

Tracing the Path of a Modern American Paradigm: Chapter 7

Platonic Philosophy: 6th - 4th centuries B.C.E. (Chap 2)

- An essential, eternal quality of humans (*psychê*, soul, spirit, self) is not accessible to humans' five senses.
- The reliability of the five senses is doubted; they are said to be able to reveal merely external appearances.
- There exists a separate, "Real" world of perfect "Forms" that is beyond the reach of humans' five senses.
- Belief in reincarnation merges with above beliefs into Plato's idea that each individual's essence had been united, at least once, with the "Real" world of "Forms."
- Thus, complete perfect knowledge is "given" to each individual; it can be caused to emerge from within.
- Because one's inborn "givens" comprise extensive knowledge attainable via intuition, instruction ideally involves a great deal of eliciting, very little telling.

Pythagorean Philosophy: 6th century B.C.E. (Chapter 2)

- The ordered beauty of the world, or "music of the spheres," is observable by the five senses; it may be understood via mathematical insights, which *require only contemplation*.
- These insights are exact, certain, and eternal; they are a *revelation from within*, and they yield feelings of ecstasy.

Aristotelian Philosophy: 4th century B.C.E. (Chapter 2)

- Form isn't separate; it's embodied in matter we perceive.
- The objective of growth and development is the attainment of the mature human form; this applies to *mental capacity* just as it applies to the physical/physiological body.
- The above process necessarily occurs; it originates in a "given," purpose-driven (*telos*) internal principle that *inexorably attains the mature form if there is no impediment*.

Approximately 1800 years

Renaissance & Enlightenment, 16th-18th centuries (Chap 4)

- The Platonic paradigm was strong: the "real" is unavailable to the five senses; what's worth learning is *inside* oneself.
- Humans gradually began to be seen as autonomous, able to make judgments based on experience and five senses. The old assumption of dependent fatalism began to wane.
- A new paradigm emerged, linked with Comenius's "sense realism" and Locke's *tabula rasa*; it aligned with observation-based inductivism. What's worth learning is *external*.
- Another paradigm was that of the Rationalists, linked with Descartes. Not interested in children, they favored mental discipline via study of Latin, Greek, math, and philosophy. Oriented to contemplation, they trusted "given" intuition.

Empiricism & Rationalism, 16th-18th centuries (Chap 3)

- The observation-based, inductive process of science, initiated by Bacon and Newton, laid the foundation for much irreverent questioning and innovative thinking.
- Descartes argued that the mind, not the senses, is in the central position regarding knowledge acquisition.

Renaissance & Rousseau, 16th-18th centuries (Chap 5)

- Emerging values about children focused on preserving their innocence and purity while reversing their ignorance.
- A prior belief about adults was that they could never attain perfection. Renaissance humanists countered that belief.
- The Humanist view slowly transformed into the belief that *the younger the human, the better the human*. This view was very widely popularized by Rousseau's *Emile* (1762).
- Very young children came to be associated with exotic savages; both existed in an uncorrupted state of nature.
- *Emile* also advocated "negative education," which relied on the spontaneous emerging from within of a child's interests in a non-classroom, non-book-populated, natural setting.
- "Nature" was deified; "organic" growth came to be valued.

Evolution of Authority, 16th-18th centuries (Chap 6)

- Weakening was the idea that everything worth knowing is already known and must be passed on intact.
- Thinkers argued that authority must not receive deference by ascription, but needs rational justification.
- Applied to clans, communities, churches, kingdoms, and commerce, that idea was extended to classrooms.
- Deference to authority declined; individualism gained.

Literary Romanticism, Late 18th - early 19th centuries (Chapter 7)

- The image of botanical, "organic" growth emerging *passively* from within an organism was further idealized.
- Science cannot know all, and nature is not for harnessing. Nature's mysteries should be appreciated by intuition and emotion. What is natural is Good, both in life and in learning.
- Children are revered for their open-minded simplicity, absence of pre-conceived ideas, and naturalness. They are precious. They should be imitated. Amplified was *the younger the human, the better the human*.
- Each person's "given" inner light illuminates Truth; insight and imagination are superior to the five senses.
- Books are regarded with suspicion, and whether children should be in classrooms *at all* is questioned.
- Authority (externally imposed rules) of all kinds was rejected. Self-directing individualism was affirmed.

Humanism

← [Chart for Chapter 6](#) [Overview of the Eight Key Beliefs](#) [Chart for Chapter 8](#) →