

THE ORIGINS OF THE CLASSICAL STYLE IN SCULPTURE¹

(PLATES IV–VI)

THE first part of this paper briefly reviews current theories as to the origins of the Classical style,² and proposes an alternative approach. The second part, making use of some rather neglected pieces of literary evidence, attempts to reconstruct the circumstances in which this distinctive sculptural style was created, and presents it in a new light: as the ingenious solution to a specific artistic problem which confronted fifth-century Greek sculptors as a result of their final rejection of archaic stylization.

I. ART-HISTORICAL EXPLANATIONS FOR THE EMERGENCE OF THE CLASSICAL STYLE

Much has been written on the nature of the Classical style, and I do not propose to offer here yet another analysis of the well-known characteristic features of Classical sculpture. None the less, a look at the subject from what is, as far as I know, a fresh angle may shed some light on old controversies.

Accounts of the origins of the Classical style are many and various. Accordingly, before proceeding it would seem prudent to prepare the ground by recalling some of the rival theories which have been advanced. Here I wish to consider only a small selection of scholarly opinion, which I regard as representative of the three most influential art-historical perspectives.³

Giesela Richter and Brunilde Ridgway, stressing the similarity in artistic interests between the sculptors of the Severe and Hellenistic periods, view the Classical style as something of a

¹ The first version of this essay was submitted in June 1983 as the first chapter of my Oxford University Master's thesis. I should like to thank Dr J. J. Coulton and Dr A. F. Stewart for their help and encouragement; this paper has greatly benefitted from their comments and criticism. I should also like to thank Dr M. Griffith for his many helpful suggestions.

² Throughout this paper I use the designation 'Classical' to refer exclusively to the sculptural style seen to emerge around the middle of the fifth century BC with the sculptural decoration of the Parthenon and statues like the Polykleitan Doryphoros. Works of the preceding period, before the style matured, I refer to (as is customary) as 'Severe' or 'Early Classical'. For reasons which will become clear from my description and definition of this style, I do not regard works of the late fifth century, like the reliefs of the Nike parapet or the Nike of Paionios, as a separate stylistic development, but as merely a further elaboration of what is here referred to as the Classical style. I wish to emphasize, however, that all these terms are only convenient labels; and in using them I do not wish to commit myself to any strict chronological division of the monuments into a theoretical succession of distinct stylistic phases. Cf. C. M. Robertson, *Between archaeology and art history* (Oxford 1962) 22 f.: 'I reject a very precise chronology based on stylistic development since I do not believe that it is true. I also do not believe that it is important.'

³ To compile a full bibliography on the Classical style would involve writing, in effect, a short history of

scholarship on Greek art. Thus in my notes throughout this paper, I cite only the most essential references. For the sake of convenience, the discussion of the various earlier approaches to this subject makes reference only to a selection of works by English and American scholars; as will be seen, their writings divide themselves very neatly into three major groups. Since this division does not work so precisely for the writings of German scholars, to include a full account of their important contributions would have complicated the discussion too much, and not substantially altered the overall picture. The following abbreviations are observed: Ashmole 1964 = B. Ashmole, *The Classical ideal in Greek sculpture* (Cincinnati 1964); Carpenter 1959 = R. Carpenter, *The esthetic basis of Greek art in the fifth and fourth centuries BC*² (Bloomington 1959); Carpenter 1960 = R. Carpenter, *Greek sculpture* (Chicago 1960); Gombrich 1977 = E. H. Gombrich, *Art and illusion*⁵ (London 1977); Gombrich 1978 = E. H. Gombrich, *Norm and form*³ (London 1978); Pollitt 1965 = J. J. Pollitt, *The art of Greece 1400–31 BC* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1965); Pollitt 1972 = J. J. Pollitt, *Art and experience in Classical Greece* (Cambridge 1972); Richter 1951 = G. M. A. Richter, *Three critical periods of Greek sculpture* (Oxford 1951); Ridgway 1981 = B. S. Ridgway, *Fifth century styles in Greek sculpture* (Princeton 1981); Sörbom 1966 = G. Sörbom, *Mimesis and art: studies in the origin and early development of an aesthetic vocabulary* (Stockholm 1966).

prodigy: a self-consciously idealizing style which obtruded itself into the gradual and regular progression of Greek sculpture from archaism to naturalism and realism. Because this idealizing phase is construed as an isolated interlude in an otherwise more or less continuous course of development, specific causes have to be sought which could have brought about this radical change in direction. Miss Richter sees the change as due to the remarkable pre-eminence achieved by one individual sculptor; and the creation of the Classical style is thus, in her opinion, to be attributed to genius—the genius of Pheidias.⁴ In contrast, Mrs Ridgway is rather antipathetic to the whole idea of artistic genius, and is disinclined to credit individual sculptors with too much control over the stylistic development of their art.⁵ She suggests that the new style was more likely the product of a change in the nature of sculptural commissions during this period, and that it may have been forged specifically to answer the needs of organized state religion, which was rapidly growing in importance at this time.⁶

Rhys Carpenter and Bernard Ashmole, on the other hand, see the idealism of the Classical style as developing smoothly and naturally out of archaic representational technique. For Carpenter the style was the inevitable result of the fundamental approach of the Greek sculptor to the practice of his art;⁷ it was the creation of those artistic procedures (described by Carpenter as ‘controlling forces’)⁸ which were built into Greek sculpture right from the beginning. This thesis is set out in a most perceptive and persuasive analysis; but as an explanation it is relatively straightforward. Any art which seeks to imitate nature will evolve according to certain fixed laws, and follow a similar stylistic development away from archaism, moving into its own ‘classic’ or ‘strong’ phase;⁹ yet the particular form which Greek sculpture attained in its strong period was governed by certain distinctive tendencies unique to Greek artists.¹⁰ However, by making the Classical style the result of suprapersonal aesthetic impulses which are considered to be quintessentially Greek, Carpenter actually comes close to invoking a kind of Hegelian *Volksgeist*. This becomes clear when he says of the Canon of Polykleitos¹¹ (PLATE VIb):

And here, perhaps more starkly than in any other work, may be detected the essential qualities of Greek sculpture in its fully evolved formal state, uncontaminated by any un-Hellenic trait.

Carpenter ascribes the creation of the archaic kouros and the Polykleitan Canon alike to certain mysteriously inherent aesthetic predilections peculiar to the Greek mind. And in actual fact this explanation resorts to genius again; in this case a racial/cultural genius rather than an individual genius.¹² Ashmole’s analysis likewise presents the Classical style as the natural and logical successor to archaic art.¹³ In his account, however, individual genius also receives its due;¹⁴ and he offers in addition, if only fleetingly, the further dimension of an historical explanation. The Classical style gives visible form to the kind of idealistic and rational humanism that was in the air around the middle of the fifth century BC. His view of the Canon, or Doryphoros, is therefore slightly different:¹⁵

⁴ Richter 1951, 6 f.

⁵ Ridgway 1981, 11: ‘... it is dangerous to ascribe such a major influence to a single personality.’

⁶ *Ibid.* ‘Greek beliefs, popular but devout, were turning into state religion, official but cold.’

⁷ Carpenter 1959, 89: ‘Because fifth century Greek sculpture inherited all the schematic forms [of archaic art] for representing objects it could not be true to life.’

⁸ Carpenter 1960, 98.

⁹ This thesis is fully set out in Carpenter 1959, 55–99. Carpenter derived most of his ideas on the formal development of style, unacknowledged as far as I know, from Heinrich Wölfflin’s *Die Klassische Kunst*⁸ (Basel 1948), and his *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (Munich 1915); he did, however, extend and elaborate Wölfflin’s method very skilfully, adapting it to the field of Greek sculpture.

¹⁰ This idea provides the whole theoretical founda-

tion for Carpenter’s book *The esthetic basis of Greek art*.

¹¹ Carpenter 1960, 108.

¹² Carpenter 1960, 17: ‘Like Attic tragedy and comedy [Greek sculpture] must be rated as the manifestation of the uniquely original creative Hellenic genius.’ Carpenter himself seems to have been dissatisfied with this formulation as an adequate explanation for the Classical style in all its features. In his last statement on the subject (*Greek art* [Philadelphia 1962] 158 ff.) he speculates that the ideal regularity of Classical faces and the perfect proportioning of the figures could have been the result of a ‘number mysticism’ which he thinks may have become prevalent among Greek sculptors at this time.

¹³ Ashmole 1964, *passim*.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 4, 12.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 21.

The Doryphoros was not of course intended to be merely an ideal statue, an ideal physical body; it was also an ideal human being, master of himself, standard of nature. It was not an accident that about this time Protagoras was saying precisely that. Neither was it accidental that the Doryphoros of Polykleitos and the Parthenon were created within a few years of each other. For each is a manifestation of the same belief in a standard of beauty, truth, goodness—whichever one likes to call it—the existence and nature of which could be inferred by reason.

This too is very plausible. After all, are not the visual arts as strongly influenced by history and the 'mood of the times' as are literature and philosophy?

This leads us to our third category: those explanations which seek to account for the Classical style exclusively in terms of contemporary history. This is precisely the kind of explanation offered by J. J. Pollitt.¹⁶ He makes the Classical style the embodiment in the visual arts of the buoyant confidence and political idealism of Periclean Athens. In this case, crudely put, it becomes simply the product of the *Zeitgeist*: the idealistic style is the unique fruit of a particularly idealistic and ebullient era of Greek history. This is generally a very popular explanation—particularly in the writings of German scholars;¹⁷ and in this they are following an art-historical and literary tradition which goes back to Winckelmann and Goethe, and received its fullest theoretical expression in the philosophy of Hegel.¹⁸ The obvious intellectual attractions of this sort of explanation and its ubiquitousness in popular accounts of the subject mean that it requires special attention here.

This method of interpreting style was perhaps best summed up by Wölfflin:¹⁹

Einen Stil *erklären* kann nichts anderes heissen als ihn nach seinem Ausdruck in die allgemeine Zeitgeschichte einreihen, nachweisen, dass seine Formen in ihrer Sprache nichts anderes sagen, als die übrigen Organe der Zeit.

To *explain* a style can mean nothing else than to fit its expressive character into the general history of the period, to prove that its forms do not say anything different in their language from what is said by the other organs of the age.

One may wish, however, to question the legitimacy of this procedure. Is the evocation of the 'spirit of the age' really a useful explanation for the evolution of an artistic style? It is certainly true for mid-fifth century Greece that if one attempts to parallel stylistic tendencies in sculpture with developments in literature, philosophy and politics then quite a coherent and unified picture can be built up. But if we then use the apparent consistency of this ensemble to go back and explain the original inception of the new style, is this correct method? Sir Ernst Gombrich has, on several occasions, pointed out the dubious logic of this procedure.²⁰ Whenever an archaeologist is faced with an artifact, whether cult-image or potsherd, he will try to make sense of it in such terms as his creative imagination suggests. What is more, he will attempt to assemble further evidence to fit into his image of the lost culture. For it is precisely the historian's task to fit all the available evidence together into a context that 'makes sense':

There is much to be admired in this effort of the imaginative historian to 'wake the dead' and to unriddle the mute language of the monuments. But he should never conceal from himself that his method is circular. The physiognomic unity of past ages which he reads from their various manifestations is precisely the unity to which the rules of his game have committed him. It was he who first unified the clues in order to make sense of them.²¹

The apparently perceptible 'spirit of the age' is, in all probability, merely an illusion—the

¹⁶ Pollitt 1972, 64 ff.

¹⁷ For a representative and fairly recent example see K. Scheffold, *The art of Classical Greece* (English transl., London 1967).

¹⁸ See now E. H. Gombrich's essay, 'The father of art history', in his *Tributes* (Oxford 1984) 51–69.

¹⁹ H. Wölfflin, *Renaissance und Barock*² (Munich 1907) 58.

²⁰ E. H. Gombrich, *Meditations on a hobby horse*³ (London 1978) 51.

²¹ *Ibid.*

product of our limited evidence and inspired historiography.²² And for this reason one should certainly be suspicious of attempts to conjure up the *Zeitgeist* as the proper and sufficient explanation for an artistic style in the manner proposed by Wölfflin.²³

One may also wish to doubt this type of explanation of the Classical style on more specific grounds. Pollitt, for instance, presents the style as giving artistic form to Athenian democratic idealism and the enlightened humanism of the sophists, which also enjoyed its greatest success in fifth-century Athens.²⁴ Yet conditions at Athens were far from typical for the rest of Greece; indeed, Athens was in many respects unique; however, there is no evidence to suggest that Athens ever had a monopoly on the Classical style. Rather the contrary: the essentials of the style are already present in the metopes from the temple of Zeus at Olympia (see below, p. 82), and some of the best examples of the style are the works of the Argive sculptor Polykleitos preserved in Roman copies, like the *Doryphoros* (PLATE VIb). No one, to my knowledge, has ever suggested that stylistically these are derivative works imitating Athenian sculpture. How then is the widespread occurrence of the style explicable in these terms? Pollitt simply states that 'without Athens Greek art would not have become what it did'.²⁵ Nevertheless he realizes this is a major difficulty and he attempts to circumvent it thus:²⁶

It was really Pheidias who, by forging a style which gave external, symbolic form to the Periclean vision and by carrying it abroad to the panhellenic sanctuaries, particularly through the Olympian Zeus, made it possible for the rest of the Greeks to appreciate and to an extent participate in the Athenian experience.

This seems special pleading.

The derivation of the Classical style from the *Zeitgeist* is in any case a good deal less convincing when one considers late fifth-century art. The 'idealizing' style does not appear to break down, or even to alter very much in its essentials, but actually to become richer and more elaborate in its creations.²⁷ Yet at this time virtually all the major states of Greece, and Athens in particular, were racked by ruinous warfare; and by the end of the century the self-confidence and optimistic idealism of Periclean Athens had long vanished. However, as Pollitt himself admits, one looks in vain for any traces of a 'tortured, insecure art, expressing the anxieties of the age'²⁸. The durability of the 'idealism' of the Classical style is less easy to explain in historical terms.²⁹

Doubts as to the respectability of the method, together with the conflicting testimony of the facts, may incline one to reject this sort of explanation altogether. Clearly history always exerts a strong influence on the practice of the arts; works of art are not created in a vacuum. But to acknowledge this is not to admit that Classical sculpture is simply the visible expression of the 'spirit of the age'—a kind of neat illustration of certain trends in contemporary politics and philosophy.³⁰ On the contrary, artistic traditions quite plainly possess their own momentum,

²² Cf. George Boas, *The heaven of invention* (Baltimore 1962) 16: 'There never was an age when everyone was in harmony with everyone else. . . . The reason why our own age seems more confused than the past is that we know more about it.'

²³ The most forceful arguments against this kind of interpretation of art works—that is, assuming that a given style is somehow a *collective* statement, in which we can somehow read the essential feelings, the *Weltanschauung* of the people of the day—are contained in Gombrich (n. 20), in the essays 'On physiognomic perception', 45–55, and 'Art and scholarship', 106–19; see now also Gombrich (n. 18) 51–69.

²⁴ Pollitt 1972, 68 ff. In this connection he quotes the funeral speech of Pericles, Thuc. ii 34 ff., the teachings of Protagoras, and the famous chorus Soph. *Ant.* 322 ff.

²⁵ Pollitt 1972, 64.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 98.

²⁷ Unlike Pollitt and a number of other scholars I do

not believe that late fifth century sculpture should be set apart stylistically from what went before. The basic traits of the Classical style, as I outline them below on pp. 80–82, can be seen to survive with little alteration down into the fourth century.

²⁸ Pollitt 1972, 115.

²⁹ Pollitt's 'Refuge in gesture' (*ibid.* 115–25), while ingenious, remains entirely unconvincing. For further discussion of this subject see below, pp. 83–4.

³⁰ Familiarity with any better documented period of history tells us that there may be many different currents perceptible in the intellectual and cultural life of a people at any given time—some of them seemingly diametrically opposed to one another. If we acknowledge this it becomes rather more difficult for us to read the dominant style of the religious monuments of the day as somehow expressing some all-encompassing 'spirit of the times.'

which may render them to a large extent immune from the fluctuating fortunes of states. Furthermore, to postulate everywhere in history the operation of Hegelian 'spirits', *Volksgeist* and *Zeitgeist*, is a manifestly unsatisfactory procedure. To quote Sir Karl Popper on the question of these *Geister*:³¹

. . . I have not the slightest sympathy with these 'spirits'; . . . and I am in full sympathy with those who treat them with contempt. And yet I feel that they indicate, at least, the existence of a vacuum, of a place which it is the task of sociology to fill with something more sensible, such as an analysis of problems arising within a tradition. There is room for a more detailed analysis of the *logic of situations*. . . .

Although these comments were made in an entirely different context, as Gombrich has remarked, artistic styles are clearly the sort of traditions to which Popper is here referring.³² And as Gombrich aptly goes on to point out:

As long as we have no better hypothesis to offer, the existence of uniform modes of representing the world [i.e. distinctive artistic styles] must invite the facile explanation that such a unity must be due to some supra-individual spirit, the 'spirit of the age' or the 'spirit of the race'.

To conclude: those theories which make the Classical style the creation of genius, the inevitable product of Greek aesthetic feeling, or the manifestation of the *Zeitgeist*, are all basically inadequate; such answers actively discourage further probing. Here, in accordance with Popper's suggestion, I intend to present this remarkable sculptural style as the result of 'problems arising within a tradition'; and to investigate the 'logic of the situation' in which it was produced.

II. THE ROOTS AND MOTIVATION OF THE CLASSICAL STYLE

(i) *Artistic revolution: the break in tradition*

Some time around the beginning of the fifth century BC the conventional form of the archaic kouros, with his unnaturally symmetrical posture, was at last abandoned; and this decisive break with tradition at once enabled Greek sculptors to achieve the first wholly convincing naturalistic images of mankind. So much is well known; and indeed the critical transitional phase is relatively well documented from the archaeological evidence. But how was this radical departure from age-old custom, this artistic revolution, viewed by the artists of the day and their public? What, in other words, was the popular response to this momentous change?

Let us first consider a fragment of Aeschylus, *POxy* 2162:³³

Fr. 1(a). Col. i.
 ὀρῶντες εἰκοῦ[ς] οὐ κατ' ἀνθρώπους[
 ὅπηι δ' ἄν ἔ[ρ]θηις, πάντα σοι τάδ' εὐσεβῆ.
 — ἦ κάρτ' ὀφείλω τῶνδέ σοι· πρόφρων γὰρ εἶ.
 — ἄκουε δὴ πᾶς εἴγα δειθ. λειδ[. .].
 5 ἄθρησον εἰπ[. .]. []
 εἶδωλον εἶναι τοῦτ' ἐμῆι μορφῆι πλέον
 τὸ Δαιδάλου μ[ε] [ί]μημα φωνῆς δεῖ μόνον.
 ταδ[. .]ει.
 ὀρα[.]ωρ[.]

³¹ K. R. Popper, *The poverty of historicism* (London 1957) 149.

³² Gombrich 1977, 17, where this quotation from Popper's work is also discussed.

³³ *POxy* 2162, *Egyptian Exploration Society* 26; *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* xviii (1941) 14–22; H. Lloyd-Jones,

Appendix to Loeb Aeschylus ii (Cambridge, Mass. and London 1957) 541–56; H. J. Mette, *Die Fragmente der Tragödien des Aischylos* (Berlin 1959) 7 ff.; See now also D. F. Sutton, *The Greek satyr play* (Meisenheim 1980) 29 ff.

10 χωρεῖ μάλα.
 — εὐκταῖα κόσμον ταῦτ[α] τῶι θεῶι φέρω,
 καλλίγραπτον εὐχάν.
 — τῆι μητρὶ τῆιμῆι πράγματ' ὄν παρασχέθοι·
 ἰδοῦσα γάρ νιν ὄν σαφῶς
 15 τρέποιτ' ὄν τ' ἀξιάζοιτό θ' ὡς
 δοκοῦς' ἔμ' εἶναι, τὸν ἐξ-
 ἔθρεψεν· οὕτως ἐμπερήσ ὄδ' ἔστιν.
 εἶα δὴ σκοπεῖτε δῶμα ποντίου κεισίχθο[νος
 κάπιπασσάλευ' ἕκαστος τῆς κ[α]λῆς μορφῆς[
 20 ἄγγελον, κήρυκ' [ἄ]ναυδον, ἔμπορον κωλύτορ[α,
 .[.]. ἐπισχῆσει κελεύθου τοὺς ξένο[υ]ς φ.[

This fragment almost certainly comes from a satyr play, called the *Θεωροὶ ἢ Ἴσθμιασταί*.³⁴ A chorus of satyrs is approaching a shrine, probably the temple of Poseidon at the Isthmus, singing about some votive offerings they are bringing with them. These offerings are εἰκοῦ[ς] (verse 1), 'images' or 'likenesses' of the satyrs themselves; and it is clear that they are lost in astonishment at them.

- (5) Consider whether . . . this image could be more [like] my looks, this Daedalus reproduction; all it lacks is a voice!³⁵

The next few lines are too fragmentary to be sure of the sense, but the piece continues:³⁶

- (11) I bring this offering to the god as decoration,
 the beautifully-painted votive image.
 —It would give my mother a bad time!
 For if she could see it clearly
 she'd run off wailing,
 thinking it was me, the son she
 brought up. So like me is this fellow.

The next verses inform us that the satyrs are each to fasten their offerings on to the temple itself.³⁷

Exactly what sort of objects are these offerings? The editors of the fragment propose that the satyrs are carrying 'likenesses of themselves, statuettes (implied by τὸ Δαιδάλου μίμημα), and painted πίνακες (implied by καλλίγραπτον εὐχάν, ἐπιπασσάλευε)'.³⁸ But they also mention Fraenkel's suggestion that 'only one object is in question, namely satyr-masks, and that fixing these to the temple has reference to the fact that such masks are actually found as antefixes covering the end of roofing tiles'.³⁹ But whatever the truth of this, the general sense of the passage is clear. The satyrs are marvelling at works of art of some kind, which are felt to be extraordinarily lifelike.

This remarkable fragment has been considered at some length by G. Sörbom;⁴⁰ and although his main interest was of a philological nature (in the use and meaning at this early date of the word μίμημα), it was also to his purpose to discuss in some detail its relevance to Early

³⁴ *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* xviii (1941) 14.

³⁵ Tr. G. F. Else, 'Imitation in the fifth century', *CP* liii (1958) 78.

³⁶ Following the text of the Loeb editor H. Lloyd-Jones; his translation is here slightly adapted.

³⁷ κάπιπασσάλευ' ἕκαστος τῆς κ[α]λῆς μορφῆς σ[α]φῆ ἄγγελον, κήρυκ' [ἄ]ναυδον, ἔμπόρων κωλύτορ[α, ὅς γ' ἐπισχῆσει κελεύθου τοὺς ξένο[υ]ς,

φό[βον] βλέπων.

'Let each fasten up the likeness of his handsome face, a truthful messenger, a voiceless herald to keep off travellers; he'll halt strangers on their way by his terrifying look. (Text and translation H. Lloyd-Jones, Loeb edition 551.)

³⁸ *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* xviii (1941) 14.

³⁹ *Ibid.* n. 1 H. J. Mette (*Der Verlorene Aischylos* [Berlin 1963] 165) shares this view.

⁴⁰ Sörbom 1966, 41–53.

Classical art, and I am in complete agreement with his careful and considered interpretation. *Mimēma* in this extract was taken by G. F. Else to mean 'an exact copying of nature'.⁴¹ Now extant works of this date occasionally possess some very frank and convincing observations from life—as for example on some of the figures from the pediments at Olympia: but none could seriously be regarded as 'an exact copying of nature' in the sense of, say, Hellenistic and Roman portraiture. Sörbom ponders the problem in the following way.⁴² Has then a whole group of monuments disappeared without trace? This seems unlikely, so another explanation is required. But first two general assumptions must be made: that the images referred to are not fanciful constructions created specially for this play, but images of a sort that could be seen in the temples and agorai; and that the experience of these images as extremely vivid and living is not a response peculiar to the satyrs of this play, but one which could occur to Aeschylus and his contemporaries when they looked at works of art. There is nothing to show that we should not make these two assumptions. But we have no reason to believe that if we were confronted with the same images we too would experience them in the same way. Thus there is no need to postulate a lost group of painstakingly realistic works of art; what the passage suggests, quite simply, is that Aeschylus and his contemporaries may well have experienced the art of their day, if not exactly as described, at least as extremely vivid and amazingly full of life; something which may be an essential aspect of the appreciation of Early Classical art.⁴³

When we are faced with works of this date like the 'Kritian Boy' or the Tyrannicide group, our immediate reaction is not likely to be one of astonishment at their realism or vitality. But our own very different impression of these pieces need not threaten Sörbom's interpretation, for it derives from our very different levels of expectation. We are familiar with the achievements of an artistic tradition which long ago mastered the rendering of the human form so completely that artists could portray with great facility any given individual in any conceivable posture or movement. No wonder then that these Early Classical statues seem, to our eyes, rather stark and severe—even a little wooden. But to the Greeks, who had previously only ever seen their own stylized and absolutely rigid images, the sudden emergence of these naturalistic figures, often in vigorous movement, must have seemed something quite fantastic.

To quote Sir Ernst Gombrich, here writing on Renaissance art:⁴⁴

A style, like a culture or climate of opinion, sets up a horizon of expectation, a mental set, which registers deviations and modifications with exaggerated sensitivity . . . The history of art is full of reactions which can only be understood in this way. To those used to the style we call 'Cimabue' (PLATE IVa) and expecting to be presented with a similar notation, the paintings of Giotto (PLATE IVb) came with a shock of incredible lifelikeness. 'There is nothing', writes Boccaccio,⁴⁵ 'which Giotto could not have portrayed in such a manner as to deceive the sense of sight.'

Given that Giotto's understanding of the principles of foreshortening and perspective was far from perfect, Boccaccio's claim seems extraordinary. To the modern eye his pictures are by no means characterized by an exhilarating realism; on the contrary, they seem to possess a 'rigid restraint and majestic aloofness'.⁴⁶ But this is plainly not how contemporaries perceived them. Another illustration drawn from modern history, cited by Sörbom,⁴⁷ may further illuminate this remarkable discrepancy. In the eighteenth century when the Mannheim school began to use

⁴¹ G. F. Else (n. 35) 78.

⁴² Sörbom 1966, 44 f. For the sake of brevity Sörbom's argument has been paraphrased and compressed rather drastically.

⁴³ P. Guggisberg (*Das Satyrspiel* [1947] 71–74) and R. Seaford ('On the origins of Satyric Drama', *Maia* n.s. xxviii [1976] 216 ff.) have pointed out that marvelling at new inventions—εὐρηματα—seems to be a regular activity of the choruses of satyrs in the extant fragments of Satyric Drama. (This is denied by D. F. Sutton [n. 33] 157 n. 455, but her objections are not compelling.) This

observation, however, does not seem to me to undermine the point that Sörbom is making. Other marvels—τέρατα—to which satyrs react with vigorous amazement are fire, wine, the sound of a lyre and so on. For the creation of lifelike images to be thought suitable as the subject of such satyric enthusiasm would place it among the most magical of 'discoveries'.

⁴⁴ Gombrich 1977, 53.

⁴⁵ Boccaccio, *Decamerone* Giornata vi, Novella 5.

⁴⁶ Gombrich 1977, 54.

⁴⁷ Sörbom 1966, 49 n. 17.

crescendi and *decrescendi* in their musical performances, it is reported that the audiences were made to rise from their seats by the power of the *crescendo*, and to gasp for breath during the *decrescendi*. Yet modern audiences are not affected in the same degree by these devices, although our orchestras are much more powerful than those of the eighteenth century, since we live in a musical tradition in which such effects are commonplaces. In agreement with Sörbom I should like to suggest that the creation of the first fully naturalistic statues in the Early Classical period was felt to be a comparably breath-taking and dramatic event.

'It only lacks a voice!', exclaimed Aeschylus' satyr. In later times this was to become a cliché of rhetorical praise for the achievement of a lifelike image. But one may suspect that the transformation in Greek religious art which is heralded by this exclamation was not made without cost; and it is the negative consequences of this transformation to which we must now turn our attention.

(ii) *Popular reaction to artistic innovation*

The great corpus of late sixth- and early fifth-century Attic vase painting reveals a rapid and impressive development of the art of drawing, as the painters strove in successive experiments to enhance the vividness and plausibility of their naturalistic representations. In sculpture too we can trace a similar kind of daring innovation, for example in the pedimental decoration of the temple of Aphaia on Aegina and the temple of Zeus at Olympia. The surviving monuments are, naturally enough, predominantly marble architectural sculptures; but the increasing use of bronze at this time for free-standing statuary greatly augmented the sculptor's freedom to explore novel and more adventurous compositions, as is witnessed for us by a number of ambitious Early Classical studies of figures in motion—for example the Tyrannicide group, the Zeus from Artemision, the Diskobolos, and the Athena and Marsyas group of Myron. (This is perhaps rather a case of the chicken and the egg, for it was presumably this feature of working in bronze which encouraged its espousal at precisely this time.) The sculptor Myron became especially famous, even in later ages, for the lifelike quality of his works. His heifer, dedicated on the Athenian acropolis, drew forth a stream of appreciative epigrams from Hellenistic poets, each striving to outdo his predecessors in praising its realistic appearance; thirty-six such pieces are preserved in the Greek Anthology.⁴⁸ No doubt this subject soon became a genre in itself—a rhetorical exercise for aspiring poets. But even so, there is no reason to doubt that the epigrams which initiated the series were sincere in their praise. The horses of the Parthenon show that fifth century sculptors could achieve great things in the representation of animals. The following is a similar poem on another of Myron's works, a victor statue for an athlete named Ladas:⁴⁹

Οἶος ἔης φεύγων τὸν ὑπήνεμον, ἔμπνοε Λάδα,
οἶμον, ἐπ' ἀκροτάτῳ πνεῦμά θ' ἰεῖς ὄνυχι,
τοῖον ἐχάλκευσέν σε Μύρων, ἐπὶ παντὶ χαράξας
σώματι Πισαίου προσδοκίην στεφάνου.

Πλήρης ἐλπίδος ἐστίν, ἄκροις δ' ἐπὶ χεῖλεσιν ἄσθμα
ἐμφαίνει κοίλων ἔνδοθεν ἐκ λαγόνων.
Πηδῆσει τάχα χαλκὸς ἐπὶ στέφος, οὐδὲ καθέξει
ἄ βάσις. ὦ τέχνη πνεύματος ὠκυτέρα.

⁴⁸ See A. S. F. Gow and D. L. Page, *The Greek anthology: Hellenistic epigrams* ii (Cambridge 1965) 63 (Antipater of Sidon xxxvi pref.) for the references to all these. Pollitt 1965, 63 f. gives six of them in translation.

⁴⁹ *Anth. Plan.* iv 54, following the text of R. Aubreton and F. Buffiere, *Anthologie de planude* xiii

(Paris 1980) 102. Some have thought that this statue must have been by a later Myron (for references see Richter 1951, 3 n. 4); like Richter (*loc. cit.*) and Pollitt 1965, 65, I see no difficulty in accepting this as a poetic description of a work by the Myron who created the Diskobolos.

Just as you were in life Ladas, flying along your wind-swept course, on tip-toe, and breathing hard, so did Myron fashion you in bronze, stamping your whole body with the expectation of the Olympic crown.

He is full of hope, and on his lips is seen the breath which comes from the hollow flanks. Soon the bronze will leap forth to gain the crown, and the base will not hold it. O art swifter than the wind!

By attempting figures like this Myron was pushing forward the horizons of his art, and following up the discoveries of earlier sculptors; and no doubt he was applauded in his efforts. But such vivid images of arrested motion must have looked strange indeed beside the hallowed static effigies of archaic times, which still stood in all the major sanctuaries and temples of Greece. And this marked contrast could not fail to have been observed by his contemporaries. In this light the following passage is of great interest:⁵⁰

Τὸν γοῦν Αἰσχύλον φασί, τῶν Δελφῶν ἀξιούντων εἰς τὸν θεὸν γράψαι παιᾶνα, εἰπεῖν ὅτι βέλτιστα Τυννίχῳ πεποίηται· παραβαλλόμενον δὲ τὸν αὐτοῦ πρὸς τὸν ἐκείνου ταῦτον πείσεσθαι τοῖς ἀγάλμασι τοῖς καινοῖς πρὸς τὰ ἀρχαῖα· ταῦτα γὰρ καίπερ ἀπλῶς πεποιημένα θεῖα νομίζεσθαι, τὰ δὲ καινὰ περιέργως εἰργασμένα θαυμάζεσθαι μὲν, θεοῦ δὲ δόξαν ἦττον ἔχειν.

It is said that Aeschylus, when asked by the people of Delphi to write a Paean in honour of the god, replied that the best Paean had been written by Tynnichos, and that if his own composition were to be compared with that of Tynnichos, it would be exactly the same as comparing new statues with old. The old, although simply made, are held to be divine; the new excite admiration for their outstanding workmanship, but give less of an impression of divinity.

This quotation is from the work of Porphyry, writing more than seven hundred years after the time of Aeschylus. Such anecdotal material is commonly found in late authors, and is seldom of any value: pure invention, colourful fictions about the men of old. But quite exceptionally, this passage has the ring of truth. And for this reason: to a later writer Aeschylus would hardly have seemed an obvious choice for protagonist in an anecdote designed to express this particular idea;⁵¹ and yet that precisely Aeschylus should be the reported speaker is striking, for he lived at a time when such a contrast would have been especially dramatic. Indeed, the new statues of his day were in many ways nothing like the old.

The archaic kouros was more a symbol of a man than an actual man. His stylized forms, his rigid hieratic stance, set him outside the realm of the living, the world of change. In this he is directly comparable to Egyptian figures: the product of a conceptual art—'art for eternity' as it has been aptly dubbed.⁵² By instilling their creations with greater life Greek sculptors had certainly attained greater vividness in their presentations, and undoubtedly won great esteem for their artifice; but by strengthening the illusion of life in their figures they inevitably brought them closer to the living world and sacrificed some of the timeless monumentality of the archaic style, some of its mysterious and supernatural power. And to those in the business of providing monuments one may take it for granted that any significant loss in monumental quality would be keenly felt.

Here then we have a specific artistic problem, developed within a tradition. Technical advances in the sculptor's art actually threaten his ability to perform his traditional—and at this time primarily religious—function: the perennial task of the artist-craftsman, which Sir Ernst

⁵⁰ Porphyrius, *de Abst.* ii, 18; following the text of J. Bouffartigue and M. Patillon, *Porphyre de l'abstinence* ii (Paris 1979).

⁵¹ As far as later generations were concerned the greatest triumphs of Greek religious art were created by Pheidias and his generation, most probably some time after Aeschylus' death. One thinks specifically of Pheidias' cult image of Zeus at Olympia, and Quintilian's famous remark that 'it seems to have added

something to traditional religion, to such an extent is the majesty of the work equal to the majesty of the god' (xii 10.9). Similar expressions of admiration for this work are contained in many late writers (see for example the collection of passages on this statue in Pollitt 1965, 221 ff.).

⁵² E. H. Gombrich, *The story of art*¹³ (Oxford 1978) ch. ii.

Gombrich has fittingly described as 'to create a satisfying order out of his well-trying elements'.⁵³

How was this problem to be resolved? The logic of the situation may be adduced, I think, in the following manner. The popular excitement and admiration which, it has been suggested, were attendant on the conquest of naturalistic representation meant that there was no way sculptors could simply go back to producing surrogate kouroi; in the light of the new knowledge and the break in tradition, such figures, if produced by a modern sculptor, could only appear ridiculous—precious and artificial, without any of their original primitive strength. Furthermore, sculptors were no doubt both conscious and proud of the progression of their art, an attitude which was recorded, slightly later, by Plato:⁵⁴

τὸν Δαίδαλόν φασιν οἱ ἀνδριαντοποιοί, νῦν εἰ γενόμενος τοιαῦτ' ἐργάζοιτο οἷα ἦν ἄφ' ὧν τοῦνομ' ἔσχευεν, καταγέλαστον ἂν εἶναι.

. . . the sculptors say that Daedalus, if he were to be born now and create such works as those from which he got his reputation, would be a laughing-stock.

Art then was inexorably set on its course towards greater naturalism; but certain concessions would definitely have to be made if some of the symbolic and monumental quality of archaic work was to be retained. And it is here we should see the basic motivation behind the development of the classical style. Sculptors must endeavour to reconcile the artistic requirement that their creations be more 'alive' and naturalistic with the functional and religious need for a monumental symbolism, a perceptible sense of order. And the characteristic tendencies of Classical sculpture may all be seen as attempts to do just this. (Whether sculptors actually formulated what they were doing in precisely these terms is another matter. It is inconceivable, however, that they were unaware of the problem.) It is not to my purpose in the present essay to go through all the well known features of the Classical style in order to try and demonstrate this; a short list will suffice to make the point.

(1) *The adoption of a blank, or better, 'neutral' facial expression*

The disruption of the impassive archaic expression by either the observation of fleeting facial expressions and grimaces, denoting emotional involvement, or the rendering of strongly individualized physiognomies,⁵⁵ appears to have been considered one of the new developments of the Severe style which had most impaired the symbolic quality of Greek religious sculpture; for this tendency quickly vanishes. Instead an all-purpose generalized face type is adopted which is empty of any precise expression, but which is none the less suggestive. It fulfils on the one hand the desire that sculpture possess a symbolic and universal quality; for the figures' almost identical and expressionless faces seem to distance them somewhat from the action, making them seem 'other-worldly' and remote. Yet their expressions do not make them seem less lifelike. Here, surely, we have the minimum solution. Moreover, the neutral Classical expression appears to take on a subtly different emotional tenor in different situations—largely through the postures and gestures of the figures. In a violent struggle it can seem resolute and intent (PLATES IVc and d); in a stately procession serene and composed; in a grave stele melancholy yet resigned; in a victor statue modest and reflective; and in cult image inscrutable—passionless and perfect. Its apparent vacancy is in fact its greatest strength; for it renders the expression potentially ambiguous, or—more correctly—multivalent; and the beholder will tend to supply feelings appropriate to the context.

⁵³ E. H. Gombrich, *Ideals and idols* (Oxford 1979) 80; in this fascinating essay, 'The logic of Vanity Fair' (60–92), Gombrich considers technical advance as a 'polarising issue' in artistic traditions. See also his 'Norm and Form' in Gombrich 1978, 81–98, especially 94 f.: 'Clearly, the more a painting or statue mirrors natural appearances, the fewer principles of order and symmetry it will automatically exhibit. Conversely, the

more ordered a configuration, the less will it be likely to reproduce nature. . . . An increase in naturalism means a decrease in order.'

⁵⁴ Plato *Hipp. Min.* 282a.

⁵⁵ Instances of both these tendencies can be seen in tentative form in some of the pedimental figures from the temple of Zeus at Olympia.

(2) *The development of complex compositional devices*

(a) Principles of balance are adopted, both for individual figures and groups; this is especially clear in the design of metopes. This allows free and vigorous movement while at the same time giving the overall impression of a poised equilibrium of forces, of unity and order (e.g. PLATE Va). Drapery is extensively used in this regard, helping to balance the picture, filling out the design where required (e.g. PLATE Vb).

(b) The movements of individual figures, and of groups, are increasingly composed of broad sweeping curves, which gives a sinuous flow to the composition and avoids harsh accents, so making all motion seem fluid and inevitable, harmonious and resolved. This may be observed particularly clearly in the rows of riders on the Parthenon frieze.

(3) *The artful deployment of drapery.*

Classical sculptors have been said to possess a 'theoretical approach to drapery'.⁵⁶ Drapery is not depicted naturalistically or for its own sake, but is exploited as a compositional tool. Early Classical figures in motion often appear unnaturally frozen in mid-movement, and as a result slightly awkward (e.g. the Diskobolos of Myron, the Tyrannicide group, and many figures both from the west pediment of the temple of Zeus at Olympia and from the pediments of the temple of Aphaia on Aegina). Classical sculptors solved this problem in two ways. They either gave the figure a quieter, more elegant pose, but suggested vigorous movement by billowing and excited drapery (e.g. PLATE Vc); or they used drapery to balance a figure in a lively or leaning posture (e.g. PLATE Vb), making its pose seem less arbitrary and awkward; to this end they often swathed the body in rich, curving folds, giving the figure greater stability and softening its outline, avoiding a frozen effect (e.g. PLATE Vd).

Thus on the one hand drapery could be used to give figures in action poses a monumental inertia and ponderation which they would otherwise not possess (e.g. the sandal-binder from the Nike parapet); on the other hand it could add a satisfying opulence and liveliness to the surface of an otherwise rather static figure (e.g. PLATE VIa).

(4) *The Polykleitan contrapposto and the emphatic articulation of the male torso*

I wish to deal with these two features in somewhat greater detail for the following reason. Here I am representing the Classical style as the product of two conflicting artistic requirements which were presented to the fifth century sculptor with some force. His figures must be ever more lifelike and 'living'; yet the symbolic and monumental quality, which the archaic kouros had possessed simply by virtue of his conventional form, must somehow be replaced or simulated in figures fashioned completely naturalistically. Seen in this light the Doryphoros of Polykleitos (PLATE VIb) is a particularly important work; for its elaborately contrived pose is surely the 'classic solution' *par excellence*: the perfect compromise between suggested motion and monumental inertia. The much discussed chiasmic composition produces a sinuous and regular, but seemingly quite natural, curve flowing up through the body; which is, however, resolved and balanced by the turn and slight inclination of the head towards the vertical of the weight-bearing leg. The pronounced curve of the posture, the familiar *Schrittstand*, and the partial turn of the body in the direction of the statue's gaze, all strongly imply movement; but the figure does not appear frozen in mid-action because the careful ponderation of the pose, the *contrapposto*, has provided such a strong feeling of equilibrium and stability.

If we now consider the modelling of the body, it may be seen how the emphatic articulation of the torso contributes considerably to the effect of the overall design. I mentioned just above how Classical sculptors cleverly used the play of folds in heavy drapery to generate lively lines of shadow coursing over the sculpted surface, producing a feeling of vigour and movement in an

⁵⁶ Ridgway 1981, 13.

otherwise rather static figure (PLATE VIa). In the Doryphoros an analogous effect may be observed: the conspicuous pattern of tensed and relaxed muscles in the trunk enlivens the curving central axis of the figure with a ripple of muscular movement, suggestive of energy and instinct with life. And the graphic delineation of these muscles also reinforces the studied equilibrium of the design, by allowing the movement implicit in the pose visibly to balance itself out through muscular adjustments even within the torso itself. Moreover, as has frequently been remarked, the heavy, prominent pectorals and the accentuated costal arch, balanced by the unnaturally exaggerated flank muscles and the strongly emphasized line of the groin, all supply the naked male body with an architectural framework, a palpable sense of order.

The Polykleitan *cuirasse esthétique*, which is almost a hallmark of the Classical style, may thus be viewed as a brilliant solution to the conflicting requirements of naturalism and monumentality. On the one hand it blatantly advertises both increased anatomical knowledge and skill in naturalistic representation (as for instance in the muscular tension and relaxation clearly visible in the different parts of the body); yet on the other hand it combines these with an ingenious system of selective emphasis which endows the human frame with a powerful and monumental structure.⁵⁷

CONCLUSION

Generalization, ponderation, clear articulation; these terms crop up again and again in all descriptions of the Classical style. Here I should like to present them as complementary artistic stratagems; ingenious, but relatively straightforward, technical devices which can all be traced back to a single motive: to restore a feeling of monumentality in sculpture without sacrificing the liveliness and excitement of advancing naturalism. In this context it is interesting to note the following comments made by Sir Ernst Gombrich writing about the art of Raphael and the painters of his generation:⁵⁸

It is this ideal compromise between two conflicting demands which was subsequently felt to be classical, in the sense of presenting an unsurpassed solution that could only be repeated not improved upon. Deviation on the one side would threaten the correctness of design, on the other the feeling of order. Seen from this point of view the 'classic solution' is indeed a technical rather than a psychological achievement.

To conclude I should like to consider some of the consequences of this analysis.

First, if the Classical style is defined as a solution to a specific problem rather than the distinctive mark of a particular historical period, this has the novel effect of making some works normally considered to be of the Severe style, and indisputably created during the Severe period, more 'Classical' in style than some sculptures created during the Classical period proper. Thus some of the metopes of the temple of Zeus at Olympia, on account of their carefully balanced compositions and the almost expressionless faces of the participants, are, on this definition, more Classical in style than many of the metopes of the Parthenon, which display much more violent and ungainly movement, and even grotesque facial distortions—at least among the centaurs.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Cf. Martin Robertson's masterly analysis of the Doryphoros: '... the Polykleitan pose is a return to an archaic ideal after the experiments of the early classical period. . . . The explanation of [the exaggerated musculature and the special emphasis given to the pectorals and flank muscles] is surely not either the desire to show off anatomical knowledge or the display of a muscular athletic ideal. The anatomy is markedly simplified, and the forms chosen for emphasis are arbitrary from either of those points of view. It must be done for aesthetic reasons: part of the imposition of a new formal discipline to replace the archaic schema

abandoned half a century before. The looser balance of the classical statue is felt to need again a more emphatic surface pattern' (my italics): C. M. Robertson, *A history of Greek art* (Cambridge 1975) 330. In contrast to Robertson I would not wish to exclude the possibility that 'a desire to show off anatomical knowledge' and 'the display of a muscular athletic ideal' both had a part to play in the creation of Polykleitan figures. But in my opinion this does not affect the validity of the general observation.

⁵⁸ Gombrich 1978, 95.

⁵⁹ This appears to make the relationship between the Severe and Classical styles seem rather complex; but it

Secondly it does not invalidate or exclude a good many of the previous suggestions which have been made by other scholars. For instance, in response to the artistic problem I have tried to outline, one or two men of genius may well have contributed more than their fair share of the artistic devices which were eventually employed to produce a satisfactory solution. In fact I should have thought this was almost certainly the case. None the less, this is very different from saying that the whole style was the singular invention of one gifted individual, flying in the face of the artistic tradition up to this time. This definition also reconciles the two basic camps on this issue: there is indeed a noticeable change in direction, a reaction away from the straightforward imitation of nature, as Richter and Ridgway sense; but there is also a clear continuity of artistic objectives and procedures, as Ashmole and Carpenter rightly point out. For faced with a serious artistic problem sculptors naturally turned to the trusted and time-honoured methods of their craft to supply the answers: systems of proportion, symmetry of design and so on. But this is not to say that the Classical style in all its features was predestined, the inevitable outcome of fixed laws of development, or of certain aesthetic principles which were somehow inherent in the Greek mind, as Carpenter would seemingly have us believe.

Lastly, even on this analysis it may be admitted that political idealism in Athens may well have played an important part in shaping the form which the 'classic solution' finally took. Many Athenians may indeed have regarded the new style of the Parthenon as inextricably linked with Pericles and contemporary humanist and democratic ideals. But I think we should be very cautious about asserting that the 'idealism' of Classical sculpture is to be thought of as in any way *dependent* on these ideals.⁶⁰ I must stress that here I am not doubting the legitimacy of searching in our historical sources for evidence as to the intended meaning and cultural significance of the extant monuments. This is obviously a necessary and correct procedure (although we should not conceal from ourselves that it is a procedure which is fraught with difficulties).⁶¹ What I wish to question is the notion that the Classical style came into being as a direct result of sculptors trying to express in stone and bronze the ideas of Pericles, Protagoras and the sophists. On two grounds. Firstly, all our evidence suggests that the rational and optimistic humanism of the 'Sophistic Enlightenment', by which some have sought to characterize this whole period, did not penetrate very deeply into Greek society even at Athens.⁶² Secondly, it was very short-lived; the extant

can be expressed I think as follows. The basic traits exhibited by works of the Severe period (collected by B. S. Ridgway, *The Severe style in Greek sculpture* [Princeton 1970] 8–11) do, not add up to a single coherent style, but represent something of a hotch-potch of experimental tendencies and passing interests. This was clearly a time of bold experiment and rapid innovation, and one should not expect any uniform stylistic development. However, one strand within all this stylistic variation seems, as one might expect, directly to anticipate the Classical style in many of its features (the Olympia metopes and the Omphalos Apollo are obvious examples; and there are some particularly outstanding instances offered by grave stelai, e.g. Ridgway, *op. cit.* figs. 61, 66, 67, 69). The Classical style, on this view, was thus the elaboration and perfection of certain artistic devices and compositional techniques, which can already be seen in some Severe style works, and which were felt to be more successful in fulfilling the requirements of a fifth century public monument than were rival modes of naturalistic representation in the Severe Period (as for example the observation of more realistic facial expressions on figures in motion, like the Marsyas of the Athena and Marsyas group from the Athenian acropolis, or the victor statue of Ladas by Myron, described in the epigram quoted earlier).

⁶⁰ Can we use the sentiments Thucydides put in the mouth of Pericles to account for the appearance of Polykleitos' Doryphoros? Can we really assert in all confidence that Polykleitos or Pheidias subscribed to the enlightened humanism of Protagoras and the other sophists? Might they not just as likely have been rather conservative and traditional in their beliefs, and the appearance of their sculptures owe more to their feelings about what was appropriate in a religious monument than to contemporary intellectual speculation about the nature of man?

⁶¹ On the intractable problems of ever deciding what was the intended meaning of a work of art, see E. H. Gombrich, 'Aims and limits of iconology', in *Symbolic images*² (Oxford 1978) 1–22, especially 'The elusiveness of meaning', 1–5.

⁶² On this subject see E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the irrational* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1951) 179–206, especially 180: 'In that period [between Aeschylus and Plato] the gap between the beliefs of the people and the beliefs of the intellectuals, which is already implicit in Homer, widens to a complete breach'; and 189. See also Dodds' essay 'The religion of the ordinary man in Classical Greece' in *The ancient concept of progress and other essays* (Oxford 1973) 140–155, especially his judicious comments at 143.

literature reveals a very swift decline in confidence.⁶³ For all the long-lasting effects which the sophistic movement was to have on Greek society, the sanguine idealism of the intellectuals of the mid-fifth century seems to have been an evanescent and relatively confined phenomenon. The 'idealism' of the Classical style, on the other hand, was by no means so ephemeral nor so restricted; it goes marching on down into the fourth century at all levels of Greek art, from prestigious cult-image to lowly grave stele, and this to my mind severely weakens the case for a causal relationship existing between the two. Classical sculptors were all working within a living craft tradition, that of making religious and funerary monuments; and this tradition clearly possessed its own inner-logic, its own pressing needs and requirements—practical considerations which can be expected to have exerted a powerful influence over the artistic products of its practitioners. All this may make one feel that the 'Idealistic spirit of the Enlightenment' is a little suspect as a primary cause or explanation for the actual appearance of Classical sculpture—its strategies of representation; and a more down-to-earth explanation like that proposed here may have something to offer in its place.

Thus I would submit that the roots of this distinctive style lie in specific developments within an artistic tradition which existed independently of Athenian culture, and which was patently shared by the whole Hellenic world; that it also arose—probably more or less simultaneously—outside Athens (e.g. in the Peloponnese at Olympia and Argos, as witnessed by the metopes from the temple of Zeus and the victor statues of Polykleitos and his followers), and that it is no matter for surprise, therefore, that its basic stylistic traits, what we have misleadingly dubbed its 'idealism', remained fundamentally unaltered through to the tragic end of the Athenian *Blütezeit* and into the following century. In this connection it is worth recalling Gombrich's words, quoted above:⁶⁴

... the 'classic solution' is indeed a technical rather than a psychological achievement. . . . There is no reason to suppose that those artists who finally achieved a perfect equilibrium in their compositions had very well balanced minds, nor to attribute to those who upset the equilibrium profound mental crises.

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⁶³ See Dodds 1951 (n. 62) 189 ff.; Pollitt 1972, 111–114.

⁶⁴ Gombrich 1978, 95.



(a) Cimabue, Madonna and Child Enthroned with Angels and Prophets, c. 1275/1280, Uffizi, Florence (Photo Alinari).



(b) Giotto, Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints and Angels, c. 1310, Uffizi, Florence (Photo Alinari).



(c) Lapith and Centaur, Parthenon South Metope 1, Athens (Photo Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Athens, Neg. No. Akr 1878).



(d) Detail, face of Lapith in Plate IV (c) (Photo Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Athens, Neg. No. Akr 1901).



(a) Lapith and Centaur, Parthenon South Metope 27, British Museum, London (Photo reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum).



(b) Parthenon West Frieze Slab VIII, 15, after a cast, British Museum, London (Photo reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum).



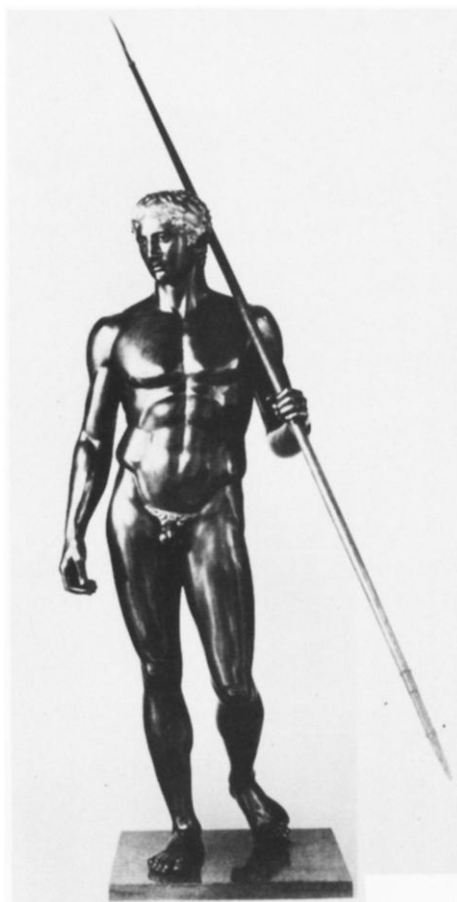
(c) Maenad, Roman copy of a relief from an unknown late fifth century monument, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Fletcher Fund, 1935 (35.11.3) (Photo Metropolitan Museum).



(d) Akroterion, probably from the Stoa of Zeus, Agora Museum, Athens (Photo © Agora Excavations, 1976, American School of Classical Studies at Athens).



(a) Figures L and M, Parthenon East Pediment, British Museum, London (Photo reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum).



(b) The Doryphoros of Polykleitos, modern reconstruction, bronze composite case, Munich (Photo Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Rome, Inst. Neg. No. 64.863).