Rivals of Socrates (the rival of Christ--Athens or Jerusalem)

Sophists: cult leaders (Eckhart, Moonies, Scientologists), or self-help authors (the Key To Success, How to win Friends and Influence People, Effective Human Management, etc.)

Well-born Athenian gentlemen, the "statemen", representing the common sense of the community: Pericles and Themistocles, and a lower level, S's accusers Anytos & Meletus (and their friends from abroad, like Meno) --discussed at p. 496

Poets and Orators: Homer and Pindar and Isocrates --discussed at bottom of p. 496 and mentioned at p. 498

Priests: oracles and sacrifices (not "divine or spiritual things" as at p. 502, but causal influences on conduct)

No scientists yet: just speculators like Democritus and Empedocles (the closest are the craftsmen, discussed at p. 497 and Anaxagoras, discussed at p. 501, who thinks the sun a stone and the moon earth, rather than their being gods)

No philosophers yet: Socrates was the first to call himself that, and Plato was the first to construct a philosophical system (pre-Socratic philosophers aren't what we call philosophers, but amateur scientists and belle-lettrists); to say "philosophers should be kings, or v.v." is to say that the cities of Greece should be ruled by men like Socrates

Plato, rich, aristocratic, young (28 at Socrates' death), passionate poet, good at math, meets an older man who isn't interested in sleeping with him but only in talking to him; Plato is one among the many listed on p. 508 who followed Socrates about, and came to think of themselves as "philosophers" in consequence

After Socrates' death, Plato devotes himself to answering the question: what would human beings, and the universe, have to be like if Socrates' life was the best sort of human life?

Answer: there would have to be a nature to goodness, rather than just conventions about what counts as good conduct here or there. **Morals would have to be like mathematics, as Socrates suggests when he analogizes learning virtue to learning geometrical theorems in the Meno.**

But there are Dreyfus like reasons for thinking that they are not—that we learn how to use these words just be picking up conventions rather than recalling essences essences.

Maybe the virtue of a woman and a man, a soldier and a craftsman, a poet and a priest are and should be different.

Maybe these are just diverse know-hows, not united by anything. Maybe "excellence" or "good" is like "doorstop" rather than like
"triangle".

But this means, Plato thought, that "virtue" and "good" and "justice" would have to be somehow "out there" to be known, and have causal power—be like Gods. Next week: the Theory of Forms.

(1) service to the greatest human happiness, which is animal-like rather than god-like (Christianity without immortality)

(2) self-creation through art (Baudelaire and Foucault, Blake and Byron)
Socrates 469-399 (explain about trial and related dialogues)
Plato 427-347 (Socrates' best student, biographer, and apologist)
Freidrich Nietzsche 1844-1900 (the anti-Plato)
Martin Heidegger 1889-1976 (anti-Plato and anti-Nietzsche)
Jacques Derrida 1930-
Michel Foucault 1926-1984
Juergen Habermas 1929-
Three Basic Criticisms of Socrates:

1. Mild, intellectualist, philosophical, Aristotelian, attempts to reconcile Socrates with common sense by saying (a) no definitions of the sort Socrates wanted, (b) no Forms of the sort Plato postulated.

2. Strong, anti-intellectualist, Nietzschean criticisms of the sort we'll read next week in Birth of Tragedy: Socrates as the man who corrupted Greece by mocking the Homeric heroes in the name of a pallid, wimpish, cowardly intellectualism; the sort of criticism made by defenders of the Old Order even in Socrates' time.

3. St. Paul's (the other great anti-Plato and anti-intellectualist) anti-wisdom-of-the-Greeks passages in I Corinthians 1. (Quote)
Meno—a dialogue, like the sections of the Republic we read, designed to convince you that space and time are shabby substitutes for True Reality—a thought that is basic to what Derrida and Heidegger are going to call "Western metaphysics":

Anything spatio-temporal can be redescribed (as beautiful or ugly, just or unjust, pious or impious (as in Euthyphro), prudent or cowardly) but the Forms cannot be redescribed—they somehow impose their own description, our knowledge of them is somehow non-linguistic.

This dialogue carves up into five sections:

(I) pp. 28-41: the need for theoretical knowledge of the nature of virtue, or goodness, or justice, or the like, as opposed to simply practical ability

[is there in fact such a need? a lot of people, including Plato's best pupil, doubted it. But much of Plato is based on the premise that this need exists.]

(II) pp. 41-51: a sketch of the theory of recollection elaborated at length in Republic and elsewhere: we have knowledge of another world, a world of non-sensory, immaterial, reality—within us, and we learn both geometry and morals (non-empirical truths) by being reminded of that world

[note that the ideas of two kinds of truth and two kinds of reality is already present here, although it will only be spelled out in other dialogues—the basic Jenseitigkeit which N condemns is already apparent: we already have the basic "binaries" which Heidegger and Derrida will be trying to undermine: Intellect-Sense, Permanent-Changing, Eternal-Temporal, Necessary-Contingent, A Priori-A Posteriori, etc.]

Did Plato really believe in immortality and pre-existence. Probably, though sometimes he says that this is just a myth, helpful to stimulate the imagination. His main premise is that the difference between math and political know-how requires explanation, and he has no better one.

(III) pp. 51-55: a sketch of the doctrine that virtue is knowledge—that there is no distinction between being good and being wise, a claim which needs section V for its proper presentation and defense

(IV) pp. 55-63: the dialogue with Anytos about the two possible teachers of virtue:

(i) the well-bred Athenian gentleman who knows how to be have respectably, how to be well thought of in the community, because (p. 57) they have "the wisdom and virtue by which men manage houses and cities well and honour their parents and know how to entertain fellow-citizens and strangers and to speend them on their way, as a good man ought to do"
(ii) the professionals who get paid for teaching kinds how to be up-to-date, cool, yuppie lawyer types, of the sort who are contemptuous of their parents

[you are supposed by now to get the point that the only teacher of virtue around is Socrates himself—who is suspected by both gentlemen like Anytos and by sophists like Protagoras, who got rich by being a wise-ass professor, who could make the worse appear the better cause, by giving a plausible argument for anything]

(V) pp. 63-68: the distinction between knowledge and right opinion—knowledge consisting in adding "reasoning concerning cause and effect" [a bad translation of something like "being able to justify one's opinion against all comers, answer all objections"]
At p. 273 we have the conclusion that only people like Socrates, and not even people like Pericles or Themistocles, can be trusted as rulers. The passages we go on to read are an answer to the question: what would people like Socrates, philosophers, have to be if this suggestion were to be plausible?

The theory of pp. 276-7 about opinion as a mean between ignorance and non-being and knowledge and being is the beginning of the answer to this question.

At p. 281 the conclusion is that the philosophers, as non-philodoxers, must lay hold on "the ever same and unchangeable". So now we need to see how there can be such a thing.

Two sources of this idealization of the nontemporal: the existence of mathematics and the hope that there is more to human life than the search for pleasure--more to politics than balancing interests so as to achieve consensus about how to make the best of life that we can.

We learn how at the later passage I asked you to read: pp. 304-319:

At p. 304 the question is: what is the good?

At p. 306 we get the "Platonic Theory of Forms"--the idea of a world that contains pure Goodness, pure Beauty, pure Justice--the things which our souls try to remember, and to catch sight of resemblances of, here below. No Forms=no point in Socrates life, because no world elsewhere.

At pp. 307-9 we get the divided line--the full-fledged metaphysics of two worlds, a sensible and an intelligible.

At p. 311 we get the fourth level of the line--Beyond Hypotheses, taking nothing for granted,

At p. 319 we draw the conclusion from the Cave that only those who have found their way into the Sunlight are fitted to rule those who have not--validating the hypothesis of p. 273.
The Republic:

This dialogue starts off with the question "Does justice pay?"—an argument with a cynical, Machiavellian, type called Thrasymachus who says, as N and Foucault were later to say, that the very idea of justice is just a device which the strong have invented to make it easier for them to control the weak—or, alternatively, an idea that the weak have invented to excuse themselves for being weak.

In the course of the argument, Socrates suggests that justice is a state of the soul, and since the state is a mirror of the soul, maybe we should see what the ideal state would look like, in order to get an idea of what the ideal soul would look like. The answer turns out to be a very long account of a utopia run by philosophers—people like Socrates. The idea of Socrates in charge of a government sounds so weird that Plato has to develop a whole epistemology and metaphysics in order to make it sound remotely sensible.

The account of the soul, however, begs all the questions against Thrasymachus—who, if we were good at this game, would say that there is no such thing as "reason" as the source of truth. There is only cleverness—only the adjustment of means to ends. He would say, with Hume, that "reason is and ought to be the slave of the passions".

The centerpiece of the Republic is the images of the ascent of the divided line and the ascent from the cave into daylight. Into these two stories is bound the idea of the Good as the supreme object of desire. If you find the Good mysterious, note that it is exactly as little or as much mysterious as the God of orthodox theology—caring and loving but without parts or passions, creating matter without being able to shove matter around, etc.

Plato:

The basic idea behind S's life and Plato's theories is that the common sense of one's society is not good enough, that the pursuit of consensus is not good enough—for what everybody agrees on may still be wrong. People may agree to execute Leon for the defeat at Salamis, or to execute Socrates. They may, like the Spartans, agree that nobody should read books. They may, like the Persians—and later the Athenians themselves—see the point of life as imperial conquest. Like Achilles and his friends, they may see the point as avoiding humiliation, preserving honor, getting "respect".

But if consensus, intersubjectivity, isn't enough, then there must be something non-human to rely on. There must be something like mathematics, which is the same here and in Sparta and Egypt. As you can see from the Meno, Plato is very impressed by mathematics, as the best example of what real knowing is like.
To know that one knows nothing (about virtue, about how to live, about what befits a human being), as Socrates says that he knows nothing, is to understand the distinction between knowledge and opinion. Knowledge is what cannot be had by getting consensus. Its mark is not agreement but that "a ha!" feeling which you get from a geometrical demonstration--when you see that nothing could ever change your mind about the square of the hypotenuse. (Remember 1984 and how you can be broken by being made to see that 2+2=5 because Big Brother wills it so.)

The people who don't know that they know nothing, who don't appreciate the distinction between knowledge and opinion, are (a) the gentlemen of Athens who know what is described at the top of p. 57--how to behave, how to be respectable, how to look well in other's eyes, and (b) the Sophists [not exactly the analogue of us professors (who had not yet been invented, since Plato was about to found the first university) but rather people like Werner Erhardt and Anthony Robbins, who make lots of money giving lectures on seminars about bringing out your inner potential, becoming the real you, getting what you want, etc..]

To know that you know nothing = redefining the term "know" so that mathematics is the only good example of it. This redefinition is what people like Nietzsche and the American pragmatists object to: they object to the very idea of getting beyond time and appearance to True Reality, as a pie-in-the-sky distraction from the hard tasks of the political day.

Only by the argument (p. 333 NAL) that "since they are two, each is one"--that there is a single essence to the ugly and the just and the like, can one hold out the hope that a Successful Socrates might have in morals and politics what Euclid had for geometry.

At 334: "if a man believes things to be beautiful, but does not believe in beauty by itself, and cannot follow when he is led towards the knowledge of it, what is is his? Is he awake or is his life a dream?" (That is, the lives of poets are like the lives of animals--leaving one clump of grass for another better looking one, one clump of words for another more charming one).

From this, at p. 335, it is only one step to the claim that "knowledge is what is--meaning what really, eternally, unchangably is, like geometry--and non-knowledge is of something half-way between being and non-being.

To be "one" in the sense in which Plato is using the term when he says "beauty is one" is to be incapable of change, like God in that no shadow of turning is possible to it.

What would a world of such things be like--it would be the world known by a succesful Socrates at the top of the Divided Line, the world as seen by the philosopher who has emerged into the light of the son. It would be an **immaterial** world, one in which space and
time do not exist, just as they do not for God.

If you think that T of F is weird, remember the God of orthodox Christian theology, who was shaped on a Platonic Form by John and Augustine.

The Theory of Forms:

What is mathematics about? Numbers, which don't change, are not material, don't have spatio-temporal location, etc.

So there must be something like numbers to know which, unlike mathematics, gives guidance about what to do--how to lead one's life, what sort of life is best.

These are the Forms--the things you get right when you know what to do with your life, just as Numbers are what you get right when you know how to prove theorems.

The idea that there must be something like Forms to know--something unchanging and once-seen-never-mistaken--is basic to what Heidegger and Derrida will be calling the "binary oppositions of Western, Greek, metaphysics"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objectivity</td>
<td>(Inter)subjectivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanence</td>
<td>Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The True World</td>
<td>The Apparent World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Many</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Necessary</td>
<td>Contingent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td>Matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soul</td>
<td>Body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up</td>
<td>Down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason</td>
<td>Sensation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logic</td>
<td>Rhetoric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certainty</td>
<td>Hypotheses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immaterial</td>
<td>Material</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***********************

Three conceptions of what Human Beings basically are:

(1) Incarnate Deities, visitors from another world containing an extra added ingredient, trailing clouds of glory whence we came: our divinity signaled by our ability to know, although we are impeded by time and chance and the body from fulfilling our souls', our true selves', destiny (Plato, Christianity's belief in the immortality of the soul, a proof of which in the Phaedo is taken over intact by Augustine and most Catholic theologians, who tended to regard Plato as a prefiguration of Revelation)

(2) Clever Animals, trying to get what they want--principally
power over other humans; (Nietzsche, who came, significantly, after Darwin--after the first successful explanation of how there could be creatures like us without there being another world from whence we came--sometimes takes this tack, but sometimes he goes for (3) below)

(3) Infinitely Malleable Animals, who do not have a nature but are whatever they make of themselves by forming communities, cultures, and languages--so that Hitler and Havel, Thrasyamachus and Socrates, are neither closer to human nature than each other. We can create communities of little would-be Hitlers, communities of little would-be Socrates, etc.

It's up to us. We get no guidance from knowledge, because there is nothing to know that's relevant.

Historical and anthropological records, and works of imaginative literature, take the place of the quest for the True Religion or the True Philosophy. We want more options, rather than knowledge of the One True Way.

Easier for us to take this view than it was for the Greeks, who had no reason to believe that the conditions of human life would ever be any different--that genuine socio-political change would take place.

If you hold the third view, as I do, then you will admit that there is no way to refute Thrasyamachus, if that means no way to argue with the sociopath (the man who isn't just pretending to be indifferent to the needs of others, but really means it) by finding some premise deep down in his soul, dragging it out, and getting him to assent to it.

One tradition in ethics--the Platonic-Kantian--says that there is such a premise, that we all have a built-in faculty called "conscience" which tells us what's right and what's wrong, no matter how much people like Thrasyamachus try to pretend they don't. The other tradition says that you can instill a conscience in kids, but you can't "ground" the conscience on something Absolute.

The debate between Absolutists and Relativists goes like this:

If there is nothing absolute (Dostoevsky) everything is permitted. There is no reason not to be a Hitler or a Stalin.

Reply: You are confusing goodness and power. "Supernaturalism is the confusion of ideals and power," Santayana said.

Rejoinder: But if moral ideals are just figments of our imagination, why follow them?

Rebuttal: Why not? You beg the question of whether an ideal needs a "ground" or whether it's OK on its own.
This gives rise to two features of Platonism: other-worldliness and anti naturalism on the one hand, and an identification of the good life with knowing on the other, to which Nietzsche, and contemporary anti-Platonists, object.

The post-Nietzschean tradition offers two alternative ways of life to the quest for wisdom and knowledge, for getting in touch with another world:

Extra topics:
Quote stuff about banishing poets, and discuss
Quote details about education