

HELLENISTIC AGE AND MODIFICATION OF THE CLASSICAL IDEAL 320-30 BCE

Hellenism is identified with the formation of a unified government for all the independent Greek city-states, resulting in the end or minimalization of the character of the polis.

The crowning age of the Greek polis is the 5th c BCE when the Greek polity around the independent city-state was defined. This was reflected in various arts including the production and perfection of the temple as the epitome of that age. By 4th c. BCE, the polis was heading for a decline brought about by the political ambition of the Macedonian king Philip and his son Alexander. Alexander's achievement is the bullying of the Greek city-states into the semblance of a nation, pushing the Greek frontier. The result was the muting the autonomy of the cities, the proudest achievement of the Greeks.

The Hellenistic Period and the end of the Classical polis:

- (1) In the new Alexandrian order, the hundreds of co-existing city states, large and small, that had formed the volatile Greek communities found themselves engulfed in a vast political entity that contained old empires like Persia and Egypt. Greek rule was no longer coextensive with the Greek race.
- (2) The duality between Greek and barbarian became diffused. Now many Greeks lived among alien peoples.
- (3) The relation between the human and the divine was also altered thus affecting the Greek's place in the scheme of things. This was triggered when Alexander, a mere mortal, was deified even before his death.
- (4) "Kouroi" sculptures were replaced by Hellenistic ones: while the kouroi showed a contained energy at rest or equilibrium - the body aware of its potential without the need to advertise it, the Hellenistic figures showed sheer brute power, boastful and over powering, or particular emotional contents.
- (5) Classical values were based on the respect of the single individual within the framework of the city-state. It was the bigness of the individual within the narrow confines of the city that Classical culture celebrated. It was precisely this that Alexander's achievement destroyed.

Hellenistic works:

Laokoon and his sons.
Dying Gaul Trumpeter.
Nike of Samothrace.

Temple of Apollo at Didyma.
The city of Pergamon (in Turkey).
The Great Altar of Zeus at Pergamon.
Theater at Priene.