



Chapter 9

Greek Humanism, 800–100 B.C.E.

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Chapter Chronology

776 B.C.E.

First Olympic Games

c. 600–c. 500 B.C.E.

Pre-Socratic philosophers

c. 500–c. 300 B.C.E.

Classical Age

470–399 B.C.E.

Socrates

c. 427–347 B.C.E.

Plato

384–322 B.C.E.

Aristotle

c. 300–50 B.C.E.

Hellenistic Age in eastern Mediterranean



Greek Contribution to Civilization

- Hellenic Culture
 - Classical Greece
 - Great achievements in arts & philosophy
- Hellenistic Culture
 - After Alexander the Great's conquests
 - Synthesis of Greek and Asian culture
 - Advances in science



Philosophy: the Love of Wisdom

- Philosophy means “love of wisdom”
- Systematic examination of entire spectrum of human knowledge
- Three periods:
 - Pre-Socratic Period: early writings to Socrates 470–399 BCE
 - Classical Age: from Socrates to 300 BCE
 - Hellenistic Era: 300 to 50 BCE



Pre-Socratic Philosophy

- Greatest contribution: concept of law in the universe
 - Cosmos was result of laws of causation, thus understandable and predictable
 - Did not look to gods for explanations of phenomena
- Natural law – set of phenomena in nature which explain why certain things happen
- Anaximander
 - Theory of natural evolution of species
 - Universe without limits
- Hippocrates
 - Founder of scientific medicine
 - First great empiricist in natural sciences

The Classical Age (Slide 1 of 3)

Socrates (470-399 BCE)

- Focus was on questions of ethics and truth
- Socratic method: Systematic questioning
- Challenged students to examine, justify everything before accepting it
- Accused of poisoning minds of the youth
 - Found guilty
 - Forced to drink hemlock poison

The Classical Age (Slide 2 of 3)

Plato (427-347 BCE)

- Pupil of Socrates
- Tried to solve problem of how to recognize truth and reality (**Metaphor of the Cave**)
- Analysis of how politics were and should be (**The Republic, Laws**)
- Anti-democratic views because of the turmoil it created in Greece

The Classical Age (Slide 3 of 3)

Aristotle (384-322 BCE)

- Student of Plato
- Interested in every form of science
- Formal rules of logic
- Best-known works are **Politics, Physics, Metaphysics**
- Mathematician, astronomer, botanist, student of medicine
- Later referred to as the Master or Philosopher in both Christendom and the Islamic World.

Hellenistic Philosophies (Slide 1 of 3)

Cynicism

- Diogenes, major proponent
- Called for
 - Absolute simplicity
 - Rejection of artificial divisions: political or economic
 - Rigid poverty and absence of egotism
- Influential ideas, though few practitioners

Hellenistic Philosophies (Slide 2 of 3)

Epicureanism

- Founder Epicurus
- Principle of life is pleasure, avoidance of pain
- Not self-indulgence in physical sensations
- Inner peace through consciously rejecting values and prejudices of others and turning inward to discover what is important to you
- Focus on finding own serenity and ignoring world affairs

Hellenistic Philosophies (Slide 3 of 3)

Stoicism

- Founder – Zeno, freed Phoenician slave
- Beliefs
 - Unity of all humanity
 - Disdain for social conventions
 - Natural law governs human affairs
 - Good people obliged to participate in public life to help less fortunate
 - Virtue is its own reward
- Had large following in Greece and was popular among Roman leadership

Greek Science (Slide 1 of 3)

- Science flourished in Hellenistic period
 - Greek philosophers sought to understand nature through rational, logical inquiry
 - Aristotle insisted on careful observation
 - Babylonian and Egyptian mathematics and astronomy spread through Hellenistic world
 - Alexandria, Egypt, had world's largest library, stimulated research
 - Greatest advances came in biology, astronomy, geography, physics, and math

Greek Science (Slide 2 of 3)

- Astronomy
 - Aristarchus of Samos – heliocentric theory of universe
 - Hipparchus of Nicea – challenged heliocentric theory
 - Ptolemy – geocentric theory of universe, prevailed until 16th c.
- Geography
 - Eratosthenes – calculated circumference of earth; maps
- Physics, Mathematics
 - Archimedes – specific gravity
 - Euclid – **Elements of Geometry**

Greek Science (Slide 3 of 3)

- Hellenistic inventions:
 - Mechanical arrow-firing catapults, stone-throwing ballistae – Philo
 - Water clock
 - Pipe organ
 - Water screw -- Archimedes
 - **Antikythera mechanism** – mechanical analog computer
- Labor-saving scientific applications not in demand due to abundant labor supply

Greek Religion (Slide 1 of 3)

- Greeks were polytheistic; had anthropomorphic gods
 - Creatures molded in the human image with foibles and strengths of men and women
- Gods personified forces of nature
 - Zeus – fatherhood
 - Hera -- motherhood
 - Poseidon – god of sea
 - Athena – goddess of wisdom and war
 - Apollo – god of sun
 - Demeter – goddess of fertility
- Gods were less threatening, less powerful than other people's gods
- No priestly class

Greek Religion (Slide 2 of 3)

- Greek civilization of the Hellenic era was **humanistic**:
 - Human beings were second to gods
 - Human race related to race of gods
 - Both descended from the Earth Goddess
 - Confidence in human qualities and ability of humans to solve any problem
 - “Man is the measure of all things” was reflected in art, philosophy, religion

Greek Religion (Slide 3 of 3)

- As in China, ethics came from philosophy, not religion
- Philosophical assumptions
 - Unavoidable Fate – gods and man are subject to fate
 - **Golden Mean**
 - Choose middle ground
 - Avoid extremes of thought and action
 - **Hubris** – overconfidence, personal pride
 - Person who claimed to have perfect solution was guilty of it

Hellenistic Mystery Religions (Slide 1 of 2)

- Worship of Greek gods like Zeus and Athena died out in the East
- Greek immigrants turned to native cults:
 - Offered eternal life or earthly prosperity
 - Provided emotional support and dealt with longing for security
- Popular cults
 - Isis – Egyptian goddess of resurrection and renewal
 - Mithra – Persian sun god becomes god of eternal life
 - Serapis – Greco-Egyptian god replaced Osiris as god of the underworld and judge of souls

Hellenistic Mystery Religions (Slide 2 of 2)

- Characteristics of **mystery religions**
 - Demanded faith over reason
 - Promised eternal life - life would overcome death
 - Afterworld more pleasant place than present
 - Deities were universal gods
 - Stage was set for the triumph of Christianity



Classical Greek Art & Architecture

- Classical Hellenic art of 5th c. expressed
 - Harmony, symmetry, balance
 - Grace, strength
 - Ideal beauty of human body
- Examples
 - Architecture – Parthenon
 - Sculpture – Myron's **Discus Thrower**
- Crafts – ceramics, vases. jugs



Classical Greek Literature

Poetry

- Sappho, Hesiod

Drama

- Tragedy: Euripedes, Aeschylus, Sophocles
- Comedy: Aristophanes

Art and Literature in the Hellenistic Age

Literature

- Artistic inspiration and execution declined
- Many imitators, but few original thinkers
- Main centers of literature: Alexandria, Rhodes, Pergamum, not in Athens or Greece

Sculpture and architecture – impressive, realistic style

- More great sculpture and buildings created in the East than in Greece
 - Richest cities, wealthiest inhabitants in East
 - Copied earlier forms; much second-class work
- Examples: **Laocoön, The Dying Gaul, and The Old Shepherdess**



Society and Economy

Classical Greece

- Most Greeks farmed
- **Polis** was the heart of Greek life
 - Small place with racially and culturally homogenous inhabitants
- Education essential for participatory government

Hellenistic Age

- True urban civilization – towns/cities more important than rural areas
- Alexandria in Egypt, Antioch in Syria, and Susa in Persia dominated
- Towns were centers of commerce and learning with museums, libraries, and amusement halls
- Sense of community - came from different social and ethnic groups
- Greek language remained the tongue of the cultured, but Eastern way of life and thought became predominant

Slavery

- Numerous slaves (both Greek and foreign) in Hellenic era
 - Usually prisoners of war, debtors, criminals
 - Slave status usually not lifelong or inherited
 - Not normally abused (except in silver mines)
 - Many were highly prized and skilled
- Changes in Hellenistic era
 - Number of slaves rose
 - Slavery could be for life
 - Slavery could be hereditary

Gender Relations

Hellenic Period

- Women excluded from direct political and economic power
- Tragic heroines: Electra, Antigone, Medea, Cassandra and Artemis
- Anti-female prejudice in later Greek literature, not in Homeric period
- Spartan women were free and equal; respectable Athenian women were limited to the home
- Women served as oracles and priestesses in mystery cults
 - **Maenads** – frenetic followers of Dionysus

Hellenistic Period

- Status of women rose in Hellenistic and Roman imperial eras
- No longer property of husbands/fathers, but independent and legal
- Homosexuality relatively common among educated