Mohammed Boudiaf University of M'sila

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Department of Philosophy

Teacher : Miss BAHACHE

Lesson three

Three Important Names to Know

Socrates was one of the greatest philosophers of all times, though he never recorded his philosophy in writing. (All that we know of him comes down to us from his student Plato and other philosophers.) Socrates was born in 470 BCE and lived his whole long life in Athens. He had a spectacular gift for rhetoric and debating. He had a much-gossiped-about marriage, had several children, and lived in poverty most of his life. He based his philosophy on the need to "know yourself" and on living the "examined life," even though the height of wisdom, according to Socrates, was to know how thoroughly ignorant we are. Much of his work was dedicated to defining and living the ideals of wisdom, justice, and the good life. In 399 BCE he was placed on trial by the Athenians for "corrupting the youth" with his ideas. He was condemned to death, refused all opportunities to escape or have his sentence repealed, and accepted the cruel and unfair verdict with complete dignity and several brilliant speeches, dying as well as living for the ideas he defended.

Plato **(427–347 BCE)** was a student of *Socrates* and the leading spokesman for Socrates' ideas. He was shocked by Socrates' execution and dedicated his life to developing and spreading his philosophy. In 385 BCE he set up the Academy to educate the future leaders of Athens in morality and philosophy in general.

Aristotle **(384–322 BCE)**, a student of *Plato*, strongly disagreed with many of his teacher's theories. Aristotle was an accomplished scientist as well as a philosopher, and his ideas ruled most of the sciences—especially biology— until modern times. He was the tutor of Alexander (who became "the Great") and later founded his own school (the Lyceum) in Athens. When Alexander died, Aristotle was forced to flee, commenting that he would not let Athens "sin against philosophy a second time."