

Classical thought seems to influence our conceptualisation of reality to its core. Our political systems refer back to the democracy of ancient Athens. The taxonomy of animals was introduced on the basis of Aristotle's framework. The atomic theory is from Democritus, geometry from Euclid, astronomical geography and alchemy from Ptolemy of Alexandria, and so on and so forth. All of these phenomena from the Greeks continuously influence our modern world. However, how can it be that ancient ideas still shape our everyday lives? This is something I had to understand, so following my teacher's suggestion, I started reading Nietzsche's 'The Birth of Tragedy'. This book was not only a challenge but a puzzle for me. In it, I discovered a Dionysian dimension of the Greek world, beyond the rationality of natural science and philosophy. After reading the book, I was left with feelings of confusion and curiosity. I felt I needed to understand this ambiguity, which is why I decided to study classics.

When I got accepted to the Milestone Institute, an advanced study programme for high school students, I had more access to engage with this discipline. I got particularly interested in Greek thinking, so I read 'The Greeks and the Irrational' by E. R. Dodds and 'The Origins of Greek Thought' by Jean-Pierre Vernant. It became clear to me that in order to get to know the irrational part of Greek thinking, I had to get immersed in classical literature, so I started reading Greek plays. One story, that of Iphigeneia, captivated me so much that I conducted a research on her myth and presented it in the Hungarian Research Student Association Conference (TUDOK). I interpreted the status of ancient Greek women with the help of her myth, illustrating Iphigeneia's inevitable fate, as it is a striking example on how women could not disengage from their repressed social status in ancient Greece. I encountered here Dodds' fabled duality of rationality and irrationality and that for the Greeks, this duplicity was so much more diverse than it is for us today. Dreams, visions and ecstasy, the state of 'ate' or 'menos', which appear here as well as in many Homeric passages, were realities for the Greeks.

It is not only the discrepancy of rationality and irrationality which persists in our age, but also concepts of morality. At Milestone, in modules such as Primary Sources and Good and Evil, I discovered Plato's theory of evil, resulting from ignorance and Aristotle's belief that evil is a form of *akrasia*, a weakness of will. These interpretations of the wickedness of humans remain influential as evidenced among others by Hannah Arendt's view of what happened in the middle of the 20th century.

So when Vernant argues that logic and philosophy were born with the death of monarchy, the expansion of the polis and the birth of democracy, which is the system that most countries follow today, I had to ask myself, how come there are still dictatorial regimes in our age? This duality encouraged me to examine Plato's theory of the state, which furthermore showed me again that ideas of the state from antiquity greatly influence those of modernity, and that there are many parallels between the ideas of the two eras. To culminate my exploration of the tight linkage between modern and ancient times, I wrote an essay for the Mary Renault Essay Prize, where I compared the conformity and delineated the parallels between Plato's theory of the state and the Bolshevik-ruled communist Russia.

Owning this insight and comprehension of the Greek thinking and mindset, the idea of investigating the ancient world's heritage to understand the modern world, where we live, just got more exciting to me. I now feel ready to immerse myself further in the influential time period, where everything came together.