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**Edited by James I. Porter: Classical Pasts**

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## Introduction

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### WHAT IS “CLASSICAL” ABOUT CLASSICAL ANTIQUITY?

JAMES I. PORTER

What seemed a single escalator, a perpetual recession into history, turns out, on reflection, to be a more complicated movement: Old England, settlement, the rural virtues—all these, in fact, mean different things at different times, and quite different values are being brought into question.

—Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*

IN 1930 the field of classical studies experienced an insurrection. Werner Jaeger, in apostasy from his teacher and predecessor at Berlin, Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, 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. (In English the title ought to read, *History of [ ] Philology*. The published English and Italian translations spoil the title’s symbolics by reinserting the missing word *classical*.)<sup>1</sup> As Wilamowitz later wrote to Wolfgang Schadewaldt, one of the participants in the conference and a former pupil, “Whenever I read *Die Antike* [Jaeger’s neohumanist journal founded in 1925], a millstone starts turning in my head. But the stone grinds no meal, not for me at least.—I have an idea what classical physics is, and there is classical music. But besides that?”<sup>2</sup> *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 and in the

<sup>1</sup> See Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1921, 1, for the justification. On Wilamowitz’s boast, see Porter 2000b, 269–72 (to which add Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1900, 52 n. 1: “der Bann des Classizismus”; his article on [viz., against] Atticism, to be discussed below, is in fact premised on a critique of the classical ideal).

<sup>2</sup> Letter to Schadewaldt, December 1930 or January 1931, reproduced in Calder 1975, 455 (my translation). The journal’s subtitle reads, “Zeitschrift für Kunst und Kultur des klassischen Altertums”; see Jaeger’s programmatic preface to the first number (Jaeger 1925).

tradition of Winckelmann, Humboldt, and Goethe, as against its being a compilation of dry historical data.<sup>3</sup>

We have a good idea of what the conference was about because Jaeger published its proceedings a year later. 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 progressed, 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 Virgil fitted the classical ideal best of all.”<sup>4</sup>

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. The term and the idea it names are as common as they ever were. *Classicists* teach in departments of *Classics*, they study *classical* literature and culture (commonly known as *the classics*), 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.<sup>5</sup> In the first place, this kind of inquiry seems dated, and embarrassingly so. Passionate defenses of the classical were once in vogue, but consensus was never reached, and anyway there is something musty and distasteful about the question, which smacks of belletrism or of antiquarianism and a dated aesthetics. What have the concerns of a Boileau, a Goethe, or a Werner Jaeger to do with us today? The quarrels of the Ancients and Moderns are dead, and postmodern chic requires that the word *classical* should at most appear with a knowing nod and in inverted commas.<sup>6</sup> Outside of art history, where the term still carries a strong periodizing charge and are occasionally felt to be troubling, and occasionally in Germany where *das Klassische* continues to evoke an important aspect of the modern German identity and so continues to find historical relevance at least, classicists for the most part are content to submit to the dictates of usage and to leave well enough alone. And no doubt wisely so, for if anything was learned from the once raging but now weary and exhausted debates of the past centuries, it is surely the conclusion that the terms formed around the idea of the classical can have no satisfactory

<sup>3</sup> See Jaeger 1925. For background, White 1992.

<sup>4</sup> Jaeger 1931; Körte 1934; quotation from p. 13 with n. 2.

<sup>5</sup> In addition to the various works and items cited below, see Peyre 1965, Voßkamp 1993, Forestier and Néraudau 1995, Stenzel 2000.

<sup>6</sup> In postmodern art and architecture, classicism lives on in the mode of pastiche, but sometimes in a more earnest vein. Cf. Jencks 1980, id. 1987, id. 1996.

definition. Nobody likes pressing after insolubles, and this is no exception. Faced with the premonition of failure, classicists (even of the postmodern variety) naturally shy away from analyzing the terms too closely. But there may be more practical premonitions at work here.

Even as we lurch into the twenty-first century, with its shimmering promises of strange new worlds transformed by changes in technology and in global economies, the idea of the classical has a cachet that continues to translate into cultural prestige, authority, elitist satisfactions, and economic power—less so than in the past, to be sure, but with a residual effect that is far from negligible. What is more, the idea of the classical conveys an allure that is no less powerful for being all the more indefinable. Indeed, to decide its meaning once and for all would be to surrender some of this power—a sure disincentive to looking too long and hard at the meaning of the term. On the other hand, the very fact that the terms *classical*, *classicism*, and the rest are mutually implicated, linguistically, historically, and institutionally, ensures that a quiver of uncertainty felt in any one of the terms will be felt across them all. So, quite apart from the difficulties that the notion of the classical poses at the level of diction and dictionaries, the motivation for defining this extended family of terms and ideas appears to be rather minimal, at least within the circle of classical studies. (Just try proposing a change of name in your local department of Classics and watch the reactions you will draw.) Thus, while historians of modern literature and art have shown an interest in defining, with a backward-looking regard, the nature of the classic or in analyzing the phenomenon of classicism in its modern forms, classicists are frequently the last to question the meaning of the terms that currently define, for good or ill, the entirety of their fields.<sup>7</sup> One of the ironies of this situation is that simply by promoting their studies and by confirming their reach, classicists are witting or unwitting *classicizers*. But surely there is something odd about this conclusion. Classicists are not classical, and their writings are not classical. It is only the objects of their study that purportedly are. So what makes a classicist a *classicist*?

#### HOW “CLASSICAL” IS CLASSICAL ANTIQUITY?

At issue in questions about classicism is plainly the very label by which we designate the cultures of Greece and Rome as classical, 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 questioned even among those who study it.<sup>8</sup> It is a fair question to ask whether the presumptive epithet *classical* in

<sup>7</sup> This deficiency was noted by Gelzer in 1979, nor have things changed substantially since.

<sup>8</sup> *OED, New Edition*, s.v. “classic” on the “extension [of the word] to the ancient authors generally, as studied in school or college. . . . The extension has probably been in the main unthinking and unanalyzed.”

*classical studies* or *classical antiquity* is justified, or even what it would mean for the terms to count as justified at all. The aim of the present volume is to open an investigation into this very issue. The problem is to confront our nomenclature with our epistemologies, to measure what we say against what we know. Accordingly, the premise of *Classical Pasts* lies at the intersection of two related questions: First, are classicism—briefly, an awareness of and appreciation for what is classical—and the classical (however that comes to be defined) part of what we today call “the classical past,” namely the worlds of ancient Greece and Rome? And second, 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 Greco-Roman antiquity? These two questions can be summed up by way of a third: Was classical antiquity *classical*?

Even judging by existing criteria, the answer to this last question 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 “classics” (treatises on architecture are not, even if many of the works they describe are), and not even all of antiquity is considered equally classical. Conventionally, classical antiquity comprises not one comprehensive classical expanse but two isolated classical moments: fifth- and fourth-century Athens, and Augustan Rome. Nor are these strictly symmetrical: most of the prestige gets handed—again, conventionally—to Athens, while Roman culture, at least in the modern era, has often been felt to be a shadow or knock-off of the Greek original, when it was not seen as basking serenely in a borrowed, earlier glory.<sup>9</sup> On either side of these strictly classical phenomena are the outlying extremes: preclassical Greece (Greece of the Bronze Age and the subsequent “Dark Age”) and postclassical antiquity (however we choose to date this). And there are the debated middles, which are commonly thought, respectively, to lead up to, fall off from, or recapture—at least in aspiration—the glories of high classical Greece: the archaic period (ca. 800–500 B.C.E.); the diasporic Ptolemaic or Hellenistic period (323 to the first century B.C.E.); and the Second Sophistic period (ca. 50–250 C.E.), when Greeks were Romans and Romans, it often seems, sought to be like Greeks.<sup>10</sup> Nor is classical Greece itself consistently classical. On the contrary, that era—or its idea—is riven into three conventional

<sup>9</sup> On Athens, see Pollitt 1972 and Stewart 1997; on Rome, Zanker 1988a (esp. chs. 6–8) and Bryson 1990, 52–53. Attempts to de-center Athens exist (Beard and Henderson 1995, Feeney 1998, Zetzel 2003, and the chapters on Roman art and literature below), but these are bucking the prevailing trend.

<sup>10</sup> Hadrian, for example, was called *Graeculus* (*SHA* 1.5); but cf. already Cicero, who says of Titus Albius, an orator with strong Epicurean leanings, that “you could call him almost a real Greek (*paene Graecus*)” (*Brut.* 131). Often, though not always: see the sobering reminders of Woolf 1994 (and as Cicero’s own disparaging ironies already suggest). On the archaic period, see Hurwit

periods, mapping within itself the same rising and falling curve as the surrounding arc of history: the so-called Early Classical (480–450 B.C.E.), High Classical (450–400 B.C.E.), and Late Classical or incipiently classicizing (400–323 B.C.E.) periods.<sup>11</sup> The disparities are wide indeed.

A classicizing view of classical antiquity is objectionable on a number of counts. It is known and occasionally acknowledged that not even all of mid-fifth-century Athens at its zenith is equally classical. Everyday banal artifacts—products of the so-called minor arts—bear none of the traits of so-called classical objects, which reminds us of an ascending ladder of values in any cultural paradigm.<sup>12</sup> Foreign influences like Orientalism and Egyptianism as well as various forms of hybridity impinge upon all presumptions about cultural purism, ancient and modern, qualifying them if not also throwing them into question (see especially Elsner, this volume).<sup>13</sup> And there are countless internal challenges to the idea, or ideal, of a hegemonic classical Athenian or Roman culture, starting with the questionable applicability of the label, which is in essence an aesthetic rubric, to the diverse domains of these two cultures. Can we truly identify the classical in intellectual and political life, in social relations, or in religious practices? Is Gorgias, the devious sophist, a classical thinker just by virtue of being a rough contemporary of Phidias? Or the atomist Democritus, for that matter? To assume a positive answer in any of these cases is to underestimate the inherent difficulties of the term *classical*, the uneven distribution of patterns and perceptions within and not only across various domains of culture, and the likelihood of their mutual untranslatability. 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 Hellenism.<sup>14</sup>

The conventional and still dominant view of Greek and Roman classicism is, in a word, Hellenocentric. Its epicenter is Athens from the end of the Persian War in the early fifth century down to its collapse at the hands of Philip of Macedon in the fourth. All of which is to say that *classical antiquity is divided, not unified, by claims to its classicism*, at the very least by the presence of two classical periods inhabiting it from within, and by a series of contenders for the

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1985 (for art), Dougherty and Kurke 1998 (for culture), and Most 1989 and Morris 1997 (for its modern definition); on the Hellenistic period, see Stewart 1979, Pollitt 1986, and Stewart 1997, 205–30 (and this volume); on the Imperial era, see Hölscher 1987, Zanker 1988a, Elsner 1995 (for art), and Goldhill 2001 (for literary culture).

<sup>11</sup> On this standard periodization, see Fullerton 1998a, 69 with n. 6.

<sup>12</sup> Vickers 1985, Vickers and Gill 1996, Lapatin 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Vickers 1990, Beth Cohen 2000, Adams 2003, with the review of Adams by Mary Beard in the *Times Literary Supplement* of June 13, 2003, 5–6.

<sup>14</sup> Momigliano 1975, Horden and Purcell 2000, Dougherty 2003.

title which, for the most part, are considered to be either losers or nonstarters (the “pre-” or “post-” classical eras, from the Bronze Age to later antiquity).<sup>15</sup> And because classical antiquity has been treated as divided from within, the study of classical antiquity has had to be divided from within as well. The consequences for this view of Greek and Roman antiquity have been vast, from the highest reaches of the art world and its markets, where the culture of copies and originals looms large, to the most mundane details of the classroom, where textbooks, translations, editions, and curricula have all been affected in both selection and availability.<sup>16</sup> And while the view of classical culture as an organic entity that rises and falls along a sweeping parabola has been contested, the main points of reference and the picture as a whole remain pretty much intact, even as the cracks and divisions are everywhere to be felt and seen.

Classical antiquity is not consistently classical primarily because it has not been felt to be so in the past, but also because opinions about the question of where particular classical values are to be sought and found have varied. Thus, while consensus seems to cluster around Athenocentric values, the consensus splinters around particular instances (as the Naumburg discussion showed). Examples of debated items from Greece alone have historically included Homer, Euripides, and the Parthenon. Are these more or less classical than the Temple of Apollo on the Palatine, the Augustus of Prima Porta, or Hadrian’s classical theme park at Tivoli?<sup>17</sup> We can point to facts about symmetry and proportionality in architecture and to standards of decorum and clarity (or the demands for both) in literature and in criticism. But do these facts point to a classical sensibility? What justifies the assumption that they do? Pressed to this kind of extreme, the label *classical* seems more of an encumbrance than a convenience.

#### SEEING AND SAYING: CLASSICAL EPISTEMOLOGIES

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 from ancient

<sup>15</sup> See Paul Friedländer, “Vorklassisch und Nachklassisch,” in Jaeger 1931, 33–46, with its typical prevarications: “Whether Herodotus is to be called late archaic or early classical may look like a quibble. But . . .” (34). Pindar is “mature archaic (*reif archaisch*)” (33). And of Statius: “This is classical, . . . these verses are not” (42).

<sup>16</sup> Beard and Henderson, 2001, ch. 2, esp. pp. 73–74. On the role of the market, which in cases has actually changed scholarly visions and aesthetic perceptions of the classical past, see the articles by Vickers (1985, 1987, 1990) and the fundamental work by Reitlinger 1961–70.

<sup>17</sup> Most recently Fullerton 1998a, id. 1998b, id. ms., querying classicism in Roman art. On Hadrian’s Villa, see Beard and Henderson, 2001, 102–5.

libraries with the label *classical* written across their faces.<sup>18</sup> Confusions are bound to result. To take only one instance, consider the Parthenon sculptures. When they were first brought to England in 1806 the sculptures were not universally received as classical, and it would take a decade for the British Museum to buy them from Lord Elgin. On the contrary, as strange as it may sound to us today, the initial reactions to the marbles were mixed and their artistic and cash value were disputed: did they rank with the better known (and heavily restored) Vatican marbles, the Apollo Belvedere and the Laocoön? Were they even Greek? It was only gradually, after considerable debate, interpretation, and eventual validation, not to mention “remedial” scraping, bleaching, and polishing, that they acquired the luster they now unquestionably enjoy.<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, the fate of the Vatican marbles went the opposite way. In the generation after J. J. Winckelmann, who popularized them, they became an embarrassment to the history of art (possibly because Winckelmann had become this too): products of a later age (Roman, or worse still, Neronian), they were no longer deemed classical, and were at most classicizing. And they were judged so according to the very same criteria that had established themselves through the same, but by then discredited, marbles from the Vatican. As copies or embellishments of lost originals, with pretensions that reached no further back than the Hellenistic period, they no longer could belong to the sublimest rank of ancient sculpture.<sup>20</sup>

So just where do the cues to what is classical come from? Presumably they come from a combination of factors, ranging from features that objects have or suggest to acquired expectations, although in practice claims for classicality tend to be made through example and assertion (“This is classical, that is not.”). But as the interminable history of disputes over what is or is not classical in fact shows, 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 an object has this kind of property, which is why one needs to determine just where in any given case the suggestion originates.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, the strongest argument for

<sup>18</sup> See Shanks in Pearson and Shanks 2001, 114, for a parallel point: “What is found is not naturally ‘authentic’; its ‘original’ context is not natural. . . . What is found *becomes* authentic and valuable because it is set by choice in a new and separate environment with its own order, purpose and its own temporality.”

<sup>19</sup> Jenkins 2001, Beard 2002, 18–20 and 155–73, Webb 2002. The frieze from the temple of Apollo at Bassae, which was hung in the British Museum shortly afterwards, met with similarly divided responses; see Beard and Henderson 1995, 81.

<sup>20</sup> Winckelmann 1972, 366–69; Haskell 1976, 6; Haskell and Penny 1982, 106–7 and 150, who however somewhat downplay the damage that Raphael Mengs and others had done to the reputation of the Apollo Belvedere. Apart from Feuerbach (see below), compare Hazlitt [1826] 1930, 222: “The Apollo Belvedere [*sic*] is positively bad, a theatrical coxcomb, and ill-made.” Further, Stewart (this volume).

<sup>21</sup> *Pace* an account like that by Tatarkiewicz 1958, which vacillates in a way that is symptomatic

something's being classical seems to be the very act of ostension itself, while the strongest evidence for the classical is usually that of self-evidence. Schade-waldt believed, for instance, that when we are confronted with Sophocles or the Parthenon, "we remain who we are in the face of that form, which is entirely itself"; for "classical is what—for us—counts as classical."<sup>22</sup> Such is the sheer *tautology* of classicism. What is more, or less, the label *classical* is a selective screen: it excludes at least as much as it includes in the perception of an object, and it typically excludes *more* than it includes. As we shall see below, to take in a classical form is a bit like closing one's eyes. Finally, we should not underestimate the extent to which the idea of the classical is rooted in an experience of pleasure, which is the true accomplice of the ideal. Indeed, the very act of filtering, which produces the blinding fantasy of a classical object, of an object with a certain inestimable value, owes everything to the work of enjoyment that makes this fantasy succeed unnoticed.<sup>23</sup>

How much investment and disavowal must go into the making of the perception of a classical body? A considerable amount, if we take any of the German classicists as our guide. The history of the classical ideal in Germany, but also elsewhere in Europe, is the history of attempts to grapple with the elusiveness of this ideal in Winckelmann's wake. Winckelmann's writings, but above all his passion for Greek art, provoked a century-long obsession with the classical ideal that has left its indelible imprint on even our most recent past. The Nazi adoration of the classical form and the obsessive appropriation and musealization of antiquities, especially of classical stamp, over the past century and a half or more are just two instances that can be and have been named in this connection.<sup>24</sup>

Which is not to deny that the modern views had antecedents in antiquity. However Athens came to be seen as the zenith of classical culture, this myth of cultural plenitude was destined to become the model for the classical world and for our own. This was, after all, the premise of the first known etymology of the

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of the tradition it resumes (e.g., p. 20: "Si on n'aboutit pas a une définition du classique, on peut au moins en énumérer les propriétés").

<sup>22</sup> Schade-waldt in Jaeger 1931, 16 ("Bleiben wir wir selbst im Anschauen jener Gestalt, die ganz sie selber ist"); 21. A *locus classicus* of this idea is found in Hegel, for whom the classical is "that which signifies itself and thereby interprets itself" ("das sich selbst Bedeutende und damit auch sich selber Deutende"), viz., is both sign and its interpretation (Hegel [1820–29] 1975, 1:427; trans. modified). Tautology, self-evidence, and self-enclosing totality go hand in hand in this tradition.

<sup>23</sup> The same holds for the criterion of "pure Greek," which is assumed to be self-evident, until a definition is asked for, and even afterwards, when none can be agreed upon; cf. Sext. Emp. *Math.* 1.176 (cf. 1.184), and below on *hellenismos*. In ways, classical properties are susceptible to the kind of analysis Marx applied to commodity fetishism, which creates a "mist through which the social character of labour [read: "the classical"] appears to us to be an objective character of the products themselves" (Tucker 1978, 322). Classical properties are fetishistic in at least this sense. Further, Žižek 1989, 16.

<sup>24</sup> Mosse 1996 for the former; Beard and Henderson 1995 and Marchand 1996 for the latter.

term *classicus* from antiquity and one of its earliest (and only) attestations, according to which what is classical is tied to a conception of exclusive affluence and influence, based on an analogy to property ownership and class standing: “Not all those men who were enrolled in the five classes were called *classici*, but only the men of the first class, who were rated at a hundred and twenty five thousand *asses*” (Gell. *NA* 6.13.1, citing Cato the Elder’s usage from the early first century B.C.E.; trans. Rolfe). A military connotation does not lie far off (*classis* is also a levy or a fleet of warships, and its adjective is likewise *classicus*).<sup>25</sup> The point would not be quite so relevant if Fronto and Gellius, antiquarians with classicizing interests, had not connected the word more closely to *classical* in the modern sense in a later, more famous passage, a point we will want to come back to below. Thus, if we are willing to grant an initial coherence to the notion of classicism, it seems fair to say that Greek and Roman antiquity produced a form of classicism internal to itself, at the very least by the time of the Second Sophistic, but conceivably earlier.<sup>26</sup>

The very fact that classicism seems to emerge from a background in which the term goes unexpressed until very late in the day, in the second century C.E., is part and parcel of this fascinating problem: *classical* seeks to label something that as yet had no name. The problem is not unique by any means: it is a common enough issue in studies of antiquity, where missing names can at different historical moments include such diverse and problematic entities as *body*, *self*, *will*, *justice*, *class*, *race*, *homosexuality*, and even *literature*.<sup>27</sup> Names aside, the myth of cultural plenitude that has insinuated itself into the meaning of *classical* no doubt originated in Athens’s own self-definition, its political patronage buttressing its cultural hegemony. To be sure, fifth-century Athens never called itself *classical* in quite so many words, and ironically its claims to this title could only grow in proportion to the ever-widening distance to the political and cultural achievements of the Athenian fifth century. Considerations like these help draw attention to the underlying ideological dimensions of the label *classical*. Unpacking the historical mechanisms of classicism is a good way to observe and discover how ideologies come to function and take hold of subjects, most of all through finely spun webs of implication that take effect precisely because they are *not* named.

Whether classicism in antiquity is any more coherent than in its modern descendants and counterparts, this much at least is certain: things classical succeed most of all in conveying their classicality because they occupy a space

<sup>25</sup> On the resonances of *class* in *classical*, see Curtius 1953, 249–50; Stallybrass and White 1986, 1–6. On the difficulties of searching for an equivalent in *archaios*, see Porter, this volume (at n. 73).

<sup>26</sup> See Körte 1934.

<sup>27</sup> *Body*: Porter 1999; *body/soul*: Williams 1993 and M. Clarke 1999; *will*: Vernant and Vidal-Naquet 1988; *justice*: Havelock 1978; *class*: De Ste. Croix 1981 (with Finley 1983, 10); *race*: Hall 1997 (esp. pp. 34–37) and Hall 2002; *homosexuality*: Dover 1977, Foucault 1980–86; *literature*: Arist. *Poet.* 1.1447a28–b9; Dupont 1999.

that is simultaneously real and ideal. Ideals have a way of seducing us with their very nonlocatability. That is their chief source of power, which is purely ideological: they present the requirement, and the illusion, of consensus, which in turn masks over a good deal of uncertainty, contestation, and difference. More will be said about this below. First we need to consider the question of how classicism and the classical came to be identified and named.

#### HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM—HISTORICIZING THE PROBLEM

The question of when classical culture as we know it came into existence is a vexing problem, and the motivating impulse behind the present project. It is a problem of genuine historical dimensions, and it is a problem of a conceptual kind that exists for us today each time we try to formulate it. These two kinds of difficulty are linked, no doubt because the question of what is classical is at one and the same time so thoroughly overdetermined (it is contaminated, historically, with layers of attempts to put the question) and so thoroughly underdetermined (no answer, empirical or theoretical, can ever satisfy the demand, so to speak, that is written into the question). The question itself can be traced back to antiquity, long before Fronto, the early-second-century Roman orator who seems to have established the term *classicus* as a marker of cultural production of a high and elite order (*classicus scriptor; non proletarius*), and specifically literary cultural production of a certain antiquity (*cohors antiquior vel oratorium vel poetarum*), as Gellius testifies.<sup>28</sup> Though restricted to a Latin *cohors*, or canon, this notion of the classical is in fact modeled on the Greek paradigm of classical culture,<sup>29</sup> and it has strong resonances with Gellius's contemporary world: Gellius is very much a product of his backward-gazing age (see Citroni, this volume).<sup>30</sup> The term had been used earlier in Latin literature in a similar vein, but seemingly casually and never so specifically as here, and then it went underground until the Renaissance, when it was attached to *auctores*.<sup>31</sup> Finally,

<sup>28</sup> Gell. *NA* 19.8.15; cf. id. 6.13.1 (cited above, where however the term is not applied to writers but merely to first-rank *homines*).

<sup>29</sup> Horsfall 1993, esp. 61–62. The title of Gellius's work, after all, is “*Attic Nights*.” Its composition, he tells us, was begun during long winter nights “spent in the countryside of Attica” (Praef. 4)—a symbolic *incipit*, to be sure.

<sup>30</sup> Further, Langlotz 1960; Gelzer 1975, 154–55, 161; Settis 2002, 44; Citroni 2003c. Fronto's and Gellius's antiquarianism, a frequent preoccupation after the Augustan age (see Gell. *NA* 2.16.5 on Caesellius's *Commentario Lectionum Antiquarum*), is strongly classicizing (cf. Körte 1934, 4–6). And the hunt for rare words and correct usage is part of a larger aesthetic quest, which includes melodiousness, rhythm, other aspects of euphony (ibid., 1.4.4, 1.7.19–20, 2.3.1, 4.17.12; see Biffino ms.)—in short, it is part of a desire for *Latinitas* parallel to the desire for *hellenismos* (on which, see below; and see also n. 116).

<sup>31</sup> Cicero employs the same metaphor (*quintae classis*) to single out the philosopher Democritus as superior to the Stoics Cleanthes and Chrysippus, but not in a literary sense (*Acad.* 2.23.73). For the

*classical* came to be applied to the whole of Greek and Roman antiquity in the sense that is current today. That sense ultimately rests, as Nietzsche once noted, on “an *aesthetic* judgment,” and in at least two ways: to speak of *classical antiquity* is to delimit historical developments and to grasp them as a unified whole; and it is to confer on them a value, which is one of unqualified prestige.<sup>32</sup>

Indeed, classicism and the classical rely upon an aesthetic bias in more surreptitious ways still. The view that classicism was available in antiquity, retrospectively, once the Golden Age of Greece had passed, tends to set up questionable teleologies according to which art and culture are seen as having groped towards, and then drifted away from, what would eventually emerge as a canonically classical ideal, whether this emergence is found in the human form (Phidias) or in the conception of humanity that this form was meant, or said, to embody (the free, self-standing, typically male individual in control of his own political and expressive destiny). But how likely is this story, in fact? One could just as easily and convincingly argue that the idea of the classical is of necessity an empty concept, a placeholder for something that never in fact transpires. For according to the standard account, later expressions of classicism are never classical but only *classicizing*, while appearances of the classical can by definition never be “classical” in their initial appearance but only in a retrospective light. The classical thus *never is* but always *only once was*. The unrelenting abstraction and idealism, not this time of what the classical picks out—this or that classical object—but of the way in which the classical appears in history as a graspable form, ought to give us pause. Here, it is no longer a question of disputed instances: it is *the very phenomenon of the classical* that has been idealized and made into an abstraction. In theory the epitome of self-contained identity, in fact the classical never seems to be equivalent to itself. Small wonder that pointing out individual instances of the classical in practice is as problematic as it is: it is *the very idea of the classical* that is problematic.

A good deal of this uncertainty has to do with the for the most part disguised function of the classical in social and political life, both ancient and modern. As a consequence, classicism and the classical are generally doing several things at the same time, nor is it always easy to prise apart these functions. What is the exact relation between the aesthetic claims of the classical and its privileged place in the realm of cultural production? One possibility is that both the allures of high culture and the aims of the political realities underlying them are *facilitated* by the aesthetic qualities that are conferred upon them through the classical, and in two ways. At times the aesthetic connotations may serve to deflect from the ideological pressures of classicism and the classical:

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term's reappearance at around 1500, see Rizzo 1986, 389–90, and Pfeiffer 1976, 84 n. 4. Our sense of the term takes its cue from here. (I owe the reference to Rizzo to M. Citroni.)

<sup>32</sup> Nietzsche 1967–, 2.1:341.

busying ourselves with timeless beauty, we are permitted to ignore the hard contingencies that make this perception possible. At other times classical aesthetics serves precisely to enhance our experience of what is at bottom an ideological formation, which now can be felt as uplifting, sublime, sacred, and so on. Aesthetics and cultural ideology are on this latter scenario indivisibly fused: the allures of classicism *just are* an ideological pleasure. Aristides, the second-century C.E. orator from Pergamum and eventual chronicler of his life-long physical ailments, swooning over the incomparable greatness of a bygone Athens worthy of a classical shrine (“the whole Acropolis was like a dedication, or rather like a statue”), illustrates the grip that classicism can have on the ancient political imagination. It is in good part thanks to the Aristides’ of the past that in the modern view of things classicism and classical antiquity form a closely knit unity that is hard to dislodge.<sup>33</sup>

*Classicism* and *classical* bespeak a proudly venerable past, yet histories of the terms, one of the conventional ways scholars have tried to get at their meaning, reveal how recent their usage in fact is in the modern vernaculars. The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives 1613 for the first appearance of the word *classic* in English, meaning “of the first rank” (as in Fronto), and 1628 for the first application of the term to Greco-Roman culture, while *classical* appears in the same senses just a few years earlier (1599 and 1607). *Classicism*, a later neologism that was initially spurned, appears in Italian in 1818 and in English for the first time in 1830.<sup>34</sup> *Klassizität* and *Klassik*, German abstractions for the concept of the classical and its incarnations, are of eighteenth-century derivation.<sup>35</sup> *Das Klassische* may date from the start of the next century,<sup>36</sup> even if the adjectives *classique* and *klassisch* appear earlier (1548 and 1748, respectively), if only sporadically, while *classical* was combined with *antiquity* only in 1797 in Germany.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, it is largely to the German eighteenth century, which was one of renewed attention to classical antiquity, that modern and current notions of the classical trace their lineage, starting above all with Winckelmann (1717–68).

To acknowledge Winckelmann’s place in this history is to begin to make an initial dent in the problem of the classical, because surprisingly he appears to

<sup>33</sup> The Acropolis is the incarnation of Athenian political, economic, and cultural hegemony, all rolled into one: Aristid. *Or.* 1.191; cf. *ibid.*, 348, and *passim*.

<sup>34</sup> *OED, New Edition*, q.v. These dates are slightly earlier than those given in Levin 1957, Luck 1958, and Wellek 1970 (who supplies the Italian example from 1818). But as Tatarkiewicz 1958, 6–7, well underscores, coinages and usage are distinct things: despite the precedents, Bayle’s *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1695–97) fails to mention *classique*, while the dictionary of the Académie Française of 1814 begrudgingly mentions the term; only afterwards did the word enjoy any currency in France.

<sup>35</sup> Wellek 1970, 74, 77–78.

<sup>36</sup> As in Wilhelm von Humboldt’s essay “Latium und Hellas” (1806/7).

<sup>37</sup> See Stroux in Jaeger 1931; Gelzer in Flashar 1979, 4; Müri 1976, 286 and 288 (on F. Schlegel’s German coinage of *klassisches Altertum* and its gradual acceptance in Germany).

be ignorant of the term and its extensions. On the one hand, there can be little doubt that it was Winckelmann who inaugurated the modern fury of classicism, stamping it as a pursuit of an idea of aesthetic beauty and purity that, abstractly conceived and barely embodied, would haunt the centuries to come in the form of “the classical ideal.” But so far as I am aware Winckelmann himself nowhere makes use of the word *classical* or any of its cognates, and instead is content to speak either of “Greeks” and “Romans” or of “antiquity” (*das Altertum*) and its phenomena *tout court*—a stretch of history that begins with Egypt, Phoenicia, Persia, and Etruria, and ends in Rome, but which achieves its pinnacle only in Greece. While Winckelmann was following good precedents, his presumptive bias is the same as in later writers, for whom the word *antiquity* stands for classical antiquity at its best, which is to say for an embodiment of values that stem from classical Greece.<sup>38</sup> Plainly, the thought or concept of what is classical had already occurred to Winckelmann and is in full force in his writings. Only the word is missing. If so, then just how significant can the history of words be?

Histories of words can take us only so far. It is not merely that such histories tend by their nature to be incomplete. Even a complete history of terms would not give us a handle on the history of the concepts that the words seek to name (Winckelmann, for instance, would not figure in such a history).<sup>39</sup> Nor do histories like these necessarily bring us any closer to definitions. What histories of words and concepts reveal is at best the history of struggles over definition. This was never more true than in the case of a word like *classical*, which can have *no* agreed-upon definition, if only because the concepts it represents have themselves historically been a matter of contention. The reason for this disagreement is not far to seek: the concept of the classical names something that is not merely ineffable, but is arguably also incoherent to the core, being fashioned out of mere ideals and aspirations with no clear embodiments in reality and not even any clear articulations in language. More significant than words and the concepts they name are the patterns of logic that underlie the deployment of both. Only by reconstructing this logic and its history can one hope to come to grips with the notion of the classical. That history has yet to be written.

Anatomies fare little better than histories of words and ideas. While they may be comforting in their apparent systematicity, anatomies can at most offer

<sup>38</sup> On these precedents, see Müri 1976, with examples from, e.g., Roger de Piles (1635–1709), “le siècle des grands hommes,” viz., “les merveilleux ouvrages,” “ces beaux ouvrages de l’antiquité,” and Caylus, “la belle Antiquité.” This acceptance entered the German language as *die Antike* around 1760 (ibid., 253–54). *Alt*, *ancien*, and *ancient* and their substantivals exhibit the same bias today, as in *Altphilologie* for *classical philology* and *anciens* for Greeks and Romans. *Philology* is another imperious shorthand.

<sup>39</sup> Another case in point is the term *Renaissance*, which was adopted as a periodizing term only in the nineteenth century by Michelet and then by Burckhardt (although Balzac may have coined the term in 1829).

a summation of past uses of a term, but not its definition, and they fail to touch the logic or illogic of the term's uses. To be sure, anatomies of *classicism* and *the classical* are available. Michael Greenhalgh's *What Is Classicism?* (1990) is a recent example, as are, in classical art history, the opening pages of J. J. Pollitt's *Art and Experience in Classical Greece* (1972).<sup>40</sup> And there are a number of (qualified) defenses of the utility of the terms, for example, Harry Levin's "Contexts of the Classical" (1957), Frank Kermode's *The Classic* (1983/1975), Italo Calvino's "Why Read the Classics?" (1999), and J. N. Coetzee's "What Is a Classic?" (2001), all in the wake of two milestone essays, Sainte-Beuve's *Qu'est-ce qu'un classique?* (1850) and T. S. Eliot's "What Is a Classic?" (1944). The most honest of these throw up their hands in despair,<sup>41</sup> and the best of them turn this despair into a productive source of inquiry by asking how we got to this point and what the gaps in our frameworks mean (see Schmalzriedt's once scandalous and now little-cited *Inhumane Klassik: Vorlesung wider ein Bildungsklichée* [1971], Beard and Henderson's *Classics: A Very Short Introduction* [1995], Guillory's *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* [1993], and Settis's "Der Klassizismus und das Klassische" [2002]).<sup>42</sup> And so, while it might be desirable to enumerate the various meanings that the terms *classical* and *classicism* can have, based on their historical usages, all such anatomies miss the crux of the problem. Let's see why.

Anatomies of the term *classical* typically list the following uses:

1. Designating or pertaining to the whole of Greek and Roman civilization in antiquity
2. As a periodizing term, designating the two periods of less than half a century each that are commonly regarded as high points within the Greek and Roman classical civilizations (Periclean Athens, Augustan Rome). In the case of Athens, this period is sometimes extended by another half century or more into the age of Plato, Isocrates, Demosthenes, and Aristotle.
3. As a paradigmatic quality or feature or set of features of aesthetic, moral, or intellectual excellence or perfection, whether of style, content, or attitude, often modeled on phenomena from classical antiquity (normally, those of its classical periods [2]) and felt to exhibit qualities of measure, restraint, and order, in addition to clarity, simplicity, unity, balance, symmetry, harmony, and the like
4. Developments in other cultures and civilizations parallel to but often autonomous of those meanings listed above, for instance, *classical French literature* produced during the period of French classicism, which need not

<sup>40</sup> See also Hölscher 1993b.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Langlotz 1960, 639: "Nonetheless . . . a classic style per se does not exist," etc.; cf. *ibid.*, 641.

<sup>42</sup> Now expanded and developed in Settis 2004, which I discovered too late to make any use of in this Introduction.

imply a direct reference to Greek and Roman classical models, or *classical Chinese art*, which as an appellation may be no more than the extension of a set of analogies across cultures, or *classical Malaysian literature*, a category invented under British colonialism and aimed against Islamic “contamination” of the Malay culture that was assumed to have been indigenous<sup>43</sup>

5. As a contrast with *romantic* or *popular*, or *gothic* and *baroque*, especially in the realm of music, often drawing upon the classical aesthetic in (3) above, and identified with specific stylistic and thematic features or qualities<sup>44</sup>

While this list captures some of the different terrains in which *classical* has come to be applied, the kinds of meaning it describes are disparate, being partly theoretical and partly historical, or else partly descriptive and partly normative. There are no rules governing the uses of the term, and little agreement on its application either. The lines get crossed easily and the categories mingle freely. A case in point is category (3), which can be raided at will to invoke any form or appreciation of the classical. As a consequence, anatomies like these are as contestable and as much a matter of momentary convenience as are the individual elements they comprise. And because they presume a level of coherence to the applications in question, when it ought to be the very applicability of the terms that is in question in any given instance, lists of this kind are uncritical by their very nature.

The term *classicism* brings with it a related and derived set of difficulties. A typical anatomy of *classicism* will include the following meanings:

1. That which pertains generally to what is perceived to be classical (e.g., the classicism of the Parthenon)
2. A style that is based on what are felt to be classical models
3. A tradition perpetuating the authoritative norms of what is felt to be an original classical moment, whether by imitation, emulation, revival, adaptation, reference, or critical enshrinement. The term in this sense can be either approving, which is its majority meaning (as in the self-proclaimed classicism of seventeenth-century France or in the new classicisms of modernism and of postmodernism, in the latter case sometimes termed “Free-Style Classicism”),<sup>45</sup> or derogatory,

<sup>43</sup> For China, see Powers 1991, ch. 5 (“Classicism”), where the terms *classical* and *classicism* and the criteria (e.g., “simplicity and grandeur”) are a conscious importation—but also where the analogies are less obviously relevant to Augustan Rome than to the Second Sophistic, unbeknownst to the author (see p. 158: “the anachronistic dress, affected mannerisms, and archaic speech of the literati,” etc.), although the historical and cultural particulars are, to be sure, at another level incommensurable. For the Malaysian example, see Maier 1988.

<sup>44</sup> Pollitt 1972; *Art Journal*, Spring 1988; Greenhalgh 1990.

<sup>45</sup> Jencks 1987, esp. p. 151 on “the classical sensibility” of the new classicism: “Less than an ideology and more than a reigning style, it can be thought of as a sensitivity in conveying particular shades of feeling or attitudes to life”; and id. 1996, 38, on “Free-Style Classicism.” The contemporary Seaside community in Florida was designed around a neoclassical aesthetic that was celebrated in a symposium called “Classical Visions” in February of 2001 ([http://www.classicist.org/symposia\\_visions.html](http://www.classicist.org/symposia_visions.html)).

when it is used to emphasize derivativeness (as when *classicismo* was first introduced into Italian in the nineteenth century)<sup>46</sup>

4. “A way of perceiving the world and using the arts to persuade others to see it in a similar fashion,” viz., “a state of mind and a ‘world view’” that represents “classical” values of the sort listed above (simplicity, harmony, rationality, etc.), but which is frequently felt to take on a life of its own independent of any Greek and Roman inspirations, as in Italian Renaissance devotional art (e.g., Michelangelo’s Sistine Chapel fresco) or in the program of the *École des Beaux-Arts* in nineteenth-century France. This attitude often assumes the dimensions of an ideology, no doubt owing to its programmatic reach; and at the very least it is a view with ideological implications<sup>47</sup>

In the first of these senses, *classicism* merely describes what is elsewhere evaluated as *classical*, but we cannot say where this evaluation takes place. I can speak of Sophocles’ classicism without having to impute the intention of being classical to him. The use is an invitation to further querying. In the remaining senses, we are having to do with a conscious reflection on the past. Here, classicism is a retrospective phenomenon, which is one of its most common acceptations, although in the fourth case there is a tendency to detach classicism from its historical context and from particular values, and so too, presumably, to see classicism as standing free of any retrospective views. The problem is that this last separation is difficult to make in theory and in practice: the values of classicism in senses 1–3 constantly intrude upon descriptions of any such “universal” classicism (T. S. Eliot), which for the most part looks to be a mere hypostasis of the essence of Greco-Roman classicism, that is, of classicism in its classic form. The different senses of *classicismo* are less easily disentangled than one might wish them to be.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup> See Wellek 1970, 67, who suggests that in French *classicisme* “was felt as an ugly neologism,” and notes the remarkable fact that as of 1965 the dictionary of the Académie Française refused to acknowledge the term. Cf. also the famous opening salvo of Wölfflin’s *Die klassische Kunst* (1st ed. 1898): “The word *classical* has a chilling quality for us. . . . ‘Classical art’ appears to us as the eternally dead, the eternally ancient, the fruit of academies, a product of doctrine, not of life,” etc.

<sup>47</sup> Greenhalgh 1990, 8 and 11. In the extreme, one might feel entitled to conclude that “as a universal category rather than a specific historical occurrence, classicism means nothing more than an assertion of authority, of power under whatever form” (Zerner 1988, 36).

<sup>48</sup> See Greenhalgh 1990, 10: “We must also distinguish between *Classicism* and the *classical tradition*—the former being a state of mind that can exist without reference to any supporting traditions, the latter a conscious assimilation or re-working of characteristics imitated from earlier art and based ultimately on the perceived qualities of antique art.” I doubt that a clean separation can be made (see *ibid.*, 10–11), any more than Gelzer’s “typological” (viz., “value-free,” “purely formal and classificatory,” i.e., “historical”) definition of classicism can be detached from the “evaluative” sense of the term, which he stipulates as a separate entity (Gelzer 1979, 9–10; see Görler in Flashar 1979, 43, with Gelzer 1975; and Gadamer 1986, 290–95). Tatarkiewicz 1958 likewise runs into trouble when he seeks to rescue a core of atemporal classical values and properties from history. Nonetheless, these are plainly derived: classical Greek art he declares “perfectly” realized,

Each of the uses of the term *classical* or *classicism* enumerated above involves a problem of attribution, which inevitably brings time and history back into the picture of timeless value that both words summon up. One problem the words disguise is the uncertainty and imprecision of any retrospective glance. Is eighteenth-century neoclassicism (Gabriel's Petit Trianon or his Place de la Concorde) an allusion to antiquity or a sign of Louis XIV revivalism?<sup>49</sup> Are the classicizing elements of the Great Altar of Zeus at Pergamum quotations from the Parthenon or a Baroque reworking of that model?<sup>50</sup> Similar questions can be put in relation to the Pasquino group and other Hellenistic Baroque sculptural compositions, both of which contain prominent archaic and classical-period elements in their makeup. The choice is misleading: hybridity is inevitable, and inherently unstable (see Stewart, this volume). But attributions bring problems of a different kind as well. Given the relative tardiness of the terms *classical* and *classicism*, are we not obliged to award both the words and their corresponding ideas to an age that no longer felt itself to be classical but instead felt itself to be only postclassical? In other words, don't we have to admit that the postclassical era in some sense *invented* the classical age? If so, then to speak of the classical properties of classical objects or attitudes from, say, Periclean Athens is to speak of projections by a later age. But also, if we allow that a postclassical era invented its ancestry in what came to be labeled a "classical" age, must we not also acknowledge that that later era simultaneously invented itself *as* postclassical?<sup>51</sup> The historical intricacies of this kind of projection and invention are mind-boggling, not to say hard to establish, let alone to date. The problem is not that this kind of double invention is inconceivable in the end, but only that it is conceivable as a strategy the usefulness of which never ends. As a marker of historical realities with determinable boundaries, it is unreliable.<sup>52</sup>

When were the classical era and its significant properties first recognized? Late-fifth-century Athens, Hellenistic Alexandria, Hellenistic Athens, Augustan

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and Aristotle is "*the* classical philosopher" (pp. 21, 22). Here, classical values are no longer simply "real" (cf. p. 15): they have become *surreal*.

<sup>49</sup> Honour 1968, 25.

<sup>50</sup> Stewart 1993a, 166–72.

<sup>51</sup> See Gelzer 1975, 166–70, on the logical and chronological primacy of classicism vis-à-vis any prior classical age, which (he claims) is merely a back-projection of the former.

<sup>52</sup> Compare the creation on the spot of archaic predecessors, entailing that one is in some sense modern, as Ennius did to Livius Andronicus and Naevius, and as Virgil, Horace, and Seneca did to Ennius (Hinds 1998, 55–74). But other readings and other strategies of invention are possible too. See Habinek's reading of the invention of literary Latin: "The very artificiality of the new language [of the generation of Ennius and others] guaranteed its inaccessibility and its timelessness—so much so that even today Terence is regarded as the quintessence of *Latinitas*" (Habinek 1998, 44; cf. *ibid.*, 48, on Cato). Virgil, too, was given to archaism, which is to say, to inventing himself, not as classical, but as *antique* (Quint. *Inst.* 8.3.24–28; cf. 1.6.39–41; Gell. *NA* 12.2.10; Bettini 1984).

Rome, Second Sophistic Rome and Greece, and neoclassical Europe are frequent contenders, but these remain generalities and, their obvious incompatibility aside (they cannot all give the correct answer—or they can, in which case none of the answers is “correct” in the ordinary sense of the term), addressing the problem in this way merely defers the question of when the exact moment of invention or discovery arrived.<sup>53</sup> This kind of solution likewise suggests a power of agency that is, to say the least, incredible. And the idea of an isolated moment when classicism in the retrospective sense came about—say, at four o’clock on a sunny afternoon in Hellenistic Alexandria—seems *prima facie* unlikely. If it can be shown that something resembling the thought of classicism and the classical can have occurred in antiquity itself, it is far more likely that classicism in its “classic” form will prove to have been a gradual phenomenon that emerged quietly over several generations and even more probably over several centuries, but with tentative anticipations originating already in the classical era itself, if not earlier. On this view one can point, as some have done, to Aristophanes’ reflections on tragedy (especially in his play *Frogs*, from 405 B.C.E.), and then in the next century to Lycurgus’s legislation concerning revivals of the three “classic” tragedians.<sup>54</sup> As classicism evolved, so did its functions. But the focus and structure of classicism remained fixed, more or less along lines that are familiar to us today, with a privileging of Athenian cultural achievements of the fifth and fourth centuries and of some of their more impressive predecessors and, eventually, as the centuries wore on in the *translatio imperii* of cultural hegemony, with a privileging of analogous equivalents in the Roman sphere. But if that is the case, then what is of interest is not the final result of this process but the process itself and its adaptive logic, which is to say the long and complex journey of a set of concepts and assumptions on the road to their being named.

Which is not to say that this conceptual journey has a well-defined terminus. How do we know once we have arrived at the destination? The problem is that there may be no clear destination. At the end of the road we find the terms *classical* and *classicism* and a series of attempts to claim and to purify their meaning. But the attempts are never definitive—the central concepts and their referents are at no point uniformly agreed upon. Surely it is not the case that with Fronto or Gellius, once the term *classicus* is established for the first time, there is any more certainty about the meaning or definition of what the classical is. If there is a moral to draw here, it is perhaps this: inquiring into the meaning of *classical* needn’t involve the search for a definition. At its best, the question need only be “a prompt to explore the many ways” in which an object

<sup>53</sup> The problem is especially acute if the concepts of the classical and classicism are specifically “modern,” viz., post-antique (Gelzer 1975, 154–55, 161). If so, then in what sense can they also be ancient (as Gelzer allows, e.g., pp. 167–70)?

<sup>54</sup> See Schadewaldt 1931, 25: “Aristophanes, selber ein Klassiker, in dem das Wesen des Klassischen zuerst seiner selbst bewußt geworden ist. . . .”; Körte 1934, 9–10.

or phenomenon comes to be labeled “classical,” and possibly loses its label, in the course of its history.<sup>55</sup> The meaning of the term is ultimately irrelevant in itself. What matters is less its dictionary meanings than how those meanings were made and remade, how they came to be conceived, institutionalized, and in various ways challenged. To think of the classical in this way is not to posit something that is immutably classical, but rather to conduct a cultural history of the classical as something that is posited in this way. It is to *historicize* classicism, or rather to historicize the classicizing imagination, and to explore how whatever is or once was deemed classical “engages through time with its tradition and with its changing environment.”<sup>56</sup> It is fair to say that the meanings of the terms built on the radical *classical* are undergoing change today, at a time when the very relevance of the “classic,” “the classical,” and antiquity in its Greek and Roman forms is coming under fire in an increasingly diverse, globally expanding, and multicultural world.<sup>57</sup>

The present volume may well be a symptom of this unease with inherited concepts. However, the primary motivation for *Classical Pasts* is to discuss the largely buried unease that the past itself has experienced in its own dealings with things classical. The only satisfactory history of the classical and of classicism would have to be a history of this discomfort. Most students of antiquity who deploy the terms *classical* and *classicism* today are scarcely aware of this troubled past, while those few who actually investigate the terms tend to assume an unwarranted coherence in the concepts that underlie them.

#### THE STATE OF THE QUESTION

When did antiquity discover itself? The very idea of the classical world is a cultural artifact, not a historically given entity, although to say this is not to say all that much, for just when was the artifact “made”?<sup>58</sup> As it happens, the inquiry into “classical pasts” today is timely. Historicism, guided by the nineteenth-century imperative to know the past *wie es eigentlich gewesen*, has gradually turned in on itself in the field of classics. The guiding problem is no longer simply to know what the past is or was, but also to know what it is or was to have a past. More and more, scholars are turning to the way antiquity conceived its own history. And more and more, it is becoming apparent that our sense of the past is shaped by *its* sense of its own past. Witness the recent explosion of

<sup>55</sup> Beard and Henderson, 2001, 74.

<sup>56</sup> Beard and Henderson, 2001, 74. Cf. Tatarkiewicz 1958, 13: “The problem . . . is not one of criticism and aesthetics, but of history, social psychology, and sociology”—a position he all but recants a few pages later: “but history leads to an idea, which is the general idea of aesthetics,” which gives credence to the “natural” affinity of man to the idea of the classical (16).

<sup>57</sup> The fiery debates surrounding Martin Bernal’s *Black Athena* have been one of the rare points of contact between contemporary and classical studies. See Bernal 2001.

<sup>58</sup> See Vercellone 1988, for one suggestion.

studies on antiquarianism, nostalgia, pilgrimage and tourism, cults and revivals, of new forms of palimpsestic histories, not to mention the booming interest in the history of (the history of) classical studies.<sup>59</sup> No longer unidimensional, linear, and progressive, history appears like a cascade of Chinese boxes, each moment containing its own tightly packed historical pasts within itself. Classical studies and the history of those studies are increasingly becoming inseparable. The logical next step is to inquire into the history of the classical.

Art historians, attuned to the aesthetics of Winckelmann, have been the first and last to observe the effects of classicism in antiquity.<sup>60</sup> They are followed, at some remove, by historians of literature, criticism, and philology, who have shown less of an investment in the meanings of the terms used as periodizing labels but still assume the general validity of the concepts, which are rarely called into question. (Students of history, religion, philosophy, science, and so-called ancillary fields, such as papyrology, epigraphy, and numismatics, are less susceptible to problems of these labeling concepts, possibly due to the influence of the more positivist traditions from which they have emerged.) Two significant exceptions are Egidius Schmalzriedt's *Inhumane Klassik: Vorlesung wider ein Bildungsklichée* (1971), a short essay that takes a cynical view of the relevance of the term *classical* to antiquity, with a long appendix of revealing quotations from mainly German literature, philosophy, and classical scholarship, and Tonio Hölscher's *Die unheimliche Klassik der Griechen* (1989), which contests the value of the term for the age of Pericles and seeks to replace it with a more politically nuanced and at times rather Nietzschean account of the period.<sup>61</sup> The present volume features several further exceptions, five of which particularly stand out for their bold heterodoxy: the essays by Alcock and Cherry, D'Angour, Stewart, Hölscher, and Elsner, each of which seeks in its own way to challenge the limits of the current understandings of *classicism* and *the classical*, and to stretch them in new and productive directions. This dissonance, in relation to the field and within this volume, is both provocative and healthy.

Outside of art history, notable exceptions include research on Roman contexts, such as the collection of essays, *Le classicisme à Rome* (Flashar 1979), in addition to a series of essays by Mario Citroni,<sup>62</sup> and also some of the recent

<sup>59</sup> E.g., Alcock et al. 2001, Boardman 2002, Alcock 2002, and on the modern side Barkan 1999 and Schnapp 1996.

<sup>60</sup> Recent accounts of the classical include Pollitt 1972, covering the High Classical period; Stewart, 1979, esp. chs. 2 ("The Magnet of Classicism") and 6 ("Time and Style"), treating the Hellenistic diffusion of classical ideals, and id. 1997, revisiting the High Classical period; half of the essays in Pöhlmann and Gauer 1994; Zanker 1974 and id. 1988a; and Elsner 1998, on the transformation of classical models of art in later antiquity.

<sup>61</sup> An exhibition from 2002 in Berlin, *Griechische Klassik—Idee oder Wirklichkeit* ("Greek Classicism—Idea or Reality"), was likewise critically aimed. See the catalogue volume ([Anon.], ed. 2002). See further Wallace-Hadrill 1989, taking critical exception to the application of *classicism* to Roman art in Zanker 1988a.

<sup>62</sup> Citroni 1998, id. 2003c.

work on the Second Sophistic.<sup>63</sup> This last is perhaps only to be expected, given the heightened presence of classicism in the imperial era, an age of sustained tension between the Greek and Roman worlds. Indeed, as research on the Second Sophistic intensifies, a convergence of visual and cultural analysis is inevitable and questions about classicism are bound to come increasingly to the fore. Moving beyond some of the reflex assumptions of the earlier models and perceptions will be of paramount importance in future scholarship. Is the category of the classical a product of later classicisms or does it preexist them? The new scholarship on Rome and especially on Greece under Rome, forcing this very kind of question, is already beginning to put renewed pressure on the meaning of *classical*.<sup>64</sup>

And yet, while ancient art history is attuned to the problem of the classical, at another level it tends to be at the mercy of this evaluative label. Privileged media, works, styles, and features that historically have been labeled “classical” all too quickly become representative of an entire era and its alleged *mentalité*.<sup>65</sup> A conceptual tyranny results. Analyses such as these tend to leave unqueried the historicity and the theoretical underpinnings of judgments about the classical aesthetic that they simultaneously deepen and usefully nuance in its various manifestations. In particular, attempts to restrict the traffic of terms like *classical* in later periods from the Hellenistic age on suffer from a willingness to tolerate the term’s unrestricted applicability in the earlier periods.<sup>66</sup> In what way, one might wish to ask, does the much-touted naturalism of fifth-century sculpture and painting, or the alleged balance between stillness and motion in the same art forms, apply to architecture of the same period?<sup>67</sup> Or consider the radical experimentations within the various art forms, not least of all in Attic red-figure vase-painting, which is susceptible of a disruptive, ironic, and playful reading, one that subverts the narrative progression of a culture on the road to a rational construction of space and depiction, as Richard Neer has recently shown.<sup>68</sup> That a similar, radical experimentation took place in the more official and public art forms of monumental sculpture and architecture is

<sup>63</sup> Swain 1996, Schmitz 1997, Connolly 2001, and Whitmarsh 2001.

<sup>64</sup> E.g., Alcock 2002.

<sup>65</sup> Brown 1973, 57, is typical: “Obviously, [fourth-century art] taps a mentality which is quite different from the dominant one, and this kind of mentality also continued later, in the Hellenistic period and afterward.” For a general critique of such modeling, see Lloyd 1990.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Palagia 1997, 82, on Attic sculpture after the sack of Athens by Sulla in 86 B.C.E.: “Whereas free-standing statuary was conceived in a fourth-century manner, the Pheidian tradition was maintained in relief copies.” From the contemporary parallel world of ceramics, things have a different look altogether, and even then there are differences between, say, the practices of lamp-makers and of potters (Rotroff 1997). Similar patterns of unevenness can be found in the “Classical” and neo-classical periods as well. On the latter, see below at n. 170.

<sup>67</sup> Sensitive to many of the fallacies of classification, Andrae 1994a, 304–5, nevertheless settles on this last criterion—the balance between stillness and motion—as the defining feature of classical art in general and plumps for a progressivist picture of Greek art.

<sup>68</sup> Neer 2002.

not unthinkable, although this awaits demonstration.<sup>69</sup> Are such tendencies to be counted as classical or as counterclassical? The question may be badly formed, and the alternatives too restricting.

An overly narrow and potentially partisan rendering of the climate of life in fifth-century Athens runs the risk of distortion, and of smothering the rich variety and sheer polyphony of values that are being worked out in that culture, and the same is true for Augustan Rome as well—and for any cultural moment in ancient Greece and Rome, for that matter. At the very least, if one wants to cling to the notion that these cultures are classical, one should acknowledge either that what is classical is the product of discrepant tensions that run deeply through a culture, or else that the classical is whatever is left over once those tensions have been artificially removed from view. This is a point that will be driven home repeatedly in all of the essays that follow.

Cultures are never harmonious wholes, and any view that represents them in this way is, quite simply, reductive and misleading. It is not just that norms are the result of clashes and conflicts that belie the equilibrium of what we call the norm. It is that ideological norms typically are honored only in the breach but not in actuality: they may have no essential positivity.<sup>70</sup> Whether classicism and the classical are one such norm and source of meaning in the ancient world, and if so how their mechanisms actually functioned in practice, are matters that still need to be shown, not assumed. For the same reason, it is doubtful that the point of reference for something “classical” can ever be isolated except in a context of contestation and of plural (and never fully concordant) identifications, which is to say that *the label “classical” is never fully justified*. The likelier outcome is that what we will discover in antiquity is not a single form of classicism, but rather a series of *classicisms* in the plural, imperfectly matching each other and the modern conceptions as well.

A comprehensive account of the problem of ancient classicism, set within the broadest available understanding of Greco-Roman culture, is still lacking. The present volume offers a modest start in this direction. But in order to get off the ground, any such study must look closely at the logic, or illogic, of the classical.

#### THE LOGIC AND ILLOGIC OF THE “CLASSICAL”

##### *There Are No Classical Properties*

Do classical properties exist? As a test case of the proposition that they do not, let us take a well-known instance of an uncertainty from the so-called High Classical period. The question of whether Euripides belongs in the same

<sup>69</sup> See, however, Osborne 1987 and Stewart 1997, both of whom come close to pressing for such an account.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Cohen 1991, id. 1995, and Hölscher 1998, 153–54.

league as Aeschylus and Sophocles has been debated at least since Aristophanes, but it surfaced with renewed vigor in the nineteenth century, in the so-called *damnatio memoriae* that was inaugurated with Friedrich Schlegel in 1794, with knock-on effects that can still be felt. Euripides' tarnished status lingered on into the next century, as is evident from Werner Jaeger's Naumburg conference from 1930, where Euripides was considered barely worthy of mention—a silence that was overdetermined, to be sure, by the unresolved debate between Nietzsche and Wilamowitz.<sup>71</sup> Euripides' classicism was hard to square with the going paradigms of the classical sensibility: he was too intellectual, too calculating and rational, but also too common and plebeian, too violent and irrational, to be reckoned a perfect classic. The difficulty of placing Euripides in some kind of neat succession within Greek tragedy today continues to reflect an earlier generation's unease with Euripides' classicism.<sup>72</sup>

One argument that was historically used to exclude Euripides from the most exclusive heights of the classical canon is that the playwright arrived too late on the scene to be considered fully classical: he was already a symptom of the classical period's inexorable decline. The problems with this kind of winnowing are almost transparent. One immediate consequence is that the range of purely classical Greek authors quickly gets narrowed to a field of one—normally, Sophocles, as we saw, or rather one defining aspect of him, “the eternally cheerful amiability of Sophocles, in harmony with himself and the whole world,” as Wilamowitz put it in his tract against Nietzsche, perpetuating a myth from the ancient biographical tradition (*Vit. Soph.* 7 and 20).<sup>73</sup>

Euripides may be a debatable quantity, but what about Homer? Homer always bore an uncomfortable relation to modern classicism, and his disputed place in the list of classical authors at the Naumburg conference is no exaggeration by Körte. In some ways prototypically classical,<sup>74</sup> in others Homer could be felt to be both more and less classical than the classical authors of the fifth century—more authentically and more pristinely classical, if also representing a simpler, more naïve, less developed form of classicism.<sup>75</sup> Origins are plainly troublesome things. If Homer could not fit the classical paradigm, one has to wonder what could. That was precisely the *reductio ad absurdum* revealed by Körte in his brief report on the discussions at Naumburg. And it was a problem noticed during the first generation of classicizers in modern Germany, for example, by the satirist Jean Paul in his *Vorschule der Ästhetik*

<sup>71</sup> Schlegel 1799, 60–63; Körte 1934, 13–14 with n. 2, and compare Schadewaldt 1931, 25.

<sup>72</sup> E.g., Dodds 1951 and Arrowsmith 1963. For a good survey of classical scholarship around this issue, see Michelini 1987.

<sup>73</sup> Wilamowitz in Gründer 1969, 51.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Strab. 8.3.30: Phidias derived the inspiration for his majestic Zeus at Olympus from Homer's Zeus of *Il.* 1.527ff.

<sup>75</sup> Humboldt 1960–81, 2:22; Jebb 1905, 38: “The Homeric Greek exhibits all the essential characteristics and aptitudes which distinguish his descendant in the historical [i.e., classical] age.”

from 1804: "Seeing how being classical resembles those card games in which whoever loses no hand wins, then not a single writer judged to be a classic by the critics is classical, Sophocles included."<sup>76</sup>

Suppose, however, that we do come up with an undisputed candidate for the classical ideal. Here the troubles only begin. Once we try to pin down what is specifically classical about, say, an author like Sophocles, we drift off again into the vagaries of harmony, order, symmetry, rationality, balance, and other features that for the most part have been borrowed from the discourse of the plastic arts but which are mere metaphors when applied to texts.<sup>77</sup> Beyond that, one enters into the metaphysics, or depths, of defining the *je ne sais quoi* of the classical, and we already know where this leads. But just *where* is this element to be found? Attempts to locate it in this or that verse can only end in disaster: such location is by definition illicit, for the trait in question is spiritual and not material. One might perhaps think that concrete classical objects fare better, but do they?

Consider 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 also trail off into vagueness once again. Here the problem lies in translating putative physical properties back into language. What we would call classical traits, but the Greeks and Romans might have termed order, harmony, rationality, and the rest, are again mere metaphors. But metaphors for what? At issue is not only the question, Which properties of the object are classical? but also the question, Where are they found? The answer is 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]."<sup>78</sup> 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, each taking into account different mathematical properties and their possible aesthetic effects. 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

<sup>76</sup> Paul 1959–63, 5:354.

<sup>77</sup> See Schadewaldt in Jaeger 1931, 23, on "the power of the surface," comparing Sophocles and the Parthenon. He goes on to discuss Sophocles' classical virtues in terms of formal "harmony" and "visible order."

<sup>78</sup> Pollitt 1972, 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.

‘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 so that the temple appeared to be more immense than it actually was”; horizontals, for example, will impressively appear to “bow upward,” 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 varied, 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.<sup>79</sup> 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, let alone its solution. One would like to know why we cannot verify *which* experience of the Parthenon is the one that is *actually had*. It is not even clear why they are not all mutually exclusive, as one might think they should be. For as some accounts paint things, the experiences are all equally available, equally possible, and equally unverifiable. But perhaps this way of putting the problem is unfair: in question, ultimately, is not the experience we have but that of “the age” of classical Athens. But how verifiable is that? The assumption of possible experiences, for all its would-be historicism, is an extrapolation from philosophical and other texts. It is not an extrapolation from the structure of the Parthenon, and it cannot be: otherwise, there would be no question to solve, and we would be faced with the additional problem of accounting for the divergent explanations once the problem seemed to have been solved. If we seem to be going in circles, we are. 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

<sup>79</sup> The most recent discussion (Hurwit 2004, 121–22) repeats the dilemma by resorting to an unstable combination of comfortable relativism (or agnosticism) and unflinching objectivism (and classicism). “The effect of the refinements is very much in the eye of the beholder: the experience is subjective.” Yet, “*however we read them*, the refinements give the Parthenon an extraordinarily ‘plastic’ or sculptural quality;” and so the Parthenon is very much “a sculptor’s temple” that obeys a Phidian aesthetic (*italics added*).

a disturbing vagueness, if not incoherence, to this account of a classical object. But this lack of focus is in fact a *characteristic* of classicality.<sup>80</sup>

Our aesthetic vocabulary, concepts, and responses may simply be too impoverished to capture the distinctions that are being sought after. The terms of our description are, to an extent we too rarely acknowledge, vague and unhelpful, merely blunt instruments for gesturing at a phenomenon we barely understand. Just as it is unclear what is classical about Classical art, it would be a fair question to ask what is archaic about Archaic art.<sup>81</sup> It is doubtful the answers to that will be any clearer than the conflicting views of the classical. What is classical does not define itself; “it” exists only in the form of an incomplete contrast. There is an inherent *inarticulateness* to the problem of the “classical” at its origins, which never rests on anything other than its own self-evidence. Such is the burden of expressing, and of analyzing, “this spiritual *more* in meaning,” which the classical ideal tends to radiate.<sup>82</sup> The point goes to the defining inarticulateness of the classical ideal in *any* form whatsoever, linguistic or other. This incoherence has played itself out historically.

#### *The Historical Incoherence of Classicism*

The contemporary hypostasized (and still vague) meanings of *classical* and *classicism* are signs of a messy and troublesome past. Just how far back that past extends is open to question, but below we shall see that there are good reasons to trace some of these troubles back into early Greco-Roman antiquity. The immediate source of the contemporary dilemmas lies in modern classicism, which is to say the form of classicism that prevailed in Europe from the eighteenth century onward. If it is true that modern classicism often lays stress on the conditions of perfection and harmony, on visual beauty, and on the childlike naïveté of early Greece, in point of fact violence, passion, and irrationality are not ignored or suppressed in classicism even on this picture. Winckelmann’s aesthetics, which could ascribe tranquility and quiet grandeur to Laocoön while serenely acknowledging him to be “the picture of raw pain”<sup>83</sup> or classic, “sublime” wholesomeness to the severely mutilated Belvedere Torso,<sup>84</sup> inaugurated classicism as a delicate form of disavowed consciousness. Indeed, in many ways, classicism was a *self-willed illusion*.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Gelzer 1975, 157–58, and Schmidt in Jaeger 1931, 90.

<sup>81</sup> Cycladic and geometric forms are a good counterexample. The fact that naturalism was not (yet) practiced does not mean either that it was unavailable as an idea or that it had not yet been “achieved”: preclassical art enjoyed its own aesthetics. To assume the opposite is a distortion and a bias. See Hurwit 1985 for suggestive remarks on the self-awareness of archaic art.

<sup>82</sup> Himmelmann 1985, 41; Himmelmann 1990, 26; cf. Hölscher 1993b, 525. A Lacanian critique of this surplus value would be apt (see Žižek 1989).

<sup>83</sup> Winckelmann 1972, 167; cf. *ibid.*, 324.

<sup>84</sup> Winckelmann 1972, 346. For a critique of this kind of spectatorship from the perspective of disability studies, see Davis 1997.

This was noticed by Anselm Feuerbach in *Der vaticanische Apollo* of 1833 (2nd ed. 1855). His book, once influential but now all but forgotten, is a meditation on the illusions of classicism in the realm of sculpture, and in particular on the illusions of the classical aesthetic. The Apollo from the Vatican idealized by Winckelmann, Feuerbach writes, is no better than “an empty figment of the imagination,” *ein leeres Phantasiegebild*—basically, a fantasy.<sup>85</sup> “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*).”<sup>86</sup>

Needless to say, the object in question is not the statue as a physical thing (which Feuerbach insisted was Neronian in manufacture, but classicizing in spirit), but whatever the object represents in all of its quintessential classicality, glimpsed in an instant of visual illusion.<sup>87</sup> It is that which is made to *appear*—in Nietzsche’s terminology, which is also Feuerbach’s, in the form of an Apollonian “dream.”<sup>88</sup> To look at a classical statue is a bit like closing one’s eyes. Feuerbach’s book is about the agonies of this location. Classicism’s construction of the classical ideal is shaped in response to the very impossibility of discovering it in the works that are beheld. Incidentally, for what it is worth, Feuerbach’s admissions resemble no ancient theory more than that of Lysippus, the great sculptor from the end of the fourth century B.C.E., at least on one construction of that theory. Lysippus seems to have recognized that classical effects are produced by their illusion; they have their place in the mind of the beholder, in her *phantasia*, not in the object itself: he is said to have held that the aim of sculpture is to present an object not as it really is, but as it *appears* to be.<sup>89</sup> Whether this phenomenism, which might also be called illusionistic, reflects a new rhetorical view of art or not is unclear. The evidence is too sparse to permit more than the slimmest of speculations.<sup>90</sup> But the Lysippan aesthetic does serve to remind us of the centrality of *deception* to ancient views and practices of art, a fact that modern views of classicism are all too keen to overlook.<sup>91</sup>

Secondly, classicism in its modern form never went unchallenged. It was accompanied from the very start by resistances to its readings of antiquity and

<sup>85</sup> Feuerbach 1855, 120.

<sup>86</sup> Feuerbach 1855, 168–72.

<sup>87</sup> Feuerbach 1855, 10.

<sup>88</sup> In Feuerbach’s lapidary formulation: “Tranquility”—the appearance of rest and quiet in statues—“is the happy truth of the deceptive dream” (“Ruhe ist die glückliche Wahrheit des täuschenden Traumes”) (Feuerbach 1855, 261; cf. 254–57).

<sup>89</sup> Plin. *HN* 34.65.

<sup>90</sup> Schweitzer 1932, Protzmann 1977; Stewart 1990, 1:186 (“‘phenomenal’ idealism”). One might also compare Aristoxenus’s own version of phenomenalist aesthetics (*Harm.* 8.23, 9.23); but the tradition goes back to the sophists (see next note).

<sup>91</sup> Gorg. fr. 11 D.-K.; Pl. *Soph.*; [Anon.] *Dialex.* 3.10–12. Cf. Vickers 1985, 122; Vickers and Gill 1996, 84–85.

to charges of willful blindness, a fact that its exponents were fully conscious of, not least because they were usually the first source of this resistance. Classicism is thus a *knowing* illusion: it is constructed on the disavowal of this self-knowledge, in an attitude that runs, “I know very well that the classical is a falsification, an illusion, the misapplication of an ideal, but I will act as if I believed in it just the same.”<sup>92</sup> This attitude was perhaps inevitable. Resistances to the label *classical*, to its viability and even its coherence, were palpable from the very start of the modern classicizing traditions. From the *Querelle des Anciens et Modernes*, which racked early modern France over the meaning and privilege of classicism, and which rested on a tradition that reached back to the early Middle Ages (when *antiqui* often did duty for *classical*, though neither idea went unchallenged),<sup>93</sup> to the wounded sensibilities of Bentley and Addison in the face of the unclassical epic poetry of Milton, to Voltaire and other Enlightenment figures who could militate powerfully against classicism,<sup>94</sup> to the classical scholar F. A. Wolf, who explicitly weighed and then rejected the word *classical* as a historical label, but not as an inspirational concept, when he was groping for a term by which to name a science—classical studies—that as yet had no name (he settled for *Altertumswissenschaft*),<sup>95</sup> classicism was continually contested. Classicism has always had a troubled past, even when it was the values of classicism, rather than the lexical term, that were being thrown into question.

A third complicating factor in the modern worship of the classical is its elevation of the idea of the classical into an *ideal*. This tendency puts all kinds of impossible pressures on classicism, which responds in different forms. Totalization, organicism, and vitalism are just some of the ways in which moderns have sought to smooth over the intractabilities of the concept of the classical. Translated into history and into classical studies, this means that the idealism of the Greeks is not merely found, as an ideal to emulate, but invented, as ideally unreachable.<sup>96</sup> Against this background, the wished-for holism of the classical ideal is more than a little suspect. And, in fact, there has to be something wrong with any view of antiquity that can hold the following, which comes from one of Wilhelm von Humboldt’s early writings:

<sup>92</sup> Mannoni 1969.

<sup>93</sup> Haskins 1927; Blunt 1971.

<sup>94</sup> Johnson 1970, 123–36.

<sup>95</sup> In his *Darstellung der Alterthums-Wissenschaft* (1807): “The label *classical learning* [Wolf reproduces the English term here] which is common in England, is too limited in another way: in our field we deal with many writers and branches of knowledge that no one would want to call *classical (classisch)* in the old sense of the word” (Wolf 1869, 2:814–15 n.). Cf. *ibid.*, 817–19 and 892 on the exclusive and totalizing definition of Greco-Roman civilization, a judgment that Wolf knows to be sanctioned in part because it was formerly cast by this civilization on itself. Further, Wolf 1831–35, 35, on the classical traits of this culture.

<sup>96</sup> Humboldt 1960–81, 2:29: “The road from the finite to the infinite is [itself] always only ideal (*idealisch*);” and therefore infinite.

