Mediterranean Views

A random walk in the Mediterranean area's history and culture.

By Fred-Olav Sorensen

Foreword

This book is built around pictures I have taken in the Mediterranean area. I have assembled pictures I like well. Starting from these, I have taken random walks into Mediterranean history and culture. The aim for me has been the pleasure of navigating unpretentiously in this atmosphere of beauty and history. If this gives you as much pleasure as it is giving me, my hopes are fulfilled.

Fred-Olav Sorensen

Oslo, November 2018.

The Twelve Olympians

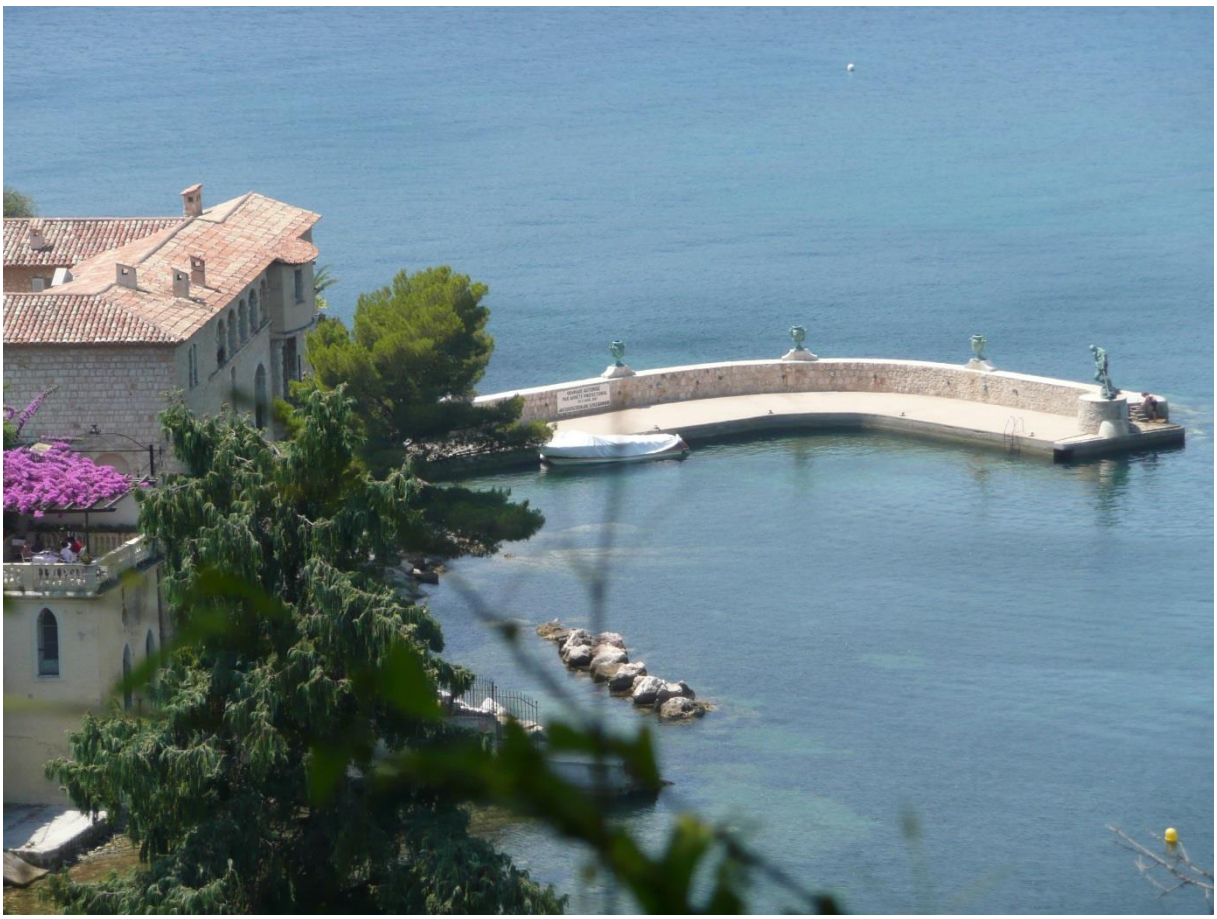
At the center of the Classical Mediterranean world, we find the twelve Olympians in Greek (and Roman) mythology: Aphrodite (Venus for the Romans), Ares (Mars), Artemis (Diana), Athena (Minerva), Demeter (Ceres), Dionysus (Bacchus), Eros (Cupid), Hades (Pluto), Hephaestus (Vulcan), Helios (Apollo), Hera (Juno), Hermes (Mercury), Pan (Faunus), Persephone (Proserpine), Poseidon (Neptune), and - heading them all – Zeus (Jupiter).

The mythical throne of these gods was the Mount Olympus, Greece's highest mountain. The gods were commonly referred to as the Olympians, or the sky-gods, with Poseidon being an exception since he reigned in the sea. These gods were probably introduced by Indo-European invaders from the area between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea who overran the archaic Aegean world around 2000 B.C.

The archaic Aegean world was an agricultural, plant-based culture with its mythology centering on Mother Earth and matriarchal mysteries of the earth-bound world. The new pantheon introduced by the invaders was one of nomadic herders, a patriarchal culture placing the power in the Heavens.

The Olympian gods became the rulers of the Heavens, elevated with the power of the new invaders, but they did not extinguish the older mythology altogether. The older mythology was subdued, but incorporated in the new mythology, in order to establish a livable compromise between the new rulers and the vanquished people.

(See (1) and (2) in the bibliography.)



This tendency of inclusive mythologies produced what has been called the "inherited conglomerate", with cults superimposed on each other. Such an

elastic pantheon suited popular and official needs remarkably well. Gods had different titles, depending partly on their locality but chiefly on their function.

Athena, patron goddess of Athens, was called Promachos (warrior) when depicted as a warrior outside on the Acropolis, but Parthenos (virgin) inside the Parthenon. Hera, Zeus' wife, was similarly patron goddess of Argos. All Greeks revered Zeus, one of whose many titles was Panhellenios (god of all the greeks). Another was Horkios (oath-keeper), insisting on the sanctity of oaths.

(op.cit)

Michel de Montaigne, a French wise man who lived from 1533 to 1592, has written a work named "The Essays". This is a thorough work of reflections on his life's experiences, and it is not possible to do this work justice by a few

references to it. However, I will offer a few shorthand points that give you a taste of what it is all about:

Socrates was told about someone that had not been influenced by him during his trip. ”Undoubtedly,” replied Socrates, “he brought himself along for the trip”.

We praise a horse for its vigor and ease of movement, not for its saddle or other equipment; a racing dog for its speed, not for its collar. Why do we not consider men for what they are, instead of by what they are surrounded by? He has a great fortune, a grand palace, so much income. All those things are surrounding him, not inside him.

Is he wise, master of himself, so that poverty, prison, death do not make him tremble? Is he out of reach for Fortune? Such a man is five hundred times better than kingdoms and duchies: he is his own empire.

Human fears, obsessive worries; do not get intimidated by the noise of arms, neither by harsh looks. They haunt without pity the kings and the powerful, without any consideration for the shine of gold (Lucretius).

To say that only princes will eat turbot and wear velvet and golden thread, and forbid it to the people, what else is that than to place value in those things and increase everybody’s desire to have them?

I will readily pardon our people for having no other model or rule for perfection than their own customs and habits; because it is a common vice, not only among the vulgar, but among almost all men, to have their aim and their hold on the situation in which they are born.

Death is dreadful for Cicero, desirable to Cato, indifferent to Socrates. Health, conscience, authority, science, wealth, beauty and their opposites are taken off at the entrance, and are given new clothes by the soul, with the color it pleases. Don’t base yourself on external attributes of things; they are for us to see. Good or bad rests in us.

As long as it escapes us, the object of our desire seems more desirable than anything. Is it given to us? Our desire then goes elsewhere. And the same thirst again takes hold on us, our mouth opened. (Lucretius)

It happens, by an extraordinary vice of nature, that we have more liking - and more fear - of things that we have not seen and that stay hidden and unknown. (Julius Cesar).

The Greeks produced the first tragedies and comedies, still performed on stage today. Greek theatre emerged in Athens shortly before 500 B.C., originating in the rites of Dionysus, which had great importance in the Greek world. The Festival of the Greater Dionysia was established by Pisistratus in 534 B.C. It took place in late March, when the god's statue was carried to his temple beneath the Acropolis. As part of the festival, competitions between playwrights developed, and winners were picked annually.

Aeschylus (525 – 456 B.C.) is widely known as the father of Greek drama. He was the first to write plays in trilogies, so making them suited for drama on the grandest scale. The greatest Greek dramatist, however, is considered to be

Sophocles (496 – 406 B.C.). He dominated Athenian theatre for almost 50 years. Sophocles wrote 128 plays, but only 7 of his tragedies are known to us. Euripides (485 – 406 B.C.), the last of Athens' three great dramatists, was Sophocles' only rival in the Dionysian theatre competitions. He was very different in style and temperament. Sophocles said: "I portray men as they ought to be, Euripides shows them as they are."

Greek comedy emerged around the same time as tragedy. Officially introduced to Athens' Great Dionysia in 486 B.C., its rustic origins are far older, going back to the seasonal ribaldry of Dionysiac fertility cults. Greek comedy divides into two phases: the Old, often savagely topical satire of the 5th century BC; and the New, more romantic, relaxed comedy. Aristophanes (450 – 385 B.C.) was the main representative of the former phase, while Menander (342 – 290 B.C.) was of the latter.

See (1).

On a deeper level of the past than that of the shuttleplay of Persia, Greece, Rome, Byzantium, Islam, and, later, Europe, the legacy of the Bronze Age supplied many of the basic motifs of Occidental, as well as Oriental, mythological thought. Moreover, the origins of this legacy were neither in India nor in China, but in the Near East, the Levant. There, about 10000 years ago, in the high, protected mountain valleys of Asia Minor (Anatolia), the arts of agriculture and stock breeding were developed, and these produced an epochal mutation in both the character of human existence and its potentialities for development.

Whereas mankind earlier had lived only precariously by food-collection (hunt and vegetable gathering), men now became tillers of the earth. Self-sustaining villages appeared, and their number, steadily increasing, spread in a broad band eastward and westward, arriving simultaneously at both oceans (the Mediterranean and the Indian), about 2500 B.C.

Meanwhile, in the developed zone of origin, the nuclear Near East, a second epochal mutation occurred around 3500 B.C., when in the river land of Mesopotamia the fundamental arts of high civilization were invented: writing, mathematics, monumental architecture, systematic scientific observation (of the heavens), temple worship, and, dominating them all, the kingly art of government.

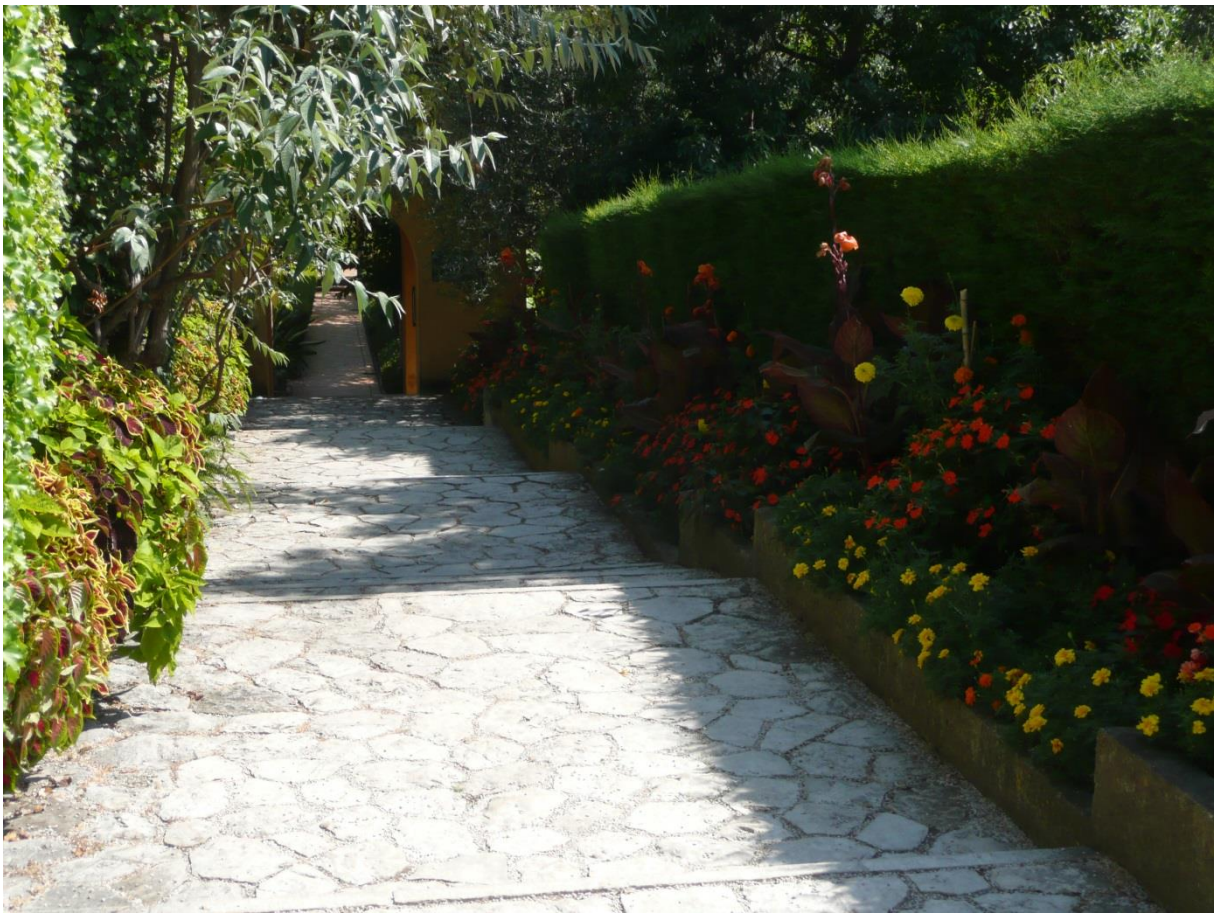
The knowledge and application of these reached Egypt with the first pharaos of Dynasty I around 2850 B.C., Crete and the Indus Valley around 2500 B.C., China around 1500 B.C., and subsequently to Mexico and Peru.

See (1), The Age of the Goddess, Occidental Mythology

Homer, who lived around 750 B.C., was the very first Greek poet – or at least the first we know anything about. His two great epics, The Iliad (abut the siege of Troy) and The Odyssey (about the wanderings of Odysseus on his long journey home from the Trojan war), rank among the grandest tales ever told.

These two epics were learnt by heart by every child in school in Greece. Homer occupied the same authoritative role in Greek culture as the Bible and Shakespeare once did for all English speakers. Almost nothing is known about Homer himself. The origin of The Iliad and The Odyssey may be much older than Homer's epics as they are written down, coming from earlier oral tradition that was collected and consolidated by Homer.

See (1).



A Flavor of The Iliad

Paradoxically, The Iliad, the grandest war-exulting poem, brims with life, although it starts with a murderous quarrel and ends with a funeral. The “wrath of Achilles”, the finest warrior in the Achean army besieging Troy, is stirred when Agamemnon, High King of Mycenae, demands Briseis, Achilles’ favorite slave girl. From their quarrel springs the events described in this, the siege’s tenth year. Achilles, sulking in his tent, refuses to fight, despite disastrous Greek defeats.

Finally, Achilles’ friend Patroclus goes out in his place and wearing his armour, is killed by Hector, the Troyan prince, King Priam’s eldest son. Maddened by grief, Achilles takes to the field to kill Hector in turn. Triumphing, he drags the corpse behind his chariot until Priam comes in person to beg for it. Achilles, moved, gives way, knowing that he too is doomed to die soon. The poem ends: “And so the Trojans buried Hector, tamer of horses.”

Still to come, as Homer's audiences knew, were the death of Achilles and the bloody final sack of Troy.

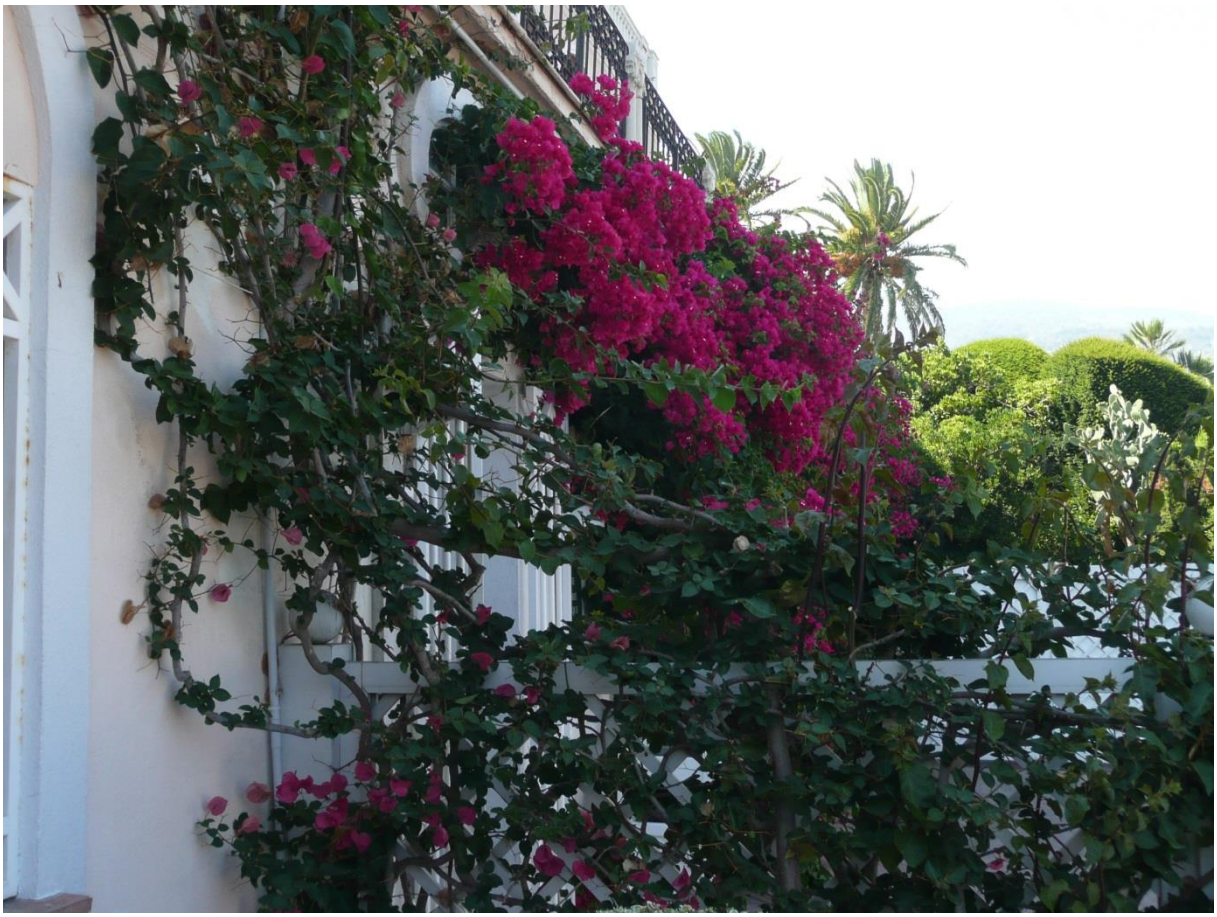
See (1)

A Flavor of The Odyssey

The second great epic of Homer opens with Odysseus, the Greek leader "who excels all men in wisdom", held captive by Calypso, the "bewitching nymph", until Athena, his champion intervenes to liberate him. Very different in theme, The Odyssey relates Odysseus' wanderings around the limits of the then known world, and his encounters with cannibalistic giants, lethal sirens, shipwrecking monsters and finally an enchanting princess in the delightful land of Phaecia. At one stage, Odysseus descends into the underworld to question the ghosts who flit bat-like through it.

Odysseus survives his travails more by his wits than by his strengths – though that is immense, as he often shows. The story culminates in his return home to Ithaca after 20 years' absence, where understandably he is not recognized at first by some of his subjects. There follows his reunion with his wife Penelope, heroically faithful to him after 20 years' absence, and meeting his now grown-up son Telemachus. Then come his bloody reckoning with Penelope's suitors. These have long been pestering Penelope to marry one of them, for the kingdom will go to whoever marries the seemingly widowed queen. The Odyssey ends in matrimonial joy in the great bed that Odysseus long ago built for Penelope.

See (1)



Against the symbol of the undying power of the Goddess Mother, the patriarchal warrior principle of the great deed of the individual flung its bolt,

and for a period the old order of belief – as well as civilization – fell apart. The empire of Minoan Crete disintegrated, just as in India the civilization of the Dravidian twin cities, Harappa and Mohenjo-daro.

However, in India the old mythology of the serpent power recovered strength, until, by the middle of the first millennium B.C. it had absorbed the entire pantheon and spirit of the Vedic gods – Indra, Mitra, Vayu, and the rest – transforming all into mere agents of the processes of its own, still circling round of eternal return.

In the West, on the other hand, the principle of indeterminacy represented by the freely willing, historically effective hero not only prevailed but held the field, and has retained it to the present. Moreover, this victory of the principle of free will, together with its moral corollary of individual responsibility, establishes the first distinguishing characteristic of specifically Occidental myth – not only the myths of Aryan Europe (Greeks, Romans, Celts, Germans), but also those of both the Semitic and Aryan peoples of the Levant (Semitic Akkadians, Babylonians, Phoenicians, Hebrews, and Arabs; Aryan Persians, Armenians, Phrygians, Thraco-Illyrians, and Slavs).

Whether we think of the victories of Zeus and Apollo, Theseus, Perseus, Jason, and the rest, over the dragons of the Golden Age, or turn to that of Yahweh over Leviathan, the lesson is equally of a self-moving power greater than the force of any earthbound serpent destiny – a protest against the worship of Earth and the spirits of the fertility of Earth.

See (2), The Age of the Goddess, The Serpent's Bride, Occidental Mythology.

The etymology of stairs – drawing on the Old English words *stigan* (to climb) and *staeger* (riser) – suggests that stairs are primarily perceived as going up rather than in two directions, furnishing a symbol for ascents in slow stages and transitions through difficult steps. We see this externally in the long staircases ancient Babylonian, Mayan, and Roman architects placed on the facades of their ziggurats, pyramids and temples in order to bridge earth and heaven, and in the stepped pyramids of ancient Egypt, whose stairways provided a transitional zone between life and death. The Egyptian god Osiris, whose throne was a set of stairs, watched the dead climb a stairway to their Last Judgment, including the weighing of their hearts against the feather of Maat, goddess of cosmic order. In ancient Rome, Mithraic priests led initiates up a Stairway of the Seven Planets, each step of which was cast from a different metal paired to one of the seven known planets. The gold tread at the top corresponded to the sun; reaching it, the initiate underwent *solificatio*, the soul's sublimation back to its source.

See (3)

In Ancient Sumer, Egypt and Crete the mythic lunar bull, lord of the rhythm of the universe, to whose song all mortality is dancing in a round of birth, death, and new birth, was called to mind by the sounds of the drum, strings, and reed flutes of the temple orchestras, and those attending were set in accord thereby with the aspect of being that never dies. In India, Shiva is the Lord of the Beasts; so too is the Sumerian lord of death and rebirth, Dumuzi-Tammuz-Adonis, whose animal is the bull; so too is the Greek God Dionysus, known – like Shiva – as the Cosmic Dancer, who is both the moon-bull torn apart and the sun-lion tearing (see (2) op.cit.).

These rites are still to be found, in different forms, today – close to 5000 years later – in Mediterranean countries where bull-fights and other bull-festivals take place.

Around the year 2000 B.C., when Greek-speaking and identifiably Greek people become visible to archeology, the same social and economic system seems to have prevailed right across Europe: the tribes were ruled by a heroic warrior class, patrons of bronze, living by the values celebrated later in epic poems, and buried in state.

As a class system, with a fighting and hunting gentry living in great houses, this lasted nearly 4000 years, perhaps until 1914. The houses that went with it, with their porches, their great halls and their inner rooms, existed already before 2000 B.C., in Anatolia and in Eastern Europe as well as in Greece, but it was in Greece that the great halls of this kind of house became the impressive centers of palaces. Yet Greek architecture at that time was not the most ambitious in Europe.

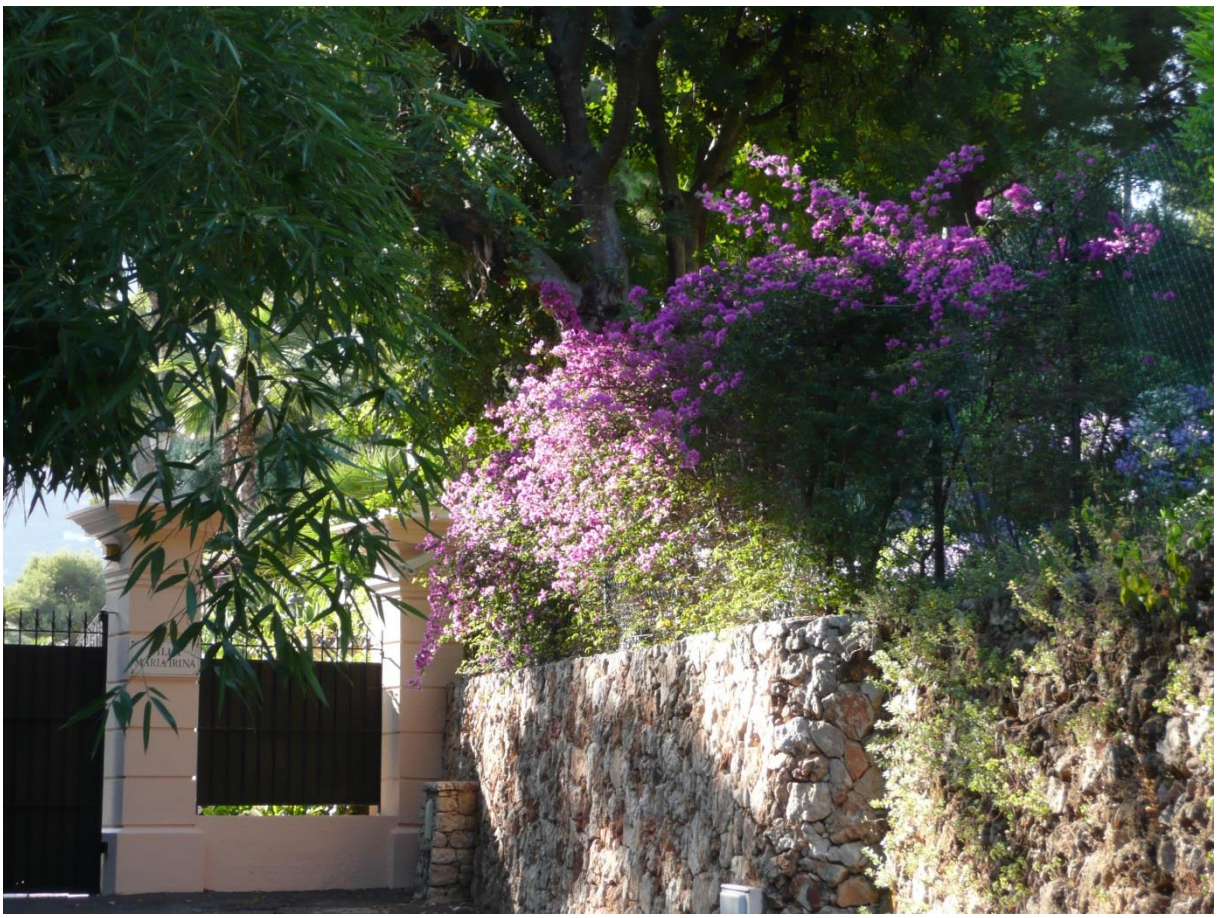
What happened in Greece was a special, but never quite an isolated development. The Mycenaeans of the late 17th century BC took their treasures of gold and silver, and the sacredness and perhaps also the very use of horses from the east, their ornaments of amber from the north, their weapons from Crete or the Levant.

Weapons spread swiftly, and it was a Mycenaean helmet copied in Germany that became the standard battle helmet of the west. The Mycenaeans measured their wealth in weapons; 90 bronze swords were found with only three bodies in one of the shaft graves at Mycenae. As far away as Brittany at the same time the rich and powerful were buried with bronze daggers in the same extravagant numbers.

See (4).

That the Greece of the Mycenaeans had such formidably wide horizons is due to the physical position of Greece in the world. In both ancient and modern times Greece has been doomed by the place it occupies on the map as a doorstep between Europe and Asia. Whenever one or other of its obvious geographic links has weakened for a time, it has always revived later. At the beginning of the 5th century BC Greece was almost but not quite swallowed up by the Persian Empire, a situation that Alexander reversed. From the west the Roman Empire overwhelmed Greece for a time; but Greece revived and, as part of the Byzantine Empire, became subject to Oriental influences, while at the same time its cultural tentacles reached Anglo-Saxon England. The comparative obscurity of Greek relations with the barbarian north is equally the effect of geography, of mountains and of forests. Influences moved more swiftly on the roads of the sea, and there is no time except immediately after the fall of the Mycenaeans when Greek ships were not fingering the surface of the western Mediterranean.

See (4).



In that dark age, when Greece was as poor as the rest of Europe or poorer, light came from the east, from more developed peoples. The closeness of the Phoenicians and the Egyptians, the Syrians and the Hebrews, constitutes an influence sufficient in itself, if there were no other, to account for the development of the Greeks, for their superiority to the Etruscans and the Gauls. From the Phoenicians came the alphabet, from the Egyptians came sculpture, and from the Levant architecture. Even the individuality of what grew up in Greece – the continual insistence on interpreting every foreign influence, however overwhelming, in Greek terms, so that Greek statues were stepping out freely when the Egyptian ones were still as stiff as ramrods, and Greek decorative art achieved a lucid formality and a final quality otherwise unknown – is due to the physical nature of Greece, the not quite complete isolation of so many vigorous communities, the mountains and the islands.

See (4).

When the Greeks were swallowed up into the Roman empire, their prestige remained immense. The Rome that swallowed them was partly Greek. The literature, the philosophy, all the fine arts, even most of the religious mythology that the Romans valued were Greek. The Greek language had the highest prestige. The Romans were overawed by Greek athletics, by the conveniently remote notion of Greek liberty, even by idyllic notions of Greek peasants and shepherds. The Romans even seem to have believed that Greek personal, physical beauty was greater than theirs.

The foundation of our own attitude to the Greeks rests heavily on Roman literature and romantic Roman understanding. Politically, the Romans both despised and admired Greece extravagantly, and in most other ways they idealized the Greeks. Eduard Fraenkel, one of the greatest of all scholars of Roman literature, has observed that the deeper any Roman writer was as a man, the more deeply he was penetrated by what was Greek.

See (4), chapter on The Study of Ancient Greece.

No one thought of excavating at the time of the Roman empire. Archeology began in Rome, but at a later time, and Greek archeology began and long continued as an extended version of Roman treasure hunting, which got its first serious momentum during the Renaissance period around 1500 AD. The first great collectors of Greek antiquities took their inspiration from Italy. As late as the end of the 18th century Athenian painted pottery, because it was first known in Italy, was thought to be Etruscan. It was in Italy, in the 17th century, that Milton took a notion to visit Delphi, and in the 18th, under the patronage of Cardinal Albani, that Johan Joachim Winckelmann (1717 – 68) planned to excavate Olympia. It was from Rome, not from London, that the British Society of Dilettanti set out in 1764 its first Greek expedition, which found the site of Olympia.

See (4), op.cit.

It was only between the two world wars that the first adequate studies of archaic Greek sculpture were published. One should remember also, so far as public taste is concerned, that it was a luxury and an adventure to visit Greece until the 1950s, nor has it always been easy even for scholars to study the vast collections for which the Greek archeological service is responsible.

As a result, archeology has become terribly bewildering. Works of art which, if they had been recovered 100 or 200 hundred years ago, would have had immense influence, and would have modified the idea of ancient Greece when that idea was thought to have unique value, are nowadays neglected. Greek religion and mythology have lost their definition in a welter of comparative studies. Archeology today is making its greatest intellectual efforts in an area in which no one showed an interest until 50 or 60 years ago: the darkness between the end of the Mycenaean and the first glimmer of archaic Greece.

See (4), op.cit.

It is not necessary to argue that Greek, Celtic, or Germanic myths were mythological. The peoples themselves knew that they were myths, and the European scholars discussing them have not been overborne by the idea of something uniquely holy about their topic. According to Joseph Campbell (see (2)), Friedrich Nietzsche was the first to recognize the force in the Greek heritage of an interplay of two mythologies: the pre-Homeric Bronze Age heritage of the peasantry, in which release from the yoke of individuality was achieved through group rites inducing rapture; and the Olympian mythology of measure and humanistic self-knowledge that is epitomized for us in Classical art.

The interplay between these two mythologies took place within the following phases:

Phase 1: Early Helladic Greece (around 2500 – 1900 B.C.), with arrival and establishment of early Bronze Age forms; fusion with Neolithic predecessors.

Phase 2: Middle Helladic Greece (around 1900 – 1600 B.C.); violent destructions in eastern Greece; arrival of new and powerful dynasty at Mycenae.

Phase 3: Late Helladic I (around 1600 – 1500 B.C); Period of the apogee of Crete, start of Minoization of Mycenae.

Phase 4: Late Helladic II (around 1500 – 1400 B.C.); Rise of Mycenae over Crete, increase of Mycenaen power.

Phase 5: Late Helladic III (around 1400 – 1300 B.C.); Hittite hegemony in Asia Minor. Achaeans fighting as allies of Hittites and mercenaries in Egypt. Mycenaen conquest of Crete.

Phase 6: Homer's Troy (around 1300 – 1184 B.C.); a mighty city, as described in the Iliad, wealthy and with flourishing trade.

At the epic time of Homer's Troy we arrive at the period when the two heroic ages, the settled agricultural and the intrusive pastoral-warrior peoples, were simultaneous and with a long period of interplay behind them. Suddenly, overwhelming onslaughts of new pastoral-warrior folk (in Palestine the Hebrews, in Greece the Dorians) precipitated the end of the world age of the

people of bronze. The exploits of Homer's "divine race of heroes" fall in the period around 1250 – 1150 B.C., followed by the shaping of the epics of The Iliad (around 850 B.C.) and the Odyssey (around 750 B.C.).

See (2).

It is instructive to contrast the history of the early Bronze Age cities of the Indus Valley with those of the Aegean. The dates of the two developments were about the same, c. 2500 – 1500 B.C.

The remoteness of India from the primary centers of Bronze Age civilization left the promising Indus cities of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa to expire. When the Indo-Aryan chariot fighters, cattle-herders, and Vedic chanters with their pantheon of Aryan gods (Indra, Varuna, Mitra, Vayu, Agni, and the rest), shattered the Indus cities and passed on to the Gangetic plain, c. 1500 – 1000 B.C., they too were absorbed by a stronger culture in India; that of the timeless,

all-absorbing and regenerating substance of the goddess mother Kali – the wheel of time we know from the Hindu culture.

In the Aegean, on the other hand, the new orders of civilization came into a zone within call of descendants of the Paleolithic Great Hunt on the broadly spreading animal plains of the north. These had, furthermore, been receiving and assimilating for centuries unremitting influences from the chief creative centers of the Nuclear Near East (Mesopotamia and Egypt). After the first of the Aryan or proto-Aryan waves struck south, c. 2500 B.C., there followed others, wave upon wave, until, in direct contrast to the Indian development, it was not the mythic order of the mother-goddess that consumed the gods, but the other way round.

See (2).

In this period around and following 2500 B.C. when the patriarchal warrior-tribes invaded the old Bronze Age agricultural Greece, the patriarchal Olympian Zeus conquered the serpent son and consort of the goddess-mother Gaea. However, the particular problem faced by Zeus in that period was simply that wherever the Greeks came, in every valley, every isle, and every cove, there was a local manifestation of the goddess-mother of the world whom he, as the great god of the patriarchal order, had to master in a patriarchal way.

Through this process, Greek mythology evolved into an amalgam of patriarchal and matriarchal traditions, with the dominance acquired by the conquering warrior-tribes. This meant that Zeus literally conquered these goddesses one by one, and became the father of their offspring.

For instance, a prime example both of the humor and of the logic and function of this mythology may be seen in the legend of the birth of Pallas Athene. The name of this goddess already appears on a pre-Hellenic tablet of c.1400 B.C. from the Cretan palace city of Knossos, as a protectress of the Minoan king. However, in the subsequent classic pantheon Athene is represented not as an ancient Cretan divinity but as a young and fresh Olympian, born, literally, from the brain of Zeus.

As the story goes, Zeus, at the start of his long career of theological assault through marriage, had taken as first wife the goddess Metis, daughter of the primal cosmic-water couple Oceanus and Tethys – who were the exact counterparts of the Mesopotamian Apsu and Tiamat. And, as the eldest child of the Mesopotamian primal pair had been their first-begotten son Mummu, the Word, the Logos, Lord of Truth and Knowledge, so was Metis infinitely wise. She, in fact, knew more than all the gods. She knew, moreover, the art of changing shape, which she put to use whenever Zeus approached, until finally, by device, he made her his own and she conceived. But then Zeus learned that her second child, if born, would be the end of him; and so, inducing her to his couch (she pregnant still), he swallowed her at a gulp. And it was only some time later, while walking by a lake, that he began to feel an increasing headache. This grew until he howled; and, some say Hephaestus others say Prometheus, arrived with a double ax and gave his head a splitting blow: whereupon Athene, fully armed, sprang forth with a battle shout – and Zeus,

thereafter, continued to claim that Metis, still sitting in his stomach, was giving him the benefit of her wisdom.

See (2)

In his poem, the “Works and Days”, Hesiod produced an amalgam of poems about morality and farming. Hesiod’s combination of the rules of agriculture with religious and magical rules, with country morality, and with the observation of seasons, is not a chance matter. At a primitive stage of agriculture every practical rule was a religious observance, and the religious rules had the practical basis of making the crops grow. A modern analogy may be useful. In the 1920s an English professor attended the midnight celebrations at Greek Easter. He asked a peasant, “Do you really believe Christ is risen?” and got the answer, “Of course Christ is risen, otherwise how would the wheat come up?”

See (4) The Homeric World, Hesiod and the conventions of myth.

There is more of this sort of religion in Homer than most people notice, but in Homeric poetry agriculture is an undertone, and the popular morality of settled peoples asserts itself only towards the end of the Odyssey. Throughout most of the action, cattle raiding is normal, and the distinction between a merchant and a pirate is hazy. The Odyssey is a poem of return; its structure has a lot in common with the central Asian epic of Dede Korkut, whose oral tradition goes back at least to the 9th century AD. In both stories the hero returns from exile or imprisonment or foreign adventure, and has to win back his bride from other suitors. He must climb step by step on his own merit through all the levels of society. In the Odyssey he takes shelter with a swineherd and fights a beggar with his fists. The final trial in both poems is the shooting of a bow. The most obvious difference is that in the Dede Korkut poems neither the poet nor his audience has any idea of the sea. But the sea wanderings of Odysseus have

almost nothing to do with the second half of the Odyssey. It seems that the Greeks simply added those amazing adventures to a story that already existed. (Although Peter Levy's dating of the Dede Korkut is about 1500 years after the Odyssey, the basic point is very likely. This is how legends are produced. Nothing is taken out of thin air.)

See (4) op.cit.

The sea in the Odyssey is islands and shadows and distances. A ship can be blown very badly off course. Heading for the northern Peloponnese it can fetch up off the south coast of Crete. But other, luckier ships make the journey from Troy in reasonable time. There are islands almost no one has ever visited, with a wide repertory of magical or monstrous inhabitants. A number of the wilder stories seem to be set in Sicily and the west, although we are not told exactly how Odysseys found himself over there, and the geography of his wanderings

is incoherent. In the Odyssey Egypt and Crete and Cyprus are real, and Odysseys has herds grazing in mainland Greece, on the coast opposite Ithaka. But in the west everything is fabulous.

See (4), op.cit.

Small wonder we find it hard to know the origins of many Homeric conventions. We can see from Norse saga and from Central Asian and from Irish epic poetry that in its long development every epic poem is organic, it puts out and it loses leaves and branches. Every retelling is for a different audience, every adaptation is a new attempt to make sense of given material. There are some obvious contradictions in the Iliad, for instance when the same hero eats a huge dinner twice in one evening; contradictions arise from reworkings. We are not even sure at what stage Homeric poetry was written down. What does seem to be unique in these among all the surviving epics of world literature is

that they took a permanent shape, apparently in writing, when the tradition of epic composition and oral transmission was still in its fullest vigor.

The tradition of epic poetry composed and transmitted by word of mouth does not flourish when there is an audience that reads. Yet it is not exactly writing that destroys epic and traditional poetry, at least not in one generation. It is rather written law, new social organization, and all those transformations of a whole human society to which the spread of literacy is linked. As we look backward, Homer's world is cloudy to us. He stands on the edge of a great darkness. He has a crispness and a purity we associate with beginnings; yet if we are to do justice to the dark age of Greece, we should think of the Iliad as its evening star, not as a morning star of a later age.

See (4) op.cit.

The Narmer Palette, from about 2850 B.C., shows the pharaoh Narmer in his conquest of the north of Egypt, thus uniting the two lands of the Upper and Lower Egypt.

Egyptian art in the period of the Narmer Palette not only reveals an extraordinary elegance of style and manner of carving stone, but also a firmly formulated mythology that is characteristically and unquestionably its own.

The cosmic goddess cow Hathor stood upon the earth in such a way that her four legs were the pillars of the four quarters. Her belly was the firmament. Moreover, the sun, the golden solar falcon, the god Horus, flying east to west, entered her mouth each evening, to be born again next dawn. Horus, thus, was the “bull of his mother”, his own father. And the cosmic goddess, whose name “hat-hor”, means the “house of Horus”, accordingly was both the consort and the mother of this self-begetting god, who in one aspect was a bird of prey. In the aspect of father, the mighty bull, this god was Osiris and identified with the dead father of the living pharaoh; but in the aspect of son, the falcon, Horus, he was the living pharaoh now enthroned. Substantially, however, these two, the living pharaoh and the dead, Horus and Osiris, were the same.

See (5), The Cities of God, The Hieratic State.

According to legend Rome was founded in 753 B.C. by Romulus and Remus, twin princes of Alba Longa, supposedly itself founded four centuries earlier by Aeneas, a Trojan prince. The twins, his distant descendants, were abandoned as babies on the orders of Amulius, who had usurped their kingdom and ordered their deaths. Miraculously, a she-wolf appeared from a wood to suckle them, and they were brought up by Faustinus, a kindly shepherd, on the Palatine Hill. When they grew up, they killed the usurper and together founded a new city: Rome.

But they soon quarreled, Romulus killing Remus for jumping over his ploughed boundary line. Romulus then populated Rome by inviting outlaws and homeless men to join him, and by abducting the young women of his neighbors in the famous “Rape of the Sabine Women”.

When the Sabine men marched back in force to reclaim their women, the latter, by now being used to being Roman wives, intervened to prevent battle and the two peoples intermarried. Romulus later ascended into heaven in a

thunderstorm, becoming divine. From such violent, mythic beginnings sprang the Eternal City, Rome.

See (6), Legendary Beginnings.

Archeology tells us that by the mid-8th century B.C. an unimpressive settlement existed on the Palatine Hill. The first Romans were actually Latin farmers or shepherds, the Latins being a subgroup of the Italian peoples, living in separate villages of small huts on the Palatine and Esquiline Hills. Beneath and between these hills were marshy valleys. Despite later Roman propaganda to the contrary, this was not a particularly healthy or fertile spot, but an island had two advantages. In the midst of the fast-flowing river Tiber, it offered the first practical crossing upriver from the sea 25 km distant, while the hills provided good defensive positions.

The settlements remained extremely primitive until the arrival – once again enshrined in myth – of the Etruscan Kings, who traditionally ruled Rome from 616 B.C. to 509 B.C. At this time Rome came under the sway of the Etruscans. They were a civilized people who dominated Italy from Bologna to the Bay of Naples. Rome's strategic position on the Tiber meant the Etruscans, approaching the height of their power, inevitably wanted control over it.

In close contact with the Greek cities to the south, whose art influenced but did not overwhelm their art, the Etruscans were a cheerful, even hedonistic, race, fond of the arts, women, banquets and athletics – or so their surviving bronzes and tomb paintings suggest. We still cannot fully read their language, even though, like the Roman alphabet, it uses a version of the Greek alphabet, but the Etruscans did not write very much.

See (6), op.cit.

In time, when Rome grew into a powerful republic exerting power over an increasing part of the Mediterranean, they would meet the Phoenicians head on in a fight for power over coastal territories and overseas trade, which led to the three Punic Wars.

Phoenicia was an ancient civilization composed of city-states which lay along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, stretching through what is now Syria, Lebanon and northern Israel. The Phoenicians were a great maritime people, known for their mighty ships adorned with horses' heads in honor of their god of the sea, Yamm, the brother of Mot, the god of death.

The island city of Tyre and the city of Sidon were the most powerful states in Phoenicia with Byblos and Baalbek as the most important spiritual and religious centers. Phoenician city-states began to take form 3200 B.C. and were firmly established by 2750 B.C., about two thousand years before the foundation of the city of Rome.

Phoenicia thrived as a maritime trader and manufacturing center from 1500 B.C. to 332 B.C., when they became a battle ground after the death of Alexander the Great. Although the Romans destroyed Carthage after the Punic Wars, they did not destroy the Phoenician cities in the Phoenician heartland, which made it possible for them to continue to flourish under Roman rule for a long time, until they were gradually integrated into the Roman empire's culture.

Aside from their skills in ship-building, the Phoenicians were highly regarded for their glass-making, the production of dyes, and an impressive level of skill in the manufacture of luxury and common goods.

The purple dye manufactured and used in Tyre for the robes of Mesopotamian royalty gave Phoenicia the name by which we know it today (from the Greek "Phoinikes" for Tyranian Purple). It also accounts for the Phoenicians being known as "purple people" by the Greeks (as the Greek historian Herodotus tells us) because the dye would stain the skin of the workers. Herodotus cites Phoenicia as the birthplace of the alphabet, stating that it was brought to Greece by the Phoenician Kadmus (sometime before the 8th century B.C.) and that, prior to that, the Greeks had no alphabet. The Phoenicians' alphabet is the basis for most western languages today, and their city of Byblos gave the

Bible its name, as Byblos was a great exporter of papyrus which was the paper used in writing in ancient Egypt and Greece.

See (7)

It is thought that many of the gods of ancient Greece were imported from Phoenicia. There are certain indisputable similarities in some stories concerning the Phoenician gods Baal and Yamm and the Greek deities Zeus and Poseidon. It is also notable that the battle between the Christian God and Satan as related in the biblical Book of Revelation seems a much later version of the same conflict one finds in the Phoenician myth of Ball and Yamm, with many of the same details,.

In its time Phoenicia was known as Canaan and is the land referenced in the Hebrew scriptures to which Moses led the Israelites from Egypt and which Joshua then conquered (according to the biblical books of Exodus and Joshua,

but uncorroborated by other ancient texts and unsupported by the physical evidence thus far excavated). According to the historian Richard Miles, the people of the land recognized “a shared ethnic identity as Can’nai, inhabitants of the land of Canaan, yet, despite a common linguistic, cultural and religious inheritance, the region was very rarely politically united, with each city operating as a sovereign state ruled over by a king”

See (7).

The Greek mythology, later adopted also by the Romans, is at the heart of ancient Mediterranean culture. It has permeated western art and literature ever since before Hesiod’s and Homer’s time, now maybe more than three thousand years ago – if we take account of the fact that Hesiod and Homer built on old oral traditions. Ovid (Publius Ovidus Naso) was born in 43 B.C. in central Italy and later expelled into exile by emperor Augustus. He died, still in

exile, in A.D. 17. Ovid has written “Metamorphoses” (see (9) in the bibliography), the major poetic work on Greek and Roman mythology on which all later works on this subject have been relying.

Ovid’s Metamorphosis is developed in fifteen books (or chapters, as we would say today), the contents of which is briefly recapitulated below. It is inevitable that such a brief recapitulation will have some passages that move a bit fast. For those who wish to know more, I recommend going to Ovid’s work itself. It is beautifully written.

Book 1

A god, a natural force of a higher kind, transforms chaos into an ordered universe. He separates the elements, gives heaven and earth their definitive forms, and creates the living beings.

In the beginning was the Golden Age, when men of their own accord, without threat or punishment, without laws, maintained good faith and did what was right. Men were content with food that grew without cultivation. Later, this age was replaced by the Age of Silver, inferior to the age of gold. Jupiter shortened the springtime which had prevailed of old, and instituted a cycle of four seasons in the year: winter, summer, changeable autumn, and a brief spring. Then, for the first time, the air became parched and arid, and glowed with white heat, then hanging icicles formed under the chilling blasts of the wind. It was in those days that men first sought covered dwelling places. Then corn, the gift of Ceres, first began to be sown in long furrows, with ensuing strains. After that came the third age, the Age of Bronze, when men were of a fiercer character, more ready to turn to cruel warfare, but still free from any taint of wickedness. Last of all arose the Age of Hard Iron; immediately, in this period which took its name from a baser ore, all manner of crime broke out; modesty, truth, and loyalty fled. Treachery and trickery took their place, together with deceit and violence and criminal greed.

The Giants assailed the kingdom of the gods and, piling mountains together, built them up to the stars above. Then the almighty father hurled his thunderbolt, smashed through Olympus, and flung down Pelios from where it had been piled on top of Ossa. The terrible bodies of the giants lay crushed beneath their own massive structures, and the earth was drenched and soaked with torrents of blood from her sons. Then she breathed life into this warm blood , so that her mighty offspring might not be completely forgotten, and changed it into the shape of men. But the men thus born, no less than the giants, were contemptuous of the gods, violent and cruel, with a lust to kill; it was obvious that they were the children of blood.

When the father of the gods looked down and saw what was going on, he groaned aloud. He recalled the horrid banquet of Lycaon which had not yet become common knowledge. He called together his council.

There is a track across the heavens, plain to see in the clear sky. It is called the Milky Way, and is famous for its brightness. It is by this road that the gods come to the palace of the mighty Thunderer. On the right hand and on the left stand the houses of distinguished gods. Here the powerful and noble divinities have made their homes, which could be called the Palatine district of high heaven. As the gods took their seats, Jupiter spoke these indignant words:

"Never was I more anxious concerning the sovereignty of the universe, no, not even at that time when each of the snaky-footed giants was preparing to throw their hundred arms round the sky and take it captive. For then the attack was made by one small group of enemies and, although they were fierce ones, still the trouble originated from one source. Now the entire human race must be destroyed, throughout all the lands which Nereus surrounds with his roaring waters. I swear by the rivers of the underworld that flow through the Stygian grove beneath the earth: all other remedies have been tried. This cancer is incurable, and must be cut out by the knife, to prevent the healthy part from becoming infected. We have the demigods to care for, the spirits of the countryside, nymphs and fauns, satyrs and silvani, who roam the hills. Since we have not, as yet, considered them worthy of the honour of a place in heaven, let us at least ensure that they can live on the earth which we have given them. For can you believe, you gods, that they will go unmolested when Lycaon, a man notorious for his savagery, has laid plots against me, the lord and master of the thunderbolt, aye, and your king and master too?"

Jupiter then went on to tell the story of how Lycaon plotted to kill him when he would be asleep after a banquet where Lycaon served for dinner the remains of a hostage sent him by the Molossian people. As soon as Lycaon had served this scandalous meal, Jupiter brought his house crashing down, and Lycaon fled into the countryside where he was transformed into a wolf. Jupiter then said to the gods:

"One house has fallen, but far more than one have deserved to perish. To the ends of the earth, the dread Fury holds sway. You would think men had sworn allegiance to crime! They shall all be punished, forthwith, as they deserve. Such is my resolve."

The gods, listening to Jupiter, were worried that he would leave the world to the plundering of the wild beasts, but he assured them that they need not be anxious, for he himself would attend to everything. He promised them a new stock of men, unlike the former ones, a race of miraculous origin. He then sent rain pouring down from every quarter of the sky, destroying mankind beneath the waters. His brother Neptune, the god of the sea, lent him the assistance of his waves. The greater part of the human race was swallowed up by the waters: those whom the sea spared died from lack of food, overcome by long-continued famine.

There is a land, Phocis, which separates the fields of Boeotia from those of Oeta. It was a fertile spot while it was land, but now it had become part of the sea, a broad stretch of waters, suddenly formed. In that region, a high mountain, called Parnassus, raises twin summits to the stars, and its ridges pierce the clouds. When the waters had covered all the rest of the earth, the little boat which carried Deucalion and his wife ran aground there. Of all the

men who ever lived, Deucalion was the best and the most upright; no woman ever showed more reverence for the gods than Pyrrha, his wife. Their first action was to offer prayers to the Corycian nymphs, to the deities of the mountain, and to Themis, the goddess who foretold the future from its oracular shrine. Following the advice of Themis, they took stones on the earth and threw them behind their backs. In the meantime, Jupiter and Neptune had made the waters recede and the earth came up again. From the stones Deucalion and Pyrrha had thrown, new human beings and animals emerged.

Mother Earth also gave birth to the huge Python, though she had no wish to do so. The python struck terror into the new-born race of men. The archer god Apollo destroyed the serpent and the venom flowed out from all its dark wounds. To keep the memory of his deed, Apollo established sacred games, which he called Pythian, after the serpent he had vanquished. Contests of many kinds were held at those games. The winners received a wreath of oak-leaves

as a prize. There was no laurel in those days; any tree served to provide the garland which Phoebus wore around his temples, to crown his handsome flowing locks.

Daphne, the daughter of Peneus, was Phoebus' first love, and it was not blind chance which brought this about, but Cupid's savage spite. Not long before, Apollo, still exultant over his slaying of the serpent, had seen Cupid bending his bow. Apollo had then said: "You naughty boy, what have you to do with a warrior's arms? Weapons such as these are suited to my shoulders: for I can aim unerringly, as I lately slew the bloated Python. You be content with your torch to excite love, do not aspire to praises that are my prerogative." But Venus' son replied: Your bow may pierce everything else, Apollo, but mine will pierce *you*: and as all animals are inferior to the gods, your glory is to that extent less than mine."

From the shady summit of Parnassus, Cupid pierced Daphne with an arrow that makes love fly away, while he pierced Apollo with an arrow that ignites love. Apollo fell deeply in love with Daphne, while she hid as fast as possible in the woodlands, out of reach from Apollo. She is then at her wish changed into a laurel, following fierce chases by Phoebus in different disguises.

There is a grove in Haemonia, shut in on every side by steep wooded slopes. Men call it Tempe. Through this grove flow the foaming waters of Peneus, gushing out from the bottom of Pindus' range. To this spot all the rivers came in compassion for Daphne's father, all the streams which, wherever their course had carried them, at last bring down their waters, weary with wandering, to the sea.

Only Inachus was not present, but remained hidden away in the depths of his cave, swelling his stream with tears, in utter misery lamenting the loss of his daughter Io. Jupiter had caught sight of her as she was returning from her father's stream, and had said: "Maiden, you are fit for Jupiter himself to love, and will make someone divinely happy when you share his couch. Now, while the sun is at its zenith, seek shelter from its heat in the depths of the greenwood." - and Jupiter indicated the shady grove. Jupiter then spread darkness over the earth, concealing it from view, halting the maiden's flight, and robbing her of her maidenhood.

Juno looked down and wondered that floating clouds should give the appearance of night during the bright daytime. She looked round to see where her husband, Jupiter, was. When she could not find him in the sky, “Unless I am mistaken”, she said, “he is doing me some wrong”. Then, gliding down from high heaven, she stood on earth and bade the clouds disperse.

Jupiter had sensed his wife’s arrival before she arrived, and had changed Inachus’ daughter into a sleek heifer. Even as a cow she was lovely. Juno, though against her will, admired the look of the animal, inquired whose it was, where it came from, and from what herd – as if she did not know the truth! Jupiter lied to her, and to stop her asking further questions about its parentage, said it had been born of the earth. Then Saturn’s daughter asked to have it as a present. On the one hand shame persuaded him to yield, but on the other love made him reluctant. His love would have triumphed over his sense of shame: but if a gift as trivial as cow were refused to one who was his sister and his wife, it might seem to be more than a cow.

Juno gave the heifer into the keeping of Argus, son of Arestor. Argus had a head set round with a hundred eyes, of which two in turn were always resting, while the others kept watch and remained on guard – watching Io. Io, in her form of a cow, went to the stream and tried to show her father Inachus who she was – and having succeeded at that, there was nothing they could do.

Jupiter could no longer bear that Io should suffer so. He called his son Mercury, whom the shining Pleiad bore, and ordered him to slay Argus. Mercury carried this through in a cunning way, and Io was brought back to her original state after Jupiter had secured Juno’s forgiveness. Io became a goddess and had a son, Epaphus, from her union with Jupiter.

Book 2

Following a heated discussion with Epaphus, Phaeton got his mother Clymene to tell him that his father was indeed the sun-god Apollo. Full of pride, Phaeton went in search of his father and obtained, after pleading intensely, the permission to drive the sun-chariot across the sky. Phaeton, who was of course not fit for the task of Apollo, quickly got off course with the result that the earth got scorched with numerous consequences outlined by Ovid. Jupiter, full of rage, put Phaeton to death. The Italian nymphs buried his body, and on the rock set this inscription:

Here Phaeton lies: his father's chariot he tried –

Though proved too weak, he greatly daring died.

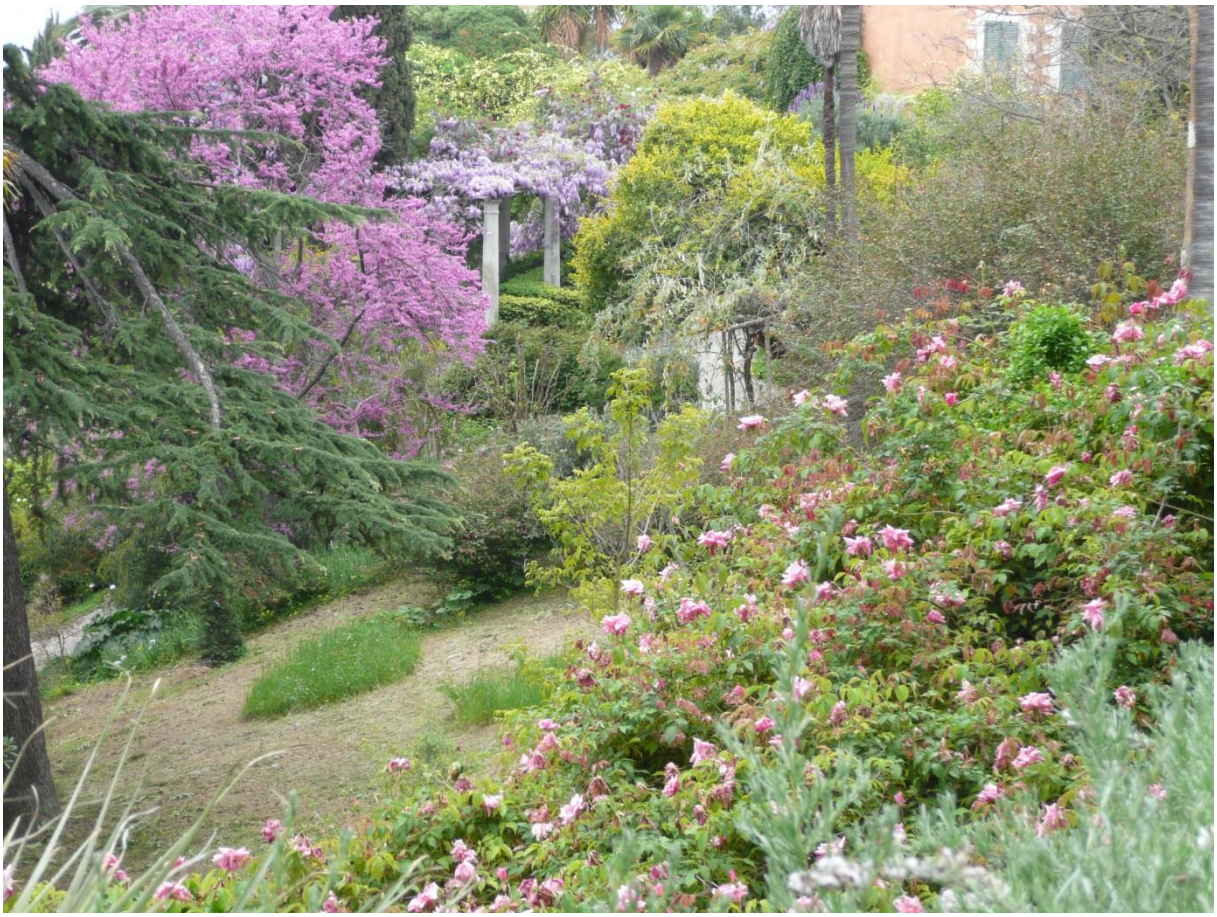
As Jupiter was inspecting the great walls of Heaven, to see whether any damage had been done by Phaeton's folly, he stopped short at the sight of an Arcadian maiden. The fire of passion kindled the very marrow of his bones. This

girl was Callisto, one of Diana's warriors – a favorite. Callisto entered a grove covered by trees. In the shade, she removed her tunic, unstrung her bow, and lay down on the turf. When Jupiter saw her thus, tired and unprotected, he said: "Here is a secret of which my wife will know nothing; or if she does get to know of it, it will be worth her reproaches!" Jupiter, beating back Callisto's resistance, had his way and returned to the upper air.

Callisto bore a son, Arcas, and Juno had in the meantime found out what had happened. Enraged, she transformed Callisto into a bear. One day, Arcas, having reached the age of fifteen, went out hunting. He found himself face to face with his mother, who gazed fixedly at him. Arcas was about to throw his spear at her, when Jupiter intervened and carried both by a whirlwind through the void of heaven, and then he set them in the sky, as neighboring constellations.

The raven, because of its indiscretions regarding the behavior of Coronis of Larissa, is transformed by Apollo from white to black. Coronis, for her unfaithfulness, was pierced by Apollo's arrow. Nyctimene is transformed into an owl.

Mercury steals Apollon's cattle. The farmer Battus, who denounced him, is transformed into a rock. Mercury is attracted to the athenaen woman Herse; Herse's sister, Aglauros, excited by Envy and instigated by Minerva wants to push back the god. She is transformed into a statue. Jupiter is full of passion for Europe, and hidden in the form of a bull, he abducts her from Phoenicia, her land, across the sea.



Book 3

The Phoenician king Agenor's son, Cadmus, is sent out to search for his sister Europe. Led by an oracle in Beotia, Cadmus meets and kills a dragon there. The dragon is a son of Mars. Cadmus sows the teeth of the dragon in the soil, out of which springs warriors that kill each other. With those who remain, Cadmus founds the city of Thebes.

Cadmus' grandson, Actaeon, surprises Diana in her bath in a stream, and is changed by her into a stag. He is subsequently torn in pieces by a group of dogs.

Jupiter makes love to Semele, daughter of Cadmus. Juno, wishing to avenge this infidelity, advises Semele to ask Jupiter to show himself completely to her. She does so and is killed by lightning.

The Theban oracle, Tiresias, who had twice changed sex, is struck by blindness. This was a punishment inflicted by Juno on him for having supported Jupiter in a quarrel she had with her husband.

The nymph Echo is transformed into a sound; Narcissus, that she loved at distance, who has seen his own image in a fountain becomes infatuated with himself and dies, consumed by this insane passion. Transformed into a flower, he is mourned by Echo.

Pentheus, son of Echion and grandson of Cadmus, refuses to worship Bacchus, whose subjects are, at the gates of Thebes, celebrating the new cult. One of the god's followers, Acoetes, tries to convince him by telling a story of when he was made prisoner by Phoenician pirates who did not worship Bacchus either. These pirates were transformed into dolphins by the god. Pentheus, being obstinate in his refusal to worship Bacchus, is torn into pieces by his mother and the other worshippers, whom Bacchus had made delirious during a ceremony.

Book 4

Minyas' daughters persist in refusing to honour the cult of Bacchus. During one of the festivals, they refuse to interrupt their domestic occupations and while they work on wool they tell each other romantic stories:

1) Arsippe tells of different transformations and of the adventures of Pyramus and Thisbe in the Babylonian countryside.

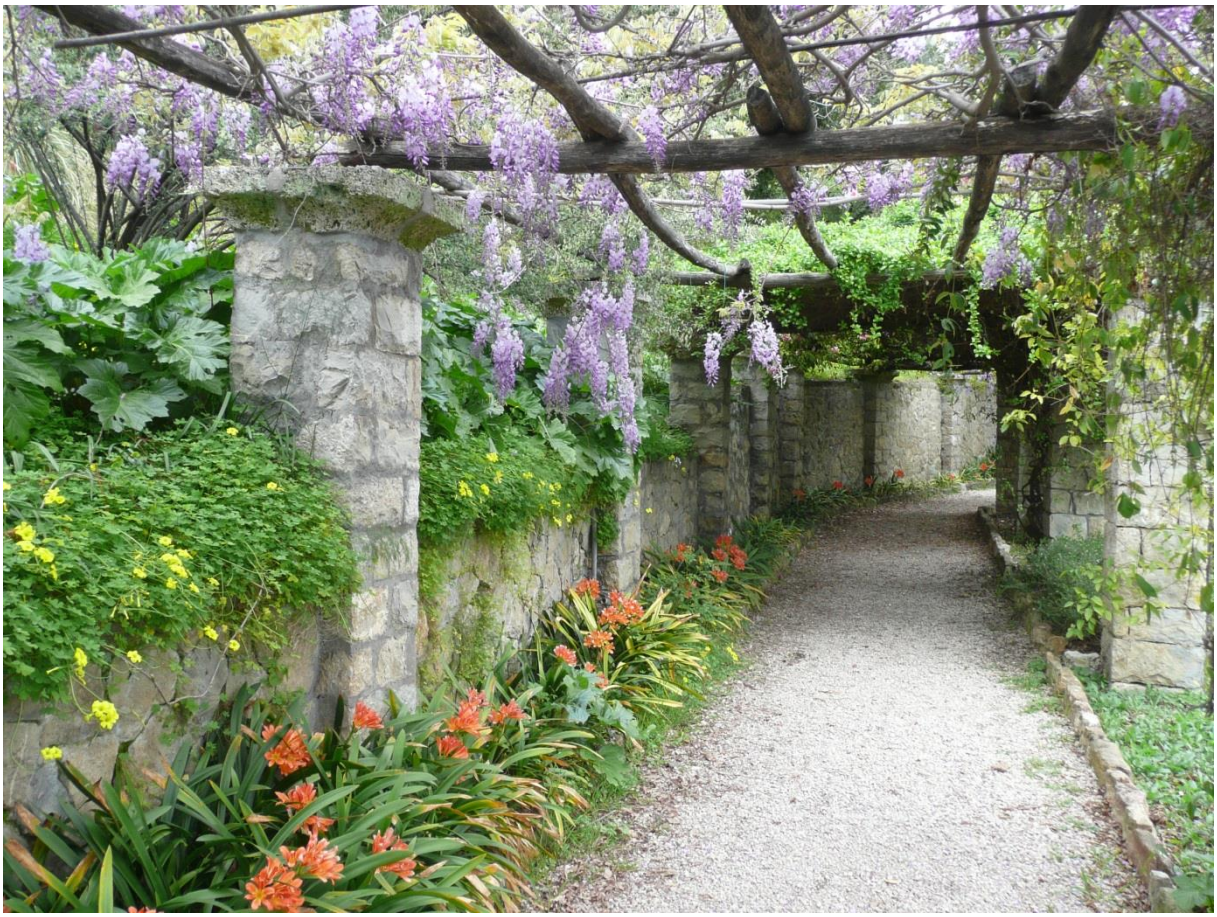
2) The story by Leuconoe: For having revealed the adulterous love of Venus with Mars, the Sun is punished by the goddess, who ignites in the Sun a mad love for Leucothoe, daughter of the Persian king; she is changed into a incens tree, and Clytie, her rival into a heliotrope.

3) Story of Alchitoe: After several legends in form of introduction, she tells of Salmacis, a nymph of the lake of Carie, who having fallen in love with Hermaphroditus, drags him down in the water and forms with him one body with double sex.

After these three stories, the daughters of Minyas are changed into batterflies by Bacchus who is irritated by their blindness.

Juno, persisting in her vengeances against Cadmus' family, inspires a strong madness in Athamas, Cadmus' fourth daughter Ino's husband; she in turn, devastated by grief, throws herself into the sea with her son Melicerte; they become gods of the sea. Finally, Cadmus and his wife Hermione, are deep in their sorrow, transformed into snakes.

The legend of Perseus. Having destroyed Gorgon, he flies into the air to Africa, to the kingdom of Atlas. When Atlas refuses him his hospitality, Perseus transforms him into a mountain. From there he goes to Ehtiopia, where he liberates Andromeda, who is tied to a rock by order of Jupiter. To get the pardon for his mother's vanity, he kills a sea monster that was on the verge of swallowing her. After his victory, he marries Andromeda; at the wedding banquet, he tells the story of how he killed Gorgon.



Book 5

The stories of Perseus are continued and completed in Book 5. Phineus, who was engaged to Andromeda, is in a rage against Perseus and sends a riotous mob against him. A fight in the palace ensues, and Perseus petrifies his enemies by displaying Medusa's head. In the same way he takes vengeance against Proetus in Argos and Polydectes in Seriphos.

Minerva, who has gone to Helicon to see the source of Pegasus, is received by the Muses; one of them tells him about the insult they have suffered from Pyreneus and his punishment for that, followed by the story of the fight they engaged in with the Pierides who disputed their prize of song: 1) Song of one Pieride: The war of the Giants against the Gods. 2) Song of Calliope: Hymn in honour of Ceres; abduction of Proserpine by Pluto, in Sicily; the nymph Cyane who tried to oppose this, is changed into a source. Ceres is wandering around, searching for her daughter. She changes a child who mocks her into a lizard. Having learned who abducted Proserpine, and where she is, Ceres goes to

Jupiter and complains. He decides that Proserpine will stay with Ceres six months of the year, and with Pluto the other six months.

The nymph Arethusa, who had informed Ceres, tells her how, being loved by Alpheus, a river of Elida, and wanting to escape from him, she was changed into a deepwater stream erupting in Sicily. Ceres teaches the Athenian Tripolemus how to sow the earth; he goes with his secret to Scythia. The king Lyncus, who prepared to kill him and steal the secret, is transformed into a lynx.

At the end of Calliope's song, the Pierides are beaten by the Muses and transformed into magpies.

Book 6

The Lydian Arachne pretends to be superior to Minerva in the art of weaving, and engages in a contest with her. Minerva's piece of art: she pictures the metamorphoses by which certain gods have punished their rivals. Arachne's piece of art: she pictures the gods in their disguises to effectuate their forbidden loves. Minerva, feeling insulted, changes Arachne into a spider.

In Thebes, Niobe refuses to recognize the divinity of Leto. To avenge the insult made to their mother, Apollo and Diana pierce with their arrows the seven sons and seven daughters of Niobe, and change her into a rock.

The story of the Lycian farmers who also had insulted Leto when, persecuted by Juno, she wandered around the earth; she changed them into frogs.

The Phrygian satyre Marsyas, beaten by Apollo, became a river.

The ivory shoulder of Pelops.

Tereus, king of Thracia, going to rescue Athens, is threatened by invasion, marries Procne, daughter of king Pandion, and takes her to his country. Some years later, he comes back to fetch Philomela, sister of his wife. Under the spell of a guilty passion, he abuses the young girl, whom he has imprisoned in a far removed solitude. To silence her, he cuts her tongue. Liberated by Procne, she avenges herself together with Procne, by making Tereus eat the body parts of his son Irys. Procne is changed into a swallow, Philomela into a rooster, and Tereus into a hoopoe.

Boreas, wind of Thracia, marries the Athenian Orithyia; he has two sons from her, Calais and Zetes, who join the Argonautes.

Book 7

The story of the Argonauts. Medea is madly in love with Jason, their chief. She betrays for him her father, the king Aeetes, and Colchia, her country, by giving Jason, through her enchantments, the opportunity to take the Golden Fleece.

Jason tames the brazen-footed bulls that blew fire from their nostrils, forces them to work in a field where he sows the teeth of the dragon of Mars and defeats the warriors born from those teeth. Master of the Golden Fleece, he departs for Thessaly with Medea.

In Thessaly Medea rejuvenates Aeson, the father of Jason, with a magic liquid she makes herself and pours into the old man's veins. She also pretends to want to rejuvenate Pelias, Jason's brother that he had dethroned. Under this pretext, she makes his daughters cut his throat and throw him into a cauldron of boiling water.

Medea subsequently flees through the air, passing over several cities where – in passing – some metamorphoses are told, notably the one of Cygnus. In Corinth, she cuts the throat of her children from Jason, because of his infidelity. Received in Athens by the king Aegeus and, having become his wife, she attempts to poison his son Theseus, who escapes by chance. Medea flees, and celebrations are made for Theseus.

Minos, king of Crete, prepares an expedition against Athens. He proposes an alliance with Aeacus, king of Aegina, who refuses. Cephalus, being sent by Athens as an envoy, is welcomed by Aeacus. He tells of a terrible pest being caused by Juno some years back in time, which depopulated his kingdom, the pest of Aegina. The island was repopulated by ants, that Jupiter transformed into men – the Myrmidons. In his turn, Cephalus tells about his tragic loves with his wife Procris. Having disdained advances made by Aurora, he is punished by a blind jealousy, which makes him throw suspicion on Procris. Breaks and reconciliations between them follow. Cephalus goes hunting. The fox of Thebes is changed into stone. Procris, jealous in her turn, comes to spy on Cephalus in the forest where he hunts. He kills her by mistake, taking her for a wild animal.

Book 8

Minos has placed Megara, an ally of Athens, under siege. Scylla, daughter of king Nisus, who is infatuated with Minos, is handing her city over to Minos by giving him a purple hair taken from her father's forehead, on which the fate of the city depends. Minos pushes her back with horror. She is, as well as her father, transformed into a seabird.

Minos returns to Crete. The story of the Minotaurus is being told. The crown of Ariadne is transformed into a constellation by Bacchus, to bring her eternal glory. Daedalus, the architect of the Labyrinth, who was being held prisoner by Minos, flies away with his son Icarus, by way of wings he has made. Icarus falls in the sea after his rash and vain behavior.

The territory of Calydon, in Etolia, is devastated by an enormous wild boar which is sent by Diana, who is angry with its inhabitants for forgetting her when making their offerings, and wants to punish them. The animal is hunted and

killed by Meleager, son of the king. Atalante receives from Meleager, who loves her, the corpse of the boar. Meleager inflicts deadly wounds on the two brothers of his mother, who were opposed to him. His mother indignantly throws a log, on which the existence of Meleager depends, into the fire. He dies right away. His saddened sisters are changed into birds.

Theseus, on returning from Calydon to Athens, is stopped on the way by an overflow of the river Achelous. Achelous gives hospitality to Theseus in his grotto, and tells him how the nymphs Echinades and Perimele became islands on the coast of Etolia. In this connection, a companion of Theseus, wanting to show that metamorphoses are possible, tells the story of two old men in Phrygia, Philemon and Baucis, who gave hospitality to Jupiter and Mercury who were disguised. They were transformed, one into an oak, the other into a linden tree.

Achelous tells the story of Erysichthon, king of a city in Thessaly, who became hated by Ceres for having cut down one of her sacred trees. He was possessed of a hunger that nothing could appease. He eats up all his possessions, and he sells his daughter as a slave several times, but she manages to flee because of her capacity to change herself into different forms.

Book 9

The tales of Achelous continue. He explains why there is only one horn left on his forehead. He wanted to marry Deianira, who was also courted by Hercules. He challenged his rival, and in spite of his successive transformations into a snake and a bull, he was beaten and humiliated.

Hercules kills the centaur Nessus, who had tried to abduct Deianira by trickery. In dying, Nessus gives Deianira his shirt, which is poisoned by the hydra of Lerna, as a means of inspiring love. Deianira, who is being left by Hercules, sends him Nessus' shirt. Having put it on, he is torn by terrible sufferings. To end these sufferings, he kills himself, but Jupiter, his father takes him up to the sky and the apotheosis of Hercules, becoming a god, is described.

Alcmene, having become old, tells Iole, her daughter in law, how, at the moment of Hercules' birth, she gave birth successfully – in spite of Juno's jealousy – because of a subterfuge of her servant Galanthis. Lucina, irritated,

changes Galanthis into a weasel. Iola, in her turn, tells Alcmena of the adventure of her sister, Dryope, changed into a lotus for having inadvertently broken the branches of one of the trees that were hiding the nymph Lotis.

Iolaus, companion of Hercules, is rejuvenated by Hebe. Several gods ask her to do the same for their proteges, but in vain.

From Tirynth, and the house of Hercules, the reader is transported to Milet. Byblis, daughter of the king who has founded this city, falls incestuously in love with her brother Caunus. Pushed back by him in horror, she flees to Lycia, where she is changed into a fountain by the nymphs of this place.

Another example of monstrous love: in Crete, a woman of humble conditions, disobeying her husband, has spared the life of her daughter Iphis, that she just had given birth to, and made her pass as a boy. Having grown up, Iphis falls in love with Ianthe, her friend. The day before their marriage, that both families approved of, Iphis' mother – fearing that her secret will be uncovered – obtains from Isis, the Egyptian goddess, that her daughter is transformed into a boy.

Book 10

From Crete we move to Thracia, where Orpheus has lost Eurydice and goes down to hell to take her back. At the moment he comes back with her, he loses her a second time through his own impatience. To console himself of the solitude in which he lives, he sings and accompanies his song with the lyre. His music attracts around him, at the summit of Mount Hemus, trees of all sorts, among which the cypress, born out of the metamorphosis Cyparissus.

The songs of Orpheus take up the rest of book 10. Being accompanied by the presence of wild animals attracted by his song, he first celebrates youth who have been loved by the gods, Ganymede, a favorite of Jupiter, and Hyacinthus, favorite of Apollo. He then tells of several young women who were lost through their guilty loves.

Cypriot and oriental legends:

1)The Cerastaes and the Propoetides.

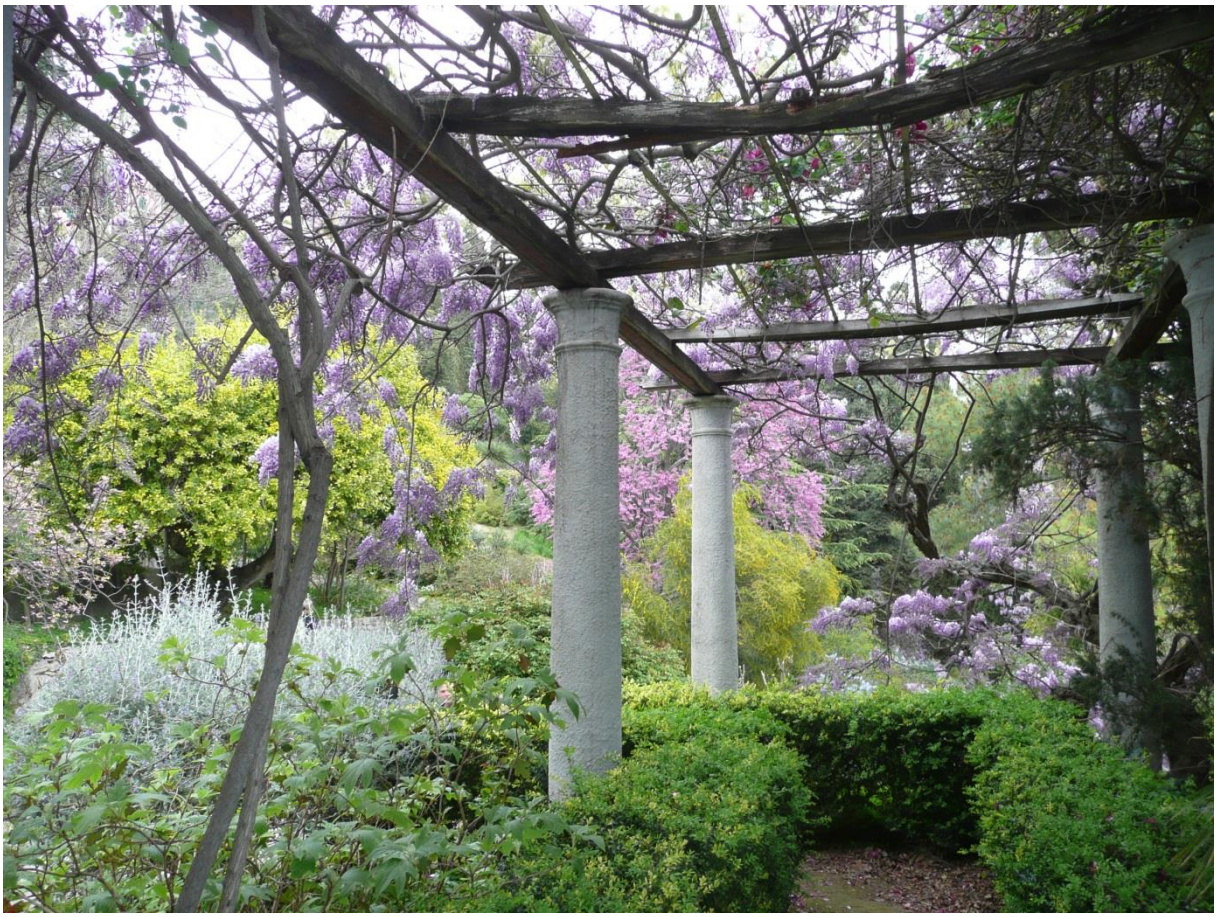
2)The story of Pygmalion, of the same origin, contrasts agreeably with the tragic scenes. Madly in love with the statue of a young woman he has sculpted himself, he obtain from Venus, the great goddess of Cyprus, that this woman is given life and he then marries her.

3)Horrible story of a descendant of Pygmalion, Myrrha, daughter of Cinyras, king of Cyprus. She develops an incestuous passion for her father, and succeeds in satisfying it in darkness, not having been recognized by him. When the crime is discovered, she flees to Arabia, where she is transformed into a myrrha tree.

4)There she gives birth to the fruit of this incestuous love, Adonis. When he reaches the age of maturity, he is loved by Venus. Wanting to protect him from the dangers of hunting ferocious animals, she tells him why she hates lions.

5)The story of Atalante and Hippomenes. Atalante wanted only a spouse who could beat her in running. She killed all men who failed. Hippomenes succeeded in passing her, with the help of Venus who threw golden apples in front of her during the chase, which she stopped to pick up. He marries her, but the spouses, having dirtied a temple of the mother of the gods, are transformed into lions.

6)End of the story of Adonis, killed by a boar in a hunt. He is mourned by Venus, who with her blood creates the anemone.



Book 11

The story of Orpheus ends. He is put in pieces by Thracian women who are angry at his disdain. His head, thrown into the waters of Hebrus, is transported to the sea, where it reaches the shores of Lesbos. A serpent, ready to swallow it, is transformed by Apollo into a rock. Bacchus punishes the Thracian women by transforming them into trees.

Bacchus moves into Lydia with his followers. Silenus, his father, loses his way during the journey and is taken care of by king Midas. Bacchus is grateful and promises Midas any reward he might wish. Midas wishes, and obtains, that anything he touches will be turned into gold. He is about to die of hunger when Bacchus takes that privilege away from him and sends him to purify himself in the waters of Pactolus. Midas transfers his powers to these waters.

Pan, pretends that his flute is better than the lyre of Apollo. A contest between them is engaged on mount Tmolus and Pan loses. Midas, who had taken sides

with Pan, is punished by Apollo. His ears are replaced by the ears of an ass. In spite of his efforts to hide them, they are discovered by one of his servants who gives the secret away to a hole he has dug in the ground. The reeds that grow out of this hole give away a sound that reveals the shame of Midas.

Apollo subsequently builds the walls of Troy together with Neptune, to help king Laomedon. King Laomedon does not fulfill his part of the deal and is punished. His daughter Hesione is exposed to a naval monster and delivered by Telamon, who marries her.

In Thessaly, Peleus, brother of Telamon, is seduced by the beauty of Thetis, goddess of the sea. She tries to escape from him by successive metamorphoses, but he overcomes her resistance with the help of Proteus. Having killed his half-brother Phocus, he takes refuge by Ceyx, king of Trachis. The king tells him how his brother Daedalion, despaired of having lost his daughter, victim of Diana, is changed into a dog. A wolf, sent by a Nereid, mother of Phocus, strangles the oxen of Peleus to punish him, and is changed into a stone.

Peleus is pardoned, and leaves Trachis. Ceyx wants to consult the oracle of Claros, in spite of the supplications of young wife Alcyone. He travels to Asia, is caught by a storm and drowns. By order of Juno, Iris persuades Sleep to send a dream to Alcyone, where the drama is told. She is changed into a swallow along with her husband who has been thrown up by the waves near Trachis.

Aesacus, son of Priam, pursues the nymph Hesperia – whom he loves - in the Troyan plains. As she flees to escape him, she is bitten by a snake and dies from the wound. In mad despair, he wants to drown himself in the sea. He is changed into a dive.

Book 12

The legends of the Troyan war. The Greek fleet is held back at Aulis by adverse winds. A serpent which had delivered prediction to Calchias is changed into stone.

Sacrifice of Iphigenia. She is replaced by a deer.

Renown publishes the news of the war. Disembarkment of the Greek. The fight of Achilles and Cygnus. Cygnus is invulnerable. Achilles can only beat him by strangling him. Metamorphosis of Cygnus into a swan. After the fight, the old Nestor tells the story of a Greek warrior, invulnerable he also, Caeneus. He had first been a woman, but obtained from Neptune to become a man.

Neptune's story goes on. Caeneus, invited to the wedding of Pirithous, in Thessaly, becomes involved in the battle between the Lapiths and the Centaurs. Episodes of the fight are retold: exploits of Pirithous, Theseus, Peleus and Nestor himself. Caeneus, victor in a battle because of his marvelous

immunity, is crushed by the Centaurs under heaps of trees that have been cut. He is changed into a bird. Nestor then tells of how his entire family, being killed by Hercules, his brother Periclymenus who, after several metamorphoses, had been changed into an eagle but then beaten by the hero.

Passing over the ten years of the Troyan war, which were of no use to Ovid, the poet then tells how Achilles is killed by Paris.

Book 13

In front of the assembled Greeks, Ajax and Ulysses demand the weapons of Achilles. We are presented with the respective pleadings of Ajax and Ulysses. Ajax, being defeated in this discussion, kills himself. His blood gives colour to the hyacinth.

The conquest of Troy. Polyxena, daughter of Priam, is strangled on the tomb of Achilles. Her brother Polydorus dies, victim of Polymestor, king of Thrace, who had been his tutor. Hecuba, their mother, in despair of having lost her two last children, avenges them by blinding Polymestor. She is changed into a dog.

Funeral of Memnon, son of Aurora. From the ashes of the fire marvelous birds are being born, who kill each other on the tomb and are reborn every year to die again.

Aeneas escapes from the ruins of Troy. He arrives at the island of Delos, where king Anius tells him how his daughters, persecuted by the Greeks, have been changed into white doves. He gives him a crate, where the metamorphosis of the daughters of Orion is depicted. Having sacrificed themselves to save Thebes from the pest, they have been resuscitated as two young men, famous under the name of the Coroni.

After a stay on the coast of Epirus, the Troyans arrive in Sicily, where Scylla and Charybdis are found. Charybdis seizes ships and swallows them into the depths, and vomits them up again, while Scylla has a girdle of fierce dogs around her horrid waist. Scylla was once a girl, and the sea nymphs loved her dearly.

The story of Scylla, from the time when she was still a young girl and frequented the Nereid Galatea. Galatea tells of her love with Acis, whom the Cyclops Polyphemus kills out of jealousy, and who has become a river. Scylla meets Glaucus, an old Beotian fisherman, changed into a sea god after having tasted magical herbs. As she resists his advances, he asks Circe to soften her resistance by witchcraft.

Book 14

Continuation and end of the story of Scylla. Glaucus, having been resisted by Scylla, goes to the coast of Latium and asks Circe to enchant Scylla so that he can conquer her. Circe, who is in love with Glaucus and jealous, takes revenge on Scylla and transforms her into a sea monster.

Aeneas leaves Sicily. His adventures are being told in brief. He sails along the Pithecusae islands, where the Cercopes had been changed into moneys.

He arrives at Cumae. The Sibyl, after having led him to the underworld, tells him how she was loved by Apollo and how she received from him the gift of living for a thousand years.

At Gaeta, Achaemenides, a former seaman on Ulysses' ship, whom Aeneas had picked up in Sicily, meets one of his old comrades, Macareus. He was also from the ship of the king of Ithaca. The two Greeks tell each other what has happened to them since they were together with Ulysses.

Achaemenides escaped from the blinded, enraged Cyclops, saved by Aeneas after Ulysses had left. Macareus almost became victim of the Laestrygonian king Antiphates, then, sent to Circe's shores, to the magician Circe, he was transformed into a piglet along with several of his companions. Freed by Ulysses and brought back to his original state, he settled in Gaeta, where he stayed. He also tells what he learned when with Circe, the story of Picus, king of Ausonia. Having resisted the love of Circe, he was changed into a bird; his wife, the nymph Canens, became a prophetic voice, devoid of a body.

Aeneas, arriving in Latium, prepares for war. Turnus, king of Rutulia, sends an embassy to the city of Arpi, in Apulia, to ask Diomede for help against the Trojans. The Greek chief refuses, on the grounds of insufficient forces. Most of his soldiers have been transformed into sea birds by Venus, who was irritated by his refusal. Turnus puts Aeneas' ships on fire. Cybele transforms them into sea nymphs. Aeneas wins the war. He destroys Ardea, the major city of Rutula. From its ashes a new bird, the heron, is born.

Apoteosis of Aeneas.

The succession of the kings of Alba.

Vertumnus, god of the seasons, courts Pomona, goddess of the orchards. To overcome her resistance, he comes to her disguised as an old woman, and tells her a Cypriot legend. Iphis, pushed back by the beautiful Anaxarete, whom he loved, hanged himself in despair. Venus, irriated against Anaxarete's rebellion against her laws, changes her into a statue. Pomona is impressed. She marries Vertumnus.

Foundation of Rome. Under the reign of Romulus, the Sabines invade Rome. Having become masters of the Capitol, through the treason of Tarpeia, they put the mount Palatine under siege. A source of cold water, changed into a source of hot water by the nymphs, blocks the passage for them.

Apotheosis of Romulus, identified with Quirinus. Apotheosis of his wife Hersilie, under the name of Hora.

Book 15

Romulus is succeeded by Numa. He is interested in philosophy and science, and travels to the south of Italy, to Crotona, to complete his studies. The story of this Greek colony, founded by Croton – who was saved in Greece from a death sentence by way of a metamorphosis - is told.

In Crotona, Numa follows the courses of Pythagoras. A resumé of the master's doctrine is given. He forbids all animal foods. The theory of metempsychosis; everything changes and is renewed continually in nature and in man. The four elements. Evolution of water; volcanoes and earthquakes. Metamorphoses of animals. Evolution of peoples in history.

After the death of Numa, his wife, the nymph Egeria retires near Rome, in the deep woods that grow in the valley of Aricia. Here, Hippolytus, son of Theseus, tells his story. After his tragic death, he is resuscitated by Diana and becomes the god Virbius, who is worshiped with her at the lake Nemi.

Other legends of Latium are being told. Miraculous birth of Tages, who first taught the Etruscans how to discover the future; the spear of Romulus transformed into a tree on the Palatine hillside. Cipus, a Roman general, coming back with victorious with his troops, suddenly discovers that horns are sprouting from his brow, indicating his coming royalty. He does not seek personal gain and his reward is told.

The Romans, decimated by a contagious disease, send a delegation to Delphi to consult the oracle of Apollo. They send a second one to Epidaurus, with a mission to bring Asclepius to Rome. Asclepius, transformed into a serpent coiled around a staff, agrees to follow the delegation. His travels and his arrival in Rome, in Isola Tiberina, and his healing of the Roman people, is told.

Murder of Julius Cesar. He has not been able to change his destiny, but he predicts to Venus, from whom his family descends, the future greatness of Augustus. The soul of Julius Cesar is transported to heaven and changed into a star. The poet's prayer to the gods for the life of the emperor.

Thus ends Ovid's Metamorphosis, on which most of our knowledge of Greco-Roman mythology is based (seen together with Hesiod's Theogony). Starting with Hesiod's Theogony and Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, which were written down around 700 years B.C., but date back even further through oral tradition, Ovid's tales are the most comprehensive renderings of this mythology. They were written down during the reign of emperor Augustus, hence the extensive references to Julius Cesar and Augustus at the end of the tales.

If we move around the Mediterranean sea and include Mesopotamia and Egypt in our overview, we will encounter extremely rich mythological traditions, dating back to pre-historic times. Seen together, these mythologies have number of common features.

They start with The Birth of the Universe, with descriptions of Primitive Chaos, out of which the first gods emerge. They then move on to the Creation of the World, generally operated by the first gods, and including great wars between threatening giants and benevolent gods. Heaven and the Stars, with the fire of the sun and the coming and going of light are crucial. The separation of Heaven and Earth, and the elements that are the sources of life, are given their fundamental roles. The Assemblies of Gods, and their respective roles, are of course different in different branches of mythology, but they are crucial as a point of departure for the next stage in the development of mythology.

The assemblies of gods and the description of their respective roles form the basis for the tales of The Relations Between Man and the Universe. The creation of man, errors of creation that men consequently have to deal with, benevolent and malevolent creatures, ages of humanity, destructions and purifying floods, and building of civilization are important traits. Humanity is constantly in conflict with monsters and other forces that threaten the existence of humans. Fights of heroes against different kinds of monsters, like dragons, are of fundamental importance. So are fights of an ethical character, where humans fight against forces within themselves.

A third major building block of mythologies relates to The End of the World. Death, descent into the Underworld, judgment of souls, notions of paradise and hell, end and resurrection of humanity, are main elements here. The end is never definitive, there is always a future.

These mythologies developed in a period of human development which seemed to be particularly fertile in spiritual terms. The German philosopher Karl Jaspers argued that during the period from 800 to 200 B.C. the spiritual foundations of humanity were laid simultaneously and independently in China, India, Persia, Judea and Greece**.** He termed this period **"The Axial Age"**. This was a period of intellectual freedom, a period where old certainties had lost their validity and where new ones were still not in place. **Platonism**, **Jainism**, **Buddhism**, **Confucianism**, **Taoism**, and **Zoroastrianism** were major currents of thought that developed in this period.

As these mythologies developed, they gradually met competition from the emergence of independent thinkers who saw the world in an entirely different light. They observed the world without prejudices or preconceptions, and tried to develop an understanding of the nature of the world around them through observations of how nature and men were functioning.

Let us now look briefly at how these particular thinkers looked at the world in the period that followed after Hesiod and Homer had presented their mythological thinking. I base my following overview on the excellent book of professor Trond Berg Eriksen of the University of Oslo: "Undringens labyrinter" (in English, the title would presumably be: "The Labyrinths of Wondering"; 1998). The text that is produced below, has been taken from my website www.fredosor.com/Lights/Philosophy of Antiquity.

The pre-Socratic philosophers

Thales of Miletus (about 624 B.C. - 546 B.C; one of the Seven Sages of Greece)

Thales' rejection of mythological explanations for natural phenomena, became an essential idea for the scientific revolution. He was the first true

mathematician. **For him, water is the origin of all things**; all things contain divinity.

Anaximander (about 610 B.C. – 546 B.C.; Miletus)

In Anaximander's view, the original element was material, but without any particular shape. There was movement, and the world was created from this movement. The universe is a series of concentric circles with the Earth in the center. When the sun starts to shine on the Earth, part of the water condensates and **fishlike creatures appear and crawl up on land, and become animals and humans. This is according to him an ongoing process**.

Anaximenes (585 B.C. – 528 B.C.; Miletus)

For Anaximenes, air is the origin of all things. **The principle governing all change is compression and decompression. The world is air in constant movement**. Air is a living element.

Anaxagoras (about 500 B.C. – 428 B.C.; born in Clazomenae in Asia Minor, moved to Athens. He was the first philosopher to bring philosophy from Ionia to Athens.)

Anaxagoras claims that the Genesis has taken place by rotation and is initiated by *nous* (spirit or reason). The world is living and organic.

With the above mentioned pre-Socratic thinkers, there are three thoughts that have been important for the subsequent development in philosophy: 1) The idea that the world has been created from forces that are still active; 2) Creation is a continuous process; 3) Nature, both the organic and the inorganic matter, is alive. These ideas are still alive in science.

Heraklit (about 535 B.C. – 475 B.C.; Ephesus, Ionia)

For Heraklit, change is the innermost principle of being, as illustrated by his saying: "No man ever steps into the same river twice." Change is the result of internal contradictions and conflicts. These conflicts, and not any external force, are the drivers of change. Man must know himself, and by introspection he can hope to find *logos* (the true expression of the self and of the reality surrounding him). He must move beyond the impressions of the senses through reflection. **Our reason unites us with other people, whereas our senses separate us from other peopl**e. The material expression of logos is *fire*.

Parmenides (From Elea, Greek city in the southern coast of Italy; born a few decades after Heraklit)

Parmenides says that reason gives us true knowledge, not the senses. Being has not been created, it has always existed. **The world is eternal. It is forever**

the same, and cannot be changed. **True knowledge can only be obtained about "what is". The world of appearances, formed by our sensory faculties, lead to conceptions which are false and deceitful**.

Empedocles (about 490 B.C. – 430 B.C.; Agrigente, Sicily))

According to Empedocles, the basis for the creation of the world consists of the four elements earth, water, fire and air (the firm, the fluid, the burning, and the aireal). These elements are stable, but they occur in varying combinations – thus combining the notions of stability and change. **In the larger perspective, the stable structure of necessity governs, whereas chance governs the smaller perspective. The creation of the human being is a result of chance**.

Pythagoras (about 570 B.C. – 495 B.C.; born at Samos, moved to Croton in Southern Italy)

Pythagoras and his followers, **the Pythagoreans, formed a religious and philosophical movement**. The Pythagorean **cosmos was characterized by mathematical harmony, and the planets moved around a centre in a way which created music ("spheric harmony")**. **This centre was a great fire, around which also the Earth circled. The Earth is round, because the spheric shape is the most perfect, beautiful and harmonic shape**. The Pythagoreans viewed homogeneity and stability as positive values, while they feared heterogeneity and movement.

Democritus (about 460 – 370 B.C.; born in Abdera, Thrace; pupil of Leucippus)

Democritus claims that the world's building blocks are small particles, infinite in number. **They are so small that they are invisible**. The element that forms the particle, which is called "what is", is so compact that it cannot be divided and is **named atomos (Greek for undividable) – atom**. The atoms move in a void (called "what is not"). What is and what is not are both just as real (as opposed to Parmenides who thought that there was no void). **The movements of the atoms in the void create clusters that the world is made of, and movement, multiplicity and change become possible**.

Sophists

The sophists were less interested in natural philosophy and more concerned with human life, such as language, customs, right or wrong.

Questions of value and legitimacy took precedence over questions on the origins of the world. **Protagoras** (about 480 B.C. – 410 B.C.) and **Gorgias** (died about 380 B.C.) were the two most notable sophists. “Man is the measure of all things”, said Protagoras. **The sophists were the carriers of the Athenian Enlightenment, the moral and political teachers of democracy. They gave courses in logic, rhetoric, and policymaking**.

The sophists were seen as a menace by the nobility, because they enabled ordinary citizens to participate in political life – at the expense of the nobility’s political hegemony. **The reaction of the nobility (voiced through Socrates in Plato’s dialogues) was criticism against the sophists along several lines**: 1) They were teaching for pay, 2) They said they could teach *arête* (excellence, virtue), but the nobility contended that this was an innate quality which was not accessible to ordinary people; 3) Sophists were only occupied with utility; 4) Sophists did not accept that there was a given truth; everything was relative (cf. the citation of Protagoras above).

The Classic period in Western philosophy

Socrates (469 B.C. – 399 B.C.; Athens)

We know Socrates mainly from the texts of Plato. Some contemporaries, the playwright Aristophanes and the historian Xenophon, did not give flattering portraits of Socrates. Plato, however, gave Socrates the main role in the many dialogues he wrote. It seems fair to think that Plato saw something that Aristophanes and Xenophon did not see. The major message left by Socrates, aside from all the important points that appear in the dialogues and which we cannot clearly separate from Plato's own ideas, is that **dialogue is the principal vehicle leading to truth. Ethics and the search for truth through the use of reason was his basic concern, through which he is seen as one of the founders of Western philosophy**.

Plato (about 424 B.C. – 348 B.C.; Athens)

Plato was a student of Socrates, and founder of the Academy in Athens – the first institution of higher learning in the Western world. **Most of his writings were in the form of dialogues where Socrates played a prominent part**. Since Socrates himself did not write anything, it is not possible to say which parts of the dialogues come from Socrates' ideas and which parts are Plato's own ideas. **Plato's dialogues introduced a new way of expressing ideas, opening up for an exploration – through the meeting of opposing ideas – of the way leading to truth**. Plato's cosmologic thoughts, expressed in the dialogue *Timaios*, saw **the world as existing at two levels, one level being a divine, permanent, timeless, harmonious world governed by reason, and the other level being the world as seen by our senses, characterized by change and random disturbances**. This brought together the views of Parmenides and of the Pythagoreans.

Plato's world of ideas, as drawn from the vision of perfection governing the divine level of the world, contains **beings and elements in their true form and in a harmonious relation to each other**. The famous allegory of the grotto gives a striking example of this thought. Plato's dialogues represent an effort to get closer to this ideal world. **Goodness, justice and beauty are notions that exist in themselves**, and not solely as subjective notions of the senses (as the sophists contended), and the purpose of the dialogues was to bring our knowledge closer to the truth of these and other notions.

Aristotle (384 B.C. – 322 B.C.; Chalcidice, later Athens)

Empirical observation of the world as it appeared was more important for Aristotle than for Plato, who was more concerned with theoretical questions of normative character. Plato was a rationalist, less inclined to rely on the observations of the senses. **Whereas Plato's ideal world exists in its own right, alongside with the material world we observe, the world of Aristotle links ideas and matter through observation and the notion of change is part of this interdependence. It is for Aristotle not static, as it is for Plato**.

However, Aristotle has taken his fundamental categories of thought from

Plato. **The originality of Aristotle stems from his development of new methods** to tackle the problems faced. He broadens his scientific outlook from mathematics (which was Plato's scientific platform) to include also physics and metaphysics (questions of being and non-being). Politics, ethics, rhetoric, aesthetics and poetry were also among his subjects of interest. **His writings were the first to create a comprehensive system of Western philosophy**. Studies of nature (physical science) are his prime interest, and in his work he **develops major classifications based on his observations**. **Every object consists of form and matter, and it has a potential for development that it will strive to attain (telos)**.

Epicureans

Epicurus (341 B.C. – 271 B.C.; born at Samos, but lived in Athens) created **a**

school of philosophy which gathered at "Epicur's Garden" in Athens. **It was open to all, including women and slaves**. **The senses and the states of mind were at the center of his preoccupations**, and all sensations have the same authority. **Man possesses a free will, and we have the power to choose our destiny**. To lead a happy life, man needs to fight the false impressions that govern his life. By living in the Epicurean community, **the pupil of the school learns to discharge himself of all the false impressions and conventions his culture has equipped him with**. Dialogue with his teacher is the vehicle of change. **The aim of life is to prevent pain and achieve joy or pleasure (hedone)**. The way to attain pleasure is to live modestly and gain knowledge of the world and the limits of one's own desires, thus reaching **a state of tranquility (ataraxia) and freedom from fear, as well as absence from bodily pain (aponia)**.

Stoics

The Stoic (Hellenistic) school of thought was antiauthoritarian, as opposed to the Epicurean school where much was centered around the almost divine authority of Epicur. **Pupils were encouraged to develop their own thoughts and to create a room for reflection around their situation**. Their impulses and thoughts should be tested by use of reason. **There were many likenesses between Epicurean and Stoic thinking. Central to both was the importance of a free will, dialogue, the criticism of customs and conventions, openness to all (men, women, and slaves), and the emphasis on moral philosophy and attainment of reason (logos)**. The Stoics emphasize that nothing separates men and women as regards the capacity of their reason. Differences between humans are random; what is permanent is their likeness in reason, a likeness they share with the gods. **The greatest enemy of reason is passion, the strong feelings. They have to be resisted**.

The earliest Stoics were **Zeno** (332 B.C. – 260 B.C.), **Cleanthes** (330 B.C. – 230 B.C.), and **Chrysippus** (280 B.C. - 208 B.C.). Zeno taught philosophy at **the *Stoa Poikile* ("the painted porch"), from which the philosophy got its name**. The intermediate period of Stoicism was linked to **Posidonius** (about 135 B.C. – 51

B.C.). **Marcus Tullius Cicero** (106 B.C. – 43 B.C.) was also an important person in this context. The later period was marked by **Seneca** (4 B.C. – 65 A.D.), **Epictetus** (A.D. 50 – 120) and **Marcus Aurelius** (A.D. 121 – 180).

Sceptics

In the Hellenistic philosophies of the Epicureans, the Stoics and the Neo-Platonics (see below) we find integrated systems of thought leading to views on how to live. **The Sceptics were against constructing any system**. Classical philosophical skepticism derives from the **"Skeptikoi", a school who "asserted nothing"**. **Pyrrho** (about 360 B.C. – 270 B.C.), **Carneades** (about 213 B.C. – 129 B.C.) and **Sextus Empiricus** (A.D. 200 – 250) were among the best known Sceptics. **The Sceptics emphasized doubt as the main attitude to life**. They also fought false ideas and impressions, but they did not wish to introduce any new

ideas to replace the old ones (which might have the same types of weaknesses). **Systematic doubt liberates the mind. Absence of anguish, and peace of the soul (ataraxia) was the goal**.

Neo-Platonics

Neo-Platonism designates the dominating philosophy of antiquity in the period from A.D. 200 to A.D. 500. **Plotinus** (205 A.D. – 270 A.D.) was its earliest and major philosopher. **This philosophy, taking its point of departure from Plato's world of ideas, had a great influence on the early development of Christian thought**. The world is divided into a spiritual and a material world. **The world of ideas is a truer world where things are as they are meant to be**. This world is unchanged and characterized by stability. **The spiritual world is divided in three parts: the Soul, the Intellect and "The One" (representing the harmonious whole).**

The thinkers of Antiquity from the earliest times until the time of the Neo-Platonics were a central part of Greek culture. During this period, Greece was not a clearly defined geographical area. Greece was an assembly of autonomous city states located in the northeast of the Mediterranean, around the Peloponnese, with a certain number of common cultural traits – but also marked differences. Sparta and Athens, the two dominant cities in the Peloponnese, had very different political cultures. Sparta had a strong military warrior culture, whereas Athens had a democratic culture. They were sometimes acting together towards common goals, as when they defended themselves against Persian attacks, and often fighting each other for regional dominance, as seen in the Peloponnesian War between Athens and its allies and Sparta and its allies. Both the Persian attacks and the Peloponnesian War came to a head in the fifth century B.C.

The Greeks were active in trade across the Mediterranean and they established numerous trading posts along the coasts of this sea. In doing so, they met Phoenician traders who were also very active in trade in the whole of the Mediterranean sea. The Phoenicians got their name from a purple colour they produced on dyed cloth which was very popular among the Greek nobility (in Greek, phoinios: purple).They had their main center of power grouped around several independent city states located in today's Lebanon, in southern Syria and northern Israel.

The Phoenician city states were primarily Arwad, Berytus, Byblos, Sidon and Tyre. Around 1200 B.C., the Egyptian and Hittite empires weakened and this gave room for Phoenician expansion in maritime development and trade. Later (around 800 B.C.), as they extended their influence, they established the city of Carthage (in what is today Tunisia), which later became their most famous city. Phoenician and Greek expansion in maritime trade went on in parallel, with Greek expansion taking mainly place along the northern shores of the Mediterranean, and Phoenician expansion on the southern shores – largely driven by the establishment of Carthage.

As a key area in the center of the Mediterranean, Sicily was then a major platform for development of maritime trade, both to the east and the west. Phoenician and Greek trading ambitions collided here. Armed conflict ensued, in what is termed the Sicilian Wars, which went on and off between 580 B.C.

and 265 B.C. On top of this conflict, the original Phoenician cities were weakened by the dominance of the Persian king Cyrus the Great in the middle of the sixth century B.C. and completely subdued by the arrival of the Macedonian Alexander the Great in 332 B.C. At the end of the Sicilian Wars, the Phoenicians nevertheless gained trading dominance in the west of the Mediterranean, through the strength of Carthage, while the Greeks gained control of the east.

The strength of Carthage was gradually challenged by the emergence of the power of the Roman republic. The city of Rome, which according to legend was founded by Romulus in 753 B.C., grew gradually in population and power. At an early stage, the Etruscans - who mainly lived in today's Tuscany (hence the name of the region) – were in conflict with the Latins of Latium. Rome, which bordered on the two regions, was naturally drawn into conflict with the Etruscans. In the sixth century, Rome had Etruscan kings. They were later

overthrown by the Roman people, who founded their own republic at that time (in 509 B.C.).

As the Roman republic grew in power and ambition, the naval power and trading positions of the Phoenician city of Carthage was increasingly seen as a threat to Roman interests. Starting as a local conflict in Sicily, Carthage and Rome were drawn into a war through demands for aid by the local parties involved. The first Punic War (from the Latin word punicus: Phoenician) was under way in 264 B.C., right after the end of the Sicilian Wars.

This was indecisive, and a second Punic War was started about sixty years later. This time the Carthaginian warlord Hannibal almost crushed the Roman republic through a surprise attack through the Alps with his strong army equipped with numerous Elephants. The attack was contained through tactics of diversion, and Hannibal went back to Carthage. A third Punic War was staged in 146 B.C., and this time the Romans had a decisive victory. Following the exhortations of the Roman senator Cato the elder, Carthage was completely destroyed and put in ruins. It never surfaced again.

While the Roman republic continued to grow in power and its territorial dominance around the Mediterranean extended, Roman generals attempted to increase their personal power. A major way of acquiring power and wealth was for a general to lead military campaigns in foreign territories. Confiscation of local wealth was a major activity during such campaigns. For the same reason, the Roman Senate was weary of giving too many such assignments to one general, for fear of him becoming too powerful.

Julius Cesar obtained from the Senate a mission to conquer Gaul, at that time a large territory populated by Celtic tribes. He was successful, and in 52 B.C. he defeated an alliance of Celtic tribes assembled with the aim of pushing him back. The Celtic tribes were led by Vercingetorix, who in the end was surrounded at the Oppidum of Alesia and surrendered after a prolonged siege. From then on, Cesar's power started to worry the Senate. He was told to come back to Rome, and was given the order of leaving his army behind by the

shores of the river Rubicon. Cesar defied the order and crossed the Rubicon with the words “Jacta est alea”.

Cesar arrived in Rome with Vercingetorix as prisoner, and was given a triumph – a great procession of honor across Rome. From then on, he imposed his power and entered a triumvirate with Crassus and Pompey – which ruled for a long time. Cesar went on to become dictator of the Roman Republic in 49 B.C. Many people in the nobility disliked this, and a conspiracy was planned and put in effect on the Ides of March (15th of March) in 44 B.C., when Cesar was stabbed to death in the Forum Romanum.

Cesar’s grandnephew and appointed heir, Octavian, subsequently fought out all his opponents and went on to take power, largely supported by the outrage of the Roman people on account of the stabbing of Cesar. He was named emperor under the name of Augustus and Rome thus became an empire, which subsequently spread its power around all of the Mediterranean.

Augustus was a wise ruler, who gave a large part of autonomy to the territories subjected to Roman rule. At the same time, he used military force without hesitation whenever a territory showed signs of wanting to break loose from Roman dominance. He made sure that cities were built along Roman models of what a city should have as institutions and infrastructure. Market places, theatres, temples of worship to Roman gods, and public baths were regular features of such cities. He invested heavily in roads connecting the territories with each other, and this particular effort facilitated trade and development throughout the empire. Military presence ensured that these roads were safe to travel on.

Through these systematic efforts, Augustus developed what has later been termed the Pax Romana, a peace extended throughout all of the Mediterranean region. This period of relative peace lasted long and had an enormous effect on trade and development in the region, with big trading centers and cities developing in all the territories. This was such a major achievement and required such enormous sustained efforts that when the Roman Empire disintegrated around three hundred years later, it did not take long before the roads, centers and cities in turn weakened and disintegrated as well. History certainly does not follow a linear development pattern, as we already could learn at that time.

The Pax Romana is generally defined as the period between the accession of Augustus as emperor (27 B.C.) and the death of Marcus Aurelius (180 A.D.). This is a period of about two hundred years. The Roman empire lasted longer than that, but after Marcus Aurelius' death, rulers were less competent. Germanic tribes and other belligerent peoples at the borders of the empire became stronger, while rulers in Rome increasingly fought between themselves for power. Roman generals, with soldiers more loyal to them than to the Empire's well-being, secured war booty to themselves and to their soldiers at the expense of the interests of Rome. Those generals who had the most powerful army were those who became emperors, regardless of their competence as rulers. This in-fighting of course weakened the resistance of the empire in face of incursions from outside forces.

Adrian Goldsworthy has written an interesting book on Pax Romana, first published in 2016. In this book, he refers to a passage in Edward Gibbon's famous history of the rise and fall of the Roman empire:

"If a man were called to fix the period in the history of the world, during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus (i.e. A.D. 96 – 180). The vast extent of the Roman empire was governed by absolute power, under the guidance of virtue and wisdom."

The gradual fragmentation and weakening of the Roman Empire went in parallel with another major development of global significance. Christianity, which in its early phase developed through small communities scattered around in the Roman Empire among people of modest means, increased

strongly in popularity as the poor saw in it a message of improvement of their fate in life. It gradually became a political force which the emperors could no longer ignore or suppress. Indeed, it became a force which it was wiser to incorporate than to oppress. Constantine the Great was emperor in the period 306 – 337 A.D. He took this major step when he published the Edict of Milan in 313, where religious tolerance for Christianity was declared. After this, Christians were no longer persecuted in the Roman Empire, and could develop their worship freely and openly.

While Christianity developed strongly in parallel with the weakening of the power of central authorities in the empire, Germanic tribes also benefited from this decline in central power. Having for a long time been attracted to the wealth of Roman territories, they now made incursions by force without meeting much resistance. These tribes, known as the Goths, beat the Roman

army at Adrianople in 378 A.D., and this marked the start of what is known as the Migration Period.

The Gothic tribes branched into several groups. Among these, the Visigoths and the Ostrogoths were particularly noticeable. The Visigoths migrated westwards, and their famous leader Alaric attacked and sacked Rome in 410 A.D. They moved on westwards, developing settlements as they went, and reached the Iberic peninsula where their major part settled down and formed a Visigoth kingdom. This kingdom remained until the arrival of the muslim forces of the Umayyads in the late 8th century.

The eastern branch of the Gothic tribes, the Ostrogoths, first formed a kingdom north of the Black Sea after migrating from the Baltic area. They then migrated further south towards the Danube and, after being subjugated by the Huns for a time, they moved on to Illyria in what is now Italy, and established a major seat in Ravenna. Ultimately, the remaining Ostrogoths were merged into the Lombards who established a kingdom in the north of Italy in 568 A.D.

After Muhammad's death in 632 A.D. the succession of his rule was contested by several factions, and after some time, the Umayyad Caliphate took the power around the middle of the 7th century. This caliphate established its seat in Damascus. The Umayyads were overthrown by a rebellion of the Abbasids in 750 A.D. Having been defeated, the Umayyads moved westwards along the coast of North Africa, and ultimately settled in Cordoba in today's Spain.

The Umayyads were later overthrown by the Almoravids from Morocco, who were in turn succeeded by the Almohads. Muslim rule over the south of Spain centered around Al-Andalus, where Cordoba, Seville and Granada were the major cities. Muslim rule in Al-Andalus lasted around 700 years, and ended when Queen Isabella of Castile and King Ferdinand of Aragon completed the conquest of the Iberian peninsula (Reconquista) – aside from Portugal which was already independent - by beating the Nasrid dynasty in 1491.

At the time when the Umayyads and its successors conquered large parts of Spain, the Abbasids – who had established their seat in Baghdad – conquered

most of the Eastern parts of the then collapsed Roman Empire. The Abbasids and their successors remained in power until the 13th century. By then, a Turkish tribal leader in a fragmented Anatolia, Osman, grew in power and started the conquests which would lead to the establishment of the Ottoman Empire.

The forces of the Ottoman Empire crossed the Bosphorus and then moved into the Balkans, and in 1453 their leader Mehmet the Conqueror took control of the seat of what remained of the Eastern Roman Empire, Constantinople. The Ottoman Empire established its seat in Constantinople and was at its peak under Suleiman the Magnificent, who reigned from 1520 to 1566. By that time the Ottoman Empire covered North Africa, Western Asia, parts of Eastern Europe with the Balkans and Hungary. It was also a great maritime and trading power, and controlled large parts of the Mediterranean sea.

Trade with Asia, especially silk and spices, was very attractive for Europeans. Along with the growth of the Ottoman Empire, the cities of Venice and Genoa developed into important maritime powers. After the Western Roman Empire had disintegrated, the Italian peninsula gradually became dominated by independent city states, with Florence, Siena, Milan, Verona, Rimini, Pisa, Lucca, Perugia, Naples, Rome, Venice and Genoa as major cities.

Among these, Venice grew into the most powerful maritime power – largely based on its firm grip on trade between Europe and Asia. Venice developed its enormous trading power slowly and steadily, and in doing so, it established trading posts along the trading routes in the Mediterranean. Due to its military naval power, it easily beat and sidelined opponents along the way of its expansion. When Pope Urban II in 1098 initiated the first Crusade to the Holy Land to liberate Jerusalem from the Muslims, Venice was a major transporter of troops and earned great incomes from that. However, aside from transporting troops it did not itself engage in hostilities.

In total, there were seven Crusades, but in the end the Ottoman Empire became too powerful for the Crusaders and they were put to an end by weary western princes who no longer wanted to follow orders from the Pope. The most dangerous threat to the trading power of Venice was posed by the Portuguese. Towards the end of the 15th century, the Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama travelled to India by going down the coast of Africa, and thereby managed to open a new trading route by navigating around the Cape Horn. This new trading route crushed the trading monopoly that Venice until then had enjoyed with Asia. This was a turning point in the fortunes of the immensely rich Venice. From then on its power gradually declined, until it finally was overtaken and dismembered by Napoleon in 1797.

The Italian city states remained independent, and often in conflict with each other on account of opposing territorial ambitions, until 1860 – when Italy was unified through the actions of the military leader Garibaldi and the political leader Cavour. In the period between the dissolution of the Western Roman Empire in 480 A.D. and the unification of Italy, the Italian cities were often attacked by external forces like the Austrian Habsburgs as regards Venice and the French and Spanish kings as regards Lombardia (Milan) and Naples, and later on by the vast incursion of Napoleon at the end of the 18th century.

By the 16th century, the west and the north of the Mediterranean area was dominated by the nation states of Spain and France, as well as the Holy Roman Empire (founded by Charles the Great in 800 A.D., and later developing into the Habsburg Empire under the emperor Charles V in the 16th century). Together with the Vatican, the Holy Roman Empire had important influence in Italy from the moment of its creation until Italy became unified. The eastern and southern parts of the Mediterranean were dominated by the Ottoman Empire.

With Italy being unified in 1860 and the Ottoman Empire dissolved in 1922 after the end of the First World War, the distribution of political power around the Mediterranean sea then evolved along the lines we have seen for the last hundred years.

The cultural history of the Mediterranean area is of course impressive. Mesopotamia (with Sumer and Akkad) and the Egyptian pharaonic dynasties were already culturally advanced societies around 3000 years B.C. The levels of artistic mastery were impressive in architecture, metal works, jewelry, sculpture and painting.

Mesopotamia, although culturally advanced, was hampered in its development by constant warfare between the cities of Uruk, Nippur, Nineveh, Assur and Babylon. Babylon came to dominate the area under Hammurabi, followed by the Assyrians, who with their violent and disruptive treatment of the

conquered populations, weakened the whole of Mesopotamia. Around the middle of the 6th century B.C. the Achaemenid ruler Cyrus the Great took over what remained of Babylon and the other Mesopotamian cities. Yet, numerous impressive artworks and ruins of buildings and monuments bear witness to the cultural mastery of the peoples of Mesopotamia. The Sumerians invented Cuneiform writing around 3500 B.C. The old epic of Gilgamesh is known to us from legendary Sumerian poems about Gilgamesh, king of Ur in the Third Dynasty of Ur around 2100 B.C. In mathematics and astronomy, they made observations that had a lasting influence. Their advanced social organization is illustrated by the Code of Hammurabi, which is shown on a large stele that is dated at 1754 B.C.

Egypt was a much more stable society. Its geographical situation was much more protected from incursions by hostile armies, with deserts to the west and to the east. The Nubians to the south were to a large extent integrated into the unified Egypt. Only the north, with its coast and the northeast, could be invaded, which it was during the height of the Hittite Empire of Anatolia between the 15th and the 13th centuries B.C. Aside from that period of turbulence, Egypt was unified under pharaonic rule for about three thousand years until it fell under the rule of Alexander the Great and subsequently Ptolemaic rule around 330 B.C. In turn, the Ptolemaic rulers fell under Roman rule when Cleopatra yielded in 30 B.C. by committing suicide after Octavian took power in Rome and beat her army.

Egyptian art developed along with hieroglyphic writing for the whole period of pharaonic reign. Aside from the regular looting of pharaonic graves throughout the long history of Egypt, much of what was created of artworks in monuments and buildings have remained and been transmitted to our time. The whole world has been, and still is, fascinated by the architecture, sculptures, wall paintings, jewelry, and literature that has come down to our time. New discoveries are made frequently and exhibitions are shown in museums and exhibition venues around the world on a regular basis.

Greece produced a civilization, which from the time of its Golden Age under the rule of Pericles in the latter half of the 5th century B.C., reached a level that has inspired the whole of the western world ever since. Its democratic form of political rule, its philosophy with Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, its architecture and its sculptures, set standards of political rule, thinking, and aesthetics which for a long time became synonymous with western civilization. The art, architecture and mythology was so impressive and so powerful that the Roman Empire later adopted it so completely that we now talk about the Greco-Roman culture as a common reference for the cultural expressions that ruled the Mediterranean world during the time of the Roman Empire.

After the Roman Empire was split into the Western and the Eastern Empires at the end of the 4th century A.D., the Eastern Empire developed into an increasingly Christian culture from the time when Constantine the Great recognized the Christian faith as part of the official culture of the empire. This Christianized Greek culture, which is referred to as Byzantine, developed its

own style of art. We see it particularly in mosaics and wall paintings which were produced from the time of Constantine to the fall of the Eastern Empire when the Ottomans conquered Constantinople in 1453. Whereas the motives in Greco-Roman art before that time mostly were taken from the ruling mythology of that time, the motives of Byzantine art are mostly Christian. Byzantine art was a dominating style of art in the northern areas of the Mediterranean during what we in the west call the Medieval period (roughly, between the 5th century and the 15th century), whereas in the south and south-east of the Mediterranean the Ottoman culture with Muslim and Persian characteristics dominated.

In the west, the Medieval culture was as mentioned dominated by Christian iconography, and the ideas expressed were largely influenced by the Church, under the guidance of the Pope in Rome. This situation started to loosen up towards the end of the 14th century, particularly in visual arts and literature, when a return to the thinking and aesthetics of the classical Greco-Roman period started to emerge, particularly in Italy. This movement gradually picked up momentum, and in the 15th century it flowered under the term of Renaissance art and culture.

An important change in focus occurred during the Renaissance period. Whereas motives in art earlier were mythological and subsequently Christian, the Renaissance placed Man in the center of attention. As such, a Humanistic culture evolved. Classical Greco-Roman art and philosophy was merged with genuinely human preoccupations, and developed from that perspective. The Renaissance culture spread to all of Western Europe, and at its peak in the 16th century, with artists like Jan van Eyck, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael, Albrecht Dürer and myriads of others too numerous to name, it reached such technical perfection in the rendering of the “real” world, that later artists – especially from the 19th and 20th century onwards - felt the need to look for other more abstract ways of expressing themselves.

Among the major artistic developments around the Mediterranean area, we have not yet mentioned Muslim or Islamic art. The descendants of Muhammad expanded their dominance of the southern and eastern Mediterranean from the 7th century and onwards, into all of Northern Africa and the Iberic peninsula and western Asia, until it gradually was merged into the expanding Ottoman Empire.

Major cultural centers in this development were Baghdad under Haroun Al-Rashid in the 9th century and later on Al-Andalus, gravitating around Seville, Cordoba and Granada. Islamic art developed its own very particular form of expression which distinguished itself strongly from the Classical western art. One major distinguishing aspect, was the interdiction for artists to depict Allah or holy persons. This represented a major difference from Greek, Roman, Byzantine and later Christian art, which in contrast aimed at depicting the holy persons and their acts. Islamic art is best seen in the ornamentation of important architecture, like the many great mosques and rulers' palaces. The

Alhambra in Granada, created in the 13th century by the Nasrid dynasty, is a venerated example. Mosaics and paintings have calligraphic content as well as floral and vegetal designs, and are extremely refined. To the extent that human beings are represented, it is seen in figurative miniature paintings heavily inspired by Persian art. In literature and philosophy, Muslim authors are well known for their preservation, transmission and discussions of ancient Greek philosophical texts – which would otherwise have been lost for the west.

It is interesting to go back to the time before the formation of the Greek city states and the Roman Republic, when the Mediterranean area was largely populated by different tribes of Indo-European origin. In the eastern part of the Mediterranean area, the Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations were as mentioned already developing strongly around 3000 years B.C.

The great Indo-European tribes developed in the northern area around the Black Sea and the Caspian sea. At time that the Mesopotamian and Egyptian empires were under formation, the Indo-European tribes gradually grew in size and power. Around 2000 years B.C. they started migrating, some to the east and some to the west. In the east, they entered India and gave rise to the Vedic civilization. In the west, they entered in large groups into Europe. Among them, the Hittites and later on the Phrygians established themselves in Anatolia.

Further west, a number of Indo-European tribes have been identified by common language roots, such as the Greek, Celtic, Germanic, Italic, Baltic and Slavs. Others, whose languages have disappeared, are the Ligurians, Etruscans, Thracians and Illyrians. These tribes were headed by large families of patriarchal rulers with hierarchic mythology headed by a king of Gods. They were herders. Upon arriving in the Mediterranean area, they learned and adopted the agricultural economy of those peoples they conquered there. They merged their own patriarchal mythology with the matriarchal mythology of the agricultural societies they took over, with their patriarchal hierarchy of gods being given the dominant part.

Along with the Vedic civilization in India the Hittites formed the most ancient Indo-European civilization. Their base was established in Anatolia around 1600 B.C. and as it expanded it became an empire which came into conflict with its neighbors, the Egyptian Empire and the Middle-Assyrian Empire. A distinguishing feature of the Hittites was their military use of chariots, which gave them an advantage in warfare. These conflicts went on in the period from the 15th to the 13th century B.C. At one time during this period, the Hittites dominated Egypt, but they were ultimately beaten by the Assyrians. The remainder of the Hittite Empire was then sacked by Phrygian newcomers. Later on, in the beginning of the 12th century B.C., the Hittites split into several independent Neo-Hittite city states. Some of these survived until the 8th century B.C., when they were wiped out by the Neo-Assyrian Empire.

The first European civilization developed on the island of Crete, in the early part of the second millennium B.C. This civilization is called the Minoan, after its great king Minos. Crete had great influence in all of the Aegean area because of its trading capacities. It was at the height of its power in the 16th and 15th centuries B.C., and there were great palaces in the different cities of

the island. Later on in the 15th century, these palaces were all destroyed. Only the palace at Knossos has left some ruins that have made it possible to get an impression of the splendor of this culture.

One major hypothesis regarding the destruction of Crete is that the island was hit by a great earthquake, and – being strongly weakened by this – it was invaded by Mycenaeans coming from the Greek mainland.

Mycenaean Greece was composed of small independent kingdoms, which built palaces and fortresses to fortify their power. They developed during the 16th and 15th centuries B.C. Local kings became increasingly powerful, agriculture improved and foreign trade also strengthened the economy. The most famous of the palace-fortresses was that of Mycenae in the Peloponnese. This gave the name to the whole civilization of Mycenaean Greece.

After having taken control over Crete, the Mycenaeans became the dominant power in the Aegean. They raided coasts and islands of the eastern Aegean, took slaves and planted colonies. It is from this context that we can trace the legend of the Trojan war, which, if it happened, most likely took place in the 13th century B.C. Soon afterwards, the Mycenaean rulers were in crisis, and by the end of the 12th century the Mycenaean palaces had been abandoned. (See (10) in the bibliography.)

With the abandonment of the Mycenaean kingdoms and palaces between 1200 and 1100 B.C., Greece entered a period of three hundred years which the historians have labelled the “Dark Age”. This was a period of unrest and internal warfare. Gradually, the Greek city states took form in the 8th century B.C. When literacy then returned to Greece, a patchwork of Greek dialects had emerged, reflecting the conflicting groups’ positions in the area. Doric was dominant in the old heartlands of Mycenaean kingdoms in the Peloponnese, Ionic in Attica, the Aegean islands, and the colonies of western Asia Minor, while to the north and west Aeolic and other local dialects were spoken. There is no reason to believe that any of these dialects, or the people who spoke them, were recent arrivals from beyond Greece.

Turning now to the other tribes that migrated from the Indo-European heartland, the Celts spread out over vast areas and divided themselves into different smaller tribes that took control over areas which covered today's France, Switzerland, and Austria. Some Celtic tribes migrated into the Iberian peninsula and mixed with the Iberians, a population which was already in place before they came and had absorbed influences of Phoenician and Greek culture.

Some scholars think that the Urnfield culture of the western parts of Central Europe represents an origin for the Celts as a distinct cultural branch of the Indo-European family. This culture was pre-eminent in Central Europe during the late Bronze Age, from 1200 B.C. to about 700 B.C. The Urnfield period produced a large increase in population, probably due to innovations in technology and agriculture. The spread of iron-working led to the development of the Halstatt culture, named after Halstatt in today's Austria, where the first major Celtic center arose. Important grave finds have been made there, and

this culture had its flowering in the period from 800 B.C. to about 450 B.C. Around 450 B.C. La Tène, located at the north of lake Neuchatel in today's Switzerland, succeeded as a major Celtic center. By migration and trans-cultural diffusion, the Celts spread into Western Europe, including the British Isles. Celtic culture was gradually weakened by the expansion of the Roman Republic and by Germanic tribes who migrated southwards into their territories. Julius Cesar beat an assembly of Celtic tribes at Alésia in today's France in 52 B.C. Later on, as the expanding Germanic tribes pressed on to the borders of the Roman Empire, the Celtic culture remained only in Ireland, the western and northern parts of Great Britain (Wales, Scotland and Cornwall), the Isle of Man and Brittany in today's France.

Originally, the Germanic tribes developed westwards into Europe along with the developments of the Celts, but to the northern parts of Europe. Gradually – as mentioned - the Germanic tribes grew in strength and made incursions within the borders of the Roman Empire towards the end of the 2nd century A.D. Later on, as the Roman Empire weakened further in the 3rd and 4th centuries, Germanic tribes as we have said not only threatened the borders but invaded the Roman Empire. Aside from the Ostrogoths and the Wisigoths whom we already have mentioned, the Franks entered Gaul and in the 5th century established themselves in the land that later evolved into today's France.

The Italic peoples entered the south of Italy around the beginning of the 2nd millennium B.C. The Latins occupied the south of the peninsula. To the north, the Etruscans were dominating. The origin of the Etruscans is still not established with certainty, but from studies of its language it is thought that this people may have other origins than Indo-European. The Etruscans and the Latins were bordering on each other's territories around the area of the Tiber, and were consequently in conflict from time to time. As the Roman Republic grew in power, both groups were gradually absorbed by Rome.

In the northwest of what later became Italy, we would at this time find the Ligurians. They were an Indo-European tribe, and its language had Celtic links. Another Indo-European tribe from this period, the Illyrians, established themselves around the Adriatic sea – mostly in what is today the Balkans. Some Illyrian groups were also found along the eastern shores of Italy, bordering on the Adriatic. Further east, to the north of Greece, were the Thracians – who developed into a political force around the 5th century. Historically, the Thracians are first mentioned in the Iliad – as a force fighting alongside the Trojans against the Mycenaeans. The Greek city states and, later, the Macedonians were stronger political forces in this area.

The pre-socratic philosopher Empedocles contended that the basis for the creation of the world was the four elements earth, water, air and fire. These elements could occur in varying degrees in different contexts, which would explain variations to be found in nature. In the larger perspective, these elements would consist of a stable structure – which would account for a long term stability in the evolution of the world. In a smaller perspective, superficial variations would occur in the combinations of the four elements – thereby producing random changes as we perceive them. The emergence of humans was considered a chance event in the evolution of the world.

These four elements are all necessary for human life. This is becoming highly visible today, when we see how one or more of these elements are making themselves scarce in those human societies where the natural environment is being harmed by human activities. Water, earth and air are in some areas being mixed with poisons produced by humans, in such proportions that human life is endangered. Clean water (or the lack of it) is becoming a source of major

political conflict, especially where water flows across political frontiers. Fire (energy) is available to humans, but extraction of oil, gas, coal and other sources of fire are gradually showing signs of depletion, or – when being put to use in the intensive way humans are using them – contributing to the poisoning of the water, air and earth. Humans are increasingly looking for sustainable ways of using the earth's resources, ways that do not harm water, earth, air and the access to fire. Whether they will succeed in that, remains to be seen. The world's population has grown so fast, and is now so large, that the need for exploitation of these elements today is larger than their sustainable availability. Political capacity for making the necessary decisions is not strong enough to meet the challenges at hand. Whether development of new technology will be able to compensate for lack of such political capacity is uncertain.

The French philosopher Gaston Bachelard has explored the psychoanalysis of the four elements. By that is meant how the different forms the four elements take, are expressing different forms of the human psyche. It is striking to think of how the various forms the elements take can be reflected in the forms we see in the human mind. Fire that erupts in the form of a volcanoe can be associated with a person whose rage is such that he damages anybody or anything that comes in his way. Fire burning quietly in a fireplace reflects a calm atmosphere where dreaming comes naturally to the onlooker. The variations in the forms taken by fire will easily be reflected by variations in human temperaments and actions.

Water has in the same way a capacity to take on an infinite number of forms, which also have been contemplated by poets throughout history. Waterfalls, silent and deep lakes, calm streams, violently flowing rivers, rain in its different forms, are examples evoking a variety of associations in our minds. Air can be clear, misty, foggy, crisp, violently flowing from one place to the other in the form of storms, cyclones, tornadoes or softly in the form of mild breezes, hot or cold. Earth can be dry, moist, dark, barren, rocky, rich and nourishing. All these forms the elements can take, have poetic connotations to the human psyche. They are also crucial to human survival. If treated well, they ensure our survival. If treated badly, they lead us to destruction.

Air, water, earth and fire are available to humans all over the globe in unequal amounts and subject to different climatic and meteorological conditions. Humans have, from their origins, established themselves and developed from small groups to tribes and through migrations searched the areas of the earth where the elements were the most favorable for their lifestyle. Starting as hunters and gatherers, and then developing their skills as cultivators, they managed to work in harmony with the elements for thousands of years. The elements could in many ways terrorize them through floods, storms, bushfires and other disruptions, but they accepted that they were subject to the elements and had to deal with them as best they could. They developed mythologies that clearly described how they saw their relations with the elements.

Gradually, as humans increased substantially in numbers and organized themselves in more complex societies, they started to make use of the elements in new and imaginative ways. Through scientific development, the

elements increasingly entered into human production as resources that were exploited systematically. Earth and water were crucial elements in agriculture. Coal, oil, and wood produced fire, a crucial element in manufacturing. Wind was the basic element in maritime transportation, which was necessary for trade. As technology got more and more advanced, fire was transformed into different forms of energy, fueling a multitude of machines that entered into all types of human activities. Humans developed machines and instruments that were helping them in all types of production, in many new ways of transportation, in all sorts of consumption of goods and services, and in further development of scientific research – thus ever reinforcing this development.

Technological progress and increased human understanding of how the elements functioned paved the way for population growth. As populations grew and their use of natural resources grew, the elements started to tell the humans that they were harming their own long term prospects. With increased production and consumption came increased waste and toxic emissions that found their way into air, water and earth. Increased production and consumption also led to depletion of the availability of resources, as well as meteorological changes in the behavior of the elements. Those who profited most from increased production and consumption made sure, through the political power their economic wealth gave them, that no measures were taken to limit their possibilities to continue this way of life – in spite of all the knowledge about environmental destabilization that had been accumulating for decades.

The elements are gradually taking their revenge on humans for their reckless behavior. Air is killing humans in the larger cities, wind is destroying habitations through stronger storms, water is increasingly flooding cities along rivers and coastal areas, and destructive fires are increasingly erupting in areas that have been drying up because of changes in weather conditions. In the face of this development, humans are not capable to agree on what the causes are, how to deal with them, or to effectively do something about them. There is an increasing recognition of the problems, but no effective responses are being put in place. Differences in economic interests, differences in stages of economic development, differences in knowledge about the challenges ahead,

and differences in political organization are all standing in the way of effective global action. Human development is now at crossroads.

Human development is a notion that in the later years has been given a statistical, measurable content by the United Nations (UN). This is done through what is called the Human Development Index (HDI). All the countries in the world, almost 190, are being ranked according to their level of human development. How does the UN measure the degree of human development? It looks at three major factors that shape human development. The first factor is labelled “Long and healthy life”. The second factor is “Knowledge”, and the third factor is “A decent standard of living”. A long and healthy life is measured by how long people in your country on average can expect to live at the time they are born. The level of knowledge is measured by the number of years in schooling people in your country have on average. A decent standard of living is measured by the average purchasing power in your country (gross National

Income per capita, corrected for purchasing power). In short, the level of human development is measured by your health, level of education and material standard of living.

There is an enormous spread between the countries that are on the top of the UN's list and those that are on the bottom of the list. The countries that are on top have some important things in common. They provide their population with easy access to health care at a low cost. In these countries, you get good medical care regardless of whether you are rich or poor. The same goes for education. These countries provide education up to the highest levels at low, easily affordable costs for everybody who wants. The people in these countries pool their resources together through the tax system to finance this.

Regarding the third factor of human development, the material standard of living, the measure for average level of income can hide great inequalities between citizens. Two countries with the same average level of income can be very different if you look at the general level of well-being of its citizens. One country can have an extremely rich minority which collects almost all income, while the rest of the population lives in poverty. Another country with the same average income can have a fairly even distribution of income among its citizens. It is clear that those countries with fairly even distributions of income score much higher on the human development scale than those with uneven distributions.

Social and political organization in the respective countries are at the heart of explaining the differences we see. Countries where a few people make most of the decisions, supported by military power, generally get very low scores. If, in addition, the people in power practice corruption, things are even worse. Generally, corruption goes hand in hand with concentration of political power. Unfortunately, corruption can also thrive in larger countries and it can have ramifications into lower levels of decision-making. We then talk about widespread corruption. This can occur in countries which have practiced corruption for a long time. A good human development is difficult to achieve in countries with widespread corruption. In those countries, most of the income is going into the pockets of those in power, and little goes into investment for the future or social welfare for the poor.

If we really wish to get a grip on how a good human development can be achieved, it is enlightening to look at the notion of human rights as it first arose from the time of the French Revolution in 1789. The human rights declaration from that time is clear and simple, and very enlightening. It contains seventeen articles, as follows.

Article 1 states that humans are born free and equal in rights; social distinctions can only be based on the common good.

This means that old social classes such as aristocracy, clergy and warriors cannot exist as classes of humans who are given particular rights or privileges. All are to have equal rights, regardless of their function or activity in society. Nobody is to have special privileges. The formation or organization of social groups should be based on aims of the common good, not on the desire to achieve privileges.

Article 2 states that the aim of any political group or association will be the maintenance of natural and inalienable rights of humans: these rights are freedom, property, security, and resistance to oppression.

The historical context was a situation where aristocracy possessed the land and the common people worked on the lords' land, under conditions decided by the lords, and were subject to the lords' practice of justice. Only in the cities, which in Europe grew in importance from the 15th century and onwards due to their role in trade, were people free from the iron laws of the aristocracy. Merchants acquired wealth and power over time, and in that way became an autonomous force that aristocrats needed to deal with on equal terms.

Article 3 states that the principle of sovereignty is linked to the nation as a whole: no body or individual can exercise power or authority outside of that which comes from the nation's leadership.

This article was directed specifically at the widespread abuse and misuse of power exercised by aristocracy, clergy, and the military over the common people. All power that was to be exercized, had to be rooted in the legitimacy of the nation's interests and emanating from the political leadership of the country.

Article 4 states that freedom means that you can do anything that does not harm others. The natural rights of humans are limited only by how the same rights are being exercised by others. These limitations can only be defined by the law.

As a matter of principle, only the law can limit your freedom. No individual or group can tell you what to do or not to do. We know, of course, that the notion of freedom has many other facets. Economic limitations, social conventions and physical environment impose constraints outside of those contained in the

law. Such constraints cannot easily be dealt with by legislation. However, removing formal power from the hands of aristocracy, clergy and the military, and placing it in the hands of one authority emanating from the political leadership of the nation, was a huge step in strengthening human rights.

Article 5 states that the law can only prohibit actions that are harmful to society. Nobody can oppose actions that are not prohibited by the law, and nobody can be forced to do things that the law does not prescribe.

This is, again, a further measure aimed at curbing the abuse of power by those who possess more means than others.

Article 6 states that the law is the expression of the general will of the people. All citizens have the right to participate, either in person or with someone representing them, in its formation. It must be the same for everyone, whether it protects or punishes. All citizens being equal in face of the law, they also have equal rights to exercise functions and employment in the public service, according to their capacities, and with no other distinctions than those emanating from their virtues and talents.

This is the heart of the democratic institution. We can easily observe how these basic principles are being abused in daily life. One example is seen when those in power seek to limit democratic participation of groups that do not support them, by manipulating electoral rules or districts. Another example is seen when the cost of being elected to public office is so high that only those with support from rich people or organizations have the resources necessary to get elected. Yet another example is when those in power give public offices only to those who share their political views, or to people from their families or social groups, with little regard to the competence needed to do the actual job. When they do that, they undermine the checks and balances introduced by the distinction between the executive power, the lawmaking power, and the judicial power.

Article 7 states that no human can be accused, arrested or held in custody in cases that are not determined by the law or not prescribed by the procedures determined by the law. Those who invoke, make use of or execute arbitrary orders must be punished; but any citizen called or arrested in the name of the law must obey immediately. Resisting the use of the law is punishable.

Those who are given the authority and power to uphold the law in the name of the public, must respect the rules of behavior set down by the law. We see all too often how people without the necessary authority take the law in their own hands or how people who are given the power to execute the law transgress the rules of behavior set down by the law.

Article 8 states that the law must only institute punishments that are deemed necessary, and that people can only be punished by virtue of an established law, a law that was established prior to the punishable act and applied in the prescribed way.

Punishments need to be seen as being in proportion to the gravity of the act leading to the punishment. A disproportion in the relation between the gravity of the punishable act and the gravity of the punishment is an abuse of power and it will undermine the acceptability of and the respect for the law.

Article 9 states that all citizens are presumed innocent until proven guilty. If it is judged necessary to keep the person in custody or under control in other ways, this must be done only to the extent necessary. Excessive measures of control must be severely restricted by the law.

It is crucial that a person who is under investigation for breaking the law is not subjected to arbitrary measures taken at the discretion of the law enforcement officers. The duration of such measures and the nature of them are strictly defined, to make sure that no abuse of power takes place during such a period when culpability is not clearly established. Otherwise, abuse of power could develop extensively, both as regards the duration and as regards the nature of the arbitrary repression that would be open to those who hold the power in their hands.

Article 10 states that nobody should be pursued for their opinions, even religious, as long as their activity does not upset public order as established by the law.

It is not necessary to describe the extent to which this article is being abused on a daily basis throughout the world. Repression and lack of tolerance is seen everywhere, and practiced extensively by citizens and public authorities in numerous countries. Even when public authorities do not carry out repressive measures, they can encourage repression simply by not reacting when aggressive citizens are taking action against people they dislike for the sake of their opinions. Still worse, they can encourage repression and lack of tolerance by devious or hateful rhetoric against certain opinions or certain groups.

Article 11 states that the free expression of thoughts and opinions is one of the most precious human rights. All citizens can speak, write and print freely, with the exception of those cases that are prescribed by the law.

The limitations of free speech prescribed by the law may be different from country to country, but they are generally linked to diffamation of other people, challenge of social rules of behavior or certain institutions that are given special public status or protection. The history of how freedom of expression has been repressed and how the limits of this freedom have been challenged by daring citizens is long and it shows us how the limits of what is acceptable in different societies are constantly moving in line with the evolution of public opinion and the evolution of political rule.

Article 12 states that the upholding of human rights necessitates a public authority with the strength to enforce them. This authority is set up for the good of all citizens, not only for those who are given the authority.

This article clearly points to another weakness seen in many societies and many places within a society. The weakness of corruption among people who have been given the power to exercise authority. No society can function properly when corruption becomes widespread. The laws then become instruments for the powerful, at the expense of those who are their subjects.

Article 13 states that for the enforcement of public authority, and for the expenses incurred by the administration, contributions from the citizens are necessary. They have to be distributed equally between all, in line with their capacities to contribute.

Any society that wishes to function properly, has to levy taxes on its citizens. Those who try to avoid contributing their share, are undermining the community. They are trying to get something for free, at the expense of the other citizens.

Article 14 states that all citizens have the right to make sure, either by themselves or by their representatives, that the contributions they are paying are necessary and freely contributed. They can control the use, their share, how it is levied and the duration of it.

The transparency of the tax system and each citizen's place in it, is crucial for the public confidence in the system – without which the system could not function.

Article 15 states that the community has the right hold all public agents to account for their administration.

This is a further specification and extension of the previous article to the domain of public expenditures.

Article 16 states that any society where the human rights are not enforced, nor the division of powers established, is considered to have no constitution.

Article 17 states that property is a right that cannot be taken away from the individual, except for the sake of public necessity, legally established, and under the condition that a just and predetermined indemnity is given to the citizen.

Arbitrary confiscation of property by public agents would undermine society's proper functioning. It would not be compatible with the rights set forth in this declaration.

As we have commented on along the way when presenting each article of the declaration of human rights of 1789, we can easily see that even today – more than two hundred years later - there is still a long way to go for a large number of the 190 countries in the world. We can even observe that in some countries, where we could have thought that the rights were in place, there is a retrogression – a movement away from the proper function of the system that was painstakingly set up earlier. Mutual respect between social groups of the country, and transparency and confidence in public administration are at the heart of such evolutions.

Freedom, equality and brotherhood were the key words at the time the declaration was set up. What do those words mean today?

Freedom is the absence of constraints of any kind. In communities where human beings live together, absolute freedom cannot exist. Your wish for freedom is limited by the freedom the other people in the community wish to have. Rules of conduct of different kinds become necessary. You will become

subject to social rules of conduct, cultural rules, as well as legal obligations. Your own income and fortune, if it is small, will also pose limitations to what you can do.

Equality can be thought of in two very different ways: equality in rights or equality in outcomes. The idea of equality in rights points to the fundamental issues in human rights. The idea of equality in outcomes points to the ideological discussions around the notions of capitalism, socialism and the different types of mixes that can be made in looking for compromises between the two, like we can see in the Scandinavian countries today.

The notion of brotherhood can also be seen in different ways. It can be seen as a closed brotherhood, open only to people who fulfill certain conditions. Alternatively, it can be seen as an open brotherhood, as in the expression “brotherhood of mankind”. The history is full of examples of closed

brotherhoods, where the aim is to obtain and protect privileges for the brotherhood – most often at the expense of the rest of society. The guilds in the Middle Ages were of that kind. Examples of open brotherhoods can be found among the many charitable organizations that aim to help people in need, without excluding anybody who asks for help.

Most countries in the world have had reasonably equal access to the elements of air, water, earth and energy from the beginning of times. The development of human living conditions have nevertheless been very unequal, mostly due to differences in the degree of corruption among the leaders, administrative incompetence, political polarization and fight for power, lack of political dialogue and sense of compromise. Instead of producing good living conditions for their citizens, many leaders have been more concerned with enriching

themselves. This greed has in many countries produced power struggles in order to get access to the public goods available for grabs, whether it is tax revenues, natural resources, kick-backs from public authorizations given to corporations, or other services which can be sold unseen by the larger public.

This destruction of the common good that has taken place in many countries around the world has in turn produced migration flows. The Mediterranean area has for a long time been the scene of different types of migration. Human migration has been a regular feature of human development since the origins of homo sapiens. Starting from its origins in Africa, homo sapiens migrated out of Africa into all parts of the world. The earliest migrants had to fight against ferocious animals for their survival. As successive waves of migrants moved around the world in search of better living conditions, they increasingly met other people who had arrived before them. This generally produced armed conflicts, where the strongest tribes prevailed, whether it was the new arrivals or those who already occupied the land.

Over time, those who occupied a fertile land managed to develop agriculture and other forms of production. They became entrenched in an area and developed economic and military strength. Some cultures developed such strengths that they developed into empires, as we have already seen examples of in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Persia, Macedonia, and Rome. More recently, we saw nation states develop in Europe in the 15th century and 16th century. Creation of nation states has over time been the dominant way in which humans have chosen to organize their community life. This has been caused by the need to get a stronger organization of the life of ever increasing concentrations of populations, as well as the need to protect the community from the invasion of other communities. Nation states have produced geographical borders, as well as military force and strong public authorities to protect these borders.

With geographical borders being set in place, and with military force to protect them from invasion by other groups of people, the basic conditions for migration were fundamentally changed. It was then no longer possible to migrate legally from one country to another, without following the rules set up by the countries concerned. The crossing of borders without the consent of the authorities, now became defined as illegal migration. Illegal migration has always taken place, ever since that notion came into existence. However, the extent of legal and illegal migration, respectively, has varied greatly over time.

Temporary migration, such as tourism, started to develop in the 18th century when it became almost mandatory for young men in the British aristocracy to travel to foreign countries as part of their education. More durable forms of migration developed extensively as a result of wars between peoples or civil wars within countries. The international community gradually agreed on rules for legal migration to alleviate the human disasters resulting from wars or civil wars. People fleeing from war zones who were seeking refuge in other countries were called refugees, and the international community established common rules for the treatment of refugees. These common rules were developed in the United Nations' convention on refugees, established after the Second World War in 1951.

Other forms of legal migration were those where people with particular skills or manpower were welcomed as a supplement to a country's own work force. This type of legal migration has always existed as well. However, as differences in living conditions between countries have developed, and as available information on these differences have developed even more, so has the desire of young people to seek improvement in their living conditions. In increasing numbers, young people in poor and conflict-ridden countries seek to improve their life prospects by migrating to countries that have better government and better living conditions.

People in the most attractive countries have become worried by increasing illegal migration flows, and as a result they have developed more restrictive

rules for allowing immigration into their countries. Increased migration flows, resulting from disparities in living conditions and mismanagement in conflict-ridden countries, as well as differences in population growth, have as a result been met with closed borders. Closed borders, with exceptions being made only for special cases such as workers with very high qualifications or people victim of life-threatening persecution, have prepared the ground for organized illegal migration.

People who do not meet the conditions for legal migration try to enter the attractive countries without making contact with the authorities of those countries. This is defined as illegal entry. If they manage to cross the borders without being stopped by authorities, they then face the challenge of making a life for themselves in this country that has not accepted them officially. This means that their stay in the country is illegal, and they have to make a living out of sight of the authorities. By doing so, they are easy prey for criminal gangs and employers who hire manpower at very low, slave-like, wages and bad working conditions.

In spite of the difficult life these illegal migrants often face in their new countries of residence, the number of people who wish to migrate illegally has been increasing. With increased difficulties in crossing borders, criminal gangs have discovered that they could develop a new line of activity. This new line of activity is to help people migrate illegally in exchange for payment. This is very profitable and they encourage young people, mostly men, to migrate – often by creating false hopes of what their new life will be like. The criminals provide transportation and illegal documents, and they often leave the migrants to themselves in life-threatening situations like sea-travel on rotten boats or walks through dangerous deserts. Many migrants die in their efforts to reach their countries of destination, but the criminals earn fortunes through this activity. They earn more than through the trade in illegal drugs, with less risk.

From a perspective of human rights, this is an intolerable situation. The countries that are the aim of illegal migration are struggling hard to find

solutions, both by coming to grips with the criminals who feed on this situation and by finding better ways to get control of the flows.

In ancient times, when groups of people migrated, it was their military force that determined how they would succeed in their place of destination. Today that picture is far more complicated and politically more difficult to deal with. From a cultural point of view, migration in ancient times led to arrival of new customs in the place of destination. Depending on the relative power of the migrants and the people already in place, the cultural habits of the new arrivals would merge with the customs of the settled communities in varying degrees.

During the Renaissance period in the 15th and 16th centuries in Europe, cultural exchanges were particularly important through the mechanism of trade and banking. Agents of the different trade and banking firms were actively buying artworks in their place of temporary residence and sending them back to their

home city. At that time, Florence was particularly important as a trading and banking city. Its merchants grew very powerful and along with trade they developed practices of lending money to clients to facilitate trade. Over time, the activity of lending money grew in importance and became a commercial activity in its own right. Florentine bankers grew in importance across Europe, and their economic power was so great that their lending extended to kings and other nobility, even to finance warfare in exchange for commercial privileges. The Medici family in Florence and the Fugger family in Augsburg are major examples of this.

The Medicis were great patrons of art, and along with their purchases of art across Europe they also commissioned artists in Florence to do work for them in Florence itself. The purpose was to decorate churches, palaces and other buildings and edifices, partly as an aesthetic effort and partly with the intention of enhancing their own prestige in the city.

The migration of merchants and bankers led to a corresponding migration of artworks. John Hale tells us, in his great work “The civilization of Europe in the Renaissance” (see (11) in the bibliography), how these flows of goods and artworks took place. In general, at that time, southern merchants were more familiar with the market for luxury furnishings than were their northern colleagues. For this reason, the balance in the import-export business favored the flow of works of art from northern Europe to the south until the beginning of the 16th century. This traffic encouraged painters to use linen or canvas that could be rolled up for easy transport, rather than wooden panels.

Later on, as cultural diplomacy and personal initiative of patrons and collectors grew in importance, other mechanisms of exchange developed. In 1502, as Hale tells us, the Florentine government, dependent on French military assistance in its war against Pisa, commissioned a bronze version of the sculpture David from Michelangelo. They sent it by sea to Florimond Robertet, the French King’s principal adviser on foreign affairs. By then, moreover, the horses, weapons and suits of armor that princes traditionally gave one another were being joined by medals and portraits. Usually combining a realistic portrait on one side with a propagandist image or self-revealing emblem on the other, medals, reproducible and easy to transport, were also condensations of the style of the centers from which they were sent abroad. They were personal gifts that were also cultural transmitters.

The same could be true of painted portraits. The Wittenberg workshop of Lucas Cranach the Elder was paid in 1533 for turning out no fewer than sixty pairs of portraits of the newly acceded Elector of Saxony, John-Frederick, and his wife Sibilla for distribution to his political contacts. When in 1550 a toadying Milanese official wrote to beg Charles V's chief minister Cardinal de Granvelle for a portrait by "your most excellent painter" Antonis Mor, what he got was a copy by a studio assistant. Nonetheless, portraits, even if they were not originals, spread artistic styles abroad with more directness than did many translations of works of literature.

The plaster casts of antique sculptures in Italy that were imported into France affected the work of the classicizing Pierre Bontemps, who was responsible for the tomb of Francis I, and of the most elegantly refined of French 16th century sculptors, Jean Goujon. The copies and variants of famous paintings, like Leonardo's "Virgin ad Child with St.Anne" (1508 – 1510), which were turned out by pupils in the absence of any commissioner's or artist's property rights,

found their way far afield. But the most widely infective multiples came from the press – not the printed word, but the printed illustration.

In one respect printing had hampered the transmission of styles; black and white could not convey the effect of light Piero della Francesca learned from the circle of his French contemporary Jean Fouquet. The printed books that were found most useful for blending foreign into native styles were above all illustrated works on architecture, from Serlio's wotk of 1537 on the order and Giacomo da vignola's "Rules for the Five Orders" of 1562, via Andrea Palladio's "Four books on Architecture" of 1570 and Jacques Androuet de Cerceau's "The finest buildings of France" of 1579 to Vicenzo Scamozzi's "The Idea of a Universal Architecture" of 1615". These showed what had and should be done, and the illustrations could be used as models even by those unable to read the texts.

For painters, sculptors and workers in decorative arts, from the mid-16th century there were encyclopedic handbooks illustrating personifications (as we have seen in the case of Europa) and other shorthand symbolic methods of communicating ideas. Bees swarming in a cast-away helmet as a fairly straightforward image of Peace for instance: industrious life resuming after the interruptions of war. In his "Iconology" of 1611 Cesare Ripa managed to symbolize so complex an idea as Reason of State: an armored woman keeps the lion of force tamed by the pressure of one hand while the other brandishes the scepter of rule; she treads on a book: it is labelled IUS (Justice) and is half hidden by her skirt because statecraft demands that the ordinary processes of law be covered over in times of emergency. This figure was copied intact as part of the iconographic argument on the title-page of a book published in Venice in 1624.

The Frankfurt book fairs acted as a distribution center for engravings and art woodcuts. An acquaintance of Dürer's friend and patron, Willibald Pirckheimer, wrote to him in 1520 expressing surprise that there were so few of the artist's works at the fair, whereas the engravings of the Dutchman Lucas were so numerous. But Dürer had by then set off on his journey to the Netherlands where he disposed of his prints on his own account, selling some, exchanging others – as in Antwerp with those of Lucas van Leyden himself and trading the works of his German fellow-printmakers like Hans Baldung. And this interchange between German and Dutch graphic ideas which Dürer had begun to absorb as a young man through the engravings of Martin Schongauer which were influenced by both, was paralleled, to even greater effect, by the circulation of German prints in Italy and vice versa. In the mid-16th century Vasari paid reluctant homage to the influence of German engravings and woodcuts.

These exchanges of ideas and art may stand as the supreme expression of how the dynamics of the Mediterranean area has formed human civilization from the earliest times.

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