



The Dialogues of Plato in Five Volumes: Vol III: Containing The Republic, Timaeus, Critias (Volume 3)

Plato

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Plato, one of 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.

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