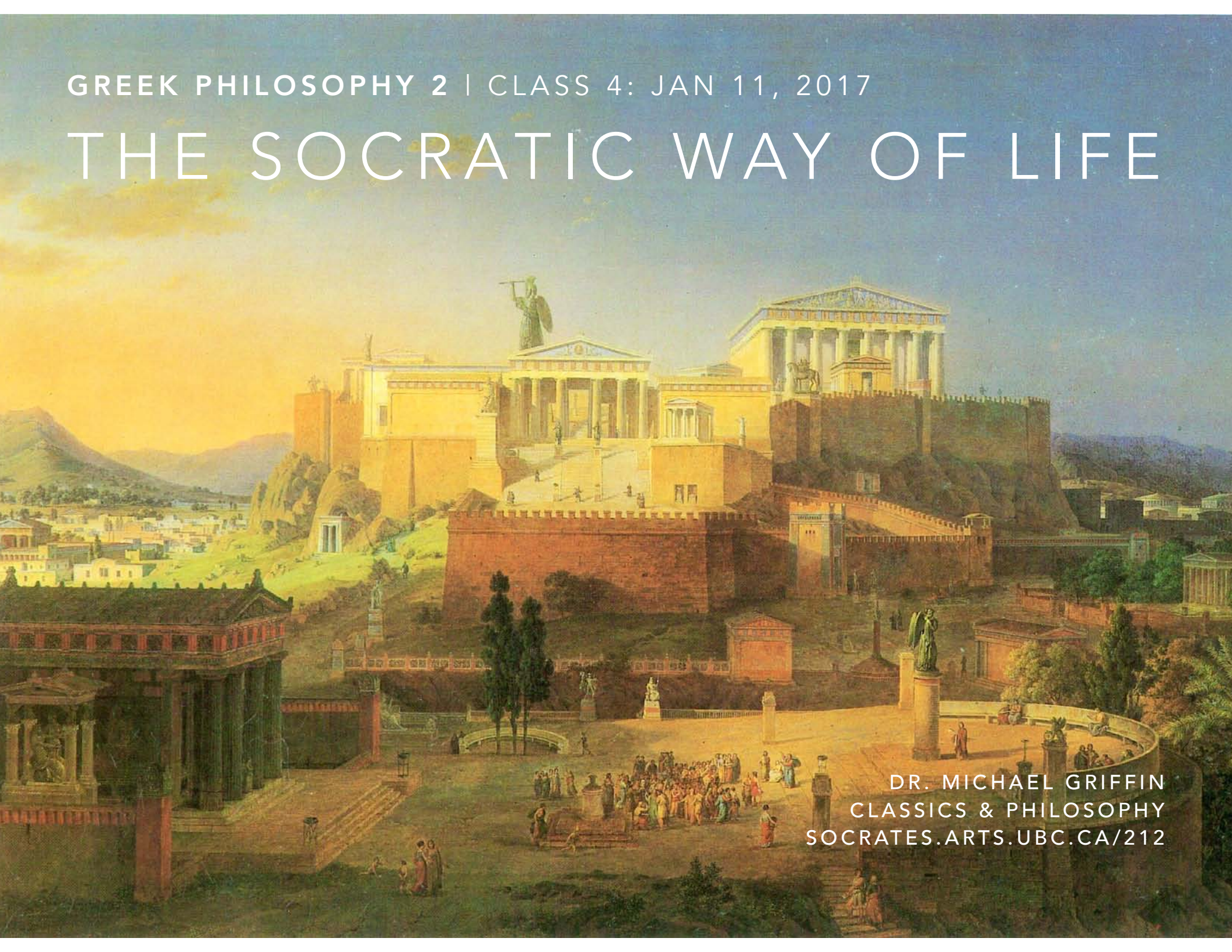


GREEK PHILOSOPHY 2 | CLASS 4: JAN 11, 2017

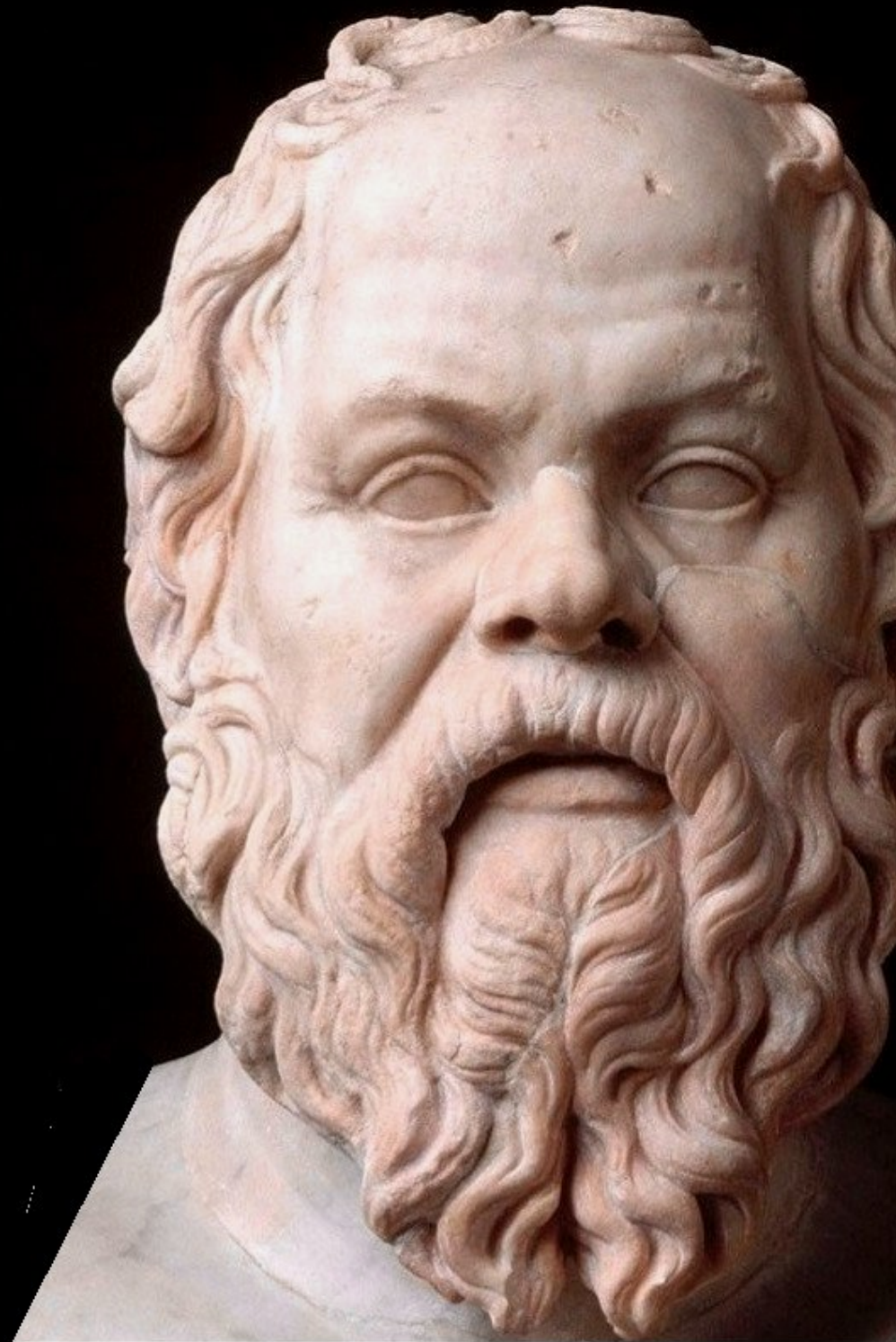
# THE SOCRATIC WAY OF LIFE



DR. MICHAEL GRIFFIN  
CLASSICS & PHILOSOPHY  
[SOCRATES.ARTS.UBC.CA/212](http://SOCRATES.ARTS.UBC.CA/212)

# SOCRATES

THE FOUNDER



# SOCRATES

- According to tradition, born to a stonemason named **Sophoniscus** in 469 BCE
- “The Socratic problem”: Socrates wrote nothing, and we know about him only through **Plato**, **Xenophon** and **Aristophanes**, whose accounts vary widely
- Developed a unique form of inquiry into human excellence (**aretē**)
  - Disclaimed **wisdom** (against **sophists**); denied that he “taught”; no fees
  - Methods based on **question and answer** (the *elenchus*), requiring unity or **consistency (a) of one’s beliefs, and (b) of one’s beliefs and actions**
  - Behaviour peculiar enough to warrant its own verb (*sōkratein*) (e.g., Aristophanes, *Birds* 1282) before *philosophia* generalized ‘Socraticism’.
- Conversated with anyone, “rich or poor, citizen or foreigner” (Apology 23C)
- Brought to trial in 399 BCE by two Athenians, Meletus and Anytus, on charges of “impiety and corrupting the young.” Portrayed in *Apology* by Plato & Xenophon.

...I say that it is the greatest good for a human being to discuss excellence (**aretē**) every day and those other things about which you hear me conversing and testing myself and others, for the unexamined life is not worth living.

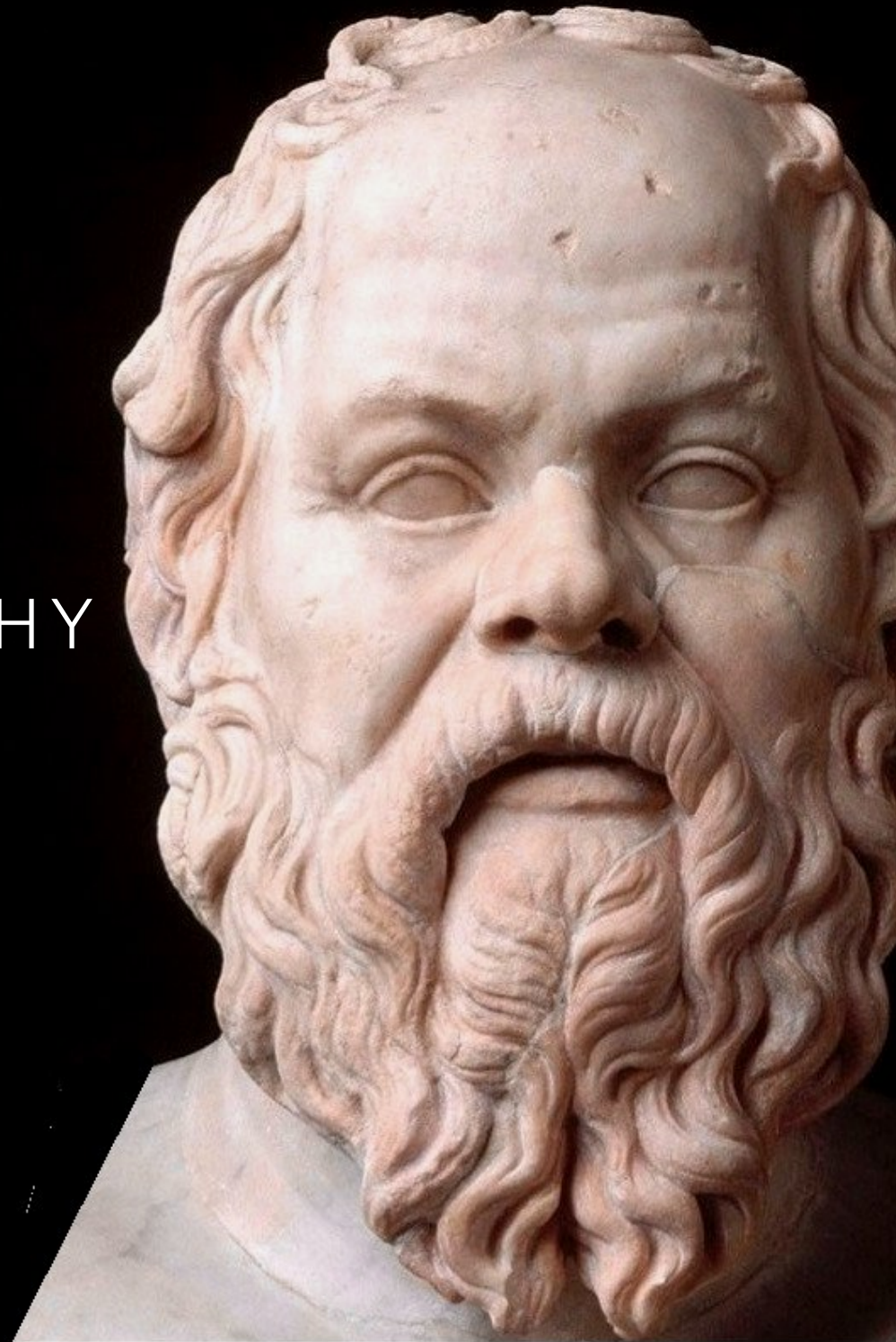
You don't appear to me to know that whoever comes into close contact with Socrates and associates with him in conversation must necessarily, even if he began by conversing about something quite different in the first place, keep on being led about by the man's arguments until he submits to answering questions about himself concerning both his present manner of life and the life he has lived hitherto. And when he does submit to this questioning, you don't realize that Socrates will not let him go before he has well and truly tested every last detail...

χρημάτων μὲν οὐκ αἰσχύνῃ ἐπιμελούμενος ὅπως σοι  
ἔσται ὡς πλείστα, καὶ δόξης καὶ τιμῆς, φρονήσεως δὲ  
καὶ ἀληθείας καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς ὅπως ὡς βελτίστη ἔσται  
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... are you not ashamed of your eagerness to  
possess as much possessions (*chrēmata*),  
reputation (*doxē*), and honours (*timē*) as possible,  
while you do not care for nor give thought to  
wisdom (*phronēsis*) or truth (*alētheia*), or the best  
possible state of your *psychē*?

# SOCRATIC PHILOSOPHY

AS FREEDOM FROM OUTER  
& INNER TYRANNY



OUTER AND INNER  
MASTERS



OUTER MASTERS

Conformity & Authority

INNER MASTERS

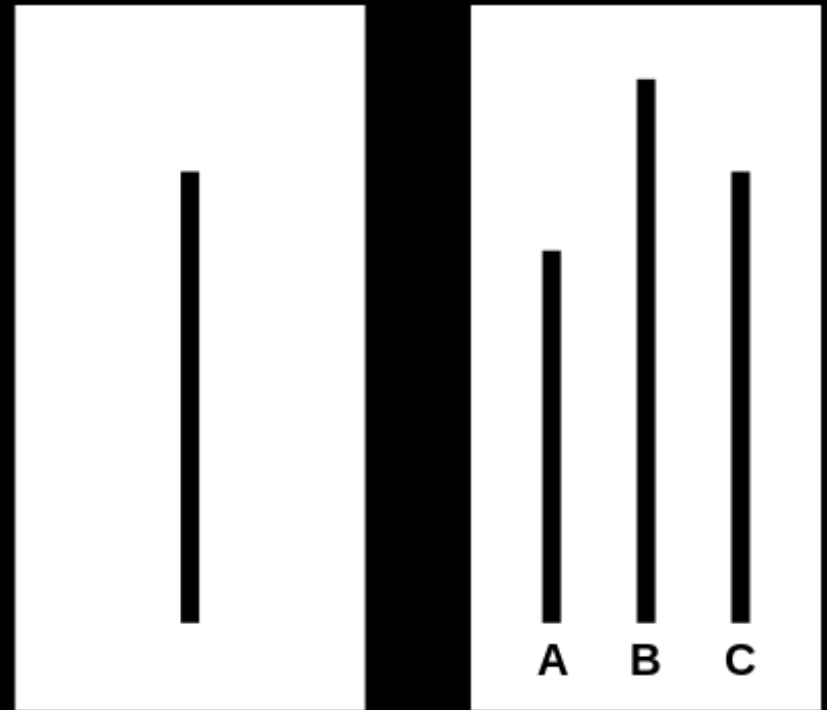
*Thumos & Epithumia*

# THE OUTER MASTERS

CONFORMITY & AUTHORITY

# SEYMOUR ASCH: CONFORMITY

- 1950s studies measuring the influence of a majority group on individual perceptions
- "I had the feeling: 'to go with it, I'll go along with the rest.'"
- "I suspected... but tried to push it out of my mind."



- ▶ Experimental group: 75% of participants conformed at least once; 25% never conformed.
- ▶ Control group (no pressure to conform): < 1% of participants gave the wrong answer.
- ▶ Conformity substantially reduced by answering in private, or by presence of a single ally (Asch, 1956)
- ▶ Replication variable, as results can be conditioned by culture (Bond & Smith, 1996) and gender (Mori & Arai, 2010)

Asch, S.E. (1951). Effects of group pressure on the modification and distortion of judgments. In H. Guetzkow (Ed.), *Groups, leadership and men* (pp. 177–190). Pittsburgh, PA: Carnegie Press.

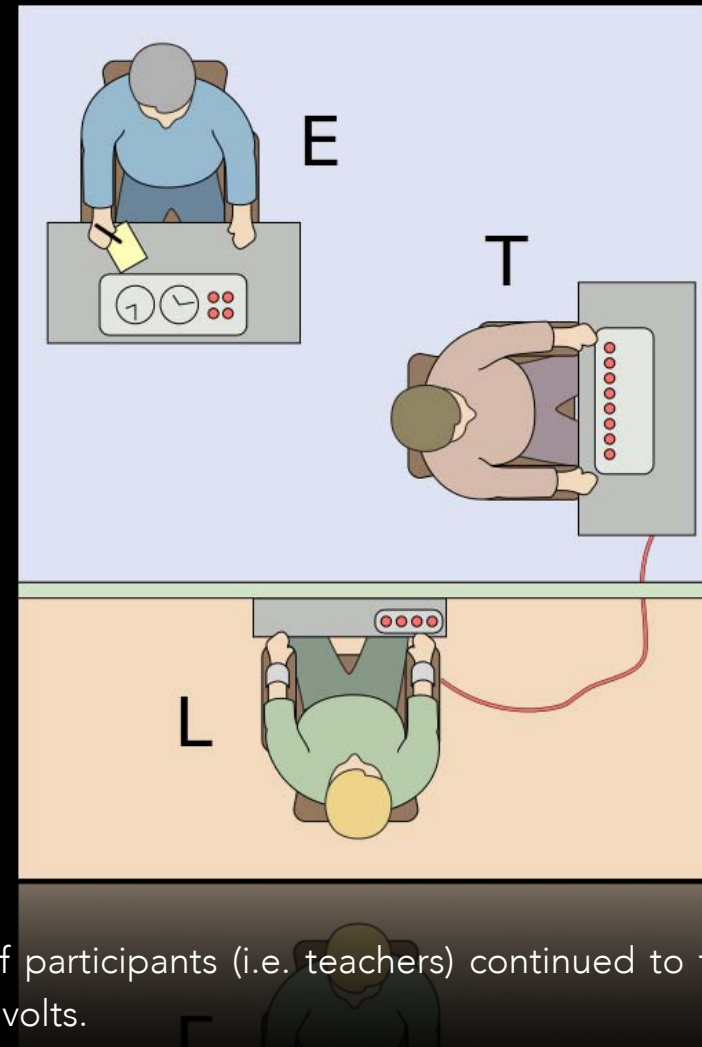
See also: <http://www.simplypsychology.org/asch-conformity.html>

That we have found the tendency to conformity in our society so strong that reasonably intelligent and well-meaning young people are willing to call White Black is a matter of concern. It raises questions about our ways of education and about the values that guide our conduct.

ASCH, 1955, P. 34

# STANLEY MILGRAM: AUTHORITY

- 1961 study measuring willingness to obey authority conflicting with personal conscience
- “Could it be that Eichmann and his million accomplices in the Holocaust were just following orders? Could we call them all accomplices?”



- ▶ Directed by a recognized authority figure, 65% (two-thirds) of participants (i.e. teachers) continued to the highest level of 450 volts. All the participants continued to 300 volts.
- ▶ In a 2009 replication, “70% of the base condition participants continued with the next item on the test and had to be stopped by the experimenter.” (Burger, 2009)

Milgram, Stanley (1963). "Behavioral Study of Obedience". *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 67 (4): 371–8.

See also: <http://www.simplypsychology.org/milgram.html>

'The legal and philosophic aspects of obedience are of enormous import [...] I set up a simple experiment at Yale University to test how much pain an ordinary citizen would inflict on another person simply because he was ordered to by an experimental scientist.

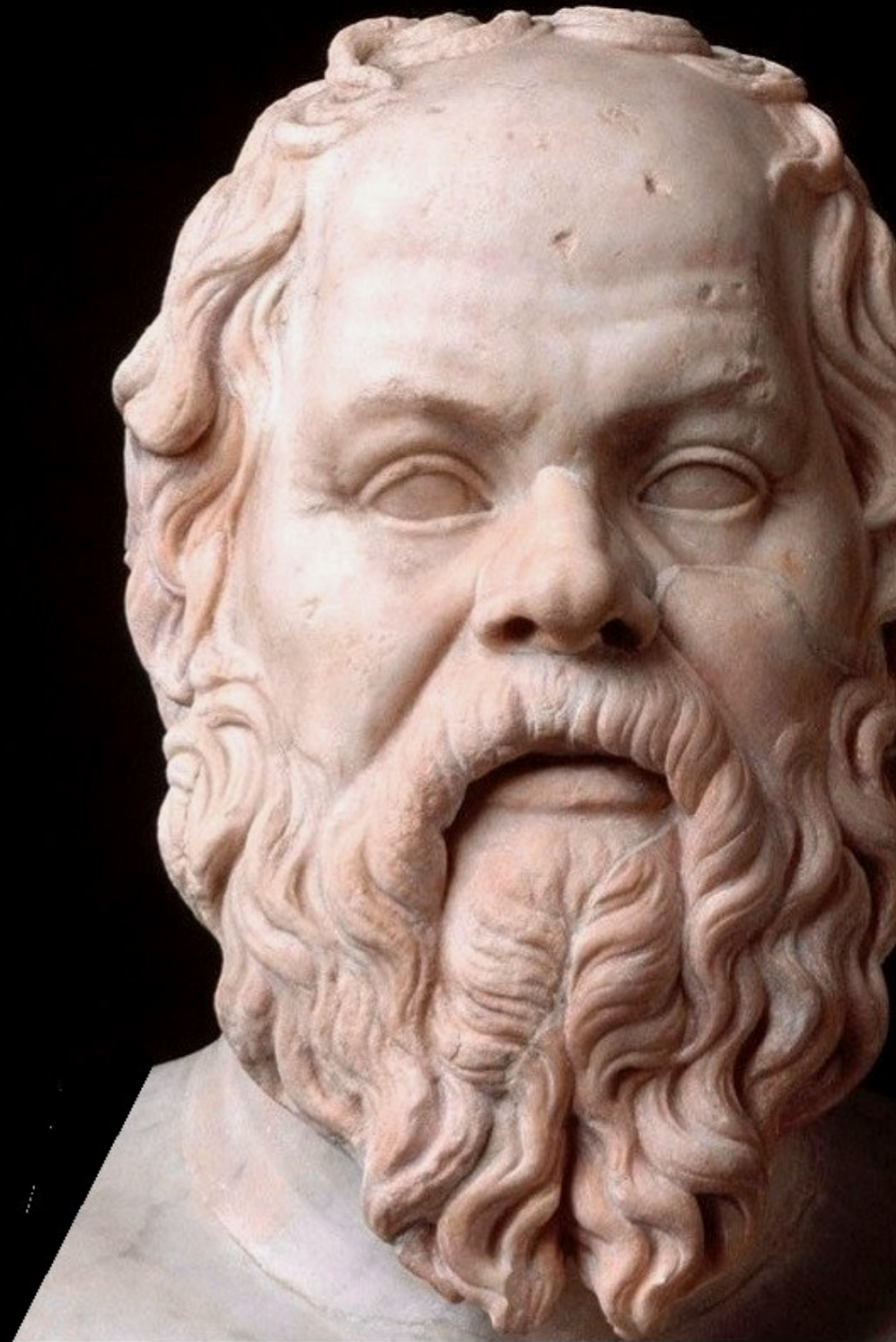
Stark authority was pitted against the subjects' [participants'] strongest moral imperatives against hurting others, and, with the subjects' [participants'] ears ringing with the screams of the victims, authority won more often than not.

The extreme willingness of adults to go to almost any lengths on the command of an authority constitutes the chief finding of the study and the fact most urgently demanding explanation.'

MILGRAM, 1974

# SOCRATES

ON CONFORMITY



We should not then think so much of what the majority will say about us, but what that person will say who understands justice and injustice... and the truth itself.

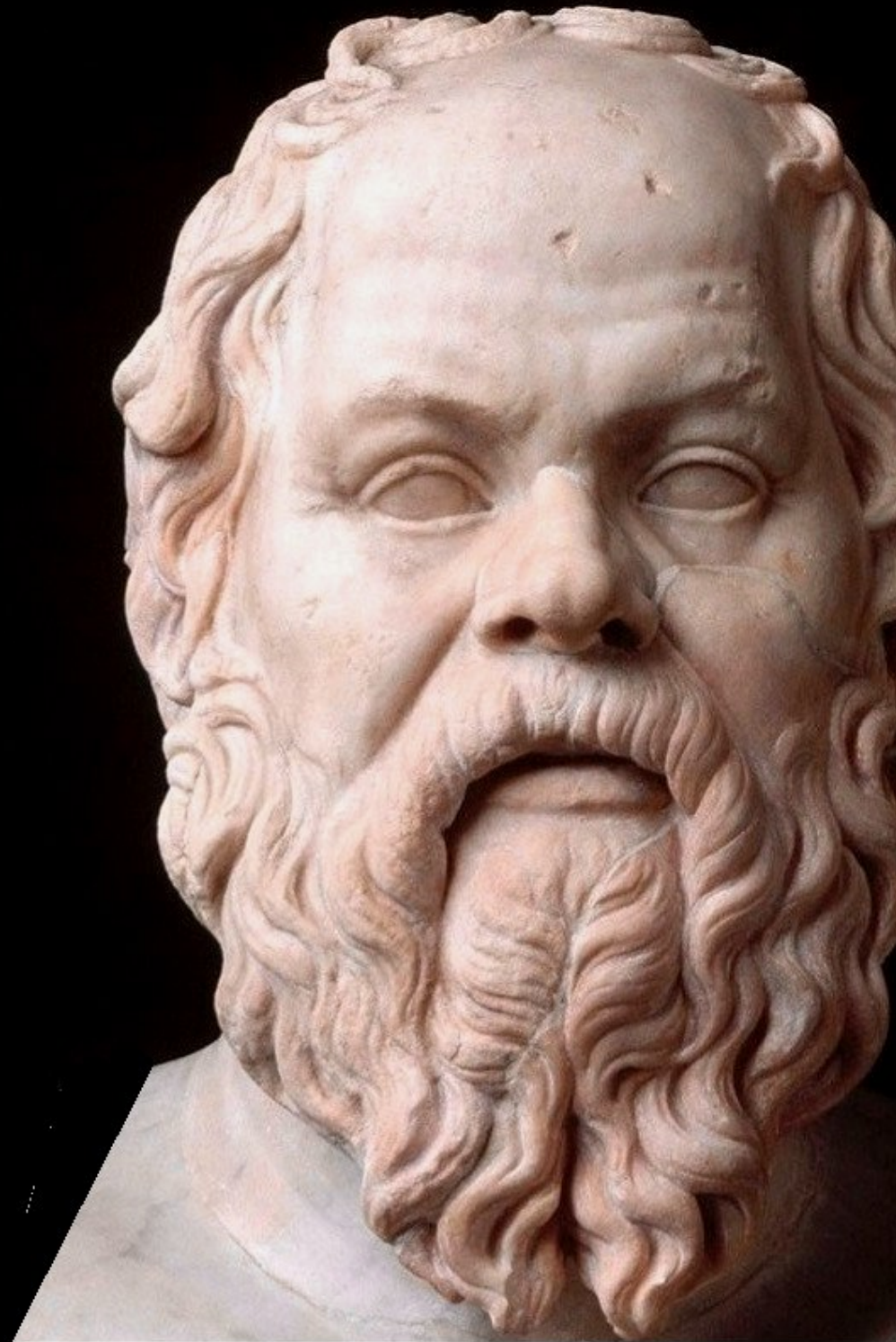


I was the only member of the presiding committee to oppose your doing something contrary to the laws, and I voted against it. The orators were ready to prosecute me and take me away, and your shouts were egging them on... [but] in any public activity I may have engaged in, I am the same man I am in private life.

SOCRATES, *APOLOGY* 32B-33A  
SEE ALSO *GORGIAS* 471E-473E, 476A

# SOCRATES

ON AUTHORITY



The question at issue is not who said it, but  
whether it's true or not...

SOCRATES, *CHARMIDES* 161C

I am the kind of man who listens to nothing within me but the argument (*logos*) that on reflection seems best to me.

SOCRATES, *CRITO* 46A

When the oligarchy was established, the Thirty [Tyrants] summoned me... and ordered us to bring Leon from Salamis, in order that he may be executed. They gave many such orders to many people, in order to implicate as many as possible in their guilt. Then I showed again... death is something I couldn't care less about... That government, powerful as it was, did not frighten me into any wrongdoing.

[Your view, Glaucon, is self-contradictory...] There is no way of life concerned with the management of the *polis* that belongs to a woman because she's a woman or to a man because he's a man... Women share by nature in every way of life just as men do... one woman is a doctor, another not, one is musical, another not... one is athletic or warlike, another not... one is philosophical, or a lover of wisdom, another not... Therefore, men and women are by nature the same with respect to guarding the city, except to the extent that one is [physically] weaker (*asthenēs*)... we must assign the same way of life to the same natures... the same education... [our suggested legislation] is in accord with nature. It's rather the way things are at present [in 4th century BCE Athens] that seems to be against nature.

[Because] human beings are prone to be subservient to both authority and peer pressure; to prevent atrocities we need to counteract these tendencies, producing a culture of individual dissent... the dialogues of Plato are second to none to inspire searching, active thinking, with the life and example of Socrates up front to inspire.

# THE INNER MASTERS

*THUMOS AND EPITHUMIA*



If you said to me... "Socrates, we acquit you, but only on condition that you spend no more time on this investigation and do not practice *philosophia*, and if you are caught doing so, you will die..." I would say to you, "Men of Athens, I am grateful and I am your friend, but I will obey the god rather than you, and as long as I draw breath and am able, I shall not cease to practice philosophy, to exhort you and in my usual way to point out..." "Good sir, you are an Athenian... are you not ashamed of your eagerness to possess as much **wealth**, **reputation**, and **honours** as possible, while you do not care for... wisdom or truth or the best possible state of your *psychē*?"

- **LOGOS**: Plato's term (*Republic* 4) for 'intelligence', 'language', 'reason', 'conscience': pictured as an inner person. *Values chosen consciously, with reason.*
- **THUMOS**: Plato's term (*Republic* 4) for 'self-esteem', in the sense of desire for reputation, respect, & honour: pictured as a lion. *Drive for status and recognition.*
- **EPITHUMIA**: Plato's term (*Republic* 4) for 'appetite', in the sense of desires of the moment: pictured as a many-headed mythical animal. *Desires and appetites.*

## THREE POWERS OF MOTIVATION TO ACTION

Justice isn't concerned with 'doing one's own work' externally, but with what is inside, what is truly oneself and one's own. One who is just... puts herself in order, is her own friend, and harmonizes the three parts of herself [**logos**, **thumos**, **epithumia**] like three limiting notes in a musical scale—high, low, and middle. She binds together those parts and any others there may be in between, and from having been many things she becomes entirely one, moderate and harmonious. Only then does she act. And when she does anything, whether acquiring wealth, taking care of her body, engaging in politics, or in private business—in all of these, she believes that the action is just and fine that preserves this inner harmony and helps achieve it, and calls it so, and regards as wisdom the knowledge that oversees such actions.

PLATO, *REPUBLIC* 443C-E

LOGOS

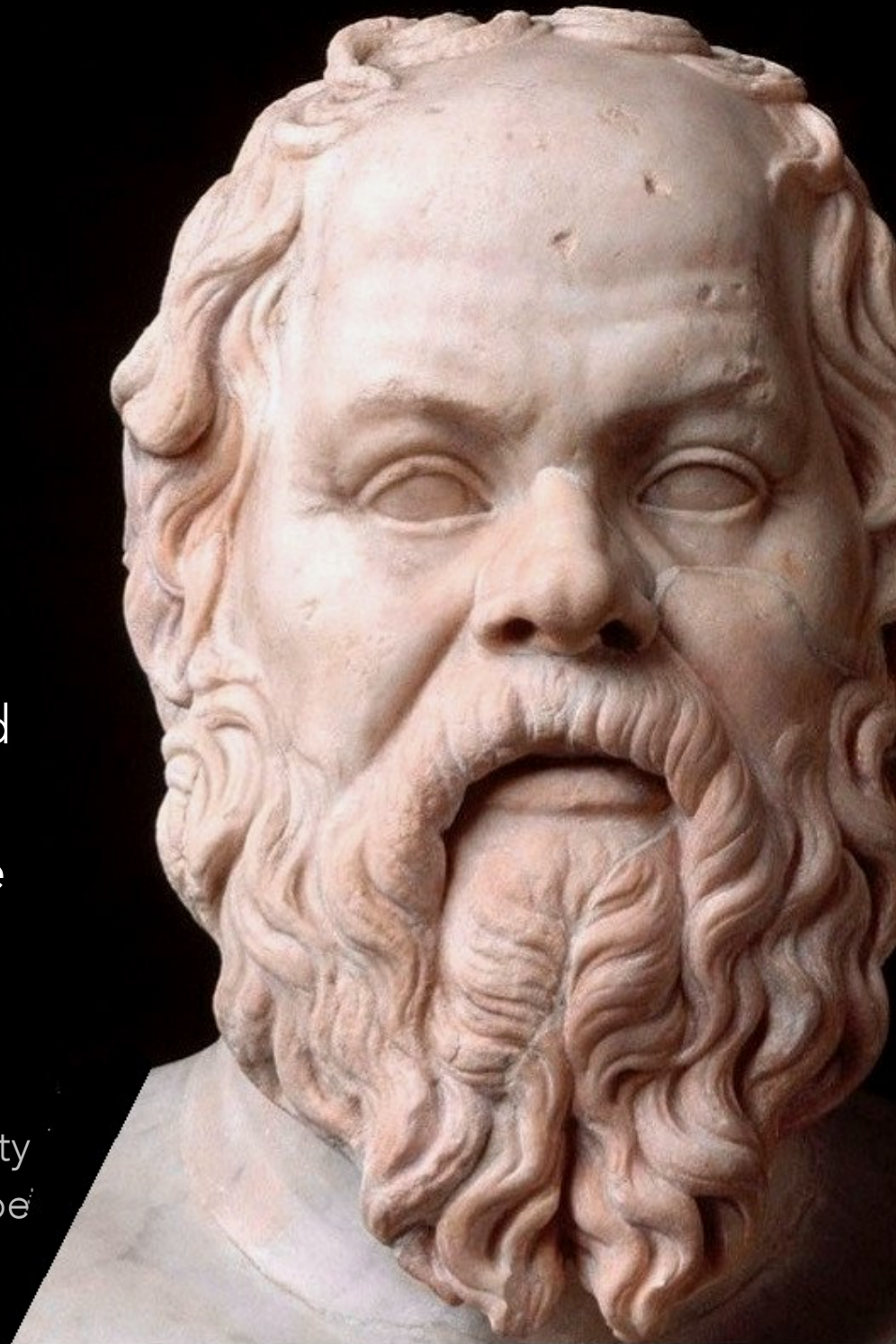
THUMOS

EPITHUMIA

# SUMMARY

- The philosopher has her 'inner city' in a state of harmony, with **logos** organizing **thumos** and **epithumia** as citizens (but not rulers) of a just, whole personality.
- This is Plato's interpretation of Socrates' goal: **logos** untrammelled by any outward tyranny (conformity, authority)\* or inward tyranny (desire or fear for wealth, appetite, reputation, and so on)

\* That's not to say that **all** authority or majority belief must be wrong! Only that it must be measured against *logos*.



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SOCRATES, APOLOGY 29D-E

λόγος  
LOGOS

The capacity for thinking, reasoning, and reflection (IV)

The explanation, rule, reason, or ground of a thing (III)

Conscience (III.3)

Value or esteem (I.4)

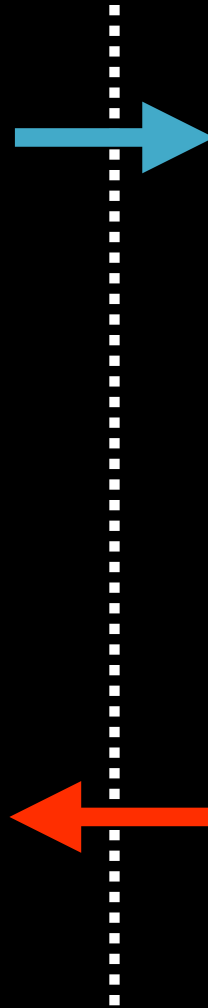
Formula or definition (III.6)

Meaningful speech, (VI) debate or discussion (IV)

# VALUE

Which way does it go? (See *Apology* 29D-E, *Crito* 46A, etc.)

λόγος  
LOGOS  
•  
One's own  
character  
reason  
conscience



HONOURS

timē

REPUTATION

doxē

POSSESSIONS

chrēmata

&

THUMOS

EPITHUMIA

- Logos first, other values follow: the philosopher. Or:
- Other values first, logos follows: the non-philosopher

Suppose there are two men, each of whom has many jars. The jars belonging to one of them are sound and full, one with wine, another with honey, a third with milk, and many others with lots of other things. And suppose that the sources of each of these things are scarce and difficult to come by, procurable only with much toil and trouble.

Now the one man, having filled up his jars, doesn't pour anything more into them and gives them no further thought.

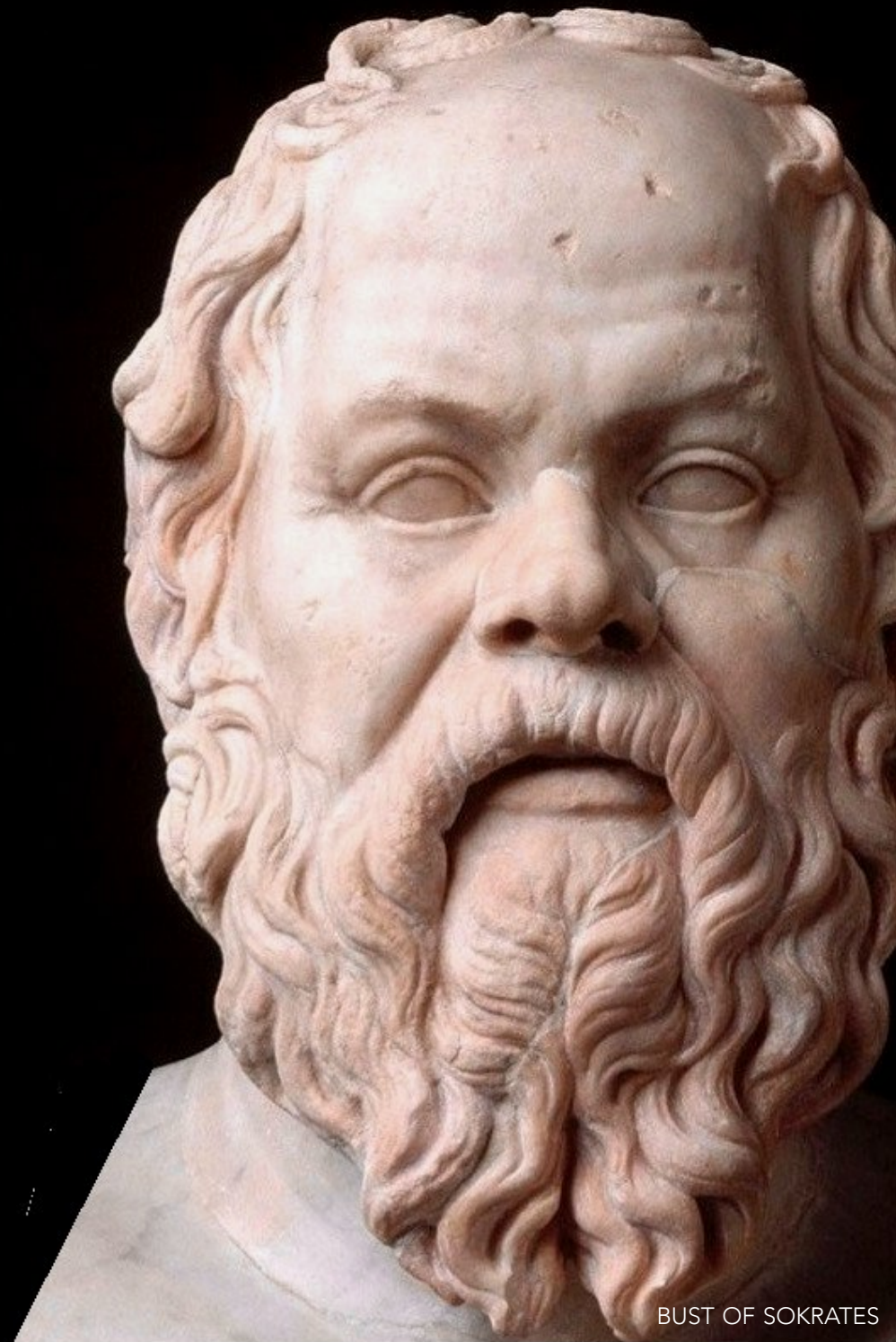
He can relax over them. As for the other one, he too has resources that can be procured, though with difficulty, but his containers are leaky and rotten. He's forced to keep on filling them, day and night, or else he suffers extreme pain.

Now since each life is the way I describe it, are you saying that the life of the man without control (*akolastos*) is happier than that of the organized (*kosmios*) man?



THE  
SOCRATIC  
WAY OF LIFE

REVIEW OF COOPER, CH. 2



BUST OF SOKRATES

# SOCRATES: KEY IDEAS

- Cooper builds on the “early” Platonic dialogues (if the “developmentalist” division of dialogues is accurate)
- Socrates is the paradigmatic philosopher living ‘from’ his philosophy (29), striving in an ‘open-ended’ way toward a complete knowledge of human values (38).
- The well-being of the *psychē* (individual psychology and experience, inner life: often translated ‘soul’) is the only unconditional value.
- What interventions can help to redress inward and outward biases and implicit belief, or shape habitual & automatic, “system 1”<sup>\*</sup> thinking?
  - Socrates, according to Cooper, employs *logos* to overcome or inoculate himself against them. (‘[R]eason is... a power of motivation for action’, 11)

\* Dual-process theory • E.g., Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking Fast & Slow* (Farrar, 2011)

# SOCRATES: KEY IDEAS

- If we were gods, we could act based upon *sophia* (wisdom), a 'complete grasp of the total truth about human values of all sorts' (46); as humans, we seek the humbler goal of *philosophia* (love of wisdom), striving constantly to improve our understanding (52).
- Socratic philosophy is set apart by its 'committed open-endedness' (61), in contrast to (say) the Stoic life, which operates on the basis of actually possessed knowledge (62-64).

# SOCRATES: KEY IDEAS

- By unrelentingly applying his mind and developing his powers of thought and argument, Socrates constantly improves his understanding. In all his discussions he is testing, while expanding, the range and adequacy of his own grasp of the moral issues on all sides of difficult and debated questions about human nature, human virtue...
- The practically best human life is a life, not of wisdom (sophia), but of philosophy (philosophia), wisdom's love and pursuit.... Eventually... any Socratic philosopher, can hope to come as close as possible to possessing... wisdom.

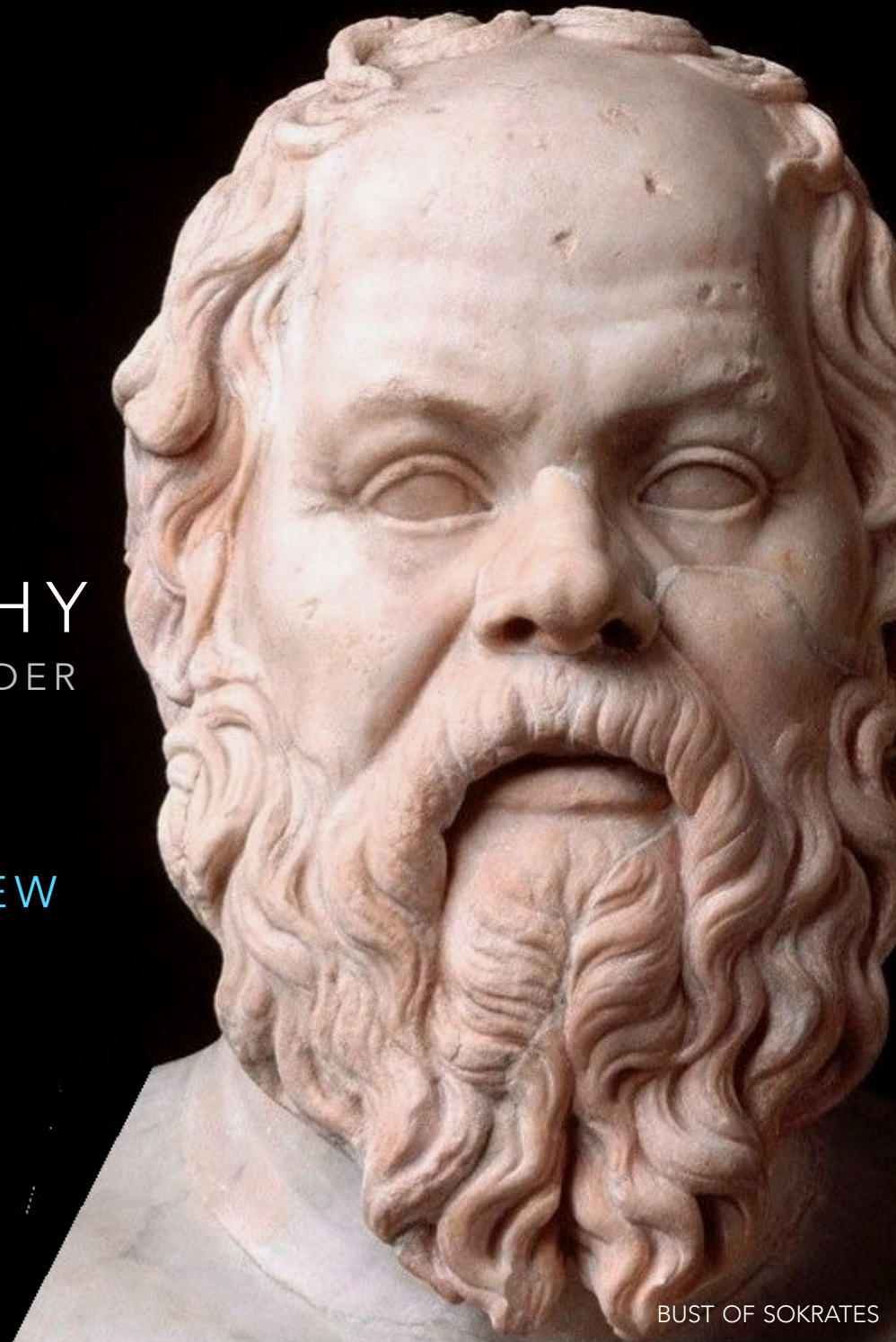
# SOCRATES: KEY IDEAS

- Socrates thinks that anyone who repeatedly reasons through, as he has done, all the issues... will find their thoughts converging upon a certain determinate set of conclusions. Like him, they will conclude... that the highest and controlling good in a human life is wisdom... they will reach conclusions about the nature of justice and its value, the nature and value of courage [and] other virtues...
- Hence, Socrates, and anyone else who has thought as assiduously as he has about human life and human values, will have strong, self-critically developed reasons for thinking that we should lead our lives on the basis of just these conceptions: we should be courageous, just, temperate, and wise people... we must lead our daily lives... from our grasp of these philosophically derived conclusions about human nature.

# SOCRATIC PHILOSOPHY

TEXT STUDY: *APOLOGY*: SOCRATES READER

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL FOR REVIEW

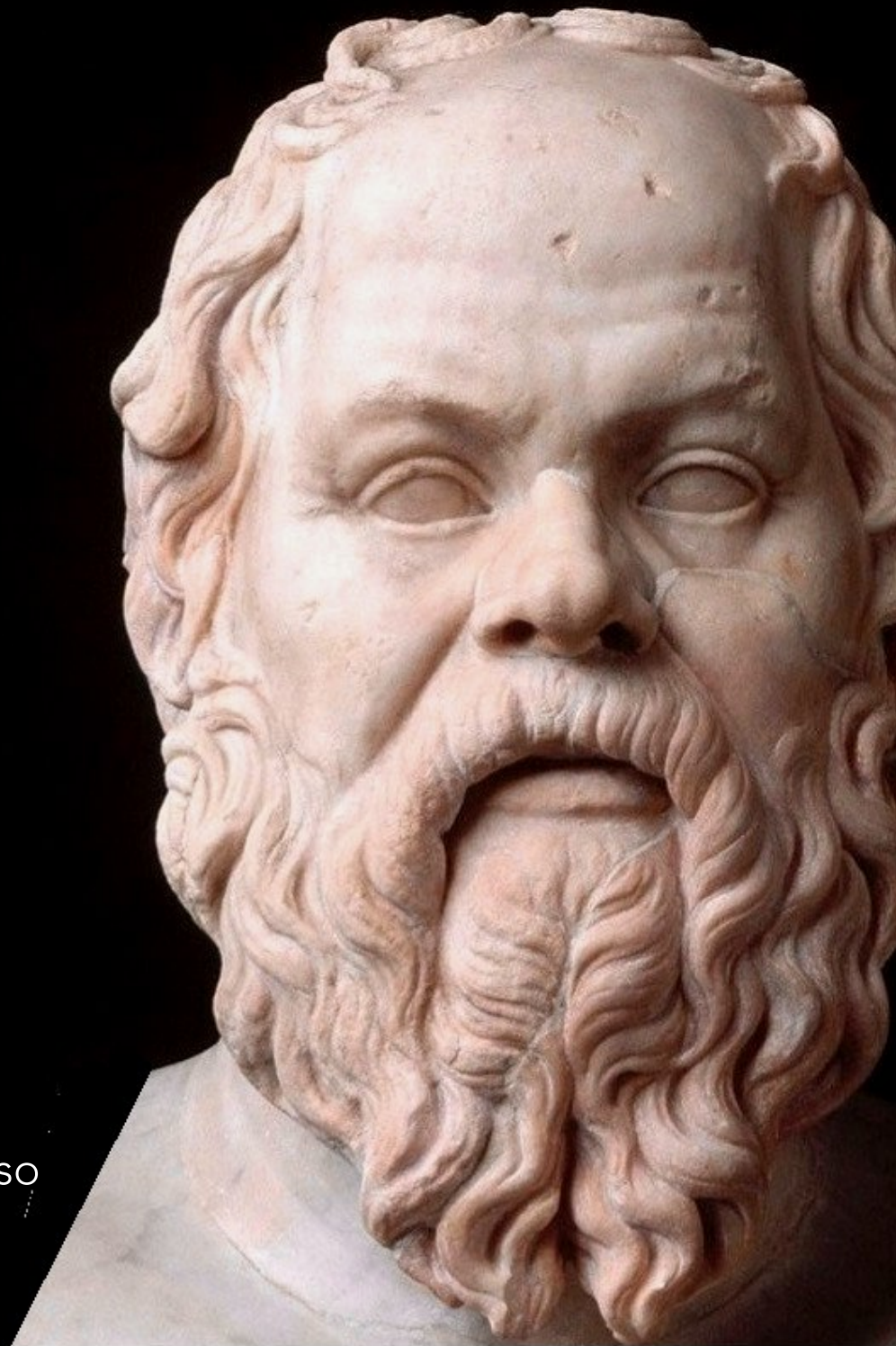


BUST OF SOCRATES

# THE APOLOGY

SOCRATES READER (E)-(F)

- Differentiation from sophists (17A-C)
- Motivation by the Oracle (21B) to “examine” (*exetazein*) the “wise”
- Others fail the test for wisdom (*sophia*) (21C-22E): Socrates continues to strive
  - “I am likely to be wiser... to this small extent, that I do not think I know what I do not know” (21D)
- ‘The Olympian victor makes you *think* yourself happy (*eudaimōn*); I make you *be* happy’ (Ap. 36E-37A).
- “The unexamined life is not worth living”, so examine *aretē* (38A)



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**NB:** Socrates understands “wisdom” to be a kind of comprehensive expertise in human values, demonstrated in the capacity to articulate consistent definitions of the moral and aesthetic terms in which one justifies one’s actions and beliefs



# WHAT IS SOCRATIC PHILOSOPHY?

- Men of Athens, I am grateful and I am your friend, but I will obey the god rather than you, and as long as I draw breath and am able, I shall not cease to practice philosophy, to exhort you and in my usual way to point out to any one of you whom I happen to meet: "Good Sir, you are an Athenian, a citizen of the greatest city with the greatest reputation for both wisdom and power; are you not ashamed of your eagerness to possess as much wealth, reputation, and honors as possible, while you do not care for nor give thought to wisdom or truth, or the best possible state of your soul?" Then, if one of you disputes this and says he does care, I shall not let him go at once or leave him, but I shall question him, examine him and test him, and if I do not think he has attained the goodness that he says he has, I shall reproach him because he attaches little importance to the most important things and greater importance to inferior things. I shall treat in this way anyone I happen to meet, young and old, citizen and stranger, for this is what the god orders me to do, and I think there is no greater blessing for the city than my service to the god. For I go around doing nothing but persuading both young and old among you to care not for your body or your wealth in preference to or as strongly as for the best possible state of your soul, as I say to you: "Wealth does not bring about excellence (aretē), but excellence makes wealth and everything else good for human beings, both individually and collectively." (Ap. 29D-30B).

# WHAT IS SOCRATIC PHILOSOPHY?

1. **Exhortation** (parakeleusis) to others to value the excellence or virtue (aretē) of their soul (psychē), especially wisdom (sophia, phronēsis), more than possessions, physical attributes, or social status.



Socrates enjoins his interlocutors to resist any form of motivation unsupported by reason, including outward pressures of social conformity and authority, and inward pressures of involuntary appetites, aversions, and the drive for status; he aims to make room for a liberated faculty of practical reason.

2. **Examination** (exetasis, elenchos) of those who claim already to possess such excellence of soul, especially wisdom, as well as examination of oneself (Ap. 38A).



Conformity (majority opinion alone), authority, involuntary appetite, and status or reputation are all insufficient motivations for action. A crisp statement is *Crito* 46A: "I am the kind of man who listens to nothing within me but the argument that on reflection seems best to me." Against conformity, see *Apology* 32B-33A (in his own practice) and *Crito* 47A-48A and *Gorgias* 471E-476A (in theory); against authority, see *Charmides* 161C, *Apology* 32C-D; against appetites and status as sole motivators, see *Apology* 32B-33A.

3. **Living the examined life.** One should act only based on those beliefs that one has subjected to rational examination (exetasis), and not on other motivations (such as fear of physical harm or loss of reputation: e.g. Ap. 22E-23A, 28B-29B).

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- Early in the narrative of a dialogue, Socrates intercedes in an interlocutor's execution of a moral choice.
- In a series of questions, he tests his interlocutor's capacity to articulate stable and universally consistent definitions of the value terms in which he justifies his action: these are normally virtue terms, like "courage" (Laches), "self-control" (Charmides), "piety" (Euthyphro), "justice" (Republic 1), and "wisdom."
- No character in Plato's "early" dialogues succeeds in articulating a definition of a value term that survives the Socratic elenchos, and the interlocutor often finds himself "frozen" (Meno 79E-80B) and unable to act at the end of the process. They thought that they were acting for reasons, but those reasons have been revealed as confabulation justifying non-rational motives.
- The conclusion of the examination also makes the interlocutor available for Socratic exhortation.

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- “[T]he greatest good for a human being [is] to discuss excellence (aretē) every day and those other things about which you hear me conversing and testing myself and others, for the unexamined life is not worth living for human beings...” (Ap. 38A).
- “You don’t appear to me to know that whoever comes into close contact with Socrates and associates with him in conversation must necessarily, even if he began by conversing about something quite different in the first place, keep on being led about by the man’s arguments until he submits to answering questions about himself concerning both his present manner of life and the life he has lived hitherto. And when he does submit to this questioning, you don’t realize that Socrates will not let him go before he has well and truly tested every last detail...” (*Laches* 187E-188B)