

**PHI 201: HISTORY OF ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY**  
**HISTORY NOTES**

**LECTURE 2: ARCHAIC GREECE (CH. 3)**

**I. ARCHAIC GREECE (C. 700 – 500 BCE) [POMEROY, et al., CH. 3]:**

- A. Introduction:** Philosophers living during this period: (1) Born and died in this period: *Thales*, *Anaximander*, *Anaximenes*; (2) Born in this period but lived past 500 BCE: *Pythagoras*, *Xenophanes*, *Heraclitus*, *Parmenides*, *Anaxagoras*.
- B. POMEROY, et al. INTRODUCTION:** This period is now seen as the decisive formative time of the intellectual, cultural, and political achievements of Greece's "Golden Age" (i.e., Classical Greece, 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries). GOOD: The city-state form of government grew to maturity; a movement of overseas colonization spread the Greek language and culture across the Mediterranean and Black seas; trade spread their goods much farther than in the past; literature and art flourished; the great Panhellenic shrines, festivals, and oracles grew in importance and nourished cultural unity; two new views [i.e., (1) a rational view of the universe, eliminating supernatural causes of natural events and replacing them with scientific explanations; and (2) the concept of democratic government – each member being equal under the laws, which were themselves created by majority rule]. BAD: Wars between city-states became much more frequent; war became more lethal; civil strife within a *demos* became commonplace, with leaders fighting among themselves; widening economic inequality caused much misery and tension among rich and poor citizens (sometimes leading to war); "tyrants" were created that led to further turmoil. Overall though, the good outweighed the bad.
- C. SOURCES FOR THE SEVENTH AND SIXTH CENTURIES:** There isn't much produced then that we still have – bits and pieces of volumes of poetry and philosophical treatises. But there were other historians who had some access to earlier writings and records (but we can question their veracity, since they wrote many years later). There was a sizable increase in the number of manufactured items found (due to the increase in population and wealth). Nonetheless, compared to the Classical period, the evidence for Archaic Greece is meager.
- D. THE CITY-STATE (*POLIS*):** This form of government was formed in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE but became more developed and remained the characteristic social and political organization for Greeks until the Roman period. We get our words "political" and "politics" from *polis*. *Polis* = a geographical area comprising a city and its adjacent territory which form a single, self-governing political unit. *Demos* = the territorial community – the land and the people (e.g., the Thracians, the Pylians, etc.). Originally (Homeric time), *polis* meant city, not including the countryside, but in this period came to mean the city and the surrounding territory, the countryside, etc. Its citizens were called "*politai*". E.g. Athens was the capital of the Attica territory, but anyone in that territory was called an Athenian. *Synoecism* took different forms and could be peaceful and voluntary or violent.
- E. THE *ETHNOS*:** *Ethnos* = tribe, nation, people; *ethne* were not city states, but a regional territory and a people (*demos*) without a single urban center or a central government or formal political union. The city-state Greeks tended to believe that the *ethne* were politically and culturally backward (and they were basically living as the *demoi* in the Dark Ages were). EX: Boeotia contained the area of the Thebans, Plataeans, and Orchomenians, all of whom believed themselves first as these latter names, and *then* Boeotians. This made them militarily weaker.

- F. GOVERNMENT IN THE EARLY CITY-STATES:** The *basileis* (leaders of the districts, towns, villages) ceded their power to the new central governments to have power in the latter. The early city-states followed this pattern: (1) the office of *basileus* was abolished completely or greatly reduced; (2) the governing functions formerly exercised by the *basileus* were distributed among several officials; (3) the importance of the council of elders increased and that of the people's assembly decreased. The transition took no more than two to three generations. To be successful (strong and competitive), the city-state had to create a more powerful/intrusive central government. The later Greeks called this consolidation of power *oligarchy* (rule of the *oligoi* - few). The ruling few called themselves *aristoi* (best men), hence aristocracy – this idea was obviously promoted heavily by the wealthy, well-born families who controlled the Archaic city-states. There were *archons* (“leader”), *prytanis* (“presiding officer”), and *polemarchos* (“war leader”). The true power in these city-states was in the council (*boule*), which had long-term, even life-, membership, and sometimes even had the ultimate decision-making power over the archon.
- G. THE COLONIZING MOVEMENT:** While *poleis* were being formed, Greeks were also colonizing, the primary causes of which were the search for metal sources and the hope of acquiring land required for new citizens, as populations increased. Mother cities (*metropolis*) chose a site for the colony, obtained divine approval for it, made plans and chose an *oikestes* (founder). EX: Foundation Oath of Cyrene, Libya in the late 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE. We've lost a lot of the names and history of the formations of these colonies, unfortunately. GENERAL POINT: Greek life and culture spread via colonization, building monumental temples, holding Olympic games, and patronizing the Delphic oracle; but they also encountered non-Greeks (“barbarians”), some of which the Greeks enslaved and others with whom they intermingled.
- H. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DIVISIONS IN THE EARLY POLEIS:** *Some people were promised land in the new colonies, and if they could afford it, would do so; those who remained had less choices for land because it grew scarcer. The rich landowners called themselves good (just based on birth and land owned) and everyone else bad. They also narrowed the term demos from its inclusive usage as the “whole people” to mean the “masses” or the “poor”, whom they also referred to disparagingly as hoi polloi, “the many”.*
- 1. The Rich, the Poor, and the Middle:** The rich (noble class) was about 12 – 20% of the families; the lower class (insufficient land to support themselves) – 20 – 30%; and the middle class (what Aristotle called the *hoi mesoi*) was at least 50% of the families. The latter group had the greatest economic and social gradation.
  - 2. Citizenship: Citizens** (= “having a share in the public life of the polis”) from the three groups didn't share equal rights. EX: Female citizens had important roles in community religious worship but were completely barred from participation in political, judicial, and military affairs, which adult (over age 18) male citizens performed. In early city-states, only the rich/well-born could vote, speak in the assembly, hold office, serve as judges, fight in the army. But in the Archaic period, the nonnoble “middles” and lower class fought to gain an equal share in the governance of their *poleis* (still, only in democracies would these groups gain equal rights – the lowest class would not gain rights in oligarchies). There were also resident aliens and ex-slaves (let alone the largest groups – slaves and semi-slaves), who held no rights in the city.
  - 3. Slaves and Serfs:** During the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the number of chattel slaves (persons captured or bought and legally classed as property) increased, but most rich landlords used the labor of

farmers who were in debt or otherwise obligated to them (which benefited the landlords economically).

**4. Resentment from Below and the Beginnings of Social Change:** Everyone below the nobles had reason to resent the upper class' power and arrogance – especially the poor (they struggled to make ends meet and had the threat of working for others or becoming slaves). The middle class had reason for resentment as well, because the nobles had the best and even most of the rest of the decent land. So they had to leave the area (emigrate) to be able to get better land. They were also shut out of political power – the magistracies, boards, and particularly the council; and the assembly had very little power. By the early 6<sup>th</sup> century, though, this all started to change with the independent farmers protesting the oligarchs, to the point where eventually even the poor joined in. Hesiod gives us insight into the lives of ordinary citizens in his *Works and Days*.

**I. HESIOD: THE VIEW FROM BELOW:** The story has Hesiod (literally or someone else – we're not sure) confronting the *Basileis* for their crooked verdicts (and taking bribes) but says that Zeus (and his maiden daughter Justice) will watch these men and make them pay; "he who wrongs another man wrongs, above all, himself." He makes lots of other ethical prescriptions there as well, about paying back your debts, etc. Being wealthy (for the independent farmers) meant having enough grain to not have to borrow from others and make it through the winter. *Works and Days* also exhibited misogyny, warning farmers against taking a wife who is a glutton, lazy, or unfaithful, but not saying that a wife could do much good for them, and also claiming that one should teach her good habits. Hesiod was the voice of a middle-class indignation, and later Solon would do the same in Athens making way for democracy.

**J. THE HOPLITE ARMY:** Warfare changed between 725 and 650 as far as military equipment and tactics went; they arranged heavily armored (helmets, breast-plates and greaves – shin/knee protectors) foot soldiers (*hoplites*) into a *phalanx* (see illustration) – shoulder to shoulder, eight rows deep, bearing spears parallel to the ground in the front row, 45 degrees behind that row, 60 behind that, and 90 behind that. After they'd charge and have their spears stuck into their enemies, they'd use their short slashing sword. They used a new type of shield called the *hoplon* (which is why the *hoplite* was so named) – it was round, made of wood, with a thin sheet of bronze overlaid. Seen from the front, it looked like a solid wall of shields, helmeted heads, and spears. These fights lasted around an hour, containing "the pushing" which is where the ranks in the back literally pushed those in front. It was very noisy, hard to see, and the equipment was 70 pounds, about half the weight of an average man. Roughly 15% casualties for the losers; massacres afterwards were rare; battles ended fighting for the summer, and armor was put away until needed the next time. Since you had to buy your own armor, the poorest men served instead as light-armed troops. So about 50% -60% of the *mesoi* served in the *hoplite* army.

**K. THE ARCHAIC AGE TYRANTS:** The *tyrannos* (tyrant, dictator) was a new type of ruler – the one-man ruler. Between 670 and 500 BCE many Greek city-states experienced a tyrannical form of government. Tyranny was achieved by a coup and was illegal governing. We don't know them in detail, but a pattern of their rise and fall is available. Tyrannies are short-lived (i.e., three generations or less; most one or two); all tyrants were born of the aristocratic class. EX: Phaidon of Argos (formerly a *basileus*); Cypselus of Corinth and Orthagoras of Sicyon (both held the post of military commander – *polemarch* – before becoming a tyrant); Cylon of Athens attempted a coup but had won fame by winning the Olympic games. Tyrants resulted from vicious infighting among the aristocratic families in the *polis* for honor and precedence. Struggles for power were

waged among hereditary clans (*genos*; plural *gevn*), and often resulted in bloodshed. Formal conflicts were called *stasis* (“taking a stand”), and could flare up for generations, but tyrants could step in to stop or check the feuds. Tyrants were seen (at least by later writers – e.g., Aristotle) as champions of the people against the oligarchs. Under some tyrannies, many *poleis* thrived and reached new heights (e.g., extensive building and improvement projects, harbors, fortifications, better water supply, streets, drainage, and trade, commerce and crafts were encouraged, etc.). They also instituted new religious cults/festivals that celebrated and strengthened the unity of the *polis*; they supported all the cultural activities, competing to attract the best artists, architects, poets, and thinkers in Greece to stay in their city. The tyrants’ sons were rarely as successful as their fathers. Aristocratic rule was never the same after the *polis* underwent a tyranny – the farmer-hoplites no longer wanted to vote for their leaders without being able to hold them accountable; the nobles couldn’t take away from the poor their benefits or exclude the farmer-hoplites.

**L. ART AND ARCHITECTURE:** The Geometric period: 900-700 BCE; Early (c. 900-850; vase makers added new shapes and decorative motifs, more linear and angular motifs, the meander pattern/Greek key design), Middle (c. 850-750; increasingly elaborate linear decoration, gradually filling the whole vase, depicting living creatures [animals, birds], and human beings reappear), and Late (c. 750-700; breaks noticeably from earlier periods; pictures of animals and humans suddenly become frequent after 800 BCE, and group scenes that told a kind of story – battles, shipwrecks, funerals, and chariot processions – and the objects became increasingly more naturalistic; EX1: wealthy woman’s large amphora grave marker; EX2: monumental temples – the signature Greek architectural form). Artists achieved excellence in all the forms of visual art in the Archaic period, building on the Geometric period. Styles unique to different city-states developed, most evident in pottery. There were new motifs – floral designs and friezes of real and fantastic animals – borrowed from the Near East, replacing the geometric patterns.

**1. CORINTH:** Guided by the tyrant Cypselus – EX: exquisitely decorated perfume flasks, 2 to 3 inches high, which they filled with scented olive oil and exported throughout Greece. They invented “black figure” – painting black silhouette on the reddish clay, and then with a sharp point he cut in the anatomical and decorative details (sometimes filling these in with red or white paint). As this became more popular though, animal motifs were monotonously and carelessly repeated.

**2. ATHENS:** By 550 Athenians mastered black figure pottery, making new and larger vessels. Then they developed “red figure” painting – drawing outlines, painting the background black, keeping the outline in the reddish color or the clay itself, and then painting the details in black with a fine brush.

Vase paintings in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries most commonly depicted episodes from mythology and the heroic sagas; in later 6<sup>th</sup> century, contemporary life images of young upper-class males (e.g., athletes, horsemanship, rowdy drinking parties [*symposia*], school scenes, music lessons, homosexual wooing) were added (women were represented less often, as servants, flute-girls, well-dressed upper-class women with female slaves). They signed their pottery and taunted rival potters on their pottery as well. They painted large-scale representations on public buildings. They were most famous for monumental (life-size or larger) marble and bronze sculpture. The first large marble statues appear around 650 BCE; Egypt was the source of its inspiration and technique. The Greeks had naked *kouros* (young male) and clothed female (*korē* – young

maiden) statues. They began rigidly, with arms pressed against the sides and one foot forward, but became more real and lifelike (anatomical details, accurate bodily proportions, more natural looking) as time went on. They had blissful “Archaic smiles”. They were grave markers or offerings to sanctuaries of gods and goddesses, as well as public status symbols. Reliefs were also created on pediments and entablatures of late-6<sup>th</sup> century temples; they showed movement and action, so the *kouroi* and *korai* figures seemed boring as time went on. Architecture continued to focus on temples. The big development in the mid-7<sup>th</sup> century occurred when limestone and marble replaced mud brick and wood (which they learned again from the Egyptians – the quarrying, transporting, positioning, and dressing huge stone blocks); the temple plan remained the same. The Doric and Ionic columns were well established by the early 6<sup>th</sup> century. The temples were brightly colored, unlike what we see today. During the 6<sup>th</sup> century, structures were built around the *agora* (“the gathering place,” “the market place”); in the Dark Age the assembly met there; in the Archaic period, it became the market place (barter, conduct official biz) and public space (exchange news/gossip). They had colonnades that provided shade, shelter and space for market stalls. Council houses and offices, sanctuaries, public monuments were around the agora. Outside that area were the *gymnasion* (exercise space) and *palaistra* (wrestling ground). [The really great buildings would come in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries.] Every city-state had true urban centers by this period except Sparta. Houses were now 3 to 4 rooms instead of 1 to 2 rooms (Dark Age) but still simple, because the gods/goddesses’ buildings were where they spent their extra capital.

- M. LYRIC POETRY:** Epics (as Homer composed) were still composed in this period, but since Homer was already canonized as the supreme poet of all time, they composed lyric poetry. Lyric poetry = folk songs for harvests, weddings, funerals, coming of age rituals, hymns, fables, drinking songs, love songs; anything that dealt with communal and private life; some were accompanied by the lyre (*lyra*), hence “lyric”. They held competitions for the best poems. There were different genres of lyric poetry with different meter, subject matter, occasion, tone (lighthearted, bitter, contemplative), deliverer (i.e., solo for symposia, e.g., or chorus for large public gatherings) and musical accompaniment. They ranged from a few lines to a few hundred lines. They were personal, ranging from singing about drinking, friends, enemies, sexual love, old age and death, politics, war, and morality. Therefore we gain more and better insight about their society (from a male point of view, the upper and middle classes’ views), sentiments and attitudes than we did in Hesiod’s day. Three famous 5<sup>th</sup> century lyric poets were Simonides, Bacchylides, and Pindar (we’ll meet them later).
- N. PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENCE:** Philosophy (“love of wisdom”) arose in the Archaic period. We’ll read the philosophers later, but soon.
- 1. The Cosmos:** The Visible Sky: The Greeks knew of the stars and five visible planets (*planē* = “wanderers”), and it was easier to see them due to lack of light pollution. They named the constellations and sailed by them. Travel allowed them to figure out that other civilizations had kept records of eclipses and the regularity of the movement of the stars/planets.
  - 2.** Greek scientists searched for explanations for what was observed with a view to attempt to predict future events, as well as to determine our origin.
- O. RELATIONS BETWEEN STATES:** States warred often during the 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries but steps were taken to alleviate the tensions. Reasons for tensions: (1) city-states ran out of land so they attempted to extend their boundaries; (2) there were tensions between the original city-state and its colony founded elsewhere (trade-routes, being separated and wanting autonomy); (3) large

ethnic groupings (e.g., Ionians and Dorians) kept up ancient tensions. [Peloponnesus contained three of the major Greek city-states – Sparta, Argos, and Corinth.]

**1. Diplomacy and Alliances:** The two measures that were really developed in this period were diplomacy (*proxeny* – using a semi-official representative of one city-state to discuss issues with another city-state, which is a development of the Dark Age's guest-friendship – *xenia* – mentioned above) and alliances (EX1: States began writing treaties and peace agreement at this point; earliest pact – 550 BCE between Sybaris in Italy with another unnamed polis; EX2: Associations of neighbors – city-states – more political than real protection; EX3: the Sparta-created Peloponnesian League; Athens was part of the Delian League).

**P. PANHELLENIC INSTITUTIONS:** Even though the Greek world was politically a bit unstable, they were very culturally unified as far as poets, thinkers, artists and ideas were concerned. Panhellenic gatherings (sanctuaries and athletics) were proof of this; these grew to great popularity and prestige in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries – more worshippers, consulters of oracles, attendees of musical and athletic competitions. Most popular – Zeus at Olympia sanctuary and Apollo at Delphi. Three new Panhellenic games were created: (1) Pythian games for Apollo at Delphi (582 BCE); (2) Isthmian games for Poseidon near Corinth (581 BCE), and (3) the Nemean games for Zeus at Argos (573 BCE); these were added as yearly events in between the Olympics, so there was one of these series of games annually. **Oracle at Delphi:** For a hefty cost in obligatory sacrifices, an individual could consult Apollo for advice on personal matters (marriage, careers, voyages, divine favor, etc.); or a city-state would seek advice on colonizing, religion or laws. Apollo's answers came through a priestess, called the Pythia, who became possessed by the god and in a trance uttered the messages she received from Apollo. These were put into coherent (though frequently ambiguous) form by "interpreters" (*prophētai*), who gave their responses in hexameter verse. From Wikipedia: Supposedly carved into the temple were three phrases: γνῶθι σεαυτόν ("know thyself") and μηδὲν ἄγαν ("nothing in excess"), and Ἐγγύα πάρα δ' ἄτη ("make a pledge and mischief is nigh"), as well as a large letter E. EX's of oracular pronouncements: "Love of money and nothing else will ruin Sparta"; "Pray to the Winds. They will prove to be mighty allies of Greece"; "there is no one wiser than Socrates," to which Socrates said that either all were equally ignorant, or that he was wiser in that he alone was aware of his own ignorance. In 336 BCE, the young Alexander the Great wanted his fortune foretold, before setting forth to attack the Persian Empire – the Oracle uncharacteristically remained silent and could not be prompted to say anything, asking him to come back later. Furious, Alexander dragged Pythia by the hair out of the temple until she screamed: "Let go of me; you're unbeatable"; The moment he heard these words he dropped her, saying "Now I have my answer ." <sup>1</sup> These events showed a similarity in language, religion, culture and values. They banned war with a sacred truce during the month for the Olympic games. The contests (*agwves*) were all individual (no groups) that represented their city-states, where the contests tested speed, strength, dexterity, and endurance. A *stade* = roughly 210 yards (a website said it is 185 meters, and an Attic Greek foot = .2941 meters, Doric = .3269 meters, and Ionic = .3487 meters). The winner of the *stade* race was listed first in the victors list. They also held the *pankration*, a combo of boxing and wrestling where only biting and eye gouging were prohibited; and the *pentathlon*: the *stade*, javelin, discus, long jump, and wrestling; other events: four-horse chariot race (the winner was the owner, not the charioteer). Separate contest for boys under 20;

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delphi> and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Famous\\_Oracular\\_Statements\\_from\\_Delphi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Famous_Oracular_Statements_from_Delphi)

no women were allowed to attend the games, let alone to participate (until later in Olympia for a footrace). The prizes were only wreaths of various kinds of foliage; but they had huge processions, honors, statues, etc. upon their return home. The Greeks in general had a loyalty to one another, not wanting any city-state from without to violate their independence.