

# WHO WAS PLATO?

First of all, Plato was not a god or a superman.  
—He was a man. —All men are mortal. —Therefore,  
Plato was a mortal. Flesh and blood, and let's not  
forget it!



More specifically, Plato was a philosopher —  
perhaps the greatest the world has ever known.

But what is a philosopher?

—Someone who deals with philosophy (a Greek word meaning “love of wisdom”). So why should we care about wisdom? In answer to that question, Aristotle, a student of Plato, once said:



“The wise man is to the ignorant  
as the living is to the dead.”

What Does that Mean?

It means that understanding the world, ourselves, and how we know what we know...makes our lives deeper, more meaningful — basically, BETTER!

**I'M GLAD YOU ASKED!**



*Besides, as a species we seem to have a need to ask...*

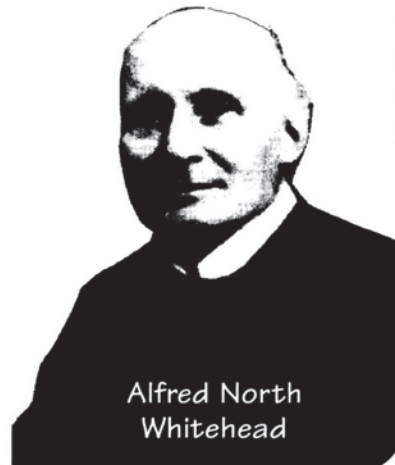
**WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?**



Plato's approach to this question — and the answers he arrived at — changed the way we think about the world and our place within it.

Plato's influence has been so great that a prominent modern philosopher, ALFRED NORTH WHITEHEAD, once declared:

"The safest general characterization of the whole Western philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato."









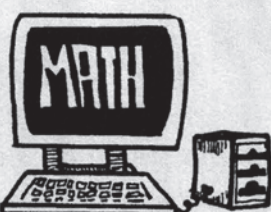




Alfred North  
Whitehead

Plato was the first to write about many of the things we today take for granted:

**What is truth?  
Justice?  
Beauty?**

(And asking "What's it all about?" was part of the Greek way.)

Plato's answers to these and many other questions had a profound effect on the future of:

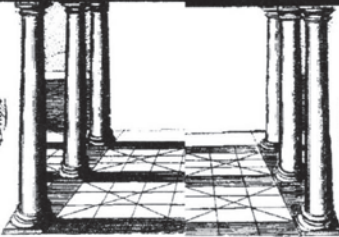
 <p><i>Religion</i></p>	 <p><b>Economics</b></p>	 <p><i>Art</i></p>
 <p><b>Psychology</b></p>	 <p><i>History</i></p>	 <p><b>Science</b></p>
 <p><b>MATH</b></p>	 <p><b>POLITICS</b></p>	 <p><b>Literature</b></p>
 <p><b>Love</b></p>	 <p><b>EVERYTHING!!!</b></p>	

# HISTORY OF GREECE

**OUR STORY BEGINS LONG, LONG AGO  
IN A CIVILIZATION FAR, FAR AWAY...**



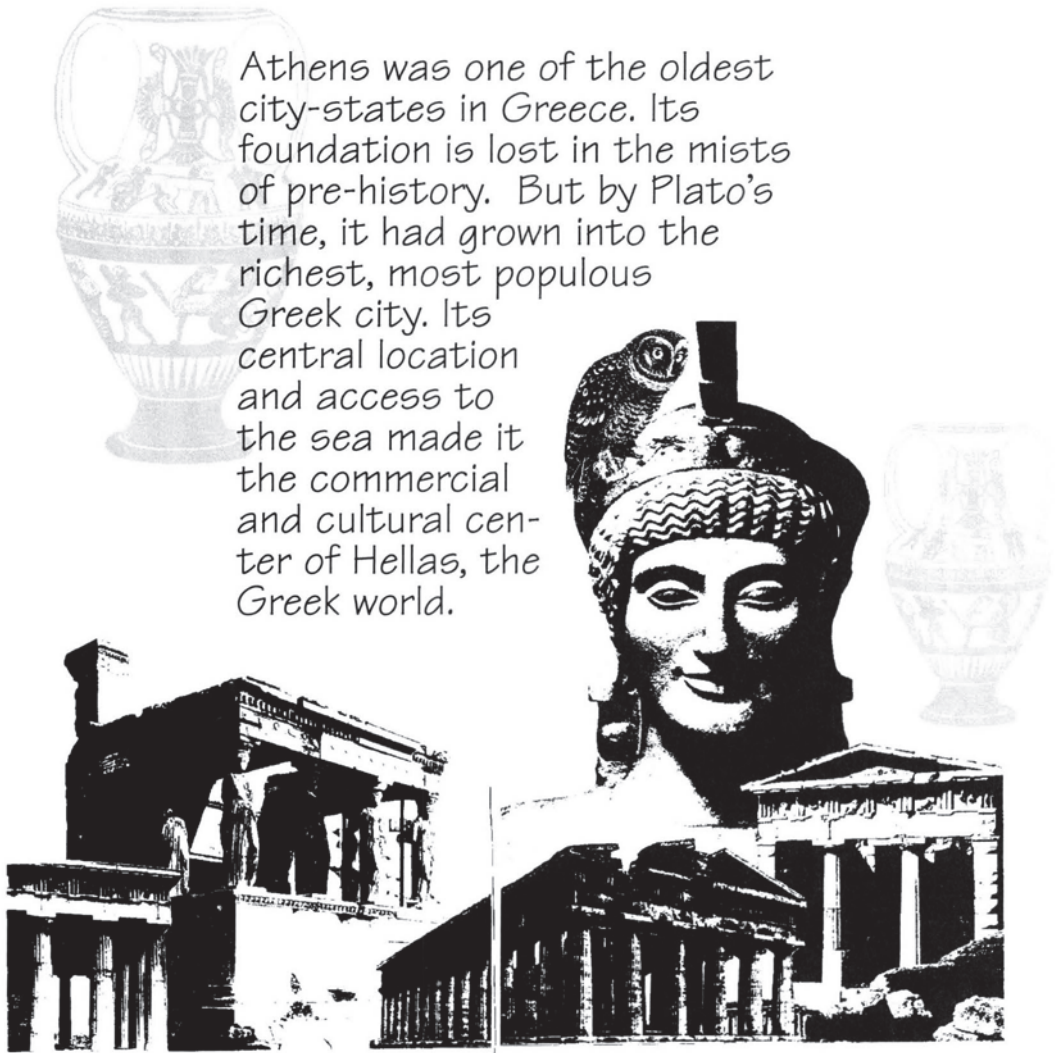
Today, we tend to think of Greek art and culture as "Classical." By that we mean cool, clean lines, white marble sculpture, tapering columns — grace and restraint. **In reality, Greek buildings and statues were painted in bright, garish colors.**



The paint wore off over time, thus leaving us with the wrong impression. The Greeks, as we know from their writing, were actually a people torn between reason and madness, freedom and slavery, war and peace, life and death.

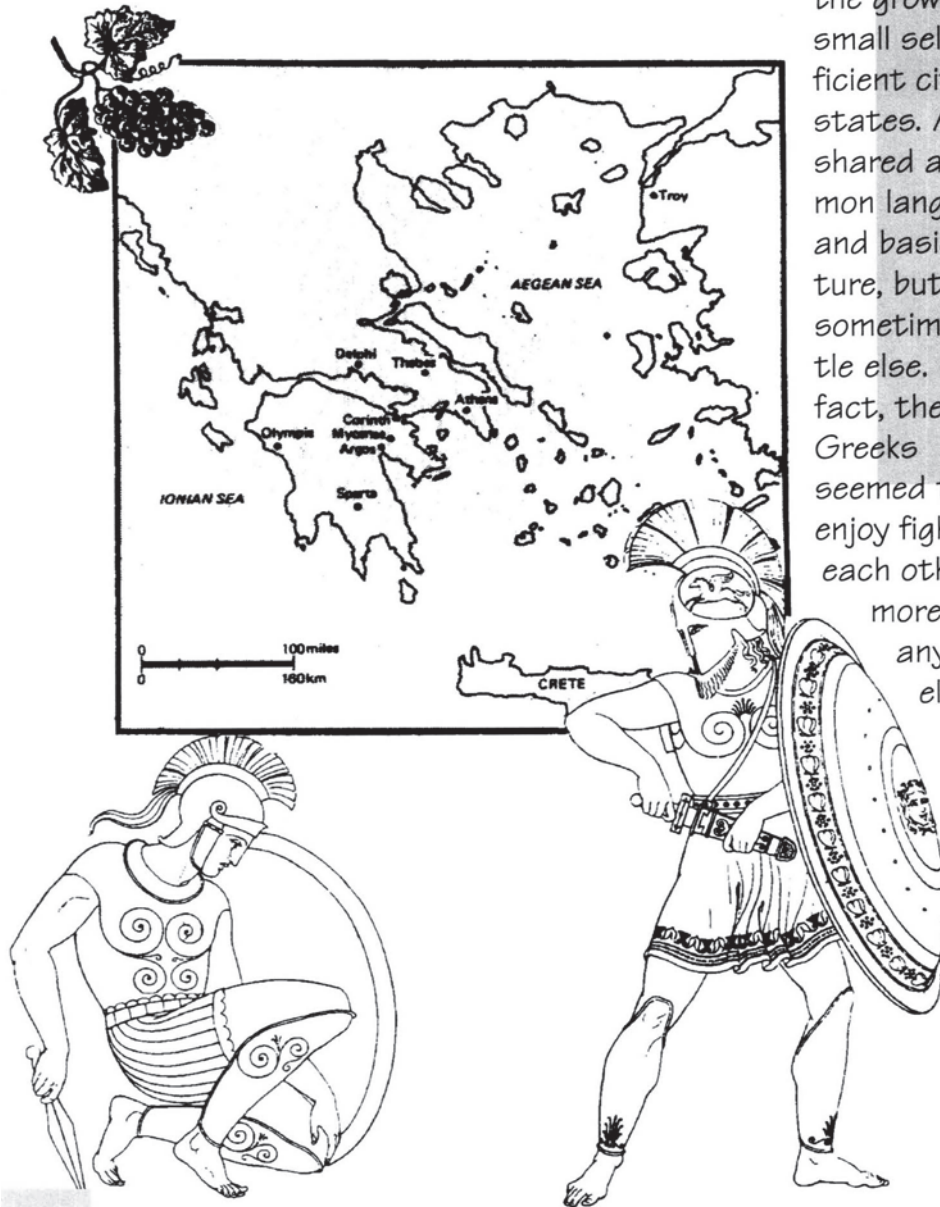
In the year 428 B.C., Plato was born into this world — the center of which was the important city-state (“polis”) of Athens. High above the walls encircling the city was the Acropolis — the temples built to honor the gods. Foremost of all was the goddess Athena, protectress of the city. The embodiment of strength in peace, Athena ruled over this cradle of philosophy.

Athens was one of the oldest city-states in Greece. Its foundation is lost in the mists of pre-history. But by Plato’s time, it had grown into the richest, most populous Greek city. Its central location and access to the sea made it the commercial and cultural center of Hellas, the Greek world.



Greece was poor in natural resources. It was dry, with few rivers. The soil was great for growing olives and grapes, but other crops grew with difficulty. The land was cut up by mountain ranges and divided by water, especially the Peloponese and the islands of the Aegean.

This physical situation encouraged the growth of small self-sufficient city-states. All shared a common language and basic culture, but sometimes little else. In fact, the Greeks seemed to enjoy fighting each other more than anyone else.

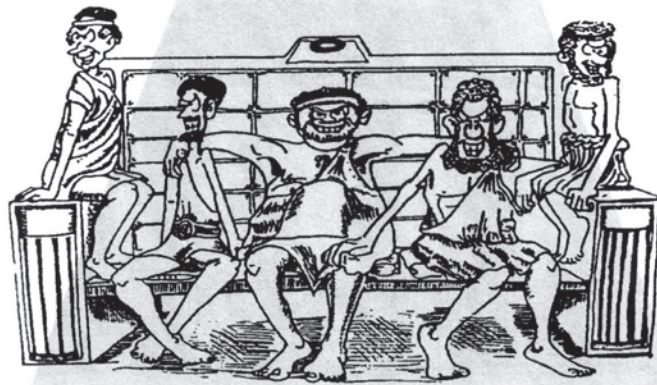




Politically, Greek city-states were organized in one of three ways:



AUTOCRACY— rule by one, king or tyrant



OLIGARCHY— rule by the few, the noble and the rich



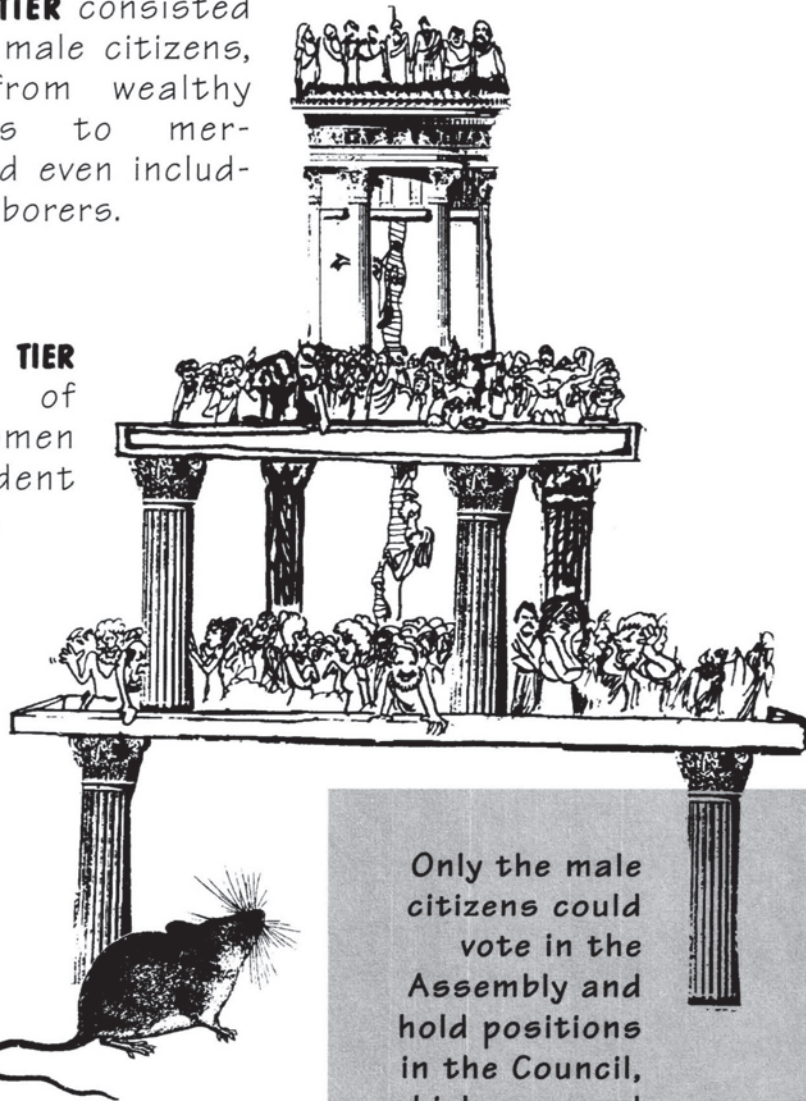
DEMOCRACY— rule by the many, or the people as a whole

Athens was known as the birthplace of democracy. In reality, it was a three-tiered society.

**THE FIRST TIER** consisted of all the male citizens, ranging from wealthy landowners to merchants and even including poor laborers.

**THE SECOND TIER** consisted of free women and resident foreigners.

**THE THIRD TIER** consisted of the large slave population.



Only the male citizens could vote in the Assembly and hold positions in the Council, which governed the city-state.