



The Greek Search for Wisdom

Michael K. Kellogg

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The philosopher Alfred North Whitehead once said that all of Western philosophy was "but a series of footnotes to Plato." By the same token, one could argue that all of Western civilization is but an extension of the ancient Greek cultural legacy. The Greeks invented tragedy, comedy, lyric poetry, history, philosophy, and democracy. They also made remarkable advances in science, medicine, and mathematics. In the author's view, what ties this wide-ranging intellectual ferment together is a restless search for wisdom.

The author looks at ten outstanding examples of Greek wisdom, offering fresh and engaging portraits of the epic poets (Homer, Hesiod); dramatists (Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes); historians (Herodotus, Thucydides); and philosophers (Plato, Aristotle) against the background of Greek history. In each case he asks what the author has to tell us— regardless of genre—about our place in the world and how we should live our lives.

By surveying some of the highest peaks of ancient civilization, the author argues that we gain perspective on the historical terrain that lies below. This book presents an eloquent and convincing case that a study of the Greek classics, as Gustave Flaubert explained, makes us "greater, wiser, purer."

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