

**1. SOCRATES**

- His important contribution to Western thought is his dialectical method of inquiry, which he referred to as “*elenchus*” (roughly, “*cross-examination*”) later known as the **Socratic Method** or **Socratic Debate**.
- The Socratic Method is used to solve a problem by breaking the problem down into a series of questions, the answers to which gradually distil better and better solutions.
- **View on Ethics:** Socrates equated knowledge with virtue, which ultimately leads to ethical conduct.
  - He stressed that none could be happy in life, who was not morally good.
- **View on Wisdom:**
  - He never actually claimed to be wise, only to understand the path a lover of wisdom must take in pursuing it.
  - He claimed that he knew one and only one thing, that he knew nothing.
- **Upholding intellectual integrity:** Courage of speaking truth to power.
  - “an unexamined life is not worth living”

**2. PLATO**

- **Plato on ethics**
  - Plato had a teleological or goal orientated worldview.
  - The aim of Ethics is to outline the conditions under which a society might function harmoniously. (PROPER FUNCTIONING)
- **Plato on virtue**
  - He gave four cardinal virtues: *Temperance, Prudence, Fortitude and Justice*.
  - The excellence of reason is *wisdom*;
  - The excellence of the passions is *courage*; and
  - The excellence of the spirit is *temperance*.
- **Plato on justice**

Finally, justice is that excellence which consists in a *harmonious relation* of the other *three parts*. He believed, then, that virtue was a sort of knowledge (the knowledge of good and evil) that is required to reach the ultimate good.

**3. ARISTOTLE**

- **On Logic:**
  - The aim of logic is the elaboration of a coherent system that allows us to *investigate, classify, and evaluate* good and bad forms of reasoning.
  - He *does not believe* that the purpose of logic is to prove that human beings can have knowledge.

- **On Ethics:**

- According to Aristotle Happiness exists in the rational exercise of the soul's faculties in conformity with the virtues.
- Aristotle ethics have been described as goal directed i.e. the ultimate end of man.
- Virtue is the mean between the extremes, the vices. When you aim at the mean you avoid the extreme.
- Aristotle considered the role, law and education play in making citizens virtuous.
- Aristotle believed that courage is the mean, the right attitude, towards fear and confidence.

- **View on good life (Eudaimonia & Golden mean):**

- Unlike some other moral philosophers before him, Aristotle started by posing the very general question of what it actually means to lead a good human life.
- He argued that Man must have a specific or proper function, which is uncommon to anything else, and which is an activity of the soul.
- The best activity of the soul is *eudaimonia* (happiness or joy or the good life), which can be achieved by living a balanced life and avoiding excess by pursuing a golden mean in everything between the two vices of excess and deficiency.

- **Theory of Mean (Doctrine of Mean):**

- The core theory of Aristotle moral virtue is his *doctrine of the mean*. According to this doctrine, moral virtues are desire-regulating character traits which are at a mean between more extreme character traits (or vices).
- The virtue of courage, then, lies at the mean between the excessive extreme of rashness, and the deficient extreme of cowardice.

#### 4. THOMAS HOBBS

- **Social Contract Theory**

- Hobbes set out his doctrine of the foundation of states and legitimate governments, based on social contract theories (Contractarianism).
- Hobbes postulated what life would be like without government, a condition which he called the "*state of nature*" and which he argued inevitably leads to conflict and lives that are "*solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short*".
- In order to escape this state of war and insecurity, men in the state of nature accede to a "social contract" and establish a civil society.
- He denied the doctrine of separation of powers, arguing that the sovereign must control civil, military, judicial and ecclesiastical powers which in extreme case can cause authoritarianism.

#### 5. JOHN LOCKE

- He is credited with political views which influenced both the American and French Revolutions.

- He started from a belief that humans have *absolute natural rights*, in the sense of universal rights that are inherent in the nature of Ethics, and not contingent on human actions or beliefs
- He believed that no sovereign should have absolute power.
- He defined certain rights such as *life, liberty, and property* which he saw as outside the legitimate concern of civil government.

## 6. JEREMY BENTHAM

- British philosopher and social reformer modified the ideas of *Adam Smith* and introduced the philosophy of utilitarianism. He is now regarded as the founder of modern utilitarianism.
- He argued that people should judge ideas, institutions, and actions on the basis of their utility, or usefulness.
- The government should try to promote “*greatest good for greatest number*”.
- The individual should be free to pursue his or her own advantage without interference from the state.
- He favoured *quantitative utility and Pleasure*.

## 7. J. S. MILL

- The Principle of Utility
  - According to him there is one thing and one thing only that is intrinsically desirable, viz. “pleasure”.
  - Qualitative Pleasure: He declares that more valuable pleasures are those which employ “higher faculties”. Mill affirms “Better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied”.
- On Liberty
  - Defended free speech, arguing that free discourse is a necessary condition for intellectual and social progress,
  - We can never be sure that a silenced opinion does not contain some element of the truth.
  - It introduces the concepts of “*social liberty*” --limits on a ruler’s power to prevent him from harming society, requiring that people should have the right to a say in a government’s decisions),
  - He was against the concept of the “*tyranny of the majority*” ---where the majority oppresses the minority by decisions which could be harmful and wrong.
- Morality as a System of Social Rules
  - Mill looked into morality as a social practice and not as self-determination by reason.
  - According to Mill moral obligations result from the justified part of the moral code of our society.