The Rise of Democratic Ideas

Prologue

Important ideas that led to modern democracy can be traced back through history
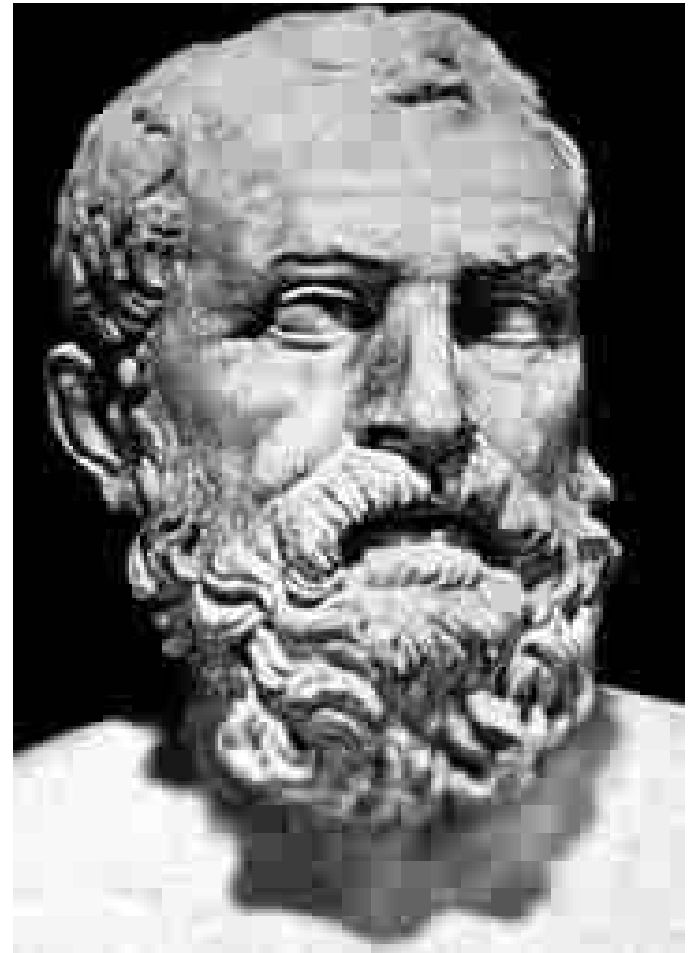
The Legacy of Ancient Greece and Rome

- Ancient Greece
  - Cities develop in small fertile valleys
  - (City-states) Each city had own government
    - Monarchy-rule by single leader
    - Aristocracy—rule by noble land owners
    - Oligarchy—rule by the wealthy/powerful
    - Democracy—rule by people (direct involvement)

Ancient Greece

- Shift from <u>monarchy to democracy</u> led by three important individuals over a period of about 130 years.
- Political and economic problems forced these leaders to make changes to how government operated and who was considered a citizen
- Citizenship belonged to wealthy landowning men
- This <u>took place in Athens,</u> which had become <u>Greece's largest city state</u>.
- The three **political leaders** who made changes were Solon, Cleisthenes, and Pericles.

Solon (594 BCE)

- <u>Stopped</u> practice of <u>selling people</u> and their family <u>into slavery for not paying debts</u>
- Established <u>4 classes of citizens</u> allowing more people to participate in government
- Allowed <u>poor to make decisions on juries</u>
- Only wealthy could be government officials
- His decisions brought compromise between rich and poor during bad time
- Stopped use of death penalty for minor crimes

Cleisthenes (508 BCE)

- Considered the "founder of Athenian democracy" because of his reforms
- Reorganized the assembly
- Allowed citizens to make laws
- Weakened power of families and clans
- Created political instead of social divisions in city
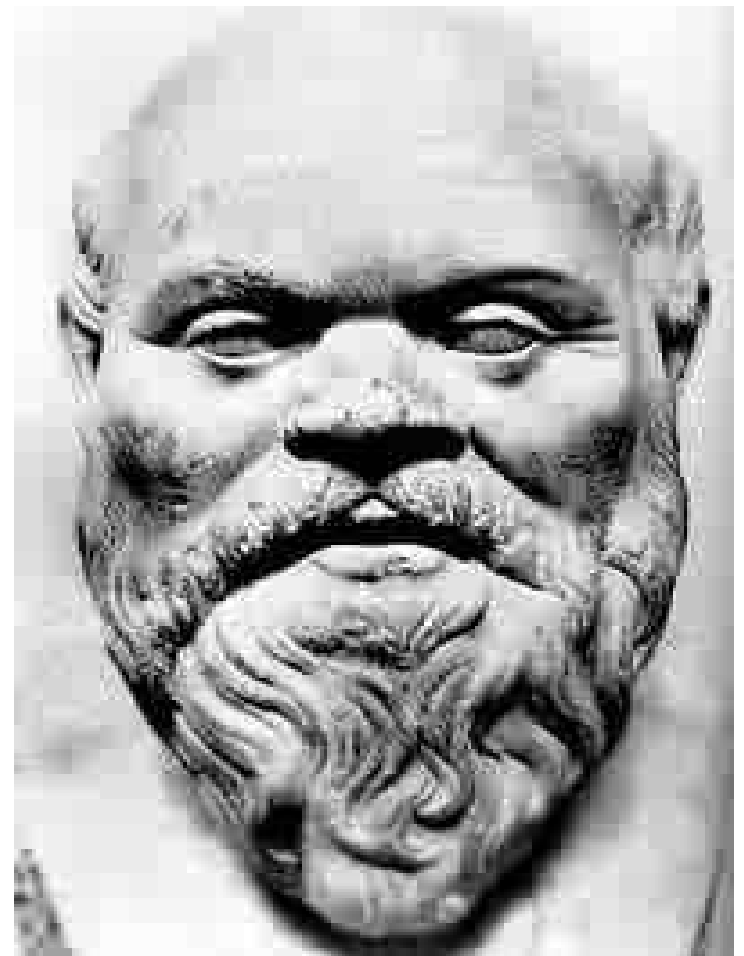
Pericles (461 BC)

- Ruled during Athens' "Golden Age"
- Increased #s of paid government officials
- Started system to <u>pay jurors for their work</u>
- <u>Poorer citizens could participate in gov't</u>
- <u>Created</u> a <u>direct democracy</u> as <u>citizens created own laws</u>, <u>served on juries and did **not** elect representatives</u>
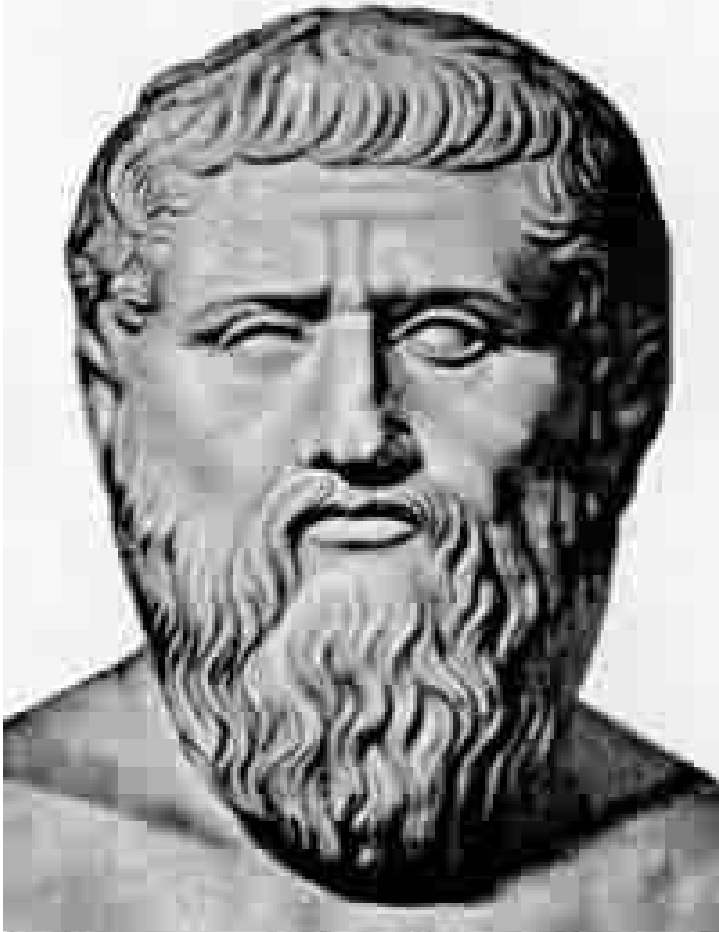
Greek **Philosophers** use Reason (300 BC)

- Several great thinkers (philosophers) made a lasting impact on Athenian law & Western thought

- Logic and reason was used to figure out how world worked, how people thought, and morality

- 2 main principles show Greek respect for human intelligence and allowed democracy to develop
  - Universe is orderly and it operates on unchanging laws
  - People can understand these laws thru use of logic and reason

Socrates 469 BCE 399 BCE

- Wanted his students to examine their deep beliefs
- Used Q & A (Socratic Method) to probe
- Looked for flaw in reasoning so students could come to truer understanding of reality
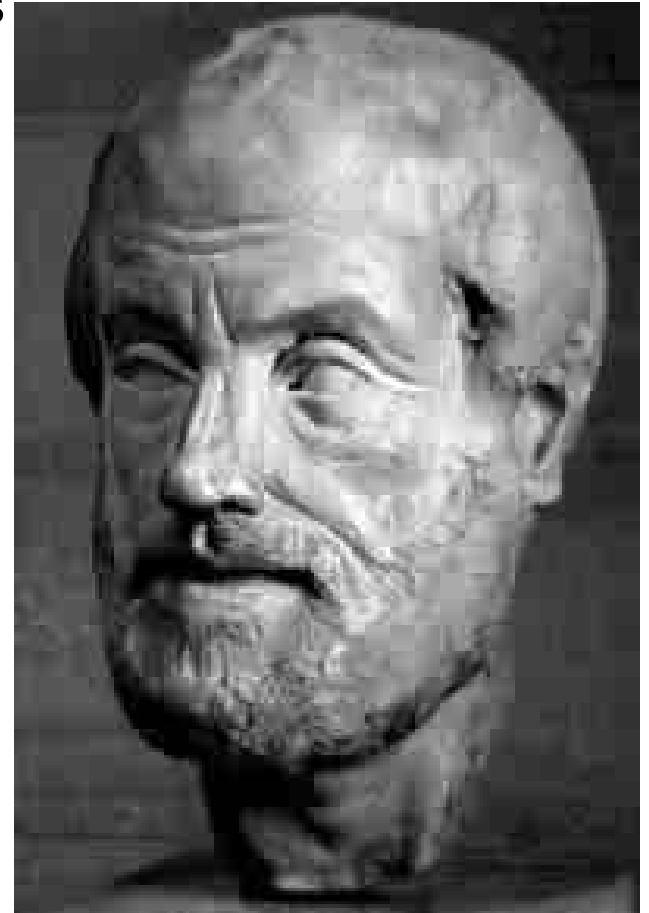- "The unexamined life is not worth living"

Plato - 427 BCE – 347 BCE

- Was Socrates greatest student
- Wrote about how an ideal government should work in The Republic
- Wanted a philosopher-king to rule

Aristotle 384 BCE 322 BCE

- Plato's student
- Wrote about physics, politics, gov't, ethics and more
- Studied astronomy, geology geography, economics, and other sciences
- Examined the physical world and human belief, thought, and knowledge
- **Aristotle was more interested in science – considered father of scientific method**
- **tutor of the young prince Alexander, who grew up to be Alexander The Great.**
- **opened his own school, the Lyceum (lie-SAY-um).**

The Legacy of Greece

•Greece set lasting standards in politics & Philosophy.

•Greeks did not rely on superstition or traditional explanations of the world. Instead, they used reason & intelligence to discover predictable patterns that they called **"Natural Laws"**.

•The Greeks developed direct democracy in order that citizens could actively participate in political decisions.

•They were the first to think of 3 branches of government

   •**Legislative branch** – to pass laws.

   •**Executive branch** – to carry out the laws.

   •**Judicial branch** – to settle disputes about the laws

Rome

- Rome rose and Greece fell but both had contact with each other
- Rome evolved from being ruled by kings, many who were brutal, to the establishment of a republic (government where people elected representatives to make laws)
- Early republic was marked by tension between the patricians (wealthy landowners with political rights/power) and plebeians (farmers, artisans, merchants who could vote but not hold office)

The 12 TABLES

- <u>Plebeians pressure</u> patricians <u>for</u> power and <u>a Written code of laws called 12 Tables</u>
- Laws written/carved on 12 stone tablets
- Laws put on public display
- Established <u>two new ideas</u> in government
  - **<u>all free citizens had the right to protection under the law</u>**
  - **<u>Law</u> would be <u>administered fairly</u>**

Republican Government

- Separate branches of government
  - Legislative—senate and two assemblies
  - Judicial—Court system
  - Executive—two consuls (one year) ran army and directed the government

  In times of crisis, a dictator could be appointed for 6 months. He had absolute power, made laws, and commanded the army.

  As Rome grew, problems governing developed and an emperor was chosen to rule in 27 BC.

Roman Law

- As Rome grew, conquered people were exposed to the system of laws that were applied to everyone in the empire. Roman Law was based on reason. We remember <u>Roman Law</u> for several important principles that are valid today.
  - All <u>citizens</u> had the <u>right to equal treatment</u>
  - A person was <u>considered innocent until proven guilty</u> in court
  - <u>Burden of proof</u> for crime fell onto <u>the accuser</u>
  - Any <u>unreasonable law could be set aside</u>

Justinian's Code

- Emperor Justinian had his legal advisors <u>organize over 1000 years of Roman laws</u> into a manageable system of <u>four parts</u>
  - <u>The Code</u>—nearly 5000 laws
  - <u>The Digest</u>—summary of legal opinions of previous decisions
  - <u>The Institutes</u>—Textbook for law students
  - <u>The Novellae</u>—new laws after the code

  Justinian's Code made a huge impact on legal systems across Western Europe and made Roman government "a system of laws, not of men." US legal code adopted much of what Justinian did.