Outline:

> *"The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato."*
>
> Alfred North Whitehead[1]

> *"To this day, the character of any philosophy is determined by the relation it bears to Plato. After him, every epoch of classical culture was marked by Platonic characteristics, however strangely altered they might by."*
>
> Werner Jaeger[2]

Chapter 1: A Brief Biography

Plato
427 BC - 347 BC
Philosopher and mathematician in Classical Greece

- Two key events that led Plato away from politics to philosophy:
  - **The Peloponnesian War**, a war fought in ancient Greece between Athens and Sparta, lasting from 431 BC to 401 BC
    - "The Tyranny of the Thirty" — a group of thirty rulers selected to govern Athens after the Peloponnesian War, in part based on their allegiance to Sparta
    - Plato's uncle and cousin were forced out of public office because of their involvement with the Tyranny of the Thirty

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[1]Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, Gifford Lectures Delivered in the University of Edinburgh During the Session 1927–1928 (New York: Macmillan, 1929), 63.

[2] Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, trans. Gilbert Highet (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939–1944), 2:77.

- - - Plato's aristocratic background became a political liability rather than an asset
  - o **Socrates**, a famous philosopher under whom Plato studied
    - - Socrates was put to death for allegedly corrupting the youth of Athens and failing to revere the gods recognized by the state.
    - - Plato's *Apology* depicts Socrates' trial and defense of himself.
    - - Plato found Socrates' death deeply unjust.
- The Academy – A School founded by Plato in the grove of Academe, northwest of Athens, where students studied astronomy, biology, mathematics, political theory, and philosophy.
- *The Republic* - Plato's most famous work, a dialogue in which he considers the notion of justice.
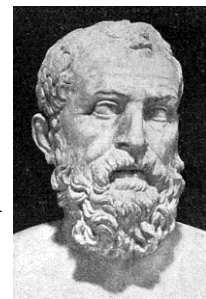
Chapter 2: Plato's Historical Context

- **"The Polis"** - the city-state. In eighth century BC, Greek city-states were somewhat autonomous, politically independent entities

Sparta	Athens
- stable - oligarchic - militaristic	progressively, though erratically, moving toward democracy

- **Solon** - Athenian leader and first great lawgiver
  - o Under his laws, the lower classes were admitted into citizenship, and any citizen had the right to bring a legal charge against another citizen regardless of class differences between them.

- The Persian Invasion (beginning in 492 BC) led to the formation of the **The Delian League**, a loose association of Greek city-states.
- Athens defeated the Persians and rose to the top of the Delian League. The result for Athens was:
  - o Political and economic stability
    They became the center of the Mediterranean world
  - o Under the reign of Pericles (circa 460-430 BC) Athens flourished in what became known as the "Golden Age."

- **The Golden Age** of Athens saw the flourishing of high arts and culture, including great inventions such as the beginning of modern theater and architectural achievements such as the Parthenon:

- Despite the remarkable achievements of fifth-century Athens, there was a dark side to the culture of this period as well.
- "They [Athenians] are bold beyond their strength; they run risks which prudence would condemn . . . If a man should say of them, in a word, that they were born neither to have peace themselves, nor to allow peace to other men, he would simply speak the truth."[3]
- Athens was invaded by Sparta in the Peloponnesian War and eventually defeated by them.
- In Plato's day "Greece was shattered to pieces and in utter need of moral and educational regeneration. The Athenian *polis* had been defeated by the Spartans. Common faith and customs had crumbled; teachers and philosophers were necessary in order to give the people, through reasoning, what earlier generations had achieved through tradition, voluntary loyalty, and communal responsibility."[4]
- Plato was born into a period of Athenian history characterized by great turbulence and transition. Fifth-century Athens embodied an unparalleled concentration of cultural achievement, and its rapid development and decline during those years created more questions than answers.
- *It was the decline of Athens and the presence of these questions, however, that formed a context for Plato's philosophical thought.*

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[3] Thucydides, *The History of Thucydides*, 3 vols., trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: The Tandy-Thomas Company, 1909), 1.70.

[4] Robert Ulich, *History of Education Thought* (New York: American Book Company, 1945), 3.