

Mark D. Fullerton

GREEK SCULPTURE



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Preface

“Did artists like Pheidias and Praxiteles,” he said, “after going up to heaven and making mechanical copies of the forms of the gods, then represent them by their art, or was there something else that stood in attendance upon them in making their sculpture?”... Certainly you would not say it was anything other than imitation (*mimesis*)?...

“Imagination,” (*Phantasia*) Apollonius answered, “wrought these, an artificer much wiser than imitation; for imitation will represent that which can be seen with the eyes, but *phantasia* will represent that which cannot, for the latter proceeds with reality as its basis.”

Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 6.19; tr. Pollitt 1990, 224.

Long before Philostratus recorded this exchange in the third century CE, the sculpture of the Greeks was much admired for its ability to capture the essence of divine anthropomorphism with minimal recourse to the abstract forms favored by contemporaneous cultures. Indeed, it was this very corporeal quality that caused Greek sculpture to be rejected, and often destroyed, by earlier Christian cultures, which preferred less naturalistic ways of depicting the unknowable. The model of the Greeks was embraced again in the Renaissance and emulated throughout the following centuries, adapted and exploited for an ever-evolving succession of purposes and perspectives. Whether accepted or rejected as a model, the normative status of Classical sculpture as an expression of ideal beauty persisted from Phidias’ day to our own, and the study of Greek sculpture, and how it came to look and function as it did in both its own and later times, continues to hold both relevance and appeal.

Subject and Scope

As is patent from the title, this is an account of the sculptures created by and for the ancient Greeks. Organized into 14 chapters to facilitate its use as a college text, it is also intended as an introduction to the topic for a wide range of readers interested in the history and culture of ancient Greece. Given the demands of the format, difficult

choices had to be made in establishing the parameters of the study and deciding which monuments and issues to discuss. Greek sculpture, it is argued here, begins as a closely defined and continuously practiced craft with the sudden appearance of human scale (and larger) marble statuary and relief just before 600 BCE. Therefore, the examination of sculpture in Greece before that time, a worthy subject in its own right, is limited to an outline of those features that contributed most clearly and directly to what would subsequently occur. This book concludes with an account of the late Roman Republican art market and the Greek workshops that arose to meet that demand. The production of sculptures that are by any criteria Greek (style, subject, material, authorship) continued unabated for centuries, right down to the end of the Roman Empire, as new sculptured forms emerged to accommodate expanding categories of customer and purpose. The concluding chapters explore the ways in which the forms and functions of sculpture inherited from Classical Greece were adapted to the political and social transformations that took place first in the century following Alexander's conquests, and then again as Rome supplanted the Hellenistic kingdoms and became the ultimate source of authority in the eastern Mediterranean.

The focus of this account is on monumental sculpture, including votive and funerary statuary in stone and bronze, marble reliefs set up for much the same purposes, and the figural sculptures incorporated into the fabric of monumental stone temples. There was also a prodigious production of works in other materials, especially smaller votives in bronze and terracotta, which, since accessible to a broad segment of the population, are of importance to a history of religious and social practices. They are not, however, sufficiently relevant to the emphases of this study to displace the monuments chosen.

Approaches and Emphases

Based as it is on my experience studying and teaching Greek sculpture, this book inevitably reflects my own prejudices and interests. First among these is the study of style and stylistic development. Sculpture in Greece quite clearly distinguishes itself from that of coeval and earlier Mediterranean societies by the fact that, and the way that, it changes in style over time. Minimally, this diachronic change is handy, since it should allow one to assign a date to works of sculpture on the basis of style alone. However, one must look beyond this expedient and consider, insofar as possible, how and why such a change took place. While a similar transformation recurs in Renaissance Europe, enhancing both the familiarity and the appeal of Greek sculpture in the modern western world, one must try to consider the phenomenon as it played out in ancient Greece on its own terms rather than our own. Several theses presented in this book provide a starting point. Stylistic development in Greek sculpture occurs not at a consistent pace but much more quickly in some periods than in others, in each case for reasons that we can plausibly identify. Moreover, new styles do not always completely displace old, so differing styles are often used contemporaneously. Finally, this development results less from phenomena specific to the practice of sculpture than from changes that occur throughout all aspects of Greek culture, resulting from both

the particular qualities of Greek society and the specific historical circumstances with which succeeding eras were confronted.

A second focus, therefore, is on the possible impact of historical processes and events on the appearance of and changes in Greek sculpture. The subject consequently expands from the consideration of style and stylistic change to that of the choices in subject matter that are reflected in statuary, relief, and, most importantly, architectural sculpture. The latter works, being conspicuous, expensive, and usually publicly funded, should theoretically be the most responsive to presumed watershed events in the rocky relationships both among Greek city-states and between the Greeks and barbarian adversaries. Scholars have long constructed and contextualized iconographic programs of architectural sculpture, although there is much disagreement about whether such displays were intended to be read more from an historical or a religious perspective, and, for that matter, whether that distinction is even meaningful.

From this objective emerges a third and final focus – on the identification and analysis of evidence. It is always a surprise to those new to Classical studies to discover how little we really know. The study of Greek sculpture is especially ill served in this respect, as much by ancient attitudes as by the hazards of preservation. Only a minuscule fraction of the art that once existed is preserved today, so it should be no surprise that the two most significant finds of Classical statuary in the later twentieth century, the Riace bronzes (Fig. 8.13) and the Motya Youth (Fig. 6.14), appeared upon discovery to be so anomalous as to prompt a profound reevaluation of how much we actually know about Greek sculpture. Moreover, the Greeks scarcely mention sculpture in their writings, and the works that did so are primarily known from their listing in Roman sources. Analyzing the latter to detect and evaluate the former is no easy matter, thus process itself becomes paramount.

Chronology

That this sequence of styles was recognized early on is explicit in the extant works of Roman authors such as Pliny, Cicero, and Quintilian, who surely adopted the scheme from their Hellenistic sources. These Latin writers were already familiar to scholars in the Renaissance, but the most influential early attempt at a systematic history of Greek sculpture occurs in Johann Joachim Winckelmann's *History of the Art of Antiquity*, published in 1764. He divided Greek art into four phases. Most important (to him) were his second and third phases – marking an acme of artistic accomplishment conceived according to an organic model of growth, bloom, and decay. These he termed “High” and “Beautiful,” together they roughly correspond to what we would call the Classical period, preceded by an “Older” style and followed by a style of “Imitators.” Thus

Older Style	before 480
High Style	480–400
Beautiful Style	400–323
Style of Imitators	after 323 (including Roman).

These have since been refined, renamed, and canonized into the chronology we use today:

Geometric	900–700	
Archaic	700–480	[Orientalizing 700–600]
Early Classical	480–450	
High Classical	450–400	
Late Classical	400–323	
Hellenistic	323–30	

His Older Style should correspond to what we call Archaic, but nineteenth-century discoveries, especially at Olympia, led to the recognition of a pre-Archaic Geometric style. Around the same time, Winckelmann's late period (of imitators) was renamed Hellenistic, a term that originated in studies of the Levant, signifying its Hellenized rather than Hellenic status. The concept was extended soon thereafter to all the lands once under Alexander's rule, coming ultimately to embrace the entire Mediterranean. The separation of Early from High Classical was especially prompted by the nineteenth-century finds from the Temple of Zeus at Olympia and the consequent re-evaluation of this stage as transitional from the Archaic to the Classical, as it is in fact termed in some schemes. More significant is the re-evaluation of the fourth-century style as Late Classical rather than Beautiful; this change is far from neutral, since the term late has an obviously pejorative connotation within the structure of an organic developmental model. Consequently, the accomplishments of fourth-century sculptors have come to be associated as much with the succeeding Hellenistic as with the preceding High Classical, an issue with which we will grapple in chapters to come. A final adjustment comes at the beginning, with the introduction, and then the rejection, of Orientalizing as a separate period. The rationale for this change is that limiting the phenomenon to a single period understates Greek indebtedness to Near Eastern sources, not only in art but also in mythology, religion, and philosophy. The lesson here is, of course, that the structure and terminology used to describe the processes of stylistic change over time do not merely reflect but actually construct the ways in which we conceive them.

Some Final Notes on Format and Content

While several recent books on Greek sculpture have adopted a thematic arrangement, the purposes and the emphases of this book favor a chronological scheme. I cannot claim to have distributed these chapters evenly over the time periods covered, but, as noted above, the pace of change, as well as the chronological distribution of the material and contextual evidence itself, is similarly irregular. The distribution of coverage is intended to support the larger objectives of the work. Each chapter, in addition, includes a breakout box that expands on and clarifies a specific topic useful for the study of Greek sculpture, including the materials and techniques used in its creation, the nature and ethnicities of the sculptors themselves, relationships to parallel media of architecture and painting, contemporary

historical and contextual sources, and the writers of Roman times who have so shaped our conceptions of an artistic production occurring half a millennium earlier. These, it is hoped, not only complement and amplify points made in the text but also, and more importantly, help the reader think more deeply about how we know what we know.

Additional resources include a glossary of terms and a parallel timeline, drawn from items mentioned in the text, listing monuments, events, and significant developments in literature and philosophy. For reasons that become clear upon reading, dates provided are mostly approximate, and all dates are BCE unless otherwise indicated. Names have insofar as possible been Latinized, not always without awkwardness. Finally, at the end of the book is a brief and annotated list of references and readings for each chapter. These are selective, limited to publications in English that are major works, relatively recent studies, or interpretations specifically referenced in the text. Intended to provide only a next level of investigation for the reader who desires more information, each contains much fuller bibliography for those who wish to delve further, as I sincerely hope many readers will be prompted to do.

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Beginnings and Before: Greek Sculpture in the Iron Age (circa 1000–600)

The question of beginning is always a thorny one, for nearly any topic can be pursued back in time until all evidence disappears; yet, to do so usually takes one far, too far, from the subject at hand. In studies of ancient Greek culture, an advantage is provided by the Greeks themselves, who figured their years from 776, the date of the first Olympic games. Should we do the same, we would find, at Olympia itself, the first traces of a continuous tradition in Greek sculptural production and usage. Yet the Greeks did not believe that time itself began in 776; we know from Homer the stories that the Greeks, as early as the eighth century, were telling one another of an earlier heroic age. Working from such accounts, archaeologists set out to find the physical settings for these legends – at Troy, Mycenae, Tiryns, Knossos, and other sites. They discovered earlier Greek cultures, which, unlike the neighboring kingdoms of Egypt and the Near East, left behind no historical accounts of their own. Lacking these, scholars had recourse only to material remains and so borrowed from the poet Hesiod the term “Bronze Age,” since the tools and weapons these cultures left behind were forged from that metal. Chronological structure within that era, in the absence of dynastic lists, was adapted from nearby Egypt in the form of a tripartite scheme (Early, Middle, Late) that corresponds to the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms.

In Egypt at that time, as well as in the Near East, conspicuous display of sculpture in stone and bronze, on scales ranging from miniature to colossal, played an important part in the expression of royal power. Although some Minoans and Mycenaeans surely had personal experience of these impressive sculptured monuments, they produced nothing comparable at Knossos, Mycenae, or elsewhere in the Aegean. The Bronze Age Greeks developed their own types of sculpture, working largely with native materials, in styles of their own, and serving functions that were characteristic also of later Hellenic work (see box). Small *votive* sculptures, for example, in bronze and terracotta especially, were used extensively in the modest domestic shrines and rural sanctuaries of the Minoans and Mycenaeans. Funerary

Box Uses of Sculpture in Ancient Greece

Archaic and Classical Greek sculpture served a narrow range of functions, all of which had to do with ritual practices. The Greeks themselves had little to say about the subject, so current beliefs are based more on inference than documentation. It is clear, however, that sculpture in ancient Greece was not, in either private or public spaces, used as visual embellishment without distinct religious purpose, as was conventionally done in Roman times.

It is often alleged or assumed that the most significant of ancient Greek images was the cult statue set up in the central room (**cella**) of a temple intended to “house” it; the statue, in which the deity could reside, could then “look” out through the temple’s front door to observe and receive the sacrifices and libations performed at an altar erected outside. The cult statue, temple, and altar together facilitated the process of interaction between deity and worshipper and ensured the presence of the god at the ritual. While this model is generally accurate, it is somewhat restrictive. The cult statue/temple/altar triad was common, but each could exist without the other(s). Moreover, a cult statue could serve more than one function; the giant gold and ivory statue in the Parthenon was at the same time part of the state treasury.

Many statues were votives, so-called because they fulfill a vow; inscribed dedications make clear that these were given as gifts (either personal or communal) to a deity in hopes of securing its beneficence in return. A term often used was **agalma**, or “pleasing thing,” but what constituted an agalma was not always obvious. It could represent the god himself or even another god, or it could substitute for a worshipper; it is not always easy to tell the difference. It could be an animal, perhaps but not necessarily representing a substitute sacrifice, or another creature such as a sphinx. Votives could be statues or reliefs, large or small, cheap or expensive, in almost any material. The cost was important, as an indicator of the magnitude of devotion involved, but equally so was the ritual act itself, of which the votive was a lasting reminder.

Sculptures were also used to adorn temples, in locations that were dictated by the architectural **order** employed. Subjects were drawn all but exclusively from episodes in Greek mythology. Some with universal applicability, such as the battle between gods and giants (**Gigantomachy**), were used frequently. Others were more local or limited in signification and occur rarely. Scholars focus intently on the relationships among the stories on a temple and consider how the embodied themes relate to the historical circumstances of the building’s construction. Did they simply reflect the shared values and religious beliefs of the society, were some myths meant to be metaphors for actual historical events, or were both readings simultaneously possible and intended?

Sculptures were also used as grave markers. Especially in Archaic times, funerary statues are mostly of the same types as used for votive functions – nude male **kouroi**,

draped female **korai**, sphinxes and other beasts – and are equally enigmatic in subject and meaning. Grave reliefs are usually more specific than statues, characterizing the deceased as a warrior, athlete, mother, or child. The Classical era has no counterpart to the Archaic funerary kouros and kore. Relief sculptures are now much more commonly used as grave monuments than statuary; these become so frequent and elaborate in fourth-century Athens that they were banned as excessively boastful by Macedonian overlords in 317, testifying once again to the social and political power of publicly displayed images.

sculpture is documented by the many marble idols from third-millennium graves on the Cycladic islands and also, a millennium later, by stone reliefs set up as markers in the royal cemetery (Grave Circle A) at Mycenae. Yet both of these categories of sculpture were limited to a particular time and place, reflecting a production that suddenly and inexplicably stopped long before the end of the Bronze Age. Despite the considerable amount of sculptured material that was produced, it is all but impossible to *characterize* prehistoric Aegean sculpture as a whole, since it consists of several circumscribed and largely unrelated categories of production.

Later Greeks on occasion came across artifacts from the heroic era, and that experience played no small role in their conception and construction of their own past. Occasionally we can be certain that this happened, as in the case of the fifteenth-century terracotta head reused seven centuries later as a cult object on Cycladic Kea. The most conspicuous of all such relics must have been the great Lion Gate at Mycenae, which has stood above the ground, with the fortifications it adorned, continuously from its installation around 1250 (Figure 1.1). The only monumental work of sculpture from the Greek Bronze Age, this great limestone relief sits atop the citadel's main gate as part of an enlarged circuit erected from massive stones in anticipation of troubles that would indeed materialize a half-century later. The relief has an architectural as well as decorative function: it screens the triangular open space left in the masonry in order to relieve the stress atop the gate's huge lintel block. The scene is static, symmetrical, and governed by principles of heraldic symmetry, influenced by Minoan sources and ultimately the Near East. The idea of gate decoration, and perhaps the carving technique as well, may also have come from parts east, most likely from the Hittites of central Anatolia. But the individual forms here, the felines (lions, griffins, sphinxes?), the hourglass-shaped altars on which they rest their forepaws, and the downwardly tapering column, are all part of a Minoan legacy that had been transformed over the previous centuries into a distinctly Mycenaean art. Like its Hittite counterparts, this sculpture was meant to be *apotropaic*, that is, to turn back unseen threats just as the gate it adorns was to repel more tangible dangers. Most important, it was, as far as we can tell, a *unique* monument, a synthesis of influences from other media and cultures, made for this one particular purpose at this one point in time, by a culture with no known tradition of monumental sculpture.



Figure 1.1 Mycenae, Lion Gate. Limestone. Circa 1250. H. 10' 2" (3.1 m). Source: © age fotostock/Alamy.

Sculpture and the Geometric Style

Not only was the Lion Gate without predecessors, it had no immediate followers either; it may have inspired the mythmakers of succeeding generations, but not its sculptors. Nor did it fulfill its intended function, for Mycenae was brought down – and Tiryns, and Pylos and the rest of the citadel sites catalogued by Homer in the *Iliad*. Some fell suddenly and violently, others more gradually owing to the changed economic circumstances that were brought about by the collapse of Mycenaean palace society. While there are important elements of continuity, such as language and religion, some features of Bronze Age society disappear altogether in the eleventh and tenth centuries: fortified palatial complexes and associated monumental tombs, figural wall painting, and writing. Yet, tombs with imported goods are more common in this era than had been previously thought. One important import from Cyprus was the technique of extracting and forging iron, a metal more readily available in Greece than those needed to make bronze (copper and tin) and one that could be worked to a sharper and more durable edge. This early “Iron Age” (or “Dark Age”) culture was not entirely imageless, but the artifacts that were locally made, mostly pottery, reflect a distinct lack of interest in the representation of any identifiable object; the human figure is especially conspicuous by its near total absence. Moreover, explicit representations of the scenes and subjects of Greek mythology, only imaginatively detected even in the considerable corpus of Minoan and Mycenaean art, were long believed to have first occurred in the art of the eighth century, or even later. One can imagine, then, the surprise when,



Figure 1.2 Terracotta centaur from cemetery at Lefkandi, Euboea. Eretria, Archaeological Museum. Circa 900. H. 2' 2" (0.36 m). Source: akg-images/De Agostini Picture Library. (See insert colour representation of the figure)

among the remarkable finds at the Dark Age site of Lefkandi on Euboea, there was unearthed a terracotta *centaur* (horse–man hybrid creature) that has given that site, succeeded by no known Classical city, its primary lasting fame (Figure 1.2).

The production of small votive statuary, common in the Bronze Age, never died out completely; Crete, with its important Dark Age “refuge” settlements such as Karphi and Kavousi produced many terracotta “goddesses” in a lingering Minoan style and an occasional bronze statuette as well. On the mainland, a few zoomorphic ceramic creations were attempted by potters of the tenth century. The Lefkandi centaur, however, stands out for its size (well over a foot tall), its quality, and especially its subject. Already broken in antiquity, its head and body were found associated with different graves; signs of repair suggest that this was a valued object. Its painted decoration, by comparison with that on

funerary vases, places it circa 900. The body is wheel thrown, with limbs, torso, and head modeled separately and attached before firing. Ventilation holes indicate experience in firing this kind of object. Its forms are simplified, in keeping with the formalized aesthetic of contemporary vase painting. Detail is at a minimum, but there is indication of joints in the legs, separate fingers, and modeled facial features, including large ears.

Fantastic creatures were common enough in Bronze Age art, but they were limited to items from the Near Eastern repertoire, mostly sphinxes and griffins. The centaur was not included in that cast and is generally taken to be a Greek creation, derived, perhaps, from the appearance of a man on horseback. It certainly plays a role (indeed, several) in Greek mythology and comes to be frequently represented in sculpture and painting. Its improbable combination of forms embodies the centaur's ambivalence. He is an emblem of the monstrous, like other such non-real creatures, but, being partially *anthropomorphic* (having human form), he represents the will to transgressive behavior that exists within humankind, as opposed to the inimical natural forces that threaten from without. The centaur can be immoderate and violent, especially under the influence of strong drink, but he can also be highly civilized and wise. One of the latter, Chiron, tutor to heroes such as Achilles, Jason, and Heracles, may be represented here. A nick in his left foreleg, deliberately added before painting and firing, could indicate the wound he accidentally received from Heracles. Concerning the role this object played among the tomb furnishings, or indeed whether it was even made for the grave, one can only speculate.

The fact that an interpretation for this object can be sought within the realm of classical myth indicates that the passage from the prehistory of Minoans and Mycenaean to the historical civilization of classical Greece is well underway; the watershed, wherever and whatever it may have been, is now crossed. One defining feature of this newly evolving culture is the establishment of clearly defined *sanctuaries* for the practice of cult. These may be small and modest, or extensive and physically spectacular; they may be strictly local, or involve Greeks from all reaches of the Mediterranean, and thus termed **Panhellenic**. Four were of special importance – Delphi (Apollo), Isthmia (Poseidon), Nemea (Zeus), and Olympia (Zeus), which was premier among them and the first to become an *agonistic* (*agon* = competition) sanctuary. Its games were founded, according to tradition, by the heroes Hercules or Pelops or both; there was surely a Mycenaean presence at Olympia, and, it is assumed, cult activity as well. The site is especially rich in early votive sculptures; some come from as far back as the tenth and ninth centuries, but the majority by far are roughly contemporary with, or later than, the first historical Olympiad in 776.

The subjects of these votives vary. There are many animals, both domestic and wild. Some, such as the bulls, may have been substitutes for, or lasting markers of, *sacrifice* (offerings made to a deity) or may have held other meanings. Especially prominent are horses, with their obvious heroic and aristocratic associations (Figure 1.3). The eighth-century examples are clearly conceived and carefully rendered; the individual features of the beast are suggested through geometric approximations that give the style, and the era, its name. Artistic representation necessarily involves a compromise between the two opposing approaches, the perceptual and the conceptual. Most simply put, the former strives to show

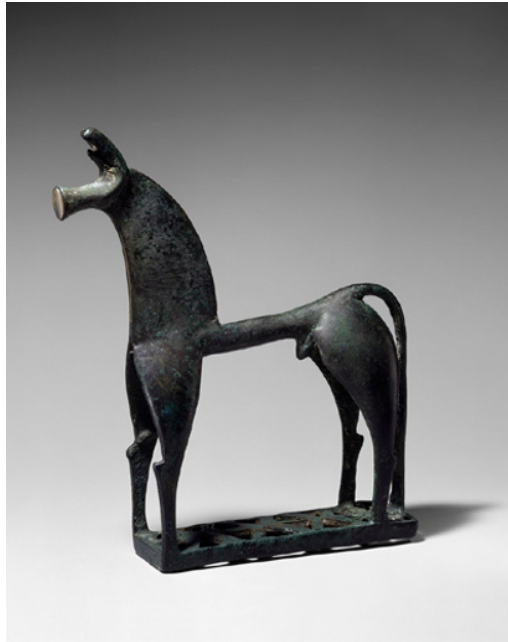


Figure 1.3 Geometric horse. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 21.88.24. Bronze. Eighth century. H. 7" (0.176 m). Circa 750–700. Source: © 2015. Image copyright The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Art Resource/Scala, Florence.

things as they appear to the observer's eye, whether physically accurate or not; the latter appeals to what the viewer knows to be there, whether it is visible or not. As we will observe, the development of Greek art can be understood in terms of a gradual but continual shift along the spectrum of possibilities between the two polarities. In its reliance on abstract rather than naturalistic forms, the Geometric style locates itself toward the conceptual pole of this spectrum. The Geometric style is, moreover, both analytic and generic. In other words, the artist portrays his subject in terms of its clearly articulated component parts, and the simplified forms used in this portrayal are essential and universal rather than momentary or particular. This approach, and this style, was born from a Dark Age tradition in which vase shapes are similarly analyzed and articulated through systems of non-figural, geometric ornament. The patterns used are intricate, rhythmic, and formulaic; they have been compared to textiles on the one hand and Homeric poetry on the other. While Greek art changes over time in its relative conceptualism and perceptualism, it remains at all times both analytic and general, so it can be said that it is with the Geometric figural style that Greek art, as we know it, is born.

This horse has its own base, but many others were attached to the large ring handles of *tripod cauldrons*, on which they may stand either alone or together with a human figure, generally a helmeted male with his right hand raised and left lowered. These warriors are interpreted as leading horses and/or brandishing a spear. The cauldrons themselves – large bronze three-legged bowls – were expensive votives; the form was used as a prize in athletic

competitions, and those from Olympia have long been explained as having been dedicated there by victors. Warriors and horses fit in with the heroic and aristocratic imagery prevalent on painted vases, and with the elite status of the games' participants. They might also reference equestrian competition at the site, like the bronze charioteers that have also been found there; the distinction between the agonistic and the heroic is not always clear. These votive luxury objects were therefore thank offerings not only for good fortune in the games, but also for good fortune in being born to the dominant class. The elision of hero and aristocrat was a critical element of this message, and the essentialism of the Geometric style was especially well suited to deliver it.

The Geometric period, of course, saw not only the birth of major Panhellenic sanctuaries such as Olympia but also of the Greek **poleis** (sing. **polis**) – the basic political and geographic units of historical Greece, each of which comprised a center of concentrated population and a variously extensive range of surrounding territory. Structures of local rule varied considerably from place to place, and over time, but each was to some degree participatory within various levels of exclusivity; the type of monarchy implied by both Homer and archaeology for the Mycenaeans no longer existed. This shift in the social structure defines the difference between heroic and historic Greece as much as replacement of bronze by iron – probably more so. The poleis were politically independent of, although incessantly intruding on, one another, but they shared a language, economy, and, of course, religion. Indeed, the genesis of the Panhellenic sanctuaries has everything to do with the external and internal dynamics of the polis, since they offered a locus for both athletic competition and social discourse among the elites who constituted most of the participants in contest and cult alike. Despite its agonistic mission and the obvious opportunity for “patriotism” that this may have offered, institutions such as the Olympic games served equally to bind the elites of different poleis together and reinforce their shared separation from their own less privileged classes at home. Polis and Panhellenic sanctuary alike were therefore products of the fundamentally *competitive* nature of Greece society, a quality that, more than any other, distinguishes it from those of Egypt and the Near East, for example, which relied more on collaboration enforced from a highly centralized power structure. Both characteristically Greek institutions resulted from, and reinforced, the contrasting relations, both competitive and collaborative, among poleis and among classes, and it was in the balance between these opposing forces that order was elicited from the chaos of the Dark Age.

Despite the redundancy of many Geometric votives from Olympia, there are some imaginative and exceptional pieces. These include lion hunts with dogs, multi-figured animal scenes, musicians, a bow-stringer, a helmet-maker, and a man drinking from a vessel. Some are surely mythological, including this group of a man and a centaur, said to have come from Olympia (Figure 1.4). It fully embodies the late Geometric style in its articulation of both human and equine form and the clear indication of the differences between them. There are several myths of conflict between human and centaur in individual combat. Heracles alone was involved in at least three, and also full-out battles, such as those commonly depicted in later painting and sculpture. One that occurs with some frequency in the subsequent century is the vanquishing by Heracles of Nessus, who attempted to make off with the hero's wife Deianeira, displaying the lack of restraint for which centaurs