



The Dialogues of Plato

The material presented here has been extracted (and rearranged) from the Sacred Texts (Classics) website: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/plato>
Clicking on the names of the dialogues will take you to the text referred to.

Plato, the greatest philosopher of ancient Greece, was born in Athens in 428 or 427 B.C.E. to an aristocratic family. He studied under Socrates, who appears as a character in many of his dialogues. He attended Socrates' trial and that traumatic experience may have led to his attempt to design an ideal society. Following the death of Socrates he travelled widely in search of learning. After twelve years he returned to Athens and founded his Academy, one of the earliest organized schools in western civilization. Among Plato's pupils was Aristotle. Some of Plato's other influences were Pythagoras, Anaxagoras, and Parmenides.

Plato wrote extensively and most of his writings survived. His works are in the form of dialogues, where several characters argue a topic by asking questions of each other. This form allows Plato to raise various points of view and let the reader decide which is valid. Plato expounded a form of dualism, where there is a world of ideal forms separate from the world of perception. The most famous exposition of this is his metaphor of the Cave, where people living in a cave are only able to see flickering shadows projected on the wall of the external reality. This influenced many later thinkers, particularly the Neoplatonists and the Gnostics, and is similar to views held by some schools of Hindu dualistic metaphysics.

Plato died in 347 B.C.E. In the middle ages he was eclipsed by Aristotle. His works were saved for posterity by Islamic scholars and reintroduced into the west in the Renaissance. Since then he has been a strong influence on philosophy, as well as natural and social science.

Although the exact order of the dialogues is not known, the following is a consensus ordering based on internal evidence:

Early Dialogues

In these dialogues, Socrates is the central character, and is believed to be expressing his own views. These are the only remaining record of Socrates' teachings; hence these are known as the *Socratic dialogues*.

		Stephanus Nos*
<u>Apology (the Death of Socrates)</u>	translated by Benjamin Jowett [1871]	17a - 42a
<u>Crito</u>	translated by Benjamin Jowett [1871]	43a – 54e
<u>Charmides, or Temperance</u>	translated by Benjamin Jowett [1871]	153a – 176d
<u>Laches or Courage</u>	translated by Benjamin Jowett [1871]	178a – 201c
<u>Lysis, or Friendship</u>	translated by Benjamin Jowett [1871]	203a - 223b
<u>Euthyphro</u>	translated by Benjamin Jowett [1871]	2a – 16a
<u>Ion</u>	translated by Benjamin Jowett [1871]	530a – 542b

* Stephanus numbers are unique only for a given dialogue.

Middle Dialogues

In these dialogues, Plato begins expressing his own views, in the guise of Socrates. The Symposium and Republic are the most important works in this period.

		Stephanus Nos*.
<u>Gorgias</u>	translated by Benjamin Jowett [1871]	447a – 527e
<u>Protagoras</u>	translated by Benjamin Jowett [1871]	309a – 362a
<u>Meno</u>	translated by Benjamin Jowett [1871]	70a – 100c
<u>Euthydemus</u>	translated by Benjamin Jowett [1871]	271a – 307c
<u>Cratylus</u>	translated by Benjamin Jowett [1871]	383a – 440e
<u>Phaedo</u>	translated by Benjamin Jowett [1871]	57a – 118a
<u>Phaedrus</u>	translated by Benjamin Jowett [1871]	227a – 279c
<u>Symposium</u>	translated by Benjamin Jowett [1871]	172a – 223d
<u>The Republic</u>	translated by Benjamin Jowett [1871]	1.327a -10.621d
<u>Theaetetus</u>	translated by Benjamin Jowett [1871]	142a – 210d
<u>Parmenides</u>	translated by Benjamin Jowett [1871]	126a – 166c

* Stephanus numbers are unique only for a given dialogue. For The Republic the number before the decimal point is the book number. The fractional part is unique within The Republic.

Late Dialogues

The later dialogues are deeper developments of the philosophy expressed in the earlier ones; these are the most difficult of Plato's works.

		Stephanus Nos*.
<u>Sophist</u>	translated by Benjamin Jowett [1871]	216a – 268d
<u>Statesman</u>	translated by Benjamin Jowett [1871]	257a – 311c
<u>Philebus</u>	translated by Benjamin Jowett [1871]	11a – 67b
<u>Timaeus</u>	translated by Benjamin Jowett [1871]	17a – 92c
<u>Critias</u>	translated by Benjamin Jowett [1871]	106a – 121c
<u>Laws</u>	translated by Benjamin Jowett [1871]	1.624a – 12.969d
<u>The Seventh Letter</u>	translated by J. Harward [1928]	7.323d – 7.352a

* Stephanus numbers are unique only for a given dialogue. For Laws the number before the decimal point is the book number. The fractional part is unique within Laws. The "7." Indicates the seventh of 13 letters.