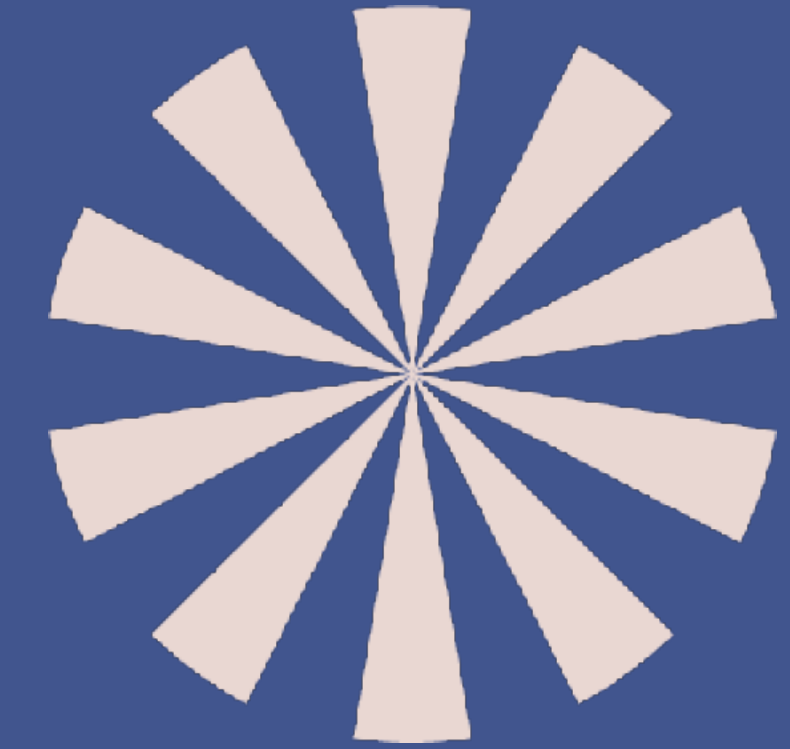

Greco-Roman Period

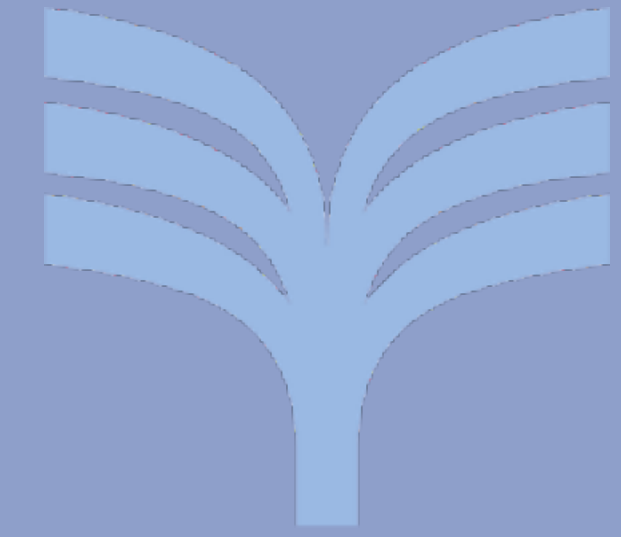


DR. KALYANI VALLATH

June 2026 Batch

25 YEARS OF
EXCELLENCE





Greek Classicism

June 2026 Batch

Ancient Greece

Three periods:

Archaic

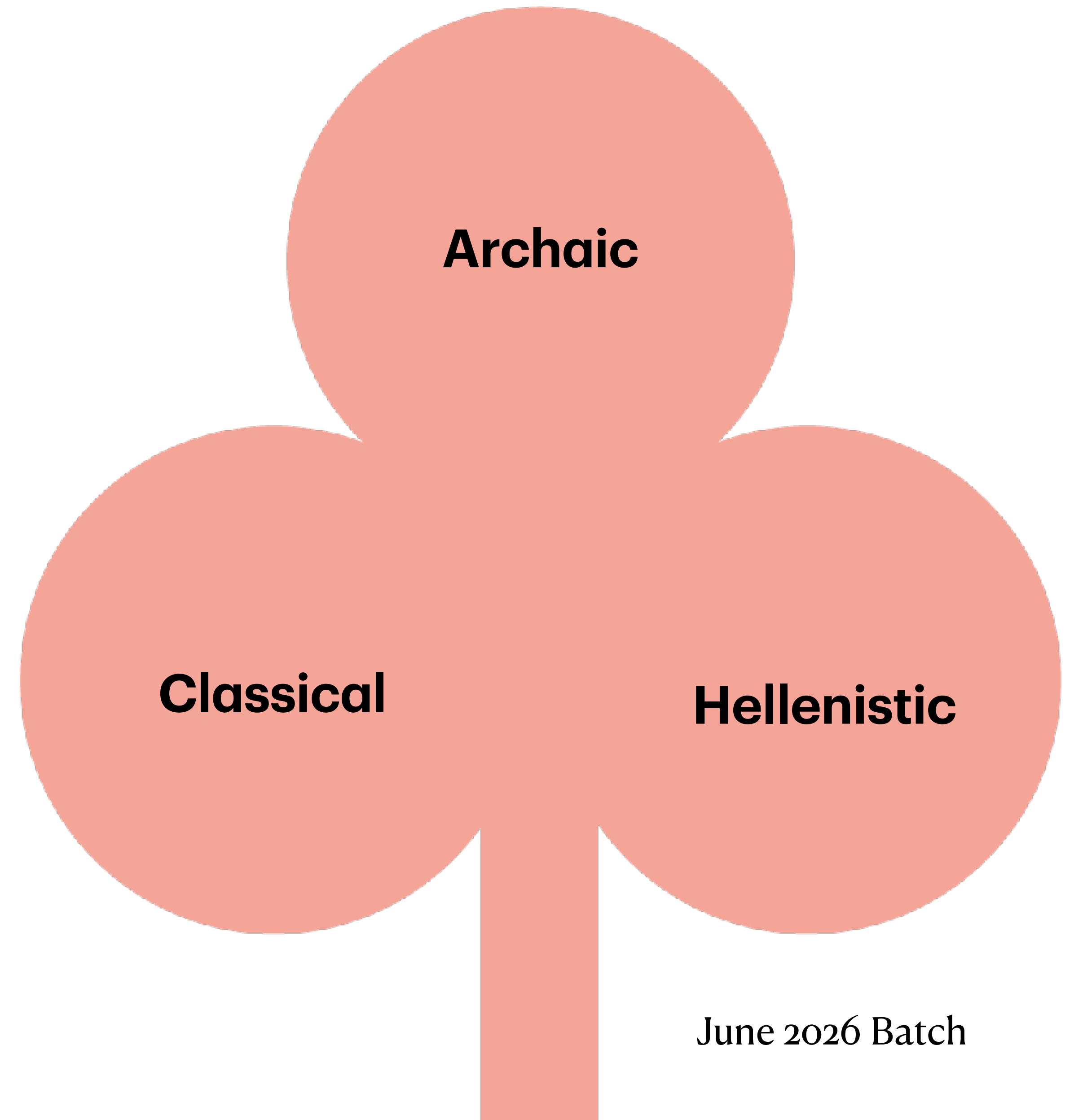
- Time of Homer
- Before this, it was the Greek Dark Ages, marked by ignorance, injustices, and various kinds of misery

Classical

- Flowering of arts and letters

Hellenistic

- Greece politically declined, but culturally dominated



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Archaic Period



Period

- About 9th Century BC to 5th Century BC

City-states formed

- Constantly at war with one another
- Ruled by tyrants
- Persians were their common enemy

Poets

- Homer
- Hesiod
- Sappho

Homer (8th century BC)

- Greatest of the Greek epic poets
- Nothing definite known of his life
- Many Lives of Homer have been written from ancient period onwards
- Believed to have been a blind, a wandering minstrel



Works

The Iliad

- Epic
- One of the oldest extant (existing) works in Western literature
- Set against the Trojan War
- Deals mainly with the fighting between Agamemnon and Achilles

The Odyssey

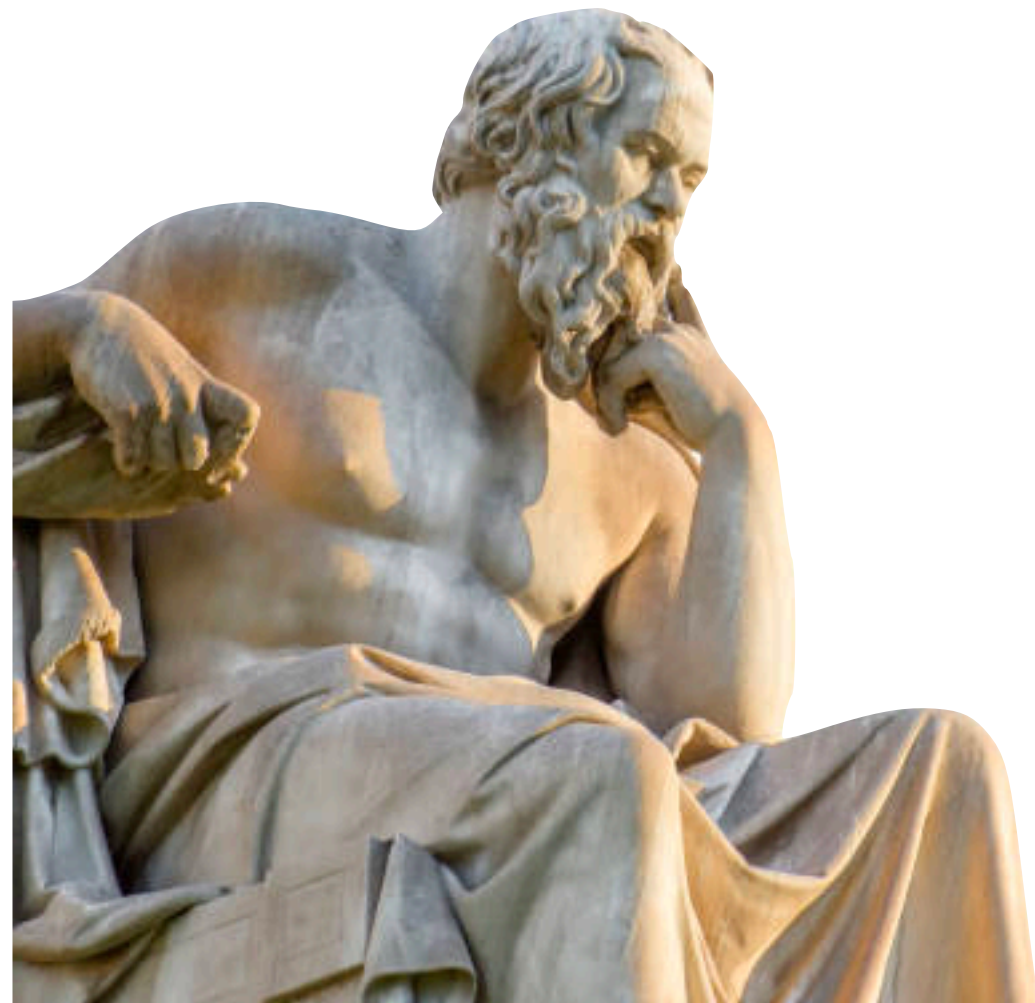
- Sequel to The Iliad
- Depicts the journey of Odysseus or Ulysses back home to Ithaca, after the fall of Troy

Classical Period



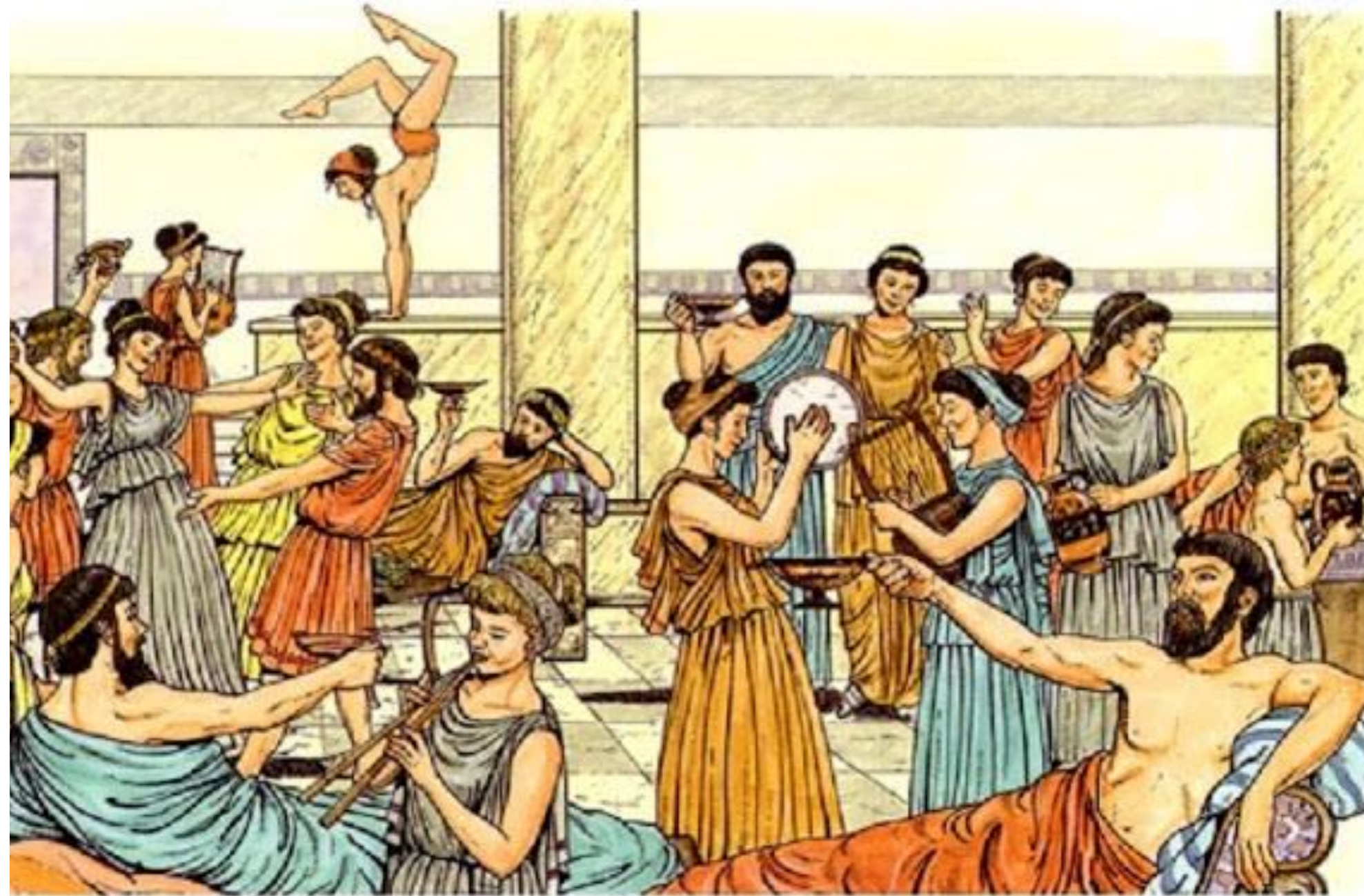
- 5th-4th century
- Athens
 - Athens emerged as the most powerful of the Greek city-states
 - Ruled by the famous ruler, Pericles
 - Tremendous flowering of the arts and letters
 - Disciplines such as political thought, aesthetics, physics, ethics, linguistics, biology, logic and mathematics developed

Rise of Philosophy



- Pre-Socratic philosophers (6th century BC)
 - Thales of Miletus
 - Anaximander
 - Xenophanes of Colophon
 - Pythagoras
 - Heraclitus
 - Parmenides
 - Zeno of Elea
 - The Sophists (founder Zeno of Citium)
- Socrates, Plato, Aristotle

Classical Drama



Tragedy

- Emerged in Athens in the late 6th century BC
- As a part of religious festival Dionysia
 - Dionysus is the god of wine and ecstasy
 - Known as Bacchus among the Romans

Comedy

- Developed later in association with the “satyr play”
- Usually based on mythological subjects

Greek Theatre



- Koilon or Theatron
- Orchestra
- Thymele
- Scene or Skene
- Proscenion or Proscenium
- Diazoma

Greek Tragedy: Structure



- Prologue
- Parados
- Episodes and Stasimon
- Exodus

How would a play enacted in such a theatre be different from that of an indoor theatre?

The Tragedians

- 3 tragedians
 - Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides
- At the beginning, there was only one actor in a tragedy, who interacted with the Chorus
- Aeschylus
 - Introduced the second actor and thus brought variety into drama (says Aristotle in Poetics)
 - Chorus has less importance
 - Made costumes more elaborate
- Sophocles
 - Introduced the third actor
 - No more than three actors were there in Greek tragedy



Aeschylus

(c. 525-c. 456 BC)

- Father of tragedy
- In the competitions held at the festival of Dionysia, Aeschylus always won the first prize
- His plays had a strong moral and religious basis
- Most famous work is the trilogy The Oresteia
- Sons Euphorion and Euaeon became tragic poets



The Oresteia



- A trilogy
 - Agamemnon
 - The Libation Bearers (Choephoroi)
 - The Eumenides
- Satyr Play Proteus
(lost except for two lines)

The Oresteia



- Story of the Greek hero Agamemnon, who is killed by his wife Clytemnestra and her lover Aegisthus
- Clytemnestra is the twin sister of Helen of Troy
- Helen and Clytemnestra were born of the “double egg” laid by Leda, a queen, who was raped by Zeus in the shape of a swan
- Agamemnon’s children Orestes and Electra take revenge upon her
- Orestes kills Clytemnestra, his mother
- Orestes is haunted by the Eumenides, as a punishment for committing matricide

Other Extant Plays

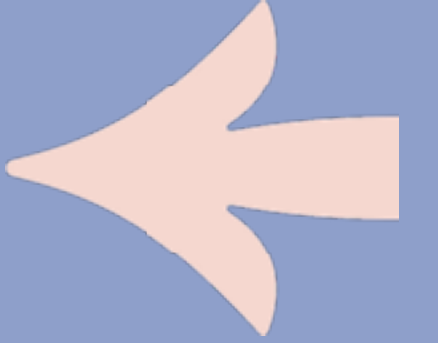
- The Persians
- The Suppliants
- Seven Against Thebes
- Prometheia
 - Prometheus Bound
 - Prometheus Unbound
 - Prometheus, the Fire-Bringer

Sophocles

- Also won prizes in dramatic competitions
- Believed to have written over a hundred plays; most of them lost.
- Initially imitated Aeschylus, but later developed a style of his own.
- Characters are more developed and individualistic than those of Aeschylus
- Theban Trilogy: Oedipus Rex (Oedipus the King), Oedipus at Colonus and Antigone

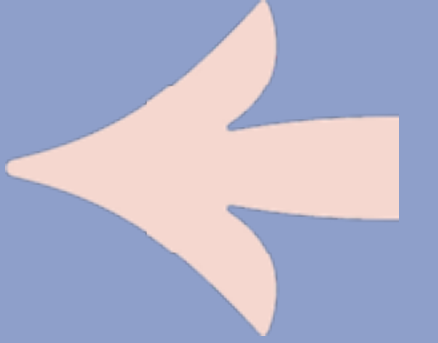


Oedipus Tyrannus (Latin, Oedipus Rex)



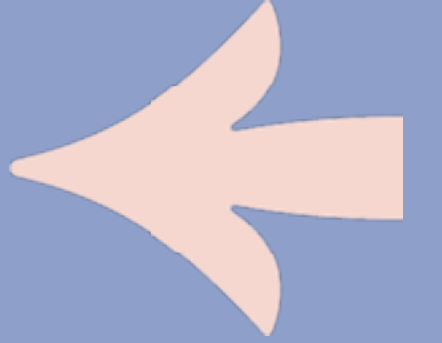
- When Oedipus is born to Laius and Jocasta, the King and Queen of Thebes, the Delphic Oracle prophesizes that he will kill his father and marry his mother
- Oedipus's parents sent the child to be killed, but he is brought up by a childless couple
- Oedipus eventually comes to know of the prophecy
- One day, he quarrels with a man and kills him, without knowing that he is his father, Laius
- By solving the riddle of the sphinx, Oedipus becomes the King of Thebes, marries the widowed queen, Jocasta, and has children by her
- When the truth is revealed, Jocasta kills herself and Oedipus blinds himself

Oedipus Tyrannus (Latin, Oedipus Rex)



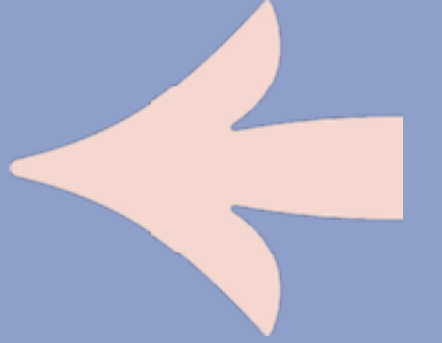
- This play is originally in Greek
 - Robert Fagles's translation (1984) for Penguin is famous
- The play opens to show Oedipus addressing a priest and the citizens of Thebes who are suffering from the plague
 - Oedipus's opening speech begins "Oh my children"
 - Later he says, ""My children, I pity you"

The Delphic Oracle



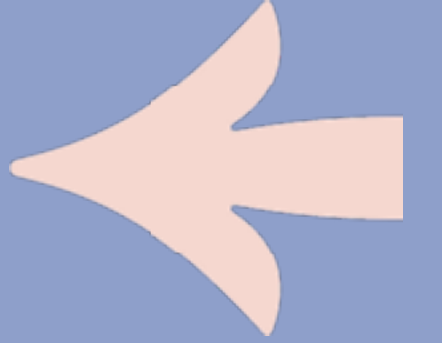
- Creon, Oedipus's brother-in-law, then returns from the Delphic Oracle
 - Through the Oracle, Apollo has ordered, ““Drive the corruption from the land, don't harbor it any longer, past all cure, / don't nurse it in your soil—root it out!”
- Oedipus questions Creon and it becomes clear that the murderer of the former king Laius should be punished
- The people of Thebes only know what one man who witnessed the murder told them
 - Laius was killed by thieves
 - The “riddling Sphinx” asked the people to let go of the murder
- Oedipus vows to find the man and punish him

The Entry of the Chorus



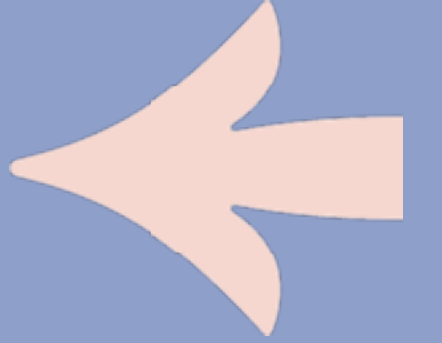
- This is followed by the Parados when the Chorus enters for the first time
 - They lament about the plague and call upon the gods to help them
 - “the miseries numberless, grief on grief, no end— too much to bear, we are all dying”
- This is followed by five Episodes

Oedipus's Sense of Justice



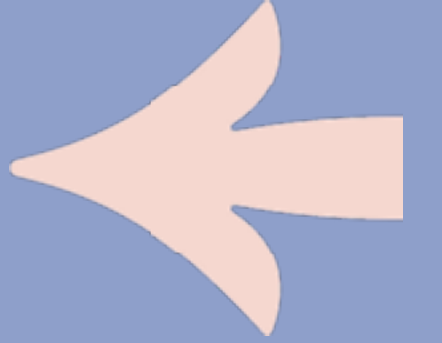
- There is great dramatic irony in the opening of the first episode
 - Oedipus tells the Chorus: “You pray to the gods? Let me grant your prayers.”
 - As “a stranger to the story”, he is determined to bring justice
- Oedipus makes some proclamations
 - The murderer can reveal himself or anyone who knows the murderer can reveal him—there won't be punishment
 - Those who hide the truth will be severely punished

Oedipus's Sense of Justice



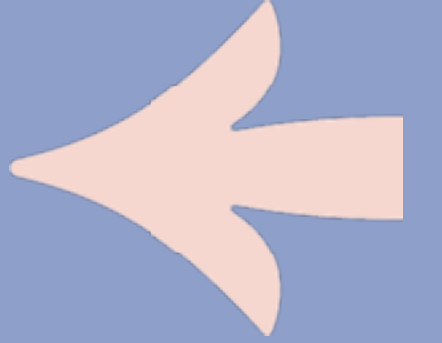
- “I fight for the god and for the murdered man....
Now my curse on the murderer. Whoever he is, a lone man unknown in his crime or one among many, let that man drag out his life in agony, step by painful step— I curse myself as well . . . if by any chance he proves to be an intimate of our house, here at my hearth, with my full knowledge, may the curse I just called down on him strike me!”

Tiresias



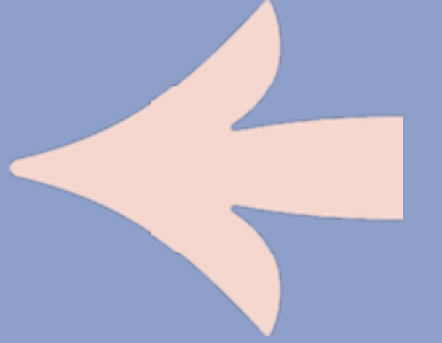
- A Leader suggests that they consult the blind prophet Tiresias
 - Tiresias is led towards the King, rather late, for Oedipus had sent escorts for him much earlier
- Tiresias says, “How terrible—to see the truth / when the truth is only pain to him who sees!” And refuses to say anything about Laius’s murderer: “You’ll get nothing from me.”
- Oedipus flies into a rage and flings insults at Tiresias
 - The prophet sadly replies, “What will come will come. Even if I shroud it all in silence.”
 - When Oedipus insists, he finally tells the baffled King, “You are the curse, the corruption of the land!.... you are the murderer you hunt.”
- Oedipus suspects a conspiracy by Tiresias and Creon against Laius, and is proud that he himself had solved the Sphinx’s riddle

Oedipus's Tirade



- Come here, you pious fraud. Tell me,
when did you ever prove yourself a prophet?
When the Sphinx, that chanting Fury kept her death watch here,
why silent then, not a word to set our people free?
There was a riddle, not for some passer-by to solve—
it cried out for a prophet. Where were you?
Did you rise to the crisis? Not a word,
you and your birds, your gods—nothing.
No, but I came by, Oedipus the ignorant,
I stopped the Sphinx! With no help from the birds,
the flight of my own intelligence hit the mark.

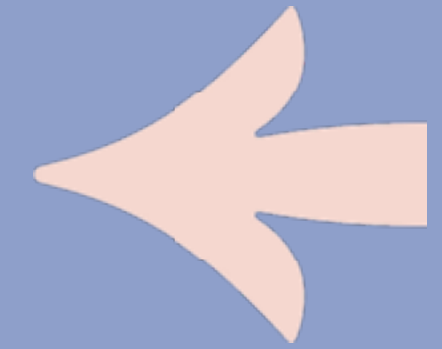
Tiresias's Reply



- You are the king no doubt, but in one respect, at least, I am your equal: the right to reply. I claim that privilege too. I am not your slave. I serve Apollo. I don't need Creon to speak for me in public. So, you mock my blindness? Let me tell you this. 470 You with your precious eyes, you're blind to the corruption of your life, to the house you live in, those you live with — who are your parents? Do you know? All unknowing you are the scourge of your own flesh and blood, 475 the dead below the earth and the living here above, and the double lash of your mother and your father's curse will whip you from this land one day, their footfall treading you down in terror, darkness shrouding your eyes that now can see the light!

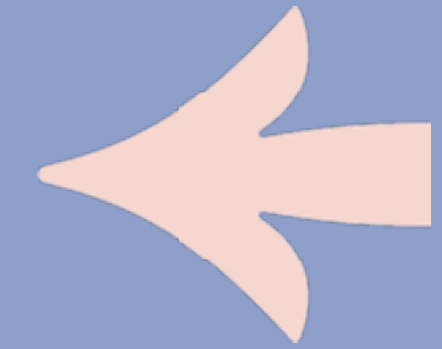


Oedipus at Colonus



- The last of the Theban plays to be written
- Starts in the grove of the Furies where Oedipus is a miserable beggar dressed in rags living in the company of his daughter Antigone
- King Theseus is kind to him, but he is neglected by his sons who are fighting each other
 - Oedipus knows it is because of his own curse, and will lead to their destruction
- Creon comes and tries to take Oedipus back to Thebes
 - Oedipus's death is prophesied to bring good fortune to the place where he dies and he refuses to leave Colonus
- Oedipus dies and is mourned by his daughters
- Theseus defends Colonus from Creon's army
- Polynices and Eteocles kill each other and Antigone decides to bury Polynices' body

Antigone



- Polynices and Eteocles have killed each other in a civil war
- King Creon gives Eteocles a hero's burial but leaves Polynices's body at the gates of Thebes as a punishment for rebelling against the state
- Antigone defies the law of the state and does her duty—buries her brother's body
- Tiresias warns Creon against making gods angry, but the king orders for her to be walled up alive in a cave
- Though Creon eventually relents, Antigone hangs herself in the cave
- Creon's son Haemon who loved her kills himself and so does Creon's wife Euridyce
- Creon's stubbornness and pride thus destroy him
- The play shows the conflict between the laws of the gods and the laws of the state



Other Extant Plays

- Ajax
- Women of Trachis
- Electra
- Philoctetes



In *Oedipus Rex*, the concept of anagnorisis is central to the dramatic structure. Which of the following best exemplifies this Aristotelian concept in the play?

- A. Oedipus' initial proclamation to punish the murderer of Laius
- B. Jocasta's recounting of the Delphic oracle to Oedipus
- C. The messenger from Corinth revealing Oedipus' adoption
- D. Creon's final acceptance of the throne of Thebes

ANS: C

How does the motif of blindness function symbolically in Oedipus Rex?

- A. As a metaphor for physical limitation in a fate-driven cosmos
- B. As a narrative device that parallels tragic decorum
- C. As a critique of Sophoclean religious skepticism
- D. As an ironic reversal of knowledge and ignorance

ANS: D

How does Sophocles employ dramatic irony in Oedipus Rex to reinforce tragic tension?

- A. By revealing Oedipus's true identity early to the audience
- B. Through the misdirection of Tiresias' prophecy
- C. By hiding key information from both characters and audience
- D. Through divine interventions that contradict human action

ANS: A

Which philosophical theme is most dominant in Oedipus Rex according to modern critical interpretations?

- A. Nihilism and the absurdity of fate
- B. Determinism versus free will
- C. Ethical relativism in political leadership
- D. Divine justice as retributive mechanism

ANS: B

Critics on Oedipus Rex

Bernard Knox, a renowned classicist and translator of Oedipus Rex, has argued, “Sophocles’ Oedipus is not only the greatest creation of a major poet and the classic representative figure of his age: he is also one of a long series of tragic protagonists who stand as symbols of human aspiration and despair before the characteristic dilemma of Western civilization—the problem of man’s true stature, his proper place in the universe.”

In **Oedipus Tyrannus: Tragic Heroism and the Limits of Knowledge (1993)**, an in-depth study of Oedipus Rex, **Charles Segal** has said: “The place of the Oedipus Tyrannus in literature is something like that of the Mona Lisa in art. Everyone knows the story, the first detective story of Western literature; everyone who has read or seen it is drawn into its enigmas and moral dilemmas. It presents a kind of nightmare vision of a world suddenly turned upside down: a decent man discovers that he has unknowingly killed his father, married his mother, and sired children by her. It is a story that, as Aristotle says in the Poetics, makes one shudder with horror and feel pity just on hearing it. In Sophocles’ hands, however, this ancient tale becomes a profound meditation on the questions of guilt and responsibility, the order (or disorder) of our world, and the nature of man.”

The twentieth century American poet and classicist **Richard Lattimore** has observed, “Sophocles turned tragedy inward upon the principal actors, and drama becomes drama of character.”

Bernard Knox, the renowned classicist and translator of *Oedipus Rex*, stated, “The closing note of the tragedy, is a renewed insistence on the heroic nature of Oedipus; the play ends as it began, with the greatness of the hero. But it is a different kind of greatness. It is now based on knowledge, not, as before on ignorance.”

Fun Fact

The theatre **Teatro Olimpico** in Italy was inaugurated on **3 March 1585** with a production of Sophocles' Oedipus Rex.

This was the first European performance of the play.

Which of these is true of Sophocles?

- A. He favoured dramatic action over narration.
- B. He emphasized dialogue rather than lengthy, undramatic monologues.
- C. He is said to have introduced painted scenery.
- D. Sophocles replaced the connected trilogies of Aeschylus with self-contained plays on different subjects.

ALL ARE TRUE!

Which character says these lines?

You have eyes to see with,
But you do not see yourself, you do not see
The horror shadowing every step of your life,
. . . Who are your father and mother? Can you tell me?

It is TIRESIAS

Which character says these lines?

Look and learn all citizens of Thebes. This is Oedipus.
He, who read the famous riddle, and we hailed chief of men,
All envied his power, glory, and good fortune.
Now upon his head the sea of disaster crashes down.
Mortality is man's burden. Keep your eyes fixed on your last day.
Call no man happy until he reaches it, and finds rest from
suffering.

It is the CHORUS

Fundamentally a victim of circumstances, innocent of intentional sin whose fate was preordained before his birth, Oedipus refuses the consolation of blamelessness that victimization confers, accepting in full his guilt and self-imposed sentence as an outcast, criminal, and sinner. He blinds himself to confirm the moral shame that his actions, unwittingly or not, have provoked. It is Oedipus's capacity to endure the revelation of his sin, his nature, and his fate that dominates the play's conclusion. Oedipus's greatest strengths—his determination to know the truth and to accept what he learns—sets him apart as one of the most pitiable and admired of tragic heroes.

In light of the passage, which of the following best captures the tragic uniqueness of Oedipus as presented in Oedipus Rex?

- A. His downfall results solely from external forces, absolving him of any true responsibility.
- B. The suggestion of his blamelessness highlights his role as a passive instrument of fate.
- C. His self-blinding represents a literal rejection of truth and a symbolic retreat from identity.
- D. His conscious embrace of guilt, despite his being innocent in intention, marks a moral heroism beyond the deterministic structure of fate.

ANS: D

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Euripides

- Author of over ninety plays, much of it lost
- Took the major step of depicting mythical heroes as ordinary people with inner lives and motives
- In his intellectual daring, Euripides is often compared to Socrates. (Neither of them cared much for accepted conventions and advocated unconventional and new ideas)
- Comic poets like Aristophanes lampooned Euripides as well as Socrates in their plays.
- Euripides's most famous play is Medea





Some Extant Plays



- Hippolytus
- Andromache
- The Trojan Women
- Iphigenia in Tauris
- Phoenician Women
- Orestes
- Bacchae
- Cyclops

Aristophanes

- 5th century BC
- Stalwart of comedy, which came to be known as Old Comedy, in contrast with the New Comedy of Menander
- Eleven surviving plays
- **The Clouds**
 - Cruelly caricatured Socrates, which led to the philosopher's trial and death according to Plato
- **The Wasps**
 - Through the character Philocleon, makes fun of the Athenians' excessiveness fondness of lawsuits
- **Lysistrata**
 - A woman ends the Peloponnesian War by getting women of the land to deny sex to their men
- **The Frogs**
 - Here, Dionysus himself, dressed in an absurd fashion, goes to Hades to bring back the best playwright from death
 - There is a famous scene in the play between Aeschylus and Euripides, regarding who is the better poet.

In Greek tragedy, Agon is a contest, competition, or struggle, often involving a formal debate or argumentation. Which of the following best encapsulates the significance of the Agon in Aristophanic comedy such as *The Clouds* or *Lysistrata*?

- A. A dramaturgical confrontation that has an ambivalent, multi-layered ending
- B. A formalized debate between opposing ideas or characters
- C. A stylised debate that encapsulates political and religious heterogeneity
- D. A metatheatrical deviation from the main plot that complicates the action

ANS: B

In *The Clouds*, Aristophanes satirizes sophistic education by following Strepsiades, an indebted Athenian who turns to Socrates' absurd "Thinkery" (a school that parodies the Sophists) to evade his debts, only to see his son corrupted by rhetorical trickery—leading to moral collapse and the ultimate destruction of the school.

What philosophical paradox does the character of Socrates embody in Aristophanes' *The Clouds*?

- A. The harmony between empirical science and faith
- B. The irrationality of justice
- C. The figure of the wise fool who undermines traditional morality
- D. The silent sage who avoids all conflict

ANS: C



Menander

- 4th century BC
- Associated with New Comedy
- More generalized situations and stock characters
 - In contrast to Old Comedy of Aristophanes, which satirized real individuals and local issues
- Menander's New Comedy eventually led to the development of Comedy of Manners



Plays

- Much of Menander's work was considered lost, except for small fragments
- In 1907, a manuscript called Cairo Codex was discovered which contains large portions of many plays
- **Dyskolos**
- **Samia**
- **Perikeiromene** (The Girl with Her Hair Cut Short)
- **Epitrepontes**

**Can you find out the adaptations
(fiction and film) of Greco-Roman
classical works?**

Pindar

- 5th cent BC poet, at the beginning of the Classical Period
- Odes
 - Encomiastic
 - Accompanied by music and dance
 - Bold and formal language
 - Three types of stanzas in each ode, based on choral dance positions: strophe, anti-strophe and epode
- A major group of Pindar's odes are the "Victory Odes"
- A variation of the Pindaric Ode, called Irregular Ode, was developed by Abraham Cowley



Plato

(c. 428 BC-c. 348 BC)

- Born of an aristocratic family in the island of Aegina near Athens in 428 BC
- Real name was Aristocles, which means “glorious” and he was called Plato, meaning “broad-shouldered”
- Received excellent education, which aroused in him a respect for tradition and a keen political sensibility
- By the age of 20, like all young men of Athens, Plato came under the influence of Socrates



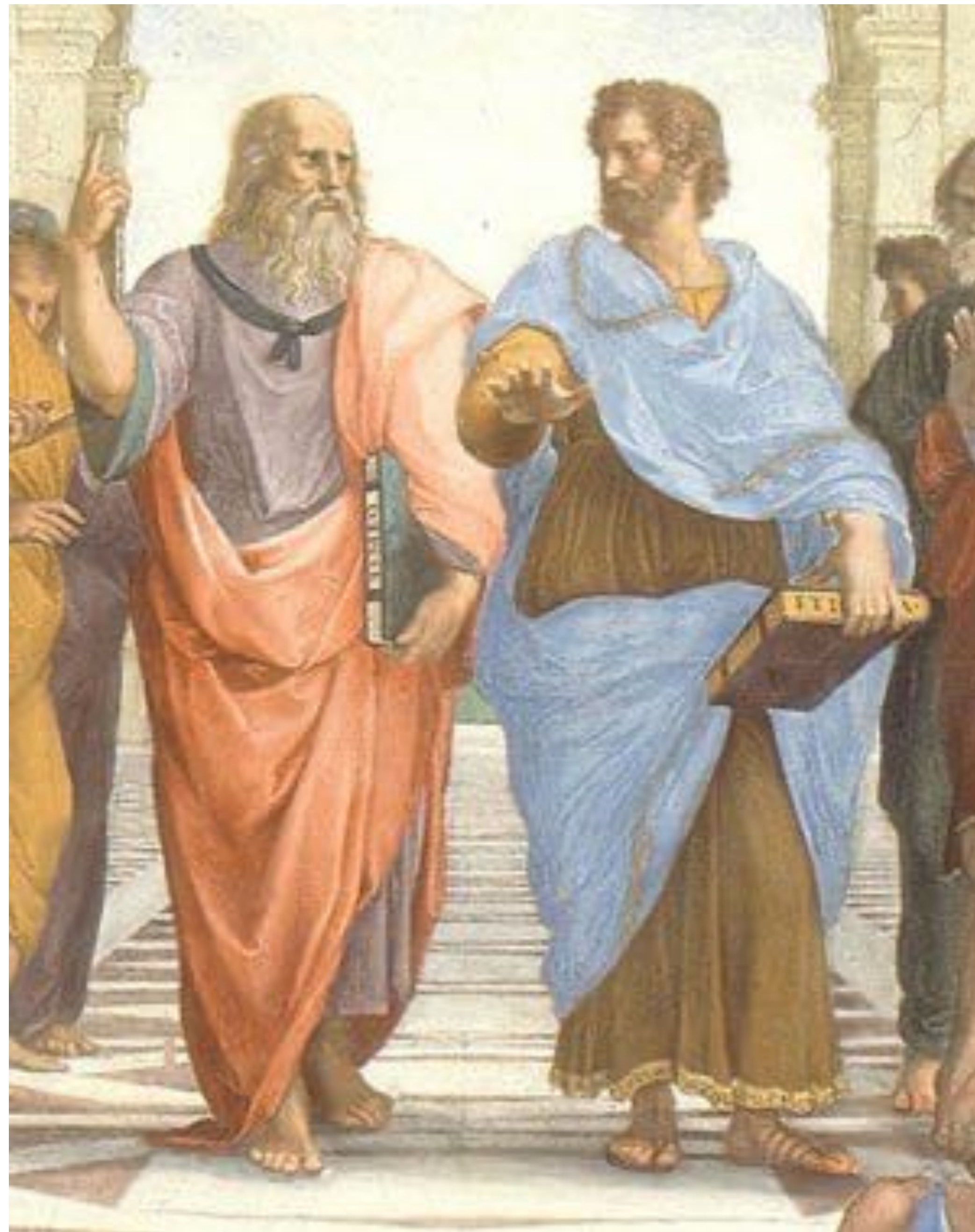
The Academy



- After the death of Socrates in 399 BC, Plato left Athens and travelled to Italy, Sicily and Egypt
- Later, he returned to Athens
- In 387 B.C. Plato, along with the mathematician Thaetetus, founded the philosophical school, the Academy
- The Academy became very famous due to the Neoplatonists, and functioned until A.D. 526, when it was closed down by emperor Justinian for its pagan orientations
- At Plato's Academy, subjects like mathematics, philosophy, astronomy, biology and political theory were taught
- At the gate of the academy was written: "Let no one without mathematics (geometry) enter."
- Aristotle was a student at the Academy, and later teacher

The Dialogues

- Much of Plato's philosophy is in the form of dialogues, usually between Socrates and someone else
 - Called Socratic Dialogues
 - Deal with some moral or philosophical problem
- 36 Dialogues, including
 - Republic, Protagoras, Apology, Gorgias, Ion, Phaedrus
- Republic is a vindication of the idea that good life is possible only in an ideal state. And the aim of a good life is justice.
- Never wrote a single work on poetry. His ideas on poetry have to be extracted from various Dialogues



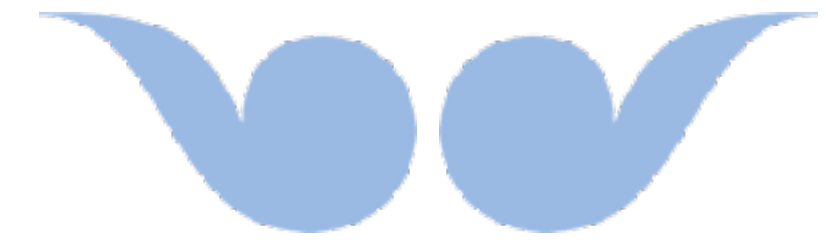
Aristotle

(384 BC-322 BC)

- Aristotle was born to a well-to-do family in the Macedonian town of Stagira in 384 BC
- His father, Nicomachus, was a physician
- In 367, when Aristotle was seventeen, his uncle sent him to Athens to study at Plato's Academy
 - Spent 20 years there, as a pupil and as a teacher
- After Plato's death, Aristotle left the Academy



Life away from Athens



- Joined the philosophical circle of Hermeias in Assos, in Asia Minor, where Hermeias was the tyrant
- When Hermeias was killed by the Persians, Aristotle moved to the island of Lesbos in the eastern Aegean
- Joined another former Academic, Theophrastus in biological studies
- Philip of Macedon invited Aristotle to serve as tutor to his thirteen-year-old son Alexander.

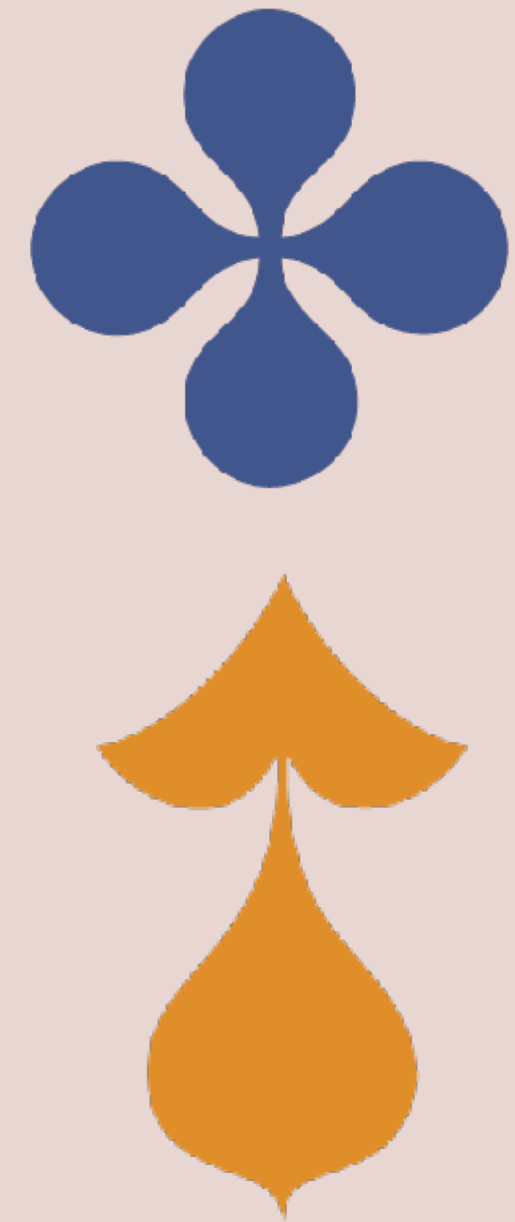
Lyceum and After



- Back in Athens, founded his own school, Lyceum
- Most of his great works written during this period
- Under his direction, his students and associates carried out research on philosophical and scientific topics
- In 323 BC, Alexander died
- Aristotle once again left Athens and took refuge in his mother's birthplace, Chalcis
- He died in 322 at the age of sixty-two

Aristotle's Works

- What the Westerners know of Aristotle today was left to them by Arab philosophers such as Averroes in the twelfth century
- The works known in Aristotle's own lifetime were some 27 dialogues modelled on those of Plato, but these are now lost
- Surviving works include Poetics, Rhetoric and Nichomachean Ethics
- Poetics
 - Written for serious students in the manner of notes for lectures
 - First edited by Andronicus in the first century BC



Greek Historians



- Herodotus
- Thucydides
- Polybius
- Plutarch
 - Philosopher, teacher, biographer
 - Wrote Parallel Lives

Hellenistic Period



- The period is from the time of Alexander the Great
 - Alexander died in 323 BC
 - Alexander's successors established Greek cities and kingdoms in Asia and Africa
- Upto the Roman annexation of Greece in 146 BC (2nd cent.)
 - After this, the “Roman period” in Greece
- Rise of the Roman Empire during this period
 - Rise of Roman Classicism

**“Ancient Greece was
overwhelmingly irrational, rigid and
violent in its culture.” Discuss.
(University of Warwick)**

“Ancient Greece was overwhelmingly irrational, rigid and violent in its culture.” Discuss.

To call Ancient Greece “overwhelmingly irrational, rigid, and violent” is to judge the ancient world by modern liberal standards without acknowledging historical complexity. While violence, exclusion, and ritualized irrationality were present, they coexisted with critical self-reflection, rationalism, artistic brilliance, and the birth of democratic thought. Ancient Greece’s enduring legacy lies in its capacity to question itself—to dramatize its own flaws, to theorize alternatives, and to leave us with texts that continue to inspire moral, political, and philosophical debate.

Which of the following best captures the central argument of the paragraph regarding the characterization of Ancient Greece?

- A. Ancient Greece was fundamentally irrational and should be critiqued for its lack of moral progress.
- B. Ancient Greece should be judged by the same ethical standards as modern liberal democracies.
- C. Despite its violent and exclusionary practices, Ancient Greece displayed a unique capacity for self-critique and rational inquiry.
- D. The contradictions within Ancient Greek society make it irrelevant for modern philosophical or political discourse.

ANS: C

**“The gods do not play an important role in tragedy.” To what extent do you agree? In your answer you should refer to at least two plays.
(Cambridge International)**

“The gods do not play an important role in tragedy.” To what extent do you agree?

To argue that the gods “do not play an important role in tragedy” is to misunderstand the structural and metaphysical architecture of Greek drama. Whether visible like Dionysus or invisible like Apollo, the gods govern the moral cosmos, test human agency, and shape tragic outcomes. Their role is not always direct, but it is rarely insignificant. The true tragic power of these plays lies in the tension between divine law and human will, between piety and pride, between knowledge and ignorance.

Which interpretive tension is central to the tragic worldview, according to the passage?

- A. The balance between plot and character development.
- B. The contrast between natural and supernatural explanations of fate.
- C. The tension between rational thought and emotional impulse.
- D. The conflict between divine command and human autonomy.

ANS: D

**“Greek lyric poetry is the product of a live song culture.” Discuss.
(U of Warwick)**

SEE PASSAGE AND QUESTIONS

June 2026 Batch

Roman Classicism



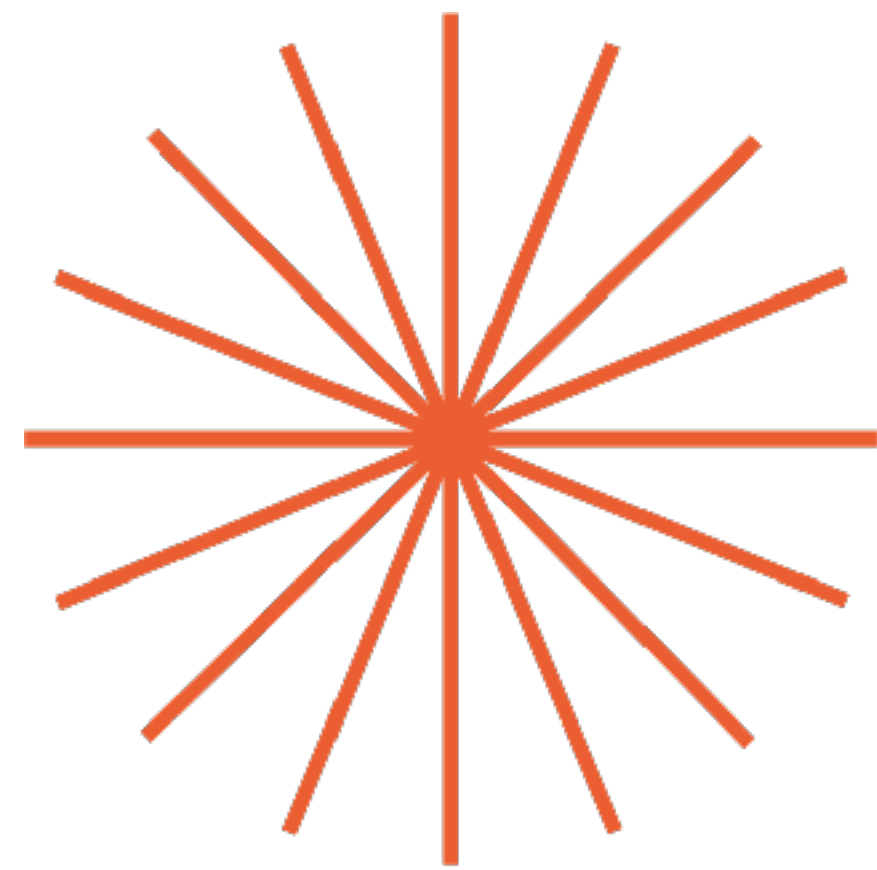
DR. KALYANI VALLATH

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Early Roman History



- In Rome, monarchy was overthrown and replaced by the republic in the 6th century BC
- 1st cent. BC: Transitional period, Republic was transforming into an Empire
- Caesar, Pompey and Crassus formed First Triumvirate
- Julius Caesar rose to being dictator (equivalent of emperor)
- On the Ides of March, that means the 15th of March, 44 BC, Julius Caesar was assassinated by the republicans (people who supported the republic against the empire)
- Civil War broke out between republicans and Caesar's supporters

The Roman Empire



- In the Civil War, republicans were defeated
- Antony, Octavian and Lepidus formed the Second Triumvirate
- Another Civil War broke out between Octavian and the combined forces of Mark Antony and his beloved, Cleopatra of Egypt
 - This was the Battle of Actium of 31 BC, the final war of the Roman Republic
 - Antony and Cleopatra died
- Octavius Caesar won and became the first emperor of Rome. And he took the title Augustus Caesar

Roman Classicism



- Profoundly influenced by Greek philosophy, culture and literature
- **Stoic philosophy**
 - Duty, discipline, political involvement
- **Epicureanism**
 - Pleasures of everyday life
 - As in the expression “Carpe Diem”
- **Skepticism**
 - Loss of belief in higher values
 - Beauty is fleeting
- **Cynicism**
 - The belief that people are motivated purely by self-interest
- Roman Classicism influenced European Renaissance

Virgil (70-19 BC)

- Father of pastoral poetry
 - Eclogues (or Bucolics)
 - Georgics
- **The Aeneid**
 - Epic modelled after Homer's Iliad and Odyssey
 - Follows the Trojan refugee Aeneas as he struggles to fulfil his destiny and arrive on the shores of Italy, thus founding the city of Rome
 - Makes use of the symbolism of the Augustan regime
 - Strong associations between Augustus and Aeneas, the one as founder, and the other as re-founder of Rome
- Virgil's work has profound influence on Western literature
 - In Dante's Divine Comedy, Virgil appears as Dante's guide through hell and purgatory



**In which works of literature
have you seen Virgil as a
character?**

Virgil in Literature

- In which books of Dante's Divine Comedy does Virgil appear?
 - Inferno and Purgatorio
- Who is called the English Virgil?
 - Edmund Spenser
- Which book of Milton was influenced by the example of the Aeneid?
 - Paradise Lost

Horace

(65-08 BC)

- Roman classicist who lived in the first century BC
- **Odes**
 - Homostrophic (same stanza throughout the ode)
 - Calm, meditative, colloquial
- **Satires**
 - Speaker is an urbane, witty, tolerant man of the world
 - Aimed “to laugh people out of their follies”
- **Epistles (Letters)**
 - Ars Poetica (Epistle to Piso)



Ovid

(43 BC-c. AD 17)

- Witty, sophisticated love poems
- **Ars Amatoria (The Art of Love)**
 - Scientific, didactic work on how to find and keep a lover
 - Humorous satirical style
- **Metamorphoses**
 - Narrative poem beginning with the creation of the world and ending in Ovid's time
 - The greatest source of mythology for Renaissance writers
- Augustus Caesar banished Ovid to an isolated island and he died in exile
 - This is the story of David Malouf's novella *An Imaginary Life* (1978)



Seneca the Younger (c. 4 BC-AD 65)

- Roman statesman, dramatist, poet and Stoic philosopher
- Emperor Nero's teacher and confidant
 - It is legendary that Nero played the fiddle while Rome burnt
- Seneca committed forced suicide at Nero's orders
- Upheld the principles of Stoicism, Cynicism & Epicureanism
- Tragedies of Blood
 - Intense, violent melodramas in rhetorical language
 - Famous: Thyestes
- Senecan revenge tragedies rediscovered by Italian humanists in the mid-16th century; became the models for tragedy on the Renaissance stage



Major Plays



- Thyestes
- Agamemnon
- Oedipus
- Phaedra
- Medea

**Which are the Senecan plays you
can think of?**

Which of these is NOT a Senecan play?

The Spanish Tragedy

By Thomas Kyd

Titus Andronicus

By William Shakespeare

Hamlet

By William Shakespeare

The Duchess of Malfi

By John Webster

The Revenger's Tragedy

By Thomas Middleton or Cyril Tourneur

Plautus

(c. 254 BC-184 BC)

- Wrote comedies that are versions of Greek New Comedy
- Stock characters: young men in love with slave girls, mistaken identities, cunning servants, deceived masters
- **Amphitryon**
- **Menaechmi**
- **Cistellaria** (The Casket Comedy)
- **Miles Gloriosus** (The Swaggering Soldier)
- Rediscovered in the Renaissance, Plautine plots furnished the basis for hundreds of comedies in every European language
 - English Restoration Comedy is Plautine in form and spirit



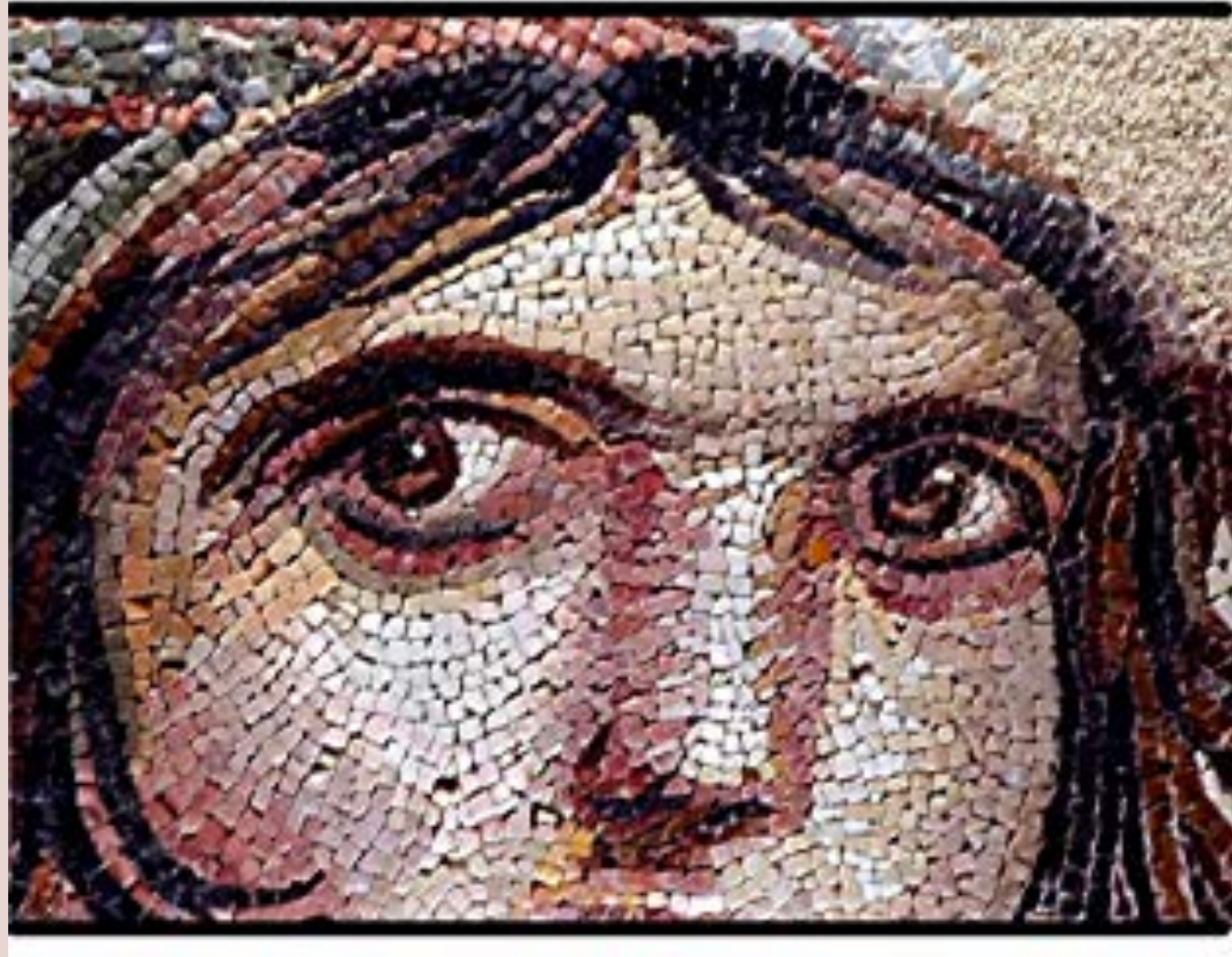
Terence

(c. 195 BC-159 BC)

- Younger contemporary of Plautus, who wrote comedies that are the earliest intact works of Roman literature
- Slave who was later freed
- More refined style of expression
- Plays are Latin versions of Greek plots
- All his 6 comedies have survived



Extant Plays



- Phormio (The Scheming Parasite)
- Andria (The Girl from Andros)
- Adelphoe
- Heauton Timorumenos (The Self-Tormentor)
- The Eunuchs
- Hecyra (The Mother-in-Law)

Cicero

(106 BC-43 BC)

- Statesman, lawyer, scholar, writer and orator
- Upheld republicanism during the final civil war of Roman Republic that killed Julius Caesar
- Founder of Ciceronian rhetoric
 - A kind of dramatic performance where judgment is possible because the speaker and audience assume character roles
- Wrote very famous historical and philosophical works
 - “On Arguments” (De Inventione)
 - “On the Orator” (De Oratore)
 - “On the Commonwealth” (De Re Publica)
 - "On Laws" (De Legibus)

