THESIS.

Grecian Thought.

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Grecian Thought. Analysis.

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GRECIAN THOUGHT.
I. Influences under which it acted.

The peculiar circumstances which surrounded the Greek peoples undoubtedly exerted a very considerable influence over the Greek thought and its products. All writers on climatic influence delight to point out glories and the happy effects exerted upon the activity of the mind and imagination, by the genial sunshine, the serenity of the deep blue sky, the combined airiness and majesty of the floating clouds, the bold relief presented by the upland mountains, as seen against the blue ground of azure blue, the sublime awe of the storm as it hurled its thunder-bolts from mountain to peak, and when all this had passed, the mild and winning beauty in which all nature appeared, the songs of birds and the sweet fragrance wafted from fresh flowers, and the soft, soothing breezes coming gently from across the waters; all these attractions and still more have been pictured as enchanting the senses and nourishing the boy and mind of the dwellers in all those countries whose shores are washed by the great Mediterranean.

However, invalid or potent these surroundings may have been in the formation of mind and thought among the Greeks, it is difficult to avoid mentioning them in considering the vivacity, the bent and the
results of Greek thought. We will consider first, the Material influences, which, the Imaginary influences, which were most prominent in molding the Greek mind.

1. The Material Influences. — Probably the most important, at least the most apparent may be included under three heads viz. country, climate, and self-defense.

The country of the Greeks is a part of a peninsula, which projects from Turkey in Europe, south into the Mediterranean sea. Reaching a part of a peninsula, it is itself composed of two smaller peninsulas together with numerous islands surrounding it. Greece is bounded on the east by the Archipelago or Aegean sea, on the south by the Mediterranean Sea, on the west by the Ionian Sea, and on the north by Thessaly and Epirus (now Turkey). On the west of Greece are numerous islands called the Ionian Islands. On the south is a large island called Sicyonia (now Ischia). East of the northern Peninsula is Crete, the largest of the islands belonging to Greece. East of the southern Peninsula is a group of islands called the Cyclades. Other islands, some near and some more distant are scattered through the Aegean Sea.

The southern peninsula of Greece was called Peloponnesus; the northern peninsula, "Greece Proper," or Helles. Both Peloponnesus and Helles were supplied with numerous small streams, rivers and mountains. Greece with all her islands was estimated to have an area of 18,500.
The country.

square miles; i.e., just about one third of the size of the State of Illinois.

The surface of Greece was quite uneven, changing from mountains to valleys, and dales to hills so frequently as to have the valleys of hillabob land so small and so thoroughly separated from each other that the divisions of the country would naturally suggest what in fact was carried out by the plan of the Greek people, viz., that each valley should be inhabited by a separate tribe or people. The mountains did not reach a very great altitude, the highest being Mt.aurus in the chain of Oeta, which is 8240 feet above the level of the sea. The rock most largely developed in the mountains of Greece was limestone, which sometimes assumed the form of the finest marble and was extensively used for building purposes and for statuary.

In addition to the limestone and marble already mentioned, the minerals included traces of gold, argentiferous lead, copper, lignite, sulphur, saltpetre, alum, asbestos, millstones, whetstones, serpentine and fuller's and porcelain earth.

On the mountains, below the height of 5500 feet, magnificent forests were found composed first of pine, then fir and hard wood including oak, chestnut and walnut. Between the height of 1500 feet and the level of the sea were exhibited as great a variety of valuable cultivated trees, shrubs and plants as could be found within the same limits in any other portion of the earth's surface. All the fruits of
The climate.

the latitude,—figs, almonds, dates, oranges, citrons, melons, currants, pears, the mulberry, and the olive were grown in abundance and of an excellent quality.

Owing to the mountainous nature of the country the proportion of arable land was quite limited; and Herod states that three thousand years ago the grain raised in Greece barely sufficed for one third of the consumption.

The mountains, the woods, the numerous inlets to the sea with excellent harbors tempting the mariner to try their waters, the thousands of islands almost within sight of each other seeming to invite the voyagers from one to another: all seemed to encourage enterprise, travel and trade; and in this way contributed a share towards determining the interests and industries of the Greek peoples.

The climate was mild but variable. The winter lasted for about two months. The summer was hot, but tempered by the fresh breezes from the sea. The air was then so clear that frequently whole months passed without a single cloud being seen. The great distance and the clearness with which one could see objects, in almost every direction the clear outlines of the mountains and their forests resting against the deep azure sky, was certainly beautiful and could not fail to impress and influence both the mind and imagination of the beholder.

Self-defense is claimed to be a universal law, not for man alone
imaginary influences.

but for all animate nature. The small natural divisions into which Greece was divided by the mountain chains, made the dwellers of each valley, if not originally, at least more and more isolated as time went on, even if they had no opposing interests. During the times of ancient and medieval history the sword was almost exclusively the arbiter of every controversy, of every affair. It was so with these Greek states. The number of soldiers which a Greek city could muster and the skill and bravery of the leaders, had perhaps the largest influence in establishing the rank of the city and the honor of its inhabitants.

2. Imaginary Influences.—The human mind is so constituted that the imagination is not the most potent factor of the mind, at least it very often determines both the course of thought and action.

Among the subjects of the imagination which seemed to have greatest weight with the Greek people we will mention but three; viz., Descent, The Gods, and Death.

The Greeks claimed that they were descended from one common ancestor, Hellen, who was the son of a solitary pair who were saved from a flood which destroyed all the other inhabitants of the peninsula. A common ancestor was not impossible, but the legend was enveloped with so much of mystery and of the supernatural, which was manifestly untrue, that the whole has been regarded as a myth. Yet in every Greek
mind, this legend was highly esteemed, and cast more than a shade of influence over Greek thought.

The Gods of the Greeks were very many and the popular belief was polytheism. The people were idolaters; and in the city of Athens and her temples, it is said were gathered the images of all the known Gods and the apostle Paul when he passed by the thousand altars on which burned incense to the multiplied Gods, beheld an altar bearing even the inscription to the "Unknown God." The Pantheists believed that God is all; Zeus and the Eleatics taught that there is but one real existence in the universe, all else being phenomenal and transient modification. The Stoics reduced the world to a world soul.

The Greeks represented their Gods as having all the human passions in their strongest and worst forms, as murderers, robbers, bachelors, adulterers, licentious, inconstant, parasites etc. Yet with these dark shades of passion they joined many virtues. This multitude of Gods and the hosts of attendant Spirits which were believed to hover and watch over the human tribes, gave the Greek imagination broad fields in which to expand.

Death, the early Greeks taught opened to the brave and good a future of bliss; and the wicked were ushered into Hades a place of torment. Homer pictures Elysium as a happy country in the west of Earth, near the ocean, where was neither winter, cold nor rain; and to this Elysium the most
Death.

Worthy heroes were transported without death. The later teachers represented Elysium as a part of the shades or lower regions inhabited by the blessed.

The theology of the Greeks from the first passed through one transformation after another, or received various shades from the numerous interpretations and teachings of the philosophers. Among these beliefs was that of Metempsychosis or transmigration of souls. It belongs to the oldest religions of India and Egypt. It is a prominent feature of Brahminism and Buddhism and is one of the earliest forms in which the doctrine of immortality appears. Herodotus believes the Egyptians were the first to entertain this doctrine. It was a leading feature of the Pythagorean philosophy. Plato believed that the soul passed from one body to another, and completed the cycle or returned to its original source after 10,000 years. (The Development Theory). It was believed that the soul descended even to animals and plants. The more evil the soul the more repulsive or hideous the body to which it was consigned. The Greek Theology was probably derived from Egypt. Socrates and Plato taught a morality much more elevated than was popularly accepted by the Greeks before their time. The reward offered to the just and brave, and the torment which awaited the wicked and cowardly, made the Greeks valiant in battle and encouraged good citizenship in times of peace.
II. Objects which called forth Grecian thought.

The objects which chiefly engaged Grecian thinkers we will consider under the ten following heads, viz. Home, the State and its government, jealousy and vigilance of petty states, Army and the necessity and ambition for mastership, Laws and customs, Schools without books, Maritime power, the Gods, Public works and Art.

The Home of the family among the Greeks was without ostentation, simple even to barbarism, of nearly all those comforts which today are considered almost absolutely essential to bare existence among the peoples of modern civilization. In fact, the home of the common people among the Greeks might be called a hovel. The Nobles built palaces and splendid mansions and adorned them with gold and silver. The Greeks had house-hold vessels made of stone, bronze, and earthenware. The men could prepare and cook their food and even took pride in that accomplishment. The women and girls even of the wealthiest classes in early times performed the household duties, spun and wove. Monogamy seems to have been the rule, and Polygamy the exception in the Greek homes. The Spartans compelled their young men to endure hardship and hunger and to engage in athletic sports and games so that they might make strong, active, and enduring soldiers. The young women of Sparta were also developed by physical training. The Greek women, with few exceptions, seem not to have been
The State and Government.

educated in any of the learning of their times, and very different from medieval and modern times, with only a few exceptions, the women were never known to exert any very strong influence in the government. The greater part of the wealth seems to have been possessed by a few nobles, and with the exception of their palaces and the public works, which were frequently extensive and costly, the buildings and the dwelling houses among the common people were rude, and small and afforded little comfort. Yet the Greek was fond of fruits and wines and rich viands, and feasting and revelry were not infrequent among them.

The State and its Government was a subject of first concern among the Greeks; and engaged much of the time and thoughts of the leading men, the orators and philosophers; and in their public meetings the contending parties opposed each other in no feeble way, with discussions, with oratory, with demagoguery and diplomacy.

We have spoken before of the small natural divisions of the country, as being separated into isolated and, in most cases, in the earlier periods of Greek history, independent states. The kinds of government in nearly in these states were chiefly four, viz. Monarchy, Oligarchy, Republic and Democracy. Royalty was abolished at an early age in all parts of Greece, save Sparta, which alone from the earliest times and throughout the Greek period retained its Kings.

Athens was the champion of Constitutional or popular govern-
The State and Government.

About 570 B.C., through the influence of Solon, the first Democracy was established at Athens. Down to this time most of the cities of Greece, except Sparta, had been the theatre of bloody feuds between the Despots and Oligarchs. Despotism was a kind of monarchy. The Despots were mostly destroyed and Oligarchy became the more common form of government. After the Democracy was established at Athens, in 510 B.C., many of the neighboring states and cities either established democratic governments or Republics, which were a kind of blending of the oligarchic and democratic governments. Whatever form of government was instituted in any of these separate states or cities, in each there seemed to be a lingering faction which not only failed to support the established government, but in many ways opposed it and advocated some other form, seeking frequently by plot and conspiracy to overthrow the former and establish the latter. Whenever two cities were at war with each other, these revengeful factions too often furnished ready hands to ply the assassin's knife, or treacherously to open the gates of the city and deliver their fellow citizens to be butchered by a merciless enemy.

The Greek states, their islands and their colonies, which were quite extensive, especially in Asia bordering on the Archipelago, gradually grew to importance in commerce, in the arts, in wealth, and in the art of war, and became objects to be coveted by the Eastern Kings. In the fifth century B.C., the Persian Empire having been consolidated under Darius, undertook the subjugation of all Greece. Many of the Asiatic Greek colonies had from time
The State and Government.

to twice fallen under the power of the Persians. In 492 B.C. Darius sent an army into Greece, under Mardonius, which met with disaster from a hurricane and slaughter from the Thracians and other northern tribes.

The second invasion occurred in 480 B.C. and resulted in the total defeat of the Persians at Marathon by the Athenians and their allies under Miltiades.

Xerxes, the successor of Darius, led into Greece the largest army the world had then or perhaps since ever known. It is said to have exceeded five and one quarter millions. The results of this vast armament were the destruction of the three hundred Spartans at Thermopylae, and afterwards of them and finally the total defeat of Xerxes in a naval battle at Salamis followed by his disastrous retreat from the Persian territories. The battles of Thermopylae and Salamis were fought in 480 B.C. just ten years after the battle of Marathon. The last effort of the Persians to subjugate the Greeks was put forth the following year, in 479 B.C. and resulted in their total defeat at the battle of Plataea.

These victories over the Persians gave the Greek soldiers great prestige, and in the fact of its making the Greek name honored and respected wherever known, it had some tendency to promote a national patriotic spirit, and a kind of community feeling. Yet while there was much of strength and excellence in the Greek governments, still there remained enough of disunion and partisan spirit to prevent such a national
The jealousy and vigilance of the petty states, into which Greece was divided, not only prevented the growth of those bonds of union which were so necessary to the self-preservation of those same states, but tended even to deepen and widen the gulf of separation between them. The whole history of the Greek people scarcely presents the picture of a Greek city besieged by either a foreign or domestic foe without at the same time discovering the abettors of the enemy within the walls, spying, discouraging patriotism, fomenting every jealous and sedition, and waiting the opportunity to betray or destroy their city and its people. A statement of just such facts and a multiplication of just such pictures would present a nearly complete view of the rise, growth and destruction of all the Greek states.

If one city or a league of cities gained a supremacy in power, wealth, fortifications, navy or influence, cause enough was presented to all forth a combination in order to humble or destroy that supremacy.

The Greek influence was most powerful and important at such times as a part more or less of the Greek states were united under the lead of some chief city. These times may be divided according to the leading cities into four periods (viz. — the period of the Athenian supremacy B.C. 477-404; the Spartan supremacy B.C. 404-390; the Peloponnesian supremacy B.C. 371; the Macedonian supremacy B.C. 359-146. Of all these periods the Athenian
The Army and the Necessity and Ambition for Mastery.

Supremacy was in all respects the strongest, the greatest, and the most noted period of Greek influence. Athens had at that time the most powerful navy then known; and her glory and strength was largely in her navy; but this period like each of those which succeeded it, was brought to an end by the jealousy of other Greek cities, which combined to destroy each other in succession, until the Macedonian supremacy and all Greece with it fell in 146 B.C. under the power of the Romans.

The Army and the Necessity and Ambition for Mastery.—A part of the citizens of every state were trained as soldiers, and in some of them a small standing army was kept. In the earlier times physical force and numbers much more nearly decided a contest in arms than in later times when the weapons and modes of warfare were very much changed. Powder and ball compelled the richly equipped and armored soldiers to dismount and fight on foot beside the ranks of the most humble soldiers.

The Customs, education, and genius of the ancient led them to war either to conquest, plunder, or self-defense, much more frequently than in modern times. And, like many people today, perhaps they knew no better antidote for the languor of peace than the excitement and tumult of war, the smoking ruins, the destruction and desolation of cities.

Law and Customs.—The Laws and customs alike of the Greek states were quite various, often harsh if not cruel in their remedies, crude in outward form and frequently derived from doubtful or superstitious sources. In modern times...
it has been usually held that the state exists for the citizen and that the great
object of the state is to secure the citizen in the enjoyment of his life and his
property. In Sparta on the contrary, the citizen existed only for the state and
was bound to devote to its honor and glory not only all his time, affections,
and energies, but to sacrifice to its interests his property and his life."

"The Spartan women, in their earlier years, were subjected to a course of
training almost as rigorous as that of the men. They too, were not viewed as
a part of the family, but as a part of the state."

"The chief ruler or Archon of Athens was the protector of widows and orphans
and determined all disputes relating to the family."

"Draco's code of laws for Athens punished petty thefts and other tyrannical
misdemeanors with death. The same as murder."

"Before the time of Solon (600 B.C.), the poorer people of Athens were
sold into slavery for debt. Solon's laws canceled contracts and (Bankruptcy) for late
future loans being made where the person of the debtor was liable for the debt.
He restored to their homes those who had been sold into foreign countries; and
to relieve debtors he debased the coin. (Inflation) Citizenship and all the
privileges, honors, and offices of the state were regulated these as forth by their
wealth. To return double the value of the property stolen was the punishment
for theft. Solon invited and made laws favoring the advent of foreignness and
traders in Athens. The Senate or Council of 500, decided all subjects of government
only by their vote could any subject be presented to the Common Assembly of people.
Schools without Books.

In every public strip or boul every citizen must take one side or other under penalty of disfranchisement.”

Schools without Books.—The Greeks had no schools such as are common in modern times. In the earliest times many of the poor, and the women generally, were almost without any general education. The sons of the rich were educated at home, frequently taught by some trusty servant, or in favored cases by some of the learned philosophers. Aristotle was instructor to Alexander the Great. In later times the philosophers established schools where they gave lectures to youths and such others as assembled to hear. Athens was the center of Greek philosophy, and Aristotle, Socrates, Plato, Anaxagoras were among the most noted. About 530 B.C. Pisistratus is said to have arranged the Books of Homer in order; and this is probably about the beginning of any formal certainty of knowledge, as preserved in books. Homer is supposed to have recited his poems some two or three hundred years before the time of Pisistratus.

Maritime Power.—During their various supranacies the Greeks excelled in the numbers and utility of their ships, the size and power of their masts, and the skill and force of their mariners. Corinth, Sparta, and Athens by their masts at various times held respectively the supremacy over the Mediterranean waters.

The Gods.—We have spoken at sufficient length perhaps concerning the Gods of the Greeks under the subject of Imaginary Influences on page 115.

Public Works.—Every Greek city of importance took pride in the number,
grandeur and costliness of her public works. These consisted chiefly of temples with their plate and other paraphernalia dedicated to the Gods, theatres, monuments of various forms, designs and frequently of superb architecture built in commemoration of some especial triumph or victory, the towers and walls of protection around the cities and harbors, and last but not least the statues of heroes, and the personified statues of the Gods and Goddesses. Small of these things Greece has been the instructor of every civilized nation since her time.

Art.—The useful arts among the Greeks seem not to have reached so high a state of perfection as the fine arts. Though we know that the Greeks were acquainted with many of the laws of chemistry and physics, as shown by the invention and working of their engines. This architecture was how our truly grand, and tribute is paid to Greek taste and skill today in the fact the Doric, Ionic and Corinthian styles of architecture are still the models for the civilized world. The household vessels were of wood, stone, earthenware, and bronze. Although there were certain many skilled mechanics we know little of them except as connected with public works.

There were very many noted as fine artists, both as painters and sculptors, chief among these were, Phidias, Polyeuktos, Myron, Scopas, Praxiteles, Euphranor, and Lyaiippos. The works of these artists in many of the conservatories of Europe after a lapse of more than 2,000 years still speak of the never-dying fame of their authors.
II. What Grecian Thought Has Accomplished.

In trying to sum up the results of Greek thought, we shall certainly expect to fall far short of any complete summation or review; but will be content with a slight notice of a few only of the prominent features of Greek influence.

The best scholars throughout the civilized world, of every age and clime, since the era of Greece have been familiar with Greek thought and Greek literature. These legions of exotic thoughts have borne the imprint of the a-cumen, the pith, the wit, the sarcasm, the irony, the complaisance, the poetic, the figurative, the philosophic, and the Philippiac and Leonie peculiar to the Greek.

Science claims some of her earliest fathers among the Greeks; at the head of all history stands Herodotus supported by Xenophen and Thucydides; natural history and philosophy can never drop the names of Aristotle, Plato and Socrates; boys at play by the pebbly brooks that run from mountain, plain and hill in every cline, speak familiarly of the oratory of Pericles and Demosthenes; the modern soldier and sailor, logician and man of ethics draw upon Athens; the statesman looks to Greece for both fact and example; tragedy and drama are both Greek words; Homer is the poet laureate of all the world; and in the fine arts the great entire world of taste pays tribute today to the beauty of Greek thought and the magic hand which has so exquisitely wrought and depicted it on the solid marble.

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