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Third edition

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PREFACE

What makes the Homeric poems a formative influence in western culture? What is distinctive about Greek drama? What are the main features of the thought of Plato and Aristotle and how do the two philosophers differ? What is it about Greek art that has made it classical in the eyes of future time? It is to help those seeking to understand the Greek legacy for the first time and those wanting to answer such questions as these that this book was first conceived. Its central core, identification of the Greek achievement in political organization, literature, philosophy and art, remains unchanged.

The Second Edition had two main purposes: it sought to set this achievement more solidly in the context of history and social development with an additional chapter on Religion and Social life and extended the chronological range beyond the classical era to include the Hellenistic period in an expansion of the final sections of the various chapters on History, Literature, Philosophy and Art. These changes to the Second Edition have been revised, extended and improved in this edition with the result that not only are Greek achievements not limited to the Classical era but the account is less Atheno-centric than hitherto.

Since the Homeric poems are the foundation texts that can be said to encapsulate the Hellenic spirit and so had a shaping influence upon subsequent Greek culture, they are introduced in the opening chapter, together with brief mention of their near contemporary Hesiod. Consideration of these early texts comes after discussion of the Bronze Age Mycenaean culture to which they can be related rather than in the later literature chapter. Otherwise the structure and organization are self-explanatory.

Reading lists are included chapter by chapter and organized by topic rather than alphabetically. For example, in the History chapter, the opening items relate to sources; then come large full-length studies of the whole period, followed by works concentrating on individual periods from the earliest to the Hellenistic era. Brief and

authoritative accounts of recent scholarship on all aspects of the material covered in this book can be found in the latest edition of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* edited by Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth (Oxford University Press, 2012).

Modern translations are generally from the Penguin classics where these are available. Otherwise Loeb translations are used for the most part. A complete list is included at the end of the text. Classical references have long been standardized and are given in most editions and translations of the text. Classical names are given in the form in which they are most familiar in English. Dates are all BC unless otherwise stated. A chronological table and a glossary of terms are included for convenience at the end of the text.

1 EARLY GREECE: HOMER AND HESIOD



BRONZE AGE GREECE

The island of Crete was one of the earliest centres of civilization in the Mediterranean. The remains at Cnossus show that the Bronze Age civilization called Minoan was highly developed and lasted from roughly 3600 to 1000 BC. On mainland Greece, a Bronze Age civilization, centred upon royal palaces such as those excavated at Mycenae, Tiryns and Pylos, developed somewhat later and lasted from about 1580 to 1120. The physical remains of these civilizations were largely unknown to the later Greeks, nor were there any written records available to later historians of the Classical period. In the opening chapter of his history of the Peloponnesian war, Thucydides, the most highly regarded of the Greek Classical historians, says that he has found it impossible, because of the remoteness in time, to acquire a really precise knowledge of the distant past or even of the history preceding his own period. In modern times the growth of archaeological science has enabled historians to fill in some of the gaps before the age of written records and also to supplement and sometimes to challenge the literary record. Examinations of burial sites and of their grave goods and of sanctuaries and their votive offerings have revealed patterns of settlement and trade. Not only do Minoan and Mycenaean pottery differ in style, but scientific analysis of the chemical composition of the pottery has enabled specialists to date it and to pinpoint its place of origin fairly precisely.

MINOAN CIVILIZATION

The modern world first owed its knowledge of Minoan civilization to the pioneering work of the British archaeologist Sir Arthur Evans (1851–1941) who excavated the site of Cnossus in early years of the twentieth century. He first uncovered the

substantial remains of a great palace; his further investigations over a period of a quarter of a century discovered more and earlier remains, so that he distinguished various phases of Cretan civilization which have since been further refined by subsequent archaeologists after further excavations and ever more sophisticated techniques for dating ancient material remains. The several large palaces that have been excavated are not fortified, suggesting that development at Crete was largely peaceable. The largest palace at Cnossus which is highly sophisticated in its design and its decoration (fig. 1) dates to 1700, replacing a previous one destroyed by an earthquake; it covers a huge area of more than three acres and comprises a complex of labyrinthine buildings around a central courtyard with storerooms for grain and food, and workshops for potters and painters.

Evans called the civilization uncovered by his excavations Minoan because later Greek historians believed Minos had been a powerful king whose empire dominated the Cycladic islands in the Aegean, while in Greek myth Minos is the lawgiver of Crete and the subject of celebrated stories. In the most famous, Minos was a son of Zeus

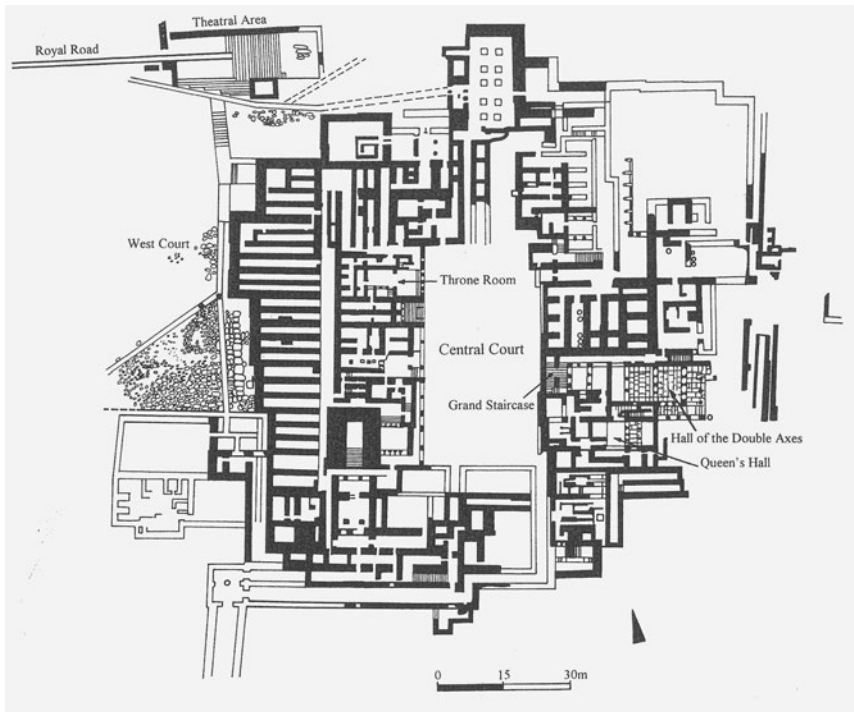


FIGURE 1 Plan of the palace at Cnossus

Source: C. Gates, *Ancient Cities*, second edition (Routledge, 2011), Fig 7.2, p. 121

by Europa whom he carried off by taking the form of a bull. Minos had brothers and to settle the question as to who was to be ruler of Crete, he prayed to Poseidon, god of the sea, to send him a victim for sacrifice, whereupon Poseidon sent a bull from the sea. But Minos failed to sacrifice the magnificent animal and so Poseidon caused Minos's wife Pasiphae to fall in love with the bull. The creature that resulted from their union with the head of a bull and the body of a man was the Minotaur. The labyrinth was constructed by the craftsman Daedalus in order to hide the monster.

The motif of the bull is prominent on the fresco decorating the wall above the north entrance of the main palace, as reconstructed by Evans. The historical importance of the bull in Cretan life is further evidenced in one of the dynamic frescoes, which depicts the sport of 'bull-jumping' (fig. 2). The idea seems to have been that as the bull charged, jumpers, perhaps in succession, grabbed the horns of the bull and somersaulted over the head landing on the bull's back. This is certainly what is depicted on the elegantly designed representation that manages to capture both the power and speed of the bull and the acrobatic agility of the jumper. The two standing figures are women, who are evidently not excluded from the society of men in what might seem the most masculine of endeavours. In their restored condition, these palace frescoes are quite stunningly beautiful. One of these (fig. 3), known as the Minoan Lady, was given the title *La Parisienne* by Sir Arthur Evans because it seemed to represent a stylish feminine beauty and elegance. Some of her colouring survives, notably the red on the lips, black for the eyes and blue for the dress. In its

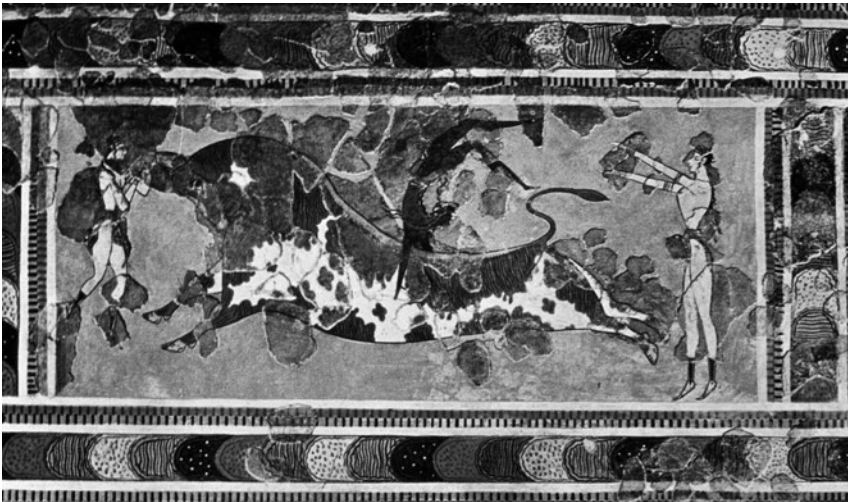


FIGURE 2 Fresco at Cnossus: bull-jumping

Source: The Bridgeman art Library, courtesy of Getty Images



FIGURE 3 Fresco at Cnossus

Source: The Minoan Photo © akg-images/Album/Prisma

original condition it must have been a very vibrant image testifying to a highly developed appreciation of beauty.

In Cretan pottery there are bull pots, that is, pots not simply with bulls decorating them but actually in the form of a bull's head. Cretan vessels have been found in various parts of the Aegean, notably in considerable quantities at Akrotiri, an island in the southern Cyclades, which suffered a fate similar to that of Pompeii when it was overwhelmed in a volcanic eruption in 1628. At the least, this indicates thriving trading relations with neighbouring islands, though perhaps falling short of an empire. The palace at Cnossus was evidently the centre of a successful highly developed mercantile society.

Further evidence of sophisticated Cretan development is the presence of writing on clay tablets and other objects from 1800 to 1450. Not enough of this script, known as Linear A, survives for modern scholars to decipher but it is agreed from study of it that the Cretans were not Greek speaking. Many of these tablets contain numbers and are thought to be accounts and evidence of a developed bureaucracy. Some Minoan specialists have concluded that the palaces were centres that took in grain and olive oil from palace lands or from outlying farmers in the form of tax. This means the palace community of the well-to-do and their workers were supported. Surpluses were redistributed to villages and outlying communities and sold overseas. A second script starting in the mid-fifteenth century was discovered at Crete similar in its form to Linear A and so designated Linear B. This script was also discovered on the mainland at Mycenaean centres such as Thebes, Tiryns, Pylos and Mycenae itself. Linear B was deciphered in the 1950s and shown to record an early form of Greek. These Linear B tablets are all records or inventories. Their decipherment places the Mycenaeans in Crete probably as conquerors and establishes an ancestral connection between the Mycenaeans and the later Greeks.

MYCENAEAN CIVILIZATION

This civilization is centred upon royal palaces on the Greek mainland and is called Mycenaean after what seems to have been its most powerful centre. In Homer's *Iliad*, Mycenae, called in Homer's *Iliad* 'rich in gold', 'well built' and 'broad-streeted', is the home of Agamemnon, the leader of the Greek expedition, and the city that sends the largest contingent of ships. When he visited Mycenae in about 150 AD, Pausanias reported that it is the location of the graves of Atreus (the father of Agamemnon) and his children (*Description of Greece*, 2,16,6). The amateur German archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann (1822–1890) first excavated the site in the 1870s, and he believed that he had found the tombs of Agamemnon's family. Subsequent scholars have rejected his conclusion that these graves could have been contemporary with

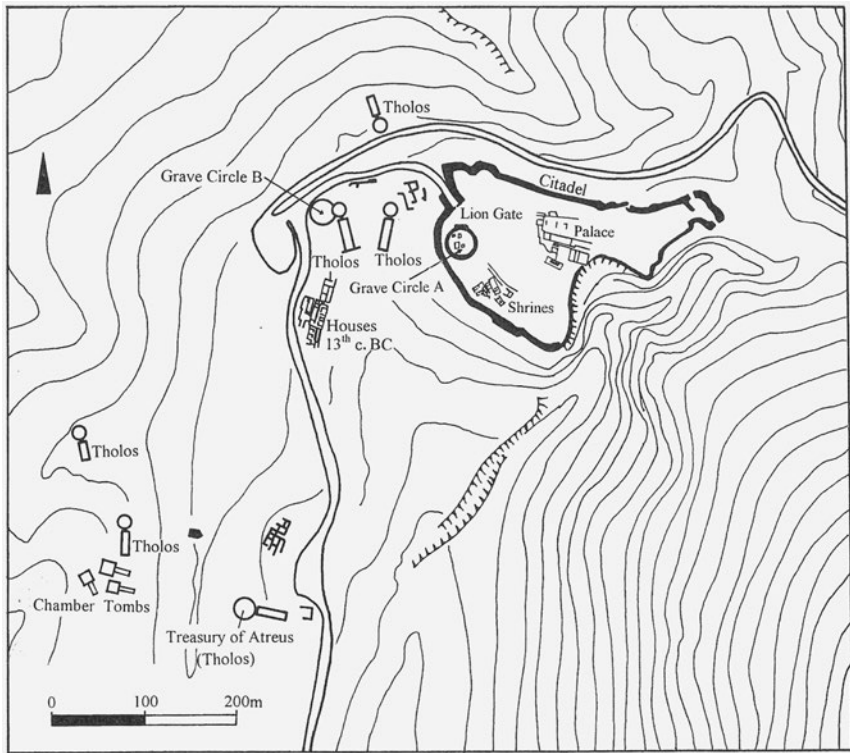


FIGURE 4 Plan of Mycenae

Source: C. Gates, *Ancient Cities*, second edition (Routledge, 2011), Fig 7.12, p. 130

any likely date of the Trojan War. Nevertheless, the Homeric names given by Schliemann to his finds are still used today. As in the case of the Minoans, archaeologists have identified various phases in Mycenaean culture, which endured over four centuries in the different centres such as Pylos and Tiryns. The remains of the palace at Pylos, traditionally known as the Palace of Nestor, are particularly impressive and on a scale that looks comparable to the excavations at Knossos.

The most substantial remains at Mycenae are the finest example of early monumental architecture. The so-called Treasury of Atreus and the Tomb of Clytemnestra (the wife of Agamemnon), were built after 1300. The tombs themselves have the shape of a beehive (called a *tholos* in Greek); this is forty-three feet high and forty-seven feet in diameter. The great 'dome' has no interior buttress and its form is self-supporting, being held in shape by the weight of the stones alone. The tomb must have contained treasures but it had been plundered in antiquity. The focal point of the city is the *megaron*, or great hall, situated on the acropolis; it has a columned

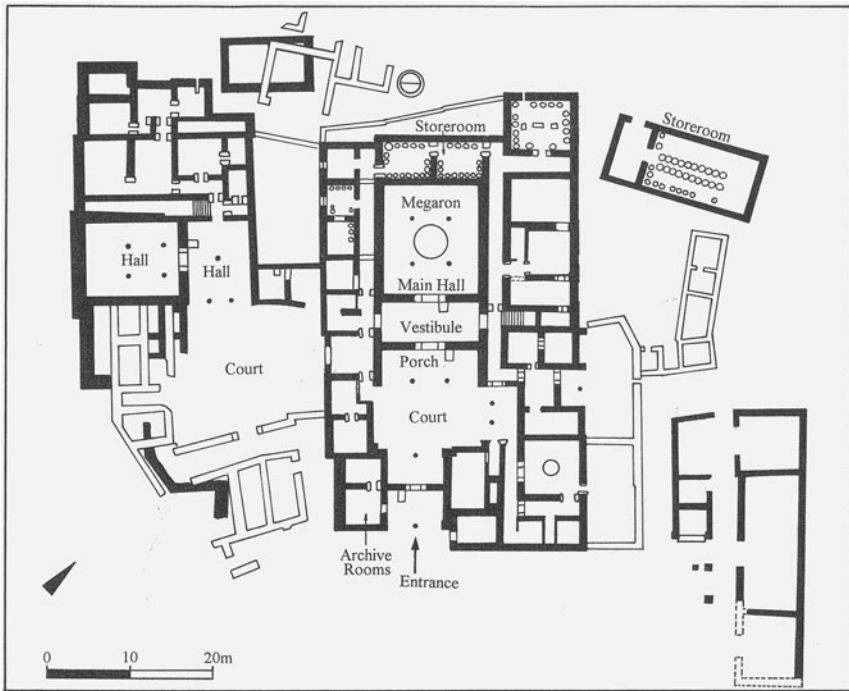


FIGURE 5 Plan of Nestor's palace at Pylos

Source: C. Gates, *Ancient Cities*, second edition (Routledge, 2011), Fig 7.17, p. 136

entrance and an interior room. The Lion Gate of Mycenae (so called from the relief over its lintel) that forms the entrance to the palace dates from 1250 (see fig. 6) added a century after the first fortification wall. The lions, clearly a symbol of royalty, have lost their heads, possibly because they were gilded or made of bronze. The fortification walls were mighty indeed. They were between 12 and 45 feet thick and it has been estimated they were as high as 40 feet. Mycenaean culture is generally thought to have been more warrior-based than the Minoan which flourished primarily through trade. Certainly no comparable defensive structures have been discovered on Crete. Nevertheless, remains of Mycenaean pottery are widespread in the Mediterranean world, indicating that the Mycenaeans, like the Minoans, were great sailors and traders. The Linear B tablets discovered at Mycenae and other Mycenaean sites such as those at Pylos, Tiryns and Thebes, also indicate a highly organized administrative system akin to developments on Crete.

The treasures found by Schliemann in the royal graves at Mycenae which date from the sixteenth or fifteenth century and include the famous gold face masks (see fig. 7), bear witness to the opulent beauty of Mycenaean artwork, which was highly



FIGURE 6 Lion Gate, Mycenae

Source: © Stockphoto.com Toon possemiers

sophisticated in craftsmanship and design. The techniques of engraving, enchasing and embossing were well developed and so was that of inlaying bronze with precious metals. Ivory and amber imported from the east and the north are commonly found and indicate the extent of Mycenaean commercial relations. The handsome silver vessel for making libations, called in Greek a *rhyton* (fig. 8) in the shape of a bull's head with magnificent gold horns, discovered in a grave circle into which it was doubtless put to honour a great hero or king, has been beautifully crafted by hammering the metal from the inside. It is Minoan in conception and design and its presence among these Mycenaean treasures two centuries before the fall of Cnossus in 1400, whether it was inspired by a Cretan original, copied or imported, suggests a long-standing cultural connection between Crete and the Greek mainland. After the destruction of Cnossus in 1400, Mycenaean civilization was at its most powerful and advanced and it seems to have lasted for a further three hundred years until its collapse just before 1100.

Schliemann's excavations at Mycenae came after his earlier excavations at Hissarlik in northern Turkey, which he believed to be the site of Troy. Excavations here have recorded nine settlements, the seventh of which was destroyed by a great fire in the mid-thirteenth century, so that archaeological evidence might seem to lend support to the possibility of a historical Trojan War of which the Homeric account records the distant poetic memory.



FIGURE 7 Gold face mask of Agamemnon

Source: National Archaeological Museum, Athens, Inv. nr. 624 © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Tourism /Archaeological Receipts Fund

THE DARK AGE

Soon after the possible date for the sack of Troy came the collapse of the mainland centres of Mycenaean civilization; the Bronze Age gave way to the Iron Age and ushered in what has been called the Dark Age lasting from the eleventh to the eighth century. The great palaces were destroyed and not replaced. Settlements became smaller and fewer. The use of Linear B was lost. There was a general decline in art and craftsmanship. The reasons for this collapse have been much debated. The

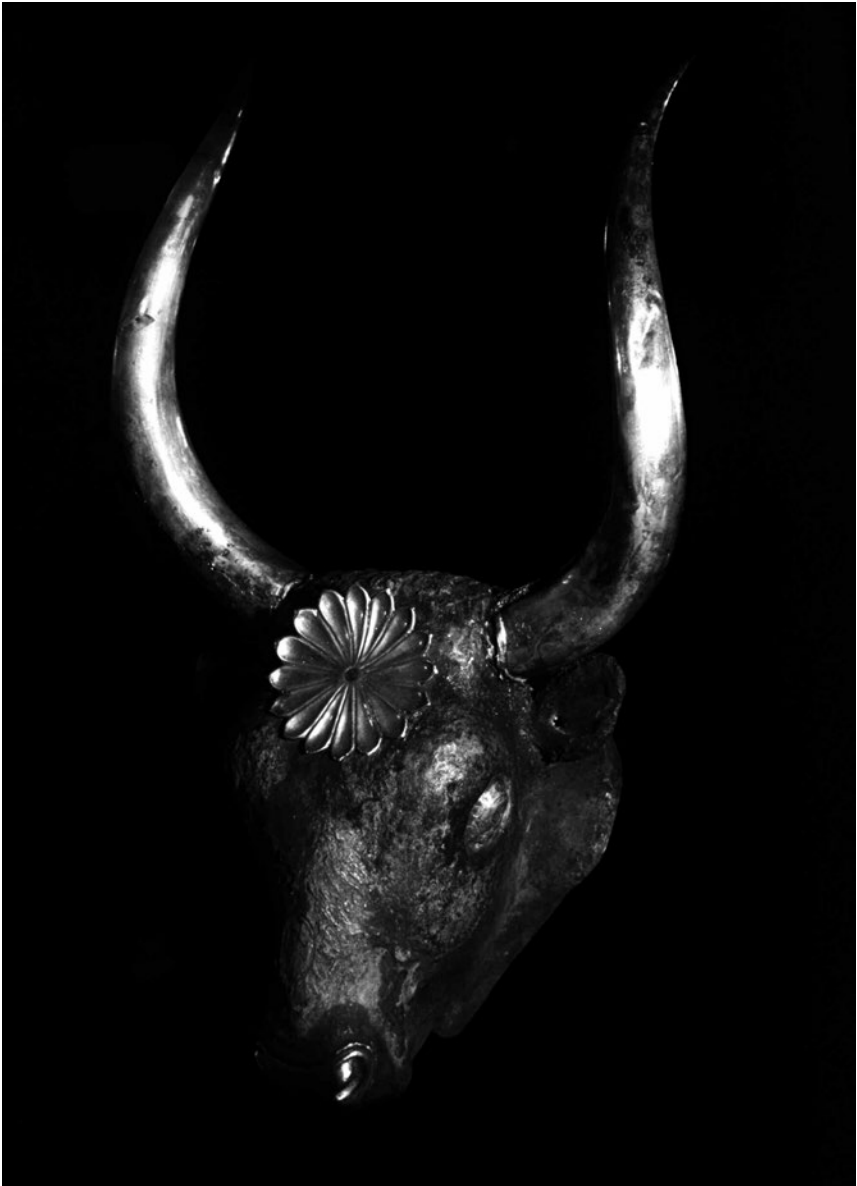


FIGURE 8 Rhyton in the shape of a bull's head, Archaeological Museum, Athens

Source: © R. Sheridan/Art & Architecture Collection Ltd

Greeks themselves talk of Dorians invading from the north but archaeologists have not found convincing evidence of a mass takeover by invading peoples. Other explanations involve some natural catastrophe or internal conflict or both in conjunction with external attacks.

The general picture of life in Dark Age Greece has been one of impoverishment on all fronts. However, recent excavations at Lefkandi on the island of Euboea have revealed a substantial and prosperous settlement that is so far a single exception to this general rule. Artefacts have been found dating from the early Mycenaean period down to about 800. Excavations have turned up fine examples of Levantine pottery and Phoenician bronze bowls indicating contact with the outside world thought until recently to have been lost in this period. But the most interesting finds are the remains of a large building dating from about 950 and built in a style different from anything Mycenaean but anticipating the first temples of some two hundred years later. In one of its rooms are two pits, one containing the skeletons of four horses and the other the cremated remains of a man in a bronze urn decorated with a hunting scene. His iron sword and spearhead lay nearby. Also nearby is the skeleton of a woman laid out with feet and hands crossed and decorated with items of gold jewellery. Scholars have drawn parallels with burial customs elsewhere, notably with those performed in the final book of Homer's *Iliad* for Patroclus who is cremated with his horses and with the human sacrifice of Trojan youths, though here the woman may be a wife who died from natural causes and was subsequently buried with her husband. The figure was evidently a man of substance and power, leading to speculation about the social order of this prosperous community.

THE HOMERIC POEMS

The connection of the Homeric poems with pre-historic Greece has long been a matter of debate. There are certainly Mycenaean survivals in Homer. In the *Iliad*, Agamemnon, leader of the Greek expedition to Troy and most powerful of the Greek princes, comes from Mycenae which Homer calls 'rich in gold', 'broad-streeted' and 'well built'. In the Catalogue of Ships in Book Two, believed by some to describe Greece as it was known in Mycenaean times, the largest numbers come from Mycenae and Pylos. The golden cup of Nestor (*Iliad* 11, 632–637) resembles an actual cup found in the graves at Mycenae. Another Mycenaean survival is the boar's tusk helmet of Odysseus (*Iliad* 10, 261–265), which is of a kind found in Mycenaean tombs and not found in later excavations.

The main metal in Homer is bronze, but there are iron weapons too. In fact there is a considerable historical mixture as the Homeric poems also record practices and customs that differ from those of Mycenaean times. For example, the Mycenaean



FIGURE 9 Troy

Source: Courtesy of Richard Stoneman

buried their dead, while in Homer the dead are cremated. Experts on warfare note that in the fighting described in *Iliad* 13, 131–135, tactics are employed which imply the use of the phalanx, an organized line of hoplites (infantrymen) that did not come into being until the formation of the city state, possibly suggesting a date as late as 750, perhaps the time when Homer lived. Some have thought the scenes of ordinary life depicted in the similes and on the shield of Achilles (including a glimpse thereon of a public trial before a jury of elders without reference to the king) are those of Homer's own day and that the poet is deliberately drawing parallels between a heroic past and his own present, thereby bringing his material up to date. The Homeric poems are believed (largely on linguistic grounds) to have emanated from Ionia, so that they may have preserved the memory of the Mycenaean mother culture transmitted by those who had colonized Asia Minor in the dispersal that followed the Mycenaean collapse.

Linguists have identified the same kind of layered structure as that revealed by the archaeologists, in which archaic elements co-exist side by side with later forms. The language of Homer is a fusion of elements from various dialects, the chief of which are the Ionic, the Aeolic and the Arcadian. The Arcadian and Aeolic dialects are thought to have developed from dialects of Greek spoken in mainland Greece in the south and north respectively during the Mycenaean period. The fusion of these two dialects with the later Ionic (which is the predominant element) has contributed



FIGURE 10 Mycenaean boar's tusk helmet

Source: Courtesy of Richard Stoneman

to the view that Ionic bards took over and adapted to new circumstances and a new audience material that they had inherited from the past. The oldest linguistic elements are probably what have come to be known as the 'traditional epithets' like 'cloud-gathering' Zeus, or 'ox-eyed' Hera, some of which perplexed the Greeks themselves. Their presence can be accounted for by the technique of formulaic composition employed in the poems. Formulae may be short phrases like 'winged words' or 'rosy-fingered dawn', or extend to longer passages describing repeated actions such as arming for battle, the preparation of a meal or the ritual of sacrifice. They are convenient units that can be readily committed to memory and are therefore an aid to improvisation in a pre-literate world where the poet is wholly dependent upon memory. About one-third of the lines in the poems are repeated wholly or in part in the course of the poem. Equally, one-third is made up of phrases and formulae that are not repeated elsewhere. It is clear that the traditional inheritance was constantly being added to, to meet contemporary needs and the requirements of different tales. In the twentieth century the pioneering work of the American scholar Milman Parry showed how sophisticated the deployment of the formulaic technique in Homer is, and from a comparative study involving modern oral poets in the Balkans Parry showed how this technique is fundamental to both the composition and transmission of oral poets. Homer's language therefore had been purposely developed for poetic recitation; it was never a spoken language. Nor did such a development any more than the tales themselves originate with one genius. There is a consensus of scholarly opinion that the language of the Homeric poems evolved over many centuries and that its sophisticated technique of formulaic diction goes back to the Mycenaean age, from which it was doubtless transmitted by practising bards like Demodocus and Phemius in the *Odyssey*.

The Homeric poems are generally regarded by most modern scholars as having been substantially composed long after the aristocratic culture of the heroes they represent had passed away, probably in the early or mid-eighth century, by which time the city-state is beginning to develop. This is also the time, at the end of the dark age, at which it is thought that the Greeks adapted a Phoenician system of signs to create the Greek alphabet, a momentous innovation making possible the art of writing, the first examples of which date from c. 740. However, there is no consensus about the extent to which writing might have been involved in their composition and transmission.

The Greeks agree on the name of Homer but otherwise there is no consistent tradition about the poet in the later literature of Greece. Different views are recorded concerning his date and time. According to some accounts he had been a contemporary witness of the Trojan War; according to others the poems were composed some time after the fall of Troy, an event, which, in any case, was for the Greek historians shrouded in the mists of prehistory.

The special status of Homer in the Greek world is something attested to in early Greek literary sources, which record the existence of a guild called the Homeridae claiming to be the descendants of Homer who flourished in Chios and were devoted to the recitation of his poems. The more widespread existence of other professional reciters of Homer's poems called rhapsodes is also well attested. One such rhapsode called Ion features in the philosophical dialogue of Plato that bears his name.

The view that Homer 'had educated the Greeks' (*Republic*, 10, 606) is a commonplace reported by Plato in the fourth century. His poetry was a central part of every Athenian schoolboy's education. Indeed the historian Xenophon, writing in the early fourth century, records the experience of a contemporary figure called Niceratus: 'My father in his anxiety to make me a good man made me learn the whole works of Homer; and I could now repeat by heart the entire *Iliad* and *Odyssey*' (*Symposium*, 3, 5). As the classic expression of the Hellenic spirit, the Homeric poems had a formative influence upon the culture of later times.

THE *ILIAD*

In the *Iliad* the heroic aristocratic virtues are proven on the battlefield. Old Nestor reports that when he recruited Achilles for the Trojan expedition, the latter's father Peleus had told his son 'always to excel and do better than the rest' (11, 784). Speaking in battle to the Greek Diomedes, the Lycian Glaucus tells him that his father had given him the same instruction, telling him not to shame his forebears who were the best in Lycia (6, 208–210). Hector's hope for his son Astyanax is that in future time men will say 'He is better than his father' as he returns from the battlefield bearing the bloodstained armour of his foe (6, 479–481). The Homeric hero consciously endeavours to excel. No distinction in this respect is made between Greek and Trojan for the Trojans are not seen as some inferior race of barbarians, but are equally responsive to the heroic impulse. In fact Homer puts his fullest and most famous expression of it into the mouth of the Trojan ally Sarpedon (12, 310–328). Here is the speech in the version of the eighteenth-century translator of Homer, Alexander Pope, who manages in his heroic couplets to capture something of its grand effect.

'Why boast we, Glaucus! our extended reign,
 Where Xanthus' streams enrich the Lycian plain,
 Our num'rous herds that range the fruitful field,
 And hills where vines their purple harvest yield,
 Our foaming bowls with purer nectar crowned,
 Our feasts enhanced with music's sprightly sound?
 Why on these shores are we with joy surveyed,
 Admired as heroes, and as gods obeyed?

Unless great acts superior merit prove,
 And vindicate the bount'ous powers above.
 'Tis ours, the dignity they give, to grace;
 The first in valour, as the first in place.
 That when with wond'ring eyes our martial bands
 Behold our deeds transcending our commands,
 Such, they may cry, deserve the sov'reign state,
 Whom those that envy, dare not imitate!
 Could all our care elude the gloomy grave,
 Which claims no less the fearful than the brave,
 For lust of fame I should not vainly dare
 In fighting fields, nor urge thy soul to war.
 But since, alas! ignoble age must come,
 Disease, and death's inexorable doom;
 The life which others pay, let us bestow,
 And give to fame what we to nature owe;
 Brave though we fall, and honoured if we live,
 Or let us glory gain, or glory give!'

Sarpedon asks Glaucus why they are singled out for honours at the feast, with special seats and the best food and drink among the Lycians, who look upon them as gods. Why do they have the best land with orchards and wheatfields? Their social position obliges them to lead the Lycians in fighting, so that their followers will acknowledge that they earn their privileges by virtue of their great prowess on the battlefield. At the same time Sarpedon says that if they could actually be like gods and avoid old age and death, he would not urge Glaucus to join the fight where glory is gained. The Homeric adjective 'bringing glory' fits the context well. Elsewhere Homer uses many adjectives that express the grisliness of the fight. However, since they cannot escape death in its countless forms, Sarpedon urges that they join the fight and either gain honour for themselves or give it to others.

The heroic resolve is the conscious choice to risk a glorious death rather than forgo glory for the sake of holding on to an insignificant life. Moreover the choice is made wholeheartedly. Homer uses the word, *charma*, 'joy' to express the emotion that the heroes feel as they enter the fray. Despite the foreboding he has of his own death, Hector entering the battle is likened to a stallion who has broken loose and is galloping off joyfully to his favourite pasture confident in his own splendour (15, 263–268). Achilles is the supreme embodiment of the hero by virtue partly of the superior physical prowess that enables him to excel others in the fight, but even more so by virtue of the choice he has made in being at Troy at all, for he reports that his goddess mother Thetis had told him that he could choose between two destinies: a

long and undistinguished life if he returned home or eternal fame if he remained at Troy (9, 410–416). Thetis herself later tells us that Zeus had allowed her to produce a child who would excel all heroes. We can imagine that the myth of Achilles as Homer inherited it was the supremely heroic myth: the greatest glory exacts the greatest price and Achilles is the supreme hero in making his heroic choice in full knowledge of its ultimate cost.

The anger of Achilles: the tragic pattern

The celebration of the hero, and of the Mycenaean culture which had fathered the myth, is not the main subject of Homer's *Iliad*. The heroic choice is taken for granted and is of secondary significance; ironically, we only hear of it when Achilles is threatening to throw it away by going home. Homer's subject, announced in the very first word of the poem, is the anger of Achilles that brings ruin in its train. His heroic aspirations are threatened by a chain of events following on from the quarrel he has with Agamemnon in the opening book. In the ninth year of the siege of Troy, the god Apollo is angry because Agamemnon will not restore for ransom the daughter of one of his priests whom the Greek leader had taken as his prize in the general allotment of spoils. Apollo has sent a plague to infest the Greek camp. In a council called by Achilles, Agamemnon reluctantly agrees to give up his prize but haughtily vows to make up his loss by depriving Achilles of his slave girl Briseis, also a spoil of war. Thus slighted and dishonoured, Achilles angrily withdraws from the fighting. In Achilles' eyes Agamemnon abuses the power he has as leader of the Greeks and is guilty of *hybris*, arrogant behaviour that offends the gods (I, 203). After the quarrel, Achilles asks his goddess mother to persuade Zeus to grant the Trojans success so that the Greeks will be forced to recognize his worth. Zeus agrees and the Trojans advance from the city to the camp upon the plain. Faced with this threat, the Greeks petition Achilles to return; Agamemnon, who privately admits his error, offers gifts of compensation going beyond what was required by good form alone. But the insult to his honour is so deeply felt that Achilles remains obdurate.

To the other Greeks it seems that Achilles is arrogantly acting as though he were a law unto himself. His response may seem disproportionate but it has its origin in something exceptionally pure and noble. No other Homeric hero has the aspiration for glory in so intense a form, for Achilles is not fighting for revenge or the defence of loved ones, neither has any other Homeric hero consciously made the sacrifice that is reflected in his stark choice in opting for a glorious death at Troy rather than a long undistinguished life. With this purity of motive, Achilles has an absolute sense of his own worth and of the honour due to him because of it. Any diminution of this honour diminishes the whole man and renders his choice of life null and void. There is honourable truth in such feeling and Achilles honours this single truth so absolutely

that he is blind to all other truths, so that this purity of motive proves the ruin not only of many others but of himself too.

The Trojans have further success, and even his great comrade in arms Patroclus remarks that while doctors are treating the wounded Greek leaders, Achilles alone is untreatable (16, 21–35). When Achilles relents to the point of allowing Patroclus to fight in his place wearing his armour, there are the first signs of a recognition of his error, as Achilles admits that a man cannot be angry forever (16, 60–61). The concern for his honour is still overriding: Patroclus must only save the ships; he must not fight on to Troy or he will diminish the honour of Achilles (16, 80–90). Yet, there is magnanimity, as well as irony, in his final wish that both he and Patroclus may survive to take Troy together (16, 97–100).

The calamitous death of Patroclus, whom he loves more than his own life (18, 81–82), becomes the calamity of Achilles. When the news reaches him, Achilles in conversation with Thetis fully recognizes his own error and folly. The gods have done much for him but there is no pleasure in achievement any more. He is ready for death, regrets his special destiny as the son of a goddess and recognizes the insidious effects of anger that can darken the wisest mind, is sweeter than honey and spreads like smoke. But the quarrel must be put behind him, and he yields to necessity, accepting the fate, which Thetis has revealed to him. He resolves to seek glory and the death of Hector (18, 79–126).

In the ensuing fight, Achilles, whose purity of motive is now tainted by the desire for revenge into which his anger has been newly channelled, is resolute for death. His encounter with Aeneas (Book 20) has none of the chivalry that characterized the duels of Paris and Menelaus (Book III), Glaucus and Diomedes (Book 6), or Hector and Ajax (Book 7) in the earlier part of the poem. He captures twelve young Trojans to sacrifice on the pyre of Patroclus (21, 27–32, and 23, 175–176). He is deaf to the pleas of the suppliant Lycaon whom he had spared on a previous occasion (21, 34–135). His arrogant challenge to the river god (21, 136–383) contrasts with the restrained war against the gods waged by Diomedes with the support of Athena (Book 5). The darkening moral tone of the poem is apparent in the many images of corpses exposed to dogs and carrion birds. In the final combat, the chivalrous Hector proposes a compact whereby the victor does no more than take the spoils of the loser, restoring his body for burial (22, 254–259). These are the conditions that had been agreed on in the earlier combat with Ajax (7, 76–86). Achilles will have none of it: 'Men cannot make compacts with lions' (22, 261–272). After the fatal blow, Achilles in a murderous mood tells Hector that the dogs and birds of prey will pull him to pieces (22, 335–336). With his dying breath Hector again begs for mercy for his corpse (22, 338–343). Achilles again refuses in fury; he wishes he could tear him up into pieces and eat him himself, but certainly the dogs and birds will feast upon him (22, 345–354). His cruel spirit is well suggested in the version of George Chapman (1611).

'Dog', he replied, 'urge not my ruth by parents, soul nor knees.
 I would to God that any rage would let me eat thee raw,
 Sliced into pieces, so beyond the right of any law
 I taste thy merits. And believe it flies the force of man
 To rescue thy head from the dogs. Give all the gold they can,
 If ten or twenty times so much as friends would rate thy price
 Were tendered here, with vows of more, to buy the cruelties
 I here have vowed, and, after that, thy father with his gold
 Would free thy self – all that should fail to let thy mother hold
 Solemnities of death with thee and do thee such a grace
 To mourn thy whole corpse on a bed – which piecemeal I'll deface
 With fowls and dogs.'

He then fastens Hector's body to his chariot and drags him away. For several days at dawn he hauls Hector's corpse three times around the funeral mound of Patroclus. As she had said farewell to Hector, Andromache recalled how Achilles had chivalrously revered the bodies of her family killed at Thebe (6, 414–428). How far below his previous magnanimity has he now fallen: so far that his behaviour becomes offensive to the gods, who put a stop to it (24, 1–92).

In the final book comes the second and fullest recognition scene in the meeting with Priam. Here Achilles is restored to humanity by the pleas of Priam who reminds him of his own aged father Peleus. In his gentle treatment of Priam there is true magnanimity. Achilles looks beyond his own grief and anger, and comes to a calm and steady recognition that men can do no more than bear the indiscriminate mixture of good and bad that comes from Zeus. In the examples of Peleus and Priam he sees the insecurity and incompleteness of human happiness; grief is of little use in the face of the inevitability of human suffering (24, 518–551). The pathos of this great speech is well conveyed in the version of Alexander Pope.

'Alas! what weight of anguish hast thou known?
 Unhappy prince! thus guardless and alone
 To pass through foes, and thus undaunted face
 The man whose fury has destroyed thy race?
 A strength proportioned to thy woes you feel.
 Rise then: let reason mitigate our care:
 To mourn, avails not: man is born to bear.
 Such is, alas! the gods' severe decree;
 They, only they, are blest, and only free.

Achilles shows a resolute acceptance here. How vulnerable and fragile this is before the onset of passion is clear in the momentary anger that flares up in Achilles when

Priam is impatient to see Hector. But Achilles collects himself, and he urges Priam to share a meal. The taking of food symbolizes the practical acceptance of continuing life and the recognition that even the passion of grief must yield to necessity. Amid the ruins of human hope and in the knowledge of imminent death, Achilles for the first time sees life steadily and sees it whole.

In concentrating therefore upon the defeat of heroic expectation by folly and passion and in organizing his poem around the anger in such a way that we see in the passionate nature of the hero the cause both of his greatness and also of his great error, Homer has made a tragedy out of the heroic myth. Indeed the Greeks came to regard Homer as the father of tragedy and it is possible to see in the *Iliad* the elements later isolated by the fourth-century philosopher and critic Aristotle in his *Poetics*: error (*hamartia*) in Agamemnon's folly and Achilles' persistence, reversal (*peripeteia*) in the arming of Patroclus and the consequent calamity (*pathos*) in his death, and finally recognition (*anagnoresis*) in the conversation of Achilles first with Thetis and then with Priam.

Unity of design

In the *Iliad* we can also see the embodiment of all those tendencies to concentration and unity that are the hallmarks of Greek art. Here many cited the judgement of Aristotle in his *Poetics*:

A plot does not possess unity, as some people suppose, merely because it is about one man. Many things, countless things indeed, may happen to one man, and some of them will not contribute to any kind of unity; and similarly he may carry out many actions from which no single unified action will emerge. . . . Homer, exceptional in this as in all other respects, seems, whether by art or by instinct, to have been well aware of what was required. . . . although the Trojan War had a beginning and an end, he did not attempt to put the whole of it into the poem; it would have been too large a subject to be taken in all at once, and if he had limited its length, the diversity of incident would have made it too complicated. As it is, he has selected one part of the story and has introduced many incidents from other parts as episodes, such as the Catalogue of Ships and other episodes with which he gives variety to his poem.

(8, 23)

In concentrating the main action of the *Iliad* upon the anger of Achilles Homer does not waste time in telling us about unessential aspects of Achilles' life and character that do not have a bearing upon his anger, nor does he obscure his main theme by telling the tale of Troy from the beginning. He begins in the middle of things in the

ninth year of the siege of Troy selecting only those particulars that relate to his central theme, which has a clear beginning in the quarrel scene, a middle, in all the consequences that flow from it, and an end in the resolution of the anger. The clear chain of cause and effect in the main action has all the requirements of the classically well-made plot that Aristotle made famous in the *Poetics*. Of course this plot is diversified, extended and enriched by many episodes and digressions, but they do not take us to places far away from the plain of Troy or extend the temporal framework within which the main action takes place. In the final analysis they are subordinate to the main action of the irreducible plot.

Within his concentrated action, which takes place within a period of a few days, Homer has nevertheless skilfully interwoven the whole Trojan story. When the scene changes from the Greek camp to the Trojan city in Book Three, the action involving Paris, Helen and Menelaus and the presence of Aphrodite the goddess of love puts before us the protagonists of the original quarrel and indirectly recounts the causes of the war. The second scene in Troy in Book Six where Hector says farewell to Andromache and to his son Astyanax is full of foreboding and looks ominously to the future. The future doom of Troy features predominantly in further forebodings and prophecies and in the pronouncements of the gods, so that the main action is seen to be part of a much larger design involving the whole Trojan War.

From the concentration and unity of a clear and simple design stems the universality for which Greek art has always been famous. For the main plot of the *Iliad* gives us a pattern of behaviour that in its causes and effects represents a probable if not inevitable sequence. Underneath all that is particular and individual, the anger is typical in its causes and consequences, and it is Homer's method or art that enables us to see this. Homer the artist has therefore accomplished in his poetry all that Aristotle the philosopher and critic held to be the end of art; he has imposed form and order on the undifferentiated matter and random chaos of life, thus enabling us to see through the particular to the universal. This imposition of form is not therefore simply an aesthetic matter. It is the means whereby the poet clarifies and communicates moral truth about the human world he is representing in his poem.

THE ODYSSEY

Aristotle remarks that while the *Iliad* has a simple plot that involves emotion and calamity, the *Odyssey* is complex and revolves upon character (*Poetics*, 24). It is on the character of Odysseus that the action principally turns. The essence of his characterization is simple and clear, and is indicated in the various epithets given to him. In the opening line of the poem he is said to be *polytropos*, variously translated as the man of many ways, many turns or many parts. He is also *polymetis* and

polymechanos, the man of much contrivance and many devices, and of course *polytlas*, much suffering and much enduring. He is a man of great versatility and great virtuosity who has seen cities and known the minds of men; he survives by reliance upon his wits and by virtue of his intelligence. Though Odysseus is famous for his 'Odyssey', his long journey to strange lands and distant places, Homer starts his *Odyssey* at a point when his hero is near the end of his journey, after he has been a prisoner of the nymph Calypso on the island of Ogygia for seven years. The main part of his 'Odyssey' is narrated in the form of an after-dinner speech to the Phaeacians, on whose island he is shipwrecked after he has left Calypso. The remainder of the poem, its second half, is entirely concerned with the situation in Ithaca and with Odysseus's successful efforts to regain mastery of his own household.

The poem starts with a dramatic representation of the disorder in Ithaca in Odysseus' absence. Nine years after the Trojan War, the sons of the neighbouring aristocracy are competing for the hand of his wife Penelope in marriage, and riotously consuming his substance in feasting and nightly entertainment. The choice lies with Penelope, and the wooers are pressing their suit till she chooses one of their number. In an Ithacan assembly, Odysseus' only son Telemachus, who has just recently come of age, attempts to eject the suitors, who are in no mood to go. The people in Ithaca are entirely passive, there being no external authority to which appeal can be made in Homeric society. Telemachus determines to journey to Pylos, the home of Nestor, and to Sparta, the home of Menelaus, in order to seek news of his father to end the uncertainty. The position of Penelope is delicate. She wishes to remain loyal to Odysseus and does not want to choose a successor, but the assertion of Telemachus, which exposes him to danger (the suitors have a plot to ambush him on his return which he is only able to evade by use of his wits), puts new pressure upon her. The situation in Ithaca is most unstable; events are taking an ugly turn and entering a dangerous and critical stage. The judgement on the suitors at the beginning of the poem and throughout is clear: their riotous actions and insulting speeches are a gross breach of Homeric manners. The line between unseemly behaviour and downright wickedness is clearly crossed in the plot to ambush and kill Telemachus. The moral outline of the poem is simple and clear; the stage is set at the opening for the ultimate triumph of right over wrong in the poetic justice that is to be meted out in the reversal of fortune at the poem's climax.

The scene now shifts to Calypso's isle, where Odysseus is to be found in a nostalgic mood, away from the goddess, yearning for his return home. The gods send their messenger Hermes to instruct Calypso to release the hero. Odysseus builds a raft, sets sail but is almost drowned when Poseidon, god of the seas, whose anger he incurred when he blinded his son Polyphemus the Cyclops, raises a storm which blows him off course and shipwrecks him on Scherie, the island home of the Phaeacians.

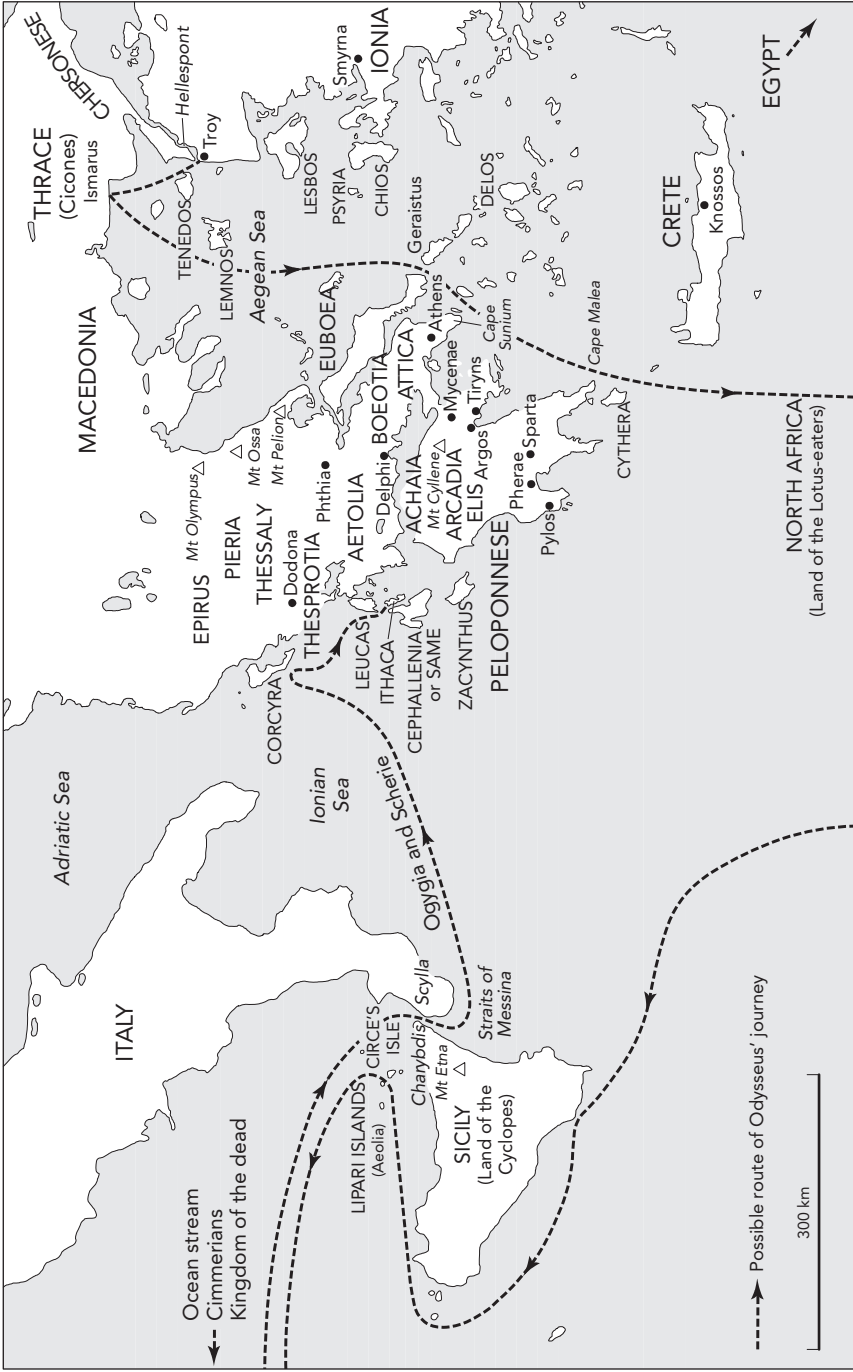


FIGURE 11 The world of Odysseus

This is an idealized and romantic setting, well suited to serve as the backdrop for Odysseus's account of his fabulous adventures. It is in fact his last port of call in the world of romance before he returns to the realities of Ithaca. Here he is courteously received by the Phaeacians, to whom he tells the story of his past wanderings from Troy.

Declaring his identity at the opening of his retrospective narrative, he announces that he is famous among men for all manner of stratagems (9, 19). The word he uses here is *dolos*, denoting wiles, craft, stratagems or cunning. The account of his adventures reveals him to be the wily and versatile Greek who has been tested in a wide variety of experiences. In contrast to his companions, who against his warnings foolishly kill the oxen of Hyperion the sun god, his thirst for adventure is tempered by the restraining influence of good sense. The tales also enhance his character and status before he embarks upon his final encounter with the suitors.

The Phaeacians honour him with gifts in admiration for his physical and mental prowess and convey him to Ithaca in one of their magic ships. He is left alone sleeping upon the shore. On awakening he fails to recognize his native home. When Athena appears disguised as a shepherd, he invents the first of several Cretan tales to keep his identity secret, in which he says he is on the run after a homicide, a realistic tale very different in character from the folk tales involving the Cyclops and Circe, which we have previously heard. In the stratagem of the tale, revealing Odysseus' habitual inventiveness, caution and craft, the hero shows himself worthy of the attention of the goddess, who is amused by it, feeling a natural affinity with one who is *epetes*, variously rendered as 'of soft or fluent speech', 'sociable' or 'civilized', *angkinoo*s, of quick understanding and *echephron*, self-possessed, controlled and prudent (13, 332). These are the qualities of mind and intelligence by virtue of which Odysseus is favoured by the goddess and succeeds in the supreme stratagem whereby he regains the mastery of his own house.

Athena initiates the plan by which Odysseus, disguised as a beggar, will find out for himself what is happening in Ithaca and take advantage of any opportunity that comes his way. To this end he uses the disguise to test loyalties and only reveals himself to those whose aid is necessary. He first visits the hut of his faithful steward Eumaeus, who offers him generous hospitality. Their encounter is full of poignant ironies, not least when Eumaeus believes the Cretan tale told by the stranger but not his oath that Odysseus is shortly to return. Here he encounters Telemachus who on his return from Sparta has just evaded the ambush laid for him by the suitors. Then comes the first of several recognition scenes in which Odysseus reveals himself to his son. Together they plot the suitors' downfall and set off separately for the palace.

In the insulting behaviour of the suitors Odysseus experiences their iniquities at first hand and sees the sufferings endured by his household, in particular those of his loyal wife Penelope, who welcomes him generously without knowing who he is and

questions him about Odysseus. Their long conversation (which is interrupted by the recognition scene involving his old nurse Eurycleia), since it is centred upon the absent husband who is actually present, is full of irony and pathos. Penelope unburdens herself to the stranger, telling him of the pressures she reluctantly faces to remarry. Odysseus silently grieves for his sorrowing wife, trying to comfort her with a tale that he has recently seen Odysseus whom he predicts will soon return. Penelope, however, does not believe him and, in the course of their conversation, she comes to the momentous decision to arrange for the contest with the great bow of Odysseus; she will marry the man who can string it. This is the opportunity that Odysseus has been waiting for. When none of the suitors proves adequate to the task, he asks for the chance to try himself. Telemachus ensures that he is given the bow and so starts the killing of the suitors.

The scene is now set for the climactic recognition scene between husband and wife. Penelope is cautious and in turn tests Odysseus. When she finally suspends her disbelief, she compares her position to that of Helen (who had yielded to the stranger Paris, who then abducted her to Troy causing the war with the Greeks), thus crystallizing for the audience the prudence of her conduct by contrast. In the final book the scene shifts to the underworld where the shades of the suitors tell their version of their miserable end to the shades of Achilles and Agamemnon, who sets the seal of heroic approval upon the action of Odysseus and extols the virtue of Penelope. 'Blessed is Odysseus in the great virtue of his wife, always loyal to him. The fame of her virtue (*arete*) will never perish, and the immortals will fashion a beautiful song in honour of Penelope the wise' (24, 192–202: *echephron*, having understanding, prudent or self-possessed, the epithet given earlier by Athena to Odysseus). Agamemnon, who had been murdered by his own wife Clytemnestra and her paramour Aegisthus on his return from Troy, speaks feelingly here. So many Greek myths show the dominance of cruel and treacherous passions indulged without any restraint of civilised feeling or morality, but the *Odyssey* ends in a peace endorsed by the gods when Athena intervenes to prevent any backlash from the relatives of the slain suitors. In the happy ending of the *Odyssey*, Homer rewards the wise restraint of his characters and serenely celebrates the most basic natural bonds of human life between parent and child and above all between husband and wife.

Homer endows Odysseus with that quality of restraint that he exhibits himself in the controlling artistry of his poems, manifested both in their measured style and their balanced structure. Both poems may be said to recommend in different ways the two great maxims of Greek culture inscribed on the temple of Apollo at Delphi: *gnothi seauton*, Know Thyself, and *meden agan*, Nothing in Excess.

HOMERIC IDEALS: CIVILIZED SOCIAL LIVING

The end of the *Odyssey* restores the conditions in which civilized living is again possible. An idealized version of Homeric civilization is the tranquil world that Odysseus enters when he arrives in Scherie, the home of the Phaeacians, a rich land whose seafaring inhabitants know of war only as a subject of song while pursuing the occupations of peace. They are indirectly contrasted with their old neighbours the Cyclopes (6, 5), who dwell in caves, do not practise agriculture and are said to be *athemistes*, that is, having no respect for *themis* (custom, law or equity), but who live each a law unto himself in the primitive state of nature where the individual will is not controlled and civilized by the social bond. While the response of the Cyclops to a visiting stranger is that of the savage, the benevolent Phaeacians show respect for the suppliant, unconditionally welcoming Odysseus without knowing who he is. In their generous treatment of their visitor, whom they honour with gifts, and in the delicate manners exhibited in the royal household between king, queen and princess, we see the highest standards of Homeric civilization. Odysseus reciprocates, himself showing exquisite manners in his delicate and considerate dealings with the young Nausicaa.

These standards are reflected too in the treatment given to Telemachus as a guest at Pylos and Sparta, in the simple piety of Nestor and his relationship with his sons, and in the humanity of Menelaus and his tranquil relationship with Helen, now forgiven. But the most striking example of moral excellence in the poem is the compassion shown to Odysseus in disguise as an apparently destitute beggar by Eumaeus, Telemachus and Penelope. These are the civilized standards by which we are to judge the shameless behaviour of the suitors, who lack *aidos*, that quality of restraint that enforces respect for the laws of hospitality and decency in human relations.

In other respects Scherie represents a world redolent of Greek ideals. The striking description of its beautiful garden and magnificent palace (a reminder of the sophisticated monuments of Mycenaean culture) evokes a world of order, harmony and proportion, a cultivated place of material splendour in which the physical and the artistic are equally valued. In this setting Homer endows his hero as he sets out for the palace with a beauty that has come to be regarded as the Greek ideal:

Athena made him seem taller and sturdier than ever and caused the bushy locks to hang from his head thick as the petals of the hyacinth in bloom. Just as a craftsman trained by Hephaestus and herself in the secrets of his art takes pains to put a graceful finish to his work by overlaying silver-ware with gold, she finished now by endowing his head and shoulders with added beauty. When Odysseus retired to sit down by himself on the sea-shore, he was radiant with comeliness and grace.

(6, 229–235)

Once there, he is entertained with food, drink, dancing and with the songs of the minstrel. He is then invited to compete in the Phaeacian games by one of the king's sons: 'you must surely be an athlete, for nothing makes a man so famous for life as what he can do with his hands and his feet' (8, 146–148). He declines, but another Phaeacian, Euryalas, assails him with the taunt that he is a mere trader concerned with profit. In less ideal circumstances we see Odysseus deeply concerned with material things. Part of his completeness as a human being is that he is not completely ideal. But here his heroic spirit responds angrily to the Phaeacian rebuke with the remark that 'we cannot all hope to combine the pleasing qualities of good looks, brains and eloquence' (8, 168). He then participates and excels, proving himself here the all-round man comprising the Greek ideal. When Euryalas later apologizes to him and gives him a sword as a parting gift, Odysseus is gracious in his acceptance; an ideal social harmony prevails.

HOMERIC IDEALS: POETRY AND ART

As he begins the narrative of his tales, Odysseus gives voice to a further Homeric ideal in his praise of the feast and the song:

'Lord Alcinous, it is indeed a lovely thing to hear a bard such as yours, with a voice like the gods'. I myself feel that there is nothing more delightful than when the festive mood reigns in a whole people's hearts and the banqueters listen to a minstrel from their seats in the hall, while the tables before them are laden with bread and meat, and a steward carries round the wine he has drawn from the bowl and fills their cups. This, to my way of thinking, is something like perfection.'

(9, 1–11)

Whatever partiality Homer had to his own profession, there can be no doubt that the bard was held in special honour in Homeric culture. In the ideal society of the Phaeacians, the blind bard Demodocus, whose name means 'honoured by the people', has a special place. In Ithaca Homer makes it clear that Phemius, whose name means 'praiser', sings at the banquet of the suitors 'by necessity' (1, 154). The motif is repeated in the suitor-slaying when Phemius, here called Terpiades ('the son of delight'), throws himself at the mercy of Odysseus:

'You will repent it later if you kill a minstrel like me, who sings for gods and men. I had no teacher but myself. All kinds of song spring unpremeditated to my lips; and I feel that I could sing for you as I could sing for a god.'

(22, 344–349)

Phemius is spared, whereas the earlier direct appeal of the priest Leodes to Odysseus goes unheeded and he is cut down with the rest.

In Homeric society the roles of poet and priest, so often confused in earlier societies, are thoroughly distinct. It is worth noting too that while the apparently typical Homeric man is not irreligious, most of the practices such as sacrifices and funerals that are presided over by priests in other societies are conducted by the heroes themselves. The custodian confirming the identity, commemorating the values and transmitting the ideals of Homeric culture from generation to generation is not, as in Egyptian society, the priest, but is the bard like Phemius and Demodocus who sang, as Achilles sings in his tent at *Iliad* 10, 189, of the *klea andron* ('the great deeds of famous men'). The old tag that Homer was the Bible of the Greeks serves to remind us that while the Homeric poems were indeed accorded the special status in Greek culture and education that the Bible has often had in the Judaeo-Christian world, the Hellenic spirit is as different from the Hebraic recorded in the Bible as it is from the Egyptian, whose conservative priestly caste has left no great texts. Unlike the prophets of the Old Testament, Homer is the reverse of otherworldly; he celebrates the vibrancy of the human spirit in the here and now, manifested in the godlike actions of his heroes.

The Homeric bard, of course, is not merely the conduit through which culture is transmitted, for he himself, like Demodocus and Phemius who are 'inspired by the god', is the creative agent who transmutes the raw material of the world around him into art. The fullest and most dynamic portrait of the artist in Homer is of the artist as god himself when we see the divine artificer Hephaestus in the *Iliad* forging the shield of Achilles and recreating on it the whole Homeric world, beginning with the sun, the moon and the constellations, and ending with the Ocean stream, which just as it encircles the world in Homer, encircles the rim of the divine artefact.

Homer gives us a vivid impression of the shield's manufacture, as the god vigorously sets about his task. The divine craftsmanship of the plastic artist finds its counterpart in the poetic energy with which Homer invests his descriptions of the scenes on the shield. In these, there is so much activity and movement that rationalistic critics have been offended because the descriptions no longer accurately represent what is a static object. But Homer is not interested in accurate representation, in verisimilitude, but in lively representation. The art of Homer is not to give us finished pictures but pictures in the making, always moving and full of energy.

The god first creates two beautiful cities. The first is a city at peace in which weddings are celebrated with music, singing, feasting and dancing. In the market assembly of the people two litigants disputing claims of compensation for a homicide put their case before a tribunal of elders who give judgement and expound the law. In contrast to this picture of peaceful activity and the rule of law is the second city, which is in a state of siege. There is an ambush and a bloody battle. Five agricultural

scenes follow: the ploughing of a field with a drink of mellow wine for the ploughman; the harvest on the king's estate with a feast for the labourers; the grape-picking by young men and women to the accompaniment of music, song and dancing; the herding of cattle with the intrusion of a lion who carries off a bellowing bull; and lastly the grazing ground for sheep. The final picture is of young men and women dancing to music and delighting a crowd of onlookers.

Though many of the scenes are idyllic, the overall representation is not idealized in the sense that men are represented as better than they are. Even in the first city at peace, a homicide has been committed. In the second city, the soldiers engage in battle, fight and drag off their dead like real living men (*Iliad* 17, 539). It is apparent that what the poet admires most is the realism of the picture and the ability of the god to bring it all to life. The city at war has a representational beauty, justifying Homer's description of both cities as beautiful (17, 491).

There are several touches that testify to the craftsmanship of the god. In the city at war the gods are larger than life and wrought in gold. In the picture of the ploughing the unploughed field is made of gold; behind the plough the colour of the soil is black as in real life, a marvel to behold (18, 549). The vineyard is gold, the grapes are black, the ditches are blue and the fences tin. The cows are of gold and tin. The poet appreciates the divine craftsmanship whereby the god makes the most of his various materials to ensure that vital details stand out in relief.

The culmination of the celebration of the artist comes in the final picture on the shield (18, 590–606), the dancing on a beautiful dance floor likened to the famous one built at Cnossus by Daedalus, the legendary Cretan artist and craftsman. Hephaestus began the shield with a joyful celebration of weddings with music, singing and dancing. He ends with a picture that celebrates youth and movement in the delight of the dance. The movement of the dancers is compared to the wheel of a potter. The immediate point of comparison is speed but the figure also suggests the perfect symmetry of the circle that results in a finished work of art. A great crowd gathers, delighting in the spectacle of the dance, and the bard sings to the accompaniment of the lyre. In the midst of the dancers acrobats perform in time to the music. In the whole scene the dominant impression is one of joyous celebration of physical energy. But the dance is organized energy so that the picture also celebrates the power of art apparent in the underlying pattern of the dance, the mention of Daedalus, the image of the potter's wheel, and the presence of the bard and his music. Though it does not obtrude (they are not dancing a minuet) there is a formality and order underlying the energy and spontaneity of the dance, so that this final picture on the shield is a fitting climax encapsulating the essence of Homeric art.

THE GREEK LOVE OF BEAUTY AND HOMER'S STYLE

For the modern world the Hellenic spirit has come to be particularly associated with Athens, and if the word Athenian is synonymous with the cultured and cultivated, it is because the Athenians yielded to the spirit of Homer more completely than other Greeks, like the Spartans, who turned their backs upon it. 'For we are lovers of beauty without extravagance and lovers of wisdom without unmanliness.' These famous words, put into the mouth of the Athenian leader Pericles by the historian Thucydides (2, 40), have been regarded as defining the Athenian spirit in its highest manifestation. The Greek love of beauty is memorably expressed in the reactions of the old men of Troy as they catch sight of Helen coming to the tower: 'Who on earth,' they asked one another, 'could blame the Trojans and Achaean men-at-arms for suffering so long for such a woman's sake? Indeed she is the very image of an immortal goddess' (*Iliad* 3, 156–158). After they have eaten, Priam expresses his wonder at the stature and beauty of Achilles, who is the very image of a god (*Iliad*, 24, 629–633). The perfect beauty of the anthropomorphic gods is constantly implied in the use of recurring epithets like 'golden Aphrodite'. The value set upon beauty is apparent in the fate of the godlike Ganymede, a mortal who grew to be the most beautiful youth in the world and because of his good looks was stolen by the gods to be the cup-bearer of Zeus (20, 232–235). The famous fifth-century sculptor Pheidias is said to have been inspired by Homer's majestic description of the dark eyebrows and ambrosial locks of Zeus (*Iliad* 1, 528–529) when he made his famous statue of Zeus at Olympia. The description of the messenger of the gods, Hermes, with his golden sandals and wand, 'looking like a princely youth at the most graceful time when the beard first begins to grow' (*Iliad* 24, 339–348), fits exactly his representation in the statues of later time.

Homer celebrates the beauty of the persons, places and material objects that he describes in his poems, but a poet's feeling for beauty is chiefly reflected in his own use of language and style. And here the first remarks must be reserved for the graceful beauty of Homer's verse and its almost magical metrical harmony. One of his Greek admirers writing in the last decades of the first century, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, cites (in the third chapter of his treatise *On Literary Composition*), the opening lines of Book Sixteen of the *Odyssey*, which describes the scene in Eumaeus' hut and the reaction of his dogs at the moment when Telemachus returns, as an instance of Homer's ability to make enchanting poetry out of the simplest and most commonplace incidents of everyday life. Dionysius points out that all the words that Homer uses here are quite ordinary, such as might be used by a farmer, a sailor or anyone who is not concerned with elegant speech. Neither is the language in the least figurative. When the lines are broken up, the language is utterly undistinguished.

When Telemachus arrived, Odysseus and the worthy swineherd were preparing their breakfast in the hut by the light of dawn, after stirring up the fire and sending the herdsmen off with the pigs to the pastures. The dogs, usually so obstreperous, not only did not bark at the newcomer but greeted him with wagging tails. Odysseus heard footsteps and at the same moment observed the dogs' friendly behaviour. Immediately alert, he turned to his companion and said: 'Eumaeus, you have a visitor: I can hear his steps. He must be a friend of yours or someone familiar here, for the dogs are wagging their tails instead of barking.'

The prose version bears out what Dionysius has to say. The beauty of the poetry derives from the metrical order of its composition. Unfortunately, it is not possible to find any verse translation that is able to convey the poetic effect of Homer's Greek in passages of plain and simple description such as this. However, Homer's stylistic range is as varied as his subject matter, and translators have been inspired to poetic heights in passages of pathos and grandeur.

In the treatise *On the Sublime*, probably written in the first century AD and usually attributed to the Greek rhetorician Longinus, the author cites many passages from Homer, often in connection with the gods, to illustrate Homeric grandeur, for he regards Homer as a poet who works pre-eminently in the grand manner. By sublimity 'Longinus' does not merely mean grandeur. He defines the true sublime as any literary passage that has the power to elevate the reader and take him out of himself. The truly beautiful and sublime is what can be seen to have this effect on diverse people in different times (*On the Sublime*, 7). One such passage that has been much admired is the moment when Hector takes his farewell of Andromache in Book Six of the *Iliad*. There is the grandeur of Hector's prayer for a heroic future for his child, which is full of pathos and irony because of Hector's foreboding and the reader's knowledge that Troy will fall (when the child is cruelly thrown off the battlements). This is admirably rendered in the heroic couplet by the seventeenth-century translator, John Dryden.

'Parent of Gods and men, propitious Jove,
 And you bright synod of the powers above;
 On this my son your gracious powers bestow;
 Grant him to live, and great in arms to grow;
 To reign in Troy, to govern with renown,
 To shield the people, and assert the crown:
 That, when hereafter he from war shall come,
 And bring his Trojans peace and triumph home,
 Some aged man, who lives this act to see,
 And who in former times remembered me,
 May say the son in fortitude and fame

Outgoes the mark, and drowns his father's name:
 That at these words his mother may rejoice,
 And add her suffrage to the public voice.'

But in this scene of great pathos and grandeur is the human reality of the small child's fear of the nodding plume of Hector's helmet, which causes laughter amidst the tears and makes the moment of parting one of tender intimacy, so that heroism is given a fully human context. This simple and direct portrayal of human nature is unhampered by any distracting notion of false grandeur either in human behaviour or in artistic expression. Homer's comprehensiveness can include the familiar touch, can descend to particular details of common human experience and can tolerate the intrusion of the comic. Discussion of these passages may serve to suggest that Homer's style has an unaffected beauty that is entirely without rhetorical extravagance or ornamental excess, and that the beauty of it springs from the delicate sense of decorum and propriety with which the artist's language is in perfect harmony with what he seeks to express.

Beauty without ornamental excess and a perfect harmony of content and form wherein the artist's expression is controlled by a restraining vision of what is truly natural – these are the hallmarks of classic art, miraculously perfect like the goddess of beauty herself at the moment of birth, in the poetic genius of archaic Greece.

HESIOD

A different poetic voice from early archaic Greece is that of Hesiod emanating from the small rural village of Ascra in Boeotia in the central Greek mainland about the time now thought to be the date of the composition of the Homeric poems some time in the eighth century. He writes in the hexameter and uses formulae in the Homeric manner, so that his poems have a similar relation to the oral tradition. His *Theogony* (mentioned in Chapter 3) transmits early stories of the gods and is an important supplement to Homer for early Greek myth. Unlike Homer, he includes personal details about his life and circumstances, telling us in his *Works and Days* that his father had migrated from Cyme in Asian Minor to Boeotia in search of a new life. In this work, the poet is found in the role of teacher, addressing his brother Perses who evidently needs to be taken seriously to task. Much of the poem has to do with the good works necessary for agricultural success and the identification of the most propitious days when they may be done. This is the world of arable farming rather than the pastoral world of Homer. By way of introduction, the poet puts Perses in the right frame of mind with a series of gloom-laden mythological excursions, including the tale of Pandora who was sent by Zeus as a punishment after Prometheus, a friend to man,

had stolen fire from heaven and given it to mortals. Pandora opens the jar she carries unleashing all the ills of life onto the world with the exception of Hope which remains trapped under the lid. He follows this with an account of the degeneration of the ages from the golden through the silver and bronze to the iron age of the present. The generation before the present iron age contains 'the godlike heroes', some of whom lost their lives in the expedition to Troy for Helen's sake (ll. 157, 159). But the age of heroes is past. The vision of the present iron age sets the overall mood and tone of the poem, here represented in the couplet version of George Chapman made in 1616:

Ill-lunged, ill-livered and ill-complexioned Spite
 Shall consort all the miserable plight
 Of men then living. Justice then and Shame
 Clad in pure white (as if they never came
 In touch with those societies) shall fly
 Up to the gods' immortal family
 From broad-wayed earth, and leave griefs to men
 That (desperate of amends) must bear them all.

(translating ll. 197–200)

The only salvation is hard work and toil, which the justice of Zeus can reward. Hesiod's instructions are addressed through Perses to those farmers who can afford to have a slave or hire a worker. It is evident in fact that Perses has more than one slave and owns the land that he has inherited from their father, so despite all the emphasis on the need to work hard to avoid poverty, the poem represents a world of the moderately well-to-do peasant farmer, a kind of middle class. Nevertheless in comparison with Homer this is a voice from lower down the scale and one that distrusts kings whom the poet castigates for often offering crooked judgements.

Further reading

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2 HISTORY



THE MAIN HISTORICAL SOURCES

In the modern world, archaeologists have uncovered much of the early history of Greek civilization, as we have seen in relation to the Minoans and Mycenaeans. However, even after the invention of writing, the Greeks do not seem to have written their own history until prompted by the spirit of enquiry (*historia* in Greek is learning by enquiry) associated with the Ionian philosophers who challenged the mythical view of the world represented in the poems of Homer and Hesiod. It can surely be no accident that the earliest writer of *Histories* known to us, Hecataeus (c. 500), who was also a geographer, came from Miletus, the Ionian home of more than one early philosopher. Only a few fragments of Hecataeus survive including a notable first sentence: 'I write these things as they seem to me to be true; for the stories of the Greeks are many and ridiculous in my opinion.' Other prose writers called *logographers* compiled accounts of local traditions, genealogies and more general matters. Local histories continued to be written in the fifth and fourth centuries and they are thought to be the basis of the history contained in *The Athenian Constitution* traditionally attributed to Aristotle referred to later in this chapter. The main literary sources referred to and cited in this chapter for the Classical period are Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, and Diodorus Siculus, and for the Hellenistic period, Arrian and Plutarch and Polybius.

Herodotus (c. 484–c. 420)

Born about 484, in between the two Persian campaigns, in Halicarnassus, a colony of Dorian Greeks on the coast of Asia Minor, Herodotus offers to the public the result of his enquiry in order to preserve the memory and renown of great and remarkable deeds done both by the Greeks and the non-Greeks (for which his work is *barbaroi*

meaning foreign but not necessarily uncivilized). More particularly he aims to show the reason why they came into conflict (I, 1). He then gives the Persian and Phoenician versions of the origin of eastern hostility to the Greeks, going back to the story of Io and the Trojan War. However, he quickly moves on from the mythical past:

This is what the Persians and Phoenicians say. I am not going to come down in favour of this or that account of events, but I will talk about the man who, to my certain knowledge, first undertook criminal acts of aggression against the Greeks. I will show who it was who did this, and then proceed with the rest of the account. I will cover minor and major human settlements equally, because most of those that were important in the past have diminished in significance by now, and those which were great in my own time were small in times past. I will mention both equally because I know that human happiness never remains long in the same place.

(1, 5)

The stress here upon historical flux suggests the influence upon Herodotus of the physical speculations of the Ionian natural philosophers, especially Heraclitus. In actual fact, he finds the historical cause of the conflict to lie in the attack made by Croesus of Lydia upon the neighbouring empire of King Cyrus of Persia, in the course of which the Lydian empire, the buffer state between Persia and the Asiatic Greeks, was destroyed. He then gives the history of the eastern part of the Persian empire, concentrating upon the reign of Cyrus, who conquered first the Medes and then extended westwards by way of Lydia to the Asiatic Greeks. His successor Cambyses conquered Egypt; Darius and then Xerxes attempt the conquest of Europe. In the course of his account he tells us of the prevailing customs of each foreign people, notably the Lydians in Book One, the Persians in Books One and Three, the Egyptians in Book Two and the Scythians and Libyans in Book Four. He therefore gives us a history and description (geographical and ethnographical) of the whole of the Near East. As in the case of Homer, there are many episodes and digressions, but essentially they are related and subordinated to one grand uniting theme. It is by virtue of this unity (reflecting the unity he saw in the human world), as well as the scale of the work and of course the interest in cause and effect, that Herodotus merits the title accorded to him in antiquity, 'the father of history', even though others had written history before him, and it is by virtue of his interest in different customs and peoples that he may also be called the father of anthropology and ethnology.

He acquired the material for his history sometimes from written records but usually from what he saw for himself or was told by those he met on his extensive travels. He lived for a time in Samos and at Athens, then after 444, for the last twenty years of his life, in the Athenian colony of Thurii in southern Italy. He tells us that he

went to Egypt, to Gaza and Tyre, to Babylon, to Scythia and throughout the northern Aegean. In his addiction to travel (at a time when it was difficult and hazardous) and in his insatiable curiosity about men and manners, he can be likened in spirit to the Homeric Odysseus, and just as 'many-minded' Homer has respect for all his characters regardless of whether they are Greek or non-Greek, so Herodotus transcends his nationality in his tolerance, openness and sympathy, to the extent that he could later be criticized for being over-fond of the foreign, *philobarbaros*. He admires Egyptian achievements in medicine and philosophy, rightly regarding Egypt as the teacher of Greece. He admires, too, the courage and honesty of the enemies of Greece. The Persians are not simply seen as uncivilized hordes in the way that westerners have often seen, for example, the Turks. On national customs and beliefs he has the following instruction:

. . . if one were to order all mankind to choose the best set of rules in the world, each group would, after due consideration, choose its own customs; each group regards its own as being by far the best. . . . there is plenty of other evidence to support the idea that this opinion of one's own customs is universal, but here is one instance. During Darius' reign, he invited some Greeks who were present to a conference, and asked them how much money it would take for them to be prepared to eat the corpses of their fathers; they replied that they would not do that for any amount of money. Next, Darius summoned some members of the Indian tribe known as Collatae, who eat their parents, and asked them in the presence of the Greeks, with an interpreter present so that they could understand what was being said, how much money it would take for them to be willing to cremate their fathers' corpses; they cried out in horror and told him not to say such appalling things. So these practices have become enshrined as customs just as they are, and I think Pindar was right to have said in his poem that custom is king of all.

(3, 38)

There is a strong element of relativism here. If we are divided by custom, then in some fundamental respects all men are equal: 'Because I believe that everyone is equal in terms of religious knowledge, I do not see any point in relating anything I was told about the gods, except their names alone' (2, 3).

It will follow from this that Herodotus does not write in the belief that the Greeks are the chosen people of the gods whose victory is divinely ordained. Greek history, recognizing a universal pattern of rise and fall, is not teleological on the Jewish pattern. On the other hand, Herodotus does clearly believe that the gods do intervene in human affairs. Recording the view of Egyptian priests that Helen and the treasure at Sparta stolen by Paris had been removed to Egypt and that the Greeks did not

believe the Trojan account, and dismissing the implausibility of the Homeric version in which the Trojans refuse to surrender Helen, he adds his own view:

No, the fact is, they did not have Helen to give back; they were telling the truth, but the Greeks did not believe them. In my opinion, this was because the gods were arranging things so that in their annihilation the Trojans might make it completely clear to others that the severity of a crime is matched by the severity of the ensuing punishment at the gods' hands. That is my view, at any rate.

(2, 120)

Similarly, he accepts the validity of oracles: 'I hesitate to challenge the validity of oracles myself, and I do not accept such challenges from others either' (8, 77). In the case of the famous oracle given to the Athenians at Delphi that in the face of the Persians they should trust to 'their wooden walls', while the narrative is designed to show the political wisdom of the Athenian leader Themistocles in his interpretation that the Athenians should trust to their ships, there is no hint of incredulity or cynicism about the institution of the Delphic oracle itself (which continued to be a potent force in the Greek world down to Hellenistic times). Omens and prophetic dreams (notably in the case of Xerxes (7, 13)) also play a part in his history. Nevertheless, Herodotus never takes upon himself the role of prophet, nor do the gods intervene crudely in his history of the Persian Wars in such a way as to compromise the exercise of human free will.

What Herodotus believed about the intervention of the gods in history may be discerned in the tale in which the wise Greek Solon advises the rich Lydian ruler Croesus who supposed himself the happiest of men: 'But until he is dead, you had better refrain from calling him happy, and just call him fortunate' (1, 32). Croesus thinks Solon a fool. 'After Solon's departure, the weight of divine anger descended on Croesus, in all likelihood for thinking he was the happiest man in the world' (1, 33–34). The fate of Croesus is an object lesson in the folly of over-confidence and pride, as the advice of Solon, very much in the spirit of Herodotus, expresses the Greek fear of excess. Here we have one of the leading ideas that shaped Herodotus' interpretation of events, that of *hybris* inevitably begetting a corresponding *nemesis* in individuals and states. While he gives us finely individualized portraits of the four great Persian kings, who all have some qualities he admires, the Persian invasion is a manifestation of *hybris*, particularly on the part of Xerxes, leader of the second Persian expedition against Greece, whose character expresses the arrogance of power. Similarly, the tragic dramatist Aeschylus in his play the *Persians* has the ghost of his father Darius say that Xerxes' *hybris* was punished by the gods 'who used the rashness of his nature against him' (ll. 742–744). When the king orders his men to lash the Hellespont, throw fetters into it, brand it with irons and utter curses over it after a storm has destroyed a recently constructed bridge, Herodotus remarks on the

presumptuous folly of this 'barbarous' behaviour, and here for once the word has a special charge (7, 35). There soon follows a story that needs no comment in which the Lydian Pythius requests Xerxes to allow his eldest son to remain with him in his old age. Xerxes angrily orders that the son be cut in half so that the army can march between the two halves (7, 39). In conversation with the exiled Spartan king Demaratus, Herodotus shows not only the understandable incomprehension of Xerxes when told that the Spartans will fight him whatever the odds but also betrays the king's perceived inability to appreciate that strength and discipline might be induced by anything other than the tyranny of the lash:

If they had a single leader in the Persian mould, fear of him might make them excel themselves and, urged on by the whip, they might attack a numerically superior force, but all this is out of the question if they are allowed their freedom.

(7, 103)

Demaratus seeks to enlighten him:

The point is that although they're free, they're not entirely free: their master is the law, and they're far more afraid of this than your men are of you. At any rate, they do whatever the law commands, and its command never changes: it is that they should not turn tail in battle no matter how many men are ranged against them, but should maintain their positions and either win or die.

(7, 104)

Unlike Xerxes in this characterization, Herodotus appreciates the value of freedom. Herodotean relativism has its limits: Greek political values are, in his view, superior to those of their Persian opponents. Commenting on Athenian military success after the expulsion of the tyrants at the end of the sixth century, he writes:

Now, the advantages of everyone having a voice in the political procedure are not restricted just to single instances, but are plain to see wherever one looks. For instance, while the Athenians were ruled by tyrants, they were no better at warfare than any of their neighbours, but once they had got rid of the tyrants they became vastly superior. This goes to show that while they were under an oppressive regime they fought below their best because they were working for a master, whereas as free men each individual wanted to achieve something for himself.

(5, 78)

In the debate between leading Persians on the best form of constitution, whether democracy, oligarchy or monarchy, the critique of monarchy and the ideal of democracy stand out (though elsewhere he is not uncritical of democratic practice):

In the first place, it has the best of all names to describe it – equality before the law. In the second place, it is entirely free of the vices of monarchy. It is government by lot, it is accountable government, and it refers all decisions to the common people.

(3, 80)

Though not an Athenian himself and evidently writing at a time when Athens was unpopular as a result of her empire, Herodotus boldly hails freedom-loving Athens as the saviour of Greece: Athenian naval power was decisive. 'It was they who aroused the whole of the rest of Greece . . . and, with the help of the gods, repelled the king's advance' (7, 139). *Philobarbaros* though he certainly is, Herodotus has no doubt that Greek civic values represent a higher order of things than oriental despotism, and his history expresses the new self-confidence in Greece in the generation after the Persian Wars.

Most readers find his history an attractively written and fascinating human document rising to a dramatic climax in the two Persian campaigns. However, the reliability of it all has always been a matter of debate. The narrative of Solon and Croesus (1, 29–34) sounds like a folk-tale and even in ancient times was rejected on chronological grounds. We may suspect that the conversations between Xerxes and Demaratus and the discussion on the various forms of constitution are largely, if not wholly, invented for dramatic effect, though here it can be said in Herodotus' defence that it remained the general practice of ancient historians to put words into the mouths of their protagonists. He is often criticized not only for lapses in chronology but also for a lack of military knowledge and often for a general credulity in relation to his sources. But it would be wrong simply to regard the history as largely a compilation of travellers' tales preserving the distorted folk memories of the oral tradition, followed by a dramatic account of the Persian Wars in which historical truth is often sacrificed for literary effect. He frequently expresses scepticism about what he is told and sometimes gives two versions of events, leaving the reader to decide the balance of probability. Modern scholars who have looked beyond Herodotus to the evidence of inscriptions and archaeology often report back with favourable verdicts. Given the difficulties in writing history at all in an age when written records were not available, and in determining criteria for deciding between myth and fact, and given that Herodotus is a pioneer in the scale of his undertaking, it is difficult not to admire the lengths to which he went in his pursuit of truth about the human world of his recent past.

Thucydides

The chief source for the Peloponnesian War and its immediate antecedents is one of the most important Greek writers, Thucydides (c. 455–c. 400):

I lived through the whole of it, being of an age to understand what was happening, and I put my mind to the subject so as to get an accurate view of it. It happened, too, that I was banished from my country for twenty years after my command at Amphipolis; I saw what was being done on both sides, particularly on the Peloponnesian side, because of my exile, and this leisure gave me rather exceptional facilities for looking into things.

(5, 26)

In the event, he did not complete the history, finishing in midsentence in 411. The event referred to here, when, as Athenian general, he lost Amphipolis in 423 to the Spartan Brasidas, is narrated stoically at 4, 103–108. It is supposed that he was in exile until the end of the war. The Athenian assembly, which later ordered the execution of all surviving generals after the battle of Arginusae in 406, was always likely to deal harshly with those who did not deliver success. Even Pericles had been fined in the last year of his life (2, 65). Little of Thucydides' life is known apart from what he tells us himself, but he was from an aristocratic family and his own political inclinations may be inferred from his comment on the government of the moderate oligarchy of the Five Thousand: 'Indeed, during the first period of this new regime the Athenians appear to have had a better government than ever before, at least in my time. There was a reasonable and moderate blending of the few and the many' (8, 97).

Like Herodotus, he relied chiefly on oral sources and, unlike Herodotus, he did not have the disadvantage of often dealing with long-forgotten events. In the comparison between the two great historians that has often been made, Thucydides has always been regarded as the more scientific, the more accurate and reliable in matters of chronology and fact, and the more questioning and searching in his powers of analysis, whether that be in sifting the evidence of his sources, or in coming to conclusions about motives and underlying causes. Moreover, unlike Herodotus, Thucydides, the rationalist, regarded the historical process as an entirely human affair and excluded the divine from his account, though he recognized, of course, the influence played by belief in the divine upon human events, as in the case of the failure of the Athenian general Nicias, 'who was rather over-inclined to divination and such things' (7, 50), to make a politic retreat at a crucial junction in the Sicilian campaign because of an eclipse of the moon. He is seen at his scientific best in his clinical description of the plague (which he caught himself) in the second year of the war (2, 47–54), which he sees not as a divine judgement but as an unforeseen event with greatly demoralizing psychological effects. The uncrowned gods in Thucydides' narrative are chance and the unforeseen.

His scientific method is to serve a scientific purpose:

And it may well be that my history will seem less easy to read because of the absence in it of a romantic element [to *mythodes*: perhaps he has Herodotus in mind here]. It will be enough for me, however, if these words of mine are judged useful by those who want to understand clearly the events which happened in the past and which (human nature being what it is) will, at some time or other and in much the same way, be repeated in the future. My work is not a piece of writing designed to meet the taste of an immediate public, but was done to last for ever.

(1, 22)

He therefore writes with the lessons of history in mind, hoping to provide a useful education in political behaviour in the belief not so much that history repeats itself as that human nature always remains the same. A notable example of this tendency is seen in the way he uses an extended analysis of civil war, or party strife, or faction, all of which are contained in the Greek word *stasis*, prompted by the revolution in Corcyra, to bring out the general demoralization of human behaviour under the stress of war. His account, which extends over several chapters, begins as follows:

In the various cities these revolutions were the cause of many calamities – as happens and always will happen while human nature is what it is, though there may be different degrees of savagery, and, as different circumstances arise, the general rules will admit of some variety. In times of peace and prosperity cities and individuals alike follow higher standards, because they are not forced into a situation where they have to do what they do not want to do. But war is a stern teacher; in depriving them of the power of easily satisfying their daily wants, it brings most people's minds down to the level of their actual circumstances.

(3, 82–85)

There is every reason to believe that he would have disagreed with the later formulation of the philosopher Aristotle on the difference between poetry and history:

... the one tells of what has happened, the other of the kind of things that might happen. For this reason poetry is something more philosophical and more worthy of serious attention than history: for while poetry is concerned with universal truths, history treats only particular facts.

(Poetics, 9)

Thucydides tells us what happened in such a way that we may see what might happen in the future given the human condition.

It is in the light of this that we may interpret the seemingly unscientific practice that he shares with Herodotus in the composition of his speeches:

I have found it difficult to remember the precise words used in the speeches which I listened to myself and my various informants have experienced the same difficulty; so my method has been, while keeping as closely as possible to the general sense of the words actually used, to make the speakers say what in my opinion, was called for by each situation.

(1, 22)

Most readers probably feel that there is more of Thucydides than of actual historical reality in these speeches. In the narrative of events Thucydides rarely intervenes with interpretive comment; in what is often a plain style he endeavours to tell us straightforwardly what happened. The narrative is complemented by speeches written in a quite different style, more abstract and condensed, in which issues and motives are explored. For example, he does not intervene in the narrative to define the different characteristics of the leading protagonists; instead he puts the characterisation of the innovating Athenians as against the conservative Spartans (explored further in the funeral oration of Pericles) in the speech of the Corinthian envoy to Sparta at the beginning of the war (1, 70). The speeches, therefore, have dramatic effect, and to some extent fulfil an artistic function in bringing the whole conflict to life. But they are also scientific; for in them is included the main burden of the political (and sometimes military and social) analysis. In the debate, for example, between Cleon and Diodotus on the fate of the inhabitants of Mitylene (3, 9–14) or in the Melian dialogue (5, 85–113), Thucydides starkly dramatizes the calculations of those who are impervious to any considerations other than their own self-interested power. We are forced to draw our own conclusions.

Thucydides is hard-headed in the determination of fact and rigorous in his political analysis. His history is also written with great imaginative power and dramatic intensity, evidenced especially in the account of the Sicilian disaster in Books Six and Seven. Even those who disagree with his analysis generally accord to Thucydides more respect than to any other ancient historian. Herodotus had celebrated the triumph of Greece in which Athens had played a leading role. Thucydides shows us Athens in a decline and fall from greatness, the tyrant city betrayed by various forms of excess into overreaching itself with tragic consequences. Beneath the surface of the narrative this undercurrent of tragic feeling gives shape to the whole.

Xenophon

Xenophon (430–354), a friend of Socrates, and well-to-do Athenian was a military commander whose most well-known work is the *Anabasis*, famous for its account of his own successful leadership of the retreating Greek mercenaries after the defeat of

the Persian Cyrus the Younger, whose cause they were supporting, at the battle of Cunaxa in 401. His interest in the Persians is reflected in his pseudo-historical account of the life of Cyrus the Great in his *Cyropaedia*. His practical support for the Persians may have led to his exile from Athens. Alternatively, his exile may have been caused by his later association with the Spartans. He became a friend of the Spartan king Agesilaos and accompanied him on campaigns fighting against opponents that included Athenians. A great admirer of the Spartan system his *Constitution of the Spartans* is an important contemporary source. His exile was eventually lifted and he spent the last years of his life in Athens. Probably his most important work is his *Hellenika* beginning where Thucydides left off in 411 and continuing down to the battle of Mantinea in 462. Like Thucydides, therefore, he writes about his own times but without the latter's concentration, objectivity and penetrating interest in causes. His Spartan bias tells against his reliability and from other sources it is apparent that he was unduly selective in his accounts. His *Oeconomicus* is one of a number of other works, which are important sources for aspects of Greek social and economic life.

Diodorus Siculus

Diodorus was born in Sicily in the early years of the first century BC. He called his history *Bibliotheke*, 'Library of World History', comprising forty books from earliest times down to Julius Caesar's Gallic War (54 BC). Books 11 to 17, covering the years 480–323, that is from the Persian Wars to the death of Alexander, have survived entire. From a comparison of his work with surviving fragments of earlier historians, it is apparent that he often reproduces his sources not merely in summary but in substantially unaltered form. He is thought to have relied substantially on *The History of Greece* composed by Ephorus of Cyme (c. 405–330). Ephorus was a pro-Athenian writer said to have been a pupil of the rhetorician Isocrates. The rhetorical school of history might put more emphasis on a dramatic and emotionally involving narrative at the expense of factual accuracy. Nevertheless, for the period from 411 onwards he is a useful supplement to Xenophon and other sources down to the death of Alexander.

Plutarch

The parallel lives of Plutarch AD 46–120 have been popular works. Here is his introduction to his life of Alexander the Great whom he paired with Julius Caesar:

My subject in this book is the life of Alexander, the king, and of Julius Caesar, the conqueror of Pompey. The careers of these men embrace such a multitude of events that my preamble shall consist of nothing more than this one plea: if I do

not record all their more celebrated achievements or describe any of them exhaustively, but merely summarize for the most part what they have accomplished, I ask my readers not to regard this as a fault. For I am writing biography, not history, and the truth is that the most brilliant exploits often tell us nothing of the virtues and vices of the men who performed them, while on the other hand a chance remark or a joke may reveal far more of a man's character than the mere feat of winning battles in which thousands fall, or of marshalling of great armies, or laying siege to cities.

His is the school of history that sees great individuals influencing and shaping events. He is open about his moral interest in the figures whose biography he is writing (he puts virtues and vices first) and in this he perhaps reveals the way in which historical writing had become an instrument of education. His juxtaposition of parallel lives across time periods may even be considered anti-historical in principle, but this preface in its emphasis and selection shows why this kind of historical writing has been and remains popular. He also writes with an attractive flourish reflected here in the three clauses of the final sentence, which are really elegant variations of the same idea. Yet he preserves important material from his sources, as for example, in his 'Life of Lycurgus' on the Spartan way of life.

Arrian

The slightly later and more systematic Greek writer Arrian c. AD 89–175 is regarded as the most reliable of the sources for the career of Alexander. He is more systematic and is not writing either to please his readers or with the predominant moral preoccupation of Plutarch. He reveals himself in his rather dry opening preface written in utilitarian prose:

Wherever Ptolemy [one of Alexander's generals] and Aristobulus [a minor officer who served with Alexander] in their histories of Alexander, the son of Philip, have given the same account I have followed it on the assumption of its accuracy; where their facts differ I have chosen what I feel to be the more probable and interesting. There are other accounts of Alexander's life – more of them, indeed, and more mutually conflicting than of any other historical character; it seems to me, however, that Ptolemy and Aristobulus are the most trustworthy writers on this subject, because the latter shared Alexander's campaigns, and the former – Ptolemy – in addition to this advantage, was himself a King, and it is more disgraceful for a King to tell lies than for anyone else. Moreover, Alexander was dead when these men wrote; so there was no sort of pressure upon either of them and they could not profit from falsification of the facts. Certain statements by other writers upon

Alexander may be taken to represent popular tradition: some of these, which are interesting in themselves and may well be true, I have included in my work.

The writings referred to by Arrian do not survive, so his judgement here is critical. Is Arrian right in regarding a more interesting version as necessarily also the more probable? Might these two criteria be pulling in opposite directions? Is his assumption that Ptolemy is more honourable because he is a king convincing? Might Ptolemy not have had a strong motive for re-writing history to bring glory and honour to himself?

Polybius

Polybius (c200–120), a Greek born in Megalopolis in the Peloponnese, writes mostly of the later period in which the Hellenistic kingdoms came into conflict with Rome, a period and topic for the most part outside the scope of this book. However, he has interesting things to say about the historian's task that shed light on the vices of his predecessors:

It is not a historian's business to startle his readers with sensational descriptions, nor should he try as the tragic poets do, to represent speeches which might have been delivered, or to enumerate all the possible consequences of the events under consideration; it is his task first and foremost to record with fidelity what actually happened, and was said, however commonplace this may be. For the aim of tragedy is by no means the same as that of history, but rather the opposite. The tragic poet seeks to thrill and charm his audience for the moment by expressing through his characters the most plausible words possible, but the historian's task is to instruct and persuade serious students by means of the truth of the words and actions he presents, and this effect must be permanent not temporary. Thus in the first case, the supreme aim is *probability*, even if what he says is untrue, but in the second it is *truth*, the purpose being to benefit the reader.

(2, 56)

This is to rehearse the distinction that Aristotle makes between tragic poetry and history but in the historian's favour. Polybius in at least one respect has been true to his word; nobody has ever read him for his style.

THE CITY STATE BEFORE THE PERSIAN WARS

The Mycenaean world to which the Homeric poems look back is one in which the basic unit consisting of the royal household and outlying farms, like that of Odysseus

in Ithaca, is smaller than the developed city-state. Despite the boisterous contribution of the common man, Thersites, at the council of the Greeks at Troy in the *Iliad* (2, 209–77), and despite the existence of an assembly of the people to which Telemachus makes his appeal in the *Odyssey* (2, 7), the political and social organization of the Greek world as represented in the Homeric poems is thoroughly aristocratic. In war, the fighting is conducted predominantly by the great nobles themselves. In peace, power lies with the lord of the palace and, in his absence, there is no external authority that has the power to intervene. The people of Ithaca are entirely passive and can do nothing to control the aristocratic suitors. Nevertheless, in the description of the city at peace on the great shield of Achilles, we clearly see the beginnings of public justice and criminal law; in the market place, the *agora*, two men in dispute over a homicide argue their case before the city elders. Though Homer uses the word *polis* for city, the word does not yet describe the developed city-state which existed in the Classical period. Yet, paradoxically, at the time when the Homeric poems are now generally considered to have been composed, in the eighth century long after the collapse of the Mycenaean culture of the Bronze Age, the city-states were beginning to acquire institutions of government in a more unified and sophisticated form.

For the Greeks themselves a landmark date in their early history was the year of the first Olympiad in 776, and it is in the eighth century at the beginning of what has been called the Archaic period that a number of developments took place that transformed the Greek world. From the examination of burial sites, archaeologists have established that there was a general growth in population, which in turn may have led to an increased desire for land that initiated the age of colonization. An alternative motive might have been the desire for new raw materials and metals. One of the earliest, if not the earliest colony was sent from the island of Euboea to Pithekoussae, an island off the west coast of Italy in the bay of Naples, the modern Ischia, around 750. Here archaeologists have unearthed evidence of blacksmiths' workshops where iron was smelted from the nearby island of Elba. Examination of the cemetery has suggested that within a generation of its founding the new city had a population of between five and ten thousand. The next century saw the rapid growth of colonies westward in the coastal areas of southern Italy known subsequently as *Magna Graecia*. A later wave of colonies went eastwards with settlements on coastal areas around the Black Sea.

The process of colonization was not undertaken haphazardly by pioneering individuals but was organized by the mother state, which chose the site and the founder, the *oikistes*. The Delphic oracle might be involved in these choices or their confirmation, as indicated in a fourth century inscription found at Cyrene in Libya recording the original decision taken in the late seventh century by the people of Thera, an island in the southern Aegean.

It has been resolved by the assembly; since Apollo spontaneously told Battos and the Theraeans to found a colony in Cyrene, it has been decided by the Theraeans to send Battus to Libya as Founder and as king, and for the Theraeans to sail as his companions; they are to sail on equal and similar terms according to family and one son shall be enlisted. Those who sail shall be adults, and any free man from the Theraeans who wishes, may also sail.

(Meiggs & Lewis 5)

The role of the founder involved the establishment of approved sanctuaries and the allotment of land. If the colony was successful, he might be accorded hero status after his death. While naturally affiliated to the mother city, the colony became autonomous with colonists losing their citizenship in the mother city.

There were obvious advantages in this process for the colonizing city. Corinth, for example, ideally situated just south of the isthmus that joined the Peloponnese to northern Greece, established colonies in the island of Corcyra, and in Syracuse in Sicily in the eighth century. Later she had colonies at Apollonia and at Epidamnus (founded jointly with Corcyra) both in Illyria, on the Balkan side of the Adriatic coast and at Potidea on the Chalcidice in northern Greece. These colonies facilitated trade to the west, and the north east. Corinthian pottery (see fig. 45) dating from this period is widely found throughout the Mediterranean.

Increased trade resulted in greater cross-cultural interchange. The most momentous of foreign influences into Greece came with the adaptation some time in the eighth century of the Phoenician alphabet. The earliest examples of the script in use are to be found on fragments from eighth century vases, one of which discovered at Pithekoussae in a boy's tomb and dated to 750–700 reads:

Nestor's cup was good to drink from,
But whoever drinks from this cup will immediately
Be seized with desire for beautifully-crowned Aphrodite.

(Meiggs & Lewis 1)

The earliest surviving civic use is found on a stone inscription in Crete dated around 650. It is in the second half of the eighth century that art historians date the beginnings of the orientalisising style in pottery of which the Corinthians and the Athenians were great exponents. Obvious symptoms are Oriental decorative motifs such as the sphinx and the lotus. The Greeks had had sanctuaries from time immemorial but it was in the eighth century that they first began to build temples, partly under Egyptian influence.

Another major change in the archaic period, though not in this instance connected with foreign influence, occurred in the conduct of Greek warfare. Vases from

the early seventh century show the use of the large round hoplite shield. The Chigi vase, a Protocorinthian wine jug found in an Etruscan grave-site and dated to the middle of the seventh century, shows its use by soldiers drawn up in files against each other in battle formation about to use their spears (fig. 12).

The innovation consisted in the way in which the shield was fitted with a strap handle from the rim to the centre through which the soldier put his left forearm. This secured the shield closer to the body more firmly and made it easier to sustain the weight than if simply held in the hand. But strapped as it was to the left, the right side of the soldier was exposed when he advanced. However, in a close packed line, the shield was large enough for the soldier's right side to be protected by the shield of his neighbour. This is the beginning of the distinctive phalanx formation adopted in time by all the Greeks. Phalanx battles, fought on the open plain, consisted of ranks of closely packed men several files deep, first marching against the enemy then, when near, charging together, using their thrusting spear, pushing and shoving in unison in an attempt to overwhelm the opposition by co-ordinated pushing power. These are the tactics used successfully at Marathon and Plataea against the Persians.



FIGURE 12 The Chigi vase, a Protocorinthian wine jug, c. 700–650 BC; it dates to when the hoplite form of warfare was being introduced throughout the Greek world. The flute players precede the army, as in the case of the Spartans, and the artist has tried to convey the idea of two lines of hoplites, the phalanx. The hoplites on each side jab each other with their spears. They wear breast-plates and greaves, carry shields and wear crested helmets but are barefoot. Villa Giulia 22679, Rome.

Source: Image © Soprintendenza per i beni archeologici dell'Etruria Meridionale

It is suggested that it might have been the function of the piper figured on the vase to help the advancing unit keep their formation. The soldiers on the vase are wearing helmets and greaves to protect their shins. It is difficult to see whether they have breastplates, as was the case with later soldiers. All this heavy armour was expensive, so that only the more prosperous members of the community could supply them. Poorer people served as light infantrymen or sailors in states that had navies. While the horse power provided for cavalry or chariot warfare sustained the rich and aristocratic, the phalanx in its manpower was more of a middle class institution and its development was thought by Aristotle to have encouraged democratic values (*Politics*, 4, 10).

Athens

Athens is mentioned in the Homeric poems (the Athenian contingent comprises fifty ships) but the city is not the home of any of the great heroes, as Sparta is the home of Menelaus. The first stage in the evolution of the developed state was the unification of Attica, *synoicism*, whereby Athens subdued other settlements in Attica with the result that all the inhabitants of Attica, a region of about a thousand square miles, whether or not they lived in the city, became Athenians. Long before written records, this unification was associated with the mythical hero Theseus who was thought to have established the *Synoikia*, a public festival celebrated in Classical times in honour of the goddess (Thucydides, 2, 15, 1–2). Thereafter the successors of Theseus were supposed to have ruled as kings, but by the seventh century the leadership of the city was in the hands of nine officials called archons (rulers) who held office annually and then automatically became members of the council which met on the hill of Ares, known as the Areopagus. Kingship has, therefore, become aristocracy and the history of the Athenian constitution thereafter is the slow extension of power beyond the confines of aristocratic families, the *eupatridai*, or the well-born, to the wealthy and then more generally to the lower orders.

In the late seventh and sixth centuries the rule of the *eupatridai* at Athens and of aristocracies in Greece generally was challenged by individuals aiming at tyranny by exploiting the discontent of those excluded from power. One such attempt, and one of the first recorded events at Athens, was by a former Olympic victor called Cylon, perhaps in the 630s. The severe code of the lawgiver Draco (whence the term Draconian), traditionally dated to 621–620, may have been an aristocratic response to popular discontent. At this time laws were for the first time formally written down. But when the Athenians looked back to their own constitutional development, the first great name with which they associated significant reform was that of Solon, who, according to the author of *The Constitution of Athens*, was appointed with special powers as mediator between the masses and the *eupatridae* in his archonship of 594.

The problem he had to alleviate was first of all an economic one. The *eupatridai* had reduced many of the poorer citizens who had offered their persons as security for loans to the condition of serfdom and actual slavery. This practice, as well as cancelling all existing debts, Solon henceforth forbade in his *seisachtheia* or shaking off of burdens. He prohibited the export of agricultural produce, except oil, to encourage more equitable distribution of food in the city. But he also changed the constitution, defining four classes according to the annual production of grain, oil and wine, and opened the archonship, and therefore the Areopagus, to the two highest classes. The third class could hold minor offices and was eligible for membership of the new *boule*, or council of 500, which must have taken over functions which had previously been the exclusive preserve of the old aristocratic council, though he confirmed the Areopagus in its ancient right of superintending the laws and acting as general guardian of the constitution. Nevertheless, even though Solon had not redistributed land, power had been extended beyond the wellborn to include the wealthy so that aristocracy was becoming a broader-based oligarchy. But the author of *The Athenian Constitution* finds the greatest reform to rest in the power he gave to all citizen classes, including the lowest, to hear appeals against magistrates' verdicts or to impose penalties in the assembly: 'This, they say, was the key to the future strength of the masses; for when the people control the ballot box, they are likewise masters of the constitution' (*The Athenian Constitution*, 9.1).

However, discontent at Athens was rife, not only between classes but also between regions, to an extent that three distinct groupings developed, centred upon the hill, the coast and the plain. The leader of the hill party of least privileged citizens, Peisistratus, managed to establish himself as tyrant, sole ruler, of Athens in 561. He was driven out, but with the help of mercenaries re-established himself and ruled from 546 until his death in 527. He made peace with the leading families and retained the forms of Solon's constitution ensuring that his own supporters held office. His rule was a period of economic success and cultural expansion. A native Attic coinage, making possible a new economic freedom, may be dated to about this time. In foreign policy, he consolidated Athenian interests in settlements around the Hellespont designed to promote trade and ensure the supply of Pontic grain. He had been involved in the worsening of Athens' neighbour and commercial rival, Megara, but otherwise did not involve Athens in foreign wars. In his time, black-figure Attic pottery was exported throughout the Mediterranean. He renewed the Great Panathenaic festival, where it is reported rhapsodes recited the Homeric poems. The Athenians did not look back to his rule as to a reign of cruelty; the word tyrant, meaning a single and not necessarily hereditary ruler (Oedipus is called a 'tyrant' of Thebes), did not necessarily have the pejorative overtones it has acquired since. He was succeeded by his son Hippias, who was finally expelled from Athens in 510 by exiled aristocrats

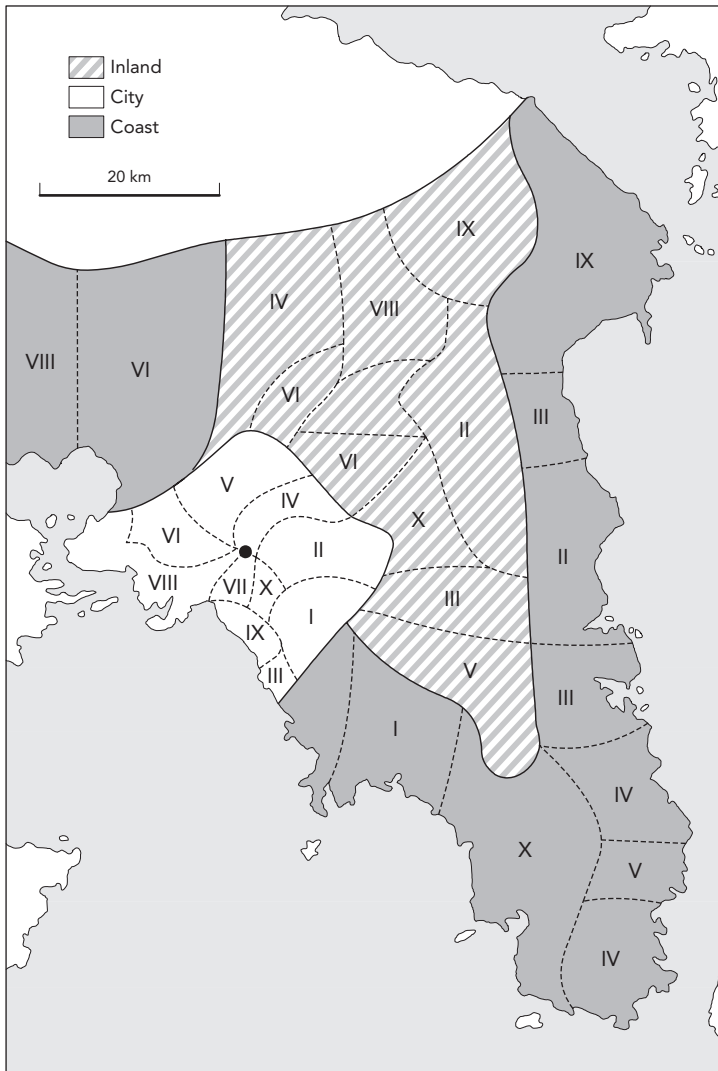


FIGURE 13 The reforms of Cleisthenes. Attica is split into three regions: the city, the inland and the coast. Each region has ten *trittys*. Each tribe (represented by Roman numerals on the map) has one *trittys* from each region

with the help of the Spartan king Cleomenes. The expulsion of the tyrants came to be regarded as a landmark in the evolution of the constitution.

In the struggle for power that followed, the leader of one of the aristocratic factions, Cleisthenes, who, according to the historian Herodotus, 'was getting the

worst of it, managed to win popular support' (5, 66). He initiated democratic reforms by the reorganisation of existing institutions. All Greek states were divided into tribes based originally on ties of kin. At Athens there were four tribes with their own priests and leaders; as well as endowing their members with a sense of identity, they also served as subdivisions of the state for administrative and military purposes. Cleisthenes created ten new tribes made up of three subdivisions called *trittys*, each from quite different parts of the state. Each *trittys* was further subdivided into demes, membership of which was extended to all free citizens. Each deme, of which there were 140, kept a record of its members and was represented on the *boule* (council) according to its size. The reorganization, although seemingly highly artificial, was successful in extending the franchise, in breaking the local power of the *eupatridai* and in discouraging the kind of regional grouping that had been exploited by Peisistratus.

The institution of ostracism, so named from the potsherd or *ostrakon* on which a name was inscribed, is sometimes associated with Cleisthenes, though it was not used until 487. It may have been introduced as a safeguard against tyranny. If an ostracism was voted for by the assembly (*ekklesia*), it was subsequently held in the agora under the supervision of the archons. A vote of 6,000 was required. The penalty entailed exile for ten years without confiscation of property.

By the beginning of the fifth century, therefore, although the main offices were still largely the preserve of the wealthy and the aristocratic, the ordinary citizens had, in theory, equality before the law, *isonomia*, and some measure of participation in the political process. Later Athenians recognized in their constitution after Cleisthenes the substantial beginnings of their radical democracy. Other Greek states developed on similar lines from aristocracy through tyranny to oligarchy, but oligarchy remained the predominant constitution; few states gave to the people the power invested in them at Athens in the assembly, the law court and the ballot box.

Sparta

It is not possible to suggest a comparable Spartan political evolution because the Spartans themselves did not write their history and other Greeks regarded their institutions as the product of one lawgiver, Lycurgus, whose constitutional arrangements had remained essentially unchanged over time, the embodiment of *eunomia* (good order). Modern historians doubt this and some have even doubted that Lycurgus was a historical figure.

Spartan arrangements can be seen to have grown from the consequences of her early conquests. Situated in the district of Laconia which had been settled by the Dorians, the Spartans first incorporated neighbouring settlements into their state; some of these *perioikoi*, 'dwellers round about' had some limited independence, others became serfs, known as helots, who were bound to the land which they

farmed for the Spartans. In the seventh century, Sparta overran her neighbour Messenia and reduced her inhabitants to the status of serfs, increasing the existence of the existing helot population. The conquered Messenian land was distributed in an allotment, or *kleros*, to each Spartiate to be worked by the helots who were required to surrender half their produce to the Spartiates, thus giving the citizens economic independence.

Sparta was unique in retaining kingship, in fact a dual kingship, possibly a result of a coalition of two distinct tribal communities, each with its own king, claiming descent from Heracles. They were the supreme commanders of the army, but in other respects their powers were circumscribed by three other institutions, the *ephorate*, the *gerousia* and the assembly. The *ephors*, five in number, were elected annually and were supposedly representatives of the people who had the power to bring the kings to account. Other judicial functions were divided between them and the *gerousia*, a council of twenty-eight aristocrats over 60 years of age in addition to the two kings. The council prepared matters to be brought before the assembly of all citizens over 30, the Spartiates, who did not have the power of discussion but whose assent by acclamation was necessary for the validity of any decree. However, the magistrate who presided over the proceedings of the assembly had the power of dissolving and annulling its decrees if they did not meet with approval. This very mixed constitution of checks and balances, ascribed to the lawgiver Lycurgus, was thought to have developed as early as the seventh century and it remained virtually unchanged throughout Sparta's history.

At Sparta, the state took an interest in the young from the moment of birth with the exposure of deformed or weak babies. At the age of 7 Spartiate boys were taken from home and educated in groups in the *agoge*, state education under the supervision of a *paidonomos* (boy-herdsman). At 12, the young boys were paired with young adults. In Plato's dialogue the *Laws*, which offers an Athenian understanding of Spartan customs, the Spartan representative lists a number of activities clearly designed to toughen up the youth of the city and to prepare them for soldiering:

the endurance of bodily pain, which finds so much scope among us Spartans in our boxing matches, and our system of foraging raids which regularly involve heavy whippings. Besides which we have what we call a *krypteia* [secret commission] which is a wonderfully hard discipline in endurance, as well as the practice of going without shoes or bedding in the winter, and wandering all over the country night and day without attendants performing one's menial offices for oneself. Further again, our *gymnopaediae* [exercises for boys] involve rigid endurance, as the matches are fought in the heat of the summer, and we have a host of other similar tests, in fact almost too many for particular enumeration.

(633b–c)

At 20 they joined one of the *sussitia*, dining clubs or messes of about 15 strong. They were required to contribute their own monthly rations which came from the *kleros* farmed by the helots. They were able to marry but still required to live in barracks. Sources report that eating and drinking here were carefully regulated and drunkenness much frowned on. At the age of 30 they became full citizens with voting rights in the assembly. Every citizen, therefore, was trained to be a soldier and lived constantly in a state of military preparedness. In fact, the Spartiates, unlike hoplites in other states, were fully professional soldiers. The system, made possible by the labour of the helots working the land and by *perioikoi* engaging in crafts and trade, encouraged conformity and equality reflected in the Greek word applied to them, *homoioi* (men of equal status). Hence came the discipline for which the Spartan elite was famous.

Other Dorian communities in Crete and Thessaly had *sussitia* and serf populations, but none developed a system as intensely militaristic and successful as the Spartans. To a large extent, this development was a response to Sparta's own domestic situation and the need to control the population of helots that greatly outnumbered the citizen body, possibly by as many as 6 or 7 to 1. Slavery existed throughout the Greek world, but no other Greek state was subject to actual revolt and the fear of revolt to such an extent. This fear was responsible for the operation of the *krypteia* as a kind of secret police in the way in which they were encouraged to roam the countryside and randomly kill helots at night. Thucydides tells the chilling story of a Spartan operation in the course of the Peloponnesian war:

They made a proclamation to the effect that the helots should choose out of their own number those who claimed to have done the best service to Sparta on the battlefield [helots occasionally accompanied the Spartans on campaigns], implying that they would be given their freedom. This was, however, a test conducted in the belief that the ones who showed most spirit and came forward first to claim their freedom would be the ones most likely to turn against Sparta. So about 2,000 were selected, who put garlands on their heads and went round the temples under the impression that they were being made free men. Soon afterwards, however, the Spartans did away with them, and no one ever knew exactly how each one of them was killed.

(4, 80)

One of the annual duties of the *ephors*, who were responsible for foreign policy, was to declare war on the helots in order to avoid the threat of religious pollution in the event of any helot death. This fear came to dictate the whole of Sparta's foreign policy.

In the sixth century, Sparta was involved in a war with her northern neighbour, Tegea. The defeated Tegeans were not treated like the Messenians, though they

became dependent and were bound not to harbour Messenians within their borders. Sparta had a long rivalry with Argos, whom she also defeated in the sixth century. As the most powerful state in the Peloponnese, she now put herself at the head of the Peloponnesian League, a loose federation of states south of the isthmus (excluding Argos) in a largely defensive alliance who agreed to supply troops in common cause under Spartan leadership. Spartan policy thereafter was predominantly defensive; she was reluctant to dispatch significant numbers of her Spartiates north of the isthmus, for fear of revolt at home.

The defensive attitude on the part of her ruling elite, together with the lack of any strong artistic element in her educational system, doubtless accounts for her more general cultural conservatism. In the seventh century Sparta had produced two of the most famous of early Greek poets. Tyrtaeus wrote war songs, and these expressed and encouraged Spartan martial virtues, as suggested in the following extract which vividly represents the shame of flight and the hoplites' duty to stand firm in hand to hand fighting:

You are of the lineage of the invincible Heracles; so rejoice; Fear not a multitude of men, nor flinch, but let every man hold his shield straight towards the front, making Life his enemy and the black Spirits of Death dear as the rays of the sun. . . . For pleasant it is in dreadful warfare to pierce the midriff of a flying man, and disgraced is the dead that lieth in the dust with a spear-point in his back. So let each man bite his lip and abide firm-set astride upon the ground, covering with the belly of his broad buckler thighs and legs below and breast and shoulders above; let him brandish the massy spear in his right hand, let him wave the dire crest upon his head; let him learn how to fight by doing doughty deeds, and not stand shield in hand beyond the missiles. Nay, let each man close the foe, and with his own long spear, or else with his sword, wound and take an enemy, and setting foot beside foot, resting shield against shield, crest beside crest, helm beside helm, fight his man breast to breast with sword or long spear in hand.

(Tyrtaeus, quoted by Stobaeus, *Anthology*)

This is an intense expression of the Spartan military ethos; little wonder that we hear that Spartan mothers bade their sons return from battle with their shield or on it. Alcman (c. 630) composed gentler choral lyrics to be sung by Spartan maidens at festivals. A fragment from a *parthenaion* (maiden song) suggests a delicacy not normally associated with the Spartans:

With loose-limbed desire
she looks at me more tenderly than sleep or death,
nor in vain is she sweet.

Astymeloisa does not answer me at all,
 but holding the wreath
 like a star flying through radiant heaven
 or like a young golden plant, or a soft feather
 . . . she moves through on slender feet
 . . . the moist, delectable perfume of Cypriot Cinyras
 clings to her maiden locks.

**(Parthenaion, 3. 61–72, translated by Bonnie MacLachlan,
 Women in Ancient Greece, Continuum, 2012, pp. 33–34)**

But not long after, in the sixth century, at about the time that Athens was beginning to assert her cultural identity with new buildings, splendid festivals and beautiful pottery, Sparta was going in the opposite direction towards the life of simplicity and austerity to which she has given her name. By the time of the Persian Wars, the divergence between characteristic Spartan and Athenian values was already plain to see.

THE PERSIAN WARS

Some time after 1000, Greeks from the mainland had migrated across the Aegean to settle on the coast of Asia Minor. These settlements had lived freely on peaceable terms with the unaggressive Lydian empire to their east. In 546, however, the Persians, who had already conquered the Medes, moved further west and their king, Cyrus, defeated Croesus, king of Lydia. Cyrus then annexed the Greek states. When in 499 the Ionian cities rose in revolt against Persian domination, they appealed to mainland Greeks for support. Only Athens and Eretria responded. In 498 they sent a force, which together with the Ionians, marched on Sardis, the former capital of Lydia; during their occupation, the city was burnt down. Herodotus tells us that when the Persian king learned of the disaster, he did not give a thought to the Ionians, knowing that their punishment would come. Instead, the first thing he did was to ask who the Athenians were. Then he commanded one of his servants to repeat to him the words ‘Master, remember the Athenians’ three times, whenever he sat down to dinner (5, 105).

The revolt was finally subdued in 494, and in 490 Darius mounted an expedition against the European Greeks, demanding from their cities the gifts of earth and water, tokens of submission. Many of the mainland Greeks and all of the islands submitted. The invading Persians in retribution against the Eretrians for aiding the Ionian revolt of 498 burnt their city and enslaved its inhabitants. Accompanied by the exiled Athenian tyrant Hippias, the Persians now landed their army at the bay of Marathon.

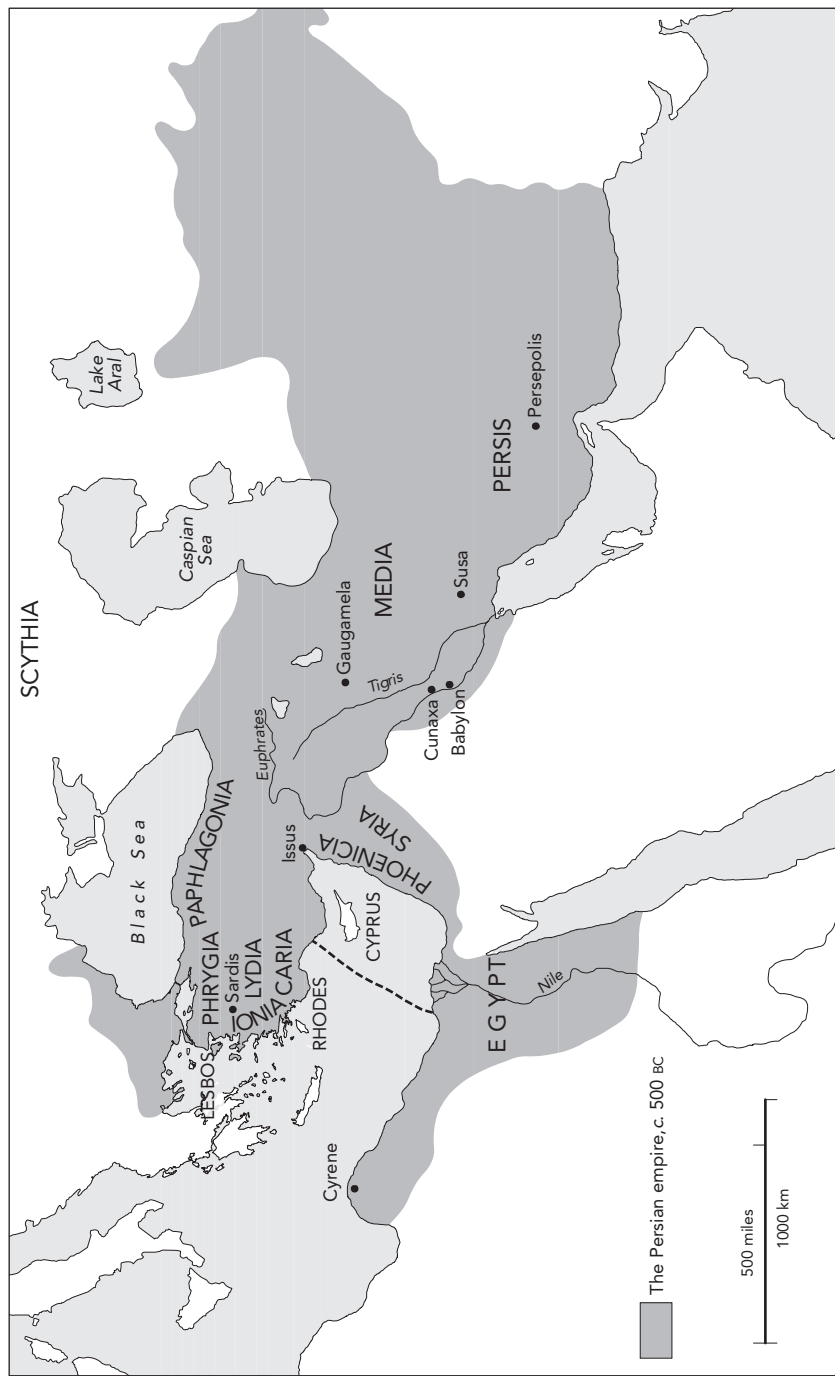


FIGURE 14 The Near East and the Persian empire

The Athenians and their allies, under the generalship of Callimachus and Miltiades, marched out to meet them. The Greeks faced the Persian host, which greatly outnumbered them, with a long battle line weak at the centre and strong on the wings. As the Persians broke through the centre they were encircled and routed with losses reported by Herodotus to be well over 6,000 as against 192 Athenians (6, 117). The latter is likely to be correct as their names were inscribed on a monument at the site. The Spartans, who had been celebrating a religious festival when requests for aid came to them from Athens, arrived with a force of 2,000, too late for the battle. The Persians returned home, abandoning their present expedition. In 487 the newly confident Athenian assembly used the provision of ostracism for the first time against Hipparchus, a descendant of the family of Peisistratus, now permanently tainted by their support for the Persian cause.

Preparations for a second and larger Persian expedition were made by Xerxes, the son of Darius, in the next decade. He had a vast army of perhaps 100,000 troops,



FIGURE 15 The plain of Marathon (with the sea in the left-hand corner) and site of the battle, fought from left to right, with the Greeks in formation in the foothills and the Persians in the foreground. Athens is just over 26 miles to the west-south-west. Legend has it that the runner Pheidippides ran from Athens to join the battle, then ran back (the distance of the 'marathon') to deliver the news of the victory with the words 'Victory: we win', whereupon he dropped dead

Source: Courtesy of R. V. Schroder

including 10,000 specially trained 'Immortals' (so called because casualties in this division were immediately replaced to keep the numbers constant), accompanied by a fleet of perhaps 1,000 ships. He cut a canal across the isthmus of Mount Athos where an earlier Persian fleet had been shipwrecked. The Greeks held a congress at the Isthmus of Corinth where Sparta assumed the leadership. The first Greek resistance was made at the pass of Thermopylae in northern Greece where the Spartan king Leonidas was in command of a force of 6,000 men. He held the pass for several days until Xerxes sent the Immortals through the mountains with the intention of attacking the Greeks at the rear. When Leonidas had intelligence of this, he dismissed most of his force except for the 300 Spartans and contingents from Thespieae and Thebes who were subsequently overwhelmed from front and rear. Herodotus records the epitaph composed for the Spartans by the poet Simonides:

Stranger, go tell the Spartans that we lie here
Obedient to their laws.

(7, 228)

The actions of Leonidas and his 300 Spartans at Thermopylae consolidated their reputation throughout Greece.

The prominent statesman and general Themistocles now persuaded the Athenians to abandon their city, which at this time was not defended by walls. A far-sighted leader, he had earlier diverted money earned from a silver mine discovered at Laurium in Attica in the 480s to a fund for building up the Athenian fleet. He now persuaded the Athenians to trust to their ships and thereby laid the foundations of Athenian naval power, by which Athens came to dominate the Aegean. In the confrontation with Persia Themistocles prevented the Spartans from withdrawing the fleet south of the isthmus and opposed the Persians in the narrow waters off the island of Salamis, where their numerical superiority and the size of their ships proved to be a positive disadvantage. As at Marathon, intelligent tactics had triumphed over seemingly impossible odds. The battle of Salamis in 480 destroyed much of the Persian navy and Xerxes retired to Persia, leaving the army under the command of Mardonius. The Spartans were persuaded to oppose the Persians north of the isthmus and under their leader Pausanias won a famous victory in 479 at the battle of Plataea.

The Athenians now returned to Athens and Themistocles persuaded them to fortify their city and harbour. Later the building of long walls uniting the two, which were completed between 461 and 451, made the city invulnerable to attacks by land and fully able to capitalise upon her naval superiority.

The Persians retreated, but in the face of an obviously continuing threat, the states of the Aegean islands, the northern coast and Ionia came together on the sacred island of Delos, the birthplace of Apollo and Artemis, to form a voluntary



FIGURE 16 Torso of a hoplite found at Sparta and identified as a memorial statue of Leonidas. 490–480 BC, Sparta Archaeological Museum.

Source: © 2014. DeAgostini Picture Library/Scala, Florence

league to which each member was to contribute annually either ships or an amount of money, to be supervised by Athenian officials called *Hellenotamiai*, treasurers of the Greeks. The league also brought economic benefits by securing the main trading routes against piracy. In the early 460s, Cimon, the son of Miltiades, carried the campaign against Persia into Asia Minor and defeated the forces of Xerxes on land, and in 468 at the battle of Eurymedon in Pamphylia effectively eliminated the Persian threat. Cimon conducted further campaigns against Persian interests in Cyprus until his death in 460/59. Athens then resigned her claims to Cyprus in the Peace of Callias; both sides recognized each other's sphere of interest, and the supremacy of Athens in the Aegean was thereby confirmed.

DEMOCRACY AND EMPIRE: PERICLEAN ATHENS

In the fifty years between the Persian and Peloponnesian wars, Athens was transformed internally and in its external relations. A series of internal changes radicalized the constitution of Cleisthenes. In 487, it was decided that the archons should subsequently be elected by lot, one from each of the ten tribes, from 500 candidates nominated by the demes and selected not exclusively from the first class of citizens but including the second class too. Thus the power of the old aristocratic families was severely curtailed. In 462–461 Ephialtes, supported by Pericles, reduced the privileges and powers of the Areopagus, a body composed of ex-archons who held office for life (a majority of whom were likely to be aristocratic or wealthy), which had general guardianship of the constitution. Jurisdiction over all cases except those involving homicide was transferred to the popular courts, the *heliaea*, so that the people virtually monopolized the administration of justice. Other powers were transferred to the council, making the role of the Areopagus largely ceremonial. In 454 the archonship was opened up to the third class of citizens. This further weakened the power of the wealthiest and broadened the democratic base of the state. Pericles then introduced payment for jury service. Thereafter payment for office, which might encourage the less wealthy, became a feature of the radical democracy.

In the developed democracy, the sovereign body was the assembly (the *ekklesia*), of which all adult male citizens were members. Business was put before it, in the form of motions, by the council of 500 (the *boule*), to which appointment was by lot from those over 30. No one could serve on the council more than twice in a lifetime. The Athenian year was split into ten parts of 36 days each called a *prytany*. The council was also subdivided into ten groups of 50 which each presided for a *prytany*. This was a small enough group to pay, and its members met every day. There were four assemblies per *prytany*. One was required to take a vote of confidence on the officials then serving, to oversee arrangements for the grain supply and for the defence of the

state. At another meeting, petitioners could address the people formally on any subject. The remaining meetings were for other business. The meeting place for the assembly was on the lower slopes of a small hill called the Pnyx near the agora and the Acropolis, and may have accommodated as many as 6,000, though we may suppose that numbers were generally much lower. Meetings were begun with the question 'who wishes to speak to the assembly?' In theory any citizen might take up the challenge. Voting seems to have been chiefly by a show of hands. The assembly's decisions were implemented by the council, which also had an important role in financial matters. Only those officers whose duties required special expertise, such as the ten generals or certain financial administrators, were not appointed by lot but by annual election with prior nomination. The generals could be re-elected annually. But all officials had to undergo scrutiny before taking office and were accountable upon leaving it. The cornerstones of the developed democracy were therefore annual sortition (also a feature of the lawcourts with their mass juries) and rotation, which prevented power being concentrated in factions or individual office-holders.

So by the mid-century, as a result of these measures the power and influence of the old aristocracy and the well-to-do were curtailed while the lower orders of the state were given equal rights. This extension of the franchise making it more inclusive was complemented by a measure that had the opposite effect. In 454, when the archonship was extended to the lowest class of citizens, Pericles made citizenship more exclusive by enacting a law that children were only eligible for citizenship if both their parents were themselves Athenian citizens. The law seems to have been rigorously enforced. By modern standards, therefore, the Athenian democracy was a rather limited affair, made more so by the citizenship law. Greek non-citizens (*metoikoi*), often traders and businessmen, who in total may have amounted to as much as a third of the total free population could have residence but were not allowed to own property in Attica, or to marry an Athenian citizen. Only rarely were they granted citizenship as a result of some special service, nor was it possible for an individual who was not by birth an Athenian citizen to buy a way into it. Women, though they might have citizenship, were excluded from exercising political rights on grounds of their sex. Slaves by definition had no rights. Nevertheless by ancient standards, the extension of franchise and its exercise were indeed remarkable and way beyond anything that had developed previously.

There was a radical change, too, in Athenian external relations. When the island of Naxos attempted to secede from the Delian league in 470, it was prevented from doing so, forfeiting its fleet and its defensive walls and being required to contribute money, which was spent upon the Athenian navy. In 465 the island of Thasos also attempted to secede and met a similar fate. Gradually fewer states contributed ships and more contributed money, which was obviously to the Athenian advantage. Individual cities made their own arrangements with the leading power, but there is

evidence that Athens interfered with the constitutions of member states, favouring more democratic arrangements, so that initially the federation was united by the need not only to combat an external threat but also perhaps to secure democratic constitutions against their oligarchic predecessors. At any rate, by the time that the treasury of the league was moved from Delos to Athens in 454, it was clear to all that what had begun as a voluntary association had gradually become the empire of Athens.

Surviving fragments of a decree from the Athenian assembly excavated in the agora and dated to c. 453 show the Athenians requiring the inhabitants of the Ionian city of Erythrai to bring grain or victims for sacrifice to the great Panathenaia and otherwise laying down the law to this ally presumably after it had revolted from the empire (Meiggs & Lewis, 40). Another degree from the agora shows the Athenians regulating the affairs of Chalcis, an island that had revolted. Adult citizens are required to swear to obey the Athenians and to pay tax; they in return will treat them well (Meiggs & Lewis, 52). The allies in time were forbidden to mint their own coins or use their own weights and measures. Coins were to be brought to the treasury, handed over and exchanged for Athenian money. The *Hellenotamiae* were to record all transactions publicly (Meiggs & Lewis, 45). These two inscriptions have been variously dated to the 440s or 420s but they are indicative of a gradual and inexorable pattern of Athenian domination.

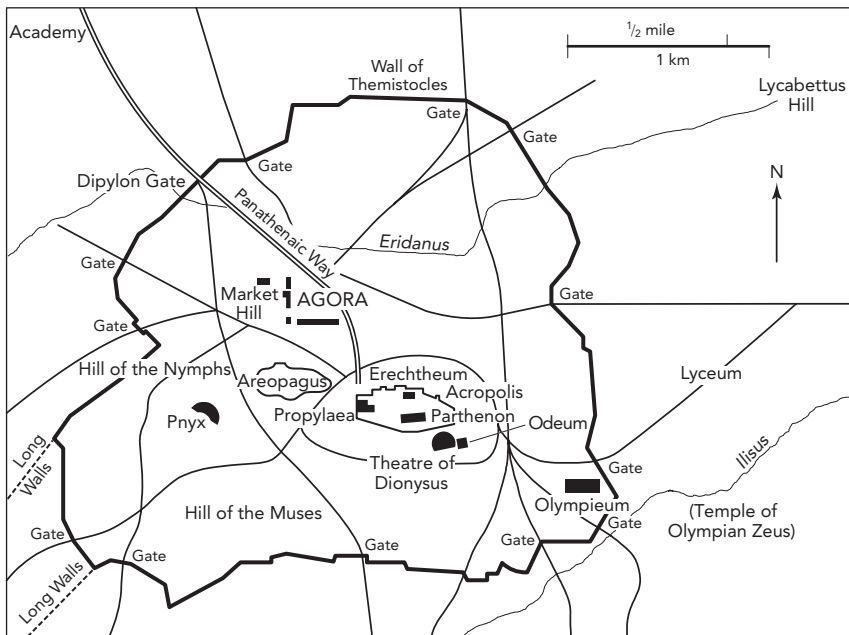


FIGURE 17 Athens in the Classical era

The Athenian empire, secured by the navy, was centred upon the Aegean and the maritime states of northern and western Greece. Spartan power, secured by the Spartiate army (Sparta had only a small navy and little naval expertise), was centred upon the Peloponnesian League, a loose non-tributary federation of all states south of the isthmus of Corinth except Argos (an age-old rival) and Achaëa. Sparta also had alliances with states such as Thebes north of the isthmus. The policy of the Athenian democracy in mid-century was expansionist, and her ambitions on land brought Athens into conflict with Sparta. In 460 Athens made an alliance with Argos and in 459, Megara, strategically situated on the northern side of the isthmus of Corinth, withdrew from the Peloponnesian League to make an alliance with Athens. The Athenians intervened in conflicts between states north of the isthmus, but did not have the military means to sustain their power on land, so that, after fifteen years of intermittent hostilities, the Thirty Year Peace treaty was signed between Sparta and Athens in 446, in which Athens gave up her ambitions on land in return for Spartan recognition of Athenian naval hegemony.

During the period between 463 (and particularly after 447) and his death in 429, the most influential figure in Athens was Pericles, who has lent his name to the whole era, which is regarded as the high-water mark of Athenian power and influence. Though born into the aristocracy and nicknamed the Olympian because of the

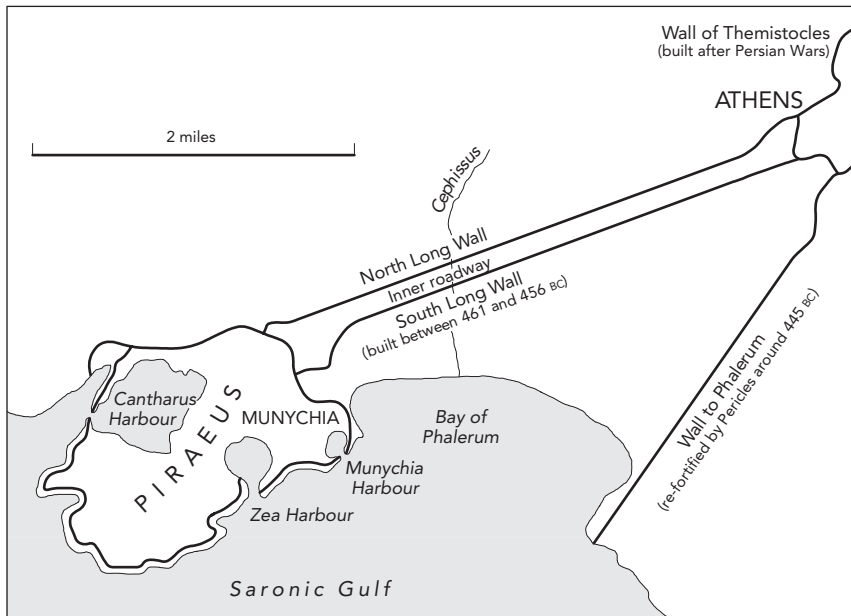


FIGURE 18 Piraeus and the Long Walls after the Persian Wars

aloofness of his bearing and manner, he encouraged and initiated democratic reforms. His power stemmed from his ability to control the assembly by virtue of his oratory. He was elected general several times and from 443, after the ostracism of an opponent, on an annual basis until his death. In 447 he called a Pan-Hellenic congress, proposing the rebuilding of the temples destroyed by the Persians, freedom of the seas and a general peace. He was thwarted in this by Spartan opposition. In 446 he negotiated the Thirty Years Peace in which Sparta recognized Athenian naval hegemony. He put down attempts by Euboea and Samos to secede from the league in 446 and 440, and supported the policy of strengthening the empire by establishing colonies in some existing states. In 437 he himself established a colony at Amphipolis in northern Greece. Shortly afterwards he extended Athenian influence in the region of the Hellespont. After the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, which he favoured at the time and for which he had worked out a strategy, Thucydides represents Pericles' thoughts on the Athenian empire as follows:

Then it is right and proper for you to support the imperial dignity of Athens. This is something in which you all take pride, and you cannot continue to enjoy the privileges unless you also shoulder the burdens of empire. . . . Your empire is now like a tyranny: it may have been wrong to take it; it is certainly dangerous to let it go.

(2, 63)

A successful general, politician and orator, Pericles was a cultivated man who numbered among his friends the philosopher Anaxagoras, the playwright Sophocles and the sculptor Pheidias. In his time Athens became the cultural centre of the Greek world and the home of visiting intellectuals and artists in all fields. In Periclean Athens, Socrates began his philosophic mission. A grand programme of public building was initiated with Periclean support and under the general control of Pheidias. Included in this was Athens' most famous building, the Parthenon, the temple of Athena Parthenos (meaning 'maiden') situated on the Acropolis, which was begun in 447 and completed in 432. In the course of one of the most famous speeches of its kind, the funeral oration over the Athenian dead in the first year of the war with Sparta in 430, Pericles, in Thucydides' words, gives voice to the ideals of his age, stressing the value of the democratic constitution, equality before the law, the absolute recognition of merit, the commercial and cultural pre-eminence of Athens, the love of beauty and philosophy, and the dedication of the individual to the community.

Taking everything together then, I declare that our city is an education to Greece, and I declare that in my opinion each single one of our citizens, in all the manifold aspects of life, is able to show himself the rightful lord and owner of his own person, and do this moreover, with exceptional grace and exceptional versatility.

(2, 41)



FIGURE 19 The Greek world in the Classical era showing the Athenian empire in the second half of the fifth century



THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR

The immediate occasion of this major conflict, which was fought out in various phases from the outbreak of hostilities in 431 until the defeat of Athens in 404, was a dispute between Athens and Corinth over Corcyra, a colony of the latter which sought to make an alliance with Athens contrary to the interests of Corinth, which appealed to Sparta to intervene. Sparta declared war with the expressed aim of liberating the states of Greece from the dominance of Athens. Thucydides, the historian of the war, finds the underlying cause to be Spartan fear of increasing Athenian power (1, 23).

The strategy of Pericles was to avoid a pitched battle with the superior Spartan forces by retreating behind the walls by which the city and the harbour were both connected and defended. Thucydides represents his policy and thinking as follows:

Their navy, in which their strength lay, was to be brought to the highest state of efficiency, and their allies were to be handled firmly, since, he said, the strength of Athens came from the money paid in tribute by her allies, and victory in war depended on a combination of intelligent resolution and financial resources. Here Pericles encouraged confidence, pointing out that, apart from all other sources of revenue, the average yearly contribution of the allies amounted to 600 talents, then there remained still in the Acropolis a sum of 6,000 talents of coined silver.

(2, 13)

With naval superiority, Athens was assured of food supplies by way of her traditional grain routes through the Bosphorus. Meanwhile she might herself blockade the Peloponnese, interfering with food imports and sowing dissension among the allies of Sparta. When the Spartans invaded Attica, which they did in the grain-growing season for the first six years of war, the rural population retreated to the city. One of the most promising engagements from the Athenian point of view was the occupation of Pylos in Messenia on the eastern coast of the Peloponnese. Here a number of Spartiates were taken prisoner and shipped back to Athens, and from here it might have been expected that the Athenians could foment a rebellion of the Messenian Helots. Sparta sued for peace but the successors of Pericles (who had died in 429) urged continuation of the war. Sparta now made a successful attempt against the Athenian empire in the north, in the Thracian Chalcidice, where she captured Amphipolis, an important source of raw materials and a promising base for further interference in the region. But neither side could press home any significant advantage in the overall conflict, and a peace was agreed in 421 in which both sides more or less gave up their gains and returned to the status quo. Athenian power remained intact.

The peace did not suit the allies of Sparta, and Athens, at the instigation of Alcibiades, who had been brought up in the household of Pericles and now began to

dominate the assembly, exploited discontent by making alliances with Peloponnesian states in dispute with Sparta, who reasserted her dominance at the battle of Mantinea in 418. Athens subjugated the island of Melos, one of the few states not subject to her in the Aegean, putting to death all men of military age and selling the women and children into slavery. In 415 envoys from Egesta in Sicily came to Athens requiring aid in a Sicilian war. According to Thucydides (2, 65) Pericles had advised the Athenians not to extend their empire during their conflict with Sparta. The general Nicias, who had negotiated the peace in 421, was against intervention but Alcibiades' enthusiastic support won the day and the Athenians mounted a huge expedition, doubtless with the aim of extending the empire. Alcibiades was recalled to Athens to answer charges of sacrilegious behaviour, whereupon he fled to Sparta and proceeded to help the enemy. The fleet, despite being heavily reinforced, was defeated and destroyed, and the troops were taken prisoner after a two-year campaign in 413. This was the decisive event of the war, which weakened Athenian power, with the loss of a huge fleet and perhaps over 40,000 Athenian men and their allies. It was a blow from which Athens never recovered.

At the suggestion of Alcibiades, the Spartans had by now established a permanent base at Decelea in Attica, restricting Athenian movement by land. Taking advantage of Athenian weakness, a number of states in her empire revolted, while Sparta began to equip herself with a new fleet for war in the Aegean. Athens now made the mistake of involving Persia in the war by supporting the revolt of Amorge in Caria against Persian rule. As a result, Persia gave financial support to Sparta, for a Spartan victory would result in increased Persian influence in an Asia Minor deprived of Athenian protection. Sparta and Persia made a treaty in which the Spartans acknowledged the Persian king's right to sovereignty over the Asiatic Greeks in return for Persian support. Persian gold was a decisive factor in the eventual Spartan victory. Athens, in the meantime, was running out of funds and her supplies of grain from the Bosphorus were threatened by the new Peloponnesian fleet. Alcibiades, now in Persia, made contact with the Athenian fleet at Samos, promising to arrange for Persia to change sides if the Athenian leaders in return overthrew the democratic constitution. An oligarchic revolution took place in 411 establishing government by a body of 400. The oligarchs did not succeed in bringing peace with Sparta and the constitution was modified to a more moderate oligarchy, giving rights to the 5,000 most wealthy citizens. In the following year, 410, radical democracy was restored.

Alcibiades had now been recalled and with a new fleet he successfully secured the grain supplies, restoring Athenian power in much of the Aegean. At the battle of Arginusae in 406 the Athenians defeated the Spartan fleet, but lost many ships and men in a subsequent storm. All the victorious generals were tried and the eight that returned to Athens were executed. An offer of peace was also spurned. The

much-reduced Athenian fleet was finally defeated at the battle of Aegospotami in the Hellespont. With no fleet to protect her and besieged by land, Athens capitulated in 404. Sparta required her to dismantle her long walls and the fortifications of the Piraeus, to maintain a fleet of no more than twelve ships and to recall citizens exiled when the earlier oligarchy had been overthrown. An oligarchic coup with Spartan support followed. A board of thirty took over and began a reign of terror against their political opponents. Leading democrats who had escaped to Thebes then returned, occupied the Piraeus and fought the Thirty, killing a number of them. Helped by disputes within the Spartan leadership which prevented their decisive action, democratic opposition had retaken the city by the fall of 403.

SPARTAN HEGEMONY AND THE SECOND ATHENIAN LEAGUE

Sparta now inherited the Athenian empire and was the undisputed leader of the Greek world. In spite of her declared aim to free the Greek states from the tyranny of Athens, she proceeded to substitute one form of control for another which was even more resented, since she established oligarchic governments of ten men supported by a military presence in a number of key states. The imperialism of Sparta appears to have been considerably less enlightened than that of Athens in her heyday. Nor were her foreign relations more wisely pursued, for she lost the crucial support of Persia (without which she could never have defeated Athens) when she supported the unsuccessful revolt of Cyrus, the younger brother of the Persian king, Artaxerxes. Cyrus' army included a number of Greek mercenaries (over 10,000). They marched from Sardis near the coast of Asia Minor to the confluence of the Euphrates and the Tigris, where they defeated the troops of Artaxerxes, who had marched west from the Persian capital, Susa, to meet them. But when Cyrus himself was killed, the whole purpose of the expedition was lost. This campaign and the long march back of the Ten Thousand is recorded by the Athenian Xenophon, who took part in it and became general in its later stages. The safe return of the Greeks after their long march was a tribute to their discipline and purpose, but also led to a new view of the weakness of the Persians, who had not prevented it. At Cyrus' instigation, the Greek cities of Asia Minor had revolted from Persian control and received Greek garrisons. Under threat, the Asiatic Greeks appealed to Sparta for protection, so that Sparta became embroiled in war with Persia. She took the war into the interior of Asia Minor, but lost her fleet in a naval engagement with the Persians and the Athenian mercenary Conon in 394. The Persians proceeded to expel all Spartan garrisons from the Aegean, then, persuaded by Conon, helped the Athenians to rebuild their walls. In 389 the Athenian fleet sailed to the Hellespont and established Athens' old imperial alliances in the northern Aegean. This, however, was not in Persian interests, and Sparta succeeded

in turning the Persian king against his Greek allies. In 387/6, Sparta imposed upon the Greek world the King's Peace, which she had devised and which had been approved and dictated by the Persian king. The cities in Asia Minor were to be the King's; in return he agreed to let the rest of the Greek states be autonomous.

The King has indeed achieved something, which is beyond the achievements of all his ancestors. He has secured the admission from both Athens and Sparta that Asia belongs to him, and has assumed such authoritative control of the Greek cities there as either to raze them to the ground, or build fortifications in them. And all this is due to our folly, not to his power.

So wrote the rhetorician and teacher Isocrates in his *Panegyricus* of 380 (137), in which he advocated a Pan-Hellenic response to the Persians and put forward Athenian claims to the joint leadership of Greece.

Sparta's position as a leading Greek power, however, was increasingly under threat. In 378, with Theban support, Athens established a second league. Seventy states joined this league in what was represented as an anti-Spartan alliance. Thebes, asserting her power in central Greece, gained a famous victory against the Spartans at the battle of Leuctra in Boeotia in 371 under the generalship of Epaminondas. For this battle the Spartans fielded only 700 Spartiate hoplites of which 400 were killed. At the battle of Plataea the Spartiates had numbered 5,000. There had been a gradual and ultimately catastrophic decline in the population of the ruling elite. Aristotle puts this down to inadequate property laws and large dowries that had caused two fifths of Spartan land to be owned by women resulting in Spartiate men losing their *kleros* which was a prerequisite of their citizen status (*Politics* 1270). So depleted were they that the 300 who had surrendered did not lose their citizenship, the usual penalty following Spartan surrender as in the case of the 120 taken prisoner by the Athenians at Pylos. Xenophon reports the reaction when news reached Sparta:

The man sent to report the calamity to Lacedaemon arrived there on the final day of the *Gymnopaedia*, when the men's chorus was in the theatre. On hearing of the disaster, the ephors were distressed, as I suppose they were bound to be; but rather than dismiss the chorus, they allowed it to continue to the end. Furthermore, while they gave the names of the fallen to the various relatives, they ordered the women not to shriek in lamentation but to bear their suffering in silence. The following day one saw those whose kinsmen had fallen appear in public with bright, beaming faces, but you could have seen only a few of those whose relatives had been reported alive, and these were going about sullen and dejected.

(Hellenica, 6, 4, 16)

There is evidence here of the Spartan ethos in the response of the ephors and of the women on the following day. The beaming faces express pride in sons of Sparta who had done their duty as conceived in the battle songs of Tyrtaeus. The sullen and dejected reflect the shame of surrender; 'return with your shield or on it', being the proverbial parting farewell of Spartan mothers to their sons as they set out on any campaign.

After Leuctra, the Spartans never recovered their dominant position in the affairs of Greece. The defeat finally confined Sparta to the Peloponnese, which she found increasingly difficult to control. Epaminondas now invaded the Peloponnese in 370 and freed the Messenian helots who were able to re-establish their city of Messene. This resulted in a further loss of one of the main supports of the ruling elite who depended on the helots for their food supply. The next great battle between the Thebans under Epaminondas and the Spartans and their allies, including the Athenians who opposed the attempts of their northern neighbours to increase their power, took place at Mantinea in 362. The result was inconclusive, except that with the death there of Epaminondas, the Thebans lost their charismatic general and leader.

Athens meanwhile reverted to her old imperial ways, demanding contributions to the league treasury, using the fleet for her own purposes and refusing the right of secession, until in 357 a concerted revolt caused the collapse of the league after a two-year conflict in 355.

Greece had now reverted to its essentially fragmented state; the individual city states, perpetually at war with one another and competing for power, could devise no kind of permanent alliance for their common good. They were therefore an easy prey for the new Macedonian power developing to the north under the direction of King Philip II.

THE RISE OF PHILIP OF MACEDON

The kingdom of Macedon in the north east had not developed on the lines of the Greek city-states. Its Greek royal house came from Argos but the Greeks regarded the Macedonians as foreigners. Their ethnicity has been much debated by scholars, though recently discovered inscriptions indicate that they spoke a form of Doric Greek. The Spartans had retained kingship but the power of their monarchs was circumscribed by its dual character and by the ephorate, the *gerousia* and the assembly. The Macedonian monarchy was much more obviously autocratic without the balances and checks of other state institutions. The king had *hetairoi*, companions, who might constitute his personal bodyguard but they functioned as court followers with no formal power.

After his accession to the throne in 359, Philip gradually secured his power base in Macedonia, moved against neighbouring tribes in Thrace, Paeonia and Illyria in the east, north and west, and in 357 gained control of the strategic coastal city of Amphipolis, formerly part of the old Athenian empire and still an object of Athenian ambitions. In the following year he moved against the neighbouring city of Crenides. Diodorus clarifies his strategy and methods.

This he enlarged by adding significant numbers to its population, and he changed its name to Philippi, calling it after himself. He then developed the gold mines in the area, which were hitherto very unproductive and of little importance, to the point where they were able to provide him with an income of more than a thousand talents. From these mines he swiftly built up his wealth, and he brought the kingdom of Macedon to great preeminence through his abundant riches. For he struck the gold coinage that was known as the Philippeios after him, and then established a considerable force of mercenaries and also used the money to bribe a large number of Greeks to turn traitor to their native lands.

(Diodorus Siculus, 16, 8, 6–7)

After further victories against his non-Greek neighbours, the now undisputed strongman of the north was invited by the Thessalians to assist them in a conflict against their southern neighbours. Victory here in 352 established his power and extended his influence in Greece. He had further victories in Thrace and then in 349 moved against his former allies in the Chalcidice, whereupon Olynthus, its leading city, sought an alliance with Athens. Despite Athenian help, Olynthus was razed to the ground and its inhabitants enslaved in 348. Athens was preoccupied with the revolt of Euboea and unable to devote her dwindling resources to deal with the threat to her interests in the northern Aegean. The Peace of Philocrates (named after one of the Athenian negotiators) was concluded in 346 on the basis that Athens and Macedonia should retain the territories of which each was in possession. With the exception of the Thracian Chersonese, Philip now controlled the Aegean seacoast from Thermopylae to the Propontis. His dominion on land extended from Thrace to Illyria, and included a substantial part of northern Greece.

Philip was a great commander, having reorganized the Macedonian army, and exploited its new weapon, a massive spear called the *sarissa* that might have been three times the length of the usual six-foot spear of the Greek hoplites. Polybius gives a vivid description of the way it could be deployed in the phalanx formation.

There are a number of factors, which make it easy to understand that so long as the phalanx retains its characteristic form and strength nothing can withstand its charge or resist it face to face. When the phalanx is closed up for action, each man

with his arms occupies a space of three feet. The pike he carries [the *sarissa*] was earlier designed to be twenty four feet long, but as adapted to current practice was shortened to twenty one, and from this we must subtract the space between the bearer's hands and the rear portion of the pike which keeps it balanced and couched. This amounts to six feet in all, from which it is clear that the pike will project fifteen feet in front of the body of each hoplite when he advances against the enemy grasping it with both hands. This also means that while the pikes of the men in the second, third, and fourth ranks naturally extend further than those of the fifth rank, yet even the latter will still project three feet in front of the men in the first rank. I am assuming, of course, that the phalanx keeps in characteristic order, and is closed up from the rear and on the flanks . . . at any rate if my description is true and exact, it follows that each man in the front rank will have the points of five pikes extending in front of him, each point being three feet ahead of the one behind. From these facts we can easily picture the nature and the tremendous power of the charge by the whole phalanx, when it advances sixteen deep with levelled pikes. Of these sixteen ranks those who are stationed further back than the fifth cannot use their pikes to take an active part in the battle. They therefore do not level them man against man, but hold them with the points tilted upwards over the shoulders of the men in front. In this way they give protection to the whole phalanx from above, for the pikes are massed so closely that they can keep off any missiles which might clear the heads of the front ranks and strike those immediately behind them. Once the charge is launched, these rear ranks by the sheer pressure of their bodily weight greatly increase its momentum and make it impossible for the foremost ranks to face about.

(Polybius, *Histories*, 18, 29–30)

As the *sarissa* had to be held with two hands, the Macedonian hoplites had small shields hung around their necks and probably had lighter body armour. Polybius may have exaggerated the dimensions of the *sarissa*, but it was evidently huge; in one of the Macedonian tombs recently excavated at the royal capital Aegae is a metal spearhead over fifteen inches long. Given the right terrain and with the proper discipline, this new weapon made the Macedonian phalanx a formidable force indeed. This hoplite weapon was a longer version of the *sarissa* used by the Macedonian cavalry. Cavalry had always been important in the north where the Macedonians had to defend themselves against the incursions of the nomadic horse peoples of the steppes. Cavalry had been deployed at Thebes where as a young man Philip had been held hostage in the time of Epaminondas, but heavy cavalry used as shock troops had not been a regular feature of warfare in mainland Greece. Cavalrymen were fully integrated into Philip's war machine and indeed into the structure of Macedonian society; his *hetairoi* were rich cavalrymen. In campaigns, he did not allow soldiers to

take along attendants and wives or concubines, and he used horses rather than the slower more cumbersome oxen for the carrying of supplies, thus facilitating the movement of his troops and their supply chain. He was personally courageous and daring in battle, but also a considerable tactician. He was also a consummate diplomat and politician, knowing how to further his interests by making opportune alliances and friendships (including several marriages) and fostering pro-Macedonian factions within neighbouring powers. Although he was a warrior king, his court at Pella was attractive enough to be home to visiting artists and intellectuals like Aristotle, who became the tutor of his son Alexander.

The Athenians were divided in their response to the rise of Macedonian power. There had long been a peace party that urged necessary accommodation with Philip. To some, his rise offered a positive opportunity. Isocrates saw in Philip the possible agent who could make his Pan-Hellenic dream a reality, and in an open letter to him written after the peace in 346 urged Philip to lead the Greek states in a united campaign against Persia.

When Athens held the principal power among the Greeks, and similarly when Sparta did, I do not think anything of the sort could have been attained, because each side could easily have frustrated the attempt. Now, however, I no longer take that view. All the states have, I know, been reduced by misfortune to one level, and I think they will be much more inclined to accept the benefits of unanimity than the old competitiveness.

(Philip, 40)

The opposing view that Philip had to be stopped at all costs found a powerful advocate in the person of Demosthenes.

THE OPPOSITION OF DEMOSTHENES

Demosthenes' speeches to the Athenian assembly against Philip are among the most famous in the history of oratory. Indeed the title given to four of them, *Philippic*, has gone into general consciousness to mean a vigorous harangue. Though Philip is denounced, it is the Athenians who are harangued for their inactivity.

'Philip is dead' comes one report. 'No, he is only ill' from another. What difference does it make? Should anything happen to Philip, Athens, in her present frame of mind, will soon create another Philip. This one's rise was due less to his own power than to Athenian apathy.

(Philippic, I, 11)

The orator seeks to arouse his countrymen to the dangers of Philip's encroachment on Athenian and general Greek interests. In the speeches of Demosthenes, Philip emerges as an unscrupulous, restless, cunning and efficient figure, who will stop at nothing to increase his own power and thus threaten the liberties of all who come into contact with him. Each speech is a response to particular circumstances and includes practical suggestions for action. On more than one occasion, he urged the sending of a force to protect Athenian interests in northern Greece, not only consisting of mercenaries but made up with a substantial proportion of citizen soldiers, under citizen commanders and backed by naval support. He urged the Athenians to use the Theoric fund (designed for festival provision) for military purposes. Mercenaries were dispatched to Olynthus in 349/8, but Athens was distracted by the revolt of Euboea and they proved to be too few and too late.

A leading political figure at the time, Demosthenes was part of the embassy that negotiated peace with Philip in 346. Doubtless he regarded this as a necessary temporary expedient in the face of rebellious allies and diminishing resources. When Philip continued to interfere in Greek affairs even as far as the Peloponnese, he went on embassies to other states in an attempt to dissuade them from any Macedonian entanglement. He tried every means to bring the peace to an end. With their grain supplies threatened by Philip's activities in the Bosphorus, the Athenians finally dispatched a fleet against him. Demosthenes endeavoured to organise a general Greek alliance; he was present at the battle of Chaeronea in 338. Philip's victory here was the beginning of the end of the independent Greek city states, which were now at the mercy of Philip, who might have marched against Athens if he had wished.

Demosthenes' speeches respond to the particular needs of their occasions but also contain recurring themes and a larger analysis. As a champion of liberty and democracy, he found all that Philip represented anathema. But he was not blind to the potential weaknesses of democratic government. On several occasions, he points out that assembly resolutions are valueless, unless there is the will to carry them out. Criticism of his fellow orators is a constant theme.

I think the true citizen must put the reality of survival above the gratification of rhetoric. (3.21) . . . Since the appearance of our modern speakers, who ask 'What are your wishes? What proposal would you like? What can I do for your gratification?', Athenian strength has been squandered for immediate popularity:

(Olynthiac, 3, 22)

The system of public scrutiny of officials in the military and civil areas of state might have an inhibiting and paralysing effect, as those holding executive office sought above all to avoid anything that might lead to investigation and prosecution. The very strengths of democracy could be weakening: Philip, who controlled the army, the

state and the treasury, was answerable to no one and able to respond to any situation with efficiency, singleness of mind and speed. But more than this, Demosthenes believed that he was living in a period of national decline when the communal spirit and civic pride that had sustained Athens in the period of her greatness had been gravely undermined.

Your predecessors had no flattery from speakers, and no love from them, as you do. But for forty-five years [between the Persian and the Peloponnesian Wars] they were the accepted leaders of the Greek states. They amassed over ten thousand talents on the Acropolis. The king of this district of Thrace was their subordinate, and stood in the right relation for a non-Greek to a Greek state. Many and great were the victories they won by land and sea as citizen fighters, and they were alone of mankind in leaving by their achievements a reputation high above carping envy. Such they proved in the sphere of Hellenic affairs. Look now at the character they bore in our city itself, in public and private relations alike. In the first the architectural beauty they created in sacred buildings and their adornment was of a quality and an extent unsurpassable by later generations. Their private lives were of such restraint, and so well in keeping with the character of the community, that if the type of house lived in by Aristides or Miltiades or any of the great men of that day is known nowadays, it can be seen to be no grander than neighbours. No one then made capital out of public affairs. It was felt that the community should be the gainer. But their integrity in the conduct of Hellenic affairs, their devotion in that of religion, their equity in that of private concerns, gained them the highest happiness. So stood the state in the past under the leaders I have mentioned. What is the position now under our present splendid administrators? Is there any similarity, any comparison with the past? I cut short the long list of instances. You can all see the degree of helplessness to which we have come. Sparta is finished. Thebes is fully occupied. No other state is strong enough to bid for the supremacy. We could retain our position in safety and hold the scales of justice for the Hellenic world. And yet we have lost territory of our own, we have spent over fifteen hundred talents to no purpose, the allies we made in the war have brought us down in the peace, and we have brought an adversary of such magnitude on the stage against us. I invite any man present to tell me here and now, what other source there is of Philip's power than ourselves. 'Well,' I am told, 'that may be very unfortunate, but at home, at least, we are better off' What is the evidence of this? Plaster on the battlements; new streets, water supplies. These are trivialities. Turn your eyes on the pursuers of these political ends. They have risen from beggary to riches, from obscurity to prominence, and in some cases have houses which outshine public buildings themselves, while their consequence rises with the decline of the nation.

(*Olynthiac*, 3, 23)

If this analysis was correct, to reverse that national decline was hardly within the power of one individual. Nevertheless, the rhetorical appeal of Demosthenes rested upon the invocation of former greatness.

The idea that Greece will be rescued by Chalcis or Megara, while Athens eludes the issue, is wholly wrong. It will be enough if these cities themselves survive. It is we who must do it, we whose ancestors gained the glory and bequeathed it in the course of great perils. And if each one of us is to sit idle and press for his own requirements and his own exemption from duty, first of all he will never find anyone to do it for him, and secondly, I fear that all that we seek to avoid will be forced upon us.

(Philippic, 3, 75)

This is the note which he struck again in a famous self-defence, written in 330 after the policy had failed, against an old adversary, Aeschines, who had laid responsibility for the city's plight at Demosthenes' door.

If I presumed to say that it was I who inspired you with a spirit worthy of your past, there is not a man present who might not properly rebuke me. But my point is that these principles of conduct were your own, that this spirit existed in the city before me, and that in its particular application I had merely my share as your servant. Aeschines, however, denounces our policy as a whole, invokes your resentment against me as responsible for the city's terrors and risks, and in his anxiety to wrest from me the distinction of an hour, robs you of glories which will endure for ever. If you decide my policy was wrong, you will make it seem that your misfortunes are due, not to the unkindness of fortune, but to a mistake of your own. But it is not true, gentlemen, it is not true that you were mistaken when you took upon you that peril for the freedom and safety of Greece. No, by our fathers, who were first to face the danger at Marathon; by those who stood in the ranks at Plataea; by the fleets of Salamis and Artemisium; by all those many others who lie in the sepulchres of the nation, brave men whom Athens honoured and buried, all alike, Aeschines, not the successful only, nor only the victorious. She did well. They have all done what brave men may; their fate is that which God assigned.

(On the Crown, 199)

The conservative appeal of Demosthenes to the highest traditions of self-respecting freedom and political responsibility has been admired throughout the ages, though the wisdom of his policy has been questioned. Did he overestimate the spiritual and material resources of Athens, and exaggerate the malignancy of Philip, who seems to have sought understanding with Athens, and in the event did not move against her in the hour of his victory?

In the year after Chaeronea, Philip called a conference of all the Greek states at Corinth and announced a decision to make war on Persia to liberate the Greek cities of Asia Minor and punish the Persians for acts of sacrilege committed in the days of Xerxes. Philip was to be the supreme commander (*hegemon*) of a Panhellenic force. He was now at the height of his power and prestige, marked by the presentation of himself in the celebrations that followed the wedding of his daughter Cleopatra.

Along with his other magnificent preparations, Philip included in the procession statues of the twelve gods, fashioned with superb craftsmanship and adorned with an incredible display of wealth – and with these was carried a thirteenth statue, appropriate for a god, that of Philip himself, with the King thus showing himself enthroned beside the twelve gods.

(Diodorus Siculus, 16, 92, 5)

In the light of this it is ironic that at these celebrations Philip was assassinated by a young man with a personal grievance. This is how his son Alexander summed up his father's achievements when he addressed mutinous troops just after the start of his Persian campaign.

Philip took you on when you were penniless vagabonds, mostly clothed in skins, grazing a few sheep up on the mountains, and on their behalf fighting – with poor results – Illyrians and Triballians and the neighbouring Thracians. He gave you cloaks to wear in place of skins; he brought you down from the mountains to the plains; he trained you so you could engage with the barbarians on your borders, and no longer relied for your safety on your strongholds rather than on your innate courage; he made you inhabitants of cities and gave you good laws and customs. It was he who made you masters, and not the slaves and subjects of those barbarians who previously used to harry and plunder yourselves and your property; he also added most of Thrace to Macedonia, and by capturing the most advantageous places by the sea opened the country up to trade; he ensured that you could work the mines in safety; he made you rulers of the Thessalians, who in the old days used to frighten you to death; by humbling the Phocian people he made you a pathway into Greece which was broad and easy instead of narrow and rough; the Athenians and Thebans who were always lying in wait to attack Macedonia he so greatly humbled, – and we were part of these campaigns – that instead of paying the Athenians tribute and taking orders from the Thebans it was our turn to give them security. He also invaded the Peloponnese and settled matters there as well, and his recognition as absolute leader over the whole of Greece conferred renown not so much upon himself as upon the Macedonian state.

(Arrian, Expedition of Alexander, 7, 9, 1–5)

ALEXANDER THE GREAT

Alexander, then aged 23, succeeded Philip and was immediately faced with revolt on all fronts. He moved swiftly into Greece and had himself elected at Corinth as his father's successor as general of the Greeks. He had to quell rebellions first in Illyria and Thrace. When Thebes rebelled, he swiftly bore down upon the city and soon occupied it. It was razed to the ground (the only house left standing was that of the poet Pindar), and its inhabitants were sold into slavery. Having settled Greece, he immediately undertook the proposed expedition to Persia, with a huge army of nearly 50,000 men. At its core was the formidable Macedonian phalanx, that proved unbeatable in an open plain, but he also had cavalry, archers and light-armed troops.

Crossing over the Hellespont in 334, one of his first actions was to make a diversion to the site of Troy. At the supposed tomb of Achilles at Sigeum he pronounced the Greek hero fortunate in having the poet Homer to be the herald of his fame, a copy of whose *Iliad* prepared for him by his tutor Aristotle he carried with him on his campaign. At the temple of Athena in Troy he dedicated his armour, and replaced it with the finest set of bronze armour supposedly dedicated at that temple by the heroes of the Trojan war. Doubtless at the time, and certainly for subsequent ages, these actions cast his expedition into Asia in a heroic light.

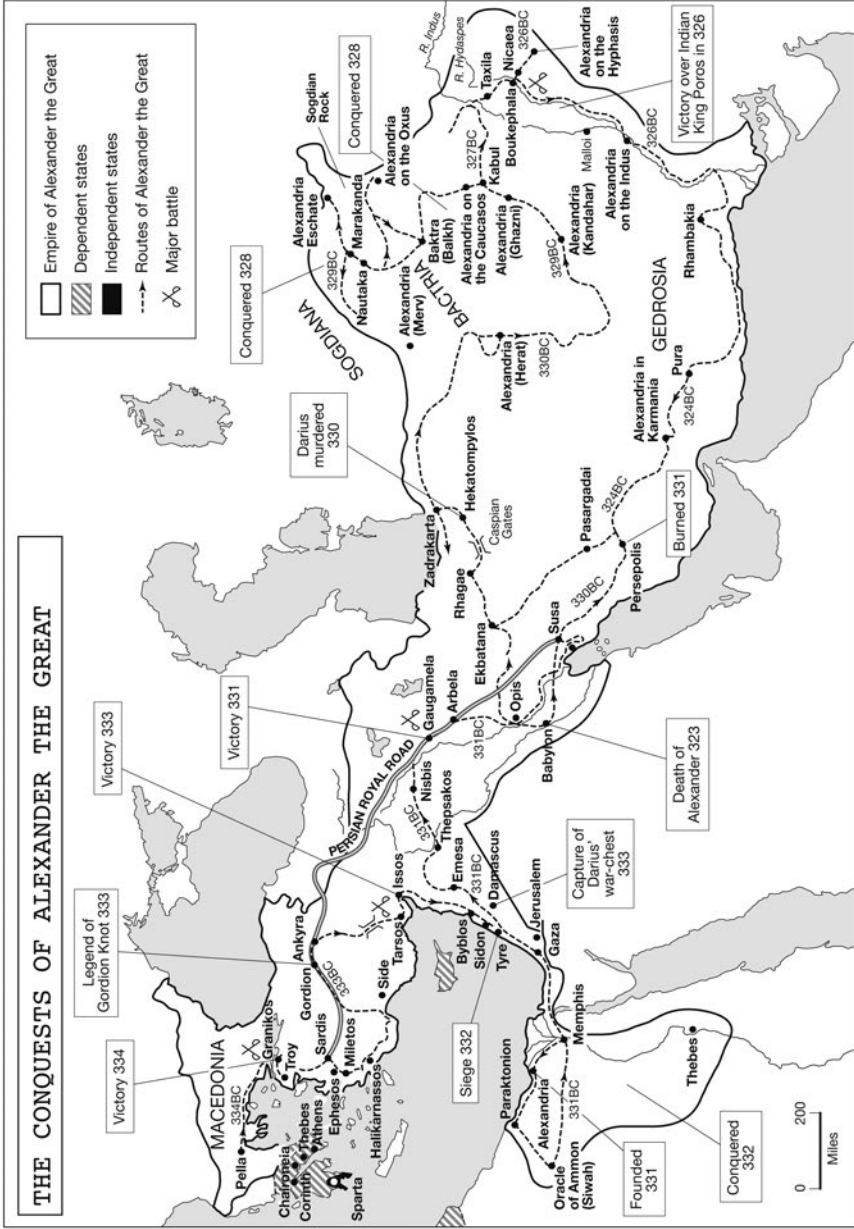
His first great battle was at the river Granicus, where he was vastly outnumbered by the Persians. Although Alexander's army had to cross this wide river, scale its steep banks and face an enemy with the advantage of height above them, his army managed to cross the river and reform. The cavalry armed with the formidable Macedonian *sarrisa* was the decisive factor in his first great victory over the Persians. According to Arrian, Alexander sent three hundred sets of Persian arms to be dedicated to the temple of the goddess Athena on the acropolis (1. 16. 7). Captive Greek mercenaries who had fought for the Persians were either killed (the majority) or enslaved and sent to Macedonia.

Passing through Ionia, he liberated the cities that the Persians had controlled through oligarchic aristocracies, establishing democracies in their stead. He also funded new buildings such as temples. By the end of 334 he had liberated most of Asia Minor from Persian control. En route to the heart of the Persian empire, he came to the Phrygian town of Gordium, the site of what is one of the most famous anecdotes about his progress, recorded here by Plutarch in his 'Life of Alexander', 18:

When he captured Gordium, which is reputed to have been the home of the ancient king Midas, he saw the celebrated chariot which was fastened to its yoke by the bark of a cornel-tree, and heard the legend which was believed by all the barbarians, that the fates had decreed that the man who untied the knot was destined to become the ruler of the whole world. According to most writers the

FIGURE 20
The conquests of Alexander the Great

Source: Based on M. Grant, *The Routledge Atlas of Classical History*, fifth edition, Routledge, 1994, pp. 38–39



fastenings were so elaborately intertwined and coiled upon one another that their ends were hidden: in consequence Alexander did not know what to do, and in the end loosened the knot by cutting through it with his sword, whereupon many ends sprang into view. But according to Aristobulus he unfastened it quite easily by removing the pin which secured the yoke to the pole of the chariot, and then pulling out the yoke himself.

The story, whether or not it is true, suggests truths about Alexander that are borne out by his short but brilliant career. Cutting the Gordian knot had a propaganda value not to be missed, and suggests a decisiveness and an unwillingness to be put off by niceties. He was regarded by others and regarded himself as a man with a special destiny.

Shortly after, in 333 he defeated Persian forces, this time led by King Darius at the battle of Issus. Once again, Alexander's army was greatly outnumbered but the narrowness of the plain at Issus prevented the Persians from using their numerical advantage. When Alexander came dangerously near to the Persian centre, Darius fled.

Alexander now moved south to free Phoenicia, Palestine and Egypt from Persian rule and secure the coastline. He was delayed in his progress by the city of Tyre, which resisted. After a six month siege, notable for the use of sophisticated siege weapons on land and from the sea, he gained the city, and some thirty thousand inhabitants were sold into slavery. In Egypt in 331 he founded Alexandria and he visited the oracle of Ammon, where it is said he was addressed as the son of the god. This suggestion of divine ancestry further marked him out as a heroic figure of destiny, though later it may have been a factor in alienating some of his Macedonian followers, by severing his connection with Macedonia, for his mother Olympias, the daughter of King Neoptolemus of Molossia, was not Macedonian. It is interesting that the Molossians claimed to be descended from Neoptolemos, the son of Achilles. However, the visit to Ammon at the time and in legend had the effect of reinforcing the quasi-divine status of the hero/king reflected in his depiction on coins in Alexander's lifetime and after (see fig. 27).

Returning to the Persian interior, he marched into Babylonia for the final reckoning with Darius, with whom he had refused to make terms. Darius was defeated decisively at Gaugamela in 331. In a mere three years Alexander had destroyed the might of the Persian army. Military historians attribute his success in part to the flexibility of the units at his disposal, as well as to his strategic sense and his personal magnetism as a leader who led by daring personal example.

Darius escaped, but Alexander captured his wife and family, whom he treated well. He now made himself master of the empire's great wealth and material resources, as he moved south and east to Babylon, Susa and Persepolis, the imperial

capital. From Susa, in an act of generosity to the Athenians, he returned the bronze statues of Harmodius and Aristogeiton, seized by Xerxes in his sack of the Acropolis, one of a series of sacrilegious acts which it was the ostensible object of his expedition to avenge. He was then involved in what the Persians would certainly have regarded as an act of sacrilege when after a night of drunken partying Persepolis was burnt down. Whether this was accidental or planned is a matter of dispute. Alexander is said to have expressed regret the morning after. Darius was murdered by Bessus, the satrap of Bactria to whom he had fled after his defeat. Alexander recovered the body of Darius and returned it to the King's mother. Bessus who had called himself King, was hunted down and killed.

Thereafter he was proclaimed King of Asia and literally began to clothe himself in the trappings of Persian power, wearing a diadem and tunic in the Persian style. He also departed from Greek ways in taking over the *proskynesis*, or obeisance, traditionally reserved for the Persian kings. This practice and the tendency, whether of Alexander himself or those around him, to equate his actions with those of the gods were a cause of tension reflected in Alexander's treatment of two close subordinates. At a festival of Dionysus in Samarkand in 328, when the participants were the worse for wear Cleitus the Black, who had saved Alexander's life at Granicus, got into an argument with Alexander over comparisons made between the king's achievements and those of other heroes such as Heracles. The drunken Alexander in a fury ran him through with a spear, an action he deeply regretted subsequently. On a more sober occasion, Alexander is reported to have allowed a debate on the practice of *proskynesis* in the presence of Persians and Macedonians with speakers for and against. Speakers for argued his achievements were even greater than those of Heracles and Dionysus. One of the speakers against was Callisthenes, a nephew of Aristotle, who was writing a eulogistic account of Alexander's campaigns, which is believed to be one of the historian Arrian's main contemporary sources. Making a clear distinction between mortals and immortals, he argued that *proskynesis*, a practice alien to the Greeks, dishonoured them and the Macedonians. On this occasion, Alexander let the matter drop. Soon after at a banquet when Alexander passed round a cup, Callisthenes alone of those who drank from it failed to make *proskynesis*, and Alexander omitted to kiss him afterwards as he had kissed the others. Not much later Callisthenes was implicated in the Royal Pages' conspiracy against the king on the grounds that he had encouraged them to see themselves as defenders of the Macedonian tradition. He endured a painful death. Whatever the exact truth of these stories, they not only suggest something about Alexander's temperament but are indicative of the strains in the Macedonian camp caused by Alexander's adoption of Persian ways.

Soon after in 328, Alexander continued eastward beyond the Persian borders as far as north-west India and the Punjab, meeting and marrying on the way in 327

Roxane, the daughter of a Baktrian noble Oxyartes. In due course she bore him a son, later killed at the age of eleven along with his mother in the intrigues among those jostling for power after Alexander's death. His progress was stopped when his troops refused to go further.

On his return to Susa, Alexander who, like his father, was polygamous married the eldest daughter of Darius, and presided over a mass marriage ceremony involving some ninety of his elite companions, *hetairoi*, to daughters of the Persian nobility. His career of conquest came to an abrupt end when, contemplating a campaign against the Arabs, he died of a fever at Babylon in 323 aged 33.

His conquests and a policy of establishing new cities like Alexandria, which was the most famous, began to extend the Greek language and Greek institutions over the eastern world. At the same time, though he had not devised a system for governing the empire, he was clearly striving for some sort of union between Greek and oriental, symbolized by his marriages and those he arranged for his chosen companions.

THE HELLENISTIC KINGDOMS

Alexander had not named a successor and after his death a power struggle followed for control of his empire between his regional governors involving Antigonus in Phrygia, Lysimachus in Thrace, Seleucus in Babylonia, and Ptolemy in Egypt. At first, the most powerful of these proved to be Antigonus 'the one-eyed'. He and his son Demetrius declared themselves kings in 305 after which Ptolemy, Lysimachus and Seleucus followed suit. But Antigonus was defeated at the battle of Ipsus in 301 by the combined forces of Seleucus and Lysimachus. Thereafter it was apparent that no one was powerful enough to maintain overall control of what had been Alexander's empire. Three dynastic kingdoms gradually emerged under the control of Ptolemy in Egypt, Seleucus in the old Persian empire and the east, and the successors of Antigonus in Macedonia and Greece.

Greece under the Antigonids

The Antigonids controlled Macedonia and mainland Greece. The Macedonian city of Pella, where earlier Euripides had written four of his tragedies and ended his life, also grew in population and was a magnet for visiting intellectuals and artists, for example the painter Zeuxis and the poet Aratus. Sacked by the Romans in 168, little of it remains though the remarkable floor mosaics uncovered by archaeologists in the 1970s (see fig. 74) are an indication of its former splendour. The port of Thessaloniki founded in 316 and Aegae (modern Vergina), the ancient capital of the royal

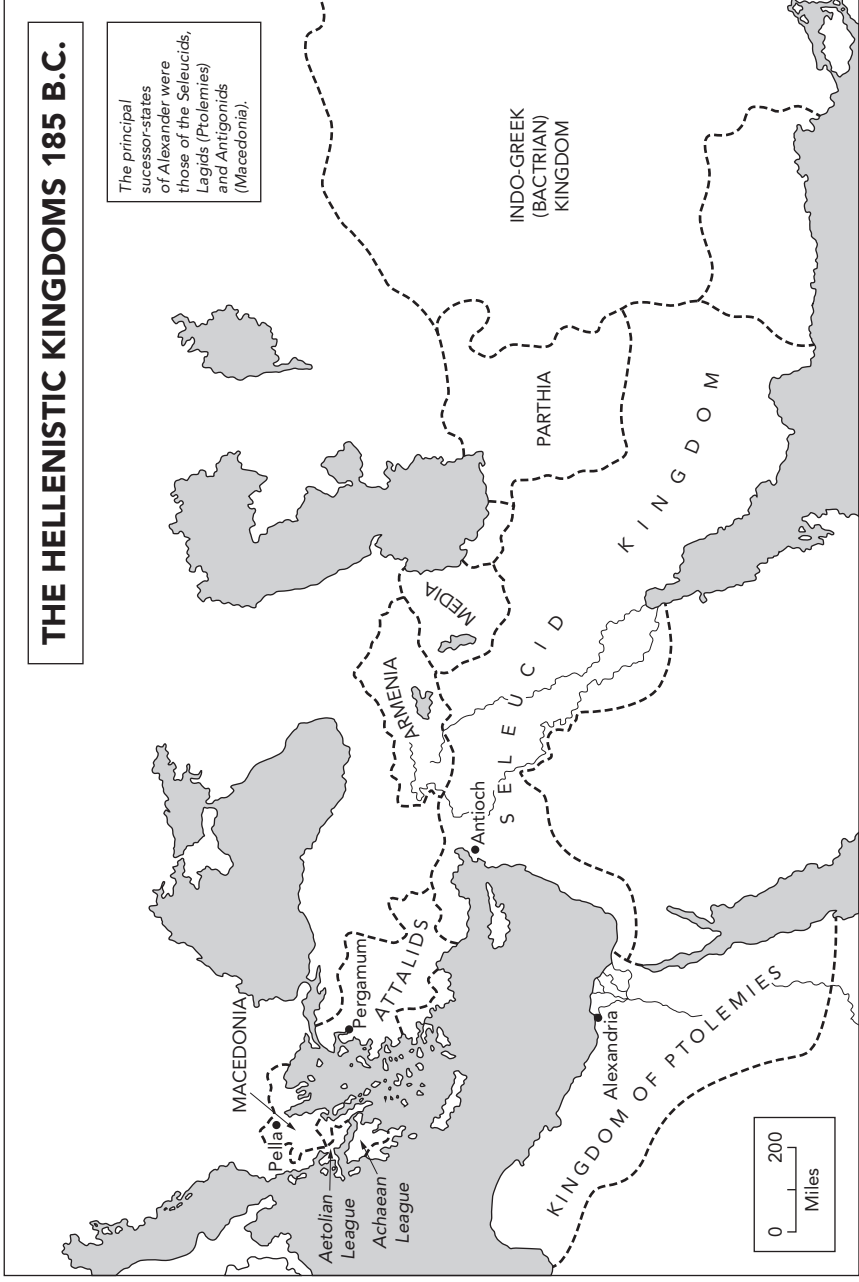


FIGURE 21 Map of Hellenistic Kingdoms c. 185 BC

Source: After M. Grant, *The Routledge Atlas of Classical History, Fifth Edition*, Routledge, 1994, p. 41

Macedonian household where the splendid royal tombs have recently been excavated, were important centres.

On Alexander's death, Athens and the northern states revolted against Macedonian rule but were again defeated at the battle of Crannon in 322 by Antipater, whom Alexander had left in charge of Macedonia in his absence. He now established a Macedonian garrison in the Piraeus, and modified the Athenian constitution by restricting citizenship to the wealthy, thereby creating a broad oligarchy or restricted democracy. The Macedonian garrison effectively prevented the Athenians from developing naval power. It was one of four on the eastern side of Greece, called by a later Macedonian king 'the fetters of Greece', the others being Demetrias, newly founded in Thessaly, Chalcis on the island of Euboea and Corinth, by which the Macedonians controlled the western Aegean sea routes and had easy access to the main city states of Greece north of the isthmus. Though fettered by the garrison, after various interventions democratic rule of a kind was restored to Athens, but the powers that be in Athens courted the patronage and material support of Ptolemy II, as a result of which the Athenians, along with the Spartans and states south of the isthmus, became involved in war against Macedonia in the 260s. Antigonos II successfully besieged the city and established a governor there. In 229 the city was freed from the garrison at the Piraeus, and gave up her fortifications and navy effectively becoming a neutral state. In this period in Athens, as in many states, citizen assemblies continued to meet and pass resolutions. And despite interference in her internal affairs and her loss of military independence, Athens remained an important cultural centre, accepting the patronage and endowments of successive kings.

At Sparta there were successive attempts by two kings, first by Agis IV from 244–241, and then after his failure by Cleomenes III 235–222, to revive the fortunes of their city in a conservative revolution involving a redistribution land designed to return to the system of Lycurgus. However, the assertive foreign policy of Cleomenes brought a military defeat at the hands of Antigonos III, who intervened to modify the constitution and abolished the kings, making a rare Macedonian intervention south of the isthmus.

In the eastern Aegean, Macedonian control was less secure. The island of Rhodes, well situated on the trade routes from Macedonia to the eastern cities, survived a year-long siege by Demetrius, the son of Antigonos I, in 305–4 who was seeking to break its connections with Ptolemy in Egypt. The city earned sufficient monies from the sale of siege equipment to fund the building of the Colossus, which became one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world. Maintaining good relations with Ptolemaic Egypt, Rhodes avoided domination by any of the major powers and in the second half of the third century its large navy secured the surrounding seas from piracy. In addition to the distinction of its sculpture, it was a cultural centre on the lines of Athens, the home of philosophers and poets. Macedonian hegemony did not spell decline for all Greek states.

On mainland Greece in the early third century there were political developments that indicate the limits of Macedonian power and interference. Two new political groupings formed in a kind of incipient federalism. The Aetolian League in northern Greece, comprising a number of smaller communities, had an assembly made up of men of military age meeting twice a year. There was a council and a chief magistrate who was also general, elected on an annual basis. The league had a notable military success for their part in repelling an invasion of Greece by the Gauls in 278, who had come as far south as Delphi. The Achaean League comprised a number of states in the northern Peloponnese. There were four meetings per year, a council and an assembly in both of which voting was by city. There were two generals at first, then a single general in the second half of the third century. These Leagues had come together in the previous century but acquired their greater constitutional forms and prominence in the wake of Macedonian power. According to Polybius writing of the Achaean League in the second century, 'They have the same laws, weights, measures and coinage, as well as the same magistrates, council-members and judges' (2, 37, 10). Individual states continued to have their own political institutions alongside their federal membership. These two Leagues were more formally constituted than the old Spartan league and they were a looser federal union than the Athenian empire in which the subject states had little or no say in the government. In 243 the Achaean League actually freed Corinth from Macedonian control and most of the states south of the isthmus joined the league with the notable exception of Sparta. However, these impulses towards union were too little and too late at a time when the Greek states found themselves faced with more formidable powers, first the Macedonian monarchy and then the Romans.

Egypt of the Ptolemies

The Ptolemies ruled Egypt and part of Asia Minor with their capital at Alexandria, which had been founded by Alexander on the Nile delta in 331. In the immediate aftermath of Alexander's death, Ptolemy had diverted his body, which was bound for Macedonia, and had taken it to Alexandria and kept it on permanent display. He had also used the money he found in Egyptian treasuries to equip himself with a mercenary force. In due course he proclaimed himself Pharaoh in 305. But in many of its features, its architecture and its civic organization, the new city was instituted on Greek lines. It had its own exclusive hereditary citizenship, recruited from various parts of the Greek world and exempt from royal taxation, its own laws and its own coinage, which was eventually used throughout Egypt. Its great harbour facilitated trade and the colossal lighthouse built by Ptolemy II on the island of Pharos that enclosed it was one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world, a beacon to sailors, and symbol of the city's pre-eminence. Its strategic position soon made it a great

economic and industrial centre, and generous patronage by the Ptolemies, who set up its famous museum and library, made it a cultural capital as well. A cosmopolitan city of Egyptians, Greeks and Jews, by 200 it was the largest city in the world.

The Greek writer Strabo reports an unflattering reaction to the multi-faceted city from the Greek historian Polybius when he visited in about 140 at a time when the city may have started to decline.

Polybius, at least, who visited the city, was disgusted with its condition at the time. He says it is inhabited by three classes of people, first the native Egyptians, an acute and civilized race; secondly by mercenaries, a numerous, rough and uncultivated set, it being an ancient practice there to maintain a foreign armed force which owing to the weakness of the kings had learnt rather to rule than to obey; thirdly there were the Alexandrians themselves, a people not genuinely civilized for the same reason, but still superior to the mercenaries, for though they are mongrels they came from Greek stock and had not forgotten Greek customs.

(Strabo, 17, 1. 12)

The kings' employment of large numbers of mercenaries to fight their many wars, in marked contrast to the widespread deployment of citizen soldiers in the classical *poleis*, clearly had an effect on the population of the great capitals and major cities.

Literary sources do not tell us how the rest of Egypt was governed but there is evidence from inscriptions and from considerable quantities of papyrus fragments that have been preserved by the dry climate, which makes it clear that there was a large bureaucracy devoted to the gathering of state taxes from the administration of state monopolies in textiles, oil, and papyrus. Some of these are written in the Egyptian demotic by native scribes, who often took Greek names. Revenues went to the kings who took an active interest in their gathering. A letter from Ptolemy II survives in which he instructs lawyers not to act on behalf of clients in fiscal disputes on pain of severe financial penalties on the grounds that they were interfering with the collection of revenues.

The Seleucid Empire and Pergamum

The Seleucids, with the largest territory, took over the old Persian empire. Seleucus I founded Seleucea on Tigris c. 305, Seleucea in Pieria c. 300, and Antioch c. 300 (in modern Syria). These three new cities were settled initially by Greeks and Macedonians migrating eastwards in large numbers. Following Alexander's practice, the Seleucids established many more new cities in the first decades of the third century. Alexander had replaced the local rulers (satraps) with his own men, a practice followed by the Seleucids who took over estates to support their royal family,

imposed taxes on the general population but otherwise did not interfere with local ways and customs. Antioch grew to be a large capital, second only to Alexandria, with a population consisting of Greek immigrants and a large number of Aramaic speakers and a sizable Jewish community. It had a flourishing cultural life. The Greek poet Aratus lived there for a time, and the Greek poet Euphorion was appointed librarian of its public library. Little of its architectural splendour survives.

In the late third century the control of the Seleucids over their vast empire began to weaken. First, the far eastern territories broke away. Then in the west the Attalids established a fourth dynasty within what had been Seleucid territory whose capital was the ancient city of Pergamum in north-west Asia Minor. The founder of the dynasty was Philetaerus (c. 343–263), son of a Macedonian called Attalus, a successful military leader who together with Antiochus I had defeated the Galatians (the Gauls) who after their repulse from Greece had crossed over to Asia Minor and made incursions into Seleucid territory in 278–276. Philetaerus strengthened the city's fortifications and endowed its acropolis with temples. The city was rich enough in his time to issue its own coins, bearing the head of Seleucus in recognition of Seleucid overlordship. Said to be a eunuch, he adopted his nephew who succeeded him as Eumenes I, who ruled from 263 to 241.

Eumenes freed Pergamum from Seleucid rule by defeating Antiochus I at Sardis in 261. Coins were minted in his reign bearing the head of Philetaerus, marking this new independence. He adopted his second cousin who succeeded him as Attalus I who ruled from 241 to 197. Attalus consolidated the power of Pergamum after a victory in the 230s over the Galatians, who had continued to exact tribute from much of Asia Minor despite their earlier defeat in the 270s. In 238 Attalus took the title of king, which was applied retrospectively to the dynasty. He allied himself with Rome, taking an active part in their wars with the Macedonians and increasing the power and wealth of Pergamum accordingly. As successful military leaders, the Attalids had promoted Athena Nikephoros ('Victory bringer') as the patron goddess of the dynasty endowing her with a sanctuary in the upper city, which was decorated with the statues of the defeated Galatians (Gauls) after their successful victories over them.

The beautification of the city was the work of Eumenes II; in his reign (197–158) the great Altar of Zeus was constructed (fig. 68) which made the city famous for its school of sculpture (figs. 68–71). He also built a library which grew to be second in importance only to that of Alexandria and was traditionally associated with invention of parchment.

In the finished city there were theatres and gymnasia for games and education. The philhellenism of the Attalids is most apparent in the architecture of its citadel which is modelled on the acropolis of Athens. The only feature in the urban planning that marks a difference from the Athenian model is the central place given to the royal palace.

His younger brother Attalus II, who succeeded Eumenes, was similarly philhellenic. In gratitude for the education he had received in Athens he built for the Athenians the grand Stoa of Attalus (fig. 43), reconstructed by the American School of Classical Studies; an inscription from the architrave survives recording this endowment by Attalus and giving the dates of his reign 159–138. He had married the widow of Eumenes, Stratonice, and adopted her son Attalus who became the last king, reigning for five years till his death in 133, whereupon the kingdom was bequeathed in his will to Rome.

Elsewhere philhellenism could be a cause of strife and tension leading to civil war. The most notable example occurred in Jerusalem, then under the control of the Seleucids in the reign of Antiochus IV (175–164), a king whose patron deity was Zeus and whose patronage of great building projects included at the beginning of his reign funds for the completion of the colossal temple of Olympian Zeus at Athens on which the grandly ornate Corinthian capitals were used for the first time on external columns.

But when Seleucus departed this life and the kingdom was taken by Antiochus called Epiphanes, Jason the brother of Onias usurped the priesthood by illegitimate means, promising the king in a petition 360 talents of silver and 80 talents of other revenue. He undertook beyond this to pay a further 150 talents if he were granted permission to establish by his own authority a gymnasium and a corps of ephebes and enroll those in Jerusalem as 'Antiochenes'.

When the king agreed and he gained the office, he immediately set about converting his fellow-countrymen to the Greek way of life. Abolishing the existing royal privileges . . . and the legitimate institutions, he brought in illegal customs. For he saw fit to establish a gymnasium below the acropolis and lead there the most athletic of the ephebes wearing sunhats. There was such a flowering of Hellenism and advance of gentile customs through the overwhelming wickedness of the impious Jason – no true high priest – that the priests were no longer conscientious over the duties concerned with the sacrifice, but, despising the Temple and neglecting the sacrifices, they hastened to take part in the unlawful exercises in the palaestra as soon as the sound of the discus summoned them.

(II Maccabees, 4, 7–10 in the Septuagint Bible)

Modern scholars tend to see the king taking sides in conflict between modern Hellenising Jews, who combined the Jewish religious tradition with elements of Greek culture, and orthodox traditionalists, two groups that had existed without notable strife in Alexandria and Antioch from the third century. Antiochus went so far as to outlaw Jewish religious practices, a prohibition not usual in the Macedonian kingdoms, where the usual policy was to let native populations retain traditional

customs provided that they paid their taxes and thus recognized the authority of the king. The Maccabees took up arms and regained their religious freedom after the death of Antiochus. Not long after, Judaea gained independence, which lasted for the most part until the Romans took over in 68.

The Romans take over

In the late third century, the Romans became involved in a series of wars against the Macedonians, which started when their king Philip V allied himself with the Carthaginian leader Hannibal in 214. The second of these wars ended decisively in the Romans' favour, when in 197 they defeated King Philip V at Cynocephalae in Thessaly in a battle that demonstrated the limitations of the Macedonian phalanx in opposition to the more flexible Roman legion. The Romans finally defeated the Carthaginians in the east and the Macedonians in the west in 146, destroying the cities of Carthage and then Corinth in the same year, after which Greece became a Roman protectorate. Roman intervention in the east finished off the remnants of the Seleucid empire, weakened by earlier failed conflicts with the Macedonians and the Ptolemies, and by civil war and the secession of eastern states. With the annexation of Egypt by Augustus after the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra at the battle of Actium in 31 BC, all the old Hellenistic kingdoms had become part of the Roman empire.

Hellenism already rooted in the west now spread further as the Greeks began to educate and civilize their less cultivated conquerors. This process began when the Romans encountered Greek culture directly after the battle of Tarentum in 270, which gave them control of *magna Graecia*. Rome subsequently became home to captives from the war. One such was a Greek slave called Andronicus who took the name of his master Livius and taught Greek to his master's sons by means of a translation of Homer. The Latin *Odyssey* of Livius Andronicus continued to be used as a schoolbook. As the Roman poet Horace (65–68) put it in the Augustan age:

Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit et artes
Intulit agresti Latio

Conquered Greece conquered her savage victor and brought the arts into rustic
Latium

(**Epistles 2, 1, 156–157**)

Athens continued to be a beacon of learning in the ancient world, a kind of university town perhaps. The great Roman orator Cicero, for example, was a student of philosophy and oratory there as a young man for six months in the third decade of the first

century. In the second century AD, the philhellene emperor Hadrian built a library and gymnasium. He funded the completion of the magnificent temple of Zeus, left incomplete on the death of Antiochus III, whose ruins remain one of the most imposing monuments for visitors to Athens. The famous schools remained open until closed by the Christian emperor Justinian in 529.

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3 RELIGION AND SOCIAL LIFE



RELIGION

The Olympians

The origin of Greek mythology and beliefs about the gods must go way back in time but, from the point of view of a fifth-century Greek like Herodotus, Homer and Hesiod were effectively the founding fathers of the literary record. As Herodotus puts it in his Histories:

But it was only – if I may so put it – yesterday that the Greeks came to know of the origin and form of the various gods, and whether or not all of them had always existed; for Homer and Hesiod, the poets who composed our theogonies and described the gods for us, giving them all their appropriate titles, offices, and powers, lived, I believe, not more than four hundred years ago.

(2, 53)

The polytheism apparent in the Homeric poems lasted throughout Greece essentially until well into the Christian era. Despite any tendency on the part of philosophers and thinkers like Plato and Aristotle to move to monotheism, the old gods continued to rule.

The principal deities that dominated the Greek pantheon are twelve in number, with Zeus, at their head; the rest are made up of his siblings and his children. They are: Aphrodite, Apollo, Ares, Artemis, Athena, Demeter, Dionysus, Hephaestus, Hera, Hermes, Poseidon and Zeus himself. Of these, only Dionysus is not prominent in Homer. Later Greeks believed that his cult had been imported from the east; there are stories that he was born on Mt. Nysa in Asia Minor and rode in a chariot drawn by tigers, which certainly makes him one of the most exotic of the Olympians. His worship by Maenads and the ecstatic rites associated with his cult are the subject of

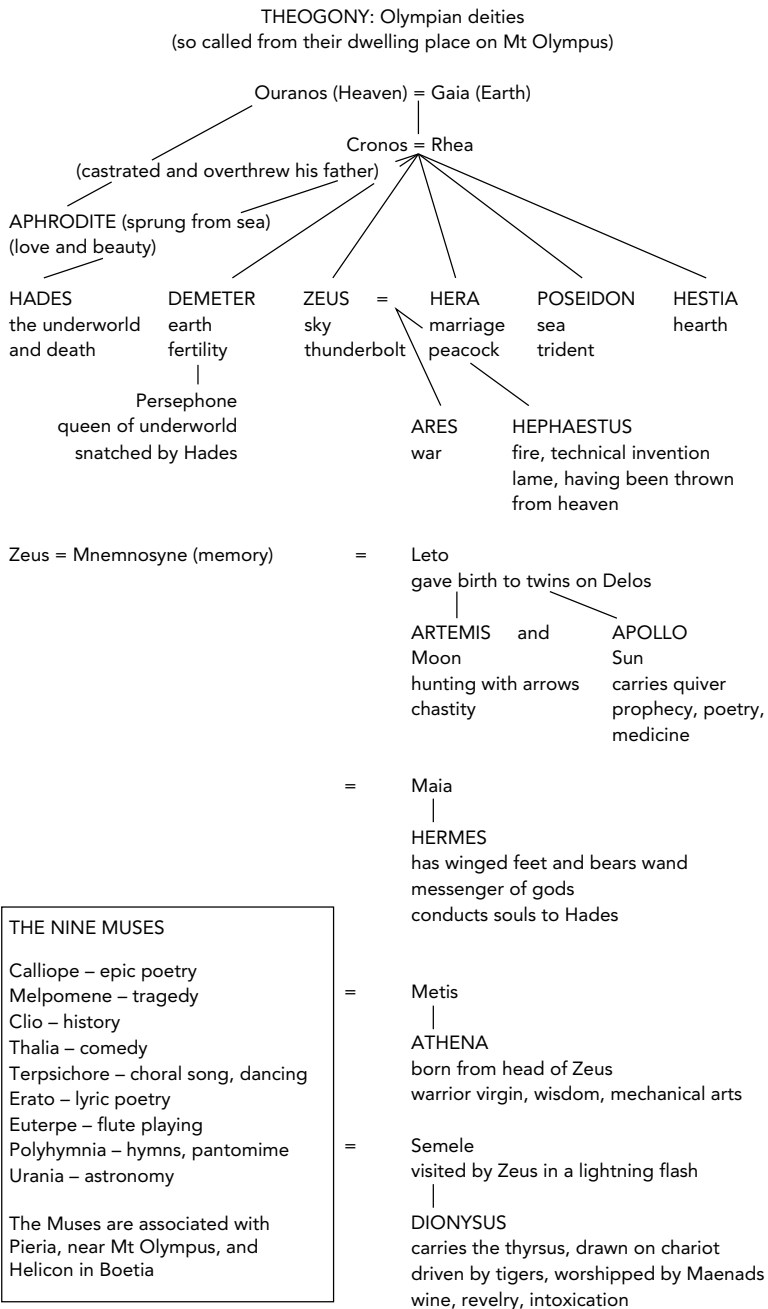


FIGURE 22 Theogony of Olympian deities

Euripides' *Bacchae* in which he comes from the east as a mysterious stranger to Thebes. But his name is known to the Linear B tablets, and he is well established in Hesiod's *Theogony*, which dates from the eighth century. Zeus's brother Hades does not dwell on Olympus but is king of the Underworld to which he gives his name.

Zeus is a third-generation god, having replaced his father Cronos who had overthrown his father Ouranos (Heaven who was married to Gaia, Earth), so that, unlike the God of the old Testament, he does not exist before the creation of the world but grows up with creation. Nor is he omnipotent, for he cannot alter fate. In the *Iliad*, he contemplates saving his son Sarpedon from the fate that awaits him at the hands of Patroclus, but is restrained from doing so by the warning of Hera (*Iliad* 12). Troy does not fall because of the will of Zeus; in fact, Zeus is well disposed to the Trojans, particularly to Hector, who has always honoured him with sacrifice. The major Trojan offence is against Poseidon who had helped build their walls and then been cheated of his payment. Neither is the will of Zeus absolute, for he shares power with the other gods. In response to the plea of Thetis that he should help the cause of her son Achilles by allowing the other Greeks to feel the loss of him now that he has withdrawn for the battle after his quarrel with Agamemnon, he sternly forbids the other gods from intervening, but Hera with the help of Aphrodite's girdle seduces him so that he takes his eye off the battle with the result that Poseidon is able to rally the Greeks (*Iliad* 14).

Each deity has his or her own predominant power: though Aphrodite is feeble on the battlefield (*Iliad* 5), in her own sphere she is a most potent force, indirectly controlling Zeus and bullying Helen to sleep with Paris (*Iliad* 3). In the *Odyssey*, she makes love to Ares, the god of war, though she is married to Hephaestus, who throws a net over the pair when he finds them out (*Iliad* 8). All the rest of the gods laugh, and this is indeed the stuff of comedy, in which there is a relaxed view of morality and a delight in fallibility and weakness. The Homeric gods generally exhibit strong individual wills with little sense of justice or compassion and a fine sense of their own importance and what is due to them. Nevertheless, they are powers to be reckoned with and powers that need to be propitiated with sacrifices and prayers, as demonstrated in the opening book of the *Iliad* when it becomes apparent that Agamemnon has offended Apollo by dishonouring his priest Chryses in taking his daughter Chryseis captive as a spoil of war. When the Greeks finally agree to restore Chryseis, Chryses prays to Apollo to stop the plague which the god has sent as a punishment.

God of the silver bow, thy ear incline . . .
 Once more attend! Avert the wasteful woe,
 And smile propitious, and unbend thy bow.
 So Chryses prayed; Apollo heard his prayer:

And now the Greeks their hecatomb prepare;
 Between their horns the salted barley threw,
 And with their heads to heav'n the victims slew;
 The limbs, they sever from th' inclosing hide;
 The thighs, selected to the gods, divide:
 On these, in double cauls involved with art,
 The choicest morsels lay from ev'ry part.
 The priest himself before his altar stands,
 And burns the off'ring with his holy hands,
 Pours the black wine, and sees the flames aspire;
 The youth with instruments surround the fire:
 The thighs thus sacrificed, and entrails dressed,
 Th' assistants part, transfix, and roast the rest:
 Then spread the tables, and repast prepare,
 Each takes his seat, and each receives his share.
 Now when the rage of hunger was repressed,
 With pure libations they conclude the feast;
 The youths with wine the copious goblets crowned,
 And pleased, dispense the flowing bowls around.
 With hymns divine the joyous banquet ends,
 The paeans lengthened 'till the sun descends:
 The Greeks restored the grateful notes prolong;
 Apollo listens, and approves the song.

(Iliad, 1, 452–474 in the translation of Alexander Pope)

In this case Apollo grants the prayer and puts an end to the plague; in other cases the prayer may be half granted or may simply go to the winds. The dignified ceremonial language of the translator well reflects the ritual style of the sacrifice and meal. The sacrifice of a hundred beasts (the literal meaning of hecatomb) is a prelude to general feasting. The custom was to offer the thighbones to the gods and there was a myth to account for this. Prometheus, whose name means 'forethought' and who is always represented as a friend to man, had tricked Zeus into choosing the thighbones, a seemingly useless part of the beast (but rich in marrow), by disguising them with a covering of rich fat (Hesiod, *Theogony*, 536–560).

The Homeric poems represent a world in which human life constantly engages with the divine. In this general respect they are a blueprint for what follows through the centuries of Greek experience. Sacrifices, prayers and votive offerings in real life as in the poetic representation were largely to ensure earthly success and well-being rather than to avoid penalties after death, for the Greek religion did not have anything comparable to the Christian concepts of universal judgement, salvation and eternal

punishment in Hell. Once again, the Homeric representation of the afterlife seems typical of general Greek belief. When Odysseus visits Hades, the twilight world of the dead, he does indeed see eternal punishment in the case of the fate of the immortal Titans who had sought to overthrow Zeus, but mortal life is not subject to judgement. Mortal consciousness continues in Hades in a twilight world of gibbering spirits, one of whom, Achilles, tells Odysseus plaintively that he would rather be the meanest slave on earth than king of the underworld (*Odyssey* 10, 488–491). The concept of Elysium occurs in Homer; it is a paradise where a privileged few can live like gods after death, but this heavenly paradise is beyond the aspirations of ordinary mortals, though it seems that initiates into the Eleusinian mysteries described below might have been promised an easier afterlife as a major benefit.

What is less apparent in Homeric Olympian religion is the seemingly darker side associated with the chthonic powers of the underworld. This lack is apparent not only in Homer but in later sources too. An obvious exception is Aeschylus' Oresteian Trilogy in which the terrifying Furies pursue Orestes after the matricide which he has undertaken on the orders of Apollo. These pre-Olympian deities who are particularly concerned with matters of family and kinship are defeated in the trial scene by the Olympians Apollo and Athena but offered an honoured place of worship in Athens, not in any temple but in a home beneath the ground. These older deities cannot be banished and evidently need to be placated.

In addition to the principal Olympians, there are many lesser deities; for example, Poseidon is often accompanied by a train of minor deities, such figures as Phorcus, Nereus and a host often unnamed but indwelling nymphs of the sea. Nymphs might also inhabit fresh water rivers and springs (Naiads), trees (Hamadryads) and mountains (Oreads). Indeed the whole of nature was interpenetrated with a sense of the divine. Pan, the god of shepherds, a local god of Arcadia in the Peloponnese, his original home, came to be a Pan-Hellenic god only later in the fifth century. As well as the gods, there are figures who have one divine parent, which is the strict definition of a hero, such as Achilles, son of the mortal Peleus and Thetis, a minor sea deity, Heracles, a son of Zeus by the mortal Alcmena, who, exceptionally, was rewarded with divinity for his various heroic labours, and Asclepius, son of Apollo to a mortal Coronis, who later became a patron of medicine and healing. Local heroes might be invoked as guardian gods, rather like saints in the Catholic tradition.

From a reading of Homer, Hesiod and the *Homeric Hymns*, it soon becomes apparent that there are many, often contradictory, stories about the gods. Hephaestus, the fire-god, is a case in point; in one account he is born without a father to Hera, in rival response to the birth of Athena from Zeus without a mother; in another he is a son of Zeus and Hera and is present at the birth of Athena acting as a kind of 'midwife' in aiding the birth by splitting open Zeus' head with an axe. Neither of these stories is in Homer or Hesiod, but from earliest times there must have been various rival

accounts of many of the principal deities, such being the nature of mythology. It follows from this, that there is no common doctrine or set of beliefs associated with any one text as is the case with the Bible or the Koran. And it is little wonder that one of the earliest pre-Socratic Ionian philosophers, Xenophanes from the sixth century, is reported as attacking Homer and Hesiod for telling lies about the gods and for representing them in human form – he remarks that if horses had a conception of the gods they would see them in the form of horses. Despite philosophical scepticism and any lesser scepticism of ordinary mortals when faced with the contradictions and absurdities of the mythological tradition, all the evidence suggests that invocation and propitiation of the gods whether in the public life of the city, at festivals, at games or in the home continued without abatement throughout Greek history.

Sanctuaries

You have many temples and wooded groves, and yours are all the cliff-tops and viewpoints on high mountains and the rivers that run to the sea. But you especially delight in Delos, Apollo, where the Ionians gather in their long linen garments, with their children and their shy wives. They delight you with boxing and dancing and song, whenever they hold a contest with you in mind.

(Homeric Hymn to Apollo, 143–150)

Delos is the birthplace of Apollo and his sister Artemis, but their cults were ubiquitous throughout Greece. The gods were worshipped in an open space set aside for sacred use for which the Greek word is *temenos*, a noun derived from the verb to cut. The *temenos* as a sacred place, which might be marked by a wall, could become a place of asylum. Within this space, the most important focus was the altar for animal sacrifice, burnt offerings, or libations. A fragment of the Athenian calendar for sacrifices for 403–399 details the number of animals required to be ‘unblemished’ for particular deities at particular times, mostly comprising sheep but including oxen and pigs. In Classical times altars might be marble constructions with elaborately carved decoration. The eighth century saw the building of temples and sometimes of adjacent dining rooms. Temples, at first wooden then later stone, were not primarily places for public worship nor did they enclose the altar but were used as storehouses for sacrificial implements and to house cult statues of the god. There are marble fragments surviving that preserve the inventories of the treasurers of Athena recording objects stored in the temples of the Athenian Acropolis. These include gold and silver ritual vessels, items of furniture and musical instruments that must have been used in sacrifices and festivals. Also listed are items of armour and six Persian daggers inlaid with gold. These latter are likely to be spoils of war, now dedicated to

the goddess. A major function of the temple in fact was to contain the god's possessions, often votive objects such as tripods, cauldrons, pins and broaches, figurines and vases. Excavations at famous sites have revealed votive remains that can be dated from the tenth and ninth centuries right through to the Hellenistic era. Much Greek statuary was in fact votive; much Classical Greek architecture was similarly in service of the gods, temples rather than palaces, stately homes or castles, so that there is a sense in which most Greek art can be called religious.

The most famous sanctuary in the Greek world was at Delphi, the home of Apollo's oracle, on the lower southern slopes of Mount Parnassus. There are significant myths associated with Delphi. It was regarded as the centre of the world, since Zeus had sent two eagles, one from the westernmost part of the cosmos and the other from the east, and their beaks had met at the *omphalos* or navel stone over which Apollo had instituted his first temple after he had successfully battled with a huge serpent (the Python) for control of the site. Hence his priestess was called the Pythia and the games subsequently held at Delphi were the Pythian games. The remains of the temple now visible date from the fourth century. On the Sacred Way leading up to the temple, excavations have uncovered evidence of dozens of monuments set up by various states and individuals commemorating victories in war or in the games usually in the form of statues, now fragmented. The most splendid survival is the bronze statue of a charioteer discovered in 1896, one of the very few original bronzes to survive antiquity (fig. 24). An inscription nearby reads 'Polyzelos dedicated me'.

Polyzelos has been identified as a tyrant of Gela in Sicily who was in power in the 470s and must have financed a winning team in the Pythian games and dedicated this bronze, which would have originally stood in a bronze chariot drawn by four bronze horses, to the god accordingly. Additionally, archaeologists have uncovered evidence of several treasuries on either side of the Sacred Way endowed by different cities which must have held votive offerings to Apollo, including the now restored Athenian treasury built in the Doric order to commemorate the victory of the Athenians at Marathon (fig. 25). Like the temples, these treasuries were decorated with sculptures, remains of which survive, notably the sixth-century frieze from the Siphnian treasury showing the gods in council, gods battling with Titans and battle scenes from the Trojan war. An inscription on the Athenian Stoa indicates that it was built to commemorate their naval victory over the Persians at Salamis in 478. The most striking of the architectural remains at Delphi is the partial reconstruction in the sanctuary of Athena Pronoia (about a mile away from the Sanctuary of Apollo) of the circular Tholos with its three Doric pillars and entablature dating from the early fourth century (fig. 26).

The function of this rotunda is unknown. Beyond the sacred precinct are a stadium, a hippodrome and a gymnasium. Within the sacred precinct is a theatre, and

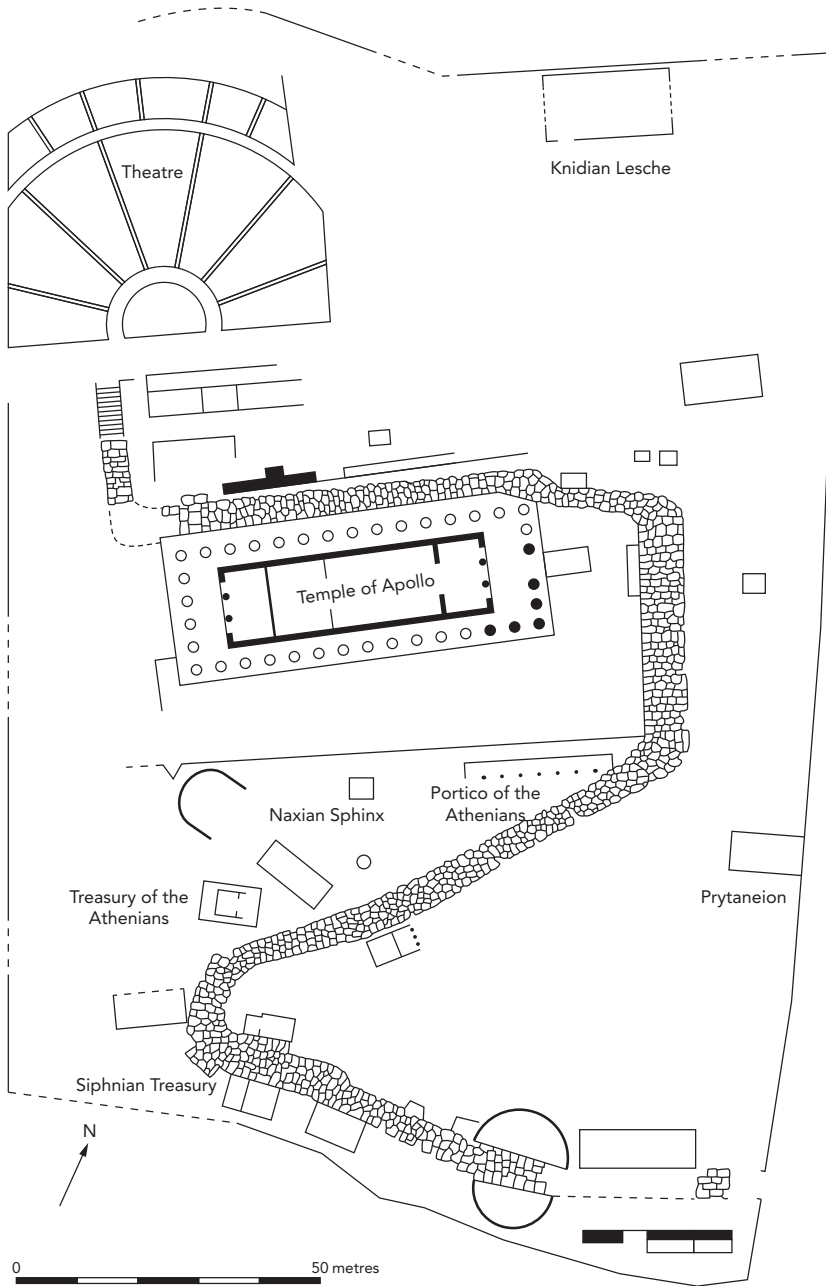


FIGURE 23 Plan of Delphi c. 350 BC

Source: James Whitley, *The Archaeology of Ancient Greece*, CUP, p. 309



FIGURE 24 The 'Charioteer of Delphi' is a life-size bronze statue dedicated at Delphi by Polykalos, younger brother of the tyrant of Syracuse, after a victory in the chariot races at the Pythian festival. As the rider holds reins, it was probably part of a statue group with horses and chariot. An inscription on the limestone base of the statue reads in part, 'Polykalos dedicated me, let him prosper, well-omened Apollo'

Source: Courtesy of the Delphi Archaeological Museum. Photo © Cory George

FIGURE 25
The reconstructed
Treasury of Athens
at Delphi

Source: Photo ©
Thinkstock/Lefteris



FIGURE 26
The reconstructed
tholos in the
Athena Pronaia
sanctuary at Delphi

Source: Photo ©
Thinkstock/Letteris



a banqueting room called the Cnidian Lesche decorated apparently by the famous painter Polygnotus and equipped for symposia, so that Delphi has all the distinctive components that mark Classical Greek civilization.

Given the importance of the oracle, Delphi was administered by a league of states living round about to ensure its independence. In the peace treaty between Athens and Sparta at the end of the first phase of the Peloponnesian war, the opening clause guarantees access for all to temples and sanctuaries 'according to ancestral custom', amongst which the sanctuary and temple of Apollo at Delphi are given special mention (Thucydides, 5.18). The influence of the oracle is highlighted in a story that suggests its independence may often have been compromised. According to Herodotus (5.62–4) the Athenians, who had built a temple there, had bribed the Pythia to tell any Spartan consulting the oracle to liberate the Athenians from the rule of the family of Peisistratus in the late fifth century. This, Herodotus says, was instrumental in Spartan intervention.

The oracle was regularly consulted by officers of state when new colonies were being contemplated, and famously when the Athenians asked how best to oppose the Persians and received the answer to trust to their 'wooden walls' (which the Athenian leader Themistocles interpreted as their ships). It was also consulted by ordinary individuals like Socrates' friend Chaerephon who had enquired whether anyone was wiser than Socrates, to which the answer was 'No'. Consultants were required to pay a fee and perform a sacrifice beforehand before they were admitted to the *adyton* or sacred place, where they encountered the Pythia who had previously purified herself by washing in the waters of the Castalian spring and who was seated on a tripod and crowned with a laurel wreath, the sacred emblem of Apollo. Exactly how she worked has been much debated. Geologists excavating the site of the temple in the 1990s detected the presence of ethylene, a mildly intoxicating gas emanating from the limestone beneath, that might have induced the Pythia's trance. The ambiguity of her Delphic utterances was doubtless thought to reflect the general difficulty of interpreting the voice of the god.

Festivals

Particular festivals were often held on an annual basis and in different communities, notably, at Athens the great or city Dionysia, the rural Dionysia and the Lenaia at which tragedies and comedies were performed (see below p. 145 ff.). The Anthesteria was a festival of Dionysus celebrated particularly in Ionian cities over a period of three days in the late winter or early spring when the wine harvested in the previous autumn was opened, sampled and dedicated to the god. The competitive element in Greek life seems to be apparent here as individuals competed against one another in draining a five litre measure. Festivals of Dionysus, god of wine and intoxication, were

widely celebrated throughout Greece, which is hardly surprising given the importance of wine in Mediterranean culture.

There was an annual festival in Athens called the Panathenaia in honour of Athena, the patron deity, held in late summer, involving a great procession of representatives from all sections of Athenian society of both sexes, including non-citizens and slaves, which took place from the Dipylon gate along the sacred way through the agora to the acropolis. This procession is represented in the sculptures on the frieze of the Parthenon, the climax being the presentation of a new robe or *peplos* to the goddess. On the robe women had embroidered scenes from the battle of the gods and giants, representing Athena's triumph. This was followed by a great sacrifice and the distribution of meat. Every four years the festival became the Great Panathenaia when games were celebrated including chariot racing, men's and boys' athletics, a regatta and a torch race. There were musical competitions and recitations of Homer.

The main Spartan festival, also celebrated over nine days in late summer in other Dorian communities, was the Karneia, honouring Apollo Karneios (of the Ram). It has been suggested this incorporated worship of an earlier pastoral god Karnos who led the flocks to new pastures. It was celebrated with music and song, and included a footrace in which young men carrying fruited vine branches chased a runner dressed with the wool fillets of a sacrificial victim. If he was caught, it was a signal for good luck in the coming year. There was a prohibition against fighting in the period of the festival, taken so seriously that the Spartans did not turn up for the battle of Marathon.

There were other city festivals supported by the state, including ones for the exclusive attendance of women. One such was the Thesmophoria, an annual three-day festival held in the autumn at the time of seed sowing in honour of Demeter and her daughter Persephone. The adjective *thesmophoros* means 'law-bringer', implying that the goddesses were givers of civilization. The *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* tells the story of the rape of her daughter Persephone while gathering flowers by Hades who carried her off to the underworld. The grief-stricken Demeter appealed to Zeus for her return but as she had eaten pomegranate seeds, her return could only be partial. With her annual return 'rich-crowned Demeter . . . straightway made fruit to spring up from the rich lands, so that the whole wide earth was laden with leaves and flowers' (l. 472). The seasonal myth represents the renewal of fertility in the spring. The festival was open to all free women of respectable character, married or unmarried, and was celebrated partly in the city and partly at the Attic coastal town of Halimus, which was the setting for mystic rites including the live burial of pigs in specially dug pits. There was fasting, sacrifices and also dancing and feasting at the conclusion. There were similar festivals in other cities in Greece and throughout the Athenian colonies.

The Eleusinian Mysteries

Their mythical origin is contained in the Homeric Hymn to the earth goddess Demeter in which she is referred to as 'queen of the land of sweet Eleusis and seagirt Paros, and rocky Antron, giver of good gifts, bringer of seasons' (ll. 470–1). After the restoration of Persephone:

Then she [Demeter] went to the kings who deal justice . . . she showed them the conduct of her rites and taught them all her mysteries . . . awful mysteries which no one may in any way transgress or pry into or utter, for deep awe of the gods checks the voice. Happy is he among men upon earth who has seen these mysteries; but he who is uninitiate and who has no part in them, never has the lot of like good things once he is dead, down in the darkness and gloom.

(ll. 473 ff.)

The mysteries were open to all who could speak Greek, including women and possibly slaves, and they were celebrated in various parts of Greece but most famously at Eleusis, a coastal town that had been annexed by the Athenians in the sixth century. Initiates believed that initiation might bring them greater happiness in the afterlife in the Underworld. Since devotees were sworn to secrecy, there is no definitive account, but only occasional references in scattered sources. The festival took place over several days. It involved a procession from Athens, purification rites (involving instruction from priests of the cult), fasting, sacrifices, prayers, votive offerings and other mystic ceremonial. For its duration there was a sacred truce for those attending with a generous allowance before and after to accommodate time for travel. Unlike most other religious practice, the mysteries were not directly connected to the *polis*, which they outlived, only finally disappearing with the destruction of Eleusis by Alaric the Goth in AD 396.

Religion in the life of the citizen

In *The Athenian Constitution*, written in the second half of the fourth century, the author (often attributed to Aristotle, but possibly by a pupil of his) tells us that before taking office, all magistrates undergo a preliminary examination in the council of the Five Hundred and another in the lawcourts, known as the *dokimasia*, akin to Senate hearings for candidates for office in the United States. Candidates are asked the following questions:

Who is your father, and to what deme does he belong?

Who is your paternal grandfather?

Who is your mother?

Who is her father, and what is his deme?
 Have you an Apollo *Patroos* and a Zeus *Herkeios*?
 Have you a family tomb and where is it?
 Do you treat your parents well?
 Do you pay your taxes?
 Have you done your military service?

When these questions have been answered the examiner proceeds: 'Call your witnesses!' and when they have been produced he goes on to ask: 'Has anyone anything to say against this man?' (*Athenian Constitution* 55).

Question five is a direct question about the individual's religious standing; it is one that invites an affirmative answer, an answer that affirms that the individual is a good citizen. Further light on the meaning of it may be shed by the following passage in Homer:

The minstrel Phemius, Terpius' son who served unwillingly as their bard, was still hoping to escape the black hand of death. He stood now close to the side door, the tuneful lyre in his hands, debating in his mind whether to slip out of the hall and seat himself at the massive altar of mighty Zeus *Herkeios*, on which Laertes and Odysseus had made so many burnt offerings, or to run forward and clasp Odysseus' knees in supplication.

(*Odyssey*, 22, 330–336)

The word *herkeios* used in Homer and in *dokimasia* is an adjective derived from the noun *herkos* which is defined as a fence or a place enclosed by a fence, an enclosure, a courtyard, or metaphorically a defence. This is Zeus, whose cult inspired some of the most magnificent temples in Greece, brought into the domestic sphere as a bulwark and defender. In the house of Odysseus there is an altar outside the main hall dedicated to Zeus *herkeios* (*Odyssey*, 22, 334–5). Excavations of later ordinary Greek houses have found physical evidence of altars which confirms that they were integral to the design of domestic buildings and the life of the inhabitants within. It is clear that there was continuity in religious belief and practice from Homeric times at least until the end of the Classical period.

In another example, Socrates himself is represented by Plato as having, like any other Athenian, the requisite altars in his house. In the *Euthydemus*, the philosopher reports to his friend Crito a dialogue between himself and a young, visiting, non-Athenian sophist Dionysodorus who asks:

Socrates, have you a Zeus *Patroos*? . . .
 No, Dionysodorus, I have not.

You must be some wretched outcast then and no Athenian at all, a man without family gods and sacrifices or anything else good and beautiful.

I have my own altars and my own religion and family prayers and all that sort of thing, as much as any other Athenian.

Then the other Athenians have no Zeus *Patroos*? He asked.

I said, none of the Ionians give him that title, neither ourselves nor any of the colonials from the city; ours is an Apollo *Patroos* because of Ion's parentage. Our Zeus is not called a family god, but courtyard god (*herkeios*) and clan god (*phratrios*), and Athena is our clan goddess (*phratiria*).

Oh that's quite enough, said Dionysodorus. For it seems you have both Apollo and Zeus, and Athena.

Yes, I said.

Then these would be your gods? He said.

Ancestors, I said and masters.

(Euthedemus, 302bd)

Socrates here identifies the Athenians as Ionians and since Ion, an early king of Athens, was a son of Apollo says that the family god of the Athenians is Apollo, who thereby merits the epithet *patroos*, as far as the Athenians are concerned. Athena's association with Athens is less direct. As a virgin goddess, she had no descendants, though in Athenian mythology she was foster-mother to one of their early kings, Erechtheus, to whom there is a temple on the Athenian Acropolis. However, her primary association with Athens is through the contest which she had (and won) with Poseidon for the possession of Attica and in which she had performed a decisive miracle in causing an olive tree to spring up on the acropolis. Socrates uses the word *herkeios* for Zeus as had Homer before him. For the Athenians, Zeus and Athena are clan gods, the word for clan being *phratiria*, a term sometimes translated as clan, so that Socrates rightly denies that he has a Zeus *patroos*, but is most concerned to show that he has the appropriate altars and cult connections. A *phratry* is an ancestral association of families, found in Athens and elsewhere throughout the Greek world. Every citizen was a member of a phratry and all male children were presented to the phratry in a ceremony known as the *Apatouria* at which the father had to swear on the altar that the child was his son. This was requisite for the child's future citizenship. The civic importance of these relations is marked formally by the presence next to the Stoa of Zeus on the west side of the Athenian agora, the centre of political and public life in Athens, of three fourth-century temples to Zeus *Phratrios*, Athena *Phratiria* and Apollo *Patroos*, the remains of which have been excavated in the twentieth century.

Socrates here declares that he has the requisite altars for proper religious observance. It is perhaps ironic in view of his prosecution for impiety that his last words are reported by Plato to have been 'Crito, we ought to offer a cock to Asclepius (the

god of medicine) (*Phaedo*, 118a) perhaps in recognition of his comparatively painless death. Whether in owing up to an Apollo *Patroos* he is saying he has an image of the god is not so clear. Images were common as votive objects in graves and temples. Images were also common about the city on the testimony of Thucydides recounting the mutilation of the Hermae (stone figures with an erect phallus: (see fig. 27), that occurred just before the Athenian fleet set sail for Sicily in 415:

While these preparations were going on it was found that in one night nearly all the stone Hermae in the city of Athens had had their faces disfigured by being cut about. These are a national institution, the well-known square-cut figures, of which there are great numbers both in the porches of private houses and in the temples. No one knew who had done this, but large rewards were offered by the state in order to find out who the criminals were, and there was also a decree passed guaranteeing immunity to anyone, citizen, alien, or slave, who knew of any other sacrilegious act that had taken place and would come forward with information about it. The whole affair, indeed, was taken very seriously, as it was regarded as an omen for the expedition, and at the same time served as evidence of a revolutionary conspiracy to overthrow the democracy.

(6, 27)

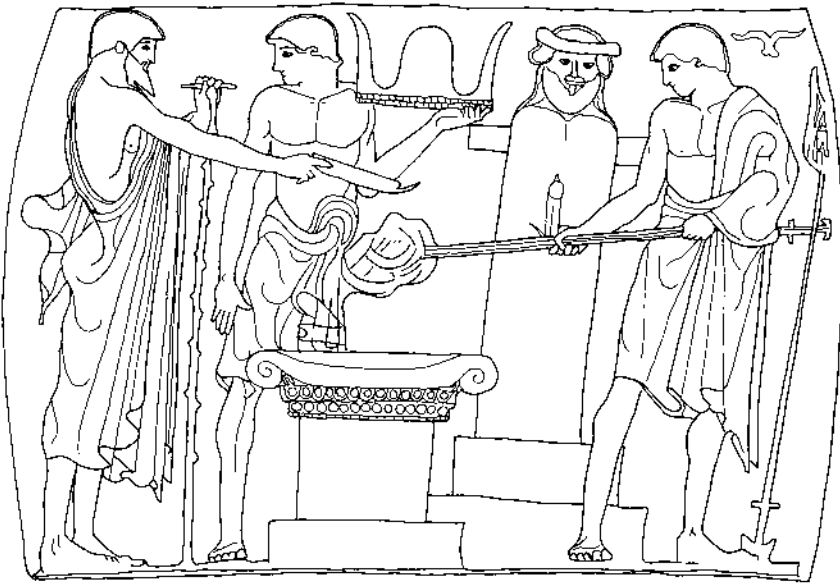


FIGURE 27 Herm: detail of Attic red-figure *krater* by the Pan-painter. Naples Museo Nazionale

Fragments of such herms have been identified in the excavations of the Athenian agora. Alcibiades, then a general and politician of influence, was implicated in this act of sacrilege, whether rightly or wrongly. He fled to Sparta and gave crucial aid and succour to Athens' enemy.

While civic customs and institutions differed from state to state, herms and phratries were not unique to Athens. Underlying these Athenian beliefs and practices were attitudes and assumptions about human relations with the gods that were shared with the rest of Greece, indeed the very mark of what constituted Greek identity. When the Persians, in advance of the battle of Plataea, tried to draw the Athenians away from the Greeks allied against them, Herodotus reports the reassuring words of the Athenians to the worried Spartans as follows:

There are many important reasons which prevent us from doing this, even if we wished, the first and greatest being the burning and demolishing of our statues and temples of our gods, which we must avenge with all our power rather than making terms with the agent of their destruction. Furthermore there is the fact that we are all Greeks, sharing both the same blood and the same language, and we have the temples of our gods in common and our sacrifices and our similar lifestyle, and it would not be right for the Athenians to betray all these.

(8, 144)

As so often in human history, religion was at the heart of the matter. One hundred and fifty years later Philip of Macedon based his appeal for Greek unity as he was about to embark on a crusade against the Persians on the desire to avenge the Persians' destruction of Greek temples.

In Hellenistic times, new patterns emerge alongside the old, one such being the development of the 'ruler cult' in relation to Alexander. The only previous known case in which divine honours were granted before death concerns the Spartan king Lysander deified by the Samians at the end of the Peloponnesian war. Alexander encouraged the custom of *proskynesis*, prostration before the king, a custom associated with the Persians. He was also addressed as a son of god by the priest of the famous oracle of Egyptian Ammon (long identified with Zeus by the Greeks) when he visited it in 331 and later encouraged the Greeks to offer him the divine status of a cult hero. Coins survive in which he is represented with ram's horns identifying him with Ammon who appears so in eastern iconography (fig. 28).

In founding Alexandria, according to the historian Arrian, Alexander specified that one of the temples should be dedicated to the Egyptian goddess Isis; later there was also an Alexandrian temple to the god Serapis, previously worshipped in Babylon but imported to Alexandria as a Graeco-Egyptian god adapted in the reign of Ptolemy I to unify Greeks and Egyptians in the new dispensation. He is shown in



FIGURE 28 A gold stater with the head of Alexander the Great, depicted with ram's horns (indicating his identification with the god Ammon); issued by Lysimachos, the coin dates to about 297–281 BC

Source: Photo courtesy of CNG Coins

anthropomorphic form (the Greeks rejected the animal-headed figures of Egyptian deities) but wearing an Egyptian headdress (fig. 29). The Syrian goddess Atargatis by the early third century was worshipped in Egypt and Greece, reflecting the growing cosmopolitanism of religious cults in post-Classical Greece. The cult of Isis in the Hellenistic world seems to have been gradually modified. In a later inscription from an Anatolian city, Isis presents herself as a daughter of Cronos and *thesmophoros*, the bringer of laws, taking upon herself the role of the Greek Demeter. The new cults by no means replaced the old but in a more fluid world lived alongside them. There were evident continuities with the Classical past. The Hellenistic kings identified with the Olympians as patrons or ancestors and also continued the practice of endowing famous Greek sanctuaries at Delphi and Olympia with statues and new buildings. With the breakdown of the *polis*, religious loyalties and practice may have been less localized but the main cults, particularly of Dionysus, Apollo and Asclepius, had universal characteristics that enabled them to survive new political realities. Athena, for example, became the presiding deity of Pergamum. In the light of what was to come with the advent of Christianity and Islam, changing religious practice in the Hellenistic centuries was comparatively gradual.

PAN-HELLENIC GAMES

Games were a part of Greek life from the earliest times, as witnessed in the funeral games held in honour of Patroclus and presided over by Achilles (*Iliad* 23). They were established throughout the Greek world, becoming a major part of religious festivals, the most famous being the Olympian and the Nemean, both in honour of Zeus in the Peloponnese, the Pythian at Delphi in honour of Apollo, and the Isthmian at Corinth



FIGURE 29 Serapis: a Grecian head with an Egyptian headdress. Alexandria, Egypt, Graeco-Roman Museum

Source: © 2014. Photo Scala, Florence

in honour of Poseidon. These four, held at different times, constituted the *Periodos* or *Circuit* and were open to all Greeks. According to the Theban poet Pindar, who won commissions to compose choral odes celebrating the victors at all these four major competitions, the Olympic games, the most prestigious, were first instituted by Heracles in thanksgiving for his victories and dedicated to his father Zeus.

And Time, in passing onward, clearly told the plain story, how Heracles divided the spoils that were the gift of war, and offered sacrifice, and how he ordained the four years' festival along with the Olympic games and with contests for victors.

(Pindar, *Olympian Odes*, 10, 55–59)

Time, in fact, came to be measured in this four-year Olympic cycle, with the first Olympiad reckoned from the victory of one Coroebus in the footrace in 776 BC; this method of dating by naming victor was adopted by Thucydides, for example:

Meanwhile the ambassadors from Mitylene who had been sent out in the first ship had been told by the Spartans to come to Olympia, in the Olympiad in which Dorieus of Rhodes won his second victory, and when after the festival was over, a meeting of the allies was called, they made the following speech:

(Thucydides, 3, 8)

Evidently, political business could be transacted on these Pan-Hellenic occasions. This dating system presupposes general Greek interest in and knowledge of the results of the contests.

At the centre of the site at Olympia is a large religious sanctuary called the *Altis*, which is dominated by the temple to Zeus which housed a giant image of the god sculpted by Pheidias which was one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world.

The god is seated on his throne. He is made of gold and ivory, and on his head is a wreath representing sprays of olive. In his right hand stands a figure of victory, also of gold and ivory . . . in his left is a sceptre, skilfully wrought with various metals. The bird perched on the sceptre is an eagle. The sandals of the god are golden, and so is his robe, which is decorated with animals and lilies.

(Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 5.11.1-2)

Nearby in the open air was the altar on which sacrifices were made. According to Pausanias, this was made entirely of bones and ashes from previous sacrifices compounded with clay that had reached a height of over 20 feet at the time he was writing in the second century AD. There were other temples and administrative buildings in the *Altis*; the various sporting arenas, including the stadium, the hippodrome and the gymnasium radiated out from the central sanctuary.

A notable late addition to the buildings at Olympia was the Philippeion, a *tholos* similar to the Athenian rotunda at Delphi (fig. 26) with a colonnade of sixteen columns prominently situated within the Altis near one of the main entrances. Inside were statues of Philip, his parents, his wife Olympias and his son Alexander. The sculptor used gold and ivory for their attire and marble for the flesh. Evidently no expense was spared. The building at this most sacred site, housing Philip's dynasty almost in the manner of gods, was a clear expression of Macedonian power and dominance.

The solemn importance of the games is further indicated by the fact that in the month in which they were held, there was a general armistice throughout Greece. This time was called the *hieromenia*, 'the holy time of the month'. Olympia was in the district of Elis, so that the regulation of the games devolved upon the Eleians, who appointed the judges and administered the competitions. The seriousness with which the Olympic law was regarded and upheld is indicated in a remarkable account in Thucydides' history of an altercation between the organizers and the Spartans. The Eleians accused the Spartans of deploying their hoplites during the period of the Olympic truce and fined them accordingly. The Spartans protested, claiming that the truce had not been proclaimed at Sparta at the time they sent their hoplites (5, 49). Although the Spartans did not back down and pay the fine, they did not, as the Eleians feared they might, intervene by force, although they were engaged in the long Peloponnesian war at the time and could easily have done so. Though they contested the judgement against them, they were restrained by respect for the Olympic law.

The festival extended over five days. The first was largely ceremonial with sacrifices (including a hecatomb at the opening), prayers and divination and included oath-taking by competitors and judges to play fair and uphold the rules. On the second day came the chariot and horse racing and the pentathlon, on the third, the foot-races, on the fourth, wrestling, boxing, the *pankration* (a mixture of the two with scarcely any rules) and the *hoplitodromos* (a race wearing armour), and on the fifth the crowning of the victors and the closing ceremonial. Interspersed, there were processions, recitals by poets, choral contests and recitals, sightseeing tours, feasting and revelry.

All Greeks were eligible to compete, though foreigners could only be spectators. Only unmarried women were allowed to watch. There were separate women's games in honour of Hera. There were also different competitions for young boys. The only prize was a laurel wreath, but victors could expect artistic celebration if funds could be provided, either in the form of a statue (the remains of many have been excavated at the site of Olympia) or poetic praise, either at the time of victory or when they returned home (as in Pindar's epinician odes). Ambassadors attended from various states and competed with one another in magnificent style, for the event was evidently potentially the cause of much prestige. Here is Alcibiades boasting to the Athenian assembly:

There was a time when the Hellenes imagined that our city had been ruined by the war, but they came to consider it even greater than it really is, because of the splendid show I made as its representative at the Olympic games, when I entered seven chariots for the chariot race (more than any private individual has entered before) and took the first, second, and fourth places, and saw that everything else was arranged in a style worthy of my victory. It is customary for such things to bring honour, and the fact that they are done at all must also give an impression of power.

(Thucydides, 6, 16)

THE GYMNASIUM

An important institution in Greek life for male citizens was the gymnasium to which young boys must have been called to practice from an early age. The word is derived from the Greek word *gymnos* meaning 'naked', implying that naked exercise was customary. Early on, the gymnasium was probably an open area with rudimentary facilities for changing but in later times came the development of adjacent buildings in which teaching took place. This has given rise to the use of the word in European countries to describe institutions of further and higher education. The Academy and the Lyceum, forever associated with the teachings of Plato and Aristotle, were in the first place gymnasia adjacent to which the philosophers had established their schools.

In Athens, physical gymnastic training was the third branch of the integrated pattern of education described by Protagoras talking about the practice of good parents who want the best for their children.

Later on when they send the children to school, their instructions to the masters lay much more emphasis on good behaviour than on letters or music. The teachers take good care of this, and when the boys have learned their letters and are ready to understand the written word as formerly the spoken, they set the works of good poets before them on their desks to read and make them learn them by heart, poems containing much admonition and many stories, eulogies, and panegyrics of the good men of old, so that the child may be inspired to imitate them and long to be like them.

The music masters by analogous methods instil self-control and deter the young from evil-doing. And when they have learned to play the lyre, they teach them works of good poets of another sort, namely the lyrical, which they accompany on the lyre, familiarising the minds of the children with the rhythms and melodies. By this means they become more civilised, more balanced and better adjusted in themselves and so more capable in whatever they say or do, for rhythm and harmonious adjustment are essential to the whole of human life.

Over and above this, they are sent to a trainer, so that a good mind may have a good body to serve it, and no one be forced by physical weakness to play the coward in war and other ordeals.

(Plato, *Protagoras*, 326)

The last sentence here is a reminder of the compelling interest of the state in the physical well-being and development of its male citizens; they were to provide service for the defence of the state in the hoplite army. In Athens, youths between 18 and 20, *epheboi* underwent special military training in two parts. The first year, they spent on guard duty in the Piraeus and in the second year they had similar duties on the borders of Attica. This was a kind of military service necessary in a state that was almost permanently at war and constantly deploying military forces overseas.

At Sparta, naked exercises were institutionalised in a festival called the *Gymnopaediae* involving young boys and attended by the Spartan king (Herodotus, *Histories*: 6, 67). Here they were a prelude to more strenuous military training yet to come, in a kind of rigour that the world has always associated with the Spartans.

At Athens, though, the gymnasium is also a place of relaxation. Socrates, well into middle age at the time in which the Platonic dialogues are set, recounts that he meets Euthydemus, the chief interlocutor of the dialogue that bears his name, in the 'undressing room' of what must be a gymnasium, though the place is not actually specified:

I happened providentially to be sitting in the place where you saw me in the undressing room, and had just thought it was time to get up; but as I was getting up I had my usual divine presentiment. . . . the two men came in and walked round in the cloisters.

(Plato, *Euthydemus*, 272e)

The 'cloister' suggests a visual image of the later stoa, the colonnades that were attached to temples that gave shade from the sun in the heat of the summer, and from which the later Stoics derived their name, as the founder of the school, Zeno, did his teaching there.

Gymnasia were municipally owned, marking the importance of their function in the life of the *polis*, whereas the analogous institution of the *palaestra* (literally, a 'wrestling floor') was privately owned and is the scene of at least two other Platonic dialogues. After his military service (for which men were liable until the age of sixty), Socrates drops in on old haunts, not for exercise but for company and conversation (*Charmides*, 153). There is a similar informality when Socrates meets Lysis.

If you will only go into the *palaestra* with Ctesippus, and sit down and begin to talk, I have little doubt that he [Lysis] will come to you of his own accord, for he is

singularly fond of listening. And moreover, as they are keeping the *Hermaea*, boys and men are all mixed up together today. . . . on entering we found that the boys had finished their sacrifices and, the ceremony now being pretty well over, were playing together at knucklebones, all in their holiday dress. The greater part were carrying on their game in the court outside, but some of them were in a corner of the dressing room, playing at odd and even with a number of bones which they drew out of small baskets.

(Plato, *Lysis*, 206c–e)

Boys and men were generally separated for the purposes of exercise but on this occasion the *palaestra* is evidently a setting for ceremonies, a festival of Hermes, followed by playtime, a high day and holiday for the boys of Athens.

Finally, the *palaestra* is evidently a place for the contemplation and celebration of the body beautiful. In the company of his friend Critias in the *palaestra*, Socrates catches sight of a strikingly beautiful youth and enquires about him. Critias informs him that he is his nephew, who is looking for a cure for headaches. He is invited over and is evidently a star attraction.

Great amusement was occasioned by everyone making room and pushing with might and main at his neighbour in order to sit next to him, until at the two ends of the row one had to get up and the other was rolled over sideways. And he came and sat down between Critias and me. But I, my friend, was beginning to feel awkward. My former bold belief in my powers of conversing naturally with him had vanished. And when Critias told him that I was the person who had the cure, he looked at me in an indescribable manner and made as though to ask me a question. And all the people in the *palaestra* crowded about us, and at that moment, my good friend, I caught sight of the inwards of his garment, and took the flame. Then I could no longer contain myself. I thought how well Cydias understood the nature of love, when, in speaking of a fair youth, he warns someone 'not to bring the fawn in the sight of the lion to be devoured by him', for I felt that I had been overcome by a sort of beast-like appetite.

(Plato, *Charmides*, 154c–e)

This is the prelude to a dialogue on the nature of *sophrosyne*, 'self-control'.

THE SYMPOSIUM

The symposium or drinking party was a key social institution taking place in the *andron* or men's quarters of private households particularly of the well-to-do. As it

was an all male affair (except in the event of any invited entertainment), like the institution of the gymnasium, it had the indirect effect of enforcing male bonding. Reclining couches were laid round the room with tables in the middle. The men wore garlands and there was usually a master of ceremonies. Plato, in his dialogue *Laws*, is at pains to stress the need for a leader to conduct the proceedings in a sober manner (639d–640d). In addition to the wine, there was entertainment. Hired flute-girls (*aulotrides*) might entertain the guests with music, or the guests might provide their own music by playing the lyre. Participants might sing songs, tell stories or debate a set theme. Plato's *Symposium*, held at the house of the tragic poet Agathon, with its lofty discussion on the nature of love, represents the intellectual ideal. But even here the interruption of Alcibiades, a late arrival, suggests that the symposium might be a rowdy affair.

Well, it wasn't long before they could hear Alcibiades shouting in the courtyard, evidently very drunk, and demanding where Agathon was, because he must see Agathon at once. So the flute girl and some of his other followers helped him stagger in, and there he stood in the doorway, with a mass of ribbons and an enormous wreath of ivy and violets sprouting on his head, and addressed the company. . . .

And now gentlemen he said, as he settled himself on the couch, can I be right in thinking that you're sober? I say, you know, we can't have this! Come on, drink up! You promised to have a drink with me. Now I'll tell you, there's no one fit to take the chair at this meeting – until you've all got reasonably drunk – but me. Come on, Agathon, tell them to bring out something that's worth drinking out of.

No, never mind, he went on. Here, you, just bring me that wine cooler, will you?

He saw it would hold a couple of quarts or so. He made them fill it up, and took the first drink himself, after which he told them to fill it again for Socrates, and remarked to the others, But I shan't get any change out of him. It doesn't matter how much you make him drink, it never makes him drunk.

(212d–214b)

Besides characterizing him, Alcibiades' intervention has the effect of showing that Socrates, by contrast, is a man of extraordinary self-control, for the pair of them have drunk a vast amount direct from the wine cooler. The usual custom was to drink out of small cups and to dilute the wine, which was served by slave boys, in a proportion of three to one (water to wine). Alcibiades has very definitely broken the rules as one of the other guests points out.

Xenophon also has written an account of a Socratic drinking party in his *Symposium*, at which the host, Callias, has invited his new flame Autolycus and his father to dinner. The *Symposium* begins with the contemplation of beauty:

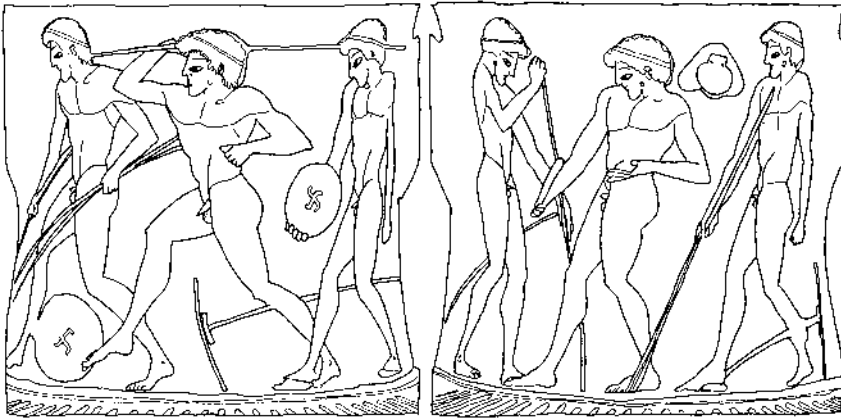


FIGURE 30 Athletes with javelin and discus in the palaestra, Attic red-figure amphora, Munich

Source: © J. Etherington



FIGURE 31 Symposium fresco from the tomb of the diver at Paestum

Source: © Stockphoto.com/Danilo Ascione

An observer of the scene would at once have reflected that beauty has something naturally regal about it, especially if it is combined with modesty and self control in its possessor, as was the case in Autolyclus. In the first place his beauty drew everyone's attention to him, as surely as a light draws all eyes to it in the dark; and secondly there was not a man there whose feelings were not moved at the sight of him. Some became more silent; others underwent a transformation. Possession by a god always seems to have a remarkable effect. Those who are influenced by other gods tend to become more intimidating in their appearance, more truculent in their speech, and more aggressive in their conduct; but those who are inspired by a pure love wear a kindlier expression and speak in a gentler tone and behave in a more civil manner. Such was the effect of Callias' love had upon him on this occasion, as was duly noted by those who were initiates of this god.

(Xenophon, *Symposium*, 1)

What is striking in Xenophon here, and in Plato throughout, is the unfussy and open appreciation of male beauty. The entertainment is more varied than in the case of

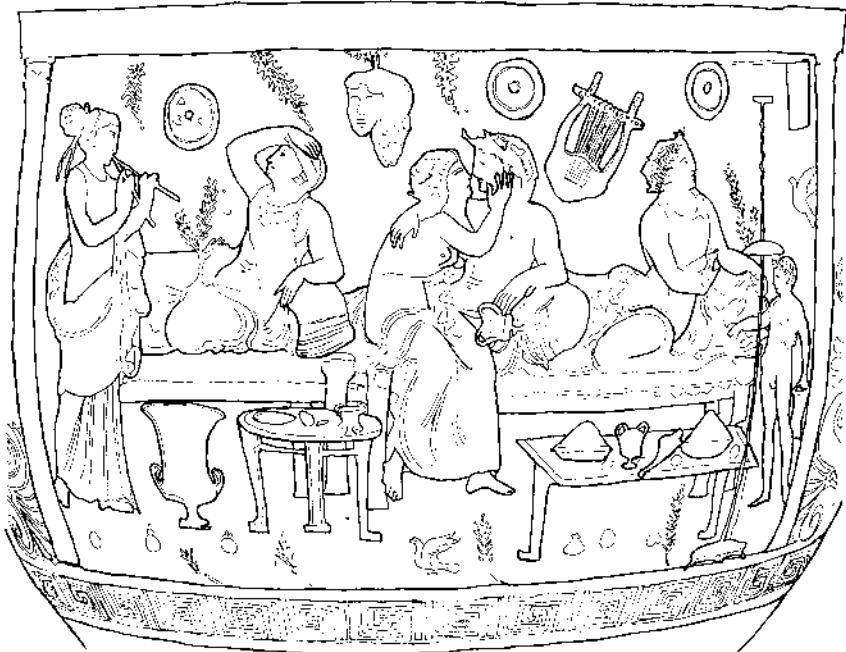


FIGURE 32 Symposium with *hetairai* from Campanian bell-krater: Naples Museo Nazionale

Source: © J. Etherington

Plato: 'A Syracusan came in to provide entertainment. He had with him a girl who was an expert flautist, another who was an acrobatic dancer, and a very attractive boy who both played the lyre and danced extremely well' (*Symposium* 2). There is something of a cabaret, and at the end, after the climactic speech of Socrates on love, a ballet dance representing the loves of Ariadne and Dionysus. In their different ways, these two symposia suggest what might have been something of a reality in the more aristocratic households. But doubtless they are the ideal and reality was usually rather different. From vase paintings it is clear that the flute girls might provide more than simply musical entertainment before the proceedings. Flute girls in fact worked as prostitutes in the red-light district of Athens, the *Kerameikos*, in the east of the city near the walls, which isn't to say that there is any implication in these dialogues that they offer sexual services to their guests.

A very different kind of Symposium from those in which Socrates features is described by Xenophon in his history (*Hellenika* 5,4,4). When some of the leaders of Thebes participating in a symposium as they were celebrating the festival of Aphrodite had become inebriated and asked for the women to be brought in, assassins disguised as *hetairai* entered and effected a coup by giving the men more than they bargained for.

'GREEK LOVE'

The two Athenian symposia alluded to above broach the subject of what has subsequently been called 'Greek love', or to give it its Greek name *paederastia*, pederasty, a word of ill repute in English and suggestive of illegal practices even after the sexual revolution. The love of boys is taken in this Greek context to involve not pre-pubescent boys but boys from the dawn of adolescence when the down begins to appear on the cheeks onwards until the youth is able to grow a full beard. We may recall here the description of Hermes in Homer 'looking like a princely youth at the most graceful time when the beard first begins to grow' (*Iliad* 24, 339–340). Pederasty naturally involves an age difference, the attraction of the older for the younger. The mythical archetype is embodied in the seizure of the beautiful Trojan youth Ganymede carried off by Zeus to become cupbearer to the gods. In doing this, Zeus had not suddenly changed his sexual preferences; he carries on his liaisons with the opposite sex. His erotic drive works in both, indeed in all, directions. In the sexual sphere, Greek myth as a whole might be regarded as a manifestation of what Freud called the 'polymorphous perverse'. This mythical attraction of Zeus for Ganymede (and the implied sex life that went with it) suggests a more general pattern in the Greek world, where the categories of homosexual and heterosexual, often considered to be exclusive in modern times and a distinct and vital aspect of an individual's

identity, are not really easily transferable. The pattern is subject to particular variation in the customs and legal frameworks of individual *poleis*.

In Athens, since men did not usually marry till the age of 30 or more, it might characteristically but not exclusively be between a man in his twenties, the *erastes* (the lover) and an adolescent, the *eromenos* (the beloved). The age at which a boy became an adult with full civic rights and responsibilities was 18, at which time the youth would begin his two years of military service. This must have marked a change of direction in the erotic life of an *eromenos*. In this relationship the *eromenos* is passive, emotionally and sexually. The *eromenos* is not to yield too willingly and not to be motivated by financial considerations. In the Platonic ideal of this relationship as set out in Plato's dialogues the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, there is a noble educative element. The older man is to inform the younger with a love of the good, the true and the beautiful. This is implied near the beginning of the *Symposium* in the speech of Pausanias:

When a lover and his favourite come together . . . when the lover (*erastes*) is able to contribute towards wisdom and excellence, and the beloved (*eromenos*) is anxious to improve his education and knowledge in general, then and then only, when these two principles coincide, and in no other circumstances is it honourable for a boy to yield to his lover. . . . this is the heavenly Love which is associated with the heavenly goddess, and which is valuable both to states and to individuals because it entails upon both lover and beloved self discipline for the sake of excellence.

(*Symposium*, 184d, 185b)

In the dialogue as a whole, as in Plato's thought generally, there is a subordination of the physical in favour of the spiritual, and in what the world has come to understand by the notion of 'Platonic love' the physical is entirely sublimated. For present purposes what these dialogues show in the assumptions underlying them and taken for granted is that homosexual desire could be seen as natural part of life that could be harnessed to the public good.

A comic perspective on the more relaxed attitude to pederasty is apparent in Aristophanes' *Birds*, where one of the characters gives an example of the kind of behaviour he would like to see in an ideal city: 'Well, a chap comes up to you and he's quite purple in the face with fury, and he's got this very good-looking son, you see, and he says: "What's all this I hear about you and my boy? That's a fine way to go on, I must say. You meet him coming from the gymnasium, clean and gleaming after his bath – and you don't make love to him, you don't speak to him, you don't go near him, you don't even tickle his balls. And you call yourself a friend of mine"' (137–142). Such a comic reversal of expectation could never have been made in a

public performance in the modern world before the second half of the twentieth century.

This comic reversal suggests that the social reality of pederastic relations in Athens must have been rather different from Plato's ideal. If we ask what might be implied in Pausanias's phrase 'yield to a lover', social convention which fell short of approving actual penetration allowed intercrural intercourse between the thighs of the *eromenos*, as sometimes depicted on vases. Status was a vital factor. Any adult taking the passive role was frowned upon and subject to ridicule, as is evident in the plays of Aristophanes. Particular standards of sexual behaviour were expected of adult male citizens. For instance, it was illegal for an adult male citizen to engage in prostitution or to hire out a citizen boy for similar purposes; in this latter case seller and buyer could lose their political rights. It is doubtful that there was any such protection offered to non citizens boys or slaves. Male prostitutes could not hold office but most of these were probably non citizens.

Very many vases survive, mostly Attic, from the sixth century onwards which are decorated with scenes implicating pederasty. On many of them is the generic inscription, *ho pais kalos*, 'the boy is beautiful', indicating that pederasty was widely appreciated and practiced. In most cases, the beardless *eromenos* as well as the *erastes*, is an athletic individual with a well-developed chest and strong legs as in figures 31 and 33, having the appearance of a late adolescent rather than a young boy. Such was the predominant artistic convention. The majority of the scenes have been classified as courtship scenes where the *erastes* presents or has presented a gift to the *eromenos*, often of a hare or a cock or occasionally a lyre. Various stages in this courtship are represented; sometimes the *eromenos* is fully clothed, sometimes his cloak is open to reveal his naked body. In many, the *erastes* touches or gestures towards the head of the *eromenos* with one hand and his genitals with the other. The *erastes* may reveal an erection as in figure 33 but the *eromenos* is invariably shown to be passively unaroused. Some representations, a minority of what survives, show as do the two illustrated here a relationship beyond courtship. In figure 31, the *eromenos* is more actively responsive, stroking the chest of the *erastes*; while the pair gaze intently into one another's eyes. In 33 the *eromenos* has his arm around the neck of his *erastes* who is positioned as if ready for consummation. The courtship gift in this case is a bag of dice or knucklebones. The props behind the *erastes*, the strigil and sponge, indicate the setting for this scene is the gymnasium. In figure 31 the context is the symposium. The wreaths on their heads, the lute and the table in front of the luxurious reclining couch on which are placed two wine cups, *kylikes*, evoke the festivity of this social ritual. The broad two handled *kylix* is the cup used in the symposium generally. A slave boy filled them for the symposiasts from the large mixing bowl called a *krater* which held the wine. Many of the representations of pederastic encounters are, in fact, found on these *kylikes*, whether round the sides, the



FIGURE 33 Attic red-figure kylix by the Byrgos-painter, showing a crouching man with a naked boy on the inside tondo. Ashmolean Museum, AN1967.304

Source: Photo © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

frieze, or on the inside of the base, the tondo. Potters and painters were not simply indulging their own fancy but responding to the tastes of their buyers. There was clearly a well-developed market for such wares.

Vases are not the only physical remains testifying to the love of boys. A marble slab discovered in the Attic countryside is inscribed in crude archaic lettering as follows: 'Here a man swore a solemn oath for love of a boy to mingle in strife and tearful war. I am sacred to Gnathios, who lost his life in war' (IG 1³ 1399 c. 500 BC). Presumably this memorial was erected by the beloved boy. This is interesting for several reasons. The archaic lettering suggests an early date and its discovery in the countryside might suggest that pederasty was not simply a behavioural pattern of the urban elite. Finally, the inscription (unlike other surviving graffiti) memorialises a bond marked by loyalty and bravery.

In Plato's *Symposium* Pausanias makes distinctions between Athenian practice and that of other states, finding that Athens represents a mean between the two extremes of the Dorian cities of Sparta, Elis and Boeotia on the one hand where love between men is accepted entirely without disgrace, and on the other, many parts of Ionia and other states under Persian rule, where the situation is quite the reverse. Persian condemnation he puts down to their absolutism, which looks unfavourably on strong friendships and private attachments.

The truth of this was actually experienced by our tyrants at Athens; it was the love of Aristogeiton and the strong affection of Harmodius which destroyed their power.

(Plato, *Symposium*, 182c)

Thucydides tells how most Athenians believed that this famous pair of aristocratic lovers had expelled the tyrants in 514 by killing Hipparchus, a son of Peisistratus, though Hippias his elder brother was actually tyrant at the time. (1.20) According to Thucydides, Harmodius was then 'the most beautiful young man in the flower of his youth' (6, 54). When Hipparchus had tried to seduce him, his lover Aristogeiton, fearful that he might lose his beloved, plotted the overthrow of the tyranny. The pair, who lost their lives in the attempt, came to have almost mythical status. Aristotle records that the *polemarchos* (the war archon) was responsible for making offerings for those who died in war and specifically names the two tyrannicides. There was a statue of them in the agora, the political and civic centre of the *polis*. An inscription records their claim to fame. 'A great light arose for the Athenians, when Aristogeiton and Harmodios slew Hipparchos; the two of them made their native land equal in laws' (IG 1³ 502). The statue is primarily a political symbol but also bears indirect witness to the honour accorded to love between men at Athens, particularly as it is apparent from reconstructions of it that they are represented as athletic nudes, one bearded and the other youthfully beardless, the artistic convention that signifies a pederastic relation (fig. 34). In addition to this public recognition, they were also celebrated in drinking songs doubtless performed privately at symposia, a familiar context for pederastic relations.

At Sparta, pederasty was institutionalised in the *agoge*, the Spartiate educational system; older men chose young boys and paired with them until they married at a later age. In the Dorian city of Thebes in Boeotia, a special military unit called The Sacred Band was formed in the early part of the fourth century composed of 150 pairs of lovers who fought side by side. They were a formidable force and under Epaminondas instrumental in the defeat of the Spartans at the battle of Leuctra in 371, until they themselves were wiped out by Philip of Macedon at the battle of Chaeroneia in 338. Plutarch accounts for their success on the grounds that 'lovers,



FIGURE 34 Statue group of the tyrant-slayers, Aristogeiton (left) and Harmodius (right), Roman marble copy of the Athenian bronze originals. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples

Source: Photo © Dennis Taylor

ashamed to be base in the sight of their lovers, and the beloved before their lovers, willingly rush into danger for the relief of one another' (*Life of Pelopidas*, 18, 3). He also has a record of Philip's reaction when on inspecting the dead after the battle he was told that he was looking at an army of lovers and beloveds: 'he wept and said "May those who suspect these man of doing or suffering anything shameful perish miserably!"' (*Life of Pelopidas*, 18, 7). It is unlikely in a permanent force that the *eromenoi* were all adolescents, suggesting that these relationships carried on into adult life consistent with the judgement of Pausanias above concerning more open practice in Sparta and Boeotia than in Athens. It is perhaps relevant to recall here that one of the most solemn Spartan festivals celebrated over three days at the sanctuary of Apollo at Amylcae just south of Sparta was the Hyakinthia. Hyacinth was a beautiful youth beloved by Apollo who accidentally killed him with a discus. However, this festival was attended by both sexes. Whatever the sexual attitudes and practices of Spartan men, like the other Greeks, they were expected to do their duty to the gods, the state, and the ancestors by marrying and producing children. Indeed at Sparta there were penalties for not doing so, just as there were incentives for reproduction. A Spartan who fathered three boys became exempt from military service, and exempt from taxes if he fathered four.

WOMEN

From these two relationships – husband and wife, master and slave – the household takes its rise. Hesiod aptly says: 'First a wife, then an ox [the poor man's servant] for the plough.' The household, therefore, is an association established by nature for the supply of men's everyday needs.

(Aristotle, *Politics*, 1252b)

In the household (*oikos*) comprising the inhabitants and their possessions is the same hierarchical structure that we see writ large in the *polis* itself, in which all power rests in the adult male citizenry. In Aristotle's thought it is possible to argue that this hierarchy reflects basic biology wherein man is the active principle in the act of generation:

Further, a boy actually resembles a woman in physique and a woman is, so to speak, a sterile male; the female, in fact, is female on account of an incapacity of sorts, by being unable to concoct semen from the final stage of nutriment.

(On the Generation of Animals, 728a)

But the separation between the sexes seems typical throughout Greece and throughout time. Although it has often been said the women have more freedom and are

more honoured in Homeric times, the social arrangements implicit in Homer are in essential respects thoroughly patriarchal. The sharp division between the sexes is marked in the architectural design of the Greek house itself, for women had separate quarters, the *gynaecoonitis*. This division is certainly apparent in the social as in the political arrangements of the Athenians.

Direct evidence for the social implications of this division is hard to come by, for all the main texts and images in sculpture or on vases are composed by men. However, the legal position of an Athenian woman emerges quite clearly; it was similar to that of a child who had not yet come of age. She was always under the rule or guardianship of her father in his lifetime, or after his death of her brothers, or, if they were under age, of her next of kin, her nearest male family relative, her *kyrios*. Orphan girls with no immediate male kin were provided with a *kyrios* by the state. If when her father died, there were no brothers of the same father, she inherited the estate as an *epikleros*, 'someone who went with the property'; she could not own it in her own right. The dictionary definition of the word *epikleros* explains: 'At Athens, the next male of kin was entitled to marry an heiress, or, if there was no inheritance or a small one, he was bound by law either to marry her or endow her from his own estate; in order to marry her, he was enabled to divorce his existing wife; and in case of several claimants, the case was tried at law.' The next of kin rule meant that marriages between cousins or between uncle and niece were not uncommon. Anyone who married an *epikleros* had guardianship of the property, which was destined to go to her male heirs.

In normal circumstances, it was the *kyrios* who was legally entitled to arrange the marriage of a woman or girl. In the majority of cases it would not have occurred to the Athenians to give any power of choice to the woman, or girl, for in most cases women were married at an early age, from fifteen onwards, or perhaps earlier. Nor was there usually any question of two people 'falling in love'; marriage was very much a business arrangement involving two people who may have been scarcely acquainted.

As a general rule, a dowry came with the bride and had to be returned in the event of any failure of the marriage, so that the dowry, particularly if large, could be considered to be something of a safeguard for the woman. The dowry was clearly the daughter's share of her paternal estate, which she could not inherit in her own right. It was intended to enable the husband to support his wife and provide the necessities of life for her and their children. In the event of the death of the husband, the wife returned to the *kyria* of her father's house, or if her sons had come of age, she might choose to live with them. They were legally obliged to support their mother and could be subject to prosecution if they failed to do so. The corollary of her permanent disability before the law was the legal requirement to guardianship on the part of her own family. In the interrogation of candidates for the archonship cited

above, one of the questions asked concerns the support of parents, so that anyone who failed to do this was liable to have witness against them in this respect. In view of women's legal incapacity, it is not surprising to find that it was much more difficult for a woman to obtain a divorce than for a man, as Medea justly complains in the play of Euripides that bears her name.

The basis of marriage was the marriage pledge. After Pericles had tightened up the law of citizenship, when a youth of eighteen came before his deme to register himself as a full citizen, he had to offer proof that both his parents were Athenian and that they were married; this consisted of witnesses to the marriage pledge which had been made at the start. There is a version of this pledge in a fourth century play as follows:

I give you this woman for the ploughing of legitimate children.
I agree.
And a dowry of three talents.
I accept that with pleasure.

(Menander, *Perikeiromene*, 1012–15)

It is apparent from all this that the main function of the woman was to produce legitimate children for the maintenance of the husband's *oikos*. Accordingly there were very strict laws for anyone caught in adultery. An adulteress had to be divorced and could no longer take part in religious rites.

A conservative view of the ideal Athenian wife can be found in Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*, a Socratic dialogue in which Socrates is in conversation with one Ischomachos, a well-to-do 'gentleman'. He tells Socrates the story of his early, successful, schooling of his wife, who subsequently came to be an excellent household manager of what looks like his substantial farm property in the Attic countryside. Socrates asks whether she already knew how to manage her sphere of responsibility:

'How on earth could she know that when I received her, Socrates?', he asked. 'She wasn't yet fifteen years old when she came to me, and in her life up till then considerable care had been taken that she should see and hear and discover as little as possible. Don't you think she should be content if all she knew when she came was how to turn wool into a cloak, and all she's seen was how wool-spinning is assigned to the female servants? I was content, Socrates,' he added, 'because when she came, she'd been excellently coached as far as her appetite [stomach] was concerned, and that seemed to me to be the most important training, for the husband as well as the wife.' . . .

'For it is better for the woman to stay indoors than to go out, but it is more reprehensible for the man to stay indoors than to look after the outside work' . . .

'I also told her that, where our property was concerned, she shouldn't be annoyed at my giving her more jobs to do than I gave to the servants; I pointed out that the servants' involvement in their master's assets was limited to fetching, looking after and protecting, but unless their master lets them, they don't have the right actually to make use of any of the assets – it is only the master's right to make use of anything he wants.'

(Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*, 7, 5–6, 20; 9, 17)

The age difference between husband and wife puts the wife at a disadvantage and so does her upbringing. There is no sign that girls had any education other than that which might equip them for the role of housekeeper. The expectation here is that the wife will stay at home and superintend the servants in the management of the house and in the spinning and weaving of cloth. This may be representative of the wealthy upper class but how far down the social scale such expectations about the role and conduct of wives are applicable it is difficult to know. There is evidence that women, presumably from poorer classes, could sell food and clothing in the markets. Most of these must have been foreign women but there is no evidence that citizen women were forbidden such activities. In the plays of Aristophanes women are shown in various occupations: selling bread in the market, and ribbons and myrtle wreaths used at sacrifices and drinking parties. Euripides is much mocked for having a mother who used to sell vegetables.

Alongside these expectations about the role and behaviour of Athenian wives may be put the famous advice given to widows at the end of Pericles' funeral oration.

Perhaps I should say a word or two on the duties of women to those among you who are now widowed. I can say all I have to say in a short word of advice. Your great glory is not to be inferior to what God has made you, and the greater glory of a woman is to be least talked about by men, whether they are praising you or criticising you.

(Thucydides, 2, 46)

Women are certainly not talked about by Thucydides; his history does not mention a single woman by name either in praise or blame. Pericles' advice to the widows of the fallen is phrased in such a way that it is difficult not to see it in the light of more general restrictions on the role of women in Classical Athens.

Wives, however, are not the only women on the Athenian scene:

Hetairas we keep for pleasure, concubines for attending day to day to the body, and wives for producing heirs, and for standing trusty guard on our household property.

(Apollodorus, *Against Neaera*, Pseudo-Demosthenes 59.122)

Concubines and *hetairai* (courtesans, companions, escorts) were not usually citizens. From early days, the Athenians had taken a pragmatic attitude to prostitution. Solon is said to have legalised brothels and prostitutes (*pornai*) were subject to tax, a procedure that involves state recognition. Mention has already been made of the flute players who might provide sexual services at symposia. Such scenes of a sexual nature are depicted upon vases. Doubtless then as now there were different classes of prostitute. At the expensive end of the market were the *hetairai*. Aristophanes gives us a glimpse of here of the sex trade in Corinth amongst both women and boys.

- Chremylos And they say the Corinthian *hetairai*
 When any poor man tries his chances with them,
 Just ignore him, but if a rich man arrives
 They turn their anus to him right away!
- Karion They say the youth do the same too
 Not for their *erastai* but for the money.
- Chremylos Only the male prostitutes, not the well-born boys;
 They don't ask for money.
- Karion What do they ask for then?
- Chremylos One asks for a good horse, another for hunting hounds.
- Karion They are probably ashamed to ask for money
 So they disguise their wickedness with another name.

(Wealth, 149–159)

The most famous *hetaira* is Aspasia, a Milesian woman whom Pericles took as his partner later in his life after he parted company with his wife, who by that time had borne him two sons. A *hetaira*, therefore, might be a mistress and move up the social scale. According to Plutarch (a late witness),

Pericles too, according to some writers, was attracted to Aspasia mainly because of her rare political wisdom. Socrates visited her from time to time with his disciples and some of his close friends brought their wives to listen to her conversation, even though she carried on a trade that was anything but honourable or even respectable, since it consisted of keeping a house of young courtesans. . . . And in Plato's *Menexenus* – even though the first section is written partly in parody of the rhetoricians – there is certainly this element of truth, namely that the woman had the reputation of being associated with a whole succession of Athenians, who came to her to learn rhetoric.

(Life of Pericles, 24)

In the *Menexenus*, the dialogue to which Plutarch refers, Socrates has this to say of Aspasia's talents:

I heard Aspasia composing a funeral oration about these very dead. For she had been told, as you were saying, that the Athenians were going to choose a speaker, and she repeated to me the sort of speech which he should deliver – partly improvising and partly from previous thought, putting together fragments of the funeral oration which Pericles spoke, but which, as I believe, she composed.

(Plato, *Menexenus*, 236b)

Whatever we make of the truth of this, it is clear that a *hetaira* could be rather more than simply a sexual partner; in fact, she could be a cultivated intellectual companion.

In other cities, women might have greater freedom than they had in Classical Athens. Evidence from the legal code of the city of Gortyn in Crete revised about 450 makes it clear women here had greater inheritance rights. They could inherit from both parents and even if they had brothers they were allowed a portion of the estate. Their dowry was also determined by the value of the estate and not simply the arbitrary decision of her father. If an heiress had no paternal relations or if they or she did not wish to marry, she could marry anyone she wished from the tribe. Her fate, therefore, was not so tied up with the maintenance of the *oikos* as at Athens.

Arrangements for women at Sparta were also very different. According to the Lycurgan principle that their role in the community was to provide healthy Spartiate children, they were brought up to exercise their bodies and not required to marry until they were physically at their peak. Far from being hidden away in the home, they could assemble together and exercise naked even in the sight of men, which caused much scandal in the rest of Greece. As their male children were taken away at the age of seven to be brought up by the state, their main function as adults was to look after the *kleros* allotted to their husbands, while they in turn were fulfilling their role in the *sussitia*. They could own and inherit property, to the extent that in the fourth century with the decline of the Spartiate soldiery it is estimated that women owned two fifths of Spartan land.

But there was one sphere in which women participated in civic life and played a distinctive part, as clearly enunciated by the female speaker in a fragment of one of Euripides' plays.

And what's more, when it comes to the gods – for I think this is of the first importance – we have the greatest share. For women interpret the mind of Loxias (Apollo) in the temple of Phoebus. By the holy foundations of Dodona beside the sacred oak the female race conveys the thoughts of Zeus to all Greeks who wish to know it. As for the holy rituals performed for the Fates and the Unnamed goddesses, these are not ordained as holy rituals for men, but among women they thrive, all of them. In affairs dealing with the gods the appointed right of women stands thus.

(Euripides, *Melanippe Captive* fr. 494 *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*,
edited by R. Kanicht, 2004, translated by Bonnie MacLachlan:
Women in Ancient Greece, Continuum, 2012, p.115)



FIGURE 35 Bronze figure of a Spartan woman semi naked in athletic pose, c. 520–500 BC, GR 1876.5-10.1 [Bronze 208]. Photo © The Trustees of the British Museum

Women also had their own special religious festival from which men were excluded such as the Thesmophoria, taking place over several days in various parts of Greece, and celebrating Demeter as bringer of civilizing agriculture and social laws to do with the home and family (see above p. 105). Women and girls took part in other festivals, such as the Panathenaia at Athens, and sang *parthenaia* ‘maidens’ songs’ at Spartan festivals (see p. 55). Nor on the evidence of Plato were they excluded from the dramatic festivals even if they had no special role here, at least in the case of tragedy,

talking of which Socrates remarks: ‘Then we have now discovered a form of rhetoric addressed to a people composed alike of children and women and men, slaves and free’ (*Gorgias* 502d).

Women are often depicted on vases offering libations or assisting at sacrifices. In the more private sphere, one of the duties outside the home that was particularly the province of women was officiation at funerals. Women gave libations to the dead, as does Electra in the *Libation-bearers*. That Antigone should see it as her duty to perform burial rites for her brother, Polyneices, might be considered part of her assumption of a traditional role that she supports in affirming ‘the unwritten, everlasting laws of the gods’ (*Antigone* 454–455). Equally traditional is Creon’s



FIGURE 36 A woman pours an offering from a jug over a flaming altar, Attic red-figure vase by Macron

Source: © J. Etherington

instruction to the palace guards to take the sisters away indoors and where they cannot wander about (ll. 578–579). Drawing conclusions about social attitudes from dramatic representations is fraught with difficulty, but it may be worth remarking in conclusion that the various male dramatists have a variety of strong female characters often sympathetically represented in their plays and often honoured with central roles. This would not have happened if the dramatic representations had not to some extent mediated aspects of a social and human reality in the audience's eyes.

SLAVES

It is even more difficult to glean much information about slavery in the Greek world than it is about women. Evidence is sporadic, difficult to interpret and much debated. Most of it represents a view from the elite. In particular, there is no agreement about estimates of numbers, a vital topic in assessing the degree to which a society was dependent upon slavery.

Slaves are present but not prominent in the Homeric poems. In the *Iliad*, the Trojan women are aware that slavery awaits them after the fall of Troy. In the *Odyssey*, the faithful steward Eumaeus, though of noble blood, after a misadventure had been bought by Odysseus's father Laertes. He had also bought Eurycleia, the nurse of Odysseus and Telemachus, for twenty oxen (*Odyssey* 1, 429–430).

Later, two categories within slavery may be distinguished in the Greek world. One exemplified by the Spartan helots and dating from the archaic period comprises those conquered in war and forced by their conquerors to work for them in what had previously been their own country. The Spartan helots were controlled by the Spartiate citizenry but seem to have been owned by the state. In dire emergencies the Spartans conscripted helots to fight, particularly in the later period of the city's decline, and gave them their freedom if they survived. But for the most part they were tied to the land as serfs, where they could maintain a family and communal life. They were probably not, therefore, at the arbitrary whim of a single owner. However, given that they were subject to the extraordinary methods of control employed by the Spartiates from time to time (see above p. 54), they suffered general oppression. There were other serf systems in Crete and Thessaly.

In the course of time there was a reluctance to enslave fellow Greeks, though the practice did not entirely die out. After killing the male inhabitants of the island of Melos in 416 the Athenians sold the women and children into slavery, and according to Xenophon feared the same fate for themselves after their defeat at Aegisopotami in 405 (*Hellenika*, 2, 2, 3–4). Nevertheless, by the Classical period most slaves seem to have been non-Greek. An inscription recording the property of those implicated in the mutilation of the *hermae* record that one Kephisodoros had sixteen slaves, all

non-Greek from such places as Thrace and Illyria, though he was a metic and not himself a Greek citizen (IG 1³ 421). In Athens slavery had developed early; Solon in the early sixth century had freed debt slaves and outlawed the practice, freeing the poorest class of citizens from economic slavery. Trading and piracy brought slaves to Athens, some of whom were employed by the state, such as the so-called Scythian Archers who served as a rudimentary police force; other more unsavoury tasks such as removing bodies of those who die in the street and road sweeping were carried out by public slaves. However, the vast majority were owned privately having been bought on the market as chattel slaves. Little is known about the way these markets operated but it seems that slave traders had an evil reputation. Numbers increased with the acquisition of empire in the period of democracy, and as a result of their own reproduction, but estimates of the total vary widely and there is much debate about the extent of the Athenian dependency upon slave labour, particularly on the farms of Attica, where much of the population lived. In a discussion of the household at the opening of his *Politics*, Aristotle remarks 'Hence masters whose position is such they are not obliged to toil keep a steward and devote themselves to philosophy or politics' (1255b). This is clearly about the well-to-do and does not imply that Aristotle believed that the larger political life of Athens depended upon the leisure time afforded to citizens by the use of slaves. Larger establishments such as the estate described by Xenophon in his *Oeconomicus* employed slaves, sometimes in significant numbers, but there is no reliable information about widespread use of agricultural slave labour in the smaller units that constituted the majority holdings.

There is little doubt that slaves played an important role in the Athenian economy when employed by the rich in particular areas such as mining and quarrying.

It is an old story, trite enough to those of us who have cared to attend to it, how once on a time Nicias, the son of Niceratus, owned a thousand men in the silver mines, whom he let out to Sosias, a Thracian, on the following terms. Sosias was to pay him a net obol a day, without charge or deduction, for every slave of the thousand, and be responsible for keeping up the number perpetually at that figure.

(Xenophon, *Revenues* 4.14)

Many were involved in building and public works where they might work alongside freemen for the same wages. From an inscription recording building arrangements for the Erechtheum, the temple of Athena and Erechtheus (the deity's adopted son and an early king of Athens), of 86 of the workman whose status can be identified, 24 are citizens, 42 are metics and 20 are slaves, working with the same wage for the same job (IG 1³ 476). Others were employed as artisans either directly for their master or working for themselves and paying their master a daily sum. The evidence of the orator Demosthenes suggests their role in the business life of the city.

My father, men of the jury, left two factories, both doing a large business. One was a sword factory, employing thirty two or thirty three slaves, most of them worth five or six minae each and none less than three minae. From these my father received a clear income of twelve minae. The other was a sofa factory, employing twenty slaves, given to my father as security for a debt of forty minae. These brought him a clear income of twelve minae.

(Demosthenes, *Against Aphobus 1, 4*)

A mina comprised 600 obols; 6 obols make one drachma, considered to be a daily wage for a skilled worker. Thucydides reports that after the Sicilian disaster, when the Spartans occupied Attica for a time 'more than 20,000 slaves, the majority of whom were skilled workers, deserted' (Thucydides 7, 27). This figure must have been a guess, but suggests the number of slaves providing skilled labour was large.

There were clearly large numbers of domestic slaves employed in households as housekeepers, maids, chaperones and tutors of children of the well-to-do. Outside the house they functioned as chaperones. There is the suggestive remark in Aristophanes that to go out without a single attendant was a sign of poverty (*Women in the Assembly*, 593). It may also be the case that hoplites were accompanied on campaigns by a single slave in attendance. In dire emergencies they had more than a servant's role, fighting alongside their masters as foot soldiers at Marathon and in the navy at the battle of Arginusae at the end of the Peloponnesian war.

As to their treatment, they were at the mercy of the character and disposition of their owner. Legally, they had no rights but were their master's property to the extent that they had to take the name he gave them and were accounted among his goods and chattels. But the following complaint suggests that they could be well integrated into the community:

The license allowed to slaves and aliens at Athens is extreme and a blow is forbidden there, nor will a slave make way for you. I shall tell you why this is the custom of the country. If it were legal for a slave or an alien or a freedman to be beaten by a freeman, you would often have taken the Athenian for a slave and struck him; for the commons there do not dress better than the slaves and the aliens, and their general appearance is in no way superior.

(Old Oligarch [attrib to Xenophon], *Athenian Constitution 1, 10*)

At Athens, too, there was a law against ill treatment, though it could not be invoked by the slave, only by a citizen. On the other hand, their evidence in a court of law was only valid if given under torture. Slaves could be freed and become resident aliens (metics) but it is not possible to say how often this happened and whether they were still obligated to their former masters.



FIGURE 37 Tattooed Thracian slave girl with a jar on her head; the lines on her neck and arms signify her status and origin, Attic red-figure hydria, Louvre, Paris

Source: © J Etherington

The treatment of slaves was a matter of theoretical discussion by philosophers and moralists. Plato, who dispensed with them in his ideal Republic, in his *Laws*, accepts the institution of slavery as a fact of life and his recommendations about their treatment are made pragmatically from the point of view of the owner for whom slavery is largely a management problem (*Laws* 6, 7766–7778a). The same can be said of Xenophon in his *Oeconomicus* and Aristotle in his *Politics*. The latter goes further, enunciating a doctrine of natural slavery: ‘Clearly, then, some individuals are by nature free, others by nature slaves; and for these latter slavery is both expedient and right’ (*Politics* 1255a). A fragment of the fourth century comic poet Philemon

asserts to the contrary 'no one is naturally a slave, it is a matter of *tyche*' (fortune or chance). But we do not hear of abolitionists in Classical Greece.

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4 LITERATURE



The creation of poetry generally is due to two causes, both rooted in human nature. The instinct for imitation is inherent in man from his earliest days. . . . Also inborn in us is the instinct to enjoy works of imitation. . . . The instinct for imitation, then, is natural to us, as is also a feeling for music and for rhythm – and metres are obviously detached sections of rhythms.

Aristotle, *Poetics*, 4

INTRODUCTION

For epic, Homer had used the dactylic hexameter, a line composed of six units or feet. Each unit (for which the Greek word is *metron*, a measure) may be a dactyl, made up of a long syllable followed by two short syllables (— ~) or by a spondee, made up of two long syllables (— —). Long and short refer to the time taken in pronunciation, to the ‘quantity’ or length of the syllables. Greek metre, unlike English, is not determined by a pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables. In literature after Homer, we see the establishment of new metrical forms used for kinds that developed after him. The elegaic couplet, consisting of a hexameter followed by a pentameter, was used for epitaphs, inscriptions and epigrams. It may be represented as follows:

— ~ | — ~ | — ~ | — ~ | — ~ | — ~
— ~ | — ~ | — | — ~ | — ~ | —

The pentameter line is actually two and a half feet repeated. At particular points in the line, the pattern allows syllables to be either long or short, thus making the metre very flexible. The iambic, which later became the metre for the spoken parts

of drama, was first used for occasional poems, such as short invectives and festive songs. The pattern of the iambic pentameter line is:

u _ | u _ | u _ | u _ | u _

Both elegiacs and iambics were used by an early practitioner, Archilochus, of the mid-seventh century, fragments of whose work survive as the earliest post-Homeric poetry. Rhyme, which is standard in English verse before the twentieth century and is employed in some of the translations used in this book, was not generally used in Greek verse.

Early lyric poetry (called by the Greeks melic, whence melody, for it was always sung in public performance, often at a symposium or drinking party) has two main branches. The Aeolian, from Aeolia in northern Asia Minor, is monodic, that is composed for one voice, and monostrophic, that is written in stanzas that repeat the same metrical form. Its two main representatives, Sappho and Alcaeus of the late seventh century, both came from Lesbos and wrote in the Aeolic dialect of Greek. They have given their names to their favoured metrical forms, which they may have invented. Sappho seems to have been at the centre of some kind of religious association, dedicated to Aphrodite and the Muses, which had young girls for its members. Much of her poetry is concerned with the lives and loves of these women. One of the most famous is quoted by the rhetorician Longinus in his treatise *On the Sublime*, cited here in the version of the eighteenth-century poet Ambrose Philips.

Bless'd as the immortal gods is he,
The youth who fondly sits by thee,
And hears and sees thee all the while
Softly speak and sweetly smile.

'Twas this deprived my soul of rest,
And raised such tumults in my breast;
For while I gazed, in transport tossed,
My breath was gone, my voice was lost.

My bosom glowed; the subtle flame
Ran quick through all my vital frame;
O'er my dim eyes a darkness hung,
My ears with hollow murmurs rung.

In dewy damps my limbs were chilled,
My blood with gentle horrors thrilled;

My feeble pulse forgot to play,
I fainted, sunk, and died away.

Longinus then comments:

Are you not astonished at the way in which, as though they were gone from her and belonged to another, she at one and the same time calls up soul and body, ears, tongue, eyes, and colour; how, uniting opposites, she freezes while she burns, is both out of her senses and in her right mind? For she is either terrified or not far from dying. And all this is done so that not one emotion may be seen in her, but a concourse of emotions. All such emotions as these are awakened in lovers, but it is, as I said, the selection of them in their most extreme forms and their fusion into a single whole that have given the poem its distinction.

(On the Sublime, 10)

Another ancient critic, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, cites a poem of Sappho to exemplify a polished style of composition where there is metrical harmony, euphonious diction and a flowing continuity (*On Literary Composition*, 23). The following is an English Sapphic based on a surviving fragment of the Greek poet herself:

Bough with apples laden around me whisper
Cool the waters trickle among the branches;
And I listen, till a languor
Stealeth upon me.

(Percy Osborn, 1919)

Alcaeus wrote hymns to the gods, war songs, political poems, love poems, encomia and drinking songs. Only a little of the work of these early lyric poets survives, mostly in the form of fragments. Many of these are preserved on papyrus as illustrated in the fragment of Alcaeus (fig. 38).

The Dorian choral lyric involving dancing developed at Sparta and characteristically had a triadic structure involving strophe, antistrophe and epode (see p. 146). These grander choral lyrics were invariably more public in character. There are many kinds of choral lyric, e.g. the hymeneal, the hymn, the dithyramb in honour of Dionysus, the threnody, the encomium. The Theban poet Pindar (c. 518–c. 466), who used the Doric dialect and form, wrote in all these kinds, but only his *epinician* or triumphal odes celebrating the victories of competitors in the Greek games (Olympian, Pythian, Isthmian and Nemean) survive in complete form, mostly having a triadic structure. His odes are heroic in tone, grandiloquent in expression and digressive in structure with mythical illustration; they celebrate aristocratic values. In

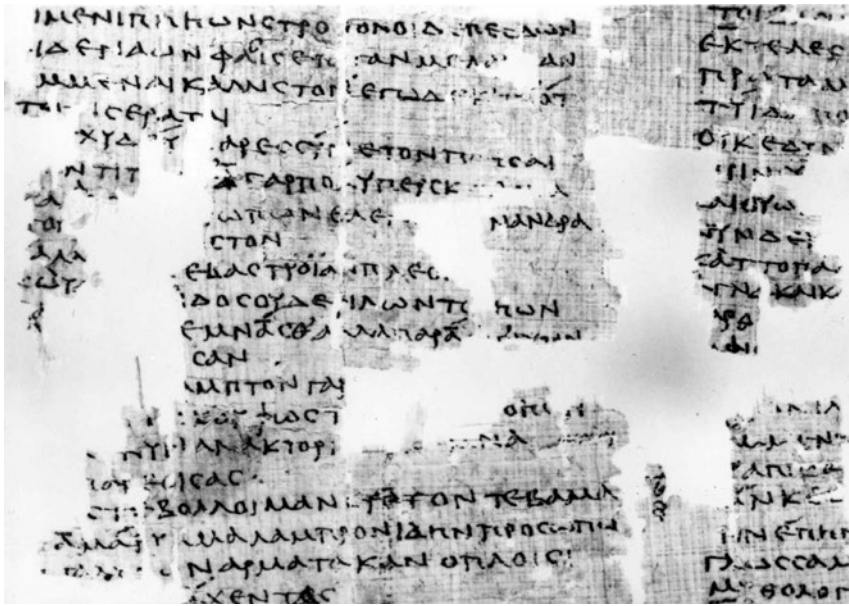


FIGURE 38 A Greek papyrus

his imitation of the second Olympian ode, the seventeenth-century poet Abraham Cowley, though, unlike Pindar or any other Classical poet, he uses a verse form with a rhyme scheme, nevertheless manages to strike a note of grand enthusiasm reminiscent of Pindar's style and manner. The ode is in praise of the charioteer Theron, whose victory the poet associates with the mythical founder of the Olympian games, the heroic archetype Heracles (Alcides).

Queen of all harmonious things,
 Dancing words, and speaking strings,
 What god, what hero wilt thou sing?
 What happy man to equal glories bring?
 Begin, begin thy noble choice,
 And let the hills around reflect the image of thy voice.
 Pisa does to Jove belong,
 Jove and Pisa claim thy song.
 The fair first-fruits of war, th'Olympic games,
 Alcides offered up to Jove;
 Alcides too thy strings may move;
 But, oh, what man to join with these can worthy prove!
 Join Theron boldly to their sacred names;

Theron the next honour claims;
 Theron to no man gives place,
 Is first in Pisa's, and in virtue's race;
 Theron there, and he alone,
 Ev'n his own swift forefathers has outgone.

After a long mythological digression, the poet returns briefly to his subject, and in a celebrated passage allies his talent with the inexhaustible power of Nature figured in the soaring eagle of Zeus. Cowley is more diffuse than Pindar and hails the eagle as the bearer of Zeus' thunderbolts and for carrying of the beautiful youth Ganymede from earth to Olympus.

Let Art use method and good husbandry,
 Art lives on Nature's alms, is weak and poor;
 Nature herself has unexhausted store,
 Wallows in wealth, and runs a turning maze,
 That no vulgar eye can trace.
 Art instead of mounting high,
 About her humble food does hovering fly.
 Like the ignoble crow, rapine and noise does love,
 Whilst Nature, like the sacred bird of Jove,
 Now bears loud thunder, and anon with silent joy
 The beautiful Phrygian boy,
 Defeats the strong, o'ertakes the flying prey;
 And sometimes basks in th'open flames of day.
 And sometimes too he shrouds,
 His soaring wings among the clouds.

There are many lyrics on a smaller scale and on more personal themes surviving for the most part in fragments quoted in later authors. Such are the poems of Anacreon:

Come, boy, bring me a bowl, so that I may drink without stopping for breath; pour in ten ladles of water and five of wine, that I may once again ply the Bacchant with decorum. Come again, let us no longer practice Scythian drinking with clatter and shouting over our wine, but drink moderately amid beautiful songs of praise.

Lord, with whom Love the subduer and the blue-eyed nymphs and radiant Aphrodite play, as you haunt the lofty mountain peaks, I beseech you: come to me with kindly heart, hear my prayer and find it acceptable; give Cleobulus good counsel, Dionysus, that he accept my love.

Once again golden-haired Love strikes me with his purple ball and summons me to play with the girl in the fancy sandals; but she – she comes from Lesbos with its fine cities – finds fault with my hair because it is white, and gapes after another – girl.

TRAGEDY: FESTIVALS AND CONVENTIONS

Very little is known about the origins or even about the immediate antecedents of tragedy. The word itself means ‘goat song’ but the surviving plays have long lost any connection with rituals involving goats. Tragedy seems to have been an Athenian invention (little is recorded of drama in other cities) and was performed at the annual spring festival of the god Dionysus, called the Great or City Dionysia to distinguish it from the lesser rural festivities in honour of Dionysus. The Dionysia as a state institution is first associated with the tyrant Peisistratus and thereafter appears to have been reorganized by Cleisthenes. The city festival involving choral lyrics and drama was held over several days in March starting with a procession in honour of the god, for Peisistratus had established a temple on the southeastern side of the Acropolis. The first dramas seem to have been acted in the agora. A major advance is associated with the name of Thespis, the actor/dramatist (whence Thespian), who separated himself from the singing and dancing chorus to converse with the chorus leader. Aristotle accredits Aeschylus with the introduction of a second actor and Sophocles with a third (*Poetics*, 4). Comedies were introduced into the Dionysia shortly before the Persian Wars. By the time of the earliest extant play of Aeschylus, the City Dionysia consisted of a day of procession, followed by a contest in dithyrambic odes involving ten choruses, a day given over to comedies (five in number) and then three days of tragedies presented on a competitive basis. On each day, one playwright presented three tragic plays, which might be linked like the three plays that make up the Oresteian trilogy but usually were not related in plot (though it is difficult to believe that they did not form some sort of sequence in mood or theme). These were followed by something completely different, a grotesque satyr play, a kind of bawdy phallic romp, which doubtless had the function of providing comic relief at the end of the day. On the next and last day, judges (*kritai*, whence critic) drawn from the ten tribes and elected by lot gave their verdict. The competitive element existed from earliest times; Thespis is reputed to have won first prize for his drama in about 535. Plays might be revived in the rural Dionysia but had only one city performance. All our extant plays were written in the period after the Persian Wars and before the end of the Peloponnesian War. We have six plays by Aeschylus (525–456) and a record of more than eighty titles to his name. The authorship of the *Prometheus*, traditionally ascribed to him, has been disputed by some modern scholars. We have seven plays

of Sophocles (c. 496–406), together with a record of one hundred and twenty-three titles, and nineteen of Euripides (c. 485–406), together with a record of ninety-two titles. One satyr play by Euripides survives.

Arrangements for the festival were the responsibility of the eponymous archon (so called because his year of office was known and identified by his name), who chose from the wealthiest citizens a number of *choregoi*, who were required to pay for the training and equipping of a chorus. Some expenses were borne by the state. The archon also chose the playwrights (we do not know how); non-Athenians might and did apply and succeed. The role of a *choregos* was largely financial; the actual direction was left to the playwright, who not only wrote the play but also choreographed and provided the music. In the early days the playwright, like Thespis, was also an actor; with the addition of a second and third actor grew a class of professional actors, an honoured trade in Athens. In 449 prizes were instituted for actors. From the time of Pericles the state treasury paid for the seats of citizens, though non-citizens and foreigners were perhaps charged admission. Women may have been allowed to attend (there is some dispute about this) and even slaves, presumably if accompanying their masters.

Any modern visitor to the site of an ancient theatre (*theatron*, a watching place) will be impressed by its size. The so-called Periclean theatre of the 440s at Athens held about 14,000 spectators seated upon benches of wood, rising in tiers in a vast semicircle up the side of the Acropolis. This replaced the first theatre dating from the early fifth century. The stone theatre associated with the name of Lycurgus was completed in 330. The present theatre of Dionysus in Athens dates from Roman times. The vastness of the seating area, physical proof that ancient drama was community theatre, is complemented by the size of the performing area itself, dominated by a circle of about 60 feet in diameter in the centre of which was an altar to the god. The circle, called the *orchestra*, meaning dancing-place, must have been largely the preserve of the chorus (ten in number in the plays of Aeschylus, fifteen in Sophocles and subsequently), who danced and sang to the accompaniment of flutes. (None of the dance movements or musical accompaniment survives.) The division of the choral odes into strophe (turn), antistrophe (counterturn) and epode (after song) probably reflects the movement of the chorus through the *orchestra*. The complicated choral metres may be related to particular steps. It is noticeable that in the *parodos*, the first utterance of the chorus as they enter the *orchestra*, the metre is often anapaestic (.. — .. — .. —, etc.), giving the rhythm of a march. It seems likely that a wooden stage beyond the *orchestra* was introduced at an early date, and in about 460 came the first background building (*skene*), perhaps containing dressing rooms for actors and an entrance onto the stage. This area must have been the preserve of the principal actors. When Clytemnestra tempts Agamemnon into the palace by way of the purple carpet in the opening play of the *Oresteia*, produced in 458, it is to be

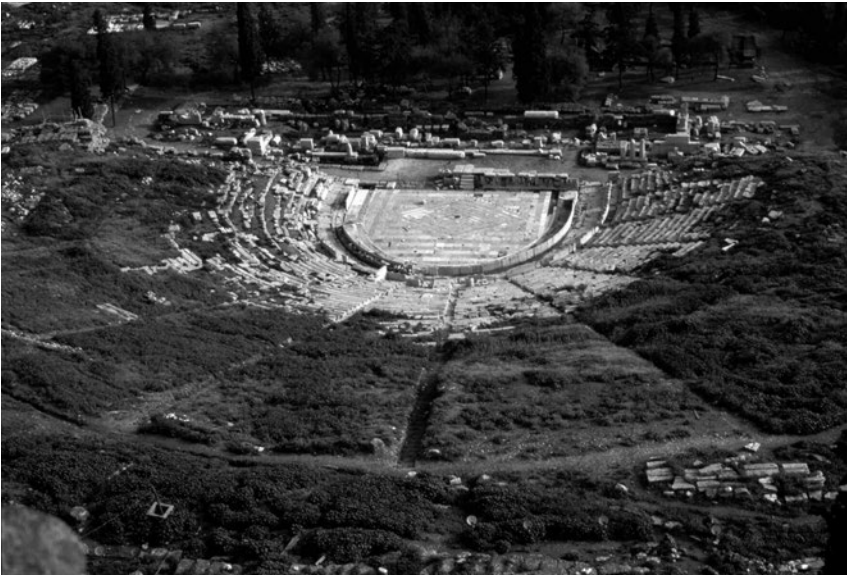


FIGURE 39 The theatre of Dionysus at Athens

Source: Courtesy of Richard Stoneman.

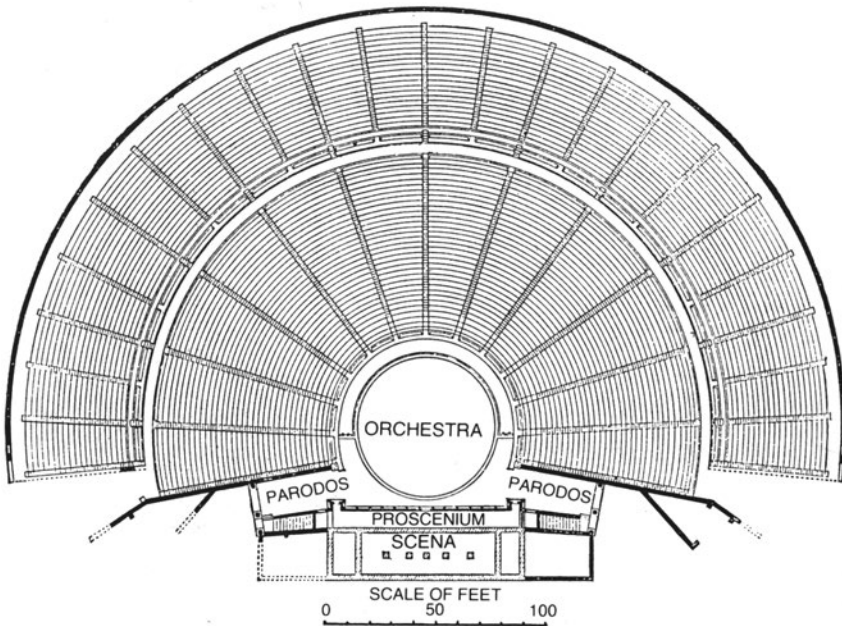


FIGURE 40 The theatre at Epidaurus

presumed that Agamemnon walks up steps on to a low stage – otherwise the carpet would not have been visible to the front rows of the audience – before entering the stage building. Nevertheless, all the acting took place out of doors in the open air. Any interior scenes might be played on the *ekkuklema*, probably a platform on wheels which could be rolled out, for example, in the *Oresteia* to reveal the bodies of Agamemnon and Cassandra killed offstage by Clytemnestra (acts of violence were usually committed offstage and reported). There was also a *mechane*, a crane by which a god might be lowered from the top of the theatre building, as for example in Euripides' *Electra* when Castor and Pollux descend to tidy up the loose ends of the plot. This use of the machine has given rise to the phrase 'deus ex machina' ('the god from the machine'). Gods also appeared on a balcony of the stage building called the *theologeion*.

The scale of the proceedings – the nearest spectators were a long way from the actors and the furthest were very distant indeed – precluded the development of naturalistic techniques in writing, staging or acting. Aristotle tells us that Sophocles introduced scene painting (*Poetics*, 4) but this can only have been very simple in effect; characters and chorus tell us in words where they are and what they are doing. As for acting, there must have been a particular style made necessary in large part by the physical conditions of the theatre. Even given the marvellous acoustics of the Greek theatre design, much effort must simply have been put into voice projection – Sophocles is said to have given up acting because he had a weak voice. Part of the acting style was dictated by conventional forms of attire. All performers (who were always male) wore masks, and the principal actors also donned special high boots or buskins called *kothurnoi*. Nevertheless, individuality was allowed for in the painting of masks to represent particular characters, and they could be changed from scene to scene. After he had blinded himself offstage at the end of the play to which he had given his name, King Oedipus doubtless entered with a blood-stained mask. Individuality could further be marked by the colourful costumes or by simple props, like a lyre for Apollo, a sceptre for a king or a broad-brimmed hat for a messenger. Effects were therefore simple and broad. In the intimate drama of today, much meaning is conveyed around the playwright's words by detailed and realistic setting, by significant small-scale gesture, by facial expression and even by the pregnant pause. But in the Greek theatre, nuance of gesture and effect would have been quite pointless, nor could the relation between player and audience be intimate. The chorus must have been trained in precise harmony and in beauty of movement when seen from afar; actors must have concentrated on conveying large effects and above all on giving a clear expressive rendering of the words themselves. And in composing those words, the playwright took for granted a need for clarity of emphasis in setting the scene, in announcing the entrances of characters and in making their emotional reactions fully explicit.

All plays consist of a number of episodes or scenes involving the principal characters, written in iambs (see p. 141), divided by choral interludes called *stasima*, that were written in a variety of metrical forms. In Aeschylus, the choral part amounts to a third of the play; in the third part of the *Oresteia*, the chorus of Furies, the Eumenides, who give their name to the play, are central to the action itself. Sophocles and Euripides reduced the proportional part of the chorus, though in particular plays it might still play a special role, as in the case of Euripides' *Bacchae*, where the chorus of Bacchanals bear witness to and define the nature and benefits of the Dionysiac experience. More commonly, the chorus is detached from the main actions involving the heroic figures of myth, but in comment and response is fully integrated into the emotional and thematic pattern of the play as a whole. The need to integrate the chorus with the main action and the comparative brevity of a Greek play when compared to a modern drama (approximately 1,500 lines in length including the chorus), determined by the festival production of four plays in one day, precluded the development of complicated plots involving more than one strand of action, variety of scenes (there is a scene change from Delphi to Athens in the *Eumenides* but this is rare) or complicated time sequences. Concentration of effect and a concern for unity of design are principles endemic in Greek art from Homer onwards. In drama simplicity and economy were further encouraged by limitations of time and form outside the playwright's control.

Greek drama was therefore a more stylized form than subsequent European drama, and the particular style was determined by inherited conventions connected with festival production and by the physical conditions of the theatre. But within the limitations imposed by the performance of the plays as part of a religious festival, what is striking is the remarkable freedom allowed to the individual dramatist, who is not restricted to myths involving Dionysus or subject to any kind of priestly control. Indeed, the earliest extant play, the *Persians* of Aeschylus (for which Pericles was *choregos*), is not mythological at all, but takes its subject from recent history. The only sense in which the playwright is a priest is figurative: he is a priest of the Muses. And if Greek drama developed from some form of religious ritual, then it quickly freed itself from the restrictions implied in the word ritual, which is not appropriately used to describe Greek tragedy.

AESCHYLUS (525–456)

Tragedy is a phenomenon that came into existence simultaneously with the gradual transformation of the Athenian state into a democracy. Though Thespis dates from the latter days of the tyranny of Peisistratus, that tyranny itself, comparatively enlightened in character, marked a stage in the destruction of the archaic aristocratic

order, whose traditional political prominence, however decreased, was formally extinguished with the reform of the Areopagus in 462–461. Our oldest extant tragedy concerns an event without which that transformation would not have been possible, the triumph of Greece in the Persian Wars. What makes the play more than a national and patriotic celebration of the heroic freedom fighters of Marathon and Salamis (Aeschylus himself had fought at Marathon) is that events are set entirely in Persia and no individual Greek is named. A chorus of Persian elders and Atossa, the mother of Xerxes, are anxious about the fate of the expedition. Atossa makes libations before the tomb of her dead husband Darius, whose ghost then appears and when informed of the disaster castigates Xerxes for rashness and folly, particularly remarking his impiety in seeking to fetter the Hellespont and in burning the temples of the Greeks. Old oracles are being fulfilled through the behaviour of his son: ‘when man makes haste the god assists’ (l. 742): human folly accelerates the fulfilment of the gods’ plans. Darius also sees divine justice in the fate of the Persians.

they wait; and there wait too
 Ruin and untold pain, which they must yet endure –
 The just reward of pride and godless insolence.
 Marching through Hellas, without scruple they destroyed
 Statues of gods, burned temples; levelled with the ground
 Altars and holy precincts, now one heap of rubble.
 Therefore their sacrilege is matched in suffering.
 And more will follow; for the well-spring of their pain
 Is not yet dry; soon new disaster gushes forth.
 On the Plataean plain the Dorian lance shall pour
 Blood in unmeasured sacrifice; dead heaped on dead
 Shall bear dumb witness to three generations hence
 That man is mortal, and must learn to curb his pride.
 For pride will blossom; soon its ripening kernel is
 Infatuation; and its bitter harvest, tears.

(Aeschylus, *Persae*, 806–820)

Xerxes then returns; the fallen prince, now dressed in rags, laments the fate of the slain. Historically, Darius had been as ambitious as Xerxes, but Aeschylus with a poet’s licence idealises him so that he appears as a wise old king. The downfall of the Persian enterprise results more from the envy of the gods than from the prowess of the Greeks. *Hybris*, bringing in its wake *ate* (infatuation or folly), begets its inevitable *nemesis*. But the pride and fall are not represented complacently. Aeschylus humanises the Persians to the extent that we are moved to reflect upon the perilous insecurity of any mighty endeavour and upon the radical instability of human fortune. It may be useful to reflect

that it is unthinkable that any Elizabethan playwright could have dramatized the defeat of the Spanish Armada in such a way so soon after it had happened.

All the other surviving tragedies feature the heroic figures of traditional myths. Since these are many and multifarious, they offer almost limitless potential for individual treatment. The Orestes myth used by Aeschylus in the one surviving trilogy, the *Oresteia*, is a case in point, being used in quite different ways by Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides.

The story of Orestes features almost as a recurrent leitmotif in counterpoint to the main theme in Homer's *Odyssey*. In that work Agamemnon returns from Troy to be met by his cousin Aegisthus, the son of Thyestes, who takes him back to his palace where he feasts and then kills him (4, 521–537). What Agamemnon did not know was that Aegisthus had earlier prevailed upon his wife Clytemnestra to become her paramour, thus usurping Agamemnon's bed and throne (3, 254–275). The spirit of Agamemnon tells Odysseus that Clytemnestra murdered Cassandra; he regards Aegisthus as the principal agent in the plot against himself (11, 405–434). The usurpers reigned for seven years until Orestes, as the gods foretold, returned to avenge his father by slaying Aegisthus. 'When Orestes had done the deed, he invited his friends to a banquet for the mother he loathed and the craven Aegisthus' (3, 303–310). Homer does not directly say how Clytemnestra died. Much is made of her infidelity, which the spirit of Agamemnon contrasts with the virtue of the loyal Penelope (24, 192–202). The vengeance of Orestes is hailed as a glorious act not only by mortals such as Nestor and Telemachus but also by Zeus (1, 30) and Athena, who holds up the bravery of Agamemnon's son as an example to the son of Odysseus (1, 298–301). Divine approval for Orestes reflects divine support for the suitor-slaying which is the prelude of the re-establishment of order in the house of Odysseus. Aegisthus and the suitors die through their own wickedness and folly. Poetic justice is unequivocally upheld in either case.

The *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus opens with the night watchman at dawn on the roof of the king's palace catching sight of the beacon that announces the downfall of Troy. The chorus of Argive elders then set the emotional, thematic and mythological scene by recalling the setting out of the expedition led by Agamemnon, dwelling upon an event not mentioned by Homer. At Aulis the fleet had been marooned by contrary winds. A priest tells Agamemnon that the anger of the goddess Artemis will be appeased only by the sacrifice of his daughter Iphigeneia. Agamemnon is faced with a choice: he can return home in failure and risk the censure of men, or he can persevere with the great expedition (whose aim is supported by Zeus) after the crime of sacrifice. The first course is unthinkable: 'he puts on the yoke of necessity' (l. 217). The priest had predicted inevitable atonement for the slaughter of a child, and the chorus now fear its fulfilment: as the Libation-bearers put it, 'the guilty doer must suffer' (*drasanti pathein*, l. 313). The chorus introduce another great theme that will be

worked out through the human action. In the midst of their song they invoke Zeus 'whoever he is' (l. 160), he who had overthrown Cronos and the old order and he who has ordained that through suffering comes knowledge or wisdom '*pathei mathos*' (l. 177). At the end of their song it is Justice who inclines the scales to exact wisdom at the price of suffering (l. 250). The stage is now set for the fulfilment of the priest's words. Clytemnestra, with the heart and soul of a man (l. 351), takes the leading role. She welcomes Agamemnon and masters him psychologically, exposing his weakness in the carpet scene. As she follows him into the palace, she prays to Zeus, the fulfiller (l. 973). The actual murder she accomplishes by throwing a net over him as he bathes and then stabbing him repeatedly. Aegisthus, insultingly called 'woman' by the chorus (l. 1625), pronounces Agamemnon's death a just requital for the iniquity of his father Atreus, who in a dispute with his brother Thyestes had served up his sons (Aegisthus' brothers) in a 'Thyestean' feast.

In the *Libation Bearers*, Orestes returns to execute the orders of Apollo in avenging this father. He kills Aegisthus first, then confronts Clytemnestra with her crime. As she pleads with him he hesitates, asking the hitherto silent Pylades if he should spare her. 'Where then are Apollo's words?' (l. 900) answers Pylades. For the crime of matricide, Orestes incurs the persecution of the Furies (not mentioned in Homer) who avenge crimes committed between kin.

In the *Eumenides* Orestes has sought sanctuary and the protection of Apollo, who ordered his crime at Delphi. While the Furies sleep, Apollo directs him to go to Athens to seek justice from Athena. The spirit of Clytemnestra awakes the Furies and goads them to hunt Orestes to his death. The Furies rebuke Apollo for interference. 'What about crimes by a wife against her husband?' he asks. They are not blood kin, the Furies reply (l. 212). Athena, having heard the pleas of Orestes and the Furies, decides to submit the case to a tribunal of twelve Athenian judges in her temple on the hill of Ares. The court she establishes is to endure for all time (ll. 482 ff.). Apollo appears as a witness on Orestes' behalf. Athena gives her verdict in favour of Orestes when the votes cast are equal. Much of the argument has been over the primacy of male or female. Though female, Athena was not born of woman, having sprung from the head of Zeus. On this basis she gives her support to the male principle. She then proceeds to placate the Furies, who as an order of gods older than the Olympians (Zeus had come to power by replacing Cronos, as the chorus in the *Agamemnon* had reminded us) feel that the younger gods have overridden ancient laws. Athena gives a second reason: Zeus through the oracle had given witness that Orestes should not suffer for his deed. Athena promises the Furies honour and abode in Athens. They, now transformed into the Kindly Ones, yield to her persuasion, which Athena identifies with Zeus (l. 974).

Aeschylus' interest in and presentation of the myth are therefore very different from those of Homer, who for his purposes had stressed the infidelity of Clytemnestra,

the wrong done to Agamemnon and Orestes' just revenge which met with the gods' approval. In the *Oresteia*, the myth serves as a vehicle for the dramatic expression of a conflict between men and women involved in a blood feud and between the rival claims of different generations of gods. The conflict has both a political and a religious dimension which are not easily separable. The victory of the Olympian gods of the upper world, Apollo and Athena, together with the mitigation of the older Furies (deities from the nether world) which is attributed to the unseen workings of Zeus through persuasion, has clear symbolic force. 'Cry sorrow, sorrow,' sings the chorus (*Agamemnon*, l. 121) 'but may the good prevail.' The good that prevails after all the individual suffering is a communal good, the establishment of Athenian justice sanctioned by the gods. The learning that comes through suffering in the *Oresteia* does not, therefore, come by way of the individual soul but comes by divine dispensation from without. The court scene on the Areopagus is clearly designed to represent what was historically the solution to the old tribal system of justice through blood-feud in the development of the laws and institutions of the *polis*. The resolution of the conflict in historic terms, and the celebration of Athens at the close, mean that the drama in its overall effect is not, in the fullest sense of the word, tragic. In the greatest tragedy we are caught up in the fate of individual protagonists and are not to be deflected by the compensation of ameliorating social or political consequences. But for all that, the *Oresteia* is not a comfortable experience. In the court scene, we may feel that in their bizarre arguments the gods work in mysterious ways that reflect the arbitrariness with which judgements are frequently arrived at in human courts of justice. Furthermore, although the play offers an escape from the cycle of crime and guilt and countercrime, it also puts us into raw contact with the primitive roots of human behaviour which the social institutions of civilization are designed to restrain. Although the protagonists become entangled in a fatal net that is not of their own devising, they also show a determined willingness for ruthless action and a capacity for unholy deeds that is appalling, the effect of which is most feelingly dramatized in the prophecies and fate of the innocent Cassandra before she is murdered alongside Agamemnon. The burden of what has gone before is by no means lifted or transmuted by the end.

SOPHOCLES (c. 496–406)

The note of celebration apparent in the *Oresteia* is also to be found in a famous choral ode in Sophocles' *Antigone*:

Wonders are many on earth, and the greatest of these
Is man, who rides the ocean and takes his way

Through the deeps, through wind-swept valleys of perilous seas
That surge and sway.

He is master of ageless Earth, to his own will bending
The immortal mother of gods by the sweat of his brow,
As year succeeds to year, with toil unending
Of mule and plough.

He is lord of all things living; birds of the air,
Beasts of the field, all creatures of sea and land
He taketh, cunning to capture and ensnare
With sleight of hand;

Hunting the savage beast from the upland rocks,
Taming the mountain monarch in his lair,
Teaching the wild horse and the roaming ox
His yoke to bear.

The use of language, the wind-swift motion of brain
He learnt; he found out the laws of living together
In cities, building him shelter against the rain
And wintry weather

There is nothing beyond his power. His subtlety
Meeteth all chance, all danger conquereth.
For every ill he hath found its remedy,
Save only death.

O wondrous subtlety of man, that draws
To good or evil ways! Great honour is given
And power to him who upholdeth his country's laws
And the justice of heaven.

But he that, too rashly daring, walks in sin
In solitary pride to his life's end,
At door of mine shall never enter in
To call me friend.

(329–370)

But the celebration is not wholly unequivocal. The Greek word translated 'wonder', *deinos*, has a range of meanings including terrible, clever and marvellous, and, at the

end of the ode, it is clear that the chorus believe that the power of contrivance which is the subject of the song can lead to evil as well as to good. The song is prompted by the news that the edict of King Creon (that the body of Polyneices, the son of Oedipus, be not buried), has been flouted. Polyneices with his Argive allies had stormed the gates of Thebes and been killed in battle by his twin brother Eteocles. Creon, who at the beginning of the play has inherited the throne of Thebes, decrees the penalty of death for anyone burying Polyneices, whom he regards as an enemy of the city. At this point the chorus do not know what the audience already knows, that Antigone, the sister of Polyneices, has done the deed. The distinction they make at the end of their song between the man who is *hypsipolis*, high in state, in revering justice and the laws of the land (*nomous chthonos*) and the city-less outcast, the *apolis*, who does wrong for the sake of daring may seem at first to suggest Creon and Antigone respectively. Creon has already asserted that he is acting on behalf of the highest interests of the city whose laws he is protecting (ll. 184–195). But Antigone, who feels compelled to honour the rights of her kin, in confessing the deed to Creon, invokes justice that dwells with the gods below (chthonic powers) and draws a distinction between human proclamations and the unwritten and unfailing ordinances of the gods that are age-old and everlasting (ll. 450–457). Sophocles might therefore be said to have constructed his tragedy upon the conflicting claims of family and city represented in two individuals of strong and uncompromising will. There is no movement towards the resolution of the conflicting claims as in the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus, nor do the gods intervene to mark a way forward. Creon becomes more tyrannical, condemning Antigone to be immured in a cave. He refuses to heed the pleas of his son Haemon, who is betrothed to Antigone. After a fierce confrontation with the prophet Tiresias, who tells him that the gods are affronted by the unburied corpse, he finally relents, fearing the force of established laws (l. 1114), and sets out to free Antigone only to find Haemon clasping her dead body, for she has committed suicide. Haemon thrusts at Creon with his sword, but misses and then kills himself. Creon returns to the palace to find that his wife Eurydice has hanged herself in despair. No longer, if ever, the man who is *hypsipolis*, at the end, Creon recognizes that his fate has reduced him to less than nothing.

Antigone, probably written in the 440s, is one of the three surviving plays, written at different periods, featuring members of the house of Oedipus, often printed together and given the title *The Theban Plays*. Not only were they not a trilogy in themselves, but the individual plays were not parts of other trilogies. Aristotle seems to have had *Oedipus the King* (c. 429) particularly in mind when he gave his famous account of ‘the best sort’ of tragedy in his *Poetics*. Much of what he has to say is by way of comment on the plot.

Oedipus the King certainly embodies the Classical ideal of the well-made play. Everything follows on logically and naturally from the plague, which sets the plot in

motion. That is not to say that it is a naturalistic play. That the palace servant who saved the infant Oedipus by giving him to a Corinthian servant should also have been the witness to the murder of Laius and that the same Corinthian servant should also be the bearer of the news of the death of Polybus are coincidences that might stretch the imagination if we were forced to reflect upon them. The legend or story of Oedipus is full of absurdities that are concealed or disguised by a Sophoclean sleight of hand in the plotting of the play. When the prophet Tiresias in anger tells Oedipus that the killer of his father Laius is present and will be found to be the son and husband to the mother who bore him (ll. 447–460) we do not know at this stage that Oedipus has been given an oracle that he will kill his father and marry his mother. Such knowledge at this point would have made the scene incredible. We only learn of the king's knowledge of this oracle much later in the play, when he tells Jocasta of his reasons for leaving his supposed parents Polybus and Merope in Corinth. Here it may be noted that Oedipus did not suffer from the complex to which he has given his name since he did all in his power to remove himself from his supposed parents.

The interweaving of the three oracles in the play (all truly Delphic in being difficult to interpret and only partial truths) is most skilfully done. That Jocasta should seek to deny the validity of oracles by telling another oracle (true, unbeknown to her) that Laius would die by the hand of his own child, because she supposes that the child of Laius has been exposed at birth and because it is believed in Thebes that Laius had been killed by robbers (in the plural), is one of the many powerful ironies of the plot.

The denouement is singled out for praise by Aristotle in a notable passage in the *Poetics*:

Some plots are simple and some complex. . . . A complex action is one in which the change [of fortune] is accompanied by a discovery (*anagnoresis*) or a reversal (*peripeteia*), or both. These should develop out of the very structure of the plot . . . a reversal is a change from one state of affairs to its opposite, one which conforms, as I have said, to probability or necessity. In *Oedipus*, for example, the Messenger who came to cheer Oedipus and relieve him of his fear about his mother did the very opposite by revealing to him who he was . . . a discovery is a change from ignorance to knowledge. . . . The most effective form of discovery is that which is accompanied by reversals like the one in *Oedipus* . . . a discovery of this kind in combination with a reversal will carry with it either pity or fear.

(*Poetics*, 9, 10)

The Corinthian messenger comes to give Oedipus news that Polybus is dead and that the Corinthians may make him king of all the isthmus (ll. 939–941). In this news both Jocasta and Oedipus see the defeat of the oracles but, when Oedipus is still fearful that his mother is still alive, the messenger reveals that he had received the infant

Oedipus from a shepherd in Laius' household. Jocasta sees the truth and begs Oedipus to desist but ironically he misinterprets her motives, thinking she fears that he may be low-born. He hails himself the child of chance (l. 1080). The chorus joyfully speculate that he is the son of a god. Then the servant of Laius is called and the truth is revealed, so that the reversal and discovery are completed.

The audience, of course, has known the truth all along, as the myth existed long before Sophocles and is known to Homer, for Odysseus encounters Jocasta, whom he calls Epicaste, in the underworld. When, therefore, Oedipus says at the opening of the play, 'I am here to learn for myself, I Oedipus, whose name is known from far', he is thinking of the fame he has acquired through his intelligence in solving the riddle of the Sphinx, whereas his real fame, before and after Freud, has always stemmed from parricide and mother-marrying. So much that he says has a double significance. No other Greek play (perhaps no other play at all) has exploited this dramatic irony so ruthlessly, and much of the play's impact and symbolic force lie in the ignorance and blindness of Oedipus brought out in the play's plot, its imagery and its language, in the contrast between the blind prophet Tiresias who knows and the seeing Oedipus who does not know, and in the reversal when the knowing Oedipus blinds himself because he cannot bear to look upon the light of day. (In Homer there is no mention of the self-blinding: Oedipus lives on in Thebes haunted by the Furies of his mother, *Odyssey* II, 271–280.)

The play therefore seems to fulfil Aristotelian requirements for a tragic fall:

We saw that the structure of tragedy at its best should be complex, not simple, and that it should represent actions capable of awakening fear and pity. . . . It follows in the first place that good men should not be shown passing from prosperity to misery, for this does not inspire pity, it merely disgusts us. Nor should evil men be shown progressing from misery to prosperity. This is the most untragic of all plots, for it has none of the requisites of tragedy; it does not appeal to our humanity, or awaken pity or fear in us. Nor again should an utterly worthless man be seen falling from prosperity into misery. Such a course might indeed play upon our humane feelings, but it would not arouse either pity or fear; for our pity is awakened by undeserved misfortune and our fear by that of someone just like ourselves. . . . There remains a mean between these extremes. This is the sort of man who is not conspicuous for virtue and justice and whose fall into misery is not due to vice and depravity, but rather to some error (*hamartia*), a man who enjoys prosperity and a high reputation like Oedipus.

(Poetics, 13)

Although Aristotle begins with the best structure (he calls plot 'the soul of tragedy': character comes second: *Poetics*, 6) he imperceptibly moves into the question of

character, though it should be noted that he never uses the term 'tragic hero'. As to the character of Oedipus, it is clear that he has faults; he is quick to anger and, though the killing of Laius (as narrated at lines 798–813) may be regarded as a justifiable homicide in self-defence after provocation, his rash temper is apparent in his treatment of Creon and Tiresias. But despite the choral utterance 'pride (*hybris*) breeds the tyrant' (l. 872), Oedipus, unlike Xerxes in the *Persians*, in no sense merits his fall, for he did all in his power to avoid his predicted fate. He is not the victim of a 'tragic flaw' within himself - indeed the famous term *hamartia* is not now generally interpreted to mean more than error. Whatever his faults, Sophocles has endowed Oedipus with great qualities. A contrast might be made here with his counterpart in the *Oedipus* of the Roman playwright Seneca (4 BC–AD 65). He is a commanding presence who exhibits a concern for his people at the beginning and the end of the play; he is strong, assertive and single-minded in his quest for the truth, though Tiresias, Jocasta and the shepherd all try to deflect him: 'I will know who I am' (l. 1085). Above all, the responsibility he takes upon himself throughout is not relinquished after the terrible revelation. Of the blinding, he asserts: 'Apollo has laid this terrible agony upon me; not by his hand, I did it' (ll. 1329–1331). The horror he feels in his unspeakable suffering is that of a civilised sensitivity and in the turmoil of his reactions he is able to think beyond himself to the future of his children, and to determine his own banishment. The final words spoken to him by Creon 'Command no more. Obey. Your rule is ended' (l. 1522) highlight the utter change of fortune but are addressed to a noble spirit that is not utterly broken.

If we take Aristotle's definition of tragedy:

Tragedy then is a representation (*mimesis*) of an action that is worth serious attention, complete in itself, and of some amplitude . . . presented in the form of action not narration; by means of pity and fear bringing about the purgation (*katharsis*) of such emotions.

(Poetics, 6)

then the actions of Oedipus in the play, which are all freely entered into, dramatize not merely the terrible insecurity of human happiness (the moral of the chorus at the end) but a hopeless human struggle against an inscrutable fate. Yet though the chorus see in the fate of Oedipus the lesson that life is nothing, in our experience of the play, man emerges as more than 'the vile worm' that he is for the Psalmist in the Old Testament. Our response to Oedipus does indeed include pity and fear, but amongst other emotions is surely an element of admiration for his greatness of spirit. How precisely this emotional effect might be cathartic (indeed what the meaning of the word *katharsis* is) it is difficult to say. It seems that Aristotle's theory was designed to ascribe to tragedy a positive and wholesome emotional function

and to reinstate it as the central genre against the moral objections of Plato, who had excluded all poetry but encomia of famous men and hymns to the gods from his ideal republic.

EURIPIDES (c. 485–406)

The earliest surviving play by Euripides, the latest of the three tragedians, is his *Medea* of 431. The nurse acting as prologue recalls how Medea out of love for Jason had helped him gain the Golden Fleece and had been involved in the murder of his uncle Pelias, as a result of which they had fled with their children to settle in Corinth. But Jason has betrayed Medea for a marriage to Glauce, daughter of Creon the king of Corinth. Medea bitterly records the solemn oaths given to her by Jason. Euripides then has her speak of her plight in such a way as to show great sympathy with the actual social position of women in the Greek society of his times, and the powerlessness of foreign women in particular:

Surely of all creatures that have life and will, we women
 Are the most wretched. When, for an extravagant sum,
 We have bought a husband, we must then accept him as
 Possessor of our body. This is to aggravate
 Wrong with worse wrong. Then the great question: will the man
 We get be bad or good? For women, divorce is not
 Respectable; to repel the man, not possible.
 . . . If a man grows tired
 Of the company at home, he can go out, and find
 A cure for tediousness. We wives are forced to look
 To one man only.

(ll. 230–51)

In Aristophanes' comedy *The Poet and the Women*, Euripides is tried by a court of women on the charge of misogyny; like other comic shafts against him, this barb has stuck. But a true misogynist would not have represented Medea sympathetically as Euripides does at the beginning of the play. The chorus of Corinthian women agree that her desire for revenge upon Jason is just. Creon then enters and orders Medea to take her sons into exile; in spite of his fear of her, he grants her request that sentence be delayed for a day. In a remarkable ode, the chorus see a great reversal of roles: it is men who break oaths; women's reputation for faithlessness will be ended. If Apollo had granted his gifts to women, they would counter the misogyny of men, for time records good and bad of men and women alike (ll. 410–430).

In the ensuing confrontation between husband and wife the egotistical Jason cuts a sorry figure. If only she had accepted things and kept quiet, she need not have been banished. To Medea's recriminations, he recognizes that he needs all his powers of speech. Euripides has been criticized for making his characters indulge in clever talking or sophistry. He certainly has a particular fondness for the cut and thrust of line-by-line debate, *stichomythia* (which is present in all the dramatists). If Jason talks like a sophist here, then his sophistry has dramatic point. He says that she did what she did for him through *eros*, though he recognizes a debt. Nevertheless, he, the oath-breaker, claims in bringing her, a foreigner, to Greece to have given her the benefits of Greek life under the rule of law, where she is now famous. Moreover, the marriage will bring prosperity and security not just for him but for her children. The chorus admire his prowess with words but tell him to his face that he was wrong to betray his wife. Given his character in Euripides, Jason's ultimate misogyny and xenophobia (ll. 1323–1350) can scarcely be imagined to be the main burden of the play's meaning.

Having gained asylum from the visiting Athenian Aegeus, who also deplors Jason's conduct, she reveals her terrible plan for revenge. She will send her children to Glauce with a gift of a poisonous dress in which she will expire in agony. Then she will kill her sons. She prefers guilt to the mockery of her enemies (l. 797). The chorus try to dissuade her and, in a famous ode in praise of Athens, ask how the city of wisdom and beauty can give asylum to one who has murdered her children (ll. 824–850).

The climax of the play is a long monologue in which Medea wavers over her intention to kill her children (ll. 1020–1080): 'Oh, what am I to do?' – in Aeschylus, Orestes had asked the same question of Pylades, who had invoked the command of Apollo. Here, although Medea is in the presence of the chorus, she is really addressing herself, her own *thymos*, her own heart or spirit, and there is no interplay between the human and the divine. The action of the play is entirely determined by the human agents. In a long self-analysis which reflects the agony of her divided soul and the various emotional shifts that have brought her to this pass, her maternal feelings struggle against her desire for revenge against Jason (in particular her desire not to be a laughing stock). Although she recognizes that her sons will be doomed anyway as they will be killed for their part in the murder of Glauce, she is fully conscious of the wickedness of her action:

I learn what evils I am about to do
But passion (*thymos*) overmasters sober thought
And this is the course of direst ills to human beings

(ll. 1078–1080)

We may compare here the words of Phaedra as she contemplates the love that she feels for her stepson Hippolytus:

We know the good; we apprehend it clearly,
 But we can't bring it to achievement

(ll. 380–381)

Medea's words amount to a chillingly calm expression of clear self-knowledge. She is alarmingly rational, knows what she is doing and passes judgement on herself.

In making Medea pronounce so consciously upon her own wrongdoing it has been suggested that Euripides had in mind the Socratic doctrine that wrongdoing results from a faulty perception of the good, that virtue is knowledge and that 'no one willingly does wrong'. The Greek word in the Socratic formulation *hamartanei* brings to mind the word *hamartia*, or error, made famous by Aristotle in his *Poetics*. Oedipus makes his error unconsciously and unwillingly, though with apparent freedom of the will; Medea makes hers consciously and with similar freedom of the will, nor does she repent of it as she confronts the hapless and helpless Jason in bitter triumph at the end of the play in a chariot drawn by dragons above the stage. Certainly Euripides' representation of actual human nature is radically different from the ideal of it made famous by the Platonic Socrates, stressing as it does the intractable power of irrational forces in human affairs, which are manifested here in the extremity of Medea's revenge (and intensified by Euripides, for the motif of infanticide is believed to be his own addition to the myth). At the same time, the rationalist poet and liberal humanist of Periclean Athens seeks understanding of the cause of that irrationality and takes great pains to make Medea's motives sympathetically comprehensible.

Aristotle records the remark of Sophocles that while he portrays men as they ought to be (of the heroic stature of Oedipus or Antigone), Euripides portrays them as they are (*Poetics*, 25). This contrast is most apparent in their different treatments of the myth of Orestes, which is not made the occasion for heroic action in Euripides' *Electra* as it is in the Sophoclean drama of the same name. The democratic note is clear in Euripides from the beginning. Electra has been forced into a marriage with a peasant on whose farm the action is set. He treats her with respectful kindness and has not forced consummation of the marriage. When told about him, Orestes reflects that true nobility has little to do with noble birth: all men including the well-born must be judged by their relationships (ll. 367–390). While characters are strong in Sophocles, in Euripides they are subject to weakness and fear. The Sophoclean Electra is a figure whom suffering has made resolute and single-minded; in Euripides she breaks down at the end. His Clytemnestra is not the proud, unrelenting character of Sophocles, but a pitiable figure admitting to frailty and expressing regret for the revenge she took against Agamemnon. His Orestes questions the wisdom of the oracle and is goaded into action by Electra's accusation of weakness. After the matricide, the chorus rebuke her for persuading him against his will. The Sophoclean Orestes has unquestioning faith and does not hesitate. In Aeschylus, Orestes is

appalled and hesitates but no one doubts the reality of the threat of divine vengeance if he fails to act. Where Sophocles plays down the effect of matricide by making no mention of retribution in the form of Furies for Orestes and by making the climax of his play the killing of Aegisthus, thus ending upon a note of uncomplicated rejoicing at the cleansing of the house, the overthrow of tyranny and the assertion of justice, Euripides, having disposed of Aegisthus first (he is stabbed in the back while performing a sacrifice), makes the climax of his play the horror and torment felt by both daughter and son at the murder of their mother.

The resolution of the play is effected by the sudden appearance of the gods from the machine, Castor and Pollux, who pronounce Clytemnestra's fate just but do not justify Orestes and Electra, saying that Apollo's command was not wise. This critical spirit is in marked contrast to Sophocles. Electra is to marry Pylades, Orestes must stand trial in Argos. He will be acquitted on equal votes 'And this shall stand as precedent for murder trials in times to come that the accused when votes are equal win the case' (ll. 1265–1269). How different is this almost gratuitous aetiology from the complicated Aeschylean resolution that had grown out of the evolving conflict of wills on both the human and divine planes. Euripides' gods are here merely machines for tying up the loose ends of the plot. In other plays (notably the *Hippolytus* and the *Bacchae*) gods representing non-rational forces are fully integrated into the thematic structure.

As if to emphasize the sceptical spirit in which the poet handles traditional stories, the gods announce that Clytemnestra is to be buried by Helen (her sister) and Menelaus, who are just now returning from Egypt, for 'Zeus sent off to Troy a phantom Helen to stir up strife and slaughter in the human race' (ll. 1282–1283). We may recall here an earlier ode in which the chorus told how Pan brought a lamb with a golden fleece to Atreus' house, and how his brother Thyestes lay with Atreus' wife and took the lamb to his own house, whereupon Zeus in anger reversed the course of the stars and the sun's chariot. Such is the story, they say, but they do not believe that Zeus turned back the sun for any mortal misdeed. But such frightening tales (*mythoi*) are useful to mortals, as they promote reverence for the gods (ll. 699–746). And so the chorus scrutinise the myths; the characters and the gods from the machine question Apollo's oracle. Old certainties are not taken for granted in Euripides.

There is evidence that, of all the tragic poets, Euripides was held in the greatest regard. Plutarch (AD c. 50–c.120) relates the following remarkable anecdote about the fate of Athenians captured in Sicily:

There is a tradition that many of the Athenian soldiers who returned home safely visited Euripides to thank him for their deliverance which they owed to his poetry. Some of them told him that they had been given their freedom in return for teaching their masters all they could remember of his works, while others, when

they took flight after the final battle, had been given food and water for reciting some of his lyrics.

(*Life of Nicias, 29*)

OLD COMEDY: ARISTOPHANES (c. 450–c. 385)

The origins of comedy were obscure to Aristotle but he records the view that the word is derived from *kome*, a village, because comedians were turned out of towns and went strolling around the villages (*Poetics*, 3), rather than *komos*, revel, the preferred derivation of modern scholars. Revels which took place on festival days might end with the participants parading the streets, garlanded and with torches, singing, dancing, drinking and making merry. Aristotle also says that comedy came from improvisations connected with phallic songs (associated with fertility and the worship of Dionysus) still surviving in the institutions of many of the cities of his day, and that the earliest plot makers were Sicilian.

In Athens comedy, like tragedy, was a state institution performed at the Great Dionysia and also at a special festival in January called the Lenaia. The chorus (consisting of twenty-four members who might be divided into two half-choruses) was provided by a *choregos* whose responsibility it was to hire, train and fit out its members at his own expense. The actors, whose number does not seem to have been restricted as in tragedy, wore masks of a grotesque kind, special footwear called the comic sock and often had a phallic emblem. Their costumes were extravagantly padded.

The only surviving complete comedies of the fifth century representing what was subsequently called by the ancients the Old Comedy are nine plays by Aristophanes. A further two plays by Aristophanes of a slightly different character survive from the early fourth century. The first most striking feature of Old Comedy is the satirical character and the ridiculing invective against named individuals, whether politicians like Pericles and Cleon, philosophers and thinkers like Socrates, or poets like Euripides. Many other individuals (whose significance is often lost upon us now) are also named, including notable or newsworthy characters of the city presumably present in the audience. Hence the verb *komodein*, meaning to represent in comedy, is also used in this period to mean to satirise, ridicule, lampoon or libel. A second striking feature is a persistent and frank indecency with regard to sexual matters and bodily functions. In *Lysistrata*, for example, when the women of Athens and Sparta agree to bring the war to an end by withdrawing their sexual services until peace is concluded, the menfolk are in an acutely priapic state for much of the play.

Aristophanic laughter acts as a kind of release from normal social embarrassment and inhibition. Most plays involve some extravagant fantasy: the *Birds*, for

example, concerns an attempt to establish an ideal city in the sky ('Cloudcuckooland') where the inhabitants can rule by controlling the food supply of both men and gods, who are also treated irreverently in Aristophanic comedy. Despite the fantastic and highly imaginative elements, a realistic picture of the life of the ordinary Athenian citizen emerges through the distortion of the comic lens. In the *Wasps* and *Assemblywomen* we can see how the system works. Hence the anecdote that when the philosopher Plato was asked by the tyrant Dionysius of Syracuse about the Athenian constitution, his reply was to send him the plays of Aristophanes. A notable formal feature is the *parabasis*, in which the poet uses the chorus to break the dramatic illusion midway through the play to speak in his own voice, sometimes to harangue the spectators with advice of topical import that may or may not be connected with the issues of the play. Like tragedy, comedy is a poetic form, and many of the choral lyrics have an appealing delicacy and charm. Together with singing and dancing the chorus (particularly the animal choruses) doubtless provided an extravagant visual spectacle, so that considered as a whole, Aristophanic comedy is a remarkably varied and lively phenomenon the like of which the world has never quite seen again.

The *Knights*, the first play produced by Aristophanes himself in 424, is a quite savage attack upon the leading politician of the day, Cleon, Pericles' successor as leader of the Athenian *demoi*, who had recently gained political kudos by his presence at a notable Athenian victory over the Spartans at Pylos in 425. In the person of Cleon, the general political leadership of Athens is being attacked. At the end of the play the imperialist schemes of Hyperbolus (such as the conquest of Carthage) are denounced, as is the general Athenian tendency to swindle the allies and prosecute the war at all cost.

An oracle is discovered that Cleon, a seller of leather by trade, is to be ousted from the favour of Demos (the Athenian people) by a sausage seller. One comes along and when told of his destiny feels unworthy because he was born in the gutter, has no virtues to speak of and can scarcely read or write. When told: 'Come off it, you don't think politics is for the educated do you or the honest? It's for the illiterate scum like you now!' (ll. 191–193), he is still doubtful, wondering how he can arrange the affairs of the city. He is then reassured: 'Dead easy; just carry on what you've always done. Mix all the city's policies into a complete hash, butter the people up a bit, throw in a pinch of rhetoric as a sweetener, and there you are' (ll. 213–216). He is supported by the chorus of Knights or cavalrymen, who as men of education and social standing are the natural opponents of upstarts from the *nouveaux riches* such as Cleon.

Cleon arrives and a furious shouting match (the contest, or *agon*) develops between them. The sausage seller contends that he is a bigger crook than Cleon; he has been cheating his customers in the market (the agora, which can also mean assembly) for years. They compete for the favour of the irascible and stupid old man Demos by flattery, bribes and interpretation of oracles. The sausage seller points out

that, though a tanner, Cleon has never given Demos a pair of shoes, and he provides him with a pair as well as a tunic and a chair for his comfort. Just before the final contest, old Demos in conversation with the Knights shows that he isn't quite as simple as he seems. He knows the thieving ways of politicians. Then there is a contest of hampers to appeal to Demos' appetite; the sausage seller, by a clever trick he uses on his customers, is able to steal Cleon's jugged hare while he is distracted, and wins by showing Demos that while his hamper is empty, Cleon has kept much of the food for himself (with the clear implication that the real Cleon lines his own pockets). Cleon now confesses that he has been outdone in shamelessness and sees the truth of the oracle. The sausage seller is now revealed as Agoracritus, 'the choice of the assembly' or 'market haggler'. 'In the *agora* I thrived on wrangling' (ll. 1257–1258). This fits the sausage seller both as purveyor of meat in the market place and as citizen of Athens schooled in the ways of the world in the assembly. In the wordplay here is concentrated the wit and design of the whole play. There may also be a third meaning: 'I fed myself in the agora in judging' (in the law courts where in the developed democracy a citizen could earn three obols a day, a living wage. Here may be adduced the remark in the *Gorgias* of Plato, 'People say that Pericles made the Athenians lazy and cowardly and garrulous and covetous by his introduction of the system of payment, for services to the state' (575e)).

Then, following Medea's example, the sausage seller boils Demos to rejuvenate him so that he appears as he was in the good old days of Miltiades, the general who had commanded the Athenians in their finest hour when they had defeated the Persians at Marathon. Demos is then amazed at his stupidity and vows to reform the politics and manners of the city. He is pleased to be shown two sweet 30-year-old treaties (in female form presumably) whom Cleon had hidden away and whom Demos can take back to his farm in the country. In a neat reversal Cleon is given Agoracritus' old job, selling sausages (a mixture of dog and donkey) at the city's gates.

As Cleon had successfully prosecuted Aristophanes a year earlier for bringing the city into disrepute before foreigners, the *Knights* was a defiant reply, as the *parabasis* makes clear. Aristophanes judged the audience well, for the judges awarded him first prize. Addressing the judges in the *Assemblywomen*, the poet has this suggestion to offer: 'Let the intellectuals choose me for my intellectual content; to those who enjoy a good laugh, judge me on my jesting. That should get most of the votes' (ll. 1155–1157). Those who came simply for the entertainment doubtless enjoyed seeing their leaders brought down to size, revelling in the caricature, the burlesque and the reduction to absurdity. In the Athenian democracy Jack was as good as his master, or perhaps the Jacks had taken the place of the master. The more discerning doubtless appreciated the playwright's wit in pressing the resemblance between the politician who sells himself and the sausage seller haggling in the market place and indulging in a spot of male prostitution on the side (l. 1242).

The comparison entails a withering political analysis that is not wholly mitigated by the general air of mirth and absurdity or by the wishful ending. The clear implication is that Demos gets the politicians he deserves. As for Aristophanes' relation to the real Athenian *demos*, this may be likened to the jester at the court of the king; he is allowed the fool's licence to insult them with the unflattering truth. Paradoxically, the *Knights* may be said to be a tribute to the maturity of the Athenian democracy (Cleon, of course, continued to be popular, and Aristophanes to attack him, to his death in 422) as well as a stringent criticism of it, as damning in its way as that of Thucydides in his history or that of Plato in his *Republic* and unlike these delivered directly at the time when the criticism might evoke a response.

The relation between dramatic art and life is subjected to a serio-comic critical scrutiny in the *Frogs*, written just after the death of Euripides and at a time of impending national disaster in 405. In a comically irreverent opening sequence the theatrical god Dionysus is seen in the not very effective disguise as Heracles, with lion skin and club, which he has donned in a desire to go down into Hades to fetch back Euripides in the absence of any decent tragic writers left since his death. To get guidance for his trip, he knocks on Heracles' door, explaining to the old hero that his longing for Euripides is like the longing Heracles experiences for pea soup. Outside Pluto's palace, we learn that Euripides newly arrived in Hades has greatly impressed the riff-raff he encounters there with his sophisticated talents and as a result attempts to usurp the throne of tragedy from the incumbent Aeschylus, who furiously resists. A contest ensues in which their poetry is to be weighed. Dionysus is to be judge. The chorus characterises the poets in language appropriate to their actual styles: Aeschylus will sweep all before him in a grand manner thundering in anger with mighty words and grandiloquent maxims; Euripides will side-step the bombardment with his subtle analysis, clear-cut phrases and neat wit, refining, dissecting and finding fault. Euripides is the sophist who prays to strange gods and finds his opponent Olympian, obscure, bombastic, lacking in dramatic action and artistically primitive; Aeschylus is the traditionalist who accuses his opponent of degrading tragedy in subject matter and style with his importation of kings in rags, incest on the stage, subtle argumentation and common talk. Euripides takes pride in having slimmed tragedy of its excess weight. He has given a voice to women and slaves and made tragedy truly democratic. He has taught his audiences to speak, to look into things, to be critical, to follow subtleties in plot, and showed them scenes from common life. He has encouraged the spirit of enquiry.

Aeschylus begins his attack by asking Euripides what he thinks is the purpose of poetry: 'wit, wisdom and to make the people better citizens' replies Euripides (ll. 1009–1010). Aeschylus then points to the difference between the patriotic citizenry of his day, inspired by warlike plays such as the *Seven against Thebes* and the *Persians*, and the idle men of the *agora* of the present, who prefer talking and debating to

wrestling and sport. Euripides has done harm by bringing on to the stage things better kept concealed, like the story of Phaedra. It is the duty of poets to talk of wholesome things and to be useful in the tradition of Orpheus, Musaeus, Hesiod and Homer.

Though the ponderous lines of Aeschylus easily prevailed in the weighing ceremony, Dionysus likes both poets equally and finds it difficult to judge between them. As he wants to bring back a poet to save the city, he asks their advice about the current critical situation of 405. Shall Alcibiades be recalled from exile? The gnomic utterances are characteristically clever (Euripides) and obscure (Aeschylus). Dionysus tries again. What are we to do? Euripides says (as Aristophanes had said more openly and forcefully in the *parabasis*) that they must trust new men. Aeschylus, being out of touch, asks what sort of men the city must put its faith in, the good and the true? Of course not, says Dionysus. Aeschylus then doubts whether the city can be saved. Nevertheless, Dionysus finally chooses Aeschylus, a choice endorsed in a famous ode as follows:

Aeschylus is returning to earth to the joy of the citizens because of his sound understanding and intelligence. For it is right not to sit beside Socrates indulging in idle talk, ignoring the Muses and stripping the tragic art of its most essential aspects. To waste time on solemn arguments and petty quibble is the part of a fool.

(ll. 1491–1499)

Is this an aesthetic judgement or a moral criticism, or both? And is it directed against Euripides or those who are left in Athens and follow his example without his talent? The jesting at Euripides' expense seems to be affectionate, and in judging the play account must be taken of its tone, which is not always easy to pin down. But since the word used by the chorus for idle talk (*lalein*) is also used by Euripides when he claims to have taught people to speak (l. 954), we are doubtless meant to make the obvious connection, even though it is clear that Aristophanes does not represent Euripides as any more of a fool than Aeschylus. For the figure of the older poet is equally comic; he emerges as an irascible old fogey, even if he is the spokesman for the values of the old world that Aristophanes had wistfully evoked in the wishful ending of the *Knights*. That Aristophanes took his didactic office seriously is clear from the seriousness of the *parabasis*, though it would be foolish to accredit a sophisticated and subtle spirit like his with naive views about the ability of poets to reform (or conversely to corrupt) mankind.

Nevertheless, these words of the chorus have often been taken very seriously indeed as summing up Aristophanes' belief in a genuine cultural malaise that had spread through Athens with dire political consequences. Written as they were just after the death of the last great tragic poet and just before the defeat of Athens in 404, from which she never recovered her former preeminence, they have sometimes been

seen to be prophetic of a decline in imaginative creativity to come in the fourth century. The current malaise and future decline are put down to the new critical spirit of the Greek enlightenment, represented here by Socrates and to some extent Euripides. In fact, of course, though similarly sceptical of received ideas, they responded very differently to the new critical spirit. The hostility later shown to tragic poets (including Aeschylus) by Socrates as Plato's spokesman in the *Republic* (see p. 203) has further given the comic poet's analysis here the uncanny force of prophecy.

The last two plays of Aristophanes, the *Assemblywomen* and *Wealth*, differ from their predecessors in that the *parabasis* is abandoned and the plays are less overtly political. The fantastic and the anarchic yield just a little to probability and realism in character and plot construction. In an earlier play, the *Thesmophoriazusae*, the burlesque of Euripidean recognition scenes, cunningly contrived escapes snatching the victim from the jaws of death and ingenious plotting, points to the new direction that comedy was gradually to take in the fourth century until it is quite transformed in the plays of Menander (c. 342–293).

ORATORY AND PROSE

Although the historians and philosophers are treated primarily in chapters devoted to history and philosophy, Herodotus, Thucydides and Plato are masters of Greek prose who might equally claim a place here for their literary qualities. Aristotle's extant works lack polish; his more stylish work does not survive. The earliest of them, Herodotus, writes in an easy, familiar style that has affinities with the oral tradition. Indeed, his language has been described as 'speech as it is spoken'. But by the time of Thucydides, prose writing had been affected by the new study of rhetoric associated with the sophist movement that reached Athens in the generation after Herodotus. The earliest rhetoricians seem to have emanated from Sicily, and rhetoric made a powerful impact at Athens with the visit in 427 of the Sicilian sophist Gorgias of Leontini (c. 485–375), famous for his use of antithesis, balance and parallelism in length of clauses and sounds of words.

Oratory itself had long played a part in Greek life, in the courts (forensic), in the assembly (deliberative) and on festive occasions (epideictic), but through the systematic study of rhetoric, the sophists and their successors sought to put the art of speaking and speech-writing on a more professional basis, equipping their pupils for success in the public life of the developed *polis*. In the fourth century, rhetoric became the centrepiece of schools orientated more towards practical learning than the philosophical Academy of Plato or the later Lyceum of Aristotle. The founder of one such school, the Athenian Pan-Hellenist Isocrates (436–338), voices his thinking on this topic in his festival oration the *Panegyricus* (46):

Philosophy took a part in the discovery and development of all these, and gave us education in the field of affairs and civilised relations with each other. . . . Our city showed the way to it, and also gave honour to skill in words, which is the desire and envy of all. She realised that this alone is the particular and natural possession of man, and that its development has led to all other superiorities as well. She saw that other activities showed such confusion in practice that wisdom was often the way to failure in them, and folly to success, while good and skilled powers of speech were outside the scope of the ordinary people, but were the province of the well-ordered mind: and that in this respect wisdom and ignorance are furthest apart, and the birthright of a liberal education is marked not by courage, wealth and similar distinctions, but most clearly of all by speech, the sign of which presents the most reliable proof of education, so that a fine use of words gives not merely ability at home, but honour abroad. Athens has so far outrun the rest of mankind in thought and speech that her disciples are the masters of the rest, and it is due to her that the word 'Greek' is not so much a term of birth as of mentality, and is applied to a common culture rather than a common descent.

Plato was distrustful of rhetoric and of the teaching of the sophists because he felt that they were not grounded in the quest for truth. In the dialogue *Gorgias*, for example, he shows Socrates refuting the sophist Gorgias, who asserts that rhetoric is the most important of human concerns because successful statesmanship relies not on knowledge of the good but upon the art of persuasion. Nevertheless, in the education system of Greece, it was rhetoric rather than philosophy that came to be central, and this continued to be the case at Rome and in the Renaissance.

The art of rhetoric affected not only oratory but all kinds of composition; similarly the analysis of prose in antiquity is invariably rhetorical. A useful introduction here is provided by the analysis of the Greek rhetorician Dionysius of Halicarnassus (writing about 30 BC) who wrote essays on various Athenian orators and a substantial work entitled *On Composition*. At the beginning of an essay on Demosthenes, he cites the account of *stasis* from Thucydides quoted above (p. 41) as an example of the grand style. It is strikingly elaborate because the style is remote from normality and much embellished; it can startle the mind, induce tension or strain and express violent emotion. Dionysius commends Thucydides for his ability to represent the terrible, the remarkable and the pathetic. He distinguishes four characteristics of his style: artificiality of vocabulary, variety of figures, harshness of word order and rapidity of signification (when discussing *Thucydides*, 24). Though he does not eschew pleasing rhythms, he is often abrupt, varying his constructions in unexpected combinations and so jarring the ear and surprising the mind. Later in the same essay, Dionysius describes Thucydides' style as austere and archaic, one that aims at dignity rather than elegance (in regard to *Thucydides*, 38–39). In translation, Thucydides appears

smoother in English than he does in Greek, but comparison of the account of *stasis* with passages from other prose writers cited below will bear out some of Dionysius' main points.

At the other end of the scale from Thucydides, Dionysius sets the style of Lysias (c. 459–380), exemplifying the plain style. A number of Lysias' orations survive, mostly forensic in character, and he is regarded as the finest example of the pure Attic stylist. In an essay devoted to him, Dionysius distinguishes a number of characteristics including his use of the ordinary vocabulary of the speech of his day (unlike Thucydides, he does not use archaisms), the expression of ideas in this everyday language without much use of metaphor, and the ability to reduce ideas to essentials with lucidity and terseness of expression. These may seem humdrum virtues but Dionysius praises him as a fine literary artist who can conceal his art in the production of stylish melodious prose.

Rhythm is a not unimportant factor in prose: it is not to be classed as an inessential adjunct, but to tell the truth, I consider it to be the most potent device of all for bewitching and beguiling the ear.

(Demosthenes, 39)

Melody cannot be represented in translation, but his other qualities may be suggested by the concluding paragraph of the speech *Against Eratosthenes*, one of the thirty oligarchs who ruled Athens at the time of her defeat in 404–403.

However, I do not intend to talk of what might have been when it is beyond me to describe the truth of what was perpetrated, which would be beyond the scope of any number of accusers. But there has been no slackening in my eager regard for our temples, which they sold or desecrated, for our city, which they brought low, for our shipyards, which they destroyed or for the dead, whom they failed to protect in their life and whom you must avenge after their death. I believe these dead are listening to what we say, and will know that you are making your vote, and feel that every vote of not guilty will be a vote for their own condemnation, every vote of guilty one of retribution on their behalf.

The style is easy yet formal, lucid yet patterned, simple and smooth yet morally intense.

Having established the styles of Thucydides and Lysias as touchstones for the grand and the plain respectively, Dionysius distinguishes a third style that is a mixture of the two, which he variously calls the middle, the mixed or the well-blended. The Classical exponents of this are Plato and Isocrates. Though paying general homage to Plato's writing, Dionysius is not particularly illuminating in the actual examples he

cites. However, the treatise *On the Sublime*, traditionally attributed to the rhetorician Longinus and perhaps written in the first century AD, contains suggestive appreciations of Plato's highly figured style.

Now although Plato . . . flows with such a noiseless stream, he none the less achieves grandeur. You are familiar with his *Republic* and know his manner. 'Those, therefore,' he says, 'who have no experience of wisdom and goodness, and are always engaged in feasting and similar pleasures, are brought down, it would seem, to a lower level, and there wander about all their lives. They have never looked up towards the truth, nor risen higher, nor tasted of any pure and lasting pleasure. In the manner of cattle, they bend down with their gaze fixed always on the ground and on their feeding-places, grazing and fattening and copulating, and in their insatiable greed for these pleasures they kick and butt one another with horns and hoofs of iron, and kill one another if their desires are not satisfied.'

(13)

Longinian sublimity is not to be equated with Dionysius' conception of the grand style; the sublime is that moving quality in great literature that has the capacity to take us out of ourselves in *ekstasis*, in ecstasy; passages that have this effect on diverse people in diverse times can be called truly sublime. Such passages may be written in what Dionysius calls the grand style, or the mixed or the plain style. This passage from Plato is highly figurative in the modern sense that tends to restrict the word to signify imagery. Ancient rhetoricians, as the work of Dionysius suggests, paid as much attention to figures of sound and arrangement (the Gorgianic figures, for example, like antithesis and isocolon) as to figures of sense and meaning (metaphor, simile, metonymy, etc.). It may seem surprising that Plato, who distrusted rhetoric and feared the power of poetry to the extent that he banished most forms of poetry from his ideal *Republic* (see p. 203), should himself be the most poetical of philosophers, famous throughout the ages for his imaginative presentation of ideas. His style in the Socratic dialogues is rooted in familiar conversation that is designed to be comprehensible to the general reader – he avoids jargon or technical terms – while at the same time they are designed to make philosophy palatable and to entice the hearts and minds of the sceptical. To this end, he uses many picturesque analogies and vivid images of illustration, as in the above example. Nevertheless, Plato always exerts the kind of rigid control over his own poetic powers that he required of poets in his ideal state, who are to write not with an eye to pleasure but in an austere style that can be useful (*Republic* 398a). Much of the beauty of his style stems not so much from the invention of images as from the judgement with which he applies them. This is nowhere more true than in the case of his most famous image, the allegory of the cave in the *Republic* (514) discussed in chapter 4.

Dionysius' second exemplar of the middle or well-blended style is Isocrates. His diction is elegant and smooth; his clauses are arranged in parallel both in syntax and sound within gracefully rounded periods which flow continuously without any abruptness or hiatus in sense or sound, for the general aim is euphony and musical effect. He cites an elegant passage from *On the Peace* (41) contrasting the attitudes of the Athenians of his day towards threats from abroad with the conduct of their heroic ancestors at the time of the Persian Wars.

Now what if a stranger from abroad were to come and suddenly find himself embroiled in our affairs, before having the time to become corrupted by our depravity: would he not think us insane and beside ourselves, when we glory in the deeds of our ancestors, and think it right to sing the city's praises by recounting the achievements of their day, and yet act in no way like them but do exactly the opposite? For, whereas they waged ceaseless war on behalf of the Greeks against the barbarians, we expelled from their homes those who derive their livelihood from Asia and led them against the Greeks; and whereas they liberated the cities of Greece and came to their aid, and so earned the right to be their leaders, we try to enslave them and feel aggrieved when we are not honoured as they were. We fall so far short of the men of those times in both our deeds and our aspirations that, whereas they had the courage to leave their country in order to save Greece, and fought and conquered the barbarians on both land and sea, we do not see fit to run any risk, even for our own gain, but seek to rule over all mankind, though we are unwilling to take the field ourselves for this but employ instead stateless men, deserters and fugitives who have come together as the result of other crimes and who, whenever others offer them higher pay, will follow their leadership against us.

Dionysius praises the purity of Isocrates' diction, his precision in idiom, his clarity of expression and the shapely structure of his sentences, but he also finds cause for criticism in the lack of concision and in the sluggishness of effect. He feels that his style can be circumlocutory, repetitious and long-winded. He criticises Isocrates for timidity in the use of metaphor, for sacrificing intensity and emotion to mellifluousness of effect, and for a lack of variety in his use of figures, most especially in his exhausting predilection for parallelisms and antitheses.

These comments, indeed much of what has been said about Lysias, are by way of prelude and preamble to the main subject of the essay in which they occur, Demosthenes, who in Dionysius' verdict is the supreme orator, combining, in an eclectic style, the virtues of all the various styles he has described, while avoiding their various limitations: the obscurity that can be a deficiency in Thucydides, the lack of emotional vigour that can characterise Lysias, the lack of variety and the diffuse-

ness sometimes present in Isocrates. He juxtaposes with the passage from Isocrates an extract from Demosthenes on a similar theme, remarking 'He does not set out each separate pair of actions in finicky detail, old and new, and compare them, but carries the whole antithesis through the whole theme by arranging the items in two contrasting groups thus' (*Demosthenes*, 21).

Yet observe, Athenians, what a summary contrast may be drawn between the state's achievements in the time of your ancestors and in your own day. The tale will be brief and familiar to all; for you need not look abroad for examples that provide the key to your future prosperity, but at home, Athenians. Our forefathers, whose speakers did not humour or caress them, as those of today do you, for forty-five years ruled the Greeks with their consent; they accumulated more than ten thousand talents in their treasury; the king of that land submitted to them, as a barbarian should to Greeks; they set up many glorious monuments to commemorate victories won by their own fighting on land and sea; and they alone among mankind have left behind them a reputation which envy cannot erase. Such were their achievements in Hellenic affairs: now see what they were like in their domestic affairs, both as citizens and as men. In public they erected for our benefit such a wealth of beautiful buildings and other objects, such as temples and the dedicated objects in them, that posterity has been left no chance to surpass them. In their private life they were so moderate, and adhered so steadfastly to the national tradition, that anyone who knows the style of house which Aristides had, or Miltiades, or other famous men of that day, is aware that it was no grander than his neighbour's. They did not engage in politics for personal profit, but each felt it his duty to enrich the commonwealth. By conduct honourable towards the other Greeks, reverence towards the gods and fair dealing in domestic matters, they deservedly achieved great prosperity.

That is how the state fared of old under the statesmen I have mentioned. How is it faring now under the worthies of the present day? Is there any similarity of resemblance? I pass over many topics on which I could wax eloquent; but with the dearth of competition which you all observe, the Spartans being in eclipse, the Thebans being fully occupied and none of the rest capable of challenging us for supremacy, it should be possible for us to hold our own securely and arbitrate the claims of others. Yet we have been deprived of territory which belongs to us, and have spent more than one thousand five hundred talents to no purpose; these politicians have lost in peace time those allies which we gained in war, and we have trained up a formidable enemy to fight against us. Or let anyone come forward and tell me where else Philip has obtained his power, if not from us. 'Well, my dear sir, you may say, if our foreign affairs are in a bad way, at any rate things at home

are better now.' What possible proof is there of this? The parapets we whitewash? The roads which we repair? The fountains and the other nonsense? Look at the statesmen who are responsible for these: some have risen from beggary to opulence, or from obscurity to honour; some have made their private houses more splendid than public buildings, and their wealth has increased at the same pace as the fortunes of the state have declined.

(*Olynthiac*, 3, 23 ff.)

Dionysius admires Demosthenes' greater variation in clauses, sentence structure and figurative arrangement. He is not tied to one manner or style. But above all it is the end result of all these technical effects, the greater energy and vehemence of feeling, that he admires. He goes on to say that while Isocrates puts him into a tranquil and serious frame of mind, Demosthenes transports him through a whole series of emotions.

Feeling and elevation are what Longinus illustrates in a short passage from Demosthenes in which the orator seeks to assure the Athenians that they were right to oppose Philip of Macedon at Chaeronea even though they were defeated.

Demosthenes is putting forward an argument in support of his policy. What was the natural procedure for doing this? 'You were not wrong, you who undertook the struggle for the freedom of the Greeks, and you have a precedent for this here at home. For those who fought at Marathon were not wrong, nor those at Salamis, nor those at Plataea.' But when, as though carried away by the inspiration of Phoebus himself, he uttered his oath by the champions of Greece, 'By those who stood the shock at Marathon, it cannot be that you were wrong', it would seem that, by his use of this single figure of adjuration, which I here give the name of apostrophe, he has deified his ancestors by suggesting that we ought to swear by men who have died such deaths as we swear by gods; he has instilled into his judges the spirit of the men who stood there in the forefront of the danger, and has transformed the natural flow of his argument into a passage of transcendent sublimity, endowing it with the passion and the power of conviction that arise from unheard-of and extraordinary oaths. At the same time he has infused into the minds of his audience words which act in some sort as an antidote and a remedy, so that, uplifted by these eulogies, they come to feel just as proud of the war against Philip as of the triumph at Marathon and Salamis.

(16)

Longinus and Dionysius, both late products of the rhetorical tradition which they seek to illuminate, help us to see that just as the great sculptures could not have come to be without scientific study and technical mastery systematically acquired over a long

period of time, so the great artistic achievements in Greek oratory and prose in the late fifth and fourth centuries presuppose gradual development of a scientific awareness of language and psychology of a kind systematised by Aristotle in his *Rhetoric*.

LITERATURE OF THE HELLENISTIC AGE

Athens remained a cultural centre and one particular form, New Comedy, flourished in the theatre. The New Comedy of general manners, unlike the Old Comedy of Aristophanes, is no longer political, that is intimately concerned with public affairs and the workings of the city-state, which has now lost something of its independence in the greater Macedonian empire. Aristophanic wit, indecency and caricature give way to humour, decorum and the realistic presentation of typical characters, the realism being such as to have prompted a famous question 'O Menander, O life, which of you imitated the other?'

In addition to substantial fragments, one complete play by Menander was discovered in the twentieth century, the *Dyskolos* ('The Peevish Man'), which was performed in 316. It has a five-act structure, a chorus that is no more than a musical interlude between acts and a prologue figure as in Euripides to set the scene. The central character is an obstacle in the way of the young man who has fallen in love at first sight with his daughter. Only when he has been rescued from near death after falling down a well does the peevish old man (who is much tormented by a garrulous cook and an impertinent slave) learn the error of his ways: 'Only disasters can educate us' (ll. 699–700), and accommodate his misanthropy to the common-sense norms of social living. Likewise, the young man is put to the test to prove himself worthy of the happy marriage that awaits him at the play's end. The New Comedy depends for its effect upon the clever manipulation of the stereotypical, whether this be of characters like the boasting soldier, the shameless bawd, the manipulative slave and the stern father, or of plot devices like recognition by means of rings and necklaces, substitution of children and mistaken identity. It does not challenge the audience but confirms the norms of a bourgeois world. Through Roman imitation it has greatly influenced modern European drama.

Gradually, the centre of gravity moved elsewhere to the capitals of the new Hellenistic kingdoms. Great libraries were established at Alexandria, Pergamum and Antioch endowed by royal patronage. By virtue of the pre-eminence of its museum, that is, its shrine to the Muses, and its library, Alexandria soon became the literary capital of the Hellenistic world. To the scholars of the Alexandrian library, one of the most famous of whom was Aristarchus (c. 217–c. 145), noted for his work on Homer, the world is indebted for the preservation of the Greek classics in reasonably good

textual order. Texts were standardized and methods of copying improved. Classical literature was now officially canonized. Two of the leading poets of the third century, Callimachus and Apollonius of Rhodes worked professionally in the library, Apollonius as its head. The literati of the Hellenistic era worked in a rarefied scholarly atmosphere that was very different from that of the Classical *polis*, and wrote for a cultivated audience delighting in artifice. A few of the surviving texts may indicate the range of their literary production.

What became one of the most famous poems of antiquity is the *Phaenomena*, a didactic poem of over 1,500 lines by Aratus of Soloi in Cilicia. He had studied at Athens and was poet at the courts of Antigonus II at Pella and later of Antiochus in Syria. The poem was undertaken at the suggestion of Antigonus.

Let Zeus be foremost – never may our hymns
Omit him. Zeus fills roads and markets, brims
Oceans and bays. By Zeus alone we live
Born as his children, too. He deigns to give
Signs out of kindness to remind us rest
Must yield to work. He shows which soil is best
For cows, and which for hoes, and oversees
Seasons for sowing seeds and planting trees.

(translated by Aaron Pochigian, ll. 1–8)

As this opening suggests, the poem, written in traditional hexameters is generically related to Hesiod's *Works and Days*, a poem emanating from Homeric times largely concerned with agriculture and the seasons. There is something comparable here with the way in which Hellenistic sculptors consciously adapted the Classical forms of the past. However, though the last four hundred lines are concerned like Hesiod with weather signs, the bulk of the poem versifies a prose work on the constellations by the mathematician Eudoxus (c. 390–c. 340), a pupil of Plato, thus breaking new ground for poetry and reflecting the interest in science in his era. There is much mythological lore included but for the most part the constellations with their traditional Classical names are described in relation to one another as they occur in the heavens, starting with those visible to the viewer in the northern hemisphere.

Day in day out, innumerable mixed
And scattered stars process above us. Fixed
Forever, never bending, an axle pins
Earth in its centre of all; around it spins
Heaven on opposing poles, the axle's ends.

Though one cannot be seen, the other extends
Over the north.

(translated by Aaron Pochigian, ll.19–25)

Aratus's idea of the cosmos is geocentric and begins with the polestar, moving directly to the two constellations surrounding the pole.

Two *Bears* surround this pole
(Which are at times called *Wagons* since they roll
Like wagon-wheels). Muzzle to behind,
They rear and dive with shoulder joints aligned
And bellies outward. If the tale is true,
Zeus the almighty stellified these two
Because, near *Ida*, in his infancy,
They found him lying on *Dicte's* dittany
And picked him up and housed him in their den.
One year they nursed him while the older men
Of *Crete* distracted *Cronos* from his son.

(translated by Aaron Pochigian, ll. 19–35)

This combines the visual picture of the constellations of the Great and Lesser Bear (as they can still be named and represented on astrological maps) with an aetiological myth, it seems, partly of Aratus's own making. Rhea hid the infant Zeus from his father Cronos (who had been told one of his sons would supplant him and so swallowed her children) by presenting him with a stone wrapped in swaddling cloths instead. A more usual version of his upbringing on Crete has the infant being nursed by the goat Amaltheia. The constellation of the Bear is more usually explained as a compensatory reward ordained by Zeus for the nymph Callisto, a devotee of the goddess Artemis, whom he had previously ravished. So, although the basis may have been the scientific treatise by Eudoxus, the mythological part is the poet's own addition and sometimes invention. The poem was much commented upon and translated into Latin in later centuries several times. It met with the approval of a leading contemporary, his fellow poet Callimachus (c. 305–c. 240):

Aratus of Soloi models his verse
On Hesiod's best, refuses to write
The Ultimate Epic. We praise these terse,
Subtle tokens of long effort at night.

(Epigram 62, translated by Lombardo and Rayer, p. 60)

The nighttime effort refers not only to Aratus's study of the sky but wittily expresses Callimachus's appreciation for the poem's precision and polish, qualities embodied in his own verse. The reference to 'the Ultimate Epic' here reflects Callimachus's preference for small-scale genres like the epigram here over epic narratives on familiar themes composed by the continuators of Homer in the Epic Cycle. 'Big book, big pest' was also reputedly one of his slogans.

Probably the best known of his surviving poems is one of his short poems, a brief and simple epitaph on the death of his friend Heraclitus.

News of your death.

Tears, and the memory
of all the times we talked the sun down the sky.

You, Heraclitus, of Halicarnassos,
once my friend, now vacant dust,
whose poems are nightingales
beyond the clutch of the unseen god

(Epigram 1, translated by Lombardo and Rayer, p. 43)

In his work in the Alexandrian library, Callimachus produced a prodigious catalogue of texts. He was also something of a poet-critic and champion of a new aesthetic.

I hate the poems of the Epic Cycle, I don't like highways
that are heavily travelled, I despise
a promiscuous lover, and I don't drink from public fountains:
Everything public disgusts me. And yes, Lysanias
you are handsome as handsome, but before I can even say it,
back comes the echo: 'Some other man has him'

(Epigram 58, translated by Lombardo and Rayer, p. 59)

'Everything public disgusts me'; poetry is becoming more private, reflective and idiosyncratic, as here when he voices a personal attraction only to immediately acknowledge its impossibility.

His esoteric learning was given full rein in his *Aetia*, a poem of four books, surviving only in fragmented form, in which the poet is instructed by the Muses in the origins of various Greek customs and religious rites. It is a long poem of several thousand lines, united by its aetiological theme but discontinuous in its structure. In this way it can be regarded as a lot of small poems strung together and so not inconsistent with the abhorrence he expresses for big books elsewhere. In his preface, he comes over as a rather prickly poet:

The malignant gnomes who write reviews in Rhodes
 are muttering about my poetry again –
 tone-deaf ignoramuses out of touch with the muse –
 because I have not consummated a continuous epic
 of thousands of lines on heroes and lords
 but turn out minor texts as if I were a child
 although my decades of years are substantial.
 To which brood of cirrhotic adepts

I, Callimachus, thus:

(Prologue to the *Aetia*, translated by Lombardo and Rayer, p. 65)

He also wrote six *Hymns*, which survive entire, in a learned allusive style. His 'Hymn to Zeus' begins in a slightly sceptical spirit, questioning of the mythic, contrasting with the dedication of Aratus quoted above:

What song but of Zeus for the God's libations?
 Eternal Lord, eternally great, mythic scourge
 of the Sons of earth, lawgiver of the sons of heaven,
 Diktaean, Lykaian – how praise the mountain-born god?
 Disputed nativity
 divides the mind in doubt.
 Cretan hills of Ida, Zeus?
 Arkadia?
 Of these claimants, which has lied, Father?
 'Cretans are always liars.'
 And your Cretan-built tomb, my Lord
 will never hold your immortal essence.

(ll.1–12, translated by Lombardo and Rayer, p. 3)

Towards the end, the poet associates Zeus with Kings, and one in particular:

And you lavished wealth
 and prosperity on them, on all, but not equally
 if we may judge by our monarch,
 for Ptolemy Philadelphos is preeminent by far.
 He accomplishes by dusk what he thinks of at dawn –
 the monumental by dusk, the minor in a trice –
 while the projects of others drag on for years,
 their programs curtailed by your executive order.

(ll. 113–120, translated by Lombardo and Rayer, p. 6)

Hymn 5, ‘The Bath of Pallas’ addresses the attendants of the stern warrior goddess Pallas Athena:

Ladies of Akhaia, come!
 but not with alabaster, not with myrrh
 [I hear the whirl of her axle now!]
 no myrrh in alabaster for the bath of Pallas
 the goddess Athena does not wear perfume
 and no mirror either: she is sure of her beauty.
 Not even when Paris judged the contest on Ida
 did the great goddess gaze into orichalch’s glow
 or the diaphanous flow of the river Simois.

(ll. 15–23 translated by Lombardo and Rayer, p. 32)

The goddess does not need the aids of beauty and is not concerned with her appearance. The poet’s art, however, in its internal rhymes and rarified vocabulary conjures an atmosphere of beauty to honour the goddess.

His learned allusiveness and his refined style have come to represent a mode or style of literary composition called ‘Alexandrianism’ which was greatly influential with later Roman poets such as Catullus and Horace in the first century BC. There is a tradition that he quarrelled with his younger contemporary Apollonius of Rhodes (c. 295–c. 215), author of the *Argonautica*, on the respective merits of epic and the short poem.

Apollonius’s hexameter poem in four books about the journey of the Argonauts from Greece to Colchis and Jason’s triumphant winning of the Golden Fleece, though on a larger scale than anything written by Callimachus, when compared to the Homeric epics is relatively short. There is supernatural involvement, notably when the goddesses send Cupid to enflame Medea, and an evocation of the great heroic era of Heracles who accompanies them on their voyage which is full of larger than life encounters, as when they sail by Mount Caucasus and come in sight of the eagle that preys on the entrails of Prometheus, all narrated in the grand style with extended similes, set speeches and elevated diction throughout. There are battles on the way but the atmosphere of the epic bears a greater resemblance to the *Odyssey* than the *Iliad*; indeed in the fourth book narrating their return journey, the Argonauts cover some of the same ground as the Homeric Odysseus, encountering Circe, Scylla and Charybdis, and the Sirens as they go. Apollonius’s epic is in marked contrast to the tragedy of Euripides, which had dramatized the acrimonious relations between Medea and Jason in the later stages of their story when love turned to hatred on Jason’s proposal to divorce Medea after the pair had settled in Greece. At the centre of the plot is the love affair between Medea and Jason, as a result of which, with

Medea's help Jason is able to overcome the test set by Medea's father Aeetes who is the guardian of the Fleece. The whole plot, therefore, turns on their love affair by virtue of which it can be called a romantic epic. In this it differs from its Homeric predecessors. At the pivotal point, the tormenting conflict of loyalties which Medea's passion engenders is convincingly presented with sympathetic psychological insight. Once resolved, she has thoughts for Jason alone. The poet vividly portrays her anxious absorption as she awaits his arrival and in a startling simile expresses both the present torment of her feeling as she is about to betray her father and also predicts the destructive effect that her passion will bring in the future.

Meanwhile the maid her secret thoughts enjoyed,
 And one dear object all her soul employed:
 Her train's gay sports no pleasure can restore.
 Vain was the dance, and music charmed no more;
 She hates each object, every face offends,
 In every wish her soul to Jason sends;
 With sharpened eyes the distant lawn explores,
 To find the hero whom her soul adores;
 At every whisper of the passing air,
 She starts, she turns, and hopes her Jason there;
 Again she fondly looks, nor looks in vain,
 He comes, her Jason shines along the plain.
 As when refulgent Sirius lifts his golden ray,
 He shines terrific! For his burning breath
 Taints the red air with fevers, plagues and death;
 Such to the nymph approaching Jason shows,
 Bright author of unutterable woes;
 Before her eyes a swimming darkness spread
 Her flushed cheeks glowed, her very heart was dead:

(Francis Fawkes 1780, translating *Argonautica* 3, 948–963)

The conservative style of this translation with its traditional neoclassical idiom (rhyming couplets) is in marked contrast to the more modern idiom in which Callimachus is translated above. This difference in the translations reflects a genuine difference in the styles of these two ancient authors.

On a smaller scale, Hellenistic poets invented the short mythological narrative subsequently called the *epyllion*, a diminutive from *epos* (epic) meaning little or brief epic. One of the most famous of the *epyllia* (no longer surviving) was the *Hecale* of Callimachus featuring Theseus and his victory over the bull of Marathon. He emphasized not the heroic victory but the heroic poverty of Hecale, who gave the hero

hospitality on his way to Marathon, and dwelt upon picturesque descriptive detail. An early surviving example is Theocritus' *Idyll* 13 featuring the story of Heracles and Hylas, emphasizing the affection of the former for the latter and portraying the muscular and heroic Heracles in a softer and more tender light.

The *Idylls* of Theocritus (300–260), short poems of about 100 to 150 lines long (idyll is a diminutive from *eidōs* meaning 'little form'), featured several in which shepherds with elegant names competed with one another in mellifluous song set in the beautiful landscape of Sicily where Theocritus had grown up. The sophisticated city poet living in Alexandria nostalgically recreating a romantic image of the simpler rural world of his boyhood thereby created the pastoral genre. In the seventh *Idyll*, 'Harvest Home', is a sensuous evocation of a Mediterranean landscape, vivid in sight and sound, with a rich pictorial appeal.

There, happy in our welcome, we flung ourselves down
On couches of fragrant reeds and freshcut vineleaves.
Above our heads a grove of elms and poplars
Stirred gently. We could hear the noise of water,
A lively stream running from the cave of the Nymphs.
Sunburnt cicadas, perched in the shadowy thickets,
Kept up their rasping chatter; a distant tree-frog
Muttered harshly as it picked its way among thorns;
Larks and linnets were singing, a dove made moan,
And brown bees loitered, flitting about the springs.
The tall air smelt of summer, it smelt of ripeness.
We lay stretched out in plenty, pears at our feet,
Apples at our sides and plumtrees reaching down,
Branches pulled earthward by the weight of fruit.

(*Idyll* 7, 133–146 translated by Robert Wells)

In such settings, presided over by Pan, the nature god, his attendant satyrs and the indwelling nymphs, the singing shepherds and herdsmen engage in witty banter or woo their beloved, as Daphnis attempts to persuade Chloris to yield to his charms in the following extract from a poem in the Theocritean corpus but no longer attributed to him, illustrated here because of the neat translation by John Dryden, published in 1685:

Daphnis The Shepherd Paris bore the Spartan bride
By force away, and then by force enjoyed;
But I by free consent can boast a bliss,
A fairer Helen, and a sweeter kiss.

Chloris Kisses are empty joys and soon are o'er.
 Daphnis A kiss betwixt the lips is something more.
 Chloris I wipe my mouth and where's your kissing then?
 Daphnis I swear you wipe it to be kissed again.
 Chloris Go tend your heard and kiss your cows at home;
 I am a maid, and in my beauty's bloom.
 Daphnis 'Tis well remembered, do not waste your time;
 But wisely use it e're you pass your prime.
 Chloris Blown roses hold their sweetness to their last,
 And raisins keep their luscious native taste.

(*Idyll 27, 1–14 translated by John Dryden*)

This style of argument or exchange is called the 'amoebean' from the Greek word to answer. At the end of the poem Chloris has yielded. She addresses Diana, the goddess of chastity:

Forgive thy handmaid, huntress of the wood!
 I see there's no resisting flesh and blood!

(112–113)

In *Idyll 1*, Theocritus' shepherd Thyrsis sings a lament for the mythical herdsman Daphnis, who is apparently dying for love, in lines that have been famously echoed in subsequent pastoral elegies, such as John Milton's *Lycidas*.

Where were you Nymphs, when Daphnis came to grief?
 What distant valley or mountain gave you delight?
 You could not be found beside Anapus, the great river,
 Nor by the water of Acis, nor on Etna's height.

Muses, sing for a herdsman, sing me your song. . . .

Bear violets now, you bramble bushes and thorn-trees,
 Let the world turn cross-natured, since Daphnis dies.
 Let the prickly juniper bloom with soft narcissus,
 The pine be weighed with pears. Let the stag hunt the hounds,
 Let the nightingale attend to the screech-owl's cries.

Goodbye to the herdsman, Muses, goodbye to the song.

(*Idyll 1, 66–70; 132–137 translated by Robert Wells*)

The beautiful 'Lament for Bion', attributed to the later, second-century poet Moschus uses the pastoral convention to pay poetic tribute to the deceased poet Bion who is figured as a shepherd in a pastoral landscape. Here it is most apparent that the artful singing shepherds of pastoral are only tenuously related to real-life shepherds in the actual rural economy.

In the first century the Greek poet Meleager collected together a large number of short poems from various authors and periods in his *Garland* including his own, which are preserved in a manuscript in the Palatine library in Heidelberg. In English, the word epigram often has quite restricted associations. This is not so in Greek, as in the case of the following poem by Meleager 'Upon a maid that died the day she was married':

That morn which saw me made a bride,
The evening witnessed that I died.
Those holy lights, wherewith they guide
Unto the bed the bashful bride,
Served but as tapers for to burn
And light my relics to their urn.
This epitaph, which here you see,
Supplied the Epithalamie.

(The Palatine Anthology, 7, 182, translated by Robert Herrick, 1648)

In the Anthology there are elegies, epitaphs, short hymns, epithalamia (wedding songs) and love songs. There are a few poems written by women, for example the following epitaph composed as if for a funeral monument (*stèle*) attributed to Erinna:

O stèle and sirens and mournful urn of mine
You who hold this small heap of ashes that belong to Hades,
Give greeting to those who pass by this my grave,
Whether they are citizens, or visitors from other towns.
Say that this tomb holds me, who was a bride; say also this,
That my father called me Baukis, and that my family
Was of Tenos, so they may know, and that my companion
Erinna inscribed these words upon my tomb.

**(The Palatine Anthology, 7, 710, translated by Jane Snyder,
The Woman and the Lyre, p. 91)**

They vary greatly in subject, style and quality; some are imitations of earlier works, like the *Anacreontea*. There is a group of poems within one of these Byzantine manuscripts attributed to the sixth century poet Anacreon of Teos and in simple metres derived from him. Scholars now believe these to be Hellenistic in origin or

even later. They are invariably about wine and love and have inspired many translations and imitations. 'The wounded Cupid' is in the manner of Anacreon, here translated by Robert Herrick in a version that captures the playful charm and light wit of its original:

Cupid as he lay among
 Roses, by a bee was stung.
 Whereupon in anger flying
 To his mother, said, thus crying;
 'Help! O help! Your boy's a dying.'
 'And why, my pretty lad?' said she.
 Then blubbering, replied he;
 'A winged snake has bitten me,
 Which country people call a bee.'
 At which she smiled; then with her hairs
 And kisses drying up his tears;
 'Alas!' said she, 'my wag! If this
 Such a pernicious torment is,
 Come tell me then, how great's the smart
 Of those, thou woundest with thy dart! (1648)

(Anacreontea 35 in *The Oxford Book of Classical Verse in Translation*)

The second, published by Christopher Smart in 1756, has a more melancholy undertone, rejecting in its central verse the vanity of external decoration (incense on the 'pavements', that is, floors, and the vanity of libations, pouring wine into the 'senseless earth'), and evoking in the final verse the unappealing twilight world of the pagan afterlife.

Beneath this fragrant myrtle shade
 While I my weary limbs recline,
 O love, be thou my Ganymede,
 And hither bring the generous wine!

How swift the wheel of time revolves!
 How soon life's little race is o'er!
 And, oh! when death this frame dissolves,
 Mirth, joy, and frolic is no more!

Why then, ah! fool, profusely vain,
 With incense shall thy pavements shine?

Why doest thou pour, O wretch profane,
On senseless earth, the nectared wine?

To me thy breathing odours bring,
On me the mantling bowls bestow:
Go, Chloe, rob the roseate spring
For wreaths to grace my honoured brow.

Yes, ere the airy dance I join
Of flitting shadows, light and vain,
I'll wisely drown, in floods of wine,
Each busy care, and idle pain.

(Anacreontea 32 in *The Oxford Book of Classical Verse in Translation*)

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5 PHILOSOPHY



It is through wonder that men now begin and originally began to philosophise; wondering in the first place at obvious perplexities, and then by gradual progression raising questions about the greater matters too, e.g. about the changes of the moon and of the sun, about the stars and about the origin of the universe. Now he who wonders and is perplexed feels that he is ignorant (thus the myth-lover is in a sense a philosopher since myths are composed of wonders); therefore if it was to escape ignorance that men studied philosophy, it is obvious that they pursued science for the sake of knowledge, and not for any practical utility.

Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1, 2, 9

THE PRE-SOCRATICS

The very word philosophy, meaning in Greek the love of wisdom, suggests what the world owes to the Greeks. The first thinkers consciously to reject the account of the world handed down in the traditional myths emanated from Ionia in the seventh and sixth centuries. Aristotle notes that prosperity in Ionia gave leisure time that allowed philosophical and scientific speculation. The movement from myth to philosophy was perhaps made easier by the nature of the myths themselves. In the *Iliad* Zeus is neither omnipotent nor omniscient, nor did he create the world. He shares his power with other gods and took power himself from his father. He is subject to laws beyond his own will, recognizing that he cannot save his son Sarpedon from fate (16, 433–461). The Homeric concept of fate might suggest a topic for speculation to the enquiring mind.

Little of the Pre-Socratic writing survives except for quotations in later authors, but by common consent the earliest Ionian thinker was Thales of Miletus, who was born in the latter half of the seventh century. He believed that the primary substance

from which everything came into being and of which all is ultimately made is water. Other Ionian philosophers came to different conclusions about the primordial substance, but their common enquiry was into the nature of the physical universe on the assumption that it is both one and intelligible.

Pythagoras in the second half of the sixth century marks a reaction against the materialism of the early Ionians. He migrated from Samos in Ionia to southern Italy where he founded a community for initiates on religious lines. Associated with Pythagoras is the doctrine of the soul's immortality and its reincarnation in a cycle of lives in the animal and human spheres (metempsychosis). The body is regarded as the prison or tomb of the soul, which may be purified in an ascetic life of study. He explained the universe not in physical but in metaphysical terms, tracing the origin of all things to number. He is accredited with developments in mathematics and music, in particular with the doctrine of the harmony of the spheres, which in their motion were supposed to make heavenly music. With Pythagoras the word *kosmos*, which means good order or decency in early Greek, is first used to describe the perfect order and arrangement of the universe.

Heraclitus of Ephesus of the late sixth and early fifth centuries expressed the belief that fire is the primordial substance. The world is an everlasting fire, which is partly flaring up and partly dying down in equal measure so that a continuous balance is maintained. Essential to this balance are tension and strife in which all subsists. Unlike other Ionian materialists, he associated this primordial element with the *Logos*. This universal reason, the principle whereby there is unity in diversity and diversity in unity, is divine and all-wise and is to be identified with what is eternal and constant, the One, while the phenomenal world is constantly changing and in a state of flux.

Parmenides of the Eleatic school (Elea was a Greek colony in southern Italy) in the fifth century believed that Being, the One, is real, while Becoming, change, is illusion. The universe is single and unchanging. He distinguished two ways of apprehending the world. There is the way of truth in which there is knowledge of Being, which, for Parmenides, is material, and the way of opinion (the common condition of ordinary men and women) that takes the world of Becoming as real. The mutable world of appearances that we apprehend through the senses is unreal; Being is the only true object of knowledge and is known through reason and thought.

The Sicilian Empedocles (c. 492–432) denied the belief of the Eleatic school that the universe is single and unchanging. He believed that the four elements of which everything was made, earth, water, fire and air, are constantly subject to change under the influence alternatively of the governing forces of Love and Strife, the latter being dominant in his own times.

These and other early philosophers are collectively known as the Pre-Socratics, because, with Socrates philosophy takes a new direction. The Roman writer Cicero (106–143) made the famous remark that Socrates first brought philosophy down from

the skies to the common problems of mankind (*Tusculan Disputations*, 5, 4, 10). This may be taken to mean that philosophy moved from physics to ethics. This change, though associated with Socrates, may be seen as a consequence of a greater shift gradually taking place in Greek culture as a whole. Between the earliest speculations of the Pre-Socratics and the time when Socrates had come of age in about 450 came the full flowering of Attic tragedy, in which practical human problems and questions of a philosophic, religious and ethical nature are raised and debated in dramatic form. Some time before Socrates' maturity, Herodotus had published his *Histories*, a work symptomatic of an adventurous pioneering spirit of enquiry into the human world and one that extended beyond the Greek horizon. Developments in philosophy may be seen as a natural accompaniment or consequence of other imaginative and empirical explorations; together they are complementary aspects of the growing Greek enlightenment.

SOCRATES (469–399) AND THE SOPHISTS

Socrates did not write anything, so that our knowledge of him comes principally from two sources, from the historian Xenophon (c. 428–c. 354) who wrote personal recollections of him in his *Memoirs of Socrates*, and chiefly from the philosopher Plato (c. 427–347) who made Socrates his chief spokesman in his dialogues, all written some time after Socrates' death in 399. How far the historical Socrates is accurately represented by the Platonic Socrates has long been a matter of debate. When even historians like Thucydides put words into the mouths of leading figures (see pp. 41–42), there is no reason to suppose that Plato felt constrained by the need to preserve historical accuracy in the portrayal of his master. Most scholars believe that Socrates did not develop any system of beliefs and that what the world has come to know as Platonism, although expressed through the Platonic Socrates, is an extension by Plato of tendencies in Socrates' thought.

The historical Socrates, the son of an Athenian stonemason in whose trade he was trained, is above all associated with the *method* to which he has given his name, the origin of which is given in the *Apology*, an early dialogue in which Plato has Socrates tell how his friend Chaerophon had consulted the oracle at Delphi to ask whether there was any one wiser than Socrates. The oracle replied 'No'. Dumbfounded at this, Socrates set out to refute the oracle by seeking out those with reputations for wisdom, the philosophers, poets and artists, only to find that they knew nothing at all, but, unlike Socrates, did not recognize their own ignorance. Thereafter he considered it his duty to disabuse all sorts and conditions of men of their own self-conceit and their own self-ignorance, and so put them on the road to truth. His favourite method involved cross-questioning; for this he pretended to be ignorant in

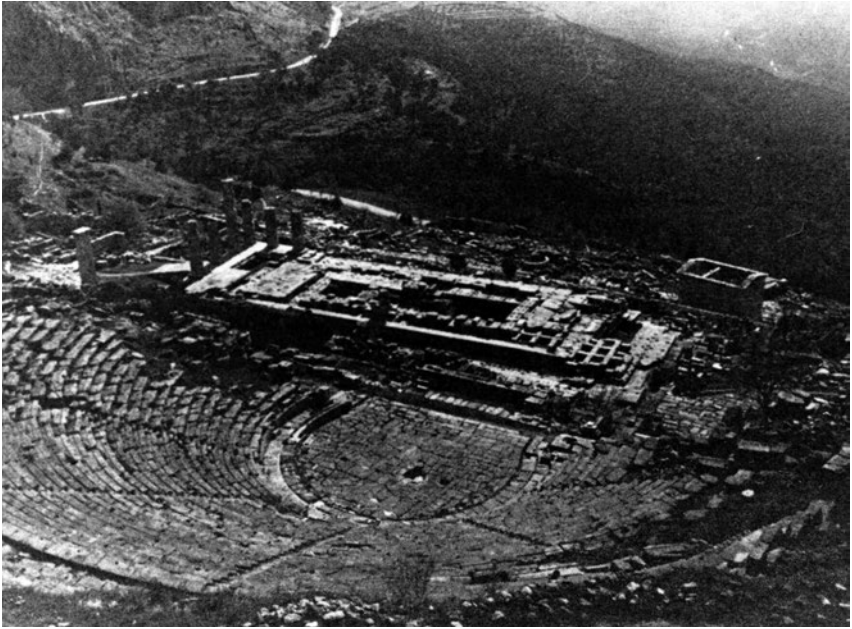


FIGURE 41 Delphi: theatre and site of the temple of Apollo, one of the spiritual centres of the Greek world. On the portal of the temple, which housed the famous oracle (consulted by Socrates) were inscribed the words *gnothi seauton* (Know Thyself), and *meden agan* (Nothing in Excess)

order to draw out and refute an opponent. The Greek word for this kind of pretence is *eironeia* and this questioning method is called Socratic irony (see Plato *Republic*, 337a). The refutation is generally called the *elenchos*. By destroying the conceit that we already have knowledge, the *elenchos* is negative in effect, destructive of self-ignorance, conventional beliefs and received opinions: the effect of it is perplexity or impasse, *aporia* in Greek. But our sources are agreed in stressing the integrity of Socrates and in showing that, as an instrument of his probing intelligence, the Socratic method served a positive moral function in paving the way for clarity of thought about moral issues.

In a famous analogy, Plato makes Socrates compare his mission and his method to that of his mother, who was a midwife:

But I have this feature in common with midwives – I myself am barren of wisdom. The criticism that’s often made of me – that it’s lack of wisdom that makes me ask questions, but say nothing positive myself – is perfectly true. Why do I behave like this? Because the god compels me to attend to the labours of others but prohibits

me from having any offspring myself. I myself therefore am quite devoid of wisdom; my mind has never produced any idea that could be called clever. But as for those who associate with me – well, although at first some of them give the impression of being pretty stupid, yet later, as the association continues, all of those to whom the god vouchsafes it improve marvellously, as is evident to themselves as well as to others. And they make this progress, clearly, not because they ever learn anything from me; the many fine ideas and offspring they produce come from within themselves. But the god and I are responsible for the delivery. . . . When I ask a question, set about answering it to the best of your ability. And if, on examination, I find that some thought of yours is illusory and untrue, and if I then draw it out of you and discard it, don't rant and rave at me, as a first-time mother might if her baby were involved. . . . I do what I do because it is my moral duty not to connive at falsehood and cover up truth.

(Theaetetus, 150c–151b)

The Socrates who is midwife to truth does not seek, like earlier philosophers, to impart truth from without, nor does he seek merely to destroy old beliefs: his midwifery serves a positive function in bringing new birth, as each individual mind becomes self-aware and seeks the ground of its own conviction.

The doctrine that seems to have been the ground of Socrates' actual beliefs is expressed in the proposition that virtue (*arete*, excellence) is knowledge. The wise man, who knows what is good and what conduces to human happiness, will do what is good and conduces to human happiness. Wrong actions are a result of a faulty perception of what conduces to true human good. It is possible to learn (and therefore in a sense to teach, but the 'teacher' can only be midwife to truth) what conduces to true human good and happiness, and, once learnt, the knowledge will be irresistible. Hence it is possible to say that no one willingly does wrong. His ethical concern did not of course lead Socrates to prescribe rules for good conduct, but was directed towards the increase of self-awareness as a prerequisite to the health and well-being of the *psyche* (spirit or soul, including the mind).

The enquiring method of Socrates is one of the first fruits of the great intellectual change that manifested itself throughout the Greek-speaking world in the second half of the fifth century, sometimes known as the Greek enlightenment. The same period saw the growth of a new kind of professional teacher throughout Greece. These men were called sophists, a name derived from the word for wisdom or skill, *sophia*. They moved from city to city, giving lessons in such things as mathematics, politics and the art of public speaking, designed to be useful for the rising political classes. The name of Gorgias of Leontini, an Ionian colony in Sicily, is associated with the development of rhetoric and examples survive of his highly antithetical style, which is thought to have influenced Thucydides. Protagoras of Abdera in Ionia is accredited

with the famous saying ‘man is the measure of all things’, often understood to imply a doctrine of relativity in relation to knowledge and scepticism as to the universality of any science. About the gods he was agnostic. He is said to have been the first to propose that on every subject there can be two conflicting opinions. He features in a dialogue of Plato that bears his name, where he is treated respectfully and debates with Socrates various questions relating to politics, pleasure and knowledge. He exhibits common sense and at one stage offers an account of his purposes as a teacher:

When he comes to me, Hippocrates will not be put through the same things that another sophist would inflict upon him. The others treat their pupils badly; these young men, who have deliberately turned their backs on specialisation, they take and plunge into special studies again, teaching them arithmetic and astronomy and geometry and music . . . but from me he will learn only what he has come to learn. What is that subject? The proper concern of his personal affairs, so that he may best manage his own household, and also his state affairs, so as to become a real power in the city, both as a speaker and man of affairs.

(Protagoras, 318d–e)

Plato draws a sharp distinction between Socrates and the sophists, whom he represents as men who taught skills without genuine interest in moral truth or in the higher ends which knowledge should be made to serve. Certainly there is a gulf between the practical aim of worldly success expressed by Protagoras here and the divine mission of Socrates. In method they differed too. The sophists gave lectures in schools for a fee; Socrates did not give lectures nor did he set up a school or take fees.

Nevertheless, when Aristophanes satirised the sophists in the *Clouds* of 423, he chose Socrates as the representative of the new learning. An elderly farmer called Strepsiades (‘The Twister’) has heard of Socrates, as a man who can make the worse case appear a better one, and hopes to profit from his teaching to cheat those to whom he is in debt. He goes to the ‘thinking school’ of Socrates where he is introduced to the clouds, whom Socrates alleges to be responsible for producing rain rather than Zeus. (There is a tradition that Socrates began with physics before turning to ethics.) But Strepsiades is too stupid to learn anything, so he sends his son Pheidippides instead. The son hears the unjust argument defeat the just argument, and as a result of the new learning is able to teach his father to cheat his creditors. But he then beats his father, proving that he is justified in doing so and disowns the authority of the gods. Strepsiades sets fire to Socrates’ school in disgust.

The comic indictment of Aristophanes proved to be uncannily prophetic. In 399, in the restored democracy, Socrates was put on trial on the serious charge of corrupting the minds of the young and of believing in deities of his own invention instead

of the gods recognised by the city. Plato makes Socrates refer to the Aristophanic caricature in the defence he gave at his trial:

Very well, what did my critics say in attacking my character? I must read out their affidavit, so to speak, as though they were my legal accusers. Socrates is guilty of criminal meddling in that he inquires into things below the earth and in the sky and makes the weaker argument defeat the stronger, and teaches others to follow his example. It runs something like that. You have seen it for yourselves in the play by Aristophanes where Socrates goes whirling around proclaiming he is walking on air and uttering a great deal of other nonsense about things of which I know nothing whatsoever.

(Apology, 19b–c)

Those who brought the charge probably wished to punish Socrates for his criticism of democracy (made on the grounds that government should be in the hands of experts whereas the *demos* is undisciplined and untrained) and his supposed influence upon the likes of Alcibiades, who had sought to undermine the Athenian democracy from without. At his trial Socrates refused to employ a proper defence, choosing instead to make an honest and uncompromising avowal of his life's aims and endeavours:

Perhaps someone may say, But surely, Socrates, after you have left us you can spend the rest of your life in quietly minding your own business. This is the hardest thing of all to make some of you understand. If I say that this would be disobedience to god, and that is why I cannot 'mind my own business', you will not believe that I am serious. If on the other hand I tell you that to let no day pass without discussing goodness and all the other subjects about which you hear me talking and examining both myself and others is really the very best thing that a man can do, and that life without this sort of examination is not worth living, you will be even less inclined to believe me.

(Apology, 37e)

Condemned to death after his conviction (if only thirty votes had been otherwise, he says in the *Apology*, he would have been acquitted), he refused to escape from prison, but chose to drink hemlock in the traditional manner, showing a cheerful courage and a philosophic calm in the face of death, as recorded in Plato's *Phaedo*.

The testimonies to the character of Socrates written after his death by Xenophon and Plato are designed in part to vindicate him against the charges of his detractors. Plato puts his most extended formal eulogy into the mouth of Alcibiades in his *Symposium*, written about 385 but set in 416 before the Sicilian expedition, when Alcibiades was still in good repute. Towards the end of the *Symposium*, a drinking

party at the house of the tragic poet Agathon in which the participants each give a speech in praise of love (*eros*), Alcibiades bursts in and announces that the only encomium he will give will be of Socrates himself, whom he likens to the figures of Silenus in statuaries' shops; their unprepossessing exterior belies their inner reality, for they are hollow inside and when opened up can be seen to contain little figures of the gods. In mythology, Silenus is a pot-bellied, sleep-prone drunkard who in sober waking moments dispensed wisdom to those who could pin him down and constrain him to do so. The flesh-and-blood Socrates was snub-nosed and ugly, not at all the image of the dignified philosopher that has come down to us in the idealised busts of Plato and Aristotle, in which the physical and intellectual are harmoniously blended in the typical Greek way. He was the butt of comedians and into this comic portrait fits the figure of his second wife Xanthippe, an archetypal shrew who gave her husband a bad time. Alcibiades also likens him to Marsyas the satyr, who can entrance men with his flute: Socrates casts his spell simply with his words and speech. Then comes the confession of Alcibiades, which might be thought to be Plato's answer to Socrates' detractors:

He compels me to realise that I am still a mass of imperfections and yet persistently neglect my own true interests by engaging in public life. So against my real inclination I stop up my ears and take refuge in flight, as Odysseus did from the Sirens.

(216a)

Only Socrates has induced in him a feeling of shame.

He then exposes the Silenus figure, with the observation that Socrates (like all the Athenians present at the banquet) has a tendency to dote on beautiful young men and (unlike his fellows) pretends to be ignorant and know nothing:

But this is exactly the point in which he resembles Silenus; he wears these characteristics superficially, like the carved figure, but once you see beneath the surface you will discover a degree of self-control (*sophrosyne*) of which you can hardly form a notion, gentlemen. Believe me, it makes no difference to him whether a person is good-looking – he despises good looks to an almost inconceivable extent – nor whether he is rich nor whether he possesses any of the other advantages that rank high in popular esteem; to him all these things are worthless, and we ourselves of no account, be sure of that.

(216d–e)

As proof of his self-control, Alcibiades then tells a remarkable story. As a handsome young man he deliberately set out to offer himself to the older man in fulfilment of

the ideal set out elsewhere in the *Symposium*, in which male love (assumed by all the speakers to be alone capable of fulfilling the highest and noblest aspirations) becomes ideal when it inspires the search for truth and beauty. Alcibiades goes to the extent of getting into bed with Socrates, who sleeps with him for the night. We are not to suppose that Socrates is not tempted, but he chastely remains immune to the young man's charms. The anecdote is designed to illustrate, without solemnity, Socratic *sophrosyne*: the divine inner being masked by the comic exterior. For Alcibiades, it is both an insult and a revelation of Socrates' strength of mind and character further confirmed in the famous incident in which he walks barefoot on ice in the wintry siege of Potidaea. Further testimony follows of his courage as a soldier of Athens, of his endurance and of his essential indifference to the needs of the senses. Though a great drinker, no one has ever seen him drunk. There is the story of his extraordinary trance-like withdrawal into thought, an inner concentration that lasted a day and a night. Little wonder that Alcibiades finds him absolutely untypical, indeed unique (221c).

The final part of the encomium stresses the extraordinary quality of his talk:

I forgot to say at the beginning that his talk too is extremely like the Silenus-figures which take apart. Anyone who sets out to listen to Socrates talking will probably find his conversation utterly ridiculous at first; it is clothed in such curious words and phrases, the hide, so to speak, of a hectoring Satyr. He will talk of pack-asses and blacksmiths, cobblers and tanners, and appear to express the same ideas in the same language over and over again so that any inexperienced or foolish person is bound to laugh at his way of speaking. But if a man penetrates within and sees the content of Socrates' talk exposed, he will find that his talk is almost the talk of a god, and enshrines countless representations of ideal excellence and is of the widest possible application.

(221d–222a)

Xenophon and Plato represent him as patriotic and law-abiding. They record his respect for the state religion. In their accounts, his mission is laid upon him by the Delphic god, and his famous *daimonion*, the inner voice which acted as a warning sign, is regarded as being of divine origin. For Xenophon he was the best and happiest of men: pious, just, self-controlled, sensible (*Memoirs of Socrates*, 1, 11). After recounting his death in his dialogue the *Phaedo*, Plato pronounces him to have been of all whom they knew in their time, the best, the wisest and the most upright man (*Phaedo*, 118). Plato's tribute culminates in the superlative form of the adjective *dikaios*, which is related to the noun *dikaiosyne*, justice or righteousness, the sum of the four cardinal virtues of the ancient world, including courage, wisdom and temperance. In his life and in his manner of dying, Socrates embodied for his admirers the perfection of the philosophic spirit.

PLATO (c. 427–347)

Born of aristocratic parents in around 427 in Athens, Plato wrote poetry in his youth before turning to philosophy, notably when he encountered Socrates. In the *Republic*, written about 375 but set in earlier times, the main respondents of Socrates, Glaucon and Adeimantus, are the elder brothers of Plato, who must have sat at the feet of Socrates and learned his philosophy in a similar way. After Socrates' trial and death in 399, he turned aside from the political career he had contemplated and travelled extensively. He visited the court of the tyrant Dionysius I of Syracuse and met the ruler's brother-in-law Dion, with whom he struck up a friendship. In his seventh letter, written to friends of Dion after his death, Plato records that his experience in Athens had convinced him that good government was only possible if philosophers acquire political authority or if by some miracle those in power become philosophers (326b). Plato returned to Athens and began teaching in a gymnasium that had a shrine to a hero named Academus, hence the school was called the Academy. It seems that he hoped the Academy might be a nursery for philosopher kings, and the school attracted the pupils from other parts of Greece, notably Aristotle from Stagira in the Chersonese. When Dionysius I died in 367, Dion invited Plato back to Syracuse to train the new young ruler Dionysius II, who was not, however, a responsive pupil.

Plato is the first thinker in western philosophy from whom we have an extant philosophical framework, though the surviving Platonic dialogues (some thirty in number) featuring Socrates as the main speaker (in all but one or two late works) are not a systematic exposition of his philosophy as it was taught in the Academy. There is some evidence, if Plato is, indeed, the author of the letters that have been attributed to him (there is dispute about this among scholars), that he deliberately refrained from committing his more advanced thoughts to paper. The dialogues seem rather to have been designed for popular consumption, to be fully intelligible to the general reader throughout, without the use of technical language. As to the recreation of the character of Socrates long after the historical figure had died, Plato is hereby affirming the soundness of his methods and seriousness of his mission as an educator of mankind and midwife to truth: the Platonic Socrates is an imaginative extension of the real figure and a dramatic embodiment of the philosophic spirit in action, a model of the kind of man who believes (and acts on the belief) that virtue is knowledge.

The dialogues are therefore exemplary, but they are also meant to be enticing. In the *Symposium*, for example, Plato clearly wishes to cast the kind of spell over his readers that Alcibiades says Socrates habitually cast over those with whom he conversed. In the realistic presentation of an actual drinking party we see 'the feast of reason and the flow of soul'. The fully human setting, conjured up by Plato's literary art, is what has given the Socratic method its irresistible appeal. Moreover, however

much they may ascend to the ideal, the discussions all start in the real world of practical human concerns.

It is not only the setting over which Plato takes pains. When he introduces Aristophanes in the *Symposium*, the comic poet speaks very much in character (one to which Plato seems well disposed), offering an entertaining fantasy in which Zeus cut the original human beings in half to punish them, with the result that love is the search for the lost half, 'the desire and pursuit of the whole' (189–193). What starts as a joke after the more scientific lecture delivered by the previous speaker proves to be the most thought provoking speech of the first half of the colloquium, in the best serio-comic Aristophanic style. There is a pointed contrast of character in the *Republic*, when, after the polite and careful cross-questioning of the sweetly reasonable Socrates, the abrupt denunciation of him by the opinionated and dogmatic sophist, Thrasymachus, comes as a dramatic surprise (336b). The portrayal of him is deliberately extreme; the contrasting example of the sophist throws the superior qualities of Socrates' mind, motive and method into clear relief.

A key to the whole tendency of Plato's thought, in particular to the sharp distinction he makes between the ideal and the phenomenal world, can be found in the famous allegory of the cave in the sixth book of the *Republic* (513e–518). This is a graphic representation of the tendency in Greek thought to find the source of human happiness and virtue in knowledge and to exalt the wise man as the enlightener and saviour of mankind, opening up the possibility of a steep and arduous upward road to truth through the application of human intelligence and the exercise of the power of reason.

The allegory of the cave is designed to be a figurative illustration of Plato's theory of knowledge. Socrates has been arguing that the true philosopher is not content to study a variety of beautiful objects, but seeks to know what beauty is in itself, what is called the 'form' (*eidos*) or 'idea' (*idea*) of beauty (*Republic*, 476).

In Plato's theory there are forms of abstract things, like beauty, goodness and justice, and of physical things, like beds and tables. These forms transcend the phenomenal world of sense impression, that is the world that we perceive through our senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. They exist apart and are eternal and unchanging. The phenomenal world in some way participates in this greater transcendent world of forms: a beautiful object is informed by beauty itself; a bed shares in the non-physical reality of the ideal bed. Only the forms are the objects of true knowledge. He who apprehends merely the particularities of the phenomenal world, apprehends mutable appearances, what seems to be true. He does not have knowledge, but has opinion (*doxa*: the Greek word has the same root as the word *dokein*, to seem). The ultimate end of knowledge is the form of the good, which gives meaning and value to everything in the universe. When asked to be more precise about this supreme reality, Socrates confesses that he is unable to be so, and resorts

to figurative language for further illustration, comparing the form of the good to the sun which gives visibility to the objects of the sensible world and the power of seeing to the eye. So the good makes the objects of thought (the forms) intelligible and gives the power of knowledge to the mind (*Republic*, 506d–509c). Plato then explores the distinction between the visible and intelligible worlds with the analogy of the divided line, through which he clarifies four sharply distinct mental states (the figure clarifies since in life they might not be so independent of one another). Opinion can be informed and true, or illusory and false; knowledge may be of ultimate reality (the forms), or of a lesser reality, which nevertheless transcends the world of sense (mathematical propositions).

Then comes the allegory of the cave. The prisoners in the cave have been fettered since childhood in their underground cave and can only look in front of them. They have one fixed view, from which they can see reflected on the wall opposite shadows of objects being carried through the cave by men walking on a road above them, in front of which a wall has been built. Above and behind the road is a fire, whose light casts the shadows of the objects, which may be figures of men or animals in stone. For the prisoners, the shadows are the only realities. If one of them is let loose and compelled to turn his head and walk towards the fire, faced with the passing objects, he will resist the new reality, taking refuge in the familiar. The light of the fire will hurt his eyes. If he is forced to make the ascent to daylight, the process will be painful and he will at first not be able to see what is pointed out to him as real. Until his eyes grow accustomed to the light, he will look at shadows and reflections, then at objects themselves, then at the heavens by night. The last thing he will be able to look at will be the sun itself. Then he will come to realise that the sun is the cause of all things. Reflecting upon his former life, he will see that it was worthless. If he is made to come back to the cave, he will again be blinded and make a fool of himself in the eyes of his former fellows, who will think the ascent has destroyed his eyesight and is not worth making. If anyone attempts to release them they will try to kill him.

Socrates likens the ascent into the upper world to the progress of the mind into the intelligible realm. The final perception is of the form of the good, which is the cause of all things right and true (*Republic*, 517b–517c).

In passing, it may be noted that another aspect of this ascent is the ascent of the ideal lover on the ladder of beauty, from the beautiful objects of the physical world on the lower rung, to the beauty of the soul and on to the beauty of abstractions, like laws and institutions, until he finally ascends to contemplation of the form of beauty itself, an incommunicable mystical experience that is the climax of the prophetess Diotima's speech to Socrates on the nature of *eros* in the *Symposium* (210–212).

Ordinary earthly life is lived in a benighted condition of ignorance from a fixed point of view, in which the deluded soul is imprisoned, without knowing it, in a world of transient shadows. The impeding fetters are not simply intellectual, but are also

The upward road to truth through philosophic enlightenment

The Divided Line

The Allegory of the Cave

A *noesis* (understanding)

The Sun (the form of the good)

Intelligence of the forms, having understanding of ultimate reality of the form of the good, the ground of all hypotheses and assumptions.

Grown accustomed to the light, the eyes can view the sun. As the sun gives visibility to the objects of the sensible world and the power of seeing to the mind, so the good gives the power of knowing to the mind.

B *dianoia* (reasoning)

Mathematical intelligence dealing with underlying realities but in a deductive way that is uncritical of assumptions.

The prisoners released from the cave must accustom their sight to the new reality and begin by looking at shadows and reflections of real things.

episteme (knowledge)

Above the Line

Outside the Cave: sunlight

Below the Line *doxa* (opinion)

Inside the Cave: firelight

C *pistis* (belief)

True opinion informed by knowledge but held on trust. Common-sense views of things without understanding of first principles underlying the mutable world of sense impression and experience.

Freed slaves turn towards the fire and see the objects that cast the shadows. These objects (still artificial) are believed to be real.

D *eikasia* (illusion)

Shadows and reflections taken to be real. Second-hand opinions and impressions. Poetry and the images of art belong to this realm. So does the teaching of the sophists, who simply make a science out of common opinion.

Fettered slaves view shadows of objects cast by firelight as real. The state of ordinary men and women.

FIGURE 42 The elements of Plato's thought in the *Republic*

moral. Nothing short of a radical turn-around of our mental and moral nature is needed. Enlightenment is a slow and painful process that is naturally and powerfully resisted by the ignorant and blind. Each stage of the upward journey into light is painful and difficult. But enlightenment is possible; eventually the released prisoner can behold the sun, although he is reluctant and has to be compelled at every stage. When in the beginning, after he has turned his head, he is told that all he has previously seen is illusory and he is cross-questioned about the objects passing before him, he is at a loss (in *aporia*), believing what he saw previously to be more real. The unmistakable allusion here to the Socratic method of refutation of conventional opinion (the *elenchos*), makes it clear that only the philosopher can effect the reformation necessary for enlightenment, though it is a dangerous proceeding, for the ignorant prisoners are liable to kill the man who attempts to lead them up the steep ascent.

Given the bleak picture of unreformed human life in the allegory, it is not surprising that Socrates concludes that the philosopher, with his eye on the good, will be reluctant to involve himself in human affairs and may make a fool of himself if he is put on trial in the lawcourts, where the shadow of justice prevails. The *Republic* itself is an attempt to envisage the reformation necessary in social arrangements if justice is to flourish in the individual and the community. Socrates recognizes that the ideal state is a pattern laid up in heaven which anyone can find and establish in himself (*Republic*, 592b). At the same time, without the ideal environment, he clearly feels that the individual effort will meet with the greatest difficulty.

The nature of the ideal state is defined in carefully argued stages, but in the final blueprint, the city, which will be an aristocracy based on merit, will be divided into three classes, the chief of which is the class of guardians, the philosophic rulers, whose orders will be carried out by the second class of auxiliaries. The third class constitutes workers, whether farmers or businessmen. The guardians, who may be male or female, are not allowed to own property or handle money. Their needs are to be provided for by the rest of the community. All women are to be held in common to all men, and children are to be held in common to be brought up in state nurseries. No child shall know its parents; no parent shall know its own child. There will be mating festivals, at which rulers will arrange for the best men to mate with the best women, in a rigged ballot to avoid dissent, with the object of ensuring that the best offspring results. The conflict of interest between the family and the state will therefore be eliminated. The state will be one large family and so have maximum unity. In the *Assemblywomen* of 392 (written before the *Republic*), Aristophanes makes a comedy of arrangements similar to these.

The ideal state will embody the four cardinal virtues of wisdom, courage, temperance and justice. Its wisdom, *sophia*, will reside in the guardians, its courage, *andreia*, in the auxiliaries, and its temperance, *sophrosyne*, in the harmonious acceptance of

the order of the state by all three classes. Justice, *dikaiosyne*, is the principle that makes this temperance possible; it is the extension of the principle of the division of labour upon which society is based in the first place, the principle whereby each class fulfils its own function without trespassing on the functions of the other two.

The nature of the state reflects the nature of the individual writ large. The individual soul is made up of three parts, corresponding to the three classes in the state: the rational part, the spirited part and the appetitive part. The wisdom of the individual resides in the rational part, courage in the spirited part and temperance in the harmonious relation between the three parts, specifically in the way in which the lower parts consent to the rule of reason. A comparison may be made here with the famous passage in the *Phaedrus* (253d–255) in which the division of the soul into three parts is represented by a charioteer driving two horses, one noble, the other wanton, each pulling in opposite directions. Justice in the individual, as in the state, is the principle whereby each part of the soul fulfils its own function without interfering with the functions of the other two. Justice is therefore the harmony and health of the soul.

Plato's idealism in the *Republic* leads him to a very negative view of the existing form of democracy. Indeed he has been seen as the enemy of liberal and humanitarian ideals and the prophet of totalitarianism. After he has established the philosophic state based on the rule of reason, Socrates in Book Eight distinguishes four kinds of unjust states, each representing a progressive decline, as the rule of reason is usurped by the lower elements in the psyche. First comes timocracy, meaning the rule of honour (the Spartan state is an example), in which the spirited element rules without the tempering guidance of philosophy. Then comes oligarchy, the rule of the few, in which honour has given way to the love of riches as the ruling principle. The people rebel in the name of liberty and equality, but democracy inevitably degenerates into anarchy and licence where the lowest elements of the psyche predominate. Democratic man becomes a prey to extravagant and unnecessary appetites, living from day to day and satisfying every whim without any ruling principle. A faction-ridden democracy easily degenerates into tyranny, where all are enslaved to the ruling passions of a single man. In the allegory of the cave, the clear allusion to the death of Socrates associates the democracy of his day with brutal ignorance from which Plato recoiled, but which was also the spur that led him to conceive the *Republic* and his other Socratic dialogues as a defence of all that Socrates had lived and died for. The writing of these dialogues itself exemplifies the moral duty that Plato laid upon the philosopher to descend again into the cave for the purpose of attempting conversion of the ignorant rather than being content to cultivate his own garden or rest assured within the walls of an enlightened Academy of his own making.

Equally notorious is Plato's hostility to poetry, though he himself has always been considered to be the most poetical of philosophers, a judgement arising from the harmony and proportion of his prose style, which is enriched by the imaginative

presentation of ideas through picturesque analogies, developed allegories like that of the cave or the use of myth to push philosophical enquiry beyond the point at which certain knowledge is possible, as in the myth of Er at the end of the *Republic*, in which he graphically represents the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and its reincarnation.

Much of the discussion of the preliminary education of the guardians is concerned to modify the existing Greek programme, in which poetry and mythology played a significant part. His treatment of the two go hand in hand, since he believed that traditional mythology was largely the invention of the poets. He does not banish poets and their stories altogether (the word for story is *mythos*), but poetry that tells lies about the gods or shows heroes in a bad light, encouraging emotional excess in those who read it, is condemned on moral and theological grounds. Here Plato is renewing the objections of previous philosophers, for the battle between poetry and philosophy had been going on since the early Ionian philosophers attacked the view of the world (and especially of the gods) in the poems of Homer and Hesiod (*Republic*, 607b). Poetry on suitable subjects and myths that are morally edifying continue to play a leading part in the education of the young (376e, 399b). Indeed, in the ideal state, all the inhabitants, including the guardians, are to be persuaded of the truth of a foundation myth which Plato calls a noble fiction (sometimes translated as 'noble lie', for he uses the same word, *pseudos*, for fiction and falsehood, 414b–415d).

The existing pattern of Athenian education consisted of *mousike paideia*, relating not only to music but to all the arts over which the nine Muses presided (including literature, history and all the liberal arts), and *gymnastike paideia*, physical education. They were designed to complement one another and produce the all-round individual. Plato envisages reform of this education to ensure that aesthetic development and a strong moral sense run parallel. This preliminary education of the guardians, which is designed to promote harmonious development of character rather than to reach true knowledge, is to be followed by the study of mathematics, astronomy and harmonics, not for any practical value but for the training of the mind. The motto 'Let no one who is ignorant of mathematics enter here' was inscribed over the doors of the Academy. The theorems and hypotheses of mathematics represent the reflections of real things seen by the prisoners of the cave in the water, after they have been newly released into the blinding light. Mathematical study leads to a knowledge of greater reality than anything in the world of sense, and so is the best way of leading the mind upward to a vision of the highest order of reality, the forms that are known through dialectical reasoning (532c–d).

Plato objects to poetry as a mode of truth because it is a representation (*mimesis*, sometimes translated 'imitation') of the world of appearances, which is itself a distorted reflection of the transcendent world of unchanging and eternal forms. The images of the poet (for which Plato's word is *eikones*) are at two removes from reality,

so that poetry belongs to the lower realm of *eikasia* (usually translated as ‘illusion’) in which shadows and reflections are mistaken for reality by the ignorant prisoners in the darkness of the cave. Poetry must yield to the higher reality of philosophy. Hence the famous judgement which shows Plato deeply at variance with traditional Greek culture:

when you meet people who admire Homer as the educator of Greece, and who say that in the administration of human affairs and education we should study him and model our whole lives on his poetry, you must feel kindly towards them as good men within their limits, and you may agree with them that Homer is the best of poets and first of tragedians. But you will know that the only poetry that should be allowed in a state is hymns to the gods and poems in praise of good men; once you go beyond that and admit the sweet lyric or epic muse, pleasure and pain become your rulers instead of law and the rational principles commonly accepted as best.

(Republic, 606e, 607a)

ARISTOTLE (384–322)

Aristotle was born in 384 at Stagira in the Chersonese, in the north east of Greece. His father had been court physician to the Macedonian king, Amyntas III. He was sent to the Athenian Academy of Plato in 367, where he studied until Plato’s death in 347. He then left Athens to direct his philosophical studies abroad. In 343/2 he was invited by King Philip to the Macedonian capital Pella to tutor his 13-year-old son Alexander. Anecdotes report that the philosopher prepared a special edition of Homer for the edification of his illustrious pupil. He returned to Athens in 335 where he opened a new school to rival the Academy in the Lyceum, a gymnasium in the temple of Apollo Lyceus, located in a grove just outside the city. From his habit of providing instruction in the *peripetos*, or covered walkway, of the gymnasium, the school has often been called Peripatetic. With the death of Alexander in 323 and the Greek revolt against his subordinates, Aristotle, with his well-known Macedonian connections, withdrew from Athens to avoid prosecution. He died in Chalcis in Euboea in the following year.

While the extant corpus of Plato’s writings are polished literary works for public consumption and none of his Academy lectures survives, Aristotle’s polished writing in dialogue form has been lost and what survives is mostly in the form of lecture material apparently used in giving courses at the Lyceum. The surviving esoteric treatises may in some cases be notes taken by pupils, and have all been assembled and edited by later Aristotelians. For example, his *Metaphysics* is regarded as a series

of small treatises on various philosophical problems, put together and given its title because it was to be read after the *Physics* (the literal meaning of meta-physics). This has had the effect of making Aristotle's philosophy seem more of a system than it doubtless was, and modern Aristotelians have found development, change and sometimes contradiction within our surviving texts.

After Plato, what is immediately striking is the great range of Aristotle's intellectual interests. He continues to reflect the Socratic and Platonic emphasis upon the moral and metaphysical, but is less theoretical and mathematical than Plato, extending the range of his philosophical enquiries to the physical and particularly to the biological. He starts from observed phenomena, believing that man achieves knowledge by looking outward, as well as inward, and by maintaining contact with the world of sense impression. His physics concerns not abstractions but real substances as they move and change spontaneously. This empiricism is most evident in his biological work. We cannot imagine the other-worldly and visionary Plato devoting time to (and doing the research for) the classification of biological phenomena according to structure and function that we find in several of Aristotle's works, including his monumental *History of Animals*, in which we see the natural philosopher reaching out towards a clear definition of the actual world and towards an explanation of facts.

In Aristotle, for the first time, the various branches of learning and science are systematically classified, differentiated and defined, so that subsequent developments in logic, physics, metaphysics, zoology, political and moral science, psychology, rhetoric and literary criticism all grow out of Aristotelian beginnings. While Plato eschewed technical terms in his popular writings, to Aristotle the world owes a whole philosophical vocabulary and grammar, so to speak. The 'vocabulary' comprises categories and essential terms such as form and matter, energy and potential, substance and essence, quantity and quality, accidental relations and causes, genus and species. The 'grammar' comprises Aristotelian logic (from *logos* meaning word, discourse or reason, something distinctive to the human species), for he saw the necessity of establishing rules for correct argumentation, in the course of which he became the first to analyse sentences, bequeathing the terms subject and predicate amongst others. Later commentators entitled his logical works the *Organon* or 'tool', recognizing that Aristotelian logic is not an end in itself but the indispensable prerequisite to any fruitful scientific enquiry.

While Plato is an idealist, Aristotle is often called the first great representative of the realist school of western philosophy. The reaction against Plato and his greater realism may be illustrated in his critical appraisal of Plato's *Republic* in his own *Politics* (1260–1264). He finds fault with Plato's proposals to abolish the family and ownership of private property among the ruling guardians, which he believes to be neither practical nor desirable. He attacks the basic premise from which Plato argues that the highest unity of the state is its highest good, insisting that plurality is the nature

of a state. He argues that Plato does not take into account the facts of human nature; present evils and abuses in society spring not from private ownership and the family, but from basic human wickedness. He also finds gaps in Plato's provisions, noting that there are no arrangements for the majority, the third class of artisans and farmers. Contemplating the class structure of Plato's city, Aristotle sees two states in one, a recipe for strife. Arguing that the whole cannot be happy unless all or at least some of its parts are happy, he finds fault with Plato's argument that the happiness of the guardians is to be sacrificed to the happiness of the whole, clearly believing along with Glaucon (*Republic*, 419) that Plato's ideal city will be a dismal place to live in. He himself, working empirically from an analysis of 158 existing constitutions, classified governments under three headings: rule by the single person, rule by a few and rule by the many. The first would be the ideal, but the corruption of it into tyranny is the worst of all. Similarly, rule by the few will easily degenerate into a self-seeking oligarchy. Though he had more faith in the collective judgement of the *demoi* than Plato, he favoured reform of extreme democracy to incorporate various checks and balances. In the best polity, faction will be avoided if there is a strong middle class (*Politics*, 1295–1296).

More radically, Aristotle came to reject the stark dualism of Plato's theory of ideas. He agreed with Plato's rejection of the insistence of the Pre-Socratics that the primordial substance was material, and accepted that the basic reality consisted of forms, but denied that these forms exist apart from the sensible world. The form is not transcendent but is immanent in the individual and the particular. The form and its essence cannot exist apart from the things whose form and essence they are. In rejecting the theory of ideas, he also rejected the belief that went with it, which Plato had inherited from the Pythagoreans, that the body is the prison of the *psyche* or soul.

In his own work *On the Soul* (*psyche*, which is better thought of as the animating principle), Aristotle does not allow that, as far as earthly life is concerned, the body and the soul are two substances pulling in different directions and that the soul's purpose is to struggle free from the bonds of matter. Body and soul are one:

Let us go back again as from the beginning in the attempt to define what the soul is and what might be the most general account of it. One kind, then, of the things that there are we call *substance*, and part of this group we say to be so as matter [*hyle*], that which is not in itself a particular thing, a second part we say to be so as shape [*morphe*] or form [*eidōs*], in accordance with which, when it applies, a thing is called a particular, and a third as that which comes from the two together. Now matter is potentiality [*dynamic*] and form is actuality [*entelecheia*] . . . soul is substance as the *form* of a natural body which potentially has life, and since this substance is actuality, soul will be the actuality of such a body.

(*On the Soul*, 2, 1)

Later he calls the soul the cause (*aitia*, 'the reason for') or first principle of the living body, its final cause. We believe that we possess scientific knowledge of a thing when we think we know its cause. We must acquire knowledge of original causes, of which there are four: the material, the formal, the efficient (what makes something come to be) and the final (the end which it serves, from *finis*, the Latin word translating *telos*, whence teleological, and meaning 'end'). If we take the example of a house, the material cause tells us about the material of which it is constructed; the formal cause tells us of the structure or the plan of the house; the efficient cause tells us what is necessary for the building of the house, such as the art of building and design; the final cause tells us about the function of the house (see e.g. *Physics*, 2, 3, 24). These famous Aristotelian distinctions represent a new clarity and definition in relation to previous thought about causation.

The four causes apply equally to natural things.

Hence, if it is by nature and also for a purpose that the swallow makes her nest and the spider his web, and that plants make leaves for the sake of the fruit and strike down (and not up) with their roots in order to get nourishment, it is clear that causality of the kind we have described is at work in things that come about or exist in the course of Nature.

(Physics, 2, 8, 25)

Nature is a 'principle of movement and change'. The movement is always the realisation of an end, the actualisation of an original potentiality. Aristotle's thought is therefore thoroughly teleological. As there is a final so there is a first cause. 'So inasmuch as motion [*kinesis*] is eternal, it follows that the prime mover, if it be single, or the prime movers, if plural, must likewise be eternal' (*Physics*, 8, 6, 8). The Unmoved Mover exists in a state of eternal contemplation.

What then is the final cause of man? What is his purpose or his end? What is peculiar to man is that which distinguishes him from the vegetable and animal worlds, his rational faculty enabling rational activity:

Let us take it that what we are concerned with here is the reasoning power in action for it is generally allowed that when we speak of 'reasoning' we really mean *exercising* our reasoning faculties The function of a man is the exercise of his non-corporeal faculties or 'soul' in accordance with, or at least not divorced from, a rational principle. . . . The good for man is 'an activity of soul in accordance with goodness' or (on the supposition that there may be more than one form of goodness) 'in accordance with the best and most complete form of goodness.'

(Ethics, 1, 7)

Aristotle's word for goodness and virtue here is *arete*, which may better be translated as excellence:

Virtue, then, is of two kinds, intellectual and moral. Of these, the intellectual is in the main indebted to teaching for its production and growth, and this calls for time and experience. Moral goodness, on the other hand, is the child of habit, from which it got its very name, ethics being derived from *ethos*, 'habit', by a slight alteration in the quantity of the *e*. This is an indication that none of the moral virtues are implanted in us by Nature, since nothing that Nature creates can be taught by habit to change the direction of its development.

(Ethics, 11, 1)

Education, the responsibility of the city, is to play a vital role in the inculcation of good habits. As we acquire the moral virtues by first exercising them, so Aristotle is persistent in stressing that virtue is a matter of action:

For in 'doing well' the happy man will of necessity *do*. Just as at the Olympic games, it is not the best looking or the strongest men present who are crowned with victory, but competitors – the successful competitors – so in the arena of human life, the honours and rewards fall to those who show their good qualities in action.

(Ethics, 1, 8)

In the *Ethics*, Aristotle does not attempt to legislate for virtue (excellence, *arete*); he lays down no rules to be followed, no ten commandments or prescriptions for the good life, recognising that in discussing right conduct in action he is dealing with an inexact science:

Now matters of conduct and consideration of what is to our advantage have no fixity about them any more than matters affecting our health. And if this be true of moral philosophy as a whole, it is still more true that the discussion of particular problems in ethics admits of no exactitude. For they do not fall under any science or professional tradition, but those who are following some line of conduct are forced in every combination of circumstances to think out for themselves what is suited to those circumstances, just as doctors and navigators have to do in their different *métiers*.

(Ethics, 2, 2)

He then advances the most famous general principle of his *Ethics*:

Let us begin with the following observation. It is in the nature of moral qualities that they can be destroyed by deficiency on the one hand and excess on the other.

We can see this in the instances of bodily health and strength. Physical strength is destroyed by too much and also by too little exercise. Similarly health is ruined by eating and drinking too much or too little, while it is produced, increased and preserved by taking the right quantity of drink and victuals. Well, it is the same with temperance, courage, and the other virtues. The man who shuns and fears everything becomes a coward. The man who is afraid of nothing at all, but marches up to every danger, becomes foolhardy. In the same way the man who indulges in every pleasure without refraining from a single one becomes incontinent. If, on the other hand, a man behaves like the Boor in comedy and turns his back on every pleasure, he will find his sensibilities becoming blunted. So also temperance and courage are destroyed both by excess and deficiency, and they are kept alive by observation of the mean.

(Ethics, 2, 2)

The doctrine of the mean has become something of a commonplace, but the discussion and application of it in the *Ethics* are subtle and discriminating. The philosopher shows us how inadequate our judgements about the virtues can be and how, both in our acting and in our judging, we must be perpetually flexible in our moral insight.

Aristotle introduced his definition of man in order to define the nature of happiness ('living well or faring well') for which the Greek word is *eudaimonia*, the desired end of all human activity. Happiness is not to be equated with pleasure, though pleasure will be a part of it, nor with fame (though his 'high-souled man' has a just regard for his own reputation: *Ethics*, 4, 3), nor even with moral excellence, for moral excellence alone will not make a success of life. Aristotle would not have agreed with the later Stoics, who held that interior moral virtue is sufficient and that we can be indifferent to external factors relating to our needs, our comforts, and our domestic and political circumstances. Nor would he have been in sympathy with the later views of Epicurus, who advocated detachment and withdrawal from the world as the prerequisite of happiness. As a social animal, man needs intercourse and communication with his fellows. There is a long section devoted to friendship, *philia*, in the *Ethics*. The Greek word for 'social' in this connection is *politikos*, for the good and happy life is only possible, in Aristotle's view, within society. The stateless man is either, like Homer's Cyclops, an ignoble savage, or a god (*Politics*, 1253a). In his view ethics and politics are virtually the same subject, the former concerning the good for man considered as an individual, the latter the good for man considered from the point of view of the state as a whole. The function of the state is not conquest, trade or empire, but to enable individuals to live the good life (*Politics*, 1252d). In particular it exists to provide the necessary leisure for the good life, for 'we occupy ourselves in order that we may have leisure, just as we make war for the sake of peace' (*Ethics*,

10, 7). This leisure will be spent partly in relaxation and simple amusement, but the man who would be happy will use it to further the life of the intellect, for 'the intellect more than anything else is the man':

intellectual activity, taking as it does the form of contemplation, seems to excel all other activities in the seriousness of its purpose, to aim at no end beyond itself and to have its own unique pleasure, which enhances its activity. In this activity we easily recognise self-sufficiency, the possibility of leisure and such freedom from fatigue as it is humanly possible, together with all the other blessings of pure happiness. . . . If the intellect is divine compared with man, the life of the intellect must be divine compared with the life of a human creature. And we ought not to listen to those who counsel us *O man, think as a man should* and *O mortal, remember your mortality*. Rather ought we, so far as in us lies, to put on immortality and to leave nothing unattempted in the effort to live in conformity with the highest thing within us.

(Ethics, 10, 7)

Aristotelian philosophy, which emanates from the last years of the independent *polis* before the Macedonian conquest (and Aristotle had been criticized for showing no apparent awareness of the coming change), represents the final and in some senses the fullest philosophic expression of the best in Classical Greek civilization. The whole tendency of his thought, unlike that of Plato, works with and not against the grain of the best Athenian culture of his day. Here may be noted the purpose and value he sees in literature and art. Nevertheless, it must be admitted at once that there is a narrowness in his aristocratic outlook. He has not the respect of Herodotus for the non-Greek (*Politics*, 1252b). Slavery he considered entirely natural (*Politics*, 1254a). Unlike Plato, who advocates sexual equality in the *Republic*, he believes in the natural inferiority of women (*Politics*, 1252b). But in the range of his interests, he embraces more of life than Plato; no other Greek thinker opened up so many areas to intellectual enquiry. And his idea of the good life, less exclusive than that of the other-worldly Plato, comes from a generous affirmation of the purpose and value of earthly life. His own achievements provide the recommending context for his praise of the intellectual life.

HELLENISTIC PHILOSOPHY: POST-ARISTOTELIANS

Athens was still the home of philosophy and attracted thinkers from the whole Greek world. But where Plato and Aristotle had taken for granted that the full human potential could only be realised in the developed *polis*, in the less exclusive Hellenistic world of the third century as the city state began to weaken the two main philosophical systems of the third century, Stoicism and Epicureanism, both desiderated

self-sufficiency and offered a safe haven for the individual less attached to the political world.

Zeno of Citium in Cyprus (c. 333–c. 262) was the founder of the Stoic School at Athens, so called from the Stoa Poikile, the colonnade, where Zeno and his successors, who included Cleanthes of Assos on the coast of Asia Minor (c. 331–c. 213) and Chrysippus of Soli in Cilicia (c. 280–207), conducted their teaching.

Zeno began philosophical life as one of the Cynics, whose chief doctrine was that self-sufficiency could bring contentment in all the vicissitudes of life. The most famous Cynic, Diogenes (c. 400–325), was reputed to have lived in a barrel in accordance with his belief that happiness consisted in satisfying only the most basic natural needs and in renouncing the world of conventional behaviour. The word cynic comes from his nickname, from *kyn-kynos*, dog, said to have been given to him for his shamelessness. From the austerities of cynicism, Zeno was converted by the writings of Antisthenes (c. 445–c. 360), a pupil and friend of Socrates (who may also have influenced Diogenes), to Socratic philosophy whence he developed his own teaching, divided into three parts comprising logic, physics and ethics, the most enduring of which has been Stoic morality.

Virtue is based upon knowledge; only the wise man can be truly virtuous and harmonize his reason with Nature which is ruled by the greater reason, the *Logos*, identified with god and manifested in fate.



FIGURE 43 The Stoa of Attalus (c. 155) as reconstructed

Cleanthes, Zeno's successor as head of the Stoic school, emphasizes the religious side of the Stoic doctrine in his *Hymn to Zeus*.

Most glorious of immortals, honoured under many names, all-powerful for ever,
 O Zeus, first cause of Nature, guiding all things through law,
 Hail! For it is just for all mortals to address you,
 Since we were born of you, and we alone share in the likeness
 Of deity, of all things that live and creep upon the earth.
 So I will hymn you and sing always of your strength.
 For all the cosmos, as it whirls around earth,
 Obeys you, wherever you lead, and it is willingly ruled by you.
 For such is the power you hold in your unconquerable hands:
 The two-forked, fiery, ever-living thunderbolt.
 For all the works of nature are accomplished through its blows,
 By which you set right the universal reason, which flows
 Through everything, mixing divine light through things great and small.
 Nothing is accomplished in this world save through you, O Spirit,
 Neither in the divine, heavenly, ethereal sphere, nor upon the sea,
 Save such as the evil accomplish on their own in their ignorance.

**(William Cassidy, *Prayers from Alexander to Constantine*,
 edited by Mark Kiley, Routledge, 1–16)**

The Stoic wise man, ruled by reason, will be indifferent to the passions (apathetic) and independent of the vagaries of fortune (having self-rule, *autarcheia*) in the knowledge that pleasure is not a good, and pain and death are not evils, a doctrine that in its logical conclusion led to the belief there could be circumstances which justified suicide. As to happiness:

Those things are called indifferent, which have no influence in producing either happiness or unhappiness; such for instance, as riches, glory, health, strength, and the like; for it is possible for a man to be happy without any of these things; and also, it is upon the character of the use that is made of them, that happiness or unhappiness depends.

(Diogenes Laertes, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, 7, 104)

The first duty is virtue.

Among the virtues some are primary, and some are derived. The primary ones are prudence, manly courage, justice, and temperance. And subordinate to these, as

a kind of species contained in them, are magnanimity, continence, endurance, presence of mind, wisdom in council. And the Stoics define prudence as a knowledge of what is good, and bad, and indifferent; justice as a knowledge of what ought to be chosen, what ought to be avoided, and what is indifferent; [93] magnanimity as a knowledge of engendering a lofty habit, superior to all such accidents as happen to all men indifferently, whether they be good or bad; continence they consider a disposition which never abandons right reason, or a habit which never yields to pleasure; endurance they call a knowledge or habit by which we understand what we ought to endure, what we ought not, and what is indifferent; presence of mind they define as a habit which is prompt at finding out what is suitable on a sudden emergency; and wisdom in counsel they think a knowledge which leads us to judge what we are to do, and how we are to do it, in order to act becomingly.

(Diogenes Laertes, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, 7, 92–93)

To acquire this knowledge and these habits, and to maintain them, is a constant endeavour. Stoicism is an active creed and a way of life. Despite the ascetic tendency of their philosophy, Stoics were not required to withdraw from social or public life; engagement was encouraged. And a cosmopolitanism strain in Stoicism encouraged the notion of the brotherhood of man, which extended to slaves. There is no equivalent in Stoic thought of Aristotle's doctrine of natural slavery.

Stoic epistemology, the belief that knowledge could be attained through reason, was challenged in mid-century by Arcesileus of Pitane in Aetolia who was head of the Academy from about 268. Arcesileus used the Socratic *elenchus*, the system of question and answer, to demonstrate the uncertainty of knowledge, since reason is dependent upon the world of sense impression and cannot therefore have reliable access to truth. This state of affairs requires a suspension of judgement, thus undermining the basis of Stoic certainty. He was not the first Sceptic and may have been following the lead of an elder contemporary Pyrrhon of Elis. Carneades of Cyrene (c. 241–129), a successor of Arcesileus as head of the Academy extended scepticism to any form of dogmatic assertion or belief and also meliorated its effect by his doctrine of probability as the basis for knowledge and action.

However, the chief opposition to Stoicism came from the school of Epicurus of Samos (341–271), who settled in Athens in 307 where he bought a home with a garden, the latter giving its name, the Garden, to the philosophical school which he set up in it. Here he lived with his followers in an ascetic seclusion detached from the world and quite unthinkable in Classical Athens. He identified pleasure (the absence of pain) with the good and aspired to *ataraxia*, freedom from disturbance. In one of his letters he is careful to distinguish the true pleasures of the Epicurean from those vulgarly attributed to his school.

When we say, then, that pleasure is the end and aim, we do not mean the pleasures of the prodigal or the pleasures of sensuality, as we are understood to do by some through ignorance, prejudice, or wilful misrepresentation. By pleasure we mean the absence of pain in the body and of trouble in the soul. It is not an unbroken succession of drinking-bouts and of revelry, not sexual love, not the enjoyment of the fish and other delicacies of a luxurious table, which produces a pleasant life; it is sober reasoning, searching out the grounds of every choice and avoidance, and banishing those beliefs through which the greatest tumults take possession of the soul. Of all this the beginning and greatest good is prudence. Wherefore prudence is a more precious thing even than philosophy; from it springs all the other virtues, for it teaches that we cannot lead a life of pleasure which is not also a life of prudence, honour, and justice; nor lead a life of prudence, honour, and justice, which is not also a life of pleasure. For the virtues have grown into one with a pleasant life, and a pleasant life is inseparable from them.

(Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, 10, 131–132)

He took over the atomic theory of Democritus (460–c. 357), believing that the world came into existence by a chance collision of atoms. The gods exist, but they do so in serene detachment, taking no interest in humankind. There is no after-life, death being merely the dispersal of atoms in the individual and therefore no cause of fear. This he makes into a life-affirming doctrine.

Accustom yourself to believe that death is nothing to us, for good and evil imply sentience, and death is the privation of all sentience; therefore, a right understanding that death is nothing to us makes the mortality of life enjoyable, not by adding to life an illimitable time, but by taking away the yearning for immortality. For life has no terrors for him who has thoroughly apprehended that there are no terrors for him in ceasing to live. . . . The wise man does not deprecate life nor does he fear the cessation of life. The thought of life is no offence to him, nor is the cessation of life regarded as an evil. And even as men choose of food not merely and simply the larger portion, but the more pleasant, so the wise seek to enjoy the time which is most pleasant and not merely that which is longest.

(Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, 10, 124–126)

His doctrines are the basis of the poem *On the Nature of Things* by the Roman Lucretius (98–55).

Greek philosophy has continued to be influential. Indeed, a modern thinker called all philosophy ‘footnotes to Plato’. Plato’s philosophy was given new expression in the Neoplatonism of the third century of the Christian era. Christian thinkers like Augustine (AD 354–430) owe much to this tradition. In the Middle Ages Aristotelian

logic became the basis of scholasticism, while the Christian philosophy of Aquinas (AD 1225–1274) was a fusion of Aristotelianism and theology. The legacy of Stoicism extends through Rome to the Renaissance and beyond.

MEDICINE AND SCIENCE

Athens continued to be a centre for philosophical and scientific enquiry in the Hellenistic era. The Lyceum, for example, where Aristotle had laid the ground for so many advances, particularly in the natural sciences, flourished under the leadership of his successor Theophrastus appointed in 322 and continuing for some thirty-five years. Of his many works, two substantially survive, through which he has been dubbed the father of botany and which were not superseded until the Renaissance: *Enquiry Concerning Plants* and *The Causes of Plants*, both the product of new research, informed by knowledge of new plants becoming known through Alexander's conquests. He set plant lore, important through the centuries for food and medicine, systematically on a scientific academic footing, classifying plants with new terminology and on the basis of empirical observation, with due regard to variations in geography and climate. His work *On Stones* is also predominantly scientific, dispensing for the most part with accounts of their magical properties.

In the course of the third century, Alexandria began to replace Athens as the leading cultural and scientific centre. Advances were made in medicine and science partly as a result of the patronage of the kings notably at the Museum in Alexandria, built by Ptolemy and maintained by his successors.

Medicine

In Homer, the plague in the Greek camp at the beginning of the *Iliad* is sent by Apollo and the only recourse for the Greeks is through the prayer of his priest. In *Oedipus the King* the gods send a plague to mark their displeasure at the parricide and incest of Oedipus; once again the key agent of remedy comes through the supernatural in the form of the prophet of Apollo, Tiresias. In Classical times, medicine was still very much bound up with religion. Asclepius, a heroic son of Apollo, was the mythical figure most commonly associated with medicine and healing; his most famous sanctuary was at Epidaurus, where there are many inscriptions bearing witness to his curing powers. Those seeking cures slept in the precincts of the temple overnight and might expect to be visited by the god in their sleep. This temple medicine is akin to faith healing. Yet in *Antigone*, coping with irremediable diseases is one of the many marks of human progress, *techné* (l. 361). Old and advanced attitudes co-exist side by side.

Hippocrates of Cos, a contemporary of Socrates and the most famous name in the history of ancient medicine, is traditionally credited as the first medical theorist and practitioner to have regarded illness entirely in physiological terms in its cause and treatment, that is to say to have severed the connection between illness and the gods, though the famous oath to which he has given his name is now often thought to be of Alexandrian origin. What is known about early medicine is derived from a large body of material called the Hippocratic corpus, compiled at a later date and probably emanating from his followers rather than from Hippocrates himself. It seems that the Hippocratic school worked from the basis of a theory of humours, associated with the elements, earth, water, fire and air, sometimes analysed in terms of hot, cold wet and dry, and associated with blood, yellow bile, black bile and phlegm, illness being an imbalance between these constituent elements. A *locus classicus* here is the extended description in Plato's *Timaeus* 82a–90. The theory of the four humours recalls the physics of Empedocles (c. 492–432) in which the world is in a constant state of flux as the four elements are moved variously by Love and Strife. The rational medicine of the Greek enlightenment might be considered as a logical development following on from the physical speculations of the Ionian philosophers applied to the human body.

Progress in medical understanding was hindered by a lack of knowledge of the interior anatomy. Aristotle in his *History of Animals* based observations on autopsy but dissection of the human corpse, let alone vivisection, was undoubtedly taboo in Classical times. Alexandrian advances may have partly resulted from vivisection. Celsus (a late witness from the second century AD) reports that Herophilus and Erasistratus, both founders of schools at Alexandria in the third century, cut open the live bodies of criminals obtained out of prison from the kings. Whether or not this is true, they certainly dissected corpses, no longer impeded by the customs and attitudes of the Greek *poleis*. Knowledge of their advances can only be pieced together from references in later sources, notably the celebrated medical writer Galen in the second century AD.

Herophilus was the first in differentiating the cerebrum and the cerebellum to assign different functions to each, and in so doing establishing beyond doubt that the brain rather than the heart was the seat of the intellect. This had long been a matter of dispute; previously Aristotle had championed the heart. The terms, *calamus scriptorius*, *torcular Herophili* and *chorioid plexus*, all still used, derive from his anatomy of the brain. He discovered the nerves, distinguishing between the motor and sensory nerves, and described the optic nerve in a new and more detailed understanding of the workings of the eye. The English word 'retina' is derived from one of his descriptions. He made advances in appreciation of the workings of blood vessels and the pulse, though there was no full understanding of the circulation of the blood in antiquity. He also identified the duodenum. He also made advances in the understanding of the reproductive system. Whereas Aristotle had believed that the

production of semen was completed in the blood vessels and assigned no function in this respect to the testes, Herophilus believed that the production of semen took place in both testes, which he called *didymoi*, 'twins', and in the spermatic vessels, the epididymis. In women he discovered the ovaries, which he identified with the testicles in men, and the fallopian tubes; this had the effect of allowing women more of a role in reproduction, as opposed to being merely the incubator of the male's sperm. Allowing that there were specific female afflictions relating to menstruation and lactation, he argued that there were no diseases specifically related to women in the sense that they were not constituted, as in some earlier medical thinking, of a different substance from the human male. Erasistratus worked on similar scientific lines making discoveries concerning the digestive and vascular systems. He regarded the heart as a pump, though like previous anatomists he believed the arteries to be vessels for *pneuma*; blood spurting from a ruptured artery being explained by the blood rushing into the vacuum caused by the invisibly escaping *pneuma*. Some indications of his practice as a physician survive. He did not favour phlebotomy, blood-letting, as readily as some of his contemporaries. He wrote a treatise on hygiene, stressing the need for a regular diet and exercise in the maintenance of good health. The most famous diagnosis attributed in some accounts to Erasistratus was of the disease of Antiochus Soter, eldest son of Seleucus, king of Antioch, who had secretly fallen in love with his stepmother Stratonice. Where other physicians failed, Erasistratus observed that the prince's skin became hotter, his colour deepened and his pulse quickened whenever the queen entered the room. He correctly divined the cause to be the physical effect of his mental and emotional condition, quite a modern diagnosis.

Mathematics, Astronomy and Inventions

'Let no one who is ignorant of mathematics enter here' is said to have been on the doorway of Plato's Academy. It is fitting that in the *Elements* of Euclid (fl. c. 300) the Greeks provided the world with an advanced mathematical primer that was unsurpassed for the best part of 2,000 years. One of the many theorems demonstrated there is that of Pythagoras in which the square of the hypotenuse of a right angled triangle equals the sum of the squares on the other two sides.

One of the greatest mathematicians and inventors was Archimedes of Syracuse (c. 287–212). His particular interest was geometry reflected in a number of extant works such as *On the Measurement of the Circle* and *On the Sphere and Cylinder*. Allied to this is his practical interest in mechanics which occasioned a famous anecdote: supposedly asked by the Syracusan king Hiero to determine whether a crown given to him was pure gold, inspiration came to him while entering a public bath as he observed the height of the water rising due his own weight. He exclaimed *eureka* 'I have discovered it' and ran home naked with the idea of making two crowns of the

same weight as Hiero's crown, one of gold, the other of silver, and measuring the amount of water displaced when each was immersed. This led to the Archimedes' principle as dryly expressed in his treatise *On Floating Bodies*:

Solids heavier than the fluid will, if placed in the fluid, be carried down to the bottom of the fluid, and they will be lighter in the fluid by the weight of the amount of fluid that has the same volume as the solid.

(Proposition 7)

He made advances in statics, 'the science relating to weight and its mechanical effects, and to the conditions of equilibrium as resulting from the distribution of weight'; hence the significance of his famous remark 'give me a place to stand and I will move the earth'. Through his interest in hydrostatics (statics in relation to liquids) he has been credited with the invention of a screw pump, duly called the Archimedean screw.

Hipparchus from Bithynia (fl 240) made advances in trigonometry and in astronomy making the science less theoretical and more practical by observing actual measurements over time and so making it possible to predict celestial positions for a given time. For this he invented instruments himself. He discovered the precession of the equinoxes defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as 'the earlier occurrence of the equinoxes in each successive sidereal year, due to the retrograde motion of the equinoctial points along the ecliptic, produced by the slow change of direction in space of the earth's axis which moves so that the pole of the equator describes a circle around the pole of the ecliptic once in about 28,500 years'. He was the first to calculate accurately the distance of the moon from the earth. Hipparchus worked with a geocentric model of the universe and did not adopt the heliocentric hypothesis of his older contemporary Aristarchus of Samos, which remained unregarded in the Greek world. In his computations he made use of the methods of the Babylonians, who had a particular reputation in the ancient world in the study of mathematics and astronomy.

One area of invention in which there was progress in Hellenistic times was to do with weaponry:

Success in this work was recently achieved by the Alexandrian engineers, who received considerable support from kings who were eager for fame and well disposed to the arts and crafts.

(Philo, *On Artillery Construction*, 3, 50)

Increasingly effective ballistic mechanisms of gigantic proportions were invented for siege warfare. But in science generally, progress was limited by lack of any effective

microscope or telescope. On the other hand, the recent discovery of the 'Antikythera mechanism', a remarkably complex device for illustrating the relative motions of the sun and the moon, called the first analogue computer, testifies to the creativity of Greek inventiveness at its best.

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6 ART



... and generally art partly completes what nature cannot bring to a finish, and partly imitates her.

Aristotle, *Physics*, 2, 8 (199a, 15)

The art of the earliest Bronze Age civilization on Crete and the mainland (the Minoan and the Mycenaean) is of a high order, as visitors to the remains of the royal palaces at Cnossus or the great sites at Mycenae or Tiryns and to their accompanying museums will testify. The fall of Mycenaean civilization initiated a Dark Age out of which gradually emerged the city state. The art of the city state, despite some limited continuity with that of the earlier culture, slowly took a new direction, developing the forms and characteristics that are perfected in the art of the classical age.

Owing to the ravages of time, the history of Greek art can only be painfully reconstructed from very partial remains. The most complete of the surviving temple architecture can best be described as ruinous. Very little original sculpture survives from the classical period; the only complete statues are bronzes rescued from the seabed, whose makers and provenance are unknown. Otherwise we are dependent for our knowledge on Roman copies and accounts in Roman writers dating from later time. With more first-hand evidence the history might be substantially different.

The main periods and styles within which art historians also distinguish various subdivisions are the Geometric, which developed at Athens in the ninth and eighth centuries (these chronological divisions can only be roughly made), the Archaic, in the seventh and sixth centuries, the Classical in the fifth and fourth, and the Hellenistic in the period between the Macedonian conquest in the late fourth century and the Roman conquest that began in the mid-second century and was completed in the first.

GEOMETRIC BEGINNINGS (ninth and eighth centuries)

Of the physical remains of Greek art that survive antiquity the most substantial in all periods comprises the decorated pottery that was used extensively in daily life and came to be traded between states throughout the Greek world. It was manufactured in many centres and while the style of each centre might vary, over the centuries definite stylistic phases can be distinguished, though little if anything is known about individual painters and artists.

It is in pottery that the distinctive character of the geometric style is most easily demonstrable. The geometric style, so called from the linear regularity of its ornamentation, represents an advance on the pottery of the preceding era (called the proto-geometric) by virtue of the increased ornamentation covering the vase. A fine example of developed geometric is the magnificent Dipylon vase of about 750, so called from the place at which it was discovered in a cemetery by the Dipylon gate at Athens. The vase (fig. 44) is about five feet in height and stood as a monument over a grave. A prominent feature of the decoration is the meander or key pattern, which is repeated (with variation) on the neck where it occurs three times and on the body where it is used four times in the horizontal bands as well as in vertical bands between the handles. There are rows of triangles and one row of oval shapes towards the bottom of the vase. The thick black bands painted at the top and the bottom of the neck, and the more extensive area of black at the base (together with the two thick bands there) accentuate the shape of the vessel, which is simply but finely proportioned.

On the neck are two bands of animal figures, all in the same attitude; in the upper band they are grazing while in the lower they are lying down. The animal figures are made to fit easily into the pattern of abstract designs. Between the handles, in a central position to which the eye is unerringly drawn, is framed a representation of mourners at a funeral, a subject which reflects the purpose of the pot. The human figures have the form that predominates in early Greek painting, with a triangular chest tapering to a thin waist and highly developed thighs in a roughly ovular tear drop shape tapering to the knee. The chest is full-frontal while the legs and head are in profile. The arms above the head in mourning attitude complete a triangle, which ascends from the waist. The same pattern is repeated for the corpse, which consequently appears to be suspended in mid-air above the bier.

The vase is a highly sophisticated work of art, but the painting of the human figures is naive; the parts of the body are simply stylised shapes that do not correspond to the natural shape of the human form. Moreover, the proportions of the figures in relation to each other are not determined by nature. The size of the figures below the corpse matches neither the size of the standing mourners nor the corpse. Similarly, the corpse is longer than the standing figures are tall. Their proportions are

designed to satisfy geometrical considerations, for the composition of the human scene is split into four parts which have a broadly symmetrical relation but interestingly there is a little variation in that on the left-hand side of the bier there are seven mourners, while on the right there are six and a tiny figure like that of a child. The central scene is divided horizontally between the corpse at the top and the mourners at the bottom, two of which are kneeling while the others are sitting, varying the symmetry.

The representation of human figures is regarded by art historians as a breakthrough, as the geometric style had been fully abstract. This relative novelty in the depiction of humans must explain the small area of space given to the central image of the mourning scene (in which the corpse is centrally situated and dominates by virtue of size) when considered in relation to the whole surface area of the vase. Despite this, the human scene *is* nevertheless curiously central, for the eye is drawn



FIGURE 44
The Dipylon vase

Source: National Archaeological Museum, Athens. © Hellenic Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, Culture and Sports/ Archaeological Receipts Fund

to it not only for the principal reason that it is situated between the handles at the broadest point of the pot. The vertical black figures contrast with the predominantly horizontal patterned bands of the rest of the vase, while the horizontal black line of the corpse corresponds to them. The band enclosing the human scene is broader than any of the geometrically patterned bands of the body of the pot and has a larger area of pale background colour, which intensifies the black figures. There is a similar effect of colour in the band of animals in the neck of the pot with a lighter background highlighting the black shapes. Furthermore, the two animal bands offset the more prominent human scene.

The design is therefore more complex than it might at first seem, since it looks deceptively simple. It is a balance of repetition and variation (and there are variations within the repetitions), designed to highlight the human scene through the subtle use of proportion, shape and colour. The component geometric parts can be said to cohere in a unified whole which expresses the function for which it is designed.

THE ARCHAIC PERIOD (seventh and sixth centuries)

Archaic black-figure style

Not long after the date of the Dipylon vase, in about 720, at Corinth a new and freer style developed, following oriental models and introducing animal and plant motifs. The use of plants in decoration continued to classical times, though interest in animals diminished in favour of an emphasis upon the human, whether in the depiction of mythological figures or in scenes from everyday life.

The Corinthian jug (fig. 45), dated about 630, is a fine example of this style in its maturity. Three prominent bands divide the pot into sections, as in the geometric style, but the intervening designs are what interest the artist. The winged mythical creature, reminiscent of the Egyptian sphinx, with her roughly triangular shape fits in well with the tapering contours of the top of the vase. The flourish of the wing and the tail offset the statuesque dignity of the shapely human head and hair. The artist has taken care with the detail of the figures: the headband on the hair, the feathers on the wing, the claws and sinews of the limbs. The bulky forms of the larger-bodied creatures amply fill the central band and add solidity to the overall design of the jug. The animals are recognizable (boars and perhaps a mastiff dog), but are clearly stylized, looking rather like silhouettes. Once again there is detail in the representation of the faces, the ribs and paws of the dog, and the sinews and hooves of the boars. The lower section, with its airy movement and slender creatures (greyhounds and a hare), reflects the more feathery delicacy of the top panel. But there is no strong correspondence between the parts of the whole as in the geometrical style. The animals do not face the same way and the flowers simply fill in the spaces. There is



FIGURE 45 Corinthian jug c. 630 BC

Source: Photo © Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek, Munich

no discernible pattern in the decoration. There is a unifying element in the dual-tone colouring of the animals, but again the colouring is used differently in each individual creature. Working within the clear boundaries made by the horizontal bands, the artist seeks a free representation of his subject.

Pottery of the archaic period reaches its culmination at Athens in the mid-sixth century. A beautiful example of the finest archaic style is the vase depicting Achilles and Ajax playing draughts (the protagonists are named on the vase), executed and signed by the Athenian Exekias c. 530 (fig. 46). The heroes are so rapt in concentration that they do not hear the call to battle.



FIGURE 46
Vase of Exekias

Source: Rome,
Vatican

The vase has been beautifully conceived as a whole. The plain black areas of the neck and the lower half offset the central band encompassing the painting. The light background of the handles links well with the light background on which the figures are painted. A more subtle link is provided by the pale band at the base broken by a dark upward pointing spearhead motif. The design of the painting itself is simple and clear and beautifully proportioned to the contours and shape of the vase. The curves of the bending heroes' backs reflect the curves of the vase, as do the diminishing rectangles of the seats, which are almost curved when compared to the central square on which the game is being played. From the baseline on either side, the curve of the foreshortened shield is carried to the base of the handle, continues through the handle to be picked up by the point of the spears, whence it is carried to the focal point of the square upon which all the attention is concentrated. The square is perfectly situated in relation to the vase as a whole. The two figures are almost mirror images of each other in their posture, costume and armour, but the artist has avoided the rigidity of too symmetrical a scheme. First, the two sets of spears form a central triangle within which are framed the two heads and the playing hands, the focus of concentration, and this central triangle gives the composition a tripartite structure rather than an exact bipartite symmetry. Although it is possible to see a geometric pattern, the lines of it are not rigid and the elements are sufficiently varied to impart naturalism.

The two spears of the helmeted figure (Achilles) cross and so seem to be slightly curved, softening the straight lines and giving a lifelike touch. The two sets of spears meet at an imaginary point off-centre, not immediately below the playing hands and just below the focal point. The most obvious asymmetrical feature is in the position of the two helmets. It is not only that Achilles is wearing his while Ajax is not, but also that the curving lines of the helmet and plume (reflecting the curves of the vase's handles) depart from the symmetry by both facing the same way. One effect of the helmet on the head is to enhance the stature and status of Achilles. But with both heroes wearing their helmets the composition would have been radically different. As it is, the helmet on the head makes a canopy of curves above the game board and the curving plume is directly central. The effect is to unify the composition by linking the top of the picture to the square at the bottom. At the same time the helmet breaks the symmetry within the central triangle and also punctures the precision of the semicircle made by the two bowed figures. Also, the 'eye' of the helmet acts as a third eye; it reflects the eye of Achilles, and the imaginary line of its vision is directed towards the head of Ajax. The third eye therefore functions as a link between the two heroes while breaking the symmetry. The position of the helmet also enables the artist to unify the sweep of the figure in a series of downward-pointing lines from the pointed end of the plume, the nose-guard and the end of the helmet itself, and the corresponding nose and beard of Achilles, and also the pointed end of his cloak near

the shoulders right down to the pointed ends of his cloak overlapping the seat. The knee guard pointing upwards acts as a counterpoint to this series. The much-praised harmony of this vase is achieved by a masterly ordering of the parts. The geometrical symmetry is enhanced and enlivened by subtle variation.

Further examination of the detail of the design shows that the figures, although broadly similar in form, are clearly differentiated. As befits his superior status as the supreme Greek warrior, Achilles not only wears his helmet, but is slightly larger in his dimensions. The artist has also included more detail in the execution of his figure; his hand and feet are more delicately drawn. Moreover, his playing hand is framed between the lines of the two spears. His costume is more detailed and the design of the shield more prominent. There are subtle differences between the two heads. Ajax has curly hair and a rugged beard while Achilles' hair is smoother and his beard more trim. The refinement of details is fully functional in giving Achilles his superior status.

The artist (unknown) includes animal and floral motifs (on the shield and on the cloaks), but these are subordinate to the human figures. The vase is highly detailed, but all the details reflect a central purpose and there is no superfluous decoration. The artistic concentration perfectly matches the theme of the painting. By the time of its production, painters on Greek vases had gone beyond the merely decorative to represent particular moments in familiar mythical stories, a significant development in narrative art.

Archaic sculpture

In sculpture, more clearly than in painting or architecture, it is possible to trace the gradual evolution whereby Greek art transcended the early formalism of the archaic period to become more naturalistic, while remaining ideal, until the emphasis upon the ideal and the typical in Classical art gave way to individuality and realism in the art of the Hellenistic age.

The earliest Greek statues seem to have been sculpted according to the Egyptian model. The *kouroi*, figures of naked youths, are a common type. Some are dedicated as attendants to gods and therefore served a religious function; others are memorials positioned over graves. Nothing is known about the conditions of patronage under which they might have been produced. The *kouros* found in Attica (fig. 47a) and dating from 620 to 610 has the look of the Pharaohs, especially noticeable in the stylization of the hair and in the pose whereby one leg is planted firmly in front of the other. The rigidity of the stance, with the weight distributed equally between both legs, the arms fixed to the thighs with clenched hands, the shoulders absolutely square and the head directly frontal, is also part of the Egyptian tradition. But there are three respects in which the Greek differs from the Egyptian.

In the first place, the figure is completely nude where the Egyptian statues are either wholly costumed or discreetly draped about the loins. Nudity is singled out by Thucydides as a mark of progress that distinguishes the modern from the old-fashioned and the Greek from the non-Greek:

[The Spartans], too, were the first to play games naked, to take off their clothes openly, and to rub themselves down with olive oil after their exercise. In ancient times even at the Olympic Games the athletics used to wear coverings for their loins, and indeed this practice was still in exercise not many years ago. Indeed one could point to a number of other instances where the manners of the ancient Hellenic world are very similar to the manners of foreigners today.

(1, 6)

The Spartans even went so far as to have women exercising almost naked. In this they were exceptional. The Athenians were more restricted about female nudity, and their statues of young women were correspondingly draped. It is not until the fourth century that the first female nude appears and then the pose is modest (fig. 65). There must be some connection between the acceptance of male nudity in the actual life of the athlete in the gymnasium (from the Greek word *gymnos* which means 'naked') and the development of the male nude as the favoured form of Greek sculpture, whether as young man (*kouros*) or young god (Apollo).

Second, whereas the Egyptian figures are supported from the back or given some prop from the stone block out of which they are carved, the Greek figure is autonomous and free-standing. In comparison with later Greek statues, of course, the archaic *kouros* seems stiff and rigid, but in comparison with the immobile Egyptian, there is more articulation in the body and more than a hint of the potential movement that will be actualized in the freer and more flexible forms of the future.

Third, while the Egyptian statues seem to have been designed to show likeness of particular individuals (and certainly there are individual features in the faces), the Greek *kouros* is typical and ideal, without any attempt to render individuality. Both the face and the body are sculpted with geometric patterns in mind. Most noticeable are the corresponding triangles above and below the waist with the navel at the centre. There are recessed triangles in the elbows too. The pectoral muscles form an elegant double semicircle that can be seen to be repeated above the knees. The most striking feature of the face (apart from the round frame of the stylised hair) is the large eyes, the upper lids of which are semicircular. The semicircle is repeated in the line of the eyebrows. The Greek is therefore more abstract than individual, though if we compare the statue with the more rudimentary abstract figures of the Dipylon vase (fig. 44), the abstractions bear a closer relation to the actual and the natural. In the archaic *kouros* can be seen a characteristic preoccupation with proportion and symmetry underlying the Greek quest for ideal beauty.

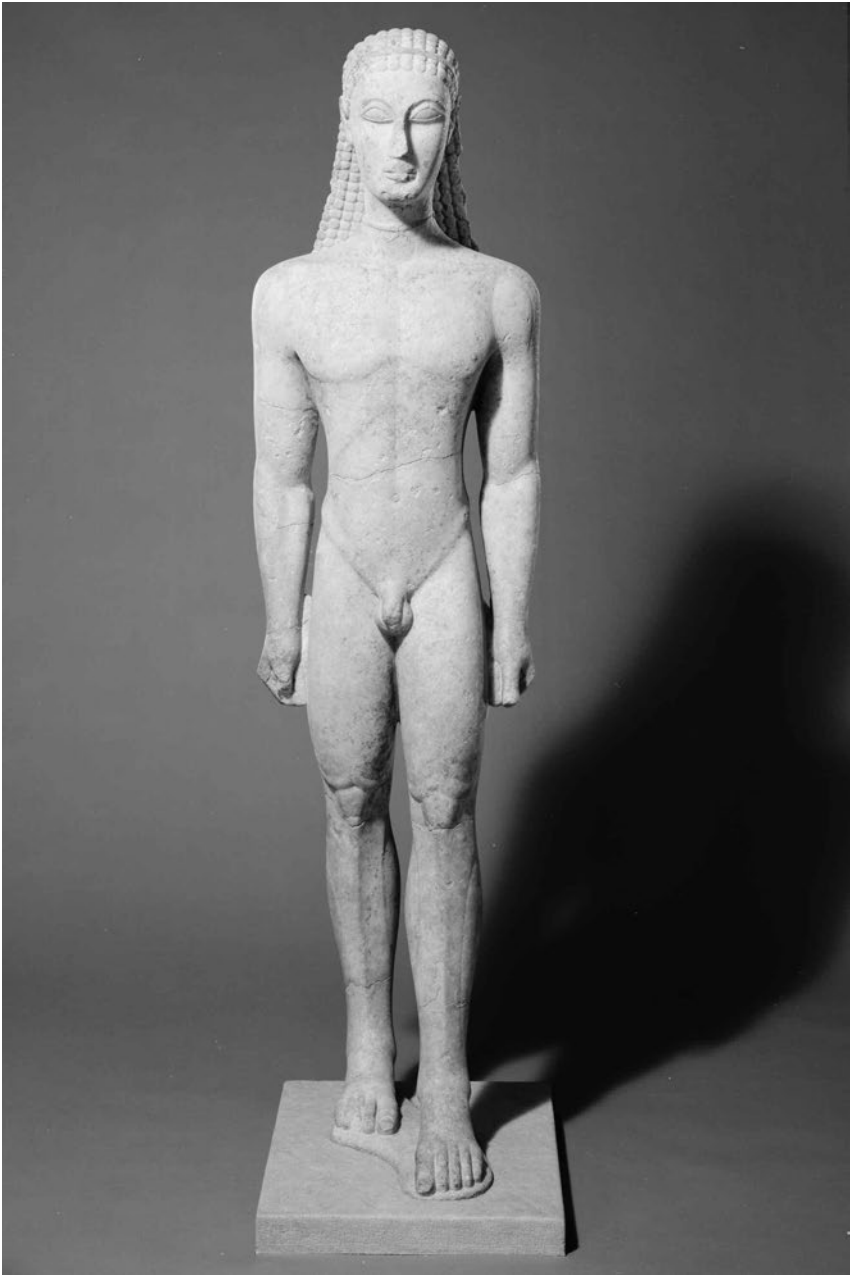


FIGURE 47a Archaic *kouros*

Source: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Fletcher Fund 1932 (32,11.1)

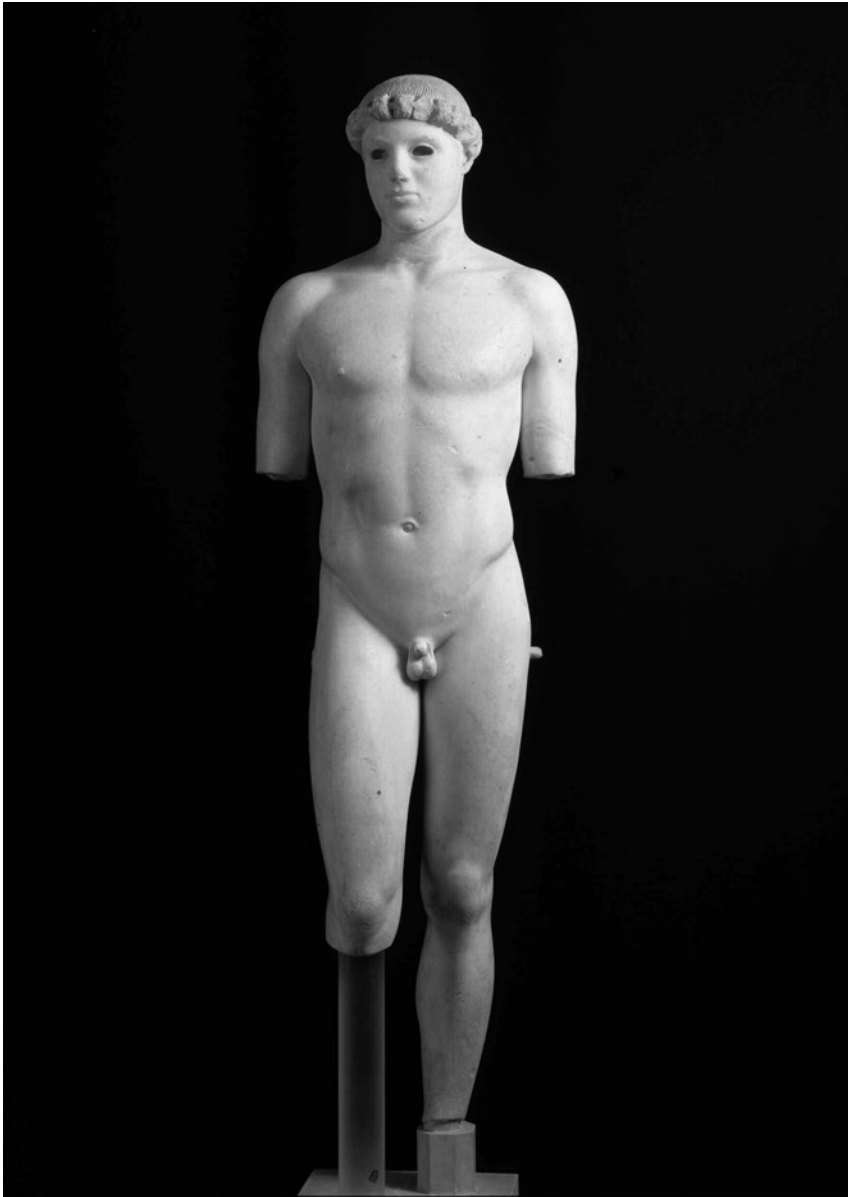


FIGURE 47b Critian boy

Source: Acropolis Museum, Athens Hellenic Ministry of Culture/Archaeological Receipts Fund

THE CLASSICAL PERIOD (fifth and fourth centuries)

Classical developments in the fifth century

The *kouros* discovered by archaeologists excavating the Athenian Acropolis in the late nineteenth century represents a remarkable advance (fig. 47b). It must have been made before the Persians destroyed the temples in 480, and is traditionally attributed to one of the leading sculptors of the period, Critios. The stiffness and rigid symmetries of the archaic style have been relaxed in the new pose, in which the weight is shifted on to the back leg with the hips raised accordingly. Although the arms are incomplete, the presence of small joints on the body makes it clear that they were fixed to the thighs as before, but the left upper arm is bent backwards slightly, suggesting that the arm was bent at the elbow, while the right arm drops vertically. Legs and arms are asymmetrically balanced. The slight turn of the head further softens the rigidity of the old pose, while the recessed eyes are more lifelike, and the shortening of the hair not only gives greater clarity to the outlines of the head, but diminishes the effect of stylization that is a marked feature of the archaic long-haired *kouros*. The centre of the torso has been filled out and its contours are gently curved. Suddenly the stone has been given a natural life.

Three further examples from the earlier classical period illustrate different aspects of its achievement. The sublime head of Apollo (fig. 48) from the pediment of the temple of Zeus at Olympia (c. 460) has a godlike beauty, authority and power. The standing god, whose body has a straight frontal pose, is situated at the central point of the pediment, the subject of which is the battle of the Lapiths and Centaurs. One of his arms is outstretched and his head, though not in profile, is turned and looking towards the battling figures. The calm majesty of the god, who can be imagined to be ordering or rebuking the bestial Centaurs, contrasts with the chaotic movement of the inferior beings. The imperiousness of the facial attitude complements the statuesque severity of the body. The noble face is strongly supported by the neck and crowned by the clear moulding of the hair with its orderly locks following the curve of the temples and forehead and framing it to its best advantage. The features of the face – the straight nose, the large eyes with fine eyebrows, the beautifully formed lips, the strong chin and cheekbones, and the flawless complexion present an unforgettable image of ideal male beauty.

Equally sublime and assured, but this time representing a more dynamic pose, is the mighty bronze statue of a god, usually identified as Poseidon but sometimes as Zeus, discovered in the sea off the coast of cape Artemisium (figs. 49 and 50). The god is thought to be about to hurl the trident (or thunderbolt) and is an image of concentrated energy and power. The face, gesticulating hand and foot point unerringly in the direction of the target. The spread of the stretching arms (almost

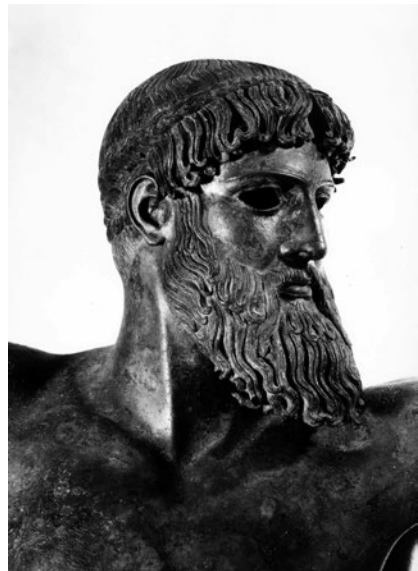


FIGURE 48 Olympian Apollo

Source: Olympia Museum Iliia, Greece

exaggeratedly long, for effect?) and the legs, with the weight of the body balanced on the heel of one foot and the ball of the other, imparts godlike energy, dynamism and purpose. The massive torso, without any contortion or strain in the evenly balanced musculature, gives the statue a calm assurance and dignified poise. There is a stylized beauty in the hair with its plaited wreath and hyacinthine fringe, and in the beard with its regular sweeping curls. The sharp angle of the beard when viewed in profile is a masterly touch (imagine the figure either unbearded or with the beard flowing down), accentuating the jutting jawline of the god, pointing towards the target, and intensifying the sense of purpose and power which the sculptor has imparted to the bronze.

Equally assured is the *discoboulos* (discus-thrower) of Myron (c. 460–450). Unlike the Apollo or the Poseidon, this is not known in the original but through several Roman copies, for the poise and balance of its dynamic pose were celebrated in the ancient world. With the *discoboulos*, sculpture is fully liberated from the restrictions of archaic forms. The original was in bronze, a more flexible medium, and did not need the support of the tree trunk provided for the heavier marble copy (fig. 51). The figure is harmoniously proportioned and represents the ideal male athlete in a moment of arrested motion. So ideal is it, that it is disputed whether the body can actually attain the poise of this pose. Despite the crease at the waist, the muscles of the torso are not responsive to the movement of the arms: there is no sign of muscular strain. The general balance is achieved by answering curves. The delicate positioning of the head, the lower hand and the rear foot contribute greatly to the final poise.



FIGURES 49 AND 50
God of Artemisium

Source: National Archaeological Museum,
Athens © Hellenic Ministry of culture/
Archaeological Receipts Fund

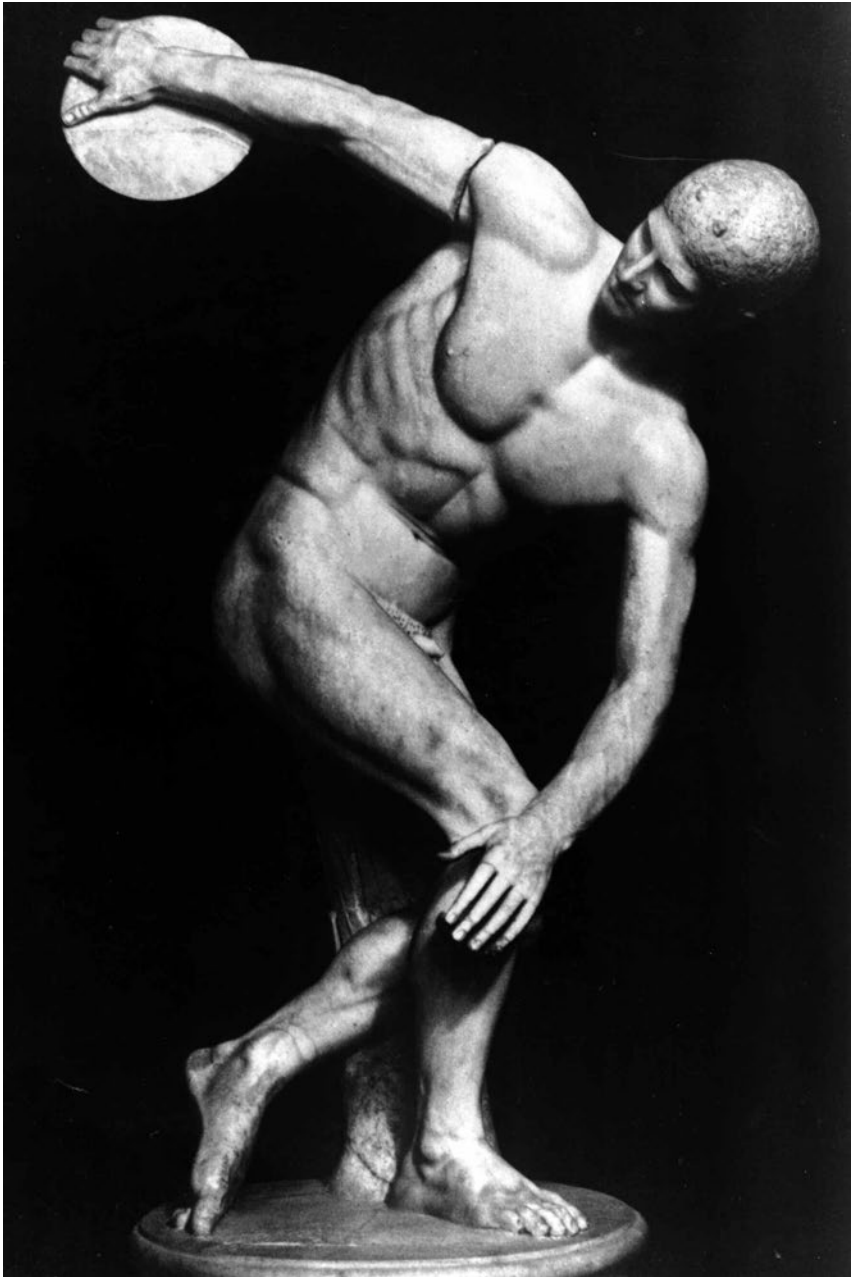


FIGURE 51 Myron: *discobolus*

Source: Terme, Rome

Red-figure innovation in pottery

The figures of the Exekian vase are painted in black silhouette upon the red clay of the pot. The potter then used an engraving tool as an incisor to give detailed lines to his form. A major technical innovation occurred in the generation following Exekias when an Athenian potter in about 530 reversed the process by painting an outline of his figures and then colouring the background black so that the figures remained red. The drawing of the figures was then completed not with an engraving tool but with a brush whose supple strokes could be more readily varied to give fluidity and depth to the figures. The subsequent red-figure technique gradually made the old method of black-figure painting redundant. Painters took advantage of the flexible technique of drawing to represent human anatomy and expression more naturally.

Wonderful as it is, Exekias' representation of the heroic warriors seems stiff and formal when set beside the girl going to wash on an Athenian cup (fig. 52) painted in the early fifth century, little more than a generation later. In the overall design there is still some trace of geometric patterning. The girl's head, the pail and the basin form a basic triangular frame within which there are two other lop-sided triangles formed by the head, the bundle of clothes and the pail, and by the pail, the bundle and the basin. The composition, reflecting the shape it is filling – note the incline of the head,



FIGURE 52 Athenian cup: girl going to wash

Source: Photo © RMAH, Brussels

the backward stretch of the arm and the curve of the back foot – is roughly circular. The handle of the pail and the handle of the basin provide a link across the painting. Furthermore, there is a predilection for rounded forms, in the bundle, in the pail, in the various curves of the figure (particularly the buttocks), and in the curvaceous basin. But the overall patterning is less marked and more difficult to describe than the design of Exekias. What is immediately striking is the relaxed naturalism of this arrested moment as the girl moves towards the basin. Although the head is in profile, its incline, together with the corresponding alignment of the shoulder, the gentle twisting of the torso and the slightly raised back leg together give the impression of a moving figure at a pivotal moment. (The archaic convention that figures should be strictly frontal or profile, or a combination of the two to represent the body in motion, has been broken.) The beauty of this slightly androgynous figure stems from the delicately executed artistry of the pose. On reflection, it can be seen that it would be extremely difficult to attain this pose in actuality: the arm extended backwards carrying a large pail would create great strain; in fact, the pail would naturally be held much closer to the body. So while the stiffness of the archaic style has been softened and its two-dimensional quality opened up, the new experimental style is only partially naturalistic. Elements of stylization continue to exist in the hair and in the lines of the drapery in the girl's hand, and the artistry of the pose is more obvious in its arrangement than will be the case in the later Classical style.

At the beginning of the classical period in the 470s, further innovations took place as vase painters experimented with techniques initiated by one of the early masters of classical picture painting, Polygnotus. None of his works survives but from descriptions of them in later writers art historians have attributed to him a key role in the revolution whereby painting becomes three-dimensional with limited use of perspective to create the illusion of space. For the first time in the fifth century, vase painters created scenes in which figures were not all placed on the same baseline.

The Niobid-painter (so called from the subject of the scene on the reverse side of the vase in fig. 53 featuring the killing of the children of Niobe) has a group of figures deliberately spaced at different levels, though since he has not recessed any of them by making them smaller, they seem to be floating in space. This is especially true of the figure to the right of the centre clasping his leg, who appears to be sitting in mid-air with his lower foot rather awkwardly resting on the knee of the reclining figure.

The subject of this side of the vase (fig. 53) is uncertain. It has sometimes been thought to represent the Argonauts. The warriors are evidently in a relaxed mood. Though the two shields and the circular decoration at the bottom left together make a triangle, and the three sharp lines of the spears link figures and give overall form to the composition, there is not the rigorously conceived geometric structure that had been the basis from which Exekias perfected his art. The foreshortening of the two



FIGURE 53 Niobid vase

Source: Louvre, Paris

shields is not designed, as in the painting of Exekias, to blend in with the contours of the vase but is clearly a naturalistic effect for its own sake to create the illusion of depth. The composition of the Niobid-painter, which lacks the concentration of a single focal point, is more relaxed and casual as reflected in his chosen theme.

The relaxed poses of the four central figures are all quite different. The helmeted and costumed figure at the top left in three-quarters view rests with his knee against his shield. The full-frontal nude figure with a garland on his head stands at ease with his weight on his right foot posed like a classical statue except that his head is in sharp profile. The reclining figure at the bottom elegantly supports himself with one arm on

the ground and one on his spears. The fourth figure clasping his leg is in a sitting position even though he does not appear to have a seat.

The figure with the fine three-quarters face is perhaps the most ambitious and also the least successful. To create a relaxed naturalistic pose the painter has experimented with the length of the limbs, but the front leg and the far arm seem too long, and the near shoulder seems bent. In the representation of the human form, painting has now freed itself from the conventions of archaic art, whereby the chest tapers to a thin waist and the ovular thighs are unduly developed, and has adopted instead the new anatomical structure of recent sculpture where the centre of the body is filled out (see p. 230). The lines of the muscular thorax of the standing nude are perhaps a little schematic, but the more fluid lines of the reclining figure impart grace and ease without diminishing the warrior's strength. The reclining figure successfully combines the formality of the standing nude with the relaxed naturalism of the sitting figure.

This beautiful red-figure vase does not have the perfection achieved in the black-figure style of Exekias, but the painter is experimenting and working in a new and freer style. On vases from this time onwards, foreshortening, particularly of objects like pedestals, shields or buildings, becomes commonplace, but experiments with spatial effects like that of the Niobid-painter were soon abandoned. Perhaps it seemed a perverse breach of decorum to attempt a deepening perspective whereby the painted scene works against the natural contours of the vase by seeming to penetrate the pot. Painters working on the flat surface of a wall might feel less inhibited.

High classicism: the architecture of the Parthenon

The finest architectural achievements of the Greeks are embodied in the Parthenon, the temple housing the statue of Athena Parthenos (meaning 'maiden'), dramatically situated on the Athenian Acropolis, the top point of the city. At the outset of his history of the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides speculates as to the effect on posterity of the public buildings of the two great rival powers of Sparta and Athens:

Suppose, for example, that the city of Sparta were to become deserted and that only the temples and foundations of buildings remained, I think that future generations would, as time passed, find it very difficult to believe that this place had really been as powerful as it was represented to be. Yet the Spartans occupy two-fifths of the Peloponnese and stand at the head not only of the whole Peloponnese itself but also of numerous allies beyond its frontiers. Since, however, the city is not regularly planned and contains no temples or monuments of great magnificence, but is simply a collection of villages, in the ancient Hellenic way, its

appearance would not come up to expectation. If, on the other hand, the same thing were to happen to Athens, one would conjecture from what met the eye that the city had been twice as powerful as in fact it is.

(1, 10)

Thucydides' words are prophetic. The Parthenon, even in its ruined state, has become an inspiring symbol of Athenian greatness and of the spirit that distinguished the Athenian from the Spartan, a symbol of the Athenian cultivation of the Greek feeling for beauty that the Spartans had repressed. (There are no Spartan remains to stir the imagination.) More than a symbol, it is a real cultural emblem, the marble embodiment of the Classical spirit (fig. 56a).

The motive force behind its building is suggested by the later Greek historian Plutarch (AD c. 50–120):

When the Spartans began to be vexed by the growing power of Athens, Pericles, by way of encouraging the people to cherish ever higher ambitions and making them believe themselves capable of great achievements, introduced a proposal that all the Greeks . . . should be invited to send delegates to a congress at Athens. The subjects to be discussed were the Greek sanctuaries which had been burned down by the Persians . . . and the security of the seas.

(*Life of Pericles*, 17)

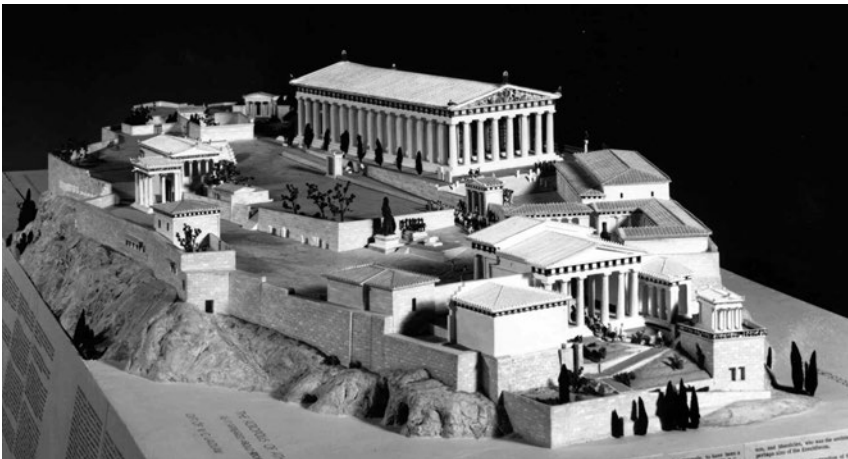


FIGURE 54 Model restoration of the Athenian Acropolis with the Propylaea and the temple of Athena Nike (completed in 424) in the right foreground; the Parthenon (completed in 432) beyond and the Erechtheum (completed in 406) to the left centre

Source: Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto © ROM

The Spartans would have nothing to do with the plan, so the Pan-Hellenic congress never took place. But Pericles went ahead with the restoration of the temples on the Acropolis that the invading Persians had destroyed, and the Parthenon was begun in 447, to be finally completed fifteen years later. We may say that the motive was political in the sense that the grand vision of Pericles was designed to express and enhance the growing confidence and self-awareness of the Athenian *polis*.

Plutarch vividly describes the energy that went into the new construction:

So the buildings arose, as imposing in their sheer size as they were inimitable in the grace of their outlines, since the artists strove to excel themselves in the beauty of their workmanship. And yet the most wonderful thing about them was the speed with which they were completed. Each of them, men supposed, would take many generations to build, but in fact the entire project was carried through in the high summer of one man's administration.

(Life of Pericles, 13)

Three years after the completion of the Parthenon, in his funeral oration over the Athenian dead, Thucydides has Pericles give voice to the Athenian cultural ideal: 'Our love of what is beautiful does not lead to extravagance; our love of things of the mind does not make us soft' (2, 40). The Greek phrase, which is literally rendered as 'with economy' and often put into its converse form 'without extravagance', is not to be understood as referring to cost, for no expense was spared in the project, for which funds were diverted from the treasury (made up of contributions from the allies). Beauty with economy and without extravagance is an aesthetic ideal perfectly embodied in the classical art of the Periclean age.

The design of the temple, the main form of Greek architecture, is well established as early as the seventh century. The roots of classical architecture go back to the ancient Egyptian, Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations. The Egyptians used columns to decorate their temples and tombs, and the Minoans used the method of construction known as 'trabeation', that is the placing of horizontal beams or lintels across the top of load-bearing upright posts or columns to form the 'entablature'. In the development of Greek architecture, there are two main stylistic orders (the Greek word for column is *stylos*), the Doric that had evolved as the predominant form on mainland Greece, and the Ionic which developed in Ionia and the Aegean islands in the late sixth century. The Doric is the more severe and grand (fig. 55a); the Ionic, with its taller and thinner columns and its greater decoration, is the more graceful (see fig. 55b). The later Corinthian order, which was the predominant form of temple architecture in imperial Rome, is a variation of the Ionic with a distinctive capital (see fig. 55c). The Parthenon is regarded as the perfection of the Doric order.

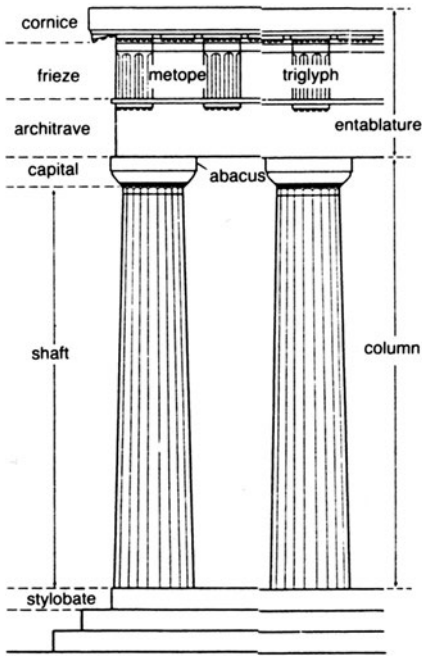


FIGURE 55a
Drawing of Doric order

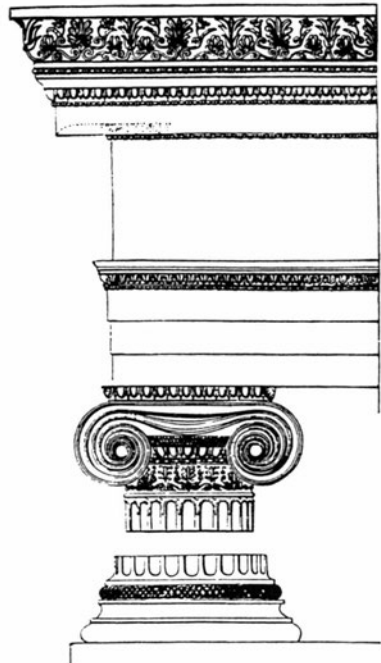


FIGURE 55b
Drawing of Ionic order

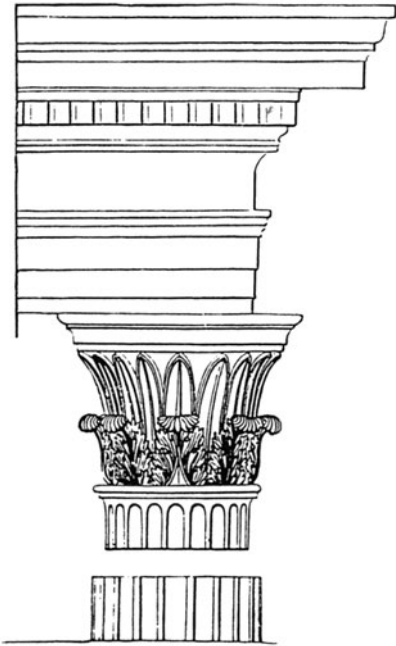


FIGURE 55c
Drawing of a Corinthian capital

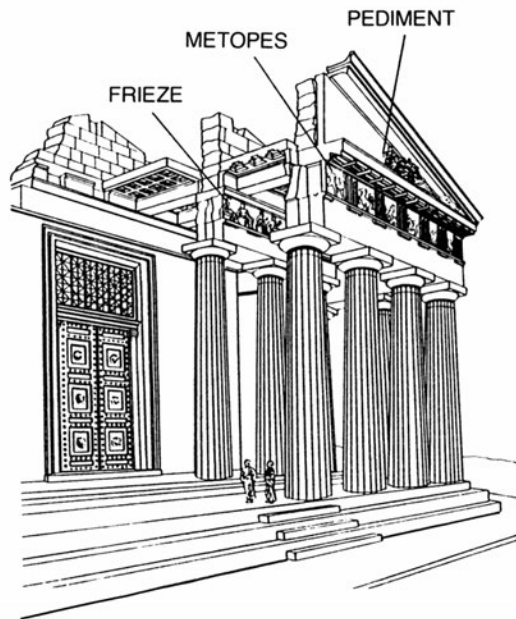


FIGURE 55d
Sectional drawing of the
reconstructed Parthenon

Religious ceremonies were performed at an altar in the open air. The function of the temple was to house the cult statue of the presiding deity and to act as a storeroom for the deity's property. The greater size of the Parthenon (having eight columns at the front rather than the usual six and seventeen columns at the side, at least two more than usual) may have been connected with the enormous size of the cult statue of Athena, some 40 feet high, executed by the greatest sculpture of the age, Pheidias. The architects of the Parthenon, Ictinus and Callicrates, must have worked in conjunction with Pheidias, and Plutarch records that the latter, who was a friend of Pericles, had a general supervisory role over the whole project.

The basic rectilinear pattern was subjected by the architects to numerous refinements, so as to please the eye and, possibly, to correct optical illusions. The tapering columns of a Greek temple draw the eye upwards from the base to the roof, providing a natural link from top to bottom. On the Parthenon, more subtly than on other temples, the columns are not only tapered but lean in slightly. The platform from which the temple rises is slightly convex so that the architrave is given a slight outward or upward curve. Such modifications in perspective soften the stark angularity of the basic geometric structure. The subtlety of the developed Greek style may be appreciated in a comparison of the photograph of the Parthenon (fig. 56a) with that of the earlier temple at Paestum (fig. 56b) formerly known as the temple of Poseidon but more often referred to by his Roman name Neptune but now thought to have been dedicated to Hera. The Parthenon is actually the larger structure (with more columns), yet its proportions are such as to endow it with a grandeur that is refined with a new grace when compared with the stockier (but nevertheless imposing) structures of the earlier part of the fifth century. The beauty of Greek architecture may be further appreciated if the temples are compared with the massive and solid structures of the Egyptians or with the static cubes and lifeless surfaces of much modern architecture.

There is considerable decoration on Greek architecture, but the decoration is not allowed to interrupt, as it often does in the Gothic style, the dominant lines of the structure as a whole. The parts are subordinate and not allowed to detract from the overall unity. Sculptural decoration of the building is confined, according to the Doric canon, to three areas, the triangular pediments at either end, the inner frieze and the *metopes* (see fig. 60). Other surfaces of the fluted columns, the architraves and the exterior walls of the inner building known as the *cella*, are plain. The Parthenon differs from other Doric temples in the ambitious extent of its decoration, in that all the *metopes* and the whole of the inner frieze (covering a very large area) are sculpted. The marble (obtained locally from Mount Pentelikon) was then painted. The colour scheme of course no longer survives, but the effect of the colour on the buildings and the sculptures must have made the originals dramatically different from the most complete part of the ruined remains.



FIGURE 56a The Parthenon

Source: Courtesy of Richard Stoneman



FIGURE 56b The temple of Poseidon (now thought to be a temple of Hera)

Apart from the ravages of time, the building suffered two particular disasters. The first occurred when it was converted into a Christian church in the fifth or sixth century of the Christian era, resulting in the loss of the centre of the east pediment. After the Turkish conquest of Greece in the fifteenth century AD it became a mosque, but the second and greatest disaster occurred in AD 1687 when it was used as an arsenal by the Turks in their war with the Venetians and a large part of the centre of the building was blown out.

Despite its incomplete state, much of the design of the original sculptures can be reconstructed. A late Greek writer, Pausanias, who wrote a *Description of Greece* in the second century AD when the building was still intact, records that the pediment above the entrance represented the birth of Athena, while the other showed a contest between Athena and Poseidon, god of the sea, for the land of Attica. Drawings by a visiting artist made before AD 1687 help to complete the picture of the pediments, the sculptures of which were carved completely in the round with reclining figures at the narrow end, then seated figures ascending to the principal standing figures at the centre.

Many of the individual *metopes*, carved in relief, survive. The main subjects appear to have been the battle between the gods and the giants on the east side, the battle between the Greeks and the Amazons (female warriors) on the west, the battle between the Lapiths and Centaurs (creatures who were half man and half horse) on the south, with scenes from the sack of Troy on the north. None of these subjects has any special connection with Athena, and these dramatic battle scenes, which were also popular on other temples, evidently gave the craftsmen maximum scope in the exercise of their art. It has also been argued that in the decorative sculptures as a whole there are the recurrent themes of the triumph of reason over chaos and of Hellenism over barbarism.

The subject of the inner frieze, where the upper part of the sculptures were carved in higher relief to allow for the steep angle of view, is not from traditional myth, and in this departure is an innovation. The frieze is wholly devoted to a representation of the Pan-Athenaic procession, the annual festival held in honour of Athena in late summer. Every four years came the Great Panathenaea, when the object of the even more splendid ceremonial procession was to provide a new robe or *peplos* for the goddess. Young Athenian horsemen dominate a large section of the frieze. There are also groups of women representing celebrants. At a climactic point on the eastern frieze over the main door the *peplos* is presented to a magistrate while the spectacle is watched by the Olympian gods including Athena herself.

Only a little of the sculpture remains on the temple itself. In 1799 Lord Elgin, the British ambassador to Turkey (still in control of Greece), and enthusiast for antiquities, obtained permission from the Turkish authorities to work on the site. The removal of a substantial portion of the remains to London, where they can now be seen in the

British Museum, has sparked a long running controversy in which the Greek government seeks their return.

Sculptures of high classicism: Polyclitus; the sculptures of the Parthenon

Art historians call the style of the early Classical sculpture (c. 480–450) severe, in contrast to the more rounded and fully three-dimensional art that followed. The *discoboulos*, for example, is largely two-dimensional, allowing no proper view from the sides. Although the straight lines of Apollo's body make a deliberate contrast with the other figures in the Olympian pediment and are fully naturalistic, the pose is more rigid than is usual in the developed Classical style from about 450 onwards, the great masters of which are the Athenian Pheidias and the Argive Polyclitus.

There are more than thirty copies of the most well-known statue by Polyclitus, the *doryphoros* or spear-bearer (fig. 57), testifying to its fame in antiquity. The original was in bronze and so did not need the prop provided for the marble copy. The figure, sometimes identified as Achilles, carries the spear in his left hand so that the left shoulder is slightly raised. The line of the shoulders is no longer horizontal as it is in the Critian boy (fig. 47b). In fact, the freedom and flexibility have been greatly advanced. Polyclitus has captured a moment of pause in an attitude that expresses movement, whether the figure is imagined to be coming to a halt or starting to walk. The asymmetrical balance of the limbs achieved in the Critian boy is now more fully developed and combined with a torso that is more fully responsive to the tilt of the hips in what is the developed 'contraposto' pose. Artists of the Renaissance admired this pose in the Apollo Belvedere, a Hellenistic statue discovered in 1506, the fame and reputation of which were eclipsed with the discovery of the Elgin marbles when they were exhibited in London in the early years of the nineteenth century. The turn of the spear-bearer's head completes the rhythm of the statue, making an S curve (imagine the effect if the head were straightened or turned the other way). The flexible pose allows pleasing views from the sides, so that the figure is more fully rounded.

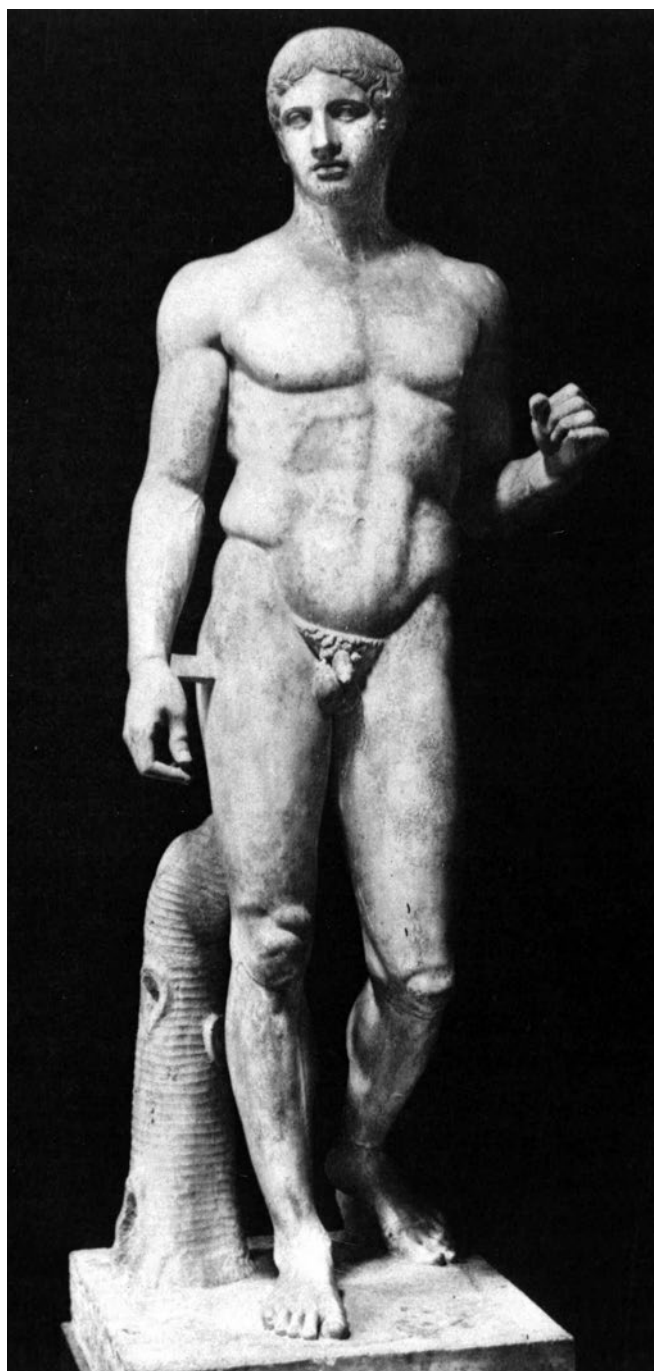
The statue was famous doubtless for its beauty, but also because it was known to be the embodiment of the consciously conceived idea of proportion that Polyclitus set out in a book called the *Canon*. Because of this, Pliny tells us, the statue itself was called the Canon:

He made also the statue that sculptors call the Canon, from which they derive art's precepts as though from a code of law; for he, alone of mankind, is deemed to have put Art's very self into a work of Art.

(Natural History, 34, 55)

FIGURE 57
Polyclitus:
doryphoros

Source: Museo Nazionale, Napoli, with permission of the Ministero per i beni archaeologici di Napoli e Pompei



The book does not survive, but from accounts of it and quotations in other authors it is clear that the sculptor thought the secret of beauty to lie in commensurability of the parts:

. . . of finger to finger, and of all the fingers to the palm and the wrist, and of these to the forearm and of the forearm to the upper arm and of all the parts to each other. [cited by the medical writer Galen (c. AD 129–99)] He said that the employment of a great many numbers would *almost* engender perfection in sculpture.

[cited by Philo (c. 30 BC–c. AD 45)]

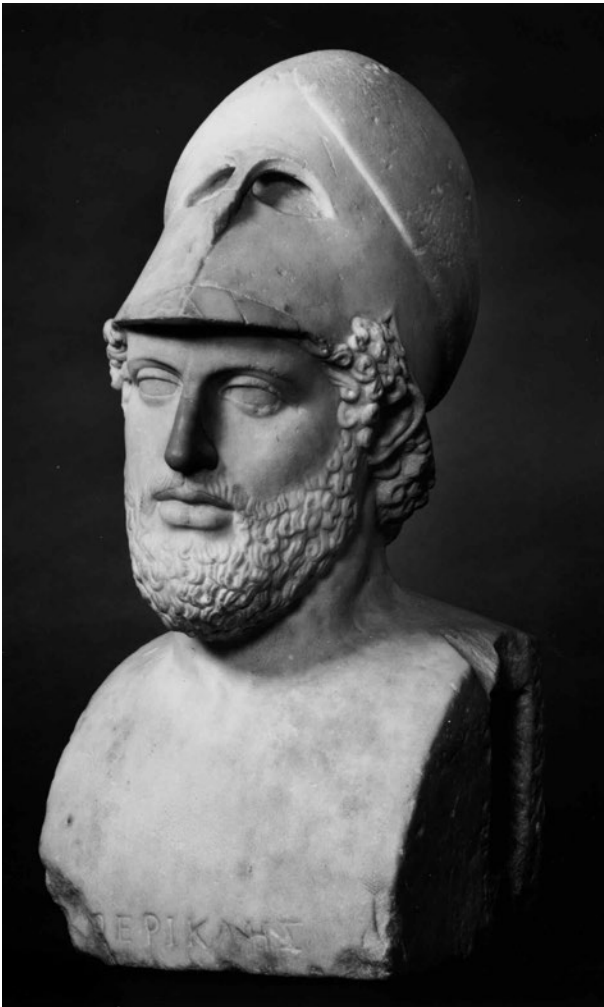


FIGURE 58
Marble portrait bust
of Pericles. Roman
copy after a
Greek original,
1805,0703.91

Source: Photo © The
Trustees of the British
Museum

Perhaps Polyclitus, like Plato and others, was influenced by the Pythagorean doctrine that number is the ultimate reality. Though the actual basis of the theory has never been satisfactorily explained, and though it seems clear from his modifying use of 'almost' that Polyclitus believed that perfection could not wholly be engendered by the determination of optimum ratios, the Canon bears witness to the Greek belief in due measure in all things, to the Greek principle that art is subject to the rule of reason and to the Greek quest for the ideal form manifested in the art of the fifth century before it became the preoccupation of philosophy in the fourth.

Later Greek commentators regarded Pheidias, whom they called the maker of gods, as their greatest sculptor. Regrettably, none of his many works survived. His most famous were the great cult statues, decorated in ivory and gold, of Athena made for the Parthenon and of Zeus made for the temple at Olympia (built earlier in the 460s). The Olympian Zeus, which was enormous (perhaps forty feet high), was one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world. Pheidias is reported to have said that he formed the conception for this most celebrated image from the majestic description of the nod of Zeus in Homer expressing his absolute will: 'Zeus spoke and nodded his dark brow, and the ambrosial locks waved from the king's immortal head, and made great Olympus shake' (*Iliad*, 1, 528–530). From ancient accounts, his Zeus is indeed represented in the Homeric attitude enthroned in majesty with a slight inclination of the head and arch of the eyebrows and with the hair gently rolling forward. All accounts agree on the grandeur and beauty of this image, which, though awesome, expressed and inspired a benign and detached serenity and did not, like some Byzantine representations of the Christian god, evoke fear. The Roman Quintilian writes: '[its] beauty is such that it is said to have added something even to the awe with which the god was already regarded: so perfectly did the majesty of the work give the impression of godhead' (*Education of the Orator*, 12, 10, 9). Cicero reports that Pheidias did not fashion his Zeus after any single man but said that there had been in his mind some perfect picture of beauty, which he had contemplated, with which he entirely filled himself and which had directed his hand. This image, he says, is nothing other than the Platonic idea of which Plato says that 'it has no birth but is ever existing and rests in the human reason and understanding' (*Orator*, 2, 9).

The idealism of Classical sculpture can be further illustrated in the Roman copy (fig. 58) of an Athenian original of about 440 by Cresilas, 'the Olympian Pericles, a figure worthy of its title', according to Pliny who adds, 'indeed it is a marvellous thing about the art of sculpture that it has made noble figures more noble' (*Natural History*, 34, 74). Pericles was nicknamed the Olympian perhaps because of his aloofness, his thundering oratory or his high and mighty ways. According to Plutarch, the Athenian comic poets also called him *schinokephalos*, squillhead, because of the shape of his head (*Life of Pericles*, 3). The helmet therefore has a dual function: to express the dignity of his position as general (political and military leadership usually went

together in fifth-century Athens) and also to disguise the onion shape of his head. However near or far it may be from the actual features of Pericles, the severe and dignified image represents him as the philosopher-general of Athens and as such expresses the idealism of the Periclean age. Generally speaking, realistic portraiture did not develop until the Hellenistic period.

Equally ideal is the head of one of the chariot horses of Selene, the moon, from the east pediment of the Parthenon (fig. 59). The eyes, the nostril and the mouth, together with the tautness of the sinewy nose and the muscular neck, are beautifully naturalistic, yet the overall effect is to suggest a powerful and epic nobility that is almost beyond nature. The artist may be said to have encapsulated the essence of the equine, the Platonic form of a horse's head, or at the very least to have sculpted a horse worthy of a god.

The sculptors of the Parthenon are not known, but are thought to have been a team under the direction of a single hand and mind, probably of Pheidias. The *metope* showing a Lapith in single combat with a Centaur (fig. 60) is finely composed and executed. The dynamic positioning of the Lapith's legs and the contrasting lines of the stretched torsos create a composition of vivid energy for which the sweeping curves of the Lapith's cloak provide a dramatic backcloth. The variously folded

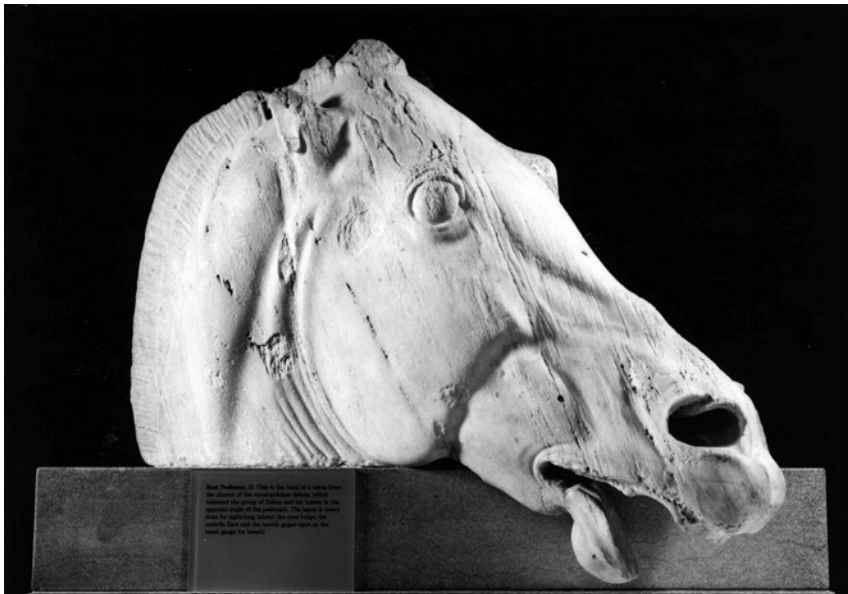


FIGURE 59 Marble head of the horse of Selene from the east pediment of the Parthenon. 438–432 BC, 1816,0610.98

Source: Photo © The Trustees of the British Museum



FIGURE 60 Lapith and Centaur, marble metope from the Parthenon (South Metope XXVII), 447–438 BC, 1816,0610.11

Source: Photo © The Trustees of the British Museum

drapery which is less solid than that of the previous age (compare the Olympian Apollo, fig. 48), also adds depth; in the centre are three layers represented by the cloak, the Centaur's flank and the Lapith's leg.

The three seated figures from the Parthenon frieze (fig. 61) are identified as Poseidon, and the twins Apollo and Artemis. Again, in the arrangement of the three seats is the illusion of depth. The three figures are relaxed in a pleasing variety of poses. Here the clinging drapery is used to suggest the forms of the body underneath. Like the Muse of the Achilles-painter (fig. 63), the graceful figures are all calm and passionless in expression, yet they are nevertheless endued with life. Serenity is conveyed through the attitude and composure of the whole body.

In the figure from the west pediment, identified as Iris (fig. 62), the *clinging* drapery not only suggests the form of the bosom, the belly and the thighs, but also in the direction of its finely carved curves gives the strong impression of movement appropriate to a figure who was the messenger of the gods. The use of drapery to

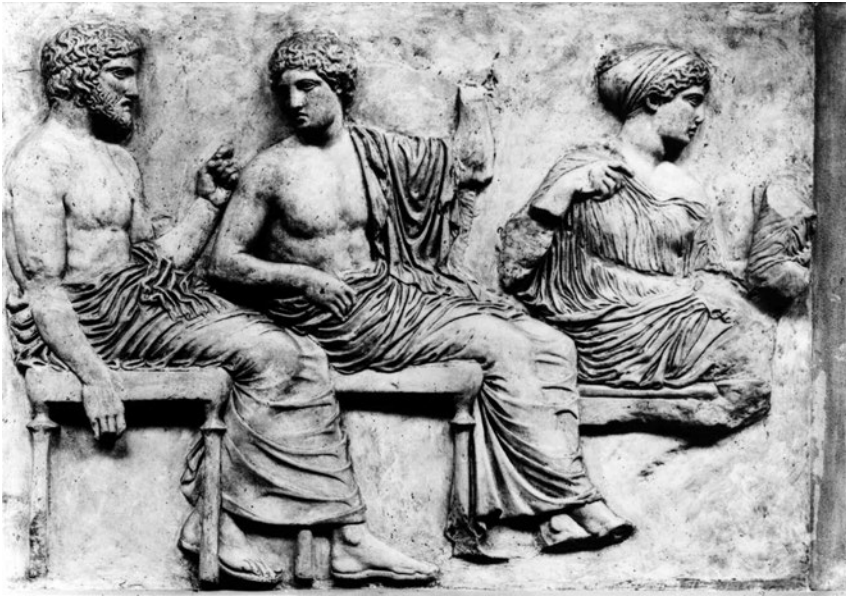


FIGURE 61 Deities from the Parthenon frieze

Source: British Museum, London

enhance form and to suggest movement in a three-dimensional composition is one of the many techniques perfected in the classical period.

Classical painting

In the absence of any surviving originals, the history of Greek painting has to be inferred from later copies (sometimes in the form of mosaics) and has to be reconstructed from accounts of it in later writings, particularly those of the elder Pliny (AD 23/4–79), a Roman polymath who has a long section on Greek art in his *Natural History*. Apollodorus, an Athenian painter of the mid- to late fifth century, was nicknamed ‘the shadow painter’, which suggests that he was the first to make extensive use of highlighting by means of shading, a technique scarcely used in the line drawing of the vase painters. Pliny says he was the first to give a realistic presentation of objects and that he paved the way for his younger contemporary Zeuxis of Heraclea (*Natural History*, 35, 60). Pliny also records a trial of skill between Zeuxis and Parrhasius of Ephesus in the art of illusion. Zeuxis produced a picture of grapes so successfully represented that birds flew up to the stage building where the paintings were exhibited. Parrhasius’ contribution was a picture of a curtain so naturalistic that



FIGURE 62 Marble sculpture of Iris from the Parthenon's west pediment, 438–432 BC, 1816,0610.96

Source: Photo © The Trustees of the British Museum

Zeuxis mistakenly asked for it to be drawn aside, thinking that Parrhasius' painting was behind it (35, 65). The anecdote suggests absolute mastery of shading, foreshortening and mixing of colour in the interests of naturalistic illusion. (Whether the Greeks composed painting with fully developed perspective, having a single vanishing point, has been much debated.)

However, the Greek artist did not aim simply to copy nature, as Socrates suggests in a conversation with Parrhasius recorded in Xenophon:

When you are painting beautiful figures, as it isn't easy to come across one single model who is beyond criticism in every detail, you combine the best feature of each one of a number of models, and so convey the appearance of entirely beautiful bodies.

(Memoirs of Socrates, 3, 10, 2)

According to the Roman writer Cicero (106–43), this was the method of Zeuxis. When commissioned by the people of Croton to decorate their temple of Hera, he desired to paint a picture of Helen of Troy, which might embody the perfection of female beauty. From the young women assembled by the citizenry he chose the five most beautiful 'because he did not think that all the qualities which he sought to combine in a portrayal of beauty could be found in one person, because in no case has Nature made anything perfect and finished in every part' (*On Invention*, 2, 3). The resulting image (which does not of course survive) could be said to be typical, meaning not that she constituted an average norm but rather the ideal of the type, for Zeuxis added to his painting the words of Homer uttered by the old men of Troy: 'who on earth could blame the Trojan and Achaean men at arms for suffering so long for such a woman's sake? Indeed she is the very image of an immortal goddess' (*Iliad*, 3, 156–158).

The theory and practice of Parrhasius and Zeuxis suggest the context for interpreting what Aristotle means when he says that art imitates nature, and art carries things further than nature (*Physics*, 2, 8, 15). Like nature, the artist imposes form (*eidos*) upon the undifferentiated matter of the world (*hyle*), but the artist can also transcend nature by ironing out her imperfections. In eschewing the abnormal and the eccentric, the classical artist concentrates upon the essence and works through the particular and the individual to express the typical and the ideal.

Vase painting, by dint of limitations both inherent and self-imposed, does not represent the pinnacle of Greek achievement in painting, which came later than in other areas of art with Apelles of Cos, who was a court artist of Alexander in the late fourth century and acknowledged to be the greatest painter of antiquity. Nevertheless, the art of line drawing in the free Attic style of the age of Pericles in the mid-fifth century has rarely been surpassed. A master of the art is the Achilles-painter, so called

from his most famous vase depicting Achilles and Briseis, to whom are also attributed a number of white ground funeral vases called *lekythoi* (oil flasks).

The *lekythos* illustrated (fig. 63) depicts a girl playing a lyre. The Greek word at the bottom right, Helicon, the seat of the Muses, indicates that she herself might be one of the nine. The musical motif is continued in the presence of the bird at the girl's feet. The composition and drawing are extremely simple; the ground and the seat are indicated by single lines, the curves of which are parallel to the curving lines of the main figure upon which all the attention is concentrated. More detail on the seat or the ground would have detracted from this concentration. The Achilles-painter has anticipated the virtue of artistic tact upon which, according to Pliny, the master Apelles prided himself when he said that 'he knew when to take his hand away from a picture' (*Natural History*, 35, 80).

The Muse is gazing into the middle distance and the very slight curve to her lips might indicate pleasure. She may easily be imagined to be serenely contemplating the beautiful sound of the music she is making, for this is the mood that the painter has successfully imparted to the painting.

Its simple harmony may seem to defy analysis, but on reflection, much of its satisfying sense of completeness stems from the beautiful sense of proportion in the broad outlines of the design, imparting to the whole a pleasing unity. The sweeping curves of the back, the thighs and the legs make a sequence in which the three major elements are perfectly proportioned. Into the central sweep of the main curve from neck to knee fits the smaller and sharper curve of the lyre. The main curve is counter-balanced both by the vertical line of the drapery (tapering into a corresponding curve), which is directly below the head and neck (thus reinforcing the painting's gravitational centre), and by the arm and a series of straight lines including the fingers and the strings and frame of the lyre, all bisecting the curves at an angle of roughly 45 degrees. This series itself is crossed almost at right angles by the white band and top string of the lyre. If the line of the headband, the line of the arm from the elbow to the forefinger and the line of the legs were to be continued leftwards, they would all meet at the edge of the vase, so that they may be said to form a series of radial lines on the main semicircular curve. Of course, the beauty of the painting does not simply arise from the design with its approximation to geometric patterns – such patterning could equally result in stiffness and artificiality – but their presence underlying the apparent naturalism of the surface must contribute to the beauty of its proportions and perhaps suggest that at its best Greek art, even in its maturity, never entirely lost contact with its geometrical origins.

The final masterly touch in the overall design may be seen in the positioning of the bird. Its body forms a parallel line with the arm and the straight lines bisecting the main curve of the girl's body. Together with the headband it is almost an edging frame to the whole structure, while the ground line on which it is situated continues and

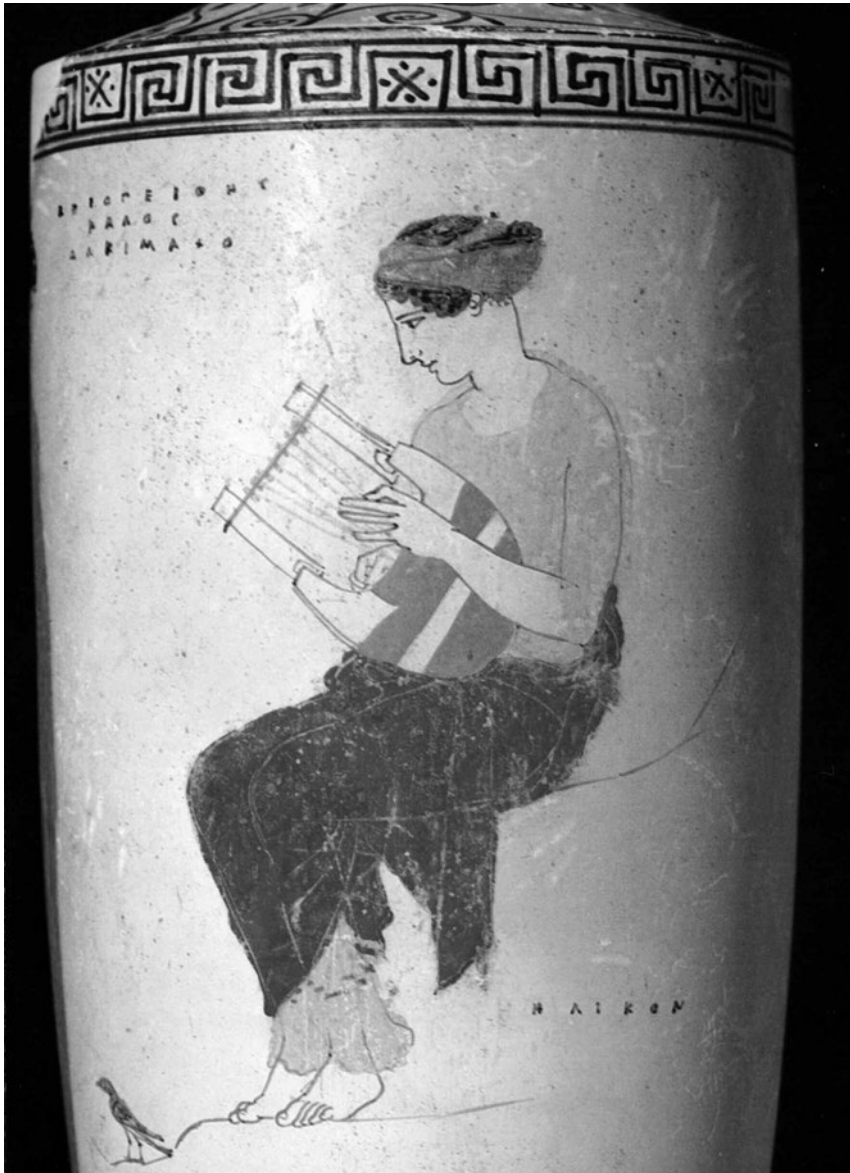


FIGURE 63 *Lekythos* by the Achilles-painter

Source: Antikensammlung, Munich: von Schoen Collection

completes the main curving sequence that begins with the incline of the head and flows through the body in a most satisfying way. We need only imagine the bird facing the other way, or at the other side of the figure or on a level with her toes, to appreciate the appropriateness of its positioning in the overall design.

The beauty of the painting stems also from its fluidity and refinement. The slight incline of the head and the tapering line of the feet give the whole structure a delicate poise. There is refinement too in the execution of detail, in the curls of the hair and in the different textures of the headband, the smooth material of the chiton above and below the darker rumpled material of the outer dress, and even in the suggestion of feathers in the figure of the bird. None of the detail is fussy or draws attention to itself; everything has its place in the larger design.

Despite the apparent naturalism there is an element of style most obviously in the 'Grecian profile' in which the forehead and nose are united in a continuous straight line, and perhaps also in the 'Grecian bend' of the slightly rounded shoulders. The Grecian attitude is clearly ideal but the style of the pose is not exaggerated to the point where it becomes affected or mannered. In this restraint of style Classical art is to be distinguished from the greater stylistic extravagance of Mannerism or the Baroque. In the clarity and economy of its general outline, in the unity of its design where the parts are subordinate to the whole in a harmoniously proportioned structure, in the natural ease of its fluent style with its tendency to ideal expression and in the restrained decorum of its content and form where there is nothing in excess, the beautiful and dignified music of the Achilles-painter may be regarded as a touchstone distinguishing the calm, the poise and the uplifting serenity of Classical art.

Fourth-century sculpture

The most famous master of later sculpture is the Athenian Praxiteles, who flourished in the mid-fourth century. The Hermes with the infant Dionysus (fig. 64), discovered in 1877, is usually thought to be an original by him and, if so, is one of the few free-standing statues to have survived from the Classical period. It is thought that the missing right arm dangled a bunch of grapes to which the infant makes a forward gesture. Its beauty is softer and more delicately sensuous than that of anything discussed so far, and in the small head and long legs Praxiteles has his own canon of proportion that differs from that of the stockier figure of Polyclitus. The Hermes also has more fluid lines than the *doryphoros*. It is often said that while the sculptors of the fifth century made gods of men, those of the fourth made men of gods. Yet this image of Hermes has majesty – the body has strength as well as grace – and the Homeric description of Hermes emphasizes his youthful charm (see p. 31). However, the soft dreaminess of the face is certainly far removed from the severity of the Olympian Apollo (fig. 48).

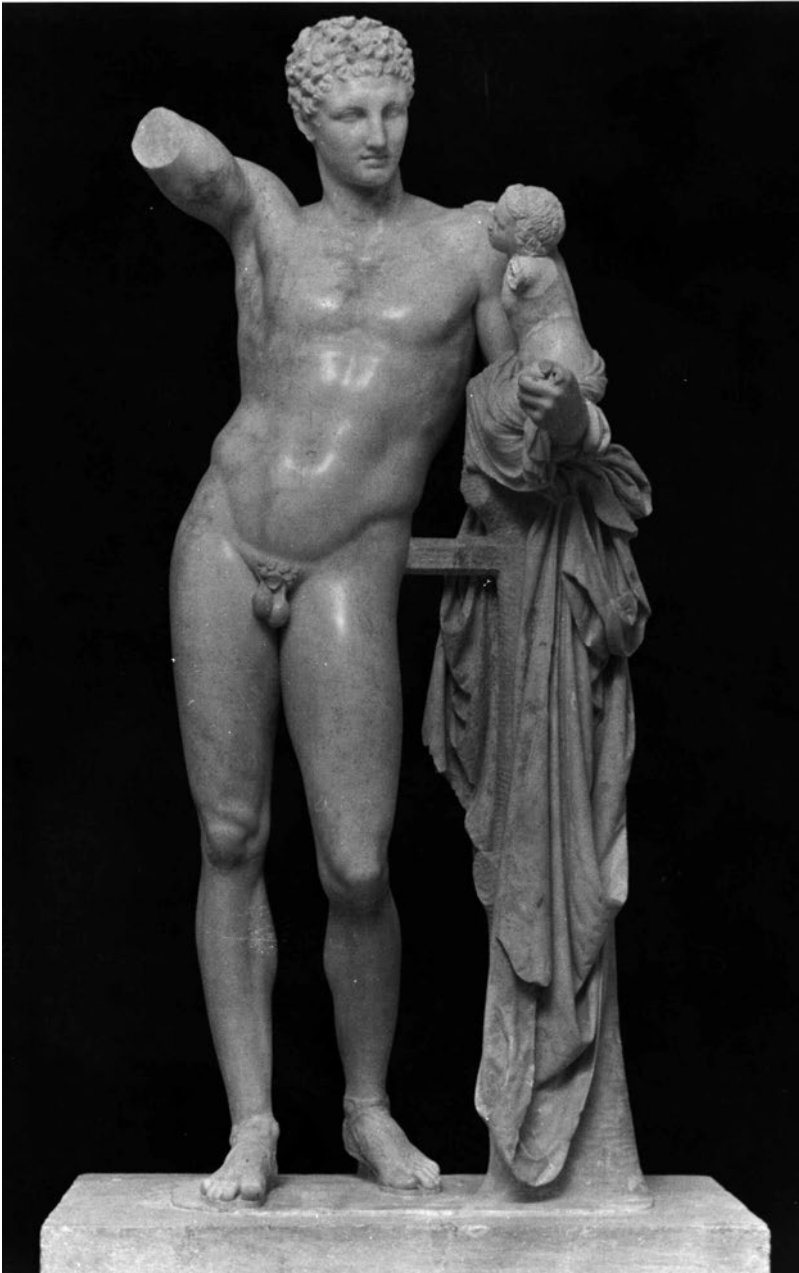


FIGURE 64 Praxiteles: Hermes

Source: Olympia Museum , Ilia, Greece

The Hermes was not particularly famous in antiquity, but Praxiteles was the author of what, after the Zeus of Pheidias, was the most famous statue in the ancient world, the Cnidian Aphrodite. Pliny tells us that Praxiteles made and sold together two statues of the goddess, one draped and for this reason preferred by the people of Cos while the other, which they had refused, was wholly nude and bought by the people of Cnidos. When later an offer was made to purchase the statue for the price of their national debt, the Cnidians refused, for the statue was their main claim to fame. Pliny goes on to say that the shrine in which it was displayed was entirely open so that it could be viewed from any angle, from which it was equally admirable (*Natural History*, 36, 20–22). The original does not survive but it was much copied by the Romans (see fig. 65). In a modest pose, Aphrodite is about to take a bath. As in the case of Hermes, there is a fine contrast between the intricate drapery and the smoothness of the body (Praxiteles is noted for the softness of his modelling). In addition to the obvious charms of the curvaceous body, a later admirer of the original, Lucian, of the second century AD, comments on ‘the liquid gaze of the eye, so clear and full of charm’ (*The Art of Portraiture*, 6), a characteristic not apparent in the cruder Roman copy. When Praxiteles was asked which of his own works in marble he placed the highest, he replied: ‘The ones to which Nicias has set his hand’, according to Pliny who adds ‘so much value did he assign to his colouring of surfaces’ (*Natural History*, 35, 133). The Cnidian Aphrodite, like other Greek statues, owed its effect partly to the touch of the painter, a point which it is difficult for the modern onlooker to appreciate, accustomed as we are to the plain white surface of the marble.

THE HELLENISTIC PERIOD (from the conquest of Alexander in 323)

A notable innovator in the later fourth century whose art straddles the later classical period and the Hellenistic age is Lysippus of Sicyon (c. 370–315). He was influential and had a number of artistic followers, including his three sons. He worked in bronze, and was extremely prolific and popular; many Roman copies of his statues are extant. On the testimony of Cicero he seems consciously to have rejected the canonical ideal represented by Polyclitus’ *doryphoros* (*Brutus* 86, 296), preferring, according to the later Latin writer Pliny, nature rather than any artist as his model. Pliny assesses his contribution as follows:

Lysippus is said to have contributed greatly to the art of bronze statuary by representing the details of the hair and by making his heads smaller than the old sculptors used to do, and his bodies more slender and firm, to give his statues the appearance of greater height. He scrupulously preserved the quality of ‘symmetry’ (for which there is no word in Latin) by the new and hitherto untried method of



FIGURE 65
Praxiteles:
Aphrodite

Source: Vatican,
Rome

modifying the squareness of the figure of the old sculptors, and he used commonly to say that whereas his predecessors had made men as they really were, he made them as they appeared to be. A peculiarity of this sculptor's work seems to be the minute finish maintained in even the smallest details.

(*Natural History*, 34, 65)

One of his most famous works, none of which survives in the original bronze, is the *apoxyomenos* 'The Man Using a Body-scraper' (c. 320: fig. 66). The body scraper called a strigil is an instrument with a curved blade used as a cleansing aid in scraping sweat or dirt from the skin in the gymnasia or the hot baths of Greece and Rome. Pliny goes on to tell us that Lysippus' statue was shipped to Rome in the age of Augustus, and that it was so admired by the Roman emperor Tiberius that he removed it from its accustomed place before the *Thermae* 'Warm Baths' at Rome to the bedroom of his private residence, until adverse public reaction caused him to restore it. Statues of Greek athletes were very common, for a victor at one of the famous games might have a statue of himself to mark his success, if he was rich or had a wealthy patron. Most of these were likely to show the victor in the moment of triumph and to perpetuate his fame by indicating the skill in which he excelled by adding a discus or a javelin or whatever. The temple of Zeus at Olympia was replete with such statues, according to the Greek travel writer Pausanias. Lysippus' statue seems to show the athlete not in triumphant mode but cleaning up after his exertions, though its later erection outside the baths at Rome suggests the possibility that he might not be an athlete at all but simply a beautiful youth coming out of the shower. The bronze original must have been free-standing, whereas the heavier Roman marble copy (fig. 66) needs a prop; nor can we gain any appreciation from the copy of what Pliny calls the sculptor's 'minute finish'. But even a damaged Roman copy can illustrate what Pliny says about the sculptor's different attitude to proportion when compared to the *doryphoros* of Polyclitus (fig. 57); the head is indeed smaller (the ratio to the body being 1.8 rather than 1.7), the body less square and the limbs longer. Lysippus' innovation is not so much in his choice of subject, for other examples survive, but in the way that the subject is represented not only in its different approach to proportion but also in the fully three-dimensional character of the result. This can be immediately appreciated if the *apoxyomenos* is put beside the *discoboulos* of Myron (fig. 51). It is also clear that the *doryphoros* too has been designed to be best viewed from the front. In the case of Lysippus' young man, there is some foreshortening of the arms and a twofold effect in their positioning. The extension, accentuated by the distant gaze and positioning of the head, reaches out into space; the bending of the left arm cuts across the torso, so that, although there is the careful balance of weight distribution brilliantly achieved in the *doryphoros*, it is not possible for the viewer to contemplate the harmonious symmetry of the body from the front. The statue is



FIGURE 66 *Apoxyomenos* after Lysippos (Roman copy)

Source: © The Bridgeman Art Library, courtesy of Getty Images

praised for the way in which, unlike those of Myron and Polyclitus, no one view predominates; its dynamism has to be appreciated by the viewer taking an all-round perspective.

Lysippus' ability and enterprise was rewarded when he became Alexander's court favourite. According to Plutarch:

The best likeness of Alexander that has been preserved for us is to be found in the statues of Lysippus, the only artist whom Alexander considered worthy to represent him. Alexander possessed a number of individual features, which many of Lysippus's followers later tried to reproduce, for example the poise of the neck which was tilted slightly to the left, or a certain melting look in his eyes, and the artist has exactly caught these peculiarities.

(Life of Alexander, 4, 1)

This Roman copy is one of several that are thought to represent the qualities in its attitude and gaze that Plutarch attributes to Alexander and that Lysippus had managed to capture in his portraits. It shows Alexander without a beard, emphasizing his youthful vigour and in the swept back hair (for which the Greeks had the word, *anastole*) parted in the middle, has what Plutarch elsewhere says was Alexander's 'manly and leonine quality'. This is evidently the image of himself that Alexander wished to present to the world, one that is alluded to in subsequent imperial portraits in the new era of kings and emperors, and it was first established by Lysippus.

One of the great monuments preserved from the ancient world is Hellenistic in origin, the reconstruction of the Pergamum altar housed in the museum to which it gave its name in Berlin, where it was brought after it had been excavated by German archaeologists in the 1870s and 80s. The reconstructed frieze (fig. 68) is on a scale only matched by the Parthenon frieze in the British museum. Visitors entering for the first time the gallery in which the reconstruction is magnificently displayed are transported back into an architectural world that with its Ionic columns and its simple and severe geometrical symmetry, is thoroughly Greek and will be first impressed by its monumental grandeur and scale. The altar and the reconstructed Temple of Athena also in the museum were part of a complex of buildings occupying the raised acropolis of Pergamum, the capital of one of the Hellenistic kingdoms that had grown up in Asia Minor after Alexander's eastern empire had fragmented after his death. Although much about its origin is unknown, including the name of its main architect and designer and all the names of its many sculptors and artists except one, it can be dated to the reign of king Eumenes II (197–158). Perhaps it was initiated after his victory over the Seleucids and Galati/Celts at the battle of Magnesia in 190 BC. It is sure and certain witness to the thorough Hellenisation of this kingdom ruled by the Attalid dynasty. The kings, who promoted Athena as patroness of the city, had as

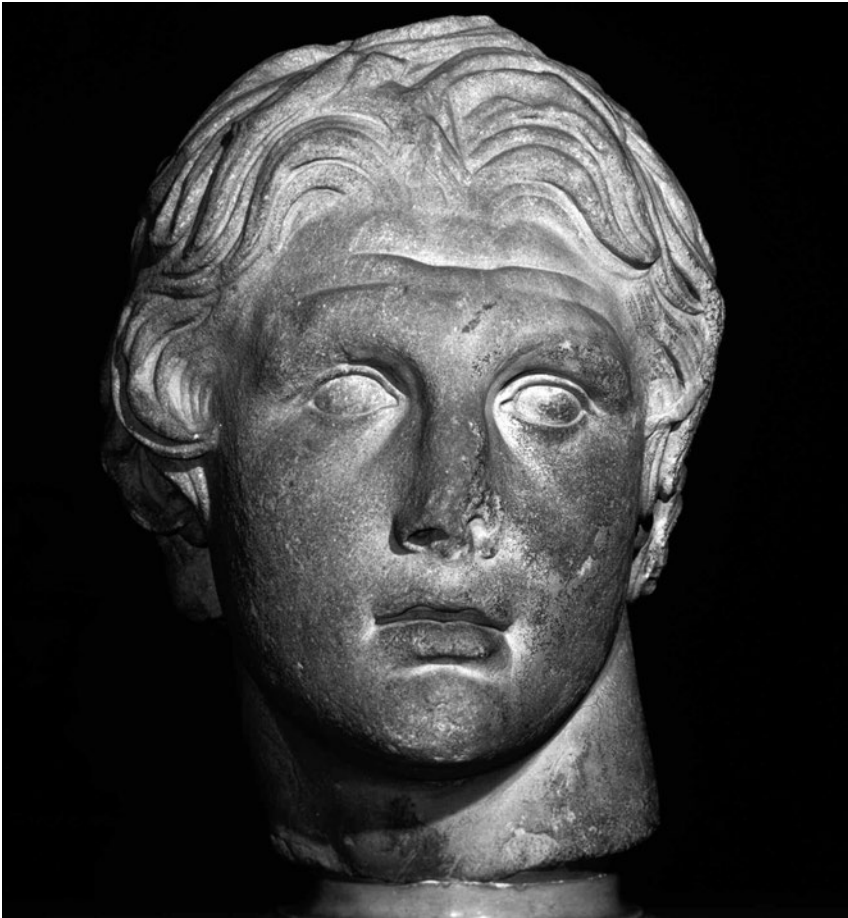


FIGURE 67 Head of Alexander, school of Lysippus

Source: © C.M. Dixon/Ancient Art and Architecture collection Ltd

their inspiration and model the Athenian Acropolis. The identity of the god to whom the great altar is dedicated has been disputed (whether Athena or Zeus), though most authorities refer to the altar as the Great altar of Zeus. The subjects of the statuary decorating the frieze are thoroughly Greek, with no Oriental influence. The inner frieze represents the story of Telephus, a son of Heracles, and the mythical founder of the city. Other parts of the frieze represent the traditional Greek subject of the battle of the Olympians with the Giants, though the identity of particular gods and giants has been much debated. The victory of the Olympians represents the triumph of order over chaos, a triumph that historians have associated in this case with the victories



FIGURE 68 Pergamum altar, Berlin

of the Hellenising Attalids over their real and potential enemies, the Galatai and Persians. The frieze can be regarded as a powerful assertion not only of national and cultural identity but part of a greater design in the buildings of the extensive acropolis, including a royal palace, that represented the self-confident pride of monarchical power. The project was unfinished when Attalus III died and bequeathed his kingdom to the Romans.



FIGURE 69 Detail from the Pergamum frieze

Source: Photo Johannes Laurentius © 2005. Photo Scala, Grenze/BPK, Bildasentus fur Kunst, kultur und Geschichte, Berlin

Parallels can be made with the sculptures of the Parthenon but there are also major differences. The Elgin marbles have inspired much talk of the serenity of Classical art; there is serenity in some of the faces of the Olympians on the Pergamum frieze but the overall and overwhelming impression is one of agonized tension and strain. Throughout, there is great variety in the individual set pieces; there is also a predominant style informing them all that is different from (and not necessarily inferior to) the style associated with Pheidias expressed in the sculptures of the Parthenon. The detail from the frieze here (fig. 69) is said to show the goddess Athena subduing the giant Alcyoneus. The winged figure on the right is identified as Nike, Victory, and the female figure below is Gaia, the mother of the giant. The two sets of figures interlock by means of outstretched limbs, ensuring visual continuity. The four figures are on slightly different levels, giving the impression of dislocation. The bodies of the giant and the goddess pull away from each other, as the goddess grasps the giant's hair and pulls; this is a real fight with no holds barred and it is represented at the moment of imminent climax as the giant is caught between the goddess and the snake. The faces of the giant and his mother look up in matching anguish. Had the

faces of the two goddesses survived, they would doubtless have looked down in triumphant anticipation. The two sets of wings form a complementary background but vary slightly in design. While the torso of the giant and his outstretched leg show strain, the outstretched leg of Victory shows poise as she moves towards the central



FIGURE 70 Detail of head of giant

Source: Time and Life Pictures/Getty Images



FIGURE 71 The dying Gaul: Roman copy of bronze original c. 230–220

Source: Musei Capitolini, Rome © 2014. Photo Scala, Florence – courtesy of Sovraintendenza di Roma Capitale

confrontation. There are no straight lines; the only clear shape is the roundness of the shield. Otherwise the swirling composition cannot be resolved into a geometric pattern; the viewer's eye has no one point of rest. In the frieze as a whole one scene meshes into the next and there is the confusion of a real gigantic struggle, in which we are conscious of the pain and agony of the victims. The scene here has features typical of the whole; dishevelled coils of snaky hair, deeply furrowed brows, straining limbs and swirling drapery that gives physical depth and emotional turbulence to the scene. This is most unlike the effect of the sculptures of the Parthenon.

In contrast to these scenes of mythological struggle are the records of historical defeat represented in the dedicatory statues commemorating the victories of Attalus I over the Gauls possibly located in the sanctuary of Athena. A marble Roman statue of a dying Gaul, identified by the torque he wears round his neck, is reckoned to be a copy of the lost original bronze. From the presence of the musical instrument at his feet the figure is sometimes referred to as the dying Celtic trumpeter. Blood is draining from a wound at his lower ribs. There is a pleasing harmony in the triangular composition complemented by the rounded edges of the oval shield on which he is lying. But the overwhelming effect to be appreciated by the spectator is not the serenity and poise of the sculptor's representation but the pathos of this moment of defeat as the drooping head bent in submission yields to the inevitable. In the

representation of the human form at the moment of death there is dignity as well as pathos.

Parallel to the sculptures of the Pergamum school, in a style that has sometimes been called baroque, is one of the most famous sculptures to survive antiquity, the Laocoon (fig. 72), thought by Pliny to be a work superior to any painting or bronze and assigned by him to the Rhodian sculptors, Hagesander, Polydorus and Athenodorus (*Natural History*, 36, 37). There has been some debate about its date, but scholars of art are agreed on the essentially Hellenistic inspiration of its style. A dramatic struggle is being enacted in three stages. The two sons are used to intensify the struggle, centred upon Laocoon, by showing its beginning and its outcome. The elder son, who is slightly detached from the other two figures (for he has only just been caught in the coils of the snake), sees his fate in the still struggling father at the centre and in his younger brother, whose limply swooning body has been virtually overcome. The inevitability of the outcome is finely suggested by the arrangement of the sequence in reverse order (from left to right), starting with the final yielding swoon, and also by the inclination of the body of Laocoon towards his swooning younger son. Anguish is expressed in the different attitudes of the three figures, and the agonizing toil is communicated through the contorted muscles and swelling veins of the swirling figure of Laocoon, whose arm muscles may be said to reflect the intricate coils of the snake and whose hair and beard are also noticeably snaky.

Although the immediate impression made by this complex structure is one of cluttered intricacy, it cannot be doubted that there is unity if not simplicity of design. Classical clarity of design, simple economy of line and restraint of form have been sacrificed to obtain maximum pathos. For the dramatic emotion that it evokes is the statue's whole reason for being and not any preoccupation with ideal beauty or perfect physical form. Even in battle scenes the classical sculptor preserves the beauty of bodily forms. The dynamic Lapith (fig. 60) retains a grace in action; the muscles of the thighs and arms are taut but not contorted, the chest is uplifted slightly but not twisted. There is a simple beauty in the positioning of the legs, as he is poised for action. It is as if the scene has been designed to exhibit an athletic aspect of the body's beauty. This accounts for its uplifting effect, what has been called the calm grandeur of high Classicism. The uplifting effect is achieved by artistic restraint and emotional detachment on the part of the sculptor, who is intent solely on exhibiting his mastery of the medium and control of form. The artists of the Laocoon, by contrast, have designs on our emotions, and it is the remarkable emotional intensity of the group shown in anguished expression and contorted forms that sets it apart from the serenity and poise of Classical art.

In any period different styles will exist alongside each other and in this period there were those in sculpture as in literature who already regarded the masterpieces



FIGURE 72 Laocöon

Source: Vatican, Rome

of the Classical era as models. The Aphrodite from Melos (the Venus de Milo) (fig. 73), named after the island where it was discovered in 1820, is regarded as an example of a neo-Classical style that is found in the second century. The swirling figure of this fine statue is draped from the hips to the feet. The pose has less natural poise than that of her Cnidian counterpart (fig. 65), but the grave beauty of her handsome head with its confident gaze reflects something of the serenity of the Classical models from which her sculptor doubtless worked.

There is one artistic development that may be regarded as an invention of the Hellenistic period, the fine art of mosaic composition. Mosaics are found earlier but there is nothing extant that is comparable to the remarkable examples uncovered at the Macedonian capital of Pella, on the floor of two buildings that may have been a palace. The wonderfully dynamic stag hunt of Gnosis (fig. 74; the artist's name appears at the top of the picture) has perspective and depth in the composition and shading in the coloration of the constituent pebbles, which can be detected even in a black and white reproduction, so it looks more like a painting than a mosaic. Another famous example is the Alexander mosaic depicting the battle of Alexander and the Persian king Darius discovered at Pompeii and believed to be a copy of an earlier painting. The stag hunt, by contrast, is a scene from ordinary life and in this it exhibits another general tendency of post-Classical Hellenistic art, a movement away from the abstract and the ideal to the realistic and the natural.

Realism can be a tricky term in art and literature, but the subject alone of the sculpture of the drunken old lady (fig. 75) is not one that might be expected in the Classical period. Drunkenness is frequently represented on vases but the figures are usually merry satyrs, followers of Dionysus, or young men carousing too much in a symposium. But here there is no question of over indulgence of the pleasure principle; in fact, though she is clutching a pot of some kind that may be a wine bottle, and though her dress is only anchored on one shoulder, it is not the drunkenness of the woman that impresses the viewer but the pathos of old age, unflinchingly seen in the wrinkles, the sunken cheeks and withered chest with jutting collar-bone and almost visible ribs. The upturned face is expressive too. The neatness of her hair and cap does not suggest abandon; rather the attitude and direction of the gaze suggest the helplessness of the blind, even if this is to some extent a result of the passage of time undergone by the statue itself rather than its subject. There is something beseeching in the set of the mouth and the upward tilt of the head. It is as if the artist has noticed a figure that might be encountered and ignored in the streets of any Greek town. As a work of art, in its simple triangular form and its concentrated subject, it has a real beauty that prompts the viewer to wonder about its unknown origin and its destination: what could have motivated it, who commissioned it and since this is designated a Roman copy, the same questions apply to its reproduction.



FIGURE 73 Aphrodite from Melos

Source: Louvre, Paris

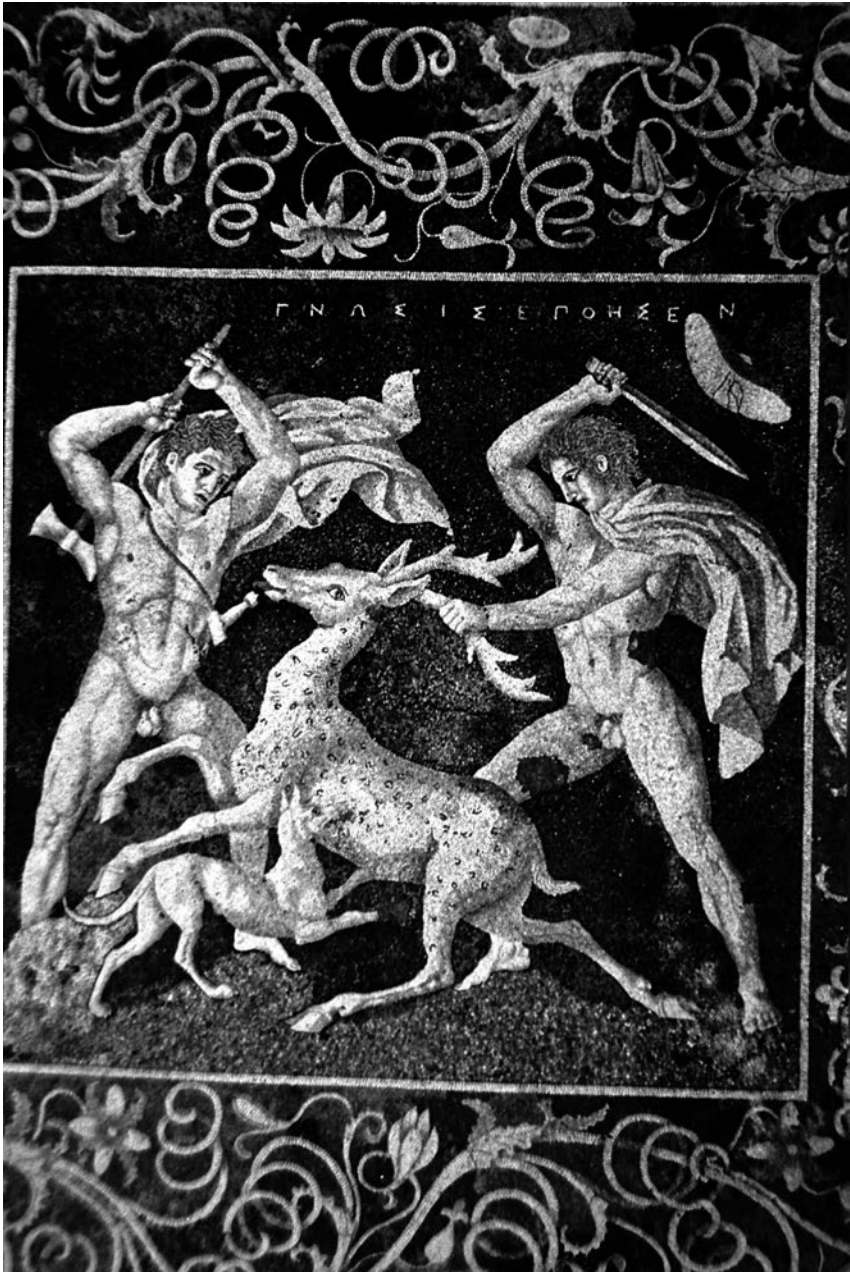


FIGURE 74 Mosaic of a stag hunt, 'The Deer Hunt'

Source: © Photo Ann Ronan/HIP/Scala, Florence



FIGURE 75 Drunken old woman

Source: Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek, Munich, with permission

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Appendix 1

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

This is confined for the most part to events and works given significant mention in this book. Before about 550 most dates are approximate and some of them much debated. The abbreviation *fl.* for *floruit* or *floruerunt* (he/she/it/they flourished) represents a scholarly estimate in the absence of firm knowledge.

HISTORY AND EVENTS

BC

Bronze Age

3000–1000	Minoan civilization
1400	Destruction of Cnossus
1580–1120	Mycenaean civilization
1250	Destruction of Troy

Iron Age – Dark Age

1100	Fall in population; Migrations to Asia Minor
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Archaic period

776	The first Olympiad
730–710	Sparta conquers Messenia
650	Development of ‘Lycurgan’ constitution at Sparta
620	Draconian code at Athens

594	Archonship of Solon
561	First rule of Peisistratus
546	Persian King Cyrus defeats Croesus of Lydia
545–510	Tyranny of the Peisistratids Reorganization of the Panathenaea Institution of the state Dionysia
514	Tyrannicides Harmodius and Aristogeiton kill Hipparchus
510	Expulsion of Peisistratids
508	Democratic reforms of Cleisthenes
499	Revolt of Ionian states against Persia
498	Burning of Sardis
494	Ionian revolt subdued
490–479	Persian Wars
490	Invasion of Darius Battle of Marathon
487	Ostracism first used
480	Xerxes invades Greece Battle of Salamis

Classical period

478	Delian League formed
462/1	Democratic reforms of Ephialtes and Pericles
461–429	Ascendancy of Pericles
461–456	Building of Long Walls from Athens to Piraeus
454	Treasury of Delian League moved to Athens
449	Peace of Callias between Athens and Persia
447	Pericles calls Panhellenic congress
446	Thirty Years Peace between Athens and Sparta
431–404	Peloponnesian War
430	Plague at Athens
429	Death of Pericles (b. c. 495)
421	Peace of Nicias
415–413	Sicilian expedition
411	Oligarchic revolution
410	Restoration of democracy
405	Battle of Aegospotami
404	Defeat of Athens; ascendancy of Sparta
404/3	The Thirty in Athens; restoration of democracy
399	Trial of Socrates
387/6	The King's Peace
377	Second Athenian League

- 371 Battle of Leuctra: eclipse of Spartan power; ascendancy of Thebes
- 359 Accession of Philip II of Macedon (b. c. 383)
- 357 Philip takes Amphipolis
- 355 Collapse of Second Athenian League
- 349 Philip threatens Chalcidice
- 348 Philip captures Olynthus
- 346 Peace of Callicrates
- 342 Philip in Thrace
- 338 Philip defeats Greeks at battle of Chaeronea
- 337 Philip calls Pan-Hellenic congress at Corinth
- 336 Assassination of Philip
- 336–323 Career of Alexander the Great (b. 356)
- 334 Alexander in Asia
- 333 Battle of Issus
- 331 Foundation of Alexandria
- 331 Battle of Gaugamela; final defeat of Persian forces
- 327 Alexander in India
- 323 Death of Alexander
- 322 Revolt of Greeks. Battle of Crannon. Macedonian garrison at the Piraeus; citizenship restricted to the wealthy

Hellenistic period

- 322– Wars of the successors of Alexander
- 305 Foundation of Seleucea on Tigris
- 301 Battle of Ipsus; death of Antigonus
- 300 Foundation of Seleucea in Pieria and Antioch
- 279 Gauls invade northern Greece reaching Delphi
- 278–6 Antiochus I and Philetaerus of Pergamum defeat the Gauls in Asia Minor
- 270 The Romans begin the conquest of the Greek colonies in southern Italy at the battle of Tarentum
- 261 Eumenes of Pergamum defeats Antiochus I at Sardis; independence of Pergamum
- 238 Attalus I of Pergamum defeats Gauls (Galatians)
- 174 Revolt of Maccabees against Seleucid rule
- 197 The Romans defeat Philip V of Macedon at Cynoscephalae
- 146 The Romans destroy Corinth: Greece becomes a Roman protectorate
- 31 Augustus defeats Mark Antony and Cleopatra at the battle of Actium: Egypt becomes a Roman province

CULTURAL RECORD

BC

Iron Age – Dark Age

875–750	Geometric pottery
750	Greek alphabet developed from Phoenician model
750	Homer
c. 720	Dipylon vase

Archaic period

725	First stone temple at Sparta
720–620	Orientalizing period in pottery
700	Hesiod
650	Archilochus <i>fl.</i>
630	First marble <i>kouros</i>
610	Sappho, Alcaeus <i>fl.</i> Attic black-figure pottery begins
600	Thales of Miletus (first Ionian philosopher)
535	Thespis <i>fl.</i>
530	Pythagoras <i>fl.</i> Exekias, potter and painter <i>fl.</i> Development of red-figure technique
500	Heraclitus of Ephesus <i>fl.</i>
498	Earliest surviving poem of Pindar
490	Parmenides of Elea <i>fl.</i> Critian <i>kouros</i>
487	First comedy performed at Dionysia
484	First victory of Aeschylus (b. c. 525)

Classical period

478	Dedication of Athenian Stoa at Delphi
477/6	Replacement statues of Harmodius and Aristogeiton set up in the agora after earlier originals had been carried off by Xerxes
475–447	Polygnotus the painter active Niobid-painter
472	Aeschylus: <i>Persians</i>
470s	The Delphic charioteer
470–430	Career of sculptor Myron (<i>discoboulos</i>)
469	Socrates born
468	First victory of Sophocles (b. c. 496) over Aeschylus
460–420	Careers of sculptors Polyclitus and Pheidias

- 460 Empedocles *fl.*
- 458 Aeschylus: *Oresteia*
- 456 Death of Aeschylus
Completion of the temple of Zeus at Olympia
- 455 First play by Euripides (b. c. 485)
- c. 450 Temple of Poseidon at Paestum
- 447 Parthenon begun
- 446 Pindar's last ode
- c. 441 Sophocles: *Antigone*
- c. 435 Herodotus: *Histories* (b. c. 484)
Achilles-painter
- 432 Parthenon completed
- 431 Thucydides (b. c. 460) begins his history
Euripides: *Medea*
- 430 Hippocrates of Cos (medicine), Protagoras of Abdera (sophist),
Zeuxis of Heraclea and Parrhasius of Ephesus (painters) *fl.*
- c. 429 Sophocles: *King Oedipus*
- 427 Georgias of Leontini (rhetorician) at Athens
Plato born
- 424 Aristophanes (b. c. 445): *Knights*
- 423 Aristophanes: *Clouds*
- 411 Aristophanes: *Thesmophoriazusae*
- 406 Deaths of Sophocles and Euripides
- 405 Aristophanes: *Frogs*
Performance of *Bacchae* of Euripides
- c. 400 Thucydides: *History of the Peloponnesian War*
- c. 392 Aristophanes: *Assemblywomen*
- 390–354 Xenophon active
- 387 Plato founds the Academy
- 384 Aristotle and Demosthenes born
- 380 Isocrates (b. 436): *Panegyricus*
- c. 380 Plato: *Republic, Symposium*
- 370–330 Praxiteles (sculptor) active
- 367 Aristotle attends Plato's Academy
- 360–325 Diogenes the cynic active
- 351 Demosthenes: *Philippic I*
- 350–320 Apelles (painter) active
- 349 Demosthenes: *Olynthiacs*
- 346 Isocrates: *Philip*
Demosthenes: *On the Peace*

- 344 Demosthenes: *Philippic II*
 342 Demosthenes: *Philippic III, On the Chersonese*
 338 Death of Isocrates
 335 Aristotle founds the Lyceum: *Nicomachean Ethics, Poetics*
 330 Demosthenes: *On the Crown*
 330 Lysippus the sculptor (c. 370–c. 315) *fl.*
 322 Deaths of Aristotle and Demosthenes

Hellenistic period

- 322 Theophrastus succeeds Aristotle as head of the Lyceum
 316 Menander (b. 342): *Dyskolos*
 307 Epicurus founds school at Athens
 300 Zeno of Citium establishes Stoic school on *Stoa Poikile* at Athens
 Euclid (mathematician) active
 270 Aratus, Callimachus and Theocritus *fl.*
 262 Cleanthes succeeds Zeno as head of Stoics
 c. 260 Apollonius of Rhodes: *Argonautica*
 260–212 Archimedes active
 260 Herophilus the physician (c. 330–c. 240) *fl.*
 250 Erasistratus the physician (c. 315–c. 240) *fl.*
 240 Hipparchus astronomer
 197–159 The Great Altar of Pergamum completed in the reign of Eumenes II
 180 Aristarchus heads Alexandrian library
 159–138 Stoa of Attalus at Athens endowed by Attalus and built in his reign
 150 Moschus *fl.*
 c. 130 Polybius (c. 200–c. 118) *Histories*
 c. 100 Meleager *fl.*
 c. 60–30 Diodorus Siculus: *Library of World History*
 30 Dionysius of Halicarnassus active at Rome
 Strabo, the geographer *fl.*

AD

- 23/4–79 Pliny the Elder, Latin writer on Greek art
 c. 46–120 Plutarch: *Parallel Lives*
On the Sublime attributed to the rhetorician Longinus
 c. 160 Pausanias: *Description of Greece*

Appendix 2

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- acropolis* literally, the top part of the city
- agoge* state training for young men at Sparta
- agora* a meeting place, the market place
- aidos* shame, reverence, modesty
- amphora* large bulbous two-handled storage jar for wine, oil, grain etc.; one with a large neck is called neck amphora
- anagnorisis* recognition that results from *peripeteia* in drama
- architrave* that part of the entablature resting directly on the columns
- archon* the Greek word for ruler; at Athens there were ten appointed annually with various responsibilities. The eponymous archon gave his name to the year
- arête* virtue, excellence
- Attic* of or pertaining to Attica, the countryside region around Athens
- barbaros* non-Greek, foreign
- boule* the council (of 500 at Athens)
- cella* the inner chamber of a Greek temple
- centaur* mythical beast, upper half man, lower half horse
- choregos* one who supplies funds for the equipping of a chorus in dramatic festivals
- deme* local communities (like English parishes). Athenians identified themselves by their father's name and deme
- demokratia* literally, the rule of the *demos* or people
- dike* justice
- dithyramb* the metrical form for songs to Dionysus
- dokimasia* examination of officials before taking office
- ekklesia* an assembly of male citizens
- entablature the horizontal structure (of the architrave, frieze and cornice) supported by the columns on a Greek temple

- ephebe* a youth between 18 and 20 who undertook military training
- epikleros* literally, someone who went with the property; an heiress whose father had died before her marriage; she could not own property in her own right
- erastes* the active male lover
- eromenos* the beloved of the *erastes*, characteristically an adolescent
- eupatridae* those who came from the best families
- frieze that part of the stonework which comes between the architrave and the cornice in temple architecture. The Parthenon has an Ionic inner and Doric exterior frieze
- genos* a small grouping of families within the *phratría*
- gerousia* from *geros*, an old man; a council of 28 elders over 60 (elected for life) at Sparta
- gymnasium* derived from *gymnos*, naked; public facility for athletic exercise and instruction
- gymnopaedia* exercises for boys at Sparta
- hamartia* error or mistake made by a dramatic protagonist, not a “tragic flaw” as in modern thought and drama
- hegemon* leader, the title taken by Philip II as prospective leader of the Greeks against the Persians
- herkeios* adjective meaning concerned with the household, often used of Zeus
- hetaira* courtesan
- hetairoi* companions; in Macedon, cavalrymen and personal guards of the king
- hieromenia* the holy time of the month: a period of general armistice in Greece during which the Olympic games were held
- historia* enquiry
- homoioi* similars, men on an equal footing; in Sparta, full citizens, also called Spartiates
- hoplite* infantryman
- hybris* overweening pride that begets *nemesis*
- hydria* a water container having one vertical (pouring) and two horizontal handles (for carrying)
- isonomia* equality under the law
- kithara* a large stringed instrument with box-shaped sounding body
- kleros* literally, a lot, portion; an allotment of land given to citizens often overseas
- komos* revel, celebration
- kore* a young woman, often used for statues of young women
- kothurnoi* the high boots worn by tragic actors
- krater* large wide vessel for mixing water and wine

krypteia from *kryptos*, secret; the 'secret police' at Sparta

kouros a youth, especially used of early statues

kylix a drinking cup as used in symposia

kyrios literally, lord; an Athenian citizen was lord of his household

lekythos cylindrical, elongated vessel with vertical handle and narrow neck; ointment jar often used in the cult of the dead

logos Greek word for argument or discourse; reason

logographers early writers of genealogies and local histories

maenad derived from *mania*, madness or possession; a female follower of Dionysus
magna Graecia the area in southern Italy colonized by the Greeks from the seventh century

mechane the crane above the stage by which gods made their entrance in dramatic performance often at the end to resolve the plot: hence the phrase, in Latin, *deus ex machina*

metoikos literally, one who dwells alongside; usually a Greek who was not a citizen but allowed residence rights

metope the individual exterior slabs of the frieze in Doric architecture, usually decorated with sculptures

mimesis imitation or representation in art or form

mythos The Greek word for story, also used by Aristotle for plot

nemesis retribution for *hybris*

nike victory in Greek; name of winged goddess or statue that is the embodiment of victory

nomos law, custom

oikistes founder of a colony

oikos household, *oikonomia* household management (economy)

orchestra dancing place, in a Greek theatre

ostracism derived from *ostrakon*, a potsherd on which names were scratched; ten-year exile decreed for anyone who received the required number of votes

paidogogos a slave who escorts a boy to school

paideia education

palaistra originally, wrestling ring; facility for athletic exercises

parthenos virgin, maiden

pathos in drama, catastrophe, suffering

patroos adjective meaning of the father

peplos sleeveless woman's garment, held together at the shoulders with pins; used in the ceremony of the Pan-Athenaia when a new *peplos* was dedicated to Athena in the Parthenon

- peripeteia* ironic reversal, term in dramatic criticism
- phalanx* a line of infantrymen
- phallus* the male organ in Greek; often part of the costume in old comedy
- phratría* literally, brotherhood; clan
- phyle* tribe, of which there were four originally at Athens, turned into ten in 508 BC when the democracy was established
- perioikoi* dwellers round about; in Sparta the free inhabitants of the towns of Laconia who enjoyed civil but not political freedom
- polis* city-state
- proskynesis* obeisance, associated with Persian attitude to the King
- rhyton* vessel often in the form of a horn, but also of an animal or human head, used for libations and drinking
- sarissa* the long pike used by the Macedonians
- satrap* a Persian governor
- satyr* creature with a human body, a horse's tail and ears, usually associated with Dionysus
- sophist* from *sophia*, Greek word for wisdom; one of the new breed of professional educators who specialized in giving practical lessons in such matters as rhetoric and the law
- sophrosyne* self-control, moderation, balance
- stasis* party or civil strife, revolution
- stele* upright stone slabs usually serving as a tombstone
- stichomythia* in Greek drama, line by line debate between characters
- stoa* a building with a roof supported by columns, usually a long open colonnade
- strategos* a general
- strigil* bent bronze scraper used by athletes to remove oil, dust and sweat after exercise
- sussitia* the system of taking meals together in Sparta
- symposium *drinking party*
- synoikismos* joining together into a union with one city as capital
- temenos* a piece of land marked off and dedicated to a god
- terracotta* figure or object of fired clay (Italian: terra cotta = baked earth)
- tholos* a round building with a conical roof
- thyrsos* wooden staff bound with ivy and tipped with pine cones carried by Dionysus and maenads
- time* honour, self-respect
- trittys* a division, one of three, of the *phyle* at Athens
- tripod* three-legged stand for a cauldron
- xenos* Greek word for a stranger, guest, or mercenary

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