

Introduction

ON THE SLOPES of Mount Parnassus lies Apollo's sanctuary at Delphi, fabled in Greek myth as the centre of the universe. The wealth of artefacts excavated from the sanctuary and its fame in antiquity as home to Apollo's oracle, the Pythia, have cemented Delphi's place on the modern tourist trail of Greece. The guided tours that meander through Apollo's sacred precinct in fact follow in ancient footsteps. A tour of the sanctuary, as familiar today as it was two thousand years ago, is the subject of a text, *The Oracles at Delphi*, written by Plutarch, a priest at Delphi in the late first and early second centuries CE.¹

Among the members of Plutarch's tour party is a man called Diogenianus, 'a lover of sights' and a connoisseur of 'beautiful artworks' (*kalōn ergōn*).² He is in the right place at Delphi: the sanctuary is filled with offerings to Apollo that not only provide a record of donors and past events but stand out for their aesthetic appeal. Early in the tour, they come to a bronze statue group of some victorious admirals. The 'brilliance of the bronze' inspires Diogenianus' 'wonder', its radiant deep-blue tinge appropriately lending the admirals 'the true complexion of the sea.'³ A conversation ensues among the tour party about how Corinthian bronze acquired 'the beauty [*kallos*] of its colour.'⁴ Eventually the guides resume their spiel, but they are soon interrupted by another conversation about beauty, this time prompted by their recitation of an oracle.

On hearing their recitation, Diogenianus comments on the 'poor quality and cheapness' of the oracular verses delivered by Apollo's propheticess, the

1. On the text, see Schröder 1990; Vernière 1990; Brouillette 2014; Simonetti 2017, 17–57. On its date, see Simonetti 2017, 17.

2. Plut. *De Pyth*, or. 394f, 395b. Cf. Pl. *Resp.* 475d–e.

3. Plut. *De Pyth*, or. 395b: ἐθαύμαζε δὲ τοῦ χαλκοῦ τὸ ἀνθρῶν.

4. Ibid. 395c.

Pythia.⁵ This strikes him as amiss. If the Pythia is inspired by Apollo, the deity who presides over the euphony of songs and elegance of diction, then surely the Pythia's verses 'should surpass Hesiod and Homer in beauty of language [*euepeia*]:'⁶ And yet this is far from true, he says, as most oracles are full of metrical errors and lack quality. Diogenianus' amazement at the inferiority of oracular verse arises from the expectation that what is divine should be most beautiful. So why do the Pythia's divinely inspired verses fall so far short of the pinnacle of human poetry, that of Hesiod and Homer?

For another member of the tour, Sarapion, this poses a theological problem: 'Then do we believe that these are the god's verses and yet dare to say that they are inferior in beauty [*kallei*] to those of Homer and Hesiod?'⁷ Rather than challenge the expectation that what is divine is most beautiful, Sarapion's solution is to turn the problem on its head by suggesting that it is we humans who are at fault. 'Should we not rather regard them [the Pythia's verses] as the best and most beautiful [*kallista*] creations, correcting our judgement which has been skewed by bad habits?'⁸ According to Sarapion, the Pythia's verses are in fact 'the best and most beautiful creations'. What has gone awry are human standards of judgement. Oracular verse does not display 'a lack of quality', we are just incapable of assessing its true merits because our aesthetic standards have been 'skewed by bad habits.'⁹ Sappho's poems might charm us with their 'beauty' (*charis*), he says, but it is the Pythia's unembellished utterances that truly deserve the highest aesthetic praise.¹⁰

Sarapion's explanation for the Pythia's verse keeps divinity's claim to supreme beauty intact. Yet it raises another, perhaps greater, problem about how gods and humans relate. That deities and mortals should have such divergent views on beauty is unsettling. A gulf between the aesthetic sensibilities of gods and humans calls into question their commensurability, raising doubts about whether humans can communicate effectively with deities on whom they depend in all aspects of life. The members of the tour might admire the beauty of votives in the sanctuary, but what about the god to whom they were given, Apollo? If a prime purpose of those votives was to please Apollo, how could

5. Ibid. 396c.

6. Ibid. 396d.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Cf. Plut. *De Pyth*, or. 396f–397b.

10. Plut. *De Pyth*, or. 397a. For other ancient attestations of the 'beauty' (*charis*) of Sappho's poetry, see, e.g., Demetr. *Eloc.* 132; *Anth. Pal.* 7.17; Dion. Hal. *Dem.* 40; Strabo, 13.2.3; Himer. *Or.* 28.

worshippers hope to achieve this without any idea of what might be aesthetically pleasing to a god?

To avoid this conundrum, and the task of reorienting their entire understanding of beauty, another member of the tour, Theon, proposes an alternative solution. It is no problem, he says, if the Pythia's verses are 'inferior to Homer's' because it is not Apollo but the prophetess who is responsible for the diction, metre, and quality of the verses. Apollo only inspires her mind with visions 'and creates a light in her soul as to the future—for this is what inspiration is.'¹¹ This answer satisfies every expectation. Apollo is exculpated and keeps his crown of beauty, while the potential discrepancy between divine and human aesthetic standards is conveniently sidestepped.¹²

From the different opinions offered by Plutarch's tour party, it is clear that even come the second century CE, there was no dogma concerning ideas about beauty and the gods; they were open to debate, though some ideas exercised a greater hold than others. This becomes apparent once more when the tour party return their attention to votives in the sanctuary. Miraculous stories about the votives are a further source of 'wonder' for Diogenianus. How, for instance, the eyes in the statue of a general popped out the day before he died in battle. And how the statue of the Spartan leader Lysander sprouted a prodigious growth of wild shrubs and grass that covered his face.¹³ These events demonstrate, Philinus argues, that votive objects are 'not void or without feeling, but all are filled with divine spirit'—a view that another member of the tour, Boëthus, disparages as mistaking coincidence for divine immanence.¹⁴

Evidently there is no single 'party line' on the matter. But it is significant that Plutarch gives the final say to Theon, who presents the material culture of the sanctuary, its votives, buildings, and natural features, as indicative of divine presence. Delphi is enjoying a period of renewed prosperity thanks, Theon says, to the divinely inspired truth of the Pythia's oracles. Thank-offerings to Apollo fill the sanctuary, which is 'adorned with beautiful buildings and furnishings'.¹⁵ 'Beside flourishing trees others spring up', while

11. Plut. *De Pyth, or.* 397c. Cf. Pl. *Ion.* 534d–e, where the argument works the other way: the exceptionally beautiful paean of the mediocre poet Tynnichus is adduced as evidence of its divine creation. On poetic inspiration in ancient Greece, see P. Murray 1981; 2015.

12. On Plutarch's defence of the Pythia and his religious attitudes, see Brenk 1977; Gallo 1996; Hirsch-Luipold 2005; 2014.

13. Plut. *De Pyth, or.* 397e–f.

14. *Ibid.* 398a. On this theme, see Brenk 1987, 316; Simonetti 2017, 30–33.

15. Plut. *De Pyth, or.* 409a: οἰκοδομημάτων δ' ἐπικεκόσμηκε κάλλεσι καὶ κατασκευαῖς.

Pylaea, a suburb of Delphi, has acquired an unprecedented ‘adornment [*kosmon*] of shrines, meeting-places, and supplies of water’.¹⁶ According to Theon, such natural abundance and beautiful constructions signify ‘the manifest presence [*epiphaneian*] of the god’.¹⁷ The reason for this is plainly stated: ‘It is not possible that so great a change of this sort could ever have been brought about in a short time through human efforts unless the god were present here to inspire the oracle’.¹⁸ The natural fertility and beauty of Delphi point to something beyond themselves: the beneficent presence and activity of Apollo himself.

Plutarch reveals that Delphi is more than simply a place where connoisseurs of beauty like Diogenianus are well entertained. The beauty of the sanctuary is fundamentally theological in meaning and significance, just as the aesthetic character of the Pythia’s verse raises questions about human relations with the divine. Engaging with beauty entails engaging with the gods and vice versa.

This book explores the relationship between beauty and the gods in ancient Greece, principally in the Archaic period (ca. 750–480 BCE), some six hundred years and more before Plutarch. Given the separation in time, it is striking to see Plutarch wrestling with ideas about beauty’s link with divinity that were current in the Archaic period, not least in the poetry of Hesiod and Homer, which represents the summit of beauty in human verse according to Plutarch’s tour party. One explanation for this continuity is suggested by the recourse to Hesiod and Homer. The cultural legacy of the Archaic period evidently looms large for Plutarch’s tour party, as they refer to Hesiod, Homer, Sappho, and other Archaic poets and philosophers in formulating their own views on beauty and the gods.¹⁹ Plutarch is by no means alone in giving the impression that cultural developments of the Archaic period were pivotal for the aesthetic and religious lives of later generations of antiquity.²⁰ This formative era of early Greek history is the focus of this book’s investigation into how

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*

18. *Ibid.* 409c.

19. E.g., Plut. *De Pyth, or.* 396f–397b.

20. See, e.g., Dio Chrys. *Or.* 12 and *Or.* 21, esp. 16–17; Philostr. *Imag.* 2.1–3; Philostr. *Her.* 6.1–7.6. See Platt 2009; Whitmarsh 2009, esp. 225–29; Platt 2011, 1–8, 235–52; Hunter 2018, 79–91. On Second Sophistic authors’ engagement with the Archaic and Classical past, see Bowie 1970; Schmitz 1997; 1999; Whitmarsh 2001; Webb 2006; Platt 2011, 215–52.

ideas and experiences of beauty informed human relations with the divine in ancient Greece.

Beauty's association with the gods is commonplace from the earliest surviving Greek literature, the epics of Hesiod and Homer, composed circa 750–650 BCE. The association even lingers in popular Western culture to this day. 'To look like a Greek god' is still proverbial for being beautiful, just as it was for Hesiod and Homer over 2,500 years ago.²¹ A principal line of enquiry in this book, then, is beauty's significance in Archaic Greek theology, understood etymologically as 'discourse about gods' (*theologia*), implicit or explicit statements and speculation about deities and their relationship with humanity.²² How important were ideas about beauty for conceptions of the gods in Archaic Greece?

As Plutarch shows, beauty's connection with the divine also encompassed the worship of deities. Apollo's sanctuary boasts an array of beautiful statues and buildings because people considered dedicating these objects to be an appropriate means of honouring the god. The second question driving this book therefore concerns the practice of worship. What role did ideas and experiences of beauty play in the different forms and contexts of divine veneration in Archaic Greece?

These two questions work in dialogue for the simple reason that ideas and expectations about gods informed how worshippers engaged with them and the nature of their religious experiences. The customs, contexts, and experience of worship in turn shaped attitudes to gods. The recent spate of beautiful dedications and building works at Delphi, for example, are taken by Theon as evidence of Apollo's 'manifest presence'. Changes in the conduct and environments of worship could alter how deities and their relationship with humans were viewed. A cyclical relationship bound together theology and the practice of divine veneration.

The central thesis of this book is that beauty was integral to both in ways that affected many cultural domains and developments in the Archaic Greek world, with far-reaching consequences in antiquity and right up to the present day.

21. The Greek word is *theoeidēs*, 'godlike in appearance'.

22. For the applicability of 'theology' to ancient Greek religion, see Henrichs 2010; Eidinow, Kindt, Osborne, and Tor 2016; J. Clay 2020, 246. Since there was no scripture in Greek polytheism, theology in this context is inherently nondogmatic, speculative, and different from, say, Christian theology.

Historical Aesthetics

For the members of Plutarch's tour party, the question of beauty pertains to a wide range of phenomena: the visual and verbal arts, the natural and architectural environment, the nature of gods, and human standards of judgement. This is entirely representative. Ancient Greek texts are pervaded with references to beautiful people, objects, sounds, places, and activities in a variety of contexts, from home to marketplace, battlefield to drinking party, dance floor to gymnasium, sanctuary to cemetery.²³ The impression conveyed by Greek literature and inscriptions is that ideas about beauty infiltrated practically all aspects of life. The same was true for relations with gods in ancient Greece. In the twentieth century the realisation that divine-human relations were woven into the fabric of everyday social and political life is what brought the study of Greek religion from the margins to the centre of ancient history.²⁴

The study of beauty in ancient Greece and elsewhere, however, has principally been the preserve of philosophers.²⁵ This is indebted to the modern Western history of aesthetics, which was carved out in the mid-eighteenth century as an independent philosophical discipline devoted to the study of sensory perception, beauty, and taste by Alexander Baumgarten, who coined the term 'aesthetics' from the ancient Greek verb *aisthanomai*, 'I perceive'.²⁶ The new-fledged discipline retained a broad scope of enquiry for the rest of the eighteenth century, notably in the work of its most influential exponent, Immanuel Kant, with his *Critique of Judgement* (1790). In the nineteenth century, in large part under the influence of Georg Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics* (1820s), aesthetics became increasingly focused on the fine arts as the privileged domain of beauty and the judgement of taste.²⁷ The conception of aesthetics as the philosophy of beauty and the fine arts prevailed throughout the twentieth century and remains dominant.²⁸ It has been influential, for example, in setting

23. On various aspects of beauty in ancient Greece, see Vernant 1982; Hawley 1998; Peponi 2012; Konstan 2014; Gherchanoc 2016; Shakeshaft 2019; 2022; Stampolidis and Fappas 2021.

24. Kindt 2012, 2–3.

25. E.g., Carritt 1931; Grassi 1962; Warry 1962; Hofstadter and Kuhns 1976; Pappas 1998; T. Irwin 2010; Čelkyté 2020. For beauty in ancient Greece, Plato has attracted most attention—e.g., Grube 1927; Moravcsik and Tempo 1982; Janaway 1998; Liminta 1998; Tarrant 2000; Lear 2006a; Nehamas 2007a; Hyland 2008; Denham 2012; Fine 2018.

26. Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* (1750) is generally considered the beginning of the modern discipline. On the modern history of aesthetics, see Tatarkiewicz 1974; Guyer 2003; 2014.

27. On Hegel's aesthetics, see, e.g., Desmond 1986; Squire and Kottman 2018; Houlgate 2021.

28. On shifts in philosophical aesthetics in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Mothersill 2004.

the agenda of ancient aesthetics that has developed apace in the last decade.²⁹ The history of aesthetics since the eighteenth century has thus cast the subject of beauty as the prerogative of those interested in philosophy, especially that of the arts. Even for many art historians, concerned less with theorizing art than understanding its particular manifestations, aesthetics is often viewed as art history's ahistorical opposite.³⁰

One contention of this book is that beauty, and aesthetics in general, is important for historians, art historians, archaeologists, and anthropologists—in fact, for anyone interested in the character of human societies past and present and their changes through time. To show why, I must clarify what I take these two highly contested terms to mean.

My approach is informed by a recent development within the field of aesthetics that proposes (a return to) a broad conception of the discipline, beyond the focus on the arts. As advocates of everyday aesthetics point out, the kinds of interests, values, and experiences pertinent to art are not neatly cordoned off from the rest of life.³¹ On this view, aesthetics is about how we perceive and experience the world. It is concerned with the processes of sensory perception and affective response and their associated values. Aesthetics therefore occupies the interface between sense and sensibility, where culturally mediated responses to the perceptual properties of things are formed. From this perspective, 'the aesthetic' is not synonymous with 'artistic' nor limited to that which pertains to beauty. Rather, it lies in the character of experience. Not only positive judgements (such as 'beautiful', 'charming', or 'sublime') but also negative and neutral ones (such as 'ugly', 'dreary', or 'plain') are within the realm of the aesthetic.

Such evaluative perceptions and concerns are part of the texture of everyday life. They guide and define how we relate to the world. They are also integral to the creation of meaning in most, if not all, contexts, not just artistic. It is for this reason that aesthetics deserves a central place in the writing of history.

29. E.g., Tatarkiewicz 1970, 1; Destrée and Murray 2015b, 1. For more on ancient aesthetics, see n. 25 above; Halliwell 2002; 2009; 2014; Bychkov and Sheppard 2010; J. Porter 2010a; 2012; 2016; Sluiter and Rosen 2012.

30. Somaini 2012; Marconi 2014, 9. Ironically, the historicism predominant in current art history owes much to Hegel's aesthetics, which proposed a historicising approach to the philosophy of art; see Squire 2020.

31. On everyday aesthetics, see Leddy 1995; 2012; Light and Smith 2005; Saito 2007; 2017; Liu and Carter 2014; Archer and Ware 2018. For a call for everyday aesthetics in antiquity, see J. Porter 2010a, 528–29; 2012. John Dewey's magisterial *Art as Experience* ([1934] 1980) has been a prime source of inspiration for advocates of everyday aesthetics.

That is to say, to understand how and why things mattered to people, what motivated their decisions, and the nature of their experiences, it is necessary to excavate their aesthetic concerns, choices, and values from the varied textual and material remains of the past.³²

By looking into the perceptual and culturally contingent foundations of meaning and experience, aesthetic enquiry investigates a common human faculty while highlighting endless cultural variety.³³ The concept of beauty is a case in point. In the modern Western world, for example, beauty has been the subject of intense debate that has laden the term with its own peculiar baggage. A good example is beauty's changing place in discourse about the visual arts. After valorisation as a crowning ideal of art in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, beauty came under attack by the modernist art movement of the twentieth century, only to be rehabilitated by postmodernism since the 1990s.³⁴ Beauty's varied fortunes in the modern era showcase its subjection to the vicissitudes of history.

This observation also raises the question of what persists. If ideas about beauty are constantly changing and bound to cultural and historical context, then what is this thing called *beauty* that endures through time and that different human societies have a sense of? If modern Western notions of beauty are born of particular historical conditions, then is it reasonable to label an ancient Greek concept, or that of any foreign culture, 'beauty'? In short, what features make beauty identifiable across time and place?

According to an ancient Greek proverb, 'beautiful things are difficult' (*chalepa ta kala*).³⁵ One difficulty arises from their variety. Since sights, sounds, people, objects, places, activities, ideas, and much else may all be beautiful, the question is what these things have in common. Beautiful things may share little besides how they are perceived. At the most basic level, beauty pertains to the pleasing way in which things appear. Beautiful things attract

32. With its focus on the character of experience, the insights of everyday aesthetics can, I believe, valuably contribute to the recent paradigm shift to 'experience' in the study of Greek religion. For the latter, see, e.g., T. Harrison 2015, 27; Driediger-Murphy and Eidinow 2019; Eidinow et al. 2022.

33. For the applicability of aesthetics to different cultures, see K. Higgins 1996; 2006; van Damme 1996; I. Winter 2002; K. Higgins et al. 2017.

34. The artist Barnett Newman famously encapsulated modernism's hostile stance: 'The impulse of modern art was to destroy beauty' (Newman 1948, 51). On beauty in postmodern art discourse, see, e.g., Hickey 1993; Brand 2000; W. Steiner 2002; Danto 2003; Prettejohn 2005; Nehamas 2007b; Hatzaki 2009; Ioannou and Kyriakidou 2014.

35. Pl. *Hp. mai.* 304e.

and hold our attention because they please us. And yet a further difficulty is that this basic element of pleasure can partner with any number of affective responses: beauty can be, for example, delightful, desirable, wonderful, uplifting, frightening, consoling, or saddening.³⁶ In any case, beautiful things make their presence felt. They demand engagement with their perceptual properties, eliciting varied responses depending on a complex of factors, including the nature of the object, personal taste, cultural conditioning, and context. Because of its inherent power to please and command attention, something's beauty confers value on it, a kind of value immediately recognised and registered in perception and experience. This very general definition permits countless permutations while maintaining certain core traits that make beauty recognizable across cultures.³⁷

Amid a constellation of aesthetic qualities, ideas about beauty bear special importance for the writing of history and the study of human societies generally because they are indicative of value: they spotlight what a culture upholds as precious and meaningful. If what is beautiful is that which is perceived to be pleasing, valuable, and worthy of attention, then the things a culture deems beautiful are instructive, as are the ways that ideas about beauty figure in different areas of life—for example, in connection with social roles, stages of life, attitudes to the body, gender, health, ethics, politics, art, architecture, philosophy, religion, and the natural world. Where a culture locates beauty, the contexts in which it comes to the fore, and the ideas and practices with which it is entwined are an index of a wider nexus of cultural preoccupations. Beauty is, by nature, a barometer of things that matter.

Ideas about beauty therefore matter to historians; as I aim to show, they are potential forces of historical change as well as windows onto what a culture considers significant. On the other hand, historians also matter for beauty. The experience of beauty is immediate, personal, intimately felt. Yet however personal, such aesthetic experiences are inescapably shaped by culture and rooted in time and place. In my view, history therefore holds a key to understanding beauty, revealing its different incarnations and the manifold ways it is embedded

36. Accordingly, beauty is not coterminous with attractiveness (although inextricably linked), nor with prettiness, which is purely pleasing. Beauty cannot be reduced, therefore, as Leo Tolstoy claimed, to 'nothing other than what is pleasing to us' (Tolstoy [1897] 1995, 52).

37. Whether there is or has ever been a human society without some notion of beauty, however culturally peculiar, seems doubtful in light of historical, anthropological, and cross-cultural studies. For the latter, see, e.g., Marwick 1988; van Damme 1996; Eco 2004; Sartwell 2004; K. Higgins et al. 2017.

in different societies, both the cultural differences and the continuities through time that speak to deeper commonalities in human experience.

Beauty Ancient and New

With its focus on the Archaic period, this book delves into an early chapter in the history of beauty and aesthetics in the Western world, from the earliest surviving Greek literature of the eighth century BCE to the beginning of the Classical period in the fifth century. This period, I argue, is critical for some long-running threads in this history. The five chapters of the book explore the cultural dialogue between beauty and the gods in Archaic Greece as it resounded in different contexts: in forms of divine worship and in poetry, music, and dance (chapters 1 and 2); in attitudes to the natural environment (chapter 3); and in architecture and art (chapters 4 and 5). Beauty's entanglement with the divine is clear from the earliest Greek literature, as chapter 1 will show. Far from static, however, this entanglement became more intense during the Archaic period due to changes in the sphere of religious life. Most important, the gods' sanctuaries, the centrepieces of human engagement with the divine in ancient Greece, underwent a radical transformation between the late eighth and early fifth centuries BCE. During the Archaic period, changes in the material culture of sanctuaries, the establishment of particular habits of divine worship, and the prevalence of certain ideas about beauty's relation with the divine set the stage for developments in the Classical period that have, in turn, proved hugely influential through the ages. By uncovering this enduring legacy, the book seeks to contribute to the histories of aesthetics, religion, and the visual arts and to the current lively debate about beauty.

In probing the relationship between the beautiful and the divine, I take my cue from what ancient Greek sources present as closely intertwined. This contravenes a predominant idea about beauty in the modern era: that beauty inhabits an autonomous realm of experience; that it is enjoyed for its own sake, untainted by any practical, social, political, economic, ethical, or religious interests. With its roots in the essays of Joseph Addison and the third Earl of Shaftesbury in the early eighteenth century, the idea of aesthetic disinterest was developed by Immanuel Kant in his distinction between two types of beauty, 'free' and 'dependent'.³⁸ For Kant, the judgement of the latter kind of beauty depends on conceptual catego-

38. On aesthetic disinterest, see, e.g., Dickie 1964; Guyer 1993, 48–130; Fenner 1996; Berleant and Hepburn 2003; Came 2009.

ries and is thus inseparable from various interests. But there is, Kant argued, a purer form of beauty, encountered especially in nature, that is ‘free’ and autonomous, not contingent on applying a concept to the object in question, whose beauty is thus experienced with disinterested contemplation.³⁹

Though his views on the topic are highly nuanced and complex, Kant is often regarded (or vilified) as the foremost flagbearer of aesthetic disinterest, thanks largely to the reception of his work in the nineteenth century, when these ideas, reframed and repurposed, influenced attitudes to the fine arts, notably the emergence of the concept ‘art for art’s sake.’⁴⁰ The theory that the experience of beauty (and art) is disinterested and autonomous, cleanly separable from context and other concerns, has had its detractors through the ages. William Hogarth (1697–1764) challenged the theory in the early stages of its life, even before Kant gave it wings.⁴¹ Nevertheless, its impact over the last three centuries has been immense and continues to this day.⁴²

As Hogarth recognised, the theory of aesthetic disinterest was born of rarified socioeconomic and political circumstances.⁴³ It also seems to have involved the secularisation of Christian theological principles.⁴⁴ It is somewhat ironic, therefore, that one of its consequences has been to undermine the connection, prominent in the premodern Western world, between the beautiful and the divine.⁴⁵ Coupled with the growth of secularism, the notion of aesthetic autonomy has had such traction in the Western world over the last two hundred years that the former intimacy between beauty (and the arts) and religion has diminished.⁴⁶ By highlighting beauty’s interconnection with the

39. See Kant [1790] 2000, esp. 111–16. On Kant’s aesthetics, see Ginsborg 2022 (with extensive further references).

40. For the impact of Kant’s views on art, see Prettejohn 2005, 40–109. For an important corrective to the simplification of Kant’s views, see J. Porter 2017.

41. Hogarth [1753] 1997. See I. Winter 2002, 4.

42. For signs of its continued influence, see, e.g., Gell 1998, 5–6; Eco 2004, 8–10; Whitley 2012, 582.

43. Hogarth [1753] 1997, xxiii–xxiv.

44. Abrams 1989, 62–64, 135–87. For more on the theory’s emergence, see Stolnitz 1961; Bohls 1993; Woodmansee 1994, 11–34.

45. A further irony is that Kant himself suggests a link between his philosophy of aesthetics (in the first half of the *Critique of Judgement*) and his ‘teleology’ (in the second half) where he expresses his theological sympathies; ‘It is from the presentiment of the sublime that Kant seems to extract his faith in a Supreme Being’ (Scruton 2001, 110). For religious aspects of beauty and aesthetics in the premodern Western world, see, e.g., Eco 1986; J. Martin 1990; Aertsen 1991; C. Harrison 1992; Marenbon 2009.

46. This may partly explain why religion has received short shrift in recent work on ancient aesthetics—e.g., Sluiter and Rosen 2012; Konstan 2014; Destrée and Murray 2015a. This has not

divine in Archaic Greece, this book joins others in recent years that have underscored beauty's inextricability from practical, social, political, economic, ethical, and religious interests.⁴⁷ Just as relations with the gods permeated all aspects of life in ancient Greece, so was beauty 'part of the everyday world of purpose and desire, history and contingency'.⁴⁸

The dethroning of disinterest in recent years is one result of a resurgence of interest in beauty in academia, the art world, and public discourse since the 1990s. After falling on hard times for much of the twentieth century, the subject of beauty has made a big comeback in the arts and humanities, and now, with the recent emergence of neuroaesthetics, is even making inroads in the sciences.⁴⁹ In this renewed debate about beauty, the inheritance of Graeco-Roman antiquity has been an important player in various ways.

One of the principal forms in which this inheritance has reared its head is with the bearded visage of Plato. Plato's reflections on beauty are the launch pad, for example, for three of the most important works to revive the conversation about beauty in different disciplines of the humanities, by Mary Mothersill, Elaine Scarry, and Alexander Nehamas.⁵⁰ Likewise, in the field of Christian theological aesthetics, which has boomed since the late twentieth century, discussion about beauty bears obvious Platonic debts.⁵¹

This is nothing new. Beauty is a subject for which it may be justifiable to invoke Alfred Whitehead's famous claim that 'the safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato'.⁵² In this case, Whitehead's claim may in fact be too modest, inasmuch as the legacy of Plato's treatment of beauty, especially in the *Sympo-*

always been the case. Hegel saw ancient Greek attitudes to beauty and art as inseparable from Greek polytheism, which he variously dubbed 'the religion of beauty' and 'religion in the form of art'; see J. Stewart 2018, 224–51. For Hegel's reflections on Greek beauty (embedded within his broad cross-cultural teleology), see Peters 2015; Houlgate 2021.

47. See Halliwell 2009, 11; J. Porter 2010a, 34–35; Peponi 2012, 6–7; Destrée and Murray 2015b, 4.

48. Nehamas 2007b, 35.

49. For beauty's return to art, see n. 34 above. More broadly in the humanities, see Scarry 1999; Zangwill 2001; Armstrong 2004; Scruton 2011; Brouwer et al. 2012; K. Higgins et al. 2017; Widdows 2018. For neuroaesthetics, see Shimamura and Palmer 2011; Starr 2013; Chatterjee 2014; Chatterjee and Cardilo 2021; Skov and Nadal 2022.

50. Mothersill 1984, 1; Scarry 1999, 1–9; Nehamas 2007b, 1–2.

51. For the boom in theological aesthetics, see, e.g., F. Brown 1990; 2014; García-Rivera 1999; Viladesau 1999; Sherry 2002; Thiessen 2004; Bychkov and Fodor 2008. For the Platonic debts, see, e.g., Bychkov 2010, 129–75; Sherry 2014, 44–45; Viladesau 2014, 30–33.

52. Whitehead [1929] 1978, 39.

sium and *Phaedrus*, extends well beyond the parameters of the European philosophical tradition, from the early Church Fathers to the mediaeval Islamic theologian Avicenna, from the poet Edmund Spenser to the painter Sandro Botticelli.⁵³ What has exercised the greatest hold is the idea, expounded in the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, that beauty is revelatory: it points to something beyond itself and has a transcendent power that can lead us up to the higher rungs of a divine reality.

This revelatory conception of beauty has been a golden thread in the Christian theological tradition from antiquity to the present. In various guises it has underpinned the theology of a diverse cohort of thinkers, including Augustine of Hippo (354–430 CE), the Italian Franciscan Bonaventure (1221–1274), the American Calvinist Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), and the Swiss Catholic Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905–1988).⁵⁴ As Gesa Thiessen says, ‘From Plato to the early Fathers, Augustine, Aquinas, Edwards to the late twentieth century writings, we find the notion that the reality and revelation of God cannot be contemplated without the dimension of beauty.’⁵⁵ This long tradition, in which beauty is prized for its transcendental power, continues into the twenty-first century with Plato upheld as its fountainhead.

One of the wider claims of this book is that this tradition did not begin with Plato. As I will show in the conclusion, Plato’s musings on beauty in the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* drew on deeply ingrained religious ideas about beauty and their role in divine worship that became established in and were handed down from the Archaic period. Beauty had a revelatory dimension in ancient Greek culture, a medium of access to the divine, long before Plato refashioned it for a novel philosophical purpose. Plato’s reflections on beauty have cast a long shadow since the Classical period. As it turns out, he too was heir to what had come before: a long lineage stretching back to Homer.

Aside from Plato, the visual arts of Graeco-Roman antiquity have also featured prominently in the recent revival of interest in beauty. Rejection of what was seen as a hackneyed classicism, and the lauded aesthetic ideals it had long been held to embody, was one driver behind the modernist art movement from the

53. For the legacy of Platonic ideas about beauty in the work of those cited, see Thiessen 2004, 9–37; Leshner 2006, 328–30; Yunis 2011, 25–30; Abolghassemi 2018.

54. For the aesthetics of these thinkers, see, e.g., (on Augustine) C. Harrison 1992; Fontanier 1998; (on Bonaventure) R. Davies 2019; (on Edwards) Delattre 1968; Lane 2011, 170–200; (on Balthasar) Bychkov 2010.

55. Thiessen 2004, 207.

second half of the nineteenth century onwards.⁵⁶ Accordingly, the postmodern reaction to modernism since the 1990s, and beauty's reinstatement in artistic discourse, has entailed renewed engagement with ancient Graeco-Roman art, reconceived for a new era and from a novel perspective.⁵⁷ A recent example is the *Chimera* series of marble and bronze figurative sculptures by American artist Sanford Biggers, composed of elements alluding to African artistic traditions and canonical Graeco-Roman sculptures, such as Phidias' statue of Zeus at Olympia and Praxiteles' Aphrodite of Knidos. The question of beauty and its figurations in the history of sculpture is one that, as Biggers says, the hybridized statues of the *Chimera* series invite us to explore.⁵⁸

In other areas of the visual arts, the conversation about beauty in relation to classical antiquity has trended in a different direction. New classical architecture, or new classicism, is a contemporary architectural movement that has gained huge momentum in the last two decades. Conceived as a return to the classical tradition, the movement was forged in the fervent architectural debates of the 1980s to counter the prevailing modernist architecture of the twentieth century.⁵⁹ Beauty stars among the professed values motivating new classical architecture.⁶⁰ Unlike other strands of postmodernism, which have questioned what the aesthetic heritage of classical antiquity might mean now in the particular sociopolitical and cultural climate of the twenty-first century, proponents of new classicism have tended to champion 'the timeless beauty of classicism'.⁶¹ In this respect, the movement owes much to its near namesake and predecessor, the neoclassicism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which similarly regarded ancient Graeco-Roman architecture and art as embodying ageless aesthetic truths.

As in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, such essentializing claims about the timeless beauty of classical architecture have become ideologically

56. Jonckheere 2022, 96–103. Cf. Scruton 2011, 141; Vout 2018, 219–21.

57. On postmodern artistic engagement with the classical tradition, see Prettejohn 2005, 196–202; Squire et al. 2018.

58. Castro 2021.

59. See Adam 2017, 87–97, 116–21; Chabard 2022, 66–78.

60. E.g., Watkin 2006, 6, 9; Dodd 2013; Terry 2013. The most distinguished honour for new classical architecture is the Richard H. Driehaus Prize, awarded to one individual each year 'in recognition of a broad-reaching body of work that has succeeded in encapsulating its namesake's values of beauty, durability and a commitment to place' (International Network for Traditional Building, Architecture and Urbanism 2023).

61. Dodd 2013, 20. Cf. Scruton 2013, 256; Watkin 2016. For more talk of beauty and timelessness in new classical architecture, see Ben Pentreath, n.d. On new classicism's (originally) hostile stance to postmodernism, see Chabard 2022, 66–78.

loaded, associated especially with the right wing of the political spectrum and, at the extreme end, harnessed by far-right groups to promote racist Eurocentric agendas.⁶² An awareness of architectural history, too often lacking in the dogmatic appeal to a supposedly immutable classical tradition at odds with all modern architecture, shows that ‘the political hijacking of architecture is always relative, unstable, and equivocal’.⁶³ It also shows that the political stakes of beauty tend to be high, for architecture as for many things.⁶⁴ Perhaps unsurprisingly, this is a recurring theme in the chapters that follow.

In the current debate about beauty, then, the arts of Graeco-Roman antiquity have been drawn on to differing ends—to question, justify, and condemn a range of practices and values, artistic, social, political, and ethical. Their prominence in this debate owes much to their neoclassical reception in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which enshrined Graeco-Roman art and architecture among the canons of beauty for the modern Western world.⁶⁵ Since then, through successive phases of modernism and postmodernism, the changing perception and status of the visual arts of classical antiquity have calibrated changing contemporary attitudes to beauty in the public imagination. To put it another way, those ancient arts have been a favoured means, whether as ideal or antitype, for thinking through what beauty is in the present.

My focus here, by contrast, is on beauty in the past: on whether, how, and why ideas about beauty mattered for ancient Greeks in their relations with the gods. One thing this ancient side of beauty’s story does is set modern debates about beauty and the visual arts of classical antiquity in a broader view. It was primarily in their dealings with gods that Greeks made the art and architecture that has had such a lasting effect on modern aesthetic tastes. Most of the artworks in question were offerings to deities; many were representations of them too. Canonical elements of classical architecture that have become ubiquitous in the West and across the world, such as Doric and Ionic columns, pediments and friezes, and antefixes and acroteria, first appeared in the Archaic period

62. H. O’Brien 2018; Chabard 2022, 65.

63. Chabard 2022, 65. As Adam 2013, 65–66 points out, the classical tradition in architecture is constantly evolving; for some, however, it has been erroneously conflated with the pursuit of ‘a fictitious historical purity’.

64. In 2018, for example, Theresa May’s Conservative government launched the Building Better Building Beautiful Commission, advocating the beauty of the architectural environment as a civic value. See GOV.UK, n.d.

65. E.g., Le Roy 1758; Gerard 1759; Stuart and Revett [1762] 2007; Winckelmann [1764] 2006; Quatremère de Quincy 1788; G. Gordon 1822; Gwilt 1825.

on temples built to honour and house divinities. Enquiring whether the ancient Greeks who made, used, and viewed these artworks and buildings were concerned with beauty is, first, about ascertaining their significance in antiquity. It is about clarifying the ancient Greek value systems that gave meaning and power to artworks and buildings in their original, religious contexts.

This understanding of the past then has a direct bearing on the present, on our appreciation of the visual world we inhabit today, where the artistic and architectural heritage of classical antiquity is immediately apparent, on grand public buildings, trinkets, and everything in between. At the roots of many of these artistic and architectural traditions lies the religious and aesthetic culture of Archaic Greece. Bringing these roots to light affords a bigger picture, a sense of the long visual history behind current appearances. It also holds a mirror up to our own ideas about beauty. Discovering what was considered beautiful art and architecture in ancient Greece, how they were responded to, and why they were valued provides a foil to modern attitudes. What emerges is a fascinating blend of familiarity and otherness, a simultaneous similarity and difference that casts the historical specificity of our ideas about beauty in high relief.

Our relationship with history is always telling: an opportunity to learn about the present by unearthing new discoveries from that fabled foreign country of the past. Beauty's deep past can set beauty now in sharper focus.

Piecing Together Beauty and the Gods

While aspects of ancient Greek views on beauty might appear familiar, a great deal is profoundly alien. The danger, of course, lies in imposing modern expectations on ancient material. Sensitivity to the cultural and historical contingency of ancient aesthetic views is essential.⁶⁶ It is for this reason that textual sources, which showcase ancient Greek conceptions of beauty at particular times and places, are indispensable. Ideas about beauty obviously existed before the earliest surviving texts, but they remain largely inaccessible. This is why the Archaic period, when the literary record begins with the epics of Hesiod and Homer around the late eighth century BCE, marks the earliest period at which it is feasible to enquire and learn about beauty's role in the religious lives of ancient Greeks.

There are good reasons, then, that textual sources have dominated scholarship on beauty in ancient Greece and on ancient aesthetics in general. From Hesiod and Homer onwards, ancient Greek literature and inscriptions are pep-

66. Destrée and Murray 2015b, 1–5.

pered with references to beautiful things in diverse contexts. Yet what these texts readily show, as Plutarch's *Oracles at Delphi* attests, is that perceptions of beauty were often concerned with things that have left significant material remains—for example, art, architecture, and the topography of sites. Insofar as texts reveal a foreign aesthetic culture, they also invite us to look at ancient archaeological evidence in light of Greek ideas about beauty.

A large proportion of this book is dedicated to this task. Scholars of Greek religion are confronted with a bewildering surfeit of sources ranging across the textual and archaeological records: from poetic depictions of deities to visual images of them in myriad shapes, sizes, and media; from lengthy inscriptions stipulating religious customs to passing literary remarks about eccentric local practices; from hymns composed for gods to buildings designed to house and please them; from the incalculable number and variety of objects given to gods in sanctuaries to the varied natural landscapes of the sanctuaries themselves.⁶⁷ However daunting, it is important to recognise how fortunate we are to possess such variety and the opportunities it brings for using different types of evidence in complementary ways. Literary sources like Plutarch's *Oracles at Delphi* offer precious insights into how sacred sites and objects were perceived. By the same token, the archaeological remains of sites and objects enrich our understanding of texts.

One of the challenges of this approach is that attitudes to beauty are diverse, inconstant, and dependent on context. It is a fair assumption that aesthetic tastes varied considerably between one individual and another at any one time during the Archaic period. But if aesthetic tastes are shaped not only by personal predisposition but also by culture, then the diverse literary products of a culture may illustrate the wider aesthetic values and expectations that informed individual tastes. Archaic Greek texts provide a touchstone for interpreting contemporary archaeological material by illuminating the perceptual and conceptual world in which such material existed and had meaning for Archaic Greeks.

In cultural terms, of course, the Archaic Greek world was neither monolithic nor homogeneous. Distinct local cultures evolved within a panhellenic matrix; local particularities intersected with commonalities shared by different Greek communities. This applies to aesthetic sensibilities and values, which were informed by an expanding scale of determining factors from the personal to the local to the panhellenic. Given the patchy condition of the Archaic textual record, access to these local aesthetic cultures is necessarily curtailed. For the

67. See Parker 2011, viii–ix.

interpretation of archaeological material, this means paying careful attention, where possible, to local contemporary textual sources for ideas about beauty, and seeing how they relate to widespread attitudes to beauty demonstrable across the literary record—that is, to a general aesthetic cultural system. This general system is also informative in its own right, as it can be used to assess the ways in which, say, sculptures and temples echoed, evoked, or diverged from common ideas and expectations about beauty. A catholic approach to the available textual evidence is therefore necessary, all the while sensitive to peculiar notions of beauty at different times and places.

Because of its relevance in many areas, as ancient texts show, the subject of beauty is one that, like Greek religion, cuts across the subdisciplines of literature, philosophy, history, and archaeology that structure the study of Graeco-Roman antiquity. The same goes for other topics of aesthetic enquiry, concerned as it is (according to the view outlined earlier) with the character of perception and experience, the standards of evaluative judgement and affective responses that were, and still are, omnipresent in everyday life. The latter are germane to analysing all kinds of ancient sources. Like Greek relations with gods, aesthetic questions defy disciplinary boundaries.

This is partly why I think they are important for Classics now more than ever, as the discipline becomes increasingly fractured and specialised within its various subfields. As the German classicist Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff said in 1921, ‘Because the life we strive to fathom is a single whole, our science too is a single whole. Its division into the separate disciplines of language and literature, archaeology, ancient history, epigraphy, numismatics and, latterly, papyrology . . . must not be allowed to stifle awareness of the whole, even in the specialist.’⁶⁸ Our vision of the ancient world is necessarily fragmented. Piecing together the literary, epigraphic, and archaeological fragments of that world may provide a clearer view.

In the last fifty years, one great advance in the study of Greek antiquity has been to uncover the deep connections between ancient Greeks and their neighbours in the ancient Near East, such as the Persians, Hittites, Phoenicians, Israelites, Egyptians, Assyrians, and Babylonians.⁶⁹ The old, problematic assumption of Greek cultural autonomy has been dismantled to reveal an ancient world

68. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff [1921] 1982, 1.

69. E.g., Walcot 1966; West 1966; 1997; Bernal 1987; 1991; 2006; Burkert 1992; 2004; Penglase 1994; Dalley 1998; J. Brown 2003; Bremmer 2008; Lane Fox 2008; Gunter 2009; López-Ruiz 2010; 2014; Loudon 2011; Haubold 2013; Metcalf 2015; Bachvarova 2016; Metcalf and Kelly 2021.

evolving through transcultural exchange of ideas, stories, goods, and technologies.⁷⁰ Throughout this book, I draw on comparative material from the ancient Near East to set the story within a wider frame and shed light on the relationship between the beautiful and the divine in Archaic Greece. Both the similarities and differences exposed by cultural comparisons are instructive.

My hope is that the approach I have taken here will foster connections between disciplines within Classics and beyond it. As I have explained, the nature of the topic under consideration calls for an interdisciplinary approach to elucidate the variety of contexts in which the relationship between beauty and the gods in Archaic Greece had a meaningful presence and effect. The legacy of this relationship in antiquity and thereafter similarly transcends disciplinary lines, echoing in the diverse fields of modern art and architecture, philosophy, and Christian theology. More broadly, the rationale behind my approach, including the comparisons with the literature and archaeology of the ancient Near East, has been to show that the principal theme of this book is a general one. Beauty's link with divinity and divine revelation, with the natural world, and with religious ritual, poetry, music, art, and architecture are topics central to many societies and religions throughout history, assuming many guises and underpinned by diverse theological outlooks. Beauty's relation with the sacred has been and remains a cornerstone in the religious lives of people across the world.

In a society where organized religion is in decline, it is easy to lose sight of this fact. The past two decades in the West, however, have witnessed a surge of spiritual outlets and quasi-religions catering to the spiritual, ritualistic, and community-oriented needs that organized religion once served.⁷¹ Religious habits and impulses are not disappearing but being redirected and expressed in new ways. What this new religious landscape means for beauty, and its changing place in society, remains to be seen.

The Terminology for Beauty in Greek

As I have stressed, texts are a vital point of access to ancient Greek notions of beauty. In the first instance, they show how beauty was conveyed in the Greek language, the terms and phrases, their connotations and contexts of use. Whether or not we subscribe to the view that the limits of one's language are the limits of one's world, it is undeniable that the terminology for beauty in

70. On the former resistance to this view, see Bernal 1987; López-Ruiz 2014, 155–59.

71. On this phenomenon, see T. Burton 2020.

Greek betrays a great deal about the conception and status of beauty in ancient Greece. What is more, it raises significant methodological questions concerning the relationship between ancient and modern conceptual categories. So, how was beauty expressed in Greek? What follows is by no means exhaustive but rather intended to introduce some important aspects of the Greek terminology for beauty. More detailed analysis of particular words appears at appropriate points throughout the book.

For the most part, studies of how beauty is expressed in Greek have sought to mitigate the task's inherent difficulties by restricting the scope of enquiry to the most obvious lexical suspects. The adjective *kalos*, the most common Greek word for 'beautiful', has enjoyed the bulk of attention, while its cognate noun, *kallos*, has recently been brought into the picture as a significant Greek term for 'beauty'.⁷² These are certainly key words, but was the Greek terminology for beauty limited to a single semantic family?

To answer yes is to deny that *kalos* and *kallos* overlapped in meaning with other Greek terms and phrases that could express what we call beauty. This plainly contradicts the evidence of Greek texts, where various words are often used interchangeably to emphasise or convey different aspects of something's beauty. The same is standard in most languages. In English, for example, 'exquisite', 'lovely', and 'gorgeous' are often used synonymously with 'beautiful'. Similarly in ancient Greek, we find a collection of terms and phrases that share certain family resemblances and are used to signify beauty in nuanced ways.⁷³

The most prolific of these is the adjective *kalos*, applied to everything from people, animals, and objects to places, sounds, and ideas. In many cases, 'beautiful' is an apt translation of *kalos* in denoting a general, attractive aspect of appearance applicable to a broad spectrum of visual and audible objects. The same is true for the cognate adjective *perikallēs*, which intensifies the meaning of *kalos* and can be rendered as 'very beautiful' or 'exquisite' in each case. Though things described as *kalos* vary greatly, some recurring features are discernible. Radiance is a common trait, like Hera's tresses that are 'shining, beautiful' (*phaeinous kalous*).⁷⁴ The precious metals gold, silver, and bronze are also widely associated with *kalos*. The phrase 'beautiful, golden' (*kalos chruseios*) is standard in

72. On *kalos*, see, e.g., *LfgGE* s.v. κάλός; Dover 1978, 15–16, 69; Hyland 2008, 5; Barney 2010; Ford 2010; T. Irwin 2010; Kosman 2010; Fine 2018, esp. 1–24. On *kallos*, see Konstan 2014; 2015a.

73. See Shakeshaft 2019.

74. *Hom. Il.* 14.176–77. Cf. *Hom. Il.* 6.295; 14.185–86; 19.379–80; *Hom. Od.* 15.107–8; *Hom. Hy.* 5.88–90. On the aesthetics of radiance in Greek culture, see Prier 1989, 50–56; Neer 2010, 59–68; Konstan 2014, 42; Shakeshaft 2019, 4.

Archaic Greek epic.⁷⁵ Large size is another common property. Men, women, animals, objects, and natural phenomena that are ‘beautiful’ (*kalos*) are very often ‘big.’⁷⁶ Things that are *kalos* are shown to produce a range of effects, notably love, desire, pleasure, delight, admiration, and wonder. Hermes ‘desired’ Polymele, ‘beautiful [*kalē*] in the dance.’⁷⁷ Apollo ‘delighted as he listened’ to the ‘beautiful [*kalon*] paean’ of the Achaeans.⁷⁸ Aphrodite’s ‘beautiful [*kaloi*], golden’ necklaces ‘shone like the moon around her tender breast, a wonder to behold [*thauma idesthai*].’⁷⁹ In both its range of applications and effects, *kalos* parallels the English term ‘beautiful’.

Kalos, however, also shades towards meaning ‘good’. ‘It is *kalos* to do this’, for instance, is a standard way of saying it is ‘good/appropriate’ to do this. The semantic range of *kalos* seems to imply that if something *looks* good, then it is good. As a result, scholars have doubted whether Greeks could distinguish between someone’s beauty and their ‘goodness’—that is, moral virtue or excellence of character.⁸⁰ Greek literature shows from its inception that the distinction could be clearly seen. One example in the *Iliad* is Paris, the man who stole Menelaus’ wife, profaned the sacred laws of hospitality, and shrinks from the fighting like a coward, but who nonetheless has a ‘beautiful appearance’ (*kalon eidos*).⁸¹ In one poetic fragment, Sappho reflects on the moral connotations and ambiguity of *kalos*: ‘for one man is beautiful [*kalos*] insofar as appearances are concerned, but the man who is good [*agathos*] will immediately be beautiful [*kalos*] too.’⁸² The moral connotations of *kalos* became more prominent during the Archaic period.⁸³ By the Classical period, the adjective might variously mean ‘beautiful’, ‘fine’, ‘noble’, or ‘good’.⁸⁴

75. E.g., Hom. *Il.* 5.730–31; 14.351; 22.315–16; Hom. *Od.* 1.137; 4.53; 7.173; 24.3; Hom. *Hy.* 5.89; 6.8; Hes. [*Sc.*] 125. Cf. Hom. *Il.* 12.295; 18.130–31; 19.370; Hom. *Od.* 4.614–16; Hes. *Theog.* 216; *Thebais* fr. 2.4.

76. E.g., Hom. *Il.* 3.167–70; 6.294; 10.436; 18.83–84, 518; 21.108; Hom. *Od.* 1.301; 3.199; 6.276; 9.426; 10.227, 396; 11.309–10; 13.289; 14.5–7; 15.107, 418; 16.158; Hom. *Hy.* 5.266–67. See Shakeshaft 2019, 4.

77. Hom. *Il.* 16.180–82. Cf. Hom. *Il.* 20.223–25; Hom. *Od.* 11.238–39, 281–82.

78. Hom. *Il.* 1.473–74. Cf. Hom. *Od.* 12.188–92.

79. Hom. *Hy.* 89–90. Cf. Hom. *Il.* 3.396–98; 18.83–84, 466–67; Hom. *Od.* 17.306–7; 19.34–36.

80. See, e.g., A. Stewart 1986, 60; Eco 2004, 37; Kosman 2010; Lear 2010, 358; Sofroniew 2015, 54.

81. Hom. *Il.* 3.44–45. For other examples, see Hom. *Il.* 2.673–75; 3.392; Hom. *Od.* 8.166–77.

82. Sapph. fr. 50.

83. See Konstan 2014, 43–50.

84. See Janaway 1998, 58–79; Barney 2010; Kosman 2010.

Two important points follow from this observation. First, the Greek terminology for beauty was not static because the meanings and uses of words evolved. The noun *kallos*, for example, has a limited range of application in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, where with one exception it refers to anthropomorphic appearance.⁸⁵ The narrative contexts of its early use also demonstrate the word's strong association with desire.⁸⁶ Aphrodite tries to entice Helen to Paris with the image of him 'glistening with beauty [*kallei*]', while Homeric women are courted and married 'for the sake of their beauty [*kallos*].'⁸⁷ In these early instances, *kallos* unambiguously signifies 'beauty' in the narrow sense of desirable physical appearance. During the Archaic and Classical periods, the word's range of use expanded, coming to denote the 'beauty' of many things: people, places, artworks, and, for Plato, Beauty itself.⁸⁸ New words might also enter the terminology for beauty. In Hesiod and Homer, the noun *hōra* principally refers to any fixed period of time, like a 'season' or 'time' of day, having not yet acquired the sense of 'youthful beauty' that appears later in the Archaic period.⁸⁹

The changing nature of the Greek terminology for beauty foregrounds the second important point: context is critical in determining 'the shade, the fine distinction' of a word's aesthetic meaning.⁹⁰ The semantic development and breadth of *kalos*, which subsumes and surpasses the range of the English word 'beautiful', indicate that trying to pin it down to a one-word translation will not suffice. Different contexts of use trigger different meanings. If in one context *kalos* means 'good' and in another 'beautiful', what this shows is that its range of signification does not correspond exactly with our word 'beautiful', not that they are altogether different. The same applies to the relationship between practically all ancient Greek words and their various equivalents in all other languages. There is not one Greek word for 'beauty' and one for 'beautiful' but a cluster of terms that are conceptually interconnected and relate in various ways to our words 'beauty' and 'beautiful'.

Another example is the noun *charis* and the cognate adjective *charieis*. *Charis* denotes 'pleasure', 'delight', or that which causes this feeling. Because *charis*

85. The exception is a mixing bowl (Hom. *Il.* 23.741–43).

86. Konstan 2014; 2015b.

87. Hom. *Il.* 3.392; 13.428–33; Hom. *Od.* 11.281–82. Cf. Hom. *Il.* 20.233–35; Hom. *Od.* 15.251.

88. Konstan 2014, 35–61, 97–108; Pl. *Phdr.* 250b.

89. Cf. Mimn. fr. 3.1; Pind. *Ol.* 10.104; Xen. *Mem.* 2.1.22; Pl. *Leg.* 837b; Aeschin. 1.134.

90. The quote is from Arnold 1862, 11. On the importance of sensitivity to semantics when analysing foreign notions of beauty, see Sartwell 2004.

can refer to that which causes pleasure, its meaning varies depending on context. As a pleasing, attractive property of things, it can denote ‘beauty’: ‘great beauty [*charis*] shone from’ the earrings of Hera and Penelope.⁹¹ *Charis* and *charieis* at times appear interchangeable with *kallos* and *kalos* as words for ‘beauty’ and ‘beautiful’. Helenus recommends a ‘very attractive’ (*chariestatos*) robe as a gift for Athena, so Hecuba chooses the one that is ‘most beautiful’ (*kallistos*).⁹² Athena pours ‘beauty’ (*charis*) on Odysseus, who consequently ‘glistens with *kallos* and *charis*’ and inspires admiration.⁹³ The use of both *kallos* and *charis* underlines Odysseus’ beauty, just as Sappho addresses a bride as ‘beautiful one, attractive one’ (*ō kalē, ō chariessa*).⁹⁴ For idiomatic reasons, we might translate as ‘glistening with beauty and grace’, but ‘grace’ is not a satisfactory equivalent for *charis*. In denoting beauty with respect to motion, posture, and elegance of proportions, ‘grace’ is more specific in meaning than *charis*, which approximates modern Western notions of beauty in its conceptual breadth and variety of applications. The beauty of people, objects, sounds, and activities are all conveyed by *charis* from the earliest Greek literature.⁹⁵ *Charis* also produces a broad spectrum of effects, ranging from desire to admiration and reverential respect.⁹⁶ At their core, *charis* and modern Western notions of beauty share a broad sense of pleasure-bearing power.

Critically, *charis* has a social sphere of meaning too. A pleasing act from one person to another—that is, a ‘favour’—is signified by *charis*. To do someone a favour—in Greek, ‘to offer someone *charis*’—carries a certain expectation of gratitude and reciprocity.⁹⁷ The pleasure felt by the beneficiary of a favour—‘gratitude’—is also conveyed by *charis*.⁹⁸ In sum, *charis* denotes both ‘beauty’ and an ideal of social reciprocity based on the pleasing exchange of gifts and favours.⁹⁹ This ideal was integral to ancient Greek religion.¹⁰⁰ Gifts of all sorts were offered to deities in hope of inspiring their pleasure and favour (*charis*), including

91. Hom. *Il.* 14.183; Hom. *Od.* 18.298. Cf. Hom. *Od.* 8.19; Hes. *Theog.* 583.

92. Hom. *Il.* 6.90, 294. Cf. Hom. *Od.* 9.5, 11.

93. Hom. *Od.* 6.235–37.

94. Sapph. fr. 108.

95. E.g., Hom. *Il.* 14.183; Hom. *Od.* 8.175; 15.320; Hes. *Op.* 65; Hom. *Hy.* 2.215; 3.153; Semon. fr. 7.89; Alc. fr. 3.71; Pind. *Pyth.* 2.70–71; Pind. fr. 75.1–2. Shakeshaft 2019, 7–9.

96. Cf. Hom. *Od.* 6.235–37; 8.19–22.

97. E.g., Hom. *Il.* 5.211; 9.613.

98. E.g., Hom. *Od.* 4.695.

99. On *charis*, see Latacz 1966, 78–98; Maclachlan 1993; von Reden 1995, 83–84, 150–51; Kurke 1999, 126–28, 137–39, 151–52, 292–93; Parker 1998; Beekes 2010, s.v. *chairō*; Shakeshaft 2019, 7–9.

100. Parker 1998; Parker 2011, x.

libations, sacrifices, dances, processions, and material objects. *Charis* is therefore an important concept for this book, both as a term for beauty and as a principle of social interaction governing Greek relations with deities. One of the central aims of the book is to explore and explain the interconnection between these social and aesthetic senses of *charis* in the religious lives of Archaic Greeks.

The *kalos-kallos* and *charis-charieis* semantic families display a high degree of conceptual overlap, demonstrated by their range of meanings, common uses, and mutual association with certain physical properties (such as radiance) and affects (such as desire, pleasure, and wonder).¹⁰¹ That said, each term has its own aesthetic nuances, whether it is the moral connotations of the adjective *kalos*, the noun *kallos*' connection with desire, or the broad idea of pleasure-bearing power conveyed by *charis* and *charieis*.

Another term for beauty, *aglaia*, is similarly idiosyncratic. In Homer, *aglaia* connotes a glamorous, superficial kind of beauty often accompanied by a certain pride and pageantry.¹⁰² Odysseus wonders whether the dog Argos has speed to match his 'fine form' (*kalos . . . demas*) or is like one of those 'table dogs' that 'masters tend for the sake of their *aglaïē*'—that is, 'for their [superficial] beauty', 'for the sake of show'.¹⁰³ The pomp and splendour of *aglaia* explains why in later Archaic sources, like the Hesiodic *Shield*, it can mean 'festivity' in the sense of beautiful and splendid display.¹⁰⁴

Aglaia's cognate adjective, *aglaos*, is applied to many things, including gifts, prizes, people, women's handiwork, water, and sacred groves. Though *aglaos* is often seen as connoting radiance, the range and the distribution of its use in fact show that it points to affect.¹⁰⁵ That *aglaos* designates a general, delightful quality is underpinned by its likely derivation from *agallomai*, 'to delight in', 'be proud of'. In many cases, it is evidently the physical appearance of objects that makes them 'delightful', 'splendid' (*aglaos*), and here 'beautiful' makes an apt approximation.¹⁰⁶ The adjective's appearance in conjunction with *kalos* and

101. For more on the relation between *kalos-kallos* and *charis-charieis* in Homer, see Shakeshaft 2019, 2–9.

102. Shakeshaft 2019, 10–11.

103. Hom. *Od.* 17.307–10. Cf. Hom. *Od.* 18.180–81, 321; 19.81–82; Hom. *Il.* 6.506–11. *Aglaia*'s link with *charis* as a term for beauty is suggested by the fact that one of the deities who personify *charis*—the Charites—is called *Aglaïē* (Hes. *Theog.* 946–47).

104. Hes. [Sc.] 272–76. Cf. Pind. *Ol.* 13.14.

105. See Shakeshaft 2019, 9–10.

106. The inference of radiance to *aglaos* and *aglaia* in modern scholarship may be owed to the fact that visually delightful things—denoted by *aglaos* and *aglaia*—are often radiant in Greek literature; but this is different from these words themselves signifying radiance.

charieis reinforces this sense. Circe's 'big web' is one of those 'attractive and beautiful works' (*charienta kai aglaa erga*) that goddesses make.¹⁰⁷ It is not always clear, however, that *aglaos* denotes something 'delightful' in an aesthetic sense. The same is true of things that are *charieis*, which might be 'pleasing' aesthetically or otherwise. Like *kalos* and *charieis*, *aglaos* does not unambiguously signify 'beautiful'. All three adjectives intersect with and diverge from the word 'beautiful' in different ways, again underlining the importance of context in clarifying the aesthetic nuances of Greek words.

Expressing beauty, however, does not depend on an explicit word for 'beauty' or 'beautiful'. The Greek lexicon contains numerous terms and phrases that convey beauty implicitly. Two important cases are the nouns *agalma* and *kosmos*, which will be analysed in greater depth later in the book. The noun *agalma* is used to refer to many things in Archaic Greek literature and inscriptions. What makes, for example, animals, jewellery, textiles, statues, and ceramics all *agalmata* is suggested by the noun's derivation from the verb *agallomai*, 'to delight in', 'be proud of': an *agalma* is an 'object of delight' that someone may be proud to own.¹⁰⁸ In the *Iliad*, an ivory cheekpiece for a horse, stained with purple dye, is an 'object of delight' (*agalma*) for its owner and an 'ornament', 'adornment' (*kosmos*) for the horse.¹⁰⁹ As this example suggests, the delight provided by an *agalma* is often thanks to its beautiful visual features, underscored here by the fact that it is also a *kosmos*.

On the one hand, *kosmos* signifies 'order' in a social, moral, or physical sense.¹¹⁰ The last sense explains why *kosmos* also denotes 'ornament', 'adornment'; when things appear well ordered, they have an ornamental, beautifying effect.¹¹¹ The semantic range of *kosmos* encapsulates this idea from its earliest uses, as in the *Iliad* when Hera beautifies herself with ornaments (*kosmos*) by carefully setting each in place.¹¹² Likewise, the verb *kosmeō* means both 'I order', 'arrange', and 'I adorn', 'embellish', as when Athena 'adorned' (*kosmēse*)

107. Hom. *Od.* 10.222–23.

108. On *agalma*, see, e.g., M. Lazzarini 1976, 276–79; D. Steiner 2001, 83–84, 121–22; Day 2010, 85–129; Lanèrès 2012; Shakeshaft 2019, 12–13.

109. Hom. *Il.* 4.141–45.

110. For various social, political, and philosophical aspects of *kosmos* in ancient Greece, see Kahn 1960, 219–30; Cartledge 1998; A. Finkelberg 1998; Horkey 2019a.

111. For aesthetic nuances of the term, see Mikalson 2016, 254; Shakeshaft 2019, 13–14.

112. Hom. *Il.* 14.187. Cf. Hom. *Hy.* 5.79–90, 162–66; 27.17.

Pandora with ‘silvery clothing’ in Hesiod’s *Theogony*.¹¹³ The Sophist Gorgias puns on the double meaning of *kosmos* in his encomium to Helen: ‘For a city its *kosmos* [order/ornament] is good citizenry, for the body its *kosmos* is beauty [*kallos*], for the soul it is wisdom, for deeds it is excellence, for speech it is truth.’¹¹⁴ *Kosmos* is, as Gorgias shows, another beauty term with a wide range of applicability, indicating the many cultural domains in which ideas of ornamentation were considered important.¹¹⁵

Narrower in scope, though equally indicative of Greek aesthetic concerns and priorities, are the numerous terms and phrases dedicated to bodily beauty. The nouns *eidōs* (‘appearance’, ‘looks’), *demās* (‘form’, ‘shape’), *megethos* (‘size’, ‘height’), and *phuē* (‘form’, ‘build’) constitute standard bodily criteria in Archaic Greek thought. They are often qualified with adjectives like ‘good’ (*eūs*), ‘better’ (*ameinōn*), ‘best’ (*aristos*), and ‘admirable’ (*agētos*) to express physical beauty.¹¹⁶ In *Iliad* 3, Paris both ‘glistens with beauty [*kallei*]’ and is ‘best in looks’ (*eidōs ariste*).¹¹⁷ In what is the earliest evidence for Greek beauty contests, Alcaeus refers to women on Lesbos ‘being judged in form [*phuan*]’.¹¹⁸ Here the noun appears unqualified in an implicitly positive sense, as does *eidōs* when Hector refers to Paris’ ‘hair and looks [*eidōs*]’.¹¹⁹ *Eidōs* is sometimes translated therefore as ‘beauty’.¹²⁰ We should beware making this leap, however, because *eidōs* can also be combined with a negative adjective to convey ugliness. Dolon, for instance, was ‘bad in appearance’ (*eidōs . . . kakos*).¹²¹ As the criteria by which people are physically differentiated, the nouns *eidōs*, *demās*, *megethos*, and *phuē* are often used to relativise bodily beauty. In the *Catalogue of Women*, Hesiod envisages a mythical past that abounded with heroines ‘lovely in appearance’ (*polyēraton eidōs*), who ‘rivalled the immortal goddesses in looks [*eidōs*]’.¹²²

As this last example shows, divine analogy is another method of conveying human beauty that is especially common in Archaic epic, ranging from

113. Hes. *Theog.* 573. Cf. Hes. *Op.* 72; *Hom. Hy.* 5.64–65.

114. Gorg. *Hel.* 1–2.

115. On ornament in Graeco-Roman art, see N. Dietrich and Squire 2018.

116. See Shakeshaft 2019, 14–16.

117. *Hom. Il.* 3.39, 392.

118. Alc. fr. 130B.17. On Greek beauty contests, see Gherchanoc 2016.

119. *Hom. Il.* 3.54–55.

120. E.g., Blondell 2013, 5.

121. *Hom. Il.* 10.316.

122. Hes. *Cat.* 10. 32; 13.7; 19.10; 33.12; 182.14. Cf. Hes. [*Sc.*] 4–5.

epithets like ‘godlike in appearance’ (*theoeidēs*) to extended similes. The representation of beauty by divine comparison is entirely oblique. That is to say, the mortal analogue’s beauty is inferred because gods are known to be exceptionally beautiful. It is by the same logic that certain physical properties and affects can in themselves evoke a sense of beauty.¹²³

In Alcman’s first maiden-song, for example, Hagesichora’s hair ‘blossoms like undefiled gold, her face like silver’—an image that conveys her beauty thanks to the aesthetic connotations of gold and silver.¹²⁴ What is more, her hair is not just like gold but ‘undefiled gold’; Ibycus similarly emphasises the beauty of Troilus by likening him to the purest kind of ‘thrice-refined gold’.¹²⁵ Of all physical properties described as beautiful in Archaic Greek literature, none competes with radiance. Even beauty itself is radiant, as when ‘immortal beauty [*kallos*] shone from’ the cheeks of Aphrodite.¹²⁶ Accordingly, radiance has an aestheticising effect. (For the sake of convenience, I use the verb ‘aestheticise’ throughout the book in its conventional meaning, ‘to represent as beautiful.’) To ‘have the sparkle of the Charites’, for example, is a recurrent formula for conveying female beauty in the *Catalogue of Women*. Similarly, the ‘bright sparkle’ of Anactoria’s face conjures the beauty that Sappho’s speaker loves and longs for.¹²⁷

In short, the common ingredients of Archaic beauty have an aestheticising power of their own. In addition to certain physical properties such as radiance and gold, this includes a spectrum of affects, such as desire, pleasure, delight, admiration, and wonder. Since love and desire are standard responses to beauty, the many Greek words for ‘lovely’ and ‘desirable’ (*epēratos*, *erateinos*, *himeroeis*, and so on) can express beauty, especially when combined with other associated affects. Tyrtaeus depicts a soldier who is ‘marvellous [*thēētos*] in the eyes of men and desirable [*eratos*] in the eyes of women’.¹²⁸ There is little doubt that this man is beautiful, just as in one of Alcman’s choral lyrics the erotic impact of the maiden Astymeloisa is

123. See Shakeshaft 2019, 17–22.

124. Alcman fr. 1.53–55. For the beauty of gold and silver, see, e.g., Hom. *Il.* 5.722–31; 8.41–45; 9.389; 10.439; 17.53–60; Hom. *Od.* 4.614–19; Hom. *Hy.* 3.135–36; 4.249–51; 5.64–65, 88–89; Mimn. 12.5–7; Alcman fr. 5 (2 col. ii); Thgn. 1105–6. Cf. Pl. *Hp. mai.* 289e.

125. Ibycus S151.42–43. See C. Wilkinson 2012, 29.

126. Hom. *Hy.* 5.174–75. Cf. Hom. *Il.* 3.392; 14.183; Hom. *Od.* 6.237; 18.297; Hom. *Hy.* 2.276–80.

127. Hes. *Cat.* 41.38; 47.3; 123.20; 154a.6; Sapph. fr. 16.18.

128. Tyrtaeus fr. 10.29. Cf. Hom. *Od.* 8.366.

testimony to her beauty.¹²⁹ Similarly in the *Odyssey*, Homer describes Neleus' daughter, Pero, as 'a wonder [*thauma*] to mortals, whom all the men in the neighbourhood courted.'¹³⁰ In the context of courtship, the 'wonder' inspired by Pero demonstrates her beauty. In another instance, however, it might have a different meaning. The Cyclops 'was a massive wonder [*thauma*]', but hardly beautiful.¹³¹ Not everything wonderful, desirable, or radiant is necessarily beautiful. Sensitivity to context is therefore essential in determining where the outer boundaries of Greek beauty lie.

These boundaries may be more porous and indistinct than perhaps we would like, but it does not follow that we should deny that things desirable, wonderful, or radiant can ever be expressive of beauty. For whatever interpretive challenges they pose, they have an important place in the broad semantic field of Greek beauty. Since so many things can be beautiful, for so many different reasons, and with so many different effects, it is hardly surprising that beauty's boundaries are not clearly defined. As Edmund Burke said, 'A clear idea is . . . another name for a little idea.'¹³² In one of Plato's dialogues, Socrates learns this when he fails to define *kalos*, realising instead the proverbial truth that 'beautiful things are difficult'.¹³³

Neither the proverb nor Burke's adage gives license to vagueness when interrogating big ideas like beauty. Rather, they acknowledge its challenges, one of which lies in not shying away from how big Greek beauty is. Limiting the search to *kalos* and *kallos*, for example, makes the task more manageable but neglects the fact that these words were imbricated with other terms and phrases that were often used interchangeably, for emphasis or to evoke different nuances of aesthetic meaning. This layering effect testifies to the interconnection between these various terms and phrases, as does their mutual association with a common affective register and certain physical properties.

To group diverse Greek terms and phrases together is not to efface their differences or force them into a modern mould of beauty. It is to recognise that they share conceptual common ground both with each other and, in various ways, with modern notions of beauty, however elusive and mutable.

129. Alcman fr. 3.61–64. Cf. Hes. *Theog.* 907–11; Sappho, fr. 31; Thgn. 1365; Pind. fr. 123; Pl. *Phdr.* 251a–252b. On eroticisation as a formulaic means of expressing beauty in Alcman and Sappho, see Most 1982, 97; Lardinois 2001.

130. Hom. *Od.* 11.287–88.

131. Hom. *Od.* 9.190; cf. 256–57. Cf. Theoc. *Id.* 11.

132. Burke 1773, 108.

133. Pl. *Hp. mai.* 304e.

To gain access to Greek ideas about beauty, this entire lexical array must be considered, ever attentive to context and the relationships between ancient terms and their modern counterparts. From Hesiod and Homer onwards, the Greek language contains a remarkably rich terminology for beauty.

The Structure of the Book

Since the epics of Hesiod and Homer constitute the earliest surviving Greek literature, they provide an appropriate place to begin. More than that, their poetry exercised a seismic influence on Greek attitudes to the beautiful and the divine from the Archaic period to Plutarch in the early second century CE to late antiquity and beyond. Chapter 1 examines the relationship between beauty and the gods in early Greek epic, principally in Hesiod's *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and the *Homeric Hymns*. Substituting the 'and' in my title for different prepositions highlights the different lines of enquiry by which this relationship is explored: beauty *of* the gods, *from* the gods, *like* the gods, and *for* the gods. The chapter foregrounds many ideas and themes that recur throughout the book by immersing the reader in the narrative world of early Greek epic, a mythical past distant from the historical present of the poems' performance and reception but no less meaningful as a result.

Chapter 2 follows from the first as it bridges the world portrayed in literary sources with the reality of their performance, which was often religious in character. Music, song, and dance, what the Greeks called *mousikē*, were at the heart of Greek relations with the divine. As well as important sources of knowledge about gods, the performance of hymns, music, and dance were ubiquitous in divine worship. And thanks to its divine origins, *mousikē* had a special power to connect humans with gods. The significance of beauty for these 'gifts of the Muses' is the subject of chapter 2. After examining the representation of divine beauty in Archaic hymns, I turn to the value ascribed to human beauty in performances of music, song, and dance for deities. This is considered through various literary and archaeological sources, including hymns composed in hexameter verse, choral lyric, and visual images of musical performers. As in much of the book, in this chapter I seek to give a big picture by ranging widely, at times zooming in for more in-depth discussion of particular sources. One case study is Alcman's first maiden-song, the earliest substantial fragments of Greek choral poetry, and among the most complex

and beguiling sources for beauty's role in ritual interaction with the divine in Archaic Greece.

According to Theon in Plutarch's *Oracles at Delphi*, the flourishing trees in Apollo's sanctuary signify the god's presence.¹³⁴ There is nothing unusual about Theon's observation: Greek deities were inseparable from the natural world. They inhabit and haunt the rivers and springs, groves and meadows, caves and mountain peaks. They control all rhythms and processes of the natural world. The varied places and phenomena of the natural landscape were also fundamental to their worship. Chapter 3 focuses on this world full of gods, investigating what perceptions of beauty in nature had to do with the divine. In Archaic Greek poetry we find a natural world freighted with aesthetic and religious significance. As evidence of ecological and aesthetic ideas, these poetic landscapes provide the basis for the chapter's ensuing discussion of whether beauty mattered for the location and topography of sanctuaries. Archaic literature reveals that attitudes to beauty in the sacred landscape diverged significantly from those that have held sway in the modern era, influenced, not least, by generations of Grand Tourists and Romantic poets. The chapter then turns to the worship of natural phenomena and their use in sanctuaries. Natural water sources like springs and rivers occupied a place of honour in the Greek sacred landscape. To determine the relevance of ideas about beauty in cults that used and focused on water sources, I explore a variety of literary and archaeological sources, including a case study on a collection of Athenian vases decorated with scenes of women drawing water from sacred fountains. The final part of the chapter examines the beauty of plant forms that were standard elements in ritual and owed their common presence in Greek sanctuaries to their proximity to water: trees, meadows, and flowers.

Sanctuaries remain centre stage in the last two chapters of the book. Plutarch portrays Apollo's sanctuary at Delphi as a place of rich aesthetic interest, filled with beautiful buildings and votive objects. In this respect, Plutarch joins a host of Greek authors stretching back centuries who represent the gods' precincts in a similar light.¹³⁵ But was this always the case? How, when, and why did sanctuaries come to be seen in this way?

From the late eighth century to the early fifth, sanctuaries witnessed arguably their most dramatic period of change in all Greek history. Critical to this

134. Plut. *De Pyth*, or. 409a.

135. E.g., Pl. *Leg.* 6.761b–c; Dem. 3.25; Herod. *Mim.* 4; *Hesp. Suppl.* 15, no. 16.5–9, 14–18; I. *Eleusis* 93; SEG 25.226.40–42; Plut. *Non posse* 21, 1101E.

was the rapid development of Greek temples, buildings offered to gods as divine residences in human communities. In scholarship on Greek religion, temples have been severely shortchanged. It stands to reason, however, that in terms of their size, expense, visibility, longevity, and centrality in society, temples were the most significant gifts that Greeks gave their gods. Accordingly, they are the subject of the fourth and longest chapter, in which I explore how important ideas and experiences of beauty were for the communities and individuals who commissioned, designed, built, used, and viewed temples. I approach this question by looking in depth at two temples as case studies—the temple of Poseidon at Isthmia (ca. 690–650 BCE) and temple C at Selinus (ca. 540–510 BCE)—and by probing wider themes and patterns of development, including the politics of beauty in temple building, the general transformation of Archaic sacred architecture, and its consequences for religious life.

Chapter 5 expands the scope of enquiry to include all votive objects offered to deities in Archaic Greek sanctuaries. While temples were the biggest gifts to gods, the objects dedicated in and around them represent the most numerous and diverse relics of communication with the divine from the ancient Greek world. The immensity of the corpus of votives poses a challenge to discovering whether beauty was significant to the Greeks who made, dedicated, and viewed them. Because material adduced in a wholesale study of Archaic Greek votives must be highly selective, I have sought to strike a balance between broad coverage and more focused analysis. The chapter begins with detailed analysis of one votive, the Mantiklos statuette (ca. 700–675 BCE). I then examine the inscriptions that accompanied votives, which offer valuable evidence for the desires and values of worshippers across the Hellenic world. Most votives, however, were not accompanied by inscriptions; epigraphy can only show so much. A case study on the large collection of Archaic votives from the sanctuary of Orthia at Sparta aims to give a more precise picture of how ideas about beauty featured in the life of one particular cult. In the final part of the chapter, I revert to a broader lens to consider the question of beauty in relation to two types of votive that were prevalent in Greek sanctuaries and are among the defining products of Archaic Greek art: sculptures of youthful males (*kouroi*) and females (*korai*).

After summarising the central arguments of the five chapters, the conclusion looks ahead to the Classical period and beyond. In particular, I look at the work of two towering figures, the artist Phidias and philosopher Plato, whose impact on art, literature, philosophy, religion, and aesthetics continues to this day. If Plato's dialogues represent the most significant interventions on the

topic of beauty in philosophy of the Classical period, the laurels surely go to Phidias in the visual arts. Phidias' colossal gold and ivory statue of Zeus at Olympia, made in the 430s BCE, became the most famous artwork in the Graeco-Roman world, renowned for its exceptional beauty. Although the statue has not survived, its fame and ancient reproductions of it have ensured a distinguished legacy in the history of Western art: a persistent shadowy presence in images through the ages, from early and mediaeval depictions of Christ to portraits of American presidents and a recent sculpture, *Oracle* (2021), by Sanford Biggers in his *Chimera* series. The conclusion shows that the work of Phidias and Plato, while marking key junctures in the history of beauty, was built on old foundations. Both were deeply indebted to the cultural dialogue between the beautiful and the divine in Archaic Greece, and as a result, the echoes of this dialogue can still be heard today.