**Famous Philosopher Info**

Socrates – Born ~470, died 399. Famous for being overall rather cranky, never wrote anything and remembered for the 'Socratic Method' of question, answer, question, answer, all while claiming never to fully know anything himself. Rumored to have once attempted to drown a man for asking to be tutored privately for money. Believed virtue was best, and that people instinctively did not want to do evil. (Oops.) Was a form of a theist, a teleologist. “The unexamined life is not worth living.” Believed only philosophers were suitable for governing.

Plato – Born 427, Died 347 Most famous student of Socrates, most of what we know of Socrates comes from Plato's (and and a few others') writings. Carried on the 'Socratic Method' and created a philosophical theory known as 'Platonism', that is, the Platonic Forms. A Form is aspatial (transcendent to space) and atemporal (transcendent to time). These Forms are the essences of various objects: they are that without which a thing would not be the kind of thing it is. For example, there are countless tables in the world but the Form of tableness is at the core; it is the essence of all of them.

The 'New Man' in light of that idea...

Republic:

- **Productive (Workers)** — the labourers, carpenters, plumbers, masons, merchants, farmers, ranchers, etc. These correspond to the "appetite" part of the soul.
- **Protective (Warriors or Guardians)** — those who are adventurous, strong and brave; in the armed forces. These correspond to the "spirit" part of the soul.
- **Governing (Rulers or Philosopher Kings)** — those who are intelligent, rational, self-controlled, in love with wisdom, well suited to make decisions for the community. These correspond to the "reason" part of the soul and are very few

"Until philosophers rule as kings or those who are now called kings and leading men genuinely and adequately philosophise, that is, until political power and philosophy entirely coincide, while the many natures who at present pursue either one exclusively are forcibly prevented from doing so, cities will have no rest from evils,... nor, I think, will the human race."
Democracy then degenerates into tyranny from the conflict of rich and poor. It is characterized by an undisciplined society existing in chaos, where the tyrant rises as popular champion leading to the formation of his private army and the growth of oppression. Not a specified theist, but left the doors open and recognized the importance of religion in society.

Aristotle – Born 384, Died 322. Quite simply the most influential thinker who ever lived. Wrote more and just about everything than any person before or after him. Formalized logic, tutored Alexander the Great, his writings cover many subjects – including physics, biology, zoology, metaphysics, logic, ethics, government and much much more – and constitute the first comprehensive system of Western philosophy.

On God - “Yet there is God, though not perhaps the simple and human god conceived by the forgivable anthropomorphism of the adolescent mind.”

Diogenes – Born 412, Died 323  He begged for a living and slept in a large ceramic jar, a large kettle looking thing rolled on its side in the marketplace. He became notorious for his philosophical stunts such as carrying a lamp in the daytime, claiming to be looking for an honest man. He embarrassed Plato, disputed his interpretation of Socrates and sabotaged his lectures. Diogenes was also responsible for publicly mocking Alexander the Great – and living!

On minimalism - He destroyed the single wooden bowl he possessed on seeing a peasant boy drink from the hollow of his hands. He then exclaimed," Fool that I am, to have been carrying superfluous baggage all this time!"

Thomas Aquinas – Born 225, Died 1274. An absolutely brilliant man in so many areas, considered the 'Doctor of the Church' in his day, its greatest philosopher and theologian. In a time where Christianity teachings were constantly challenged by other philosophers, Thomas took a different stand. He conceived a theory that proved God exists. His argument was based on the creation theory. Stating that the creator of the universe is God, he was able to successfully teach ethics, with help from the Bible. Notably influenced by our friend Aristotle.

Rene Descartes – Born 1596, Died 1650. Considered to be the father of modern philosophy, but an all a round brilliant man, as well. Bridged the gap between algebra and geometry.
Descartes was also one of the key figures in the scientific revolution and has been described as an example of pure genius. He refused to accept the authority of previous philosophers.

"Cogito ergo sum." - Don't put Descartes before de horse...!

Was a Catholic, but the Pope hated him, anyway, and placed all of his works on the dreaded “prohibited list”. Dang legalists...

John Locke – Born 1632, Died 1704. An English philosopher and physician regarded as one of the most influential of the Enlightenment thinkers and known as the "Father of Classical Liberalism”. His work greatly affected the development of epistemology (the theory OF knowledge) and political philosophy.

His writings influenced many people, as well as the American revolutionaries. His contributions to classical republicanism and liberal theory are reflected in our very own Declaration of Independence.

John Locke was a 'confused Christian' at best, having allowed his philosophical leanings to do some serious distorting of the Scriptures, not unlike Thomas Jefferson, a man highly influenced by Locke.

David Hume – Born 1711, Died 1776. Another brilliant “reformer” of modern philosophy, likely the most influential of the empiricists. Hume wrote "'Tis evident, that all the sciences have a relation, more or less, to human nature ... Even Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, and Natural Religion, are in some measure dependent on the science of Man". Also, "the science of man is the only solid foundation for the other sciences", and the method for this science assumes "experience and observation" as the foundations of a logical argument.

I submit that at this point a great change in the way man was viewing the world around him was taking place, and we'll see if that's true in a while.
Immanuel Kant – Born 1724, Died 1804. Another key figure in the formation of modern philosophy.

Kant was raised in a religious household, but likely became an agnostic later in life. Kant asserted that, because of the limitations of argumentation in the absence of irrefutable evidence, no one could really know whether there is a God and an afterlife or not. For the sake of morality and as a ground for reason, Kant asserted, people are justified in believing in God, even though they could never know God's presence empirically.

There's much more to the man than that, but we need to be aware of this subtle shift in the thinking of “empirical” and science from this point forward. By the way, Kant credited Hume with waking him up from his "dogmatic slumbers" and Hume has clearly proved extremely influential on subsequent philosophers.

Soren Kierkegaard – Born 1813, Died 1855. Another absolutely brilliant and unique human being, a man influential to guiding my friend Ed to the Lord.

He's pretty much considered to be the first existentialist philosopher. He wrote critical texts on organized religions, morality, ethics, psychology, the philosophy of psychology and the philosophy of religion. Used wonderful metaphors, irony and parables. Much of his philosophical work deals with the issues of how one lives as a "single individual", giving priority to concrete human reality over abstract thinking, and highlighting the importance of personal choice and commitment. He was a fierce critic of idealist intellectuals and philosophers of his time.

Kierkegaard was always interested in the "how" The how of a Christian, the how to not commit suicide, the how not to go insane, the how to live a happy life and an ethical life rather than a depressed life.

Karl Marx – Born 1814, Died 1883. He and lifelong friend and collaborator Friedrich Engels are best known for their socio-eco-political theory forming the world's understanding of Communism. Along with believing in the inevitability of socialism and communism, Marx actively fought for their implementation, arguing that social theorists and underprivileged people alike should carry out organised revolutionary action to topple capitalism and bring about socio-economic change.

Simply put, one of the most profoundly influential figures in human history.
Friedrich Nietzsche – Born 1844, Died 1900. Extremely hostile to religion. Atheist. One of the key tenets of his philosophy is the concept of “life affirmation”, which embraces the realities of the world in which we live over the idea of a world beyond. Nietzsche focused the creative powers of the individual. His radical questioning of the value and objectivity of truth has been the focus of extensive commentary, and his influence remains substantial, particularly in our modern philosophical schools of existentialism, postmodernism and post-structuralism. He, along with Marx & Engels, allowed more evil to be cultivated on planet Earth than any before them.

C.S. Lewis – Born 1898, Died 1963. Greatest of all modern Christian writers and philosophers. Brilliant thinker and prolific author. “Liar, Lord or Lunatic” still stands the test if time, and always will.

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) and Albert Camus (1913-1960) enjoyed an intellectual cachet that Proust in his own lifetime could only have dreamed of. Each was a novelist, a playwright, a philosopher, and a political intellectual, and in these various lines of work both were the acclaimed eminences of their time and place. For a while they were considered an item: the twin geniuses of existentialism, the French philosophical movement they pioneered and embodied. And indeed they were often together, the best of friends.

Jean-Paul Sartre – Born 1905, Died 1980. Philosopher, playwright, novelist, screenwriter, political activist and biographer. He was one of the key figures in the philosophy of existentialism and phenomenology, and one of the leading figures in 20th century French philosophy and Marxism. His work has also influenced sociology, critical theory, and so many other things. His work influences the minds of children in higher academia to this day.

How deep into the Marxist Kool-Aid was this guy? Sartre went to Cuba in the 1960s to meet Fidel Castro and spoke with Ernesto 'Che' Guevara. After Guevara's death, Sartre would declare him to be "not only an intellectual but also the most complete human being of our age", and the "era's most perfect man." Sweet.

Albert Camus – Born 1913, Died 1960. Widely considered second fiddle to Sarte, but influential, nonetheless. Heck, he influenced ME as a senior in high school whereupon finishing 'The Stranger' I was afraid of philosophers for their ability to degrade morality into meaninglessness. Also a well known Communist.
Michel Foucault – Born 1926, Died 1984. Most famous of all postmodernist thinkers (although he rejected the idea), prolific writer, complete humanist, militant Atheist, raid homosexual and colleges in higher academia use more of his works than almost any other modern philosopher. Heavily influenced by Kant & Nietzsche. Genius, and demon, rolled into one. Also a Communist.

Jacques Derrida – Born 1930, Died 2004. The last of our influential philosophers. Derrida is best known for developing a form of semiotic analysis known as deconstruction. (Semiotics is the study of meaning-making. This includes the study of signs and sign processes, indication, designation, likeness, analogy, metaphor, symbolism, signification, and communication. I have a book on the subject, but freely admit to barely being able to understand it, or maybe just tolerate it.) He is one of the major figures associated with post-structuralism and postmodern philosophy.

Another prolific author, a book a year, and a major influence (again) in higher academia. Not gay, but a supporter of gay rights and other things we find a bit irritable, and he was not a Commie!

WHEW!!