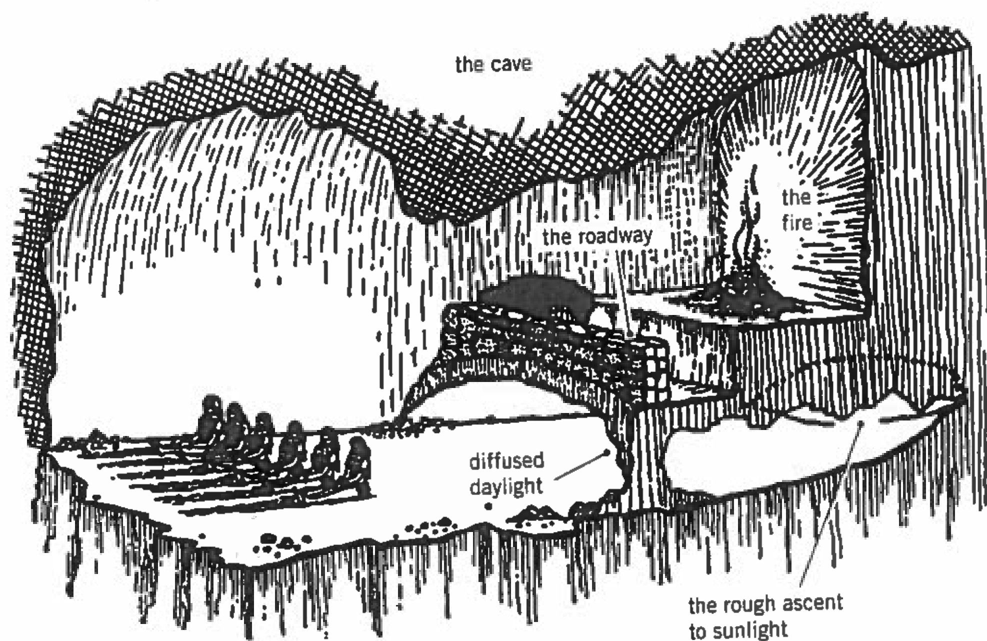


Fig. 5.12 "Allegory of the Cave," from *The Great Dialogues of Plato*, trans. W.H.D. Rouse. Translation © 1956, renewed 1984 by J.C.G. Rouse. Used by permission of Dutton Signet, a division of Penguin Books USA Inc. The scene imaged here is fully described by Plato in Reading 5.5, page 169.

Everyone would undergo physical and mental training reminiscent of Sparta in the sixth century BCE. Although he believed in the intellectual pursuit of the Form or Idea of Beauty, Plato did not champion the arts. He condemned certain kinds of lively music because they affected not the reasonable mind of their audience but the emotional and sensory tendencies of the body. (But even for Plato, a man who did not know how to dance was uneducated—Plato simply preferred more restrained forms of music.) He also condemned sculptors and painters, whose works, he believed, were mere representations of representations—for if an actual bed is once removed from the Idea of Bed, a painting of a bed is twice removed, the faintest shadow. Furthermore, the images created by painters and sculptors appealed only to the senses. Thus he banished them from his ideal republic. Because they gave voice to tensions within the state, poets were banned as well.

Plato's *Symposium*

If Plato banned sex in his *Republic*, he did not ban it in his life. Indeed, one of the most remarkable of his dialogues is *The Symposium*. A symposium is literally a drinking party, exclusively for men, except for a few slaves and a nude female flute player or two. Dinner was served first, followed by ritualized drinking. Wine was poured to honor the "good spirit," hymns were sung, a member of the group was elected to decide the strength of the wine, which was mixed with water (usually five parts water to two of wine), and then host and guests, seated usually two to a couch around a square room, took turns in song or speech, one after another around the room.

Plato's *Symposium* recounts just such an evening. At the outset, the female flute player provided by the host is sent away, indicating the special nature of the event, which turns out to be a series of speeches on the nature of love, homoerotic love in particular. To the Greeks, it was considered normal for males to direct their sexual appetites toward both males and females, generally without particular preference for one or the other. Since the symposium was an all-male environment (Fig. 5.13), it is hardly surprising that homoerotic behavior was commonplace, or at least commonly discussed.

In *The Symposium*, each member of the party makes a speech about the nature of Love—or more precisely Eros, the god of love *and* desire—culminating with Socrates, whose presentation is by far the most sophisticated. Phaedrus makes clear, and all agree, that the loved one becomes virtuous by being loved. Pausanius [paw-ZAY-nee-us] contributes an important distinction between Common Love, which is simply physical, and Heavenly Love, which is also physical but is generated only in those who are capable of rational and ethical development. Thus, he suggests, an older man contributes to the ethical education of a youth through his love for him. No one disagrees, though the question remains whether *physical* love is necessary to the relationship.

Since Plato was himself a bachelor who led an essentially monastic existence, it is hardly surprising that by the time Socrates contributes to this discussion, Eros comes to be defined as more than just interpersonal love; it is also desire, desire for something it *lacks*. What Eros lacks and needs is beauty. The purpose of love, then, according to Socrates, and by extension Plato, is to give birth to beauty "in both body and mind," and, finally, to attain insight into the ultimate Form of Beauty. These are lessons, Socrates claims, that he learned from a woman named Diotima [dye-oh-TEE-ma], who "was wise about this and many other things," a character many believe to be modeled on Aspasia, Pericles's mistress and partner. In our

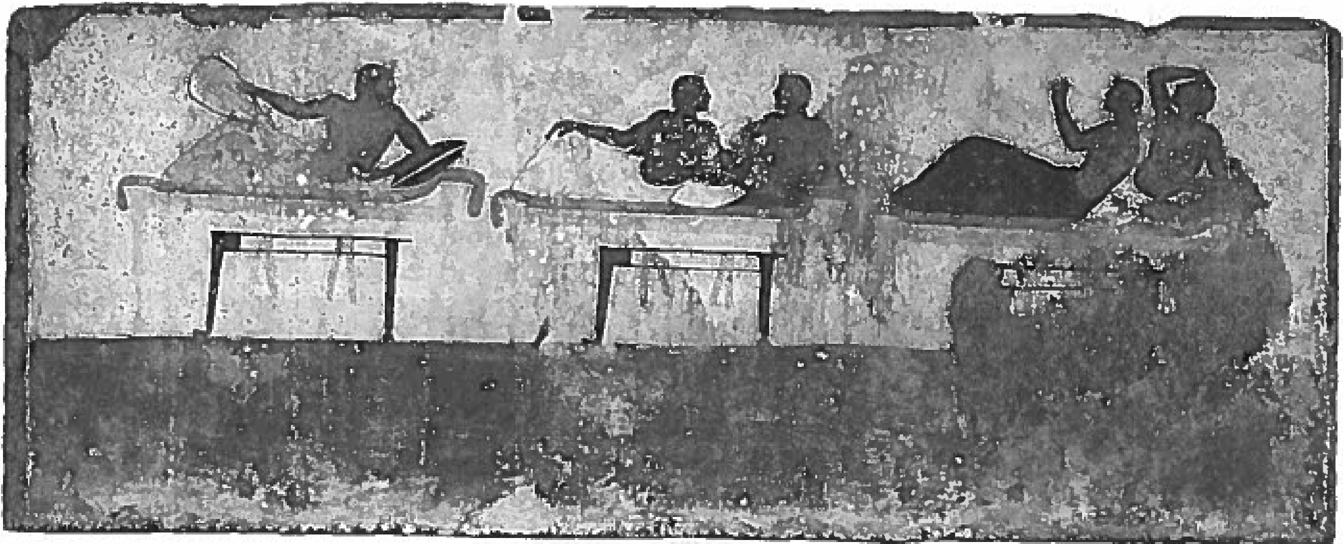


Fig. 5.13 ***Banqueting Scene*, panel from the Tomb of the Diver, Paestum, Italy. Early fifth century BCE.** Fresco, Museo Archeològico Nazionale, Paestum. Scala, Florence. Part of a painted tomb, this is a rare surviving example of Greek painting.

excerpt, Socrates quotes Diotima at length (see **Reading 5.6** on page 171).

The high philosophical tone of Socrates' speech comes to an abrupt end when the drunken politician Alcibiades crashes the party, regaling all with a speech in praise of Socrates, including an account of his own physical attraction to the older philosopher, his desire for an erotic-educational relationship with him, and the surprising denouement, a description of a time when he succeeded in getting into bed with him (**Reading 5.6a**).

READING 5.6a

Plato, *The Symposium*

I threw my arms round this really god-like and amazing man, and lay there with him all night long. And you can't say this is a lie, Socrates. After I'd done all this he completely triumphed over my good looks—and despised, scorned and insulted them—although I placed a very high value on these looks, gentlemen of the jury. . . . I swear to you by the gods, and by the goddesses, that when I got up the next morning I had no more slept with Socrates than if I'd been sleeping with my father or elder brother.

Socrates, Plato finally shows us, knows a higher form of Love than the physical and is an example to all present at the symposium.

THE THEATER OF THE PEOPLE

The Dionysian aspects of the symposium—the drinking, the philosophical dialogue, and sexual license—tell us something about the origins of Greek drama. The drama was originally a participatory ritual, tied to the cult of Dionysus. A chorus of people participating in the ritual would address and respond to another chorus or to a leader, such as a priest, perhaps representing (thus "acting the part" of) Dionysus. These dialogues usually occurred in the context of riotous dance and song—befitting revels dedicated to the god of wine. By the sixth century BCE, groups of men regularly celebrated Dionysus, coming together for the enjoyment of dance, music, and wine. Sexual license was the rule of the day. On a mid-sixth-century amphora used as a wine container (**Fig. 5.14**) we see five satyrs,

Fig. 5.14 Amasis Painter (?) ***Satyrs Making Wine*, detail of Athenian black-figure amphora. ca. 540–530 BCE.** Martin von Wagner Museum, University of Würzburg, Germany. The entire ritual of wine production is depicted here, from harvesting the grapes, to stomping them to render their juice, to pouring the juice into large vats for fermentation. All lead to the state of ecstasy (*ekstasis*) painted across the top band.

minor deities with characteristics of goats or horses, making wine, including one playing pipes. Depicted in the band across the top is Dionysus himself, sitting in the midst of a rollicking band of satyrs and maenads—the frenzied women with whom he cavorted.

This kind of behavior gave rise to one of the three major forms of Greek drama, the **satyr play**. Always the last event of the daylong performances, the satyr play was **farce**, that is, broadly satirical comedy, in which actors disguised themselves as satyrs, replete with extravagant genitalia, and generally honored the "lord of misrule," Dionysus, by misbehaving themselves. One whole satyr play survives, the *Cyclops* of Euripides, and half of another, Sophocles's *Trackers*. The spirit of these plays can perhaps be summed up best by Odysseus's first words in the *Cyclops* as he comes ashore on the island of Polyphemus (recall Reading 4.2, page 130, and Fig. 4.15): "What? Do I see right? We must have come to the city of Bacchus. These are satyrs I see around the cave." The play, in other words, spoofs or lampoons traditional Greek legend by setting it in a world turned topsy-turvy, a world in which Polyphemus is stronger than Zeus because his farts are louder than Zeus's thunder.

Comedy

Closely related to the satyr plays was comedy, an amusing or lighthearted play designed to make its audience laugh. The word itself is derived from the *komos* [KO-mus], a phallic dance, and nothing is sacred to comedy. It freely slandered, buffooned, and ridiculed politicians, generals, public figures, and especially the gods. Foreigners, as always in Greek culture, are subject to particular abuse, as are women; in fact, by our standards, the plays are racist and sexist. Most of what we know about Greek comedies comes from two sources: vase painting and the plays of the playwright Aristophanes.

Comedic action was a favorite subject of vase painters working at Paestum in Italy in the fourth century BCE. They depict actors wearing masks and grotesque costumes distinguished by padded bellies, buttocks, and enlarged genitalia. These vases show a theater of burlesque and slapstick that relied heavily on visual gags (Fig. 5.15).

Fig. 5.15 Assteas. Red-figure krater depicting a comedy, from Paestum, Italy. ca. 350 BCE. Staatliche Museen, Berlin. On a stage supported by columns, with a scenic backdrop to the left, robbers try to separate a man from his strongbox.

The works of Aristophanes (ca. 445–388 BCE) are the only comedies to have survived, and only 11 of his 44 plays have come down to us. *Lysistrata* is the most famous. Sexually explicit to a degree that can still shock a modern audience, it takes place during the Peloponnesian Wars and tells the story of an Athenian matron who convinces the women of Athens and Sparta to withhold sex from their husbands until they sign a peace treaty. First performed in 411 BCE, seven years before Sparta's victory over Athens, it has its serious side, begging both Athenians and Spartans to remember their common traditions and put down their arms. Against this dark background, the play's action must have seemed absurd and hilarious to its Athenian audience, ignorant of what the future would hold for them.

Tragedy

It was at tragedy that the Greek playwrights truly excelled. As with comedy, the basis for tragedy is conflict, but the tensions at work in tragedy—murder and revenge, crime and retribution, pride and humility, courage and cowardice—have far more serious consequences. Tragedies often explore the physical and moral depths to which human life can descend. The form also has its origins in the Dionysian rites—the name itself derives from *tragoidos* [trah-GOY-dus], the "goat song" of the half-goat, half-man satyrs, and tragedy's seriousness of purpose is not at odds with its origins. Dionysus was also the god of immortality, and an important aspect of his cult's influence is that he promised his followers life after death, just as the grapevine regenerates itself year after year. If tragedy can be said to have a subject, it is death—and the lessons the living can learn from the dead.

The original chorus structure of the Dionysian rites survives as an important element in tragedy. Thespis, a playwright from whom we derive the word *thespian*, "actor," first assumed the conscious role of an actor in the mid-sixth century BCE and apparently redefined the role of the **chorus**. At first, the actor asked questions of the chorus, perhaps of the "tell me what happened next" variety, but when two, three, and sometimes four actors were introduced to the stage, the

chorus began to comment on their interaction. In this way, the chorus assumed its classic function as an intermediary between actors and audience. Although the chorus's role diminished noticeably in the fourth century BCE, it remained the symbolic voice of the people, asserting the importance of the action to the community as a whole.

Greek tragedy often focused on the friction between the individual and his or her community, and, at a higher level, between the community and the will of the gods. This conflict manifests itself in the weakness or "tragic flaw" of the play's **protagonist**, or leading character, which brings the character into conflict with the community, the gods, or some **antagonist** who represents an opposing will. The action occurs in a single day, the result of a single incident that precipitates the unfolding crisis. Thus the audience feels that it is experiencing the action in real time, that it is directly involved in and affected by the play's action.

During the reign of the tyrant Peisistratus, the performance of all plays was regularized. An annual competitive festival for the performance of tragedies called the City Dionysia was celebrated for a week every March as the vines came back to life, and a separate festival for comedies occurred in January. At the City Dionysia, plays were performed in sets of four—**tetralogies**—all by the same author, three of which were tragedies, performed during the day, and the fourth a satyr play, performed in the evening. The audiences were as large as 14,000, and audience response determined which plays were awarded prizes. Slaves, metics, and women judged the performances alongside citizens.

Aeschylus Although many Greek playwrights composed tragedies, only those of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides have come down to us. Aeschylus (ca. 525–ca. 456 BCE), the oldest of the three, is reputed to have served in the Athenian armies during the Persian Wars and fought in the battles at Marathon and Salamis. He won the City Dionysia 13 times. It was Aeschylus who introduced a third actor to the tragic stage, and his chorus plays a substantial role in drawing attention to the underlying moral principles that define or determine the action. He also was a master of the visual presentation of his drama, taking full advantage of stage design and costume. Three of his plays, known as the *Oresteia* [oh-ray-STYE-ee-uh], form the only complete set of tragedies from a tetralogy that we have.

The plays narrate the story of the Mycenaean king Agamemnon, murdered by his adulterous wife Clytemnestra and mourned and revenged by their children, Orestes and Electra. In the first play, *Agamemnon*, Clytemnestra murders her husband, partly in revenge for his having sacrificed their daughter Iphigenia to ensure good weather for the invasion of Troy, and partly to marry her lover, Aegisthus. In the second play, *The Libation Bearers*, Orestes murders Aegisthus and Clytemnestra, his mother, to avenge his father's death. Orestes is subsequently pursued by the Furies, a band of *chthonian gods* (literally "gods of the earth," a branch of the Greek pantheon that is distinguished from the Olympian, or "heavenly" gods), whose function is to seek retribution for wrongs and blood-guilt among family members. The Furies form the Chorus of the last play in the cycle, the *Eumenides*, in which the seemingly endless cycle of murder comes to an end. In this play, Athens institutes a court to hear Orestes' case. The court absolves him of the crime of matricide, with Athena herself casting the deciding vote.

None of the violence in the plays occurs on stage—either the chorus or a messenger describes it. And in fact, the ethical dimension of Aeschylus's trilogy is underscored by the triumph of civilization and law, mirrored by the transformation of the Furies—the blind forces of revenge—into the Eumenides, or "Kindly Ones," whose dark powers have been neutralized.

Sophocles Playwright, treasurer for the Athenian polis, a general under Pericles, and advisor to Athens on financial matters during the Peloponnesian Wars, Sophocles (ca. 496–406 BCE) was an almost legendary figure in fifth-century BCE Athens. He wrote over 125 plays, of which only 7 survive, and he won the City Dionysia 18 times. In *Oedipus the King*, Sophocles dramatizes how the king of Thebes, a polis in east central Greece, mistakenly kills his father and marries his mother, then finally blinds himself to atone for his crimes of patricide and incest. In *Antigone*, he dramatizes the struggle of Oedipus's daughter, Antigone, with her uncle, Creon, the tyrannical king who inherited Oedipus's throne. Antigone struggles for what amounts to her democratic rights as an individual to fulfill her familial duties, even when this opposes what Creon argues is the interest of the polis. Her predicament is doubly complicated by her status as a woman.

As the play opens, Antigone's brothers, Polynices and Eteocles, have killed each other in a dispute over their father's throne. Creon, Oedipus's brother-in-law, who has inherited the throne, has forbidden the burial of Polynices, believing Eteocles to have been the rightful heir. Antigone, in the opening scene, defends her right to bury her brother, and this willful act, which she then performs in defiance of Creon's authority, leads to the tragedy that follows. She considers the burial her duty, since no unburied body can enjoy an afterlife. The play begins as Antigone explains her action to her sister, Ismene, who thoroughly disapproves of what she has done (**Reading 5.7a**).

READING 5.7a

Sophocles, *Antigone*

ISMENE Oh my sister, think—
think how our own father died, hated,
his reputation in ruins, driven on
by the crimes he brought to light himself
to gouge out his eyes with his own hands—
then mother . . . his mother and wife, both in one,
mutilating her life in the twisted noose—
and last, our two brothers dead in a single day,

both shedding their own blood, poor suffering boys,
battling out their common destiny hand-to-hand.
Now look at the two of us, left so alone. . . .
think what a death we'll die, the worst of all
if we violate the laws and override
the fixed decree of the throne, its power—
we must be sensible. Remember we are women,
we're not born to contend with men. Then too,
we're underlings, ruled by much stronger hands,
so we must submit in this, and things still worse.
I, for one, I'll beg the dead to forgive me—
I'm forced, I have no choice—I must obey
the ones who stand in power. Why rush to extremes?
It's madness, madness.

The conflict between Antigone and Creon is exacerbated by their gender difference. The Greek male would expect a female to submit to his will. But it is, in the end, Antigone's "rush to extremes" that forces the play's action—that, and Creon's refusal to give in. Creon's "fatal flaw"—his pride (hubris)—leads to the destruction of all whom he loves, and Antigone herself is blindly dedicated to her duty to honor her family. Her actions in the play have been the subject of endless debate. Some readers feel that she is far too hard on Ismene, and certainly a Greek audience would have found her defiance of male authority shocking. Nevertheless, her strength of conviction seems to many—especially modern audiences—wholly admirable.

But beyond the complexities of Antigone's personality, one of Sophocles's greatest achievements, the play really pits two forms of idealism against one another: Antigone's uncompromising belief in herself plays off Creon's equally uncompromising infatuation with his own power and his dedication to his political duty, which he puts above devotion even to family.

The philosophical basis of the play is clearly evident in the essentially Sophist debate between Creon and his son Haemon [HEE-mun], as Haemon attempts to point out the wrong in his father's action (Reading 5.7b):

READING 5.7b

Sophocles, *Antigone*

HAEMON Father, the gods implant reason in men, the highest of all things that we call our own. Not mine the skill—far from me be the quest!—to say wherein thou speakest not aright; and yet another man, too, might have some useful thought. . . . No, though a man be wise, 'tis no shame for him to learn many things, and to bend in season. Seest thou, beside the wintry torrent's course, how the trees that yield to it save every twig, while the stiff-necked perish root and branch? And even thus he who keeps the sheet of his sail taut, and never slackens it, upsets his boat, and finishes his voyage with keel uppermost.

Nay, forego thy wrath; permit thyself to change. For if I, a younger man, may offer my thought, it were far best, I ween, that men should be all-wise by nature; but, otherwise—and oft the scale inclines not so—'tis good also to learn from those who speak aright. . . .

CREON Men of my age are we indeed to be schooled, then, by men of his?

HAEMON In nothing that is not right; but if I am young, thou shouldest look to my merits, not to my years.

CREON Is it a merit to honour the unruly?

HAEMON I could wish no one to show respect for evil-doers.

CREON Then is not she tainted with that malady?

HAEMON Our Theban folk, with one voice, denies it. . . .

CREON Am I to rule this land by other judgment than mine own?

HAEMON That is no city which belongs to one man.

CREON Is not the city held to be the ruler's?

HAEMON Thou wouldst make a good monarch of a desert.

CREON This boy, it seems, is the woman's champion.

HAEMON If thou art a woman; indeed, my care is for thee.

CREON Shameless, at open feud with thy father!

HAEMON Nay, I see thee offending against justice.

CREON Do I offend, when I respect mine own prerogatives?

HAEMON Thou dost not respect them, when thou tramplest on the gods' honours . . . .

CREON Thou shalt rue thy witless teaching of wisdom.

HAEMON Wert thou not my father, I would have called thee unwise.

CREON Thou woman's slave, use not wheedling speech with me.

HAEMON Thou wouldest speak, and then hear no reply?

CREON Sayest thou so? Now, by the heaven above us—be sure of it—thou shalt smart for taunting me in this opprobrious strain. Bring forth that hated thing, that she may die forthwith in his presence—before his eyes—at her bridegroom's side!

Finally, the play demonstrates the extreme difficulty of reconciling the private and public spheres—one of Greek philosophy's most troubling and troubled themes—even as it cries out for the rational action and sound judgment that might have spared its characters their tragedy.

Euripides The youngest of the three playwrights, Euripides (ca. 480–406 BCE), writing during the Peloponnesian Wars,

Fig. 5.16 Theater, Epidaurus. Early third century BCE. This theater is renowned for its democratic design—not only is every viewer equally well situated, but the acoustics of the space are unparalleled. A person sitting in the very top row can hear a pin drop on the *orchestra* floor.

brought a level of measured skepticism to the stage. Eighteen of his 90 works survive, but Euripides won the City Dionysia only 4 times. His plays probably angered more conservative Athenians, which may be why he moved from Athens to Macedonia in 408 BCE. In *The Trojan Women*, for instance, performed in 415 BCE, he describes, disapprovingly, the Greek enslavement of the women of Troy, drawing an unmistakable analogy to the contemporary Athenian victory at Melos, where women were subjected to Athenian abuse.

His darkest play, and his masterpiece, is *The Bacchae*, which describes the introduction to Thebes of the worship of Dionysus by the god himself, disguised as a mortal. Pentheus, the young king of the city, opposes the Dionysian rites both because all the city's women have given themselves up to Dionysian ecstasy and because the new religion disturbs the larger social order. Performed at a festival honoring Dionysus, the play warns of the dangers of Dionysian excess as the frenzied celebrants, including Pentheus's own mother, mistake their king for a wild animal and murder him. Euripides's play underscores the fact that the rational mind is unable to comprehend, let alone control, all human impulses. Greek theater itself, particularly the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, would become the object of study in the fourth century BCE, when the philosopher Aristotle, Plato's student, attempted to account for tragedy's power in his *Poetics*. And despite the fact that the tragedies were largely forgotten in the Western world until the sixteenth century, they have had a lasting impact upon Western literature, deeply influencing writers from William Shakespeare to the modern American novelist William Faulkner.

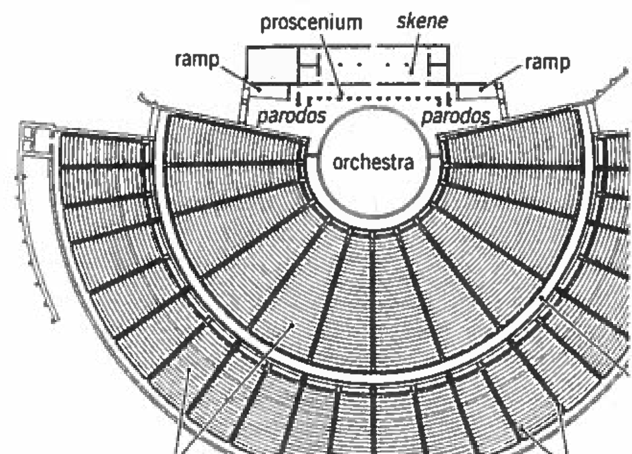


Fig. 5.17 Plan of the theater at Epidaurus. Early third century BCE.

The Performance Space

During the tyranny of Peisistratus, plays were performed in an open area of the agora called the ***orchestra***, or "dancing space." Spectators sat on wooden planks laid on portable scaffolding. Sometime in the fifth century BCE, the scaffolding collapsed, and many people were injured. The Athenians built a new theater (*theatron*, meaning "viewing space"), dedicated to Dionysus, into the hillside on the side of the Acropolis away from the agora and below the Parthenon. Architecturally, it was very similar to the best preserved of all Greek theaters, the one at Epidaurus (Figs. **5.16** and **5.17**), built in the early third century BCE. The *orchestra* has

been transformed into a circular performance space, approached on each side by an entryway called a ***parodos***, through which the chorus would enter the *orchestra* area. Behind this was an elevated platform, the **proscenium**, the stage on which the actors performed and where painted backdrops could be hung. Behind the proscenium was the ***skene***, literally a "tent," and originally a changing room for the actors. Over time, it was transformed into a building, often two stories tall. Actors on the roof could portray the gods, looking down on the action below. By the time of Euripides, it housed a rolling or rotating platform that could suddenly reveal an interior space.

Artists were regularly employed to paint stage sets, and evidence suggests that they had at least a basic knowledge of perspective (although the geometry necessary for a fully realized perspectival space would not be developed until around 300 BCE, in Euclid's *Optics*). Their aim was, as in sculpture, to approximate reality as closely as possible. We know from literary sources that the painter Zeuxis "invented" ways to shade or model the figure in the fifth century BCE. Legend also had it that he once painted grapes so realistically that birds tried to eat them. The theatrical sets would have at least aimed at this degree of naturalism.

THE HELLENISTIC WORLD

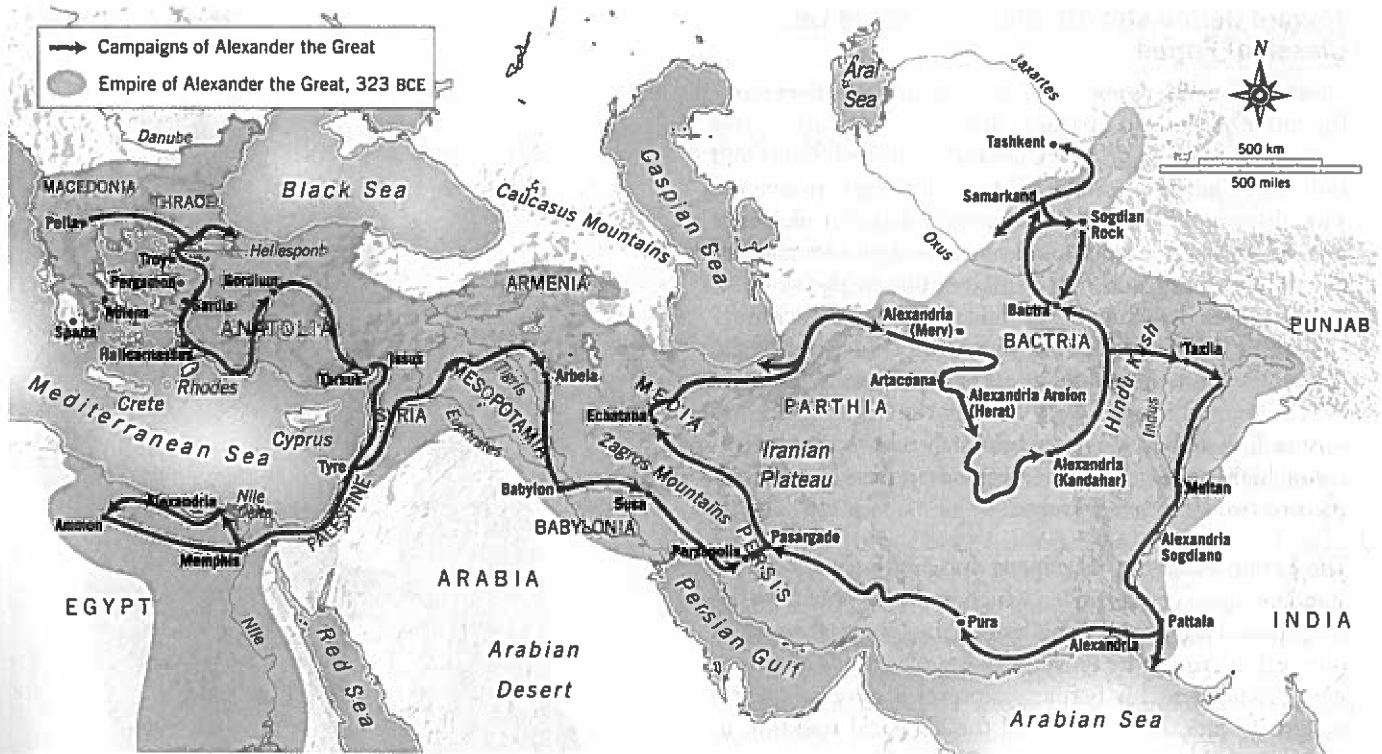
Both the emotional drama of Greek theater and the sensory appeal of its music reveal a growing tendency in the culture to value emotional expression at least as much, and sometimes more, than the balanced harmonies of classical art. During the Hellenistic age in the fourth and third centuries BCE, the truths that the culture increasingly sought to understand were less idealistic and universal, and more and more empirical and personal. This shift is especially evident in the new empirical philosophy of Aristotle (384–322 BCE), whose investigation into the workings of the real world supplanted, or at least challenged, Plato's idealism. In many ways, however, the ascendancy of this new aesthetic standard can be attributed to the daring, the audacity, and the sheer awe-inspiring power of a single figure, Alexander of Macedonia, known as Alexander the Great (356–323 BCE). Alexander aroused the emotions and captured the imagination of not just a theatrical audience, but an entire people—perhaps even the entire Western world—and created a legacy that established Hellenic Greece as the model against which all cultures in the West had to measure themselves.

The Empire of Alexander the Great

Alexander was the son of Philip II (382–336 BCE) of Macedonia, a relatively undeveloped state to the north whose inhabitants spoke a Greek dialect unintelligible to Athenians. Macedonia was ruled loosely by a king whose power was checked by a council of nobles. Philip had been a hostage in the polis of Thebes early in his life, and while there he had learned to love Greek civilization, but he also recognized that, after the Peloponnesian Wars, the Greek poleis were in disarray. In 338 BCE, at the battle of Chaeronea, on the plains near Delphi, he defeated the combined forces of southern Greece, led by Athens and Thebes, and unified all of Greece, with the exception of Sparta, in the League of Corinth.

In the process of mounting a military campaign to subdue the Persians, Philip was assassinated in 336 BCE, possibly ordered by Alexander himself. (Philip had just divorced the 19-year-old's mother and removed him from any role in the government.) Although the Thebans immediately revolted, Alexander quickly took control, burning Thebes to the ground and selling its entire population into slavery. He then turned his sights on the rest of the world, and henceforth representations of him would proliferate. Even during his lifetime, but especially after his death, sculptures celebrating the youthful hero abounded, almost all of them modeled on originals sculpted by Lysippus (flourished fourth century BCE) whom Alexander hired to do all his portraits. Alexander is easily recognizable—his disheveled hair long and flowing, his gaze intense and melting, his mouth slightly open, his head alertly turned on a slightly tilted neck (Fig. 5.18). Lysippus dramatized his hero. That is, he did not merely represent Alexander as naturalistically as possible, he also animated

Fig. 5.18 ***Alexander the Great*, head from a Pergamene copy (ca. 200 BCE) of a statue, possibly after a fourth-century BCE original by Lysippus.** Marble, height 16 1/8". Archaeological Museum, Istanbul, Turkey. Alexander is traditionally portrayed as if looking beyond his present circumstances to greater things.



Map 5.2 Alexander's empire as of his death in 323 BCE and the route of his conquests. Alexander founded over 70 cities throughout his empire, naming many after himself.

him, showing him in the midst of action. In all likelihood, he idealized him as well. The creation of Alexander's likeness was a conscious act of propaganda. Early in his conquests, the young hero referred to himself as "Alexander the Great," and Lysippus's job was to embody that greatness.

Within two years of conquering Thebes, Alexander had crossed the Hellespont into Asia and defeated Darius III of Persia at the battle of Issus (just north of modern Iskenderon, Turkey). The victory continued Philip's plan to repay the Persians for their role in the Peloponnesian Wars and to conquer Asia as well. By 332 BCE, Alexander had conquered Egypt, founding the great city of Alexandria (named, of course, after himself) in the Nile Delta (Map 5.2). Then he marched back into Mesopotamia, where he again defeated Darius III and then marched into both Babylon and Susa without resistance. After making the proper sacrifices to the Akkadian god Marduk (see Chapter 2)—and thus gaining the admiration of the locals—he advanced on Persepolis, the Persian capital, which he burned after seizing its royal treasures. Then he entered present-day Pakistan.

Alexander's object was India, which he believed was relatively small. He thought if he crossed it, he would find what he called Ocean, and an easy sea route home. Finally, in 326 BCE, his army reached the Indian Punjab. Under Alexander's leadership, it had marched over 11,000 miles without a defeat. It had destroyed ancient empires, founded many cities (in the 320s BCE, Alexandrias proliferated across the world), and created the largest empire the world had ever known.

When Alexander and his army reached the banks of the Indus River in 326 BCE, he encountered a culture that had long fascinated him. His teacher Aristotle had described it, wholly on hearsay, as had Herodotus before him, as the farthest land mass to the east, beyond which lay an Endless Ocean that encircled the world. Alexander stopped first at Taxila (20 miles north of modern Islamabad, Pakistan; see Map 5.2), where King Omphis [OHM-fis] greeted him with a gift of 200 silver talents, 3,000 oxen, 10,000 sheep, and 30 elephants, and bolstered Alexander's army by giving him 700 Indian cavalry and 5,000 infantry.

While Alexander was in Taxila, he became acquainted with the Hindu philosopher Calanus [kuh-LAY-nus]. Alexander recognized in Calanus and his fellow Hindu philosophers a level of wisdom and learning that he valued highly, one clearly reminiscent of Greek philosophy, and his encounters with them represent the first steps in a long history of the cross-fertilization of Eastern and Western cultures.

But in India the army encountered elephants, whose formidable size proved problematic. East of Taxila, Alexander's troops managed to defeat King Porus [PAW-rus], whose army was equipped with 200 elephants. Rumor had it that farther to the east, the kingdom of the Ganges, their next logical opponent, had a force of 5,000 elephants. Alexander pleaded with his troops: "Dionysus, divine from birth, faced terrible tasks—and we have outstripped him! . . . Onward, then: let us add to our empire the rest of Asia!" The army refused to budge. His conquests thus concluded, Alexander himself sailed down the Indus River, founding the city that would later become Karachi. As he returned home, he contracted fever in Babylon and died in 323 BCE. Alexander's life was brief, but his influence on the arts was long-lasting.