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Art and Paideia

THOMAS D. PAXSON, JR.

Wherever the ancient Greeks went, they took with them their culture—their language, poetry, music, arts, and attitudes—which distinguished them from non-Greeks, “barbarians.” From 750 B.C. to 550 B.C., Greeks migrated north as far as the shores of the Black Sea and west as far as Spain. In each place they settled, they established cities very like the ones they had left in Greece, and they retained active commercial and cultural contacts with their mother cities. Central to their general outlook was a concern for and an appreciation of *arete*, excellence. In a hierarchical society of priests, kings, and scribes, human excellences are carefully distinguished, and people aspire only to those that are appropriate to their position and function. Greek society was not like this. The best men of a Greek city were expected not only to take part in the governance of the city-state, to be able and courageous soldiers and athletes, to be wise managers of their personal affairs, and to be generous to their friends, but also to be literate and to have some musical ability, to list just a few “excellences.” Human excellence in general characterized the *kalos kagathos*, the noble and good man. Such human excellence was considered possible only in the context of the *polis*, the city-state, because the city-state provided both the economic security to pursue excellence and the social context in which it could flourish. *Paideia* was the education through which arete was fostered. Despite the magnificent achievements of Greek artists in sculpture, architecture, and painting, the role of the visual arts in paideia is usually regarded as insignificant. For example, Werner Jaeger wrote that “no Greek ever thought of giving painting and sculpture and the enjoyment of visual art a place in paideia, whereas the educational

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Art and Paideia

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Wherever the ancient Greeks went, they took with them their culture—their language, poetry, music, arts, and attitudes—which distinguished them from non-Greeks, “barbarians.” From 750 B.C. to 550 B.C., Greeks migrated north as far as the shores of the Black Sea and west as far as Spain. In each place they settled, they established cities very like the ones they had left in Greece, and they retained active commercial and cultural contacts with their mother cities. Central to their general outlook was a concern for and an appreciation of *arete*, excellence. In a hierarchical society of priests, kings, and scribes, human excellences are carefully distinguished, and people aspire only to those that are appropriate to their position and function. Greek society was not like this. The best men of a Greek city were expected not only to take part in the governance of the city-state, to be able and courageous soldiers and athletes, to be wise managers of their personal affairs, and to be generous to their friends, but also to be literate and to have some musical ability, to list just a few “excellences.” Human excellence in general characterized the *kalos kagathos*, the noble and good man. Such human excellence was considered possible only in the context of the *polis*, the city-state, because the city-state provided both the economic security to pursue excellence and the social context in which it could flourish. *Paideia* was the education through which arete was fostered. Despite the magnificent achievements of Greek artists in sculpture, architecture, and painting, the role of the visual arts in paideia is usually regarded as insignificant. For example, Werner Jaeger wrote that “no Greek ever thought of giving painting and sculpture and the enjoyment of visual art a place in paideia, whereas the educational

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ideals of Greece were always dominated by poetry, music, and rhythm.”¹ This thesis deserves to be reconsidered.

Jaeger claimed both that the educational ideals of ancient Greece were always dominated by poetry, music, and rhythm, and also that no Greek ever thought of giving the visual arts a place in *paideia*. The former claim is certainly true, and the reasons for its truth must be understood in order to assess adequately the latter claim. First, although fifth- and fourth-century Greek culture was literate, it was shaped by its not too distant roots in the oral/aural society of the earlier Greeks. The great Homeric epics of that earlier period were not only remembered, but were learned by heart, declaimed by professional reciters, quoted in civic debates, and cherished by all as a priceless part of their heritage. In addition, there was a large body of oral tradition, including myths, folk tales, and lyric poetry, that celebrated their cities, their progenitors, and their heroes. Public addresses in the assembly were carefully structured and delivered in such a way that they could be remembered more easily. The public religion of a polis featured poetry and dramatic performances—the latter being civic enterprises in which in Athens the various political subdivisions or *demes* competed to put on the best performances. Citizens, not slaves or aliens, performed the tragedies, comedies, and satyr plays. The plays, especially in the fifth century B.C., explored the human condition, fate, and virtue or *arete*. These activities, which the Greeks called *mousike* because they were believed to be inspired by the muses—included tragedy, comedy, elegy, oratory, music (in our sense), dance, even history and astronomy. There were no muses for the arts of painting, sculpture, metal working, pottery, or architecture.

Paideia traditionally included *mousike* and physical education. Poseidonia (Paestum), like other Greek cities, had to have its gymnasium. The gymnasia frequently became the homes of philosophical schools in the fourth century, so that they offered both physical and “musical” education. Both were essential for the well-educated man; both were called upon in the exercise of his civic responsibilities; both were incorporated into his religion. The panhellenic games at Olympia and at Delphi, for example, were religious events in which the Greeks offered their *arete* to the gods through competition in sport and in *mousike*.² There were no painting or sculpting competitions among the most promising Greek youths as part of these religious festivals. Nor do we find the Sophists, who promised to teach aspiring youth the *arete* necessary for them to become prominent citizens, requiring of their students that they learn the techniques of perspectival painting or bronze casting. Thus the evidence is convincing that the educational ideals of Greece were dominated by gymnastics and *mousike*. And what we know of the Sophists appears to support Jaeger’s other claim that “no Greek ever thought of giving painting and sculpture and the enjoyment of visual art a place in *paideia*.”

Why, in view of all this, should the question of the role of visual art in paideia be raised? One reason it should is the mute testimony of the art itself. As Martin Robertson has written, "In the visual arts, as in so much else, the Greek achievement marks a turning-point, a revolution."³ This revolution was the turning away from the restrictions of conventional representation to a free naturalism—free in the sense that it was no longer constrained by a fixed and unchanging set of rules. To be sure, the Greek sculptors were concerned to find and observe "canons" to govern their art. Indeed, particular artists claimed to have found some canons, but their successors insisted on revising them. Thus Greek art is marked by steady evolution. But although Greek art is assured of its place in history for this reason, this does not show that it was considered, or should be considered, part of paideia.

When we think of ancient Greek art, we tend to think of sculpture and painting. Sculpture is usually found in association with religious sanctuaries and graves. But it is well to remember that in Athens the acropolis was both a citadel for defense and a religious sanctuary and that the *agora*, or marketplace, was also a religious sanctuary. Indeed, virtually every public edifice could be regarded as also having had religious significance to the Greeks, for the polis had religious significance. Many Greek cities claimed heroic progenitors and divine guardians. In the archaic period, a large number of *koroi* were sculpted. These stylized, naked youths are still something of a mystery. Some are taken to be statues of Apollo, as they were found in sanctuaries devoted to him; others may have been intended to represent deceased youths, as is suggested by their placement on graves; and still others seem to have portrayed those who dedicated them. But many *koroi* cannot be explained in any of these ways. It is clear that they are idealized, however, and that, whatever their particular associations, they represent arete, human excellence—which, as mentioned, was regarded by the Greeks as a most fitting offering to the gods. Similar remarks apply to the *korai*, statues of clothed young women, which were common in Eastern Greek or Ionian areas.

That sculptures were considered important gifts to the gods is shown by the great number of such dedications found in temple areas. A different kind of evidence is provided by the votive offerings of eyes, limbs, organs, etc., usually fashioned from terracotta, found at the sites of shrines dedicated to Asklepios (e.g., Epidauros, Corinth) and Hera (Poseidonia). These anatomical figures were given to the god or goddess in thanks for a cure. Although votive offerings are not examples of an educational use of sculpture, they do bring out something of the Greek attitude toward sculpture. The sculptor produces an object that has a reality transcending the stuff and shape of which it is made. The votive foot is a foot and not merely a piece of foot-shaped terracotta. Furthermore, it may in some sense have

been regarded as the dedicator's foot, even though it was probably made in a nearby workshop with many others before the patient ever came to the shrine. This phenomenon of artifacts perceived as stand-ins magically associated with originals or ideals is important to an adequate understanding of the significance of art, especially sculptural art, in Greek society. One might recall in this connection the Greek practice of seeking to injure an enemy by writing his name on a shard and then smashing the shard to bits, or the uproar in Athens before her disastrous expedition against Syracuse when it was discovered that someone had vandalized the herms. These facts point to the significance that sculpture had for the Greeks. Given this importance and given that Greek *paideia* was shaped by the fundamental character of Greek culture and society, Jaeger's claim must be reconsidered.

Before turning to such a reconsideration of Jaeger's claim, something must be said about Greek painting. Of all Greek painting, the decoration of pottery is most familiar. A vast quantity has survived. We know that the Greeks also painted small portable plaques and murals, some apparently quite large. Only a couple of plaque paintings remain, one of which was found at Eleusis. It is the vase paintings that have of necessity provided the basis of our understanding and appreciation of Greek painting. For our purposes this is unfortunate, since the large public frescoes would presumably tell us more about the polis's use of public paintings. Virtually no classical Greek murals have survived, though we do have descriptions of and comments on such paintings. We do at least have the tomb paintings of Poseidonia and of the royal tomb in Macedonia to help confirm the expectations derived from pottery painting and the testimony of literary reports. Much of the vase painting may have been considered simply decorative, and the vases do not help us much in understanding what role painting may have had in *paideia*. The paintings were done to appeal to popular tastes rather than to shape them.

Jaeger makes his claims about visual art in his discussion of Aristotle: "But the fact remains that no Greek ever thought of giving painting and sculpture and the enjoyment of visual art a place in *paideia*, whereas the educational ideals of Greece were always dominated by poetry, music, and rhythm. (What Aristotle says about the value of drawing has nothing to do with the appreciation of fine art, and cannot be taken to contradict this point.)"⁴ The parenthetical remark would seem to refer to the following passages from Aristotle's *Politics*:

1. There are perhaps four customary subjects of *paideia*, reading and writing, gymnastics, mousike, and fourth, with some people, drawing (*graphike*); reading and writing and drawing being taught as being useful for the purpose of life and very serviceable, and gymnastics as contributing to manly courage; but as to mousike, here one might raise a question (8.2.1337b23-28).

2. Hence our predecessors included mousike in paideia not as a necessity . . . nor as useful (in the way in which reading and writing are useful for business and for acquiring learning and for many pursuits of civil life, while drawing also seems useful in making us better judges of the works of artists) (1338a13-19).
3. . . .and similarly they should study drawing (graphike) not in order that they may not go wrong in their private purchases and may avoid being cheated in buying and selling articles, but rather because this study makes a man observant of bodily beauty (*somata kallous*) (1338a40-b3).

Can these passages be taken to contradict the point that what he says about drawing has nothing to do with the appreciation of fine art? It is not clear that they cannot. First, Aristotle clearly ascribes the view to some people that *graphike* is a part of paideia. Second, whether or not what Aristotle says about drawing has something to do with the appreciation of fine art may turn either on what Jaeger means by “fine art” here, or on how we are to translate *somata kallous*, or both. It is a commonplace that the Greeks of the classical period did not separate “fine arts” done purely for aesthetic purposes from crafts. If Jaeger is claiming that Aristotle is not making any claim about what we would call fine arts and their appreciation, then the claim would seem to be trivial. He is presumably making a claim about being able to identify works of fine craftsmanship. The works of craftsmanship that Aristotle thinks learning *graphike* will help one judge are articles of an indefinite sort—household and personal goods, for example. Perhaps he has in mind drinking cups, which were often beautifully painted, or carved-marble grave monuments. It would be useful to be able to recognize fine objects, even if they were not considered fine art in our sense. It is no anachronism to claim that the Greeks nonetheless appreciated the beauty of fine paintings and sculptures (in addition to fine couches or shields) and that drawing would be recommended to sharpen that appreciation.

“*Somata kallous*” is translated above as “bodily beauty” rather than as “the beauty of human bodies” because, although both translations are possible, the context permits and would seem to favor the more general sense. Here is an instance where translation is interpretation, but there is nothing in the context that suggests limiting the beauty that is to be appreciated to the beauty of human bodies. It is quite evident that the Greeks valued beautiful artifacts generally so that insofar as *graphike* is useful in training our critical assessment of the beauty of physical objects, and insofar as such beauty was highly prized, then *graphike* would be *paideutic*.

Aristotle’s division of paideia into forms that are necessary, forms that are useful, and forms that are liberal and noble, raises an important point. *Graphike* is included among the useful subjects of education, whereas *mousike* is liberal and noble (*eleutherion kai kalen*). Aristotle cautions that

"to be always seeking after the useful does not become free and exalted souls" (*Politics*, 1338b3). It is in this context that liberal and noble paideia is praised. Only the better sort of people, the elite, engage in this liberal education, and they do so for intellectual enjoyment in leisure. The paideia with which Aristotle is concerned is the paideia of the aristocrat who alone has leisure. The aristocrat does not paint, throw pots, or cast bronze, but he does author modest verse, make music for friends, and give orations in the assembly. In discussing paideia, then, we have to make it clear whether we are discussing the training of aristocrats or the more general paideia that a polis provides all its citizens. It is the latter which made Athens the school of Hellas, as Pericles boasted. And it is in this sense that paintings have a paideutic effect in Aristotle's view, as is attested by his recommendation for censorship: "Let the ruler take care that there be no image or picture representing unseemly actions, except in the temples of those gods at whose festivals the law permits even ribaldry, and whom the law also permits to be worshipped by persons of mature age on behalf of themselves, their children, and their wives" (*Politics*, 1336b14-19). In perceiving a need for censoring art, he follows Plato; but given what has been noted about the Greek attitudes toward symbolic artifacts, it may be supposed that Greeks typically ascribed a paideutic effect to images and pictures, if not to the activity that produces them. This is a second important distinction to be kept in mind in discussing paideia: the paideutic character of activities on the one hand, and of artifacts and institutions on the other. The latter shape the environment, and the environment is held to affect a person's development; this is presupposed by any call for censorship.

Those Greeks who taught about teaching recognized the difference between teaching skills and teaching facts. Some, like Hippias, sought to acquaint their students with as much information as possible; others provided little information and sought instead to arm their students with essential cognitive and communication skills. Although the educated person clearly needs both, the difference in stress is important. Does our environment shape our whole intellectual (and moral) development, causing us to develop the necessary and useful skills, or do we shape our environment using our cognitive skills to interpret and understand it?

Aristotle, in his discussion of paideia in the *Politics*, stressed skills. Because he distinguished between free or liberal skills and servile skills like the crafts, he judged graphike to be only marginally connected with the paideia of aristocrats. The arts of sculpting marble or casting bronze would have no connection with such paideia. Mousike, in contrast, was taken to be in general liberal rather than servile. Many of the activities which mousike comprises were believed to affect the soul directly, and even the products of musical activity powerfully affected the souls of the

audience. Aristotle's justly famous catharsis theory which alleges that tragedies purge the souls of the audience is the classic example of such a view. Our question, then, becomes, To what extent does environment, and in particular images and pictures, foster excellence (arete)?

In order to delve more deeply into the connection between art and paideia, let us leave Aristotle and go back in time to a consideration of the Pythagoreans. W. Tatarkiewicz, in his *History of Aesthetics*, has reminded us that the Pythagoreans laid the conceptual foundations for subsequent Greek aesthetics.⁵ Three key concepts warrant attention here: harmony, *psychagogia*, and *theoria*. The Pythagoreans claimed to perceive an underlying harmony throughout reality, a harmony that was essentially numerical. Pythagoras was said to have made this discovery when experimenting with a musical instrument, called a *kanon*, that had a single string and a moveable bridge. With this instrument he discovered that the musically harmonious intervals of pitch were those produced by strings whose lengths could be expressed in simple ratios. A string half the length of a given string, for example, produces a note an octave higher than the note produced by the longer string, if the strings are otherwise exactly similar. From this he concluded that all harmony in nature is derived from number and that even nature itself derives from number. When Polyclitus tried to discern the perfect form for human bodies, he sought the *kanon* which numerically expressed the perfect harmony that is the natural standard for human bodies. The Pythagorean presuppositions of this search for a *kanon* are evident. According to Sextus Empiricus, the Pythagoreans held that "no art comes about without proportion, and proportion resides in number. All art therefore arises through number. . . . So there is a certain proportion in sculpture and also in painting. Thanks to this proportion they achieve complete propriety. Generally speaking, every art is a system of perceptions, and system is number; one can therefore justly say 'things look beautiful by virtue of number,' which means thanks to a mind capable of judgment and related to numbers which are the principle of all things."⁶

Psychagogia is the leading of the soul. Pythagoreans thought that music directly affected the feelings of the performers and of the audience and thus led the soul. Music not only expresses, it evokes feelings. In so doing it leads the soul into an *ethos*, a state of mind (to use Tatarkiewicz's happy translation).⁷ Music not only evokes feelings, it teaches through the words sung—sung by the tragic chorus, for example. It also patterns behavior. Hoplites trained to music to help them master the intricate maneuvers of close combat. But the *psychagogic* character of music must have been most evident to the Greeks in relation to the Dionysiac mysteries. E. R. Dodds has given us a vivid account of the power of music and dancing to produce ecstasy, even in bystanders who seek to resist

this effect.⁸ The Greeks possessed no painting or sculpture that would induce Bacchic ecstasy, nor could they conceive such. Aristotle, in a passage quoted above, does refer to images and pictures that are only to be tolerated "in the temples of those gods at whose festivals the law permits even ribaldry, and whom the law also permits to be worshipped by persons of mature age on behalf of themselves, their children, and their wives." Perhaps pornographic art would have been considered to be psychagogic. This would make sense of Aristotle's remark and the evidence of vase paintings. But in any case, such art would have only a shadow of the force that Bacchic music and dance seem to have had and little if any paideutic value.

Theoria, contemplation, was considered by the Pythagoreans to be the search for truth and harmony, as contrasted with the search for fame or for wealth. Tatarkiewicz suggests that the Pythagorean attitude toward disinterested observation prepared the way for a much later distinction between the "epistemological contemplation of truth, and aesthetic contemplation of beauty."⁹ More immediately, it may have contributed to the study of visible forms to discern the mathematical basis of their beauty and harmony. The Pythagoreans' practice of theoria may have led them to their understanding of harmony.

The Pythagoreans are of special interest to readers of this issue, because their center was at Croton in Southern Italy. There they formed a society which controlled Croton for many years. In addition, there were Pythagoreans in many other cities of Southern Italy, including Poseidonia. One of the temples of Poseidonia, the temple dedicated to Athena, seems to have been designed under Pythagorean influence. Ned Nabor, in a talk given in St. Louis in 1979, pointed out that the dimensions of that temple, measured in Doric feet, are multiples of important Pythagorean numbers, especially 4, 10, and 24. The number 4 stood for justice and thus harmony between persons and harmony within the polis. Since construction of the temple occurred about 500 B.C., and since the first anti-Pythagorean uprisings were about 509 B.C., it may be that this Poseidonian temple had some political significance. The numbers 10 and 24 are, respectively, the sum and product of 1, 2, 3, and 4. The numbers 10 and 24 represent all the numbers, and since number is the basis of the whole cosmos, it would seem that the dimensions of the temple had cosmic significance for the Pythagoreans. Unfortunately, we have no literary evidence connecting this temple with the Pythagoreans, nor do we have any Pythagorean texts discussing architecture. In addition to the dimensions of the temple, there is the character of the Pythagoreans to consider. They shaped a whole manner of living in an effort to achieve harmony in themselves and with the cosmos. They turned over their goods to be held in common and lived a life of austerity. It is quite possible that the designers of this temple believed its proportions would have a paideutic effect on worshippers or on the polis itself.

No discussion of Greek attitudes toward visual art and paideia can ignore Plato. Discussions of Plato's approach to art tend to take one of two directions. Some are devoted to his theory of imitation.¹⁰ Others focus on the beautiful and the role it plays in Plato's philosophical system.¹¹ Our focus is paideia, which cuts across both. Imitation is much more than a metaphysical metaphor for Plato; it is also psychagogic. The beautiful is more than an objective aesthetic standard; it is the ultimate object of love.

Imitation is a favorite metaphor for Plato. It is one of the metaphors by which Plato seeks to indicate the relationship between an eternal, unchanging Form—Beauty, for example—and all the many things that we encounter in this sensible world that are beautiful. The things of this world are ever-changing shadows, as it were, of the unchanging Forms that cast them. As shadows are “less real” than the things that cast them, so the objects of this world are less real than the Forms, *eide*. In the tenth book of the *Republic* it is said that the works of painters and sculptors are but imitation of the objects of this world and thus twice removed from reality. In this respect the painter is akin to one who carries around a mirror, thus creating images of the phenomenal world. The painter is inferior to the cabinet maker who makes a real bed, albeit an image of the Form, whereas from the metaphysical point of view the painter makes only a two-dimensional image of the carpenter's product, which is itself like a shadow of the real bed, the Form. Imitation is used to dramatize not only the partial vision represented by the artist, the distance that paintings and sculptures are from the truth, but also their greater power over us. Mimetic, that is imitative, art exploits that in us most remote from wisdom, that power of apprehending images whereby unequals appear equal. Worse, the arts are mimetic in the sense that they lead our souls to imitate in ourselves the emotions they express and in so doing appeal to just that part of us which, in Plato's view, our better part is often called upon to restrain. Pleasure, grief, pain, rage, love, and (we should add) fear are exploited by the imitative artist to manipulate our experience, often with no concern about the long-term effects such experiences may have on our psyches. It is precisely because the arts are so effective in leading us to states of mind that the arts are important to paideia and are dangerous. In the *Laws* Plato does admit mimetic art and dulcet poetry to the state, but only under the careful and strict control of judges who ensure that approved kanons and high standards are maintained—both in musical and in visual art.

Two senses of “mimetic” have been distinguished above: the sense in which art is imitative by virtue of representing something of our phenomenal world and the sense in which art is imitative by virtue of engaging us in imitating the feelings “expressed” by the work of art.¹² Visual works of art may be mimetic in still another way, for they, like everything else, can

imitate the eternal Forms. If painting or sculpture could direct our attention effectively to these eternal Forms, then such art would be paideutic in the fullest possible sense; it would be genuinely philosophical art. W. J. Oates sees reference to this kind of art in the distinction between narrative and imitative poetry (*Republic*, Bk III, 394d, it would seem). The latter, in the context, refers to the impersonation of the characters presented as opposed to the description of them found in narrative poetry. Oates calls the two sorts of poetry "imitative imitation" and "nonimitative imitation" respectively.¹³ The nonimitative imitator he identifies with the philosophical, creative artist, that is, the artist whose works do direct the observer/auditor to the Forms themselves. It is worth noting that a few pages later in the *Republic* (401) Plato treats the visual arts as part of mousike in finding a place for them in the paideia of the ideal state:

Is it then the poets only whom we shall command and compel to represent the image of good character in their poems or else not practise among us, or are we to give orders also to other craftsmen (demiourgois) and forbid them to represent, whether in pictures or in buildings or in any other works, character that is vicious, mean, unrestrained, or graceless? . . . We must seek out such artists as have the talent to pursue the beautiful and the graceful in their work, in order that our young men shall be benefited from all sides like those who live in a healthy place, whence something from these beautiful works will strike their eyes and ears like a breeze that brings health from salubrious places, and lead them unawares from childhood to love of, resemblance to, and harmony with, the beauty of reason. . . . Are these not the reasons, Glaukon, I said, why nurture in mousike is most important, because its rhythm and harmony permeate the inner part of the soul, bring graciousness to it, and make the strongest impression. . . . The man who has been properly nurtured in this area will be keenly aware of things which are neglected, things not beautifully made by art or nature.

When painting, architecture, etc., are praised as having an appropriate role in paideia, they are treated as part of mousike. This is strong confirmation of Jaeger's claim that the educational ideals of Greece were dominated by mousike, but contradicts his other claim that no Greek ever thought of giving painting and sculpture and the enjoyment of visual art a place in paideia.

Art and paideia are seen to come together in Plato's system from a somewhat different vantage point. In the theory of Forms, the Good, the True, and the Beautiful coalesce in the teleological metaphysics of the *Republic* and the *Symposium*. The simile of the sun reveals that the Good is the basis not only of our knowledge, but of that known, which is shaped and made harmonious through the workings of the Good in some unspecified way. As determinant of what is, the Good is Truth—the object and necessary condition of all knowledge. The Good is thus that for which our

reason, in its curiosity, searches. But harmony is also the fundamental nature of beauty. *To kalon* extends beyond aesthetic beauty to include what we might call moral beauty as well. The coalescence of moral and aesthetic value was a natural feature of the language. The desire we have for truth is curiosity, but we call the desire for *to kalon* love. Of all the Forms, Oates reminds us, it is beauty which we apprehend most clearly “by that sense which is most clear in us, the eye-sight” (*Phaedrus*, 250c).¹⁴ It is the dim perception of beauty first in phenomenal objects, then in souls, that leads the lover upward to the beautiful itself. Beautiful objects therefore have an important paideutic role. Art is both a prompter of eros and a product of eros, and eros together with curiosity make one susceptible to and desirous of paideia.

In the *Symposium* (209a) Diotima, in building her argument that the noblest people act out of love for the eternal and seek undying fame, points to poets and “every artist whom we may call creative (*heuretikos*).” These are paradigms of those who are led by eros to seek the eternal through spiritual procreation. Oates contrasts such creative artists with the imitative imitators criticized in the tenth book of the *Republic*.¹⁵ Surely, those creative artists who seek to use their art through psychagogia to turn us to eternal Beauty deserve a place in the ideal polis and satisfy the condition for their entry: “If mimetic art and dulcet poetry can show any reason for her existence in a well-governed state, we would gladly admit her” (*Republic*, 607c).

Plato has come down to us as one of the harshest critics of the visual arts. This is unjustified, but perhaps not surprising. As Eva Keuls has argued, Plato seems not to have taken much interest in the visual arts, except insofar as they could provide a useful metaphor in the explication of his philosophy.¹⁶ He did not, she shows, take sides in the artistic controversies of his day. He did not applaud the advances in perspective painting or discuss the aesthetic advantages or disadvantages of the impressionistic *skia-graphia* as compared with painting that emphasized form, especially outlines. I have argued that Plato did provide a place for the visual arts in paideia; it remains true, however, that he saw their role as limited at best. In particular, although works of art are granted a modest paideutic value, there is never any hint that the activities of painting, sculpting, or casting have any paideutic value in themselves. Dialectic, whether rational or erotic, was the heart of any true paideia in the Platonic scheme.

It cannot be said that Plato and Aristotle fairly represent the Greek view of the visual arts' relation to paideia. The visual art which accompanied tragedies, *skenographia*, and the public murals and sculptures of the agora and temple compounds are mute testimony that they were accorded a greater role in the paideia provided by a polis for her citizens than either of these two philosophers grudgingly allow. In addition we know that the

philosopher Democritus took art seriously and wrote about it, though none of his works has survived, and we are unable to reconstruct his teachings on art. Finally, there is Plutarch's report. "Simonides calls painting silent poetry, and poetry articulate painting."¹⁷

NOTES

1. W. Jaeger, *Paideia*, vol. 2, trans. Gilbert Highet, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 228.
2. H. D. F. Kitto, *The Greeks* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1957), p. 173.
3. M. Robertson, "The Visual Arts of the Greeks," in *The Greek World*, ed. Hugh Lloyd-Jones (Baltimore: Penguin, 1962), p. 168.
4. Jaeger, *Paideia*.
5. W. Tatarkiewicz, *History of Aesthetics*, vol. 1 (The Hague, Holland: Mouton, 1970), pp. 80-84.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 85 (*Adversus Mathematicos*, VII 106).
7. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
8. E. R. Dodds, ed., *Bacchae*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. xiii-xvi.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
10. Cf. W. J. Verdenius, *Mimesis: Plato's Doctrine of Artistic Imitation and Its Meaning to Us* (Leiden, Holland: E. J. Brill, 1949); and R. McKeon, "Literary Criticism and the Concept of Imitation in Antiquity," *Modern Philology* 24 (1936-37): 1-35.
11. Cf. W. J. Oates, *Plato's View of Art* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972); and I. M. Crombie, *An Examination of Plato's Doctrines*, vol. 1 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), pp. 183-89.
12. Different senses of "mimetic" are very helpfully distinguished by Leon Golden in "Plato's Concept of *Mimesis*," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 15 (1975): 118-31. In this article Golden summarizes recent scholarship on mimesis and advances our understanding of its function in Plato's philosophy.
13. Oates, *Plato's View of Art*, p. 36.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 73, 59.
16. E. Keuls, *Plato and Greek Painting* (Leiden, Holland: E. J. Brill, 1978).
17. Tatarkiewicz, *History of Aesthetics*, vol. 1, p. 40; Plutarch, *De gloria atheniensum*, 3.