

Essay on greek philosophers

War



(1/2) Aristophanes and Plato are among the three primary sources of information about Socrates, including Xenophon. Aristophanes, the playwright, is the earliest source, who claimed that he knew Socrates in his early years. In 423 B. C., Xenophon and Plato were still infants, when Aristophanes produced his comedy *The Clouds*, in which Socrates appears. During Socrates's trial and execution, Plato was about twenty-five.

When it comes to having been acquainted with Socrates, Aristophanes's account is favored since Plato was some forty-five years younger than Socrates, so he must have been acquainted to him in his later years. However, Aristophanes' account of a younger Socrates, along with that of other comic poets, was publicly criticized and ridiculed. Moreover, *The Clouds* was written during the years of the Peloponnesian War and intellectual freedom in Greece had worn away by then. This is why Plato's account of Socrates was favored and preferred a lot more than Aristophanes's, especially by his fellow philosophers. Plato was certainly younger than Socrates, but must have known him most of his life since Socrates often spent time with the youths of the city. Nonetheless, the assumption that most men are capable of philosophy is denied by Socrates, in both the *Republic* by Plato and *The Clouds* by Aristophanes. However, when it comes to the character of philosophy, the Socrates from Aristophanes's and Plato's accounts seems implacably opposed.

In *The Clouds*, philosophy is depicted as sophistic, while in the *Republic* philosophy is depicted as a noble enterprise. Thus, the Socrates from Aristophanes's *The Clouds* would probably not succeed in qualifying in Plato's *Republic* and vice versa. Although it seems a bit irrational to consider

comedy as a source of information, but Aristophanes's representation of Socrates in *The Clouds* is more than just comic exaggeration. Aristophanes perhaps chose Socrates as a major character in his comedy because Socrates's expressions or facial features were comic by themselves. Plato's representation of Socrates can be assumed to be more accurate. Socrates's dialogues in Plato's *Republic* are authentic, and the familial relations, friendship bonds, names and places coincide extraordinarily well with archaeological and literary evidence. On the other hand, the accuracy of Aristophanes's *The Clouds* is not regarded as clear. However, one of the arguments against Plato's representation of Socrates is that he did not represent the views of Socrates as the philosopher himself had originally uttered but rather as how he recalled them. Despite their portrayal of the same individual, there are major differences in the representation of Socrates in the accounts of Aristophanes and Plato, especially due to the difference of the genre of their works.

(II/4) The Peloponnesian War lasted for 27 years from 431 B. C. to 404 B. C., and had devastating impact on ancient Greek civilization. Initially, it seemed that Athens would win since their powerful navy was dominating the Mediterranean Sea. However, the most major impact of the war was that the ancient Greek civilization lost its empire and therefore also lost the source of revenue that had been supporting its dominant navy. By the time Sparta and its allies, Persian Empire, temporarily dominated the ancient Greek land. For decades, the city-states of ancient Greece were torn apart by the war, leaving the Greek civilization, especially in Athens, extremely weakened. Sparta and its tyrants were driven out of Athens after the Athenian

revolution, and eventually, the rest of the Greek civilization also revolted against him, causing the Greek economy to sink. The living conditions of the Greek civilization significantly declined because of the continuous warfare. Greece was so harshly affected by the tyrannical government during the eight-month rule that more Greek citizens had died than had been slew in the war itself. Apart from the deaths of the citizens, fields, orchards and vineyards had also been destroyed during the war. The Peloponnesian War also resulted in the destruction of the treasuries of the Greek city states and even the faith in democracy had been diminished. Ancient Greek and the Greek civilization continued to become poorer and weaker because of the Peloponnesian War. Even Greek philosophy was influenced by the war. During this time, the renowned Greek philosophers, Socrates and Plato also came to prominence during this period. Based on Socrates and Plato's ideas, philosophers after them held the idea that the most suitable dictators or kings to rule nations were those who had been trained for life. Thebes and its allies ultimately overthrew Sparta, and as a result, mainland Greece was left with a three-way deadlock in dominance with the Persians now taking advantage of Sparta's weakened army. As a result extensive and prevalent destruction of the 27-year war, Ancient Greece was no longer united and was incapable of confronting Persia. No doubt, the intervention of Persia led to the defeat of Athens. Persia was also able to intervene in Greek political arrangements since Greece was already divided because of the war and Athens, Sparta and Thebes were now struggling. Between all of this, Greece was also suffering from a leadership vacuum as well, and all of this left Ancient Greece utterly weak. Ultimately, when the Macedonians attacked Greece within a couple of decades, the Greek civilization was incapable of

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defending itself. This led to the collapse of the Greek civilization when Greece was conquered by the Macedonian King Phillip II, who established himself as the leader or Hegemon of Greece.