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EDITORS

Editor-in-Chief

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Editors

ADAM JONES is pursuing a degree in Greek and Roman Studies and comes from Barrie, Ontario. His background includes service in the Canadian Armed Forces, where he was decorated after sustaining serious injuries. Following his military career, Adam represented Canada in the 2017 Invictus Games, showcasing his athletic abilities and commitment to adaptive sports. He has been instrumental in promoting inclusivity in sports, particularly through his work with para rowing programs.

Adam has also contributed to preserving the histories of Canadian veterans at the Canadian War Museum and has engaged in national defense discussions through his involvement with the Canadian Association of Defence and Security Industries. At Carleton University, he founded an association to aid veteran students in their academic transitions. His efforts extend to raising awareness about veteran challenges, leveraging his experiences to advocate for adaptive sports and veteran support.

DOGA ERDEMISIK is a third year undergraduate student working toward her Political Science Honors degree at Carleton University. In her second year as a Corvus Journal editor, she is a keen reader and frequently immerses herself in literature, delving into the minds of prominent historical intellectuals. Her fascination and regard for philosophy and history shine through in her academic work and leisure activities. Presently, her interests are focused on witnessing the role of literature, journalism, and the people's voices on paper and how they have the power to connect individuals together.

MADELEINE EGGINTON (she/her) is a third-year English student minoring in Greek

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SAVANNAH RANGER is a fourth year student completing her B.A. Honours in History with a minor in Medieval and Early Modern Studies. After graduating, Savannah hopes to earn a Masters degree at Carleton from the Public History program, with the dream of becoming a museum curator.

CONTRIBUTORS

ALLY ROBIDOUX is a third year at Carleton University working on a Combined Honours degree in English and History. They are interested in the nineteenth century, medical history, and women's history. They plan on pursuing an MA in History or Cultural Studies next to keep up their research while dabbling in creative writing on the side.

COLLEEN DUNN is a fourth year student at Carleton who will be completing her degree this year in Combined Honours Greek and Roman Studies and Religion. She began working on her degree part time after retiring from an almost four-decade career in pediatric diagnostic imaging. Her plans after graduation are to continue her education at Carleton by participating in courses in history and philosophy.

EMILY BIGGAR-HEIL is a fourth year student working to a degree at Carleton, with a double major in Greek and Roman Studies and History, with a minor in Archaeology. Her academic interests primarily relate to ancient Mediterranean, specifically Greco-Persian relations, Bronze Age culture and trade, and early Cycladic and Minoan religion and ritual. From a young age, Emily has been fascinated by mythology and history, and plans to continue to pursue these interests as she eventually aims to achieve a Masters and Ph.D. in the field, and hopes to one day excavate these mysterious and beautiful ancient sites!

GRACE HAMPER is a second year student in the Honours Psychology program at Carleton University. Upon graduating, she plans to complete her Masters and Ph.D., though isn't yet sure what specific area of psychology that will be in. Her whole life animals have been one of her favourite things, and she enjoys spending time learning about them, especially their minds and behaviour. She would love her future studies and career to include researching the psychology of non-humans and ensuring they get the recognition and respect they deserve. She also loves reading and finds learning about history and ancient authors or philosophers fascinating. Needless to say, she especially liked this essay assignment since she was able to incorporate both of these interests.

KASSANDRA TROMBETTA is a third year undergraduate at Carleton University, majoring in Greek and Roman Studies with a minor in Chemistry. Her research interests revolve around ancient religions in and beyond the Mediterranean, with a special focus on comparative mythology. Kassandra's other research interests include Graeco-Roman architecture, non-canonical biblical texts, and the use and evolution of magic. After graduation, Kassandra will be pursuing a Bachelor of Education, concentrating on History and Chemistry.

LILLIAN BREAU is a third year student at Carleton University, working towards a Bachelor's degree in History, with minors in Greek and Roman Studies and History. Lillian's biggest area of interest is in ancient art and architecture. Over the summer she had the opportunity to participate in an archaeological excavation at Gabii, in Italy. Her work at the excavation encouraged her interests in the material culture of ancient Rome and Greece. She found the handling of pottery sherds and coins while in the field to resonate especially strongly. She hopes to explore further opportunities for field work while continuing her studies as a Master's student.

MARYNA NEKRASOVA is a fourth year Bachelor of Humanities student with a second major in Philosophy at Carleton University. She is the founding Editor-in-Chief of Ipso Facto: The Carleton Journal of Interdisciplinary Humanities and the Chair of the Annual Humanities Colloquium at Carleton. Her primary research interests are in the Philosophy of Artificial Intelligence and human-robot interaction, focusing on how religious environments and factors shape people's perceptions of AI. She has been researching this topic under the supervision of Dr. Andrew Brook and Dr. Joshua Redstone for two years, and hopes to further her research and academic contributions through graduate studies in Philosophy. She has previously been awarded one of Carleton's Provost Scholars awards, as well as the Peter J. Ricketts Outstanding Provost Scholar Award for 2023.

MOIRA POWER is a recent graduate from Carleton University's Bachelor of Arts Honours program in Art History. Throughout her undergraduate career, Moira nurtured her passions for both art and architectural history, as well as their natural inclination towards Classical Studies. Her research focuses on challenging the limitations of art historical categorization, emphasizing the significance of Western artistic traditions in shaping the perception of contemporary art. Moira's research interests extend to exploring what has been excluded from art and architectural narratives, a curiosity evident in her recent work curating an exhibition at the Ottawa Art Gallery entitled

Nobody Sees a Flower. With plans to pursue a Master's degree, Moira is dedicated to broadening the art historical canon.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

As we come to the close of another edition of *The Corvus Journal of Classics and Ancient History*, I am filled with pride and gratitude for the opportunity to serve as both an editor and Editor-in-Chief. Over the years, *Corvus* has evolved into a beacon of academic achievement and community engagement within the Greek & Roman Studies program at Carleton University and beyond.

Working on *Corvus* for the past two years, and being entrusted with the role of Editor-in-Chief for the fourteenth year, has been a truly rewarding aspect of my academic journey. This year's edition of *Corvus* is a testament to the vibrant community that surrounds us, dedicated to exploring the depths of ancient history through research papers, exegetical essays, and creative pieces. It is heartening to witness the continued enthusiasm for unearthing the past and memorializing its stories.

I extend my deepest gratitude to all our contributors for their exceptional work, which has enriched this edition of *Corvus*. Your dedication and passion for the subject matter is evident in each submission. I hope that *Corvus* serves as a source of inspiration for you to continue pursuing your interests and sharing your research with the world.

I also wish to express my appreciation to the diligent editors who have dedicated countless hours to shaping this journal into its final form. Your commitment to excellence shines in every aspect of this publication, and I am immensely grateful to have had such a wonderful team.

Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge the unwavering support of the Carleton community, whose encouragement and collaboration have been instrumental in the success of *Corvus.* I would like to thank the College of the Humanities at Carleton University as well as the faculty members and alumni who have contributed to *Corvus*' continued growth and success. Special thanks to Andrea McIntyre, Professor Susan Downie, and Eloise Greenfield (Editor-in-Chief of *Corvus*, 2022-2023), for their advice and generous support of both this initiative and my personal academic growth.

As I pass the torch to the capable hands of the next editorial team, I am excited to see how *Corvus* will continue to evolve and flourish in the years to come. I encourage all those interested in contributing to *Corvus* to reach out and join our diverse team of scholars and enthusiasts!

I extend my warmest wishes to each and every one of you. May your scholarly pursuits continue to illuminate the past, enrich the present, and inspire the future.

Sincerely,
Farane Zaidi
Editor-in-Chief, 2023-2024

PERCEIVING THE ANCIENT WORLD

COLLEEN DUNN

I perceive with my mind's eye the wonders of the ancient world.
The brilliant sheen of Giza rising against a dimming golden sky
   of hushing dusk.
The beckoning Pharos tower calls all towards the harbour shore,
but where Alexander slept, he sleeps no more.

Trembling quivering beneath, the ground emits a rumbling roar.
Crashing crumbling at my feet behold bold chariot with equine guides
   comes toppling down.
Dark within its tumbled marble shards Halicarnassus seals
hovering gods stand guard stone deaf to our appeals.

Olympic Zeus would you, could you, calm time's relentless zeal?
What sacrifice is needed to convince great gods we indeed deserve
   to grasp our past?
Clutching in eagle fists what came before and build upon it!
Even Helios of Rhodes does not protect for he has strayed.
Is there joy in loss, a spark to recreate?

Sweet Artemis of Ephesus what a wondrous path you paved!
Laid with luscious shoots and stalks that burst enthusiastically from earth,
   Eden preserved.
With wafts of fragrant Babylonian blooms our senses leap.
Gifts of perception taste the world that was, that is, will be!

SPARTAN WOMEN: SONG AND DANCE IN EDUCATION AND RELIGION

EMILY BIGGAR-HEIL

Abstract

By reviewing the main portions of what a Spartan girl was taught, and the associated actions at festivals and rites of passage, this essay will prove that the education of Spartan girls was composed to prepare for a life of faithful worship of the goddess of Artemis Orthia. Through song, dance and athletic training, girls learned to perform these acts of worship for the goddess in public and in private.

Most famously known as a military state, Sparta is set apart from the majority of other Greek city-states. Historically, Spartans have been known for their strict and no-nonsense attitudes. Sparta is a popular point of study in Classics, as an integral part of nearly all periods of ancient Greek history. The study of Spartan women is particularly interesting as they had much different experiences than those in other Greek city-states, like with standardised education, which, for women, is completely unique in the Greek world. There were also significant roles for women in religious ceremonies and rituals. Spartan girls' education was designed specifically for their performances and contributions in ritual activity, especially those rituals performed at Artemis Orthia. The first study of dance, music and song will be examined and compared to ritual performance, providing evidence to believe that women were trained in standardised school not for military like men, but for religious importance.

The period which will be studied is the Archaic, from the eighth to the early fifth centuries BCE. When studying the ancient world, we must always consider our sources carefully, as they are most often long after the period of interest. As we have so few primary sources from antiquity, sources written centuries after an event or time period are still considered to be "primary." Another thing to consider with these sources are that they are written primarily

by men, some from Sparta, some from other Greek city-states, and even non-Greek authors, which undoubtedly means there are biases in these sources[1]based on gender and nationality. Classics scholar Ellen Millender expertly states that, "the ancient sources can provide much information on Spartan women as long as we approach the evidence carefully, on its own terms, and are vigilant regarding its context, limits, and ideological roots." [2] After the Persian Wars in the early fifth century BCE, we see literature become athenocentric, that is, biassed in favour of Athens. We even see this from non-Athenian authors, like Herodotus. Nearly every subject then becomes the "Athenian" version of it. For example, at this time, Athens had a democracy, and since few sources are writing about politics in other Greek regions, many assume that the rest of Greece was also democratic, which is simply not true. We can and must use primary sources to understand the ancient world, but each one must be appropriately analysed to eliminate prejudices and separate truths from fallacies.

Women in Sparta had a much different upbringing than women in other city-states, something that is widely understood in the field. Education for girls was to prepare them to be mothers, but was standardised, something unique to only Sparta.[3] While there is no hard evidence, Sarah Pomeroy argues that average Spartan women had the luxury of free time, and could have learned to read and write as part of their *mousike* education.[4] Pomeroy uses Plato's works (*Laws* 806a, *Rep.* 5.452a) as evidence for her theory.[5] *Laws* 806a is a very brief description of Laconian women, where Plato criticises the need for music and athletic education for women.[6] *Republic* is also a short section of a conversation, where the topic of women

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[1] Ellen G. Millender, "Spartan Women," *A Companion to Sparta*, ed. Anton Powell, (Chichester, UK: John Wiley and Sons Ltd., 2017): 502.
[2] Millender, 503.
[3] Sarah Pomeroy, *Spartan Women,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002),
[4] Sarah Pomeroy, *Xenophon. Oeconomicus: A Social and Historical Commentary.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 270; 283; Pomeroy (2002), 5.
[5] Pomeroy (2002), 9
[6] Plato, *Laws* 806a, trans. R. G. Bury, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), 61.

working as men do is discussed: the conclusion being that they would require the same training and instruction, though it would be unorthodox.[7] Pomeroy's theory uses these two passages to confirm that women receive schooling, but do not work like men, potentially allowing them the time to become literate. This is not proven, but would illustrate a significant difference between Sparta and other city-states, if the majority of middle-class women were literate. It was not unheard of in Sparta for women of high-classes to be literate, as is explained by both Pomeroy and Millender by referencing Herodotus' Histories, book VII, 239, which indicates that Princess Gorgo, daughter of Spartan king Kleomones I, decoded military messages during Xerxes' invasion of Greece.[8] Scholars are not certain that a majority or even middle-class minority of women were literate, but this is a very interesting theory, which does have merit. Pomeroy also argues that "the cultural level of girls may well have been superior to that of boys, inasmuch as the latter had to devote so much attention to military training".[9] This would be another major difference to other Greek states, who traditionally had men with much higher levels of all sectors of education. While this paper will not be a comparison of men and women's education levels in the ancient world, it is important to remember that Sparta is an outlier in its education process and gender roles.

The education of Spartan girls is highly important to understanding the role of women in ritual activity. As physical education was taught to boys, the same can be said for Spartan girls. A high importance was placed on physical fitness in Sparta, for men to be good soldiers, and for women to give birth to strong babies.[10] Lycurgus instated running and strength competitions for men and women, for if mother and father were both strong and healthy, their offspring would be

[7] Plato, *Republic 5.452a*, trans. Christopher Emlyn-Jones, William Preddy, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 455-457.
[8] Millender, 503; Pomeroy (2002), 8.
[9] Pomeroy (2002), 8.
[10] Pomeroy (2002), 4.

as well.[11] Ruth Léger agrees with the consensus that the rigorous physical training of women was to make childbirth more successful for mothers and babies.[12] Millender goes into great detail on how women participated in their athletic events in the nude, to represent their fertility, the ultimate goal, and to illustrate their marriageability, this point being supported by Pomeroy as well.[13]

Not all Spartan education focused on athletics: women were taught extensively in the arts of dance, song, and to play musical instruments.[14] Votive figures are found in Sparta of women playing various instruments, as well as dancing, and ancient sources also note these activities.[15] Pomeroy states that there are more descriptions about females dancing than any other portion of education,[16] indicating that it is an important part of a girl's daily life. Millender and Pomeroy both examine a bronze figure (fig. 1), once thought to be a girl running, but both scholars offer the possibility that she is dancing a vigorous dance, the bibasis.[17] The dance was highly athletic, and consisted of the dancer leaping and kicking her buttocks with her heels.[18] Whether this dance was part of educational training, ritual use or of another forum, we are not certain, but we can be assured that if it is not in a scholastic setting, then it is more evidence of dance in the lives of Spartan women in general, contributing to the point of importance of dance. Girls were even trained by professional poets and competed in choruses.[19] Dance and choral performance seem to have been a significant portion of a Spartan girl's education. Dance is a physical activity, and while women were also trained in athletics, dance is treated differently in their education, with professional training.

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[11] Ruth Léger, *Artemis and Her Cult,* (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2015), 244. [12] Léger, 245.

[12] Léger, 245.

[13] Millender, 505-508; Pomeroy (2002), 34.

[14] Pomeroy (2002), 12.

[15] Pomeroy (2002), 12.

[16] Pomeroy (2002), 12.

[17] Pomeroy, (2002), 12; Millender, 504.

[18] Pomeroy, (2002), 12; Millender, 504.

[19] Millender, 505.

With the basics of women's education summarised, its relevance in the context of religion can be explored. Michael Flower recognises that Greek religion is still mysterious, and is viewed in different ways in the many fields that study it: history, religion, anthropology, sociology, and more.[20] Ancient Greek religion is often generalised for the whole of the region, when each location actually had their own local versions of the mythology, each differing to some extent from the last. Religion, therefore, like other topics, can be dominated by the most popular beliefs of the most powerful region at the time, and ancient and modern sources may only have a generalised version of a broad religion, when in fact, that religion had hundreds of regional variations, many of which we likely do not even know of. To overcome this towering dilemma in the study of religion in a particular region, Flower elegantly describes Greek religion in Sparta as having been "uniquely adapted to Spartan social and political institutions, and evolved in tandem with those institutions." [21]

The overwhelming majority of what is, by definition, Greek mythology, is what we know the Spartans to consider their religion, but we see that their rigid rule-abiding culture impacts their beliefs.[22] Flower uses Herodotus to make his point that Spartans put the needs of the gods over the needs of men, and uses the example of how the Spartans could not provide aid in the Battle of Marathon whilst they were in the middle of a multi-day long religious festival.[23] Herodotus' quote on the Spartans is, "the gods' will weighed with them more than the will of man," certainly supporting this point.[24] What this rigid culture can confirm for us is that what the Spartans produced was aiming to be the ideal, allowing us to add a degree of credibility in the

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[20] Michael Flower, "Spartan Religion," *A Companion to Sparta,* ed. Anton Powell, (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2017), 425-426.
[21] Flower, 426.
[22] Flower, 428.
[23] Flower, 428.
[24] Herodotus, *The Persian Wars* 5.63, (vol. III), trans. A. D. Godley, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1922), 69.

evidence and sources regarding Sparta's religious activity.

Spartan religion was impacted by their culture, and vice versa. Like many Greek city-states, Sparta had a deity with whom they identified: Artemis. However, the Spartans also associated themselves with an older regional goddess, Orthia.[25] A sort of religious evolution resulted in Artemis Orthia, a well-known goddess from the major Olympians, worshipped by many, combined with the individuality, locality and ancientness of Orthia. The first temple to Artemis Orthia was built in the early sixth century BCE.[26] During the archaic, we see many temples built and rebuilt for various reasons, including competition between city-states. The temple of Artemis Orthia would go on to become the central location "for the rites of passage and initiation that were connected with the public upbringing (the agōgē) of the young, both male and female."[27]

Artemis is known to be a goddess to guide men and women through all stages of life, from birth, to childhood, adolescence, marriage, and parenthood.[28] The temple of Artemis Orthia is located on the River Eurotas, and was a common area where children would play, under the watchful eye of the goddess.[29] Artemis is also a goddess of nature and hunting, which is fitting for Sparta's cultural interest in military success. What we see then is a goddess who the Spartans can relate to their entire lives, from education as a young child, through service in battle or childbirth, into parenthood. In addition to this personal relationship, ancient Greeks believed they formed bonds with gods through reciprocity. They offer votives, sacrifices and worship the deity in exchange for protection, and in the case of Sparta, military success and fertility, amongst other things the state or individuals may ask of the deity.

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[25] Léger, 263.
[26] Flower, 432.
[27] Flower, 432.
[28] Léger, 23-24.
[29] Léger, 250.

At festivals and rites of passage, different activities were held, including competitions and performances. These activities are fundamentally to please the goddess, but had a significant social purpose as well.[30] Festivals reinforced the communal and cultural expectations of Spartans, and rites of passage socialised children.[31] Both events contributed social functions to the community all throughout Greece, but according to Flower, "power was intensified by the geographically isolated and socially conformist world of the Spartan citizen."[32] These events served numerous purposes, both religious and social, which is why the importance of these events was so significant. The great weight to have flawless religious events is why women's education was to prepare them to perform on these occasions.

In religious events, great importance was placed on choral performance, and competitions of choruses were held at festivals.[33] At the festival of Karneia, musical contests were featured, and at Hyakinthia, choruses performed.[34] Both of these actions were a part of the Gymnopaidai festival, as well as dance performances and contests.[35] These artistic competitions are common at religious festivals throughout the ancient Greek world, as were physical contests. Running races were also incorporated into these festivals, amongst other traditions like garland, and masks.[36] According to Flower, these were the three main religious festivals celebrated by the Spartans, all surrounding Apollo.[37]It is not unusual for these festivals to have some association with Artemis as well though, since Apollo, his sister Artemis, and their mother Leto were worshipped as a trinity of deities. These festivals "focused almost exclusively on choral performance [and] competition between the choruses."[38]

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[30] Flower, 435.
[31] Flower, 435.
[32] Flower, 435.
[33] Flower, 436.
[34] Flower, 437-438.
[35] Flower, 439.
[36] Léger, 266.
[37] Flower, 436.
[38] Flower, 436.

Girls, like boys, performed their musical and physical acts nude.[39] One reason for this, Luginbill argues, is the "presentation of newly marriageable young women to now marriage-aged young men." [40] He also uses Plato (*Lyc*. 15:1-2) as evidence, quoting that "They were inducements to marry. I mean *the processions of the girls*, and the nudity, and the competitions which the young men watched, attracted by a compulsion not of an intellectual type, but of a sexual one." [41] Léger agrees, adding that foot races and dances were methods of presenting suitable brides to suitors.[42] We can say then, that at a certain point in a young woman's life, the actions in rites of passage served as a platform for potential marriage. Other rites existed for women in marrying, such as the controversial head-shaving of the bride, and "capture" on the wedding night, but historians have not come to a clear consensus on when and whether these rituals were practiced.[43]

Rites of passages for women included even more rituals, for which girls had been prepared in school. Artemis presided over rites of passage, specifically for girls through puberty and marriage, and these events took place at the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia.[44] During puberty, the rites that women participated in included foot races, processions, and dance and chorus.[45] Dance had religious and social functions, and was a "[large] part in the initiation rites and fertility charms practiced in the cult of Artemis." [46] Léger claims that girls were isolated during rites, and informed about fertility and sexuality.[47] This would support Pomeroy's statement that "girls and women also performed lewd dances in honor of Artemis, celebrating her as a fertility

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[39] Robert D. Luginbill, "The Occasion and Purpose of Alcman's *Partheneion," Quaderni Urbinati Di Cultura Classica* 92(2),(2009), 28; Pomeroy, (2002), 34; Léger, 247.
[40] Luginbill, 28, cites Rayor (1987),80; Stehle (1997), 32; Ingalls (2000),11; and Cyrino (2004), 25-6. *His cited sources will not appear in bibliography.
[41] Luginbill, 28.
[42] Léger, 427.
[43] Pomeroy, (2002), 42-43, Léger, 428-429.
[44] Pomeroy, (2002), 108.
[45] Léger, 242.
[46] Léger, 45.
[47] Léger, 241.

goddess."[48] These performances were meant to prelude marriage and childbirth, the end goal of the rites, and were thought to have been led by Artemis herself, as the deity in charge of the rituals.[49] The rites themselves are quite fascinating. Young women gathered away from the city and were informed about marriage and childbirth, and seemingly performed dances and choruses in honour of Artemis before returning to the city to be presented, through these dances and choruses, as eligible brides.

Aside from festivals and rites of passage, there were rituals performed with general cult activity. Choral dances were significantly important in the cults of Helen and Artemis.[50]Many ancient sources describe dancing in honour of Artemis, including Euripides' *Helen,* Aristophanes' *Lysistrata,* Plutarch's *Theseus,* and Pausanius' *Description of Greece III, IV*.[51] Festivals were a major part of Greek and Spartan religion, but people also performed rituals on a daily basis, some small from within their own homes, and others where they made their own sacrifices or performed rituals independently. It is likely that these chorus and dance performances, with how significant they were in festivals and rites of passage, were also common ways to interact with and worship the gods, specifically Artemis.

It is clear with the evidence provided that song and dance were very important in religion. Women were trained through the only feminine systemized education in the Greek world in dance and song in order to prepare them to adequately perform at many rites and festivals to come in their lives. The rites of passage are a cultural initiation to womanhood, vital for young women to proceed into their next stages of life. Festivals are common, occurring multiple times annually, so women are performing many, many times throughout their lives. These dance and choral skills also make it possible for Spartan women to worship at any time, in

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[48] Pomeroy, (2002), 108.
[49] Léger, 242; cites Steven Lonsdale's *Dance and ritual play in Greek Religion* (1993:170), but this work was inaccessible for verification and citation.
[50] Millender, 504; cites Claude Calame's *Les chœurs des jeunes filles en Grèce archaïque* (2017:251-357).
[51] Millender, 504.

any place, which did happen in the Greek world, rituals were not only performed by priests during festivals, but by individuals daily.

It makes perfect sense why dance was the most significant portion of a girl's education, as it is a tool she will use as she develops into a woman, creates a relationship with the goddess, and chooses her husband. The rites and festivals associated with Artemis specifically heavily relied on dance and musical performances, as the most used method of worship. Song and dance were not only a way to worship the goddess, but a way to communicate with her. The Greeks believed in relationships of reciprocity with the gods, worship and sacrifice in exchange for fertility, military success, agricultural success, protection and more. The dances opened the reciprocal relationship with Artemis for strength, fertility, and guidance for young women as they continue in life to marriage and motherhood.

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Fig. 1 Laconian girl either running or dancing. The British Museum, museum number 1876.0510.1. Image retrieved from joyofmuseums.com.

IDENTIFYING THE TEMPLE OF ATHENA NIKE'S SOUTHERN FRIEZE

LILLIAN BREAU

Abstract

This paper intends to explore the debate around the Temple of Athena Nike, it also aims to explain why there is so much discussion and so many unanswered questions surrounding the temple. As well as, to explain why this temple is the subject of such study and its importance in the larger context of Greek history. The Persian Wars played a large role in shaping Greek culture and identity in the Classical Period. The Temple of Athena Nike is an excellent example of the change happening in Athens following the Persian Wars. The southern frieze has the potential to completely change current understanding of artistic evolution in Greek art. The Battle of Marathon, in Athens, sparked a cultural change, and if it is in fact depicted on the Temple of Athena Nike's southern frieze it would be a sharp change in Athenian art, in the fifth century BCE. Understanding the discussions around identifying the southern frieze on the Temple of Athena Nike is important to appreciating the significance around the iconography of the southern frieze and whether or not it does depict the Battle of Marathon.

The Temple of Athena Nike (Figs. 1 & 2) occupies an important position in Athenian art and marks a significant evolution in Athenian identity. The temple is typically associated with the "Periklean Building Program," which was a scheme in the fifth century BCE, in Athens to rebuild the buildings and temples on the Acropolis that had been destroyed during the Persian invasion. In the nineteenth century, a group of amateur archaeologists brought the temple to prominence, which began the enduring controversies that remain to plague scholars today. Since then, the temple has been dismantled and reconstructed on three separate occasions. The majority of the discourse around the temple is related to the iconography of the temple and it's potential significance, specifically that of the southern frieze (figs. 4, 5 & 6). The southern frieze is highly debated; the controversy centers on whether it depicts the Battle of Marathon. The theories regarding the southern frieze extend into discussions of other aspects of the temple. For example, there are difficulties in dating the construction and the decision-making process behind building

the temple, and the dates historians choose are typically motivated by their interpretations of what the southern frieze portrays. The issue with the southern frieze lies in determining whether it illustrates an allegory, myth, or the Battle of Marathon. This paper aims to explore why the temple has been the subject of so much study and its importance in understanding Athenian history and to examine the discourse around the theory that the southern frieze depicts the Battle of Marathon.

The date of the decision to build the Temple of Athena Nike and the date of the actual construction affect some historians' theories around what the iconography of the southern frieze represents. Part of the trouble in dating the temple comes from an undated broken stele of Pentelic marble found in 1897 on the northern slopes of the Athenian Acropolis. Referred to as the Nike Temple Decree (fig. 3), it authorizes the construction and outlines the administrative procedures for the temple.[1] The Nike Temple Decree features a three-barred sigma, which was believed to have gone out of use around 445 BCE.[2] The decision to build the temple is normally given a much earlier date than when the actual construction on the temple began. However, this is usually motivated by the desire to link the temple to the Persian Wars, from 490-479 BCE, and the Peace of Kallias in 449 BCE.[3] Fullerton believes the Nike Temple Decree has a clear reference to the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, ca.431-421 BCE, and therefore the stele must date to 424-423 BCE.[4] This puts the decision to build the temple much closer to the time of construction. Pemberton disagrees, she believes the decision to build the temple occurred in 448 BCE, two decades prior to when construction began in the 420s, and that this is due to all the

[1] David W.J. Gill, "The Decision to Build the Temple of Athena Nike," *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte* 50, no. 3 (2001): 257.
[2] Gill, "The Decision to Build the Temple of Athena Nike," 257.
[3] Gill, "The Decision to Build the Temple of Athena Nike," 278.
[4] Mark D. Fullerton, *Greek Sculpture* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2016), 317.

activity already underway on the Acropolis.[5] Pemberton expresses no doubts that the Temple of Athena Nike and its iconography are linked to the Persian Wars. Her certainty is based on a potential link between the Temple of Athena Nike and the Temple of Artemis Agrotera on the Ilissos River.[6] According to Pemberton, the Temple of Artemis Agrotera was built as a stand-in since honoring Artemis, the patron goddess for the city of Marathon, was the best alternative until the Temple of Athena Nike could be completed.[7] She goes further, citing the resemblance between the two temples as an additional reference for their connection.[8]

There are some aspects of the southern frieze on which there is consensus. For example, it's accepted that the frieze depicts a battle between the Greeks and Persians. The southern frieze features thirty-nine male figures, identified as seventeen Greeks and twenty-two Persians. There is also some agreement about the presence of Persian cavalry in the frieze, though the significance of the cavalry's presence is highly contested. This is where consensus regarding the southern frieze begins to wane. Harrison, for example, argues that the frieze represents the Battle of Marathon, which, she proposes, is based on a painting of the battle located in the Athenian Agora, in the Stoa Poikile.[9] Karakas, though he agrees with the evidence Harrison presents,[10] has issues with her dating and "stylistic evidence."[11] Other historians, such as Robertson and Kousser, disagree entirely. Robertson believes that the frieze cannot be identified with a specific battle but is simply reminiscent of the Persian Wars in general.[12] Kousser goes further, believing

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[5] Elizabeth Gummey Pemberton, "The East and West Friezes of the Temple of Athena Nike," *American Journal of Archaeology* 76, no. 3 (1972): 307-308.
[6] Pemberton, "The East and West Friezes of the Temple of Athena Nike," 307.
[7] Pemberton, "The East and West Friezes of the Temple of Athena Nike," 307-308.
[8] Pemberton, "The East and West Friezes of the Temple of Athena Nike," 307.
[9] Evelyn B. Harrison, "The South Frieze of the Nike Temple and the Marathon Painting in the Painted Stoa," *American Journal of Archaeology* 76, no. 4 (1972b): 354.
[10] Evelyn B. Harrison, "The Glories of the Athenians: Observations on the Program of the Frieze of the Temple of Athena Nike," *Studies in the History of Art* 49, (1997): 117-119.
[11] Scott Louis Karakas, "Subject and Symbolism in historical battle reliefs of the Late Classical and Hellenistic periods," (PhD dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2002), 40.
[12] Martin Robertson, *A History of Greek Art* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 348-349.

that the frieze is even less exact and is meant to convey an overall theme of the tragedy of war, even in victory.[13] Cawkwell also disagrees that the frieze is a depiction of Marathon, and uses Herodotus'[14] description of the battle as evidence.[15] Herodotus mentions the Persian cavalry several times in his description of the Persians' attack plan but makes no specific mention of the cavalry during the actual battle.[16] The southern frieze, as previously mentioned, may contain Persian cavalry. Cawkwell states that the presence of cavalry in the frieze, but not in Herodotus' description of the battle specifically, casts strong doubt over the frieze depicting Marathon.[17] Ridgway also uses the presence of Persian cavalry in the frieze as evidence against Marathon, and cites the fact that the Greeks commonly used repetitive sculptural motifs in reliefs.[18] Ridgway identifies the Persian rider on a stumbling horse as one of these common motifs, and lists several vastly different monuments on which it is present.[19] Ridgway argues that this motif does not depict a specific event but rather indicates the presence of cavalry at the battle.[20] Cohen is another supporter of this theory that the Greeks used repetitive motifs as general representations in art, rather than references to specific events.[21] Cohen, along with Ridgway, agrees that the southern frieze is not a depiction of the Battle of Marathon.

Traditionally, the majority of Greek art has been related to myths and religion, and depictions of battles can be divided into four groups: Gigantomachies, Amazonomachies, Centauromachies, and the Trojan War.[22] The portrayal of historical events has been believed by

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[13] Rachel Kousser, "Destruction and Memory on the Athenian Acropolis," *The Art Bulletin* 91, no. 3 (2009): 263.
[14] Hdt. 6.1-140
[15] George Cawkwell, *The Greek Wars: The Failure of Persia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 88-89.
[16] Hdt. 6.48.102
[17] Cawkwell, *The Greek Wars*, 88-89.
[18] Brunilde Sismondo Ridgway, *Fifth Century Styles in Greek Sculpture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 89-93.
[19] Ridgway, *Fifth Century Styles in Greek Sculpture,* 89-93.
[20] Ridgway, *Fifth Century Styles in Greek Sculpture,* 92.
[21] Ada Cohen, *The Alexander Mosaic: Stories of Victory and Defeat* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 24.
[22] Karakas, "Subject and Symbolism in historical battle reliefs of the Late Classical and Hellenistic periods," 8.

many historians to have begun only in 323 BCE, after the death of Alexander the Great.[23] According to this theory the Telephos frieze from the Pergamon altar, dating to the Hellenistic period (323 BCE to ca.31 BCE) represents the first true historical relief.[24] A key argument against the southern frieze's depiction of Marathon lies in the generally rigid practice of who and what it was acceptable to depict in different art mediums. The clear delineation against depicting still living people in art was "...all but taboo," during the fifth century.[25] However, there is only vague documentation of one surviving hero who may have still been alive at the time of the temple's construction, and it is more likely a confusion of two men named Myrondies.[26] Regardless, the argument that the Greeks used this general battle motif as a way to reference "...historical occurrences without depicting them in any specificity,"[27] becomes even more credible when presented with evidence that the Athenians, as a rule, did not depict recent historical events in this manner. The Greeks were aware of the ever-changing alliances and hostilities with other city states, and may have sought to use allegory to convey messages, as it would be inappropriate to display historical events in permanent art forms.[28] It has been put forward that the Greeks intentionally refrained from depicting historical events, specifically conflicts, to preserve relations with other city-states.[29] There is some outright rejection of the idea that the southern frieze could display a historical event, and denial that there were any

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[23] Karakas, "Subject and Symbolism in historical battle reliefs of the Late Classical and Hellenistic periods," 9.
[24] Pamela A. Webb, *Hellenistic Architectural Sculpture: Figural Motifs in Western Anatolia and the Aegean Islands* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 35.
[25] A. Stewart, "The Persian and Carthaginian Invasions of 480 B.C.E. and the Beginning of the Classical Style: Part 1, the Stratigraphy, Chronology, and Significance of the Acropolis Deposits," *American Journal of Archaeology* 112, no. 3 (2008): 64.
[26] Pemberton, "The East and West Friezes of the Temple of Athena Nike," 305.
[27] Cohen, *The Alexander Mosaic*, 24.
[28] Gisela Marie Augusta Richter, *The Sculpture and Sculptors of the Greeks* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 27.
[29] Richter, *The Sculpture and Sculptors of the Greeks*, 27.

historical reliefs in Greece during the Classical period at all.[30] However, this outright rejection fails to distinguish between recent history and the heroic past.[31]

Referencing mythological or long-ago battles has a long tradition in Greek art, and there is a plethora of evidence that the Greeks had no hesitations to alter and adapt myths to fit their intended message.[32] Using mythology is a way of utilizing allegory to display Hellenistic victory over foreign "barbarism," or in the case of the Temple of Athena Nike, over the Persians,[33] without breaking artistic traditions. The problem is that very little of the southern frieze is actually reminiscent of any known mythological battles, and, therefore, it seems more likely it is meant to represent a historical event.[34] The distinction between myth and history is a much more modern concept; in antiquity, there were no rigid distinctions and myth simply was a part of history. This further complicates the entire argument, so a distinction is typically made between recent and long past history. There is some argument that due to the presence of mythological figures on the Temple of Athena Nike, it cannot be a true historical illustration.[35] Still, it is possible that by the 420s BCE, the Greeks considered Marathon to be part of the mythological past. It is well documented that the Athenians celebrated those who died at Marathon as heroes,

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[30] Karakas, "Subject and Symbolism in historical battle reliefs of the Late Classical and Hellenistic periods," 48, attributes this information to Blümel 1950-1951. "Der Fries des Tempels der Athena Nike in der attischen Kunst des fünften Jahrhunderts vor Christus." *Jdl* 65/66 p.154. Source inaccessible due to language.
[31] Evelyn B. Harrison, "A New Fragment from the North Frieze of the Nike Temple," *American Journal of Archaeology* 76, no. 2 (1972a): 196.
[32] The Temple of Zeus in Olympia is an excellent example. Built by Elis, after their victory over Pisa, it is full of adapted myths and allegories. The twelve labours of Herakles adorn the metopes around the temple, but the Stables of Augeas is out of order. It has a local origin and in recognition the labour has been moved to a place of greater prominence. The western pediment shows scenes from the Battle of Lapiths and the Centaurs, but the women all have a single exposed breast, quite unusual for the period. This is a reference to a unique local Olympian tradition where women wore special garments during foot races which exposed one of their breasts. The eastern pediment has not been adapted but it is a parable of recent events. It depicts the chariot race between Pelops and Oinomaus, the king of Pisa. Pelops wins the race and becomes the new king of Pisa, and Pisa is left to be ruled by a foreigner. Elis had recently defeated Pisa in battle and taken over control of Olympia, similar to Pelops taking over as king.
[33] John Boardman, *Greek Sculpture: The Classical Period: A Handbook* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985), 171-174.
[34] Stewart, "The Persian and Carthaginian Invasions of 480 B.C.E.," 56.
[35] Webb, *Hellenistic Architectural Sculpture*, 35.

with celebrations and cult worship, along with a grand burial mound at the battle site.[36] The Greeks in the southern frieze are portrayed as almost nude, which is effervescent of the age-old mythological heroes, reinforcing the mythologization of the Battle of Marathon.[37] This is further suggestive that the mythologization of the Battle of Marathon and the soldiers turned heroes may have allowed for depictions of Marathon as a myth rather than a recent historical event.[38] In the Stoa Poikile, the Battle of Marathon is shown alongside scenes from famous myths of heroes fighting foreign enemies, "[t]hus the actual battle of Marathon is promoted as equal to the mythological past and a proper foundation for the current actions of Athens."[39] Marathon is shown alongside paintings with similar themes: Hellenistic triumph over Asiatic enemies, suggesting that Marathon was on the same level as the mythological Hellenic heroes.[40] A similar design is used on the Temple of Athena Nike; the southern frieze is accompanied by multiple depictions of the gods and famous myths. It is meant to showcase the parallel between these heroic myths and the Athenians' victory against the Persians at Marathon.[41] The Battle of Marathon then becomes "mythohistorical" as its recent history made equal to gods and myths.[42]

The peace with Persia brought stability and wealth to Athens, which, in turn, marked a distinct change in Athenian identity. Athenians became more concerned with their history, and there was a visible effort in the fifth century BCE to memorialize the greatness of Athens.[43] As well, Athens begins its reign over a significant portion of the Greek world and art begins to be a

[36] Paus. 1.32.4.
[37] Stewart, "The Persian and Carthaginian Invasions of 480 B.C.E.," 64.
[38] Karakas, "Subject and Symbolism in historical battle reliefs of the Late Classical and Hellenistic periods," 49, 53.
[39] M.D. Stansbury-O'Donnell, "The Painting Program in the Stoa Poikile," in *Periklean Athens and its Legacy: Problems and Perspectives,* ed. J.M. Barringer and J.M. Hurwit (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 78.
[40] David Castriota, "Feminizing the Barbarian and Barbarizing the Feminine: Amazons, Trojans, and Persians in the Stoa Poikile," in *Periklean Athens and its Legacy: Problems and Perspectives*, ed. J.M. Barringer and J.M. Hurwit (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 91.
[41] Castriota, "Feminizing the Barbarian and Barbarizing the Feminine," 91.
[42] Stansbury-O'Donnell, "The Painting Program in the Stoa Poikile," 78.
[43] Jacquelyn Helene Clements, "Visualizing autochthony: The iconography of Athenian identity in the late fifth century BCE," (PhD dissertation, John Hopkins University, 2015), 212-213.

standard political weapon. To secure their dominance over other Greeks, a victory monument showcasing the Battle of Marathon, such as the Temple of Athena Nike, may have been a strategic political move to display the militaristic power of Athens.[44] Victory is the theme of the Temple of Athena Nike, specifically Athena, in the context of victory. The idea of putting the scenes of victory on a temple, where cult worship will take place, brings a connotation of divine sanctions and a relationship of reciprocity between the Athenians and the gods.[45] At the Battle of Marathon, Herodotus describes that the Persians were in a state of disordered chaos as a result of the Athenians' attack.[46] Herodotus' description supports the idea that politics motivated the decision behind which scenes to display. Other art on the Temple of Athena Nike has similar tropes, such as the scenes from the Gigantomachy and Amazonomachy, which also have strong undertones of maintaining order in chaos.[47] It sends the message that Athens is a protector of order in the cosmos, and it was a clear signal to the rest of Greece that Athens had the right to rule. If Athens were using the Temple of Athena Nike and its iconography as a way to send a message to the rest of Greece, displaying a scene of Athens not only standing up to the Persians but triumphing over them would be a clear and effective choice.

Further evidence of a political motive behind displaying the Battle of Marathon on the southern frieze is the use of the "Harmodius pose."[48] Part of a pair of statues named the Tyrannicides (fig. 7), the "Harmodius pose" was a common motif in Greek art. In all of Greece, but Athens especially, the Tyrannicide statues and their poses were famous symbols of

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[44] Fullerton, *Greek Sculpture,* 318.
[45] Fullerton, *Greek Sculpture,* 321.
[46] Hdt. 6.113
[47] Fullerton, *Greek Sculpture,* 320.
[48] Harrison, "The South Frieze of the Nike Temple and the Marathon Painting in the Painted Stoa," 355.

democracy.[49] Herodotus even writes that in his speech immediately prior to the Battle of Marathon Miltiades directly mentions the Tyrannicides,

> "Callimachus, it is for you today to choose, whether you will enslave Athens, or free her and thereby leave such a memorial for all posterity was left not even by Harmodius and Arsitogeiton."[50]

The use of the pose on the southern frieze was to emphasize that Marathon was a "battle of liberation" which kept the Greeks free from Persian tyranny.[51] Further enforcing that Athenian victory is divinely sanctioned.[52] By the 420s BCE, Marathon would have had generations to be properly mythologized in Athens. The depiction of Marathon on the Temple of Athena Nike was very plausibly a rallying cry to the Athenians, it would encourage the association of Athens as the heroic defenders of democracy. It also invigorates "…contemporary Athenians to continue their ancestral glories," a move meant to garner support for war with Sparta.[53]

The southern frieze on the Temple of Athena Nike, whether or not it depicts the Battle of Marathon, was doubtlessly influenced by the Peloponnesian War.[54] As Fullerton suggests, the Nike Temple Decree may even have a direct reference to the Peloponnesian War in its inscription.[55] By the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, the structure of power in Athens was radically changed, it was a period of rapidly changing alliances and rife with civic disorder.[56] The entire sense of what it meant to be an Athenian citizen had changed. Athens now had a reputation as a military power in the Greek world, it would have been vital for Athens to maintain that image throughout the war with Sparta. The war with Sparta began in 431 BCE and lasted until

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[49] In Olympia, Elis' Temple of Zeus' western pediment displaying the Battle of Lapiths and the Centaurs, shows both myths heroes in the "Harmodius pose." Likely as an acknowledgement to the fact that Elis had become a democracy, and as a sign of support and recognition to Athens, the first democracy.
[50] Hdt. 6.109
[51] Harrison, "The South Frieze of the Nike Temple and the Marathon Painting in the Painted Stoa," 362.
[52] Fullerton, *Greek Sculpture,* 319-321.
[53] Pemberton, "The East and West Friezes of the Temple of Athena Nike," 310.
[54] Fullerton, *Greek Sculpture,* 271.
[55] Fullerton, *Greek Sculpture,* 317.
[56] Pemberton, "The East and West Friezes of the Temple of Athena Nike," 310.

404 BCE, when Athens surrendered unconditionally to Sparta. This means that the Temple of Athena Nike was entirely constructed around the time of the Peloponnesian War and was likely a strong influence in the decisions around the iconography of the temple. Decisions like those to highlight Athenian strength and power, and also to re-enforce the association between Athens and the divine, as well as the image of Athens as a protector of liberty and freedom in Greece. The Temple of Athena Nike is the first fully Iconic building on the Acropolis, likely done to acknowledge that Athens' assistance in defending the Ionian Greeks from Persia is what ultimately led to the Battle of Marathon. It would have further depicted the Athenians as protectors in Greece. These depictions would have painted the Athenians as opposite to the Spartans, who were known for subjugating other Greeks and being anti-democratic. The southern frieze shows Athens defending Greece from barbaric Persian invaders, who sought to strip away freedom and autonomy from all Greeks. This may have been an attempt to paint the Spartans, enslavers of fellow Greeks, as a barbarian threat to all of Greece and to spark the same feelings towards the Spartans as those felt towards the Persians.[57] Athens regularly utilizes the "Hellene vs. Barbarian antithesis" to show themselves as the defenders of Greece from all barbarian enemies.[58] The Stoa Poikile, which mirrors the Temple of Athena Nike so strongly, also features an image of Athenians fighting Spartan enemies, a sharp contrast to the other images of Athenians fighting Asiatic enemies.[59] Casting fellow Greeks as barbarians was likely a deliberate decision in Athens. By depicting the other Greeks as enemies and casting them as barbarians, it allows them to begin commemorating their victories over other Greeks and asserting their power

[57] Pemberton, "The East and West Friezes of the Temple of Athena Nike," 310.
[58] Castriota, "Feminizing the Barbarian and Barbarizing the Feminine," 93.
[59] Castriota, "Feminizing the Barbarian and Barbarizing the Feminine," 90.

over other city-states.[60] Athens can then maintain their image as the protector of Greece and democracy but still display their militaristic victories.

The discourse around the Temple of Athena Nike and the iconography of the southern frieze is incredibly important in understanding the changing dynamics in Athens in the fifth century BCE. It affects not only how those dynamics are understood but also challenges previous understanding of Athenian conventions. It is believed that the Greeks did not begin depicting historical events in art until after the death of Alexander the Great, but if the southern frieze, as suggested, does depict the Battle of Marathon, it would challenge that notion. However, with the extensive mythologization of the Battle of Marathon within Athens and even the mythic and divine contexts around the Battle of Marathon's depictions, it could be said that these depictions of Marathon are not a change to the artistic conventions of the fifth century. That, by the later half of the fifth century, Marathon had become so mythologized there was no difference in using it for political propaganda than in using any other myths or allegories to convey political messages. Examining the discourse and controversies around topics of the ancient world is important for all ancient historians, as it shows the sometimes hidden motivations behind some scholars' theories. With the trouble dating the temple, for example, most historians are inspired by their theories of the southern frieze's iconography when suggesting potential dates for the temple. It is important to keep those motives in mind while examining different theories. The Temple of Athena Nike and the iconography adorning it are likely to continue in mystery since while the argument for Marathon is convincing, the discussion of whether its depiction is as myth or as history remains unsettled.

[60] Gill, "The Decision to Build the Temple of Athena Nike," 278.

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Images

Fig. 1 Temple of Athena Nike from the southeast.
Frantz, A. 1954. Accessed 12/01/2022.
https://frantz.ascsa.net/id/frantz/image/at%208&q=Athena%20Nike&t=image&v=list&p=1&s=3&sort=&size=full.

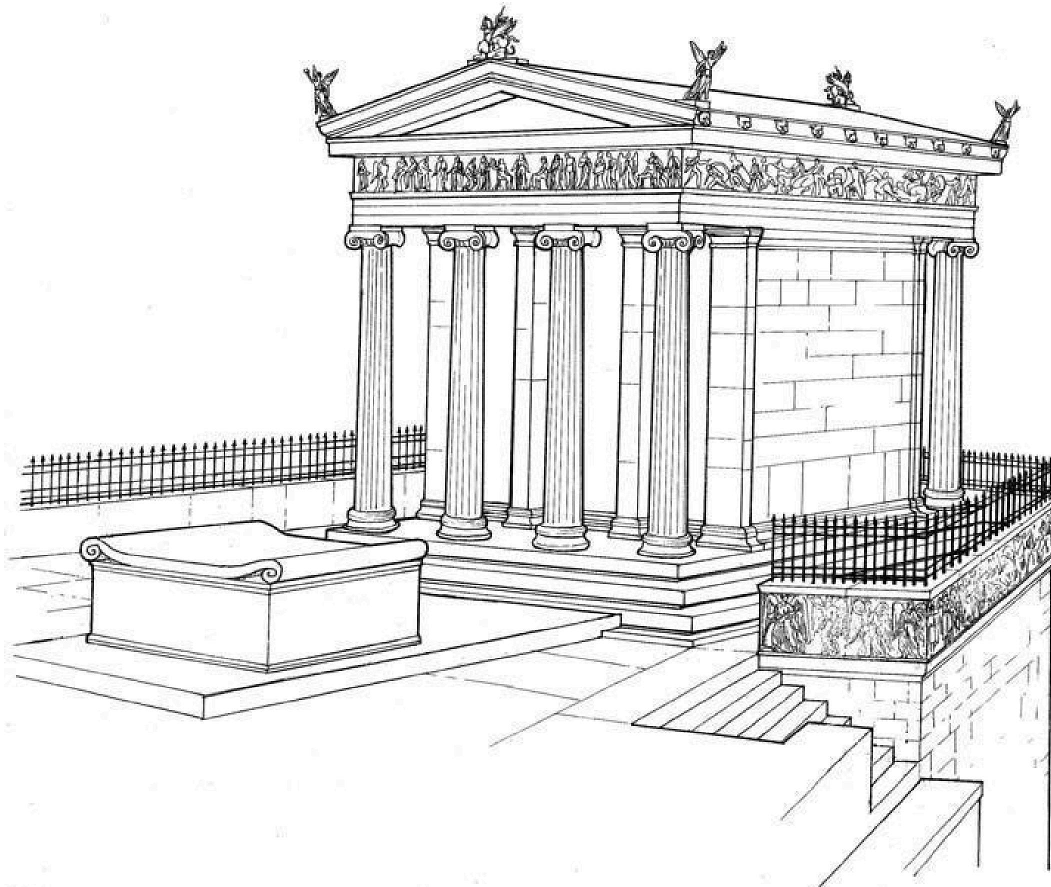

Fig. 2. Reconstruction of the Athena Nike Temple, as it may have looked 404 BCE
Image from the Acropolis Museum Website, Accessed 12/01/2022.
https://www.theacropolismuseum.gr/sites/default/files/2021-03/3%CE%92-%CE%A6%CE%A9%CE%A4%CE%9F%CE%98%CE%97%CE%9A%CE%97-%CF%83%CF%87%CE%AD%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%BF.jpg

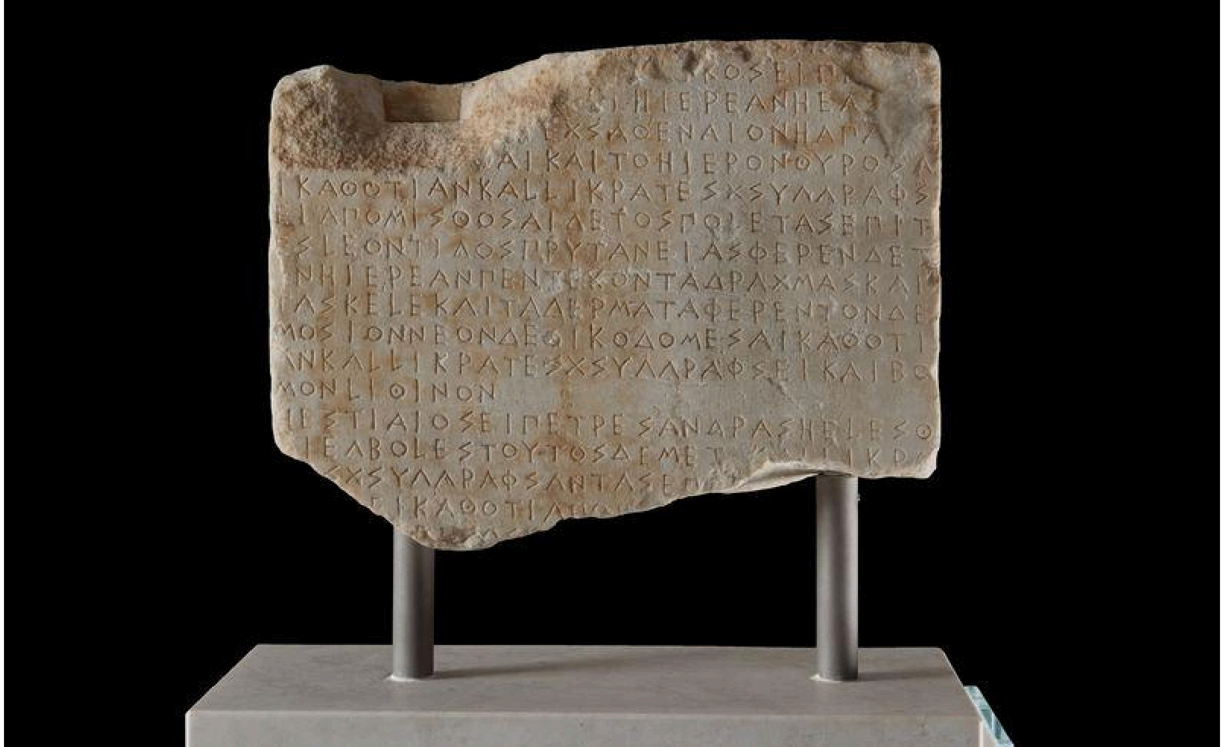

Fig. 3. Nike Temple Decree Stele.
This is an image from the Acropolis Museum of the Nike Temple Decree.
Image from the Acropolis Museum Website, Accessed 12/01/2022.
https://www.theacropolismuseum.gr/en/stele-decrees-temple-athena-nike.

Fig. 4. Temple of Athena Nike South Frieze, Block O Left Side.
Unknown. *Temple of Athena Nike South Frieze*. ca. 1890-1900. Plaster cast (sculpture); marble sculpture in relief (original). Cornell University (current); London, British Museum (original). https://jstor.org/stable/community.945876.

Fig. 5. Temple of Athena Nike South Frieze, Block O Right Side.
Unknown. *Temple of Athena Nike South Frieze*. ca. 1890-1900. Plaster cast (sculpture); marble sculpture in relief (original). Cornell University (current); London, British Museum (original). https://jstor.org/stable/community.945875.

Fig. 6. Temple of Athena Nike South Frieze, Block G Right Side.
Unknown. *Temple of Athena Nike South Frieze*. ca. 1890-1900. Plaster cast (sculpture); marble sculpture in relief (original). Cornell University (current); London, British Museum (original). https://jstor.org/stable/community.945947.

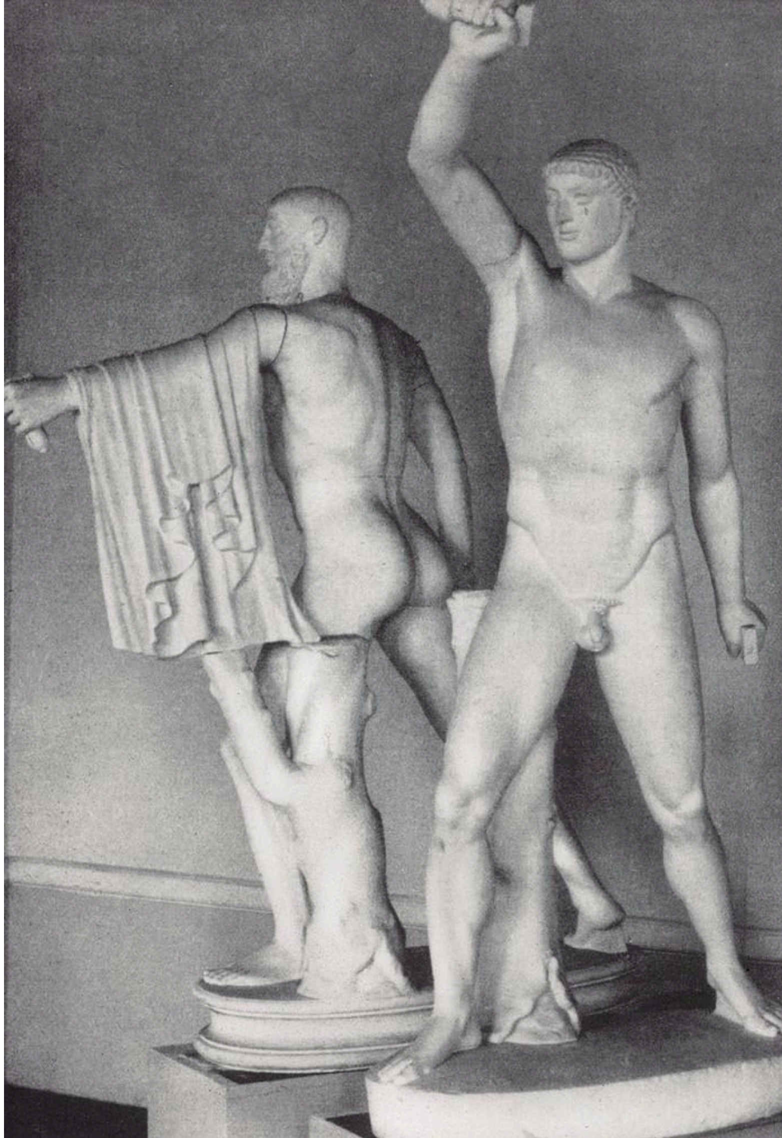

Fig. 7. The Tyrannicides. Aristogeiton Left and Harmodius Right.
Critius and Nesiotes. *Tyrannicides Group Copy Front 3/4 View*. 477-76 B.C. Marble. https://jstor.org/stable/community.13562002.

THE MAKING OF MAGIC

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Abstract

This paper explores how various ancient Mediterranean cultures defined and viewed the concept of magic. It examines how magic is more intricate than it initially appears, acting as an umbrella term rather than a precise concept. Since Western civilization's view and understanding of magic originated from the ancient Mediterranean, examining magic in ancient Mediterranean cultures is incredibly useful for understanding the importance of magic to both the ancient and modern worlds. The paper first endeavours to achieve a workable definition of magic through which the rest of the paper can be oriented. It then examines magic's association with religious and cult activities, noting the division between divine and magical power. The bulk of this paper will collect information about magic in various ancient Mediterranean cultures, examining each culture's definition and practices. From there, this paper will compare magic in the ancient Mediterranean to modern conceptions of magic, exploring modern practices (e.g. Wicca) and representations in media.

Defining Magic

One major issue that arises when speaking about magic is defining what precisely magic is. There is no concrete definition, which can make discussions rather difficult. In terms of etymology, the word *magic* has linguistic links to the Latin *magia* (and *magus*), Greek *mageía*, Sanskrit *maga-*, and Old Persian *magu[s]*.[1][2] In turn, it is suspected that these words originated with the Proto-Indo-European word **magh-*, meaning "to be able" or "to have power". Similarly, magician (*magus* and *maga-*) means "one who has power".[3] Based on this postulation, one could define *magic* as *power* or *ability*. The issue with defining *magic* through its etymology is two-fold; the definition is far too broad, and the people of the ancient Mediterranean did not call it *magic*. So, while it may be simple, etymology is not the best approach to defining *magic*. A

[1] Dieter Harmening. "The History of Western Magic: Some Considerations." *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore* 17 (2001), 1.
[2] J.P. Mallory, and D.Q Adams. *The Oxford Introduction to Proto-Indo-European and the Proto-Indo-European World*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 369.
[3] Mallory and Adams, 369.

more specific definition is needed.

Yuval Harari proposes that the best way to describe magic is through a "quasi-ostensive definition".[4] That is to say, the best way to describe magic is by examining magical things. Similarly, *A General Theory of Magic* describes magic as "those things which society as a whole considers magical".[5] While both of these authors quickly point out the various issues with such an approach, it does help in narrowing down a definition of magic. Furthermore, Georg Luck describes magic as "a technique that aims at imposing the human will on nature or on human beings by using supersensual powers".[6]

Combining the points explained above, magic can be characterized by what a culture understands *to be* magic and gives someone the supersensual *ability* or *power* to impose their will on things or people. By this timid definition, *magic* as a kind of technology is evident. Technology is fundamentally linked to techniques that "form a bridge [...] between a set of 'given' elements [...] and a goal-state which is to be realized making use of these givens", with tools acting as the intermediates between said goal and its realization.[7] In the case of magic, ancient peoples could not protect themselves from the perceived evils of the time (their goal), so they used magic (their tool) to do so (the realization of their goal).

Separating Magic From Religion

Another major issue with discussing magic is magic's relationship with religion — most notably, whether the two can or should be separated. In ancient and modern times alike, magic is

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[4] Yuval Harari. *Jewish Magic: Before the Rise of Kabbalah*, trans Batya Stein (Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 2017), 159.
[5] Marcel Mauss. "A Definition of Magic." In *A General Theory of Magic*, trans. Robert Brain (London: Routledge, 2001), 22.
[6] Georg Luck. *Arcana Mundi Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A Collection of Ancient Texts.* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 33.
[7] Alfred Gell. "Technology and Magic." *Anthropology Today* 4, no. 2 (1988), 6.

"most often, if not always, connected with religion".[8] Such a strong link to religion should make magic impossible to secularize, yet there does seem to be a distinction between *magic* performed by religious officials and everyday people. Throughout multiple cultures (such as the Greeks, Romans, Jews, and Hittites),[9] *divine power*[10] and *witchcraft* or *sorcery*[11] have been treated as fundamentally distinct from one another. That said, divine power is still distinctly magical,[12] capable of doing both harm and good.

Magic, whether it is *divine power* or *witchcraft*, is a part of religion, separated by arbitrary factors. This paper will proceed with the understanding that *divine power* is a form of magic and discuss how (or if) it is separate from the concept of *witchcraft*.

Magic in the Ancient Mediterranean

In the interest of full transparency, isolating different Mediterranean cultures to explore different types of magic is neither fair nor accurate. While these cultures were relatively distinct from one another, the ancient Mediterranean was a figurative melting pot of cultural exchange.[13] Certain aspects of magic appear in multiple cultures, not strictly belonging to any specific one. Additionally, colonization was prevalent in the Mediterranean, resulting in the blending (syncretism) of cultural concepts[14] — such as magic.[15]

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[8] Shaul Shaked. *Officina Magica: Essays on the Practice of Magic in Antiquit*y. (Leiden: BRILL, 2005), 295.
[9] With the notable exception of the Egyptians.
[10] Such as the ritual power of the rabbis in rabbinic literature, miracles performed by Jesus in the New Testament, white magic in Hittite society, *theurgy* in Graeco-Roman society, etc.
[11] Such as *kishuf* or *keshafim* in Judaism, black magic in Hittite society, and *goeteia* in Graeco-Roman society.
[12] In the sense that it is a tool powered by the practitioner's will, that grants the said practitioner the supersensual *ability* or *power* to do something that they could not normally do.
[13] Sara Parks, Shayna Sheinfeld, and Warren Meredith J C. *Jewish and Christian Women in the Ancient Mediterranean*. (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2022), 28.
[14] Parks, Sheinfled, & Warren, 29.
[15] Luck, 55.

Graeco-Roman Magic

The ancient Greek *magi* (magical practitioners) used *dynamis*, translating to *power* and correlating to the anthropological term *mana*. *Dynamis* was freely available, only needing a vessel (the *magus*) to be used.[16] From here, *dynamis* can be divided into two categories, *theurgy* (higher magic) and *goeteia* (lower magic). *Theurgy* was performed by exalted, priest-like figures and was, very simply, magic applied to religious purposes. *Goeteia*, on the other hand, was a very negative term, denoting both "lower-class" magic and charlatanism.[17] This ties into the fact that the distinguishing factor between *theurgy* and *goeteia* was social class, where *theurgy* was a respectable form of magic, performed by respectable (and wealthy) men and women.[18]

An important aspect of Graeco-Roman magic was the concept of *cosmic sympathy*. Also referred to as sympathetic magic, *cosmic sympathy* operated through the belief that anything that happened in one part of the universe, regardless of distance or apparent relevance, could affect something else.[19] For example, if someone stabbed, bound, or broke a human-like figurine, it would harm whoever it resembled.[20][21] Sympathetic magic can be further divided into two categories; homeopathic or imitative magic — where a desired effect is achieved through imitation — and contagious magic — where a material object is linked to someone who was recently in contact with it.[22]

The earliest mention of magic in a Greek text is found in book 10 of *The Odyssey* with

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[16] Luck, 33.
[17] Luck, 51-52.
[18] Luck, 52.
[19] Luck, 5.
[20] Christopher A. Faraone, and Dirk Obbink. *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*. (New York City, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), 8.
[21] Luck, 6.
[22] James Frazer. *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*. (London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1957), 14.

the introduction of Circe. When Circe turns Odysseus' men into pigs, the god Hermes gives Odysseus the herb *moly*, which prevents Circe's spell from affecting him.[23] This story demonstrates, among other things, a vital component of Greek magic: countermagic, granting people the ability to protect themselves.[24] A common form of countermagic was amulets or talismans,[25] used to protect the wearer from evil and to ensure good health.[26] While the tradition of amulets seems to have begun as strings or narrow bands tied around a person's wrist, neck, or ankle, most ancient examples of amulets were made from metal or stone and strung on something (like leather), so they could be worn around the neck.[27][28] Amulets often contained an inscription of some kind, either inside the amulet (written on papyrus, rolled up, and placed inside) or written directly on it using a bronze stylus. That said, amulets were not exclusively carved pieces of stone or metal; they could be anything that repelled evil, like strong smells or bells. While people could wear amulets daily, they could also wear them irregularly as they felt appropriate. Such occasions include feeling ill, going to war, or racing a chariot.[29]

Circe also introduces the concept of a magical formula when she attempts to turn Odysseus into a pig.[30] Magical formulas, alongside magical recipes, were used for various types of magic, such as curses, love magic, or exorcisms, and varied drastically in length, ranging from

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[23] Luck, 35. Luck also postulates that Circe (along with Medea and magic as a whole) was so commonly depicted as evil in ancient Greek society due to the conflict between the old religion of Greece's prehistoric inhabitants and the new religion that developed once the Hellenes invaded.
[24] Luck, 93.
[25] Luck, 49. There is no functional difference between the amulets and talismans. *Amulet* is likely derived from the Latin *amolitum* while *talisman* is likely derived from the Greek *telesma*.
[26] Luck, 218.
[27] Faraone & Obbink, 110. It is important to note that the phrase, "most ancient examples" is limited by what has survived from antiquity. Amulets made from things like wood or wax would not have appeared in the archaeological record.
[28] Luck, 218. As these amulets evolved, they became more elaborate and aesthetically pleasing, developing into jewellery.
[29] Luck, 218-220.
[30] Luck, 96.

a single word to full prayers.[31] These formulas were often written on objects (such as amulets) and recited as spells.[32]

Divination (foretelling the future, interpreting the past, etc.) in Graeco-Roman magic is inextricably linked to women. Graeco-Romans believed that women's bodies were "more fluid, more permeable, more open to affect and entry from the outside",[33] a trait that caused people to associate women with madness or *mania*.[34] The Greek word for "prophet" or "prophetess" is *mantis*, which the ancient Greeks believed was connected to the word *mania.* The Greeks believed that women could see (and speak) double, a concept associated with madness,[35] and the "second sight" of prophetesses like Cassandra of Troy.[36] *Mania,* in Greek thought, was a temporary, trance-like state of mental abnormality.[37] The oracle of Delphi, Pythia, was the most famous *mantis* in the ancient world who often gave prophecies after falling into a trance. While she does serve the god Apollo, the myth of Apollo slaying the Python (thought to be female) reflects that the older Greek civilization was conquered by the newer civilization. Before Apollo, Pythia was likely the *mantis* of Gaia, the great mother goddess of the earth.[38] Further evidence for the close association of divination and women includes Cassandra and the Sibyls, all of whom were women who gave prophecies while in a maddened, trance-like state.[39]

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[31] Luck, 47-51.
[32] Luck, 49, 130-133.
[33] Froma I Zeitlin. "Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality, and the Feminine in Greek Drama." *Representations* 11 (1985), 65.
[34] Zeitlin, 80.
[35] Zeitlin, 80.
[36] Zeitlin, 75.
[37] Luck, 285.
[38] Luck, 302. Here Luck also links Pythia to the feminine by examining the words *delphys* (womb) and *omphalos* (the navel of the earth). Luck explains that Pythia got her knowledge from the "womb of the earth" and that *omphalos* could, more literally, mean the navel of the goddess Gaia.
[39] Luck, 301.

Judeo-Christian Magic

In Judaism and Christianity, one of the contributing factors that distinguish *divine power* from *witchcraft* seems to be the gender of the practitioner. *Witchcraft* (*kishuf*) was gifted to humanity (specifically women) by the rebellious Watchers (a class of angels), making it both divine and sacrilegious in nature.[40] Contrastingly, *divine power* (ritual power) was achieved by rabbis through a "holy way of life and […] constant ritual contact with God".[41] Despite the strict boundaries between the two, there was little to no functional difference between *kishuf* and the rabbi's ritual power.[42] A more Doylist explanation regarding this distinction involves the rabbis' attempts to maintain their social power. While non-rabbinic men could threaten this power, they maintained the male-centric social order. Women, however, were viewed as a continuous threat to male-centrism, making female magic both a sin and an intolerable threat to the rabbis.[43]

Demons and angels are significant concepts in Judeo-Christian magic, often serving as the power behind an adjuration (*hashba'ah*), writ (*ketav*), seal (*ḥotam*), amulet (*qame'a*), ban (*shamta'*), incantation (*laḥash*), or countermagic (*qibla'*).[44] Amulets, in particular, served to bind angels and demons, coercing them into doing the practitioner's bidding.[45] Demons, through possession, were generally believed to be the cause of various ailments in humans, resulting in many amulets acting as a means to bind and expel (or exorcism) them.[46] Exorcisms were (and to a certain extent still are) a popular form of magic in Judeo-Christian society,[47] potentially

[40] Harari, 313-314.
[41] Harari, 372.
[42] Harari, 374.
[43] Harari, 99.
[44] Harari, 173.
[45] Harari, 219. Here angels and demons are listed alongside other entities such as "holy names, letters, planets, the sun, the moon, and even God".
[46] Harari, 191.
[47] Luck, 38.

because when a demon was expelled, the person it was possessing was healed of their ailment — a notion supported by both the New and Old Testaments.[48]

Interestingly, the words *angel* and *demon* have changed in meaning drastically over time, originally having more neutral definitions. *Demon* originates from *diamon* and initially meant "divine being" — a definition it had strayed from by the time it was used in the New Testament, wherein it is translated to "devils".[49][50] One possible reason for this linguistic shift is the villainization of the pagan gods and their syncretism with demons. One example of this phenomenon is Baal, the principal god of the Philistines, and Beelzebub, the prince of demons and lord of flies/filth.[51] On the other hand, *angel* originates from *angelos* and initially meant "messenger" — a definition it maintained in the New Testament, wherein it denotes human messengers.[52][53]

Magical formulas also appear in Judeo-Christian magic, appearing in written form on amulets and recipes and in verbal form through incantations and prayers.[54][55] A common formula in Judaism is *amen*,[56] which carried over to Christianity.[57][58]

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[48] *Holy Bible: King James Version*. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2017). This can be seen in Mark 1:23-26 and 1 Sam. 16:23 respectively.
[49] Luck, 207.
[50] KJV, Mat 8:31.
[51] Luck, 208.
[52] Luck, 208.
[53] KJV, Luke 7:24.
[54] Harari, 220-221, 214-215, 240.
[55] Luck, 47.
[56] Harari, 148.
[57] KJV, Eph. 3:21.
[58] KJV, Phil. 4:20.

Hittite Magic

Since the Hittite gods created and used magic,[59] also called *alwanzatar*,[60] the distinguishing factor between *divine power* (white magic) and *witchcraft* (black magic) was how it was used.[61][62] In general terms, white magic had one goal, helping a person, while black magic had two, harming a person and benefitting from that harm. That said, this distinction was not always clear, and there are considerable gray areas between the two.[63] White magic was the legalized form of magic and was often used in conjunction with religion by priests and priestesses, who were the only class of people allowed to use it.[64][65] Conversely, black magic was unambiguously illegal and punishable by death.[66]

Hittite magic (both white and black) also has strong ties to the concept of sympathetic magic. White sympathetic magic can be seen in the myth of Kamrušepa and the Sheep of the Sun-God, where Kamrušepa (the Hittite goddess of magic) uses a wool comb (a tool for removing impurities) to remove sickness.[67] Additionally, black sympathetic magic can be seen in the banned formula, which details the recitation of a person's name while stabbing a snake to

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[59] Luck, 13-14.
[60] Ahmet Ünal. "The Role of Magic in the Ancient Anatolian Religions According to the Cuneiform Texts from Bogazköy-Hattusa." In *Essays on Anatolian Studies in the Second Millennium B.C.*, ed. Mikasa Takahito (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1988), 53.
[61] Jared L. Miller. "Practice and Perception of Black Magic among the Hittites." *Altorientalische Forschungen* 37, no. 2 (2010), 169.
[62] Ünal, 64-65.
[63] Miller, 169-170. This gray area has to do with perspective. After the Hittite ritualist, Uḫḫamuwa, purified the Hittite army (white magic due to its singular intention of helping people), he sends all of the impurities over to the enemy camp (black magic because of its dual focus on harming people and benefitting from that harm). While the Hittites may view this act as white magic because its main purpose is to help them, others may view it as black magic because it is being used to harm them.
[64] Arvid S. Kapelrud. "The Interrelationship between Religion and Magic in Hittite Religion." *Numen* 6, no. 1 (1959), 43.
[65] Luck, 13.
[66] Miller, 169. While black magic *was* punishable by death, free people only ever paid a fine, while slaves were put to death. Given the Hittites' relatively mild law code (Ünal, 64), this makes much more sense.
[67] Alfonso Archi. "Kamrušepa and the Sheep of the Sun-God." *Orientalia* 62, no. 4 (1993), 407.

harm that person in the same way.[68]

Egyptian Magic

Unlike the previously mentioned cultures, ancient Egypt did not distinguish *divine power* from *witchcraft* or *sorcery*; the magic (*heka*) used in the religious sphere was fundamentally the same as the magic used in the domestic sphere.[69] The Egyptian gods used magic in the same way practitioners did, and could even be negatively affected if it was used against them.[70] Speech and words of power are the roots of *heka*,[71] relating back to when Ra created the world by speaking the word.[72] *Heka* united thought, motive, deed, emotion, and power, manifesting them into reality through the use of the correct words and tone.[73][74]

Despite the lack of distinction between what other cultures call *divine power* and *witchcraft*, there was another form of magic present in ancient Egypt; *akhu*, a form of magic that is unavailable until after death.[75] Like *heka*, *akhu* wasn't necessarily good or evil and was also used by the Egyptian gods.[76][77][78] *Akhu* is related to the word *akh*, a "transfigured spirit" of someone who had passed judgment in the underworld.[79] That said, by the mid-second century BCE, *akh* had become a popular word for demon, and letters written to them occasionally accused them of causing sickness, legal problems, other disasters, and possession.[80] There is

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68 Ünal, 65.
69 Jan Assmann. "Magic and Theology in Ancient Egypt." *Envisioning Magic*, (1997), 3-4.
70 Luck, 14.
71 Raymond Faulkner, and Ogden Goelet, trans. *The Egyptian Book of the Dead: The Book of Going Forth by Day*. (San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 2008), 145.
72 Eleanor Harris. *Ancient Egyptian Magic*. (Newburyport, MA: Red Wheel/Weiser, 2016), 94.
73 Faulkner & Goelet, 146.
74 Harris, 94.
75 Faulkner & Goelet, 145.
76 Faulkner & Goelet, 146.
77 Harris, 156.
78 Geraldine Pinch. *Magic in Ancient Egypt*. (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1995), 12.
79 Pinch, 34.
80 Pinch, 45.

also a potential connection between *akhu* and *ankh*, the Egyptian word for life and an amulet used to lengthen and protect life.[81]

Another important aspect of Egyptian magic is its connection to medicine. While not necessarily the same thing, magic and medicine complimented one another and were used in tandem by Egyptian doctors to treat a variety of conditions.[82] Some remedies were purely medical, some were purely magical, and some were a mixture of the two.[83] Preventative magic (commonly against infections from insects, epidemics, venomous bites, etc.) was primarily magical, commonly using amulets and herbs to protect the body from a wide range of medical problems.[84] Protection against plagues was a major concern for Egypt as it had more and more contact with other countries and preventative spells (or formulas) were either individual, recited over amulets or herbs, or household-based, said while using (burning or sweeping with a broom made of) a specific type of wood.[85] Anti-venom charms were also very popular, despite the relatively low chance of getting bit by a venomous creature.[86] The large statues of gods in temples and tombs were talismans, using the power of the depicted god as further protection.[87]

Modern Comparisons

Western civilization's view of magic is neither the same nor completely different than that of the ancient Mediterranean. These similarities are evident in both modern magical practices and the portrayal of magic in media. The following section of this paper will take a brief look at

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[81] Harris, 74.
[82] Pinch, 133-134.
[83] Assmann, 4.
[84] Pinch, 142-143.
[85] Pinch, 143.
[86] Pinch, 134-144. Pinch explains that this was likely because ancient Egyptians attributed unknown illnesses to poisons in the body. Anti-venom spells were made to address the Egyptians' fears regarding fate and chaos.
[87] Harris, 107.

both of these subjects and compare their use of magic to that of the ancient Mediterranean cultures.

Practices

Wicca is the largest and most popular form of neo-paganism in the modern world, with numerous followers.[88] Based on reverence for the omnipresent Goddess and God, Wicca is a religion that embraces magic as a part of nature.[89] While Wicca did historically separate white and black magic based on the intent of the practitioner, it has since disregarded the terms and, in some cases, the concept altogether.[90] The separation of magic based on intent is extremely reminiscent of Hittite magic, wherein particular practices were banned, not magic as a whole.[91] The removal of this distinction more closely resembles Egyptian magic and its view that magic in the religious and domestic spheres is the same.[92]

The Goddess[93] and God[94] are the creative forces of the universe,[95] giving power to practitioners through ritualistic prayers, invocations, or spells,[96] which are analogous to the

[88] Ethan Doyle White. "The Meaning of 'Wicca': A Study in Etymology, History, and Pagan Politics." *Pomegranate: The International Journal of Pagan Studies* 12, no. 2 (2010), 185. While there is no exact number, Doyle White estimates that, as of 2010, there were hundreds of thousands of wiccans.
[89] Scott Cunningham. *Wicca: A Guide for the Solitary Practitioner*. (Woodbury, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 2004), 5-6.
[90] Doyle White, Ethan. *Wicca: History, Belief, and Community in Modern Pagan Witchcraft*. (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2016), 108-109.
[91] Kapelrud, 65.
[92] Assmann, 3-4.
[93] Doyle White 2016, 90. The Goddess possesses all goddesses within herself. She is most commonly presented as the Mother Goddess, associated with female triplicity (the maid, mother, and crone), the moon, the earth, bright and dark, and menstruation.
[94] Doyle White 2016, 90. Much like the Goddess, the God possesses all gods within himself. He is most commonly presented as the Horned God (thought to be an amalgamation of Pan and a horned Celtic god, like the Oak and Holly Kings from Welsh folklore (Doyle White 2016, 90), who was associated with the Devil by Christian priests (Luck 2006, 37)), associated with male triplicity (the youth, father, and wise old man), wisdom, vegetation, war, craftsmanship, the sun, and the Underworld.
[95] Cunningham, 14.
[96] Cunningham, 21.

magical formulas and recipes seen throughout the ancient Mediterranean.[97][98][99][100]

Wiccan rituals are often accompanied by magical tools (like knives, brooms, or wands) and herbs, including fruits and flowers.[101] Amulets and talismans, often doubling as ritual jewellery, are also common features in Wicca, although not all practitioners use them.[102] While the use of magic tools was prevalent throughout the ancient Mediterranean, the specific use of brooms to purify a space in Wicca is strongly reminiscent of the ancient Egyptian practice of sweeping with a broom as a form of household-based preventative magic.[103][104]

In Media

The Owl House (2020-2023) is a popular cartoon that revolves around witches, demons, and magic. As one would expect from the description, this show contains many aspects of ancient magic, such as arbitrary divisions of magic, demons as neutral or good beings, and talismans.

Regarding the arbitrary divisions of magic, *The Owl House* has *coven magic* and *wild magic*. *Coven magic* is performed by those who have had the type of magic they can use restricted to a single type (such as healing, potions, illusions, plants, etc.) per laws put in place by a prophet. *Wild magic* is unrestricted magic, performed by those who disobeyed the laws. *Wild magic* is called dangerous and uncivilized and said to be sacrilegious.[105] The division of *coven magic* and *wild magic*, along with the villainization of the latter, clearly parallel the

[97] Harari, 220-221.
[98] Harris, 11.
[99] Kapelrud, 65.
[100] Luck, 130-133.
[101] Cunningham, 169-173.
[102] Cunningham, 51-52.
[103] Doyle White 2016, 122.
[104] Pinch, 143.
[105] Dana Terrace. "Covention." Episode. *The Owl House* 1, no. 5. (Disney Channel, February 7, 2020).

divisions between *divine power* and *witchcraft* seen in Graeco-Roman and Judeo-Christian magic,[106][107] while lacking the intent-based division of the Hittites.[108]

Demons in this show are not evil beings. They are complex in morality, where their actions (whether they be virtuous, neutral, or malicious) depend on the specific circumstances of a given situation.[109] This characterization of demons more closely resembles the characterization of *diamons*, powerful beings who, while not necessarily *good*, were not evil.[110]

Talismans are abundant throughout the show, most prominently taking the form of a palisman, a familiar who doubles as a practitioner's staff, used to help cast and deflect magic.[111] Disregarding the similar names, a palisman is an animal (or animal-like) creature carved out of a specific type of wood, granting them magic power and animating them.[112] This is similar to the talismans (and amulets) seen in Graeco-Roman and Egyptian magic, which protected the practitioner against evil.[113][114] The specificity of the wood needed is also reminiscent of the specificity of wood needed in Egyptian preventative magic.[115]

Conclusion

Magic in the ancient Mediterranean has had a huge impact on how magic in the modern West is practiced, perceived, and portrayed. Modern magical practices like Wicca are full of remnants of older magic, such as amulets, formulas, tools, and the division of "good" and "bad" magic. Ancient magic introduced concepts that are still present in the modern understanding of

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[106] Harari, 313-314, 372.
[107] Luck, 51-52.
[108] Miller, 169.
[109] Dana Terrace. "Yesterday's Lie." Episode. *The Owl House* 2, no. 10. (Disney Channel, March 20, 2021).
[110] Luck, 207.
[111] Dana Terrace. "Eclipse Lake." Episode. *The Owl House* 2, no. 9. (Disney Channel, August 7, 2021).
[112] Dana Terrace. "Escape of the Palisman." Episode. *The Owl House* 1, no. 10. (Disney Channel, August 7, 2020).
[113] Harris, 107.
[114] Luck, 218.
[115] Pinch, 143.

magic, like herbal magic, divination, angels and demons, and possession. The media we consume, including television or books, is full of references and adaptations of ancient magical practices. While understanding ancient magic does provide insight into the ancient past, it also explains an extremely common (and utterly fascinating) concept in modern Western society.

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THE FUNCTION AND SOCIAL PERCEPTION OF TATTOOS IN ANCIENT EGYPT AND OTHER ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN CIVILIZATIONS

ALLY ROBIDOUX

Abstract

Tattoos are extremely well-understood in the modern world, but how they were used and perceived in antiquity has long been of interest to scholars. Much has been learned from ancient writing, but proven inaccuracies make written accounts questionable. Ultimately, the only hard proof scholars can rely on is preserved tattooed skin. So, the discoveries of tattooed Egyptian mummies in recent years have been hugely important. Though they lack much context, it has been observed that in Dynastic Egypt, tattoos ranged from Nubian-inspired geometric patterns to symbols of religious significance. Conversely, in Ancient Greece (and later, Rome), tattoos were used to identify slaves and criminals. Thus, the social attitudes towards tattoos have experienced immense change over time despite the practice itself undergoing relatively little change. Even with the decline in tattooing caused by the rise of Christianity, the practice has remained culturally relevant, whether in a positive or negative light.

As Deter-Wolf and Diaz-Granados describe, tattooing exists on a global scale, dating back at least 8000 years.[1] Furthermore, interpretations greatly vary since it is not a practice exclusive to any one culture. Another important complication with this topic is that although many major discoveries have been made in recent years, there is still uncertainty in the scholarship. How tattoos are created and what civilizations did so are well-known, but aspects like symbolism are harder to figure out. Regardless, there is not only proof of ancient tattoos but compelling evidence that it has been a constant practice with huge shifts in cultural usage and meaning.

1. Practices and Archaeology

Present tattooing skills of artistic talent and fine motor skills easily transfer to the context of antiquity. The most obvious and important features, in both the past and present, are needles and

[1] Aaron Deter-Wolf, *Drawing with Great Needles: Ancient Tattoo Traditions of North America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013), xi.

ink. Quite simply, Zidarov describes tattooing as "the insertion of a pigment (most often from crushed or pulverized carbon) beneath the epidermis using a fine, sharp needle."[2] Sometimes, multiple needles were combined to fill larger areas of skin, a practice more frequently found in North American Indigenous cultures.[3] Bone, because of its durability, is thought of as the most common material for tattooing, but other organic materials and copper have also been suggested.[4] Bone needles have been found with stone figurines bearing designs and patterns that, to Gilbert, prove their tattooing purpose.[5] This type of carving is commonly excavated but has led to a common theme in ancient tattoo scholarship where it is unclear if this was an artistic decision or a representation of real tattoos.[6] While the method of creating tattoos is quite straightforward, irrefutable archeological examples of these tattooing tools are hard to find.

Though tattoos in antiquity are a documented phenomenon, the exact implements used are much harder to pinpoint for various archaeological reasons. Firstly, is the issue of preservation. Deter-Wolf and Clark note that unlike stone and bone (in the right conditions), any fragile or organic materials that were used to tattoo do not exist anymore.[7] Furthermore, identifying the many excavated pointed bone tools as tattoo tools specifically presents another challenge: these implements typically lack defining characteristics other than size. They can be

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[2] Petar N. Zidarov, "The Antiquity of Tattooing in Southeastern Europe," in *Ancient Ink: The Archaeology of Tattooing*, Lars Krutak and Aaron Deter-Wolf, eds. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017), 144.

[3] Lars Krutak, *Tattoo Traditions of Native North America: Ancient and Contemporary Expressions of Identity* (Edam: LM Publishers, 2014), quoted in ibid.

[4] Aaron Deter-Wolf and Tara Nicole Clark, "Further Evaluation of Tattooing Use-Wear on Bone Tools," in *Ancient Ink*, 232; "World's Earliest Tattoos Discovered on Gebelein Mummies." *International Business Times* (March 2018). *Gale Academic OneFile* (accessed February 28, 2023).

[5] Marthe Péquart and Saint-Juste Péquart, "*Grotte du Mas d'Azil (Ariège). Une nouvelle galerie magdalenienne*," *Annales de Paléontologie* 48 (1962): 211-214, and R.W.B. Scutt and Christopher Gotch, *Art, Sex and Symbol* (London: Cornwall Books, 1974), 22, quoted in ibid.

[6] Zidarov, "The Antiquity of Tattooing in Southeastern Europe," in *Ancient Ink*, 142.

[7] Deter-Wolf and Clark, "Further Evaluation of Tattooing Use-Wear on Bone Tools," in *Ancient Ink*, 231.

designated as awls for their ability to pierce holes, but such a simple design could have been utilized for dozens of purposes such as basketweaving, making pottery, preparing food, pinning clothes or hair, or tattooing.[8] More than just the issue of universality, human error also plays a role in identification struggles. Factors like "inadequate artifact preservation and recovery methods, cultural changes, conflicting traditional artifact classification systems, and the biases and misunderstandings of previous researchers" can hinder accurate identification.[9] For Zidarov, an essential way to tell apart these bone tools would be "The identification of various residues such as pigments, binders, or even blood on their surfaces."[10] This seems to be the most concrete proof to distinguish items like pins and awls from tattoo needles. As for the actual practice of tattooing, he argues that can only be proven with "the survival of tattooed human skin."[11] Thanks to mummification, both natural and artificial, such skin exists.

Probably one of the most famous mummies to have ever been found is that of the Copper Age man known as Ötzi the Iceman. Found in October 1991, in the Ötztal Alps on the border of Austria and Italy, this mummy was a monumental contribution to the fields of anthropology and archaeology because he was found with clothes and several tools.[12] His well-preserved skin contains many tattoos including what Gilbert describes as "a cross on the inside of the left knee, six straight lines 15 centimeters long above the kidneys and numerous parallel lines on the ankles."[13] Though the placements of the tattoos seem random, they are mostly on joints and

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[8] Christian Gates St Pierre, "Iroquoian bone artifacts: Characteristics and problems," in *Ancient and Modern Bone Artefacts from America to Russia. Cultural, Technological and Functional Signature*, ed. Alexandra Legrand et al. (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2010): 71-85, quoted in ibid., 232.
[9] Deter-Wolf and Clark, "Further Evaluation of Tattooing Use-Wear on Bone Tools," 231.
[10] Zidarov, "The Antiquity of Tattooing in Southeastern Europe," in *Ancient Ink*, 148.
[11] Ibid. Steve Gilbert, *Tattoo History: a sourcebook: an anthology of historical records of tattooing throughout the world*, (New York: Juno Books, 2000), 11.
[12] Gilbert, *Tattoo History*, 11.
[13] Ibid.

likely "applied for therapeutic reasons."[14] It was previously thought that Ötzi's tattoos are the oldest ones ever found, but this was put into question in 2018 when tattoos were identified on two Predynastic Egyptian mummies by Friedman.[15] Based on their estimated dates of origin, these Gebelein mummies (3351 to 3017 cal BCE) and Ötzi (3370-3100 cal BCE) were nearly contemporary.[16] Interestingly, the tattoos on the Gebelein mummies seem to be for decorative purposes and not medical ones, but the most important difference here is that Ötzi's tattoos are geometric and the Gebelein ones are organic animal designs.[17] If Ötzi's tattoos are indeed the result of some medical treatment, they would have been viewed much differently in a social context than Egyptian animal imagery, in their respective cultures.

2. Purpose and Cultures

It is theorized that tattoos served distinct functions in society depending on the culture and person bearing them. However, the specifics distinguishing their purpose—usually assumed to be religious, erotic, or decorative—have mostly been lost to time. Zidarov touches on this very problem, which applies equally to Ötzi, Egyptian mummies, and Thracian tattooing, the subject of his research. He stresses the importance of records from those who tattooed or were tattooed, thus explicitly discussing tattoos, the lack of which creates so much ambivalence in this field and so, "the meanings of these marks will remain largely elusive, except when we can draw parallels from other cultures and glean insights from the archaeological record."[18] Parallels are useful, but may not be correct, even when evidence-based. In the context of antiquity in the Mediterranean region, great cultural exchange occurred, and it is very practical to examine cultures not just by

[14] Gilbert, *Tattoo History*, 11.
[15] Renée Friedman et al., "Natural mummies from Predynastic Egypt reveal the world's earliest figural tattoos," *Journal of Archaeological Science* 92 (2018): 116.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid., 119, 122.
[18] Zidarov, "The Antiquity of Tattooing in Southeastern Europe," in *Ancient Ink*, 148.

their differences and similarities, but also by how they create a timeline of events and changing social attitudes.

1a. Egypt

Because of the artificial mummification process frequently undertaken in Ancient Egypt, this is where much of the evidence for ancient tattooing originates. The Egyptian kingdoms stood for centuries before falling under Greek rule, so the tattoos that appear over this expansive period of time have markedly different meanings, as theorized by experts in the field.

Before the discovery of the Gebelein mummies' tattoos, there was little evidence for tattooing in Predynastic Egypt (ca. 4300-3000 BCE). The most that had been observed were figurines that had been excavated "bearing geometric patterns on their arms and legs."[19] Austin and Gobeil identify this as merely circumstantial evidence that might be just decoration and not even tattoos. Since surviving tattooed skin is needed to prove the existence of tattooing, artistic representations are not enough, but Austin and Gobeil also point out that the human remains found in pharaonic burials rarely have tattoos.[20] There was a clear challenge in proving tattooing existed in Egypt as far back as the Predynastic period. This challenge elucidates the significance of the Gebelein mummies, which were on display for more than a century before a new research program emerged looking for body modifications and found the tattoos.[21] Friedman and her group worked with the seven mummies, but nothing is known about their lives, other than their burial at the Gebelein site.[22] Despite their unknown identities, their bodies are significantly better understood. Using infrared imaging, tattoos can be seen on two of these mummies (one male and

[19] Anne Austin and Cédric Gobeil, "Embodying the Divine: A Tattooed Female Mummy from Deir el-Medina," *Bulletin de l'institut français d'archéologie orientale* 116, (2017): 23.
[20] Anne Austin and Cédric Gobeil, "Embodying the Divine: A Tattooed Female Mummy from Deir el-Medina," *Bulletin de l'institut français d'archéologie orientale* 116, (2017): 23.
[21] Friedman et al., "Natural mummies from Predynastic Egypt," 116.
[22] Ibid., 116-7.

one female), and they are certainly tattoos because the ink was found in the dermis layer of the skin.[23] This distinguishes them as permanent body modifications, rather than any sort of decorative paint.

Since the discovery of their tattoos in 2018, the Gebelein Man and Woman have transformed historical knowledge of ancient tattooing. First, they established decent certainty in the type of material used as ink. Rather than the liquid ink used today, the pigment in these tattoos has been identified as "predominantly carbon-based, presumably some sort of soot."[24] Especially significant, however, is that "They represent the earliest evidence for tattooing in Africa by a millennium."[25] As for the tattoos themselves, the Gebelein Woman has a series of S-shaped markings on her upper arm and shoulder.[26] The meaning of these is unknown, but basic designs are not unusual, such as those found on Ötzi. What is astonishing, however, are tattoos being found on a man. Before this discovery, scholars believed only women had tattoos in Ancient Egypt since only female bodies had been discovered with tattoos.[27] Despite this revelation, the man's tattoos, consisting of two horned animals on his shoulder, are hardly understood at all. The animals are theorized to be wild cattle—Friedman suggests an auroch—and a Barbary sheep, but their simple representations make this an uncertainty.[28] According to Friedman, they are "well-known in Predynastic art" and near the end of this period,

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[23] Friedman et al., "Natural mummies from Predynastic Egypt," 117.
[24] Friedman et al., "Natural mummies from Predynastic Egypt," 117.
[25] Friedman et al., "Natural mummies from Predynastic Egypt," 116.
[26] Ibid., 118.
[27] Gilbert, *Tattoo History*, 11; "World's Earliest Tattoos Discovered on Gebelein Mummies."
[28] Gwenola Graff, *Les peintures sur vases de Nagada I - Nagada II: Nouvelle approche sémiologique de l'iconographie prédynastique*, (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2009) quoted in Friedman et al., "Natural mummies from Predynastic Egypt," 119.

"the closest stylistic parallels" are found in other works of art like carving and pottery.[29] Due to the differing line weight and overlap of the two animals, they could have been done at different times.[30] Overall, the Gebelein mummies have contributed to the establishment of a timeline of tattooing in Egypt, but do not answer many questions.

Though several sources, like Austin and Gobeil as well as Gilbert, claim tattooing flourished in the Middle Kingdom and did not appear in the Old Kingdom (2675-2130 BCE), the surprise finding of the Predynastic Gebelein mummies' tattoos, makes that gap particularly strange.[31] Tassie attributes this to few mummies from before the Middle Kingdom surviving since "the art of mummification with evisceration was only in its infancy in the Old Kingdom."[32] He explains that artistic and symbolic representations are the best evidence available.[33] At the time he was writing, the tattoos on the Gebelein mummies were unknown, so there was little thought of tattooing before the Old Kingdom. Either way, the Middle Kingdom is of great interest to scholars because it has evidence of tattooing in both human remains and art.[34]

The Middle Kingdom (ca. 1980-1630 BCE) is not only plentiful in its evidence of tattooing, but many surviving mummies and artifacts help piece together the unclear context. Most of the important discoveries for tattooing from this period are related to women. Whether they are women represented in art or the mummified bodies of women, there is a strong spiritual connection present between tattoos and womanhood. As the first major civilization in the

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[29] Diana Craig Patch, *Dawn of Egyptian Art*, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2011) and W.M. Flinders Petrie and James Edward Quibell, *Naqada and Ballas*, (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1896) quoted in Friedman et al., "Natural mummies from Predynastic Egypt," 119.

[30] Friedman et al., "Natural mummies from Predynastic Egypt," 118.

[31] Austin and Gobeil, "Embodying the Divine," 24; Gilbert, *Tattoo History*, 18.

[32] Geoffrey J. Tassie, "Identifying the Practice of Tattooing in Ancient Egypt and Nubia," *Papers from the Institute of Archaeology* 14 (2003): 92.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Austin and Gobeil, "Embodying the Divine," 24.

Mediterranean area to embrace tattooing, the Egyptians saw it as something quite positive. Therefore, the gendered relationship they expressed was an empowering one that gave women a link to the divine, rather than marking them as only mothers and caretakers. The first major discovery from the Middle Kingdom that illustrates this is the mummy of Amunet, a priestess of Hathor during the Eleventh Dynasty. Austin and Gobeil explain Amunet was found buried in a tomb with two other tattooed women south of the temple at Deir el-Bahri.[35] On their arms, legs, and torsos, the three mummies have tattooed dotted lines, which Bianchi describes the colour as a "dark, blackish-blue pigment."[36] Their tattoos matched similar designs on figurines and paddle dolls of women, a revelation that makes the Predynastic figurines supposedly representing tattoos more likely to be accurate.[37] Furthermore, it was common in the period for female musicians and dancers to be tattooed to both express sensuality and worship Hathor.[38] Gilbert recognizes Hathor as a very important goddess who "symbolized the cosmic mother who gave birth to all life on earth," implying worship of her was undoubtedly a respectable act.[39] Yet, he also puts forward Bianchi's description of Amunet's tattoos as having "an undeniably carnal overtone."[40] This seems highly reductive, but it is important to know that this carnality served a spiritual purpose as a meaningful act of devotion (delivering fertility and resurrection), rather than as a symbol of female subservience.[41]

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[35] Austin and Gobeil, "Embodying the Divine," 24.
[36] Richard S. Bianchi, "*Tätoweirung*," in *Lexikon der Ägyotologie*, VI, eds. Hans Wolfgang Helck and Eberhard Otto (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1986), 145-6, quoted in C.P. Jones, "Stigma and Tattoo," in *Written on the Body: The Tattoo in European and American History*, ed. Jane Caplan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).
[37] Austin and Gobeil, "Embodying the Divine," 24.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Gilbert, *Tattoo History*, 11.
[40] Robert S. Bianchi, "Tattoo in Ancient Egypt," in *Marks of Civilization*, ed. Arnold Rubin. (Los Angeles: Museum of Cultural History, The University of California, 1988), 22, quoted in ibid.
[41] Gilbert, *Tattoo History*, 11.

The special status of tattoos in Egypt was not a phenomenon that originated within its kingdom, however. Instead, tattooing was greatly influenced by cultural exchange between Egypt and Nubia. Austin and Gobeil present how the Nubian C-Group proves this exchange because their culture coincided with the beginning of Egypt's Middle Kingdom, and female mummies were found in their cemeteries with dots and lines similar to the Egyptian mummies found at Deir el-Bahri.[42] In art, a Nubian influence can be seen in the Middle and New Kingdoms, with more Egyptian imagery being used over time.[43] This shows how the Egyptians embraced a new practice and adapted it to their own culture. Something that aided this process was the fact that the goddess Bes was worshipped by both civilizations and having such a connection would have made them more compatible with each other.[44] Presumed tattoos of Bes, the goddess of revelry, have been seen on the thighs of female dancers and musicians in Egyptian paintings.[45] Tattoos in art can be ambiguously true to real life, but by the New Kingdom, five women were found with tattoos of Bes on their thighs by Keimer at Deir el-Medina.[46] This is significant for proving the shared culture between Egypt and Nubia as well as a concrete overlap between worship and tattoo continuing into the New Kingdom.

In the New Kingdom, tattooing was becoming an increasingly intricate art form with a lot of respect attached to those who bore tattoos. In 2014, at Deir el-Medina, the mummy of a heavily tattooed woman was discovered by Austin and Gobeil and subsequently became the oldest Pharaonic mummy with figural tattoos.[47] Found in a heavily plundered tomb, this mummy

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[42] Louis Keimer, *Remarques sur le tatouage dans l'Egypte ancienne*, vol. 53 of *Mémoires de l'institut égyptien* (Cairo: *L'institut français d'archéologie orientale,* 1948), 106, quoted in Austin and Gobeil, "Embodying the Divine," 24.
[43] Austin and Gobeil, "Embodying the Divine," 24.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Gilbert, *Tattoo History*, 13.
[46] Keimer, *Remarques sur le tatouage dans l'Egypte ancienne*, 40-2, quoted in ibid.
[47] Austin and Gobeil, "Embodying the Divine," 23, 36.

from the Nineteenth Dynasty (1292-1189 BCE) was probably a musician or priestess of Hathor, and her name is unknown.[48] The mummy consists of only a torso and arms, but she has at least thirty tattoos of undoubtedly Pharaonic iconography that were created before mummification, proven by the distortion caused by skin shrinkage.[49] Other features of the tattoos' creation include a strong sense of symmetry and varying darkness and definition, which indicate that the tattoos were planned out and created at different times.[50] Furthermore, the only tattoos that would have been regularly covered would be the lotus flower on her lower back, the abdomen being an area associated with eroticism and fertility.[51] The rest of the tattoos are thus displayed on more public areas of the body such as many wadjet eyes meaning that "any direction that you could look at this woman—there would be a pair of divine eyes looking back at you."[52] This kind of publicness engages the viewer, likely for spiritual reasons due to the tattoos being largely religious symbols. Moreover, the placements of the tattoos indicate they had to have been done by someone else, suggesting community involvement.[53] This embrace of tattooing at Deir el-Medina reflects the solidified acceptance of the practice by the New Kingdom.

As for the Deir el-Medina mummy's tattoos themselves, there is not enough context for their meanings to be explained. However, the existing speculation from Austin and Gobeil provides a compelling case for their important spiritual function. With many of the tattoos being wadjet eyes and nefer signs, two quite important symbols of divinity, this woman's tattoos were

[48] Austin and Gobeil, "Embodying the Divine," 25, 33.
[49] Ibid., 25-6.
[50] Keimer, *Remarques sur le tatouage dans l'Egypte ancienne*, 40-2, quoted in ibid.
Austin and Gobeil, "Embodying the Divine," 27.
[51] Ibid., 26.
[52] Ibid., 29.
[53] Ibid., 27.

positive and magical in nature according to Pinch.[54] Additionally, there are several tattoos on her neck, which the Egyptians viewed as a particularly vulnerable part of the body.[55] To combat this, they would wear amulets to ward off disease, but magical tattoos could have served the same purpose albeit permanently.[56] But Austin and Gobeil go further than this to argue that she was not sick, but rather a healer herself, a magician, who used magical symbols on her throat and arms to enhance the power of her speech and gestures.[57] When pictured together, wadjet eyes and nefer signs can mean "seeing the beauties" of the tattooed woman, or read as *ir nfr, ir nfr,* which means "do good, do good," possibly used as a mantra for protection and power.[58] Other divine symbols that appear include seated baboons—associated with the magical god of knowledge Thoth—on her collar bones, and a snake—a symbol of protection seen on household objects—on each of her shoulders.[59] Under each snake is a cross resembling a four-leaf clover, a symbol that appears on Hathor's cows in art, and the connection to this goddess is strengthened by two of Hathor's cows on the mummy's left arm.[60] Similar cross shapes have been found on figurines and, in the tomb of Amennakht, six women are depicted with them on their upper arms.[61] To Austin and Gobeil, this strong correlation could prove that the vast collection of art and figurines found with

[54] Geraldine Pinch, *Magic in Ancient Egypt*, (London: British Museum Press, 2006), 110, quoted in ibid., 28.
[55] Austin and Gobeil, "Embodying the Divine," 28.
[56] Pinch, *Magic in Ancient Egypt*, 70, 111-2, 116, quoted in ibid.
[57] Austin and Gobeil, "Embodying the Divine," 28-9.
[58] Marek Marciniak, "*Quelques remarques sur la formule ir nfr, ir nfr*," *Études et travaux* 2 (1968): 26-31, quoted in ibid.
[59] Pinch, *Magic in Ancient Egypt*, 40-3, 72, quoted in Austin and Gobeil, "Embodying the Divine," 28-9.
[60] Édouard Naville, *The XIth Dynasty Temple at Deir el-Bahari*, Part I, (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1907), 65, quoted in Austin and Gobeil, "Embodying the Divine," 29, 31.
[61] Christiane Desroches-Noblecourt, "*Concubines du mort et mères de famille au Moyen Empire. À propos d'une supplique pour une naissance*," BIFAO 53 (1953): 7-47, quoted in Austin and Gobeil, "Embodying the Divine," 30.

decorative markings could represent real tattoos.[62] In summary, this mummy represents the great power that tattoos were thought to channel for important spiritual beliefs in the New Kingdom.

Regardless of the illusive details, there is a great connotation of benevolence in these tattoos—especially when their owner was possibly a priestess of Hathor. However, this is a point of debate among scholars who, according to Austin and Gobeil, "have previously argued that by the New Kingdom, women could no longer hold the title "priestess of Hathor" nor any priestly titles because their bodies, through menstruation and childbirth, were perceived as too impure for the daily cult rituals."[63] On the contrary, Austin and Gobeil position this woman as both the worshipper and object of worship, covered in symbols of devotion, tattoos that "signify her divine role as something that could be separate from—or even beyond—the priesthood."[64] Another explanation that separates her from organized religious practices is the documented existence of a wise woman at Deir el-Medina called the *rhyt*, "the knowing one," who would "be consulted to determine the divine cause of an illness or death."[65] By the Late Period, knowledge of bites from venomous animals was part of her role, another possible explanation for the snake tattoos.[66] Finally, there is another connection to Hathor in that she was known by the epithet *rhyt* since the Ptolemaic Dynasty.[67] All these factors would have made the woman an important figure in her community and a devoted follower of Egyptian religious teachings. Thus, in Egypt, tattoos did not hinder one's morality, spiritual life, or social status and could even elevate such things.

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[62] Austin and Gobeil, "Embodying the Divine," 30.
[63] Carolyn Graves-Brown, *Dancing for Hathor: Women in Ancient Egypt*, (London: Continuum 2010), 27, quoted in ibid., 34.
[64] Austin and Gobeil, "Embodying the Divine," 34.
[65] Pinch, *Magic in Ancient Egypt*, 56, quoted in ibid.
[66] Philippa Lang, *Medicine and Society in Ptolemaic Egypt*, (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 215, quoted in Austin and Gobeil, "Embodying the Divine," 34.
[67] J. F. Borghouts "Divine Intervention in Ancient Egypt and its Manifestation," in *Gleanings from Deir el-Medina*, eds. R. J. Demarée and Jac J. Janssen (Leiden: Netherlands Institute for the Near East, 1982), 26, quoted in Austin and Gobeil, "Embodying the Divine," 35.

1b. Greece

Jones describes how, from the beginning, tattooing was not a practice native to Greek society, so it was perceived as foreign and barbarian.[68] This was their reaction near the end of the Archaic period when the Greeks were in contact with the Thracians of southeastern Europe and noticed their tattoos.[69] This first encounter with tattooing inspired an assortment of Greek interpretations. From Herodotus' accounts of the Thracians to tattooed Thracian women being depicted on Greek vases, there was great interest.[70] However, Zidarov introduces the possibility that tattooing already existed in the Greek Archaic period since possibly tattooed people appeared in art from that time. They remain ambiguously accurate, although he points out they were also "considered indicative of the superhuman nature of the portrayed characters."[71] If that was the case, then the tattoos represented something metaphysical about the people portrayed that made them special. This is also evidenced in Herodotus' amazement with the runaway slaves at Canopus tattooing themselves in an act of devotion to the local god.[72] However, if they were really tattoos, they functioned much differently than the ways the Persians introduced the Greeks to tattooing.

Greek interaction with Thracian tattooing seemed to be mostly based on curiosity, whereas Persian tattooing worked with Greek systems and was thus adopted by them.[73] Jones argues that tattooing did not appear in Greek literature and art until the end of the sixth century BCE when the Greeks observed the Persians being marked with penal tattoos.[74] Asius of Samos

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[68] Jones, "Stigma and Tattoo,"15.
[69] Ibid., 3.
[70] Ibid; Zidarov, "The Antiquity of Tattooing in Southeastern Europe," in *Ancient Ink*, 137.
[71] Rudolf Fellmann, "*Belege zum Sabazioskult im frühkaiserzeitlichen Legionslager von Vindonissa*," in *Studien zur Religion und Kultur Kleinasien*, eds. Sencer Şahin, Elmar Schwertheim, and Jörg Wagner (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 284–294, quoted in Zidarov, "The Antiquity of Tattooing in Southeastern Europe," in *Ancient Ink*, 139.
[72] Jones, "Stigma and Tattoo," 7.
[73] Ibid; Zidarov, "The Antiquity of Tattooing in Southeastern Europe," in *Ancient Ink*, 137.
[74] Jones, "Stigma and Tattoo," 7.

produced the first reference in Greek literature, using the word *stigmatias* to mean a "marked slave."[75] It has been suggested that Samos, being close to the Asian coast, might have been the first Greek area to adopt the custom.[76] Herodotus wrote of this punitive version of tattooing as being used by the Persian King Xerxes on his people since "All subjects of the Persian king were regarded as his 'slaves.'"[77] Unsurprisingly, Greek prisoners of war would also have been punished with these royal tattoos (*estixan stigmata basileia*).[78] So, when the Greeks themselves adopted the practice as a whole, Fisher notes it was for the same kinds of people: slaves and criminals.[79] This way of permanently shaming people and identifying them if they ran away was clearly much harsher than the earlier practices in Egypt and would continue over the centuries.

Jones points out that, by the fifth century BCE, tattooing was so widely known in Greece that it could be competently used for comparison in literature.[80] One such example is by the comedian Aristophanes who used the line "I'm being tattooed [*stizomenos*] to death with a stick" as a joke that compares black bruises from being beaten to the appearance of a tattoo.[81] This shows not only the tattoo's entrance into the public consciousness but its continuing use as a punishment. Additionally, Gilbert mentions that Aristophanes is just one of many Greek (and Roman) intellectuals who have written about tattooing; other writers include Plutarch, Galen, Seneca, Petronius, Dioscorides, and Pliny the Elder.[82] In the Classical period, Plato emphasized the negative attitude around tattoos when he wrote "that individuals guilty of sacrilege should be

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[75] Jones, "Stigma and Tattoo," 7.
[76] Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae.*, in *Iambi et Elegi Graeci: Ante Alexandrum Cantati*, 2nd ed., ed. and trans. by Martin L. West, (Oxford: 1992), 46, quoted in ibid.
[77] Jones, "Stigma and Tattoo," 7.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Jill A. Fisher, "Tattooing the Body, Marking Culture," *Body & Society* 8, no. 4, (Dec 2002): 9; Gilbert, *Tattoo History*, 15.
[80] Jones, "Stigma and Tattoo," 9.
[81] Aristophanes, *Wasps*, 1296, quoted in Jones, "Stigma and Tattoo," 9.
[82] Gilbert, *Tattoo History*, 15.

forcibly tattooed and banished from the Republic."[83] Finally, it is worth noting that Jones recognizes that these examples make up the dominant view of the time in Greece but not all civilizations.[84] Religious tattooing like that in Egypt was recorded by Herodotus and the decorative tattooing of Celts by others, but neither was adopted by the Greeks themselves.[85] These depictions have negative connotations that reinforce the class hierarchy in Ancient Greece, a tradition that would continue in future empires.

3. Language

However well-known this activity may have been, Fisher explains the word "tattoo" was only popularized following the publishing of British explorer James Cook's memoirs in 1769 as an anglicized version of the Polynesian word *tatau*.[86] Though this put tattooing into the public consciousness, it was not a new discovery or even a rediscovery in Europe. Not only did tattooing exist in several different ways in several ancient civilizations around the Mediterranean Sea, but they had words for the practice. Gilbert writes that the language of Ancient Egypt had no word for tattooing.[87] Conversely, Fisher recounts that Ancient Greek had the words *stigma* or *stigmata* for tattoos.[88] In agreement with this, Jones asserts that *stigmata* meant tattoo and not branding as previous scholars had thought.[89] The branding of animals was quite common in the ancient world, but the Greeks did not think of branding humans.[90] Instead of the separate words used for branding, the Greeks used the root word *stig*- ("to prick") to describe the tattooing they encountered in other cultures.[91] These words would stay remarkably relevant as "stigma" is now

[83] Gilbert, *Tattoo History*, 15.
[84] Jones, "Stigma and Tattoo," 11.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Fisher, "Tattooing the Body, Marking Culture," 93.
[87] Gilbert, *Tattoo History*, 13.
[88] Fisher, "Tattooing the Body, Marking Culture," 92.
[89] Jones, "Stigma and Tattoo," 2.
[90] Jones, "Stigma and Tattoo," 2.
[91] Ibid., 15.

a modern English word. Tattoos and stigma in the current sense continue to be connected, as Fisher points out.[92]

Overall, tattooing has existed for millennia. Interactions in ancient Africa, Europe, and the Middle East shaped much of the way tattoos are perceived today. From decorative and sacred purposes in Ancient Egypt to the damning uses in Ancient Greece, tattoos have undergone much change. Though the shame they brought on continued for many more years, tattoos have come to be understood as a unique artistic medium. Despite its basic methodology, tattooing can be "related to the sensual, erotic, and emotional aspects of the psyche."[93] The magical thinking, self-expression, and empowerment of the tattoos found on Egyptian mummies thus can still be understood in the modern age.

[92] Fisher, "Tattooing the Body, Marking Culture," 92.
[93] Gilbert, *Tattoo History*, 17.

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URBAN OASIS
THE IMPORTANCE OF ORNAMENTAL HORTICULTURE TO ANCIENT ROMAN SOCIETY

MOIRA POWER

Abstract

The technological advancements implicated in the production, enhancement, and preservation of decorative urban gardens in ancient Rome indicate an appreciation of ornamental horticulture that is often overlooked in the study of ancient Roman art. By examining ancient literary sources, archeological evidence, and the limited research available on the decorative rather than utilitarian garden, this paper positions gardening and its value alongside various visual arts and argues the embedded nature of its practice within ancient Roman society.

1. Introduction

Ancient civilizations valued the beauty and sacrality of the natural environment while simultaneously striving to control it. From a respect for nature and the desire to tame it, the garden, or *hortus* (plural *horti*) as it was called during the Roman period, became an integral aspect of ancient Roman society.[1] Reminiscent of a 17th century artistic movement called the Baroque, which blurred distinctions between various forms of artistic production, *hotri* blended water features, architectural elements, sculpture, horticulture, and the topiary arts into one engaging and pleasurable environment. However, ancient Roman gardens have no place in the art historical canon despite their artistic value to the culture. Art history favours Roman sculpture, fresco, and even mosaic, but as the Roman Empire went into decline in the 5th century CE, the artistic value of *horti* seems to have gone along with it.

This paper aims to discuss the decorative rather than utilitarian garden, arguing its value and position alongside other forms of artistic production. It also argues the importance of

[1] Linda Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing Limited, 1998), p. xi.

ornamental horticulture to Roman society, evident through the technological advancements implicated in the production, enhancement, and preservation of *horti*. By examining the decorative garden's origins in connection to the Roman *domus*' (home) architecture, the *horti*'s decoration and ornamental horticulture, and finally, the status of the "gardener who specifically presided over ornamental gardens," known as the *topiarius* (plural *topiarii*), the *hortus* will be proven to be an interdisciplinary artistic environment that evolved well beyond its humble origins as a vegetable garden.[2]

2. Water

2.1. Aqueducts

Although decorative gardens find their origins in ancient Egypt and Persia, ornamental horticulture was revolutionized by the Romans. Dylan Kelby Rogers writes that "the harnessing of water by the Romans is the catalyst for the flourishing of all forms of life, not only of humans, but also of flora and fauna."[3] Unlike the Greeks, who relied on easily accessible spring water, the Romans' innovative control and superfluous use of water during the Republican period allowed gardens to be purely pleasurable rather than agricultural.[4] Based on the historic mythical and medicinal associations with flowing water, the Republican Romans were concerned with engineering a system of waterways that would bring fresh, running water to the various territories under Roman control. This led to the invention of the aqueduct, the cornerstone of Roman society.

The first aqueduct or artificial water channel was the *Aqua Appia*, completed in 312 BCE by the censor Appius Claudius Caecus (c. 340 – 273 BCE).[5] This became the first of many

[2] Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, pp. 27; 12.
[3] Dylan Kelby Rogers, "Water Culture in Roman Society," *Brill Research Perspectives in Ancient History* 1, no. 1 (March 16, 2018): p. 10, https://doi.org/10.1163/25425374-12340001.
[4] Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, p. 22.
[5] David Deming, "The Aqueducts and Water Supply of Ancient Rome," *Groundwater* 58, no. 1 (November 22, 2019): p. 2, https://doi.org/10.1111/gwat.12958.

aqueducts that carried water to the Republic down a consistent slope of a "quarter of an inch every hundred feet" from a freshwater source at a higher point than the water's destination, because as Pliny the Elder (c. 23 – 79 CE) states in his *Naturalis Historia*, "water rises as high as its source."[6] The water being carried from a spring or lake would be used in various ways, but primarily for consumption. However, the water carried by some of these aqueducts was unsafe for consumption and was indicated as such. During the Imperial period in c. 98 CE, Sextus Julius Frontinus (c. 40 – 103 CE) wrote in his *De aquaeductu urbis Romae* that the *Aqua Alsietina* (Figure 1.), also known as the *Aqua Augusta*, "[was] in fact positively unwholesome, and for that reason is nowhere delivered for consumption by the people."[7] But additionally, Frontinus mentions that despite its "unwholesome" drinking water, this aqueduct was still used to bring a surplus of water to the *Naumachia*, a basin where mock naval battles were held for entertainment, as well as to "[its] adjacent gardens and to private users for irrigation."[8] Frontinus' account offers insight into the cruciality of aqueducts to both public and private *horti*.

2.2. Decorative Water Displays

Differing from its Greek counterpart, which preferred public rather than private gardens due to the Greeks' democratic nature, Roman horticulture was emphasized in the private garden that served as both a formal and informal reception area and became an integral part of the Roman *domus*.[9] The water carried by the aqueduct into the domestic *hortus* was used for utilitarian purposes, like sustaining plants, as well as for decorative and extravagant displays that were often intentionally wasteful to convey the owner's wealth and status to those visiting the *domus*.[10] The aqueducts would carry the water from its source to holding tanks or directly into

[6] Pliny, *NH*. XXXI. 56–57, trans. Rackham.
[7] Rogers, "Water Culture in Roman Society," p. 7; Frontinus, *De aqu*. 1. 11. 2, trans. Bennett.
[8] Frontinus, *De aqu*. 1. 11. 3, trans. Bennett.
[9] Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, pp. 7–8; L. Cilliers and F.P. Retief, "Horticulture in Antiquity, With Emphasis on the Graeco-Roman Era," *Akroterion* 54 (March 30, 2012): p. 5, https://doi.org/10.7445/54-0-23.
[10] Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, pp. 22–23.

decorative water features like ornamental pools and fountains, often using hidden lead or terracotta piping, like the stop tap connected to lead piping that was found hidden next to an amphora in the garden of the *House of the Silver Wedding* (restorations completed in c. 40 – 30 BCE) (Figure 2.) in Pompeii.[11]

2.2.1. Ornamental Pools

One of the best ways to show off an excessive amount of water, and therefore one's status, was to construct an ornamental pool. Often found in Roman *horti*, an ornamental pool was both decorative and functional, as it humidified the surrounding space.[12] Originally used as a water basin to store water for irrigation, these pools were constructed with a waterproofing concrete called *opus signinum* and lined with slabs of stone, some of which were painted with waterproof plaster.[13] Emulating the opulence of Roman bath complexes, these pools were often heavily mosaiced and painted blue on the interior to "make the water look healthy and…provide a good reflection."[14] Some pools would also either have marine animals painted on the interior, like at the *House of M. Epidius Sabinus* in Pompeii, or would have contained real fish. These fishponds, or *piscinas*, were, according to Pliny the Elder, invented by Elder Licinius Murena in c. 91 – 88 BCE to breed fish and were later utilized for decorative purposes.[15] But *piscinas*, recognizable through their depth of 0.50 meters or more, became a desirable feature in *horti* as they demonstrated the owner's ability to control the natural environment as well as sustain it.[16] But *piscinas*' water needed to be kept fresh to sustain the fish, and one way to do this was to use a fountain to aerate and introduce new water into the pool.

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[11] Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, p. 68.
[12] Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, p. 94.
[13] Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, pp. 68–69.
[14] Deming, "The Aqueducts and Water Supply of Ancient Rome," p. 4; Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, p. 69.
[15] Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, p. 69; Pliny, *NH*. IX. 80. 170, trans. Rackham.
[16] Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, p. 70; Dafna Langgut, "Prestigious Early Roman Gardens across the Empire: The Significance of Gardens and Horticultural Trends Evidenced by Pollen," *Palynology* 46, no. 4 (July 18, 2022): p. 1, https://doi.org/10.1080/01916122.2022.2089928.

2.2.2. Fountains

Fountains were another feature often found in private *horti* that emphasized the sacrality and sustainability of flowing water. In public spaces, drainage systems were constructed to deal with excess water, specifically from the overflow of public fountains, as Frontinus mentions.[17] In private spaces, however, according to Pliny the Younger (61 – c. 113 CE), the excess water that overflowed from these often elaborate fountains was used to water surrounding plant beds.[18] Private façade fountains connected to the architectural setting of the *hortus*, referred to in modern scholarship as *nymphaeum* because of their association with household shrines to water nymphs, slowly transformed into free-standing, purely decorative fountains, a variation of which is called a free-standing water-stair fountain by scholar Linda Farrar (Figure 3.).[19] These fountains were no longer directly associated with divinity, like *nymphaeum*, but retained similar iconography. They would incorporate artistic qualities of mosaic, sculptural relief, and/or statuary that depicted characters associated with water and often divinity, like sculptural representations of nymphs and putti in which grooves were carved to conceal the piping and water outlets.[20] As Farrar writes, "fountain statues may be seen to play a dual role in the garden, being both ornamental and symbolic."[21]

3. Architecture

Water displays were just one aspect of the *hortus*, which had become a part of the architectural design of the Roman *domus*. Adopted in part from the typical Greek home, which immediately entered into a *peristyle* (open paved courtyard), the Roman *domus* began to incorporate its own informal *peristyle* at the rear of the *domus* as early as the 2nd century BCE.[22] Unlike its Greek

[17] Rogers, "Water Culture in Roman Society," p. 41; Frontinus, *De aqu*. 1. 11. 2, trans. Bennett.
[18] Pliny, *Ep*. V. 6. 20, trans. Radice.
[19] Rogers, "Water Culture in Roman Society," p. 46; Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, pp. 89–90.
[20] Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, p. 94.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Cilliers and Retief, "Horticulture in Antiquity," pp. 4–5.

counterpart, the Roman interior *peristyle* that compounded Hellenistic, Persian, and Etruscan ideas, contained *areae* (plant beds), which were often situated around a central ornamental pool or fountain, like in the garden of the *House of the Vettii* (c. late Republican–early Imperial period) (Figure 4.) in Pompeii.[23] This, along with walled rear gardens evolving from the humble vegetable garden containing herbs for cooking, were embedded within domestic Roman architecture. Marcus Vitruvius Pollio (c. 80 – 15 BCE), one of the most renowned ancient architects, wrote in his architectural treatise *De architectura* that *peristyle* gardens were necessary to construct a beautiful and health-conscious architectural design. He wrote:

> The open spaces which are between the colonnades under the open sky, are to be arranged with green plots; because walks in the open are very healthy, first for the eyes, because from the green plantations, the air being subtle and rarefied, flows into the body as it moves, clears the vision, and so by removing the thick humour from the eyes, leaves the glance defined and the image clearly marked. Moreover, since in walking the body is heated by motion, the air extracts the humours from the limbs, and diminishes repletion, by dissipating what the body has, more than it can carry.[24]

3.1. Origins

Originally, the urban *domus* was uniform in an Etruscan *atrium tuscanicum* design with three main elements: the *atrium* (open central court), *tablinium* (main bedroom or official reception room), and *hortus*, ordered front to back, respectively, and cramped into a city's grid-like pattern.[25] Before the invention of the aqueduct, people relied on rainwater for household necessities, including watering plants in the *hortus*. Because of this, the average *atrium tuscanicum domus* had a sloped roof that would guide rainwater down the roof, through the *compluvium* (square opening in the ceiling), and into the *impluvium* (water catchment basin) below, where it was channelled into a cistern to be accessed when needed.[26] Here, the architectural design of the home was directly connected to the *hortus*. As time went on, the

[23] Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, p. 17; Cilliers and Retief, "Horticulture in Antiquity," pp. 5–7.
[24] Vitruvius, *De arch*. V. 6, trans. Granger.
[25] Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, p. 15.
[26] Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, pp. 15–17.

garden became a status symbol of its own and was therefore enlarged in the *domus* and the *villa suburbana* (a home on a large property close to or within the city) whenever the opportunity arrived.[27] Gardens became desirable for citizens of every status, and although those living in *cenaculae* (apartment buildings) or *insulae* (city blocks with mass housing) did not have the space for gardens, they would still bring nature into their homes by decorating pillars and windowsills with climbing and potted plants.[28]

3.2. Architectural Features

Over time, the utilitarian garden turned decorative, particularly on larger properties, and situated vegetation as a backdrop for architectural and artistic features that perfected nature. Cilliers and Retief write that "in many later homes the *atrium* was converted into a *peristyle*, with the *impluvium* becoming a basin or water pool surrounded by a garden, now called a *viridarium*."[29] Wealthy property owners hired a *topiarius*, along with architects, to design a *viridarium* (pleasure garden) containing elements of both, which would display the owner's wealth and artistic prowess.[30] As previously mentioned, the 'Italic' *peristyle* garden became the ideal form for garden design. The *peristyle* consisted of four covered colonnades that framed the *viridarium* and included a variety of architectural elements to shade visitors from the sun, in addition to planted trees.[31] As seen in garden frescoes, pergolas with trellis work were often situated in gardens that would have provided additional shade cast from the structure itself, as well as from the various vines and climbing plants using the trellis or decorative lattice to grow.[32]

Pergolas, archeologically evident through postholes left behind as organic material deteriorated, would have been accompanied by garden furniture. This furniture later became a

[27] Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, p. 19.
[28] Cilliers and Retief, "Horticulture in Antiquity," pp. 5–6; Pliny, *NH*. 19. 59, trans. Rackham.
[29] Cilliers and Retief, "Horticulture in Antiquity," p. 8.
[30] Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, p. 27.
[31] Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, p. 29; Cilliers and Retief, "Horticulture in Antiquity," p. 7.
[32] Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, p. 36.

permanent and decorative function of the space in conjunction with sunken gardens, which would help to keep the soil moist, conserve water, and offer additional protection to vegetation.[33] The permanent garden furniture would have been made from wood, masonry, or elaborately carved marble if belonging to wealthier patrons, like the three-legged table form with legs carved to resemble lions that was found in the garden of the *House of the Stags* in Herculaneum (Figure 5.).[34] Masonry dining couches, made comfortable with cushions, were used during the summer for dining by families and visitors alike and were often positioned near an ornamental pool or what Pliny the Younger refers to as a *mensa* (water table), which allowed the food to be floated in the water and kept cool.[35]

3.2.1. Fencing, Balustrades, and Walls

Decorative walls and paths would have guided the visitor to the focal point of the *hortus*, like a fountain or an impressive tree. Like garden paths, which were initially made to allow an *aquarius* (a gardener who specifically waters plants) to access the plants without harming them, walling in *horti* was also constructed for the protection of plant life.[36] Reed fences made of woven *Arundo donax* and *Phragmites australis* reed were designed in a variety of decorative motifs and were depicted surrounding plants in a delineating manner in frescoes such as the *Miniature Garden Fresco* (c. 15 BCE) (Figure 6.) found in the *Villa Imperiale* in Pompeii.[37] Balustrades and enclosing walls, on the other hand, served as décor as well as an effective protective barrier around the perimeter of the *hortus*. Farrar writes that “the enclosing walls around *horti* were usually high. As well as keeping the garden area private they were needed to

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[33] Cilliers and Retief, “Horticulture in Antiquity,” p. 9.
[34] Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, pp. 39–40.
[35] Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, p. 40; Pliny, *Ep*. 6. 37, trans. Radice.
[36] Cilliers and Retief, “Horticulture in Antiquity,” p. 8; Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, p. 32.
[37] Bettina Bergmann, “Frescoes in Roman Gardens,” in *Gardens of the Roman Empire*, ed. Wilhelmina F. Jashemski, Kathryn L. Gleason, Kim J. Hartswick, and Malek Amina-Aïcha (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 279.

stop thieves."[38] The walls enclosing *horti* indicate their value within Roman society, as multiple measures were taken to protect the plants as well as the privacy and beauty of the space, like placing shards of amphora on top of the protective wall as a form of ancient barbed wire.[39]

But these walls also combined various forms of artistic production, as they were architectural features that were painted to create "illusory realms and became dramatic backdrops for the comings and goings of inhabitants."[40] The frescoes painted on the enclosing walls of *horti* extended the garden and often depicted utopian settings where animals interacted with each other in harmony in a natural environment, like the garden walls of the *House of Lucretius Fronto* in Pompeii.[41] Fresco gave the illusion that the *hortus* went on forever and added to the tranquil natural, yet controlled, environment that was accompanied by the soothing sound of flowing water from fountains and pools. In this way, gardens unite and highlight various arts and, therefore, perfect nature by taming it. The poet Publius Papinius Statius (c. 45 – c. 96 CE) touched on this notion when he wrote about Pollius Felix's villa at Surrentum in his *Silvae*. Explaining the architectural design of the villa, he wrote, "here the land is saved from harm, and here the savage waters are tamed."[42]

4. Ornaments

Water features and architectural elements decorating the *horti* were placed alongside various ornamental features. The most common ornaments incorporated into the décor of Roman gardens were sculptures, garlands, and, of course, decorative plants.

4.1. Statuary

[38] Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, p. 44.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Bergmann, "Frescoes in Roman Gardens," p. 315.
[41] Bergmann, "Frescoes in Roman Gardens," p. 306.
[42] Statius, *Silv*. II. 2. 26–27, trans. Kline.

Free-standing statuary found in *horti* functioned similarly to those connected to fountains, which "add[ed] to the aesthetic beauty of the [space] itself, while also hinting at other connections to water, myth, and history."[43] But instead of being associated with water, free-standing statues that were placed in the garden were associated with the natural environment or the outdoors, just like modern equivalents such as garden gnomes. The most common figure depicted in *horti* statuary is the goddess Venus.[44] Although Venus is commonly known as the goddess of love and sexuality due to her connection to her Greek counterpart Aphrodite, Venus was also the most important divine figure in the garden, as she was known as the protector of the *hortus* and of growing plants.[45] Because of this association, statues of Venus and her son Cupid, and all his variations, were frequently used as ornamentation within the garden space, often carved in a Hellenistic model where Venus crouches down, like Doidalsas' copy of a Greek original *Crouching Venus and Cupid* (Figure 6.).[46]

Another common theme depicted in the garden were the Muses, each associated with a particular art.[47] The Muses being represented in *horti* can be read as an indication of the value placed on the arts in the garden space. Here the Muses unite the various forms of artistic production within the garden walls, as well as positioning the *horti* as an artistic space or possibly as its own art form. Although the subject matter of many of the statues found in gardens can be tied to divinity, they were likely ornamental rather than ritualistic, as not all garden sculptures presented mythical connotations; for example, shepherds and children were also represented.[48]

4.2. Decorative Plants

[43] Rogers, "Water Culture in Roman Society," p. 69.
[44] Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, p. 108.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, p. 112.
[47] Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, p. 120.
[48] Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, p. 105.

4.2.1. Garlands

A variety of plants were originally brought into the garden space because they could be used in creating garlands, wreaths, or chaplets that would have been hung between columns or worn during special occasions like feast days, banquets, and birthdays.[49] By using ivy or other vines and braiding them together with seasonal flowers, such as violets, daisies, and roses, which were the most popular for their aroma and association with spring, garlands were created to add aesthetic and fragrant qualities to the garden.[50] The use of garland for festive occasions in the garden space and in the *domus* likely played a role in the *horti*'s transition from utilitarian to decorative.

4.2.2. Ornamental Horticulture

It can be extremely difficult to decipher which plants were incorporated into a garden purely because of their beauty. Archeological techniques are limited when determining which plants were naturally occurring, intentionally planted for ornamental purposes, for utilitarian purposes like consumption or medicine, or simply part of the furniture or fertilizer that were often used in *horti*.[51] This is particularly due to the fact that the majority of organic material has either deteriorated or become contaminated by modern plant life. A phytolith investigation, which uses the silica structures of some decayed plants as archeological evidence, can only partially depict the ornamental plants present in *horti*. To avoid these limitations, archeologist Dafna Langgut employs a palynological investigation that uses traces of pollen trapped in the plaster of garden walls to determine which ornamental plants were present in elite Roman gardens.[52]

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[49] Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, pp. 135–136.
[50] Cilliers and Retief, "Horticulture in Antiquity," p. 8.
[51] Langgut, "Prestigious Early Roman Gardens across the Empire," p. 1.
[52] Langgut, "Prestigious Early Roman Gardens across the Empire," pp. 1–17.

Langgut writes that "while the phytolith investigation indicates that date palms were grown [for decoration] in the prestigious Great Peristyle Garden of Villa Arianna, this pollen study suggests that cedar, Persian walnut, myrtle, hazelnut, grape, rose, heath, olive and chestnut were probably also cultivated in the garden."[53] Each of these plants likely grew in the garden of the *Villa Arianna* in Stabiae, Italy, and possibly indicates which types of ornamental plants were common in prestigious Mediterranean gardens and, therefore, urban *horti*, which tended to emulate that of the aristocracy. Some of these plants, particularly the date palm, were used primarily for their ornamental purposes and were therefore part of the *opus topiarium* (belonging to the gardener).[54] Roots of some of these trees, like cedar, date palm, olive, and myrtle, were also found buried in *ollae perforatae* (perforated ceramic pots) (Figure 8.), which highlights another common trend in Roman ornamental horticulture; dwarfed trees.[55] Placing trees in these pots not only helped to conserve water, but it also stunted the trees' growth and demonstrated yet another way that the Romans strived to tame and control the landscape.

It is also worth mentioning the value that was placed on plants in antiquity. Perhaps due to the sacred connotations held by some types of plants or because of the status connected to being able to control and sustain exotic plant life, plants were imported around the Roman Empire and were even taken as trophies from conquered territories. This is evident through primary sources and traces of pollen from non-indigenous plants found in territories throughout the Roman Empire; for example, hazelnut was found in the gardens of Herod the Great's *Herodium* in the southeast of Jerusalem.[56] This indicates that plants were therefore viewed as an elite, ornamental product that was worth importing, just like art.

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[53] Langgut, "Prestigious Early Roman Gardens across the Empire," p. 9.
[54] Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, p. 141.
[55] Langgut, "Prestigious Early Roman Gardens across the Empire," p. 10.
[56] Langgut, "Prestigious Early Roman Gardens across the Empire," pp. 10; 14.

5. Ancient Horticulture

5.1. Horticultural Tools and Techniques

5.1.1. Ferramenta

Known primarily through literary sources, the Romans used horticultural tools and techniques that are reminiscent of those still used for gardening today. *Ferramenta* (agricultural tools) would have been used in the construction and upkeep of the *hortus* as well. Some of the tools that were used throughout the Roman Empire include the *palas ligneas* (wooden spade), the *ferrea* (pitchfork), the *forfex* (shears), and the *sarculum* (hoe), all of which would not be out of place in a modern garden shed.[57] As previously mentioned, *ollae perforatae* were found in many cases, particularly in the gardens of Herod the Great.[58] These vessels were specifically used as flowerpots rather than being reused amphora, as the drainage holes that are found in the bottom of these pots seem to have been made when the clay was wet and demonstrate intent.[59] In other cases, like those found at the *Horti Adonaea* in Rome, amphorae were turned upside down and reused as flowerpots, where the neck would be used as a drainage hole.[60]

5.1.2. Horticultural Techniques

Plant cultivation in ancient Roman territories utilized a variety of techniques adopted from various territories around the Empire and neighbouring states. The Romans, who valued gardening, put much time and effort into understanding the different types of plants and the different methods of cultivating and propagating them. They were aware of various propagation techniques, like cutting, grafting, and layering, which Pliny the Elder described:

> Nature has likewise also taught the art of reproducing from layers. Brambles curving over with their slender and also excessively long shoots plant their ends in the earth again and sprout afresh out of themselves, in a

[57] Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, pp. 162–164.
[58] Langgut, "Prestigious Early Roman Gardens across the Empire," p. 4.
[59] Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, p. 165.
[60] Ibid.

manner that would fill up the whole place if resistance were not offered by cultivation, so that it would be positively possible to imagine that mankind was created for the service of the earth.[61]

This likely accurately portrays ancient Roman sentiments towards their role in gardening. The ancient Romans saw themselves as protectors and helpers of the earth, perfecting it through their techniques like plant nurseries, which utilized the same soil as the seedlings' mother but offered better-growing conditions through proper spacing and access to sunlight.[62]

The role of the protector was taken so seriously that the *specularium* was invented. The *specularium* was a type of miniature greenhouse on wheels fitted with transparent stone that would direct the warmth of the sun towards the plants in colder seasons and could be wheeled around to follow the sun throughout the day.[63] By cultivating and caring for plants, they were able to control them. Plants in *horti* became extremely controlled, to the point where they were arguably brutalized, sometimes even having a stake driven through their roots in order to promote flowering.[64] Although seemingly a form of punishment, this would have had the same effect as root pruning, but it was done in an extreme manner. In many cases, the *topiarius* was in complete control over the natural environment.

5.2. The Status of the Topiarius

There were a variety of people who would have worked in the garden, but *topiarii* were employed for the maintenance of decorative gardens. A *topiarius* was originally employed to sculpt hedges and was called *nemora tonsilia*, an art that gave rise to the modern term topiary.[65] Pliny the Elder indicates that the art was first introduced during the reign of Augustus and wrote that "clipped arbours were invented within the last 80 years by a member of the Equestrian order

[61] Pliny, *NH*. XVII. 21. 97, trans. Rackham.
[62] Pliny, *NH*. XVII. 21. 70–88, trans. Rackham.
[63] Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, p. 167.
[64] Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, p. 169.
[65] Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, p. 161.

named Gaius Matius, a friend of his late Majesty Augustus."[66] Literary evidence suggests that *topiarii* held a similar status to that of a visual artist as their work was similarly admired. The *topiarii*'s status is further emphasized by the fact that they could sign their work by clipping their own names into the box hedges right next to the name of their master.[67] Another indication of the *topiarii*'s status as artists is found on the inscriptions of tombstones throughout the Empire that read "*topiarii*," marking it as a desirable and respectable profession.[68] This evidence indicates that these artists held at least some status and were valued for their skills in Roman society.

Pliny the Elder offers yet another account of how valued gardens and gardeners were to Roman society. He wrote about how innovative gardeners worked to control nature and create new variations of plants, which were so impressive that surnames were changed to reflect inventions:

> Why should I hesitate to indicate by name the remaining varieties of fruit, seeing that they have prolonged the memory of those who established them for all time, as though on account of some outstanding achievement in life? Unless I am mistaken, the recital will reveal the ingenuity exercised in grafting, and will show that nothing is so trifling as to be incapable of producing celebrity. And in order that nobody may imagine that it has gained its position by influence due to distinction and family, there is also a Sceptian apple named from a freedman who discovered it, which is remarkable for its round shape.[69]

He explained that no matter the underlying social status of the gardener, their innovative and impressive ability to manipulate nature was valued. He goes on to explain that many families have names derived from horticulture, just like other respectable professions.[70] Pliny the Elder positions the *topiarius* as a craftsman that was as valuable to Roman society as his work in creating and maintaining the *viridarium* was, which was valued by low and elite statues alike.

6. Conclusion

[66] Pliny, *NH*. XII. 6. 13, trans. Rackham.
[67] Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, p. 161.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Pliny, *NH*. XV. 15. 50, trans. Rackham.
[70] Pliny, *NH*. XVII. 1. 7, trans. Rackham.

In conclusion, *horti*, those who designed and maintained them, and the plant life and art contained within their walls were crucial and valuable to ancient Roman society. Gardening was positioned as an art form and was used to unite various forms of artistic production like water features, architectural elements, painting, sculpture, and ornamental horticulture. Despite the fact that art history excludes *topiarii* from the artists creating works that reflect ideologies of the Republic and Empire, *horti* were used like other forms of artistic production to display the status and artistic process of their patrons. In this sense, the *hortus* is not dissimilar from the triumphal arch, an integral part of Roman society, uniting art forms through extravagant propaganda. *Horti* were embedded in Roman artistic culture and were present throughout Roman territory; therefore, it should be positioned and valued alongside other forms of artistic production that are connected to antiquity. The *hortus* was an ancient art form and deserves to be treated as such.

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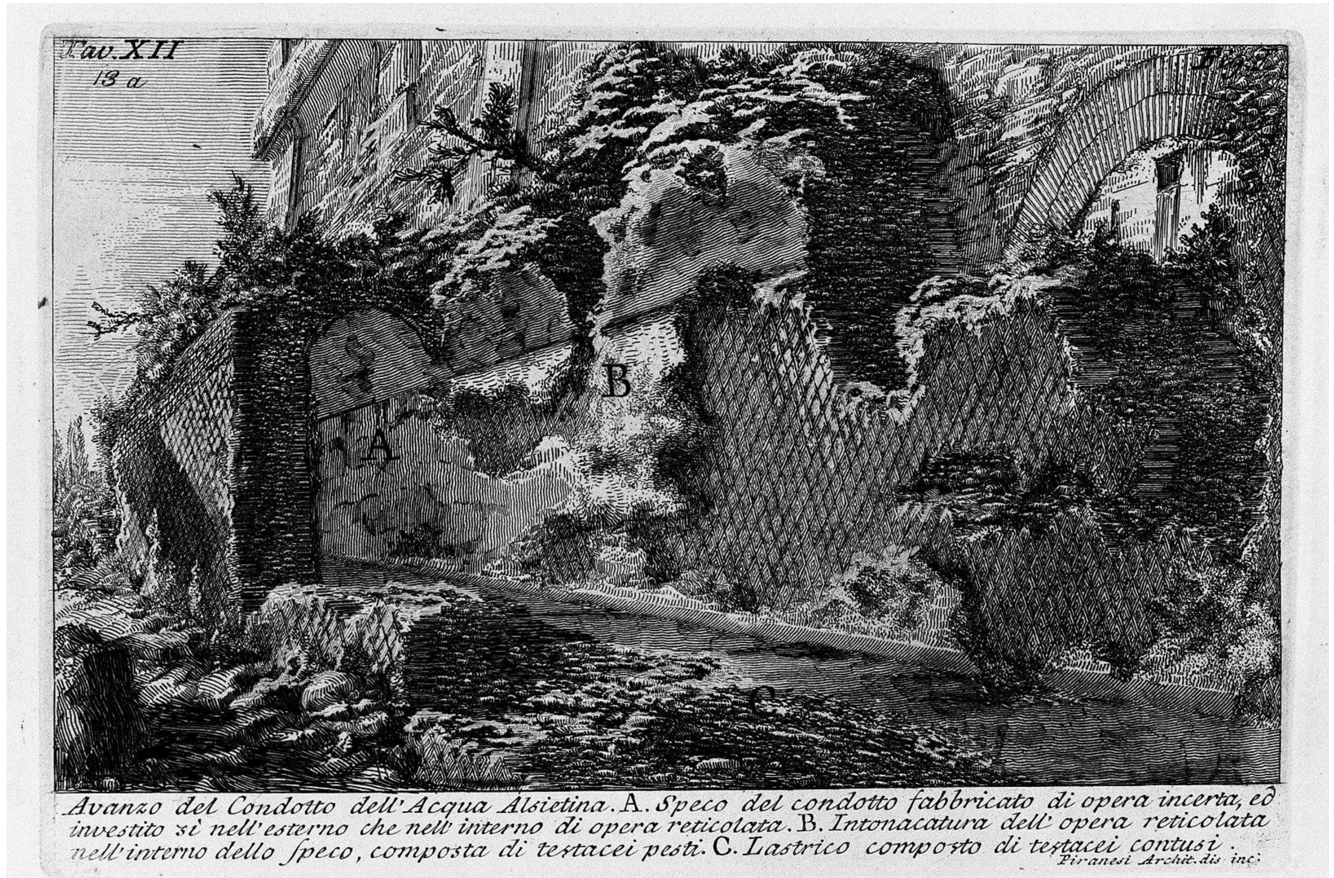

Fig. 1. Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Aqua Alsietina*, 19th century, etching.

Fig. 2. Lead piping in the garden of the *House of the Silver Wedding*, Pompeii, c. 30 – 40 BCE.

Fig. 3. Illustration of a decorative free-standing water-stair fountain, Therme Museum, Rome.

Fig. 4. 'Italic' *peristyle* garden in the *House of the Vettii*, Pompeii, c. late Republican–early Imperial period.

Fig. 5. Permanent three-legged garden table in the garden of the *House of the Stags*, Herculaneum, c. before 79 CE.

Fig. 6. *Miniature Garden Fresco* found in the *Villa Imperiale,* Pompeii, c. 15 BCE, 12 cm x 35 cm.

Fig. 7. Doidalsas attr., *Crouching Venus and Cupid*, copy of Greek original in the Farnese Collection, National Archaeological Museum, Naples.

Fig. 8. Cast of large root cavity within *ollae perforatae* found in Oplontis, Naples.

THE NATURE OF DIVINE LOVE BETWEEN THE TEACHER AND THE DISCIPLE AS EXHIBITED IN PLATO'S *SYMPOSIUM* AND *THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN*

MARYNA NEKRASOVA

Abstract

Scholars such as George van Kooten have noted literary and philosophical similarities between Plato's Symposium and the Gospel of John regarding their discourses on the nature of divine love. Engaging with van Kooten's work throughout this essay, I explore the linguistic similarities of both texts describing the attainments acquired upon partaking in divine love and the portrayal of love-based teacher-disciple relationships. This demonstrates that the role of Jesus as an intermediary between humanity and divine love resembles the function of Socrates in Plato's dialogue as a "daemonic" intermediary, while the position of Jesus' disciples (including the author of John) is akin to that of Alcibiades. The function of both teachers as intermediaries is to help their disciples understand and acquire divine love through their teachings. I will further argue that while Socrates' student Alcibiates fails to see past his physical form and attain true knowledge of the divine, Jesus' disciples are able to see past his human appearance and partake in divine love.

This comparative paper aims to explore the similarities between Plato's *Symposium* and the Gospel of John regarding their discourses on love. Engaging with the work of the theologian George Van Kooten throughout this essay, I will begin by briefly referencing research that argues in favour of the plausibility of a historical influence of the *Symposium* on the Gospel of John. Second, the linguistic similarities describing both the attainments upon partaking in divine love and the love-based teacher-disciple relationships will also be explored. The comparison between these attainments and relationships demonstrate that the role of Jesus as an intermediary between humanity and divine love resembles the function of Socrates in Plato's dialogue as a "daemonic" intermediary, while the position of Jesus' disciples (including the author of John) is akin to Alcibiades. I will further argue that while Alcibiades fails to see past the bodily form of Socrates

to understand his true purpose as an intermediary, the disciples of Jesus are able to see past Jesus' human appearance and partake in divine love.[1]

George van Kooten claims that "John wishes to express the theme of divine love in his biography of Jesus, and for his narrative model he draws on Plato's *Symposium*, which was widely known in antiquity to be a dialogue about love."[2] He argues for the plausibility of this claim, using both general and specific reasons.[3] Structurally, the Gospel of John, like the works of Plato, adheres to a dialogical structure. Narratologically, the author of the Gospel of John portrays Jesus similarly to a peripatetic, a Greek philosopher partaking in "the act of walking up and down (περιπατεῖν) in a Stoa (John 10:23) of the Jerusalem temple."[4] As well, the Gospel's author proclaims himself "the beloved pupil" of Jesus.[5] While this is by no means done in a sexually erotic manner, this label is meant to be indicative of the love between the student and teacher. Thus, it holds a resemblance between the ways in which the erastai, the lovers of Socrates in Plato's dialogues, were referred to.[6]

Secondly, the description of Jesus's trial and death closely parallel the dialogues of the last days of Socrates. In antiquity, the "biographical" dialogues of Socrates (the *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo*) have formed a literary unit. From a rhetorical standpoint, the use of these texts as a framework would have allowed John to "draw a picture of Jesus's trial, death, and beliefs that [was] understandable for a Greek audience."[7] From a geographic standpoint, the

[1] Given the vast interpretations of Christian theology, some views (such as miaphysitism) hold that Jesus was both fully human and fully divine. If I were to conduct my analysis in light of this view, the relationship between Jesus' physical body and the source of the divine may hold different implications for how he would be compared to Socrates in the *Symposium*. In this paper, I will proceed to diverge from this view by presenting a slightly different interpretation of John in which Jesus, at first, *appears* physically human to most of his viewers (and this interpretation does not entirely rule out the possibility of him being fully divine).
[2] George Van Kooten, "John's Counter-Symposium: 'The Continuation of Dialogue,' in *Intolerance, Polemics, and Debate in Antiquity*, eds. George Van Kooten and Jacques van Ruiten (Beaverton: Ringgold Inc, 2020), 296.
[3] Van Kooten, "John's Counter-Symposium," 283.
[4] Van Kooten, "John's Counter-Symposium," 284.
[5] Van Kooten, "John's Counter-Symposium," 284.
[6] Van Kooten, "John's Counter-Symposium," 284.
[7] Van Kooten, "John's Counter-Symposium," 285.

author's location (granted he lived in Judaea) most likely enabled him to have access to Plato's dialogues. His contemporary who lived in Galilee, Justus of Tiberias, reportedly had a profound interest in the figure of Socrates (as written in Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*). As well, the comparison drawn between Socrates and Jesus at this early stage of Christianity was not unheard of, given that the Syrian Stoic philosopher Mara bar Serapion also compares Socrates and Jesus in a letter written to his son, which has been dated to sometime after 73 CE.[8]

It appears that John responds to the *Symposium* in both form and content. The theme of divine love permeates all of the speeches delivered in the *Symposium*, and is arguably the defining theme of John's Gospel as well. In contrast to the Synoptic Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke, the specific theme of divine love is only present in John.[9] The similarities in form, content, as well as other linguistic and conceptual resemblances between both texts lead Van Kooten to suppose that " John wishes to express the theme of divine love in his biography of Jesus, and for his narrative model he draws on Plato's *Symposium*, which was widely known in antiquity to be a dialogue about love."[10]

Both texts contain linguistic similarities in their portrayal of love-based relationships between teachers and their disciples. This is evident in the resemblance of parallel descriptions of Jesus and Socrates, as well as Jesus' disciples (including the author of John) and Alcibiades. First, Alcibiades is portrayed as the beloved pupil of Socrates, much like how the author of John identifies himself as the "beloved pupil."[11] In correspondence to the *Symposium*, Van Kooten notes that the author of John's Gospel, in repeatedly proclaiming himself "the pupil whom Jesus

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[8] Due to the scope of this paper, the specific evidence for the plausibility of this argument will not be discussed; Van Kooten, "John's Counter-Symposium," 284.
[9] Van Kooten, "John's Counter-Symposium," 293.
[10] For more information, refer to Van Kooten's article; Van Kooten, "John's Counter-Symposium," 296.
[11] John 21:20-24, NRSV. All subsequent citations will be from this version of the Bible.

loved," fully adheres to the classical erastic model, in which the teacher is expected to love his student.[12] Nonetheless, the kind of love exhibited by Jesus is not erotic in any manner, instead being a manifestation of purely divine love. Van Kooten notes that this seems to be a conscious parallel with the role of Alcibiades, who is "utterly infatuated with Socrates."[13] Socrates also mentions that he is in love with Alcibiades, indicating that this emotion is reciprocated.[14] In a similar but more implicit manner, the love of John for Jesus is indicated in his ability to understand and write about Jesus' divine nature. This is because only those who partake in divine love for Jesus can recognize his nature, and John clearly does so. While I find that the general claim that both pupils are loved by their teachers is plausible – granted that it is recognized that the types of love exhibited by each teacher are different in nature – I ultimately disagree with Van Kooten's casting of John and Alcibiades in a similar light. As I will explain further in this essay, Alcibiades fails to see Socrates' true nature because his love is immature and base, while John and the other disciples succeed in understanding the nature of Jesus because their love is divine.[15]

Van Kooten says that in his final speech, Alcibiades "sees Socrates as the embodiment of the god of Love," and similarly, John portrays Jesus "as the personification of divine love."[16] While it is plausible to view Jesus as the personification of divine love, the view of Alcibiades' and the other speakers at the symposium of Socrates as being the God of Love is incorrect.[17] Regardless, the similarity of both teachers being labelled as figures of major importance for understanding the true nature of Love holds credibility. To better understand the similarities and

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[12] Van Kooten, "John's Counter-Symposium," 296-97.
[13] Van Kooten, "John's Counter-Symposium," 296.
[14] Plato, *Symposium*, trans. G.M.A. Grube and C.D.C. Reeve, in *Plato, Complete Works*, ed. J.M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 213d, p. 495.
[15] This is, of course, with the exception of Judas Iscariot.
[16] Van Kooten, "John's Counter-Symposium," 297.
[17] The reason for this will also be explained at a later point in this paper.

differences between student-teacher relationships presented in the *Symposium* and the Gospel of John, it is important to first consider how the nature and acquisition of divine love are discussed in both texts.

Diotima convinces Socrates that Love is not a God, but rather a "great daemon" or "divine power" that serves as an intermediary between gods and mortals. This daemon is described as "being in the middle of the two, they round out the whole and bind fast the all to all."[18] In this way, actual gods do not interact with people.[19] In delivering Diotima's speech to his disciples, I believe that Socrates actually serves the role of an intermediary, or a "daemonic man" because he is recounting godly knowledge to his disciples.[20] Jesus also performs an intermediary function as the one who ascends and descends from heaven, and whose teachings, worship, and sacrifice are meant to unify humankind.[21] Yet, Van Kooten believes that John rejects Diotima's claim that the gods do not interact with people.[22] This is evident in his description of Jesus as being God and the Divine Logos, whose purpose by becoming flesh was to interact with humankind.[23] In light of my interpretation, John is not rejecting Plato but merely borrowing from his writings to also present Jesus as serving the role of both God and an intermediary.[24] This way of considering Jesus' role is important to my argument. To be an intermediary, Christ must have taken on a physical form in order to interact with humans. As we shall see later, one key purpose of his human form is to test people in their ability to see past this form and comprehend his nature as the embodiment of God, and thus, the embodiment of divine love.

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[18] Plato, *Symposium*, 202d-e, pp.485-486.
[19] Plato, *Symposium*, 203a, p.486.
[20] Plato, *Symposium*, 203a, p.486.
[21] John 3:13.
[22] Van Kooten, "John's Counter-Symposium," 302.
[23] John 1:1, 1:14, 1:18.
[24] Christianity, being a monotheistic religion, portrays Jesus as being one with God and thus the primary intermediary to the divine, while the polytheistic context of ancient Greece allows for the belief in multiple gods. John, therefore, obviously refuses to incorporate any mention of multiple deities.

In the teachings of Jesus as well as in Socrates' discussion of Diotima's ladder, disciples and readers alike are told about the requirements necessary to spiritually ascend and acquire divine love.[25] The speech of Socrates is meant to be the most important speech in Plato's whole dialogue, notably containing many similarities to Jesus' teaching at the Last Supper in the Gospel of John. There are very close correlations between what can be achieved at the top of Diotima's ladder and Jesus' preaching of humankind's ultimate purpose of achieving unity with the divine through love. Due to the scope of this essay, a description of all of the steps to ascension will not be summarised.

In Plato's *Symposium*, the four achievements that someone may attain upon their ascension to the top of the ladder are i) full purification, ii) divine unity, iii) truth, and iv) immortality. These goals are reflected in the speech of Jesus during the episode of the Last Supper.[26] First, once someone reaches the end of Diotima's ladder and becomes fully purified, they will "see the Beautiful itself, absolute, pure, unmixed, not polluted by human flesh or colours or any other great nonsense of mortality."[27] In Jesus' speech, he portrays his disciples as already having attained a state of purity when he says "You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you."[28] To mutually abide in Jesus refers to having faith and loving him, just as he reciprocally loves and has faith in those who believe in him. It is through this love that his disciples can continue to be pure. Yet, the difference between these two passages lies in the fact that the goal of purification and divine love in Plato is to look upon the unmediated beauty of the world, and not on bodily beauty, while the purpose of purification in John is to attain salvation through Jesus. A connection could be

[25] Plato, *Symposium*, 201d-212c, pp. 484-494.
[26] Van Kooten, "John's Counter-Symposium," 299.
[27] Plato, *Symposium*, 211e, p.494.
[28] John 15:3-4.

bridged from Diotima's conception of purity to John's. This is done by understanding the clear-sightedness that arises from full purity as a means to see those things that are worthy of love, and continuously abiding in loving them to perpetuate the purity in one's soul.

Secondly, the final unification attained is characterised by Diotima as "always [being] one in form."[29]Similarly, Jesus concludes the Last Supper by telling God the Father that the fate of his disciples and future students is "that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be perfected into one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."[30] Once again, there is a contextual difference between these two passages. The first passage aims to say that the soul of a person, in unifying with Beauty, which ultimately exists as a form independent of everything else, becomes independent of earthly things.[31] On the contrary, the purpose of unification according to Jesus is to unify with other people and God. Nonetheless, the underlying similarity in both passages lies in their reference to the ability to transcend one's boundaries by merging with a universal force greater than oneself.

Third, the final stage of the ascent leaves the individual clear-sighted about the true nature of beauty; they are no longer susceptible to finding beauty in mere illusions and have gained the ability to see the world in its unmediated beauty, which is itself the truth. Diotima reportedly says, "When he looks at Beauty in the only way that Beauty can be seen – only then will it become possible for him to give birth not to images of virtue (because he is in touch with no images), but to true virtue (because he is in touch with the true beauty)."[32] While Diotima means to say that one will be guided to virtue through true beauty rather than the illusion of

[29] Plato, *Symposium*, 211b, p.493.
[30] John 17:22–23.
[31] Plato, *Symposium*, 211b, p.493.
[32] Plato, *Symposium*, 212a, p.494.

earthly beauty, Jesus says that he is the agent responsible for having his disciples see the truth. He tells his disciples that they will be made sacred and guided by "the Spirit of truth," with which he identifies himself.[33] Thus, the similarity lies in both true beauty and Jesus being the factors that allow one to see the truth.

Finally, both texts hold in common the disciple's acquisition of immortality upon their ascent. Diotima states,"The love of the gods belongs to anyone who has given birth to true virtue and nourished it, and if any human being could become immortal, it would be he."[34] According to the latter, it is the acquisition of the love of the gods that makes a human immortal. Among the four main Gospels, the attainment of divine immortality during the person's lifetime and in advance to the final judgement is unique to the Gospel of John.[35] This holds a strong similarity to the claim made by Plato, given that in the Christian tradition, one attains salvation and immortality to a great extent by loving and also being loved by God. The love for God is the driving feature behind complying with his commandments and expectations for a moral lifestyle.

In addition to having similarities regarding the rewards that can be obtained by partaking in divine love, both texts contain resemblances in their linguistic description of the love-based relationships between teachers and disciples. While Alcibiades fails to see past the bodily form of Socrates to understand his true purpose, the disciples of Jesus can see past Jesus' human appearance and partake in divine love. The seventh speech – that of Alcibiades – shows that the student has not been able to see past the physical form of the teacher, and thus was not able to achieve the ultimate, unified type of love. By positioning Alcibiades' speech as the last one to follow Socrates', Plato emphasises a failure on the part of Socrates' pupil to truly grasp the role of Socrates as an intermediary through which divine love can be communicated to him. While he

[33] John 14:6, 16:13, 17:17-19.
[34] Plato, *Symposium*, 212a, p.494.
[35] Van Kooten, "John's Counter-Symposium," 325.

acknowledges what he believed to be the divine nature of Socrates, he is never able to shed his possessive, carnal desires for Socrates in his unyielding association of love with bodily pleasures. Thus, from the onset of Alcibiades' entrance to the symposium, he is symbolically associated with base and bodily appetites.

Alcibiades is illustrated as being drunk and blinded by the ribbons and garlands that have fallen over his eyes.[36] This is an allusion to him being overpowered by bodily passions, which disable him from seeing unmediated beauty and truth. In his portrayal of Socrates' erotic pursuits, Alcibiades attempts to invert the master-student relationship of conventional erastic relations. He complains that rather than making him and a number of other young men into the objects of his love, Socrates instead deceives them be an object of their love: "I told you how horrible he treated me – and not only me but also Charmenides, Euthydemus, and many others. He has deceived us all: he presents himself as your lover, and, before you know it, you're in love with him yourself!"[37]

I believe that Socrates purposefully rejects the advances of those who pursue him in a base and carnal manner. This is done to abstain from rewarding their bodily passions, which are the root of their immature love. Instead, he saves himself and his teachings for those who pursue him to elevate their knowledge, rather than merely sleep with him. Upon Socrates' response to Alcibiades' accusation, it also becomes evident that he also loves Alcibiades. Without taking the erotic references into account, this is in a way similar to how Jesus loved anyone desiring to learn from him willingly, but whose teachings and kindness are only extended to those who can understand his nature.

[36] Plato, *Symposium*, 216a-b, p.498.
[37] Plato, *Symposium*, 222b, p.503.

Regardless of the elevated love that Socrates is able to offer, he abstains from engaging further with Alcibiades due to the latter's response of possessiveness and jealousy at the thought of Socrates sharing his love with others. In response to Alcibiades' accusation, Socrates says, "You can't imagine what it is like to be in love with him: from the very first moment he realised how I felt about him, he hasn't allowed me to say two words to anybody else – what am I saying, I can't so much as look at an attractive man but he flies into a fit of jealous rage."[38] On a metaphorical level, Alcibiades' mistake is in seeing Socrates' love on a physical level as a commodity that should not be shared with anyone, rather than an instrument used to attain divine love, which should be available to everyone.

Alcibiades denies his jealousy and instead claims that anything Socrates has said is a lie. In his following speech, he chooses to focus on the uniqueness of Socrates himself, which is heavily laden with his expression of desire for his teacher.[39] Yet, his insistence on praising the "uniqueness" of Socrates and not Love itself is yet another hint of Alcibiades' inability to associate love with a purely abstract concept that extends beyond an individual person. Regardless of what he says, it is the acquisition of Socrates' body, and not the teachings he is able to offer, that is Alcibiades' real goal – regardless of his claims to the contrary. This is evident in Alcibiades' discussion of the 'divine figures' he recalls seeing in Socrates.[40] In his discussion, he alludes to the mythological figure of Silenus, whose playing of the aulos was believed to arouse the passions, and whose statue is described as having many small gods inside it. In trying to compare Socrates to a Silenus figure, Alcibiades continues to resort to the use of very erotic bodily imagery to describe Socrates' 'divine' inner nature, thus revealing his immature vision of love.

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[38] Plato, *Symposium*, 213d, p.495.
[39] Plato, *Symposium*, 216c, p.498.
[40] Plato, *Symposium*, 215b, p.497.

This is even more explicitly seen when Alcibiades also compares Socrates to the Satyr Marsyas, a beast-like creature often portrayed with a large erection.[41] He goes on to say that like Marsyas' melodies, Socrates' speeches are divine and transport anyone who listens to them:

> If I were to describe for you what an extraordinary effect his words have always had on me (I can feel it this moment even when I am speaking), you might actually suspect that I'm drunk! Still, I swear to you, the moment he starts to speak, I am beside myself: my heart starts leaping in my chest, the tears come streaming down my face…they never upset me so deeply that my very own soul started protesting that my life – *my* life! – was no better then the most miserable slave's…So I refuse to listen to him; I stop my ears and tear myself away from him.[42]

Socrates' ability to deliver moving speeches is similar to the effect that Jesus' speeches have on listeners in John. As well, there is also a remarkable resemblance between Alcibiades' confession to living life akin to a "miserable slave's" and Jesus' teaching that those who live an immoral lifestyle are "slaves to Sin":

> Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." They answered him, "We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, "You will be made free'?" Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits a sin is a slave to Sin.[43]

In both cases, the concept of enslavement is used to describe a way of living life and comprehending the world that prevents one from seeing the truth. In Alcibiades' case, his understanding of love is so underdeveloped, that any exposure to Socrates' teachings, which aim to direct one to seeing the truth, is too overwhelming for Alcibiades. Rather than having the strength to learn, he refuses to listen to him. However, he continues in his attempts to seduce Socrates, believing that having sex would be the entry point to acquiring higher knowledge from

[41] Plato, *Symposium*, 215b, p.497.
[42] Plato, *Symposium*, 215d-216b, pp.497-498.
[43] John 8:31-34.

the latter. In these vain attempts, Alcibiades persists in trying to secure Socrates for himself until the very end of the dialogue by trying to keep Agathon and Socrates separate from each other. This flawed way of understanding shows that Alcibiades only comprehends things in terms of the body, the object to which his love is limited. Hence, he fails to grasp Socrates' true function as an intermediary to attaining knowledge about divine love. His failure to grasp Socrates' true function is evident in his continuation and focus on his political career, which is a very bodily occupation. Politics is considered a bodily career because it is very concerned with the order, events, and reputations of people in the material world and does not appeal to any transcendent reality beyond it.

Unlike Alcibiades' view of Socrates in the *Symposium*, the disciples of Jesus, especially the author of the Gospel of John who refers to himself as "the beloved pupil," see the true nature of Jesus as the intermediary between the earthly and the divine, as well as the divine himself. Clearly, there are major differences between the natures of love in both texts since there is an absence of any erotic imagery in the Gospel of John. As well, Jesus and Socrates are very different in nature, given that Jesus is divine love and God himself. Nonetheless, as mentioned earlier, there are many foretellings made by Jesus of his disciples' ability to undergo purification and attain divine unity, the knowledge of truth, and immortality. The method in which this can be attained is relatively simpler than ascending Diotima's ladder, where all that is necessary for a disciple is to recognize Jesus as the Divine Logos and direct their faith and love at him. In the Gospel of gosJohn, the necessity to love Jesus is emphasised when the resurrected Jesus asks Peter, who previously denied him, whether he loves him three times, to which Peter responded affirmatively.[44]

[44] John 21:15-17.

However, many people fail to grasp the nature of Jesus due to their incapability to see beyond his physical form, such as the Jewish religious leaders referred to in John 5:18 and the stone-throwing crowd in John 8:59. This bears resemblance to Alcibiades' blindness that stems from his preoccupation with the political, preventing him from seeing past Socrates' physical form. Likewise, the persecutors of Jesus fail to see past his physical form and therefore fail to partake in divine love. This is because they are too preoccupied with political concerns that may arise from Jesus' claims to be the son of God and to be God himself. For example, when the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting with the Sanhedrin, the reasoning and concerns they used to justify killing Jesus were as follows: "This man is performing many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation."[45] This failure to partake in divine love due to political, and thus bodily, concerns is the major factor that causes people to fail in seeing the teacher's function as an intermediary for the divine.

This comparative paper has demonstrated the existence of literary and philosophical similarities and differences between Plato's *Symposium* and the Gospel of John regarding their exploration into the nature of divine love. As shown, both texts possess striking similarities pertaining to the rewards obtained in the successful acquisition of divine love, such as full purification, divine unity, truth, and immortality. Likewise, they contain common features in their description of the love-based relationships between teachers and their beloved pupils. In both cases, Socrates and Jesus are revealed to be intermediaries meant to help people understand and acquire divine love through their teachings. Yet, while Socrates' student Alcibiades fails to see past his physical form and attain true knowledge of the divine, Jesus' disciples recognize his true nature and are promised salvation through divine love.

[45] John 11:47-48.

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EXAMINING NON-HUMAN INTELLIGENCE IN PLUTARCH'S "WHETHER LAND OR SEA ANIMALS ARE CLEVERER"

GRACE HAMPER

Abstract

Over the course of history, humans have always been interested in what might make them unique from any other species. This special trait has been identified through the years as the use of tools, capacity for emotions, or the ability to reason, but eventually, each one of these things was found to be not exclusively human, suggesting that perhaps other species have long been underestimated. These findings, along with the concept of animal rights and sentience, are considered relatively modern research, but there have been people who figured out and argued in defence of these things long before now, even dating back to antiquity. One of the most notable people to argue this was the philosopher Plutarch, who wrote several essays on animals, and the one entitled "Whether Land or Sea Animals are Cleverer" will be examined here. This paper will take time to describe in detail the most interesting anecdotes and reasoning he provides. Plutarch's methodology will also be discussed, which includes his background, importance as a writer and philosopher, and how he may have obtained the information he provides in the essay. The next section is entitled "Accuracy and Utility." It incorporates research from the present-day into Plutarch's topic of animal sentience, comparing them to Plutarch's conclusions, and examining how the research and findings of modern science reflect Plutarch's own perspectives in natural philosophy. Finally, the last and longest section is the analysis, which examines the arguments Plutarch uses and critiques a few of their weaknesses. The analysis also provides some information on how the general public of ancient Greece perceived animals, as well as the opinions of some of Plutarch's fellow philosophers from around the same time.

Keywords: animals, Plutarch, intelligence, land, sea

Contents

"Whether Land or Sea Animals are Cleverer" comes out of Plutarch's famous and influential book, *Moralia*, which contains 78 essays all about different moral questions relating to both humans and non-humans. This essay is organised into a conversation between six people having a debate on whether animals living on land or in the sea have better cognition, or "reason," as the title states. However, Plutarch does not start with this debate; he

begins by providing many arguments, mostly through a character called Autobulus, as to why *all* animals have more complex minds than humans give them credit for, and for that reason, deserve more respect.[1] Then, as now, the main reason people mistreated animals was because they assumed they could not reason or feel as humans did. Plutarch makes it clear he believed this view is not only incorrect, but foolish since there is no evidence to suggest that; rather, there is evidence to the contrary, which becomes quite clear if people take time to both think about and observe their fellow creatures.[2] For one thing, even though many people deny animals' intelligence and reason, no one denies that they have senses—that they can hear, see, etc., as well as (and often better than) humans.[3] However, Plutarch points out that you cannot have sensations without at least a bit of sentience, since the purpose of having senses is so the organism can react accordingly to the environment.[4] Animals react to their senses all the time, by fleeing from predators, identifying mates, finding food, and more, which suggests that they must understand the world around them, as Plutarch says: "…the impact on eyes and ears brings no perception if the understanding is not present".[5] Furthermore, humans have been training animals to perform useful tasks for centuries, and the fact that they have been successful should be enough to demonstrate that animals can learn and understand.[6] Another interesting argument given is that animals, as most people seem to be aware of, are capable of having disturbances of the mind or "going mad" due to illness, just like humans can.[7] This should be a very clear indication of animals having intelligence; just as something without legs cannot have a broken leg, something cannot lose its mind without a mind to lose: "It is impossible to ail where you have no faculty of which the ailment is a deficiency or

[1] Plutarch, "Moralia. Whether Land or Sea Animals are Cleverer," *Loeb Classical Library* (1957) : 317-357.
[2] Plutarch, "Moralia," 328.
[3] Plutarch, "Moralia," 329.
[4] Plutarch, "Moralia," 331.
[5] Plutarch, "Moralia," 331.
[6] Plutarch, "Moralia," 333.
[7] Plutarch, "Moralia," 345.

loss".[8]

There are also examples of animals cooperating for mutual benefit, even ones that are usually predator and prey to each other, such as crocodiles allowing little birds to stand in their mouths, cleaning their teeth, without ever harming them.[9] The essay asserts that it's insensible to say that these creatures cannot think or reason because usually, the birds would avoid crocodiles, who might eat them, but in this case, the crocodile seems to understand that the bird is providing a service and is willing to give up an extra meal for a cleaner mouth, and the bird seems to understand what the crocodile is thinking and therefore feels safe standing in the mouth of a normally dangerous animal, picking out bits of food to eat.[10] The difference between behaviours resulting from instinct as opposed to reason was fully understood by philosophers during Plutarch's time, and he seemed to regard this story as evidence of the latter; it seems that both animals are *resisting* instinct, in fact, which is not the behaviour of mindless, simple beings. After much reasoning is given in defence of all species, the essay moves on to the debate between land and sea creatures. Plutarch introduces a character named Aristotimus who argues that the land animals are more intelligent. He begins by telling the other characters that hunting is generally much harder than fishing—people like to brag about hunting certain land animals and some with exceptional hunting skills are admired and made famous, but nobody finds it overly impressive to catch a fish.[11] Aristotimus says this is because land animals are braver, more complex, and harder to outwit: "Crafty animals sharpen the wits and cunning of their attackers".[12] Hunting is a constantly active, challenging game because land animals demonstrate obvious, easily observable intelligent traits.[13] Aristotimus gives many anecdotes of animals showing impressive reasoning and mental

[8] Plutarch, "Moralia," 345.
[9] Plutarch, "Moralia," 449.
[10] Plutarch, "Moralia," 449.
[11] Plutarch, "Moralia," 359.
[12] Plutarch, "Moralia," 359.
[13] Plutarch, "Moralia," 361.

abilities, from elephants using one tusk as a tool and purposely keeping the other sharp for defence, to birds knowing which materials will build durable nests, crows and dogs putting stones into jugs of water, forcing the liquid to the top to drink, and even ants having good agriculture methods and knowing how to preserve their food.[14] He then explains that the majority of examples such as these cannot be explained only by the animals having instincts or enhanced senses; in many cases, the only logical explanation is that they are using rational thought just like humans.[15]

One of the major stories in Aristotimus' section demonstrates these rational faculties. He tells of how foxes accurately test iced-over ponds in winter to see if they are safe to walk on.[16] First, the fox walks to the edge of the pond and puts its ear to the ice.[17] If it hears water moving, then it will not walk on it, because the sound of water underneath indicates that the ice is not thoroughly frozen.[18] If it hears nothing, which means the frozen part should be thick enough to support its weight, then it proceeds.[19] It does not seem plausible that the fox, or any creature, would do this if it did not have some kind of logical thought process happening in its mind, which Plutarch describes as,"What makes noise must be in motion; what is in motion is not frozen; what is not frozen is liquid; what is liquid gives way". [20] Furthermore, according to this essay, humans have learned about safely crossing ice thanks to watching foxes; a supposedly simple animal appeared to have figured this out before people.[21]

The land animals part of the debate does not just focus on supporting the presence of human-like reasoning and problem-solving in animals, but emotions too, which are also indicators of sentience and high intelligence. There are many examples given of animals

[14] Plutarch, "Moralia," 363-371.
[15] Plutarch, "Moralia," 377.
[16] Plutarch, "Moralia," 377.
[17] Plutarch, "Moralia," 377.
[18] Plutarch, "Moralia," 377.
[19] Plutarch, "Moralia," 377.
[20] Plutarch, "Moralia," 377.
[21] Plutarch, "Moralia," 377.

having deep devotion and bonds with human companions, including dogs who sacrificed themselves for their humans or mourned when they died, refusing to eat until they died, too.[22] He explains how animals also act selflessly towards each other, especially their offspring.[23] For instance, when a predator comes, animals will take care to hide their young, even getting the predator to chase them to try and lead them away from the babies, in the same way that human mothers would do anything to protect their children.[24] This type of behaviour is found in many species, including commonly hunted birds like partridges, showing that even the smaller, seemingly less complex animals "exhibit cunning, combined with affection for their young." [25] After Aristotimus finishes his side of the debate, another figure, called Phaedimus, comes in to defend the sea animals. Sea creatures are sometimes neglected in questions of animal intelligence and Phaedimus tries to prove that they are just as smart as land animals, and may even be smarter. He points out that since humans live only on solid ground the land animals have had lots of interaction with them, and this interaction could have helped further develop their human-like characteristics previously described.[26] But the sea animals are isolated; they don't get nearly as much contact with humans, so any human-like traits or skills they possess they must have acquired on their own, which makes them even more impressive. [27] To refute Aristotimus' point about hunting, Phaedimus says that the difficulty of fishing is underestimated and that fishermen must use specific techniques and tools to make sure the fish don't get suspicious of their lures. The fish's caution, which rivals that of land animals, is "strong evidence" of their "native intelligence." [28] Aristotimus talked about the flying strategies of birds, so in return, Phaedimus explained that fish have the same knowledge of the currents in the sea as birds do about the wind, and they can *both* skilfully navigate better than

[22] Plutarch, "Moralia," 385.
[23] Plutarch, "Moralia," 391.
[24] Plutarch, "Moralia," 391.
[25] Plutarch, "Moralia," 391.
[26] Plutarch, "Moralia," 417.
[27] Plutarch, "Moralia," 417.
[28] Plutarch, "Moralia," 421.

any human.[29] As for their emotions, Phaedimus points out that fish, too, have some kinds of bonds and care for one another, using examples of fish pulling hooks out of each other and helping ones who got stuck in a net.[30] Finally, even though they are of course not fish, he uses dolphins as an example of highly intelligent sea life and tells stories of them rescuing and guiding people, stories which probably everybody would be familiar with.[31] He also claims that dolphins are one of the few creatures who seem to have a natural affection for humans, despite humans not always giving them reason to, saying they "love man for his own sake," [32] and calling the dolphin "a genial friend to all." [33]

It is here that the debate comes to an end, and yet, the ending does not determine a winning side.[34] Rather, Plutarch gives the impression that there *is* no winning side and that the point of the essay was not to be a competition between land and sea animals, which the title suggests it might be, as much as an argument against those who deny animals of any kind and any habitat intelligence and feelings.

Methodology

Plutarch was a well-known Greek philosopher born in the municipality of Chaeronea around 45 BC.[35] He was from a wealthy family, which helped him get a good education to pursue his scholarly talents; he became a philosopher at Plato's academy, a priest in Delphi at the Temple of Apollo, and was also a prolific essayist, biographer, and historian.[36] He contributed to his education by travelling and living in many different places, including Rome, where he even had a citizenship.[37] He became very knowledgeable about the history

[29] Plutarch, "Moralia," 439.
[30] Plutarch, "Moralia," 423-431.
[31] Plutarch, "Moralia," 469-473.
[32] Plutarch, "Moralia," 471.
[33] Plutarch, "Moralia," 473.
[34] Plutarch, "Moralia," 479.
[35] Michael R. Licona and Craig A. Evans,"Who Was Plutarch?" *Why Are There Differences in the Gospels? What We Can Learn from Ancient Biography*, Oxford University Press (January 5, 2017): 15.
[36] Licona and Evans, "Who Was Plutarch?," 15-16.
[37] Licona and Evans, "Who Was Plutarch?," 15.

of Greece and surrounding areas, and was present for important historical events of the ancient times, which he then wrote about.[38] Today his best known works are his book containing biographies of famous Greeks and Romans, called *Lives,* and *Moralia,* which includes the land versus sea animals essay.[39] Like this essay, most of the others in *Moralia* are written in the form of conversations or debates, and interestingly, Plutarch often gave the characters names of family members or other people he knew; Autobulus, for instance, is the name of his father.[40] Plutarch's father was also a philosopher, and it seems reasonable to suggest that he may have held the same beliefs on animals as Autobulus the character. Plutarch has been widely read and well-respected ever since his time. His works influenced many other writers or philosophers and helped people centuries later learn about ancient history and the lives of important figures.[41] His collection of biographies has long been "the main source of understanding of the ancient world for many readers from the Renaissance to the present day" (Russell qtd. in Licona and Evans 2017, 16).[42] However, the accuracy of Plutarch's biographies and historical accounts is not flawless; over time, factual errors have been found, along with biases in favour of the Romans, and he occasionally bent facts to better emphasise the type of story or character qualities he wanted to tell about.[43] Even though Plutarch is still a valuable source of information, in many cases, being an eyewitness to history, it is a good idea to consult other sources as well before believing every detail he gave to be a fact. However, it is important to note that these habits were not considered weaknesses in writing or documentation in Plutarch's time. Biographies were meant to tell a novel-like story about their subjects and present them in a specific light; the truth was not always equivalent to only objective, solid facts.

[38] Licona and Evans, "Who Was Plutarch?," 15-17.
[39] Licona and Evans, "Who Was Plutarch?," 15-17.
[40] Licona and Evans, "Who Was Plutarch?," 15-17.
[41] Licona and Evans, "Who Was Plutarch?," 16.
[42] Licona and Evans, "Who Was Plutarch?," 16.
[43] Licona and Evans, "Who Was Plutarch?," 16-17.

Plutarch covered many different topics in his essays, but he was always interested in animals, and four of the *Moralia* works are about them, from analysing their minds to the ethics of eating meat. There was also no real scientific research done on animals at the time, so Plutarch had no studies or other information on this he could reference. While his historical writings depended on his travelling, education, and detailed recording of events around him, he forms his arguments for animals mostly by coming to his conclusions while looking at their behaviour. It can be hard to know exactly how Plutarch came about his opinions, aside from being a good observer and deep thinker. However, in the present day, there is an increasing amount of research done on animals' emotions and cognitive abilities: their "cleverness," as Plutarch called it. We are finally becoming informed enough about non-humans that we can compare the research findings to Plutarch's conclusions to see if he had been right all along, according to our standards.

Accuracy and Utility

Plutarch's essay does not favour one side over the other when it comes to the intelligence of land or sea animals, which is consistent with today's findings; we now know that there are highly intelligent and sophisticated creatures in both habitats and therefore cannot accurately assign a superior side. We also have findings now that support the case of animals not being irrational, as was believed for so long. One technique that Plutarch uses to create sympathy for animals is anthropomorphism: attributing human traits and behaviours onto non-humans or interpreting them in a specifically human way. This is a natural part of human nature in trying to understand and make sense of different species, but in the scientific field it is often advised that in many cases anthropomorphism should be limited or avoided. One common reason is that it is unfair and unreasonable to put expectations of one

species—humans—onto another species; just as one would not expect a human child to develop and act like a puppy, a puppy should not be expected to develop like a human child. Variation among species does not make one superior to another, it just makes them different. However, another case against anthropomorphism comes from people reluctant to assign emotions and complex thought processes to animals. These traits were for a long time considered unique to humans, but in the past decades especially there has been much more research done on the subject, and evidence shows that this belief was wrong.

For essentially all of human history, the species of the world have been classified by a hierarchical system, with human beings far above other types of creatures. Though there have been individuals who thought differently—Plutarch, for instance—humanity generally accepted this idea and animals have been used for their (humans') benefit, suffering great injustices, due to humans regarding any other species beneath them, often barely treating them as living things. Society experienced many historical developments over time and new knowledge affected the way people understood many things, but understandings of animals' rights and abilities never seemed to change much. Even today, humans seem to generally believe that their lives and desires are worth more than any other, casually exploiting animals by testing cosmetics on them, harming them in scientific experiments, and hunting them for fun. Even so, thanks to more studies into these issues taking place, there is more hope now than there has ever been that humans will start to understand what Plutarch and other animal advocates have been trying to say: that non-humans are sentient, intelligent, and feel things just as well as any human can.

Studies have shown that animals creatively use objects as tools to get what they want, and recognise themselves and others in mirrors; many species, from dolphins to monkeys to fish have passed mirror tests.[44] It has also been proven that animals feel pain, and their

[44] Marian Stamp Dawkins, "Through Animal Eyes, What Behaviour Tells Us," *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* 100, no. 1-2 (October 2006): 6.

reactions are not just unconscious reflexes to stimuli, as was once thought, but suggest sentience: their brains develop positive or negative associations for objects or situations based on their experiences, and they adjust their behaviour to avoid those negative things.[45] Recently it has been found that this applies not just to mammals or seemingly more "complex" creatures, but also to animals like crabs, lobsters, and other invertebrates, even insects like bees.[46] These animals display other forms of intelligence too, such as lobster mates remaining loyal to each other for life, and hermit crabs expressing preferences for certain shells as opposed to other types.[47] The nervous systems of humans and animals—including species not genetically similar—even resemble each other.[48] While it can be difficult to figure out exactly what is going on in the brain of another, it is safe to say that denying any animal's emotions and mental abilities is not only unkind but unscientific.

Therefore, Plutarch's anthropomorphism for the most part is not unreasonable. He mostly uses it to assign human-like emotions and thought processes onto animals, which, judging by present-day research, he was right in doing. It would probably be a good idea to stop referring to animals having feelings as anthropomorphism at all, since these days we have no reason to believe they are exclusively human characteristics.

Analysis

No persuasive essay is perfect, and not all of Plutarch's arguments presented in his work are fully credible, at least not today. He often uses anecdotes as evidence for animals' emotions and human-like traits, which is not a particularly reliable or scientific way to prove something. Many of the stories told in this essay, such as the snake who appeared to be

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[45] Frans B. M. de Waal and Kristin Andrews, "The Question of Animal Emotions," *Science* 375, no. 6587 (March 25, 2022): 1351-52.
[46] de Waal and Andrews, "The Question of Animal Emotions," 1352.
[47] de Waal and Andrews, "The Question of Animal Emotions," 1351.
[48] de Waal and Andrews, "The Question of Animal Emotions," 1351.

in love with a woman,[49] while interesting, cannot be guaranteed to be true, especially after so many years, and so don't work as well for reliable, convincing arguments. That snake story, along with its veracity being debatable, is also one of the few times Plutarch uses anthropomorphism rather inappropriately. While it usually makes sense to assign certain feelings to animals, being in love is something a bit trickier. Animals probably do not view romantic love in the same way a human would, and both species would display those feelings differently. It also seems unlikely that an animal would have those "romantic" feelings for a member of another species. The snake may have felt affection for the woman, hence crawling into bed with her and wrapping around her body (in a non-predatory manner), but we certainly cannot assume romantic feelings from it.[50] Again, similar to the way he wrote biographies, these issues of truth and credibility would not have been any problem for Plutarch's contemporaries. Parameters for accuracy were a bit different during their time and stories *were* regarded as legitimate arguments for this sort of topic. Writers, including Plutarch, didn't always intend to present them as completely true, so long as they made a point; sometimes the purpose was to provide an emotional rather than factual truth. When looking at these stories today, however, they do not always work for evidence as people now view it, so we must be cautious in the way we approach them. Nevertheless, despite a few exceptions, when looking at the behaviour of animals and findings about them, as seen in the last section, many of the stories Plutarch tells do not seem too far-fetched to believe.

One other aspect of the essay that is less persuasive to scientists and all modern people is that the characters point out that certain types of animals were regarded as sacred by the gods, some even representing gods.[51] While this may have been a convincing reason for

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[49] Plutarch, "Moralia," 399.
[50] Plutarch, "Moralia," 399.
[51] Plutarch, "Moralia," 467.

people to respect these species back then, it is not as much now, and it unfortunately does not prove anything about their abilities to the modern audience. Just because an animal is said to have divine connotations does not automatically make them smart and aware; only facts and explanations of their behaviour can demonstrate that. Whether an animal is connected to a deity or not does not mean it deserves more or less respect than another species, either. Of course, references to gods and a lack of scientific facts are to be expected in a written work from so long ago; this does not mean that Plutarch was wrong in his views or was a poor debater, just that he lived in a world that was very different from today's.

Something interesting is that though animals' connections to divinity were major reasons for ancient Greeks having what reverence they did for non-humans, and Plutarch does refer to this, it was not his main method of persuasion. It may have been easier to bring about more respect for animals in his society by making the essay mostly about their supposed mythical qualities, perhaps by saying that if the gods are admired and viewed as having fully human-like souls then the creatures on earth associated with them should be too, since people already had some ideas similar to this, and being careful to please the gods was of utmost importance, but the essay mostly does not rely on this. Whether Plutarch believed in the supernatural powers and connotations of animals or not, it seems that he thought it was more important to convince people to respect them for the animals' own sake than because they were symbols of something *else* to be respected. This explains why his main arguments are about the observable, "real" qualities of animals like their awareness, problem-solving skills, and care for others, and he provides examples that clearly show how advanced they are in these areas. Just as humans are given an amount of respect and dignity by being human, Plutarch seemed to believe that animals should be given the same thing just for being alive and sentient, even if they are a different species.

When Plutarch lived, animals were certainly important to his fellow ancient Greeks, but

unsurprisingly, they for the most part valued them first and foremost for their usefulness to humans.[52] Like most societies, they used animals as livestock, helpers in hunting, or ways to get around, and they were appreciated for those services.[53] As author Steven Lonsdale points out, animals in ancient Greece could often still be regarded with affection and some degree of respect—dogs especially were well-liked, and some people even kept them as pets.[54] Some animals were also respected because it was believed they were a representation of the gods, beliefs that Plutarch appealed to in this essay, as previously mentioned, or that they had magical or medicinal powers: "it was a sure sign of imminent recovery if a patient dreamed about a dog." [55] Even so, animals of any kind were not regarded as equal to humans when it came to their intelligence or overall worth; for example, going back to the dog, there was "an underlying kinship between man and animal," and yet "the dog was not regarded as a creature possessing a complete, quasi-human personality."[56] Plutarch knew this was the general attitude and was opposed to it, or else he never would have written about it in hopes of changing people's minds and proving them wrong.

Even among the better-educated people and some fellow philosophers, Plutarch was still met with opposition to his animal ideas. The followers of the Stoic school of thought were among his biggest adversaries.[57] The Stoics argued that animals were non-rational beings with no sense of morals who acted only on impulses, so it could not be said that they deserve just treatment from humans, or that humans should have any "duties" towards them.[58] They believed that morality and justice only extended to beings which could understand those concepts or could act justly themselves— because, according to them, animals could not,

[52] Stephen H. Lonsdale, "Attitudes Towards Animals in Ancient Greece," *Greece and Rome* 26, no. 2 (October 1979): 149.
[53] Lonsdale, "Animals in Ancient Greece," 149.
[54] Lonsdale, "Animals in Ancient Greece," 150.
[55] Lonsdale, "Animals in Ancient Greece," 150.
[56] Lonsdale, "Animals in Ancient Greece," 150.
[57] Stephen T. Newmyer, "Plutarch on Justice Toward Animals: Ancient Insights on a Modern Debate," *Scholia* 1, no. 1 (January 1, 1992): 44.
[58] Newmyer, "Plutarch on Justice Toward Animals," 45.

morality did not apply to them and a human ought to feel no moral responsibility for any harm they might inflict upon a non-human.[59] Plutarch was known as a major critic of Stoicism and he wrote his animal-focused morality writings to refute these beliefs with the reasoning previously discussed. In the land versus sea animals essay, a main method of his is to attack the concept of animals being non-rational, which Stoics seemed to take for granted. This proved quite effective: because the Stoics base all their reasons for not applying justice to animals on this concept, their arguments fall apart once Plutarch demonstrates that they have good reason to think twice about it.

Despite the strength of Plutarch's arguments, many appeared not to feel the same. Xenophon, the Greek military leader and writer, showed similar beliefs to the Stoics when he wrote that the fundamental trait that distinguishes humans from animals is the former's ability to reason.[60] Aristotle, while he didn't deny that animals had some kind of soul, also felt that there could be no real "bounds of justice" between them and humans, since he too did not consider them rational.[61] Plato was more like Plutarch in his thoughts about animals and human actions concerning them. He wrote about hunting and believed that forms of it that required effort on the part of the human, to make it more like an equal contest, were acceptable, but he disapproved of methods such as setting traps, which he thought were cruel and lazy.[62] It is not clear how Plutarch felt about hunting—whether he felt the same as Plato or condemned all forms of it.

Followers of the Pythagorean school of thought were vegetarians, like Plutarch, but they did it for different reasons. They believed in reincarnation and their main motivation for believing it wrong to eat meat was that human souls may come back in the form of an

[59] Newmyer, "Plutarch on Justice Toward Animals," 46.
[60] Lonsdale, "Animals in Ancient Greece," 156.
[61] Damian Miszczynski, "Justice for Animals According to Plutarch," *Mare Nostrum* 10, no. 1 (April 9, 2019): 55.
[62] Lonsdale, "Animals in Ancient Greece," 153.

animal.[63] For that reason, they cannot be called animal advocates in the same way that Plutarch can, since their biggest concern was for a possible *human* spirit, not an animal's life, whereas Plutarch believed in vegetarianism for ethical purposes regarding the animal, not religion. Even when compared to other ancient people whose views were more sympathetic to animal ethics, Plutarch stands out for how accurate he was with his opinions compared to what is being proven now, as well as for the amount of compassion and care he showed for all creatures, even small ones like ants. The writer S. T. Newmyer expresses his admiration for this defence of animals by saying, "Perhaps none felt more sympathy for animals or defended them on more rational and humane grounds than did Plutarch." [64]

Though animal rights are thought of as a new concept and do not receive enough attention, there have been people through the ages who defended the rights of *all* creatures, even in classical antiquity, which Plutarch exemplifies for us. Though there were many people with intelligent ideas during his time (*and* long after), refusing to assign rights and rationality to animals seemed to be a common weakness for many of them. Plutarch's beliefs of animals' abilities and rights come across as surprisingly modern, fitting better with today's ethics than those of his time, and yet he still goes beyond them; he treats animals with more respect than many people do in this century—which certainly does nothing to make modern people look more progressive or superior, demonstrating that advanced knowledge does not always guarantee improved ethical treatment and attitudes. Today, there are not only more advancements in information on animals compared to antiquity, but more opportunity and resources to discover the truth, and yet, this does not seem to be properly taken advantage of; the ancient philosopher understands non-humans better than the majority of us today. It is also noteworthy that he came to these conclusions not through experimentation, as done in current science, but simply by taking time to *observe* his fellow

[63] Miszczynski, "Justice for Animals," 55.
[64] Newmyer, "Plutarch on Justice Toward Animals," 40.

creatures. Even though he couldn't be certain about what their minds were like, he could see enough to tell that they were living, feeling beings as much as he was. It is the hope of all animal advocates, as well as mine, that more people will finally come to follow the example of Plutarch, who "heeded the cry of those whose language he could not understand, but whose interests he defended." [65]

[65] Newmyer, "Plutarch on Justice Toward Animals," 54.

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