

# PHOENICIAN COSMOLOGY AS A PROTO-BASE FOR GREEK MATERIALISM, NATURALIST PHILOSOPHY AND ARISTOTELIANISM

Anna MAKOLKIN<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** *This essay traces the origins of the Greek materialism, early science, naturalist philosophy and Aristotelianism to the Phoenician poetic cosmology, science and philosophy – the topic still in the embryonic stages of scholarly exploration. It demonstrates the affinity of Hesiod’s much later poetic categories to the ancient cosmic genesis by Sanchuniathon, constructed centuries earlier, how Phoenician Thales became “the father of Greek philosophy” and how Aristotle’s causality theory was rooted in Thales’ theory of becoming, concept of unity, movement and cyclicity.*

**KEYWORDS:** *cosmic genesis; poetic cosmology; causality; unity; whole; harmony; primary causes; cosmic egg; pro-cause; biocosmology*

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## Introduction

Until mid-20th century, prior to the excavations on the territory of ancient Phoenicia – in what is modern Syria, Lebanon and Israel– cultural history of Europe, Middle East, Greece and Rome had been dominated by the descriptions about the role and contribution of the Greeks, Romans and by Biblical narrative. History and memory left very little about Phoenicians, the actual cultural mentors of Europeans, whose image had been nearly erased and distorted by her enemies and conquerors. Now the stereotypes about Phoenicians as ancient traders and mariners are about to be replaced by the surprising discovery – the forgotten Phoenicians as the founders of

<sup>1</sup> University of Toronto, CANADA.

European civilization, transmitters of literacy, science, technology, urbanity and philosophy.

In this connection, the narrative of cultural history is about to be corrected. Here, we shall explore the so far untrodden pathway – from the seldom mentioned and forgotten Sanchuniathon to Aristotle via Hesiod and Thales, from the ancient Phoenician poetics and cosmology to the early naturalist philosophy and science in ancient Greece.

### 1. Sanchuniathon and Phoenician Cosmology

Long before the Greeks, the forgotten Phoenicians had established that “everything was in everything,” or the interconnectedness of all natural phenomena and that **the dynamics of the whole** in cosmos was ruled by the movements of its parts rather than by the divine powers. They were aware of the power of the primal forces, correlated functioning of the elements and the cyclicity of the natural processes, birth, gradual decay and then again, re-birth, of **the innate harmony** in cosmos, between all the things animate and inanimate. They were cognizant of **the gender dichotomy** or the permanent gender-oriented natural universe which had shaped their anthropomorphic view of cosmos and was paramount for their poetic cosmology. In their view, the chaotic and directed movements in cosmos were brought about by **the cosmic egg**, the imagined engine of the universe which revealed their biology-driven vision of the world, the result of their long and attentive observations of the natural phenomena or their primitive scientific explanation.

Even the ancient poetic picture, intended for the illiterate, was still rooted in the quasi-botanical or biological theory of knowledge, based on the centuries of observing nature, natural transformations and taming it. The early ancient Phoenician or pre-Hellenic cosmology is characterized by the inexplicable atheism at its core. Despite the presence of deities, there was essentially a defined secular, early quasi-scientific model, developed by these earliest known creators of science, technology, art, seafaring, astronomy, logic, meteorology, mathematics, and versatile industries and knowledge, beyond that of the level of their neighbors. Surprisingly late, through Philo of Byblos (64 AD–141AD) we learnt about the early Phoenician philosophy and history, documented in the treatises by the forgotten Sanchuniathon. According to Albert Baumgarten, Philo was “a part of the group of the Oriental savants which included Hermippos of Beirut, Paul of Tyre and Herodian of Alexandria who pled the case of Alexandrians against the Jews” (1981:32). Proficient in Phoenician language, Philo had translated 8 books by Sanchuniathon into Greek. The Christian historian Eusebius of Caesaria (260–340AD) claimed that “Sanchuniathon was the most ancient man who lived before the Trojan war,” a native of Tyre, he left in Phoenician language such interesting works as:

*Concerning the Physical Doctrines of Hermes,  
The Ancestral Traditions and Customs of the Tyrians  
Egyptian Theology* [A.Baumgarten, 1981:45].

Both Philo of Byblos and Christian historian Eusebius date Sanchuniathon to 2000 BC, a quite realistic chronology since Tyre had been founded in 2950 BC. By Sanchuniathon's life time, the Phoenicians had already produced a written history, epic, scientific literature, music and art. Sanchuniathon provided a very early proto-scientific explanation of the origin of cosmos:

*When the air burst into light, on account of the burning of both the land and the sea, there arose the winds and clouds, and great downpourings of waters, of heaven and floods (1981[806:28]:96).*

This seemingly naive, quasi-scientific explanation predates the no less naive cosmologies articulated by Hesiod, Pythagoras, Parmenides and Heraclitus.

According to Albert Baumgarten, "Sanchuniathon's work reached Greece to be the basis of Hesiod's *"Theogony"* and predates Hesiod by several centuries. He quotes Sanchuniathon:

*And when the wind loved its own primary elements and a mixture resulted that plexus was called Pothos (Desire), the source of the creation. Some say Mot is slime, others the putrefaction of a watery mixture and from it was born every seed of creation and origin of all things ([806:17]1981:96).*

"Water and Watery Mixture" – these are the key concepts that would re-occur much later in Parmenides, Heraclitus, after the reproductions by Hesiod. Water as a source of life and primal cosmic element was an important conclusion made by the Phoenicians, long before the Greeks, and recorded in Sanchuniathon who had given the earliest possible known **quasi-scientific explanation**. His POTHOS/ Desire would much later migrate to Hesiod and Sanchuniathon was the first to advance the male/female union as **the foundation of creation**, the indispensable mixture of the fundamental elements. But the waters did not act on their own on Earth, in Sanchuniathon's view, "they were set apart and separated from their original place on an account of the Sun" (1981:97[806:28]). This is the earliest proto-scientific system of the universe, the gesture of recognition of the significance and role of the Solar System, and the interconnection between the Earth and the Sun.

The Phoenicians, the earliest successful seafarers, explorers and discoverers of European continent – we owe even the name of the continent to them, in the honor of the snatched Europa, the sister of King Cadmus – had been the earliest keenest observers of nature. Their vision of the world was not predetermined by the fear of nature but by their own **intelligent assessment of the powerful cosmos** where man had to dwell in harmony with himself, his neighbors and surrounding cosmos. Sanchuniathon's cosmology brings order into the understanding of the world, acknowledging the power of Nature, Cosmic forces and place of man in Cosmos, as

the owner of the Intellect, Reason. Long before the Greek tradition and elevation of Human Reason, there appeared the description of the world that cut a demarcation line between those who possess and do not possess Reason/Intellect. Millennia later, one would hear the echo of Sanchuniathon in Aristotle. Those who possess intellect, in Sanchuniathon's view, had the capacity to observe Nature and establish the regularities of the natural cycles, as the first stage of learning about Cosmos. Circa 800 BC, the forgotten Phoenician would be reborn in Hesiod who would revive the Phoenician poetic model of cosmos, inspiring Aristotle, Anaximenes and Diogenes, but be destined to be unmentionable in the Greek philosophical texts. The Phoenicians, as the givers of literacy, must have definitely transmitted to the Greeks and all Europeans their early proto-science, poetic cosmology and keen vision of the natural world.

## 2. Hesiod's Reworking of Sanchuniathon's Cosmology

Hesiod's monumental poem *Love and Desire*, written nearly a millennium after Sanchuniathon's poetic account of the Order of Things and origins of Cosmos, represents an obvious reworking of the ancient Phoenician cosmology, immortalized in Sanchuniathon's abandoned and forgotten genesis. Hesiod (circa 800 BC) would later become the source of Aristotle's scientific explanation of **the primary causes** and dynamics of the forces in the universe. But Hesiod's metaphors echo Sanchuniathon whose forgotten **cosmic genesis** the Greek poet re-processes, reviving the Phoenician cosmology in new cultural circumstances:

*First of all chaos made,  
And then broad-breasted Earth  
And love mid all the God's supreme*

Sanchuniathon's Pothos/Desire and sexual metaphors for the explanation of the origins of life on Earth found the second life in Hesiod, the feature that Philo of Byblos fortunately acknowledged and left for the unenlightened posterity. Male and female principles, wind, water and air were the permanent recognizable signs in Phoenician cosmology that migrated in an unknown manner and time into the Greek collective psyche. When Sanchuniathon tells the story

*of the wind Kolpia and his wife Baau that [he]  
renders night, and how there was born Aion and  
Protogonos, mortal men called by these name*

the Phoenician poet, thinker and historian wants to reduce the historical time from the origins of life on Earth to the history of Phoenician civilization. He briefly summarizes the unknown primordial past, the distant phase of life on the planet, coming to the contemporary to him life of Phoenicians as **the masters of the planet**:

*Aion discovered the food obtained from  
trees. The children born of them Calos, Genos*

*and Genea and they settled in Phoenicia*  
(1981:141[807:19]).

The wise ancient Phoenician is pragmatic about the possibilities of learning the Past and human contributions to cultural evolution and taming Nature. Instead of seeking the precise physical or biological genesis of cosmos which we may never discover or assigning the divine forces with the function of the cosmic movements, the ancient Phoenician sage brings instead **the world of the Possible**. Sanchuniathon cuts off and abandons the wasteful explorations into the universe of the Impossible, the mythological creativity in the direction of the religion, connecting instead Man and Cosmos. His story reveals the strictly pragmatic collective orientation of the Phoenicians who, unlike the Greeks, their able imitators, dwelt strictly in the realm of the Real and Possible. By the time of their recorded cultural legacy, as evidenced by Sanchuniathon, the gods had been already denied privileged status and worship, and men were given the task of mastering the universe and establishing a certain harmony. The **proto-cause** and creation were no longer on the collective Phoenician agenda, they had apparently already passed the stage of being interested in such remote impossible explorations.

In contrast, the Greeks, the recipients of the Phoenician cultural world and urban advanced civilization, were at the time of their encounter with the Phoenicians at the stage of purely fictional mythologized representation of the Real. Even at the time of Aristotle (384–322 BC), five centuries after Hesiod and millennium after Sanchuniathon, the Greek society had been functioning still in the presence of 30 000 gods! Philo of Byblos marveled at the “inexplicable atheism” of the Phoenician cosmogony, the absence of traditional gods which were replaced by the physical elements associated with them” (1981:121). Aristotle, an early Greek accomplished natural scientist, drew his inspiration from Hesiod, who, in his view, provided him with the best metaphor about Cosmos, or “Order of Things” – first, there came Chaos, then Cosmos, second. In Hesiod’s version, Nature, Cosmos and Life on Earth had seemingly come about as the aftermath of the clash between some unknown forces, which he represented, for clarity, by the familiar and universal understandable to all metaphors – Love and Desire. This was a Greek revision of Sanchuniathon’s metaphoric message, communicating the imaginary history of life on Earth, accounting for all the biological and cultural processes in the story of the wondrous mysterious union of the male and female, Genos and Genea.

Hesiod, a Greek poet, could not have delivered his message otherwise but through **the recognizable sign** – Love. But he also could not have done it without the formula, suggested by the Phoenician philosopher and poet Sanchuniathon millennia prior, i.e without his icon of POTHOS/Desire. Hesiod’s planet Earth had appeared in his own imagination but with the help of the **Phoenician cosmological iconography**, coming in front of the Greek readers as a voluptuous broad breasted woman, the giver of life and a seductive supreme creature, overpowering all other male deities, acting in cosmos. In Hesiod’s mind, the Order of Creation and Things in the Universe emerged in the following order:

- 1.CHAOS
- 2.FEMALE LIFE PRINCIPLE
- 3.MALE
- 4.UNION OF LOVE
- 5.BEAUTY

Hesiod's formula of creation, cryptic, elegant and strikingly simple, would later fascinate Aristotle who would be impressed by his imagery but would seemingly remain unaware of the source of Hesiod's inspiration. In turn, it would inspire Aristotle to make his own useful for the understanding of the origins of life and cosmos conclusion, as well as for the construction of his natural philosophy, early Greek science and overall knowledge about universe, asserting "that these suggest that there must be in things some cause that will move them together." Hesiod's metaphor of causes brought Aristotle to scientific reasoning, the explanation of causes, a new insight into physics, moving from the imaginary and Impossible to the Possible causes of the natural processes, from the naive poetic insight to the scientific reasoning.

Later, Hesiod's poetic formulas would be perfected by philosopher Empedocles (490–460 BC) and his ethical categories of friendship and strife. Aristotle regarded Empedocles the first scientist "who posited several distinct and contrary principles in motion," inspired by poet Hesiod. Aristotle was able to see **the poetic proto-base** of scientific vision in Hesiod's poems. Parmenides (515 ? BC- ?), the imaginative 6<sup>th</sup>-century BC thinker, also relies on the poetic metaphoric representations. Aristotle, contemplating about Nature, the nature of thought and mechanism of reasoning, quoted a poem by Parmenides in his *Metaphysics*:

*For, as each is formed by many jointed limbs,  
So is the mind of men; for that which  
Thinks in each and every man is but the  
Nature of his limbs; and what is more of  
This is also more of thought.*  
(1984, vol.II:1594[1009.21])

The thinker produces a poetic model of the psychology of the body and primitive neuropsychology, the transmission of the stimuli, **a poetic diagnosis** of the internal bodily functioning. Parmenides correctly imagined that man, a biological creature, is locked into the biological internal processes and the chemical mini universe of one's own body, represented by his "joined limbs." But mind operates in the analogous fashion to the body, controlling health, disposition and biology, the production of thought, ideas, imagery etc.. The biological reality, the **biocosmology**, the primary plane of observation and nature per se, as the sources of metaphor and movement of thought had been also the thinking of the ancient Phoenicians, transmitted further by Hesiod and transformed later into philosophical categories by the Greek philosophers.

### 3. Thales – the Phoenician Father of Greek Philosophy

In his *Essays in Ancient Philosophy*, Stanley Rosen writes:

*Thales, whoever he may have actually been, is for us philosophy, making its appearance in human history [2013:75].*

In the currently accepted historical chronology about the pre-Socratic philosophy, Thales (640 BC–562 BC, the data from Diogenes Laertius) is preceded only by Hesiod's *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, marking the beginning of the recorded Greek philosophical tradition and narrative. We know about Thales, a native of Miletus, Asia Minor, largely from Diogenes Laertius (first part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century) who acknowledges his Phoenician origins. Acknowledging the contribution of the Egyptians, Babylonians, and Persians, Diogenes Laertius begins the history of the Greek philosophy with Thales. Relying on Herodotus, Duris and Democritus, he presents Thales as a descendant of the Phoenicians, and by the admission of Plato "one of the seven sages." Thales achieved his high scholarly status in Athens and had been made a citizen of Miletus. The last was bestowed upon him after the arrival from Phoenicia of another expatriate, Nileos. Thales' achievements in astronomy earned him notice, admiration and remembrance of Xenophanes, Herodotus, Heraclitus and Democritus. He allegedly gave the name to the last day of the month as the 30<sup>th</sup>, discussed and pondered over numerous physical, biological and medical problems. "He was the first to determine the sun's course, the size of the sun and the moon" [D.Laertius, 1972, vol. I:25]. Aristotle and Hippias recognized Thales' contribution to the understanding of nature and physics. Thales allegedly was the first to inscribe a right-angled triangle in a circle, the discovery which was later wrongly attributed to Pythagoras. To show how much the ancient Greeks valued the wisdom and genius of Thales, Diogenes quotes the said inscription on his tomb, reading as:

*Pride of Miletus and Ionian lands,  
Wisest astronomer, here Thales stands  
[Diogenes Laertius, 1972, vol.I:34-35].*

Personally in awe of his wisdom, he quotes the most memorable sayings of Thales:

*Being asked what is difficult, Thales replied,  
"To know thyself." "What is easy? To give  
advice to another [ibid.].*

The well-known "To know thyself" – saying by Thales was later described as the wisdom of god Apollo, carved on the front of the temple on the island of Delphi. Thales is also credited with transmitting the idea of monotheism:

*Of all things, that are the most ancient is God,*

*for he is uncreated.  
The most beautiful is universe, for it is God's  
Workmanship [ibid.].*

In his *Letter to Pherecydes*, according to Diogenes Laertius, Thales allegedly wrote:

*I hear that you intend to be the first Ionian  
to expound theology to the Greeks. And, perhaps,  
it was a wise decision to make the book common  
property [ibid.].*

Thales' pronouncements on ethics, as recorded by Diogenes Laertius, are very much reminiscent of the Ten Commandments from another Semitic text, but reveal the needs of the members of the more advanced society than that of the tribe of Moses, suggesting their longer history. Let us compare the utterances:

From the descendant of the  
tribe of Cadmus:

*Shun ill-gotten gains.  
How shall we lead the best  
and most righteous life?  
By refraining from doing what  
we blame in Others*

[Diogenes Laertius, 1972, vol. I:39].

From the tribe of Moses:

*Neither shall you steal.  
(Deuteronomy 5:19)  
Do not do to others  
What thou do not wish  
For yourself*

Another Phoenician whom Diogenes Laertius mentions is Menippus, a Cynic, a former slave. Diogenes displays obvious dislike of this wise foreigner whom he condescendingly characterizes in two paragraphs, either as a successful beggar or money lender by day who had managed to accumulate a large fortune due to his financial acumen. Despite the fact that Menippus ended his life by committing suicide after a robbery, Diogenes shows no sympathy. He disliked his style, not serious enough in his opinion, and even questioned his authorship. This statement was not substantiated by any direct references and was, perhaps, a mere hearsay, based on the known even to Homer stereotypes about the Phoenicians as money-lenders or money-makers. He does not even give his date of birth or death, but simply states that "Menippus had been Phoenician by birth but a Cretan hound" who wrote 13 books, including *The Life of Epicurus* among them.

Epicurus lived during 341BC–271BC, and Menippus, the Phoenician, must have been either his contemporary or a person close to his time. Yet, it is rather peculiar that, out of a hundred of Greek philosophers, only Thales and Menippus are acknowledged as Phoenicians, some admit to have visited Crete and Egypt but none are described as the pupils of the Phoenician philosophers who must have been numerous in this period. The Greeks competed with the Phoenician rivals not only on the economic arena, global trade and colonial territories but also in the cultural



sphere. Being the recipients of Phoenician alphabet, literary, scientific knowledge and technical know-how, the Greeks owed their own achievements largely to the detested rivals and former colonizers. Tyre and Byblos, Larnaca and Kition, Limassol and Olbia, Nora and Motya, Cadiz and Gibraltar, Cartagena and Majorca, Carthage and Cumae... – all challenged the Greek colonial appetite, cultural aspirations and collective cultural Self. The ultimate winners in the historic Phoenico-Hellenic conflict, the Greek zealously guarded their historical narrative and the alleged purity of their Hellenic race. The ancient Helleno-Semitic connections were hidden and, even in case of recent mixed origins of the Greek cultural figures, the Greek line was emphasized. In this sense, the myth of the exclusive noble Hellenic origins and superiority over the rest of the Mediterranean neighbors, the “barbarians” had been the predominant, if not the key, motif. The Greeks who had been the recipients of the Phoenician urban civilization could not accept the fact of being second in line, after the Phoenicians in all cultural achievements. They vehemently rejected and negated the **Phoenician mentorship**.

“Philosophy begins with Thales,” declared Bertrand Russell and we can paraphrase it, stating that “Philosophy and European culture begin with Phoenicians,” this is something which had been intentionally and traditionally forgotten or by habit omitted. The proverbial “*Know thyself*” attributed to god Apollo had been planted into the Greek collective memory as a Greek legacy because nobody ever reminded of the outstanding and magnificent **urban Phoenician civilization** which predated all others in their civilizing impact. Diogenes Laertius who overturned some perceptions and stereotypes about the Phoenicians, credited Thales with several significant philosophical positions:

- 1.he was first to maintain the immortality of the soul;
  - 2.the first to speak of physics;
  - 3.the first establish water as the beginning of everything, and made the cosmos ensouled (EMPSYCHON) and full of demons;
  - 4.NOUS he defined as the quickest of all things, for it runs through everything;
  - 5.he said there is no difference between life and death.
- [1972, vol. I: 37]

Thales was, the first and foremost, the earliest physicist. The archetypal Phoenician mythical image of WATER that entered the ancient collective Phoenician imagination, their epos, lore and history receives a new treatment in Thales. Aristotle would later claim that Thales “was the leader and originator (ARKHEGOS) of a philosophy that attributed to water the function of the prime matter (PROTO ILI),” the primary significance in cosmos, biosphere and life in general. James Warren claims that “perhaps, he [Thales] got this kind of philosophy from seeing that everything is nourished by it, as suggested by Aristotle in his *Metaphysics* (2007:27).

Aristotle mentions Thales in his *De Anima*, repeating his main postulates:

- 1) *the Earth rests on water like a log in a pond;*

2) *repulsion and attraction drive magnets to induce motion in themselves and other rocks* [2007:27].

The elements of the proto and actual astronomy were in the collective psyche and mind of the Phoenicians, the first most successful mariners and explorers of distant lands. They would not be able to function at sea without the knowledge of the interactive powers in cosmos, the impact of the sun, wind, stars, planets and their movements upon the Earth, i.e. without astronomy.

Thales appears on the intellectual horizon at the time when the versatile branches of knowledge and sciences had been already serving the Phoenicians for millennia. His cosmology reflects the evolution of knowledge among the Phoenicians who had advanced naive mythology to the level of precisely functioning **biocosmology** and scientific genesis. Thales perfected the ancient collective observations into a **proto-scientific hypothesis**, predating modern science. To him, WATER is the ARCHE of all things, the primary matter and cause, possessing her own *empsychon* and *daimons* or inner order and mechanism. His world view was the most ancient materialistic in its essence, much more scientific than that of Plato's who came three long centuries after. The NOUS of Thales would find a creative re-working in Aristotle and his secular interpretation of Cosmos and human place in it. The Aristotelean materialism and atheism stem from the utterly secular, advanced and surprising, for his time, modern scientific system of Thales. Patricia O'Grady, who provided the most definitive study and formulation of Thales' cosmology, physics and interdisciplinary contribution to Western thought, passionately states, "Thales' views constitute a break with the supernatural explanations" (2002:109). The contemporary Australian scholar argues that

*Thales gave no role to the gods in his hypothesis about water principles, the most important cosmic element* [2002:129].

Not daring to admit the Phoenician roots of Thales, the scholar is correct in her characterization of his absolutely advanced theories, standing far away from the religious mythology and naive speculations of his Greek and non-Greek contemporaries. She defends his world view as a product of his strictly personal unique intellect rather than the consequence of his cultural belonging and Phoenician heritage:

*The explanation that the gods, far distant on Olympus, controlled nature and the affairs of man, could not satisfy a Thales* [2002:129].

Commentators on Thales, beginning from Hippias, Posidonius, Plato and ending with Cicero, largely misinterpreted his theory of the soul, grafting it to their own beliefs or repetitions of the beliefs of others. The theory of the soul in Thales was the only part of his predominantly detached scientific world view that could be

mistakenly treated as religious. In fact, P.O'Grady argues that "Thales identified soul as the motive force" [2002:110]. For millennia, Aristotle's NOUS or intellect, actually borrowed from Thales, would be also confused with the divine origins and enter the Western theological discourse as a pro-religious and pro-Christian helpful argument. His proposition that soul was deathless would inspire the Roman poet Ovid to have a similar motif in his *Metamorphosis*, leading to the myriads of the theological speculations in the post-Christian era, with a long life, extending to the modern and post-modern hermeneutics in the classical juxtaposition of Being and Non-Being. **The recognizable sign** intellect/NOUS in Thales has a multilayered philosophical meaning, attributed to all animate and inanimate parts of Cosmos. Cosmos is primary for Thales, the NOUS of Cosmos requires a reflective power of the human NOUS, something that Aristotle and his followers would dwell upon substantially in order to reject the divine origins and empower man to run one's own affairs, guided by Reason. The interactions between the Whole and its Parts, the Harmonious Order of Things had been profoundly clear to Thales, but it would have to be defended and argued by numerous Greek philosophers who would come centuries after him.

Diogenes Laertius claims that Thales' pupil Anaximander (circa 580 BC) founded the Ionian school of philosophy and his own idea of the infinite got inspired by Thales. The ideas of Thales would be given a second life in the theories of Anaxagoras, Empedocles, Heraclitus, Democritus and Zeno, among numerous others. The reincarnated soul in Plato's *Timaeus* could be also traced to Thales and his cornerstone interpretations. When Anaxagoras would later claim that "mind arranges and is responsible for everything," he is processing Thales' idea of intellect. When Anaxagoras claimed that "coming to be is a combination and perishing is dissolution," he is following Thales. It was Thales who defined the mechanism of all cosmic processes that are governed by "combination and separation". The Pythagorean interests in number and harmony could be also traced to Thales. The famous postulate by Democritus – "all is flowing and changing" – is also a reworked version of Thales' interpretation about **the state of cosmos**. Now, Thales is accepted as not only "the father of philosophy" but also of modern sciences, such as mathematics, astronomy, biology, physics, and even chemistry. According to Diogenes Laertius, Thales had apparently predicted the eclipse of 585 BC and a bumper olive crop that increased the production of olive presses [J.Warren, 2007:27]. His scientific predictions had a purely **applied character**, something which Aristotle would later regard as the proper trend of inquiries. The idea of practical application of knowledge in the scientific activity of Thales was in the best traditions of the Phoenician ancient civilization in which **the idea of perfection** of human existence was central.

All the Phoenician inventions and discoveries over the millennia of their ascent as a civilization represent a successful search for useful and immediately applied knowledge to improve the existential conditions. None of the advanced ancient societies were known to exhibit the same cognitive direction. The Phoenicians, the first to have studied Cosmos, did so for their immediate practical purposes and needs.

Simultaneously, they displayed the most careful attitude towards the environment, acting as the first environmentalists of antiquity. Reaching to explore and tame Nature, they knew their limitations, trying to adjust themselves to Cosmos, to Be within it, rather than change it to their own liking. The Phoenicians were the most practical philosophers, wise existentialists and masters of Being in the World. Their interest in the abstract was motivated by their practical goals, having an applied character. Aristotle would later provide the analogous synthesis of the primitive materialism of Thales and the applied orientation of the Phoenician search for knowledge.

The interdisciplinary interests and profoundly useful applied scientific discoveries, made by Thales in various branches of knowledge, anticipate all Greek achievements of antiquity. His conclusions had been the result of a prolonged observation, calculation and contemplation of the ancient Phoenicians, the nearly lost legacy in his life time. Ironically, Thales became the acclaimed one of the wisest men of Greece. P.O'Grady has discovered in Diogenes Laertius the *Iambi* by Callimachus, the best panegyric to Thales:

*Lord of the folk of Neleus' line,  
Thales, of Greeks, adjudged most wise,  
Brings of thy Didymaen shrine  
His offering, a twice-won prize*  
[P.O'Grady, 2002:276; D.Laertius, 1972, vol. I:31].

The poem quoted by Diogenes Laertius is the story of the tripod, received by Thales for his highly esteemed wisdom. He was particularly respected after the correct prediction of the 585 BC– Solar Eclipse. The same Diogenes Laertius refers to the *History of Astronomy* by Eudemus who gave primacy to Thales for “who determined the sun’s course from solstice to solstice” [1972, vol. I:24]. Today, Thales is recognized as “the progenitor of Western philosophy and science”. Scholars of modernity write books with such titles as, *Astronomy from Thales to Kepler*, or *Mathematics from Thales to Euclid*.

The discoveries of Thales stand at the height of the Phoenician cumulative knowledge and during the sunset of their magnificent advanced ancient civilization. In the life time of Thales, there were still largely preserved the depositories of the Phoenician knowledge in the temples, in the royal palaces and libraries of Tyre, Byblos, Sidon, Beirut and Carthage. Diogenes Laertius reports that Thales came to Miletus with his friend Nileos who “had been expelled from Phoenicia but most writers represent him as a genuine Milesian” [1972, vol. 1:23]. It means that the Greeks wanted to see Thales as their own. Thales had been a contemporary of the still thriving Carthage, the seat of the late Phoenician stage, known as Punic. Sadly enough, even the writer of the post-modern heroic biography of Thales, Patricia O'Grady, fails to dwell on the Phoenician origins of Thales, attributing his knowledge of mathematics and astronomy to his travels to Egypt and Babylonia, and knowledge of the Eastern sources while none of the civilizations in the Mediterranean

region had reached the sophistication and level of the Phoenicians. They had explored most of the sea routes across the lands and seas precisely due to their early acquired scientific knowledge. Their knowledge of geography, mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, and meteorology predates that of all their neighbors. The Phoenicians were the only ones to have had monopoly on knowledge which secured their power and impact in the world. None of the Phoenician neighbors possessed their high scientific and highly applied knowledge, neither the Egyptians, nor the Persians, Babylonians and Greeks could match the Phoenician achievements. The Egyptian bias and scientific mythology in the history of science were constructed by the Greeks who had intentionally expunged their Phoenician rivals and cultural mentors from the collective memory. Herodotus claimed the Egyptians to be the most ancient nation, intentionally tracing the Greek theology and science and cultural influences to them and drowning the image of the Phoenicians in the mythological and pseudo-historical narrative of his *Histories*.

The most reliable source about Thales remains Diones Laertius who had reported that

*Hieronimus informs us that [Thales] measured the height of the pyramids by the shadow they cast, taking the observation at the hour when our shadow is of the same length [1972, vol. I:27].*

Contrary to the Greek pseudo-historical narrative, the Phoenician father of Greek philosophy had been also the “father of geometry”, in addition to his being the founder of physics, astronomy and chemistry. Thales demonstrated to Pharaoh Amasis how to determine the height of the pyramid without actually measuring it but calculating. Egypt which had long-standing contacts with Phoenicia must have benefitted from their advanced knowledge, as it would be later documented by the 20<sup>th</sup>-century architectural findings which challenged Herodotus and other myth makers of antiquity about the actual course of cultural development and the real Phoenician role in the region. Thales had the most profound impact on the course of the Greek and entire Western philosophy not by chance. His achievements represent the culminating point prior to the forced eclipse of Phoenician civilization and its destruction by her rivals and new comers to the global arena, such as the Greeks and Romans. One may claim that the Phoenicians collectively begot Thales and bequeathed him to the Greeks and the entire West. The most successful heir was Aristotle who acknowledged Thales and the legacy of Cyprus, Crete, Lacedomon/Sparta and Carthage, i.e. the centers of the Phoenician culture. The Aristotelean **causality theory** is rooted in Thales’ theory of becoming, his concept of unity, movement, and cyclicity, and his entire cosmology would be impossible without the basic hypothesis of Thales. Thalesianism begot Aristotle and Aristoteleanism, and materialism in the science of antiquity, in the shadow of Platonic idealism and in the presence of the religious mythology and the influential divine origins-theory.

The Greek thinkers appropriated Thales, making him their own and having attached the cultural accomplishments of their rivals to the corpus of their own metaphysical systems. Thales, a contemporary of the yet undestroyed thriving Carthage and undermined but still surviving Phoenicia, must have known the Phoenician and Punic languages and must have been cognizant of the Phoenician scientific legacy. Acknowledging the primacy of Thales in sciences and philosophy, we acknowledge Phoenicia as progenitor of our cultural evolution.

#### 4. The Zenonian Trinity

Gerhard Herm challenged the entire Western cultural history in his provocative book, *The Phoenicians* (1975), where he proclaimed with confidence:

*The Hellenes owed their rivals [the Phoenicians]  
more than they cared to admit and were never able  
to forget this [1975:175].*

He reminds the 20<sup>th</sup>-century readers that the Phoenicians had been not only the first daring geographical explorers, mariners, transmitters of urbanity, first major inventors of various useful tools and objects, founders of various industries, but also transmitters of literacy and knowledge. For a long time, the Greeks called their own script “*grammata phoenica*”, acknowledging its Phoenician origin, fearing that Phoenicians would dominate and rule them. This fear and inferiority complex in the relationship with the Phoenicians would not disappear even in Plato’s time (428 BC-398 BC). According to G.Herm, “Plato feared that sooner or later the Greek language would be supplanted by the Phoenician [1975:224]. Apparently, the Phoenician philosophical treatises had been still available in the 5<sup>th</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC to the interested in the subject Greeks. The travels and contacts between Athens and Tyre, Citium, Cyprus and Elea, Italy had been regular and very productive. History of philosophy and European cultural history lag behind the modern archeology, philology and history in respect to the Phoenician role in European scultural evolution. The presently available knowledge about the true story of Phoenician settlements in the Mediterranean, unique urbanization and colonization of Europe reveals the fact of the Phoenician presence in Europe, antedating the Greek and shedding a new light on the chronology and proto-history of Greek and European culture.

The town of Elea, associated with the Greek philosophical school, the birthplace of Parmenides and Zeno, is known as a Greek colony in Italy. However, since it has been recently established that the Phoenician presence in Italy predates the Greek one, the narrative changes in favor of the actual past. The name of the city itself – Elea – points out to the Phoenician proto-history. This just another remaining geographical toponym, stubbornly signifying the Phoenician origins and ancient migration. The sign Elea is the **onomastic double** of Ellis in the mother country and of another colony in Greece, named after the Phoenician god El. Philip Hitti finds the Phoenician **cultural recombination** on the ground of this previously Phoenician

settlement and cultural centre. Apparently, Zeno of Elea (495 BC – 430 BC), who became known as one of the controversial Greek philosophers and a prominent member of the so-called Eleatic school, is an interesting byproduct of the Hellenosemitic cultural symbiosis at Elea. Most of the information about him and other scholars of the Eleatic School come to us from the secondary sources. Zeno came to us from Plato's dialogue *Parmenides*, as an alleged Zeno's adoptive father, as well as from Aristotle, Diogenes Laertius Plutarch and other writers. Aristotle refers to Zeno but there seems to be no surviving texts. Philip Hitti alludes to Zeno's possible Phoenician origins and includes him into "the trinity of Zenos" who had an impact on Greek philosophy. Zeno of Elea entered the history of Greek philosophy as the master of "paradoxes", apparently 40 in number, out of which only 8 survived in discourse. Aristotle who passionately disagreed with Zeno's central ideas, having labeled them as "fallacies" still contributed to the preservation of his memory. In his *Physics*, Aristotle simply stated that Zeno makes a mistake in reasoning (1984, vol.I: 239.b30-33.b9). He is mostly remembered for his most classical proverbial paradox of Achilles and the Tortoise, Arrow Paradox and Dichotomy Paradox or the paradoxes of motion, which also earned him a label of "immobilist" by Aristotle. This very colorful figure at the Eleatic School was known to also have authored a treatise on ideal city, called *Republic*, anticipating the second version by Plato and actually representing a proto-utopia which Plato would rework later. Plato's anxiety about the Phoenician legacy becomes understandable with the recovery of the proto-history of Ellis and other Phoenician settlements, predating the Greek ones. Zeno of Elea stimulated Aristotle's discourse on motion and it continues to provoke contemporary theoretical discussions on the topic.

The second Zeno of Citium (334 BC–261-2? BC), the founder of stoicism and a reputable ancient thinker, was also of Phoenician descent. P.Hitti reports a very interesting fact that this Zeno even spoke with Phoenician ascent and "was called Phoenician by his contemporaries" (1965:57). The city of Citium, the native city of Zeno, more known as Kition, was located in Cyprus, the oldest and one of the first Phoenician colonies, and was founded by them, becoming a significant centre of Phoenician culture. Gerhard Herm dates the foundation of Kition to 1000BC. The Phoenicians allegedly had established mines and ports on Cyprus, and Kition was the most important city, next to Tamassos/Politikos, Idalion (near the village Dali), Lapithos (near Kyrenice) and Salamis, later duplicated in another area of Greece [G.Herm, 1975:132]. Obviously, the Phoenicians had also established schools and libraries in the cities they had founded, spreading literacy, education and knowledge. Zeno was the founder of the Stoic School of Philosophy at Citium but later moved to Athens where he taught ethics. His students were called Zenonians but, as we know from Diogenes Laertius, he was often ridiculed for his ascent and his Phoenician extraction. Nonetheless, fame came to Zeno in his life time – he was even honored with the golden crown. Zeno divided philosophy into three parts – Logic, Physics and Ethics. His physics and theories of the universe had been of pantheistic nature, incorporating ancient Phoenician mythical poetic categories and Thalesianism, regarding the UNIVERSAL SOUL, consistency of the soul, which would find its

development in Aristotle and particularly the PRIMACY OF REASON.

The third Zeno, a native of Sidon (150 BC- ?), headed the Epicurean School of Athens Cicero was among the celebrities whom he taught [G.Herm 1975:57]. This third in the “Zenonian triad” symbolizes the Hellenic period in Phoenician history when the ties between Athens and Tyre, Sidon and Byblos became strong and the **Hellenosemitic cultural symbiosis** had acquired a new predominantly Hellenic quality. Around the same time, Diodorus from Tyre (circa 110 BC) headed the Peripatetic School in Athens and attempted to bridge Stoicism and Epicureanism [G.Herm, 1975:58]. The same German scholar attests to the Greek impact on Tyre around 126 BC, on Beirut in 197 BC and upon Sidon in 111 BC. Prior to that, as evidenced by the Greek coming to and eventual seizure of the old Phoenician colonies in Italy, the movements of **the cultural pendulum** had been regulated by the Phoenicians, right up to the birth of Plato. Regrettably, the evidence is scant and deliberately destroyed in the process of conquest and coming of the new colonizers, the Greeks, who were not interested in preserving the material evidence and information about their Phoenician rivals and their own Phoenician roots.

### 5. Aristotle’s Tribute to Phoenicians

Aristotle’s sophisticated cosmology, his multidisciplinary inquiries and secular explanations of the natural phenomena substantially differed from those by his mentor Plato. If Plato’s explanations of the bio and physiosphere were largely dependent on the primitive religious mythology, Aristotle’s achievement was in his analytical departure from the divine origins of cosmos, still maintained by many Greek thinkers. Aristotle expelled the Platonian deities from his scientific universe, having thus approached the cosmology and early science of Thales. In his essay *On Heavens*, Aristotle speaks of eclipses of the moon and sun, clearly alluding to Thales without naming him, but referring instead to his mentor Plato and his *Timaeus*, obviously for censorial reasons. In the essay *On the Soul*, Aristotle directly names Thales:

*Thales too, to judge what is recorded about him, seems to have held Soul to be a motive force, he said the magnet has a soul in it because it moves the iron*  
(1984, vol.I: 645-646;[405.a9]).

Occasionally, Aristotle interprets Thales through the prism of the Platonian theological world view. Later, in the same treatise, Aristotle writes:

*Certain thinkers say that soul is intermingled in the Whole Universe, and it is perhaps for that reason that Thales came to the opinion that all things are full of gods* (ibid.[411.a5-10]).

Here, Aristotle obviously relies on Plato’s *Timaeus* and Plato’s adjustment of



Thales to his own theological explanations and the focus on the divine origins of cosmos. Aware of Thales and his concept of the soul, Plato had introduced his students at the Academy to the concept of the SOUL in the universe. In his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle ponders over the causes, relying on the materialism of Thales, and with it, the originator of life – WATER– assigning it to be the primary cause. Aristotle provides a biological explanation to the theory of Thales:

*He[Thales] got his notion from seeing that the nutriment of all things is moist, and that heat itself is generated from the moist and kept alive by it( and from which they come to be is the principle of all things). He got his notion from this fact and from the fact that the seeds of all things have a moist nature and water is the origin of the nature of moist things (1984,vol.II:[933.20]).*

“All things moist” is the motif that connects Sanchuniathon, the Phoenician ancient cosmology and Thales, culminating in the obvious materialism of Aristotle. Aristotle who insisted that “science is the most divine” still acknowledged the variety of views by Anaximenes, Diogenes, Hippassus, Heraclitus and Empedocles on **the primary causes** as the advancement of the early scientific views of Thales. He obviously was not familiar with the primary sources, i.e. the original texts by Thales, but the multidisciplinary contributions of his ancient predecessor were known to Aristotle via the secondary and tertiary ancient oral and written sources that circulated among the Greek scholars at the Academy and beyond.

The predominant ethnic stereotype about the Phoenicians as merchants and “makers of useful goods,” known and popular since Homer, penetrated even philosophical discourse, and even Aristotle was not immune. In his famous and well-known *Politics*, Aristotle retells the anecdotal story about Thales. Allegedly, otherwise an impractical philosopher, Thales had once predicted a rich olive crop which led to the manufacturing of olive presses and large profits in Chios and Miletus (1984,vol. II:[1998; 1258,9-11]). Thales had the most fundamental impact on the course of the Greek and European philosophy as a mathematician, astronomer, chemist and natural scientist. Quoting Patricia O’Grady, “it was with Thales that science began,” perfected by his contemporaries and followers. It found **the ultimate continuum** in Aristotle, his scientific methodology, analysis of nature and natural philosophy. His materialistic world view was later disseminated by his intellectual allies such as Pittacus of Mitylene, Bias of Priene, Solon, Cleobulus of Lindus, Myson of Chen and Chilon of Sparta, as well as by Anaximander, Anaxemenes, Parmenides, Pythagoras, Empedocles, Democrius, Heraclitus etc.. In addition to his interests in science, studies of nature, astronomy, physics, biology and medicine, Aristotle was interested in sociology, politics, improvement of relationships between people and creation of an ideal civilized society. He was a living witness of the well-functioning late Phoenician society in Carthage, as well as cognizant of the

Phoenician accomplishments in their former outposts in Cyprus, Crete and beyond. Phoenician civilization offered a model of the most sophisticated governance for the rising Greek society and Aristotle promoted it in his writings, dedicated to political science. Modern scholars (G. Stanton, 1990; B Warmington, 1960; S.Stockwell, 2010) pay attention to the motif of Carthage and Carthaginians in Aristotle who mentions them several times in *Politics*, referring to the known successful models of governance and versions of constitutions in the past of non-Hellenic city-states. By the time Aristotle had been writing his *Politics*, Carthage, the Phoenician colony in Africa founded in 878 BC, had been already the seat of the most powerful Mediterranean Empire, with colonies in Spain, Crete, Cyprus, and Italy. Despite the prominence of Carthage in the Middle East, Europe and North Africa, their historical (little mentioned and studied!) impact on the Greeks, most of the cultural figures, including Plato and Aristotle, reluctantly, if ever, mention them. Plato mentions them only once in his *Laws* when he talks about the pre-eminence of mathematics in Egypt and Phoenicia but criticizes for using allegedly “wrong methods” (1970:219). Plato, in general, intentionally “forgets” the Phoenicians. It was the taboo topic in ancient Greece since the Phoenicians were their mentors for centuries. Aristotle, in contrast, mentions Carthage and refers to various people whose cultures continued to develop in Aristotle’s time. Aristotle was a witness of the still existing blossoming Tyre – his pupil Alexander the Great occupied Tyre after long siege in 332 BC, ten years before Aristotle’s death. At the same time the Phoenician diaspora thrived on the coasts of Spain, Portugal, Italy, in Malta, Cyprus and Crete, having built numerous coastal cities and having spread their knowledge and skills all over the world. Carthage, the Phoenician stronghold in Africa, already had reached its strongest position in Plato’s and Aristotle’s lifetime. By the time Greece had been wrestling with the idea of proper political governance, Carthage was a model of social, political and economic success. Modern historiography, influenced for a long time by the Hellenophilic and Romanophilic mythology, seldom gave any credit to the Phoenicians to the point of distorting their role in history. With the 20<sup>th</sup>-century archeological expeditions and discoveries, and the works of Maria Aubert, Sabatino Moscati, Harden, Picard and others, the Phoenicians are now in the purview of the modern scholarship. The Phoenician city-states had, apparently, much more to offer to their neighbors in the region, who since the pre and Biblical times were less advanced culturally and economically. Greece was no exception. Contemporary scholars now come to an agreement that democracy was born before Athens, and numerous sophisticated social and political instruments were, in fact, wise borrowings from the early and later Phoenicians, i.e. The Carthaginians to whom Aristotle alludes in his *Politics* [S.Stockwell, 2010:123–135].

In Book VII, he makes references to the running of military affairs in Carthage whose experience he finds useful for the Greeks [1984, vol. II:2162]. If ancient Greece had acquired magistrates, wardens of the country, inspectors of forests, treasurers, city-wardens, property tax collectors, Assembly Courts, Councils of a Hundred and Senate, it borrowed them from the Phoenicians, the seasoned urbanites and shrewd politically-minded citizens, their unmentionable colonizers and mentors.

The Greek polis, is in fact, predated by the autonomously run Phoenician city-states [S. Moscati, 1968:27; S.Stockwell 2010:123]. Aristotle mentions the role of the magistrates as a Greek patriot – first, he talks about the Lacedaemon, proto-Sparta, and then he admits that “a similar principle prevails in Carthage: there certain magistrates decide all causes” [1984, vol. II:2024]. He gives credit to Draco and his laws, and Philolaus who gave the laws to Thebans, Phaleas, regarding the equalization of property.” When Aristotle mentions the Supreme Council of 100 he mentions Sparta and Crete, forgetting about Carthage who had developed these instruments centuries earlier. But yet, speaking of “meritorial democracy”, Aristotle gives credit to Carthage where “they choose their magistrate and particularly the highest of them– their kings and generals– with an eye both to merit and to wealth” [1984, vol. II, B.II :2020]. Aristotle deals with advanced and sophisticated Carthage as a jealous Greek– he has to acknowledge it, in contrast to Plato, but the level of discourse is censored and from the obvious Graeco-centric perspective. Unlike Plato, Aristotle does not expunge Carthage from the discourse. He is ahead of his mentor, he honestly includes the Phoenician model into the world history of political governance and into his own doctrine of proper society [A.Makolkin, 2015]. His philosophy of politics and classification of government systems are inseparable from the achievements of the late Phoenicians/Carthaginians. Yet talking about Carthage, he does not mention any connection with Phoenicia proper, i.e Tyre. Herodotus (484–425 BC) wrote a treatise *Hellenosemitica* where he described his trip to Tyre and how he learned about the cult of Heracles [L.Boutros, 1981:7]. B.H. Warmington, the author of the modern works on Phoenicians, admits that the problem in history and scholarship as to Carthage and Phoenicia, in general, that we had for millennia to rely “on the distorted image created by their enemies” – Greeks and Romans [1960:11]. It was not in the interest of the future leaders of the Western civilization and the recipients of the Phoenician legacy to admit the impact and mentorship of their ancient predecessors. In 1922, around the same time when Leonard Wooley had discovered Sumer, French archeologist P.Ceritas determined the dates of Carthage by analyzing the unique pottery, having established new chronology of Phoenician colonization in Spain, Portugal, Italy, Crete, Malta and North Africa. Later, the same data were confirmed in the 1970 s by the expedition of Maria Aubet and the discoveries of the Almarina Letters in Egypt opened the previously unknown chapter of the Phoenician impact on Egypt with whom they had contacts back in 1800BC.

Apparently, the municipalities existed in Phoenicia as far back as the 1400 BC, as per the findings. Carthage or “*Kart Hadash*” in Punic, the late Phoenician, meaning “new city,” was a capital of the late Phoenician diaspora and migrants from Tyre, Sidon and Beritos/Beirut, and Byblos that became the capital of the mighty Mediterranean Empire. It had been ruling the world seafaring and trade for centuries until the Romans destroyed it finally in 146 BC, after a prolonged battle that lasted since 264 BC! The Phoenician city-states were the ancient prototypes of the Greek polis. Each city had their king up to the Hellenic times and also the Executive Council/SUFET which in 300 BC was appointed only for a year. This, perhaps, inspired Aristotle to state that rejuvenation of membership was a rational need.

Apparently, among the late Phoenicians, merit though counted more than hereditary wealth, i.e. “aristocracy was not a closed one” [B. Warmington, 1960]. These Councils had no military power. They presided over the Senate and Popular Assembly, the latter actually was an instrument of democracy which could overturn even the decisions of the king. The councillors in Carthage were the prototypes of the modern ministers, dealing with the infrastructure, architecture, construction, road building, environment and water supply that indicates a sophisticated urban culture, unknown to most Phoenician neighbors that were still largely farming tribal village communities, scattered in space, including even ancient Athens. Army generals in Carthage had an extra constitutional position and had to preserve peace and stability. Court consisted of a 100 judges. “After each war, writes B.Warmington, “generals had to give an account of their actions to the Court” that stood on guard of the laws and justice” [1960:147]. The Popular Assembly in Carthage played a very important role in actually supervising the military. The Phoenicians, in general, and Carthaginians, in particular, were concerned with preservation of peace and stability. If they could avoid military actions, they would. They were “sailors but not soldiers” [D.Harden, 1963:124]. They often purchased peace by buying and selling cities, and running away from the warring barbarians throughout their entire history, be it Egypt, ancient Israel, Libya or ancient Greece. Theirs was a highly sophisticated civilization of peaceful architects, artisans, shipbuilders, glass makers, inventors of literacy, musical instruments, tools, developers of various industries and designers of democratic political institutions. They were not warriors by character, traditionally preferring diplomacy and compromise, but they exercised enormous courage, defending Tyre and resisting Alexander the Great for a decade, and Romans for 18 years until Carthage was mercilessly destroyed. In the opinion of B. Warmington, the Phoenicians “were essentially non-political” [1960:149]. Their allegedly archaic Constitution had been preserved intact until the time of Alexander the Great, i.e. 330 BC, and it was known very well to Aristotle. Aristotle criticizes the Carthaginian Constitution for its oligarchic tendency, failing to accept the genuinely democratic spirit of its Popular Assembly, not emulated either by the Greeks or Romans. The Phoenicians, the leaders in all areas of invention, production, craft, seafaring, shipbuilding and trading had no equals since the Bronze Age. They had been spreading their wealth, various inventions, numerous skills, products of metallurgy, tin, bronze, jewelry, shipbuilding, glass making etc. all over the Middle East, Mediterranean region, Black Sea and Caucasus, predating the Greek colonization in Europe by centuries. But recently more is becoming known about the Phoenicians. Stephen Stockwell claims that “for the last twenty years the Phoenician contribution to democracy has become a vexed issue” [2010:125]. If previously the discourse was limited to the Biblical references and contacts between Tyre and ancient Israel, now upon the completion of the new archeological discoveries and with the help of the carbon technique, it has become possible to establish a new cultural chronology and receive a better picture about the role of the Phoenicians, predating Greece and Rome. Flinders Petrie actually claimed back in 1898 that “municipalities existed in the 1400 BC [S.Stockwell, 2010:125]. The excavated Almarina Letters, at the site of

the capital built by Pharaoh, Akhenaton reveal also the date about the Assembly of Elders in Phoenicia. However, Aristotle and Plato both refer to Egypt as the most ancient country. Solon, the law maker, is mentioned by both traveling to Egypt and presumably learning about their laws. Some modern English translators of Plato also notice the taboo topic. Francis Macdonald, for instance, explains in the footnote to the *Republic's* Chapter XL that the Greeks took the names of their gods from the Syrians [1948]. The translator confuses the Syrians with the Phoenicians but he still correctly point out to the cultural borrowing by the Greeks [1948:345]. The Archives in the Verona Conservatory of Music have materials as to the Phoenician role in history of music, describing them as the inventors of the musical instruments and frequent performers at the Egyptian Pharaoh's ancient concerts. In addition, Phoenicians had been spreading not only their products and technical knowledge but also their myths whose traces one finds in the Greek mythology as well. The imprint of Phoenicia, her rich and advanced culture, science and technology was all over the Mediterranean, Asia Minor, the Greek islands, such as Rhodes, Chios, Kos. Robert Drews argues that "The Spartan systems followed the Phoenician prototypes" (in S. Stockwell, 2010, 1979:47). The scholars argue that the Greek experience with democracy came down to them from the Phoenicians who possessed it back in 1500 BC! The sophisticated bureaucracy, described in Aristotle's *Constitution of Athens*, is a clear duplication of the Phoenician political model [A. Makolkin, 2015:371–375]. Aristotle's Academy was actively involved in the research of the constitutional history and had Carthage, i.e. late Phoenicia, in the curriculum, and his "ideal society of excellence" was built in consideration of the Phoenician experience, albeit with critical consideration. The uneven distribution of wealth bothered Aristotle, as well "the avarice of mankind that is insatiable" [1984, vol. II:2011].

## Conclusions

Without diminishing the role of the ancient Greek culture, it is possible in the 21<sup>st</sup> century AD to conclude that ancient Phoenician civilization served as the proto-base of the Greek and the entire European civilization. In this essay, we focused solely on the transmission of philosophical categories and scientific concepts developed by the Phoenicians who happened to be pioneers of literacy, thought, reasoning and scientific conceptualization at a time when all their neighbors were largely behind them. Poetic imagination of Sanchuniathon (circa 2000 BC) and his cosmology begot Hesiod who, in turn, inspired Greek thinkers. Thales, the Phoenician, became the father of the Greek philosophy and his categories and vision of cosmos stimulated most of the Greek great minds, including Aristotle. Greek science would be unthinkable without the Phoenician proto-base, and even Greek democracy owes her origins to the ancient Phoenician experience. Tyre, Sidon and Byblos begot and shaped Athens who eventually tried to erase their memory.

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