

## Winter History & Heritage -- #2 (Dec. 16)

### **Democracy --- (Kirk; *Roots of American Order*, pp. 67-73)**

**This Athenian political order**, during the Great Age of Greece, provoked the Peloponnesian War (431--404 BC) with its damaging consequences for all Greek cities? Initially the work of Cleisthenes, Ephialtes, and the visionary Pericles, the system lost whatever checks and balances it had, all restraint on the will of the people, and veered toward extravagance, covetousness, and imperialistic aggression. Demagogues won over the people; prudent and moderate men were demoted or exiled.

### **Plato & Aristotle --- (Kirk; *Roots of American Order*, pp. 73-85)**

**These two 4th-century BC Greeks** stand above all others in Western philosophy, so much so that the story of the latter is often said to be a mere footnote to the former? One is forever linked to the Athenian Academy and the other to the Lyceum, both scholarly institutes serving as ancient prototypes of the modern university. Their political influence upon the American Founders, however, was subtle and indirect, relegated to insights into man's nature, condition, and quest for justice.

### **Myth of the Cave --- (Kirk; *Roots of American Order*, pp. 73-85)**

**This myth or metaphor** was employed by Plato (c. 428--347 BC) to illustrate his conviction that most men do not perceive things as they really are? As it were, suggested the sage, we are numbered among the living dead, confined to a subterranean dungeon where all we see are shadows against a stone wall. If a prisoner were to escape, make his way to the light of day, and return with news of the substance behind the shadows, he'd be dismissed as a deceiver who deserves to die.

### **Philosopher & Philodoxer --- (Kirk; *Roots of American Order*, pp. 73-85)**

**These two Greek terms** distinguished fierce adversaries in the ancient world, adversaries in the realm of thinking, speaking, and teaching? One of the terms, embraced by the followers of Socrates, denotes a "lover of wisdom" or one whose words and ways accord with a greater reality like tradition, truth, or God. The other, for which we have no word in English, stands for a "lover of opinion" or a man who fancies he can have things as he would like them, no matter what the facts of life may be.

### **Sophists --- (Kirk; *Roots of American Order*, pp. 73-85)**

**These Greek teachers** of the 5th- and 4th-centuries BC (400s & 300s) were devotees of Protagoras and his famous humanistic maxim, "Man is the measure of all things..."? Less interested in speaking the truth than winning an argument, they employed clever reasoning and artful speech to make the lesser cause seem the greater and vice versa. They taught youths, for a handsome fee, how to overwhelm their opponents rhetorically in the assemblies or courts, all for the sake of success in the here-and-now.