

THE SCIENCE OF MAN
IN ANCIENT GREECE



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With a Foreword by
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ONE

THE COLORS OF HUMANITY

1. A Woman's Place: Among the Shadows of the Home

Classical sources tell how, in the first half of the fourth century B.C., Parrhasius was criticized by his fellow painter Euphranor for depicting Theseus with the delicate color of a man "fed on roses" rather than on "ox meat," like Euphranor's own version of the hero.¹ We also know that Apelles was prone to give the women he portrayed, such as Alexander the Great's lover Pacate² and women of myth, fresh rosy complexions. Indeed, his picture of Aphrodite Anadyomene, for instance, was famous for this very reason.³ Yet the astonishment and admiration aroused by the naturalism of such works, and echoed in the ancient texts, show that the normal practice must have been quite different. In fact Greek painters generally made a more schematic distinction between the dark body of a man and the lighter-colored body of a woman.

According to Pliny this practice goes back to Eumares of Athens (sixth century B.C.).⁴ However, it is already found in Egyptian and Minoan frescoes, and it later characterizes the whole tradition of Greek

1. Plin. *Nat. hist.* XXXV 129; Plut. *Glor. Ath.* 346A. The image may be an echo of the description of Eros in Plato's *Symposium*, 196a, where the god's delicate skin is associated with the life he leads "among the flowers."

2. Luc. *Imag.* 7.

3. Cic. *Nat. deor.* I 75; see also Prop. I 2.22.

4. Plin. *Nat. hist.* XXXV 56.

vase painting, starting with the black figure vases of the seventh century B.C. It can also be seen on the walls of Etruscan tombs and in the houses of Pompeii.⁵ So this is something more than the invention of an individual artist, more indeed than a mere figurative convention. These various pictorial instances are only the more intense visual expression of a sense of opposition between the sexes which is powerfully active elsewhere and has all the force of a habit of thought. Let us first see how this sense of opposition is expressed in the literary sources, where it is not devoid, however, of vivid sensual imagery.

One of the figures in Homer that most haunts the reader's memory is that of "white-armed" Hera (*leukōlenos*).⁶ Aphrodite and mortal women such as Andromache, Nausicaa, and Penelope⁷ have white arms, too. The epithet is formulaic, thus little redolent of individual character. Yet this only further invests it with the force of a commonly accepted aesthetic canon. Thus, when Athena comes in revivifying sleep to anoint the face of Penelope with ambrosia and so restore her beauty, the queen becomes "whiter than sawn ivory,"⁸ whereas Odysseus, when touched by the goddess with a golden rod, recovers the brown skin and dark beard of his vigorous youth.⁹ Sometimes, it is true, even the Homeric warrior's skin is described as white and soft. Yet this is only to highlight the vulnerability of the parts not protected by armor in the fury of battle,¹⁰ almost recalling the way the graceful hand of Aphrodite darkens with blood when she is wounded by Diomedes.¹¹

The Greek word *leukos*, which is connected with the root of the Latin *lux*, both denotes the color white and expresses the idea of brilliance. It implies a special link with the realm of daylight and the Olympian gods (as opposed to the shadows of night and the somber hues of blood and death).¹² Used of the body of a woman, the term emphasizes her

5. Cf. Lepik-Kopaczyńska 1963. It is possible that in sculpture, too, lighter colors were used for females, though traces of the original coloring are too slight to be sure (Reuterswärd 1960, p. 73).

6. Hom. *Il.* I 55, 95, etc.

7. Hom. *Il.* V 314, VI 371, and *Od.* VII 12, XXIII 240, respectively.

8. Hom. *Od.* XVIII 196.

9. Hom. *Od.* XVI 175-76.

10. Hom. *Il.* XI 573 = XV 316.

11. Hom. *Il.* V 354. Monsacré (1984) makes the acute observation that a number of elements in the epic overturn (but also render more interesting and problematic) the superficial opposition between male heroism and female fragility.

12. Cf. Bultmann 1948.

aesthetic endowments. Indeed, along with the mannered variants *argyreos* (silvery) and *elephantinos* (ivory-colored), it indicates an attribute sufficient to define beauty throughout the whole of the Greek literary tradition, even if more varied descriptions of rose-fingered¹³ or purple-lipped¹⁴ girls are already found in early Greek lyric, while in the Alexandrian period especially the search for more chromatically exact expressions intensifies and thus becomes an aspect of much Latin poetry from Catullus on.¹⁵

Unless we remember that it was not until the 1920s (with Coco Chanel) that it became fashionable for women to tan themselves, we can hardly understand the derogatory remarks made by the Greek and Latin poets at the expense of those few women with dark skin who appear in their work.¹⁶ Hardly less unkind is the lover in Theocritus who asks the Muses, who embellish everything they touch, to accompany him as he sings the praises of his beloved (as no one else could!), as though she were "the color of honey,"¹⁷ whereas everyone else calls her "the sun-scorched Syrian." The poet's irony wittily attenuates the negative topos in the very act of employing it but is far from being an attempt to overturn it.

Yet aesthetic sublimation is also a very effective means of giving acceptable collective expression to the idea of a (as far as possible) generalized female color, one in radical and more or less implicit contrast with that of the vigorously brown male. This antithesis, with all its power to polarize empirical reality, is further accentuated by the peculiarly elo-

13. Bacch. 19.18 Snell-Maehler.

14. Sim. frag. 72. Ion of Chios (*ap.* Athen. 603F-604B = *FGH Hist* 392F6) tells how Sophocles once praised the beauty of this line of Simonides while at the same time pointing out the difficulty of actually coloring a girl's lips purple, adding that, whereas a poet is free to call Apollo "Goldenlocks" (*Chrysokomas*), the painter who fails to give him black hair risks severe criticism. The majority of vase paintings do indeed show figures with black hair, in conformity with the naturally dominant color in Mediterranean countries (cf. Dover 1967, p. 20). The ancient source may reveal an awareness that visual images were apt to be more conventional than literary images.

15. For a broad selection of passages see Blümner 1892, pp. 19ff., 40-41, 55-56; Müller-Boré 1922, pp. 87ff.; André 1949, pp. 112, 324ff., 377ff.; Reiter 1962, pp. 22ff., 115-16; Irwin 1974, pp. 111ff.

16. Theoc. III 35; *Anth. Pal.* V 121.1, 210.3; Plaut. *Rud.* 442; Hor. *Epod.* II 41; Stat. *Silv.* V 1.22.

17. *Melichlōros* (Theoc. X 26-27). Compare the use in Lucr. IV 1160 of the Latin *melichrus* as an endearment. The Greek *melichlōros* (as *melichrous*, too) is *vox media* and is found as a euphemism for "pale" (Plat. *Resp.* 474e; Plut. *Rat. aud.* 45A, etc.; a detailed analysis of *melichlōros* and *melichrous* is in Raina 1992, pp. 310ff.).

quent pair black/white, which represent opposite extremes of the color spectrum.¹⁸ From this point of view it is no longer relevant that a lighter complexion (though not always present) may in fact be seen as specifically characteristic of the female body, a trait that may be explained in genetic, but equally in exogenous, terms, such as by reference to a long-established custom of a life led indoors.¹⁹ However, whether determined by nature or by the habit of a retired existence (though as we shall see these are commonly considered interdependent and mutually justifying factors), female pallor is found in texts of various kinds and accompanied by different degrees of ideological awareness, as one of the most vivid images of what Jean-Pierre Vernant calls the "polar relation between the economic functions of the two sexes" in that, "since her place is within, the woman's role is . . . to store the goods which the man, whose existence is oriented out-of-doors, has brought into the home."²⁰

This division of tasks was probably not equally clear-cut at all levels of society. It was certainly less so in rural than in urban communities. In poor families, who owned few or no slaves, the women also worked out in the fields or else as washerwomen, retailers, or midwives. The sources available to us, however, tend to identify the norm with the situation of wealthier women, whose time was taken up with the preparation of baths and food or with weaving, and who never went out, not even to buy goods at the market, which was the job of their slaves or husbands. The freedom enjoyed by Spartan women, who devoted themselves to music and even to gymnastics, must have been quite exceptional. This at least is the impression conveyed by the outrage and scorn they aroused in all right-minded persons and champions of the Athenian way of life.²¹ We may on the whole take as our point of reference the

18. Cf. Bennett 1981.

19. Cf. Martin and Saller [1914] 1957-62, pp. 1792, 1800ff. (referring to the lighter coloring of parts of the body such as the armpits or the spaces between the fingers, which are not exposed to the sun's rays, and of peoples that mostly live in the shade, such as the forest-dwelling Indians of South America, as opposed to the inhabitants of the plains).

20. ". . . polarité entre les fonctions économiques des deux sexes." "Parce qu'elle est vouée au dedans, la femme a . . . pour rôle d'emmagasiner les biens que l'homme, tourné vers l'extérieur, a fait rentrer dans la maison" (Vernant 1965, p. 126).

21. Cf. Eur. *Andr.* 595ff.; Aristot. *Pol.* 1269b-1270a; and Plut. *Agis VII*; for a pro-Spartan outlook see Xenoph. *Lac.* I 3-4. For general accounts of the situation and representation of women in ancient Greece and Rome (the bibliography is notoriously vast and constantly growing), see Pomeroy 1975; Campese and Gastaldi 1977; Cantarella [1981] 1987; Lefkowitz and Fant 1982; Mossé 1983; Bérard 1984; Arrigoni 1985; Blundell 1995; and Joshel and Murnaghan 1998. A wealth of information and perceptive comments regarding women

picture rapidly sketched by Herodotus in the passage where he describes the strange customs of the Egyptians as the "inverse" of those of other nations (namely, from his point of view, of the Greeks): "In Egypt the women go to the market and barter, while the men stay at home and weave. . . . There the men carry weights on their heads, the women on their shoulders. The women urinate standing up, the men sitting down."²²

This boundary dividing inside from outside often takes the form of a contrast between darkness and light or between a pale and a florid complexion. Protected by the male as though by a leafy tree,²³ the woman drags her pale, exhausted body through the shadows of the home, while the man tans and hardens his body through physical exercise in the open air.²⁴ Seclusion is, moreover, a natural condition for the female sex, "born in weakness in order to scheme in hiding." In Plato's view, "accustomed as it is to a withdrawn and shadowy existence," the female sex would rebel against any attempt to determine their role in public life by law, and "withdrawn from *the light*, they would oppose such an attempt with all their might and so defeat the lawgiver."²⁵

Cultural models are much more effective if they bear the stamp of nature, and they will therefore insist that natural law be respected—hence the frequent and unforgiving condemnation of women who try to personalize their appearance through the use of cosmetics and thus ingenuously end up by creating a new set of prescriptive rules, which, moreover, are ambiguous because they are ultimately realized in the erotic desire to please the other sex. The woman who frets away her idle days amid ointments and perfumes in the gynaeceum in the attempt to disguise the real color of her face is like a caricature from comedy: if she is dark, she paints her face white; if white, she paints it red.²⁶ Women

and the other social groups to be discussed may of course be found in Austin and Vidal-Naquet 1972 and Dover 1974, to which I shall not specifically refer again.

22. Her. II 35; cf. Soph. *Oed. Col.* 337ff.

23. Aesch. *Ag.* 966ff.; cf. Soph. *El.* 417ff.

24. Plat. *Phaedr.* 239c; Luc. *Anach.* 25.

25. Plat. *Leg.* 781a, c.

26. Antiphan. frag. 148; Alex. frag. 98.17-18; cf. Mart. I 72.5. For technical information on ancient cosmetics see Forbes 1954 and 1955 and, more generally, Grillet 1975 and Rosati 1985. The latter rightly stresses the peculiar role of Ovid's *Medicamina faciei*, which aims to rehabilitate cosmetics—though without abandoning the limits imposed by traditional aesthetics—as a *perfecting* of nature. It should also be recalled that the practice of dying the hair blond was still denigrated, not only in comedy (Aristoph. *Lys.* 43; Men. frag. 610.2; *Com. adesp.* 289) but also in tragedy (Eur. frag. 322.2; *Trag. adesp.* 441). Indeed, this same criticism was later made by Galen at various points in a treatise full of cosmetic

may at most use makeup in the home, when receiving their female friends, or in order to make themselves more attractive to their husbands. Yet in Lysias's famous first oration it is her lover whom Euphiletus's wife seeks thus to please, in contravention of the mourning for her brother's death.²⁷ Outside the home, makeup becomes the immoral and shameless mark of the courtesan. In the episode of Heracles at the crossroads, the woman who symbolizes virtue is "beautiful and dignified in appearance, her body adorned with purity, her eyes with shame, her body with modesty, and dressed in white." The other woman (vice), "fleshy and fat and so made up as to seem *unnaturally* white and red, also tries to appear taller than she really is."²⁸

Effeminate men, too, such as the rosy-skinned Dionysus in Euripides' *Bacchae*,²⁹ their faces similarly whitened through the "artifice" of a shadow-bound existence, avoid the harsh physical labor of manly life and attempt to make themselves more attractive through the use of "extraneous" pigments.³⁰ This is the reason Plato disapproves of the use of cosmetics, which he sees as "deceitful and ignoble, typical of a man who is not free" and productive of an "unnatural (*allogtrion*) form of beauty," contrasting this practice with gymnastics, which develops real beauty.³¹

Yet if the gymnasium is closed to her and makeup forbidden as indecent, how can a woman improve her physical appearance? The landowner Ischomachus, Socrates' interlocutor in Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*, has a ready and clever answer. It is only natural that outdoor tasks should fall to men, while indoor tasks should be taken care of by the weaker sex: women are like queen bees, which stay in the hive to guard the honey.³² Nor is it easy to find a virtuous wife, and Ischomachus has had to train his own with much advice. On one occasion she comes before him made up, "her face so thickly caked with white lead as to seem whiter than she really was and with so much henna³³ as to appear *unnaturally* red and with high-heeled shoes so as to seem taller than

recipes (*Comp. med. sec. loc.* I 3 passim = K. XII 439, 446, 449, etc.). See also below, chap. 3, n. 130.

27. *Lys.* I 14, 17.

28. Xenoph. *Mem.* II 1.22.

29. Eur. *Bacch.* 457ff.; see also 236, 438.

30. Plat. *Phaedr.* 239c-d and other passages collected in Herter 1959, cols. 633ff. The manner of judging the characteristics of effeminate men varies, in accordance with the complexity of the Greek view of homosexuality (Dover 1978).

31. Plat. *Gorg.* 465b.

32. Xenoph. *Oec.* VII 21ff., 33.

33. In Greek, *enchousa* or *anchousa*, a plant with a dark red root.

nature had made her." He vigorously dissuades her from such practices by appealing to the principle of authenticity as the necessary basis of daily cohabitation. If she "wishes *truly* to be, and not merely *seem*, beautiful," then she should not stay seated like a slave but move busily about, overseeing the housework like a true mistress. "I told her that after such exercise she would eat with more appetite and enjoy better health, and her complexion would really be more florid": she would thus distinguish herself from those women who do nothing but sit making themselves up and scheming.³⁴

Less severe than the husband whom the fifteenth-century diary of Giannozzo Alberti records as forcing his wife to wash her face with water and tears,³⁵ Ischomachus proves himself capable of a more subtle form of control in urging a course that necessarily favors domestic activity. The woman exercises herself within the home in the name of a truth which claims to be that of her individual existence but actually defines her role in the world. Ischomachus himself exercises in the open air, though his walks are taken not within the gymnasium but along the road that leads into the countryside.³⁶ Thus physically, too, he corresponds to the *kalos kagathos* type that Socrates was searching for.

Conversely, a crisis in the system may bring about a reversal in value (even if only temporary and apparent) between indoors and outdoors. In *Lysistrata*, first performed in Athens in 411 B.C. (during one of the most difficult phases of the Peloponnesian War), Aristophanes plays with the idea of the woman who sits at home weaving or making herself pretty (only the Spartan Lampito has a florid complexion), but who must hold her tongue when she hears the men making disastrous decisions with regard to the war.³⁷ Aware of the authority she carries as the person who manages the family possessions "indoors," Lysistrata invites all the women to deny the men sexual intercourse when the men seek them out, as they inevitably do, at home, until peace has been arranged:³⁸ weaving has taught them how to unravel this knotted thread of a war.³⁹ And though they deplore having bred such causes of disgrace in their own homes,⁴⁰ the men succumb to this blackmail.

34. Xenoph. *Oec.* X passim.

35. Quoted in Levi-Pisetzky 1978, p. 43.

36. Xenoph. *Oec.* VII 2, XI 15.

37. Aristoph. *Lys.* 16, 43ff., 80ff., 510-19, 597.

38. Aristoph. *Lys.* 149, 495.

39. Aristoph. *Lys.* 567ff. On women and weaving and associated metaphors, see Loraux 1981, p. 169.

40. Aristoph. *Lys.* 260-61; cf. *Thesm.* 789ff.

Aristophanes takes up the subject again, in an Athens still further tried by war, in his *Ecclesiazusae* of 392 B.C. Here the women devise a way of having a law passed that will give them command of the city. They gain access to the assembly, this time not by emphasizing their femininity but by disguising it (for though they are citizens they do not have the right to vote). They therefore put on men's clothes and false beards, stop removing their body hair, and even attempt to darken their bodies by oiling themselves well and staying out in the sun.⁴¹ However, it is "like sticking a beard on a fried squid," and the result is an assembly that is one sea of white.⁴² Having obtained what they set out to achieve, the women's first official act is to abolish private property and the family, with bizarre consequences that allow full scope to the poet's gift for satire.

While the nascent contradictions within the Athenian community are felt with growing keenness, the indoor/outdoor dichotomy translates into the vivid visual contrast between black and white.⁴³ At the same time, the idea that a woman's behavior is determined by nature—she can never be other than what she is—is increasingly understood to refer to her irrationality. The relations that govern society remain rigidly fixed, and it is no use expecting salvation from others when it eludes the very citizens of Athens.

2. Beyond the Threshold: Cross-Dressing, Holidays, and Funerals

The utopian character of Aristophanes' plot is further emphasized by means of the cross-dressing element. It is worth exploring the meaning that this may have had for the Greeks by examining it elsewhere first. The legends of Heracles, slave to Omphale in women's clothes, or of Achilles, who attempts to escape from the snares of the Trojan War by hiding among the daughters of Lycomedes at Skyros (and like them is painted in a lighter color in the fresco of the Casa dei Dioscuri at Naples), are only partly explained by fascination with episodes of sexual inversion, an interest that nevertheless emerges in Dionysus's disturbing bisexuality and in Tiresias's various metamorphoses. It is not clear, for example, exactly what role was played by two boys dressed in women's clothes in the procession of the Attic Oschophoria, held annually at the end of October. Plutarch traces the ceremony back to the triumphal entry of Theseus into Athens after his exploits in Crete: two of the girls

41. Aristoph. *Ecll.* 25–26, 63ff.

42. Aristoph. *Ecll.* 126, 385–87, 428ff.

43. Cf. Aristoph. *Ecll.* 699, 736.

freed from the Minotaur were not to hand, so Theseus placed two delicate looking but manly and brave-hearted friends among the women's ranks, "without anyone noticing" and having first accentuated their feminine traits "by means of hot baths and by keeping them in the shade (*skiatrophiais*), as well as by anointing and adorning their hair and smooth skin."⁴⁴

Depending on whether the Oschophoria are interpreted as a rite of passage between puberty and adolescence or as a ceremony aimed at propitiating the gods and ensuring a good grape harvest, the cross-dressing may be seen as a dramatized (inverse) representation of the young man's entry into adulthood or as the representation and exorcism of a demonic "other." The first hypothesis⁴⁵ is perhaps confirmed by the usual mode of representing boys among the Greeks. On account of their not having yet attained intellectual maturity (which was thought to be reached at around their eighteenth year, when they would be enrolled in their father's demos), boys tended to be perceived as possessing both male and female traits until adulthood, thus rendering them more suited to the ambiguity of cross-dressing, as well as to taking a "female" role in homoerotic relationships.⁴⁶ It cannot be denied that this is precisely how the boys mentioned by Plutarch are represented (with the added echo of the age-old belief that warm baths are a cause of depravity in men),⁴⁷ even though we have to be aware that we must proceed cautiously when interpreting a narrative that represents an explanation a posteriori. Nevertheless, the *custom* of exchanging sexual identities is a common feature in folklore of more recent date than the classical period and is always associated with occasions that mark the festive interruption of daily life. Like other aspects of popular festivals it stands for the temporary abolition of all hierarchical relations, of all privileges, rules, and social taboos.⁴⁸ The emphasis is more on its temporary character than on the abolition itself: just as the real festival repairs the conflicts within the community, so by confining transgression within the occasion in which it is declared, Aristophanes is able to conclude the

44. Plut. *Thes.* XXIII 2–3; cf. Procl. *Chrest.* 322a14, 88–89, p. 56 Severyns.

45. Put forward by Vidal-Naquet 1981, pp. 267–88; for the other hypothesis, see Kenner 1970, pp. 110ff.

46. Cf. Roussel 1942 for a detailed study of the age requirements for the holding of different public offices, as well as of the values placed on the various ages in ethical and political thought; cf. also Vidal-Naquet 1981, pp. 177–209; and Vegetti [1979] 1987, pp. 111–12, 118–19.

47. Cf. Aristoph. *Nub.* 1045ff. The subject is studied in Vegetti 1983, pp. 71–90.

48. Bachtin [1965] 1968 (but see also Kenner 1970, pp. 102ff.).

great dramatic festival, having for a moment imagined the possibility of a women's government, with a liberating burst of laughter.

The transgression permitted by the festival and by religious ritual may actually exceed the bounds of what is tolerable, and it is not without a touch of reproof that a character in *Lysistrata* seeks to explain the unaccustomed din made by the women as that of some orgiastic cult from the east, or by reference to the custom of commemorating Adonis by lamenting his death from the very rooftops: "There it is, the flash of female license (*exelampsen*). There go the drum and invocations to Sabazius and lamenting of Adonis from the rooftops."⁴⁹

Religious ceremonies were in fact one of the few occasions in which women could leave the home, the most justifiable and honorable of these being the funeral rite (even if it might offer occasion for adultery).⁵⁰ Here the women's presence was essential, especially when the corpse had to be washed, anointed, and dressed, in the initial and most private phase of the ceremony (the *prothesis*, which was usually, though not always, held within the home). The women were also present later when the corpse was taken away (*ekphora*). It is not true, as recent anthropological research has often led us to think, that in both phases the funeral lament was exclusively performed by the women. Though literary and visual sources do suggest that their role may have been dominant and that they were entitled to perform the most pathetic gestures (such as beating the breast, tearing the hair, and scratching the cheeks), the men also joined in the lamenting or else stretched their arms and struck their heads as a sign of grief.⁵¹ It is also true, however, that the funeral rite gave a collective meaning to a woman's solipsistic tendency to indulge her tears within the darkest recesses of the home (with negative effects on the children's education).⁵² When the sound of moaning from the walls of Troy reaches her, that prototype of the tearful woman, Andromache, prone as she is to weeping in her nuptial chamber, is busy weaving "deep within the tall palace." She then emerges "like a crazed maenad" to witness the death of Hector and to join in a lament *shared* by men and women.

In the model already laid out in the epic, whose heroes weep both

49. Aristoph. *Lys.* 387ff. On the Adonia, see Weill 1966; Detienne [1972] 1977; and esp. Winkler 1990, pp. 189ff. The severely punished transgression of Euripides' maenads should also be borne in mind.

50. As in the case of the wife of Euphiletus, who killed her lover and was defended by Lysias.

51. Cf. De Martino [1958] 1975, but on the Greek tradition in particular, see Reiner 1938 and Alexiou 1974.

52. Plat. *Resp.* 387e-389a and Plat. *Leg.* 788a-b, 792a ff.

frequently and copiously, the domestic threshold marks the sharpest of boundaries. The values of outdoor life, the realm of male friendship, of war, and of mourning, make men's tears the expression of a brave heart and moral generosity, whereas those shed within the closed world of the home are a sign of incurable weakness and of an uncontrollable need to give vent to irrational feelings.⁵³

3. Marginal Figures: Boys, Slaves, Craftsmen, and Peasants

A woman's subordinate position within the family and society is thus clearly reflected, from the Homeric poems on, in a series of texts that tend to present her shadowy and secluded existence as the inevitable fate of a *naturally* inferior being. Aristotle confers theoretical sanction on this reality when (above all, in the first book of his *Politics*) he argues for the superiority of a head of the family able to command his wife (as well as his children and slaves, though with a different sort of authority) as the soul commands the body. This is not the place to consider this well-known and widely studied philosophical argument in detail. However, it is worth noting that in many ways it merely elevates a widely shared commonsense notion to a higher degree of theoretical awareness, one in tune with a political structure founded on the exclusion of both (nominally free) women and slaves.⁵⁴

This interplay between the two negative figures of the woman and the slave is further complicated by the figure of the boy, equally excluded from political life (if only for the time being). This is shown by the custom of addressing a slave, whatever his age, as "boy" (*pais* in Greek, *puer* in Latin), as is recorded not only in literary texts (comedies) but also in Ptolemaic papyri dealing with daily life. (It is also typical of relations with servants in cultures that do not practice slavery.)⁵⁵

Especially interesting in this regard is a passage from Dionysius of

53. Cf. Hom. *Il.* XXII 437ff. and the perceptive analysis offered in Monsacré 1984.

54. See esp. Fortenbaugh 1977 and Campese 1983. Both in their choice of title and in their lucid introduction, Joshel and Murnaghan 1998 rightly stress an aspect that should not be overlooked, even if it does not have a prominent place in the present study: namely, that throughout Greco-Roman culture women and slaves, while comparable, maintain distinct roles, "each falling short of the full virtue of the free man *in its own way*" (p. 1, my emphasis). According to Aristot. *Pol.* 1252b1-9 there is no distinction between woman and slave in barbarian societies, where no component is naturally suited to govern (so that "barbarian and slave are the same thing"), and relations between men and women are no different from relations between male and female slaves. In other words, in societies in which freedom is unknown, it is not merely the relation between men and women but that between individuals as such that loses meaning.

55. Cf. Maurin 1975 and Finley 1980, esp. p. 96. Aristoph. *Vesp.* 1297-98 and 1307 plays amusingly on the connection between *pais*, as used to address a slave, and *paiein* (to strike).

Halicarnassus, as was seen by Pierre Vidal-Naquet in studying the intertwined myths regarding the power enjoyed by slaves and women.⁵⁶ The passage tells how Aristodemus established his tyranny at Cumae toward the end of the sixth century B.C. by killing all the adult males, giving their widows to the freed slaves, and forcing their sons to work in the fields. In order to prevent the youths left in the city from growing into brave-hearted manhood, they were brought up as though women (indoors and with no exercise). The result of these measures, however, was that the boys sent out into the country were later able to reconquer the city without difficulty. The contrast between the immobile existence of the oppressed community and the free and healthy life of the country is another version (to which we shall presently return) of the indoor/outdoor opposition, one that works in favor of the young men able to take the place of their fathers and restore political freedom, and against the women, slaves, and effeminate youths, who passively surrender to the young despot.

The episode might be read as a reworking of the passage in Aristotle in which he identifies the two major risks for democracy in its extreme, or tyrannic, form: domestic gynecocracy and lack of discipline among slaves.⁵⁷ On this issue the philosopher gives theoretical form to mental attitudes that were already widely current. The same may be said of his notorious statement that "nature wishes to mark a difference between the bodies of the free and those of the slaves," the latter being sufficiently strong for necessary labor, the former *upright*, even though incapable of such work and suited rather to political life.

These words occur in one of the most labored passages in Aristotle and concern the controversy over whether slavery is justified by nature or not. Indeed, the statement is immediately followed by the admission that "the opposite is often the case": in other words, the correspondence between physical appearance and inner qualities just alluded to does not always hold true, and the body of a free man may hide a slave's soul, or vice versa. Aristotle concludes, however, that "some are by nature free and others slaves, and it is right that the latter should be slaves."⁵⁸ Clearly, *this* nature is not, as he elsewhere states, "what is always or

56. Cf. Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* VII 9–10 with Vidal-Naquet 1981, pp. 267–88, whose suggestion of a link with initiatory rites, however, I find too emphatic.

57. Aristot. *Pol.* 1313b32.

58. Aristot. *Pol.* 1254b27. For a detailed analysis of the complex logical structure of this passage, see, among others, Goldschmidt 1973, Corcella 1991, and, more recently, Phillips Simpson 1998, pp. 28ff.

mostly the case" but, on a no less Aristotelian view, what is identified as the end or ideal (here in the sociopolitical sense):⁵⁹ in short, it is what we would call "culture." The reference to the difference between the bodies of the free and of slaves has meaning with respect to the consolidation of a shared cultural heritage, the same context that gives rise to the iconographical motif of the tired black slave, crouched on the ground with his legs apart (an indecent pose for a free man and reminiscent, rather, of certain representations of silens), commonly found among clay statuettes and on carved gems from the beginning of the fifth century B.C.

The earliest artifacts in which slaves are represented as small, often beardless (like boys!), and nude (their lack of clothing conveying a sense of mere physical labor, especially if accompanied by an obese stomach and flaccid skin) date from 530 B.C.⁶⁰ However, the crouching position—as also the nudity—is already found in a bronze statuette of a smith from the Subgeometric period, and when considering later images it is often difficult to decide whether we are dealing with the representation of a slave or of a free workman. This uncertainty has its roots in the tendency to leave certain handicrafts (especially those entailing the use of fire or at any rate long periods of confinement to a workshop) to foreigners or slaves, as they were indicative of inferior status. It is no surprise that in a thoroughly codified system of social behavior bodily posture is particularly suited to symbolize status. There is indeed sufficient evidence to suggest that Greek and Roman etiquette drew a clear distinction between the position to be adopted at a banquet by adolescents, who sat on the ground or at table, and that of their fathers, who reclined. This makes Aristotle's association of the right to adopt this position and to get drunk with the right to attend comic plays, which signifies entry into manhood, all the more significant.⁶¹ It is also significant that here, too, we find the figure of the boy conflated with those of the slave and the craftsman, in a general context of discrimination and subordination.

To return to the marginal social existence of craftsmen, it should be remembered that this may partly be explained by reference to the ideal

59. This kind of tension is typical of Aristotle's philosophy of nature: see Lloyd 1991.

60. Himmelmann 1971 is essential on this point and for what immediately follows in the text. Muller (1997, pp. 52–53) analyzes a series of texts (from Homer to Epictetus by way of Plato) that play (in part metaphorically) on the opposition between the pairs upright/free and curved/servile.

61. Aristot. *Pol.* 1336b10–22. The point is made in Bremmer 1990, p. 139, which contains other useful information.

of moral and financial independence, which remains beyond their reach insofar as they inevitably rely on others' demand for their work.⁶² This notion is most clearly and tendentiously expressed by the aristocratic writers of the fourth century, but it is already present in Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae*, where the women's conspiracy succeeds only because the guileless spectators think they are in the midst of a gathering of cobblers:⁶³ of all the citizens enjoying the right to vote, only the cobblers could be so pale. If Aristotle allows that one is not a cobbler by nature but one may be a slave by nature, Xenophon specifies that work of this kind is harmful to the body, "forcing one to remain seated and in the dark (*skiatrapheisthai*), and sometimes even to spend the whole day beside the fire," and that "when the body becomes effeminate, the soul, too, becomes much weaker."⁶⁴ Thus habit and daily environment—the sedentary indoor life by the workshop fire (echoing the domestic hearth)—are seen to lead to a settled physical and mental condition, like that of a woman. This attempt to match social class with natural or quasi-natural conditions, or at least with a negative state that leaves its mark on the body, derives its main strength from social patterns that must have been fairly widespread, if Aristophanes' pale cobblers could rouse his audience's laughter.

We can imagine a similar context for the eulogy of agriculture which Xenophon places in the mouth of Socrates and which takes up the whole of the fifth book of the *Oeconomicus*. It insists on the advantages of a life led in the fields insofar as it is a life led in the *open air*, in closer contact with nature and providing continual opportunity for the physical exercise a free man requires. Indeed, nature itself teaches man how it is to be cultivated, so that while other skills are handed on in secret, the

62. This explanation (for which see Aymard 1948, 1967, pp. 316–33; Vernant 1965) of course summarizes a complex and changing situation and refers above all to the so-called banausic arts, namely, those dominated by the mechanical or manual element and therefore apt to debase body and soul: Aristot. *Pol.* 1258b36, 1337b8. It is interesting to note that the lexicographers later define *banausos* as the craftsman whose work entails the use of fire. Doctors and artists, on the other hand, enjoyed greater social prestige (though admiration of a work of art did not necessarily lend dignity to an artist: see Plut. *Per.* II 1–2).

63. Aristoph. *Eccl.* 385ff., 432.

64. Aristot. *Pol.* 1260b1; Xenoph. *Oec.* IV 2. The verb *skiatrapheo* (a leitmotif of many of these texts) is also found in *Trag. adesp.* 546.7–8 (where a healthy life is defined as that which allows one to endure the winter cold, as well as the summer heat, without retiring indoors), Her. VI 12, and Plut. *Lib. educ.* 8D (which exalts the hardships of military life). The catalogue of Pollux (see chap. 2) contains the term *skiatrophia*.

peasant who is good at sowing and planting is happy to be observed.⁶⁵ The "most blatant proof" of the physical and moral corruption of craftsmen is that, under invasion by the enemy, they prefer guard duty on the city walls ("they are used to sitting still") to confronting the enemy face-to-face like the peasants, who refuse to abandon their fields.⁶⁶

Hints of a positive view of agriculture, capable of attaining that "ideal of individual and family self-reliance" which so strongly influences the appraisal of different occupations in Greece, are already apparent in archaic mental attitudes, especially as reconstructed through the writings of Hesiod.⁶⁷ Xenophon develops this positive view, stressing its conservative character, at a time in which small and large landowners were joining together to form a single social group opposed to the urban classes, which were identified with a maritime democracy oblivious to the defense of the countryside. This breeds a view of the city as a place of physical decadence, while at the same time the ideal of the landed citizen gradually takes shape, embodied in Ischomachus of the *Oeconomicus*, who personally (or with the help of his slaves) tends fields that nurture health and military courage.

The possibility (in general) of a positive view does not undermine a traditional aspect of "bourgeois" etiquette, dating back to the fifth century, namely, the humorous distinction between the uncouth rustic (*agroikos*) and the cultivated city dweller, or *asteios* (a term that becomes synonymous with "well-educated," like the English "urbane"). Yet the city dweller's delicate appearance and sensitivity (he is given to blushing)⁶⁸ may acquire negative meaning when moralizing political commentators contrast the "thin, tanned poor man" with the rich man's "short breath and awkwardness" in the emergency of war, due to his being "brought up in the dark indoors (*eskiatrophēkoti*) and fat from superfluous flesh" (*allogrias*, or unnatural, like the makeup on the face of the homosexual in the *Gorgias*).⁶⁹ The poor peasants later break away still further from the city, and this becomes a serious social problem, typified in the uncouth and dour protagonist of Menander's *Dyskolos*. The

65. Xenoph. *Oec.* XV 10–11.

66. Xenoph. *Oec.* VI 6–7.

67. Cf. Aymard 1948, p. 40; but for accounts that are more attentive to the ideological tensions and historical changes involved, see Humphreys 1978, pp. 261–71, and Bodei Gigliani 1982.

68. Plat. *Lys.* 304c. On this subject generally Ribbeck 1888 is still extremely useful.

69. Plat. *Resp.* 556D. Consider the frequent use of pallor to signify the effects of a hectic life in the city in Mart. I 55.14, III 58.24, X 12.9ff., XI 6.6, and XIV 162.2.

image of the healthily active peasant, sustained by a robust moral constitution, nevertheless continues to lend even its physical traits to the ideal citizen. An example is the rich youth Sostratos, who, to gain the misanthrope's favor and win the hand of his daughter, pretends to be a peasant, and spends hours hoeing in the fields under a scorching sun, a sure sign that he does not live in luxury and pass his days in idleness.⁷⁰

4. The Philosopher: A Foreign Body

Another eminent social outcast—that “stranger in the city,” the intellectual—gives rise to a topos that is no less powerful.⁷¹ It is true that the pre-Socratic philosophers do not seem to have developed the idea of philosophic activity as an exercise in the disinterested pursuit of knowledge distinct from practical life. Anecdotes like the well-known one in which a Thracian maid makes fun of the philosopher Thales for falling into a well while intent on staring up at the stars derive from the subsequent application of a theoretical ideal that only acquires conscious form in Plato and Aristotle, where it is distinguished from other intellectual activities aspiring to the title of “love of knowledge,” or *philosophia*, such as rhetoric.⁷²

However, both Pythagorean asceticism and the course taken by Anaxagoras in abandoning his native Clazomenae to devote himself to philosophical inquiry in a city not his own, as well as the very interest in cosmology that dominates pre-Socratic science, are themselves indicative of a tendency to dissociate speculative thought from practical action. A new attitude is enforced by Socrates, with his keener sense of a moral theory that does not simply entail denial of material needs valued by common sense but affirms with unprecedented force a system of values which, insofar as it (also) aims at political renewal, offends the city's actual laws.⁷³

It appears that many of those who flocked to hear Plato lecture on the Good expected to hear him discourse on wealth, health, strength, and other such things, and heckled in scorn and disgust at his lucubra-

70. Men. *Dysc.* 754ff.; see also 365ff.

71. Aristot. *Pol.* 1324a16.

72. See Isoc. *Paneg.* 10. For the anecdote about Thales, see Plat. *Theaet.* 174a.

73. Cf. Humphreys 1978, pp. 209–41; and Cambiano 1983. For discussions of the “philosophic life,” see Boll 1950, pp. 303–31; Jaeger 1928; Joly 1956; and Isnardi Parente 1966, pp. 245ff. The history of the portraits of philosophers, brilliantly explored by Zanker (1995), yields further insights on the self-perception of the intellectual in antiquity.

tions on numbers, geometry, astronomy, and a strangely single Good.⁷⁴ It was the applause of just such an audience that the Attic comic playwrights sought with their witty allusions to the philosophers' bizarre attempts to define the essence of the Good.⁷⁵ However, the prize for historical insight and inventive satire must again go to Aristophanes, who in the *Clouds* of 423 B.C., thus well before the death of Socrates in 399, shows his intellectual detachment carried to the point of physical self-injury. A diabolical braggart and skillful manipulator of words, who spends his time philosophizing in a basket hung in midair (his head literally in the clouds), Aristophanes' Socrates exerts a baleful influence on his unlucky disciples, even to the point of giving them the pale complexion of those who prefer the subtleties of dialectic to healthy physical activity.⁷⁶ Indeed, Chaerephon, attacked elsewhere by the playwright, is perfectly funereal and is variously compared to the sallow corpse of a woman or to a bat.⁷⁷

The term repeatedly used here to describe the philosophers' pale complexion is *ōchros*, which implies the sallow cast of the invalid rather than the pallor resulting from the sedentary indoor life of the craftsman. However, the transition from craftsman to philosopher is not an abrupt one. Plato himself mentions a certain kind of person (he is probably thinking of the Sophists) who, having destroyed both body and soul through labor at some craft, thinks it an easy thing to devote himself to philosophy. Still later, Lucian conjures up a whole army of cobblers and carpenters who only need to bare their bodies to the sun in order to start philosophizing.⁷⁸ The philosopher comes out-of-doors, but only to wander around in bare feet. We read in the *Symposium* that even in the terrible winter of the siege of Potidaea, Socrates would walk barefoot on the ice, wrapped in a light cloak.⁷⁹ While Plato sees this as a sign of strength and frugal living, Antiphon in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* speaks of it as a sign of masochism. In the *Clouds* Aristophanes, too, stresses the eccentricity of this behavior, not unlike that of the maenads in Eurip-

74. Aristox. *Harm.* 30–31.

75. Amph. frag. 6; Philem. frag. 71; cf. Alex. frag. 93.2–4.

76. Aristoph. *Nub.* 102ff., 120, 417, 718, 1012–17, 1111–12, 1171. The philosopher is “constitutionally” opposed to the monopoly enjoyed by the athletic ideal, already attacked in Xenophanes (frag. 2; cf. Socrates in Plat. *Apol.* 36d).

77. Aristoph. *Nub.* 503–4., *Vesp.* 1413 (cf. Eup. frag. 239), *Av.* 1296, 1564 (cf. frag. 573).

78. Plat. *Resp.* 455d–e; Luc. *Bis acc.* 6.

79. Plat. *Symp.* 220b; see also *Symp.* 173b (about a disciple of Socrates who goes about barefoot) and 174a (Socrates has just washed and has put on sandals—“a thing he seldom did”—to go to Agathon's banquet); *Phaedr.* 229a.

ides, who burst out of their homes and the city and who bare their white feet in the orgiastic race.⁸⁰

A pale complexion and bare feet become constant features of anti-philosophical satire, which has its supreme model in the *Clouds* and later becomes more stereotyped as the Old and the Middle Comedy give way to Menippus and Lucian.⁸¹ The inventiveness of the latter triggers a whole kaleidoscope of variations: a drunkard enters the Academy and in giving up the pleasures of attending feasts loses his healthy red coloring; and pallor so suits the philosopher that by considering how pale he is (or else how grim he looks or how long his beard is) one can *infer* how good a philosopher he is.⁸² In Theocritus the same attributes denote a "Pythagorist," an imitator of his ancient master's ascetic way of life,⁸³ while according to the rhetor Alciphron (second century A.D.) it is the Stoics who wander about the Poikile barefoot and as pale as corpses, and a young man from the country set on emulating the behavior of the Cynics offers a "frightening and repellent spectacle . . . his face fixed in a frown . . . half naked . . . barefoot . . . bad-tempered, he fails to recognize either his field or us, who are his parents . . . he despises money and hates farming."⁸⁴

It would appear to be in reaction to this desolate picture that the Stoic Musonius Rufus (first century A.D.) insists on the need to temper the body as well as the mind and portrays the ideal philosopher as not keeping to the city, like the effeminate and inert Sophists, nor eating in the dark (*skiatropheisthai*) rather than in the open air but as regaining contact with nature through agricultural labor. This is a late example of the ancient tendency (we saw some examples from the fourth century B.C. in the previous section) of assigning the figure of the peasant a

80. Xenoph. *Mem.* I 6.2; Aristoph. *Nub.* 103, 363, 834ff., 858; Eur. *Bacch.* 665, 863.

81. Cf. Ribbeck 1882, pp. 10ff.; Helm 1906, pp. 371ff.; and Weiher 1913. Some Latin echoes are noted in Blümner 1892, p. 86. On the epigrammatic tradition, see esp. Brecht 1930, pp. 18ff. The philosopher shares with other types certain (often physical) traits that characterize him as a social parasite. These include the unkempt and pale-faced usurer counting his money ("growing rich with his fingers": Luc. *Catapl.* 17) and the grammarian who entangles himself in pointless detail (irony at his expense is understandably more common in the Hellenistic period) and even when young looks wasted and unhealthy, and so is unfit for public office. (Such, according to Plutarch in *An seni* 791E, was the appearance of the Sophist Prodicus and the poet Philitas of Cos, on whose proverbial thinness, see Athen. IX 401E.)

82. *Tekmērasthai* in Luc. *Icarom.* 5; cf. *eikasai* in *Par.* 50. Other relevant passages are Luc. *Bis acc.* 16, *Iupp. trag.* 1, and *Gall.* 10.

83. Theoc. XIV 6.

84. Alciphron I 3.2, II 38.2-3.

positive value that reverberates on weaker elements of society. This time the attempt is to give new color and energy to the intellectual and bring his activity back into contact with the practical sense of life from which it has so long detached itself. This is accompanied by a comparison of another traditional attribute of the philosopher, his long beard, to the mane of a lion, in order to show that his appearance is not indicative of neglect but expressive of dignity.⁸⁵

This is not the only instance in which the simile of the lion reflects vigor and nobility back onto the wild figure of the philosopher. The emperor Julian, a proud champion of pagan philosophy in an era that saw it retreat before the rising tide of Christian culture, opens his satirical self-defense, the *Misopogon* (or "hater of beards"), by describing with morbid complacency his filthy, lice-infested head and inky fingers but also by stating his love of frugal living and hatred of horse races and such theatrical entertainments as are loved by the mob. And proof of the manly spirit required to remain faithful to this deliberate and difficult choice is his hairy chest, which he compares to that of a lion.⁸⁶

The Sophists and philosophers of the fourth century A.D. who share the cult of Greek *paideia* and draw especially on the Cynic and Stoic traditions continue to attempt the translation back into positive terms of the topos of the philosopher as social outcast. The whole sense of Plato's picture of Socrates returns in Eunapius's admiration for the (superhuman) fitness of Proaeresius, the Athenian Sophist who astounds the members of Constantius's court in Gaul by going barefoot in winter, wearing a light cloak, and drinking ice-cold wine.⁸⁷ In its death throes the tradition of classical thought once more draws nourishment from the figure of its founding father. However, in so doing it merely reaffirms—and perhaps even reveals as willful—its own peripheral relation to the needs of real life.

5. White Northerners and Black Ethiopians

The "transcendent" status of the intellectual is the most extreme, and the most richly documented, example of the tensions between social groups existing within the polis and reflected in a series of representations that are more or less distinct from one another according to the

85. Muson. XI, pp. 58ff. Hense, on which passage see van Geytenbeek 1963, pp. 119ff., 129ff. A long beard is already typical of the philosopher in Plat. *Theaet.* 168a.

86. Iul. *Mis.* 339B. In the next chapter we shall see how physiognomics deploys other qualities "typical" of a lion.

87. Eun. *Vit. soph. phil.* X 72, p. 76 Giangrande; cf. Cracco Ruggini 1971.

ideological orientation of the text in question. However, when it came to describing a foreign people, their difference was mostly expressed in terms of a contrasting general idea of "the Greek." This obscuring of the fragmentary nature of the individual Hellenic states was encouraged by the military partnership between Athens and Sparta in the first half of the fifth century, which successfully prevented a Persian invasion. This unity offered a powerful (perhaps because historically unique) model for the construction of the idea of Greek superiority over other peoples. This idea of superiority was principally understood in cultural terms (see the memorable definition of Greece as a cultural community in Isocrates' *Panegyric*).⁸⁸ However, the idea of a "blood" tie between the various ethnic groups was also present,⁸⁹ though accompanied by a proper sense of the leading role played by Athens at Marathon and Salamis. This was given particular emphasis by Attic orators in the fourth century and was apt to give rise to claims such as that made by Isocrates, namely, that the Athenians stand in relation to other Greeks as the Greeks do to the barbarians or as men to animals.⁹⁰

The contrast between the peoples north and south of Hellas, which becomes so frequent in Greek literature, is already found in Xenophanes (between the sixth and fifth century B.C.), who ridicules anthropomorphic religions, saying that "the Ethiopians imagine their own gods as having flattish noses and being black; the Thracians, as blue-eyed and rosy-complexioned." The people of the north are also described (probably correctly) as light-skinned, or rather ruddy from the cold, in the Hippocratic text *Airs, Waters, Places* (with reference to the Scythians) and again in Herodotus (with reference to the Budini, the Scythians' neigh-

88. Isoc. *Paneg.* 50. On the significance, especially in cultural terms, of the idea of a Hellenic "nation," see Walbank 1951; Finley 1975; and Aymard 1967, pp. 300–313.

89. According to Her. VIII 144, the Hellenic people are united by the triple ties of blood, similarity of language, and a common religion.

90. Isoc. *Antid.* 293. In interpreting texts like this one by Isocrates, one needs to take into account what Hall (1997) has to say about the discursive procedures whereby ethnic identity is constructed, and also the stereotypical character of the idea of Greek nationality, which contrasts with a strong sense of an internal difference between the various ethnic groups. It should be remembered that the construction of Greek identity is based on the fact of belonging to a polis (hence to an *ethnos*, whether Ionian, Dorian, or Aeolian). It is with respect to this criterion of citizenship that foreigners are divided into two categories, the first for Greeks from other cities (the *xenos*, who may thus also be classified as "guests" or "friends") and the second for the *barbaros*. This second category is the more relevant of the two for my purposes, but the distinction is an important one, for which see at least Moggi 1992; Assmann 1996, esp. pp. 81–82; and Asheri 1997.

bors).⁹¹ Africa, on the other hand, is inhabited by people whose dark skin fascinates the Greeks. The herald Eurybates as described in the *Odyssey* may be intended as a black man: "round shouldered, black skinned, curly headed."⁹² The variety of terms used to indicate the color black in poetry and prose (*melas*, *kelainos*, *kyaneos*) is in any case considerable and is picturesquely applied to Egyptians and Ethiopians and even to the Colchians and the Indians.⁹³

In some instances the diversity of the barbarians is expressed by comparison to some particular subclass of Greeks. In Aeschylus's *Suppliants*, for instance, the Danaids, after fleeing Egypt, seek the protection of the king of Argos against the hated marriage with their cousins, by whose "black army" the city risks being overrun, though "men whose arms have been strengthened in the midday sun" are ready to defend it.⁹⁴ Here the conflict between Greeks and barbarians is depicted in such a way as to suggest a relatively equal footing (the Greeks are favored with a lively image of peasant strength). In other episodes the barbarians are wholly at a disadvantage. The Spartan king Agesilaus, for instance, is said to have had all his Asian prisoners stripped, so as to display their soft, white, effeminate bodies (highly unsuited to warfare) to his own men and evidently thus boost their morale. In relating the incident Plu-

91. Xenophan. frag. 16; Hipp. *Aër.* 20; Her. IV 108. I understand the term *pyrros* as used in these texts to refer chiefly to the color of the skin rather than to that of the hair, as is usually thought (Sassi 1982c). As to the justice of the remark, cf. Martin and Saller [1914] 1957–62, p. 1792.

92. Hom. *Od.* XIX 246.

93. See Hable-Selassie [1964] 1970; Snowden 1970; Thompson 1989, pp. 57ff. For the Egyptians, see esp. Aesch. *Suppl.* 154–55, 277ff., 496ff., 719–20, 745–46, and cf. 779, 785, 887–88. For the Ethiopians, see Hes. *Op.* 527; Aesch. *Prom.* 808, 851; Eur. frags. 228.3, 771; Callim. *Hymn.* VI 11; Theoc. XVII 87. For the Colchians, see Her. II 104; Pind. *Pyth.* IV 212. For the Indians, see Her. III 101. The use of the term *aigyptios* as a metonym for "dark" is recorded in Soph. frag. 363 and *Trag. adesp.* 161. The etymology of the name given to the *aithiopes*, on the other hand (from *aithō*, "I burn"), may have to do with this people's proximity to the sun, whether in their mythical location at the extreme eastern limit of the world or in their historical home south of Egypt (A. Lesky 1959). Together with the Ethiopians and Pygmies, Hesiod (frag. 150.15ff. Merkelbach-West) mentions a people he calls *melanes*, and the Egyptians are said to have been called "black feet" (*melampodes*) before taking the name of their mythical ancestor Aegyptus (Apollod. II 1–4; Eustath. *Comm. ad Hom. Il.* I 42; schol.; Plat. *Tim.* 25a). For the possibility, admittedly a remote one, that the names of other peoples also refer to the color of their skin, see Frisk 1970 with regard to the Phaeacians (s.v. *phaïos*) and Dürbeck 1977, p. 123, with regard to the Phoenicians.

94. Aesch. *Suppl.* 743ff. Aeschylus (in this respect the opposite of Euripides: see Bovon 1963) generally displays a highly concrete sense of the barbarians' bodily appearance.

tarch refers to the "shadow-bound" existence (*skiatrophia*) of the Persians,⁹⁵ and indeed Herodotus had already claimed that they had soft skulls because they lived in the dark (*skiatropheousi*) and always wore caps, unlike the Egyptians, who were used from an early age to going bare-scalped in the sun.⁹⁶ "Living in the dark" is a characteristic already found in numerous descriptions of women and craftsmen and is a clear mark of inferiority, stemming from the social discrimination equally affecting women and foreigners.

Social denigration through imputation of feminizing traits or behavior is not restricted to the Greek world, as is shown by some interesting research into certain African cultures. Grinker's study of the social dynamics of differentiation between the farming Lese and the hunting/foraging Efe (Pygmies) of the Ituri forest has shown how the Lese, men and women, distinguish themselves ethnically from the Efe (with whom they live in close contact and social harmony) by attributing female characteristics to the latter. The language of gender here does not refer to sexual difference but draws a metaphorical analogy between the Efe and the Lese women on the basis of the role (expressed in terms of the indoor/outdoor opposition) that both groups share within the Lese village system.⁹⁷ However, the Greek sources do sometimes suggest an aspect specific to the classical world: a certain *awareness* of the representational devices employed that even allows their use by others with respect to oneself. If for the moment we limit ourselves to the imputation of feminizing traits, an example is offered by Plato's *Apology*, where Socrates claims that out of regard for himself and for the city he will not act the suppliant and demean himself by begging the judges' mercy. Faced with the ignominious behavior in court, with which even citizens of renown had sullied their reputation, "a foreigner might think that the Athenians themselves, who have such a name for virtue . . . , are no different from women."⁹⁸

This of course does not prevent the Greeks, with their markedly ethnocentric outlook, from invariably representing the position they themselves occupy as normal and that occupied by others as deviant. Consider the well-known passages in which Herodotus shows keen

awareness of the widespread nature of cultural ethnocentrism. He remarks, for instance, that "the Persians have most regard for those peoples who live closest to them, and after these, for those closest to their neighbors and so on . . . for they consider themselves in all things superior to other men, and those who live farthest from them the least worthy." He also recalls how Darius once asked the Greeks if they would ever eat the corpses of their parents (as the Indians did), and he asked the Indians if they would ever burn them (as the Greeks did); both Greeks and Indians were horrified at the suggestion.⁹⁹ Their horror is the point. The laudable awareness of cultural diversity does not lessen a proud sense of the sharp boundary separating Greek and barbarian; and the spectator, unequivocally *on this side* of the divide, is not sparing of value judgments.

In this context it may be instructive to consider the way in which Herodotus refers to what he sees as the typically barbarian custom of tattooing. He knows that among the Thracians "tattoos are considered a sign of nobility rather than the opposite" but also that "not doing anything is the activity they prefer, while working the land is seen as ignoble; for them the best sort of life is one of warfare and looting." Herodotus's description typically works to invert the scale of values: tattooing cannot be considered a sign of nobility from the Greek point of view precisely because this is how it is seen by the barbarians. Should there be any doubt about this, let us see what opinion is expressed on the same subject by the anonymous author of the *Dissoi logoi* (Double Arguments), a short Sophistic text which lists a series of arguments for and against various theses, with frequent reference to the notion of the relativity of values: "among the Thracians the tattooing of girls is a form of ornament, whereas for others it is a way of punishing a criminal."¹⁰⁰ Here, too, the inversion of values is enacted in actual social practice before (or even as?) it is expressed through the intellectual's comments: we know that the Thracians, like other ancient peoples (such as the Egyptians), did in fact consider tattooing a form of ornament, and sometimes even endowed it with religious meaning, while the Greeks (as later the Romans) used it as a way of punishing runaway slaves, criminals, and prisoners of war. It should indeed be noted that the Greek term for tattoo, *stigma*, acquired a derogatory meaning in metaphorical

95. Plut. *Ages.* IX 7, *Apophth. Lac.* 209C. The episode is also recounted by Xenophon, *Hell.* III 4.19.

96. Her. III 12. Cf. *skiatrophia* and similar expressions encountered above.

97. Cf. Grinker 1990, which contains references to other case studies in its bibliography.

98. Plat. *Apol.* 35b. As in other Attic texts, the "foreigner" here might also be Greek, though not from Athens (see n. 90 above).

99. Her. I 134, III 38. Cf. also *Diss. log.* 2, 9ff.

100. Her. V 6; *Diss. log.* 2, 13. The many vase paintings testifying to the use of tattoos among Thracian women have been studied in Zimmermann 1980; but Jones 1987 is of greater relevance for the present topic.

use which survives in the modern verb "to stigmatize," a significant, if unique, exception being the use of "stigma" ("stigmata" in the plural) to refer to the wounds resulting from extreme empathy with the suffering of Christ, whether self-inflicted or through mystical contact.

Though Greek ethnocentrism may appear somewhat aggressive, it cannot, however, be said to turn immediately into racism. If we go back to the question of skin color, it is a striking fact that the kind of prejudice which sees this as *in itself* a sign of a radical difference in nature was virtually unknown in the ancient world.¹⁰¹ It is very important to remember that skin color and other signs of ethnic difference were most frequently explained (when not taken for granted) as connected with distance from the sun or angle of the earth with respect to the sun's rays rather than as biological in basis, or else as at most due to questions of custom and environment (consider once more the link both Plutarch and Herodotus trace between the pale Asian complexion and indoor life). The stress on *acquired*, rather than on innate or original, characteristics, tends to resist the kinds of assumptions underlying the modern notion of race.¹⁰²

It is thus still more difficult to share the opinion that the idealization in literature of a white female complexion has its basis in the racial classification of Greek culture itself as white, as many modern scholars have insisted, and in highly suspect times.¹⁰³ As I attempted to show at

101. On the fine borderline between the sense of ethnic difference and racism, see the subtle remarks of Tinland 1978; Lonis 1981; and Thompson 1989, esp. pp. 1ff., 21ff., 157ff. The development of racist feelings in a specific historical context is usually explained as a reaction to a direct threat posed to the existing social structure. This is what happened, for example, in Egypt in the third century A.D. at a time of increased politico-economical conflict between the white and black populations (Cracco Ruggini 1979). On the radically different attitude expressed by Heliodorus in the same period cf. Dilke 1980. Sikes (1914), A. Diller ([1937] 1971), Baldry (1965), Snowden (1983), Baslez (1984), and Bérard (1986) are all of the opinion that the Greeks were, on the whole, racially tolerant.

102. The opening pages of Lévi-Strauss 1983 contain many important remarks on the subject (with reference to the findings of genetic science). However, though I thought differently when writing the first edition of this book (and argued explicitly in Sassi 1985), I no longer believe that the appeal to environmental factors in order to explain ethnic difference can *of itself* prevent the development of racist attitudes. In the Greek world it certainly did not prevent the development of the idea of Greek cultural superiority over other peoples, a superiority gradually attained thanks to favorable external conditions but which came to be perceived as "natural" (see Sassi forthcoming). I no longer think it right to pass over cases such as that analyzed by Bougerol (1984), who discusses how a geographical and climatic framework is used for racist purposes to justify the subjugation of a people.

103. For our present purposes see Jax 1933; for an opposite view, see Corbetta 1979 and Schnapp-Courbeillon 1979. Furthermore, from the time of Xenophanes fragment 16 onward there was a certain awareness of the subjectivity of aesthetic judgments, such that

the beginning of this chapter, the idealization of a white female complexion is, rather, based on contrast with the dark male body and perhaps acquired further positive resonance through association with the idea of luminosity, which follows its own symbolic laws. Among certain African tribes women with lighter complexions (and children, too, who are often lighter in color in their earliest months) are aesthetically more pleasing precisely because of a close symbolic link with generation, life, and the sky.¹⁰⁴ It was for the same reason that (like albinos in many primitive cultures) Europeans could be taken for gods or as godlike by the natives of the countries they colonized.¹⁰⁵

The texts available, then, reveal a sense of curiosity and indeed often sympathy toward nonwhites (culminating in Heliodorus's *Aethiopia*, dating from the third or the fourth century A.D.). The black African occupies a position that is antithetical to that of the Greek but also diametrically opposed to that of the northern nations. On the other hand, if the northern tendency to fair hair is susceptible of idealization (so much so that it is normally attributed to gods and heroes or to imaginary characters but less frequently to real people), other northern features tend to be viewed negatively. For instance, blue eyes could be disturbing and sometimes were associated with the evil eye.¹⁰⁶

The question is thus a complex one and does not permit the use of the kind of conceptual framework which modern racism has made familiar. Skin color is used as an objective factor in the process of ethnic classification and has a role not unlike the one it still enjoys (notwithstanding the increasing contact between ethnic groups and the gradual reduction of natural environments) in contemporary anthropology.¹⁰⁷ In many cultures, moreover, it is one of the earliest criteria adopted in the

it was seen to be perfectly possible for an Ethiopian to prefer a dark woman with a flattish nose (Sext. *Adv. math.* XI 43; cf. Philostr. *Vit. Apoll.* II 19).

104. Zahan 1972, pp. 375ff., 385ff.

105. Cf., e.g., Métais 1957, p. 356.

106. Eros, for instance, is traditionally represented as blond (Geiger 1986). It will suffice to look up the entries for *xanthos* (blond) and *chryseos* (golden) in LSJ. For *glaukos* ("light blue") see Maxwell-Stuart 1981, pt. I; B. Schmidt 1913; and Deonna 1965, pp. 148ff. Of course, though blond hair was admired (as is shown by the widespread practice of dyeing one's hair, on which see n. 26 above and chap. 3, n. 130), various methods to change blue eyes to black, partly because blue eyes were thought to be possessed of weak sight in the daytime, have been preserved (see Gal. *Comp. med. sec. loc.* IV 8 = K. XII 740 and 802; Maxwell-Stuart 1981, pt. 1, pp. 35, 46, 48, 51-52).

107. Cf. Martin and Saller 1957-62, pp. 110ff., 1805ff., 1996 (with the obvious proviso that melanin is not, as was thought in ancient times, a product of solar radiation but a biological defense against ultraviolet rays).

perception and representation of ethnic difference. With regard to the ancient world, it may be worth noting that in Egypt the attribution of specific traits (skin color, language, dress, etc.) to other peoples seems to begin in the New Kingdom (sixteenth to eleventh centuries B.C.), at a time when the term *ṛmꜣw* (man), originally referring exclusively to the Egyptians themselves, as the only civilized men, began to be used of foreigners, too. A fresco from this period (Eighteenth Dynasty), decorating a wall in the Rekhmara tomb at Thebes, represents the Egyptians with dark red skins and thus distinguishes them not only from a group of blacks but also from a lighter-skinned North African and an olive-complexioned Semite.¹⁰⁸

It is thus not a question of stressing the Greeks' keenness of observation, nor the "relevance" today of their insights, but rather of studying the means whereby they succeeded in discerning the clear text of their own culture in the manifold varieties of the human.

6. From Periphery to Center: Constructing a Cultural Model

Given the vividness with which marginal figures such as those of women and barbarians are represented, it may seem surprising that we should lack definite descriptions of the citizens who by contrast enjoyed full political rights and who were not only the main figures in the picture but themselves designed it. This lack may be explained by reference to a communication strategy common in descriptions, which is seen most clearly in administrative documents, both because of the practical purpose these serve and because of their lack of literary complexity. An important example of this kind of document is offered by the numerous papyri from Greco-Roman Egypt that show how, from the Ptolemaic period on, citizens were legally identified in wills, deeds of sale, and tax returns through a detailed cataloguing of their personal appearance. It is interesting to note that, while information regarding age, height, complexion, hair type, form of face, and special marks such as scars or moles is consistently recorded, the color of the eyes is only mentioned when they are light and that of the hair not at all. It is likely that these two features were fairly uniform, even at a time when the Egyptian population included a variety of immigrants, such as Greeks and Per-

108. See Martin and Saller [1914] 1957-62, p. 1791; Helck 1964; Helck and Otto 1972, s.v. "Anthropologie," pp. 304-5. Many peoples, convinced that they occupied a place at the center of the world, referred to themselves as "men" (see Müller 1972-80, vol. 1, p. 2, on the Eskimos, Delaware, etc.).

sians, all of whom presumably had dark hair and eyes.¹⁰⁹ In other words, it was felt to be of no use recording features that did not vary from one person to the next, since they could be of no help in identifying individual citizens. By the same token, the absence of information relating to a particular feature implies a certain norm (individuals with hair that was not jet black would be noted as significant exceptions).

Similarly, insofar as it is regarded as the norm, the positive term in a cultural model lacks marked definition within the asymmetrical system of relations holding between itself and the other terms.¹¹⁰ This rule is capable of many different applications. One instance is the well-known passage in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* on the ages of man, where the extensive and lively description of youth and old age (which suffer from an excess or lack of warm passion and/or cold experience) contrasts with the short space given over to the phase of maturity, a physical and mental ideal sufficiently defined (but also more abstractly typified) as a proper balance between the extremes either side of it.¹¹¹ A further example, far removed in place and time, is furnished by the reports drawn up by Napoleon's prefects as part of a census of the French nation immediately after the revolution. Most of these reports deal with the life and customs of people living in the country, on the (often explicit) assumption that these must vary from one region to another while the life and customs

109. In addition to Hasebroek 1921, see the equally useful, though less well known Fürst 1902 and Caldara 1924, esp. pp. 23ff., 56ff. The asyndetic character of these records, meant to aid the rapid retrieval of information, is comparable to the method used to ensure an incisive style in literary portraiture. In literature this technique, termed *eikonismos* in rhetoric, has its origin in the Homeric description of Eurybates. It is not so clear, however, when and where its application in a legal context begins. Misener (1924, p. 102) thinks it likely that it was used in Greece and Italy, at least for the purpose of recovering escaped slaves through the offer of a reward, but only cites literary sources. More pertinent than the passage in Petr. *Satyr.* CII 13 referred to in Hasebroek 1925 is the statement in Suetonius's *Life of Augustus* (LXV 3) to the effect that the emperor forbade his daughter, Julia, to receive any visitor without his first being informed of the visitor's "age, height, and skin color and whether he had any distinguishing marks or scars." Jax (1936), however, stresses that no other instances of a similar procedure are known and argues for the Egyptian origin of the administrative portrait, as well as for its independence with respect to the literary genre. I would like to add here that references to a "freckled" patient in Hipp. *Epid.* IV 30 = L. V 174 and to "the one with dark skin" in Hipp. *Epid.* VI 2.19 = L. V 286 may have been intended to identify the persons in question (even if only as an aid to the doctor's memory).

110. Cf. Waugh 1982.

111. Aristot. *Rhet.* II 12-14; the lack of balance is stressed in a perceptive reading of the passage in Boll 1950, pp. 168ff.

of the urban elite will not. The true reason is that the urban elite come under the category of the obvious, embodying as they do the ideal of a universal man, who does not need to be studied because he is already endowed with reason and education.¹¹²

The case before us would seem to be a similar one: women, craftsmen, and barbarians appear clearly defined precisely because they are deliberately selected for description,¹¹³ occupying as they do a marginal position, which implies a point of reference that is unnamed because it is regarded as normal but of all its elements is the most deeply embedded in the system. If we take the various texts considered so far as a system for constructing a model of reality, the sense of such a system may be summarized by means of the categories proposed by Yuri Lotman.¹¹⁴ Greek culture has inner and outer spaces (IN and OUT, respectively), where IN corresponds to the sole depository of the text (us), thus regulating and marking the description of OUT, understood as the space occupied by others. (This description assigns a positive value to IN, even though it may happen that for contingent reasons some aspect of OUT receives positive appraisal, as in the case of the peasant.)

A woman's otherness, it is true, is seen as more radical than a boy's (which is only temporary), or indeed than that of a craftsman, peasant, or philosopher (which are differently restricted forms of citizenship). On the other hand, she is never inferior to a slave. Yet this only makes the shifting relations between the various elements more interesting. The boundary excluding foreign peoples further develops and complicates the picture but is secondary to that cutting through Greek culture itself. Though initially defined in terms of an outer geographical area, the barbarian world becomes a paradigm for some of the weaker elements within the model (such as the feminine), to the gratification of its self-regarding inner core. Slaves, on the other hand, who historically originated from the subjugation of enemy peoples, were like an influx of barbarians within the polis itself, where they offered an example close at hand of the traits that barbarians share with women or low-status workers. The system may be represented by means of diagram 1, where

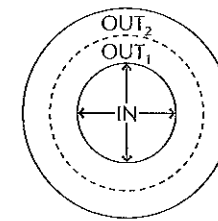
112. Cf. Bourguet 1984, who also points out the use of a set of concepts derived from Hippocrates, according to which environment and climate allow one to read human variety in terms of an ordered system of differences (in temperature, latitude, and so on).

113. There is of course a tradition within Greek culture that views the *technai* of the craftsmen in a positive way (as is well shown in Cambiano [1971] 1991), but the fact remains that it is mainly their negative valuation that finds expression in *descriptions* of the craftsmen themselves.

114. See Lotman and Uspenskij 1975, but also Segre 1979, esp. pp. 5ff.

IN is the Greek citizen with full political rights, OUT₁ represents women (and also boys, craftsmen, peasants, philosophers, and slaves), and OUT₂ represents barbarians.

Diagram 1



The diagram allows us to observe another process common to the construction of cultural models, whereby observation is progressively less structured as one moves from the center of observation out to the periphery.¹¹⁵ Put more concretely, it is the same attitude which leads Herodotus to write that "the Indians are all the same color, which is like that of the Ethiopians."¹¹⁶ This is certainly no proof of his "inability" to perceive elements of differentiation within an ethnic group that was not his own, given that he could also point to the straight hair of the eastern Ethiopians as a characteristic that distinguished them from the rest of this otherwise curly-haired people.¹¹⁷ The same process is at work in the mythical location of the Ethiopians in the east (echoed by Herodotus when he compares them to the Indians) and, at a later date (the beginning of the fourth century B.C.), on Lucanian vases showing the Egyptian king Busiris represented as a Persian¹¹⁸ and yet again in the fact that the peoples of North Africa today have only one term to describe the white European complexion, whereas they have a wide lexical range to

115. Cf. Lotman 1977 and Ginzburg [1979] 1983, pp. 97ff.

116. Her. III 101.

117. Her. VII 70. With regard to skin color, it cannot be denied that ethnographers of the Hellenistic period would prove extremely subtle in discerning nuances of pigmentation. Nearchus, for example, remarks on a difference between the inhabitants of southern India (the color of their skin and hair being more like that of the Ethiopians) and those of the northern part of the country, who rather resembled the Egyptians (*ap. Arr. Ind.* VI 9). Aristobulus refers to certain inhabitants of western India who are not as dark as the other Indians (*ap. Arr. Ind.* I 2), and Strabo distinguishes between Syrians with a lighter complexion (*leukosyroi*) and those "with burnt skin" (XII 3.9, XVI 1.2). But the idea of a foreign people as "homogeneous" is a long-lived topos that has survived advances in objective knowledge, with which it remains interwoven. For Alexander von Humboldt's attitude toward the American Indians, see Bourguet 1984, p. 229 n. 55.

118. See Greco Pontrandolfo and Rouveret 1983, p. 1065.

describe those of their co-nationals.¹¹⁹ This process, according to which details lose in importance and thus become interchangeable in proportion to the desire to *ignore* them, relegates foreigners to an area that is relatively inaccessible to consciousness, in which individual phenomena merge and are confused with one another, leaving considerable scope for the imagination. Thus, in the passage just cited, Herodotus adds that the Ethiopians are the only men to have black sperm, the same color as their skin. Yet this is far from being some bizarre notion peculiar to this author: the same piece of information is found in Aristotle.¹²⁰

To stay with Herodotus, it is interesting to see what happens to his account of Scythia as the author's gaze reaches farther and farther into the distance and the information he supplies becomes more and more doubtful. Of the land beyond the Argippaei, "said to be" born bald, "nothing precise can be said"; however, the Argippaei themselves say (and Herodotus repeats their story, though he finds it incredible) that it is inhabited by men with goats' feet.¹²¹ This is a very good example of how, as information becomes less structured, it is overlaid by an opposition between culture and nonculture, expressed in terms of order versus disorder or of human versus animal. In Aeschylus's *Suppliants*, the Argive king wonders whether the Danaids before him, certainly more like Libyan women than natives (on account of their skin color, language, and dress, as is elsewhere specified), are Egyptian, Cypriot, or Indian nomads (the latter are said to travel along the Ethiopian border on camel back) or even (except that they have no bows) those enemies of men and devourers of meat, the Amazons. His thoughts follow an "order of increasing unreality" and end in an image highly expressive of the wonder felt before a people both unknown and incomprehensible (as also felt by the audience before the exotic dress and dark masks of the chorus).¹²² The Amazons, furthermore, are a mythical people from the north (which hardly justifies their physical resemblance to blacks) and are here spoken of as hunters, alien to the world of bread and agriculture. They are thus close to that "interchangeability of barbarian and beast" which is a widespread topos of the ancient world (one that finds its best-known and most picturesque expression in the fabulous des-

119. Cf. Hess 1920, p. 82.

120. Aristot. *Hist. anim.* 523a18 (despite the reservations expressed in *Gen. anim.* 736a1).

121. Her. IV 24–25.

122. Froidefond 1971, p. 87. The king's speech is in Aesch. *Suppl.* 279ff.; other significant passages are Aesch. *Suppl.* 70, 128, 155, 233ff. In drawing attention to the probable appearance of the chorus, Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1914, p. 4) was anticipated by Girard (1894–95, p. 114).

criptions of monstrous peoples in books V and VI of Pliny's *Natural History*).¹²³

As in Semonides' famous satire, the nature of women may equally be likened to the lower and unruly nature of animals, whose intelligence is a matter of pure instinct, or at best of cunning.¹²⁴ Of the various types of animal-woman, the only positive example is that likened to the modest and industrious bee, an image borrowed from Hesiod whose modified form gains immense popularity and is found, for instance, in Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*, where it is expressly used to reinforce the distinction between the outdoor work of men and the indoor work of women. It recurs again in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, where it is developed into the disturbing image of the bee, quiescent in the hive until provoked, when it will exit the hive and attack like any wild beast. (However, in assigning the simile to a chorus of old women, who employ it to defend themselves against the insults of the men, Aristophanes has them adopt the same modes of expression as the culture that excludes them and thus deprives their sally into the outdoor world of meaning.)¹²⁵ The tragic heroine, such as Clytemnestra or Medea, whose energy makes her situation exceptional with regard to the limits normally imposed on women, is also called a "lioness" (implying a higher degree of dignity, as the lion has always been seen as the most noble of animals).¹²⁶

This kind of description reflects a mode of cultural self-definition that is commonly found well beyond the confines of the Greek world and entails a vertical axis of differentiation which operates downward with respect to the lower animal world and upward with respect to the realm of the gods. This model, whose function is limited to that of identifying an area of culture within an area of nonculture, tends not to introduce further internal distinctions.¹²⁷ As we shall see in the next chapter, the animal world is to a certain degree susceptible of classification and thereby acquires heuristic value for humans. The realm of the gods is more elusive, their various epiphanies being characterized in the sources by the metaphorical use of dark and light, in order to express the opposition between the radiant Olympian and the dark Chthonian deities, matched in their respective cults by the use of black as opposed

123. Vegetti [1979] 1987, pp. 126ff. In addition to the texts there cited, see [Aristot.] *Probl.* XIV 1 ("wild," the customs or aspect of those peoples who live in excessively hot or cold climates).

124. Sem. frag. 7; on which see chap. 2, sec. 1.

125. Hes. *Theog.* 598–99; Xenoph. *Oec.* VII 33; Aristoph. *Lys.* 467ff., 1014–15.

126. Aesch. *Ag.* 1258ff.; Eur. *El.* 1163, *Med.* 187, 1342, 1358, 407.

127. Vidal-Naquet 1975; Benabou 1975; Bottéro 1975; and see also Crispini 1983 on the move toward the "naturalization" of monsters.

to white or vice versa.¹²⁸ The chryselephantine technique, used exclusively (in the classical period at least) for the statues of the gods (Phidias's statue of Zeus at Olympia being a famous example, but a far from isolated one), probably derives from the belief that the nature of the gods cannot be compared to that of men. The same belief is expressed in the myth of Pelops (served at table by his father, Tantalus, to his divine guests, who when they later reassemble him give him an ivory shoulder), or again in the legend of the golden thigh exhibited by Pythagoras as proof of his superhuman origin.¹²⁹ In philosophical thinking, "metaphysical" reality is more sharply defined as nonrepresentable, as in Xenophanes' attack on the anthropomorphism of the Ethiopians, who picture their gods as black and with flattish noses, and of the Thracians, who think them rosy-cheeked and blue-eyed, or as in Parmenides, who instances the absence of "change in its resplendent color" as the principal reason the concept of being may not be grasped by the senses.¹³⁰ If finally we take Euripides' remark that "divinity is in its very nature something variegated and which cannot be inferred" (where "variegated" translates *poikilon*, which can also mean "changeable" and "intricate," like a labyrinth), it is interesting to note the connection between color and the cognitive process, here rejected with reference to the divine.¹³¹

All these texts, however, and especially the last, imply (and the inference is an important one for our purposes) that the human individual, on the other hand, endowed as he is with a body that is written all over with signs, may become the object of conjecture, such as to locate him within a system of classification aimed at determining value. Impeded by a model that classes women, animals, and barbarians together in a *single* deviant group with no internal distinctions, this process becomes possible as soon as a given culture manages to develop its model so as to register different degrees within a reality instinctively perceived as amorphous (even at the cost of discerning weak areas within its own system, by analogy with others outside itself).¹³² It is significant that this

128. Cf. Mayer 1927 and Radke 1936.

129. For Pelops, see schol. Pind. *Ol.* I 40; for Pythagoras, Apollon. *Mir.* 6 = Aristot. frag. 191 Rose, in 14A7 DK; and note also the Latin saying *barbam auream habere* = *deus esse*, e.g., in Petr. *Satyr.* LVIII 6 (for these and other sources see Lorimer 1936). There is evidence that belief in the golden "flesh of the gods" was current among the Egyptians from very early times (fourteenth to thirteenth centuries B.C.) (Gunn and Gardiner 1917, pp. 247ff.).

130. Xenophan. frag. 16; Parm. frag. 8. 41.

131. Eur. *Hel.* 711–12.

132. See above, sec. 5 and diagram 1, with comments.

change comes about in Greece (though without blurring the opposition between human and animal) between the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., in the very period in which the classical polis was being founded and consolidated.

The fact that the distinguishing features of a social or ethnic group are presented as natural and visibly inscribed on the body should clearly be interpreted, not as a neutral reading of reality, but rather as a selection (in itself an arbitrary one) operated by culture on the continuum of experience. Indeed, though not in themselves a voluntary means of communication, bodily signs acquire the force of a message wherever humans interact, in a process of social classification which is a direct product of the community's instinct. The degree of markedness of these bodily signs therefore corresponds to the degree in which the community is structured as a hierarchy (semiologists have shown how widespread the special attention to sexual, social, and racial characteristics is).¹³³

From the time that a man first noticed that a woman—or barbarian—had a lighter skin than himself, a long chain of inferences impossible now to reconstruct has made this trait almost a symbol of diversity, loading it with connotations determined by the hierarchical relationships between elements within the cultural system (hence negative if the system is male-centered or ethnocentric). As we shall see, this situation heavily influences the scientific study of man in Greece. For this study grafts ideology straight onto reality, and starting with what are held to be the outermost levels of humanity (though ordered with reference to a scale of values), it penetrates deeper, to what is assumed to be the real goal of knowledge. However, the method is essentially the same, *mutatis mutandis*, as that which survives into the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and hence shapes our own cultural anthropology: "When we wish to study men, we have to look close to ourselves: to study man we have to look far; we have to discern differences before we can discover properties." The ideology that excludes women and barbarians is also a means of differentiation within the cognitive continuum: anthropology—like democracy—was born in Greece thanks to its victims.¹³⁴

133. See Stein 1979, and on the broader question of the conceptual framework, see Lévi-Strauss [1962a] 1974.

134. "Quand on veut étudier les hommes, il faut regarder près de soi; mais pour étudier l'homme, il faut apprendre à porter la vue au loin; il faut d'abord observer les différences pur découvrir les propriétés." The quotation is from Rousseau and is given in Lévi-Strauss 1962a, p. 326.