

Roman law. Another outstanding civilization that contributed to the development of Western values was Rome. The center of this civilization was the city of Rome, located in what is now Italy. In 509 B.C. the Romans set up a **republic**—a government without a king or queen (page 305). When the republic declined, after nearly 500 years, an emperor took control. The Roman Empire achieved something unique in history. It became a great power not only by conquering other lands but also by bringing the conquered peoples into its system.

While the Greeks had lived in small city-states, each governed by different laws, the Romans controlled an enormous amount of territory. They allowed conquered peoples to live according to their traditions in many areas, but they also tried to create a system of laws that could be used throughout the Empire. The Romans, like the Greeks, believed that law should be based on principles of reason and justice and should protect citizens and their property. This idea, applied to all peoples regardless of their nationality, had a great influence on the development of democracy throughout the Western world. Some provisions of

Roman law are readily recognizable in modern legal systems:

☞ Justice is a constant, unfailing disposition to give everyone his legal due.

No one should suffer a penalty for what he thinks.

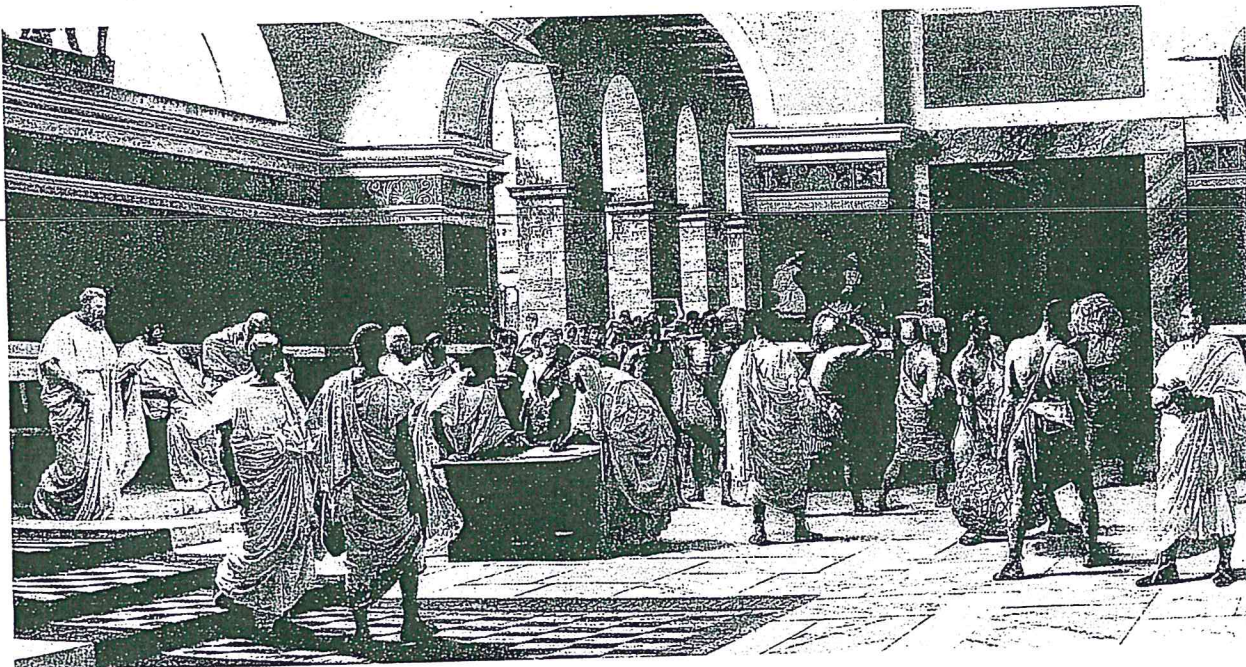
In the case of major offenses it makes a difference whether something is committed purposely or accidentally.

The guilt or punishment of a father can impose no stigma [lasting disgrace] upon the son, for every individual is subjected to treatment in accordance with his own action, and no one is made the inheritor of the guilt of another.

In inflicting penalties, the age . . . of the guilty party must be taken into account.☞

- (1) Which of these principles of Roman law might be cited by an attorney defending a fifteen-year-old burglary suspect?
 (2) Which of the principles might be cited as a forerunner of modern guarantees of rights to freedom of worship and freedom of speech?

This painting shows Roman citizens paying their taxes. Payments were often made in goods, such as those being carried away at right. Taxation paid for the many benefits of Roman rule, including roads, maintaining peace and order, and help for the poor.



From: History of the World: The Modern Era (1994).

Civic Values

Citizenship—Ancient and Modern

In the most distant provinces of the ancient Roman Empire, a person was proud to be able to say, "*Civis Romanus sum*—I am a Roman citizen!" Roman citizenship was a kind of invisible shield of respect. It meant that the citizen was protected by the laws of the great Roman Empire.

Since the days of the Republic, Rome had extended citizenship to conquered people. Finding that it was a good way to win people's allegiance, Roman emperors had continued the practice. By about A.D. 212, most free men and women throughout the empire were citizens. Only male citizens, however, could hold office; they were also expected to fight for Rome.

The idea of "citizenship," like many of our basic ideas about government, began

with the ancient Greek city-states and the Roman Republic. Before this, people were simply considered "subjects" of a monarch or ruler. When they began to have both rights and responsibilities in their community, people became "citizens." As modern states developed, the term *citizen* became common again. During the French Revolution, people who welcomed a republican government addressed each other as "Citizen" and "Citizensness."

All modern nations—not just democracies—have citizens, though their rights and responsibilities vary. In general, citizens are expected to be loyal to the nation, obey its laws, pay taxes, and perhaps give military service. The state in turn is supposed to protect its citizens.

Natural law. A particularly important feature of Roman law was the idea of natural law. As you have read, early Greek philosophers declared that the rules of nature could be discovered through careful observation. Natural law as the Romans understood it held that there are in nature certain rational principles and standards that apply to all people in all times. The Romans were introduced to the idea of natural law by the Stoics, a group of Greek thinkers whose philosophy, called stoicism, arose about 300 B.C.

The Stoics said that every person was born with the capacity to reason. Not everyone had this capacity to the same degree, and even those who had the same inborn ability might not have the opportunity to develop it as fully as others. Still, all human beings could reason, and it was this capacity that set them apart from other creatures. Since reason was common to all people—Greek and non-Greek, slave and free, rich and poor—all people were basically equal. Cicero, a leading Roman statesman and orator from the first century B.C. summed up this idea as follows: "There is no

difference in kind between man and man, for . . . reason, which alone raises us above the level of the beasts . . . is certainly common to us all."

Since human beings are fundamentally alike, said the Stoics, they are all subject to the same moral laws and principles. The Stoics argued that human laws should agree with the natural law governing the universe. This Stoic belief—that human law should not violate the higher natural law—was central to Roman thinking about the legal system. As we shall see, it also entered into modern democratic thought through Enlightenment thinkers (page 19). It is the basic principle underlying the modern theory that people have certain natural rights that no legitimate government can deny them.

The Judeo-Christian Tradition

Ancient Greece and Rome are one source of Western democratic ideals. A second source is called the **Judeo-Christian tradition**. The ancient Hebrews, or Jews, were the first people to believe in one God