

CLASSICAL GREECE AND THE HELLENISTIC WORLD

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"Yet this entire body of peoples (of the East) remains excluded from our consideration, because hitherto it has not appeared as an independent element in the series of phases that Reason has assumed in the world"

Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*.

Most historical observations as well as contemporary approaches revolve around the structural as well as cultural and ideological differences between east and west. Even today the prediction on a certain "clash of civilizations" is somehow based on this long-lasting approach to "the other".

From the start of history "the East" was the advanced region with prosperous cities, developed economy within relatively centralized states. On the other hand West was "underdeveloped" with weaker towns, rent-exploited or enslaved peasantry and in most cases with a weak central authority. Feudalism and Capitalism evolved in such a region.

Due to this study of world history ended by capitalism use Greek-Roman-Feudal Western line as the founding core, with rare and marginal glances to other civilizations. This approach exaggerating "modernism" of the "dominant" West and accusing "out of line" the other societies is observed even today in World politics.

"Slave" societies of Greece and Rome

Greek and Roman societies political universe is initially based on small independent cities with their economies depending on a slave labored agriculture and trade.

Agriculture (throughout all periods) is the dominant area of production furnishing the main income of cities. The "citizen" land owners constitute a small segment of the population as the rest being mostly slaves deprived of any material means. Production limited mostly to simple textile, pottery, furniture and glassware is narrow due to limited demand and expensiveness of transport.

A common particularity for Greece and Rome is the Aegean and the Mediterranean seas serving a big geographical zone with the best seaport possibilities. This situation made possible an urban growth, concentration and complexity with a developed interregional trade.

Slavery is the only form of "labor" common both in Greece and Rome. While various forms of slavery were also existent in the "Eastern" societies but it was mostly occasional due to war captivity and mainly limited to household production.

In the Greek city states by 5th century B.C. and in Rome by 2nd century B.C. slavery became a dominant form. It was the high number of slaves used in all production that permitted a "freedom" and "democracy" to a non-laboring population. However these systems couldn't reproduce themselves due to the lack of incentive for productivity and invention which also caused their rapid disintegration and evolution to other systems.

Classical Greece and the Hellenistic World:

A Brief Survey

"Classical Greece" till now is considered as a cultural ancestor of "the" Western Civilization. It is a tradition continued by the Roman culture, Islamic science and philosophy, "rediscovered" by the Renaissance and so forth. Greek culture itself was based on the heritage of Minoan, Mycenae as well as Egypt and the other Middle Eastern civilizations.



Internal warfare, invasions and probably some natural disasters had destroyed the earlier settlements but by 800 B.C. a new civilization named as "classical" began to emerge and flourished until 400 B.C.

With the empire of Alexander the Great called the "Hellenistic period", this civilization spread in the whole Mediterranean region. Later, the cultural scientific and philosophical heritage will be transmitted by Roman and Islamic civilizations.

The Greek society was mainly based on private property thus a further stimulus to Greek civilization came from the development of sea trade in the Mediterranean. Increased wealth with population growth and social change in Greece encouraged new political forms.

After 800 B.C. the society revolved around city-states (polis), varying in size. Originally the polis constituted by a city and its agricultural hinterland was ruled by landowning aristocrat-warriors through a more or less “direct democracy”. After 700 B.C. the system of aristocratic control was challenged as a result of commercial expansion.

Many city-states founded colonies along the coasts of the Mediterranean and Black Sea. These colonies relieved population pressure, provided particularly grain supplies, and served as markets for various products.

However this “capitalist” expansion resulted by a severe loss for small landholders and an increased gulf between the rich and poor. By the 6th century B.C. urban commercial groups and dispossessed farmers sought reform. And reformers, like Solon of Athens, developed new laws to regulate the social environment. By 500 B.C. most city-states were based upon principles of loyalty to the community rather than to an individual ruler.

A participation in public life of every male citizen and the dominant principle of “rule by the people” was called democracy in Athens.

A popular assembly of citizens was the sovereign authority. Citizens formed the army and served as jurors. Offices were chosen by lot and were responsible to the assembly. Women, slaves, and foreigners - were excluded from political rights.

In Ancient Athens only men were citizens, and only citizens could govern. As young boys they were trained in reading, writing, arithmetic, poetry, music, dance, and athletics.

Women were not seen as citizens, they stayed home and did the housework, which included washing, cleaning, and taking care of the children, but men were not expected to share the work. (Among others we have inherited this tradition also)

Greek political life was based on individual participation quite different from other centralized states of the Middle East and Asia.

The growing power of a democratic, commercially active Athens led to competition with oligarchic, conservative, and militaristic Sparta. They fought from 431 to 404 B.C. in the Peloponnesian War. A weakened Athens surrendered to Sparta in 404 B.C. and this marked the end of the dominance of the polis culture.

The Peloponnesian Wars had destroyed all basis for Greek unity which will be realized for a brief period by a conquering northern state, Macedonia in 338 BC. Taken the control of Greece and expanded into the Middle East and Egypt, short-lived empire of Alexander the Great greatly helped to the expansion of Hellenistic culture.



The new empire of Alexander quickly fragmented into states run by former generals. The three principal dynasties were the Ptolemy in Egypt, the Seleucids in Persia, and the Antigonid in Macedon and Greece.

Early History: the missing Minoans

Today still limited information is known about Minoan civilization of Crete whose name derives from a figure of myth rather than history: the Minotaur, a monster with the body of a man and the head of a bull.

Minoa is famous for its colossal palaces built from around 2000 BC as the administrative centre for a large local population estimated as between 15,000 and 50,000 people.



Minos and Minotaur at the Garden of Tuileries, Paris

Administrative records and accounts are kept on clay tablets in a script known as “Linear A” is yet not deciphered. Archaeological discoveries reveal that, trade was carried on round the entire Mediterranean coast, from Sicily in the west to Egypt in the southeast.



A view from the palace of Knossos

Among the outposts of Minoan state is the city of Akrotiri, on the island of Thera in the Aegean Sea. The end of Minoan is attributed to two consecutive disasters. The eruption of the island's volcano in about 1500 BC and all the towns and palaces of Crete, except Knossos itself, were destroyed by fire in about 1400 BC.

It is not known whether this latter is due to a natural disaster or whether it was the Greek invaders which destroyed Minoan Crete. But it is certain that the next generation of rulers introduced the culture of mainland Mycenae.

The first Greek civilization: from the 16th century

The rulers of these early Greeks to have been warlike as described in Homer's famous epics *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

A significant trait is their fortress palaces, protected by walls of stone blocks so large that only giants would seem capable of heaving them into place. This style of architecture has been named *Cyclopean*, after the Cyclopes.



Cyclopean walls

Cyclopes are one-eyed giants encountered by Odysseus in the Homer's *Odyssey* in Chapter IX. The same image will be found in the famous epic stories of Dede Korkut. There, a one-eyed, man-eating giant "Tepegöz" bears a striking resemblance to the Cyclopes of Homer.



Odysseus against the Cyclope

By the 13th century, Mycenaean rulers control to varying degrees the whole of the Peloponnese, the islands of Crete and Rhodes and many smaller islands with a rayon of around most of the Aegean and the Mediterranean.

In the latter half of the 13th century, according to the oral tradition, the rulers of Mycenaean Greece combined forces to attack the rich city of Troy whose remains are located in Hisarlık, Çanakkale. Some four centuries later the oral tradition will be written down as the *Iliad* of Homer.

In Homer's poem it takes many years before Troy is finally subdued however the victory of the Greeks will not last long. Mycenaean civilization will come to an abrupt end in about 1200 BC.

This sudden destruction of Mycenaean is part of a wider chaos in the eastern Mediterranean caused by raiders whom the Egyptians describe as "sea peoples". Their origin remains a mystery until now. The same invaders had attacked the Hittites as we had seen earlier.

The final blow to Mycenae, later in the 12th century was by the Dorians from the northern regions. They had the advantage of iron technology, which helped them to overcome the Bronze Age Mycenaean.

The Dorian invasion resulted by a period referred usually referred to as "dark age".

The Spartans will claim the Dorians as their ancestors, and model themselves upon them. While a rival tradition in classical Greece is linked with Athens resistance to Dorians.

From about 900 BC, colonies start to be founded on the west coast of Anatolia called Ionia. In the following centuries “Ionian” will be a name to define Greeks. In contemporary Turkish we are using this name as “Yunan”.

The impulse to establish Greek colonies derives partly from the desire for trade but also from population pressure. In both Greece and Anatolia the easiest way of expanding from coastal valleys is outwards, by sea. By 600 BC there were around 1500 colonies on the coastline of Mediterranean, Aegean and the Black Sea. Also during this progressive period coinage and a new alphabetic script taken from the Phoenicians began to be used.

The most energetic colonists to spread towards the Black Sea and the Mediterranean then on will become the Ionians, from Anatolia. An example is the case of the trade colony founded by Phocceans (Turkish Foça) about 600 BC in southern France which later will develop and become the famous Marseilles.

On the other hand, Lydia emerges in the 7th century BC as a rich and powerful state in the interior of Anatolia, with its capital at Sardis. The last king of Lydia, Croesus, has survived in popular memory as a man of legendary wealth (he is the first ruler in history to mint coins of gold and silver).

Lydia will raid into Ionia with increasing pressure and success. By the mid-6th century Croesus controls Ephesus and many other Greek cities in Asia Minor. But in 546 he is defeated by a greater conqueror from the east, Cyrus. Within a year or two the Persian Empire has swallow up Ionia. Greek civilization is confronted with a new enemy.

Governing by “the Polis”: *politeia*

Citizenship important in all aspects of Greek life is restricted to a small proportion of the people living in a city: the free males.

Neither women nor children and outsiders were considered as citizens.

Slaves, who constitute the majority of the population and the totality of the work force were not even considered as human beings.

By the 7th century further expansion of trade colonies increasing the prosperity a new class acquires wealth, and military strength.

A frequent event in the Greek city-states of the 7th and 6th centuries is the seizing of power by individual members of this class. They rule with a personal authority as absolute as that of the kings whom they replace.

The Greek word for such a man, coming to power by a military coup, is *turannos*, a tyrant. But on the whole they fail to establish dynasties. Their authority dies with them.



Trade colonies

The tyrannical rule cause certain unrests and revolts due to the discontent of traditional members of the community losing their status. Increase in population narrows the possibilities of allocation and causes a social disequilibrium. Reforming the system for interest of popular majority and the regulation of the citizenship rights becomes a necessity.

A famous reformer, Solon (640 -550 BC) was also a tyrant. Among his reforms was the abolishing of debt bondage on land and formation of a new political and military organization based on a wider participation.



A medieval representation of Solon

In later history citizens with a passionate interest in the affairs of their city-state, play the “art of politics”. The debate is mostly on the three rival forms of government.

One extreme is the rule of a single powerful tyrant called “*tyranny*”. An intermediate form is the “*oligarchy*”, or rule by a few. Finally the very virtuous solution of “*democracy*”, in which power is shared by all the “people = *demos*” that is the citizens.

By the 5th century the days of the tyrants are over. The subject of Greek politics is now a dispute between oligarchy and democracy which also reflect a broader conflict between rival alliances: Athens and Sparta. The two most powerful states, Sparta and Athens, are associated respectively with oligarchy and democracy. Those seeking democracy will refer to Athens for help. Similarly those oppose democracy will look to Sparta.

In 480 the threat from Persia brings Sparta and Athens together, with most of the other city-states of mainland Greece. During the Greco-Persian wars the leading position of Sparta is acknowledged by all.

By the end of 480 the defeated Persians withdraw, Sparta's military reputation has been enhanced at Thermopylae and Plataea.

The Athenians, most damaged by the Persians soon emerge stronger than before due to their navy and the control of the Aegean Sea. It was evident that control of the Aegean Sea was also the best defense against Persia.

In 478, representatives of Athens and other Aegean states meet on the island of Delos to form a coalition, subsequently known as the Delian League to liberate the territories held by Persia on the Anatolian coast.

Athens begins to treat the League as an Athenian “empire”, and makes provocative alliances with two city-states opposed to Sparta.

Open hostility breaks out in 460, the start of the First Peloponnesian War. In 446 a temporary peace is agreed.

These wars will also create a famous hero of Athens, Pericles who will even today be remembered by his famous speech defining the principles of becoming a virtuous citizen

However the war continues in stops and starts for more than twenty years. From 414, the Persians intervene on the Spartan side and by 404 the Athenian fleet has been destroyed. Sparta is once again the undisputed leader of the Greek city-states.

Athens recovers again to put together, in 377, a revised version of the Delian League to defeat Sparta and by the mid-century, with the military reputation of Sparta faded, Athens is again perceived as the leader.

Now a new threat from the north, of Philip II of Macedon becomes victorious, persuading all the Greek

cities (except Sparta) to enter into a treaty for military cooperation known as the League of Corinth. One of the resolutions of the League of Corinth is to launch a war against Persia

Again against Persia

Confederate forces from 336 BC, with Philip as commander sets off eastwards. When Philip is murdered by one of his man the League immediately elects his son, Alexander, in his place as commander.

After this the Greek culture is considered to be entering its most triumphant period: the Hellenistic age. During this time, Greek culture and power extended itself and “Hellenized” a large area across the world.

At the root of Hellenism were the conquests of Alexander, exporting Greek culture in terms of politics, law, literature, philosophy, religion, and art. This will deeply influence all the civilizations and cultures the Romans, the Christians, Islam that will later shape the history.

Alexander



Silver tetradrachm from Macedonia, c. 288-281 BC

Alexander, who was only thirty-three years old when he died, had made no preparations for his succession.

So the generals who had aided him divided the empire among themselves in order to preserve the empire for the future.

They soon fell into conflict with one another and by 300 BC. all that was left of Alexander's empire were divided into smaller empires, each controlled by military generals who declared themselves kings.

Greece and Macedonia fell to Antigonos, who founded the Antigonid dynasty which would eventually control Anatolia.

Mesopotamia and the Middle East came under the control of Seleucus, who crowned himself Seleucus I and began the Seleucus dynasty.

Egypt came under the control of Ptolemy, who crowned himself Ptolemy I and began the Ptoleimid dynasty.

Despite the constant conflict, the Hellenistic world was a prosperous one. Alexander and his

successors had liberated an immense amount of wealth from the Persian Empire, and with this new wealth in each of the empires scholarship, arts, literature and philosophy developed. For example the Ptolemies built a huge library in their capital city of Alexandria which will be reputed throughout the whole history.

Spread from Italy to India, from Macedonia to Egypt the Hellenistic cultural sphere became under the domination of a new power rising in the west, the Romans.

Origins of "philosophy"

Philosophy from Greek *philosophos*, lover of wisdom

1. Love and pursuit of wisdom by intellectual means and moral self-discipline.
2. Investigation of the nature, causes, or principles of reality, knowledge, or values, based on logical reasoning rather than empirical methods.
3. The critical analysis of fundamental assumptions or beliefs.
4. The disciplines presented in university curriculums of science and the liberal arts, except medicine, law, and theology.
5. The discipline comprising logic, ethics, aesthetics, metaphysics, and epistemology.
6. A set of ideas or beliefs relating to a particular field or activity; an underlying theory: an original philosophy of advertising.
7. A system of values by which one lives: has an unusual philosophy of life.

From: <http://www.answers.com/?gwp=11>

Pre-Socratic Philosophy

"Philosophic thought" in Greece first appeared in, *Theogony*, written by Hesiod about 725 B.C. on the myths of the gods, the origins of things and the order of the universe. However what is generally called "Greek philosophy" was derived by the Greeks from Egyptian culture, particularly the part involved with natural sciences like physics and mathematics.

In the latter half of the fifth century, a group called the Sophists started the inquiry from towards the nature of morality and society. Socrates followed the tradition of the early Sophists in making ethics his primary topic. With Plato's concern with ethics, Greek philosophy became primarily concerned with ethical and civic virtue.

The early Greek philosophers who preceded Socrates, generally called "Pre-Socratic" are divided up into several schools.

The Milesian (from Miletus in the Aegean region) or Ionian School. Miletus, in the 6th century was a prosperous trading center with numerous colonies.

The philosophers in Miletus sought to discover or describe one primary, material substance as the base

or elemental foundation of all natural objects and the source of all motion.

Thales (early 6th century) postulated that this primary substance was water, Anaximander defined the primary substance as "the unlimited" or "the indefinite" (in Greek: *apeiron*), Anaximenes defined it as air.

The Pythagoreans began towards the end of the 6th century in the cities in southern Italy; this school sought an intellectual foundation for a certain religious way of life, and was more abstract and mathematical and heavily influenced by Egyptian thought. Much of their thought remains completely obscure and impenetrable. They principally sought to purify the soul by strict rules of life and believed in the transmigration of souls to animals and even plants. For the Pythagoreans, the one thing that formed the substrate of all the infinite things in the universe was number.

Anaxagoras (of Athens; perhaps 500-428) taught that all things come to be from the mixing of innumerable tiny particles of all kinds of substance, shaped by a separate, immaterial, creating principle, nous ("mind").

Origins of "dialectics". Heraclites of Ephesus saw change as the unity of all things. The unity underlying all change and opposition, but not existing outside of change and opposition called the Logos or God. He taught that all things carried with them their opposites, that death was potential in life, that being and not-being were part of every whole, therefore, the only possible real state was the transitional one of becoming. He believed fire to be the underlying substance of the universe and all other elements transformations of it. Heraclitus is perhaps the most important philosopher before Plato and has formed the foundation of Western thinking ever since. He is famous for the expression "change alone is unchanging" expressing the notion that no man can cross the same river twice: "We both step and do not step in the same rivers. We are and are not."

The Atomists like Democritus (of Abdera, in Thrace, born about 460), held that void (space with no matter) exists (against the Eleatics, who held that what is not there cannot exist) and that this void contains an infinite number of indivisible units, *atoma*, which means "indivisibles". By random movements in which similar atoms come together and form the sensible world. This theory was taken over later by the Hellenistic philosopher, Epicurus.

Socrates

Most of our knowledge of Socrates (469-399) comes from the works of Plato. The most accurate of Plato's writings on Socrates is probably *The Apology*.

The word "apology" comes from the Greek word for "defense-speech" and the work is Plato's account of Socrates' defense at his trial in 399 BC.

In it, Plato outlines some of Socrates' most famous philosophical ideas: the necessity of doing what one thinks is right even in the face of universal opposition, and the need to pursue knowledge even when opposed.



If Socrates was interrogated today!

Socrates' method of philosophical inquiry consisted in questioning people on the positions they asserted and working them through questions into a contradiction, thus proving to them that their original assertion was wrong.

Socrates himself never takes a position; in *The Apology* he radically and skeptically claims to know nothing at all except that he knows nothing.

Socrates and Plato refer to this method of questioning as *elenchus*, which means negation and is the way of arguing that oppose another argument by proving the contrary of its conclusion. The Socratic *elenchus* in time gave rise to *dialectic*, the idea that truth needs to be pursued by modifying one's position through questioning and conflict with opposing ideas. It is this idea of the truth being pursued, rather than discovered, that characterizes Socratic thought and much of our world view today. The Western notion of dialectic is somewhat Socratic in nature in that it is conceived of as an ongoing process.

Plato

Plato (427– 347 BC) is the most famous of Socrates' pupils and carried on much of his former teacher's work and in time founded his own school, the *Academia*, in 385. The Academy would become in its time the most famous school in the classical world, and its most famous pupil was Aristotle.

We know much about Plato's teachings, because he wrote dialogues between Socrates and others that would explore philosophical issues. These dialogues would be used in his school as starting points for discussion. Plato carried on the philosophy of Socrates, concentrating on the dialectical examination of basic ethical issues: what is friendship? What is virtue? Can virtue be taught?

The fundamental aspect of Plato's thought is the theory of "ideas" or "forms." Heraclitus had said that there is nothing certain or stable except the fact that things change, and Parmenides and some other philosophers claimed that all change, motion, and time was an illusion. Plato combined the two.

The most famous of Plato's dialogues is an immense dialogue called *The Republic*, one of the single most influential works in Western philosophy. His inquiry is shaped into the questions what is justice in the State, or what would an ideal State be like, and what is a just individual? This type of thinking, that is, speculating about an ideal state or republic, is called "utopian" thinking (*utopia* is a Greek word which means "no-place").

Plato's metaphysics divides the world into two distinct aspects: the intelligible world of "forms", and the perceptual world we see around us. The perceptual world consists of imperfect copies of the intelligible forms or ideas. These forms are unchangeable and perfect, and are only comprehensible by the use of the intellect or understanding. Anything arising from reason alone, such as abstract definitions or mathematics, makes up this intelligible world, which is the world of reality. The intelligible world contains the eternal "Forms" (in Greek, *idea*) of things; the visible world is the imperfect and changing manifestation in this world of these unchanging forms.

Aristotle

Aristotle (384-322 BC) is one of the "big three" in ancient Greek philosophy, along with Plato and Socrates. Socrates taught Plato, who in turn instructed Aristotle. Aristotle spent nearly 20 years at Plato's Academy, first as a student and then as a teacher. After Plato's death he traveled widely and educated a famous pupil, Alexander the Great, the Macedonian who nearly conquered the world. Later Aristotle began his own school in Athens, known as the *Lyceum*, from where comes the name we use for our "lise".

Aristotle placed great emphasis on direct observation of nature, and in science he taught that theory must follow fact. He considered philosophy to be the finding of the self-evident, changeless first principles that form the basis of all knowledge. Logic was for Aristotle the necessary tool of any inquiry.

Knowledge of a thing, beyond its classification and description, requires an explanation of causality, or why it is.

He posited four causes or principles of explanation: the material cause (the substance of which the thing is made); the formal cause (its design); the efficient cause (its maker or builder); and the final cause (its purpose or function). In modern thought the efficient cause is generally considered the central explanation of a thing, but for Aristotle the final cause had primacy.

He used this account of causes to examine the relation of form to matter, and in his conclusions differed sharply from those of his teacher, Plato.

Aristotle believed that a form, with the exception of the Prime Mover, or God, had no separate existence, but rather was immanent in matter.

Aristotle's ethical theory reflects his metaphysics. Following Plato, he argued that the goodness or virtue of a thing lay in the realization of its specific nature.

The highest good for humans is the complete and habitual exercise of the specifically human function—rationality. Rationality is exercised through the practice of two kinds of virtue, moral and intellectual.

In the Politics, Aristotle holds that, by nature, humans form political associations, and he explores the best forms these may take.

After the decline of Rome, Aristotle's work was lost in the West. However, in the 9th cent., Arab scholars introduced Aristotle to Islam. It was largely through Arab and Jewish scholars that Aristotelian thought was reintroduced in the West. His works became the basis of medieval scholasticism.

2300 years later a subject of debate!

Diogenes circa 412–323 B.C., “Cynic” philosopher; pupil of Antisthenes. He was born in Sinop and lived in Athens. He taught that the virtuous life is the simple life, and he dramatically discarded conventional comforts, living in a tub. He is said to have thrown away his last utensil, a cup, when he saw a peasant drink from his hands. When Alexander the Great asked what he might do for him, Diogenes said, “Only step out of my sunlight.” His daylight quest with a lantern “for an honest man” was probably the most striking expression of his contempt for his generation.

Sinopta Diyojen Heykeli Tartışması

Milliyet.com.tr 2.11.2006



MHP,DSP ve Saadet Partisi il başkanları Pontus Rum Devleti fikrine destek verdiği savunarak heykele karşı çıktı

Sinop Belediyesi Başkan AK Parti Zeki Yılmaz tarafından Sam Sun Belediyesi Heykel ve Seramik Atölyesinde yaptırılan 5.5 metre yüksekliğindeki heykel bir hafta önce Sinop Otoparkına dikildi.

Ancak heykel bazı parti il başkanlarının tepkisini çekti. MHP İl Başkanı Mehmet İpek, Sinop'ta birçok sorun varken 50 bin YTL'ye heykel dikilmesinin anlamsız olduğunu savunup "5 bin yıl önce yaşamı birinin heykelini dikiyoruz. Bu heykel, AKP hükümetinin dış politikada bu kadar yetersiz olduğu bir dönemde, Karadeniz'de Pontus devleti hayali kuran dış güçlerin düncelerinin destekleri. Elinde fenerle 'Adam arıyorum adam' diye dolan biri Sinop halkına hakaret etmiştir. Sinop'ta adam yok mu uydu?" dedi.

Saadet Partisi İl Başkanı Hüseyin Eker de heykelin dikilmesinin gereksiz olduğunu savundu. DSP İl Başkanı Ahmet Kavazak da, "Ben heykelin dikildiği yere karıym. Eherin en güzel yerine yapılmamalıydı" dedi.