



The Genesis of Science: The Story of Greek Imagination

Stephen Bertman

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Historians often look to ancient Greece as the wellspring of Western civilization. Perhaps the most ingenious achievement of the Hellenic mind was the early development of the sciences. What was it about the Greeks, as opposed to the far older civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, India, and China, that gave rise to the uniquely Western, scientific mindset? Bertman explores this intriguing question in this authoritative yet accessible and eloquently told story about the origins of science. Going beyond individual Greek discoveries in the various branches of science, he emphasizes why these early investigators were able to achieve what they did. Among the exceptional characteristics of Greek culture that created the seedbed for early science were:

- the Greek emphasis on rationalism—a conviction that human reason could successfully unravel the mysteries of nature and make sense of the cosmos
- an early form of humanism—a pride and confidence in human potential despite the frailty and brief tenure of individual lives
- the drive to excel in every arena from the battlefield to the Olympic games and arts competitions
- an insatiable curiosity that sought understanding of both human nature and the world
- a fierce love of freedom and individualism that promoted freedom of thought—the prelude to science.

Focusing on ten different branches of science, the author shows why the Greeks gravitated to each specialty and explains the fascinating theories they developed, the brilliant experiments they performed, and the practical applications of their discoveries. He concludes by recounting how these early insights and achievements—transmitted over the course of two thousand years—have shaped the scientific attitude that is the hallmark of today's world. This lively narrative captures the Greek genius and demonstrates the indelible influence of their discoveries on modern science and technology.

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