ANCIENT GREEK CULTURE

Why care?
- aesthetic pleasure?
- depth of history; connecting with the past
- shallowness of history; civilization a (relatively) new experiment
- A distant mirror?
- ideas still vital & part of today’s culture; these guys never go away

ROMANS MEDIEVAL THEORIES
RENAISSANCE BAROQUE ENLIGHTENMENT TODAY
BUILDINGS OPERAS PLAYS MOVIES

“You might be through with the past but the past is not through with you.”
Paul Thomas Anderson, Magnolia screen play

DEMOCRACY
SLAVERY
NIKE
HUMANISM

• end (for a while) of god-kings
• “Man is the measure of all things” – Protagoras (p. 61 box)
• plenty of gods but no sacred text or dogma
• art reveals a delight in the human form
Three periods

- Archaic (650-490 BC)
- Classical (480-323 BC)
- Hellenistic (323-145 BC)

about 500 years in all

Classical (480-323 BC)

- Plato, Aristotle
- Theater – comedy & tragedy

Sophocles (p. 60): Oedipus Rex, Antigone (p 55) (play titles)

about 150 years

Change in Greek sculpture

An illustration of the 3 periods

Archaic

- epic and lyric poetry
- evolution and change in works such as in terracotta from black figure to red figure
- Pythagoras

What is a kouros?

- free-standing nude MALE youth. MALE = IDEAL
- sculpture would be outside a temple or serve as a grave-marker
- possibly portraying a god, but usually a human athlete
- rigid symmetry from Egyptian roots
- "stylized geometry"

note – the term is singular
Golden Age

480-404 BC (or 480-430 BC)
Beginning of Classical Period
76 years! (or only 50)

of *demos* (people) *kratos* (power)
Democracy! (Also an Imperial era)

The first evidence of change in sculpture

- Kritios boy
- No Archaic smile
- New idea . . .
  - **Contrapposto** (weight shift; literally, “placed opposite”)
  - **Idealized form - perfection**

Vitruvius: Principles of Symmetry
(Roman, c. 30 BC)

Probably based on writings of Polycleitus (Classical Greek)

open hand =
- chin to top of hairline = 1/10 of entire body height
- head from chin to top = 1/8
- middle of the breast to top of head = 1/4
- bottom of chin to nostrils = nose to eyebrow = 1/3 of face
- length of the foot = 1/6 of body height
- forearm = breadth of the breast = 1/4

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Leonardo da Vinci, Proportional study of a man in the manner of Vitruvius

Poseidon/Zeus? bronze
dynamic pose!

Discus Thrower (Discobolus) by Myron

Hermes and Dionysus

Riace Warrior

Hellenistic (323-145 BC)
- Works more dramatic
- First to look back on "the good ol' days" – Classical Greece
- Alexander’s empire
- Other philosophies: Skepticism, Epicureanism, Stoicism
- doesn’t really end in 145 BC; continues while attention shifts to Rome, which invades Greece in 145 BC
Laocoön and his two sons (lay ahk a wan)

HELENISTIC -- dramatic!
- c. 150 BC

KEY IMAGE p. 67

More Hellenistic examples

Copy after bronze original

More Hellenistic examples – Athena Slaying Giant, Pergamon, c. 180 BC
Our first isms

- **HUMANISM** see p. 55
- **Idealism** [see glossary] – a perfect world lies behind/beyond/within/separate-from this world we sense (see, touch, hear, taste, etc.) Rationalism (p. 48) is very much related to Idealism.
- Naturalism/Realism

Greek Architecture

Classic and late Classic

Acropolis

The Parthenon – 447 BC

Parthenon

Temple to Athena
Goddesses from the Pediment

Side view of the Parthenon

The Golden Mean

- Ideal of beauty in Numbers
- Proportion
- A formula as a “theme” $1:2 + 1$
  (Parthenon 8:17)
- Golden Mean = $1:1.6180339 \ldots$
  (roughly 8:13) found throughout nature
Post & Lintel construction

LINTEL
POST
POST

US Supreme Court Building, 1932-35
Corinthian columns
Nike temple of Athena Nike

Metope - relief sculpture

Erectheum

2004 Olympic opening ceremonies

6 figures
- Figures have contrapposto
- Figures called Caryatids
- Represent the harmonious metaphorical relationship between the ideal (geometric) form and human form.

Back porch view building was damaged in battle with Persians (421–406 b.c.).
Music

• lost sounds! (very little remains – no actual influence)
• significant to culture
  - part of lyrical poetry (lyre is a string instrument)
  - part of drama & theater; used a chorus
  - worth censoring (see Plato)
• theory by the numbers:
  * intervals are integer ratios
    1:1, 2:1, 3:2, 4:3, 5:4
• Pythagoras legend

Music

• Epitaph of Seikilos (1st Century CE)

  As long as you live, be happy;
  do not grieve at all.
  Life’s span is short;
  time exacts the final reckoning.

Music in Plato’s Republic

“[A ruler] must beware of changing to a new kind of music, for the change always involves far-reaching danger. Any alteration in the modes of music is always followed by alteration in the most fundamental laws of the state.”

Music in Plato’s Republic

Plato would ban:
  • the flute and aulos (associated with Dionysus; lyre is OK)
  • makers of the flute and aulos
  • sudden modulation (change in mode)
  • 4 of the 6 available modes

Dionysus – god of wine, nature, fertility; orgiastic rites
  - compared to –
Apollo – god of sun, prophecy, music, poetry

Contest of Apollo & Marsyas, c. 350 BC

(p. 61)

Compare Kong Fuzi

. . . we must discriminate sounds in order to know the airs; the airs in order to know the music; and the music in order to know [the character of] the government. Having attained to this, we are fully provided with the methods of good order.  (Book of Rites, Sixth Century BCE)
**Compare Kong Fu Zui**

Kong Fu Zui is said to classify music into two types:

-- positive music (shi yin, proper sound), with attributes of harmoniousness, peacefulness, and appropriateness, is an important educational tool capable of inspiring virtue and appropriate attitudes [The Ancient Greeks would call it Apollonian]

-- negative music (chi yue, extravagant music), with attributes of inappropriate loudness (like thunder and lightning) and wanton noisiness, stimulated excessive and licentious behavior [Dionysian]

**Greek history - it's a story**

- Roots & borrowings in other cultures (Egyptian, Persian)
- It is a MYTH in the sense that it is an often repeated story – it is the story that Europe told about itself to itself
- Each era has its own way of appropriating and re-using different parts of this myth

**Summary**

- 3 periods (political, artistic)
- 2 IDEAS – HUMANISM
  - IDEALISM: truth, beauty, number
- ART & ARCHITECTURE: kouros, Parthenon
- MUSIC: very important; only theory remains

**DATE TO MEMORIZE:**

480BC

- START OF CLASSICAL ERA
- START OF GOLDEN AGE
- associate with PARTHENON

**KEY IMAGES**

- **What?** Kritios boy
- **When?** Classical Greek
- **So what?** IDEALISM, contrapposto

**TEXT p. 48**

**KEY IMAGES**

- **What?** Parthenon
- **When?** Classical Greek
- **So what?** Beauty in numbers, post & lintel

**DATE TO MEMORIZE:**

480BC
KEY IMAGES

What?  Kouros
When?  Archaic Greek
So what?  humanism
Text p. 48

KEY IMAGES

What?  Laocoön and his two sons
When?  Hellenistic
So what?  Greater expressiveness
p. 67