

Philosophical Writings  
Bureau of Indian Affairs 1961 Summer Program  
At  
The University of Alaska, Fairbanks

**APPENDIX B**

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE 1961 BIA-UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA SUMMER PROGRAM PHILOSOPHICAL WRITINGS**

The 1961 Summer Program was a bench mark regarding my professional development and in changing the Mt. Edgecumbe curriculum to reflect the “Modern math and science curricula.” Our (Vinita and I) basic purpose was to use the summer program to develop a curriculum that taught Alaska Native students abstract thinking and logic and then to make comparisons between the U.S. dominant (Eurocentric) thinking and that of the different cultural groups reflected in the student body. The summer program made constant use of questioning and then reasoned response(s). The philosophical writings develop an intellectual history of Western Europe starting with Mythology and the Greeks and concluding with John Locke and John Stuart Mills. Admittedly, the reading was difficult for the eight grade graduates but with help from the teacher understanding was made possible. I know of no approach to Alaska Native education that has used this approach. I think it is an excellent approach to cross-cultural education but not one that every teacher can embrace.

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Tom R. Hopkins

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Written by

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And

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

THE STORY OF MANKIND which you have now finished reading has given you a good general idea of what we human beings know or can deduce about Man's activities on this planet since the beginning of his sojourn here. You read something about Man and the world of prehistory and a great deal about Man's activities during all the periods of recorded history, including the present. Have you noticed that I have been saying, "Man's activities"? Why is this, do you suppose? Because the study of pure history is essentially the study of Man's activities and I want you to be very aware of the fundamental approach we are now going to take. We are now going to read and discuss, in a very general way, the history of western man's Ideas, or philosophy. And this will require much more of you than your study of the history of Man's activities has required. Why? Because you will have to do a great deal of abstract thinking in order to understand how Western Man's philosophy evolved from a way of explaining the universe in terms of demons, spirits and myths handed down by word of mouth to the very complicated and many-sided modern ways of explaining his universe. You must put on your "thinking caps" and keep them on or we shall, I am afraid, leave you behind and that would be too bad for you because this is, in my opinion, the most interesting part of our study, the part which our other approach to the study of history has been preparing you. Why do you think I say that this is the most interesting part? Because Man's ability to think abstractly, and communicate this thinking, is really what differentiates him from the, other kinds of mammals, is it not? Man is the only animal that can communicate the knowledge he has acquired through personal experience to the other members of his race or group and this knowledge, once communicated, is accumulated and handed down from one generation to another. Man can, then, learn from the collective experience of his group as well as from individual experience. To illustrate: A rat can learn to find his way out of a maze through a long process of trial and error but he can not teach another rat this lesson, can he? If the man who invented the locomotive had, for example, had to start from scratch where the "first man" started, do you think he would have got very far? Of course not. We are indeed, "like dwarfs seated on the shoulders of giants; we see more things than the ancients and things more distant, but this is due neither to the sharpness of our own sight, nor to the greatness of our own stature, but because we are raised and borne aloft on that giant mass."

Now Man must not only be able to communicate in order to be a man but he must have something to communicate. Man is able to reason, to use symbols. He can operate with symbols in his head instead of going through a long process of trial and error on every occasion as the rat in the maze has to do. Clearly, again, the man who invented the locomotive could not have done so by messing about with pieces of cast iron and brass, filing pieces down, casting pieces on, sticking together and taking apart. He worked out the design in his head in mathematical symbols, put these symbols down in the form of diagrams, made, perhaps, scale models and the like. So that you can see, can you not, why I think the history of Man's ideas, or philosophy, should be even more interesting and important than a history of his activities. (Though, you understand, I am sure, that we can not talk about one without touching on the other at all. It is, rather, a matter of emphasis.) For his ideas, and his ability to communicate them, are really what

make him a human being and not an ape or some other kind of mammal.

Now what does the word “philosophy” which I have been using mean? It comes from two Greek words, philo, love and sophia, wisdom.. So that it is then the love of wisdom. (And, again, only Man with his ability to think abstractly, in symbols, can love wisdom.) And a philosopher would be, would he not, a lover of wisdom. Well, what, you ask, is wisdom? If a man possessed Wisdom -that is, all Wisdom - he would have the final, right, true, answers to these questions:

(1) What is the nature of the world around me? How is it built? What is really there? Are there gods behind the forces and actions of nature or are they due to other causes?

(2) How should I conduct myself In this life? What is good and what is bad? What is right and what is wrong?

(3) What is the cause of evil in the world?

(4.) How should men govern themselves or regulate the life of the group as a whole?

(5) How do we gain knowledge? How do I know what is true? What is the real source of Truth and knowledge?

Pretty tough questions, aren't they? So tough in fact that you can see right away that no one man can answer them absolutely correctly. Therefore Wisdom - absolute Wisdom - must belong to some high intelligence other than Mans must it not? Or, as Pythagoras, who lived in Greece in the 6th Century B.C., put it, true wisdom belongs only to God, therefore a philosopher is a lover of wisdom, a seeker after it, not a possessor of it; boy seeks girl rather than gets girl. So, we are then going to study now about these seekers of wisdom in history and about the part of wisdom that they did find and hand down to us. We will begin our study with the Greeks and a man named Lucretius (We begin with the Greeks because we are studying Western Mans philosophy.) This is called the Classical Period of philosophy and we will talk specifically about one more philosopher of this era, perhaps the most famous one of all time, Plato. Then, we will read and talk about the philosophy of the Christian Era which began with St. Paul. We come, after this period, to the period which is some times called the Age of Reason and will meet another very well-known man, Rene Descartes, the first really modern philosopher. The name we give the period following the Age of Reason is the Enlightenment and here we shall meet Mr. Locke, who has influenced American political thought so markedly. Then we shall read and talk a little about several periods beginning after the Enlightenment down to the present.

You will be learning many new words and phrases as e go along, words which men have made up to stand for areas of philosophical thought. For example: Metaphysics, which is what philosophers label answers given to our above-mentioned question (1). Ethics, which is the word used to describe answers to our question (2). Politics, which is the -word used to describe answers to our question (3). Epistemology, a really interesting sounding word, isn't it? - which is the word used to describe the

answers given to our question (5).

Tomorrow we -will go back again in our thoughts to Greece and talk about a man named Democritus and his ideas which ere so well written up by another man, Lucretius.

### LUCRETIUS AND THE CLASSICAL PERIOD

Five hundred years before Christ in a little town on the far western border of the settled and civilized world, a strange new power was at work. Something had awakened in the minds. and spirits of the men there which was so to influence the world that the slow passage of long time, of century upon century and the shattering changes they brought, would be powerless to wear away that deep impress. Athens had entered upon her brief and magnificent flowering of genius which so molded the world of mind and spirit that our mind and spirit to-day are different. We think and feel differently because of what a little Greek town did during a century or two, twenty-four hundred years ago. What was then produced of art and of thought has never been surpassed and very rarely equaled, and the stamp of it is upon all the art and all the thought of the Western world. And yet this full stature of greatness came to pass at a time when the mighty civilizations of the ancient world had perished and the shadow of "effortless barbarism" was dark upon the earth. In that black and fierce world a little centre ,of white-hot spiritual energy was at work. A new civilization had arisen in Athens. unlike all that had gone on before. The Greek Way by Edith Hamilton

The poem that you have read by Lucretius was not written in Athens but the ideas which it presents are those of Democritus who lived in Greece during the Golden Age.

What was so revolutionary about these ideas that we say they created a whole new way of thinking? How was this the foundation of all thought in our western civilization? From the beginning of time men have always tried to explain the world they live in. The Greeks were not different in this way. The difference lay in the way they tried to explain it. Previous cultures had explained happenings in nature - wind, lightning, thunder, the meaning of the stars - in terms of Gods, demons and spirits. Each event in nature had a special and separate explanation. Only in recent time has the Eskimo culture changed from a way of thinking very much like this.

The Greeks tried to explain the world around them in terms of a rational system. That is, they tried to explain things with their reason alone in terms of concrete ideas from the everyday world. Instead of a separate explanation for each. event they tried to find theories which would explain all the events of nature in terms of a few basic principles.

In order to do this they learned to combine reason and observation in a way that made modern science possible. Science requires this ability to build general ideas or principles from the mass of particular details which experience provides. Like all other

previous cultures, the Greeks began by observing their world. However they began to classify their observations into broad general ideas called universals. In a way all the words of a language are universals. The word “cow” doesn’t refer to any one particular cow but to the general idea or definition of cow. All particular cows have the characteristics of the general idea so that they may be identified as cows. But the Greeks went much further. They not only thought of the universal common-name ideas like “cow” but realized cows and horses and many other things shared certain common characteristics which made up the universal idea “animal”. And that animals together with rocks, plants and so on, all have the property or characteristics of being solid. Hence, arises the universal idea of solid things. Solids together with liquids like water or oil, and gases like steam and air all are things or substances. Hence, arose the universal idea of “matter” which merely means any thing found in the world as opposed to universal ideas describing things like size, shape or motion.

The Greeks then went one step further. They thought of matter not only as the universal abstract idea including all “things”, but as an actual uniform universal stuff out of which everything is made. This universal idea then quite naturally led stepwise into a theory explaining how the world is put together. This attempt to explain what the world is made of - the nature of reality - is called metaphysics. The Greeks -were the first people in history to attempt it in a rational instead of mythical way. For example, Thales of Miletus probably the very first thinker of this kind, believed that everything was made of water in various stages of solidity, like water, ice and steam. Another man believed that everything was composed of an ever-changing “fire”. Democritus (Lucretius) as we have seen, conceived all matter as composed of tiny, hard, indivisible, indestructible atoms, (The word atom means “not cuttable” in Greek.) The only other thing -which he believed existed besides these atoms -was the absolutely empty space or void in which they moved. We have followed his logic showing why he believed this to be the composition of matter. He also believed that consequences of his theory could account for many of the events found in nature and all the properties of matter. Because the theory did, in his understanding, account for these things, this acted as further evidence that the theory was true.

Of course, Democritus (Lucretius) logic was later shown to be faulty and was discarded. And, *even* though centuries later we find considerable truth in it, this truth - was arrived at in an entirely different way. Nevertheless the type of thinking -which Democritus used -was the kind that set the pattern for all western thought to follow and was the beginning of the scientific method. This method consists of, first of all, picking out the broad general universal ideas, like the idea of matter, from a mass of particular observations which make up human experience. Second, a theory is proposed to explain the relationship between these universals. For instance, Democritus theory was meant to explain the hardness or softness of matter.

Such a theory has many other logical consequences than the particular ideas which it was proposed to explain. Therefore, the next step is to derive more of these logical consequences and then to see if these are really true in nature. In modern science we carry out experiments to test theories. Although he did not know how to carry out careful

experiments or observations in our modern way, Democritus also believed his theory could account for many other events in nature. If the consequences of a theory do check with reality we can continue to use it. If they do not, it must be discarded and another one found.

For instance we could discover a theory to account for the wind. Let us suppose a theory which assumes that the wind is due to action brought on by the anger of the God, Zeus. (Zeus, to the Greeks, was the Cloud Gatherer, the Father of their many Gods, Ruler of the Sky. We will refer to a Greek God since -we are talking about Greek thought and times.) If this theory were true, we should expect, logically, to be able to influence the wind by making prayer and sacrifice to Zeus and by avoiding those actions which are known to make Zeus angry. We should then set up scientific study to see if there were any correlation or connection between the violence and frequency of the wind and the number of prayers and sacrifices per month minus the number of instances of the God Zeus anger per month. We find from this study, that there is no correlation or connection. That is, that reality does not bear out the consequences of our theory. On the other hand, suppose we form the theory that wind is due to a difference in the air pressure between one place and another. We can then test this theory by actually measuring that air pressure. We find that there always is a measurable difference in the pressure of the air where the wind is coming from and the pressure of the air where the wind is going to. Therefore, the consequences of our theory are borne out by the reality we observe. We may, therefore, keep our theory and see where else it leads us concerning the properties or qualities of wind and their effects, always realizing that some other future consequences or discoveries may force us to discard it.

This is the method of thinking which has allowed modern science to grow, It was the Greeks greatest gift to the world.

What was there about Greece that caused this great change in the way of thinking? Probably It was the combination of three things. First, as is so often the case in history, the rise of the new Greek civilization came as a response to a conflict growing out of the mixing of an old culture with a new one. The old Aegean civilization which had reached such technological splendor under Crete was challenged by the invasion of the nomadic Aryans, lasting from about 2000 to 1500 BC. These free-roving lusty horsemen swept down from the steppes of Asia into Persia, India, Europe and Greece singing their ballads which became the Baghavad Gita. of India and the Homeric mythology of Greece. It was the addition of a new, vigorous culture to the older, more technologically advanced civilization that led to a great new flowering of culture in each of these areas. A part of the vigor of American culture grows out of the fact that there has been a constant conflict due to the mixing of the various cultures which have come to make up our nation. This is why America is called a "melting pot". This mixing is still going on especially in areas like Alaska -where Eskimo, Indian and Aleut cultures are in the process of mixing with non-native culture.

Besides the mixing of these two particular cultures, another factor, resulting again from the intermingling of peoples, set the stage for the rise of the Greek rational mind. One was the ready availability of a simple, efficient, written language. This was made



possible by the adoption of the alphabet transmitted by the Phoenicians from the Hebrews. Without a simply-written (alphabetic) language, a culture is essentially non-literate. Even though without an alphabet, a certain number of written records can be made by scribes, writing cannot be a tool available to everyone for the transmission and preservation of their thoughts because it is so time-consuming. For example, Egyptian and Sumerian scribes with their picture-type and wedge-shaped writings, both non-alphabetic of course, often spent hours engraving two or three letters. The Phoenicians transmitted a written language which sacrificed the pretty looks of the older system for speed and reduced the thousand different images to a short and handy alphabet of twenty-two letters. In non literate cultures only traditional ideas or majority opinions are transmitted. Dissenting opinion is quickly lost if it must be transmitted orally. For this reason non-literate cultures are tradition bound as they have no opportunity to develop dissenting opinion or rational inquiry. The preservation and transmission of ideas in writing has the effect of snowballing knowledge because new ideas are constantly being brought into conflict with old ones and out of the conflict still more new ideas grow. This tool of literacy was one of the necessary ingredients for the growth of the Greek mind. Always, literacy reaches non-literate peoples through the mixing of cultures. For example, because of its isolation, Eskimo culture remained non-literate for many centuries.

Another factor unique to Greece was the character of its mythology. This pictured the Gods as sort of big brothers to the human race instead of being terrible, fear-inspiring, powerful gods as in Egypt, Persia and Babylon. The Greek Gods erred in very human ways. This gave man a great deal of freedom to disagree with the gods and go his own way. The Gods were also depicted as gradually learning more as time passed. Therefore, man could also expect to learn and gain more understanding of his world as generations passed. And because of Greece's gift of rationality, he did and can.

## PLATO - THE CLASSICAL PERIOD

Plato is considered by many people to represent the high point of the Greek mind. In fact, many believe that he is the high point for all times. It has been said that all philosophy is “merely footnotes to Plato”. Why is this?

In our discussion of Lucretius we have already talked about some of the factors which brought about the rise of Greek culture. Before discussing Plato, we should look a little more specifically at the culture and history of Athens in the Golden Age in which Socrates grew up and which influenced Plato so much.

Around 600 BC. Athens was just another of many small city-states on the Greek peninsula. What brought about its rise to greatness? In the first place, it was a sea port. The land around Athens was rocky and poor for farming so that Athenians turned more and more to the sea for their livelihood. They began to trade with the older more advanced (technologically and politically) civilizations of Asia Minor and the Near East. They planted many trading colonies on the islands off the shore of Greece and Asia Minor. As this trading empire grew, the art of government became more important to them. In the old days Athens had had a King like the other Greek cities. But with the rise of trade came riches and an aristocracy based on wealth grew up. The King was replaced by a council of the older, richer and usually wiser men of the city. Then in 594 a very wise law giver, Solon, after whom our Congressmen are still called, devised a new constitution for Athens. This set up a council of 400 citizens to make the laws for Athens. They were chosen each year by lot from all the freemen of the city. This worked extremely well for a while. All the citizens devoted themselves diligently to the governing of the city. Patriotism, in the best sense, reigned. That is, there was thoughtful devotion by all to the best interest of the whole city. The chief desire of every citizen was to make Athens the most beautiful and powerful and just city in the world.

Suddenly in 490 BC, the mighty Empire of Persia under Darius decided to crush the young upstart Athenian state which was encroaching on its trading area and encouraging the coast cities along the Aegean to revolt. A mighty army was assembled. They planned to march down the Greek peninsula to Athens but a storm dispersed the army while it was trying to cross the Hellespont. The next year an even mightier army and fleet was assembled for the attack. Athens, realizing the danger, asked the other cities of Greece to send armies to help her. Almost no one came to her aid because of their jealousy of her increasing power and wealth.

The Persian army landed from the naval fleet on the plain of Marathon. They far outnumbered the tiny Athenian army massed to meet them. However, because of their better tactics and fierce determination to defend their beloved city, the Greeks routed the larger Persian army which took to its ships and sailed home. The famous runner, Pheidippides, ran the 27 miles to Athens from Marathon to deliver the news of victory after which he fell dead of exhaustion. In memory of this event we still call such long races Marathons.

Ten years later under Darius son Xerxes, a new Persian army and naval fleet was assembled against Athens. This time the army marched successfully down the peninsula and the fleet threatened the city from the sea. Following the wisdom of their great general Pericles, the Athenians deserted their city to the oncoming army and took to ships to use all their forces against the Persian fleet. Through excellent maneuvering and fortunate winds, they destroyed most of the Persian fleet, while the Persian army was busy burning the deserted city of Athens. However, without the Persian fleet to supply them, the army was forced to retreat back to Persia with heavy losses. The Persians never tried to attack Athens again.

In the great patriotic spirit of victory, the Athenians rebuilt their city, making it more beautiful than ever, and experienced a flowering of culture that burned with a white-hot flame for a generation. All the men who made Athens still live for us today in her heritage of literature, drama, history and philosophy were either soldiers themselves in these great wars or grew up during the time of the wars.

Under the leadership of Pericles, from 461-429 BC, Athenian government displayed a brilliance equal to that of her literature. The art of debate and politics reached a high point in history, and was developed among all Athens free citizens. Then almost as quickly as it had arisen, this political genius sputtered and died. When the generation we've been discussing died, the next lacked the wisdom or concern to carry on the tradition of self-government. What had been a brilliant forum of debate for law-making, turned more and more into a mob swayed by demagogues. Part of this degeneration was due to the war with Sparta. The new generation did not have the stamina to stand up against the better disciplined Spartans. They were defeated again and again. In addition a great plague swept Athens in 430 BC killing 1/3 of the city's population including Pericles, the brilliant leader who had held them together.

In the midst of all this turmoil, a group of men appeared calling themselves Sophists, meaning wise men. Originally these men had been teachers of rhetoric, the art of speaking well. But as the government became more a mob swayed by demagogues, the Sophists used and sold the influence they had over crowds through this ability to speak cleverly. A view grew up among them that right was only a matter of might and power. They believed that any action was justified as long as it worked. In other words, a man could use any means to accomplish his goals.

It was against this attitude of the Sophists that Socrates and his famous pupil, Plato, were fighting in their teaching of the idea of justice. Just as Lucretius was seeking broad general principles on which to build his metaphysics, so Plato was trying to find the same sort of broad general principle in ethics or morality.

The method that Socrates and Plato used was very novel and interesting. It was called the dialectic method, which means pitting one person's mind against another's. Remember how we have noted that wisdom and the growth of civilization often comes out of conflict situations? Well, Socrates tried to produce just this continued-conflict situation in discussions to create wisdom. He developed most of his philosophy by the system of asking questions of his friends and enemies - which required them, among

other things, to carefully define the words they used in discussion. He called himself a “gadfly” because he stung people into critical thinking by his penetrating questions. He said that he was only a mid-wife to ideas, not a creator of them. That is, he tried to help others formulate their ideas and put them into words by- asking questions. This technique is mirrored in Plato’s dialogues. In the part of the REPUBLIC which we read, Socrates is trying to find out what justice really is.

Thracymachus, the Sophist, has contended that justice is merely power. Socrates tries to refute this argument by a very interesting method. He proposed that since a state is larger than a man, it should be easier to see what justice is by examining a state than by looking at one man. . Therefore he proposes to set up in theory an ideally just state and then see how it is just. By comparing the state to man, he hopes to see what justice should be in the ideal man. In the process of the argument he not only defines justice, but proposes the first ideal state in history. We call such an ideal theoretical state a Utopia today, after the name of such a famous state proposed by Sir Thomas Moore in the Renaissance.

As Plato did, we should consider his ideal state first and then come to the justice it is intended to help us discover. Plato describes a state run by a select group called guardians -who are chosen at an early age and trained all their lives, for the job. The rest of the people have essentially nothing to say about the government. By modern or even Greek standards, this seems very dictatorial or at least autocratic. Why did Plato throw away all of Athens democratic tradition when he came to write about his ideal state? You must remember that Plato grew up not during the glorious age of Greek democracy when the marvelous tradition of wise debate and decision was being maintained by all the people. He grew up during the war with Sparta when the Forum had already degenerated into a mob ruled by demagogues. Plato was completely disillusioned by democracy. He patterned his ideal state after the Spartan government which was able to defeat Athens again and again because of its better discipline. Plato was very bitter about the trial and execution of Socrates by this same mob. They condemned Socrates because of his maddening, to their way of thinking, inquiries into the affairs of state. Plato was completely disillusioned therefore about the ability of the masses of men to even recognize wisdom and so proposed that only a small group should be so well educated for the job of governing that they would be philosopher-kings.

After describing this state Plato goes back and tries to point out that it is a just state (has justice), because everyone is doing the job he is fitted and trained for. Each to his own place. The guardians are ruling. The soldiers are fighting to defend the state and the rest are carrying out the business affairs of the city. This is justice - to each his own rights and duties - the doing of one's own business.

Likewise in the individual, justice consists of a harmony between the various parts of the personality, the passions, and the intellect-temperance, courage and wisdom - in their proper balance. This idea of justice or the “good” as harmony did not originate with Plato or Socrates, but was a Greek ideal of the good life even before the Golden Age. Beauty and reason and harmony, nothing in excess, this was always the Greek ideal life and is one of the ideals which she most clearly transmitted to us. Aristotle described it

even more clearly in his treatise on “Ethics” as the Golden Mean in all things. No, the idea did not originate with Plato, but he was the first to try to give a rational basis in argument to an ideal -which was already true. This was the first rational treatise on ethics, the theory of morality.

## PAUL AND THE CHRISTIAN ERA

----Come with me on an imaginary journey in time and space imaginary in the sense that we can not actually travel to the Orient - we do not have the money. And we can not really go backward into time, not yet anyway. But the places themselves are not imaginary. They exist. And the people we shall meet on this journey lived. And the events -we shall experience vicariously truly happened . . . . .

The time is one or two years after the crucifixion of Jesus, or about 30 A. D. The scene -- the site in Jerusalem of the stoning of Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Stephen is dead, the crowd is dispersing. Our interest is focused on one young man in this crowd. He is short in stature, beetle-browed, already beginning to bald a little. He has a hooked nose and crooked legs. In short, he is ugly. That is, he lives in an ugly body. But this fact does not prevent his being an arresting personality - even on first sight. He stands apart in our minds from the others in this crowd not because of his ugliness, but rather in spite of it. For we are attracted to him by his obvious vitality. He is full of life. -- Of physical energy -- This is apparent in the quickness and sureness with which he moves about; Of mental energy - This we can see immediately for he is lost in thought even in the midst of a good-sized crowd; Of spiritual energy - For the combination of the confidence evident in his movements and the intensity of the expression on his face give us the impression of a man committed, a man completely and deeply enthusiastic about the purpose of his life.

Who exactly is this man, we wonder?

. . . And because the answers to all questions asked by time-space travelers jump right into their minds immediately the questions are asked----

He is Saul of Tarsus, by name, and a Jew, we learn. Born in about 5-10 A. D. in Tarsus, a Hellenistic city, yes, but born, in his own words, "a Hebrew of the Hebrews", meaning of a Jewish family, speaking the Aramaic-Hebrew language. He grew up in a Greek city, then, and therefore writes and speaks Greek also, but Hebrew in his home.

His father must have been a rich and honored man in Tarsus for he was a Roman citizen, a privilege which was achieved outside of Rome proper only by people of wealth or influence. Thus Saul was born into Roman citizenship. And, very significantly, his father was a Pharisee by family descent. So that Saul was a birthright member of this most prominent and influential of Jewish religious sects.

A strange mixture this man, Saul, a legal citizen of Rome the nation of conquerors; yet of the Jewish faith, the religion of the conquered born and reared in still another conquered city, Tarsus, of Greek-influenced atmosphere; educated partly in Tarsus and partly in Rome-ruled Jerusalem under Gamaliel, a foremost Jewish Rabbi (teacher) and scholar.

Small wonder then that, as we look at him, conviction and uncertainty take turns

playing across the thoughtful, intense face. Here is a man loyal, extremely loyal, to his own people, the Jews, and their outlook on life yet able, too, to see beyond their views, for he knows two other worlds also, the Roman and the Greek.

Why is this young man here at this place, at this time? He has watched the cruel execution of Stephen. Why?

-----Having asked the question-----

We discover, to our own amazement, that he helped convict Stephen before the Jewish Sanhedrin, or court. He was a witness against Stephen.

Why, we asked again? For what possible reason can this well-educated, intelligent young man have for desiring the execution of a really harmless young man like Stephen?

Saul, we find, hates the Christians. They are, he feels, a menace to the unity and preservation of his nation, the Jewish nation. They teach the setting aside of much of the Jewish Ceremonial Law, of circumcision, for example. They thereby threaten, really threaten, in Saul's view, the Jewish community for if the Jews do not stick together and observe their religious sacraments very strictly they will, Saul feels, become just like so many of the other conquered peoples of the Roman Empire -- careless, dishonest, wanting only pleasure no matter -what the cost, lazy, afraid of the Romans, irreverent toward God. This Saul does not want for his people. It is bad enough that they should be under the political heel of Rome without having their religion attacked. (The Romans had always respected the religious views of the peoples they conquered.) And so, being, as we have observed, a man of much enthusiasm Saul fights the Christians. Stephen was a leader among the Christians. Saul is glad to see him go.

Or is he? We wonder a little as we look at Saul's face. There is, we note again, a shadow of doubt there trailing along behind the conviction

. . . Being curious time-space travelers, we lose interest in Saul momentarily for there is much to see in this Jerusalem of 30 A. D.

Later, while we are having an after dinner cup of tea and incidentally a bull session about what we've seen -- we suddenly remember Saul again and become very curious about his fate. We quickly -- for time-space travel ~is fast -  
- return once more to Palestine to see for ourselves -----

The time we chose is about 31 A. D. We see Saul and some friends walking along a narrow, dusty road. We come close and look into his face. It is surely the same thoughtful face. troubled, now. What is he thinking, we wonder?

Nobody can be sure - our mind wonders - but it is fairly certain that he is thinking again about the stoning of Stephen and wondering just a little whether the Christians

might have a few good points. Saul wants to convert people too, as do the Christians, only to his religion, true Judaism. He looks upon early Christianity as a branch, a wrongheaded sect of Judaism. Only lately he has begun to suspect that their way might be a good way, after all, of persuading Gentiles, as people who were not Jewish were called, to become Jews. Circumcision, Saul is thinking, is very difficult for grown men to endure. The Christians say one has only to be baptized, not circumcised, and believe in Jesus as the Messiah or the Christ and one will have the power within oneself to love and do good. And they acquire more converts this way. But is it right, Saul asks himself? And here his thoughts turn to Jesus whom he had seen and knew much about but never met. Yes, he thinks, the lives and some of the sayings the Prophets of Israel do indicate that a suffering one might be at the same time a Messiah - which Saul's sect expected some day. And all Jews know Saul's mind goes on, that in the days of the Messiah the Ceremonial Laws can be set aside for the wish. to do evil shall die in the souls of the people and therefore the laws will not be needed. Can the Christians be right? What of Jesus? Was he the Messiah? The Crucifixion comes to Saul's mind. . .

. . . .We can see now that Saul is very agitated. His face is distorted by an all-over frown, he is very pale, his eyes are filled with tears, his body jerks. He looks to us a man possessed -taken over completely - by a feeling. We are suddenly frightened for him--and of him, almost. impulsively, we return to our time and our place ----

What happened to Saul on that dusty road in 31 A. D.? We know from his own writings in the New Testament of our Bible. He was on his way to Damascus and he saw, he felt, a "vision", a picture in his own mind, of Jesus and this Jesus, he felt, spoke to him and asked Saul to follow him, to change his ways and become a Christian. After - three days of hard thinking and talking with another Christian, Saul did. And became Paul, the first Christian missionary, a man with a great and lasting faith, a belief in something he could not understand fully with his mind, but felt to be true and right.

The Greeks followed where their reason led them and Paul followed where his faith led him, a faith born on that dusty road to Damascus and seasoned by many long, hard missionary journeys, beatings, terms in jail, troublesome young churches and, finally, tested by Nero, one of the most cruel of the Roman Emperors. Paul was not found wanting. Nero executed him in about 64 A. D. "by reason of his faith" in Jesus and his teaching of it among the Romans.

But Nero was too late. Paul had already done his work. Christianity began with Jesus, but Paul, the many-sided man, the man of three worlds, organized it and spread it over most of the world of his day, as Jesus, the unraveled carpenter's son could never have done. Without Paul Christianity might never have become a world religion. And this part of our story of ideas in the western world would be very different as would the story of ideas for many centuries to follow, for Paul and Christianity inaugurated an era of emphasis on faith instead of reason which lasted for a long, long time.

Selected writings - Descartes DISCOURSE ON METHOD - Excerpts



[I had long before noticed that, for the habits of ordinary life, it is sometimes necessary to adopt, as if above doubt, opinions which we discern to be highly uncertain, as has been already said but as I then wanted to give my attention solely to the search after truth, I thought that a procedure exactly the opposite was called for, and that I ought to reject as absolutely false all opinions in regard to which I could suppose the least ground for doubt, in order to ascertain whether after that there remained anything in my belief that was wholly indubitable. Accordingly, seeing that our senses sometimes deceive us, I was willing to suppose that there existed nothing really such as they lead us to imagine; and because some men err in reasoning, and fall into paralogisms, even on the simplest matters of geometry, I, convinced that I -was as open to error as any other, rejected as false all the reasoning's that I had so far taken for demonstrations; and finally, when I considered that the very same thoughts which we have when a-wake may also come when -we are asleep, -while there is at that time not one of them true, I supposed that all the objects that had ever entered into my mind when awake, had in them no more truth than the illusions of my dreams. But immediately afterwards I observed that, whilst I thus -wished to think that all -was false, it was absolutely necessary that I, who thus thought, should be something; and as I observed that this truth, I think, therefore I am, was so certain and of such evidence, that no ground of doubt, however extravagant, could be alleged by the skeptics capable of shaking it, I concluded that I might, without scruple, accept it as the first principle of the philosophy of which I was in search.

In the next place, I attentively examined what I was and as I observed that I could suppose that I had no body, and that there was no world nor any place in which I might be; but that I could not therefore suppose that I was not; and that, on the contrary, from the very circumstance that I thought to doubt of the truth of other things, it most clearly and certainly followed that I -was; while, on the other hand, if I had only ceased to think, although all the other objects which I had ever imagined had been in reality existent, I would have had no reason to believe that I existed; I thence concluded that I was a substance whose whole essence or nature consists only in thinking, and which, that it may exist, has no need of no place, nor is dependent on any material thing; so that "I," that is to say, the mind by which I am what I am, is wholly distinct from the body, and is even more easily known than the latter, and is such, that although the latter were not, it would still continue to be all that it is.

After this I inquired in general into what is essential to the truth and certainty of a proposition; for since I had discovered one which I knew to be true, I thought that I must likewise be able to discover the ground of this certainty. And as I observed that in the words I think, therefore I am, there is nothing at all -which gives me assurance of their truth beyond this, that I see very clearly that in order to think it is necessary to exist, I concluded that I might take, as a general rule, the principle, that all the things which we very clearly and distinctly conceive are true, only observing, however, that there is some difficulty in rightly determining the objects which we distinctly conceive....]

## RENE DESCARTES AND THE AGE OF REASON

With Rene Descartes modern philosophy and mathematics began. Between Plato and Descartes lay 2000 years of intense philosophical activity and yet in many ways they were closer to each other than they were to any thinkers in between.

In order to understand Descartes importance we should briefly review these 2000 years of the history of thought.

Immediately following the Golden age of Greece, philosophy broke up into a number of groups each trying to sell a particular code of ethics or morality, that is, to sell a particular way of conducting ones life. For example, one group called the Stoics believed that a persons life should be devoted to service, duty and hardship. Another group, the Epicureans, believed it should consist of withdrawal from the active world to a life of thinking and calm enjoyment of pleasures like good food, in moderation. As we have learned, it was Lucretius purpose in writing “The Nature of the Universe” to sell this Epicurean ethic.

And this period between Plato and Descartes did not lack for scholarly research. In the libraries and universities built by Alexander the Great at Antioch and Alexandria, knowledge was built up which was to be the basis of thought and action throughout the entire middle ages, that is, until the dawn of our modern era in the 16th and 17th centuries. Euclid developed geometry to the science as it is taught in our high schools even today. Archimedes discovered many principles of physics which are still true. Galen developed a system of medicine which was accepted until Harvey discovered the true nature of the circulation of the blood in 1629, the same year that Descartes was writing his Discourse on Method.

Yet for all this scholarly activity of the Hellenic (post-Alexandrian) world, there was no great man who understood all fields of knowledge, as Plato or Aristotle did, to bring science and morality into a meaningful system.

This was the disorganized condition of philosophy when Christianity was born. The emphasis in scholarly thought then shifted to faith instead of reason as we have seen in our study of St. Paul. Reason became a much less important activity of the mind. The main concern of philosophy was to enlarge or help explain, and therefore teach, the revealed faith of Christ. After a while, in the 12th and 13th centuries, or during the high point of medieval civilization, there was a re-emphasis on the use of reason in the great scholastic system of philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas. This was largely due to the re-introduction of the study of Aristotle into Europe at that time. However, Christian faith was still always the most important and reason was used only to explain and enlarge faith. In addition, even the reason used was entirely limited by the authority of Aristotle. The writings and logical method of Aristotle were considered the basis from which all else must follow. The reliability of this basis was never questioned. Because of this complete submission to authority, the scholastic system was totally inflexible. It could not move with the times during the next few centuries and thus became meaningless.

Next, a new awareness of the world beyond Europe was brought on by increasing trade between countries. And this combined with the great discoveries of the 14th and 15th centuries brought on the Renaissance or rebirth of classical (Greek) learning in the 16th century. Here again it was the mixing of several cultures which stimulated new learning. This rebirth began with the great flowering of art and free thought in Italy around 1450 and continued into the humanist movement in Northern Europe. Erasmus of Rotterdam who was the center of this movement, was primarily a scholar of Greek. With the fall of Constantinople and the Eastern Roman Empire to the Turks in 1453, there was a great flow into Western Europe of long hidden Greek writings from the monasteries of the East. (The manuscripts were removed to Europe to save them from destruction at the hands of the invading Turks.) This flow of classical manuscripts brought about a revival of interest in the ancient Greek thinkers, especially Plato.

During this same period the Roman Catholic Church had become rather corrupt and, as we said, the scholastic philosophy approved by the church and based on the authority of Aristotle had degenerated into an oppressive burden on the human mind. Because of the centuries-old position of tradition and authority, men of this age lacked the necessary courage to set out on a completely new course with their reason alone as a guide. Therefore, the dissenters eagerly took up Plato as their new authority to pit against the established authority of Aristotle in their work for reform. It was in this use of Plato and other Greek scholarship that Erasmus led Europe. He re-translated the New Testament from the original Greek into Latin, pointing out many errors, so that it could be read by all the scholars of the day. Thus he opened another road to criticism of the church, but again this was only an appeal to a new authority against the entrenched one.

Erasmus himself hoped to use this new learning and new authority of Plato to unite all the learned men of Europe behind a movement to reform the church and the universities, which were the bastions of scholastic philosophy. He was a great compromiser and wished most of all for peace and toleration among believers in different ways of life and worship. It was almost 200 before a man was to have this vision of toleration again. To his complete dismay, instead of being used to reform the church peacefully, Erasmus scholarship helped lay the ground for the Protestant Reformation started by Martin Luther in 1517, which tore the church in half and led to the terrible and cruel religious wars of the 16th and 17th centuries.

This was the world into which Descartes was born in 1596. It was also a world of intense activity in the advancement of mathematics and science. Galileo first published the laws for the motion of falling bodies and the pendulum in 1638.

Descartes was primarily a mathematician, At the age of 30 he laid the entire foundation for the application of algebra to geometry and hence to physical problems. Math was for Descartes the model of clear and certain knowledge which advanced logically step by step to indisputable conclusions. When he sought such knowledge in the books of the scholastic philosophers or even the humanists, it was not to be found. Therefore, he looked into his own mind to find a new method in philosophy which would give the same sureness that math gives. He believed he had found this in his method of

doubt, which meant accepting as true only those ideas which appeared to his own mind as absolutely clear and distinct. This was his criterion of truth. He trusted his own mind as the final judge of whether an idea in mathematics should be doubted or seemed absolutely clear and certain.

This critical examination of how we can know what is true and what is false is called epistemology. This is the basis of all critical modern philosophy. Without knowing how we gain knowledge and how we test it for truth there can be no knowledge. Descartes criterion of truth was soon shown to be inadequate, but it is important because he did show the need to study epistemology and so started the thinkers of our civilization on the course of critical and rational analysis. And so after a 2000-year detour Descartes returned philosophy to the road on which Lucretius and Plato had so bravely set it off.

## JOUN LOCKE - AN ESSAY CONCERNING HUMAN UNDERSTANDING

It is the purpose of this essay to inquire into the source, certainty and extent of human knowledge. Because it is only understanding or knowledge which sets man above the animals, we must study the nature and limits of this understanding. For if we do not recognize its limits, we may deceive ourselves into foolish actions by having a false sureness in this knowledge. This is a great source of mans error.

How does a man begin his knowledge? It is impossible that there could be any ideas inborn or innate in the human mind. In the beginning mans mind is a perfectly blank tablet on which all knowledge is written. Some men argue that certain ideas must be innate because they are agreed upon by all men. For instance, apparently all agree to the idea that something cannot be both true and false at the same time. However it is not true that these ideas are agreed upon by all. Not all children or idiots will agree to them. And even if these ideas were universally agreed upon, it should not prove that they were inborn. They could easily have come from experience before the ability to speak.

All the ideas of human knowledge come from one source - experience. This may be of two kinds, the experience provided by the senses (sensation), and the experience of the mind in viewing its own actions (reflection). The senses provide the mind with such perceptions as red, white, heat, cold, soft, hard, bitter, sweet, etc. These are pure, simple (umanalyzable) ideas which can not be broken down in any way into simpler Ideas. It is possible to think of an apple as containing the ideas of round, red, sweet, firm, and so on. But it is impossible to think of red being composed of anything but red. For this reason it is impossible for this idea to enter the mind by any other way than experience; that is, for anyone to have the idea if he has not actually experienced it. For example a man born blind has no idea of red, and it is impossible for anyone to give it to him. It is these pure basic sensations like red, out of which all other knowledge is built.

The mind has one other source of perception, its own functioning's such as doubting, willingly, believing, etc. We can call this inner sensation or reflection. All our ideas must start from one or the other of these sources. The mind builds more complex ideas like apple, by adding and comparing the simple sensations. In addition the mind is able to invent words to describe these collections of simple ideas, words like "apple." Then the mind is also able to use this word, a universal, to describe all similar collections of simple ideas. All things which give a certain associated collection of sensations or red, round, sweet, firm, etc., can be called apples. The mind can go even further. It can also make even further abstractions or generalizations (Universals) from these ideas. In our study of Lucretius, we saw how this could lead to ideas like matter or substance. This is how we gain concept of the world we live in from experience.

There must be a real world around us to be the source of our sensation. If there were not some underlying substance giving unity to our sensation, why would all the sensations which make up apple occur together constantly.

But the universe consists only of material particles moving according to mechanical laws (Newton). Now is it possible that these material particles can be underlying substance causing all the sensation which we Interpret as “apple?” Motion can only cause other motion, not “redness.” This is the job of the observing mental substance which makes up each individual person. This is the blank tablet on which all knowledge is written. This mental substance is able to interpret and record certain motions, shapes, textures, etc, in bodies as “red”, “soft”, “hot”, etc. This is the intrinsic value of each individual mental substance that it is able to create this rich world of sensation out of pure mechanical motion.

## JOHN LOCKE - AN ESSAY ON GOVERNMENT

What is the basis on which government is founded and what purpose should it fulfill? It is alleged by some men that the basis of government lies in the natural right of the governing handed down from the paternal authority of Adam, the first man, over his children. Just as we have devotion and obedience for our own father, so we should have devotion and obedience for the King because he represents the direct descent of fatherly authority from Adam. However, this Is a false argument. In the first place, it is obviously entirely impossible to trace the descent of authority from Adam. In the second place a son is not bound by a father authority after he comes of age.

We must rather start on the realization that in a state of nature all men are born absolutely free and equal. “There being nothing more evident than that the creatures of the same species born with the same faculties should be equal one amongst the other without subordination or subjection.” In this state of nature, each man has the right to defend himself and to punish these who commit injury against him.

Why does man give up this state of nature where he is the absolute master of his own fate? He does so to protect his property. In the initial state of nature no one has any property because God gave it In common to all people, but soon man begins to work the natural resources of the earth and so creates something more out of it which is his property because of his labor. Once man has created property for himself, he has to protect it against other men who may try to take it from him. It Is for this reason that he enters into government. In order to have some higher authority to act as policeman, man willingly gives up part of his freedom, especially that of punishing offenders. This higher authority, or policeman, is a government and it derives all powers from the consent of those entering into it. Anyone wishing Lo be a part of the government need not enter the initial contract.

Once a government Is established, its laws must be determined in some way. Since all men enter the contract on the same basis, they all have equal rights in determining the laws. Therefore the only way to decide questions of law is by majority vote.

However, since the fundamental contract on which man entered government is to protect property, the government (that is the majority) can make no laws encroaching on the right of property. This holds for each generation as well as the initial one, because in a sense each man must himself consent to be bound by the laws of the government if he wishes to live in the country. Otherwise he may leave the country.

Certain men in a state are designated to act as “agents” of the majority to carry out the laws and decisions which it makes through the legislature. If at any time this person fails to act in the public good or to protect property, it is the right of the people to remove him and get a new agent, even if he is the King.

### DISCUSSION ON LOCKE

Why did Locke write these essays on human understanding and on government? By now it should be obvious that men do not philosophize in a vacuum. By this I mean a person does not just sit down one fine day and say, ~” I believe I will think about life and try to understand it”. On the contrary a man has a problem or an idea first, and develops a philosophy to explain it later. This is merely another example of our familiar fact that it is usually some sort of challenge or conflict which brings about a growth in human knowledge.

Locke in this case, was trying to justify a revolution. He was a strong supporter of the Puritan (protestant) group in England. In 1688 the Catholic King of England, James II, was deposed by act of Parliament and the protestant king and queen of Holland, William and Mary of Orange were invited to take over the throne. There was little precedent in history for this. Therefore some members of Parliament felt the need for further justification. Locke was a member of the party responsible for putting this action through Parliament.

In order to justify this action of Parliament, Locke first had to refute the theory of the “divine right of Kings” which was the basis of James II authority. This theory assumed that the King is God’s agent on earth acting as a kind of super-father to all his subjects. His authority could not be questioned in any way, according to this theory.

Locke argued that there is no way of tracing the heredity of this paternal authority from Adam down to the King of England. Hence it is foolish to speak of the King as Adam’s heir. Much more important, in his “Essay on Human Understanding”, he argues that there is no such thing as an innate or inborn idea in the human mind, instead all ideas come from experience. The divine right theory rests on the assumption that there is an inborn or natural idea in all men’s minds that there should be a King (that there should be a natural hierarchy). This idea must have been placed there by God and therefore this is Gods way of telling us that he expects the King to be his agent on earth to look after his subjects. But Locke argues that all men’s minds begin as absolutely blank tablets and that all Ideas come from experience. Therefore any idea about government and kings merely comes from mans experience and Is not necessarily or Innately true.

He goes on to argue that each man starts life as the same sort of blank mental recording substance. The difference in abilities comes from his possessions, starting with his physical mind and body. Since the soul is the same as this mental substance, each individual immortal soul has the same basic dignity and worth. Although not necessarily equal in ability, in the sense of basic dignity, all men are born equal, and none stands innately in any subject position to any other. Therefore all men are born free as well as equal.

Because men are free and equal in a state of nature, there can be no certain form of government which is right or wrong, such as a King is. Rather any government which is formed gets its power from the consent of those agreeing to be subject to it for their mutual protection. For this reason every man has equal right to a voice in the decisions of government so that the decision of the majority is the final authority in questions of law.

One other point we must keep in mind because it is very basic in Locke's theory of government is that the reason men enter into a government and give up some of their freedom to it is to protect their property. This idea of property includes one's own body as well as anything he has produced. Therefore the government cannot make any laws abridging property right since this is the basis of the original contract.

Locke was a member of the middle class, merchant, protestant group in England. Their morals included the idea that every one should work hard at his job, save his money by living frugally, and reinvest it in tools and factories so that he can produce ever more goods by this labor. Since these men were accumulators of wealth and property, it is only natural that they should base their theory of government on the idea of protection of property. They felt that the chief incentive to make people work was the assurance that they would be able to enjoy the results of their labor. They believed that the work itself was good for the individual and helped him find eternal salvation.

You should read our Declaration of Independence and parts of the U. S. Constitution to see how Locke's philosophy was responsible for shaping our democratic government. However, it is important to realize that Locke's basis is not the only basis on which a democratic government can be built. You are going to read John Stuart Mill's essay "On Liberty" soon. Mill built his democratic ideas on quite a different basis than Locke's. During the century after Locke wrote his "Essay on Human Understanding", it became obvious that if the basic assumption that all knowledge comes from experience is carried to its logical conclusion, then it is impossible to know anything of the world except the sensations we receive. In fact it becomes meaningless to talk about the self or soul as anything but the collection of all sense data and our memories of them.

On the basis the worth and dignity of the individual does not lie in the sameness of an underlying blank mental substance on which all experience is recorded. Since we can know nothing of this underlying substance the worth of the individual must lie in the uniqueness of the collection of sensations and memories which he is (which constitutes him). Mill's idea still leads to a democratic theory of government since each individual has his own rights, but majority decision does not necessarily determine right and wrong. Because all individuals' experience is different, they may have different abilities to judge



right and wrong. Since it is the collection of sensation which constitutes the individual and determines his worth, the object of government is to see that this collection of experience will be happy or pleasant for as many as possible. The greatest happiness for the greatest number principle is called Utilitarianism. According to this theory, the government has the right even to take property from individuals if it is for the best interests of all. This is the basis of socialism and of course a great deal of this practice has crept into our government also.

It is important that you see that his very subtle change in the basic philosophy of government can lead to profound changes in the practical actions of governments. Locke said the worth of the individual lies in the equality of the basic mental substance with which he starts life. Mill said the worth of the individual lies in the uniqueness of his particular collection of experience different from that of others. Out of this difference in basic assumptions grew two entirely different theories of democratic government.

Another interesting difference in the two democratic philosophies is that Locke's tends to emphasize sameness in the members of society because decisions must be reached entirely by agreement and because all individuals are thought to start as identical mental observing substances. This emphasis on sameness is felt very strongly in America today. Perhaps you can give some examples of this yourself in class. It fits in well with our mass production economy which requires that the tastes of the buyers be more or less uniform so that production can be efficient by making everything in large numbers. This mass production economy is also an outgrowth of Locke's theory of property which allows one man or a few men to collect enough wealth to build the large factories necessary for mass production. You should discuss in class how all this fits together, logically, and how it is typified by American Ideals.

England on the other hand has been influenced much more by Mill than by Locke. Mill stresses the uniqueness of each individual because of his own particular collection of sense data. Therefore the rights of the individual to be different are stressed in England even at the expense of efficiency in government and industry. This shows very clearly in his essay "On Liberty" which you should compare with the American Declaration of Independence and Constitution. It is an interesting paradox that the country which believes in a minimum of government interference in individual lives tends to have a maximum social pressure to sameness and the nation which believes in government interference in private lives for the good of the whole tends to leave the individual the greatest freedom to be different and follow his own conscience in political matters.