
What Is “Classical” about Classical Antiquity? Eight Propositions

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I. “CLASSICAL ANTIQUITY” IS NOT CONSISTENTLY CLASSICAL

In 1930 classical studies experienced an insurrection. Werner Jaeger, in apostasy from his teacher Wilamowitz, convened a conference in Naumburg called “The Problem of the Classical” (*Das Problem des Klassischen*). The apostasy was open and calculated. Thirty years earlier Wilamowitz had boasted that he helped put paid to the word *classical*, which he found meaningless, and in his *Geschichte der Philologie* from 1921 he notoriously (and audibly) omitted the time-honored epithet of his discipline.¹ (In English the title ought to read, *History of [] Philology*. The published English and Italian translations spoil the title’s symbolism by reinserting the missing word *Classical*.) *Das Klassische* was a problem indeed, and Jaeger’s conference aimed at making classics a *classical* discipline again, one firmly rooted in classical and humanistic values true for all time, as against its being a compilation of dry historical data.

We have a good idea of what the conference was about because Jaeger published its proceedings a year later.² But what went on behind the scenes? Luckily, in the days before tape recorders there was Alfred Körte, who offers an invaluable first-hand account of what he saw and heard: “A number of speakers in the discussion at Naumburg sharply disputed the claim that Aeschylus was a classical author of the first rank (*ein Klassiker*). . . . As the discussion went on, it turned out that actually none of the first-class luminaries of world literature had any rightful claim to the label *classical*, or at most they had only a qualified claim to it—neither Homer nor Aeschylus nor Shakespeare nor even the young Goethe. Sophocles and Vergil fitted the classical ideal best of all.”³

It is obvious that the scholars Jaeger surrounded himself with had painted themselves into an intellectual corner, but

it does not follow from their failure that the Classical should be any less of a problem today than it was in 1930. *Classicists* teach in departments of *classics* or of *classical studies*, they study *classical* literature and culture, the books they write, and more often buy, appear on the shelves of stores and libraries under the rubric of *Classical Studies*, and so on. But does anyone stop to ask what these labels mean?

Rarely, and with good reason. Passionate defenses of the Classical were once in vogue, but consensus was never reached and is never likely to be reached; and anyway there is something musty and distasteful about the question, which smacks of belletrism or antiquarianism, and of a dated aesthetics. What have the concerns of a Boileau, a Goethe, or a Werner Jaeger to do with us today?

A great deal, I believe. It is hard to discuss Greco-Roman antiquity without invoking the c-word, and it behooves us at the very least to reflect on the very label by which we designate the cultures of Greece and Rome, and so too the disciplines that seek to grasp them. The label, inherited and ubiquitous, is for the most part taken for granted rather than questioned⁴—or else clung to for fear of losing a powerful cachet that, even in the beleaguered present, continues to translate into cultural prestige, authority, elitist satisfactions, and economic power (if you don’t believe me, try changing your local classics department’s nomenclature and see what reactions you will draw). It is a fair question to ask whether the presumptive epithet *classical* in classical studies or classical antiquity is justified, or even what it would mean for the term to count as justified at all. More pointedly still, is the designation one that would be recognizable (in some form) to the inhabitants of what we today call *the classical world*? In other words, *was classical antiquity—classical*?

Even judging by existing criteria, the answer cannot be an unqualified Yes. Although some classicists write on classical texts and some classical archaeologists investigate classical sites and ruins, not all of them do. Not all of the works to survive from Greco-Roman antiquity are recognized “clas-

sics” (treatises on architecture are not this, even if many of the works they describe are), and not even all of antiquity is considered equally classical. If Greco-Roman antiquity is classical, then one would have to admit that classical antiquity has been *divided*, not unified, by claims to its classicism (to its exhibiting classical traits), at the very least by the presence of two classical periods inhabiting it from within (fifth- and fourth-century Athens, and Augustan Rome), and by a series of contenders for the title which, for the most part, are considered to be either losers or non-starters (the pre- or postclassical periods, from the Bronze Age to later antiquity). The only other genuine alternative, inserting ancient Greece and Rome into the contact cultures of the wider Mediterranean world in an area-studies approach, is in the decided minority, and for the same reasons. Western culture remains predominantly under the spell of classicism.⁵ Nor is it all that easy to stand comfortably outside the margins and claim immunity from this influence. I, for one, cannot, and I doubt that most professional classicists today can either.

Now, classical antiquity is not consistently classical primarily because opinions about the question of where particular classical values are to be sought and found have varied historically. Thus, while consensus seems to cluster around Athenocentric values, the consensus splinters around particular instances. The Naumburg discussion is one example, but let’s take another. When they were first brought to England in 1806, the Parthenon sculptures were not universally received as classical, and it would take a decade for the British Museum to buy them off of Lord Elgin. On the contrary, strange as it may sound to us today, initial reactions to the marbles were mixed and their artistic and cash values were disputed: did they rank with the better known (and heavily restored) Vatican marbles, the Apollo Belvedere, the Belvedere Torso, and the Laocoön? Were they even Greek? It was only gradually, after considerable debate, interpretation, and eventual validation, not to mention “remedial” scrap-

ing, bleaching, and polishing, that they acquired the luster they now unquestionably enjoy.⁶ Meanwhile, the fate of the Vatican marbles went the opposite way: in the generation after Winckelmann, who popularized them, they were an embarrassment to the history of art (possibly because Winckelmann had become this too): products of a later age (Roman, or worse still, Neronian), their pretensions seemed to reach no further back than the Hellenistic period. They were no longer deemed classical, and were at most classicizing—and they were judged to be so according to the *very same* criteria that had established themselves through the same but by then discredited marbles from the Vatican.

How do we know, or recognize, when something is or is not classical? Looking at the history of classics, one is tempted to conclude that the idea of the classical is an ideal that is at most suggested but not confirmed by concrete objects. So strong are the assumptions about what the classical and classicism are, we tend to forget that objects do not surface from the ground or emerge from ancient libraries wearing a sign with the label *classical* written across their face. Confusions are bound to result. But equally to the point, is classicism (understood as an awareness of and appreciation for what is classical, however that is understood) an anachronism or is it part of what we today call the classical past, namely the worlds of ancient Greece and Rome? If so, how would we recognize this sensibility? That is, by way of what, and especially by *whose*, criteria would we point to the existence of classicism and the classical in antiquity?

2. THERE ARE NO CLASSICAL PROPERTIES

Despite THE repeated claims on behalf of simplicity, harmony, balance, proportionality, and so on, being classical is not a property an object can have, like specific gravity or being red or standing six feet tall. It is the suggestion that a given object has this kind of property, which is why one needs to determine just where in any given case the suggestion originates.

Let's take as an example the debates over the Parthenon, not the pediments, friezes, and metopes that were lifted off its face now, but the structure that was left standing in Athens. Today the Parthenon is frequently said to exhibit the purest traits of classicality. And yet attempts to explain just where these virtues lie not only conflict with one another but trail off into vagueness once again. At issue here is not only the question, Which properties of this object are classical, but also the question, Where are they found? The answer is surely not in the object, or at least not unequivocally so.

Close examination of the physical structure of the Parthenon reveals "subtle and intentional variations from mathematical regularity which run throughout [it]."⁷ It is generally thought that these irregularities are somehow responsible for making the Parthenon the quintessential classical object it is so commonly celebrated to be. But how? The three most common answers to have been advanced, from antiquity to the present, are the compensation theory, the exaggeration theory, and the tension theory. The first, found already in antiquity, is that variations in regularity exist to compensate for the optical illusions of the architectural form: Greek architects wished to ensure that buildings looked "'regular' and 'correct'—e.g., horizontals should look horizontal, verticals vertical, columns should appear to be the same size," and so "the function of the refinements was to make the appearance of the temple fit their mental conception of it." The second possibility—exaggeration—has been understood "to make the temple look quite different from what it actually was." In this case, the object had "to amplify normal optical distortion by refinements so that the temple appeared to be more immense than it actually was," thanks to *entasis* or the swelling of lines and proportions. The third interpretation is that the refinements are "intentional deviations from 'regularity' for the purpose of creating a tension in the mind of the viewer between what he expects to see and what he actually does see." Expecting to find geometrical equivalences and norms, what the eye sees is a var-

ied, irregular display. A struggle ensues, "and from this struggle arises a tension and fascination which makes the structure seem vibrant, alive, and continually interesting." Which of these interpretations is right?

The problem is that none of these proposals appears to answer the problem definitively, and agreement has never been reached. So uncertain is the consensus, one has to suspect not merely a difference of opinion here but an underlying ignorance about the nature of the problem. One would like to know why we can't verify *which* experience of the Parthenon is the one that is *actually had*. It is not even clear why they aren't all mutually exclusive, as one might think they ought to be. For as some accounts paint things, the experiences are all equally available, equally possible, and equally unverifiable. But equally troubling is the joint implication of these hypotheses, namely that in question is not a classical property of an object *per se*, but an appearance of being classical. Is the experience of the Parthenon an experience of a reality or of a reality's presentation to the mind? More emphatically, is classicism a *trompe l'oeil*? The problem, again, is not only *what* are the classical properties of the monument, but also just *where* are they supposed to be found? There is an all-too-familiar vagueness, if not incoherence, to this account of a classical object. But before turning to historical antecedents, I want to linger a while longer on the possibility that classicism is an illusory property of works of art, and that classical properties are not inscribed unequivocally in or on a classical work of art.

This last point was made in an acute way by Anselm Feuerbach, an uneasy critic of Winckelmann, at a time when the Apollo Belvedere had fallen out of fashion and into disrepute (in part, by association with Winckelmann's interpretive excesses, and in part, and linked to this, owing to the disqualification of the statue from the canon of high classical art). In his study *Der vaticanische Apollo* ["The Vatican Apollo"] of 1833 (2nd ed. 1855), Feuerbach brings out into the open the dilemmas of reading classical objects. His book,

once influential but now all but forgotten, is a meditation on the effects of decontextualization and on the illusions of sculptural viewing.

Classical idealism, Feuerbach notes, depends heavily on the greatest possible decontextualization; only so can the values it cherishes be isolated: simplicity, tranquility, balanced proportions, restraint, purity of form, impurity of material—all of these are features that underscore the timeless quality of the highest possible expression of art, like a breath that is held indefinitely. Not only are all of the original factors of context and dramatic situation, implied by the form and the circle of movement in which statues can be seen to move, often unknown and irrecoverable: sure knowledge of them is barred by the very nature of the sculptural experience. Is Apollo striking a pose, basking in the sun, or (as Winckelmann supposed) marching triumphantly, fresh from the slaughter of the Python, bow in hand? Feuerbach is unsure, and so he concludes, “The meaning of our statue [viz., the Apollo Belvedere], the situation in which the artist conceived his Apollo, is just as much in doubt as every other aspect of the work.”⁸

Doubt was very much in the air at the time of Feuerbach’s writing—it was pretty much the new scholarly *habitus* of the time. As the study of classics in the disciplines of art history, archaeology, and philology turned increasingly scientific (which is to say, positivistic and historicist in their pretensions), previous assumptions held as certainties were tossed aside like so many hasty errors. (Skepticism has its certainties too.) Repudiation and disavowal—not of the past but of its prior understanding—were the name of the game in this new age of skepticism. Large tracts of antiquity were affected by this critical triage, the exponents of which were eager to expose forgeries and inauthenticities wherever they could—witness the aspersions cast on Homer’s poems in the wake of Wolf’s *Prolegomena to Homer* in 1795. At stake in this crisis of judgment was plainly a crisis of the classical ideal itself.⁹

And so it happened that the most talked about artifact from antiquity after Winckelmann made it so, the statue of Apollo in the Vatican Museum, soon lent itself to unfavorable scrutiny, starting with the painter Anton Raphael Mengs' judgment from 1779 that it was a Roman copy.¹⁰ The closer one looked at the work, the more suspect it became. What had earlier elicited marvel and unqualified admiration now encouraged doubtfulness and skepticism (*Zweifel*, 6), and Feuerbach seems to revel in these. The statue reveals defects, “abnormalities,” features “irreconcilable with the concept of a classically perfected work” (6); the work is flawed and misproportioned; viewed from the rear, the feet are out of proportion (125–26); the hollow of the left knee is “placed much too high”; “the impression under the left calf muscle ought to be weaker, and from this point down to the heel a certain hesitation betrays itself in the way the foot is formed, a soft *uncertainty of form*” (127); the heel is “deficiently shaped” (127); the form of the neck “stands in glaring contrast” to the beauty of the head (128); “the so-called neck flexor muscle (the sternocleidomastoid)—the lay and scientific terms are Feuerbach’s—“is insufficiently prominent,” and a “false shadow” results in this part of the statue (128); “the head is too far from the right shoulder, the left collarbone is a good bit too long compared to the right” (129). Worse, “the right arm is awkwardly stiff, clumsily placed to the left of the body, and there is something rather *anxious and unsure* about the whole bearing of the statue in the way the feet and backside are positioned: *one is at a loss* as to where the center of gravity lies” (129). Indeed, to take in its profile from different angles is to despair of locating any beauty in the statue at all: the experience is downright “insulting for the eye” (176).

How, given its wealth of flaws and blemishes, can Winckelmann have sanely called the Apollo Belvedere the supreme achievement of classical Greek art as he did? As a consequence, and in contrast, the “chimerical fiction of a body lacking veins”—this was Winckelmann’s conceit—“the superficial quality of the details, the technical botch-up

of the drapery, and finally the unsculpturely pretension of effect and deception” are all the more glaring (161). In the light of this microscopic, indeed “philological” analysis (the term is again Feuerbach’s), the traditional idealized Apollo is no better than “an empty figment of the imagination,” *ein leeres Phantasiegebild*—basically, a phantasm (120; cf. 11).

Feuerbach’s critique is damning but it goes no further than this. Little did he know that he was retracing, almost step for step, Winckelmann’s own critical journey *en route* to his final confirmation of the Apollo’s aesthetic perfection. Winckelmann in his draft descriptions of the Apollo Belvedere had confessed: “The mouth is drawn downwards at both ends, . . . the cheeks are flat, the ears a little deep, but larger than the practice of the ancients generally allows for. . . . The ringlets of the hair . . . are not done up with all that much attention,” the hips are “*fast ein wenig weibisch, almost a bit too feminine,*” “the feet are very fine, but they seem a bit asymmetrical in their form,” while “the muscles and the skin are done *fairly* sublimely” (*ziemlich erhaben*, etc).¹¹ Instead, and in a surprise move, Feuerbach embraces his own and Winckelmann’s conclusions in a truly brilliant move of classicizing *je-sais-bien-ism* (that is to say, the formula: *I know very well* that the statue is not classical, indeed it is quite flawed in its particulars, but I will treat it as if it were classical *just the same*). The reception of a classical work of art, Feuerbach insists, can be nothing *but* a phantasm, a subjective illusion in the mind of a classicizing subject.

Adopting what he calls a “painterly” approach to the perception of classical sculpture (the fusion of appearances in the imagination of a viewer), Feuerbach allows that even if appearances do not exactly lie, they can produce a momentary illusion, and in the best of cases they *will* do this: “All those abnormalities in the better statues,” the blemishes mentioned earlier, “vanish as a rule before the eye, if the viewer stands back in an appropriate distance from the statue” (167). From there, the “painterly illusion” takes over, thanks to a “perspectival deception” that was calculated in advance

by the artist (166–67; 172; 175). The play of light, which at times can be recreated in modern exhibit settings, contributes to the overall effect. And so, “the beguiling prospect of an image is held up to our imagination where the object cannot be given in corporeal actuality: in place of a palpable reality there is a play of light and shadow, a deception of the eye, a painterly appearance and illusion (*Schein*)” (168–72). Needless to say, the object in question is not the statue as a physical thing (which he insisted was Neronian in manufacture, though genuinely classical *in spirit*), but whatever it represents in all of its classical essentialness, glimpsed in an instant of visual illusion (10). It is that which is made to *appear*—in Nietzsche’s terminology which is also Feuerbach’s, in the form of an Apollonian “dream”: “Ruhe ist die glückliche Wahrheit des täuschenden Traumes,” “calm is the felicitous truth of the deceiving dream” (261; cf. 254–57). To look at a classical statue is a bit like closing one’s eyes.

It is this aesthetics of illusion that, I suspect, will later captivate Nietzsche, who is known to have admired Feuerbach’s work and to have made use of it in *The Birth of Tragedy* (this is the only way Feuerbach is barely remembered today). But the affinities run far beyond this one work. To the previous generation’s aesthetics of classical self-containment, quiet, and grandeur, Feuerbach opposes a dynamic model of imaginary beholding (7). It would be a mistake to reduce this generational struggle to a shift from classicism to romanticism. Rather, the shift (in the case of both Feuerbach and of Nietzsche) is from an aesthetics of *disavowed deception* to an aesthetics of deception embraced *with conviction*, and even with a certain gusto. Feuerbach’s frank exposure of classicism’s impulses brings out well the mechanisms by which the fantasy of the classical ideal comes to be *produced*. Those mechanisms include blind investment and (fetishistic) disavowal.

I began this essay by pointing to the unlocatability of classical ideals. Feuerbach’s book is about the agonies of this location, and a further attempt to solve the problem. The

problem lives on today, as we have seen with the case of the Parthenon. But there is a prequel (or maybe I should say, *Urquell*). Looking backward in time, we will find that if modernity inherited anything from Greek and Roman antiquity, it was not so much the concept of classicality as it was that concept's fundamental incoherence.

3. THE LOGIC OF CLASSICISM IS INCOHERENT

When do the claims of classicism begin? Athens in the late fifth or early fourth century,¹² Hellenistic Alexandria,¹³ Late Hellenistic Athens, Augustan Rome,¹⁴ Second Sophistic Rome and Greece,¹⁵ and neoclassical Europe have all been nominated, but how all of these can give the correct answer is far from obvious. The very fact that classicism emerges from a background in which the term goes unexpressed until very late in the day, in the second century CE (Fronto, in Gellius—*classicus scriptor, non proletarius*), is part and parcel of this fascinating problem: *classicism* seeks to label something that as yet had no name. This is not to say that the concepts of classicism and the classical are completely anachronistic when they are applied to antiquity, but only that we will never find them if we go looking for a thing with a name, and that the absence of a name points even more readily to the fundamental incoherence of these two concepts than our modern terms do. One of the most basic ingredients of this incoherence is the fact that classicism cannot be traced to some originary moment, in part because of the peculiar temporality of classicism. Classicism has a logic that is less retrospective than it is consistently *regressive*: it has no way of halting its backward-regarding search for a classic original. (So, for example, Homer is the archetypal classic who ruins the paradigm, coming as he does either too early or too late to supply a satisfyingly classic original: Homer was always felt to be more and less classical than the classical authors of the fifth century, sometimes embarrassingly so—either too naïve and primitive or too perfect and complete, but most often some unstable combination of

both.¹⁶) But there are other peculiarities to the logic of the classical that the return to antiquity can help foreground. In the place of anatomies and definitions of concepts, what we perhaps need is an anatomy of the *procedures* by which the classical comes to be *generated*. And many of these are more visible in antiquity than they are in the mainly backward-gazing logic of modern classicism.

It is important to realize that there were no unified views about questions of classical value in antiquity—any more than there have been since. The general terms and criteria of classicism sometimes change (although they roughly correspond to eternal and imperishable value, which ironically must be rescued and recuperated *lest it perish*), but the objects of classicism change all the time, and most of all whenever they appear least to do so. Plutarch's Homer is not Longinus'—and he is: Homer may be forever, but is he ever the same? Similarly, Cicero's steady value as a stock reference can betray less visible patterns, whereby his name acts more like a convenient foil, a bit of "classic kitsch."¹⁷ But is the classic(al) ever anything *but* a kind of kitsch, however refined? It is precisely this uncertainty, or rather indeterminacy of and within the notion of the classical, which helps explain why the notion eludes definition. Indeterminacy can be cashed out as ineffability, but as the metaphor already implies, there is cultural capital to be made out of assuming such a posture. Classicism is a quality that nowhere gets defined but is rather everywhere assumed, or felt.

Presenting a front of timeless durability, classical values are in fact grasped only as fleeting and ephemeral moments that can be pointed to just when they vanish ("There!")—they are epiphanic—while all that remains of them once they are gone is the empty gesture of pointing itself, which may in the end be all that classicism can rightfully lay claim to.¹⁸ Small wonder that the strongest evidence for the classical is usually that of *self*-evidence. Classical objects are irrational to the core. Their existence is upheld by the most irrational of experiences: they simply *are*, like a revealed truth, and no

amount of logic can refute or explain the fact. Longinus' treatise *On the Sublime* is one of the best illustrations of this: "Sublimity, . . . produced at the right moment (καιρίως), tears everything up like a whirlwind, and exhibits the orator's whole power *at a single blow* (εὐθὺς ἀθρόαν δύναμιν)" and with "*a single sublime stroke* (ἐνὶ ὕψει καὶ κατορθώματι)" (1.4, 36.2; trans. Russell). But he is by no means atypical. One might compare earlier authors, such as the Augustan literary critic and antiquarian, Dionysius of Halicarnassus. As with all other arts and realms of beauty, Dionysius writes, one discovers the intangible qualities of excellence through the senses and not through reason (αἰσθήσει καὶ οὐ λόγῳ):

The advice which teachers of music give to those wishing to acquire an accurate sense of melody and thus be able to discern [literally, "not to fail to catch": μηδὲ ἀγνοεῖν] the smallest tone-interval in the musical scale, is that they should simply cultivate the ear, and seek no more accurate standard of judgment (κριτήριον) than this. My advice also would be the same to those readers of Lysias who wish to learn the nature of his charm: to banish reason from the senses and train them by patient study over a long period to feel without thinking [literally, "to train the irrational faculty of perception together with irrational feeling": καὶ ἀλόγῳ πάθει τὴν ἄλογον συνασκεῖν αἴσθησιν]. (*On Lysias*, 11; trans. Usher)

Dionysius adds that it is to this faculty of irrational sensation that he makes final appeal whenever questions of attribution are in doubt: "I resort to this criterion to cast the final vote." Feeling puts one directly in touch with the qualities of an author's mind and soul. It is how one verifies the experience of reading. And it is an unfailing touchstone, because it reveals a truth that is self-evident and beyond argument: "it is very easy and plain (φανερὸν) for layman and expert alike to see, but to express it in words is very difficult" (*On Lysias*, 10). In a word, irrational feeling is the criterion of classicism.

Given that classicism is so elusive, and that it arguably describes not a series of real properties in the world but a set

of attitudes about the world, how can we ever hope to get at the phenomenon of classicism? One way is to give up on its ontology, and to consider its phenomenology.

4. CLASSICISM IS A *HABITUS* AND A STRUCTURE OF FEELING

What we have in the phenomenon of classicism is in the first instance “a structure of feeling.” By this we should understand not a private experience like a pleasure or pain that I cannot share, but a socially conditioned one—a consciousness, experience, or feeling that, as Raymond Williams observes (and from whom I’ve adapted the phrase, “structure of feeling”), is revealed at the level of “the inalienably physical, within which we may indeed discern and acknowledge institutions, formations, positions, but not always as fixed products, defining products. . . . It is a kind of feeling and thinking which is indeed social and material, but each in an embryonic phase before it can become fully articulate and defined exchange.”¹⁹ Williams’s concept, which has a decidedly aesthetic application, is left underdefined by him, but its lack of definition is what makes it appropriate as a way of getting at the realm of ideological pleasures. When coordinated with such related categories as pleasure, *jouissance*, interpellation (whereby one feels oneself to be “hailed,” here by the past), attachment, and *habitus*, structures of feeling can provide a useful index to the more insidious pressures of collective experience and of unspoken knowledge within the domain of art and culture.²⁰

Feeling classical is an instance of this kind of inarticulate knowledge, and one that is all the more intriguing in the case of literary sensibilities, a traditional stronghold of classicism in antiquity, in that it brings the feeling in question, the feeling of being classical, to the very edge of language, to a point that lies on the verge between an articulation of a very high order—that of a self-conscious reflection upon linguistic processes and literary values—and everything that escapes this reflection and in escaping seems all the more to confirm the results of conscious judgment. Whence the reams of pa-

pyrus that were expended, after Aristotle, on articulating and elaborating a perception that is based on the *alogon kritêrion* or irrational criterion of poetic evaluation (as seen just above). “Structures of feeling” are exemplary and not idiosyncratic by nature: they give us a clue to the wider domain of their embedded context.²¹ Which is an argument for why a phenomenology of classicism, or rather of classicisms in the plural, would need to be developed.

How do we gain access to this feeling? One way is to attempt to reconstruct the *habitus* of classicism. Following Bourdieu, we can understand *habitus* as a set of dispositions that organize social behavior in a way that eludes articulation (it can be nonintentional, preconscious, and often purely bodily). That is, *habitus* directs us to the inarticulate knowledge of the practitioners of a given social field (or “game”). And, no less importantly, it designates a realm of (often unwitting or half-witting) *identifications* that is uniquely appropriate to the problem of classicism.²² What is the sensation one has when receiving and imagining the classical past in antiquity? To know this is to know the inculcated *habitus* of literary classicism, the feeling of being in the ambit of what is classical and, at the limit, of actually being classical oneself. Take the example of Favorinus, the famed but bizarre Second Sophistic philosopher (born—without testicles, with “flabby cheeks, a wide mouth,” and “a voice like a woman’s”—in ca. 80–90 CE in Arles), in his *Corinthian Oration*, where a notional speaker (elusively identified with Favorinus himself) can claim he is

not a Lucanian but a Roman; not one of the rabble but a man of equestrian rank who has cultivated not only the language of the Greeks but their thought, life and dress as well, and all this so competently and so manifestly (οὕτως ἐγκρατῶς καὶ περιφανῶς) that not a single Roman before me—or even any Greek of my own time (οὔτε τῶν καθ’ αὐτὸν Ἑλλήνων)—has equaled me.

As a consequence, he reasons, bronze statues ought to be set up for him

in your own city because, though a Roman, I have been Hellenized, just as your own city has been; in Athens, because I speak Attic [or, “because I Atticize”: ἀττικίζω τῷ φωνῆ]; in Sparta, because I am an enthusiast for athletics—and everywhere, because I am a philosopher who have already inspired many Greeks to follow me and not a few barbarians as well. For I seem to have been endowed by the gods for this very mission: to show the Greeks that culture (*paideia*) is just as important for a man’s reputation as birth; to show the Romans that they should not cocoon themselves in their own reputation and ignore the role that *paideia* must play in it, and to show the Gauls that no barbarians should despair of attaining Greek civilization (*paideia*) when they look at my example ([Dio Chrys.] *Oration* 37.25–27; trans. Crosby).²³

So confident is the speaker of his habituation to Greekness, a Greekness not only of the present but also of the past, that he can claim to be more Greek than contemporary Greeks. The contest he has erected for himself is around “a professional standard based on the past.”²⁴ It is thus a contest over a patrimonial Greek identity, and not merely over an ethnic or contemporary cultural identity: it is a contest in *becoming classical*, which simultaneously implies a complete *mastery* of the classical past. Greek identity has been refigured here as the ability to embody and control the resources of Greek culture in its finest dimensions. And this assimilation to an ideal has to be complete, down to the last atom of one’s self.

This is not to suggest that classicism is by any means exhaustive of the repertoire of social and cultural positions that could be adopted in antiquity. Nor should we seek to reduce all of ancient criticism in art or literature to a classicizing salvage operation, or to a mindless reverence for the past, let alone to a single formula. The paradigms of slavish subservience to a past, or melancholic nostalgia, secondariness, and inferiority are probably overstated and overly dramatic. A sounder approach is to credit the exponents of classicism with consciously adopting poses and strategic

identities, so as to manipulate and negotiate with, rather than to serve, the past—always with an eye to solving a problem in specific historical and cultural circumstances. But one should also allow for the possibility that the exponents of classicism could be as much manipulated by their assumed positions as they could manipulate them.²⁵ *Habitus* implies habituation; and habit has a force of its own.

Now, in the realm of literary classicism, which happens to be peculiarly telling (as the realm of articulated value) and symptomatic (as the realm of inarticulacy, where reflective judgment is brought to the very edge of language), the question of what one feels is bound up with the question of how one experiences a classical text; and that is bound up in the first instance with the question of what one hears or thinks one hears. If this is right, then the *habitus* of classicism in literature draws much of its force from this experience—be it had, imagined, or merely touted—of the past. Shifting our focus from texts to their experience, and from values to their index in feelings, is one way of reorganizing our study of the classical past. I believe this can be done in a critical way, without falling victim to a naïve belief in the recuperability of private experience.

5. “FEELING CLASSICAL” IS BOUND UP WITH “SOUNDING” CLASSICAL

The desire to relive the authentic past through letters was widespread, literally as far-reaching as the Greek language itself. Classical texts, as receptacles of voice, were a mnemonic of the classical past (cf. [Longinus], *On the Sublime* 7.3, 8.4, 33.3; Cicero, *On the Making of an Orator* 3.45). Recovering their sound was a way of living, literally of experiencing, the past the way it once was. Only, the experience of the past here is of the way it once *sounded*—an experience (or illusion) that, apparently, is still to be had: “Yet one can still hear the authentic classical clarity and euphony in words like παρακαλῶ, with its rippling and superbly articulated flow,” etc. (so W. B. Stanford).²⁶

Perhaps the first sign of a deliberate preservation of the aural past is to be found in Lysurgus’ legislation from the 330s requiring a state clerk to read out to actors, and thus control, the texts of the three tragedians that were put in a public trust. Postclassical Greek writers could take this thought to an unheard-of limit. Atticism or “hyperatticism,” the deliberate reproduction of an assumed, albeit contested and varying, core of pure fifth- and fourth-century Athenian language, was an attempt to reproduce the authentic sound of a perished Greek and to police linguistic habits. Establishing correct authentic usage like this was a step in the direction of appropriating it as one’s own. (Recall Fronto’s boast to be able to speak perfect Attic Greek.) Lucian and others mock these practices, which at most produced a vaguely Attic-sounding speech or writing, or else the spectacle of the desire to do so.²⁷ But the surest way to revive the voice of a classical author was to impersonate it directly.

Such was the case of Herodes Atticus, one of the premier Second Sophistic rhetors, who called himself “the tongue of the Athenians (ἡ γλῶττα τῶν Ἀθηναίων)”²⁸ He could boast the title not because he was from Athens and a spokesman for that city, but because his *voice* was from classical Athens. Philostratus tells us that Herodes’ imitation of Critias, Plato’s uncle and a sophist renowned for his varied literary output, was complete, down to the qualities of breathing:

The constituency of his style was sufficiently restrained, and it had a power which crept up on you rather than launching an assault. It combined impact with plainness, with a *sonorousness that recalled Critias* (κριτιάζουσα ἡχώ); . . . his diction was pleasing and . . . *his breath* (πνεῦμα) was not vehement but smooth and steady. In general, his type of eloquence was like gold dust shining beneath a silvery eddying river. . . . From Critias he was actually inseparable (τῷ Κριτίᾳ προσετέθηκε).²⁹

It takes a finely tuned ear, or else a trained imagination, to detect breath in an author. But here the feat is doubled:

Philostratus confirms, by repeating, Herodes' leap into an aural reality some five centuries old. How certain can Philostratus be about the quality of Herodes' voice, which he has never heard but has only, as it were, read, or of Critias' for that matter? Similarly, for Philostratus the style of Dio of Prusa "has the ring (ἠχώ) of Demosthenes and Plato," though with overtones all his own (προσηχεῖ τὸ ἑαυτοῦ ἴδιον; *Lives* 487). Hearing has become the art of overhearing—of hearing the past in the present and a living voice in an inanimate text. Such were the complicities of the classical sensibility in its most daring of manifestations.³⁰

The connection between the sound of a text and classicism is of a very special sort in antiquity, which is why it gives us an as it were privileged access to what it's like to feel classical. Here, reading and hearing have to be viewed within the context of a society that was heavily conditioned by oral practices even in times of flourishing literacy, when writing never replaced orality but both were rather mutually reinforcing, and not exclusive, categories.³¹ One also has to factor in the situation of ancient literary inquiry, living on as it did in the shadow of the Alexandrian canons and of texts that were increasingly remote and inaccessible. How, after all, does a *written* text *sound*?

Whenever I read a speech of Isocrates . . . I become serious and feel a great tranquility of mind, like those listening to libation-music played on reed-pipes or to Dorian or enharmonic melodies. But when I pick up one of Demosthenes' speeches, I am transported (ἐνθουσιῶ): I am led hither and thither, feeling one emotion after another—disbelief, anguish, terror, contempt, hatred, pity, goodwill, anger, envy—every emotion in turn that can sway the human mind. I feel exactly the same (διαφέρειν οὐδὲν ἑμαυτῷ δοκῶ) as those who take part in the Corybantic dances and the rites of Cybele the Mother-Goddess . . . , whether it is because these celebrants are inspired by the scents, <sights>, or sounds (ἤχοις) or by the influence of the deities themselves that they experience many and various sensations (φαντασίας). And I have often wondered what on earth those men who actually heard him make these

speeches could have felt (πάσχειν). (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *On Demosthenes* 22)

Whenever it is obsessed with the question of how written texts sound (as it often is), ancient literary criticism offers us, among other things, a theory of reading, a way of reading the voice buried in the voiceless script of Greek texts from the distant past. But to pursue that would be to go off into another paper, and I want to make some concluding and more general points about classicism’s symptomatology, of which criticism is fairly representative.

6. CLASSICISM = CLASSICAL PLEASURE = AN INSTRUMENT OF IDEOLOGY

Here I will have to resort to telegraphics. As any quick glance at the ancient literary critics will show, there were no unified views about questions of classical value in antiquity. But one has to know just what was in question at any given moment. Much of the time, the disagreements concerning the past were not over whether this or that work was sublimely unsurpassed (in our terms, classical), but over what did or did not give a viewer or hearer unrivalled *pleasure*. Classicism is, above all, fun to do (and fun to argue about).

Now, the reason for this variety and lack of consensus within a broadly consensual domain of literary criticism has to do less with the subjective nature of the aesthetics of reading than with the public nature of the issues that are at stake. As I mentioned, criticism was contending over structures of feeling, not private revelations.³² The classical pleasures afforded by great literature from the past and analyzed and fought over in the present were thus decidedly *public* pleasures, pleasures that came freighted with a history and a context, having been already sited and (re-)cited for generations. The pleasures, we can safely say, were ideological ones. Pressed to the limit, one would want to consider to what degree they reflected or simply were the pleasure of classical ideology itself—as this reflected itself differently at different

historical moments, from the proud yet vulnerable Periclean age to the hybridized Roman imperial period. The aesthetics of *hellenismos*, or purism in Greek, plays into this directly. Consider Thucydides 7.63.3, the general Nicias addressing the allies in 413 BCE: “Think of the pleasure (ἡδονήν) and how much worth preserving it is (ὡς ἀξία διασώσασθαι) that all this time, through knowledge of our language (φωνῆς) and imitation (μιμήσει) of our way of life, though not really Athenians, you have been considered as Athenians and been admired for it throughout Hellas” (trans. Warner, adapted). Or Demosthenes 15.35 in the next century: “take joy in hearing (χαίρετ’ ἀκούοντες) someone praise your ancestors.” Or a certain Pausimachus, presumably a Hellenistic critic antedating Crates of Mallos and preserved for us in Philodemus: “So too, then, *in the case of people speaking Greek the sound produces what is particular (τὸ ἴδιον) with regard to our pleasure*—wouldn’t it be dreadful for [the sound] to be deprived [of this particularity of pleasure] because of speaking Greek (διὰ τὸν ἑλληνισμόν)!—but [the mind] is perhaps distracted by some other (factors),” viz., by, or towards, the sense of the words, as opposed to their phonic qualities (Philodemus, *On Poems* 1, col. 100 Janko).

Given the public and external nature of the debate, at issue was not whether one should or should not take pleasure in literary excellence, but how one should appropriate ideological pleasures as one’s own.³³ After all, it is not obvious why or even that a given text is pleasurable: pleasure is a delicate social event before it becomes an individual feeling, and the move from outside to within is fraught with entanglements and, inevitably, uncertainties and anxieties. Defining and redefining the nature and meaning of pleasure, an activity that no doubt entailed pleasures of its own, was the heart and soul of the critical enterprise (even if it was often pursued with a deadly earnest). But so was teaching students and readers how to respond to objects and to internalize critical standards: the aim of criticism was (and probably still is) to discipline one’s pleasures. At bottom, I

believe, these activities were a matter of cultivating a pleasurable form of attachment to history and its values rather than to art or literature *per se*. Such was the ideological function of Greek literary criticism in its later and developed phases.

At the end of the tradition that it also culminates, the Longinian sublime finally names classical literary excellence in its purest and most concentrated form. Indeed, the sublime names the ways in which the classical canon (which Longinus staunchly defends) comes to be, and in fact always was, pleasurable enforced. The pleasure of sublimity, with its ultimate and untrumpable appeal to self-evidence (“Caecilius tries at immense length to explain to us what sort of thing ‘the sublime’ is, as though we did not know. . . . Your education dispenses me from any long preliminary definition,” etc. [I.2, I.3]), is a classical pleasure in its most intense expression. And so we can say that the Longinian sublime captures the intensity, not so much of literary excellence, as of *the experience of classicism itself*.

7. CLASSICISM INVOLVES IDENTIFYING WITH THE PAST IN THE FUTURE PERFECT

Temporalities of different orders are at work in classicism (the voice of the past, which is heard in the present, and so on). The competing logics of classical time, which intersect at a common point of illogic, need to be unfolded. Two related pressures are operative in classicism: works from the past are never fully allowed *into* the present (they can only enter the present *as* classical objects); and they are never fully allowed to exist as anything but ancient, even in their past present (they are classical—and so too, antique—from birth). Plutarch illustrates how prevalent this game of perspectives was in later antiquity, and how the writers we have been sampling are merely part of its expression. Here is an excerpt from Plutarch’s account of the construction of the Parthenon and other public monuments overseen by Phidias and funded by Pericles in the fifth century, when Athens was

at its hegemonic peak, politically and culturally. The passage, justly famous, deserves to be quoted at some length:

So then the works arose, no less towering in their grandeur (μεγέθει) than inimitable in the grace of their outlines (μορφῇ), since the workmen eagerly strove to surpass themselves (ὑπερβάλλεσθαι) in the beauty of their handicraft. . . . Each one of them, men thought, would require many successive generations to complete it, but all of them were fully completed in the heyday of a single administration. . . . And it is true that deftness and speed in working do not impart to the work an abiding weight of influence (βάρος μόνιμον) nor an exactness (ἀκρίβειαν) of beauty; whereas the time which is put out to loan in laboriously creating (εἰς τὴν γένεσιν) pays a large and generous interest in the preservation of the creation (τῇ σωτηρίᾳ τοῦ γενομένου). For this reason are the works of Pericles all the more to be wondered at; they were created in a short time for much time (πρὸς πολὺν χρόνον). Each one of them, in its beauty (κάλλει μὲν), *was from the very first already then antique* (εὐθὺς ἦν τότε ἀρχαῖον); *but in the freshness of its vigor* (ἀκμῇ δέ) *it is, even to the present day, recent and newly wrought* (πρόσφατόν ἐστι καὶ νεουργόν). Such is, as it were, *the bloom of perpetual newness* (οὕτως ἐπανθεῖ καινότης αἰεὶ τις) upon these works of his, which makes them ever to look untouched by time (ἄθικτον ὑπὸ τοῦ χρόνου), as though the unflinching breath of an ageless vitality (ὡσπερ ἀειθαλὲς πνεῦμα καὶ ψυχὴν ἀγήρω) had been infused into them. (*Life of Pericles* 13.1-4 [= 13.1-5 Ziegler]; trans. Perrin, adapted)

The compression of the work that went into the construction of the monuments of the Periclean building program (“completed in the heyday of a single administration”) is in fact greater than the generations such a program would ordinarily have cost, for the time that is compressed is not one of generations but of over half a millennium (Plutarch is writing at the close of the second century CE, the monuments date to the mid-fifth century BCE). The result is the millennial perspective that is occupied by Plutarch’s gaze, in the light of which the monuments could already in the fifth-century pres-

ent appear antique and classical.³⁴ That is, the appearance of classicality was available to Pericles’ contemporaries from the very first, at that time (εὐθύς, τότε): Plutarch and the fifth-century Athenians share the same view. It is as if time never passed but was simply frozen, less in a perpetual present than in a perpetual conflation of past and present, which is the timeless frame of classicism.³⁵

Plutarch cannot help but look upon the ancient monuments of Periclean Athens as classical whenever they appear to him, and his language betrays this. His is a classicizing gaze. But that is not all there is to his stance. For in occupying the vantage point he does, Plutarch is not imposing an anachronism upon the past. He is not retrojecting his distant perspective willfully. Rather, he is merely occupying a point of view that (Plutarch can justly claim) was anticipated by the creators of the Athenian monuments and that they themselves projected into the future (into that of their own posterity) and then gazed back upon from that anticipated distance. Designed in the first instance to be lasting monuments to themselves and to their own making (τῆ σωτηρίᾳ τοῦ γενομένου), the Periclean buildings were plainly erected to “preserve the past” (the phrase can mean this as well) that they were also designed to honor.³⁶ And so the Athenians evidently not only had a view of their own monuments as classical; they also had a view of them as “*already at that time* antique,” a view that can only be said to have been retroactively available to them in the fifth century.

That such a perspective was available to them already in the fifth century is well illustrated by a much-cited thought-experiment from Thucydides. The ruins of Mycenae in our own age (νῦν), he writes, are diminutive, but to leap to the conclusion that they represent what was once (τότε) an insignificant power would be a mistake. Imagine now Sparta and Athens as ruined and deserted sites, as mere temples and floor-plans, and as looked upon by future beholders after much time had lapsed (προελθόντος πολλοῦ χρόνου): one

would doubtless believe Sparta to have been an insignificant collection of villages, and Athens to have been twice as powerful as it in fact is (1.10.1–3). The capacity to project the present into the future *as a past* is obviously not beyond the reach of fifth-century Athens, any more than is a prescient critique of this kind of illusion (which Thucydides' counter-projection manifestly is).³⁷ That Athens under Pericles consciously projected an image of itself for future consumption and admiration, and that the building program was an integral element of this design, is likewise beyond doubt (cf. Thucydides 2.41.4–5, to be quoted below). Here we would need to say that the classical past is not an invention of the postclassical past, as the fashionable logic of “inventions” today would have it. Rather, the reverse is true. In producing a point of view from which to be beheld, *Periclean antiquity* “invented” *Plutarch*, or rather it invented *Plutarch's gaze*. And that gaze is unqualifiedly universal, as is often claimed by upholders of the classical aesthetic in antiquity: anybody can occupy its point of view, and anyone with eyes for seeing—anyone with sufficient culture—does just that.

The Periclean buildings are proleptically classical, a *ktêma es aiei*, “a possession for all time,” or at the very least (in Plutarch's more modest paraphrase), “for much time (πρὸς πολὺν χρόνον).”³⁸ Longinus offers the same recommendation to aspiring writers. Anyone bent on becoming a classic must take up the Plutarchan point of view and ask him or herself, “How will posterity (ὁ μετ' ἐμὲ πᾶς αἰών) take what I am writing?” (14.3). Needless to say, for “take” the Greek has “hear” (ἀκούσειεν). The question is as much addressed to the nature of feeling as it is to reading. It is important to recognize that the logic of classicism is not only retrospective, as it is most commonly thought to be (a thing that never is but only always was), but can also be proleptic (something that forever will have been—and so, it follows, *never actually was*). The gesture behind this logic is a regressive one, and it reaches in some form back to Homer.

I have just mentioned the *locus classicus* of this proleptic logic, Thucydides’ boast that his own historical writing should be “a possession for all time, rather than a declamation composed for the moment of hearing” (1.22.4; cf. [Longinus] 7.3). The point is that when Thucydides declares his *History* to be “a possession for all time,” he is proudly projecting himself into a distant, if vaguely conceived, after-life that (in his mind) was in turn already gazing back upon him. His boast may or may not be modeled on Pericles’ similar-sounding claim from the Funeral Oration: “Mighty [and “imperishable” (ἀίδια)] indeed are the marks and monuments of our empire which we have left. *Future ages will wonder at us, as the present age wonders at us now* (τοῖς τε νῦν καὶ τοῖς ἔπειτα θαυμασθησόμεθα). We do not need the praises of a Homer, or of anyone else whose words may delight us for the moment (τὸ αὐτίκα τέρψει), but whose estimation of facts will fall short of what is really true” (2.41.4–5; trans Warner; cf. Hyperides, *Funeral Oration* 18; Plato, *Menexenus* 241c8–9). The disparagement of Homer inevitably involves a glance back at the Delian *Hymn to Apollo* and “the blind man of Chios,” whom Thucydides took for the Poet (3.104.5), and who claims for himself that “all of his songs are the very best *among posterity* (τοῦ πᾶσαι μετόπισθεν ἀριστεύουσιν αἰοιδαί)” (v. 173).³⁹ And the Homeric boast inevitably recalls the general posture of the epics, which are aimed at some future audience, whether this is to be felt in the bard’s own implicit sense of his place in the ever-flowing streams of memory or in the heroic ethos of *kleos aphthiton* (immortal fame). This last expectation is particularly well exemplified in the Homeric τις-formulas, which encapsulate an imagined futurity (often, imagined future *kleos*) projected from the present, rendering the present a retrojected past, as at *Iliad* 7.87–91: “And some day *one of the men to come will say* (ποτέ τις εἴησι καὶ ὀπιγόνων ἀνθρώπων), as he sees it, / one who in his benched ship sails on the wine-blue water: / ‘This is the mound of a man who died long ago in battle, / who was one of the bravest, and

glorious Hektor killed him.’ / *So will he speak some day, and my glory will not be forgotten*” (trans. Lattimore).⁴⁰ Epic heroes are playing to a future unseen audience. They are, in a sense, already dead.

So much for precedents. Now, Plutarch’s conflation of temporalities (“already at that time unique”) is an index of what he feels, not what he knows.⁴¹ In fact, he knows better, but denies himself this knowledge. Such is the *je sais bien, mais quand-même* logic of classicizing discourse, its founding gesture of disavowal, which in the present case runs, “I know very well that the Periclean monuments cannot have been old and new at one and the same time, but I will act as if they were just the same . . .”

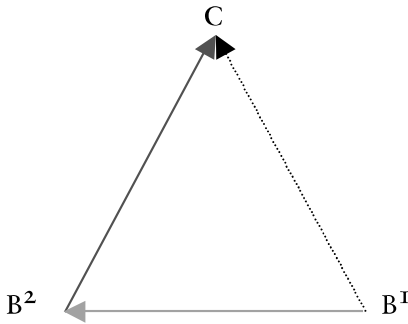
Plutarch nicely illustrates how from a classicizing perspective antiquity cannot be conceived except as in itself always already classical, simultaneously old and new. He achieves this contradictory stance (without any hint of contradiction) simply by occupying two imaginary points of identification in his mind, that of himself in the present and that of himself transported into the past with all of his reverence for classical Athens intact. That Plutarch’s conceit rhymes with the view of literary critics and other representatives of classicism in literature, at least of the imperial period, is evident from the vocabulary they share. Conflations of past and present are the extreme case of identification. Even Herodes Atticus could be imagined as “one of the Ten,” that is, one of the ten canonical Attic orators—a sum that manifestly fails to add up.

Consider Plutarch’s aesthetic vocabulary. The Periclean monuments, in Plutarch’s eyes, are done up in the severe style: they are “overwhelming in their grandeur” (ὕπερ-ηφάνων μὲν μεγέθει), yet manage nonetheless to be gracefully beautiful (μορφῇ δὲ ἀμιμήτων καὶ χάριτι). The “abiding weight of influence” (βᾶρος μόνιμον) they project is a quality of *gravitas* and intensity which endures over time. The monuments are “archaic” (ἀρχαῖα), which is to say *already archaizing*. They display that “patina of antiquity” which

“blooms” (ἐπανθεῖ) on their surfaces like fresh down (or dust). Full of grandeur and shapeliness, and wearing all the signs of the culture of contest that produced them (traits of rivalry and ambition and extraordinary effort [το ὑπερβάλλεσθαι], if need be at the expense of a certain exactitude [ἀκριβεῖα]—all features that will reappear in the Longinian sublime), they are as though alive, animated by their own canonical qualities: finally, they “breathe” (ὥσπερ ἀειθαλὲς πνεῦμα καὶ ψυχὴν . . . ἐχόντων). Thus do the monuments of ancient Athens speak to Plutarch at the end of the first century CE, much as the verbal remains of classical writers could be regarded as monumental architecture or statuary by literary critics from Dionysius of Halicarnassus (if not earlier) to Longinus, archaic and blooming in the very same breath.⁴² It is not that the critics were merely fond of searching for pictorial analogies to verbal art. The analogies they found had a specifically classicizing, which is to say ideological, function, as Pausanias and other ancient witnesses to the material culture of the (variously imagined) classical past attest.⁴³

8. CLASSICISM AND THE CLASSICAL ARE MEDIATED— NAMESLY, *PRODUCED*—BY IDENTIFICATORY EXPERIENCES

Plutarch’s posture helps bring to the fore a final point about classicism, which can only be adumbrated here. Classicism is no one thing, as we’ve seen. Across its various modes, however, one trait remains stubbornly the same. In whatever form it obtains, *classicism is a transferential experience*, and it is forever mediated by a middle term. The classical is never directly apprehended: it always comes indirectly and secondhand, which is to say that it is the transference not merely of a perception, *but of an illusion*, or fantasy, about the past. Only, the fantasy had is always courtesy of *another’s* fantasy, triangulated around some imaginary object:



B^I = Beholder^I; B^2 = Beholder²; C = Classical Object

A classical subject (B^I) takes in a classical object (C) by way of *another's* (B^2 's) perception of that object.

In retracing the history of classicism, it is essential to retrace the history of these *identifications*, which are embedded in the tradition. *They* are primarily what constitute classicism, *they* teach us how to be classical, and not the objects of the respective appreciations that we have come to know, and dispute, as “classical.”⁴⁴

NOTES

This essay is based on a public talk that evolved into the Introduction and Chapter 9 of *Classical Pasts: The Classical Traditions of Greece and Rome*, James I. Porter, ed., which is due to appear with Princeton University Press in late 2005. My debts to friends and colleagues are legion and will be expressed in the acknowledgments to that volume.

1. Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Geschichte der Philologie*. (Leipzig and Berlin 1921): B. G. Teubner (= *Einleitung in die Altertumswissenschaft*, Alfred Gercke and Eduard Norden, eds., 3rd ed., vol. 1 [1927]). On Wilamowitz's boast, see James I. Porter, *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future* (Stanford 2000), 269–72.

2. Werner Jaeger, *Das Problem des Klassischen und die Antike: Acht Vorträge gehalten auf der Fachtagung der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft zu Naumburg 1930*. (Leipzig 1931; rpt Darmstadt 1972). Also see Jaeger's “Einführung,” *Die Antike* 1 (1925), 1–4.

3. Alfred Körte, “Der Begriff des Klassischen in der Antike.” *Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig. Phil.-hist. Kl.* 86 no. 3 (1925), 13 with note 2.

4. This is confirmed by the most recent Oxford English Dictionary, which reads under the etymology of *classic*, “Gellius has ‘classicus. . . scriptor, non proletarius,’ where the word means ‘high-class,’ as opposed to ‘low’ (see *proletarius sermo*, Plautus), and this is the main sense of *classique* in Cotgr., as well as in our earliest examples. Littré however takes as his first sense of *classique* ‘Used in or belonging to the classes of colleges or schools’; and it is probable that this notion has influenced the word in its extension to the ancient authors generally, as studied in school or college, together with the associated languages, literature, history, geography, mythology, art, etc. It is probable, also, that the transference of the epithet from the first-class or standard writers in Greek and Latin to these languages themselves has been partly owing to the notion that the latter are intrinsically excellent or of the first order, in comparison with the modern tongues. *But the extension has probably been in the main unthinking and unanalyzed* [italics added, JIP]: the Greek and Roman authors read in school were actually the classical writers in these languages, and thus ‘classic’ became practically synonymous with ‘ancient Greek or Roman.’ See also the modern L. *locus classicus*, the passage of first-rate authority or importance.”

5. Arnaldo Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom: The Limits of Hellenization* (Cambridge 1975); Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford and Malden, MA 2000); Carol Dougherty, “Towards an Itinerary of Culture in Fifth-century Athens,” in “Declassifying Hellenism,” Karen Bassi and Peter Euben, eds., *Parallax* 9.4 (2003), 8–17.

6. Ian Jenkins *Cleaning and Controversy: The Parthenon Sculptures 1811–1939*, The British Museum Occasional Papers, no. 146 (London 2001); Mary Beard, *The Parthenon* (London 2002), 18–20, 155–73; Timothy Webb, “Appropriating the Stones: The ‘Elgin Marbles’ and English National Taste,” *Claiming the Stones/Naming the Bones: Cultural Property and the Negotiation of National and Ethnic Identity*, Elazar Barkan and Ronald Bush, eds. (Los Angeles 2002), 51–96. The frieze from the temple of Apollo at Bassae, which was hung in the British Museum shortly afterwards, met with similarly divided responses; see Mary Beard and John Henderson, *Classics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford 1995), 81.

7. J. J. Pollitt, *Art and Experience in Classical Greece* (Cambridge 1975), 74. The quotes that follow are from Pollitt’s account, which remains the best, because it gives the clearest articulation of the issues and the problem.

8. Joseph Anselm Feuerbach, *Der vaticanische Apollo: Eine Reihe archäologisch-ästhetischer Betrachtungen* (1st ed., Nürnberg 1833; 2nd ed., Stuttgart and Augsburg 1855), 191; compare page 71.

9. On the new “Pyrrhonianism” of the age and on the Homeric question in particular, see Porter (note 1), chapter 1.

10. Andrew F. Stewart, *Greek Sculpture: An Exploration* (New Haven 1990), 1–30.

11. Helmut Pfothenauer, Markus Bernauer, Norbert Miller, and Thomas Franke, eds. *Frühklassizismus: Position und Opposition: Winckelmann, Mengs, Heinse* (Frankfurt am Main 1995), 149 and 151.

12. For different views, see now Armand D'Angour, "Intimations of the Classical in Early Greek *Mousikê*"; Glenn Most, "Athens as the School of Greece"; Yun Lee Too, "Rehistoricizing Classicism: Isocrates and the Politics of Metaphor in Fourth-Century Athens"; and my "Feeling Classical: Classicism and Ancient Literary Criticism" (the section on Aristophanes), forthcoming in *Classical Pasts* (Princeton University Press).

13. See now Andrew Stewart, "Baroque Classics: The Tragic Muse and the *Exemplum*," forthcoming in *Classical Pasts* (note 12).

14. For critical views, see now Mario Citroni, "The Concept of the 'Classic' and the Canons of Exemplary Writers in Roman Literature"; Tonio Hölscher, "Greek Styles and Greek Art in Augustan Rome: Issues of the Present versus Records of the Past"; and Jaś Elsner, "Classicism in Roman Art," forthcoming in *Classical Pasts* (note 12).

15. See Tim Whitmarsh, "Quickening the Classics: The Politics of Prose in Roman Greece," forthcoming in *Classical Pasts* (note 12).

16. See James I. Porter, "Homer: The Very Idea," *Arion* 10.2 (Fall 2002), 57–86.

17. Robert A. Kaster, "Becoming 'Cicero,'" in *Style and Tradition: Studies in Honor of Wendell Clausen*, Peter Knox and Clive Foss, eds. (Stuttgart and Leipzig 1998), 248–63. On Cicero's own conflicted relation to classicism, see John Henderson, "From ΦΙΛΟΣΟΦΙΑ into PHILOSOPHIA: Classicism and Ciceronianism," forthcoming in *Classical Pasts* (note 12).

18. The remark of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, that "there is in fact no single clear distinguishing mark (παράσημον αὐτῆς ἐκφανέας) of Demosthenes' style (*On Demosthenes* 50), is both a confession about this indeterminacy and a claim to a higher authority in matters of taste and discrimination. The musical qualities of style come to stand in for what is most fleetingly and difficultly apprehensible in style (see below).

19. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford 1977), 128 and 131; see also Williams' *Modern Tragedy* (Stanford 1966), 18, 57, 65. Williams resorts to this category throughout his career without ever fully defining it, and its meaning changes (for a critical survey, see David Simpson "Raymond Williams: Feeling for Structures, Voicing History" in *Cultural Materialism: On Raymond Williams*, Christopher Prendergast, ed. [Minneapolis and London 1995], 29–50, extending the critical reading of Terry Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism* [Berkeley 1976], 32–36). I have adopted and no doubt modified Williams's concept. More work could be done to elucidate the category of "structures of feeling," which is expressed in but by no means exhausted by pleasure. Indeed, its role as a reinforcer of transmitted ideology could be made to connect up with Lacanian *jouissance*. But above all, "feeling" here is to be construed as a complex, conflicted, even contradictory experience.

20. Williams seems to be seeking something like a materialist theory and criticism of art, which focuses upon the materiality of art itself (see Wil-

liams, *Marxism and Literature* [note 19], 169). Bourdieu’s theory of *habitus* and of the “logic of practice” and Williams’ theory of “structures of feeling” and “practical consciousness” (*Marxism and Literature*, 132) plainly overlap. See further Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *Contingencies of Value: Alternative Perspectives for Critical Theory* (Cambridge, MA 1988), 45.

21. “This is a way of defining forms and conventions in art and literature as inalienable elements of a social material process: not by derivation from other social forms and pre-forms, but as social formations of a specific kind which may in turn be seen as the articulation (often the only fully available articulation) of structures of feeling which as living processes are much more widely experienced” (Williams, *Marxism* [note 19], 133).

22. For instance, *habitus* has a historical dimension that is absolutely central to it, both as a constituent element and in being constitutively denied (“detemporalized”). “The body believes in what it plays at: it weeps if it mimes grief. It does not represent what it performs, it does not memorize the past, it enacts the past, bringing it back to life” (Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, Richard Nice, trans. [Stanford 1990], 73). As Bourdieu’s language suggests, a subject who is inhabited by a *habitus* is both knowing and unknowing at the same time, both a strategic player and a willing dupe of the social game at which he or she excels. See Bourdieu, 53–54, 60, 76 (citing “the *gravitas* of a Roman senator”), 108–9. For a recent useful (if slightly critical) application of Bourdieuan *habitus* to Roman rhetoric, see Erik Gunderson, *Staging Masculinity: The Rhetoric of Performance in the Roman World* (Ann Arbor 2000). Dio Chrysostom’s claim to weep while reading Xenophon’s *Anabasis* (*Oration* 18.16) is a good example.

23. Excellent discussion in Graham Anderson, “Sophists and their Outlook in the Early Empire,” *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* (1989) 2.33.1, 181–82; Maud W. Gleason, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton 1995), 13–17; Joy Connolly “Problems of the Past in Imperial Greek Education” in *Education in Greek and Roman Antiquity*, Yun Lee Too, ed. (Leiden and Boston 2001), 339–72; Tim Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire: The Politics of Imitation* (Oxford 2001), esp. 170–80. See Lucian, *A Professor of Public Speaking* 18, 20: “Mention Marathon and Cynegeirus everywhere, pack in Salamis, Artemisium, and Plataea, [and the crowds will marvel at] your appearance, voice, gait, your striding about, your sing-song tone, your sandals, and those ‘divers things’ of yours” (quoted in Connolly “Problems,” 357); see also Plutarch, *Moralia* 813e–14c.

24. Anderson (note 23), 182. *Paideia* standardly has this connotation of classically-based knowledge; see Lucian, *The Dream* 10.

25. Dio Chrysostom notes how his contemporaries’ critical faculties have become “enslaved” to classical texts (18.12), and yet he is willing to exploit and encourage identifications of the same kind (*passim*).

26. W. B. Stanford, *The Sound of Greek: Studies in the Greek Theory and Practice of Euphony* (Berkeley 1967). On the difficulties of this kind of recuperative projection, see Nietzsche in Porter (note 1), ch. 3.

27. See *The Consonants at Law, A Professor of Public Speaking* (esp. 10 and 17–22), *The Sham Sophist, or, The Solecist, and A Slip of the Tongue*.

28. Marcellus, in *Epigrammata Graeca* 1046.38 = IGR 1.194, A.38. See Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists* 598 (“tongue of the Greeks”).

29. Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists* 564; trans. Ian Rutherford after Wright, in Rutherford’s *Canons of Style in the Antonine Age: Idea-theory in its Literary Context* (Oxford and New York 1998), 22. See Wilhelm Schmid, *Der Atticismus in seinen Hauptvertretern von Dionysius von Halikarnass bis auf den zweiten Philostratus* (Stuttgart 1887–97), 1.193.

30. The attribution is common. See Philostratus, *Lives* 604 on Proclus of Naucratis, an Athenian sophist from the post-Hadrianic era and otherwise unknown, who gave declamations in the style of Hippias and Gorgias (ἰππιάζοντι τε ἐφκει καὶ γοργιάζοντι); Aelius Aristides dreamt of being Demosthenes declaiming to the Athenians (*Sacred Tales* 1.16 = Aristides, *Oration* 47.16 Keil). In doing so, these later sophists were adding a dimension to the fashions of the late fifth century: see Philostratus, *Lives* 501 on the Thessalian rage for Gorgianizing. A further sign of the compelling nature of the past’s sensuous immediacy is to be found in Pausanias 1.32.4.

31. See Rosalind Thomas, *Oral Tradition and Written Record in Classical Athens* (Cambridge and New York 1989).

32. “. . . feelings which, I think, are not uniquely mine (οὐκ ἐμὸν ἴδιον μόνου) but are experienced by everyone (κοινόν τι πάθος πάντων),” Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *On Demosthenes* 21.

33. See Simon Swain, *Hellenism and Empire: Language, Classicism, and Power in the Greek World, AD 50–250* (Oxford 1996), 79, for a good insight into this problematic: “the greatest importance lies in examining the cultural expectations which, once interiorized, determine why texts are pleasurable.” Swain goes on to broach the topic of feeling: the past becomes “tied up with the feelings of the present day observer,” pleasure being only one amongst these myriad feelings, to be sure.

34. Philip A. Stadter, *A Commentary on Plutarch’s Pericles* (Chapel Hill, NC 1989), 165 (ad loc.), rightly translates ἀρχαῖος with “ancient” but glosses it with “classic,” following LSJ, s.v. II.1. See Dicaearchus fr. 49 Wehrli, along with Pierre Chiron, ed., *Démétrios, Du style* (Paris 1993), 117 n. 237, who notes that, unlike *palaios*, *archaios* is never used in the sense of decrepit age. Rather, *archaios* stands semantically close to beginnings (*archai*), “donc ce qui est à la fois neuf, innocent, et pourvu du prestige de l’antiquité.” Plutarch is activating this sense but also creating a contrast, and a conflation, of the (simultaneously) old and new. See further next note. (Incidentally, the use of *archaios* in this passage is the only moment where LSJ acknowledges a Greek equivalent of the English word *classical*.)

35. The time frame of timelessness is of course itself inherited (see Nicole Loraux, *L’invention d’Athènes: histoire de l’oraison funèbre dans la “cité classique,”* Éditions de l’École des hautes études en sciences sociales [Paris 1981], 125–30, e.g., 129: “intemporalité”), as is the figure of perpetual

newness; see Lysias 2.26: “deeds of old (πάλαι γεγενημένων) . . . , as if they were still new (ὡςπερ καινῶν ὄντων ἔτι καὶ νῦν).” For a superficial resemblance, see Walter Pater’s essay, “The Beginnings of Greek Sculpture”: “In Greece all things are at once old and new” (*Greek Studies: A Series of Lectures* [London 1894, rpt. New York 1983], 226).

36. See Tonio Hölscher, “Images and Political Identity: The Case of Athens” in *Democracy, Empire, and the Arts in Fifth-century Athens*, Deborah Boedeker and Kurt A. Raaflaub, eds., (Cambridge, MA 1998), 182, on the way in which Athens, through its systematic public building program and patronage of the arts in the fifth century, “gradually developed into a monument of [its] own historical identity.”

37. Whether Thucydides is refuting a contemporary illusion about Athens and Sparta, a view held by contemporaries, is hard to say, but it is not unlikely that he is doing just this.

38. See Zeuxis’ retort to Agatharcus, who boasted of his speed and agility: “Mine take, and last, a long time” (Plut. *Life of Pericles*, 13.4; and *Moralia* 94E).

39. Translation as in Walter Burkert, “The Making of Homer in the Sixth Century BC: Rhapsodes Versus Stesichorus,” in *Papers on the Amasis Painter and his World* (Malibu, CA 1987), 55.

40. See Irene de Jong, “The Voice of Anonymity: τις-speeches in the *Iliad*,” *Eranos* 85 (1987), 69–84; Ruth Scodel, “Inscription, Absence and Memory: Epic and Early Epitaph,” *Studi italiani di filologia classica* 10 (1992), 57–76.

41. M. M. Bakhtin, “Epic and Novel,” in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson, trans.; Michael Holquist, ed. (Austin, TX 1981), 18–19, notes the same mechanism: “One may, and in fact one must, memorialize with artistic language only that which is worthy of being remembered, that which should be preserved in the memory of descendants; an image is created for descendants, and this image is projected onto their sublime and distant horizon,” which is to say, onto the descendants’ *past*, for contemplation by the ancestors as their *own* future legacy. This is what Bakhtin calls “the future memory of a past” (18–19).

42. [Demetrius] *On Style* 13, 108, 183; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *On the Composition of Words*, 22; [Longinus], 40.4. See James I. Porter, “Des sons qu’on ne peut entendre: Cicéron, Les ‘kritikoi’ et la tradition du sublime dans la critique littéraire,” in Clara Auvray-Assayas and Daniel Delattre, eds., *Cicéron et Philodème: La polémique en philosophie* (Paris 2001), 315–41.

43. Numerous examples are discussed in Susan E. Alcock, *Archaeologies of the Greek Past: Landscape, Monuments, and Memories* (Cambridge 2002); see also G. W. Bowersock, “The Barbarism of the Greeks.” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 97 (1995), 3–14; James I. Porter, “Ideals and Ruins: Pausanias, Longinus, and the Second Sophistic” in Susan E. Alcock, John F. Cherry, and Jaś Elsner, eds., *Pausanias: Travel and Memory in Roman Greece* (New York 2001), 63–92; and Susan E. Alcock and John F.

Cherry, “‘No Greater Marvel’: A Bronze Age Classic at Orchomenos,” forthcoming in *Classical Pasts* [note 12].

44. It should be stressed that B₂ is a phantasmatic construct in the mind of B₁ (most dramatically, in the case of a projected posterity), which is not to say that B₂ cannot be occupied by a historically real figure, past or contemporary. The question arises, What about B₂'s view of C? Where does it come from? The answer is simple: whenever we trace the process back a stage, a further triangulation goes into effect, along the same lines as those that obtain for B₁, whereby B₂ takes on the role of B₁ accessing C (or a version of C) by way of another phantasmatically constructed mediating figure (another B₂). The logic is truly regressive. Thus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus perceives fifth-century Athens through the gaze of a historical Demosthenes who nonetheless is filtered through Dionysius' imaginary. Demosthenes' image of the “same” Athens is likewise filtered through other antecedents, viz., is the product of further triangulated fantasies and identifications. Our own image of “Athens” is an overlay of these various triangulations, and so on. In a word, chain-linked regressiveness in one direction, accumulated overdetermination in the other. But even this account remains a simplification of a more complex pattern of identifications.