

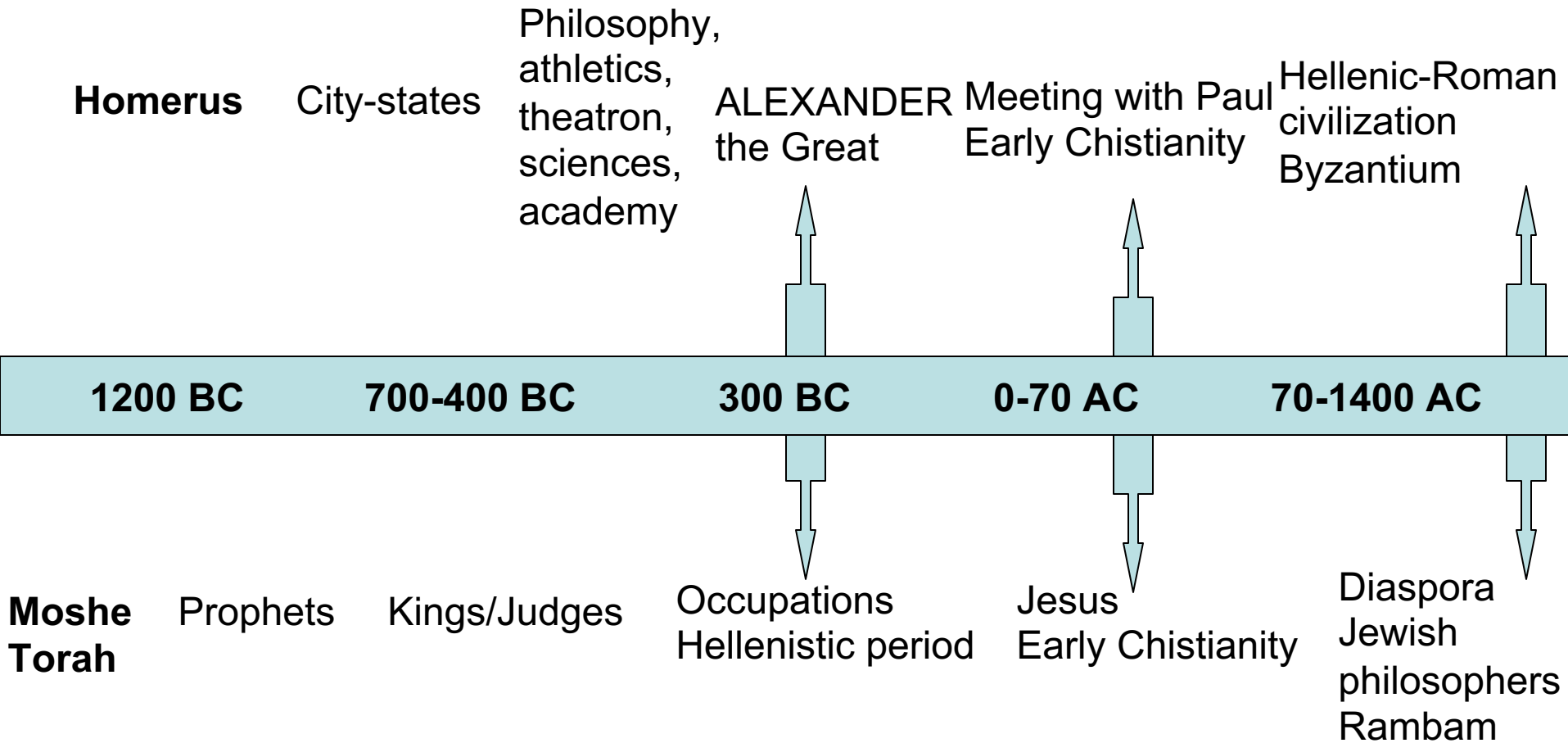
**Greek Philosophy and Judaism:
The two major cornerstones of
Western civilization and their
integration through history**

- *“The source of all our feelings, thoughts, but also emotions and spiritual experiences, is the brain” (Hippocrates)*

Faith doesn't contradict science !!

- *“And He will be the stability of your times, wealth of salvation, **wisdom and knowledge**” (Isaiah, 33:6)*
- *“Nous Ygieis en somati ygiei” (“Mind and soul is healthy in healthy body”) (Socrates)*

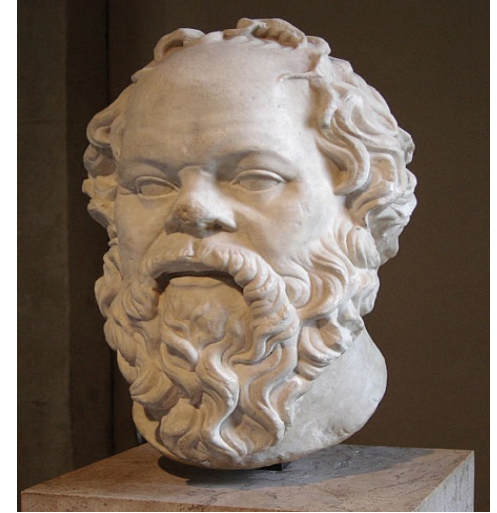
Greeks and Jews: Parallel histories and interactions



Greek Philosophers

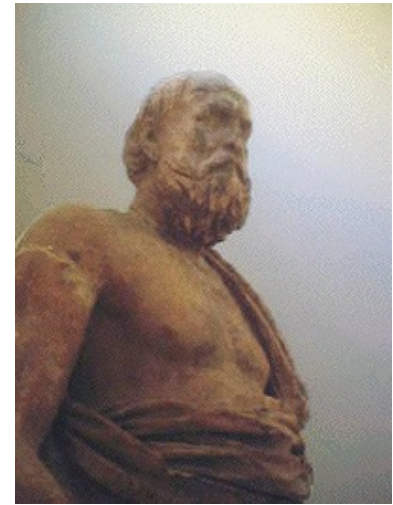
A logical trial to find out the aims in life and the path to perfection

Socrates



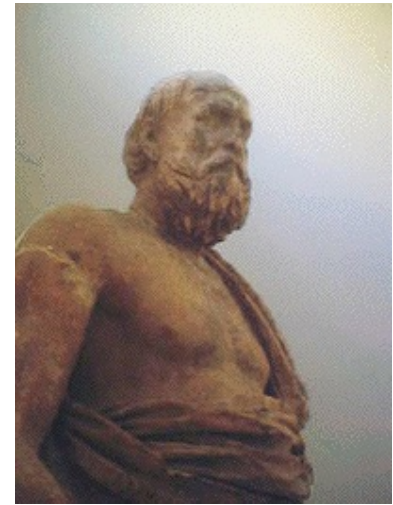
- Socrates initially suggested the term “philosophia” (love for wisdom) and claimed that the most difficult part is to “know and discover yourself” (“gnothi safton”)
- A good act is **not good because gods say it is, but is good because it is useful to us in our efforts to be better and happier people.**

Platon (Aristocles)



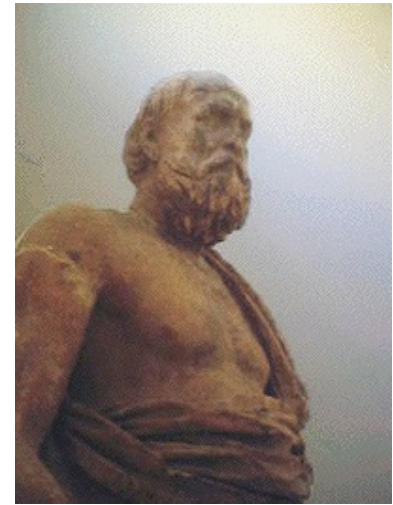
- Plato: **idealistic** and rationalistic.
- Reality:
 - **Idea** or ideal (ultimate reality, permanent, eternal, spiritual).
 - **Phenomena**, (associated with matter, time, and space). Phenomena are illusions which decay and die. Ideals are unchanging, perfect.
- Plato, identifies the ideal with God and perfect goodness. **God creates the world out of materia (raw material, matter) and shapes it according to his plan and ideas (the idea)**. If the world is not perfect, it is not because of God or the ideals, but because the raw materials are not perfect.

Platon



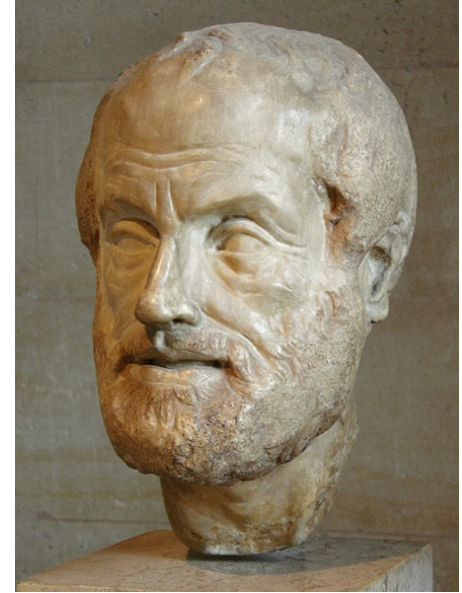
- Dichotomy of human beings: There is the **body**, which is material, mortal, and moved. Then there is the **soul**, which is ideal, immortal, and **unmoved** (**enjoying free will**).
- The **soul will always choose to do good**. The soul is drawn to the good, the ideal, and so is **drawn to God**.
- Our ethical goal in life is **resemblance to God**, to come closer to the pure world of ideas, to **liberate ourselves from matter, time, and space**, and to become more real in this deeper sense.

Platon



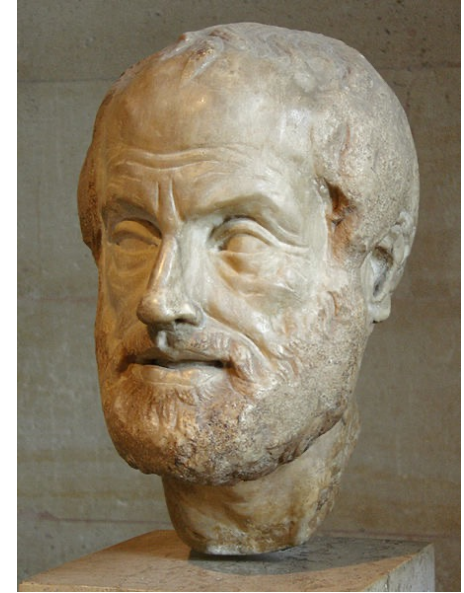
- Three levels of pleasure:
 - sensual or **physical** pleasure.
 - **esthetic pleasure**,
 - **ideal pleasure**, the pleasures of the mind.
- Paralleling these three levels of pleasure are three souls:
 - **appetite**, which is mortal and comes from the gut.
 - **spirit** or courage, also mortal, and lives in the heart.
 - **Reason** (immortal and residing in the brain).
 - The three are strung together by the cerebrospinal canal.
- "Do to others as I would they should do to me."

Aristotle



- Aristotle invented modern logic
- Aristotle suggests that the ideal is found inside the phenomena
- What Plato called idea or ideal, Aristotle called **essence**, and its opposite, he referred to as **matter**. Essence is what provides the shape or form or purpose to matter. Essence is perfect, complete, but it has no substance, no solidity. Essence and matter need each other!
- Essence realizes (makes real) matter. This process, the movement from formless stuff to complete being, is called "entelechy", which some translate as actualization.

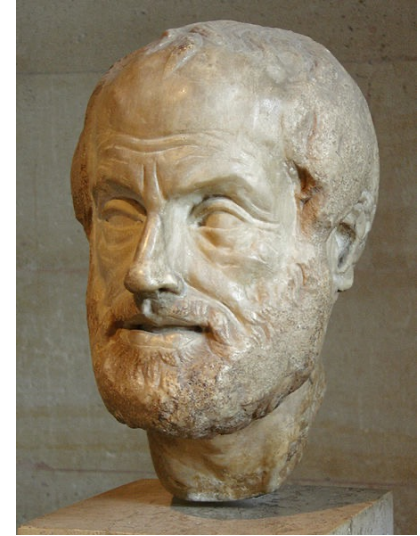
Aristotle



- The essence of our lives is "being as being"
- The highest determinations of Being are **Actuality** ([*entelecheia*](#) - Greek: ἐντελέχεια) and **Potentiality** ([*dynamis*](#) - Greek: δύναμις).
- **Entelecheia**-actuality is perfection, realization, fullness of Being
- **Potentiality** is imperfection.
- God is all actuality in Whom there is no imperfection.
- All other beings are composed of actuality and potentiality, a dualism which is a general metaphysical formula for the **dualism of matter and form, body and soul**

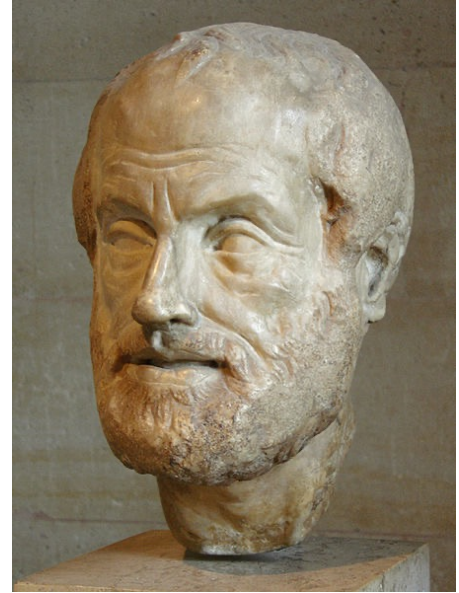
Aristotle

Causation of things



1. The material cause: what something is made of
2. The efficient cause: the motion or energy that changes matter.
3. The formal cause: the thing shape, form, or essence; its definition
4. The final cause: its reason (“teleology”), its purpose, the intention behind it (**ultimate final cause=God**)

Aristotle



- There are two powers in the soul which appear to be moving forces -- **desire and reason**.

Search for the absolute “good”

- The highest good, whatever it turns out to be, has three characteristics:
 - it is desirable for itself
 - it is not desirable for the sake of some other good
 - all other goods are desirable for its sake.

Well being as a target

“eudaimonia” (“happiness”) and “eu zên” (“living well”),
can describe such a highest good

Virtues (“Aretes”)-Happiness ?

Happiness is more than a simple virtue; it is virtuous activity. Living well consists in doing something, not just being in a certain state or condition. It consists in those lifelong activities that actualize the virtues of the soul

Virtues (“Aretes”) and fortune

- The highest good, virtuous activity, is not something that comes to us by chance.
- We ourselves share most of the responsibility for acquiring and exercising the virtues.
- We should learn to acquire the virtues and develop a love of doing what is “kalon” (Good) and a strong aversion to its opposite—the “aischron”, the shameful and ugly. Determining what is kalon is difficult !

Virtues (“Aretes”)

- There are two kinds of virtues:
 - those related to reasoning (virtues of mind or intellect)
 - those related to the part of the soul that cannot itself reason (ethical virtues, virtues of character).
- Intellectual virtues :
 - theoretical reasoning
 - practical thinking; (practical wisdom-phronêsis).

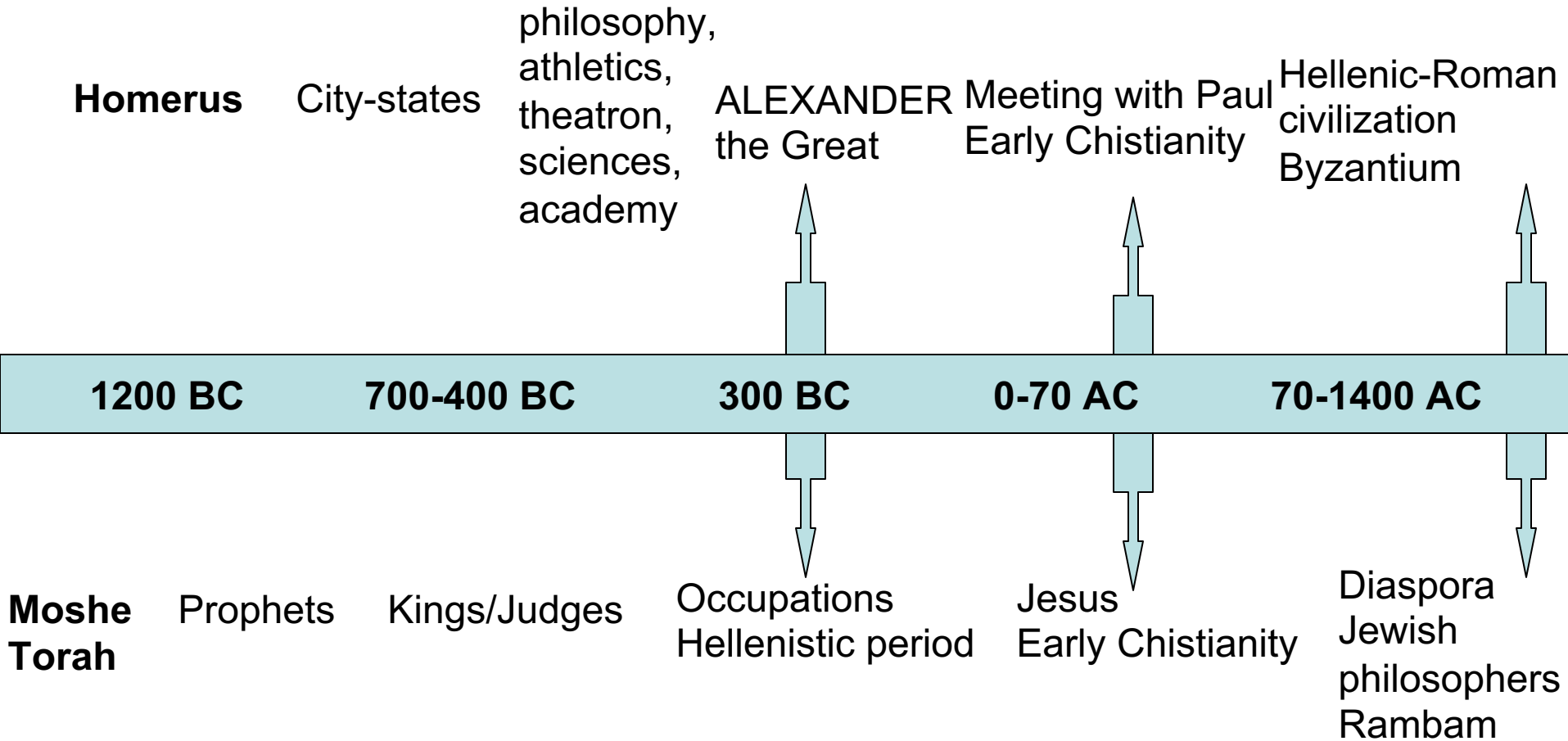
“Finding the mean” in our behavior

- All ethical virtues are located between states of excess and deficiency.
- Finding the mean in any given situation is not a mechanical procedure, but requires a full and detailed acquaintance with the circumstances.
- The right amount is the proportionate to the seriousness of the situation. This means that our passion should always fall short of the extreme point at which we would lose control.

Friendship and relations between people (Aristotle)

- A genuine friend is someone who loves or likes another person for the sake of that other person. Wanting what is good for the sake of another he calls “good will” (eunoia), and friendship is reciprocal good will

Greeks and Jews: Parallel histories and interactions





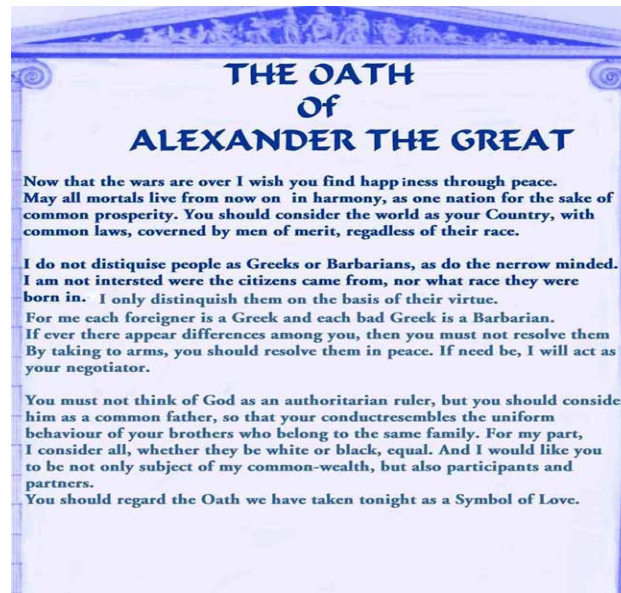
Alexander the Great



- Alexander the Macedon spread Greek ideas throughout the world in what is known as the Hellenistic Period and was perhaps the most important single person in western civilization with the exception of Jesus Christ



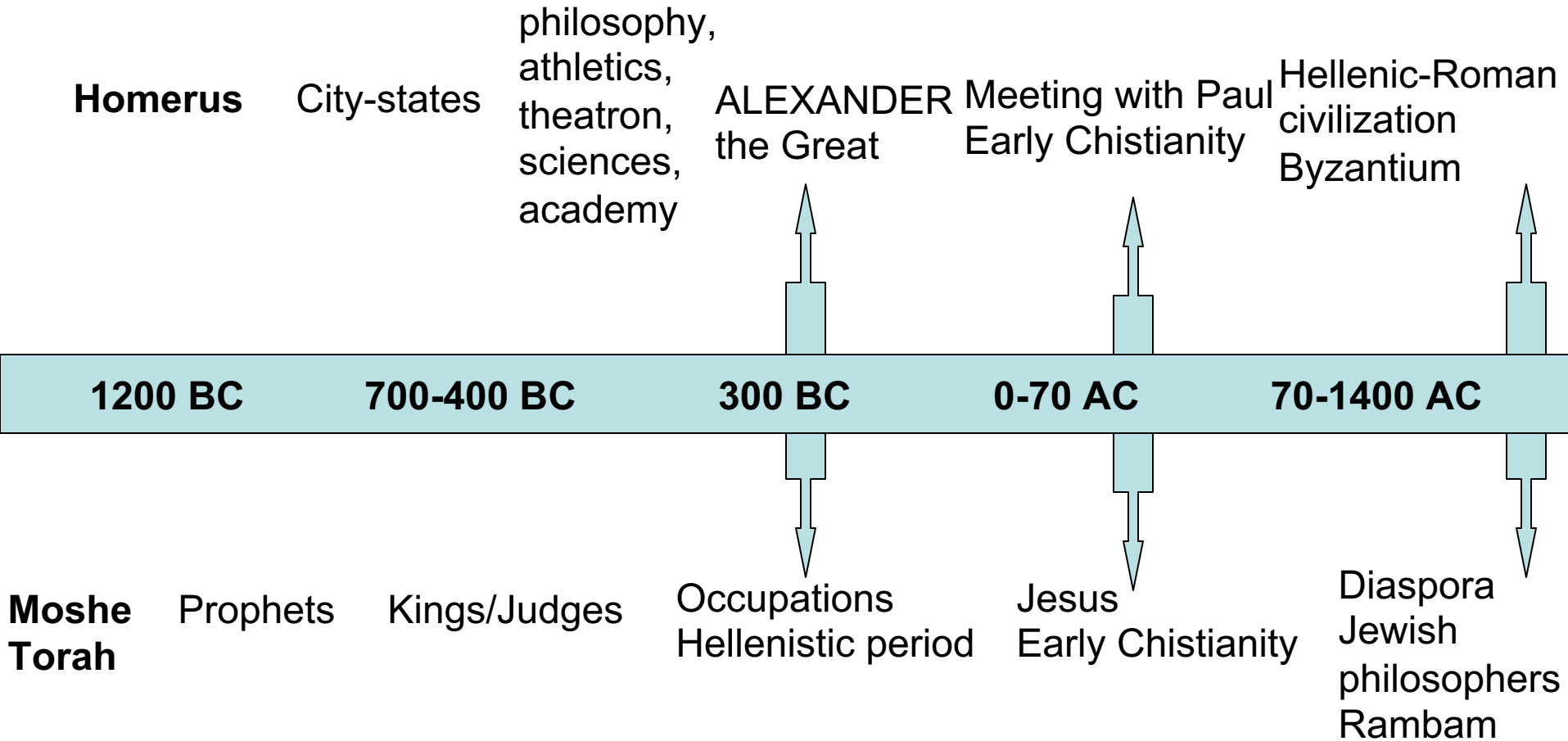
- I do not distinguish between Greeks and barbarians, as do the narrow-minded.
- I am not interested in the country or race of origin of people.
- I only distinguish people according to their virtues. To me every virtuous foreigner is Greek and each non-virtuous Greek is worse than a barbarian.
- God should not be viewed as an authoritarian ruler, but as our common father.



Hellenistic influence on Jewish life and thinking

- The Hellenistic (Greek) period which followed Aristotle's death in 322 BCE, and the conquest of the Holy Land by the Greeks, had a **powerful influence on Jewish life**.
- **The Greeks were defeated, but, their philosophy was not.** Aristotle's philosophy dominated the world at that time, and it also found its way into the Jewish religious literature, **including the Talmud**, and later, into the writings of the **Rambam**.
- **Aristotle's philosophy penetrated the Jewish religious** literature, the religious world is still suffering from its influence, up until today, so one is **unable to distinguish between certain views of the Torah and the philosophy of the Greek**.

Greeks and Jews: Parallel histories and interactions



Elements of philosophy in later Jewish thinking and literature

- **Rabbi Akiva** [ben Joseph](#) was the only [tanna](#) to suggest a religious philosophy
- *"How favored is man, for he was created after an image" for in an image, Elohim made man"*
- *"Everything is foreseen; but freedom [of will] is given to every man"*
- *"The world is governed by mercy... but the divine decision is made by the impact of the good or bad in one's actions"*

Elements of philosophy in later Jewish thinking and literature: Maimonides

- Maimonides in his "Shemonah Peraḳim" (Eight Chapters), adopts the Aristotelian four faculties of the soul.
- Both alike teach that two perfections dwell in the soul—the moral and the intellectual.
- The source of virtue and vice lies, with both philosophers, in the capability of thought and desire.
- Maimonides defines virtue as the desired action "in the mean." Moral acts are those that hold the "mean" between two harmful "extremes," between the "too much" and the "too little."

Elements of philosophy in later Jewish thinking and literature: Maimonides

- As regards the problems of the aim of mankind and the purpose of human existence, the Jewish philosopher necessarily differs from the Greek. According to Aristotle, true happiness consists in virtue; but with Maimonides the aim of mankind is divine perfection. Man must endeavor to approach the essence of the Deity as far as possible. What Maimonides expresses in the most exalted diction is found in the saying of the sages, "Let all thy actions be done in the name of Heaven!"

Elements of philosophy in later Jewish thinking and literature: Maimonides

- Maimonides' philosophical system as presented in the "**Moreh Nevuhim**" (**Guide for the Perplexed**). **Following generally in the footsteps of Aristotle, he deserts him only when approaching the domain of God's law.** But here, too, it is Aristotelian doctrine, coinciding, it is true, with Revelation in the basic principle that **men are incapable of comprehending God's being fully, on account of their imperfection and His perfection.** Concerning the sphere of metaphysical thought, absolute truth must lie in **Revelation**; that is, in Judaism.

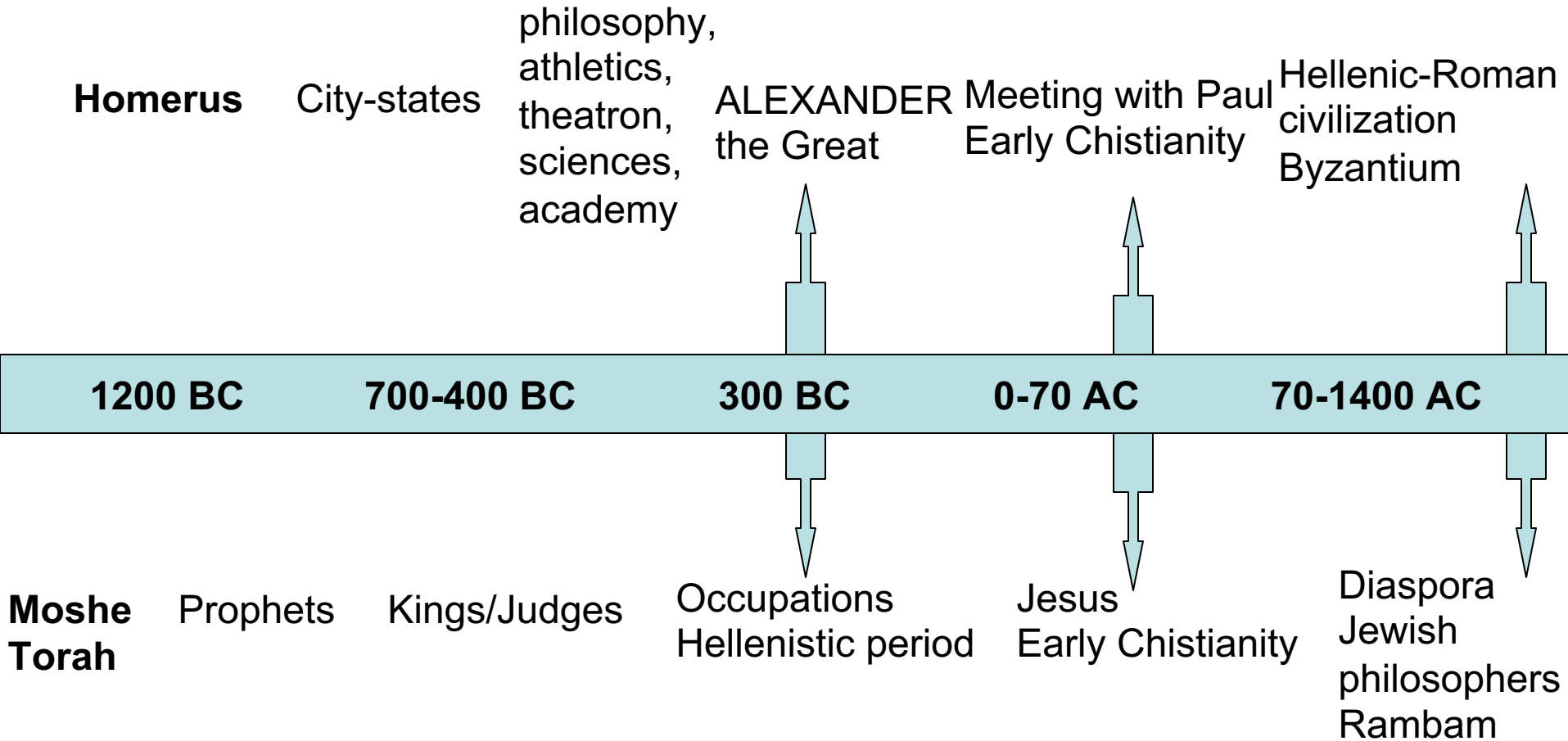
Elements of philosophy in later Jewish thinking and literature: Maimonides

- Aristotle posits the eternity of the world
- Maimonides **recognizing the divine origin of the Law**
- Aristotle recognizes **no miracles and no revelation, no selection by God of a specific people**, no mission to an individual, no choice of any one particular age.

Admiration of Aristotles by leading Jewish thinkers

- **Aristotle was almost universally held in esteem by the Jews:**
- **Maimonides' verdict concerning him: "The thorough understanding of Aristotle is the highest achievement to which man can attain, with the sole exception of the understanding of the Prophets."**
- **Shem-Ṭob ben Isaac of Tortosa styles Aristotle "the master of all philosophers."**
- **Elijah b. Eliezer of Candia, calls Aristotle "the divine"**

Greeks and Jews: Parallel histories and interactions



ΤΩ ΑΓΝΩΣΤΩ ΘΕΩ (To the unknown God !)



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ΕΡΕΤΕΙΛΗ ΑΠΟ ΤΩΝ ΜΕΝ ΜΟΥΣΕΩΝ

Greek philosophy and Judaism: Two opposite poles of thinking

- **12 Gods plus many more; no real obligation for believing !**
- **Man** as the Center of Life
- Development of **sciences**, ACADEMY of **knowledge**, arts (Theatron), political sciences, athletics, music, joy
- **Democracy** as the highest level of ruling; polis-state model
- Every day well being is achieved by developing intelligence, science, arts, political thought
- **World/creation is Infinite**
- Man has to achieve the **ethical**, political, scientific and artistic **virtues** (“aretas”)
- Happiness is graded at different levels: **higher happiness** is that achieved by developing the virtues
- **Faith in One God**
- **People** as the center
- **Faith** in the center of existence; not logical explanation but rather trust in God and the predestors; Torah the highest level of guideness and **Revelation !**
- **God** and His servants (prophets etc) are ruling; decisions not by men but by God
- Every day well being is not so important
- **World was created** and has a start and an end
- Man has to follow **divine orders**
- **Real happiness is only given by God** and achieved by following his orders

Greek philosophy and Judaism: Two opposite poles of thinking

Their integration

- **Faith entered in the way of thinking and solved some of the dead ends and the endless philosophical exploration**
- **Analytical thought and philosophical exploration of the Torah**
- **Use of the Greek language**
- **Scientific exploration integrated to faith**
- **JUDAISM AND BELIEVE IN ONE GOD BECAME THROUGH THE VEHICLE OF GREEK PHILOSOPHY, A MORE OPEN RELIGION/PHILOSOPHY !**
- **Belief to one God, through the Jewish way and philosophy of life of Jesus and Shaul (Paul)**

“Conclusions”

- The “marriage” of the seemingly opposite ways of thinking (Greek philosophy and Jewish thought and faith) occurred at critical historical points, mainly through Alexander the Great and mostly in the era of Jesus and the development of a new religion based on Judaism but more open to the world and focusing on universality
- Hellenistic influences and the spread of the Greek language (including the use of the Tanach translation by the 70), made Judaism more open and expanded its wings of influence
- This marriage of the two poles of thinking integrated analytical and scientific thought with the Jewish faith (combining the supra-rationale with the irrational) and represent the basis of the modern way of thinking in the Western world



Jewish thought

Greek philosophy