

## Philosophers' Hall of Fame

### Sun Tzu (4<sup>th</sup> century BC)

Sun Tzu was the author of *The Art of War*, the earliest known work on military strategy. When the book was written, China was not a single state, but was made up of a number of states that frequently resorted to war in order to gain supremacy. Sun Tzu wrote *The Art of War* for Ho Lu, King of Wu, who subsequently appointed Sun Tzu as a general. In this position, he led an army westwards, crushed the Ch'u state and entered Ying, the capital.

*The Art of War* outlines strategies and tactics for leaders who should “Know the enemy and know yourself” if they are to be successful in battle. He was a strong believer in deception, and that a general should trust no one, in order to ensure victory.

“It is the business of a general to be quiet and thus ensure secrecy; upright and just, and thus maintain order.

He must be able to mystify his officers and men by false reports and appearances, and thus keep them in total ignorance. By altering his arrangements and changing his plans, he keeps the enemy without definite knowledge. By shifting his camp and taking circuitous routes, he prevents the enemy from anticipating his purpose.”

The influence of the book is widespread, from the Chinese Communists in the war against the Japanese to corporate leaders in the 1980s who found that the broad principals could be applied to business, especially in take over and merger deals.

## Plato (427-347 BC)

Plato, born in Athens, is one of the key figures of Greek philosophy. His works include the dialogues that recorded Socrates philosophical thought, which formed the basis of Plato's own philosophy.

After Socrates' death, in 399 BC, Plato began a period of travel that took him to Egypt and Sicily, before returning to Athens around 385 BC, where he founded the Academy school. It was here that the young Aristotle was to begin his philosophical training under Plato's supervision.

Perhaps his most well known work is *The Republic*, in which justice and its importance in an imaginary state is discussed, together with an exploration of the qualities required by the rulers and the citizens of this state. Plato explains that a ruler in such a state must have the philosophical knowledge of the *Good* and describes the education that would be required to produce this just ruler.

Plato's position in philosophy is probably only rivalled by one of his pupils, Aristotle. Between them they form a key foundation for western philosophy and their influence reaches throughout the centuries.

## Aristotle (384 – 322 BC)

The son of a Macedonian court physician, Aristotle was born in Stagira, Macedonia, in Northern Greece. At the age of 17 he joined Plato's Academy, near Athens, where he remained until Plato's death in 347 BC. Moving to the newly formed Academy at Assos in Asia Minor, Aristotle started working on both biology and philosophy. In the following years Aristotle spent time in Assos, Lesbos, and in Macedonia where he was the tutor to the son of Philip of Macedonia - later known as Alexander the Great.

In 335 BC he set up his own school, the Lyceum, in Athens where he taught for twelve years. With the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC a strong anti-Macedonian feeling in the city became apparent. Aristotle, with his strong Macedonian connections, became a target and withdrew to Chalcis. It is said that he did this to prevent the people of Athens sinning a second time against philosophy (Socrates being the first victim). Aristotle died, from a stomach complaint, in Chalcis one year later at the age of 62.

Aristotle's ethics survives in the thought that we should cultivate certain traits of character, so that we become better people, or 'flourish', by cultivating certain virtues; which could include trust. Indeed one of Aristotle's concerns was with the nature of friendship, which he considered as an ideal covering our relationships with everyone but the most casual acquaintance. He understood friendship as a relationship of love between those who are equally virtuous, and so in friendship it seems to be love and virtue, rather than rewards and punishments, which ensures trustworthiness and trust.

Together with Plato, Aristotle is considered to be the most influential philosopher in Western society. The breadth of his work is considerable: from the weather to the planets, morals to mathematics, politics to biology. Although much of his work in the physical sciences gradually came to be seen as inaccurate, his metaphysical work in logic, ethics and politics remains a strong foundation for western philosophy.

## **Machiavelli, Niccolò (1469 – 1527)**

Florence-born Machiavelli came to a position of power and influence at the age of 29, after the ruling Medici family were ejected in favour of a republic. However, in 1512 the republic fell and the Medici took back control and summarily sacked the troublesome philosopher. In the following year, a conspiracy against the Medici was uncovered and Machiavelli was arrested. Despite torture, Machiavelli maintained his innocence, and was later released.

Reduced to near poverty and out of favour with the Medici, Machiavelli moved to a family property outside of Florence. Here, in 1513, he wrote extensively, including his most famous work, *Il Principe (The Prince)*.

In this work he describes what is required to manage a state successfully. Core to this, he believes, is the conduct of the prince, who must be seen by the populace as a good man with traditional virtues such as compassion and integrity. However, the prince's actions must be cunning and ruthless, unconstrained by conventional morality, in order to keep the state loyal and united.

Machiavelli dedicated *Il Principe* to Lorenzo de' Medici (ruler of Florence from 1513). Despite this dedication Lorenzo did not favour Machiavelli. His successor Cardinal Giulio de' Medici appointed Machiavelli to a paid position within the University of Florence in 1520, marking the beginning of his return to favour. However, by 1527 Florence was once again a republic and the limited favours that Machiavelli had been given by the Medici now caused him problems. His desire to return to his old position at the heart of Florentine political life was dashed and he died soon afterwards.

## Hobbes, Thomas (1588 – 1679)

Born in Wiltshire, England, Hobbes started his formal education at the age of four and completed it in 1608 when he graduated from Magdalen Hall, Oxford. After working as a private tutor he went to Europe, returning to England in 1637. In that year the country was in political upheaval – the preamble to the Civil War.

By 1640 Hobbes decided his safety was at risk due to the worsening political situation and retreated to France, where he produced a number of significant works, including his most famous, *Leviathan* (published in 1651). Hobbes reasons in *Leviathan* that in order to secure society's peace the members of the society must submit to a sovereign authority. This sovereign must act in order to protect its subjects and preserve the peace. Hobbes was one of the first philosophers to use the notion of a 'social contract' to justify our obligation to obey the authority of the state.

*Leviathan* put Hobbes in a difficult political position. He had proposed a system in which the sovereign's position was not justified as being given by divine right, and had said that the sovereign authority need not be an individual, but could be a group of people. As a result he was barred from the exiled English court. Added to this, he had argued that the Church should be subject to the sovereign's rule rather than being an independent body, which aroused the suspicious interest of the Roman Catholic French authorities. By the end of 1651 Hobbes came to the conclusion that Paris was best left behind, so he returned to England, now under Cromwell's Protectorate.

When Charles II was restored to the throne in 1660, Hobbes returned to favour, primarily because he had taught the Prince of Wales mathematics whilst in France. However, Charles II never permitted Hobbes to publish on the subject of human behaviour again.

## Hume, David (1711 – 1776)

Born in Edinburgh, David Hume studied at the city's university, but never completed his degree, choosing instead to study at home. In 1734 he travelled to France where he wrote his first philosophical work *Treatise of Human Nature* (published 1739 – 1740). However, its impact at the time was minimal. It was Hume's *History of England* (published 1754 – 1762) that brought him to prominence and gave him a considerable reputation as a learned man.

Like Hobbes, Hume appreciated the role that trust, and mistrust, lay in the inequalities of life. But whereas Hobbes required a sovereign to ensure that trust was honoured in order to bring about the mutual benefits for society, Hume had a more positive outlook of humanity. Hume believed that human nature makes us naturally sympathetic towards one another's concerns, which could encourage trust. In order to bring about trust with others he saw a process of reassurance as being necessary, rather than coercion.

## **Rousseau, Jean-Jacques (1712-1778)**

Born in Geneva, Rousseau was brought up to cherish the ideal of the ancient Roman republic. Deciding, in 1728, to reject his apprenticeship with an engraver, he left for Turin where his extensive reading led to the beginnings of his writing career. In 1742 he moved to Paris, but it was not until 1750, when his essay, the *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts* won the Academy of Dijon's first prize that he was brought to wider attention.

Perhaps the most often quoted phrase of Rousseau's work comes from *The Social Contract* in which he says 'Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains.' To Rousseau, the value of freedom was of prime importance. He saw the 'chains' of government and laws as being justified only when they were based on the will of the people for the common good. Indeed he thought that obeying such laws makes us 'free', and that those who fail to obey them could legitimately be 'forced to be free'.

Rousseau was one of the most influential of modern philosophers; he was the first true Romanticist philosopher, marking the end of the Age of Reason. According to Rousseau, liberty was something that all could aspire to. He condemned the decadence of French high society, which he suggested corrupted human nature. His works were not only inspired the leaders of the French Revolution, but also an entire generation of Romanticists.

## **Kant, Immanuel (1724-1804)**

The son of a saddler in Königsberg, East Prussia, Immanuel's parents were persuaded by their pastor to enter him into the local church school at the age of eight. He went on to study at the University of Königsberg at Bachelors and, after a period working as a tutor, Masters levels.

In 1770 Kant was appointed Professor of Logic and Metaphysics at the university when he widened his interests from the natural sciences to philosophy. His work sought to find a way between the two philosophical polarities at the time, *Rationalism* (with its focus on reason) and *Empiricism* (which focused on experience).

Kant attempted to generate morality from a foundation of reason, rather than from religion or custom and practice. He thought the test of morality was whether it applied to everyone. He argued that we should see whether the principles that govern our actions could be universally applied. Kant would argue that we could quickly appreciate the importance of trust. If our moral principals allow us to break bonds of trust then we should not expect others to honour such bonds - in which case trust would simply be a word without any real meaning.

Kant's work was hugely influential, although it was slow to spread due to the difficulty in translating his writing from German, mainly due to his considerable use of technical terms. He is widely acknowledged as the greatest philosopher for three hundred years, and often ranked alongside Plato and Aristotle for importance within western philosophy.

## Marx, Karl (1818 - 1883)

Born in Prussia, Marx was educated at the Universities of Bonn and Berlin, graduating in 1841. Two years later he had married and moved to Paris where he soon became a revolutionary and a communist. It was here that he met Friedrich Engels, who was to become his life long friend and writing partner. In 1845 Marx was expelled from France and took refuge in Brussels (where he renounced his Prussian nationality) before eventually taking up residence in London, where he was to spend the rest of his life.

Although sometimes regarded simply as a revolutionary, Marx's work clearly outline a distinct philosophy. In *The Communist Manifesto* (1848, co-authored with Engels), he attacked morality as being defined by the prejudices of the bourgeois, created to serve the interests of the ruling class. Only in a society without classes could morality serve the interest of all, rather than the few.

Marx developed a sophisticated understanding of capitalism, as a social system ruled by the exchange of commodities, which is based on the interests of the bourgeoisie ruling classes. He was concerned with the flourishing of our 'species being', our productive and communal nature.

Marx described capitalism as a society of mutual competition and highlighted the potential for a conflict between the interest of the individual and the interest of society as a whole. Trust, according to Marx, would be difficult to establish and maintain in a capitalist society. He prescribed the abolition of private property in order to resolve the clash of interests and enable true community.

Marx felt that simply discussing the problems of capitalist society was not enough. Only through action could a solution could be found, in the form of a Communist Society. He wrote, "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it." - words which became his epitaph, carved into his tombstone in Highgate Cemetery.

## **Foucault, Michel (1926 – 1984)**

Historian and philosopher, Foucault was born in Poitiers, France, and educated in Paris. He taught throughout Europe and in 1960 went on to work at the University of Clermont-Ferrand until 1968 when he joined the University of Vincennes. In 1970 he became 'Professor of the History of Systems of Thought' at the Collège de France, a position he held until his AIDS related death in 1984.

Foucault was interested in detection and punishment as the means to ensure general obedience to society. In *Discipline and Punish* he gives a history of the ways in which society has tried to do this, particularly by surveillance and discipline.

In much of his work Foucault stated that social institutions such as hospitals and prisons are mechanisms by which a society can exclude sections of their population. By looking at these 'exclusions' one can gain an insight into how a society defines itself. This interest began early in his professional life, when he investigated how societies have dealt with mental illness throughout history.

## **Nash, John (1928 - )**

John Nash was educated at both Bachelor and Masters level in mathematics at Carnegie Institute of Technology. He went on to Princeton University to work towards his doctorate, which he completed in 1950 with the publication of his 'Non-cooperative Games' thesis in which he laid down the mathematical foundations of games theory.

In mathematics, games theory looks at situations where two (or more) participants have a range of possible choices that they can take. Each decides which choice to make in the light of others' choices, since the outcome is produced by the particular combination of their choices. The 'Nash Equilibrium' is the outcome which would be produced by each making the best choice, given their knowledge of others' choices.

One of the classic examples of games theory is the 'Prisoner's Dilemma'.

## **Baier, Annette (1929 - )**

New Zealand born Annette Baier is a scholar of Hume and a moral philosopher for whom trust is the key to fundamental moral notions. Morality, according to Baier in her book *Moral Prejudices*, should not be governed by rules and codes, but by trust: a moral prejudice. Writing from a feminist perspective, she is preoccupied with the idea of vulnerability and inequalities of vulnerability, and with trust and distrust between equals. She explores the implications of trusting and trust, rather than proscribing action.

Baier takes an ethical stance that focuses on the importance of membership within a moral community, and explores the notion of trust, particularly between the genders. In *What Do Women Want in a Moral Theory?* (1983), she argues that trust provides a vital link between traditional male accounts of rational obligation and the female 'ethics of love'.

Women, according to Baier, operate in a different system of ethics than men. Males base their ethic on obligation (or justice), whereas women depend on ethics of caring (or trust). The history of moral philosophy, having been written by men, does not account for this gender difference. Men, for example, would say that lying is wrong, but do not deal with whose obligation it is to teach children not to lie. Is this the obligation of parents or society?

Baier also questions the role of trust in relations of inequality, such as between women and men, or children and parents, whether women can trust other women more easily than they can trust men.

### **O'Neill, Onora (1941 - )**

Born in Northern Ireland, Onora O'Neill was educated in both the UK and Germany before going on to study philosophy, psychology and physiology at Oxford University. Her doctorate was completed at Harvard University, after which she taught at Barnard College, the women's college at Columbia University, New York. In 1977 she returned to the UK to work at the University of Essex where she became Professor of Philosophy before leaving in 1992 to take on the post of Principal of Newnham College, Cambridge University.

She has chaired the Nuffield Council on Bioethics and the Human Genetics Advisory Commission, and she is currently chair of the Nuffield Foundation. She has been President of the Aristotelian Society, and a member of the Animal Procedures (Scientific) Committee. In 1999 she was made a life peer as Baroness O'Neill of Bengarve, and sits as a crossbencher.

She has written widely on political philosophy and ethics, international justice, bioethics and the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. In 2002 she addressed the issue of trust in the BBC's Reith Lectures.