

THE HELLENIC CIVILIZATION

1.What types of philosophy emerged in ancient Athens?

Ans: As Athens become democratized it became necessary for individuals wishing to get ahead politically in this new society to be able to express themselves and expound convincing arguments. No longer was strength a substitute for brain. Wealthy Athenian parents wanted their male children to be educated in order to succeed. Educators called "sophists" came to Athens to fill this need. Today we still use this word in English in one form or another as in "sophisticated", "philosophy", and "sophistry".

Athens spawned several noble or ignoble professions besides professional athletes depending on how you look at it: actors, playwrights, lawyers and politicians.

[Socrates](#) was perhaps the first to awaken the impressionable young minds of Athenian youth with his critical thinking in the form of philosophical dialogue. Most of his students were aristocratic young men. He insistently questioned their beliefs in the conventional wisdom of the times. This particular technique did not sit well with the parents of these young men as it was at odds with their own beliefs. Some of these attempted an anti-democratic coup in 399 BC and Socrates was naturally held responsible and brought to trial for failure to worship the Gods and corrupting youth by his criticism of democracy. Since he was so well respected by many Athenians he was allowed to commit suicide by drinking hemlock. He calmly did this with great dignity.

[Plato](#) was one of Socrates students and his disciple. Plato set up his own school on land sacred to the muses at the Hekademos a few kilometers north west of Athens. For 40 years he wrote and taught all who were interested at what became known as [Plato's Academy](#). Plato's style was to walk about while lecturing and he had quite a pleasant grove of olive trees within which to teach.

[Aristotle](#) became the most famous of Plato's students at the Academy and in 335 BC, he founded his own school at the Sanctuary of Apollo Leceus. It became known as the [Lyceum](#) and its whereabouts only conjecture until its recent discovery under today's Byzantine Museum. Aristotle also walked about while lecturing and his style of philosophy became known as Peripatetic which stems from the ancient and modern Greek word for walking. A "peripato" is a walk in modern Greek.

Students came to Athens from all over the ancient world. Newcomers were met at dockside by recruiters and urged to join the various schools by passionate followers and disciples of their chosen master. These various schools had an excited rivalry with other schools much like the students of today's universities. Ancient schools also had bizarre initiation rites and frequently engaged in practical jokes and demonstrations sometimes resulting in lawlessness such as kidnapping students of another school.

Even when Athens later lost its ascendancy its schools of philosophy kept it a vibrant and well respected center of learning for many centuries. The Byzantine Emperor Justinian closed all the schools in 529 AD and sounded the death knell for Athens for over a thousand years.

2.What kind of philosophy did Socrates preach?

Ans: In 399 B.C., a trial was held in Athens. The person on trial was Socrates, a 70year-old Athenian philosopher who was interested in the thinking process. Socrates gave up private business so he could spend his time searching for truth. He believed people could discover truth if they knew how to think. In his search for truth, Socrates walked throughout Athens trying to teach people how to think. He did this by asking questions. Each question was designed to make a person arrive step-by-step at a final conclusion, or truth. This form of questioning is known as the Socratic Method. All Athenians did not react in the same way to Socrates's teachings. Some were pleased because they learned how to examine their own beliefs and to think things out. Others saw Socrates's ideas as dangerous. They did not like self-examination, particularly when it pointed

out their own mistakes. In time, they began to consider Socrates a threat to Athens. Finally, they accused him of denying the gods, corrupting the young, and trying to overthrow the government. Socrates was tried before a jury of some 500 citizens. He defended himself by speaking about truth and goodness. He said, "Wealth does not bring goodness. But goodness brings wealth and every blessing, both to the citizen and to the polis." He also said he would not change his beliefs even to save his life. The jury found Socrates guilty and sentenced him to death. Since he was so well respected by many Athenians he was allowed to commit suicide by drinking poisonous hemlock juice. He calmly did this with great dignity. Later, the Athenians regretted having executed Socrates, so they put up a bronze statue in his honor.

3.What was the philosophical outlook of Plato?

Ans: Socrates left no writings. All that is known about him comes from one of his pupils, an Athenian aristocrat named Plato (plāˈ tō). Plato recorded the speeches Socrates made at his trial and just before his death. Plato was 30 years old when Socrates died. Until then, Plato had wanted to become a politician. In 399 B.C., he changed his mind. He left Greece and traveled in Egypt and Italy for the next 12 years. When he returned, he set up a school outside Athens in the sacred grove of the hero Academus (ak uh deˈ muhs). The school, where Plato hoped to train government leaders, was called the Academy. Plato taught there almost 40 years.

The Academy itself lasted almost 900 years after Plato's death. Plato's beliefs were contrary to the ideas that had made Athens great. Plato believed in order. He thought political liberty was disorder and did not approve of it. He thought only the wise and good should rule. Plato set down his ideas about an ideal state in a book called The Republic. It is the first book ever written on political science, or the study of government. In it, Plato examined different kinds of government and explained how to avoid political errors. Like Socrates, Plato believed in truth. He thought it could be found only after a long, hard search. In a work called The Dialogues, he showed how difficult it is to discover truth. The Dialogues consists of a series of discussions in which different people talk about such things as truth and loyalty. Socrates is the leading speaker in many

discussions. Through these discussions, Plato brings out the self-questioning that goes on within a person troubled by such issues.

4.How did Aristotle contribute to ancient Greek philosophy?

Ans: One of Plato's brightest pupils was Aristotle (ar'uh stot l). Aristotle came to the Academy when he was 17 years old and stayed for 20 years. Before he died in 322 B.C., he founded his own school in Athens and wrote more than 200 books. Aristotle was known as "the master of them that know." He believed in using one's senses to discover the laws that govern the physical world. He was the first to classify, or group together, plants and animals that resemble each other. His system, with some changes, is still used today. It has helped scientists handle a great amount of information in an orderly way. Aristotle also added to the ideas of an earlier Greek scientist named Thales of Miletus (mi let' uhs). Thales developed the first two steps of what is known today as the scientific method. This is the process used by scientists to study something. First, Thales collected information. Then, based on what he observed, he formed a hypothesis, or possible explanation. Aristotle provided a third step in the scientific method when he said that a hypothesis must be tested to see if it is correct.

Another important contribution Aristotle made was in logic, or the science of reasoning. He developed the syllogism. This is a method of reasoning that uses three related statements. The third statement is a conclusion based on the information given in the first two. For example:

Athenians are Greeks.

Socrates is an Athenian.

Therefore, Socrates is Greek.

5.Examine ancient Greek religion.

Ans: Although most Greeks held similar religious beliefs, there was no single Greek religion. Greeks were basically Polytheistic and Anthropomorphic. Each city-state worshiped its own gods. Officials in each polis were in charge of public

feasts and sacrifices. In their own homes, heads of families prayed and offered sacrifices to the gods. Greek priests and priestesses often served as oracles, or persons who, it was believed, could speak with the gods. As they were Little concern for after life but had Faith in Oracle. Many Greeks went to oracles for advice. The advice was generally given in the form of a prophecy, or a statement of what might happen in the future. Often, a prophecy could mean more than one thing. The person seeking advice had to decide what he or she believed to be the true meaning of the prophecy. The most popular oracle was a priestess in the temple at Delphi. The Greeks believed that Delphi was the center of the world, and they built many temples and other public buildings there.

Gods and Goddesses of Mount Olympus: During the Golden Age, the Greeks worshiped the gods of Mount Olympus. There were 12 major gods and goddesses. Each had specific duties to carry out. Most ancient peoples feared their gods. They believed that people were put on Earth only to obey and serve the gods. The Greeks were the first people to feel differently. They placed importance on the worth of the individual. Because they believed in their own value, the Greeks had a great deal of self-respect. This allowed them to approach their gods with dignity. The Greeks built temples to honor their gods. Inside each temple stood a statue of the god being honored. In front of the statue was an altar. Because the Greeks believed the temple was the god's home, they did not enter it. They worshiped outside, as a sign of respect. Another way the Greeks honored their gods was with different kinds of festivals. Each showed the power of the god in whose honor it was given. Out of the festivals came two important contributions to western culture. These were the Olympic Games and the theater.

The Olympic Games: Every four years, in the middle of summer, a festival was held in Olympia to honor the god Zeus. Olympia was not really a town. It was a group of temples and arenas built in fields. A 40-foot, or 12-meter, gold and ivory statue of Zeus stood in one of the temples. The festival was known as the Olympic Games. It was the most important sporting event in Greece. While the games were going on, the Greeks would stop fighting any war in which they

were involved. When the Spartans refused to call a truce during the Peloponnesian War to compete in the games, they had to pay a fine. Athletes came from all over Greece and from Greek colonies in Africa, Italy, and Asia Minor to take part in the games. Individuals, rather than teams, competed. Only men were allowed to take part. Women were not even allowed to watch. Each athlete had to swear on the sacred boar of Zeus that he would follow the rules of the games. Those who broke the rules were fined.

OLYMPIAN GODS AND GODDESSES

Name	Realm
Zeus	ruler of Mount Olympus; king of the gods; god of the weather
Aphrodite	goddess of love and beauty
Apollo	god of the sun; patron of truth, archery, music, medicine, and prophecy
Ares	god of war
Artemis	goddess of the moon; mighty huntress and "rainer of arrows"; guardian of cities, young animals, and women; twin sister of Apollo
Athena	goddess of wisdom; city god of Athens; patron of household crafts; protectress in war of those who worshiped her; daughter of Zeus
Demeter	goddess of crops, giver of grain and fruit
Dionysus	god of fertility, of joyous life and hospitality, and of wild things
Hephaestus	god of fire and artisans; maker of Pandora, the first mortal woman; husband of Aphrodite
Hera	protectress of marriage, children, and the home; wife of Zeus
Hermes	god of orators, writers, and commerce; protector of thieves and mischief-makers; guardian of wayfarers; messenger to mortals; son of Zeus
Poseidon	god of the sea and earthquakes; giver of horses to mortals



The Theater: The theater grew out of festivals given in honor of the god Dionysus. About 600 B.C., the Ionians began telling stories about Dionysus at festivals. A chorus chanted and danced each story to the music of a flute. At certain points, the chorus fell silent. The chorus leader then gave a soliloquy, or talk in which personal thoughts and feelings are expressed to the audience. In time, the chorus became shorter and the soliloquies longer. Stories were then told about other gods and heroes. About the time of the Persian Wars, a Greek poet named Aeschylus added an additional character to each story. Now, instead of singing or telling a story, it was acted out. Thus, Aeschylus created what came to be known as a play. The first Greek plays were tragedies, or stories about suffering.

6.How was oracle practiced in ancient Greece?

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