

The history of the greeks: hellenic and hellenistic essay sample



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The Hellenic Age and the Hellenistic Age are the two main periods in Greek history. The Hellenic Age is significantly different from the Hellenistic Age. The Hellenic period saw the rising and falling of the polis while Hellenistic period was plagued by warfare among the remaining dynasties. Despite the differences between the Hellenic and Hellenistic periods, the one thing that remained consistent in both periods was the Greeks' ability to not only advance science and philosophy but to strive for excellence in everything that they undertook including their ability to deemphasize the role of the gods in their lives.

The first period that shaped Greek history was the Hellenic (c. 750-323 B. C.). One of the characteristics of the Hellenic period was the polis, or very small city-state. Each polis was dedicated to one specific god. Each polis was self-governing and allowed for the citizens to be involved in the political and cultural life of the city. The early city-states were colonized as religious institutions. The citizens of each polis had a desire to maintain a bond with the gods. The city-states were originally in Greece, with Athens being the largest, however, because of the growing population, the Greeks needed to expand their territory. They began their colonization to the east on the coast of the Aegean Sea. They then moved to Cyprus along with the coasts of Thrace, the Sea of Marmara and the south coast of the Black Sea. Their western colonization included the coasts of Albania, Sicily, southeastern Italy, the south coast of France, Corsica and Spain. The two most distinct city-states of Greece were Athens and Sparta. During this massive colonization period, one poet would forever change the way the Greeks lived their lives.

The poet's name was Homer. Around 750 B. C. Homer's two works, the Iliad and the Odyssey, were becoming widely popular among the Greeks. These two works influenced the Greeks both in religion and everyday life. The heroes that he wrote of in his works became idols to the older as well as the younger Greek citizens. In his poems, Homer originated the idea of *arête*, or excellence. He believed that they should strive for excellence in everything. His two poems provided a basis for Greek education and culture. During Homer's influential period on the Greeks, the task of de-emphasizing the gods' role in politics was also being attempted.

The city-states were changing their political outlook. They went from purely religious influence to a more humanistic form of government. While they never truly denounced the gods, the Greeks removed the religious influence of the gods from their politics, and in its place, they based their governments on human intelligence. This new type of government was embraced by many, however, the peasants still hung on to their dedication to religion. Even though the politics of the Greeks were changing, they still remained faithful to their gods and the worshiping of the god of each polis was still required. Although all of the Greek city-states were changed by the influence of Homer and the change of politics, the two that stood out the most were Sparta and Athens.

The influence of Homer on Sparta was immense. Using the philosophy of excellence, the Spartans strove for excellence in their ability to be warriors. Through this philosophy, the Spartans were able to conquer their neighboring city-states. The most prominent of these city-states was

Messenia. The Spartans made the Messenians into helots owned by the state
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of Sparta. The Messenians soon grew frustrated by their conquerors and began to up rise. Because the Messenians out numbered the Spartans, the Spartans decided to put them and the other people they conquered to work. While the Spartans were training to be excellent warriors, the helots were forced to do the agricultural labor, as well as the other trades and crafts. The Spartans were only trained to be warriors to fight for Sparta. Their philosophy of being excellent warriors set them apart from the other city-states of Greece. While the Spartans were trained to be warriors and only warriors, the citizens of Athens were vastly different.

Athens was the largest polis in Greece. Its population was over five times as great as the other small city-states. Athens stood out from Sparta as well as the other city-states not only because of its immense population but also because it was the commercial leader of Greece and was home to a great navy. The Athenians valued their political freedom and free thought. Like the Spartans they too wanted to protect their state but unlike the Spartans, the Athenians strove for excellence not only in being warriors but also in their everyday lives. Since the Spartans were only concerned with being great warriors, the Athenians became the cultural center of Greece during the Hellenic period. Athens original government was a monarchy ruled by one king, however, the king's influence began to diminish with the changing times and soon Athens was under the rule of an oligarchy.

The oligarchy consisted of wealthy aristocrats who "...gradually became very wealthy, particularly off of the cash crops of wine and olive oil, both of which require great wealth to get started. As their wealth increased, the nobles

slowly stripped the king of power until Athenian government imperceptibly became an oligarchy.” (Hooker)

As the aristocrats grew in power and wealth, they asserted their dominance over the peasants and lower class citizens. The wealthy aristocrats took advantage of the ailing peasants by allowing them to borrow money and put their property up as security. The aristocrats seized their property and took the peasants as slaves for non-payment of their debts. Some of the non-paying peasants were enslaved in Athens and others were sold abroad. The enslaved peasants became irate because they felt that the laws, which were made and implemented by the wealthy aristocrats, were unfair. In order to cease the controversy that surrounded the unwritten laws of Athens, the Athenian aristocrats asked the scholar Draco, in 621 B. C., to write down the laws.

Draco decided that the best way to put the laws of Athens in writing was to ask both the aristocrats and the peasants what they believed the laws were. After asking them to define the laws as they saw them to be, Draco published the code of law for Athens. The code stated that punishment for all crimes, including minor ones, was death. The peasants were very unhappy with the code that Draco had come up with because they felt that it favored the aristocrats. The peasants grew increasingly unhappy and frustrated by the new laws and were on the verge of civil war when Solon was elected chief executive in 594 B. C.

Solon was a traveler and a poet with a reputation for wisdom. Both the aristocrats and citizens of Athens realized that the threat of civil war was

imminent. In an effort to avert war, the Athenians handed over power of government to Solon. Solon set out to reform the laws of Draco in order to avoid an uprising. Solon believed that the aristocrats' greed was the reason that Athens was on the edge of civil war. He set out to reform Draco's laws. Solon's laws covered all aspects of Athenian society. In addition,

“ He divided the Athenian society into five classes based on people's annual fortune. According to class, one had certain obligations, such as tax and contributions to the war-machine.” (Sandels)

Solon also created a new government where all of the Athenians, whether wealthy or poor, could be involved the politics of the city. In addition to his laws, Solon also set the slaves free and cancelled the debt that was incurred. While reforming the laws, Solon began to de-emphasize the role that the gods had played in Athenian life. He held individuals accountable for their own actions and sought practical solutions. Solon began the task of encouraging all citizens of Athens to work for the common good of Athens. With Solon's laws, Athens was changed from an oligarchy ruled by the wealthy aristocrats to a democracy where all Athenians were allowed to participate in the government.

Solon's democracy was the first of its kind. He permitted all classes to sit in the Assembly, however, only the wealthy could were permitted to hold the highest offices. The aristocrats did not like the idea of the lower class being able to participate in the government. However, Solon believed that democracy would be better for the Athenians. Solon promoted economic reform by encouraging the Athenians to cultivate grapes and olives so they

could be sold abroad. He wanted the Athenians to use the resources available to them to increase their economic value. They exported pottery along with wine and oil to other city-states. Under Solon's guidance, Athens became a great commercial center for Greece. Although Solon did a lot to improve the Athenian economy, he did not manage to eliminate the agricultural problems among the Athenians and after his death, Pisistratus took over as ruler of Athens.

In 546 B. C., Pisistratus became the leader of the again unsteady Athens. Pisistratus became a tyrant. He banished those who opposed his rule and replaced Solon's early democracy with tyranny. Although a tyrant, Pisistratus set out to reform Athens. He promoted cultural life throughout the city and allowed culture to be available to all citizens.

"...he rewarded dispossessed peasants with land confiscated from wealthier families. He also encouraged trade and industry and engaged in great public works programs. Temples were built and religious centers improved. New religious festivals were also introduced by Pisistratus..." (Kreis)

By placing a greater emphasis on culture, Pisistratus allowed the middle and lower class citizens to gain wealth. As their income increased, so did their status in the government. More commoners were able to take part in the political life of Athens. After his death, an aristocratic clan, lead by Cleisthenes, that Pisistratus had previously exiled, returned to Athens and assumed leadership.

Cleisthenes initiated change from Pisitratus' tyranny to a democracy. In 508 B. C., he began a new system of government which would ensure that the <https://assignbuster.com/the-history-of-the-greeks-hellenic-and-hellenistic-essay-sample/>

Athenians' loyalty to their city was placed above their loyalty to clans or tribes. Cleisthenes was a strong believer in democracy and wanted to ensure that tyranny would not take place. He allowed all men of Athens to be involved in the government so that they would learn from their political experiences. He established the Council of Five Hundred. The council "...looked after the construction of docks and surveyed public buildings. They collected rent on public land and oversaw the redistribution of confiscated property. Members of the Council were also responsible for examining the horses of the cavalry, administering state pensions and receiving foreign delegations. In other words, the Council was responsible for the smooth running of the daily operations of the Athenian city-state." (Kreis)

This council was one of the major accomplishments of Cleisthenes' democracy. Another major accomplishment was the practice of ostracism. Cleisthenes felt so strongly about his democracy that he wanted to do everything in his power to avoid the return of tyranny. Ostracism allowed the Athenians, once a year, to write the name of the person they felt was a threat to the democracy, on a piece of pottery. The individual that the majority had voted for would be banished from Athens for ten years. This system secured democracy for the Athenians. While the government of Athens was changing from a monarchy in the early years to a democracy in 510 B. C., the Greeks were in the beginning states of their philosophical, scientific, and cultural development.

Greek philosophy has its origins in Ionia. Ionia is where the first philosophers emerged. They sought practical rather than mythical explanations. They

believed that nature was not manipulated by the gods. They were called cosmologists because they wanted to know why everything was the way it was. This period of early philosophy was also the beginning of scientific thought. Thales of Miletus (c. 624-548 B. C.) began the early philosophical, scientific and mathematical thinking of the Greeks.

Thales was the first Greek philosopher, scientist and mathematician. He was also the founder of the first Ionian school of philosophy. He wanted to understand the order of nature and believed that water was the basic element from which everything else arose. He changed the way that the Greeks thought because he eliminated the gods from his explanation of the origin of nature. Thales also achieved some mathematical advancement. He

“...discovered how to calculate the distance of a ship at sea from observations taken at two points on land, and how to estimate the height of a pyramid from the length of its shadow.” (Haselhurst)

Thales' view of water being the origin of everything was not shared by all. Anaximander (c. 611-547 B. C.) rejected Thales' theory and any other theory that stated that any one substance was the origin of everything in the world. He was an astronomer and philosopher who believed that everything originated from an indefinite substance. He “...was the first to model the Earth according to scientific principles. According to him, the Earth was a cylinder with a north-south curvature, suspended freely in space, and the stars were attached to a sphere that rotated around Earth.” (Siris)

His theory, like that of Thales, did not include any gods or mythical creations.

Like Anaximander, Anaximenes (d. 525 B. C.) also transitioned from mythical gods to practical realities. Anaximenes, like the other Ionian philosophers, believed that everything originated from air. He believed that rainbows were the result of the sun's rays descending on earth, not the mythical doing of the Greek god Isis. The Ionian thinkers believed that everything in the world originated from a particular substance, however, other early philosophers differed from the Ionians in their philosophies.

Pythagoras (c. 580-507 B. C.) lived in Samos, a city in southern Italy, and believed that the nature of the universe could be found in mathematical relationships. He was the first to believe that the earth was spherical. He also discovered the mathematical relationships of musical intervals. Unlike the Ionians, the Pythagoreans believed in the immortality of souls. Pythagoras is also known for the Pythagorean Theorem. Another philosopher that originated from the south of Italy who challenged the Ionian philosophies was Parmenides of Elea (c. 515-450 B. C.). Parmenides like Pythagoras believed that the world was spherical. Parmenides founded formal logic with his theory that arguments must contain no contradictions. He believed that reality cannot be changed. Parmenides' philosophy of the unchanging reality was the foundations of metaphysics. One philosopher, Democritus (c. 460-370 B. C.), brought together the Ionian philosophy and Parmenides philosophy.

Democritus said that the universe had two realities. One was empty space and the other was an infinite number of atoms. Democritus and his teacher Leucippus were the first to come up with the idea of atoms. He believed that the atoms were indivisible and different groupings of these atoms accounted

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for the changes in nature. He also believed that the universe was composed of many worlds and that some of them were inhabited. He was the first to state that the Milky Way was the light of distant stars. Through their philosophies, Democritus along with the other early philosophers originated scientific thought as well as theoretical thought and allowed for early medicinal and mathematical accomplishments.

Greek mathematics and medicine was in its infancy during the Hellenic period. The Greek mathematicians used Egyptian measurements to further the science of geometry. Their belief in logic allowed them to develop proofs for their mathematical principles. Being able to prove their work set them apart from the Egyptians and Babylonians. As the Greeks were making small advancements in mathematics, they were also advancing in medicine.

Hippocrates (c. 460-c. 377 B. C.) is considered the father of medicine. He believed that all illnesses have a natural cause not a mythical one.

Hippocrates was the first to examine his patients. He made great strides in the diagnosis of disease, disease prevention and hygiene. In addition, Hippocrates originated the Hippocratic Oath. While these great advances were being made in mathematics, medicine and philosophy, the Ionians were revolting against the Persians.

The Persian Wars began in 499 B. C. with a rebellion against the Persians. Realizing that they could not overcome the Persians alone, the Ionian leader went to Greece to request help. The Athenians responded by sending twenty of their ships to help the Ionian revolt. The Persians were aggravated by the Athenians' help and vowed revenge. In 490 B. C., the King of Persia, Darius I, sent a fleet to punish the Athenians. The Athenians met the Persian invaders
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at Marathon in Attica. The Athenians defeated the Persians and won the Battle of Marathon. Because the Battle of Marathon was considered to be one of the greatest achievements of Greeks, the Athenians regarded Athens as the powerful center of Greece. While many Athenians were busy celebrating their victory over Persia, Themistocles (c. 527-460 B. C.) was able to convince the Athenians that the Persians would be back and that they needed to be prepared to fight them. Themistocles was able to build up the Athenian navy to over two hundred ships.

In 480 B. C., Darius' son, Xerxes, coordinated a massive invasion to conquer all of Greece. Xerxes sent his ships across the Aegean Sea and began his quest to conquer Greece from the north. The Spartans as well as some of the other city-states joined together to try and resist the Persian invasion. The Spartans were strong but the Persians prevailed over the Spartans and began their quest south. Themistocles believed that the Persian ships would have trouble crossing the Aegean Sea because of its ever changing winds and current. He was right and the Persians lost some of their fleet. Once the Persians began to sail through the Bay of Salamis, Themistocles' navy was able to gain victory over the Persians. A year later, in 479 B. C., the Persian Wars ended at the Plataea when the Spartans defeated the Persians. The Athenians were filled with more confidence after their second defeat of the Persians which led to the creation of the Delian League as well as the advancement of Greek art, poetry and drama.

One year after the end of the war, in 478 B. C., delegates from some of the Greek city-states around the Aegean Sea met on the island of Delos to discuss an alliance with Athens. This would become the Delian League. The <https://assignbuster.com/the-history-of-the-greeks-hellenic-and-hellenistic-essay-sample/>

league swore alliance with Athens and with each other. Athens emerged as the leader amongst the city-states in the Delian League because of its powerful navy and wealth. This began the period of Athenian imperialism in Greece. The purpose of the league was to protect themselves from retaliation by the Persians as well as to free the remaining Greek city-states that were still under Persian rule. The Delian League was able to free many of the Greek city-states that were under the Persians' rule.

The states that were freed from Persian rule joined Athens and the other city-states in the Delian League. Because the Athenians were the leaders of the Delian League, they were able to manipulate the league for their own advantage. Athens did not permit any state that was a member of the league to withdraw. The Athenians were also able to manipulate use the league's treasury for their own purposes. Athens used the money to advance their city by building large buildings, expanding their state and investing in the advancement of their culture so that their city would reflect their confidence. As the Athenians gained wealth and dominance over their fellow league members, resented Athens was also becoming a very prominent leader in the arts, poetry and drama.

Greek classical art, poetry and art all reflected the Greeks achievements. Greek art evolved the same way that science and philosophy had; moving from mythological gods to human reality and reason. Artists would observe nature and humans in order to accurately depict them. Even though the Greek artists of this time tried to make their art as realistic as possible, the Greeks had idealistic views about how the human body should look. They did not believe that they should show the imperfections on the body. Therefore, <https://assignbuster.com/the-history-of-the-greeks-hellenic-and-hellenistic-essay-sample/>

statues were often very similar to one another. Greek artists, poets, and dramatists all allowed for individual expression. The Greek poets wrote poems that reflected the achievements of the Greeks. The Greek poets as well as the Greek dramatists often wrote about excellence, warriors and strong athletes. Greek dramatists also wrote about Greek weaknesses and the suffering of the people. Greek dramatists, like the philosophers, changed the emphasis of drama from the mythical gods to humans. The dramatists depicted the hopes and fears of the Greeks in their works. Education after the Persian Wars was also evolving.

The Sophists were professional teachers who exemplified the shift to reason. The Sophists, trained in rhetoric and writing, traveled around the cities of Greece teaching rhetoric, grammar, poetry, gymnastics, mathematics and music. After the Persian Wars, the Sophists were the desired teachers of ambitious politicians in Athens. The Sophists believed that reason could be applied to everything including politics and law. They believed that whether something was right or wrong depended on the circumstance. One challenger of the Sophists ideals was Socrates (c. 469-399 B. C.).

Socrates believed that logical thinking could discover what was right and wrong. He believed that morality has absolutes. He believed that an individual's morals did not come from a god; they were attained by using reason in one's life. Socrates believed that dialogues helped people to reason; which in turn, helped them determine their ideals and values.

Socrates professed his philosophy until his death. When he was seventy years old, after the Peloponnesian War, he was accused of corrupting the youth. He was put before an Athenian court and convicted of the crime. He <https://assignbuster.com/the-history-of-the-greeks-hellenic-and-hellenistic-essay-sample/>

was sentenced to death and ordered to drink poison. History evolved as philosophy had after the Persian Wars.

History was changing just as philosophy had changed. It was concentrating on the events of Greece and why they happened. The main historian of this time was Herodotus (c. 484-c. 424 B. C.). Herodotus, the father of history, wrote the history of the Persian Wars. In his book, *The Histories*, Herodotus contrasts the views of the Persians and Greek freedom. He stated that the freedom that the Greeks saw was incomprehensible to the Persians.

Herodotus wrote of reason and punishment. Herodotus would question the past in order to try to determine, logically, what really happened instead of relying solely myths. He was one of the great historians of the time. Greek culture, including history, was thriving after the Persian Wars. No where was Greek culture more prominent than in Athens. The Athenians used money taken from the Delian League to fund their cultural development. The other city-states were growing more and more resentful of the Athenians' imperialism especially as the threat from Persia was diminishing.

Once Persia was no longer a great threat to the Greeks, the member states developed a hatred for the Athenians because of their dominance and imperialism. The member states no longer approved of the Athenians domination and some tried to leave the Delian League. When Pericles (c. 495-429 B. C.) came to power in Athens and formed alliances with Argos and Magara,

“ The Spartans grew suspicious of these moves, particularly the alliance with Megara, and began a campaign against the Athenians.” (Hooker)

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The Athenians were able to divert a war with Sparta when they made a thirty year peace treaty. The treaty called for Athens to dissolve their dominance over the Greek states and Sparta to recognize the Athenian Empire. Although the Athenian's did give up their political dominance over the other city-states, the Spartans continued to be wary of the power that the Athenians still had. The Spartans and Athenians were not half way through the thirty year treaty when the Spartans and Peloponnesians believed that the Athenians posed an overwhelming threat to their independence and began the Peloponnesian War in 431B. C.

The Spartans, realizing that the Athenians were a great naval power, decided that their best chance at winning the war was in a land battle with the Athenians. The Spartans proceeded to invade Attica and burn the crops in order to starve the Athenians. Pericles believed that the Athenians would be able to hold off the Spartans if they attacked Spartan's allies. Plagued by their lack of food and diminishing supply of food, the Athenians surrendered to Sparta in 404 B. C which ended the Peloponnesian War. With their win over the Athenians, Sparta ended the Delian League as well as Athens dominance over the city-states. The Peloponnesian War caused irrevocable damages to the foundations of Hellenic Greece. These damages included the decline of the Greek city-states. With the city-states in shambles, the individual loyalty to each polis that the early leaders had strived for was replaced by concern for private affairs. Instead of the all of the citizens ruling the government, professionals began to assume that role. As the government of Athens was changing, new philosophers were emerging.

Plato (c. 429-347 B. C.) was a student of Socrates. He used Socrates' teachings to create his own philosophies as well as establish his school, the Lyceum, in 385 B. C. Unlike Socrates, Plato believed a higher reality of ideas. He believed that truth resided in the higher reality; it was not acquired as Socrates believed. Plato also believed in reason. He believed that the Athenian government was in need of reform. Plato aspired to create a utopia. He believed that this was possible if the citizens would conform to valid principles and move towards moral improvement. Plato saw many weaknesses within the current Athenian government. He believed that the commoners could not think intellectually and therefore should not be allowed to hold government office or vote.

He believed that the leaders of Athens were not chosen based on their intellect; they were chosen based on superficial values and beliefs. Plato believed that the democracy of Athens would eventually be replaced by anarchy. He believed that the commoners should not be involved in government. His thought was that reason should prevail above all else and that only those gifted in philosophical thought should be allowed to partake in government. Everyone else should be separated into those that could be soldiers and those that could produce goods. He believed that if the Athenians put reason above their ambitions, they could avoid anarchy. As Plato was professing his beliefs, another major philosopher was emerging.

Aristotle (384-322 B. C.) was a student at Plato's school. Although Aristotle was Plato's student, he did not agree with his philosophies. Aristotle believed that Plato's philosophy contained too much mystery. Aristotle believed that knowledge was gained through use of the senses. Aristotle, like Plato and <https://assignbuster.com/the-history-of-the-greeks-hellenic-and-hellenistic-essay-sample/>

Socrates, believed in reason. He believed that knowledge could be acquired through reason and rationale examination. Aristotle's philosophies are also present in the development of the empirical sciences in which observation, investigation and noting data are used. He also believed that ethics were based on reason. Aristotle believed that if people applied rationality to their lives, they could achieve a sense of happiness. Aristotle believed that people were not completely rational and stated that they should learn to regulate their desires and avoid extreme behaviors. Aristotle also philosophized about political thought.

He believed that politics could be rationalized. He believed in laws not individuals because as he saw it, individuals were subject to their desires whereas the laws were absolute. Aristotle believed that in order to prevent an uprising among the citizens, the citizens must be compliant to the laws. He believed that the middle class citizens were better equipped than the wealthy or the poor to run the government because they were least subject to desires. Aristotle was the greatest philosopher of his time. Philosophy during the time of Aristotle, Plato and Socrates emerged into different ideas based on reason. While philosophy was advancing, there existed turmoil among the city-states. In 359 B. C., while the Greek city-states were engaged in small wars amongst themselves, Philip II became the king of Macedonia

Philip II began to develop a powerful military and began to conquer cities to his north. The Greeks did not believe that Philip posed a threat to them and so they did not organize to fight against him as they had done with the

Persians. After conquering the northern cities, Philip then desired to conquer the Greeks. Philip wanted his son, Alexander, learn in the Greek schools,
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however, with the city-states fighting amongst themselves, the only way Philip believed his son could attend a Greek school was if he managed to conquer the Greeks and bring about order. Philip moved southward towards Greece and because the Greeks were not prepared, he was able to conquer Greece at the Battle of Chaeronea in 338 B. C. Shortly after the conquest of the Greeks, the polis no longer existed. Philip's reign over the Greeks did not last long. Two years into his reign he was assassinated. His son, Alexander took over his father reign of the Greeks. Alexander became known as Alexander the Great because he was able to conquer the known world with his military strength. Alexander would rule over the Greeks until his sudden death in 323 B. C, which ended the Hellenic period. As the Hellenic period ended with the death of Alexander, the Hellenistic Age in Greek history began.

The Hellenistic Age began in 323 B. C. and ended in 30 B. C. One of the major changes of the Hellenistic period was its lack of city-states. The city-states of Greece had collapsed after the Athenian's lose to the Spartans in the Peloponnesian war. In the Hellenistic period, the former city-states were governed by monarchs. After Alexander's unexpected death, his generals fought over who would rule in his place. In 275 B. C., they split his dynasty into three parts, Egypt, Asia and Macedonia. The Macedonians remained in control of Greece. The three Hellenistic kingdoms fought each other for control of the land and the people of Greece struggled to define relationships within the larger monarchy. The Philosophers of the Hellenistic period began to adapt previous philosophies to their new lives.

The Hellenistic philosophers attempted to deal with the Greeks new reality of alienation which resulted from the lack of community within each former polis. Epicureanism and Stoicism arose as the two main schools of philosophy. Both attempted to show the Greeks how they could achieve happiness in their new environment. The school of Epicureanism was founded by Epicurus (342-270 B. C.) in Athens. The bases for Epicurus' school were the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. Epicurus offered his philosophy about finding happiness in big cities. Epicurus suggested that the Greeks should stay out of public affairs and avoid anxiety. He also stated that they should try to live their lives justly so they would not be burdened with troubles.

In following the earlier Hellenic philosophers, Epicurus believed that trying to please the gods would only cause stress and anxiety. Although Epicurus did believe in the gods' existence, he did not believe that they meddled in the affairs of humans. He believed that every individual was in control of their life and was responsible for their own fate. He believed that happiness was achievable if one was able to remain free from anxiety and led a life of caution, honor, and justice. During this period of time, while Epicurus was opening his school, Zeno (335-263 B. C.) was introducing his teachings of Stoicism.

Zeno founded his school of Stoicism around 300 B. C. in Athens. Stoicism provided answers for living in big cities by using reason and rationale. Stoics believed that inner strength would allow the Greeks to cope with the change from polis to big city as well as allow them to find happiness. They believed that all people had the power to reason. Reason gave them the ability to

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know what was acceptable behavior and what was not. Stoics also believed that having the power to reason allowed each individual to be connected to one another in a fundamental way. Stoics believed that the only law that applied to everyone was the law of nature. Because Stoics believed that everyone was connected by the power to reason and the law of nature, each individual was equipped with the ability to respect others dignity. They believed that individuals were connected through a world community. They believed that true happiness could be achieved not only by using reason but also by using rationale to regulate their emotions. Stoics believed that every individual should strive for perfecting their character by using reason and rationale. Stoicism and Epicureanism are only some of the great advancements of the Hellenistic Age.

During the Hellenistic period, Greek scientific advances reached its peak. Major scientific achievements occurred during this time. Alexandria, not Athens was the leader in scientific advancement. The museum in Alexandria was the center for scientific studies. During the Hellenistic Age, doctors were able to advance their knowledge of the human body through dissection and observation. Through their dissections, they were able to define the brain as the origin of intelligence as well as distinguish between the motor and sensory nervous systems. As medicine was evolving so were the fields of astronomy and mathematics.

Aristarchus (310-230 B. C.) was a great astronomer and mathematician of the Hellenistic period. He was the first to propose that the sun was the center of the universe and that the planets revolved around the stationary sun. He also postulated that the sun was larger than the earth and that the <https://assignbuster.com/the-history-of-the-greeks-hellenic-and-hellenistic-essay-sample/>

earth rotated on an axis which accounted for the change from day to night as well as the change in the seasons. Another excellent mathematician that was emerging during this time was Euclid (300 B. C.). Euclid advanced the study of geometry. He was able to write down in his books, Elements, the meanings of fundamental terms such as point and line. While Euclid and Aristarchus were advancing astronomy and mathematics, Eratosthenes (c. 275-194 B. C.) was advancing geography.

Eratosthenes was an Alexandrian geographer who wanted to understand the entire world. Eratosthenes greatest contribution to the world was his ability to accurately measure the earth's circumference. In addition to this, he was also able to measure the distance from the earth to the sun and moon. He also divided the earth into four climatic zones, drew a map of the known world and accurately measured the tilt of the Earth's axis. One of his other major accomplishments was a calendar with leap years. Eratosthenes was able to make great strides in geography and mathematics. Another great mathematician, physicist and inventor of the time was Archimedes of Syracuse (287-212 B. C.).

Using his mathematic ability, Archimedes was able to calculate the value of π . One of his other mathematical accomplishments was his ability to use exponents to represent very large numbers. Archimedes was considered the father of calculus because he perfected a system of integration. He was able to use his knowledge of mathematics to create many war machines to defend Syracuse. Archimedes was perhaps the greatest mathematician of the Hellenistic period. As Archimedes and his colleagues were advancing the studies of science, art and history were also evolving.

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During the Hellenic period, the artists attempted to make their art more realistic, however, their attempts were marred by their idealistic views. Hellenic artists created sculptures with no flaws that were extremely similar to one another. The Hellenistic artists were able to evolve like the Hellenistic philosophers. They began to incorporate reality into their sculptures. While the Hellenic sculptures were based on idealism, the Hellenistic sculptures were based on reality. The sculptures were made to show emotion and flaws. There was also a growing interest in incorporating daily life into paintings and sculptures. As the artists were changing from idealism to realism, so was the leading historian, Polybius (c. 200-118 B. C.). Polybius was able to incorporate rationale in his works. He is accredited with writing the history of the rise of the Roman Empire. He was able to use rationale along with eyewitness accounts to construct a rational explanation of the events. During this time of great evolution and revolution of history, art, science and philosophy, the quarreling of the dynasties attracted the attention of the Romans.

The Romans set out to conquer the Greeks for the same reason as Philip II did. They wanted their children to attend the best schools in Greece and the only way that they could achieve their goal was if they conquered the Greeks and brought about stability. The Romans were able to conquer the Greeks in 30 B. C. at the Battle of Actium. This conquest of the Greeks by the Romans marked the end of the Hellenistic Age of the Greeks.

Though the accomplishments of the Hellenic and Hellenistic periods are vastly different, the Greeks managed to advance science and philosophy.

This advancement would influence future scientists and philosophers for <https://assignbuster.com/the-history-of-the-greeks-hellenic-and-hellenistic-essay-sample/>

years to come. Another major accomplishment that began in the Hellenic Age was the task of deemphasizing the gods. This allowed for the Greeks to emphasize reason and rationale which led to their great advancements. The Greeks' accomplishments in both philosophy and science are the foundations for today's philosophy and science.

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