

# GREEK CULTURE: AN ESSAY

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MANY threads contribute to form the complex pattern of a culture—geographical, racial, economic, political, scientific, artistic, religious, and philosophical, and, certainly, temporal circumstances. Some acquaintance with this total Greek pattern is essential if we are to understand the values expressed in Greek literature.

A glance at the map of Europe will reveal the strategic position of Greece. "Europa Minor" it has been rightly called. This peninsula is the stepping stone from Asia to Europe; hundreds of little islands in the Aegean Sea led the way from the home of our earliest great cultures in Asia and Egypt to the mainland of Europe. Easy communication by sea was one of the chief geographical factors in the development of Greece. Everywhere were bays and estuaries, promontories and protecting headlands. And the sea was a friendly one, with no tides, no formidable distances between landing places. The Mediterranean is, in fact, a great lake, beautiful as well as useful; poets since Homer have sung of its exquisite color, its jeweled islands gleaming as the sunlight falls on their clean, limestone shores.

The country itself is composed of ridges of mountains, with small valleys lying between. These are not vast mountains; the highest one, Olympus, rises only about 10,000 feet. But they do effectively separate one plain from another, so that many settlements had no convenient outlet except to the coast.

The people who lived in these surroundings found the climate a favorable one for outdoor activity nearly all the year around. Except for a few weeks of heavy rainfall in the late autumn, Greece is a land of sunlight. Yet the sun is not often oppressively hot; even in summer the prevailing trade winds blow steadily and keep the atmosphere from becoming humid.

The soil, however, has never been favorable for easy living. Fertile plains are few, and even there the soil is thin and poor in comparison with our river valleys and Western plains. Greece has no rivers of importance; often irrigation had to be resorted to in an effort to make the earth yield enough to support the people. On the low slopes of the hills the chief products were raised: olives and grapes, and flocks of sheep and goats. Higher up there were forests of oak and chestnut, then beeches and evergreens, and finally alpine foliage nearer the summits of the mountains. The mountains contained scattered deposits of minerals—silver, lead, zinc, iron.

Insofar as surroundings influence human development we might expect to find in Greece a healthy, hard-working people. Sunlight and fresh breezes from the sea and conditions rugged enough to challenge men's energies are factors in making people healthy and enterprising. We would not expect them to be moody, introspective, romantic. An environment characterized by clear outlines, sharp, vivid colors, and well-defined forms does not usually produce either mysticism or morbidness. Directness, clarity, and common sense we might expect to find in the Greeks. As there is variety in the landscape, so in the people we might expect versatility. And the isolation of communities favored independence. Small local settlements could often flourish without danger from their neighbors across the mountains; with the communities there could easily develop a strong sense of local loyalty, of communal self-reliance. Finally, where could one expect to find a keener feeling for beauty? The land itself in design and color is a work of art. Lacking overpowering grandeur and mystery, it had nevertheless those qualities of symmetry, fine proportion, and intense color which stimulate discerning eyes and minds. Without laying too much stress on

geographical factors, we may see in them a strong formative influence on the values cherished by the Greeks.

A rapid historical survey of Greek development may be roughly divided into the following four periods:

Heroic Age	2000-1100 B.C.
Transitional Age	1100-700 B.C.
Classical Age	700-323 B.C.
Pioneers	
Fifth Century	
Fourth Century	
Hellenistic Age	323-146 B.C.

Little is known about the inhabitants of Greece prior to 2000 B.C., although they were probably of Mediterranean stock. About that date there came into the peninsula wave after wave of nomad tribes from the north; a robust, youthful race of Alpine type, splendid fighters, with a language, religion, and social organization which were to form the basis of later Greek culture. It was from the amalgamation of the Mediterranean people and these northerners that the Greek people whom we shall study emerged. How the tribes of Ionians and Achaeans profited from the Mediterranean influences, especially those of the flourishing civilization centering in Crete, is obvious from the remains unearthed by excavators in such settlements as Mycenae and Pylos.

During such a restless age of migration and conquest, warfare was of course the leading activity. Military prowess was the characteristic which made men respected; kings like Achilles, Agamemnon, and Odysseus were their people's heroes. After the centuries of fighting subsided, stories of the great days of conquest were popular among the princes and nobles of the newly settled cities, especially on the coast of Asia Minor, and professional bards went from court to court singing the traditional accounts of battles. For a long time these songs were not written down because writing was as yet unknown; but ultimately certain selections were chosen by poets and fused into more or less unified poems. The *Iliad* remains as one of these works. The *Odyssey* was similarly composed, probably rather later, from legends, folklore, and fictional elements centering around the exploration of the Mediterranean and early commercial ventures.

The world described by Homer is one of ad-

venture, of war and plunder, of the allegiance of fighting men to their leaders. The tribe, composed of many clans, is the basic institution; it is led by a king, but the leaders of the clans form a council of nobles whom he consults, and all the people meet in assembly to hear the policies explained and voice their opinion regarding them. Agriculture is the chief means of peaceful subsistence; land belongs to the tribe and is temporarily allotted to its members. Industry and commerce are in a primitive stage. The principal amusements are banquets, athletic meets, and listening to the recital of poets. The ethics of war are enlightened: men who fight part "reconciled in friendship"; there are truces for the burial of the dead; poisoned arrows are taboo; respect for themselves and for others saves these fighters from much of the cruelty associated with warfare. And they are not unreflective upon the mystery of life and the sorrows of mankind.

To the Heroic Age succeeded that more trying time when the warriors settled down and began to face the problems of peace. Less spectacular this, the adjustment to new conditions of community living by people who had previously been wanderers relying on plunder instead of agriculture, craftsmanship, and commerce to win them a living. The process was a slow and difficult one. During the period to about 700 B.C., little was produced from which we can see what was happening. But in hundreds of towns new conditions of life were being slowly but effectively forged, and cities were laying the foundations of a stable government and economic security. The rule of land-owning aristocrats supplanted that of kings; traders from Phoenicia brought imports from Egypt and the Orient which stimulated Greek craftsmen, and, most important of all, an alphabet which the Greeks appropriated. The life of the common people was hazardous; the stronger and more cunning nobles acquired most of the land and often reduced the workers to a state of serfdom. Life was not easy in this age of transition. An echo of the hardships comes to us in the writings of Hesiod, who advised his fellow-farmers how to live as tolerably as possible in a cruel world.

But finally from this period of ferment was born an orderly and progressive civilization. The period from 700 to 500 B.C. was one of rapid advance in many directions. The city-states were

solving their economic and political problems, were profiting from growing commercial contacts, and were finding more leisure for the enjoyment of life. This is the time of Greek adolescence, when men relished a spirit of conscious growth, curiosity, and delight in the new, unfolding world.

Cities that had previously been self-sufficient agricultural towns now grew to be centers of trade. Coined money, invented by the Lydians, was quickly utilized by all the Greeks. The economic distress of the farmers was partly met by a colonization movement which relieved the overpopulation at home and opened new sources of supply and markets all over the Mediterranean. It was a period of the rise of the common man. Solon's reforms in Athens gave the people new economic security and political and judicial powers of such importance that he has justly been called "the father of democracy." The power of the nobles was undermined by unconstitutional rulers called tyrants, who relied upon popular support for their success. In those years of comparative peace, commerce and the arts flourished. Athletic games, local and international, were established, along with artistic and religious festivals; architects, sculptors, and vase-painters were active; poets wrote with the enthusiasm of freedom, and men began for the first time fearlessly to speculate on the nature of the physical world. This cultural flowering was most marked in the Ionian cities of Asia Minor, in the islands, and at Athens.

The final episode of the pioneer period was the repulse of Persia. The one serious menace to the further development of Greece lay in the extension of the great Persian Empire to the islands and continental Greece. Few chapters in history are more stirring than that of Herodotus which tells of the Greek refusal to submit to Persia's demands and of the almost incredible victories at Marathon and Salamis. The Greek cities emerged from the trial confident of their own powers, ready to build on the foundation laid by pioneers the splendid structure of maturity.

It was the Athenian navy which played the leading role in the defeat of Persia, and during the fifth century Athens became the dominant city of Greece in political and economic power and in cultural leadership. Profiting from the Spartan policy of isolation, Athens assumed the leader-

ship of the Delian Confederacy, a league of over two hundred Greek cities formed to protect themselves from further Persian aggression. Gradually this league became virtually an Athenian Empire. Athens, at home devoted to freedom and individuality, refused to allow her subject states the same rights that she herself enjoyed. Sparta, autocratic and repressive of minorities at home, realized the danger to herself and her allies of such power in the hands of a democratic government, and proclaimed herself the champion of the rights of small states. Corinth, formerly the leading commercial city, saw her trade being strangled by Athens. In 431, war on a major scale broke out between Athens and a coalition of Sparta, Corinth, and Thebes. It lasted nearly thirty years, and it resulted in such draining of resources, human and material, that the cities engaged in it never fully recovered. Thucydides was the historian of this momentous conflict.

From that time until the conquest of Greece by Philip of Macedon there was a succession of wars, with the military supremacy passing from Athens to Sparta and then to Thebes. Philip, using all the military, political and propagandistic devices of dictators, began the invasion which was completed by Alexander the Great. Alexander was more than a military conqueror; he was also a missionary. Trained in his youth by Aristotle and devoted to the culture which Athens had created, he imposed on Asia Minor, Asia, and Egypt not only garrisons of soldiers but also colonies of Greeks. He began the process later continued by Rome, of making Greek culture international. Following his death, his empire was split into three parts—Europe, Asia, and Africa—and imperial unity was supplanted by the growth of local city kingdoms such as Antioch and Pergamon, Rhodes and Alexandria, which challenged both the commercial and cultural eminence of Athens. Alexandria in particular came to be the great university center of the world, with its famous library and its schools of science, literary criticism, and art. Oriental influences were sweeping in, bringing new luxury, new fashions, new religions.

The final act in this historical drama is the conquest of Greece by Rome. Macedon was defeated in 197 B.C.; in 146 B.C. the Achaean League was crushed; and in 86 B.C., after Athens had supported the campaign of Mithridates of

Pontus, Sulla sacked the city. Thereafter Greece became simply a part of the Roman Empire. But if Rome won the military victory, Greece was the cultural conqueror. Wealthy Romans sent their sons to Athens for their education; Greek teachers and artists were summoned to Italy; Greek architecture and sculpture, literature, religion, and philosophy were adopted by the Romans. Across Europe, Asia, and Africa, where Roman power extended, the culture of Greece spread. The seeds from the dying tree of Hellas were scattered to the four winds, to sprout into new life all over the world.

THE STAGE has been set, and we have reviewed the bare outlines of the plot of Greek development. It remains to do something much more important: to discover, if we can, the motives and aims of the characters, to understand the forces that shaped their evolution. What were the social conditions under which they lived? What enjoyment did they find in life? What were their views of the nature of the world and of man? These are the questions we must now ask about the Greeks, especially those who created the flower of Greek civilization in fifth- and fourth-century Athens.

In economic institutions we shall find probably the most striking difference between that ancient and our modern life. The Greeks were living in a world infinitely simpler and less complicated in this respect than our own. It was a world of handicraft rather than the machine, of limited resources, of small-scale production, modest competition and advertising, and the mere beginnings of a banking and credit system. The enormous creation and exploitation of wealth which have been developed since the Industrial Revolution were undreamed of. And the consequent standards, whereby we judge men's happiness in terms of material conveniences and men's prestige in terms of financial success, were also largely foreign to Greece. It may seem to us the strangest difference of all that in fifth-century Athens men were highly civilized without being what we would call comfortable, and that many, perhaps most, of the citizens regarded "business" as less important than politics.

The population of Athens in 430 B.C. has been estimated as around 425,000 including adult males as follows: citizens, 40,000; resident

aliens, 25,000; slaves, 55,000. Now it is obvious that such a population could not be fed by the farmers of Attica. Most of the grain had to be imported. In order to provide goods for exchange, many industries had been developed during the sixth century—pottery, textiles, leather goods, jewelry—so that Athens became a thriving industrial and commercial center, importing workers from abroad and protecting with her navy the vital trade route to the Black Sea. But judged by modern standards the industry and commerce were of a very simple sort. Individual craftsmen had their little shops, seldom employing more than half a dozen assistants; contracts were made, but without much formality; there were no fixed prices, little credit, no system of competitive bargaining, no advertising campaigns. Among the experts and apprentices in each field there were organized guilds, which took pride in their standards of workmanship. The men engaged in commerce took a risk on every cargo, shipping what they hoped would bring good prices in a foreign market, from which they would bring back what was available for sale in Athens. Such ways of doing business encouraged caution and resulted in economic conservatism.

Much of this business was gladly entrusted to foreigners and slaves; the Athenian citizens insisted on as much time as they could afford for politics and sports, festivals and conversation, which they greatly preferred to being cramped over a bench or an office desk. Yet they must not be thought of as a leisure-class people. Only a small percentage of them did not have to work for a living, on farm or in factory, and fully half of the citizens were what we would call day laborers. Labor was so esteemed that there were laws against idleness, and fathers were expected to teach their sons trades. But it seems clear that in comparison with the attitude of our times the Athenians had modest economic ambition and a real distaste for too much devotion to mere business.

Two economic problems invite special consideration: the control of wealth by the government and the situation of those residents who were not citizens.

With the exception of a small tax levied on aliens, Athens had no system of personal taxation. People of unusual wealth in the city, whether

citizens or foreigners, were expected regularly to make donations for public purposes, such as naval construction or musical and dramatic festivals. Commerce was carefully regulated. Duties were levied on exports and imports; a bureau of standards kept strict watch of weights and measures and the purity of goods; the coinage was never debased. For running expenses the city relied upon money from fines and revenues from state property, such as the silver mines. The obligation to workers and the families of soldiers was recognized; doles were paid to disabled workmen, grants were provided so that the poorer citizens could spare time from their work to participate in political activity and festivals, and the orphans of men killed in war received pensions.

Resident aliens were restricted in the ownership of land, but otherwise they were allowed to profit in every way from being in Athens. Many of the foremost artisans and professional and businessmen in the city were foreigners. The restrictions imposed on slaves (chiefly war captives) were, of course, much greater. The less gifted among them were consigned to the hardest of tasks, such as mining, or were sold to individuals for work in homes or factories. The able ones were given state jobs as artisans on public work projects, clerks, or members of the police force. There they wore no distinguishing dress or brand, could become foremen directing citizens if their talents warranted, received the same pay as free workers, and could often save from it enough to buy their freedom. Obviously these are not the economic conditions usually associated with slavery. If, as is often said, the institution of slavery freed the Athenians for cultural activity, they acknowledged the debt by giving slaves an extraordinary amount of economic opportunity.

DEMOCRACY is a Greek word; and in Athens both the theory and the practice of democracy found their first expression. The practice was, of course, imperfect: aliens, slaves, and women were denied the right to vote. But among the Athenian citizens it was carried to a point which has rarely if ever been attained since.

How true this is appears when we study the life of the average Athenian. On any given day, one out of approximately every six citizens was

engaged in some form of public service. The final decision on all matters of state policy was made by a majority decision of the citizens in public assembly. The agenda for these meetings were prepared and the laws administered by a council of five hundred citizens, chosen yearly by lot. Judicial cases were tried by jurors chosen from an annual panel of six thousand, also picked by lot. By constant rotation of office, any citizen of Athens might in the course of a few years expect to serve as a councilor, a juror, and an administrator in various civil offices, as well as constantly taking part in the passing of legislation in meetings of the assembly. Every Athenian might literally expect to be president, for the head of the government was chosen daily from the fifty members of the Council who were in active service during each month.

Here we have, not a representative democracy, but a direct one; instead of officials being elected or appointed for long terms they were, with a few exceptions, such as the generals, chosen by lot for annual terms; instead of laws being made by various groups checking and balancing one another, most of them could be immediately changed by a single vote of the assembly; instead of a professional judiciary to decide cases or instruct jurors, each legal case was decided by ordinary citizens on what they considered its merits.

Our first reaction to such a system of government is that it must necessarily have been clumsy and inefficient, relying upon inexperienced men, since a large majority of the citizens came from the working class. But upon reflection we must recognize that these men were not inexpert or inexperienced. Democracy provided a constant education in public affairs of the broadest scope, including the control of domestic and international policy in every conceivable area; the citizens learned their political science from actual experience. Graft and the building of political machines were discouraged by the device of selection by lot. Enforcement of law was rendered easier because the citizens were aware that they made their own laws and could change them readily. The system was, of course, far from perfect. Contemporary criticisms leveled against it of capricious judgment, intolerance, and even mob hysteria in times of emergency, were sometimes justified. But the chief evidence of its substantial success is the record of cultural achieve-

ment made by Athens under such a democratic government.

THE SAME restriction that applied to women in Athenian politics applied to girls in Athenian education. Up to the age of seven all children were told the time-honored stories of national heroes and played games together. After that the girls learned their lessons in their homes, a practical course in domestic art and science. The boys went daily to private schools, accompanied by a servant (pedagogue) whose duty it was to see that they minded their manners, did not play truant, and met with no trouble. They were taught reading, writing, and arithmetic, but the chief attention was given to the memorizing of poetry, playing the lyre, and gymnastics. The stories of heroes were supposed to inspire boys to copy their courage, ingenuity, and devotion to the public welfare; the rhythm and harmony of music were believed to "penetrate into the inward places of the soul and affect it powerfully"; the physical education aimed to develop endurance, skill, and sound coordination of body and mind. Boys who showed special ability to athletics received additional training to fit them for taking part in the city's athletic festivals and for representing Athens in the Panhellenic games held at Olympia, Delphi, Nemea, and the Isthmus of Corinth. The events included foot races, chariot and horse races, endurance races in full armor; field events in boxing, wrestling, and the pancratium, a fierce struggle for supremacy in strength permitting almost any kind of bodily attack; and the pentathlon, a comprehensive test including the broad jump, discus and javelin throwing, running, and wrestling.

At the age of fourteen the poorer Athenian boys went into various trades as apprentices, and except for their two years of military service, in which all Athenians from eighteen to twenty participated, had no further formal education. They had to rely on their own shrewd observation, their political experience, and the attendance at musical and dramatic festivals for their broader understanding of life. But the boys whose families had enough wealth to afford it enjoyed, in addition to more mathematics and rhetoric, the advanced instruction provided by two sorts of teachers, the scientists and the Sophists. Men like Anaxagoras and Democritus, physicists who

were formulating theories about the nature of the world, spent much of their time in Athens, and while there were surrounded by eager young disciples. Other teachers, like Protagoras and Gorgias, did not claim to possess such scientific knowledge; they were, however, widely versed in information of a practical sort and taught men how to succeed in the competition of life by developing the ability to reason clearly about human problems, express themselves effectively, and understand better their fellows. Such education was far afield from the traditional sort; instead of making boys good citizens in the accepted way, obedient to their elders and the customs of the city, it encouraged them to criticize popular beliefs and to follow a philosophy of individual success. The more conservative people of Athens resented this attitude on the part of their sons; Aristophanes in the *Clouds* is speaking for them when he holds up to scorn and ridicule a caricatured Socrates, who is pictured as combining the worst characteristics of both physicists and Sophists.

The actual Socrates was neither a physicist nor a Sophist. He, too, was surrounded by young fellows, especially those of the aristocratic class, who relished his radical enquiry into the meaning of such facile generalizations as "justice" and "virtue," and the way in which his questions disconcerted the most supposedly successful men in Athens. But he never took money for his teaching, and he never pretended to answer questions for his followers. His mission was to start people thinking for themselves, even on such dangerous subjects as religion and government. It is not strange that he became highly unpopular during the later years of the Peloponnesian War and was eventually put to death as a subversive citizen. But because he taught not dogma but a sound and stimulating method of thinking, his influence on later intellectual leaders was incomparable. Plato and Aristotle founded schools of their own, the Academy and the Lyceum, where they taught not only the method of Socrates but some of the conclusions which men arrive at after such thinking. Plato's *Republic* is the first great analysis of human society; Aristotle's encyclopedic works covered many fields in science, politics, literature, and philosophy. The Cynics, Stoics, and Epicureans were also profoundly influenced by the ideas of Socrates.

IN THE arts—music, the dance, drama, literature, architecture, painting, and sculpture—the Greeks found joy in life and created forms which have been widely adopted in the later history of European culture. The analysis of a few of them will give us the clue to their greatness.

When we examine Greek buildings they seem rather simple. The plan is usually a rectangular mass, crowned with a gable roof and relying on rows of columns for its chief effect. Sometimes the form is circular; occasionally, as in the Erechtheum, it is irregular, but there is never any intricacy of essential design. Simplicity is its first characteristic. But as we study more in detail the architecture of the Greeks we find it is by no means as simple as we would at first suppose. Content with a plain essential form, the Greeks invested it with subtle refinement and variety which made it a living and glowing thing.

When we look at the Parthenon, for example, we are impressed first of all by its outward simplicity and dignity, its logical construction, planned with a mathematically exact relationship of the various parts. But it is not a cold and mechanical simplicity. The lines are not absolutely horizontal and vertical; they are delicately curved, so that the flexibility of life is in them. The base across the front rises in the center nearly three inches, and is slightly convex; the course over the columns has a slightly backward slope, and the cornice above bends gently outward; the side walls slope in toward the top. The columns diminish in diameter as they mount upward, with a slight swelling about a third of the way up. They are fluted, so that the shadows cast upon them repeat their curves and emphasize their mass as well as their grace. The capitals are also complex in their calculated proportions and curvatures. Furthermore there is decoration lavishly applied to the nonstructural parts of the building; the pediments and metopes are filled with a rich variety of sculptured figures, and the dividing lines between the various parts of the building are marked and the transitions softened by elaborate mouldings. This decoration was not merely in cold stone; glowing red and blue color was applied to the sculpture and the mouldings to relieve the eye from the glare of marble under a hot southern sky and to add to the vitality of the whole effect.

Of course temples were not the only buildings

erected by the Greeks, although on them they expended most of their time and care. Their houses were of the simplest sort still popular in Mediterranean lands, boxlike affairs with an interior colonnade around a central court which was open to the sky. For the theater they designed semi-circular rows of seats on the slopes of a hill, the basic design of our modern theaters, and their form of athletic stadium has likewise come down to us.

In their sculpture the same general principles apply. Sculpture was a leading art to the Greeks. They were by nature people who liked to live in a world of clear-cut forms, practical and intellectual as well as aesthetic. So we find sculpture flourishing throughout Greek history as a popular community expression. On their buildings were scenes commemorating the founding of their cities and their ancient triumphs in battle; in their temples and shrines were statues representing their gods; after the festivals and athletic games monuments were erected to the victors. Sculptors were regarded as normal and necessary contributors to the national life; sculptural rivalry was often as keen as athletic or dramatic competition; and the masters of the art, like Phidias and Praxiteles, were held in the highest honor. Since sculpture was so closely related to the life of the people, its development naturally corresponds to the evolution of the Greek character. In the pioneer period there was pioneer sculpture, crude but vigorous, done with the sap and savor of youth. By the fifth century the same poise and harmony was attained in the Parthenon figures that characterized in other ways the Golden Age. Then, as individualism spread during the feverish period of the Greek wars, sculpture became less a community than a private affair; personal portraits and romantic groups succeeded the monumental and idealistic sculpture of the earlier day. During the Hellenistic period, genre scenes from ordinary life became popular, sentimentalism ran riot, and dramatic episodes were emphasized.

The greatness of Greek sculpture in its best period, from about 500 to 300 B.C., is to be understood in terms of its meeting four standards which apply to all great sculpture. First is sensitiveness to the beauty of material. The Greeks knew marble and bronze as few sculptors since have known them; they cut marble with such

warmth and delicacy of surface that the play of light and shade across it gives it the glow of life, and under their hands bronze realized its native smooth, severe beauty. They were also masters of those crisp and flexible lines that appeal to people, physically and psychologically, as right and lovely. The third standard is that of design. Here the logical bent of the Greeks is clear in their creation of delightfully balanced forms. Finally, in their expression of figures in three dimensions, one contour merges into another, the design develops and changes, and a total impression of balance and harmony in depth is realized. The concentration of energy and power in Greek sculpture is nonetheless potent because it is expressed with a breadth of modeling which keeps it from becoming fussy and trivial.

To the Greeks the drama was much more than an amusing spectacle; it was rooted in religious tradition. It dealt with urgent problems of individual and social experience and offered intellectual and moral as well as aesthetic interpretations of life. Everyone expected to see the plays during the great religious festivals; they were produced by the community, and the actors were respected as important contributors to the city's life.

The sheer spectacle appealed to the Greeks; their drama resembled our grand opera as well as our plays. Between the episodes of action a chorus in many-colored costumes danced to music the emotional interpretation of what had happened; the characters were dressed, and they spoke and moved, in a manner above that of ordinary life; often a god was introduced toward the end to heighten the spectacular effect. But essentially the tragedies had to do with themes involving the conflicts between individuals, between individuals and social forces, or between individuals and that universal force which was called Necessity or Destiny. Aeschylus was especially concerned with the operation of the moral law in its historical evolution, Sophocles with the conflict between men and social institutions, Euripides with the struggle of will and emotion between individuals.

Comedies were also part of the great city festivals. The greatest writer of these plays, Aris-

tophanes, was first of all a robust and hearty comedian, using all the tricks of his trade: outlandish speech, caricature, impossible situations following one another at breakneck speed, and fantasy. But he was too typically Athenian to be content with provoking laughs; he was also a social critic, leveling his fire at the leaders of Athens with whose policies he disagreed. The Sophists he regarded as subversive, Pericles as a selfish imperialist, Euripides as a charlatan, war agitators and profiteers as beneath contempt, the Athenian democracy as a pampered and befuddled mob. He did not mince words in saying what he thought; and because he said it so cleverly and so courageously the crowd enjoyed listening, even though his point of view was usually far different from their own.

WE HAVE already seen how large a place religion had in Greek experience. The dramas and athletic games were connected with religious festivals; the chief buildings were temples to the gods; the most famous sculpture was dedicated to divinities. Yet it seems a strange religion, with its scores of great and lesser gods, corresponding to all sorts of natural phenomena and aspects of human experience, its lack of any sacred book or powerful priests, its richly imaginative and inconsistent mythology, its general disregard of dogma and ethical precepts. The gods, to most Greeks, were not distinguished by their moral greatness but by their superhuman power, beauty, and immortality. As administrators of Destiny they could control the affairs of men, so they were to be treated with deference and respect, worshipped with prayer and sacrifice. But it was ritual rather than dogma or ethics which was at the heart of Greek religion. Every citizen expected to offer sacrifices to the friendly gods of his farm and his home; to cunning Hermes if he engaged in trade; to Poseidon if he went on a sea voyage; to Hephaestus if he was an artisan. Before battle an Athenian prayed to Athena Promachos, the defender of the city, who was also, as Athena Parthenos, the virgin goddess of administrative sagacity. Artemis was the patron of hunters and the helper of women in childbirth. The god of health, patron of the arts and prophecy, was Apollo. Ares was the universal Greek god of warfare, Hera the domestic divinity,

Aphrodite the goddess of beauty, and Zeus, father of the gods, the court of last resort, to whose will both gods and men must bow. To these gods, in scores of festivals throughout the year, the Greek cities gave their tribute of praise and supplication; in their honor processions, songs, and games were held; temples were built to please them, and burnt offerings smoked on the altars.

One consolation of religion these gods did not provide: the assurance of a blessed immortality. This assurance many Greeks found in the worship of other divinities, notably Demeter and Dionysus. Demeter was worshipped in the sacraments of the Eleusinian Mysteries, which included the washing away of impurity and witnessing a symbolic representation of the resurrection of new life. In ecstatic dances the followers of Dionysus lost their consciousness of self and felt the divine madness of sharing in the experience of the god of the Spring rebirth of nature.

The general effect of Greek religion was healthy, picturing as it did a world governed by rational and lovely beings, who were worshipped in correspondingly beautiful rituals. It was also a religion of tolerance, which imposed few restrictions upon the human mind in the form of dogma and creed. For social ethics, however, the Greek relied on the institution which had religion in its keeping: the community itself.

There were, however, among poets and philosophers many who believed that religion and morality cannot be divorced, that the forces which control our world are one in character, and that character is goodness. Euripides and Plato agree in condemning stories about the gods which picture them as less moral than men. Socrates declared that God is responsible, not for the evil in the world, but only for the good. Aeschylus preached of a moral law which controls men's destiny. The Stoics believed that reason rules the universe, in accordance with which one must be a brother to all men.

Many other Greeks were not content with the religious interpretations of the world which were sufficient for the rank and file. As early as the sixth century B.C., scientists began to speculate regarding the nature of the world, enquiring of what substance it is composed, by what processes that substance takes the forms which we see, and what is the explanation of energy. Within the

following two hundred years Greeks stated the atomic theory, the theory of evolution, many correct principles of astronomy and mathematics, and methods of scientific medicine.

We must, however, make two important distinctions between Greek science and our own. First, the Greek discoveries were largely brilliant guesswork, deductive rather than experimental, on the part of a few men; secondly, their discoveries were for the most part theoretical, and were seldom applied practically to make living conditions more convenient.

Even in these two respects, however, the Greeks had outstanding exceptions to the general rule. The biological researches of Aristotle and his followers remain as fine examples of scientific observation and description. In engineering and medicine the Greeks utilized their knowledge effectively as an agency in human progress. Hippocrates diagnosed and treated diseases objectively, and founded a school which continued his methods; sanatoriums were established for the sick, employing athletics and the theater to supplement the harsher therapy of surgery. Alexandria had a school of engineering in which many useful discoveries were made, such as the water screw, the principle of the lever, steam appliances, and measuring machines.

But neither the religious nor the scientific interpretations of life satisfied some Greeks. They were not content to say that the gods rule the world, or that we are atoms in a swirl of mechanically ordered motion. One school of philosophers, the Sophists, declared that the world is for us essentially one of human purposes and skills, and in order to live well we must first study how and why men act as they do in relation to their fellows. Socrates went further in his analysis of human thinking, declaring that "the uncritical life is not worth a man's living." From Plato we may learn to analyze the words we use so glibly, like "justice," "truth," and "freedom"; and he may persuade us that there are such qualities that exist in the nature of things, no matter how our opinions about them change in various times and places. From Aristotle we may learn some of the ways in which the human organism works and the institutions which it has created. We may not follow Epicurus in his frank refusal to concern himself about the gods, to hope

for immortality, or to view the world as more than chance and convention, but we must respect his appreciation of the enduring values of life in the higher qualities of pleasure. And we must certainly render tribute to the rugged faith of the Stoics, who, regardless of the circumstances of a seemingly cruel world, believed that the law of

the universe is reasonable and that men can rise superior to circumstance.

THESE are some of the values which the Greeks created. For the more detailed and richer picture of what they meant, we must go to Greek literature.

THE ILLS OF HOMER

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