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GREEK CIVILIZATION IN THE
FOURTH CENTURY B.C.

If the political development of Greece in the fourth century was based exclusively on the city-state, with its inherent belief in complete political independence, complete self-government, and, as far as possible, economic isolation from the rest of the world—and if this development was fundamentally hostile to any political union whatever to include all Greeks, yet Greek civilization tended more and more to transcend the narrow bounds of the city-state, until it became the common property first of all Hellas and then of all mankind. In the parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa which border on the Mediterranean, the conviction, which had long before been firmly held by the Greeks, now grew up in the minds of the majority, that there was only one civilization, that of the Greek city-state, and that everything outside of it was 'barbarism', i.e. a life under conditions which a Greek considered unworthy of a human being. It is interesting to note that modern historical thought has inherited this point of view from the Greeks. It is still a commonplace to contrast West with East—Greece, as the bearer of a true and unique civilization, with the East, as the possessor of a different civilization, lower than the first and not measurable by the same standards.

Nevertheless the Greeks, consciously in part and subconsciously in part, now impart to their production a more and
more cosmopolitan character, leaving what is local and provincial and characteristic of a single city-state, and proceeding to a result accepted by all Greeks alike. This process is especially clear in art. The local schools, often referred to above, continue to exist; but local peculiarities become less important than the individual genius of the artist and his followers. In architecture, painting, and sculpture we cease to speak of the different schools, Peloponnesian or Ionian or Sicilian: we speak instead of Phidias, Praxiteles, Scopas, Lysippus, Polygnotus, Apelles, and so on. Their statues and paintings appealed to the Greek eye and mind; and every community was eager to adorn its temples, open spaces, and museums with their works.

Applied art adapted itself with special ease to this change in the manner of artistic production. The clients and customers, for whom this industry was carried on, were in many cases not Greeks themselves, though they set a high value on the productions of Greek art. Their taste influenced the work produced, and the Greek artist adapted himself successfully to it. The two chief centres for the sale of Greek articles illustrate most clearly this process: these are Italy and Sicily in the West (and to some extent Gaul and Spain), and Thrace and Scythia in the North and East. In Etruria, Samnium, Campania, and Apulia on the one hand, and at Panticapaeum in the Bosporan kingdom on the other, local schools of Greek art-workers are formed—potters, jewellers, and workers in wood, leather, and metal. These men, while remaining Greeks, add a trifle of local tang which makes their work attractive to their customers, while at the same time it Hellenizes their taste. Thus the Greeks enter on a new path of great historical importance: their civilization attracts men who are not Greeks, and so becomes the common property of the world.

In Asia Minor, and even in Phoenicia and Egypt, the Greeks carry on the same work with remarkable success. Such Anatolian political communities as Lycia and Caria, arising out of satrapies of the decaying Persian kingdom, become more and more Greek
in the external manifestations of their civilization. It is sufficient
to mention the Lycian tombs, covered with reliefs and repro-
ducing, in some cases, paintings of Polygnotus, and the famous
Mausoleum of Halicarnassus. This was the monument erected
over the grave of Mausolus, King of Caria, at Halicarnassus, a
half-Greek city and the capital of the kingdom. The best Greek
artists of the century worked at the adornment of this monu-
ment. For the political future of Greece, however, this peaceful
conquest of foreign nations was disastrous. In Italy, in Asia
Minor, in south Russia, the native inhabitants became more and
more prominent in political affairs, and many Greek cities, lying
on the outskirts of the Greek world, lost their purely national
aspect; many of them were unable to cope with the forces which
they themselves had called forth. And so the foundations were
laid for the Hellenistic kingdoms of the future with their hybrid
civilization.

Her place in the life of the countries bordering on the Medi-
terranean Greece owed to her sublime intellectual triumphs in
the fourth century B.C. In this period also, in spite of political
degradation, in spite of the fact that she was only one of many
Greek states, equally feeble and equally incapable of uniting
Hellas into a single nation, Athens is still the foremost in the
march of civilization. The dialect spoken and written by the
Athenians of the fifth century becomes in the next century the
language of every educated Greek, and banishes all other local
dialects from literature and refined society. To speak Attic and
to write Attic becomes obligatory for every man of education;
and literature written in any other dialect has a merely local
importance. The Attic dialect owed its position to the Athenian
writers, who brought to perfection its expressiveness, its wealth
of vocabulary, the pliancy of its syntax, and the harmony of its
periods in prose and its strains in verse.

Some, indeed, of the literary forms invented by the Athenians
had reached perfection in the fifth century. In these further
development is impossible, and nothing is produced that can
1. Head of the great Athenian philosopher Plato. It is a copy, made in Roman times, of a contemporary or nearly contemporary bust. The portrait is no doubt idealized. Holkham Hall, England.

2. Head of the philosopher Aristotle. Copy, made in Roman times, of a contemporary portrait by a great sculptor of the late 4th century. There is no idealization in the head. It is a true realistic portrait of the greatest scholar of the world. Vienna Museum.

3. Head of the orator and statesman Demosthenes, the great rival of Philip and Alexander, the enthusiastic champion of the Greek city-state and the ardent Athenian patriot. It is a real portrait slightly idealized, part of a copy of the bronze statue by Polyxenus set up in 280 B.C. The famous full-length statue of Demosthenes in the Vatican is a copy of the same original. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.
rival the past. This is the case of tragedy and, to some extent, of comedy. But, on the other hand, new forms of literary creation appear and run their dazzling race. The most conspicuous of these are philosophy and rhetoric. Both were created by the sophists of the fifth century. In the person of Plato Greek philosophy reaches its highest point, alike in form and in substance. This is not the place to speak of what Plato did to deepen and widen Greek speculative thought. His Theory of Ideas, and his doctrine that reason makes the world and himself intelligible to man, laid a foundation for the development of philosophic speculation not only in antiquity but at the present day. For the history of Greek civilization it is important to note that Plato was the first definitely to concentrate his attention, as student and thinker, on man and not on the external world, and that he gave to ethics and politics, regarded by him as inseparable from one another, the precedence over other sciences.

The power to discover truth and understand justice is the first step towards the realization of justice; and this realization is the basis for the moral life of the individual and for the right ordering of government and society. Plato's theory of the state, of which we have already spoken, is founded entirely upon the conception of justice. Criticism of existing constitutions and (to some extent) of Athenian democracy is not for Plato an end in itself: it serves merely as the introduction to an elaborate and detailed scheme for a new political and social system, based upon the realization of abstract justice. That scheme is visionary and Utopian: it takes no account of historical development or human nature; but it remains a true statement of the essential goal, at which all later social reformers have aimed, even when their opinions were diametrically opposed to Plato's.

It is quite possible that Plato himself, especially after his repeated attempts to convert to his philosophy the younger Dionysius, tyrant of Syracuse, realized the Utopian character of his scheme. For he followed up his visionary Republic with a second political treatise called The Laws, in which he not only tried to
show how a Greek city-state might be founded on a rational basis, but also brought together all the scientific conclusions which had been attained by Greeks in law and politics. We have here the first codification of Greek law; and its influence upon the future has been very great.

Plato expounded his views to a scanty band of pupils in the form of lectures, which he delivered in the Academeia, a grove consecrated to the Attic hero, Academus. The lectures were not published, and we do not possess them. But, for the instruction of a wide circle of readers, Plato wrote and published his Dialogues, of which we possess a considerable part. Here in the form of conversations, carried on, as a rule, by Socrates, Plato’s master, with some other person, Plato has expounded in a grand, brilliant, and copious style, his thoughts on various topics, and especially on ethics and politics. The Dialogues are admirable works of literature, in which the Greek language, while preserving all its simplicity and picturesqueness, was first adapted to express all the refinements of philosophic thought. Each dialogue is a finished work of art, and fascinates the reader from beginning to end.

Another pupil of Socrates and founder of a philosophic school was Antisthenes, an Athenian, who began his career as a rhetorician and sophist under the instruction of Gorgias. The business of this school was to define the relation of man to life, and to reconcile man with life and with himself. His preaching was founded on the conviction that earthly goods and the gains of civilization are vain. He called man to asceticism and the simple life; he bade them return to the laws of nature. The stability of mind thus acquired makes a man a king; he cares nothing for external things—food, drink, luxury, a fine dwelling, honour and glory; all such things are ‘indifferent’. Social distinctions are meaningless: all men are brothers, and there is no difference between the slave and the freeman. He alone is free who is master of himself. Because Antisthenes taught in the gymnasium of Cynosarges, the name of Cynic was attached to the school.
The most famous pupil of Antisthenes was Diogenes of Sinope, who lived in the time of Alexander the Great. Cynicism gave birth eventually to Stoicism, so called because its founder, Zeno, taught in the Stoa Poecile or Painted Colonnade.

Yet another pupil of Socrates offered a different solution of the same fundamental question. This was Aristippus of Cyrene. He, too, seeks happiness for man. Starting from a purely materialistic standpoint, the standpoint of Democritus and Antiphon, and insisting on the relativity of our knowledge, he calls on men to trust their feelings. That which procures happiness and pleasure is good. But happiness and pleasure must not be our masters. To conquer them and thus gain true freedom, man has the power of reason. The truly happy man is he who has learned truth and conquered feeling, who is the master of pleasure and not its slave. In these precepts there is no place for religion. It is probable that the gods exist; but they are outside the world and have no concern with it. The chief disciple of Aristippus was Epicurus, always sick and always suffering, but a cheerful sage, who taught his pupils in his 'Garden'.

Aristotle, a pupil of Plato, differs in much from his master. His works have come down to us almost complete: immediately after their appearance they became the companions of every educated man and were used in schools. Aristotle was not an Athenian. He was born in Macedonia, but spent nearly all his life at Athens, first as Plato's disciple, and then as head of his own school, which was called the Peripatetic school, because he preferred to walk about and not to sit while delivering his discourses. Three years he spent in Macedonia at the court of Philip, supervising the education of his son Alexander. He wrote Dialogues, but they have been lost. His lectures, however, which deal with almost every department of contemporary knowledge, have been preserved. As literature these do not rank with the Dialogues of Plato: they show little attention to form, and many of the works which pass under his name were not actually written by him: some are notes of his lectures, taken by his
pupils; others are the work of his pupils, written under his direction. In these lectures Aristotle and his pupils collected all that had been done previously in the different branches of knowledge, revised this matter, threw light upon it, and produced a finished picture of each separate science that was cultivated, more or less successfully, at the time. The sciences were divided by Aristotle into four groups: logic, metaphysics, natural history, and ethics. Rhetoric and politics he treated as a part of ethics; and poetics, or the philosophy of art, had a section to itself. For the history of civilization his works on natural history and ethics are especially important. Under natural history he included physics, astronomy, psychology, zoology, botany, and mineralogy. In all this field the reasoning is based upon experiment, as far as experiment was possible without instruments of precision. Aristotle's work in zoology and botany is especially remarkable: indeed he was the creator of both sciences.

This experimental method was applied by Aristotle to politics as well. Before proceeding to describe in the Politics the normal or preferable forms of government, he made a thorough study of the constitution in 158 Greek and foreign city-states. Other types of community he considered unworthy of attention. But each considerable city was studied historically and systematically by him or one of his pupils, relying upon the best accessible sources. One of these treatises has been preserved—his investigation of the Athenian constitution, and it is the main authority for the constitutional history of Athens. For this work Aristotle used a digest of Athenian history compiled by Androtion and other historical works and documents. Aristotle's Politics, dealing with the city-state in general and the ideal form of constitution, is the fullest and most searching examination we possess of political conditions in Greece, and there is no modern work on the same subject which surpasses it.

The development at Athens of rhetoric, i.e. the art of speaking and writing with grace and ease, was as vigorous as that of philosophy. Practice went hand in hand with theory. The fourth
century produced a number of excellent orators and publicists, whose forensic and political speeches were published in their lifetime, sometimes immediately after delivery, and served as models to the next generation of orators and advocates. A political speech was generally delivered by the writer himself in the popular assembly; but most forensic speeches were written for others to deliver, since the Athenian courts required every defendant to conduct his own defence. Some political speeches were never spoken, but merely published as occasional pamphlets. Isocrates, already mentioned, published most of his political works in this way, and may truly be called the earliest of European journalists.

Lysias and Isaeus must be considered as the most brilliant forensic orators of the century. Demosthenes and Aeschines are not only brilliant advocates but admirable political orators. Many of the speeches of Demosthenes are extant. They were recognized by contemporaries, and have since been recognized by later generations as perfect models of rhetorical art. They combine loftiness and complete sincerity with faultless logical construction; and the marvellous beauty of each sentence and period often produces the impression of music itself. The speeches of Demosthenes show not only genius, but severe study and complete knowledge of the unalterable laws, laid down once for all by theorists of the subject, for musical speech. Apart from their artistic and literary merits, the speeches and political pamphlets of that age are priceless to the historian, because they are the chief source of information concerning the political events of the century, and also tell us of social and economic relations, of civil and criminal law. The first system of Greek law was compiled at Athens; and by degrees Athenian law became the law of all Greeks.

Rhetoric, or the art of speech, spread its influence outside the domain of forensic and political oratory. Every branch of prose literature was affected by it, and history first of all and more than all. History in the fourth century loses the scientific character
which Thucydides tried to impart to it, and becomes little more than a department of artistic prose. The chief business of the historian is not so much to collect, verify, and explain historical facts, as to set them forth in a beautiful and attractive form. This is the main object of Xenophon, the only historian of the time whose works have been preserved. Something has been said above of Xenophon. His Hellenica or Greek history is a continuation of Thucydides, brought down to the battle of Mantinea in 362 B.C. His Anabasis describes admirably the retreat of the Greek mercenaries from Babylonia to the Black Sea and thence to Greece; the author himself took part in this retreat and was one of the leaders. The Education of Cyrus is partly a romance and partly a study of national characteristics, in which the writer has set forth his ideas about education, and has also communicated some interesting notices of contemporary life in Persia. In his Recollections he has drawn for us a portrait of his master, Socrates. Ephorus and Theopompos, whose works have been lost, were younger contemporaries of Xenophon. The former wrote a continuous history of Greece from the Dorian invasion to the end of his own life in 340 B.C.—the earliest attempt to write the history of a whole people; the latter, like Xenophon, wrote contemporary history in two works—a History of Greece and a History of Philip.

The development of science and some kinds of literature during this century was rivalled by the development of the plastic arts and sculpture in particular. The great sculptors of the time make it their chief aim to study man in every phase of his bodily and spiritual life. Scopas, one of the greatest sculptors of antiquity, endeavours in his single figures and groups to convey the intense emotions felt by men or gods at a crisis in their lives—the intense exertion of all their physical powers in conflict, their sufferings of mind and body. We do not possess a single statue from his hand in the original; but we have a number of reproductions and a few figures, carved by him or his pupils, which adorned the pediments of Athena's temple at Tegea. The extant
sculptures, also, which came from the monument of Mausolus at Halicarnassus, are strongly influenced by the dramatic and passionate quality imported into the art by Scopas. The scenes of battle between the Greeks and Amazons depicted on the walls of the Mausoleum are full of passion and movement.

Praxiteles, a younger contemporary of Scopas, took a different line. He enjoyed great fame in his lifetime, and had a strong influence upon the later development of sculpture. Our museums are crowded with reproductions and imitations of his work. And one of his works has survived in the original—a statue of Hermes carrying the infant Dionysus in his arms. It was made for the temple of Hera at Olympia. In all the statues of Praxiteles we note the endeavor to convey in marble the beauty of the human form, male and female—not the ideal superhuman beauty which the statues of Phidias represent, but a purely human beauty in its highest perfection. When one looks at his Hermes, one does not recognize a god in that nude figure, but one admires the perfection of form in the youthful body and the harmonious nobility of the face. His Aphrodite, made for the city of Cnidus, impresses the spectator by the harmonious lines of a faultlessly beautiful female form; and his Satyr conveys that careless enjoyment of life which is natural to a being that is half-man and half-beast.

The same love for the beauty of form in the human body gives life to all the works of Lysippus, a younger contemporary of Praxiteles, who devoted himself entirely to the figures of young athletes. He was also the creator of portrait sculpture. Tradition reports that Alexander allowed no others than Lysippus and Apelles to carve and paint his likeness.

The same features are observable in painting. Large schemes of decoration give place by degrees to the production of single easel-pictures, intended for the adornment of public buildings or private houses. It is difficult, however, for us to judge of the painting, because not a single example from the hand of the great masters has been preserved even in a copy, while some
specimens of the art, dating from this period, are the work of second-rate painters. In vase-painting, as the demand for Attic vases increased, the artistic quality fell off; and the vases do not convey, as precisely as they once did, the style and peculiar features of painting on a larger scale.

On the whole, the fourth century was a worthy successor of the fifth. The creative power of the Greek people was as strong as ever. It grew and flourished, conquering one new domain after another and attaining in some of them the same perfection that stamps the literature and art of the preceding century.
When Alexander had conquered the Persian monarchy, he was faced by a further problem. What was to become of the huge empire, of which he found himself the supreme and absolute ruler? How he intended to organize these vast dominions, we do not know. Indeed, it is possible that he had no clear notions himself on the subject. Death came upon him at Babylon in 323 B.C., at a time when he considered his military problem, the problem of conquest, as still unfinished. On the eve of his sickness and death, which took him entirely by surprise, he was planning an expedition to Arabia. Perhaps the conquest of Arabia seemed to him necessary, partly to protect the frontier of his empire in Hither Asia, and partly that he might be able to continue the task of conquering India. And another scheme may have appealed to his adventurous nature, the scheme which had attracted Themistocles and Alcibiades and became later the object of Pyrrhus, King of Epirus. This was the annexation of the western Greeks to his empire. Had he done this, he must infallibly have come into collision with Carthage and with the Italian tribes, who had by this time formed more than one powerful state.