3

CLASSICAL GREEK CIVILIZATION
The Hellenic Age

With the defeat of the Persians at Plataea in 479 BCE, the Greeks entered the **Hellenic,** or Classical, Age, a period that lasted until the death of Alexander the Great of Macedon in 323 BCE. During the Hellenic Age, the Greeks defeated the Persians for a second time and survived a century of destructive civil war, only to succumb ultimately to the Macedonians. But throughout those tumultuous times, the Greeks never wavered in their supreme confidence in the superiority of their way of life.

Although the Greek world consisted of numerous poleis (city-states), spread across the Greek mainland, the Aegean Islands and the Ionian coast of Asia Minor, and the lands bordering the Mediterranean and Black Seas (Map 3.1), Athens became its cultural center. The Hellenic Age was the first stage of classical civilization, the highest achievement of the ancient Greeks. Despite diversity among the poleis, the Greeks of the Hellenic Age shared certain characteristics. Competitiveness and rivalry were certainly dominant features, as was an increasingly urban tone to culture in a still overwhelmingly rural world (Figure 3.1).

Popular attitudes toward the Olympian deities were changing, and public worship began to be assimilated into civic festivals. The great art of the age reflected the fusion of civic and sacred in such works as the Parthenon, the temple of the goddess Athena, protector of Athens (Figure 3.2). With gods and goddesses playing increasingly ceremonial roles in Greek life, religion became demystified and lost some of its personal value in people's lives. Moreover, war, political strife, and challenging new philosophical ideas diminished religion's ability to explain daily realities.

◄ **Detail** *Socrates.* Ca. 200 BCE–100 CE. Ht. 10½". British Museum, London.

Map 3.1   THE ATHENIAN EMPIRE, 431 BCE
This map shows the Athenian and Persian Empires on the eve of the Peloponnesian War. 1. *Compare* the Athenian and Persian Empires, with respect to size and sea and land configuration. 2. *Notice* the difference between Athenian and Spartan influence in the eastern Mediterranean. 3. *How* did the locations of Athens and Sparta influence their respective naval and military policies? 4. *In what way* did the distance between Sicily and Athens affect the course of the Peloponnesian War? 5. *Observe* that Macedonia's proximity to Greece helped in its conquest of the late fourth century BCE.

Figure 3.1   *Torch Race.* Ca. 430–420 BCE. Clay, ht. 14³⁄₁₆″. Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Harvard University Art Museums, Cambridge, Mass. (Bequest of David M. Robinson.) *From the dawn of the Archaic period, about 800 BCE, sports, especially competitive sports, were integral to Greek life. In Hellenic times, artists used sports contests as subjects, as in this painting depicting a torch race, perhaps during the Panathenaea festival. This vase painting is executed in the red-figure style, a reversal of the black-figure style, which is illustrated in Figure 2.9 and Interpreting Art figure 2.1. The relatively uncluttered design, three figures with sparse details, perfectly fits into the small panel on the krater, a mixing vessel.*

Classical Hellenic civilization sought to define the balanced life and strove for moderation in achieving it. In Athenian tragedy, a recurrent theme is the danger of great wealth and high position. According to the playwrights, riches and status bred pride and led to envy by other citizens or, worse, envy by the gods. A modest life was the safest way to avoid personal calamity.

The Greeks also sought a balance between two opposite aspects of human nature, symbolized by Apollo, god of moderation, and Dionysus, god of excess. Apollo was the god of rational thought, ethical standards, and aesthetic balance (Figure 3.3). Dionysus, on the other hand, was the god of wine, drunken revelry, sexual excess, and madness. Women known as **maenads** followed and worshiped him, sometimes tearing apart beasts in their blind frenzy. By the Hellenic Age, these excesses were confined to rural areas, for the Dionysiac impulse was constantly being tamed by the Apollonian spirit and urban life. In Athens, the drunken worship of Dionysus was transformed into a civic festival, the **Dionysia,** from which tragedy, perhaps the highest expression of the Greek ethical genius, was born (Figure 3.4).

Classic, or **classical,** is a term with varied meanings. *Classic* means, first of all, "best" or "preeminent," and Greek culture has sometimes been seen as the highest moment in the entire history of the Western humanities. *Classic* also means "having permanent and recognized significance"; a classic work establishes a standard against which other efforts are measured. In this second sense, the aesthetic values and forms of Greek culture have been studied and imitated in all later stages of Western history. By extension, "the classics" are the works that have survived from Greece and Rome.

Classic also refers to the body of specific aesthetic principles expressed through the art and literature of Greece and Rome, a system known as **classicism.** The first stage of classicism, which originated in the Hellenic Age, emphasized simplicity over complexity; balance, or symmetry, over asymmetry; and restraint

Figure 3.2   *Athena Parthenos.* Marble replica based on fifth century BCE statue by Phidias. Ht. 3′5⅜″. National Museum, Athens. *Phidias's larger-than-life sculpture, which dominated the inner sanctum of the Parthenon, disappeared in ancient times, but numerous copies, such as this small figurine, have survived. Athena wears a peplos, gathered at her waist, and a helmet, ornamented with a sphinx flanked by two winged horses, and her left hand steadies a shield depicting Greek battle scenes. The statue was composed of gold and ivory sections joined together. A close examination of Athena's head demonstrates the shift from the Archaic to the Hellenic style of sculpture, since it does not have the Archaic smile and its features are idealized.*
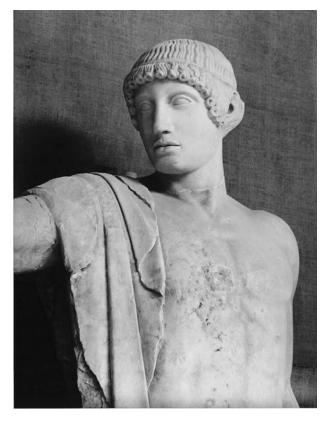
Figure 3.3 *Apollo.* West pediment, Temple at Olympia. Ca. 460 BCE. Marble, ht. 10′2″. Olympia Museum. *Apollo's serene countenance in this splendidly crafted head reflects his image as the god of moderation. As the deity who counseled "Nothing in excess," Apollo was a potent force in combating the destructive urges that assailed the Greeks. This sculpture is executed in the Severe style, or the first stage of the Hellenic classical style, which is evident by the turn of the head to the right. However, its wiglike hair indicates the lingering influence of the Archaic style.*

Figure 3.4 *Dionysus and His Followers.* Ca. 430 BCE. Staatliche Museen, Berlin. *Scrolling around a perfume vase, this painting depicts a bearded Dionysus seated on the right with his followers. Of his twelve devotees, eleven are maenads, young female revelers; the last is the bearded Silenus, the foster father and former schoolmaster of Dionysus. Silenus is depicted on the lower left in his usual drunken, disorderly state.*

over excess. At the heart of classicism was the search for perfection, for the ideal form—whether expressed in the proportions of a temple constructed in marble or in the canon of the human anatomy molded in bronze or in a philosophical conclusion reached through logic. Hellenic classicism found expression in many areas: theater, music, history, natural philosophy, medicine, architecture, and sculpture.

DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS: WAR, PEACE, AND THE TRIUMPH OF MACEDONIA

On the eve of the Hellenic Age, the Greeks, having defeated the Persians, were united only in their continuing opposition to Persia and in their hostility to any polis that tried to control the others. Although they cooperated on short-term goals that served their common interests, goodwill among the poleis usually evaporated once specific ends were met. If the period was marked by division, rivalry, and conflict, it was also generally prosperous. Wealth made possible some aspects of a brilliant culture that sometimes reflected on but that was never deflected by strife.

Political Phases of the Hellenic Age

The Hellenic Age can be divided into four distinct phases:

- The Delian League
- Wars in Greece and with Persia and the ensuing Thirty Years' Peace
- The Peloponnesian War
- Spartan and Theban hegemony and the triumph of Macedonia (Timeline 3.1)

Timeline 3.1   PHASES OF HELLENIC HISTORY   All dates BCE

478	460		431	404		323
Delian League	Wars in Greece and with Persia	Thirty Years' Peace	Peloponnesian War	Spartan and Theban Hegemony		Triumph of Macedonia

After defeating the Persians, the Greeks realized that a mutual defense organization was the key to preventing further Persian attack. In 478 BCE, a number of poleis formed the Delian League, a defensive alliance, with Athens at its head. But Athens soon began to transform the voluntary league into an Athenian Empire. As the oppressive nature of Athenian policies emerged, Athens's independent neighbors became alarmed.

Athenian power, however, was restricted by strained relations with Sparta, by the continuing menace of Persia, and by the highly unstable Delian alliance. When a negotiated settlement finally resolved Persian claims, the Delian League fell apart, leaving Athens vulnerable to its enemies on the Greek mainland. First Thebes and then Sparta led attacks on Athens. The war dragged on, but in 445 BCE, when Sparta unexpectedly withdrew, Athens won a quick victory that forced its enemies to negotiate.

The ensuing Thirty Years' Peace (which lasted only fourteen years) brought the Hellenic Age of Athens to its zenith. Athenian democracy expanded so that even the poorest citizens were empowered with full rights (though women continued to be excluded). Artists and sculptors beautified the Acropolis, and the three great Athenian tragedians—Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides—were active in the drama festivals. Drawing on the Delian treasury, Pericles [PER-uh-kleez], the popular leader and general, launched a glorious building program that was essentially a huge public works project (Figure 3.5). In a speech over Athens's war dead, Pericles offered an eloquent summation of Athenian democracy, praising its use of public debate in reaching decisions, tolerance of diverse beliefs, and ability to love beauty without sacrificing military strength. His conclusion boasted that Athens was the model for Greece.

However, those poleis that were not enamored of Athenian aggression became convinced that war was the only way to protect themselves. Athens's foreign policy and its expansionism had given rise to an alliance so delicately balanced that neither side could allow the other to gain the slightest advantage. When Athens's neighbor Corinth went to war with Corcyra (present-day Corfu) in western Greece, Corcyra appealed to Athens for aid. Athens's initial victories
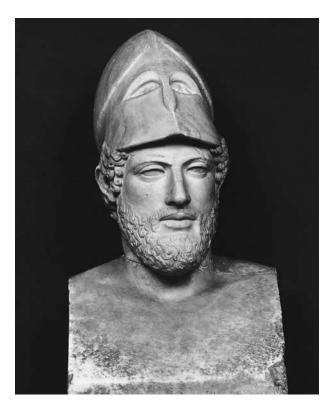

Figure 3.5   *Pericles.* Ca. 440 BCE. Marble, ht. 19¾". Vatican Museum. *Pericles possessed a vision of Athens as the political, economic, and cultural center of the Greek world. Even though this portrait bust is a Roman copy of the Greek original, it conveys Pericles' strong sense of leadership and determination.*

frightened Corinth, whose leaders persuaded the Spartans to join with them in the Peloponnesian League. The Peloponnesian War (431–404 BCE) had begun.

Pericles knew the league was superior on land but thought the Athenians could hold out indefinitely within their own walls and win a war of attrition. However, a plague broke out in Athens in 430 BCE, killing many citizens, including Pericles. The first phase of the war ended in 421 BCE, when a demoralized and defeated Athens sued for peace.

The second half of the Peloponnesian War shifted from the Greek peninsula to distant Sicily and the west—a move that sealed Athens's fate. In 416 BCE, a Sicilian polis begged Athens for military assistance. In trying to conduct a war so far from home, the

Athenians lost their fleet and never recovered their military and economic power.

In the early decades of the fourth century BCE, first Sparta and then Thebes emerged as the preeminent city-state, but these power struggles only further weakened the poleis and made them easy prey for an invader. At the northern edge of the civilized Greek world, that invader was gathering its forces. Macedonia was a primitive Greek state, governed by a king and whose people spoke a rough dialect of the Greek language. Its king, Philip, having been a hostage in Thebes when young, had become a *philhellene*—a lover of Greek civilization. A brilliant soldier, Philip expanded Macedonia to the east as far as the Black Sea. He then moved southward, conquering the poleis of central Greece. The poleis hastily raised an army, but Philip's well-disciplined troops crushed them at Chaeronea in 338 BCE. After establishing a league between Macedonia and the poleis, Philip granted the Greeks autonomy in everything except military affairs. He then announced an all-out war against

Figure 3.6   *Alexander the Great. Ca. 200 BCE. Marble, ht. 16⅛". Istanbul Museum. Alexander's youth and fine features, idealized perhaps in this portrait bust, add to the legends that have accumulated around one of the most famous conquerors in history. Later rulers measured themselves against Alexander, whose dream of a united world was cut short by his early death.*

Persia but was assassinated before he could launch his first campaign.

Philip's nineteen-year-old son, Alexander, succeeded to the throne. Tutored in philosophy by the renowned Aristotle, Alexander nevertheless had the heart of a warrior. When Thebes and other poleis attempted to take control at Philip's death, Alexander burned Thebes to the ground, sparing only the house of the poet Pindar. Placing a general in command of Greece, Alexander turned his sights to the east (Figure 3.6).

Alexander dreamed of a world united under his name and of a culture fused from Hellenic and Persian roots. His armies marched into Asia Minor, Egypt, and Mesopotamia, absorbing the great Persian Empire; then they swept east through Asia to the Indus River in India. As he conquered, Alexander destroyed and looted the great centers of Eastern civilization, but he also founded new cities and spread Greek culture.

Alexander's dream ended abruptly with his death in 323 BCE at the age of thirty-two. Seizing the opportunity presented by his sudden death, the Greeks revolted against the Macedonian oppressors, but they were quickly overwhelmed. The Macedonians then occupied Athens and installed an aristocratic government. Thus ended democracy and Hellenic civilization—in Greece.

THE ARTS OF HELLENIC GREECE: THE QUEST FOR PERFECTION

Throughout this era of shifting political fortunes, artistic and intellectual life flourished. Athens—bursting with creative energy—was the jewel of the Greek world. Atop its Acropolis, perfectly proportioned marble temples gleamed in the brilliant Aegean sun (Figure 3.7). Below, in the agora (market area), philosophers debated the most profound questions of human nature. Hundreds of citizens congregated outdoors to serve in the assembly, where they passed laws or sat on juries that made legal rulings. Citizens who were at leisure cheered on the athletes exercising in the open-air gymnasium (Figure 3.8). During drama festivals, the whole city turned out to share a gripping tragedy or to laugh uproariously at the latest comedy.

Theater

One of the most prominent institutions of Greek civilization was the theater, in which the dramatic form known as **tragedy** reached a state of perfection. Greek theater originally arose in connection with the worship of Dionysus. The word *tragedy* in Greek means "goat song," and this word may refer to a prehistoric
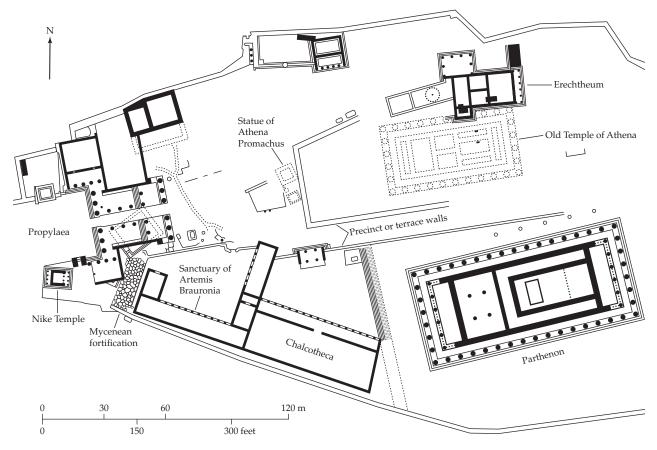
Figure 3.7 Plan of the Acropolis. *This plan shows the sites of the major temples, the Parthenon (Figure 3.15), Athena Nike (Figure 3.16), and the Erechtheum (Figure 3.17). For an overall view, compare Figure 2.7.*

Figure 3.8 *Athletes in the Palaestra.* Second quarter of the fifth century BCE. Marble, ht. 12½″. National Museum, Athens. *This low-relief sculpture depicts athletes warming up in the open-air exercise area where spectators would congregate to urge on their favorites. The youth on the left is preparing for a footrace, and the one on the right tests his javelin. The pair in the center has just begun to wrestle. This relief was originally part of a sculptured base built into a wall that the Athenians constructed after the Persian Wars.*

ENCOUNTER

The Representation of Blacks in Greek Art

Starting in the Archaic period, Greek artists began to depict black Africans in their art. For the rest of Greek history and subsequently in Roman history, artists continued this practice, thus making the representation of blacks a significant feature of classical art. This change in classical art is simply one of the ways that, over the centuries, the Western arts have been influenced by non-Western traditions, such as stylistic elements, artistic symbols, and motifs.

The Greeks, over the course of their history, encountered other peoples, but their contact with black Africans left the greatest visual legacy. Starting in the Archaic Age, Greek artists created a black type, which became a persistent theme in their tradition. Features that came to characterize the black type in art included black skin, tightly curled hair, broad nose, full lips, and projecting jaw. Once introduced, the black figure flourished for the rest of Greek history (see Figure 4.1) and became part of Roman art. Few life-size statues and heads of the black type have been found, but hundreds of small works, dating from all periods, reflect the enduring popularity of the type, including images on statuettes, vases, engraved gems, coins, lamps, weights, finger rings, earrings, necklaces, and masks.

The Greek word for a black person was *Ethiopian*, a term originally meaning "one with a sunburned face." As Greeks encountered blacks at home and abroad, the word came to be applied to any dark-skinned person and had no special connection to the land below Egypt.

The black type probably originated in Naucratis, the city founded in Egypt's Nile delta by Greek settlers, in the seventh century BCE. There, artists, impressed by their contacts with black people, may have been the first to portray black figures in Greek art.

A critical date in the evolution of the black type was the arrival in Athens of black troops in the army of Persian king Xerxes in the Persian Wars (479 BCE). The black type had previously emerged in mainland art, but the large number of blacks in Xerxes' defeated army deeply impressed the Greeks who saw them. Some blacks may eventually have been enslaved and thus became a continuing presence in Greek life. Others also made their way to Greece. Most came as prisoners of war, some as soldiers, diplomats, or members of trade delegations, and a few to study. Many black immigrants held menial positions, but others were soldiers, actors, and athletes.

The portrayal of blacks in Greek art arose from artistic and scientific interest, not from racial prejudice. The Greek world, just as the Roman, was free of color bias, unlike the modern world. The numerous images

Encounter figure 3.1   Attic Head-Vase. Sixth to fifth century BCE. Berlin, Staatliche Museen, F4049. Courtesy Staatliche Museen, Berlin. *The head that forms this vase exhibits the typical features of the black type in Greek art, including black skin, curled, short hair, broad nose, and full lips. The vase was fashioned in Athens during the Archaic period.*

Greek artists created provide striking evidence of contacts between Greeks and black Africans throughout most of Greek history.

LEARNING FROM THE ENCOUNTER

1. *What* circumstances enabled Greek artists to encounter black Africans in the Greek world? 2. If we know that the first depiction of blacks may have occurred in the Greek city of Naucratis, in Egypt, *what* does the subsequent spread of the representation of blacks across Greek culture tell us about Greek art and society? 3. *What* are some roles that blacks played in Greek society? 4. *How* did Greek artists depict blacks in their art?

religious ceremony in which competing male **choruses**—groups of singers—sang and danced, while intoxicated, in homage to the god of wine; the victory prize may have been a sacrificial goat. Whatever its precise origins, during the Archaic Age theater in Athens had taken the form of a series of competitive performances presented annually during the Great Dionysia, celebrated in March. Although the names of numerous tragedians are known to us, the plays of only three survive. Eventually comedy took its place alongside tragedy as a public spectacle and as another component of the Dionysiac festival. Only one comedian's plays are extant. All the while, music grew in prominence, in connection with tragedy and independently.

At first, the chorus served as both the collective actor and the commentator on the events of the drama. Then, in the late sixth century BCE, according to tradition, the poet Thespis—from whose name comes the word *thespian*, or "actor"—introduced an actor with whom the chorus could interact. The theater was born. Initially, the main function of the actor was simply to ask questions of the chorus. During the Hellenic Age, the number of actors was increased to three, and, occasionally, late in the fifth century BCE, a fourth was added. Any number of actors who did not speak might be on the stage, but only the three leading actors engaged in dialogue. In the fifth century BCE, the chorus achieved its classic function as mediator between actors and audience. As time went on, however, the role of the chorus declined and the importance of the actors increased. By the fourth century BCE, the actor had become the focus of the drama.

Because the focus of tragedy was originally the chorus, the need for a space to accommodate their dancing and singing determined the theater's shape. The chorus performed in a circular area called an **orchestra,** or "dancing place," in the center of which was a functioning altar, serving as a reminder that tragedy was a religious rite. The audience sat around two-thirds of the orchestra on wooden bleachers or stone seats under the open sky. The other third of the orchestra was backed by a wooden or stone building called the *skene* [SKEE-nee], which could be painted to suggest a scene and through which entrances and exits could be made (Figure 3.9).

Such simple set decorations may have provided a slight bit of realism, but Greek theater was not concerned with either realism or the expressiveness of individual actors. Instead, ideas and language were crucial. The actors—all men, even in the female roles—wore elaborate masks designed to project their voices, platform shoes, and long robes, which helped give the dramas a timeless, otherworldly quality.

Plays were performed in tetralogies (sets of four) on successive days of the Great Dionysia. Each competing playwright offered three tragedies (a trilogy), not necessarily related in theme or subject, that were

Figure 3.9   Theater at Epidaurus. Ca. 300 BCE. *The best-preserved theater in Greece is the one at Epidaurus. Although tragedy was created only in Athens, the popularity of the art form led to the construction of theaters all over Greece—a telling index of Athens's cultural imperialism. The acoustics in this ancient auditorium were remarkable. Performers' voices could be heard clearly throughout the theater even though it is in the open with fifty-four rows of seats accommodating fourteen thousand spectators.*

performed during the day, and a satyr-play that was performed later. A **satyr-play** usually featured the indecent behavior and ribald speech of the satyrs—sexually insatiable half men, half goats—who followed Dionysus. That the Greeks liked to watch three deeply serious dramas followed by a play full of obscene high jinks demonstrates the breadth of their sensibility.

TRAGEDY   The essence of Greek tragedy is the deeply felt belief that mortals cannot escape pain and sorrow. The dramatists shared with Homer the insight that "we men are wretched things, and the gods . . . have woven sorrow into the very pattern of our lives." Although terrible things happened in the tragedies—murder, incest, suicide, rape, mutilation—the attitude of the play toward these events was deeply moral. And violence was never depicted onstage.

The tragedies were primarily based on the legends of royal families—usually the dynasties of Thebes, Sparta, and Argos—dating from the Age of Heroes of which Homer sang in his epics. Since the audience already knew these stories, their interest focused on the playwright's treatment of a familiar tale, his ideas about its moral significance, and how his language shaped those ideas. The plots dealt with fundamental human issues with no easy solutions, such as the decrees of the state versus the conscience of the individual or divine law versus human law. Humans were forced to make hard choices without being able to foresee the consequences of their decisions. Nonetheless, the dramatists affirmed that a basic moral order existed underneath the shifting tide of human affairs. The political leaders of Athens recognized and accepted tragedy's ethical significance and educative function and thus made the plays into civic spectacles. For example, the audience was composed of citizens seated according to voting precincts, and Athenian warriors' orphans, who were wards of the polis, were honored at the performances.

According to the Greek philosopher Aristotle, whose immensely influential theory of tragedy, the *Poetics,* was based on his study of the dramas of the Hellenic Age, the purpose of tragedy was to work a cathartic, or purging, effect on the audience, to "arouse pity and terror" so that these negative emotions could be drained from the soul. The tragic heroes were warnings, not models; the spectators were instructed to seek modest lives and not aim too high.

Aeschylus   Aeschylus [ES-kuh-luhs] (about 525–about 456 BCE), the earliest of the three dramatists whose plays are extant, won first prize in the Great Dionysia thirteen times. He composed about ninety plays of which only seven are extant. His masterpiece, the *Oresteia,* is the only trilogy that has survived, and even

here the satyr-play is missing. The framing plot is the homecoming from Troy of the Greek king Agamemnon, who had sinned by sacrificing his daughter to gain military success; his murder by his vengeful and adulterous wife, Clytemnestra; and the dire consequences of this killing.

Aeschylus's treatment of these terrible events in the *Oresteia* embodies some of the principles of classicism. In the first place, Aeschylus shows great simplicity by avoiding distracting subplots: The first play, *Agamemnon,* tells the story of the king's death and Clytemnestra's triumph; the second, the *Libation Bearers,* relates the vengeance murder of Clytemnestra by her son, Orestes; and the third, *Eumenides,* halts—with the help of the Olympians Athena and Apollo—the cycle of revenge by instituting an Athenian court to try such cases. The trilogy is symmetrical in that Agamemnon's murder in the first play serves as punishment for the sacrifice of his daughter, Clytemnestra's death in the second avenges her slaying of Agamemnon, and the courtroom drama of the third absolves Orestes of the crime of matricide.

Finally, Aeschylus shows great restraint inasmuch as all deaths occur offstage, and the chorus or messengers only describe them. However, for the Athenian audience, the *Oresteia* had moral significance as well as stylistic power. By transforming the Furies, the blind champions of vengeance killing, into the "Kindly Ones" *(Eumenides),* Aeschylus, in effect, affirmed the ethical superiority of the rational Olympians over the earthbound chthonian divinities (see Chapter 2). In the *Oresteia,* Aeschylus confronts and resolves the opposition between several seemingly irreconcilable polarities—Olympian and chthonian gods, divine and human justice, religious cult and civic ritual, and fate and free will (Figure 3.10).

Sophocles   Sophocles [SOF-uh-kleez] (about 496–406 BCE), the most prolific of the great tragedians, wrote about 125 plays, but only 7 survive. He was popular among the Athenians, who awarded him first prize in the Great Dionysia twenty-four times. Sophocles' *Antigone* (442 BCE) expresses beautifully the principles of classical tragedy. The simple plot treats the conflicts between King Creon and his niece Antigone. The principal, although not the sole, philosophical issue explored by the play is whether human or divine law should take precedence. Antigone's two brothers have killed each other in a dispute over the Theban crown. Creon decrees that Eteocles, who died defending the city, be buried with honor but that the body of the rebel Polyneices be left as carrion for wild beasts. Antigone, whose name in Greek means "born to oppose," defies his order and buries her brother in compliance with religious teachings. Arrested and imprisoned, Antigone hangs
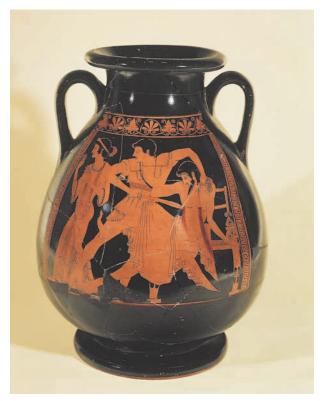
Figure 3.10 *Orestes Slaying Aegisthus.* Ca. late sixth century BCE. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. *This red-figure vase painting presents a different version of events in Argos from that given by Aeschylus in the* Libation Bearers, *the second play of the* Oresteia. *The vase painter portrays Clytemnestra bearing an ax (left), a detail Aeschylus omitted, and the sister between Orestes and his mother is not named Electra as she is in the* Oresteia. *However, painter and playwright agree that Orestes killed Aegisthus, his mother's lover.*

herself, and Creon's son and wife kill themselves. Too late, King Creon sees the light; he gives up his throne, saying, "There is no man can bear this guilt but I."

Several tensions are at issue here. Creon represents the typical tyrant, concerned only with law and order. His son, Haemon, is the voice of democracy, opposing the tyrannical will of his father. Creon believes in the superiority of public power over domestic life, in the necessity of the state to seek power for its own sake, in the priority of war over the commands of love, and in the right of men to control women. When the king tries to persuade his son to renounce his love for the disobedient Antigone, they argue about all four of these issues. Whether the Athenian citizens sided with Creon or Haemon is unknown, but *Antigone* has become the classic example of a tragic dilemma where two rights confront each other. In his desire for balance, Sophocles gives equally powerful arguments to the play's opposing characters.

Sophocles returned to the history of the Theban dynasty in later plays about Antigone's ill-fated father, Oedipus. In *Oedipus the King,* he tells how the Theban ruler unwittingly kills his father and marries his mother and later blinds himself to atone for his guilt. Though fate has a pivotal role in Oedipus's story, the playwright also emphasizes the part the hero's weakness plays in his downfall. Aristotle's *Poetics* held up this work as a model of Greek tragedy. In *Oedpius at Colonnus,* his last play, Sophocles portrays the former king at peace with himself and his destiny.

Euripides By the time Euripides [yu-RIP-uh-deez] (about 480–406 BCE) was writing for the stage, Athens was fighting for its existence in the Peloponnesian War. Euripides was in tune with the skeptical mood of the later years of this struggle, and, by presenting unorthodox versions of myths and legends, he exposed the foolishness of some popular beliefs and, sometimes, the emptiness of contemporary values. When he staged *The Trojan Women* in 415 BCE, the Athenians could not have missed the parallel between the cruel enslavement of the women of Troy after the Greeks destroyed their city and the fate of the women of the island of Melos, which Athens had just subjugated.

For his ninety or more tragedies (of which eighteen survive), the Athenians awarded the first prize to Euripides only five times, perhaps because his unorthodox plays angered the audience. But later ages, far removed from the stresses of Hellenic times, found his dramas more to their liking. Among the extant works, *The Bacchae* is his masterpiece, a gruesome tale about the introduction of the worship of Dionysus into Thebes. In this play, the bacchae (another name for the drunken followers of Dionysius), blinded by religious frenzy, kill the king of Thebes under the delusion that he is a wild animal. Euripides' dark tragedy may have been a warning to the citizens of Athens about the dangers of both excess and repression in religion and politics.

Euripides followed classical principles in *The Bacchae,* using a single plot, offstage violence, and well-defined conflict, but he also extended the range of classical drama with his unorthodox, even romantic, language and his skeptical treatment of familiar themes. Moreover, Euripides pointed the way toward a different sort of theater by having the severed head of the hero brought onstage at the end of the tragedy. With Euripides, the creative phase of classical theater came to an end.

COMEDY   Comedies were performed in the Great Dionysia just as the tragedies were, and they were also entered in contests in another festival, known as the Lesser Dionysia, celebrated in late winter. Comedies refused to take anyone or anything seriously. Comedies blended exquisite poetry with coarse language. They featured burlesque actions, buffoonery, slapstick, obscenity, and horseplay, and actors wore grotesque costumes with padded bellies or rumps to give a ridiculous effect (Figure 3.11). Comic playwrights invented their own plots and focused on contemporary matters: politics, philosophies, the new social classes, and well-known personalities. Even the deities were ridiculed and portrayed in embarrassing situations.

The freedom of the comic playwrights could exist only in a democracy. And yet the freedom was limited to a highly ritualized setting—the drama festivals—which allowed, even encouraged, the overturning of rules and the burlesquing of traditions. This controlled expression of the unspeakable provided a catharsis that strengthened communal bonds in the polis. At the same time, the comic playwrights demonstrated their faith in the basic good sense of the average citizen.

The comedies of Aristophanes [air-uh-STOF-uh-neez] (about 445–about 388 BCE) are the primary source for what is known as **Old Comedy,** comic Greek plays with a strong element of political criticism. Aristophanes composed forty-four works in all, of which eleven are extant. Like Euripides, he wrote his plays for war-torn Athens, and he satirized famous contem-

Figure 3.11   Detail, Scene from a Comedy. Mid–fourth century BCE. Ht. of vase 15⅔". British Museum, London. *This scene, painted on a mixing bowl, portrays a situation from a Greek comedy. The actors on the right and left are outfitted in the grotesque costume of comedy with padded rumps and genitals. That these characters are onstage is indicated by the decorations at the bottom of the frame.*

poraries such as the thinker Socrates, depicting him as a hopeless dreamer. Aristophanes must have stepped on many toes, for the Athenians awarded him first prize only four times.

In *Lysistrata*, Aristophanes transcended the limitations of the comedic form and approached the timeless quality of the tragedies. A sexually explicit and hilarious comedy, *Lysistrata* points out the absurdity of the prolonged Peloponnesian War and, by implication, all war. In the play, Lysistrata, an Athenian matron, persuades the women of Athens and Sparta to withhold sex from their husbands until they sign a peace treaty. Filled with sexual innuendos, obscenities, and ridiculous allusions to tragic dramas, the play ends with stirring reminders to the Greeks of their common ancestry, their joint victory over the Persians earlier in the century, and their reverence for the same gods. First staged in 411 BCE, seven years before Sparta won the Peloponnesian War, this play commented on but failed to derail Athens's headlong rush to disaster.

After the Peloponnesian War and the restoration of a restricted democracy in 403 BCE, free speech was severely repressed in Athens. Comedies still relied on burlesque and slapstick, but their political edge was blunted. The great creative age of Greek theater was now over.

Music

Like other peoples of the ancient Near East, the Greeks used music both in civic and religious events and in private entertainment. But the Greeks also gave music a new importance, making it one of the humanities along with art, literature, theater, and philosophy. Music became a form of expression subject to rules, styles, and rational analysis. One reason for this was that the Greeks believed music fulfilled an ethical function in the training of young citizens. They also believed that music had divine origins and was inspired by Euterpe, one of the nine muses (thus the word *music*).

Nevertheless, the vast library of Greek music has vanished. What knowledge there is of that lost heritage, which can be only partially reconstructed from surviving treatises on musical theory and references in other writings, shows a tradition that, despite some differences, became the foundation of Western music. Greek music apparently followed the diatonic system, which had been invented by Pythagoras (fl. 530 BCE), using a scale of eight notes, each of which was determined by its numerical ratio to the lowest tone. The Greek composers also devised a series of scales, called **modes,** which functioned roughly like major and minor keys in later Western music. The modes, however, were not interchangeable the way keys are, because the Greeks believed that each mode produced a different emotional and ethical effect on the listener. Thus, the Dorian mode, martial and grave in its emotional impact, was thought by the Greeks to make hearers brave and dignified; the tender and sorrowing Lydian mode, to make them sentimental and weak; and the passionate and wild Phrygian mode, to make them excited and headstrong. Believing that such emotional manipulation made free citizens difficult to govern, Plato banished virtually all music from his ideal republic. Modern research has been able to reproduce all the Greek modes, but otherwise this music remains a mystery.

Despite music's high ethical status in Greece, it had no independent role in Hellenic culture. Instead, music was integrated with verse, notably in epic and lyric poetry and in tragedy and comedy, with either the lyre (a stringed instrument) or the aulos (a wind instrument) providing accompaniment.

HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY, SCIENCE, AND MEDICINE

The finest poetry of the Hellenic period is to be found in plays. However, new literary forms, especially in prose, became the hallmarks of the age. Historical writing emerged and achieved a high level of skill. Philosophy soared far above the achievements of the Archaic period and began to differentiate itself from natural science. Medical writers produced works that would be influential for nearly two millennia.

History

The study of history began in the fifth century BCE, when Greeks started to analyze the meaning of their immediate past and to write down in prose the results of their research, or *historia*—the Greek word for "inquiry." The Greeks before the classical period had only a dim sense of their past; what they knew came from Homer, local traditions, and mysterious Mycenaean ruins. Herodotus [he-ROD-uh-tuhs] (about 484 BCE–about 430 BCE) was the first to approach history as a distinct subject and to practice historical writing in anything like the modern sense. He was motivated by the belief that the present has its causes in the past and could be a guide for the future. His *Histories* recorded and analyzed the Persian Wars, which he interpreted as Europe versus Asia, or West versus East. In his desire to be fair to both sides, Herodotus traveled to Persia and recorded what he learned there.

The *Histories* have been criticized for implausible and inaccurate information, but Herodotus's clear prose style, masterful storytelling skills, concern for research, impartiality, belief in cause and effect, and desire to leave a record of the past as a legacy to future generations have justly earned him the title "father of history."

Yet, for all his excellence, Herodotus pales in comparison with Thucydides [thew-SID-uh-deez] (died about 401 BCE). His subject was the Peloponnesian War, of which he was a participant. Thucydides was much more skeptical and analytical than Herodotus, and although he had reservations about democracy, he admired Pericles and strove to be completely fair in his account of Periclean Athens. He saw the weaknesses of his beloved polis and realized the baleful effects of imperialism. In his *History of the Peloponnesian War,* he even wrote objectively of his own role as the losing admiral in a naval battle.

Thucydides also used ordinary events to illuminate human motives and fundamental causes and effects in history. Like the Greek dramatists, he showed that human weaknesses and flaws created the real-life tragedies he observed around him. His insight into human nature was penetrating as he chronicled how individuals shift loyalties and redefine their values to justify their actions. Like a medical writer, he explored the health of the body politic. He rose above his narrative to give lessons to future generations. He argued that events that happened in the past would recur in some way—he did not say they would simply repeat

themselves—and thus history, carefully studied, can teach the future.

Philosophy, Science, and Medicine

During the Hellenic Age, philosophy and science experienced a radical transformation. Both types of learning came to focus on the place of humans in society, rather than concentrating on the composition of the natural world. Increasing attention was dedicated to ethics, right conduct, and epistemology, the branch of philosophy that deals with knowledge and cognition.

When the Hellenic Age opened, natural philosophy remained divided into two major camps: the materialists and the idealists (see Chapter 2). The materialists, who continued the inquiries of Thales and the Milesian school, believed that the world is made of some basic physical thing. The idealists, in contrast, whose thought stemmed from Pythagoras and the Sicilian school, were nonmaterialists, reasoning that the physical world is illusory and that behind it lies a realm accessible only by contemplation.

By the mid–fifth century BCE, this simple pattern was being challenged by new philosophies, and by 400 BCE, a revolution in thought had occurred that overshadowed everything that had gone before. The first assault came from Sicily, where a new school of thinkers proposed to reconcile materialism and idealism. Then, in Athens, a group of teachers called the Sophists questioned philosophical inquiry itself and the notion of absolute truth. The corrosive ideas of these figures provoked Socrates, the most revolutionary thinker of the entire ancient world, to respond to their claims. Socrates' life marked a watershed in Greek thought. All Greek thinkers before him are now known as Pre-Socratics, and those who came after him—chiefly Plato and Aristotle in Hellenic Greece—followed his lead in studying the human experience (Table 3.1).

THE PRE-SOCRATICS   The major Pre-Socratic thinkers tried to determine the nature of the physical world. For Parmenides [par-MEN-uh-deez] (fl. after 515 BCE) and his followers in the polis Elea, for example, the world was a single, unchanging, unmoving object whose order could be known through human reason. This attempt to reconcile materialism and idealism was modified by Parmenides' student Empedocles [em-PED-uh-kleez] (about 484–about 424 BCE), who claimed that everything, animate or inanimate, originated in the four elements of earth, water, fire, and air. These elements were unchanging, but the opposing forces of love and strife could combine them in different ways, to the detriment or benefit of humans. This

Table 3.1 PHILOSOPHY IN THE HELLENIC AGE	
PHILOSOPHY	*EMPHASIS*
Pre-Socratic	The physical world; nature; debate over materialism and idealism
Sophist	Humanistic values; practical skills, such as public speaking and logic
Socratic	Enduring moral and intellectual order of the universe; the psyche (mind/soul); "Virtue is Knowledge"
Platonist	Ideas (Forms) are the basis of everything; dualism, the split between the world of Ideas and the everyday world; rationalism; severe moderation in ethics
Aristotelian	Natural world is the only world; empiricism, using observation, classification, and comparison; "golden mean" in ethics

essentially metaphysical explanation of change later influenced Aristotle.

The atomists, another school of Pre-Socratic thinkers, believed that everything is composed of atoms—eternal, invisible bodies of varying size that, by definition, cannot be divided into smaller units—and the void, the empty space between the atoms. Atomic theory was developed most fully by Democritus [de-MOK-ruht-us] of Thrace (fl. after 460 BCE). The movement and shape of the atoms were sufficient to explain not only physical objects but also feelings, tastes, sight, ideas—in short, every aspect of the physical world.

THE SOPHISTS   The Sophists—from the Greek word *sophia,* or "wisdom"—scorned Pre-Socratic speculation about atoms and elements as irrelevant and useless. These traveling teachers claimed to offer their students (for a fee) knowledge that guaranteed success in life. Their emphasis on the development of practical skills, such as effective public speaking, led their critics to accuse them of cynicism and a lack of interest in higher ethical values, but the Sophists were deeply serious and committed to humanistic values. Protagoras [pro-TAG-uh-ruhs] (481–411 BCE), the most renowned of the Sophists, proclaimed that "man is the measure of all things." This summed up the Sophists' argument that human beings, as the center of the universe, have the power to make judgments about themselves and their world—that they naturally see everything in relation to themselves. The Sophists helped free the human spirit to be critical and creative. If there was a danger in their teaching, it was a tendency toward unrestrained skepticism. By stressing that human beings have the power

to shape the world, the Sophists opened themselves to charges of impiety and undermining traditional values, because the traditional Greek view was that the gods controlled everything. The Sophists' denial of norms, standards, and absolutes registered with the populace because the dramatists responded to them. Sophocles condemned the Sophists while Euripides embraced many of their ideas.

THE SOCRATIC REVOLUTION Socrates [SAH-kruh-teez] (about 470–399 BCE) launched a new era in philosophy. Given his passionate conviction that an enduring moral and intellectual order existed in the universe, he opposed almost everything the Sophists stood for. But Socrates shared certain traits with them, such as his rejection of philosophizing about nature, his focus on human problems, and his desire to empower individuals to make their own moral choices.
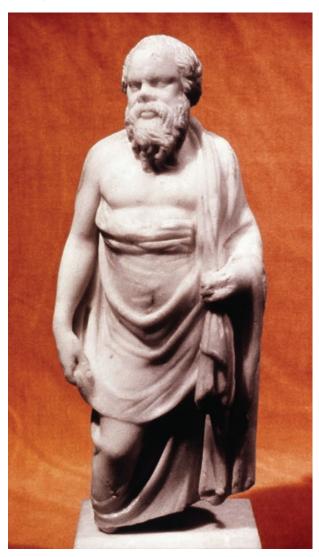
Socrates' method for arriving at true moral and intellectual values was deceptively simple yet maddeningly elusive. At the heart of his thinking was the *psyche* (mind, or soul); being immortal, the psyche was deemed more important than the mortal and doomed body. Those who want wisdom must protect, nourish, and expand their psyches by giving their minds the maximum amount of knowledge. The knowledge the psyche acquired had to be won through stimulating conversations and debates as well as by contemplation of abstract virtues and moral values. Only then could the psyche approach its highest potential.

"Virtue is Knowledge," claimed Socrates; he meant that a person who knows the truth, acquired through personal struggle for self-enlightenment, will not commit evil deeds. And this moral dictum may be reversed: those who do wrong do so out of ignorance. If people used their psyches to think more deeply and clearly, they would lead virtuous lives. Socrates' belief in the essential goodness of human nature and the necessity of well-defined knowledge became central tenets of Western thought.

After having pointed out the proper path to wisdom, Socrates left the rest up to his students. Bombarding inquiring youths with questions on such topics as the meaning of justice, he used rigorous logic to refute all the squirming students' attempts at precise definition. Then—as shown by Plato's dialogues, the principal source for what we know about Socrates—the students, collapsing into confusion, admitted the serious gaps in their knowledge. Socrates' step-by-step questions, interspersed with gentle humor and ironic jabs, honed his students' logical skills and compelled them to begin a quest for knowledge in light of their self-confessed ignorance. Many teachers in Greece and Rome adopted the Socratic method, and it remains an honored pedagogical device.

The Athenians of this era began to perceive Socrates as a threat to their way of life. This short, homely, and rather insignificant-looking man—as surviving statues reveal—aroused suspicion in the polis with his public arguments (Figure 3.12). When Athens fell to the Spartans in 404 BCE, opposition to Socrates swelled. Many citizens now found subversion or even blasphemy in his words and in the behavior of his followers. Five years after the end of the Peloponnesian War, Socrates was accused of impiety and of corrupting the Athenian youth; a jury declared him guilty and sentenced him to die. Plato, a former student, was so moved by

Figure 3.12 *Socrates.* Ca. 200 BCE–100 CE. Ht. 10½″. British Museum, London. *This Roman marble copy of the original Greek statue supports the unflattering descriptions of Socrates by his contemporaries. By portraying the philosopher with a receding hairline and a dumpy body, the anonymous sculptor has made one of the world's most extraordinary human beings look very ordinary.*

Socrates' eloquent, though ineffective, defense and by the injustice of his death sentence that the younger man dedicated the remainder of his life to righting the wrong and explaining the Socratic philosophy. Indeed, Plato devoted four works to the last days of Socrates including the *Phaedo,* which is a deathbed scene with an argument in support of immortality.

PLATO   The spirit of Socrates hovers over the rest of Greek philosophy, especially in the accomplishments of his most famous student, Plato (about 427–347 BCE). Plato's philosophy is the fountainhead of Western **idealism,** a thought system that emphasizes spiritual values and makes ideas, rather than matter, the basis of everything that exists. **Platonism** arose out of certain premises that were Socratic in origin—the concept of the psyche and the theory of remembrance. Like Socrates, Plato emphasized the immortal and immutable psyche over the mortal and changeful body. But Plato advanced a new polarity, favoring the invisible world of the Forms, or Ideas, in opposition to the physical world. The psyche's true home was the world of the Forms, which it inhabited before birth and after death—the time when the psyche was lost in wonder among the eternal Ideas. In contrast, the body lived exclusively in the material world, completely absorbed by the life of the senses. Once trapped inside the body, the psyche could glimpse the higher reality, or Forms, only through remembrance.

Nonetheless, Plato thought that through a set of mental exercises the psyche would be able to recall the Ideas to which it had once been exposed. The best training for the psyche was the study of mathematics, since mathematics required signs and symbols to represent other things. After the mastery of mathematics, the student proceeded, with the help of logic, to higher stages of abstract learning, such as defining the Forms of Justice, Beauty, and Love. By showing that wisdom came only after an intellectual progression that culminated in an understanding of the absolute Ideas, Plato refuted the Sophists, who claimed that knowledge was relative.

A major implication of Plato's idealism was that the psyche and the body were constantly at war. The psyche's attempts to remember the lost Ideas met resistance from the body's pursuit of power, fame, and physical comforts. This dualism especially plagued the philosopher, the lover of wisdom; but the true philosopher took comfort in recognizing that at death the psyche would return freely to the world of the Forms.

Plato identified the Form of the Good, the ultimate Idea, with God, yet the Platonic deity was neither the creator of the world nor the absolute and final power. Instead, Plato's deity was necessary for his idealism to function; in his thought, God was the source from which descended the imperfect objects of the natural world. In a related theological notion, he, like Socrates, attributed the presence of evil to ignorance; but Plato added the psyche's misdirected judgment and insatiable bodily appetites as other causes of evil.

Socrates' death provoked Plato to envision a perfect state where justice flourished. The book that resulted from Plato's speculations—the *Republic*—sets forth his model state and, incidentally, launched the study of political philosophy in the West. Plato thought that a just state could be realized only when all social classes worked together for the good of the whole, each class performing its assigned tasks. Because of the importance of the psyche, social status was determined by the ability to reason, not by wealth or inheritance. A tiny elite of philosopher-kings and queens, who were the best qualified to run the state, reigned. Possessing wisdom as a result of their education in the Platonic system, they lived simply, shunning the creature comforts that corrupted weaker rulers.

The two lower ranks were similarly equipped for their roles in society by their intellects and their training: a middle group provided police and military protection, and the third and largest segment operated the economy. In Plato's dream world, both the individual and the society aimed for virtue, and the laws and the institutions ensured that the ideal would be achieved.

ARISTOTLE   Socrates may have been revolutionary; Plato was certainly poetic; but Aristotle [AIR-us-tah-tuhl] (384–322 BCE) had the most comprehensive mind of the ancient world. His curiosity and vast intellect led him into every major field of inquiry of his time except mathematics and music. Born in Macedonia, he was connected to some of the most brilliant personalities of his day. He first studied philosophy under Plato in Athens and then tutored the future Alexander the Great. After Philip's conquest of Greece, Aristotle settled in Athens and opened a school, the Lyceum, that quickly rivaled the Academy, Plato's school.

Although his philosophy owed much to Platonism, Aristotle emphasized the role of the human senses. To Aristotle, the natural world was the only world; no separate, invisible realm of Ideas existed. Nature could be studied and understood by observation, classification, and comparison of data from the physical world—that is, through the empirical method.

Aristotle rejected the world of the Forms because he believed that Form and Matter were inseparable, both rooted in nature. Each material object contained a predetermined Form that, with proper training or nourishment, would evolve into its final Form and ultimate purpose. This growth process, in his view, was potentiality evolving into actuality, as when an em-

bryo becomes a human or a seed matures into a plant. Thus, the philosopher could conclude that everything has a purpose, or end.

Aristotle's thought rested on the concept of God, which he equated with the First Cause. Aristotle's God was a logical necessity not a benevolent figure. Rejecting Platonic dualism and its exclusive regard for the psyche, Aristotle devised a down-to-earth ethical goal—a sound mind in a healthy body—that he called happiness. To achieve happiness, he advised, in his *Nicomachean Ethics,* striking a mean, or a balance, between extremes of behavior. For example, courage is the mean between the excess of foolhardiness and the deficiency of cowardice. Noting that actions like murder and adultery are vicious by their very nature, he condemned them as being unable to be moderated. Although Aristotle disavowed many of Plato's ideas, he agreed with his former mentor that the cultivation of the higher intellect is more important than that of the body.

Aristotle's ethics were related to his politics, for he taught that happiness finally depended on the type of government under which an individual lived. Unlike Plato, who based his politics on speculative thinking, Aristotle reached his political views after careful research. After collecting 158 state constitutions, Aristotle, in his *Politics,* classified and compared them, concluding that the best form of government was a constitutional regime ruled by the middle class. His preference for the middle class stemmed from his belief that they, exciting neither envy from the poor nor contempt from the wealthy, would honor and work for the good of all.

Aristotle's influence on Western civilization is immeasurable. In the Middle Ages, Christian, Muslim, and Jewish scholars studied his writings, regarding them as containing authoritative teachings on the natural world. Today, Aristotelianism is embedded in the official theology of the Roman Catholic Church (see Chapter 9), and Aristotle's logic continues to be taught in college philosophy courses.

MEDICINE   Little is known of the life of Hippocrates [hip-OCK-re-teez] (about 460–377 BCE), the major figure in classical Greek medicine. In his own lifetime, he was highly regarded and apparently traveled extensively through Greece and Asia Minor, healing the sick and teaching aspiring physicians.

Hippocrates was born on the island of Cos in the Aegean Sea and probably taught at the medical school located there. In the second and third centuries CE, scholars collected about seventy works attributed to him, the Hippocratic Collection, which ensured his future reputation. Today, Hippocrates is still the "father of medicine" and identified with the Hippocratic

oath, which most medical students take at the commencement of their medical careers. This oath, which he certainly did not compose, spells out the duties and responsibilities of a physician and sets ethical standards and personal behavior practices.

Regardless of how little is known of Hippocrates, he is still recognized as one of the first physicians to reject supernatural explanations as causes of illness. Instead, he observed and studied the body and its parts from a scientific and clinical point of view. Most specifically, Hippocrates believed that diseases were caused by imbalances of the four "humors," which he identified as the four fluids—blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile—within the physical body. He asserted that disease was not the invasion of evil spirits or controlling deities. If these humors were kept in balance—such as by administering drugs, prescribing diets, or removing excess blood or other humors—then the body would heal itself and the patient would recover.

In one of the works attributed to him, Hippocrates discusses the "sacred" disease, now known as epilepsy. At the time, conventional wisdom explained epilepsy as a "divine affliction," a sign that the patient was favored by the gods. In contrast, Hippocrates argues that epilepsy has natural causes that can be identified and treated. He also comments on the brain, terming it the source of all emotions and senses and the "most powerful organ in the human body."

THE VISUAL ARTS

In architecture, sculpture, and painting, Greeks of the Hellenic Age outstripped their Archaic forebears. Doric architecture was brought to a peak of perfection and then surpassed by a new order, the Ionic. The emerging humanism of the kouroi and korai yielded to classical sculpture of almost inexpressible beauty and naturalism. Finally, the gorgeous black- and red-figure ware of the Archaic period was complemented by exquisite white-ground ware.

Architecture

Although the temple was the supreme expression of Hellenic architecture, there were sanctuaries long before there were temples. These were places considered sacred to a god or a goddess. Apollo's sanctuary at Delphi was the oldest and most famous (Figure 3.13). Delphi, believed to be the center of the earth, was sacred to all Greeks and all poleis contributed to the shrine. Inside the shrine was the priestess of Apollo—the only woman allowed at Delphi—the oracle to whom people came from all over with their questions.

Figure 3.13. The Delphic Sanctuary. Aerial view. Late sixth to fourth century BCE. *The ruins of Apollo's temple—this is an earthquake zone—reveal a rectangular foundation and a few standing columns. A sacred way, or road, zigzagged up the mountain to the shrine. During the fourth century, a gymnasium (boy's school), theater, and stadium were built on the site.*

Figure 3.14 Second Temple of Hera at Paestum. Ca. 450 BCE. Limestone. *This temple of Hera is among the best-preserved structures from the ancient world. Since Hera may have been a chthonian goddess before becoming consort to Olympian Zeus, it is appropriate that this Doric temple, with its ground-hugging appearance, be her monument.*

By Hellenic times, the Greek world was polarized between eastern (the mainland and the Aegean Islands) and western (Magna Graecia) styles of temple design, although in both styles the temples were rectilinear and of post-beam-triangle construction. Influenced by the Pythagorean quest for harmony through mathematical rules, the eastern builders had standardized six as the perfect number of columns for the ends of temples and thirteen, or twice the number of end columns plus one, as the perfect number of columns for the sides. These balanced proportions, along with simple designs and restrained decorative schemes, made the eastern temples majestically expressive of classical ideals.

Architects in western Greece, somewhat removed from the centers of classical culture, were more experimental than those in the Greek mainland. Their buildings deviated from the eastern ideals, as can be seen in the Second Temple of Hera at Paestum, built of limestone in about 450 BCE (Figure 3.14). The best preserved of all Greek temples, this Doric structure does not have the harmonious proportions of the eastern version of this style. Although the Second Temple of Hera owed much to eastern influences, including the six columns at the ends and the porches, it had too many (fourteen) columns on the sides, its columns were too thick, and the low-pitched roof made the building seem squat.

Between 447 and 438 BCE, the architects Ictinus [ik-TIE-nuhs] and Callicrates [kuh-LICK-ruh-teez] perfected the eastern-style Doric temple in the Parthenon, a temple on Athens's Acropolis dedicated to Athena (Figure 3.15). When completed, this temple established a new standard of classicism, with eight columns on the ends and seventeen on the sides and with the numeric ratio 9:4 used throughout, expressed, for example, in the relation of a column's height to its diameter. Inside, the builders designed two chambers, an east room for a forty-foot-high statue of Athena and a smaller room housing the Delian League treasury.

SLICE OF LIFE
Secrets of a Successful Marriage in Ancient Greece

XENOPHON
From *Oeconomicus*

With their boundless curiosity, it is not surprising that the Greeks were concerned with how to have a good marriage, as this piece by Xenophon (about 445–355 BCE) demonstrates. A famous military commander, Xenophon was also a historian, essayist, and student of Socrates. Nonetheless, his discussion of marriage, taken from his essay on domestic economy, or home life, is considered a fairly accurate depiction of the marital ideal among well-to-do Greeks of the time. In this selection, he expounds his ideas through the characters of Socrates and Ischomachus, a rich landowner.

During Hellenic times, literacy increased among the Greeks, as compared with the achievements of earlier peoples of the Near East and Egypt. This growth in literacy was mainly the result of the rise of democracy, in which education became a major goal of the citizenry. Despite the increase, though, the survival of written records by ordinary Greeks is spotty. Hence, this Slice of Life is from the writings of a famous Greek author, not by an ordinary person.

I [Socrates] said, "I should very much like you to tell me, Ischomachus, whether you yourself trained your wife to become the sort of woman that she ought to be, or whether she already knew how to carry out her duties when you took her as your wife from her father and mother."

[Ischomachus replied,] "What could she have known when I took her as my wife, Socrates? She was not yet fifteen when she came to me, and had spent her previous years under careful supervision so that she might see and hear and speak as little as possible. . . .

"[A]s soon as she was sufficiently tamed and domesticated so as to be able to carry on a conversation, I questioned her more or less as follows: 'Tell me, wife, have you ever thought about why I married you and why your parents gave you to me? It must be quite obvious to you, I am sure, that there was no shortage of partners with whom we might sleep. I, on my part, and your parents, on your behalf, considered who was the best partner we could choose for managing an estate and for children. And I chose you, and your parents, apparently, chose me, out of those who were eligible. Now if some day the god grants us children, then we shall consider how to train them in the best way pos-

sible. For this will be a blessing to us both, to obtain the best allies and support in old age. But at present we two share this estate. I go on paying everything I have into the common fund; and you deposited into it everything you brought with you. There is no need to calculate precisely which of us has contributed more, but to be well aware of this: that the better partner is the one who makes the more valuable contribution. . . .

" 'Because both the indoor and the outdoor tasks require work and concern, I think the god, from the very beginning, designed the nature of woman for the indoor work and concerns and the nature of man for the outdoor work. For he prepared man's body and mind to be more capable of enduring cold and heat and travelling and military campaigns, and so he assigned the outdoor work to him. Because the woman was physically less capable of endurance, I think the god has evidently assigned the indoor work to her. . . .

" 'Because it is necessary for both of them to give and to take, he gave both of them equal powers of memory and concern. So you would not be able to distinguish whether the female or male sex has the larger share of these. And he gave them both equally the ability to practise self-control too, when it is needed. . . .

"[B]ecause they are not equally well endowed with all the same natural aptitudes, they are consequently more in need of each other, and the bond is more beneficial to the couple, since one is capable where the other is deficient.' "

INTERPRETING THIS SLICE OF LIFE

1. Based on this selection, *what* was the role of women in marriage in Hellenic Greece? 2. At *what* age was the wife in the selection married? 3. *What* impact would the wife's youth have on the dynamics of the marriage? 4. *Discuss* the role of material matters (money, property, and other forms of wealth) in Greek marriage, as depicted here. 5. *What* attitude does the speaker, Ischomachus, have toward male and female intellectual abilities? 6. *Why* does such advice on marriage appear in a work on domestic economy? 7. *Compare and contrast* modern attitudes toward marriage with those represented in this selection.

The rest of the Acropolis project, finally finished in 405 BCE, included the Propylaea, the gate leading to the sanctuary; the temple of Athena Nike, a gift to Athens's patron goddess thanking her for a military victory (Figure 3.16); and the Erechtheum, a temple dedicated to three deities.

Ictinus and Callicrates introduced many subtle variations, called refinements, into their designs so that no line is exactly straight, horizontal, or perpendicular. For example, the stepped base of the temple forms a gentle arc so that the ends are lower than the middle; the floor slopes slightly to the edges; and the
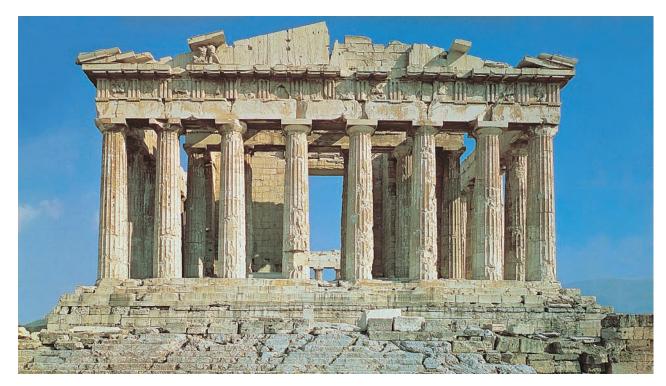
Figure 3.15 ICTINUS AND CALLICRATES. The Parthenon, Athens. Third quarter of the fifth century BCE. Pentelic marble. *A great humanistic icon, the Parthenon has had a long history since its days as a Greek temple. It served successively as a Christian church, a mosque, and an ammunitions depot, until it was accidentally blown up at the end of the seventeenth century CE. Today, concerned nations are cooperating with the Greek government through UNESCO to preserve this noble ruin.*

columns tilt inward away from the ends. These and other refinements were no accidents but, instead, were intended to be corrections for real and imaginary optical illusions. The Parthenon's fame exerted such authority in later times that these refinements, along with harmonious proportions, became standardized as the essence of Greek architecture.

The second order of Greek architecture, the Ionic, originated in the late Archaic Age and, like the Doric, came to flower in Hellenic times. The **Ionic** style, freer than the Doric and more graceful, reflected its origins in the Ionian world; traditionally, the Ionians contrasted their opulence with the simplicity of the Dorians. In place of the alternating metopes and triglyphs of Doric buildings, the Ionic temple had a running frieze to which sculptured figures might be added. More decorated than the plain Doric, the Ionic columns had el-

Figure 3.16 CALLICRATES. Temple of Athena Nike, Athens. Late fifth century BCE. Marble. *Designed by Callicrates, one of the Parthenon's architects, this miniature temple was begun after 427 BCE and probably completed before 420 BCE. Like the Parthenon, it was dedicated to the city's patron goddess, Athena, though here she was honored as Nike, goddess of victory. This temple's simple plan includes a square cella with four Ionic columns at the front and back and a sculptural frieze, devoted to scenes of mythic and contemporary battles, encircling the upper exterior walls.*

egant bases, and their tops were crowned with capitals that suggested either a scroll's ends or a ram's horns. What solidified the Ionic temple's impression of elegance were its slender and delicate columns.

The Athenians chose the Ionic style for the exquisite, though eccentric, Erechtheum, the last of the great buildings erected on the Acropolis (Figure 3.17). The artistic freedom associated with the Ionic style may have led the architect, Mnesicles [NES-uh-kleez], to make the floor plan asymmetrical and to introduce so many design variations, but a more likely explanation was Mnesicles' need to integrate three existing shrines into a single building—those of the Olympians Athena and Poseidon and the mythical king Erechtheus [eh-RECK-thee-us], who introduced the horse to Athens. Mnesicles took the unusual step of stressing the site's unbalanced nature by adding two Ionic porches and the temple's crowning feature, the Porch of the Maidens. With his bold design, Mnesicles created a marvelous illusion of harmony that was in keeping with the age's classical ideals.

Sculpture

Equally impressive is the Greek achievement in sculpture. Believing that the task of sculpture is to imitate nature, the Greeks created images of gods and goddesses as well as of men and women that have haunted the Western imagination ever since. They not only forged a canon of idealized human proportions that later sculptors followed but also developed a repertoire of postures, gestures, and subjects that have become embedded in Western art.

During the Hellenic Age, classical sculpture moved through three separate phases: the **Severe style,** which ushered in the period and lasted until 450 BCE; the **high classical style,** which coincided with the zenith of Athenian imperial greatness; and the **fourth-century style,** which concluded with the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BCE.

Sculpture in the Severe style, inspired perhaps by its association with funeral customs, was characterized by a feeling of dignified nobility. The *Kritios Boy*—showing a figure fully at rest—is an elegant expression of this first phase of classicism (Figure 3.18). Kritios [KRIT-ee-uhs], the supposed sculptor, fixed the mouth severely and altered the frontality, a feature of the Archaic style, by tilting the head subtly to the right and slightly twisting the upper torso. The flat-footed stance of the Archaic kouros has given way to a posture that places the body's weight on one leg and uses the other leg as a support. This stance is called **contrapposto** (counterpoise), and its invention, along with the mastery of the representation of muscula-
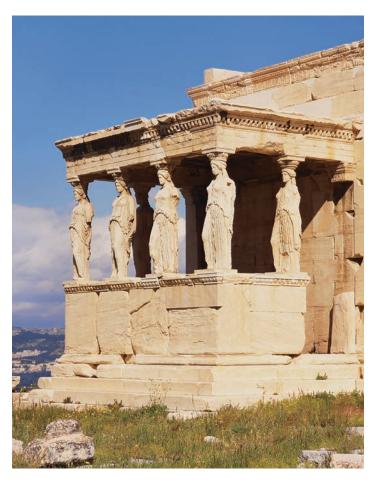

Figure 3.17   Mnesicles. The Erechtheum. View from the west. Ca. 410 BCE. Marble. Athens. *The Erechtheum was probably built to quiet conservatives who rejected Athena's new temple, the Parthenon, as a symbol of Athenian imperialism. Reflecting its ties with the past, the Erechtheum housed the ancient wooden cult statue of Athena, which pious Athenians believed had fallen from the sky. Its Ionic porches set the standard for the graceful Ionic order. The Porch of the Maidens (above), which was inaccessible from the outside, fronted the southern wall.*

ture, helped to make the classical revolution. Thereafter, sculptors were able to render the human figure in freer, more relaxed poses.

The central panel of the so-called Ludovisi Throne, another sculpture from the same period, conveys an air of quiet gravity (Figure 3.19). The subject is probably the birth of Aphrodite as she rises from the sea, indicated by pebbles under the feet of her attendants, the stooping figures on either side. This relief reflects a perfect blending of late Archaic grace (Aphrodite's stylized hair and the hint of Archaic smile) with the dignity of the Severe style (the delicate transparent draperies and the convincing realism produced by foreshortening the arms of the three figures).

In contrast to the Severe style, which accepted repose as normal, the high classical style was fascinated
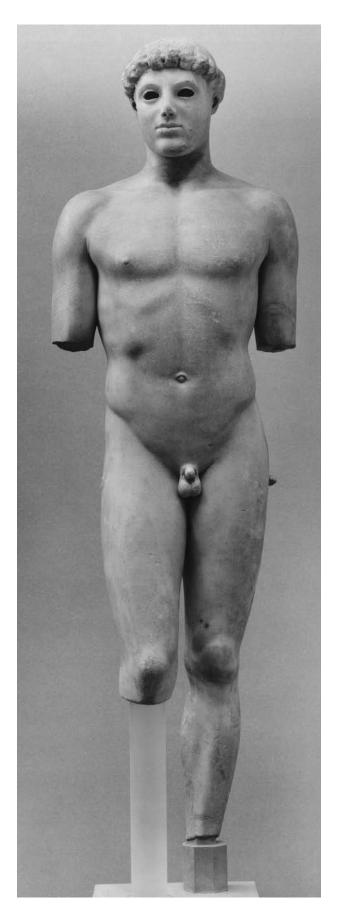
Figure 3.18 *Kritios Boy. Ca. 480 BCE. Ht. 33". Acropolis Museum, Athens. This statue is carved from marble probably mined at Mount Pentelicus in Attica. Two features—the treatment of the eyes, which were originally set with semiprecious stones, and the roll of hair—show that the Kritios sculptor was accustomed to working in bronze. The figure's beautifully rendered muscles and sense of inner life announce the arrival of the Hellenic style; the contrapposto, used sparingly here, foreshadows later developments in Greek sculpture.*

with the aesthetic problem of showing motion in a static medium. The sculptors' solution, which became central to high classicism, was to freeze the action, resisting the impulse to depict agitated movement, in much the same way that the tragic playwrights banished violence from the stage. In effect, the high classical sculptors stopped time, allowing an ideal world to emerge in which serene gods and mortals showed grace under pressure. A striking representation of this aspect of high classicism is the bronze statue of Poseidon, or Zeus, found in the Aegean Sea off Cape Artemision. It captures to perfection high classicism's ideal of virile grace (Figure 3.20). The god (whose maturity is signified by the beard and fully developed body) is shown poised, ready to hurl some object. In such sculptures as this, the Greeks found visual metaphors for their notion that deities and mortals are kin.

High classical sculptors wanted to do more than portray figures in motion; some, especially Polykleitos [pol-e-KLITE-uhs] of Argos, continued to be obsessed with presenting the ideal human form at rest. In his search for perfection, Polykleitos executed a bronze male figure of such strength and beauty—the *Doryphoros* ("Spearbearer")—that its proportions came to be regarded as a canon, or set of rules, to be imitated by other artists (Figure 3.21). In the *Doryphoros* canon, each of the limbs bears a numeric relation to the body's overall measurements; for example, the length of the foot is one-tenth of the figure's height. Other principles of high classicism embodied in the *Doryphoros* include the slightly brutal facial features, typical of this style's masculine ideal; the relaxed contrapposto; and the controlled muscles.

Greek architecture reached its zenith in the Parthenon, and, similarly, classical Greek sculpture attained its height in the reliefs and sculptures of this celebrated temple. Under the disciplined eye of the sculptor Phidias [FIHD-e-uhs], craftspeople carved patriotic and mythological subjects destined for various parts of the building. Taken as a whole, the sculptures revealed the Parthenon to be a tribute to Athenian imperialism as much as to the goddess Athena (see Figure 3.2).

On the Parthenon's metopes—the rectangular spaces on the Doric frieze—sculptors portrayed scenes in the prevailing high classical style. In panel after

Figure 3.19 *The Birth of Aphrodite. Ca. 460 BCE. Ht. 2′9″. Terme Museum, Rome. The Ludovisi Throne, with its three relief panels, is a controversial work, because scholars disagree about its original function, the interpretation of its panels, and even its date. Discovered in Rome in the late nineteenth century, it probably was carved in Magna Graecia, perhaps for an altar, and brought to Rome in antiquity. The figure of Aphrodite was one of the first naked women depicted in large-scale Greek sculpture. The goddess is rendered in softly curving lines—a marked deviation from the Severe style and a forecast of the sensuous tendency of later Greek art.*

Figure 3.20 *Poseidon* (or *Zeus*). Ca. 460–450 BCE. Bronze, ht. 6′10″. National Museum, Athens. *The Greek conception of the nobility of their gods is nowhere better revealed than in this magnificent bronze sculpture of Poseidon (or Zeus). Grace, strength, and intellect are united in this majestic image of a mature deity. Poseidon's eyes originally would have been semiprecious stones, and the statue would have been painted to create a more realistic effect. If Poseidon, he hurls a trident; if Zeus, a thunderbolt.*

panel, the metope sculptors depicted perfect human forms showing restraint in the midst of struggle, such as Amazons against men, Greeks against Trojans, and gods against giants. The south metopes portrayed the battle between the legendary lapiths and the half-men, half-horse centaurs (Figure 3.22). For the Greeks, the struggle between the human lapiths and the bestial centaurs symbolized the contest between civilization and barbarism or, possibly, between the Greeks and the Persians.

Inside the columns, running around the perimeter of the upper cella walls in a continuous band, was a low-relief frieze (Figure 3.23). Borrowed from the Ionic order, this running frieze introduced greater liveliness
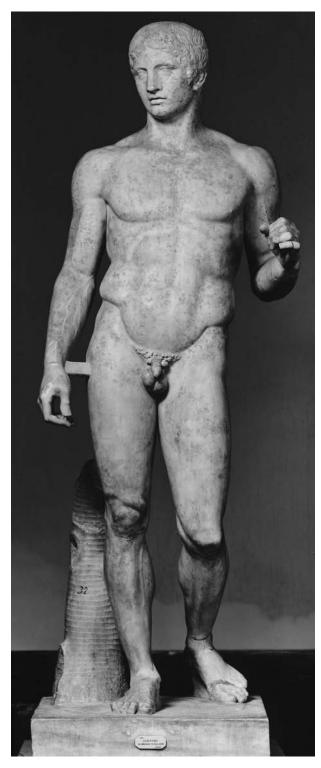
Figure 3.21   *Doryphoros.* Ca. 440 BCE. Marble copy of a bronze original by Polykleitos, ht. 6′6″. Museo Nazionale Archeologico, Naples. *The* Doryphoros *expresses the classical ideal of balanced repose. The nude figure rests his weight upon the right leg. The left arm, extended to hold the now-missing spear, balances with the right leg. The left foot, barely touching the ground, balances with the relaxed right arm. Besides representing idealized repose, the* Doryphoros *was also recognized as the embodiment of human beauty with its ordered proportions, well-toned musculature, and rugged features.*

into high classicism. The 525-foot-long band depicts the Panathenaea festival, Athens's most important civic and religious ritual, which was held every four years. This panoramic view of the thrilling procession concluded with a stunning group portrait of the twelve gods and goddesses, seated in casual majesty, awaiting their human worshipers. The entire Parthenon frieze was the most ambitious work of sculpture in the Greek tradition.

The beautiful grave stele of Hegeso (Figure 3.24) is in the Phidian style, the presumed style of Phidias. The deceased lady has selected a necklace from a jewel box held by her attendant. The billowing garments reveal arms, legs, and breasts. These are real people. The figures themselves merge into the background as if it were empty space. Sculptors had by now mastered form and could concentrate on interpretation.
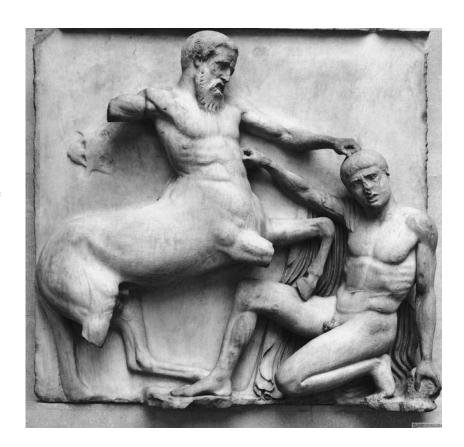
The transition to fourth-century style coincided with the end of the creative phase of tragedy and the disintegration of the Greek world as it passed into the Macedonian political orbit. Sculpture remained innovative, since each generation seemed to produce a master who challenged the prevailing aesthetic rules, and free expression continued as a leading principle of fourth-century style. But sculptors now expressed such new ideas as beauty for its own sake and a delight in sensuality. Earlier classicism had stressed the notion that humans could become godlike, but the last phase concluded that gods and mortals alike reveled in human joys.

This new focus is apparent in Praxiteles' [prax-SIT-uh-eez] *Hermes with the Infant Dionysus.* This sculpture, perhaps the only original work by a known sculptor that survives from Hellenic Greece, portrays two gods blissfully at play (Figure 3.25). Hermes, lounging in a casual yet dignified pose, probably dangled grapes before the attentive baby god. The contrapposto posture, beautifully defined in Hermes' stance, became widely imitated as the **Praxitelean curve.** Hermes' sensuous body, his intent gaze, and his delicate features are hallmarks of fourth-century classicism; by the next generation, Praxiteles' treatment of the male figure had superseded the more rugged *Doryphoros* canon.

Painting

In the Hellenic period, red-figure ware was more popular than black-figure ware, but both styles continued to be produced (Figures 3.1, 3.10, 3.11). New toward the end of the fifth century was white-ground ware. Surviving examples are almost all painted on lekynthoi (oil jugs, for funeral offerings). Two features of this new style are striking. First, the white-ground ware style shares traits with the period's sculpture, but it is unclear which came first. A look at the Hegeso stele (see Figure 3.24) and the *Mistress and Maid* by the so-called

Figure 3.22 *Centaur Versus Lapith.* Metope XXX, south face of the Parthenon. Ca. 448–442 BCE. Marble, ht. 56". British Museum. *This struggling pair was designed to fit comfortably into the metope frame, and thus the proportions of the figures in relation to each other and to the small space were worked out with precision. The intertwined limbs of the warrior and the centaur visibly demonstrate the new freedom of high classicism. The anguished countenance of the lapith, however, is almost unique in high classicism and is a portent of the more emotional faces of the Hellenistic style, the next major artistic development.*
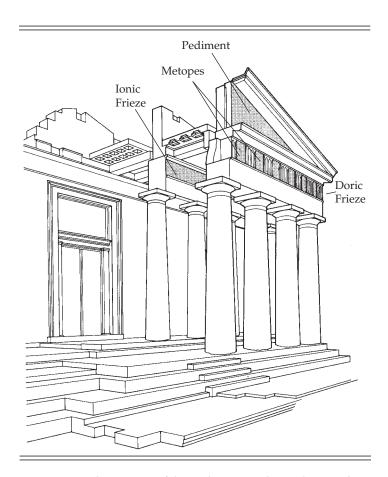

Figure 3.23 The Location of the Sculptures on the Parthenon. *This cutaway view shows the metopes on the Doric frieze, Ionic frieze, and pediments of the Parthenon, which were covered with sculptures celebrating the glory of Athens.*

Figure 3.24 Grave Stele of Hegeso. Ca. 410–400 B.C.E Ht. 5' 9". National Archaeological Museum, Athens. *Grave markers like this one were produced in profusion in Athens and probably helped to disseminate the Phidian style. Hegeso was a noble lady and this tomb marker was probably erected by her husband. As Figure 3.22 shows a lapith in agony, so this stele reveals tenderness, attentiveness, and intimacy. Here is Greek humanism at its most humane.*

Figure 3.25   PRAXITELES. *Hermes with the Infant Dionysus.* Ca. 350–340 BCE. Marble, ht. 85". Olympia Museum. *In this statue of Hermes, Praxiteles changed the look of classical art with his rendering of the god's body. For example, Hermes' small head and long legs contributed to the Praxitelean canon for the male figure. The sculptor has also created a dramatic contrast between Hermes' well-muscled body and his soft face. As a direct result of Praxiteles' new vision, sculptors in the Hellenistic Age became interested in more frankly sensual portrayals of the human figure, both male and female.*

Figure 3.26   *Mistress and Maid* by the so-called Achilles Painter. Ca. 440–430 BCE. Ht. 16". Staatliche Antikensamm-lungen, Munich. *Probably made in Athens, this white-ground vessel has perhaps the most refined, delicate surviving painting from ancient Greece. Compare the Hegeso stele (Figure 3.24).*

Achilles Painter (Figure 3.26) shows the same melancholy scene interpreted in almost the same way. Second, the white background in the white-ground ware gave the painter the opportunity to draw and color freely, allowing the figures to emerge from seemingly empty space. The painter's command of spatial effects creates a powerful three-dimensionality. In painting, this command of space is corollary to the sense of movement in sculpture.

The Legacy of Hellenic Civilization

Although Athens failed in its dream of political mastery of Greece, the Athenian miracle so impressed its contemporaries that Athenian culture dominated the Hellenic Age. Tragic poets, comic playwrights, and natural philosophers made the Athenian dialect the medium of expression for poetry and prose. The buildings on the Acropolis expressed visually the purity and restraint of the Athenian style. And Athenian democracy, which served as the exciting teacher of its citizens, was the envy of most of the other Greek poleis. After the fall of Greece to Macedonia, however, the idea of democracy fell into disrepute. Almost two thousand years passed before some leaders in Europe were ready to give democracy a second chance.

But **humanism,** the other great creation of Athens, survived as a guide to refined living for the cultivated classes in the West. Athenian culture became the heart of the educational curriculum that was followed in Hellenistic civilization; that model was adopted by Rome and transmitted in the humanistic tradition to Europe. In time, the study and the practice of humanistic learning—literature, philosophy, theater, music, and the arts and architecture—became the crowning glory of Western civilization, affecting private individuals and entire societies.

Moreover, classicism—the style of humanistic achievements in the Hellenic Age—had three great effects on the Western tradition. First, the principles of Greek classicism—balance, simplicity, and restraint—set the standard by which the styles of other times are often measured. Second, the actual works of classicism became basic building blocks of Western culture. In the realm of thought, the works of Plato and Aristotle quickly acquired a luster of authority and retained it until the seventeenth century CE. Aristotle's literary criticism created a new writing genre, and his analysis of tragedy made this type of drama the ultimate challenge to ambitious writers. The Greek tragedies themselves—of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides—are thought by many people in the West to be unsurpassed.

The comic plays of Aristophanes are less well known today, but their spirit still lives in period comedies and contemporary political satire. The histories of Herodotus and Thucydides retain their vitality as important sources for their respective eras, although modern research has cast doubt on some of their conclusions. Among Greece's accomplishments, architecture has had the most potent effect; the ruins on the Athenian Acropolis and elsewhere are eternal reminders of this Greek heritage. Finally, the idealized statues of men and women, such as the *Doryphoros,* have inspired Western artists with their vision of noble beings alert to the rich possibilities of human life.

The third and perhaps most important contribution of classicism to the Western tradition was a skeptical spirit rooted in democracy. By asserting that the purpose of human life can best be realized in cities that are shaped by the citizens' needs, as Athenian humanism claimed, the humanists declared war on all tyrants, hierarchical societies, and divinely ordered states—in other words, the prevailing order of the ancient world. Because of this critical aspect of humanism, the Greek heritage has sometimes been called into question and, during repressive periods, been subjected to attack. However, the passion for questioning, for inquiry, which characterizes the skeptical spirit, is at the core of Western consciousness.

KEY CULTURAL TERMS

Hellenic
maenad
Dionysia
classic (classical)
classicism
tragedy
chorus
orchestra
skene
satyr-play
Old Comedy

modes
epistemology
idealism
Platonism
Ionic
Severe style
high classical style
fourth-century style
contrapposto
Praxitelean curve
humanism

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL THINKING

1. Discuss the impact of the Peloponnesian War on the cultural life of Athens and its citizens.

2. Define classicism and illustrate how Greek tragedy embodies it.

3. Discuss the pivotal role of Socrates in Greek philosophy.

4. Compare Plato's and Aristotle's approaches to truth.

5. What is meant by the high classical style? Discuss examples of this style as found in Greek sculpture.