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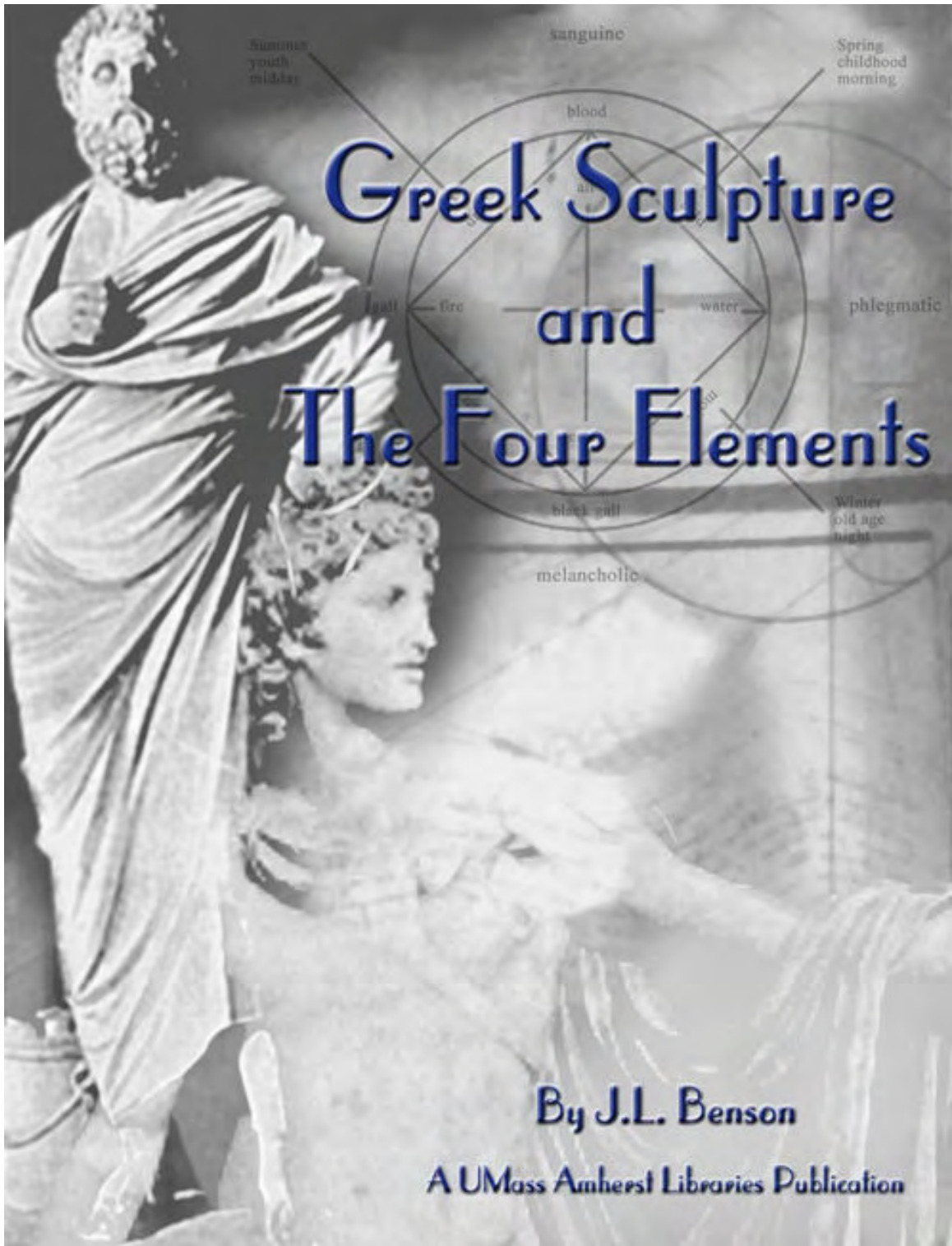
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*Cover design by Jeff Belizaire*

## About this book

This is one part of the first comprehensive study of the development of Greek sculpture and painting with the aim of enriching the usual stylistic-sociological approaches through a serious, disciplined consideration of the basic Greek scientific orientation to the world. This world view, known as the Four Elements Theory, came to specific formulation at the same time as the perfected contrapposto of Polykleitos and a concern with the four root colors in painting (Polygnotos). All these factors are found to be intimately intertwined, for, at this stage of human culture, the spheres of science and art were not so drastically differentiated as in our era.

The world of the four elements involved the concepts of polarity and complementarism at every level. One of the most important results of this approach, taken first mainly on the basis of an analysis of sculpture, is a deeper understanding of the conventional articulation of Greek art (and culture) into large characteristic periods. However, in order to understand the finer subdivisions of these periods, it was necessary to supplement the concern with the four elements as a dynamic system of macrocosmic-microcosmic relationships with a study of the Greek conception of the mind, on the basis both of hints in ancient literature, mythology and art and of certain aspects of modern psychology. The result of this is a different kind of understanding than hitherto suggested for the motivating forces behind our conventional sub-periods. Other laborers in this field have been Bruno Snell and J. J. Pollitt.

Essentially this book presents a new way of seeing Greek art through thought structures based on the work of the Greek natural philosophers themselves. Among these, Empedokles is at last accorded the commanding position he deserves to occupy for his contribution.

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# **GREEK SCULPTURE AND THE FOUR ELEMENTS**

**A Psycho-Historical Investigation**

**J. L. Benson**

Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries, 2000



## ***HYMN TO THE FOUR ELEMENTS***

### *Sirenen*

Welch feuriges Wunder verklärt uns die Wellen,  
Die gegeneinander sich funkelnd zerschellen?  
So leuchtet's und schwanket und hellet hinan:  
Die Körper, sie glühen auf nächtlicher Bahn,  
Und ringsum ist alles vom Feuer umronnen;  
So herrsche denn Eros, der alles begonnen!

Heil dem Meer! Heil den Wogen!  
Von dem heiligen Feuer umzogen!  
Heil dem Wasser! Heil dem Feuer!  
Heil dem seltnen Abenteuer!

### *All-Alle*

Heil den mildgewognen Lüften!  
Heil geheimnisreichen Grüften!  
Hoch gefeiert seid allhier,  
Element' ihr alle vier!

### *Sirens*

The waves are transfigured with fire-laden wonder,  
They glitter in impact, in flame leap asunder  
Here's shining and swaying, and spurting of light,  
With forms all aglow in the track of the night,  
And lapping of fire touches all things around:  
Let Eros who wrought it be honoured and crowned!

Hail to the Ocean! Hail to the wave!  
The flood with holy fire to lave!  
Waters hail! All hail the fire!  
The strange event hail we in choir!

### *All voices in concert*

Hail light airs now floating free!  
Hail earth's caves of mystery!  
Held in honour evermore  
Be the elemental four!

— JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE

*Faust II*, Act 2, "Klassische Walpurgisnacht"

*Translated by Philip Wayne*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Preface
- List of figures
- List of schematic illustrations
- Credits
- Introduction
- Chapter I: Toward Defining the Ego: Greek and Modern Viewpoints
  - The Three Faculties of the Ego
  - Recapitulation and Interpretation of Dilthey's "Structure of a World View"
  - The Author's Conception of How "The Structure of a World View" May Throw Light on Greek Art
- Chapter II: Examples of Period-setting in Studies of Greek Art (or Greek Sculpture) in Modern Scholarship
- Chapter III: Human Consciousness and Time
  - Justification of the Periods
  - The Cyclical Quality of Greek Art
- Chapter IV: Form and Time: Reasoning about an Existential Basis for our Style Periods
  - Setting the Archaic Period
  - When did the Archaic Period end?
  - Setting the Protoclassical Period
  - Setting the Classical Period
    - Picturing the cyclical stages in broadest terms
    - Contrapposto in the World of Four Elements philosophy
    - From dynamic ponderation to contrapposto
    - The "destiny" of contrapposto
  - Setting the Protohellenistic Period
    - The larger problem
    - The specific problem
    - The walking position in sculpture
    - The new ponderation in relief
  - Setting the Hellenistic Period
- Chapter V: A Detailed Study of the Emergence and Significance of Contrapposto
  - Introduction
  - The Canon as Evolved Prototype
  - The Development of Dynamic Ponderation
  - Abstracting the Elements of Dynamic Ponderation
  - Art as Science and Science as Art
  - Abstracting the Elements of Dynamic Ponderation: Illustrations 2–3
  - The Longer Perspective
- Epilogue: On Philosophers and Artists
- Appendix A: Diagrams illustrating the progressive governance of the Four Elements Cycle by Each Element in Turn
- Appendix B: The Structure of a World View (as conceived by Wilhelm Dilthey)
- Appendix C: Triadism in the History of 19th and Early 20th Century Psychology
- Appendix D: Comments on the Question of Mineral Weight in the Canon
- Bibliography
- Notes

## LIST OF FIGURES

Abbreviations follow Select Bibliography except some explained within the List of Figures.

### Half-tones

- Fig. 1** Bronze statuette Metropolitan Museum, New York: Herakles (?) and Centaur. 8th century B.C.
- Fig. 2** Bronze horse Antikenmuseum Berlin 8th century B.C. H.O.16.
- Fig. 3a–b** Bronze Statuette Museum of Fine Arts Boston: Apollo (votive of Mantiklos). H.O.20 Early 7th century B.C.
- Fig. 4** Ivory panel of bed-head Baghdad(?) Figure grasping palmetto-tree. From Nimrud Later 8th century B.C. M. Mallowan, *Nimrud and its Remains* v. II (London 1966) fig. 391.
- Fig. 5** Bronze statuette NM Delphi Mid-7th century B.C. H.O.20.
- Fig. 6** Limestone statue NM Cairo: Ranufer Ca. 2500 B.C.
- Fig. 7** Marble kouros Metropolitan Museum, New York, Ca. 620 B.C. G. Richter 1969, Fig. 54.
- Fig. 8** Marble kore Pergamon Museum Berlin Ca. 580 B.C. G. Richter 1969, Fig. 66.
- Fig. 9** Marble kouros NM Athens from Anavysos Ca. 530/525 B.C. G. Richter 1969, Fig. 85.
- Fig. 10** Attic blackfigure amphora Vatican Museum: Achilles and Ajax. Ca. 530 B.C. E. Buschor, *Die griechischen Vasen* (Munich 1940) fig. 130.
- Fig. 11** Opposite side of fig 10 with Return of the Dioskouroi. Ca. 570 B.C.
- Fig. 12** Marble panel North frieze of Treasury of the Siphnians, Delphi: (detail, gods and giants). Ca. 525 B.C. H.O.64.
- Fig. 13** Identification as fig.12.
- Fig. 14** Marble statuary East pediment of Old Athena Temple, Acropolis: Athena and Giant. 520–510 B.C. H.2.0 G. Richter 1969, fig. 107.
- Fig. 15** Marble panel (detail) NM Athens: base of athlete's statue 510–500 B.C. H.O.317. G. Richter 1969, fig. 109.



- Fig. 16** Attic redfigure kylix (detail) MvWagner Museum inv. 1479 Würzburg: comast and hetaira; attributed to the Brygos Painter. 500–480 B.C. pl. 154.
- Fig. 17** Marble metope (no. 21) Treasury of the Athenians, Delphi 500–480 B.C. After de la Coste Messelière, *Fouilles de Delphes IV*, 4 (Paris 1957) pl. 60.
- Fig. 18** Marble statuary Glyptothek Munich from Aphaia Temple, Aigina. 500–480 B.C. D. Ohly 1976, pl. 73.
- Fig. 19** Attic redfigure kylix (detail) Staatliche Museen Berlin inv. 2309: satyrs cavorting; attributed to the Dokimasia Painter “perhaps 480”.
- Fig. 20** Attic redfigure kantharos (detail) Musees Royaux de l’Archeologie et d’Histoire, Brussels A718: Herakles and Amazons. 490/480 B.C.
- Fig. 21** Attic redfigure belly amphora (detail) Staatliche Museen Berlin F 2159: scene of wrestling. Ca. 525–520.
- Fig. 22** Marble kouros NM Athens from Ptoon (no. 20). 515–500 B.C. H.1.03. G. Richter 1970(2), fig. 450.
- Fig. 23** Marble kouros NM Athens no. 3686 from Keos. 530–525 B.C. H. “overlife-size” G. Richter 1970(2), fig. 419.
- Fig. 24** Back view of fig. 23. G. Richter 1970(2), fig. 422.
- Fig. 25** Back view of fig. 22. G. Richter 1970(2), fig. 451.
- Fig. 26** Marble kouros Acropolis Museum no. 692 from Athens. 500–480 B.C. H.O.87. G. Richter 1970(2), fig. 464.
- Fig. 27** Back view of fig. 26. Richter 1970(2), fig. 465.
- Fig. 28** Bronze statuette NM Athens no. 6445 from Athens. 500–480 B.C. H.O.273. G. Richter 1970(2), fig. 474.
- Fig. 29** Back view of fig. 28. Richter 1970(2) fig. 475.
- Fig. 30** Bronze kouros Louvre Paris from sea at Piombino. 500–480 B.C. (?). H.1.15. M. Collingnon I, p. 312.
- Fig. 31** Marble kouros Acropolis Museum no. 698 (“Kritios Boy”). Ca. 480 B.C. H.O.86.
- Fig. 32** Side view of fig. 31.
- Fig. 33** Attic redfigure Panathenaic amphora (detail) MvWagner Museum Würzburg (from Vulci): Herakles; by the Berlin Painter. 500–490 B.C.

- Fig. 34** Attic redfigure neck amphora (detail) Harrow School (England): satyr; by the Kleophrades Painter 500–490 B.C. J. Boardman 1975, fig. 140.
- Fig. 35** Attic redfigure cup (detail) Berlin Staatliche Museen inv. 2269 from Chiusi; lovers; by the Kiss Painter. 500–480 B.C.
- Fig. 36** Attic redfigure belly amphora (detail) MvWagner Museum Würzburg: warrior's return; by the Kleophrades Painter. 500–490 B.C. Furtwängler-Reichhold. *Griechische Vasenmalerei: Auswahl hervorragender Vasenbilder.* (Munich 1909) pl. 113
- Fig. 37** Another scene from the foregoing: revellers.
- Fig. 38** Marble statue NM Naples: Roman copy of Doryphoros of Polykeitos. Original: Ca. 440 B.C. H.2.12.
- Fig. 39** Repeats fig. 31
- Fig. 40** Bronze statue NM Delphi: charioteer. 480–470 B.C. H.1.80.
- Fig. 41** Marble statue NM Olympia: Oinomaos from east pediment. Ca. 470 B.C. H.2.95.
- Fig. 42** Marble statue NM Olympia: Apollo from west pediment. Ca. 460 B.C. H.
- Fig. 43** Marble metope NM Olympia Zeus Temple: Augean Stables. 470–460 B.C. H.1.60. Yalouris, Olympia, fig. 202.
- Fig. 44** Marble metope NM Olympia Zeus Temple: Apples of the Hesperides. 470–460 B.C. H.1.60.
- Fig. 45** Marble kouros NM Athens no. 45: Omphalos Apollo (Roman copy). Original: 460–450 B.C. H.1.77. M. Collingnon I, fig. 15.
- Fig. 46** Bronze statue NM Reggio di Calabria: bearded man. 460–450 B.C.
- Fig. 47** Repeats fig. 38.
- Fig. 48** Marble metope British Museum London Parthenon no. 31: Lapith and centaur 450–440 B.C. H.1.48.
- Fig. 49** Marble panel NM Athens: Eleusinian votive relief. 440–430 B.C. H.2.40. M. Collingnon I, fig. 68.
- Fig. 50** Marble statue NM Athens: "Diadoumenos" (Roman copy). 420–410 B.C. H.1.86. E. von Mach, *Greek Sculpture* (Boston 1903) pl. XXII fig. 3
- Fig. 51** Marble statues Erechtheion Athens: "Karyatids" 420–410 B.C. H.2.31.

- Fig. 52** Marble panel British Museum London: from frieze of Apollo Temple at Phigaleia: Amazonomachy. 410–400 B.C. H.O.64.
- Fig. 53** Marble grave relief NM Athens inv. 3624: Hegeso. 410–400 B.C. H.1.49. M. Collingnon I, pl. IV.
- Fig. 54** Marble statue Staatliche Museen Munich: Eirene and Ploutos (Roman copy). Original: 380–370 B.C. H.1.99. W. R. Biers AG, fig. 9-9.
- Fig. 55** Marble statue NM Olympia: Hermes and Dionysos. Ca. 350 B.C. H.2.13. W. R. Biers AG, fig. 9-20.
- Fig. 56** Bronze statue NM Athens from Piraeus: Athena. Ca. 350 B.C.
- Fig. 57** Marble panel British Museum London from Halikarnassos: Amazonomachy no. 1022 ascribed to Timotheos. Ca. 350 B.C. H.O.89.
- Fig. 58** Marble grave stele NM Athens from Ilissos. 350–340 B.C. H.1.68. M. Collingnon (1911), fig. 82.
- Fig. 59** Marble panel NM Athens from Mantinea: three muses. Ca. 375 B.C. M. Collingnon (1911), p. 192.
- Fig. 60** Marble statue Metropolitan Museum, NY: wounded Amazon (Roman Copy, probably after Polykleitos) Ca. 440–430 B.C. G. Richter 1969, fig. 163.
- Fig. 61** Bronze statue NM Athens from Cape Artemision: god with missile. 470–460 B.C. H.2.09.
- Fig. 62** Marble statue Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden: Maenad after Skopas (Roman copy). 350–340 B.C.
- Fig. 63** Marble statue Agora Museum Athens: akroterion from Stoa of Zeus. 410–400 B.C.
- Fig. 64** Marble grave stele Kerameikos Museum Athens: Dexileos. Ca. 390 B.C. H.1.75. M. Collingnon I, fig. 89.
- Fig. 65** Marble statue NM Delphi: Agias. 350–340 B.C. H.1.97.
- Fig. 66** Marble statue Vatican Museum: Scraper by Lysippos (Roman copy). 340–330 B.C. H.2.05 E. von Mach, fig. 16 (opp. p. 290).
- Fig. 67** Bronze statuette Louvre Paris: Alexander with the lance. 330–300 B.C.
- Fig. 68** Marble statue Vatican Museum: Apollo Belvedere attributed to Leochares (Roman copy). Original: 330–300 B.C. H.2.24. M. Collingnon I, fig. 161.

- Fig. 69** Bronze statue Galerie Beyeler Basel “Homme qui marche” 1980 H.1.82. “Alberto Giacometti” by Alexander Watt in *Studio International Art* January 1964 p.24. (Priam Publications London).
- Fig. 70** Wooden statue Egyptian Museum Cairo Ka’aper from Sakkara. Ca. 2400 B.C. H.1.10. H. Schaefer and W. Andrae, *Die Kunst des Alten Orients* (1928) p. 239L.
- Fig. 71** Gilded wooden statuette Egyptian Museum Cairo Tutankhamen as Horus from Sakkara. 1340 B.C. H.O.695.
- Fig. 72** Bronze statuette Metropolitan Museum NY Herakles from Arkadia Ca. 530 B.C. H.O.12.
- Fig. 73** Bronze statuette Staatliche Museen Berlin (West) Zeus from Dodona. Ca. 460 B.C. H.O.138.
- Fig. 74** Limestone metope NM Delphi Cattle theft by heroes from monopteros of Sikyon. Ca. 560 B.C. H.O.58.
- Fig. 75** Marble coffin NM Istanbul the “Alexander Sarcophagus” 320–300 B.C. G. Richter SSG, fig. 748.
- Fig. 76** Marble statue Lateran Museum Rome Sophokles 335–330 B.C. M. Collingnon I, fig. 178.
- Fig. 77** Marble statue Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek Copenhagen: Demosthenes (Roman Copy) 300–280 B.C. H.2.07. G. Richter SSG, fig. 757.
- Fig. 78** Marble Statue NM Rome: Gaul and wife 230–200 B.C. H. 2.11. M. Collingnon I, fig. 258.
- Fig. 79** Marble panel Pergamon Museum Berlin: Athena and Giants from Altar of Pergamon. 230–200 B.C. H.2.30. M. Collingnon I, fig. 272.
- Fig. 80** Marble statue Capitoline Museum Rome: drunken woman. 2nd–1st century B.C. H.O.92.
- Fig. 81** Marble statue Louvre Paris: “Borghese Warrior”. 2nd–1st century B.C. H.1.55. M. Bieber 1961, fig. 688.
- Fig. 82** Marble statue Louvre Paris: Aphrodite of Melos 2nd–1st century B.C. H.2.04. M. Bieber 1961, fig. 674.
- Fig. 83** Marble statue NM Naples: Orestes and Elektra. 2nd–1st century B.C. H.1.50. M. Collingnon I, fig. 347.

## **LIST OF SCHEMATIC ILLUSTRATIONS**

- III. 1**      Weight of air
- III. 2**      Development of contrapposto in the three-dimensional figure
- III. 3**      Development of contrapposto in relief composition
- III. 3bis**    Cross-balance between light and gravity
- III. 4**      Macrocosmic processes
- III. 5**      Microcosmic processes

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- Piper Verlag GmbH, Munich: 10
- Martin von Wagner Museum, Universitaet-Wuerzburg: 33
- Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek, Munich: 18
- Author’s sketches: 19, 35, 65, 67, 71
- British School at Athens Archives: 22–29
- Saskia Cultural Enterprises, Freeport (Maine): 31–32
- Keepers and Governors of Harrow School: 34
- Soprintendenza Archeologico delle Provinzie di Napoli e Caserta: 38
- American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Alison Frantz Collection: 41–44
- Soprintendenza Archeologico della Calabria Reggio Calabria: 46 (su concessione del Ministero Beni Attività Culturei)
- British Museum, London: 48, 52, 57
- Cornell University Press, Ithaca (New York): 54–55
- Deutsches Archaeologisches Institut, Athens: 58
- Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden: 62
- American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Agora Excavations: 63
- Archaeological Museum, Istanbul: 75
- Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen: 77
- Archivio Fotografico dei Musei Capitolini: 60
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