

# History of Ancient Greece, Antigone

## Institute for the Study of Western Civilization

### Week 16: Feb 12, 2020

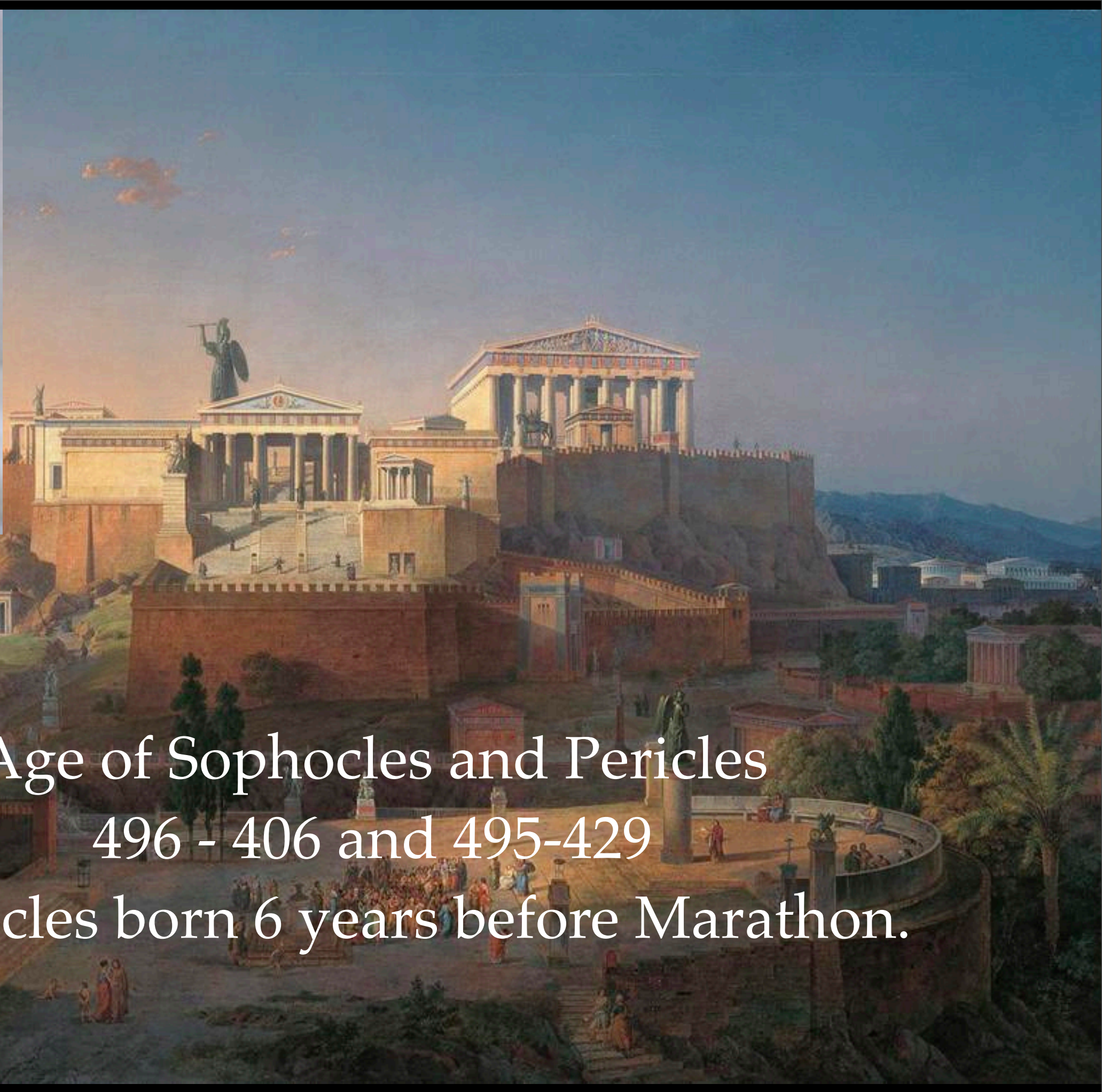






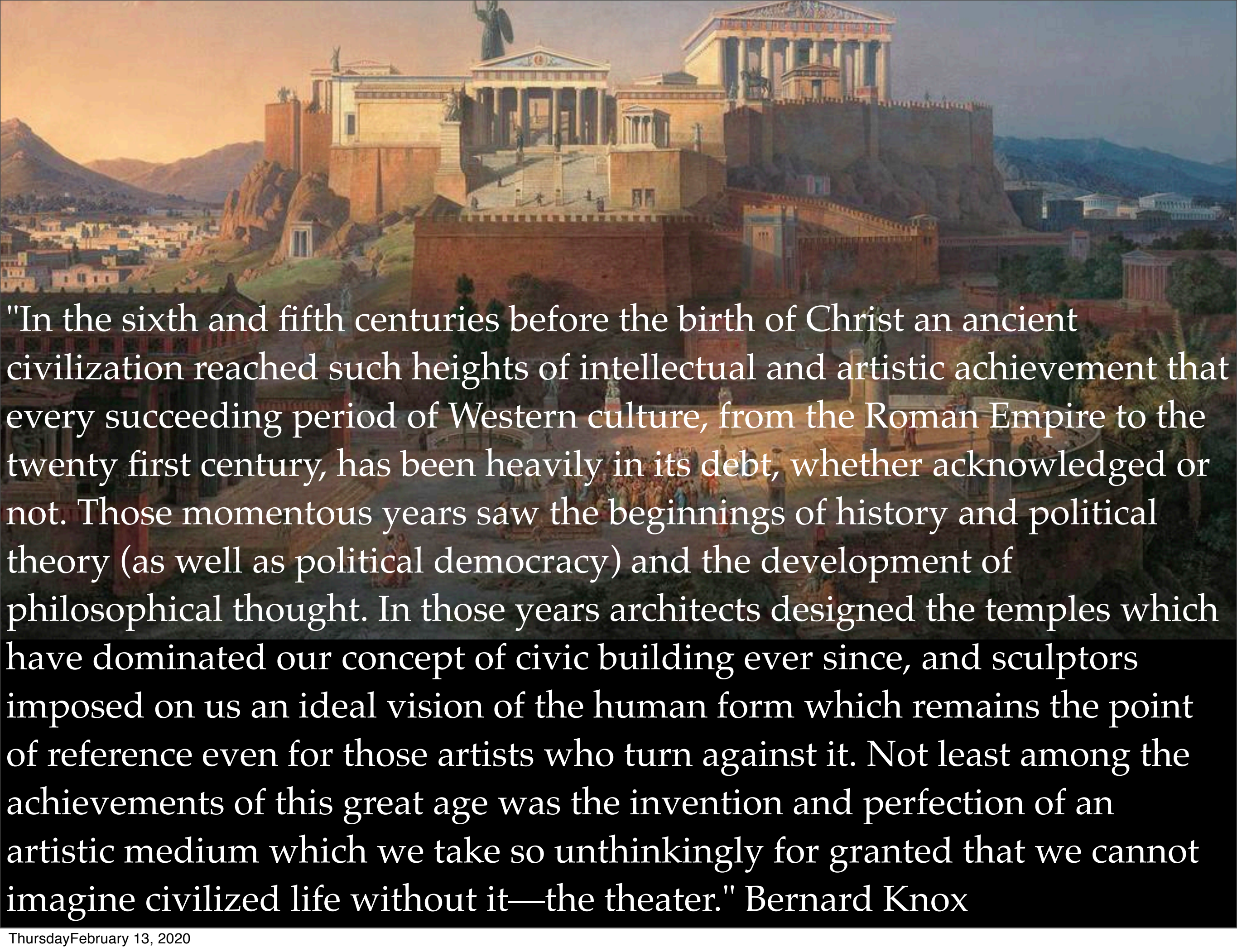
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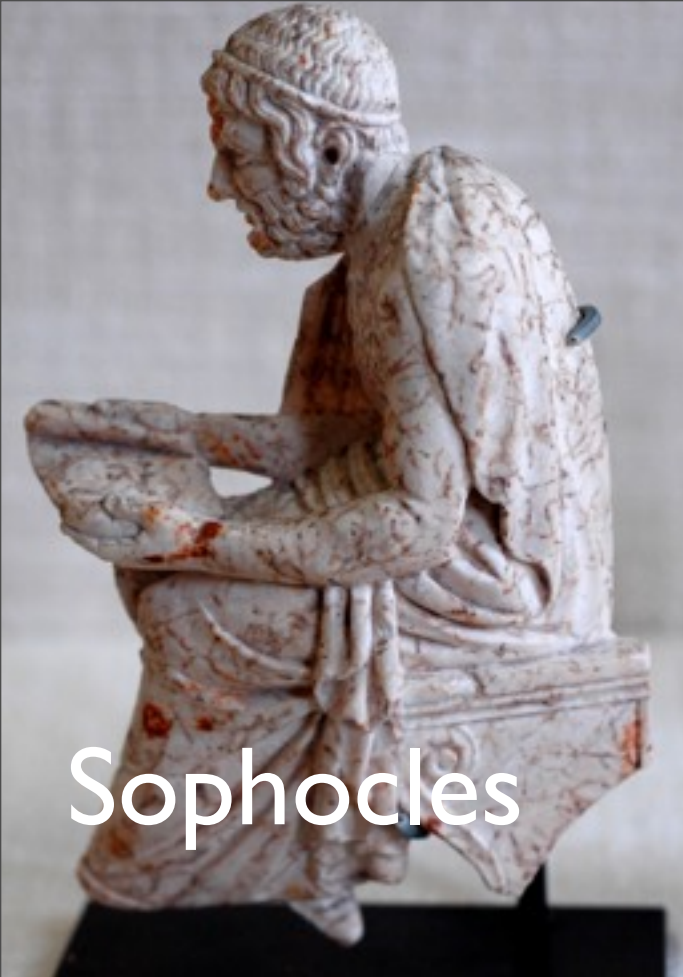
Age of Sophocles and Pericles  
496 - 406 and 495-429  
Sophocles born 6 years before Marathon.



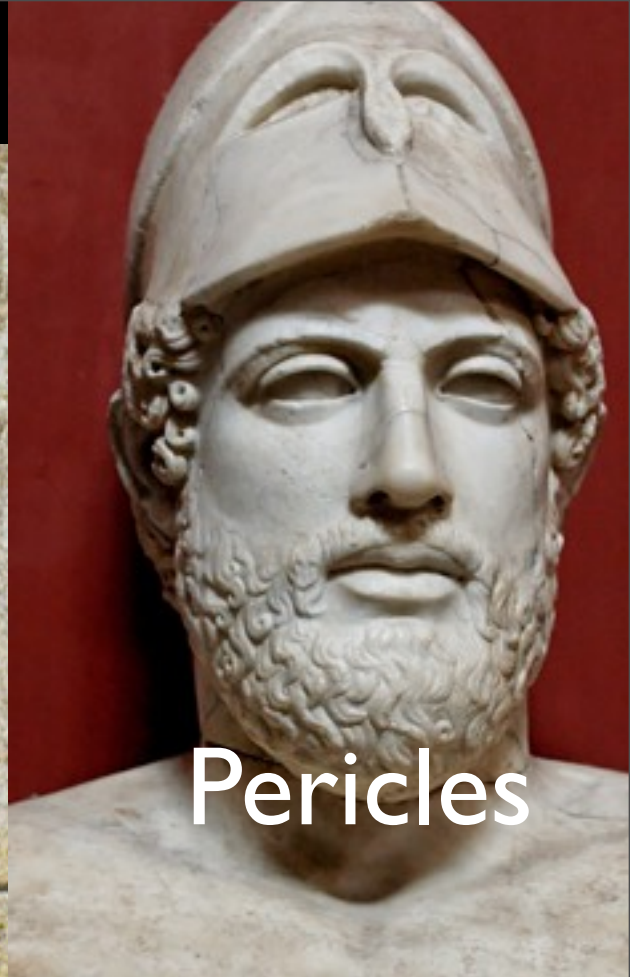


"In the sixth and fifth centuries before the birth of Christ an ancient civilization reached such heights of intellectual and artistic achievement that every succeeding period of Western culture, from the Roman Empire to the twenty first century, has been heavily in its debt, whether acknowledged or not. Those momentous years saw the beginnings of history and political theory (as well as political democracy) and the development of philosophical thought. In those years architects designed the temples which have dominated our concept of civic building ever since, and sculptors imposed on us an ideal vision of the human form which remains the point of reference even for those artists who turn against it. Not least among the achievements of this great age was the invention and perfection of an artistic medium which we take so unthinkingly for granted that we cannot imagine civilized life without it—the theater." Bernard Knox

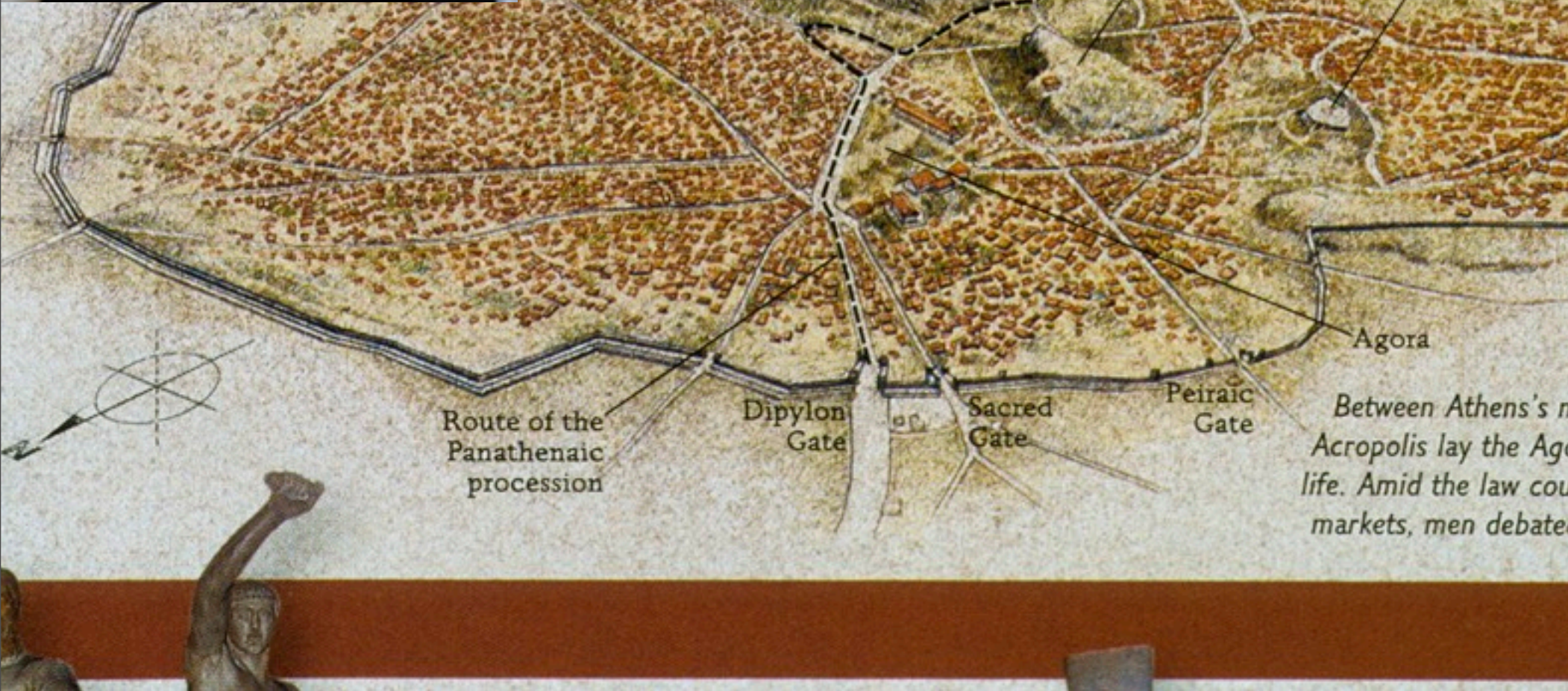




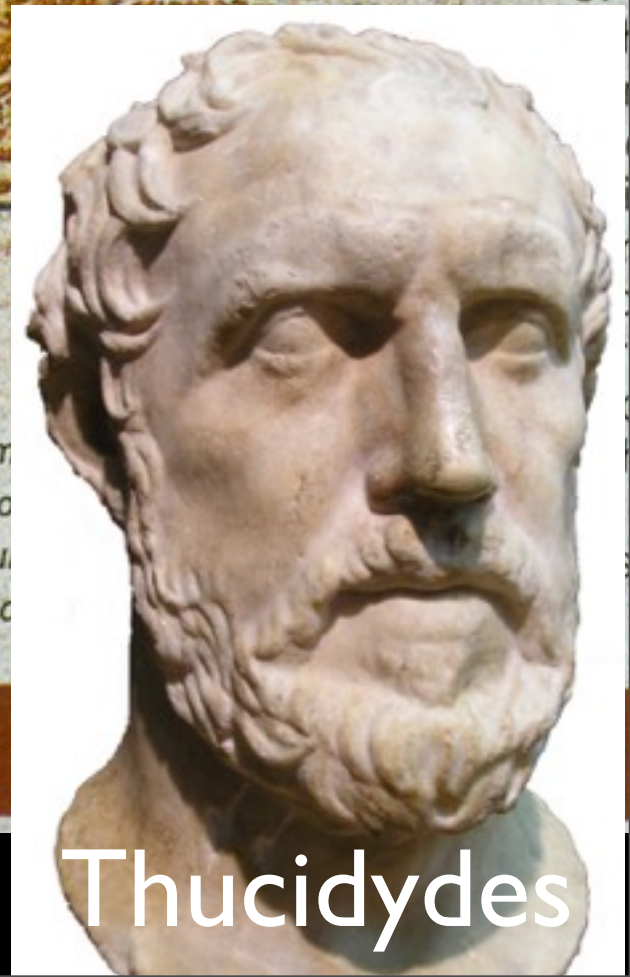
Sophocles



Pericles



Between Athens's m  
Acropolis lay the Ago  
life. Amid the law cou  
markets, men debated



Thucydides



# THE GOLDEN AGE, 480-399 BC



“The period which intervened between the birth of Pericles and the death of Aristotle,” wrote Shelley, “is undoubtedly, whether considered in itself or with reference to the effect which it has produced upon the subsequent destinies of civilized man, the most memorable in the history of the world.” (with apologies to Jesus of Nazareth)

## GREECE THE FIFTH CENTURY BC

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411 Oligarchic coup at Athens xt



# ATHENS TAKES THE LEAD





# Athena

Athena (Minerva) was the daughter of Zeus.

She sprang full grown in armor from his forehead, thus has no mother.

She was fierce and brave in battle (Iliad) but, only fights to protect the state and home from outside enemies.

She was the goddess of the city- esp Athens, handicrafts, and agriculture.

She invented the bridle, which permitted man to tame horses,  
the trumpet, the flute, the pot, the rake,

the plow,

the yoke,

the ship, and

the chariot.

She was the embodiment of wisdom, reason, and purity.

She was Zeus's favorite child and was allowed to use his weapons including his thunderbolt.

Her favorite city was Athens.

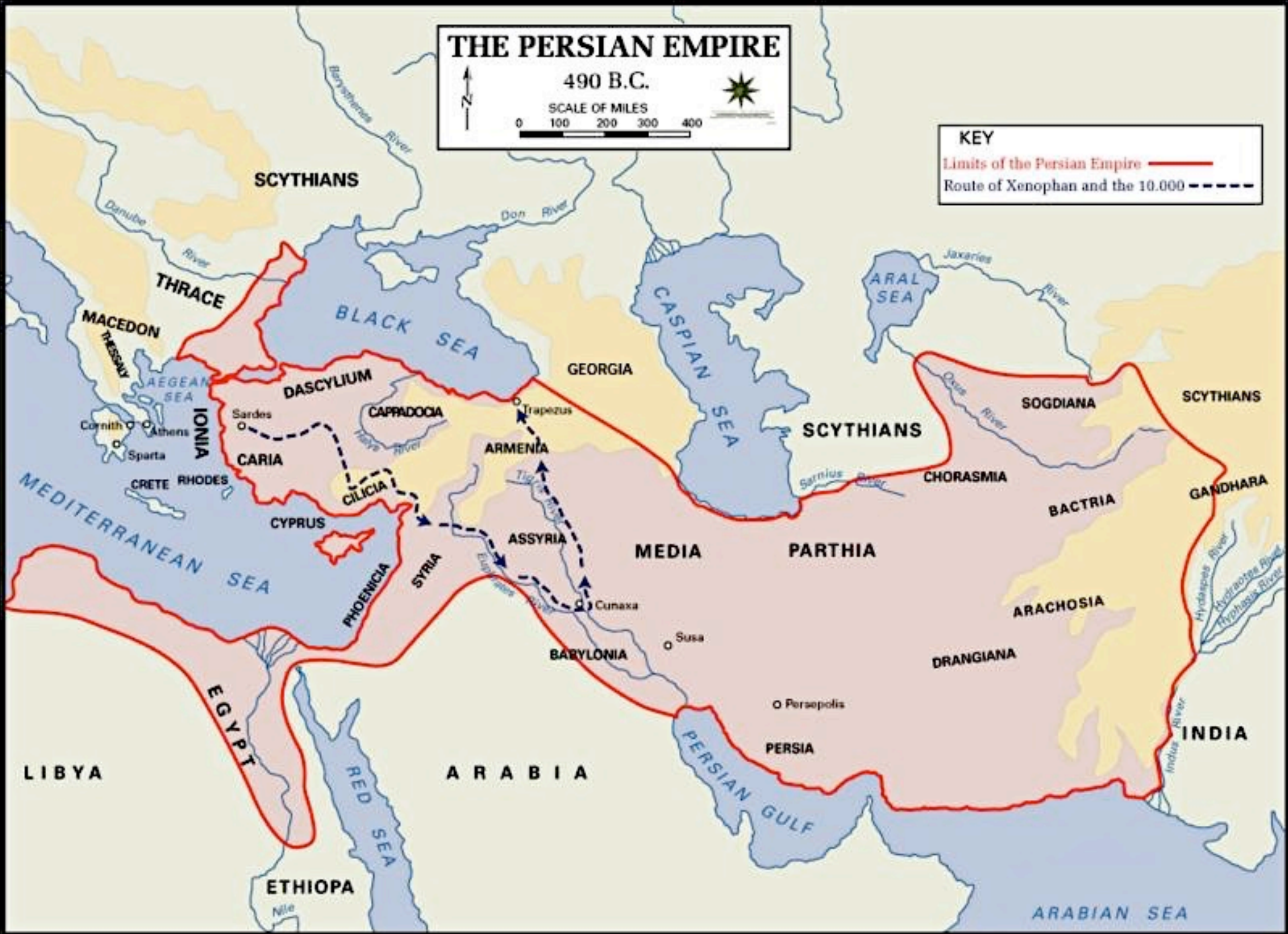
Her tree was the olive.

The owl was her bird.

She was a virgin goddess.

com  
ele  
?







# FOUR BIG BATTLES OF THE PERSIAN WARS

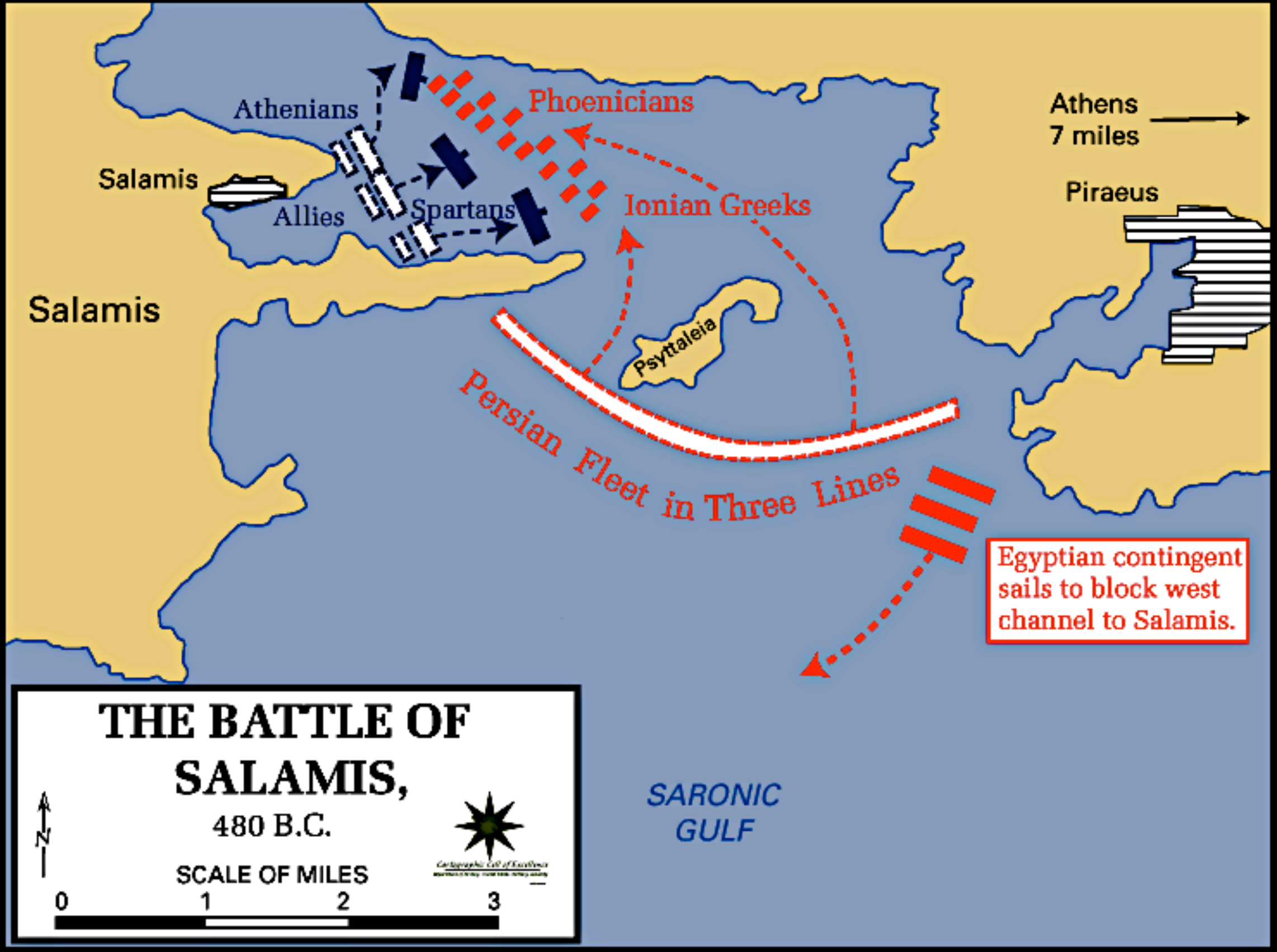
## I. Marathon 2. Themopylae 3. Salamis 4. Platea







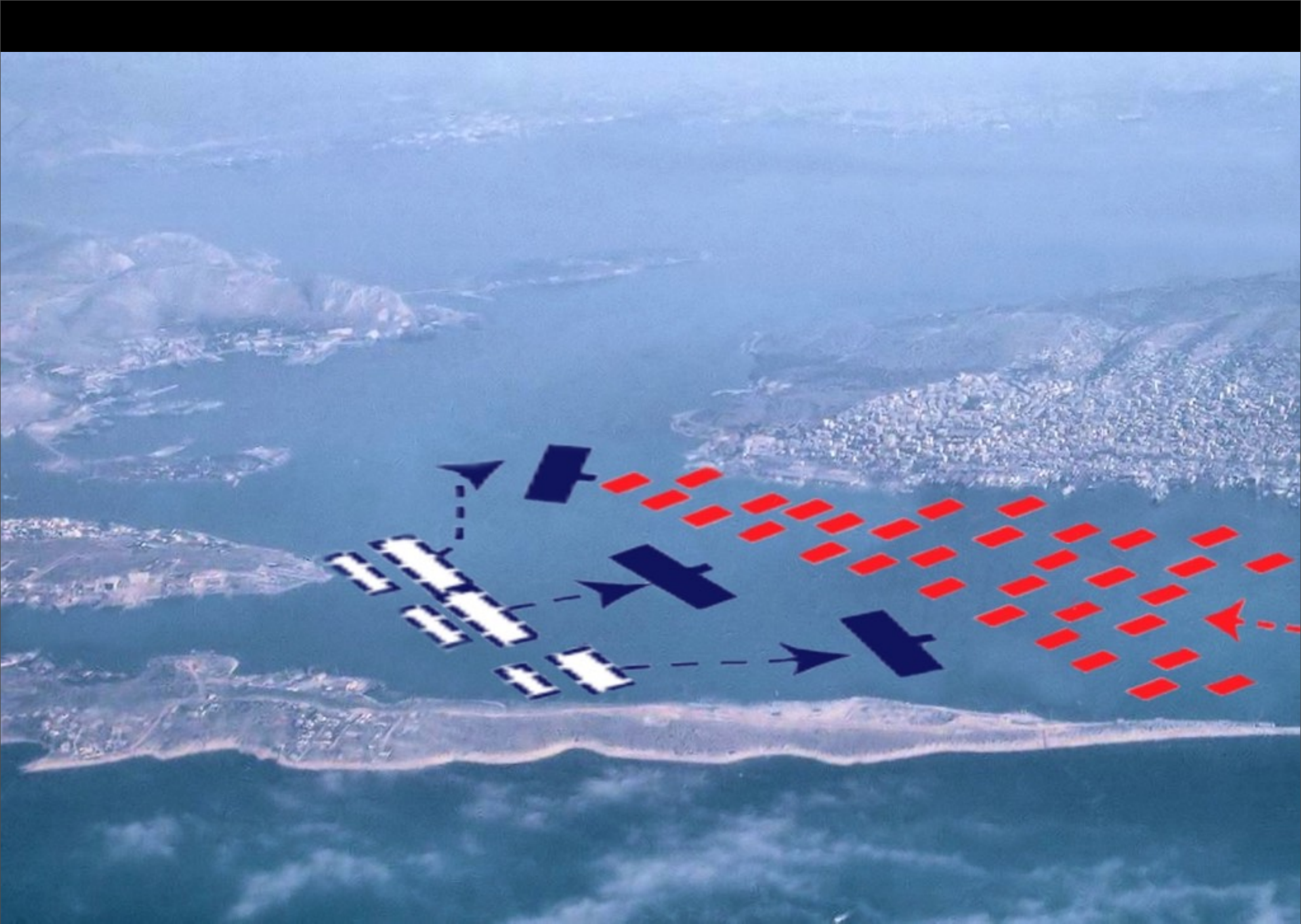














**History of Ancient Greece**  
**Institute for the Study of Western Civilization**  
**PERICLES**





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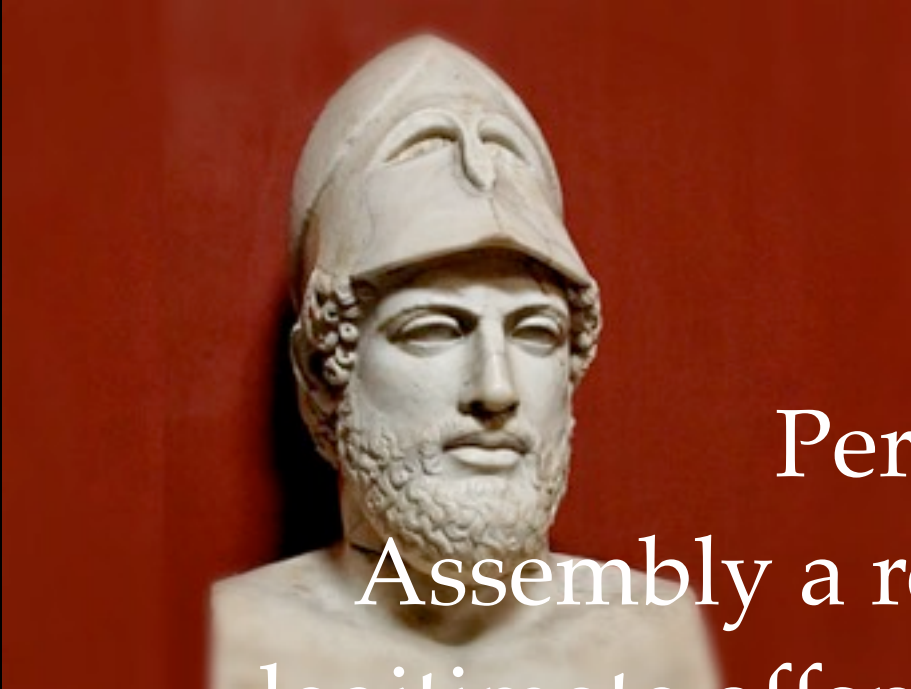
## Pericles (495-429)

Aristocrat who leads the democratic party (Peoples Party) like Thomas Jefferson, FDR  
father Xanthippus fought at Marathon  
mother Agariste, niece of Cleisthenes

He absorbed the rapidly growing culture of his epoch, and united in his mind and policy all the threads of Athenian civilization— economic, military, literary, artistic, and philosophical.

Even the comic poets, who disliked him, spoke of him as “the Olympian,” who wielded the thunder and lightning of such eloquence as Athens had never heard before.





## Citizenship

Pericles (451) carried through the Assembly a restriction of the franchise to the legitimate offspring of an Athenian father and an Athenian mother.

No legal marriage was to be permitted between a citizen and a noncitizen.

It was a measure aimed to discourage intermarriage with foreigners, to reduce illegitimate births, and perhaps to reserve to the jealous burghers of Athens the material rewards of citizenship and empire.



Citizenship is limited, first, by the fact that only a minority of the people can read. It is limited physically by the difficulty of reaching Athens from the remoter towns of Attica. The franchise is restricted to those sons, of two free Athenian parents, who have reached the age of twenty-one; and only they and their families enjoy civil rights, or directly bear the military and fiscal burdens of the state. Within this jealously circumscribed circle of 50,000 citizens out of an Attic population of 300,000, political power, in the days of Pericles, is formally equal; each citizen enjoys and insists upon equal rights at law and in the Assembly. To the Athenian a citizen is a man who not only votes, but takes his turn, by lot and rote, as magistrate or judge, and as soldier.

## A CITIZEN'S STATE.



All of the 115,000 slaves of Attica,  
all women,  
many workingmen,  
all of the 28,500 resident aliens,  
and consequently a great part of  
the trading class, are excluded  
from the franchise.





Thucydides said that the Athenians were the first Greeks to walk in the streets unarmed. A "civilian" society."



"There are few words which are used more loosely than the word 'Civilization.' What does it mean? It means a society based upon the opinion of civilians. It means that violence, the rule of warriors and despotic chiefs, the conditions of camps and warfare, of riot and tyranny, give place to parliaments where laws are made, and independent courts of justice in which over long periods those laws are maintained. That is Civilization—and in its soil grow continually freedom, comfort and culture. When Civilization reigns, in any country, a wider and less harassed life is afforded to the masses of the people. The traditions of the past are cherished, and the inheritance bequeathed to us by former wise or valiant men becomes a rich estate to be enjoyed and used by all. The central principle of Civilization is the subordination of the ruling authority to the settled customs of the people and to their will as expressed through the Constitution. In this Island we have today achieved in a high degree the blessings of Civilization. There is freedom: there is law; there is love of country; there is a great measure of good will between classes: there is a widening prosperity. There are unmeasured opportunities of correcting abuses and making further progress." Winston Churchill





Pericles (495-429 BC) and Aspasia (470-400 BC)



# A WOMAN PHILOSOPHER



Arriving in Athens about 450, Aspasia opened a school of rhetoric and philosophy, and boldly encouraged the public emergence and higher education of women. Many girls of good family came to her classes, and some husbands brought their wives to study with her. Men also attended her lectures, among them Pericles and Socrates, and probably Anaxagoras, Euripides, Alcibiades, and Pheidias.





Aspasia made his home a French Enlightenment salon, where the art and science, the literature, philosophy, and statesmanship of Athens were brought together in mutual stimulation. Socrates marveled at her eloquence, and credited her with composing the funeral oration that Pericles delivered after the first casualties of the “Peloponnesian War.”







Aspasia became the uncrowned queen of Athens, setting fashion's tone, and giving to the women of the city an exciting example of mental and moral freedom.







Oligarchic conservative enemies  
of democracy use Aspasia to get  
at Pericles

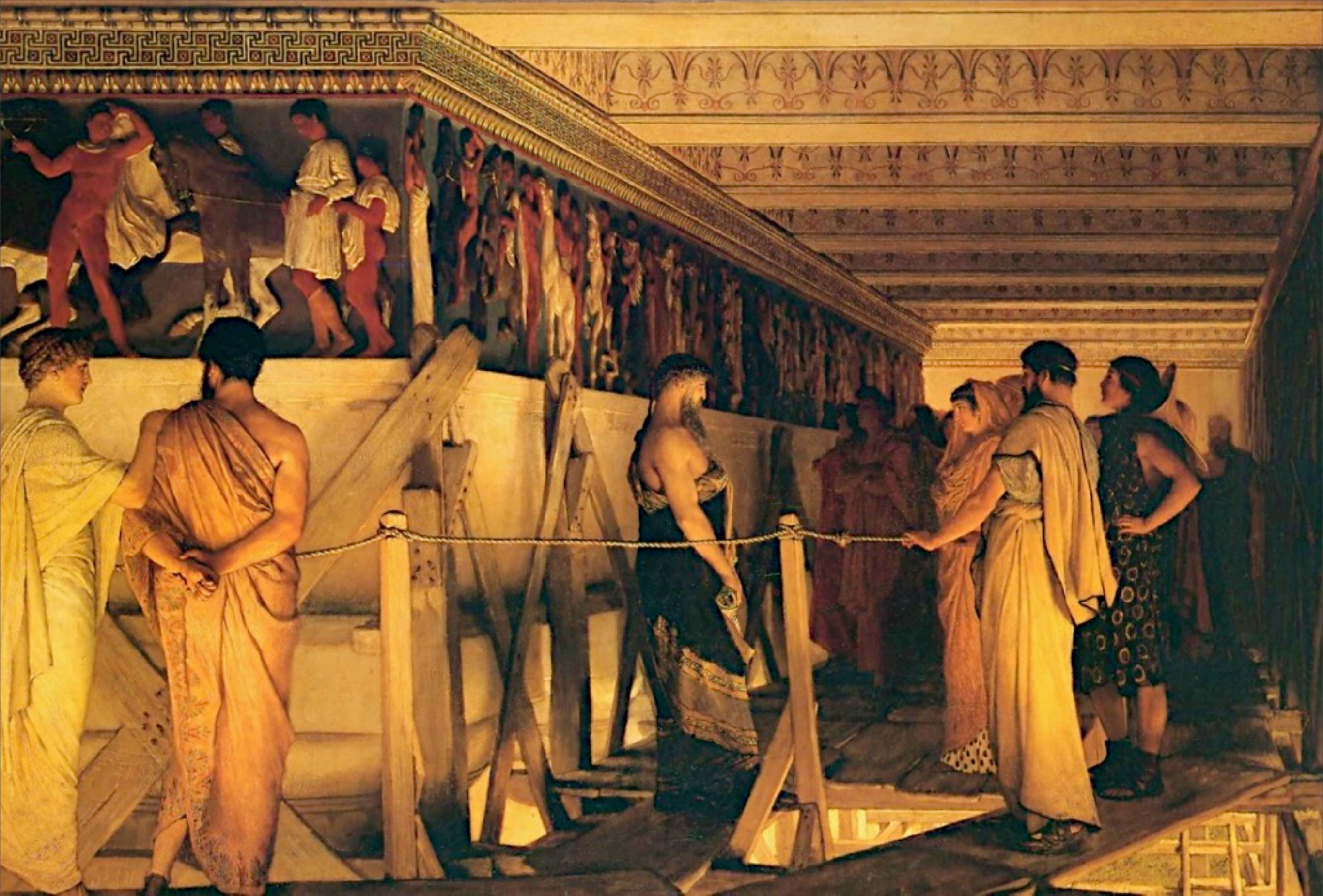
Bring her to trial for "impiety"

Pericles defends her at her trial  
case dismissed.

but his power waning with all  
the enemies after him.  
when dies in 429 losing power.

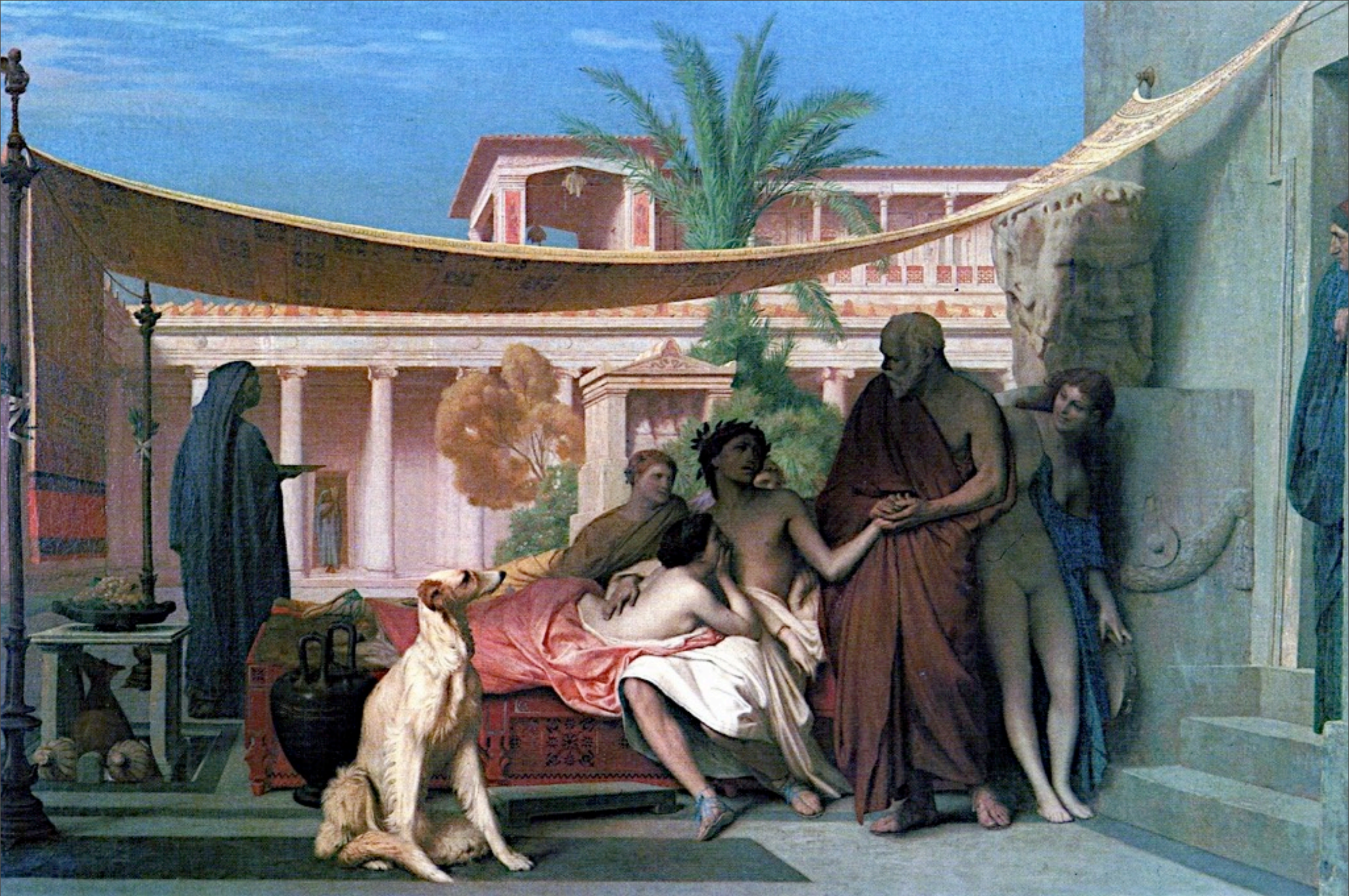






Sculptor Phidias shows Parthenon frieze to Pericles, Aspasia, Alcibiades





Alcibiades at the home of Aspasia with Socrates.



**Pericles' Funeral Oration** is a famous speech from Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*. The speech was delivered by Pericles at the end of the first year of the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BC) as a part of the annual public funeral for the war dead.





# Pericles' Funeral Oration



"If we look to the laws, they afford equal justice to all in their private differences...if a man is able to serve the state, he is not hindered by the obscurity of his condition.

The freedom we enjoy in our government extends also to our ordinary life. There, far from exercising a jealous surveillance over each other, we do not feel called upon to be angry with our neighbor for doing what he likes..." These lines form the roots of the famous phrase "equal justice under law."



# Pericles' Funeral Oration



The liberality of which Pericles spoke also extended to Athens' foreign policy: "We throw open our city to the world, and never by alien acts exclude foreigners from any opportunity of learning or observing, although the eyes of an enemy may occasionally profit by our liberality..." Yet Athens' values of equality and openness do not, according to Pericles, hinder Athens' greatness, indeed, they enhance it, "...advancement in public life falls to reputations for capacity, class considerations not being allowed to interfere with merit...our ordinary citizens, though occupied with the pursuits of industry, are still fair judges of public matters...at Athens we live exactly as we please, and yet are just as ready to encounter every legitimate danger."



# THE GREEK'S DISCOVERY OF THE POWER OF FREEDOM

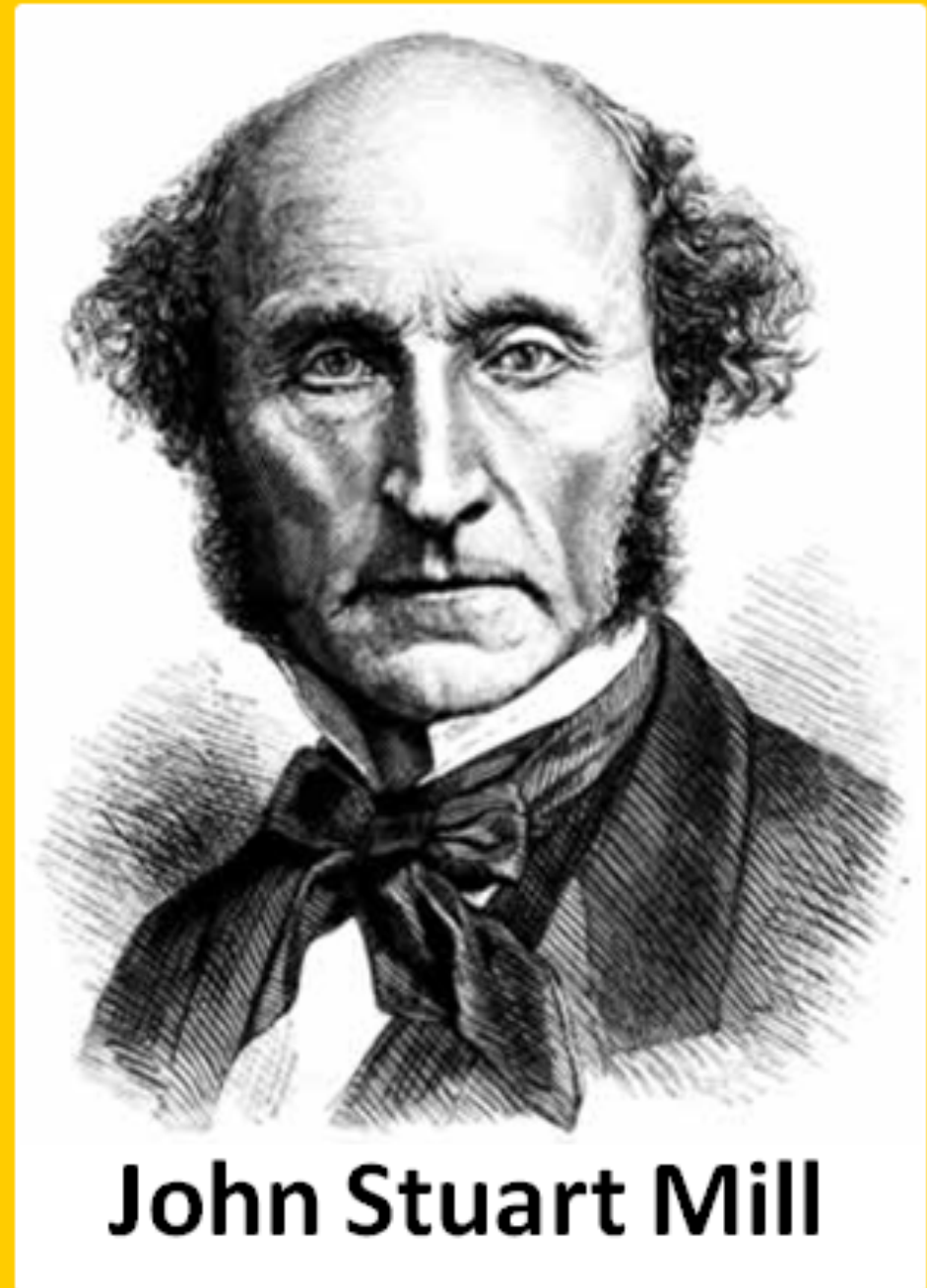
John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, 1859

1. Human beings are most creative when free.
2. Human beings are happiest when free. (?)
3. freedom of speech
4. freedom of print (no restrictions)
5. freedom of association
6. freedom of sexes, equality
7. women's equality and women's vote



# What is liberalism?

People understand their own business, and their own interests better, and care for them more, than the government does or can be expected to do.



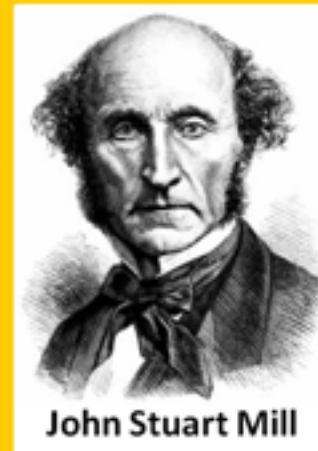
*Graphic by Mark Pack / [www.MarkPack.org.uk](http://www.MarkPack.org.uk)*





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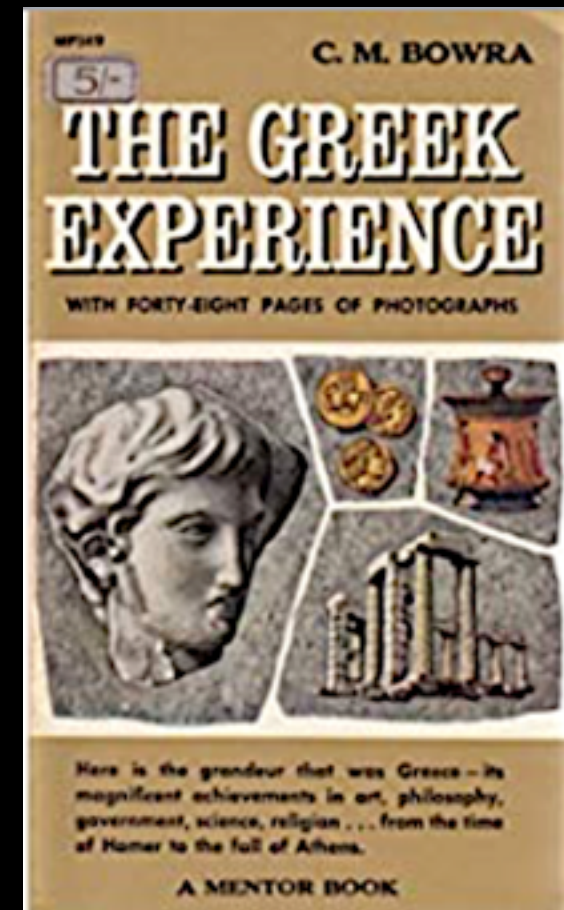
# Athens, Sophocles, Antigone, 445 BC

## Sophoclean Tragedy

"The central idea of a Sophoclean tragedy is that through suffering a man learns to be modest before the gods . . . When [the characters] are finally forced to see the truth, we know that the gods have prevailed and that men must accept their insignificance [their limited powers]." C. M. Bowra



**Sir Cecil Maurice Bowra,**  
1898 – 1971  
was an English classical scholar, literary critic and academic, known for his wit. He was Warden of Wadham College, Oxford, from 1938 to 1970, and served as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford from 1951 to 1954.





## Religion Hesiod: *The Theogony*

most thoroughly anthropomorphic mythology ever.

whole pantheon = human behavior / often poor behavior.

1. no system

2. begins at no fixed time / point / origin.

3. roots stretch back into unchronicled past.

4. no principle prophet or lawgiver (like Moses).

5. no sacred books.

6. no central organized priestly hierarchy (local.many. EX: Delphi).

7. no revealed cosmology (many conflicting).

8. no national religious practices (localized / many ancient mystery)

9. no orthodoxy. just stories, many gods, be careful you dont make them mad at you.

10. no scheme of redemption.( in general afterlife is bad / drab / dull)

11. no divine model for human behavior.( Imitatio Christo).

religion in decline by time of Plato and Aristotle.



# How long did the ancient Greek religion endure?

## **Greek Religion: Continuity and Change in the Hellenistic Period**

Jon D. Mikalson Cam Univ Press 2006

The social, economic, and political changes occasioned by Alexander's expeditions and the wars and policies of his successors brought changes also to religious traditions and practices, but the extent of these changes varied greatly for Greeks living in different parts of the Hellenistic world and in different kinds of cities. Athenians, for example, very conservatively preserved their centuries old religious cults, practices, and festivals, and a fifth-century BC Athenian finding himself in second century BC Athens would have found the religious environment quite familiar, with only a few new and disturbing elements. In Alexandria of the same period, by contrast, there was a most unclassical heterogeneity of Greek, pseudo-Greek, Egyptian, and Jewish deities and religious practices, all in a multiethnic and multicultural cosmopolitan environment more like that of a modern metropolis than that of the Classical Greek city-state. The changes characteristic of Hellenistic Greek religion largely emanated from this religious multiculturalism in Alexandria and other similar metropolitan centers and did eventually affect all parts of the Greek world but some more so than others, some earlier than others, and some differently from others, all to the extent that it is erroneous to imagine a single form of Hellenistic religion that was practised by all of Greeks at any one time



## Athens, Sophocles, Antigone, 445 BC

THIS PLAY, it is generally agreed, was produced before and fairly close to the year 441 B.C.

Sophocles, as we know from a reliable contemporary source, was one of the nine generals elected, with Pericles, for a campaign against the revolt of Samos in that year. The ancient introduction to the play, found in most of the manuscripts, records a tradition that Sophocles owed his election to office to the popularity of Antigone. True or false, this story could only have been based on a widely accepted belief that the play was produced before the year 441.



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# *Characters*

- **Antigone** - Oedipus's daughter
- **Creon** - Oedipus's brother-in-law, king of Thebes
- **Ismene** - Oedipus's daughter
- **Polynices** - Oedipus's son
- **Eteocles** - Oedipus's son
- **Haemon** - Creon's son, Antigones betrothed
- **Tiresias** - The blind soothsayer of Thebes
- **Eurydice** - Creons wife
- **Sentry**
- **Messenger**



## ANTIGONE SUMMARY 1.

Antigone is the subject of a story in which she attempts to secure a respectable burial for her brother Polynices. Oedipus's sons, Eteocles and Polynices, had shared the rule of Thebes jointly until they quarreled, and Eteocles expelled his brother. In Sophocles' account, the two brothers agreed to alternate rule each year, but Eteocles decided not to share power with his brother after his tenure expired. Polynices left the kingdom, gathered an army and attacked the city of Thebes in a conflict called the Seven Against Thebes. Both brothers were killed in the battle. King Creon, who has ascended to the throne of Thebes after the death of the brothers, decrees that Polynices is not to be buried or even mourned, on pain of death by stoning. Antigone, Polynices' sister, defies the king's order but is caught.



## ANTIGONE SUMMARY 2.

Antigone is brought before Creon, and admits that she knew of Creon's law forbidding mourning for Polynices but chose to break it, claiming the superiority of divine over human law, and she defies Creon's cruelty with courage, passion and determination. Sophocles' Antigone ends in disaster. Creon orders Antigone buried alive in a tomb. Although Creon has a change of heart and tries to release Antigone, he finds she has hanged herself. Creon's son Haemon, who was in love with Antigone commits suicide with a knife, and his mother Queen Eurydice, also kills herself in despair over her son's death. She has been forced to weave throughout the entire story, and her death alludes to The Fates. Sophocles' play is a typical Greek tragedy, in which inherent flaws of the characters lead to irrevocable disaster. Antigone and Creon are prototypical tragic figures in an Aristotelian sense (written after with Sophocles plays in mind), as they struggle towards their end.



# Sophocles, Antigone, 445 BC , POLITICS

The story also, by setting Antigone in a political context, draws attention to

the political content of the play,

its concern with the problems of the polis, the city-state. GOVERNMENT

Antigone resurfaces in a highly political context once again in the fourth century (399-300 BC), some sixty years after Sophocles' death; it had by that time become a classic. The orator and statesman **Demosthenes** had the clerk of the court read out **Creon's speech** on the proper loyalties of a citizen (lines 194-214 of the translation) as a lesson in patriotism to his political opponent Aeschines (who had once been a professional actor and had played the part of Creon).

And in that same century Aristotle quoted the play repeatedly in his treatise the Politics.



# Sophocles, Antigone, 445 BC , IDEAS

Do the Gods control everything?

Or do they not?

Do they exist?

Thus all of the Sophoclean plays reflect this century-long search.

The search climaxes in the tragic execution of Socrates (399).

That execution signals the temporary end of the search  
and the triumph of the conservatives who do not want any more doubt.

This philosophical search parallels similar searches and innovations in:

architecture

sculpture

literature

politics

economics



What is the intellectual reality of 5thC Athens

450BC Time of rigorous rational critique of traditional religion

Specific attack: on prophecy and its implication that gods know future.

This attack is in pursuit of the human freedom that was at center of  
5thC Athens Credo. (Pericles)

Athens moving away from the old piety of Aeschylus toward scepticism  
of Thucydides and Euripedes

Protagoras: "the individual man is the measure of all things, of the  
existence of what exists and the nonexistence of what does not..."



# Radical intellectual change

Sophocles living through this radical intellectual change with its drive toward total freedom of man. He senses and expresses the dangers in this play.

The play is a warning about human pride.

Play is filled with warnings about human drive to total freedom / lack of humility.



# Sophocles, *Antigone*, 445 BC , POLITICS

## TIME AND SCENE:

The royal house of Thebes.

It is still night, and the invading armies of Argos have just been driven from the city. Fighting on opposite sides, the sons of Oedipus, Eteocles and Polynices, have killed each other in combat.

Their uncle, CREON, is now king of Thebes.

Enter ANTIGONE, slipping through the central doors of the palace. She motions to her sister, ISMENE, who follows her cautiously toward an altar at the center of the stage.



Enter CREON

from the palace, attended by his guard.

But look, the king of the realm is coming,

Creon, the new man for the new day,  
whatever the gods are sending now ...

what new plan will he launch?

Why this, this special session?

Why this sudden call to the old men  
summoned at one command?

## Creon's political credo.

CREON: My countrymen,  
the ship of state is safe. The gods who rocked her,  
after a long, merciless pounding in the storm,  
have righted her once more.  
Out of the whole city I have called you here alone.  
Well I know, first, your undeviating respect  
for the throne and royal power of King Laius.  
Next, while Oedipus steered the land of Thebes,  
and even after he died, your loyalty was unshakable,  
you still stood by their children. Now then,  
since the two sons are dead—two blows of fate  
in the same day, cut down by each other's hands,  
both killers, both brothers stained with blood—  
as I am next in kin to the dead,



## Creon's political credo.

CREON: I now possess the throne and all its powers. Of course you cannot know a man completely, his character, his principles, sense of judgment, not till he's shown his colors, ruling the people, making laws. Experience, there's the test.

As I see it, whoever assumes the task, the awesome task of setting the city's course, and refuses to adopt the soundest policies but fearing someone, keeps his lips locked tight, he's utterly worthless. So I rate him now, I always have. And whoever places a friend above the good of his own country, he is nothing: I have no use for him.

Zeus my witness, Zeus who sees all things, always—I could never stand by silent, watching destruction march against our city, putting safety to rout,

## Creon's political credo.

Nor could I ever make that man a friend of mine  
who menaces our country.

Remember this:  
our country is our safety.

Only while she voyages true on course  
can we establish friendships, truer than blood itself.  
Such are my standards.  
They make our city great.



## Creon's political credo.

Closely akin to them I have proclaimed,  
just now, the following decree to our people  
concerning the two sons of Oedipus.  
Eteocles, who died fighting for Thebes,  
excelling all in arms: he shall be buried,  
crowned with a hero's honors, the cups we pour  
to soak the earth and reach the famous dead.  
But as for his blood brother, Polynices,  
who returned from exile, home to his father-city  
and the gods of his race, consumed with one desire—  
to burn them roof to roots—who thirsted to drink  
his kinsmen's blood and sell the rest to slavery:  
that man—a proclamation has forbidden the city  
to dignify him with burial, mourn him at all.  
No, he must be left unburied, his corpse  
carrion for the birds and dogs to tear,  
an obscenity for the citizens to behold!  
These are my principles. Never at my hands  
will the traitor be honored above the patriot.

# *Summary*

- Antigone freely confesses her act to Creon and says that he himself defies the will of the gods by refusing Polynices burial .



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CREON: Were you aware of the law?

ANTIGONE: Well aware. How could I avoid it? It was public.

CREON: And still you had the gall to break this law?

ANTIGONE: Of course I did. It wasn't Zeus, not in the least, who made this proclamation—not to me.

Nor did that Justice, dwelling with the gods beneath the earth, ordain such laws for men.

Nor did I think your edict had such force that you, a mere mortal, could override the gods, the great unwritten, unshakable traditions.

They are alive, not just today or yesterday: they live forever, from the first of time, and no one knows when they first saw the light.

These laws—I was not about to break them, not out of fear of some man's wounded pride, and face the retribution of the gods.

Die I must, I've known it all my life—how could I keep from knowing?—even without your death-sentence ringing in my ears.

And if I am to die before my time I consider that a gain. Who on earth, alive in the midst of so much grief as I,

could fail to find his death a rich reward? So for me, at least, to meet this doom of yours

is precious little pain. But if I had allowed my own mother's son to rot, an unburied corpse—

that would have been an agony! This is nothing.

And if my present actions strike you as foolish,

let's just say I've been accused of folly by a fool.

CREON: No? Believe me, the stiffest stubborn wills  
fall the hardest; the toughest iron,  
tempered strong in the white-hot fire,  
you'll see it crack and shatter first of all.  
And I've known spirited horses you can break  
with a light bit—proud, rebellious horses.  
There's no room for pride, not in a slave,  
not with the lord and master standing by.  
This girl was an old hand at insolence  
when she overrode the edicts we made public.  
But once she had done it—the insolence,  
twice over—to glory in it, laughing,  
mocking us to our face with what she'd done.



I am not the man, not now: she is the man  
if this victory goes to her and she goes free.  
Never! Sister's child or closer in blood  
than all my family clustered at my altar  
worshiping Guardian Zeus—she'll never escape,  
she and her blood sister, the most barbaric death.  
Yes, I accuse her sister of an equal part  
in scheming this, this burial.

To his attendants. Bring her here!

I just saw her inside, hysterical, gone to pieces.  
It never fails: the mind convicts itself  
in advance, when scoundrels are up to no good,  
plotting in the dark. Oh but I hate it more  
when a traitor, caught red-handed,  
tries to glorify his crimes.

ANTIGONE: Creon, what more do you want  
than my arrest and execution?

CREON: Nothing. Then I have it all.

ANTIGONE: Then why delay?  
Your moralizing repels me,  
every word you say—pray god it always will.  
So naturally all I say repels you too. Enough.  
Give me glory! What greater glory could I win  
than to give my own brother decent burial?  
These citizens here would all agree,  
To the CHORUS. they would praise me too  
if their lips weren't locked in fear. Pointing to CREON.  
Lucky tyrants—the perquisites of power!  
Ruthless power to do and say whatever pleases them.  
CREON: You alone, of all the people in Thebes,  
see things that way.  
ANTIGONE: They see it just that way  
but defer to you and keep their tongues in leash.



TIRESIAS: The chariot of the sun will not race through so many circuits more, before you have surrendered one born of your own loins, your own flesh and blood, a corpse for corpses given in return, since you have thrust to the world below a child sprung for the world above, ruthlessly lodged a living soul within the grave— then you've robbed the gods below the earth, keeping a dead body here in the bright air, unburied, unsung, unhallowed by the rites. You, you have no business with the dead, nor do the gods above—this is violence you have forced upon the heavens. And so the avengers, the dark destroyers late but true to the mark, now lie in wait for you, the Furies sent by the gods and the god of death to strike you down with the pains that you perfected! There. Reflect on that, tell me I've been bribed. The day comes soon, no long test of time, not now, when the mourning cries for men and women break throughout your halls. Great hatred rises against you— cities in tumult, all whose mutilated sons the dogs have graced with burial, or the wild beasts or a wheeling crow that wings the ungodly stench of carrion

Creon's crime.

# The Tragic Ending

## *Summary*

- They went in and saw Antigone hanging from a noose, and Haemon raving. Creon's son then took a sword and thrust it at his father. Missing, he turned the sword against himself and died embracing Antigone's body.





# The Tragic Ending

## *Summary*

- Creon's wife, Eurydice, hears this terrible news and rushes away into the palace.



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## Creon's fate.

MESSENGER: Neighbors,  
friends of the house of Cadmus and the kings,  
there's not a thing in this mortal life of ours  
I'd praise or blame as settled once for all.

Fortune lifts and Fortune fells the lucky  
and unlucky every day.  
No prophet on earth can tell a man his fate.

Take Creon:  
there was a man to rouse your envy once,  
as I see it. He saved the realm from enemies,  
taking power, he alone, the lord of the fatherland,  
he set us true on course—he flourished like a tree  
with the noble line of sons he bred and reared ...



# What is Sophocles' philosophy of life?

Does he believe in an order to the universe?  
(think of both Oedipus and Antigone) Yes.

a) has an intellectual faith that there is a LOGOS to the universe as did all his friends and all of his Periclean Athens. All of 5thC Athens lived by this faith in an Order to Nature and Universe.

b) the individual needs balance / a kind of wisdom  
need know who you are  
need know where you are in universe  
need wisdom / balance / proportion  
(all go together=Athena=Parthenon)

c) believes in the essential DIGNITY OF MAN  
See closing speech. Oedipus at Colonus.  
Oedipus contending is heroic=seeks truth no matter what

and THE WONDER OF MAN  
See Chorus, pp. 76-77, the wonder of man (in Antigone)  
(compare this conception of man in Genesis and Lao Tzu)

# Wonders of Man

CHORUS: Numberless wonders  
terrible wonders walk the world but none the match for man—  
that great wonder crossing the heaving gray sea,  
driven on by the blasts of winter  
on through breakers crashing left and right,  
holds his steady course  
and the oldest of the gods he wears away—  
the Earth, the immortal, the inexhaustible—  
as his plows go back and forth, year in, year out  
with the breed of stallions turning up the furrows.  
And the blithe, lightheaded race of birds he snares,  
the tribes of savage beasts, the life that swarms the depths—  
with one fling of his nets  
woven and coiled tight, he takes them all,  
man the skilled, the brilliant!  
He conquers all, taming with his techniques  
the prey that roams the cliffs and wild lairs,  
training the stallion, clamping the yoke across  
his shaggy neck, and the tireless mountain bull.  
And speech and thought, quick as the wind  
and the mood and mind for law that rules the city—



# Wonders of Man

all these he has taught himself  
and shelter from the arrows of the frost  
when there's rough lodging under the cold clear sky  
and the shafts of lashing rain—  
ready, resourceful man! Never without resources  
never an impasse as he marches on the future—  
only Death, from Death alone he will find no rescue  
but from desperate plagues he has plotted his escapes.  
Man the master, ingenious past all measure  
past all dreams, the skills within his grasp—  
he forges on, now to destruction  
now again to greatness. When he weaves in  
the laws of the land, and the justice of the gods  
that binds his oaths together  
he and his city rise high—  
but the city casts out  
that man who weds himself to inhumanity  
thanks to reckless daring.  
Never share my hearth  
never think my thoughts,  
whoever does such things.

# What is the nature of Sophoclean tragedy?

that man so great, man so powerful, man so brilliant still fails.

thus the tragedy is his tragic contending against his own imperfect self.  
Not against gods and gods powers.

thus Sophocles' TRAGEDY

reflects perfectly the high ideals of Periclean Athens at mid-century

the balanced power of the figure of the Artemision Zeus:  
Man contending with self and own limitations.

Tragedy of life for Sophocles is that man is imperfect  
not that he is evil. (compare to Genesis)

Thus Sophocles dramatic method and his phil message are the same.





Age of Sophocles

496 - 406

Sophocles born 6 years before Marathon.















