• **Short biography**
  - Born in Macedonia, he went to Athens to become an apprentice of Plato’s. One major difference between them is that Aristotle was never a citizen of Athens, and therefore did not come in contact with its political system. Plato did not take part in Athenian politics either, but for very different reasons. Aristotle’s philosophy asks the same questions that Plato’s does, but comes to radically different conclusions that often contradicts his master’s. He was also more positive about democracies than Plato. After teaching Alexander the Great, he returned to Athens to found his own school, the *Lyceum*, as a competitor to Plato’s Academy. The main subject of the Lyceum was natural science. Aristotle himself never wrote anything down. We know most of his students’ class notes.

• **Aristotle’s philosophy**
  - *One of the main points of divergence between Plato and Aristotle is about where to find the ‘good’. According to Plato, this can be found in another world, the world of ‘forms’. According to Aristotle, the good can be found in our own world through our sense rather than through philosophical speculation.* The question of where does knowledge come from remains unanswered in the field of philosophy.
  - For Aristotle, everything that we see has its own *natural place* in the universe. By observing objects, we can find their natural place. This means that if we observe existing political systems, we can find the ‘natural’ or ideal political system, as well as their real purpose. The ideal states of Plato and Aristotle vary enormously, with Aristotle’s being probably the most realistic, while Plato’s Republic is a fantasy.
actions should be allowed freedom, which would be the men. The women are more like children.

4) Purpose of the State: why do we need a state at all?

In this case, Aristotle and Plato have a more or less common view. They both agree that the polis was developed by primitive societies, while those societies themselves had been developed out of families. Therefore it was fitting to see the state first and foremost as on big family. This is good, according to them, because humans can’t live alone and need each other’s help. The state is then the structure that allows human to live together.

For Plato, it is very important that the state functions in such ways that people can maximize their talents. Also, as previously mentioned, politics is a task for specialists and not for the entire population.

Aristotle emphasizes the fact that the state should allow people to obtain some sort of moral fulfillment. The state should also be independent and able to survive on its own.

The modern view of the task of the state is that it should provide its population with a high material living standard, without necessarily increasing happiness. The modern state is structured in such a way that it allows for economic development rather than moral development—something which would undoubtedly sound horrible to both Plato and Aristotle. In addition, we assume that a ‘good’ state is one which permits freedom of action and of speech to its citizens, which goes against Plato’s philosophy.

MACHIAVELLI: The Prince
What they had in common

- They are considered to be the fathers of modern liberalism and modern individualism.
- The distinguish society and a state of nature.
- Their theories came to be in a time of crisis. England in the seventeenth century was full of conflict, including a civil war and an ongoing discussion about the division of powers between king and parliament. Several factions included:
  - The Anglican Church, which supported the king.
  - The Calvinists/Purists which supported parliament.
- Eventually the conflict escalated and the king was executed. England became a republic, led by a man named Cromwell, for about a decade until the royal family returned to power. In 1668, the glorious revolution took place, which did not depose the king but gave significant powers to parliament. This in turn contributed to the development of the industrial revolution.
- During this time many political movements were present in England.
  - The ‘Diggers’ on the far left argued that land should be taken from the rich and given to the poor. They were led by Win Stanley.
  - The ‘Levellers’ were connected to Cromwell’s Calvinists. They represented the middle class and were a precursor to liberalism.

Modern Individualism

- Historically there are traces of individualism before the seventeenth century, notably in Protestantism.
- Modern Individualism assumes that a society consists of individual beings and that the state protects these individuals and their interests. An example for this is that people will only participate in society (accept the state) if they have something to gain from it.
- The Social Contract is the bond between the state and the individual. If there is a social contract, there is a society. The social contract can only be made if the society is better than the state of nature. Hobbes and Locke differ on what the state of nature is exactly. The questions they try to answer is: Why do people agree to a social contract?
  - The state of nature is humanity without customs, rules, traditions, organization... It is the most basic state mankind can find itself in.

Thomas Hobbes

- His most famous work is entitled ‘Leviathan’, which is his name for the absolute ruler of society. He was a fervent proponent of absolutism.
- Rights are not natural but derived from a political system (this clearly distinguishes him from Locke, who says that there are in fact natural rights).
- The State of Nature is characterized by a war of everyone against everyone. People are selfish, chaos reigns. Humans are only matter in motion and are not spiritual in any way. Humans are driven by passions and feelings and all their actions serve to promote their own interests and survive at any cost. Hobbes discovers a paradox here: war and self-preservation do not go hand in hand very well. This is where society comes in. The people consider that peace is preferable if self-preservation is the goal, which is why they form a social contract. The people agree to give up individual power to a ruler, provided that this ruler provides them with protection. Humans retain no rights against the leviathan, unless leviathan fails in his task.
- He holds that revolutions are always wrong unless they succeed, for this would mean that the leviathan is not strong enough and thereby forfeits his right to rule.
- The question of giving up power in exchange for protection is a very actual one after 9/11.
- One connection between Hobbes and Machiavelli is that they both believe in absolute power.
Mill: first he had the same ideas of Bentham (personally related) regarding Utilitarianism, but he changed his opinion after a period of depression. He considers Bentham’s ideas to be too narrow and takes into consideration qualitative forms of happiness (higher and lower forms for happiness >Bentham had only a quantitative view of happiness) => intelligent people thrive society forward, some that are ‘better’ and not the common individual. The intellectual elite has to be kept away from the masses => strive for more developed ideas of happiness, think farther than the usual individual who thinks short term...

He also declares the State has one type of interest, while people have other. Mill sees the State is nothing else but people.

On Liberty 1859
He talks about the importance of freedom: limits to our freedom are necessary because of the dangers a society without limits can have (how can we create a nation as free as possible?)
Opposition to personal freedom and the limitations that are set by the State: for Mill people need to understand the state is not against them but works for their good: common interests. However, Mill thinks that the only right the State has is to intervene when a person harms another human being. If my behavior hurts someone else, the State must intervene. The State has to be responsible to prevent harm: you can do whatever to yourself; the State can only interfere if your behavior harms other people: it's bad only if it has direct consequences on other individual.

Complexity: different thinking between persons=> rule of the many and masses and not the intellectual ideas of the elite minority => you need a society that promotes the elites to create growth and advancement in a society.

Still the idea of rationality: individual will always think about their individual needs/good

There are three kinds of freedom (and are now generally applied to today's developed liberal countries):
- freedom of speech
- freedom of religion
- freedom of association

These are basic freedoms that are beneficial to society but that are not limitless. Example: speech is limited in a way that it shouldn't harm someone else. This freedom is determined in its context and not directly by the words. The situation determines these freedoms.

Suspicion of government power: difference between private and state control. As much as private as possible because people always try to search for their own interests: free economy (competition). All sectors, such as education, companies, hospitals, should be private. If public, economy will be generalized and there will be no differences that create innovation and progress.

The problem of voting: to strive for universal vote you need to educate the masses, otherwise people don't have an autonomous thinking. (Mill didn't distinguish men and women, seen as equals). The right of vote is not for everyone; only educated people are allowed to vote because they have a great responsibility in their hands. He also states that only people who earn enough money should be able to
- **Moral argument**: people are born with natural rights and the state should not interfere with these.

- **Milton Friedman**:
  - He was a classical liberal and a very famous economist. He was part of the Chicago school and developed the idea of rational choice and the economic man, for which he and a few others received the Nobel Prize.
  - He was a classical liberal.
  - Jeremy Bentham said that we should do what is best for the greater good. Friedman says that one should do what is best for oneself.
  - Friedman often speaks about the positive effects of capitalism. All material benefits are the result of capitalism.
  - Central to his thought are:
    - *The freedom of the individual*
    - *Economic freedom*
    - *Political freedom*
  - Maximal economic freedom leads to maximal political freedom. Neoliberalism represents the shift from the government deciding over the economy to the economy deciding over the government, which started in the eighties.
  - Friedman is very critical of the welfare state, since it is economically very ineffective. This is true because the state takes away a person's responsibility for his own life, which impedes his freedom. No people are so controlled and restricted in their rights and freedom as those that live in the welfare state.

The **rational choice and economic man theory** describe how individuals make decisions in life. It is based on the idea that everyone in every situation knows what is best for themselves. Humans are rational, and every time they have to make a choice, they will make the one that in the end will provide the best outcome. This is related to the economy, since every human will make the decision that will, ultimately, give him the best economic outcome. These decisions are about everything, from which school to choose to which restaurant to go to.

  - He is extremely important in neoliberal thought.
  - *Anarchy, State and Utopia* is his most famous work (1974). It was extremely well debated, even though Nozick never commented on it afterward. In it he asks himself...