# Sculpture in Ancient Greece and the Renaissance

By Rudolf Steiner

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### Lecture IX

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*Dornach,*
*January 24, 1917*

I have often quoted Goethe's saying, when he felt in Italy the echo of the nature of Greek Art. I may remind you of it once again today, now that we shall show a few representations of Greek sculpture. Goethe was writing from Italy to his friends in Weimer. He had seen something in Italy of the Grecian Art, and he had divined still more. He had made acquaintance with it. And he wrote: After this experience he had become convinced that in the creation of their works of art the Greeks proceeded according to the same laws by which Nature herself proceeds — and he himself was on the track of their discovery.

This saying of Goethe's always seemed to me of deep and lasting significance. Goethe at that moment divined that something was living in the Greeks, in intimate unison with the laws of the great Universe. Already before his journey to Italy, he had been trying to discover the principle of universal evolution and becoming. He had done so, above all, in his Theory of Metamorphosis. He found that the manifold forms of

Nature can be referred to certain typical or fundamental forms, in which is expressed the spiritual Law and Essence that underlies the outer things. He started, as you know, from Botany — the study of the Plant world. He tried to perceive the growth of the plant in this way: A single fundamental organ, whose basic form he recognized in the leaf, undergoes constant metamorphoses. All organs are transformations of this one. Not only so, but having thus begun, he sought to understand the several plant species as diverse manifestations of one archetypal form, the primary plant.

Likewise he looked for a connecting thread throughout the world of animals. We have often spoken of this work of Goethe's. But, as a rule, we have not a sufficiently vivid conception of what he intended. We are wont to conceive things too abstractly, and we do so in this case. Goethe, if I may put it thus, wanted to take hold in a really living way of the life of living things, in their organic metamorphosis. He wanted to discover the principle on which Nature works. In so doing, he was, indeed, steering straight towards what must be the characteristic of the Science of the fifth post-Atlantean age, even as that which the Greeks conceived and expressed in their works of art was characteristic of the fourth.

In this connection I have often called upon you to observe what is recognizable in the Golden Age of

Greek Art, and notably of Grecian sculpture, in so far as it been preserved for us. The Greek artist created from an altogether different starting point. He had a certain feeling. To express it in our fully concrete way, we must describe it thus: He felt how the Etheric Body in its living forces and mobility underlies the forms and movements of the Physical. He felt how the Etheric is manifested or portrayed in the forms of the Physical Body, while in the movements of the latter the living forces that abound in the Etheric Body come to expression.

The Greek art of Gymnastics, the Greek Athletics, were built on this foundation. Those who partook in them were to gain thereby a real feeling of what lives invisibly within the visible being of man. And in his plastic art the Greek wanted to portray what he himself experienced in his own nature. All this, as I have often said, grew different in later times, for afterwards men copied what they saw before them with their eyes, what they had outwardly before them. The Greek copies what he felt within himself. He did not work after the model as was done in later times — (whether they do so more or less obviously or indistinctly is not the point). To work from the model is only a peculiarity of the Fifth post-Atlantean age. Nevertheless, in this very age there must arise a new view of Nature, for which the living starting-point is given in Goethe's “Metamorphosis.” True, there are weighty obstacles, as yet, to such a

view of Nature. In this sphere, as in all others, materialistic prejudices stand in the way of a healthy conception of existence. The latter will have to work its way forth in the overcoming of these hindrances. We have to witness in our time things that are little noticed yet — movements that tend in the long run to brutalize even the artistic life. Goethe recognized in a beautiful way the connection between Truth in knowledge or science and Truth in Art, in practice. Science to him was still a living life within the Spirit.

Among the hindrances in this regard is one thing to which — if able to look more deeply into all the impulses of hindrance and of progress in our time — we cannot give a pleasant name. I refer to what are now called sports and games, athletics and the like, which — if we look more deeply — are also largely among the forces of hindrance in modern civilization. I can describe them in no other way, than as a tendency to degrade civilization to the level of the ape. Modern sports and athletics — themselves an outcome of the materialistic conception of life — represent, as it were, the other pole. At the one pole, materialism tends to conceive man as a merely more perfect ape, while at the other pole — through many of the activities that fall under the heading of sport — they are working hard to turn him into a kind of carnivorous monkey. The two things run parallel with one another. Needless to say, modern sports and games and athletics are regarded

as a great sign of progress. Indeed, they are often thought of as a kind of resurrection of the spirit of ancient Greece. But in their real essence they can only be described as working towards the ideal, to "monkeyfy" the human race. What can become of man if he proceeds along this path of modern sports, etc? Precisely a "monkeyfied" man, whose chief distinction from the real monkey will lie in the fact that the latter is a vegetarian, while monkeyfied man — presumably — will be a carnivorous species of monkey. The hindrances that face us in the civilization of today must sometimes be described grotesquely; otherwise we do not describe them strongly enough to bring them home — however little — to the people of today. It is quite in keeping with the propensities of our time: On the one hand theoretically, they are at pains to understand Man as a more perfect ape, while on the other hand in practice they work to bring out the apishness of Man. For if that human being were developed, who is the underlying ideal of the extreme movements in sports and games today, a scientist could truly describe him in no other way, than in all essentials as an offshoot of the ape-nature.

We must think truly on these matters, to gain some understanding of those noble forms of Humanity which underlay the Golden Age of Grecian Art. It was inevitable in the Fifth Post-Atlantean age, for man to leave behind him his life within the spiritual ... The

ancient Greek was living in it still. When he moved his hand, he knew that the Spiritual — the etheric body — was in movement. Hence, too, as a creative artist, in all that he imparted to the physical material, he strove to create, as it were, the expression of what he felt within him — the movement of the etheric body. The man of today must go a different path. By way of outward vision, contemplation, — combined with the living Imagination of the weaving of the Ethereal in the organic realm, — he must bring ancient Greece to life again on a higher level, permeated this time by conscious knowledge, according to the true impulses of the fifth post-Atlantean age. In an elementary way, Goethe was striving towards this end in his Theory of Metamorphosis.

Goethe lived with his whole being in this striving towards a living conception of the Spiritual in the world. For this reason he was glad to refresh and strengthen himself by all that came to him from the study of Greek Art.

To understand the art of ancient Greece in its proper nature — its characteristics entirely a product of the mood of soul of the fourth post Atlantean age — we must start from such ideas as we have just set forth. In this respect it is interesting to see how the Greek Art found its way. Few of the original works have been preserved. Most of them are only handed down to us through later copies. It was with the help of later copies

that a man like Winckelmann, in the 18th century, strove so wonderfully to recognize the essence of the art of ancient Greece. Winckelmann, Lessing and Goethe, in the latter half of the 18th century, tried to express in words the essence of Greek Art — tried to find their way back, to re-discover it. And we may truly say: Greek Art in its essence, once it is really grasped, can bring salvation from the perils of materialism.

It would take us too far afield if I were to give you even an outline sketch of the real history, the occult history of Greek Art. Only this much may be said, in connection with the illustrations we shall see today. Even in the early works of the Fifth or of the end of the Sixth century B.C., the relics of which have come down to us; the underlying foundation which I described just now is clearly recognizable. Albeit, in that early period the Greeks had not yet the ability to express through the material what they experienced within, nevertheless even in the archaic forms, imperfect as they are, we can see that the artist's creation is based on a feeling of the inner life and movement of the etheric body. By this means the Greek could find the way to raise the human form so marvellously to the Divine. The Greek was well aware that the figures of his Gods were based on real Being in the ethereal universe. Out of this there arose quite instinctively (for everything in that time was more or less instinctive) the need to represent the world of the Gods and all that was connected with them, in

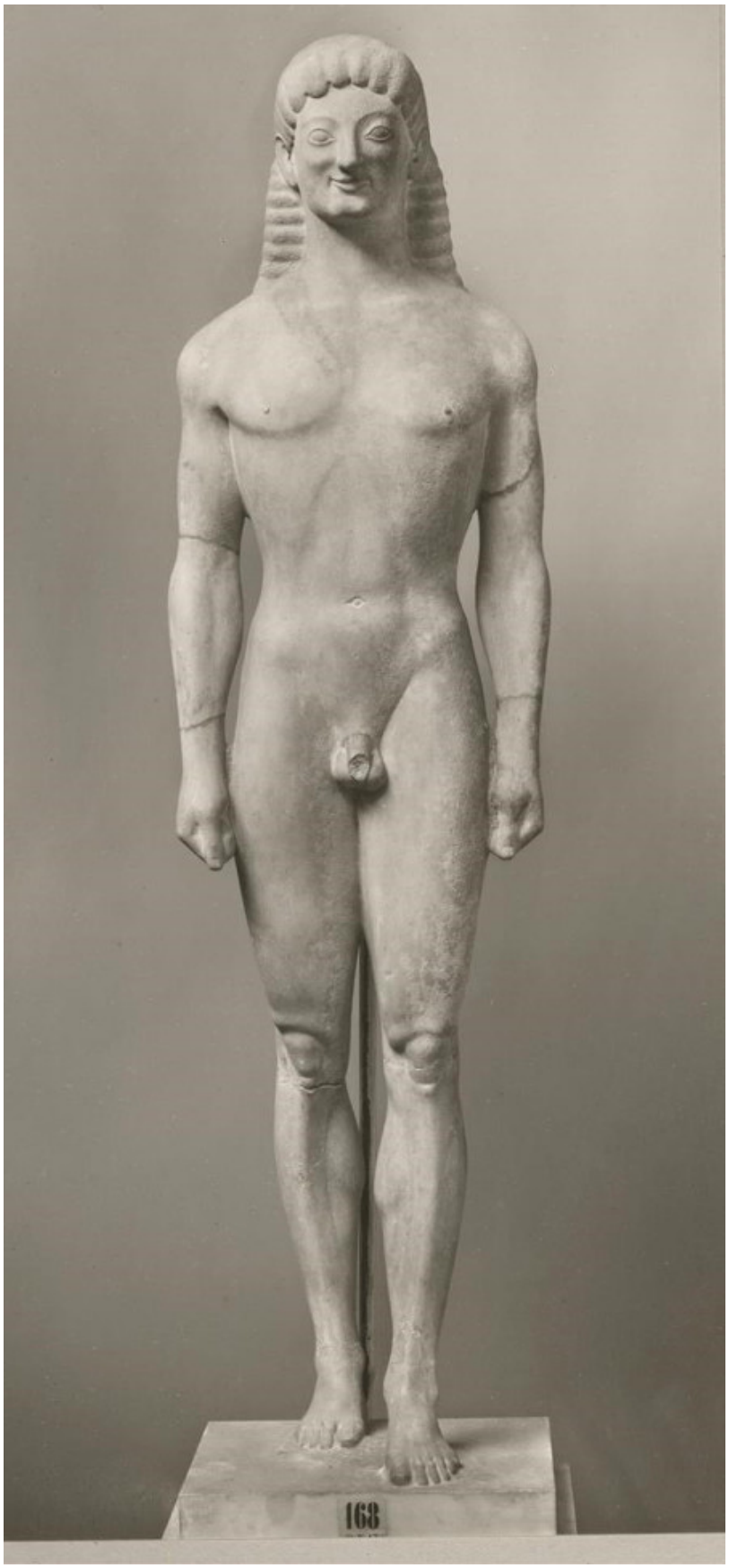
such a way that the outer form was the human form idealized. The point was by no means merely to idealize the Human — that is only the idea of an age that fails to understand the real depths. *Through* the idealized human form they were able to express what lives and weaves in the ethereal life.

In the earliest pictures we shall still see a certain stiffness; but even here it can be seen that the shaping of the limbs proceeds from a true feeling for the ethereal in movement.

Then as we go on to Myron and bring some of his works before our souls, we shall see how what first came to expression only in the forming of the limbs, begins to take hold of the whole body. In Myron we already see how when an arm is moved — or represented in movement — it means something for the whole breathing organism, the forming of the chest. The human being as a whole is felt through and through. And this must have been the case to the highest degree in Phidias and his School and in Polycletus — in the Golden Age of ancient Greece. Thereafter we find a gradual descent of Art from this sublime feeling of the ethereal. Not that the ethereal is left out; but they now try to master the actual forms of Nature, they follow the forms of Nature more faithfully, more humanly and less divinely. Nevertheless, the forms are still an expression of the living etheric movement within.

In looking at the several pictures, we shall be less concerned to discuss the individual artists; we chiefly want to see the gradual evolution of the Grecian Art as a whole. Nor does it matter so much, whether we speak — as the historians of Art are wont to do — of a decline in the latest works. In the earlier period the body was conceived, as it were, more in position, thus a certain restfulness or repose pervades the older works. Movement itself is conceived as though it had come to rest. We have the feeling that the artist endeavours to represent the body in such a way that the position in which the figure is might be a lasting one. The later artists strive for a more dramatic quality, holding fast the moment of time in the progressive movement. Thus there is more of movement in the later works. It is, after all, a mere matter of choice — arbitrary human choice — whether we call this a decline or not.

After these few remarks we will see some illustrations, and whatever more there is to say can be said in connection with the single works that will be shown.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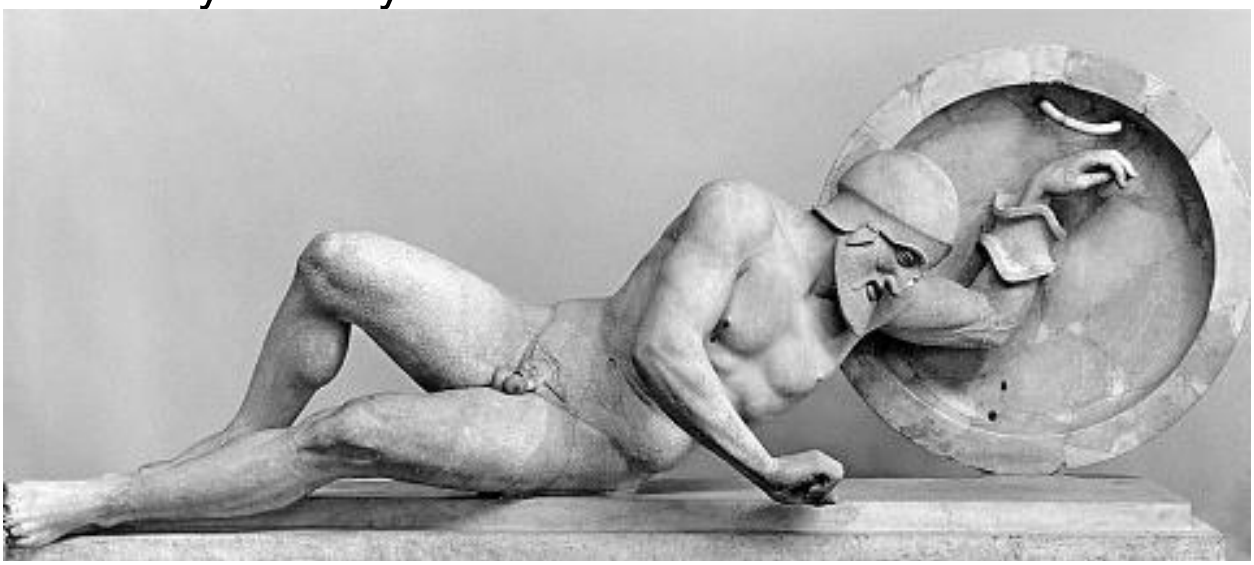
1. Apollo of Tenea. (Glyptothek. Munich.)
This is of an early period — about 600 B.C. Observe how the limbs, especially, are permeated with the ethereal ... One feature of the earliest Greek sculpture is often emphasized: the smile, as it is called, about the lips. In time to come this will be recognized as arising from the effort to represent not the dead human being — the mere physical body — but really to seize the inner life. In the earliest period they could do this in no other way than by this feature.



2. Dying Warrior. Eastern Pediment. Temple of Aegina. (Glyptothek. Munich.)
These works of art in the Doric Temple at Aegina were done as a thank-offering for the Battle of Salamis. They chiefly represent battle-scenes. Dominating the whole is the figure of Pallas Athene, which we shall see presently. This dying recumbent figure is a beautiful

example of the figures that are found in this temple. The figures are grouped in the pediment. It is most interesting to see the composition, the perfect symmetry. The figures are distributed to the left and right with the most beautiful symmetrical effect.

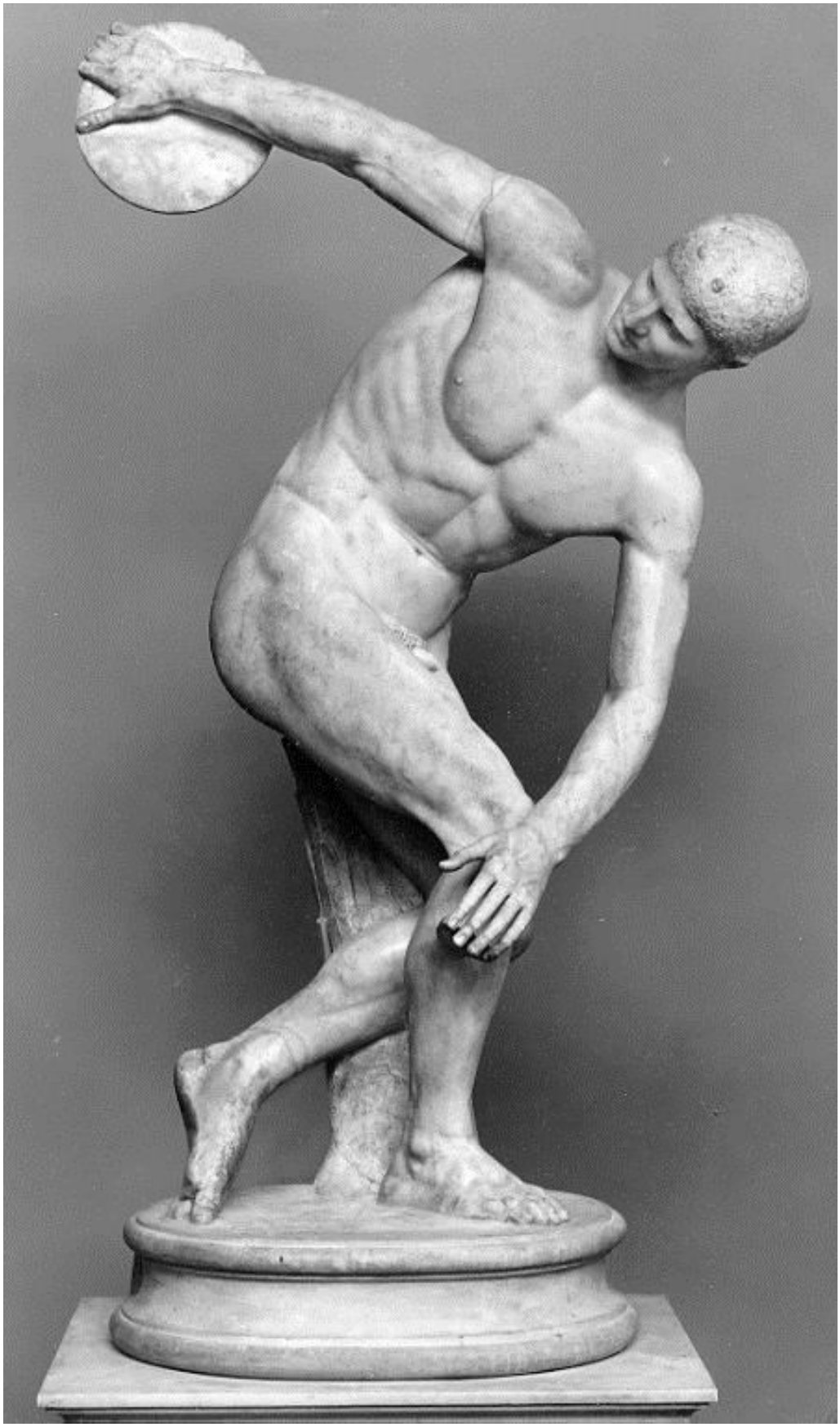
3. Pallas Athene from the Pediment of the Temple at Aegina. (Glyptothek. Munich.)

4. Reconstruction of the Western Piedemont of the Aphaia Temple.
These works take us to the beginning of the 5th century B.C.

5. Head of a youth.

6. Charioteer from Delphi

7. Runner (middle of the 5th century B.C.)
And then I ask you to note, as with Myron — as we come in to that age that one can denote as the pinnacle — as with Myron, that a very different treatment of the body arises, in that he no longer separates, what even here is still the case, but he knows how to treat the whole body in connection with the limbs.



8. Discus Thrower

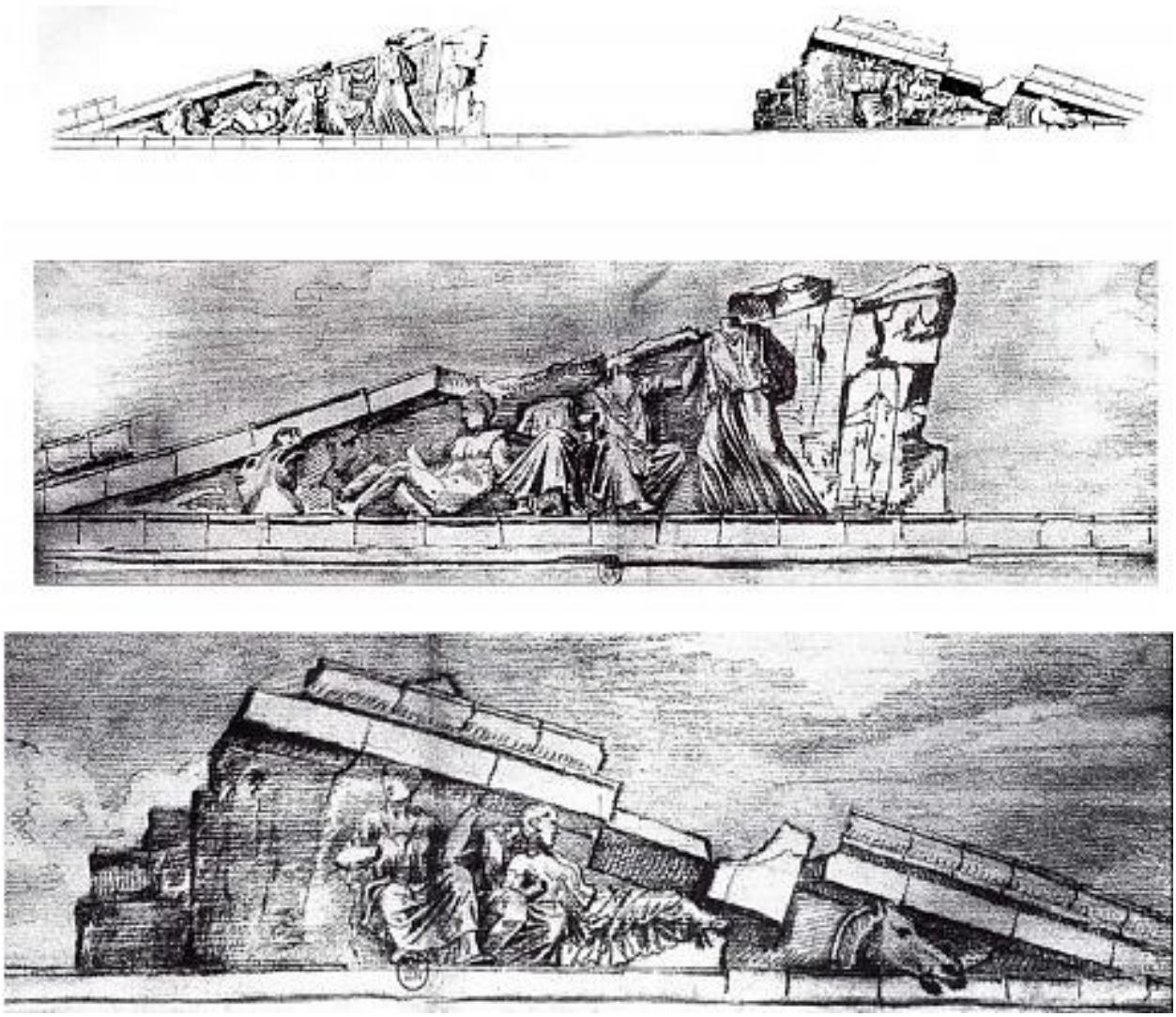
Thus we stand in the middle of the 5th century and find in such a shapes a truly high degree of perfection in the direction, we have tried to characterize.

And now we come, or are already in, to the Age of Periclean. From the time of Phidias, of whom we unfortunately know very little, you have the so-called Athena Lemnia:

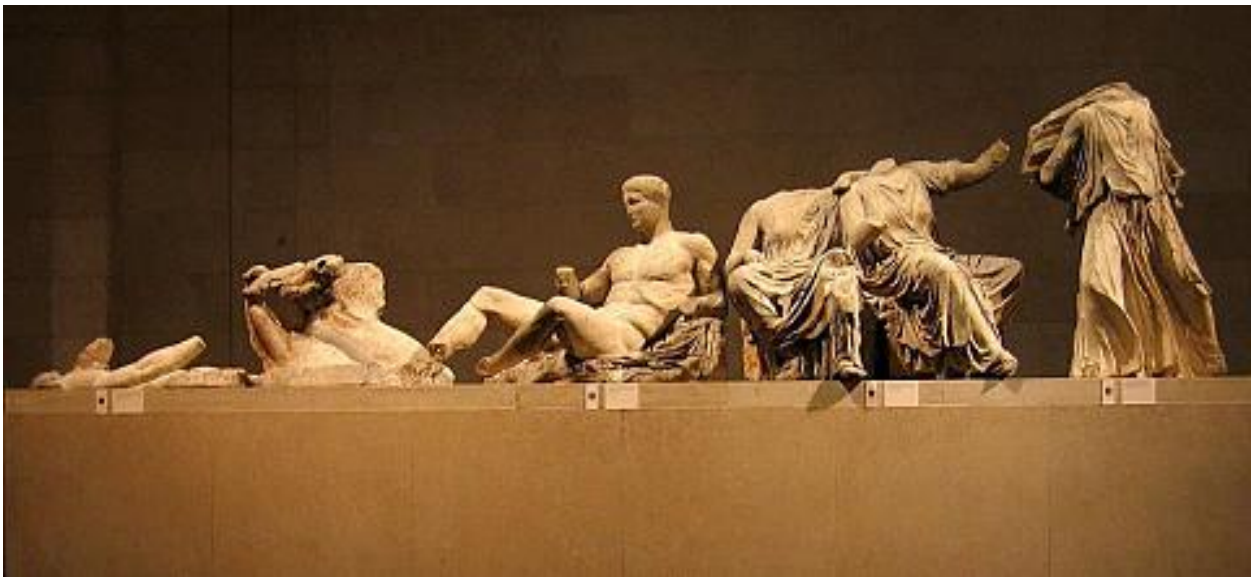
9. Athena Lemnia

10. Head of Athena

We will now give a few examples of the famous Parthenon. You may read the interesting story of these figures in any History of Art. The greatest of them have in all probability been lost. We can only gain some idea of them from the drawings made by the Frenchman, Carrey, in the 17th century. Subsequently they were largely destroyed by the Venetians, and only the relics were discovered by Lord Elgin in the 19th century.



11a. Drawings of the eastern pediment.

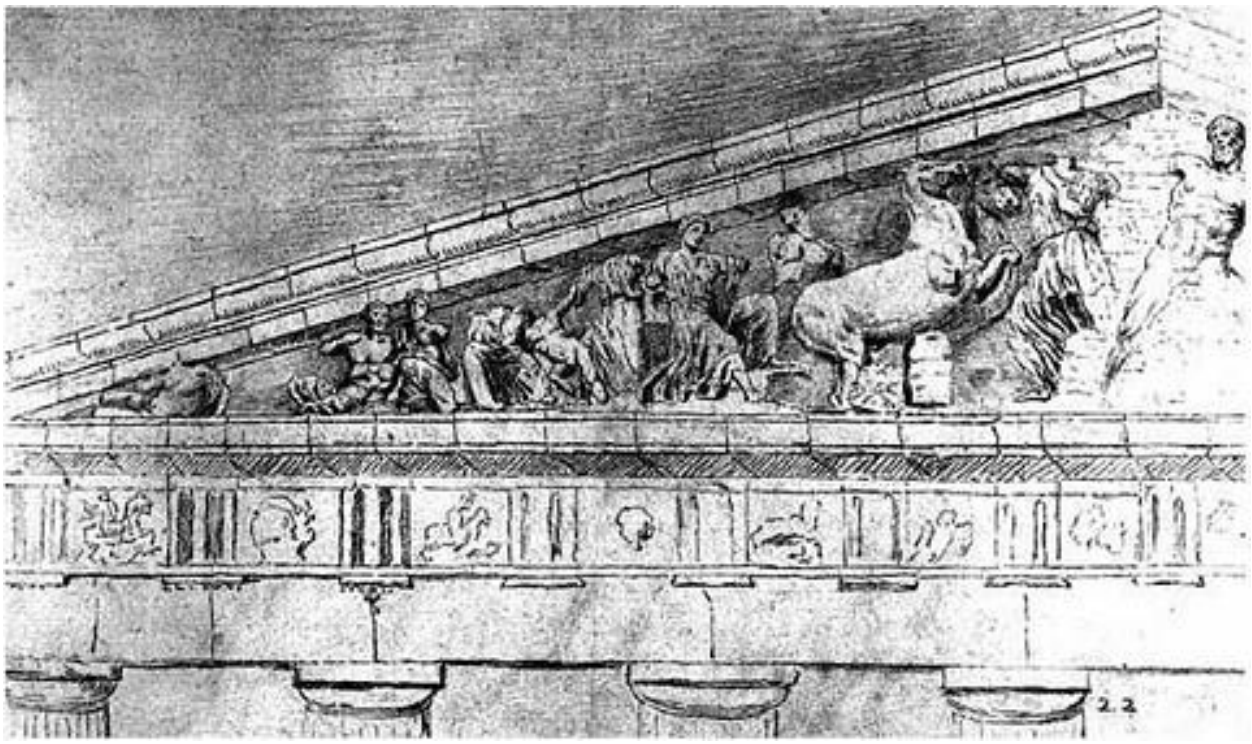


11b. Remains of the left side of the eastern pediment. (Bristish Museum. London.)

11c. Reconstruction of the figures in the last photo.

11d. Hestia, Dione, and Aphrodite from the right side of the eastern pediment. (British Museum, London.)

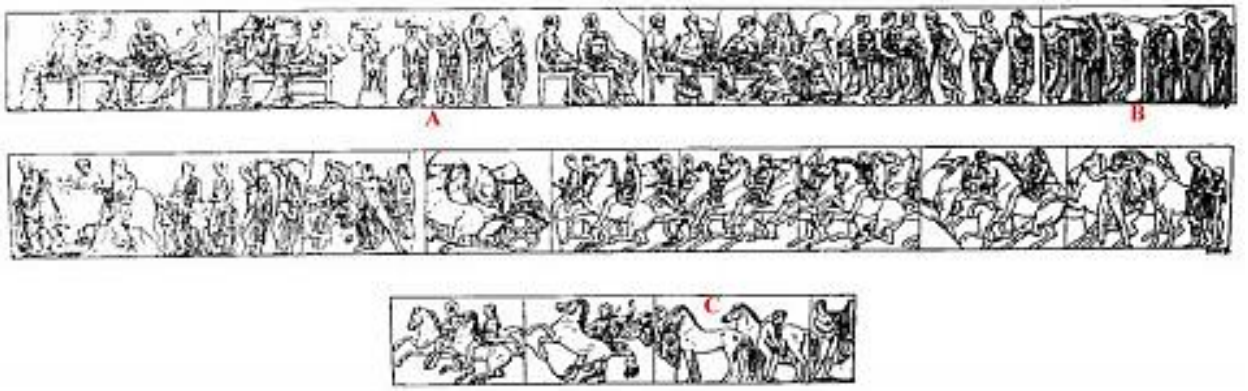
11e. Far right of the eastern pediment.
Now for the Parthenon western pediment:

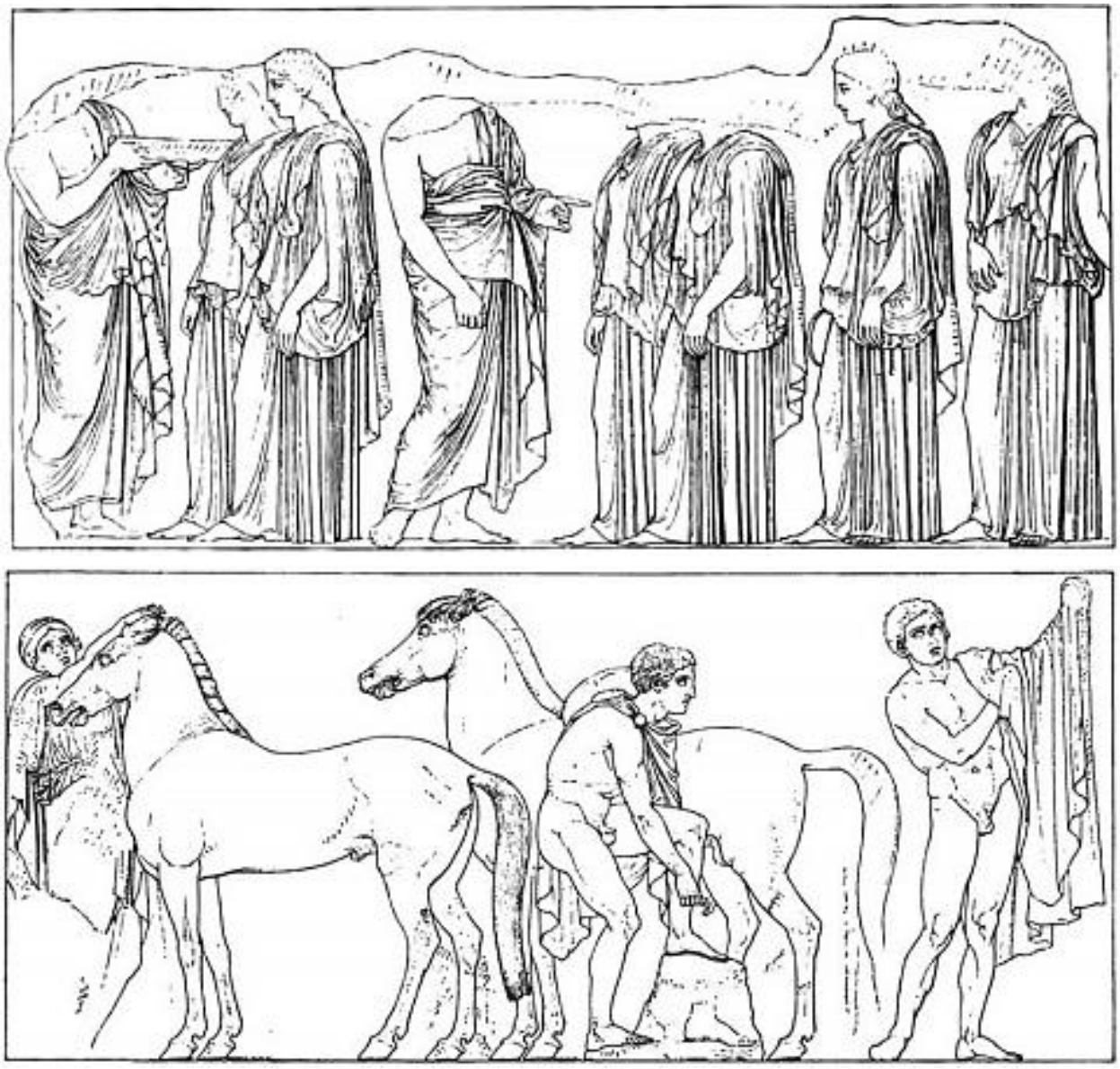


11f. Drawings of the western pediment.

11g. Reconstruction of the western pediment.

The Parthnon Friezes:



12a. Drawings of the Friezes.

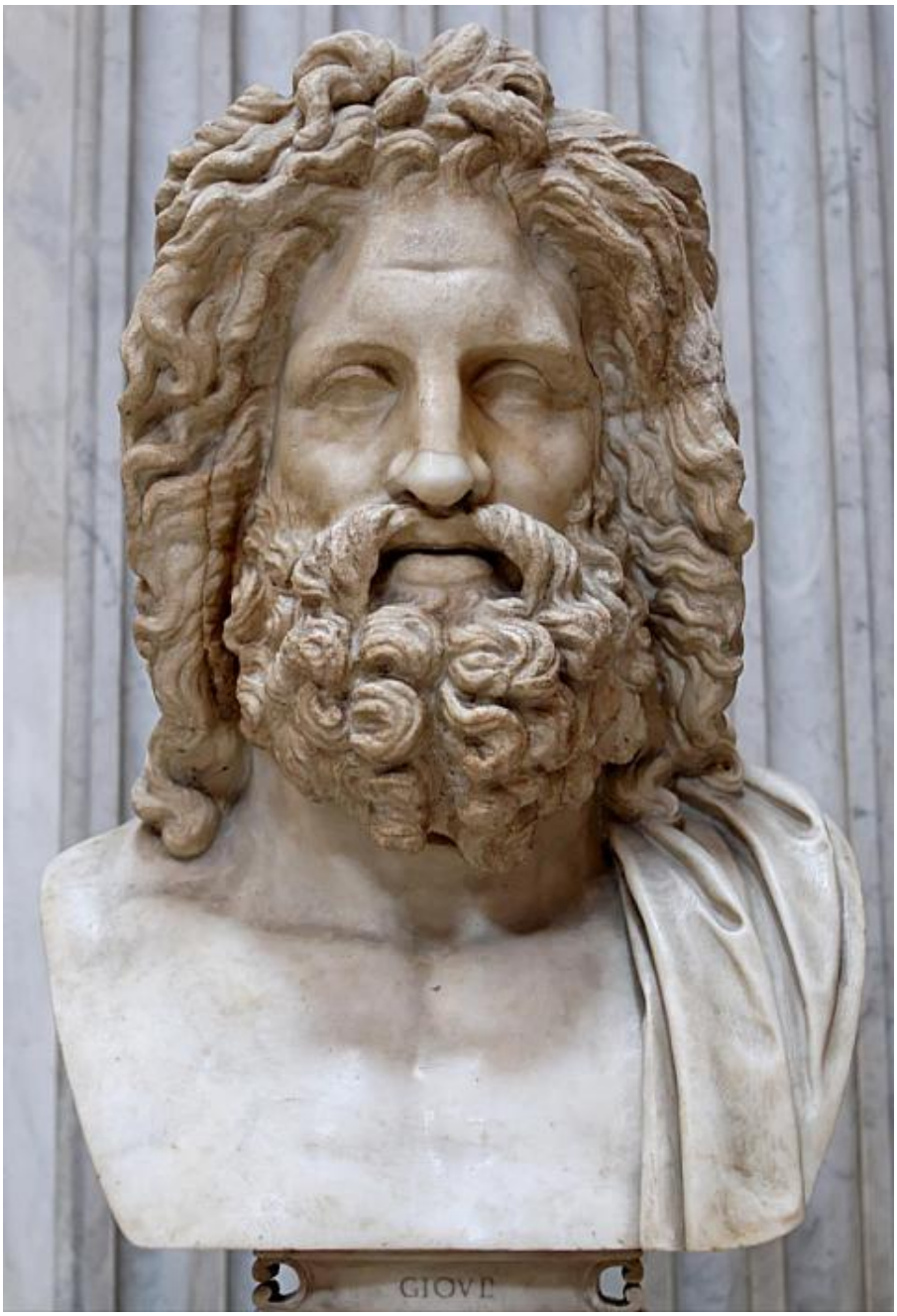
12b. Calvary. (Western Frieze.)

We may assume that these works were mostly executed in the presence of Phidias himself by his pupils. The next group is from the Eastern Frieze:

12. Poseidon Group. (Eastern Frieze.)

With Phidias, indeed, all that was typical of Greek Art was already given. The stamp, the signature, as it were, was now given to the bodily figure, as it should be represented in Art. The way in which Phidias and his pupils saw it lived on for a long time. It was felt that the line of the face, the features, the movement of the limbs, the flow of the drapery and so forth, should accord with what was evolved in this ideal age. Through all the traditions this was handed down, even into the times when they were able to imitate quite superficially what had lived so strongly in this Golden Age of the Art of ancient Greece. Unhappily, the greatest works have been destroyed. It is no longer possible to gain by outer vision a conception of Phidias' greatest masterpieces, which were transcendent and sublime. We must realise that in the 18th century, when Goethe and others, stimulated by Winckelmann, entered so deeply into the essence of Greek Art, they could only do so with the help of poor, late imitations. Truly, great intuition was necessary to penetrate into the nature of Greek Art through the poor imitations that were then available. And if we really try to feel the truth about these things we cannot but admit: In the time when Goethe was a young man, or when he travelled in Italy, there was still quite a different instinctive feeling for Art than later in the 19th century, — let alone the 20th. For otherwise it would have been impossible for these late imitations to inspire the lofty conceptions of

Greek Art which lighted forth in Winckelmann or in Goethe.
Look, for instance, at the next, the head of Zeus, which is to be seen in Rome:



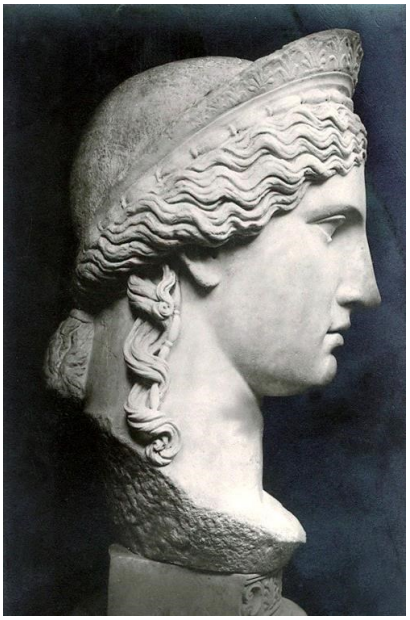

13. Zeus of Otricoli. (Vatican. Rome.)

14. Athena

Here you can see something like a later continuation of

the type that was evolved in the time of Phidias. This is, of course, a later imitation, though undoubtedly it still appears with a certain grandeur, — With a far less

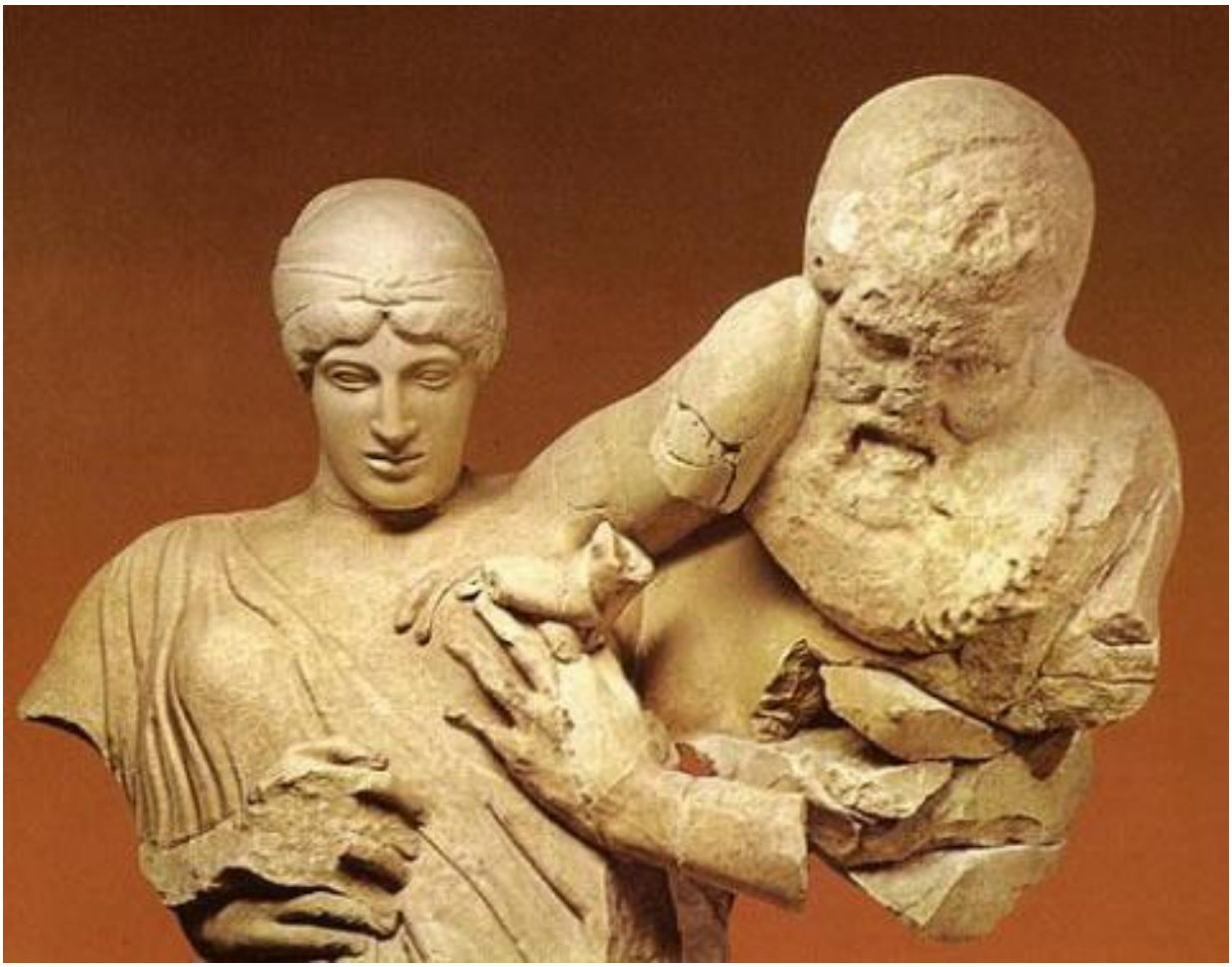
grandeur they imitated the Hera type which had been evolved by Polycleitus. And as to the famous Pallas Athene, which is also to be seen among these statues in Rome, here I must say the imitation has become insipid, fatuous. Indeed, this figure shows already the type of the later imitations of Pallas Athene. These things even become a little reminiscent of fashion-plates! We can but divine how magnificent were the works from which these later imitations were derived. In this head of Zeus you see the tradition that was handed down from Phidias.



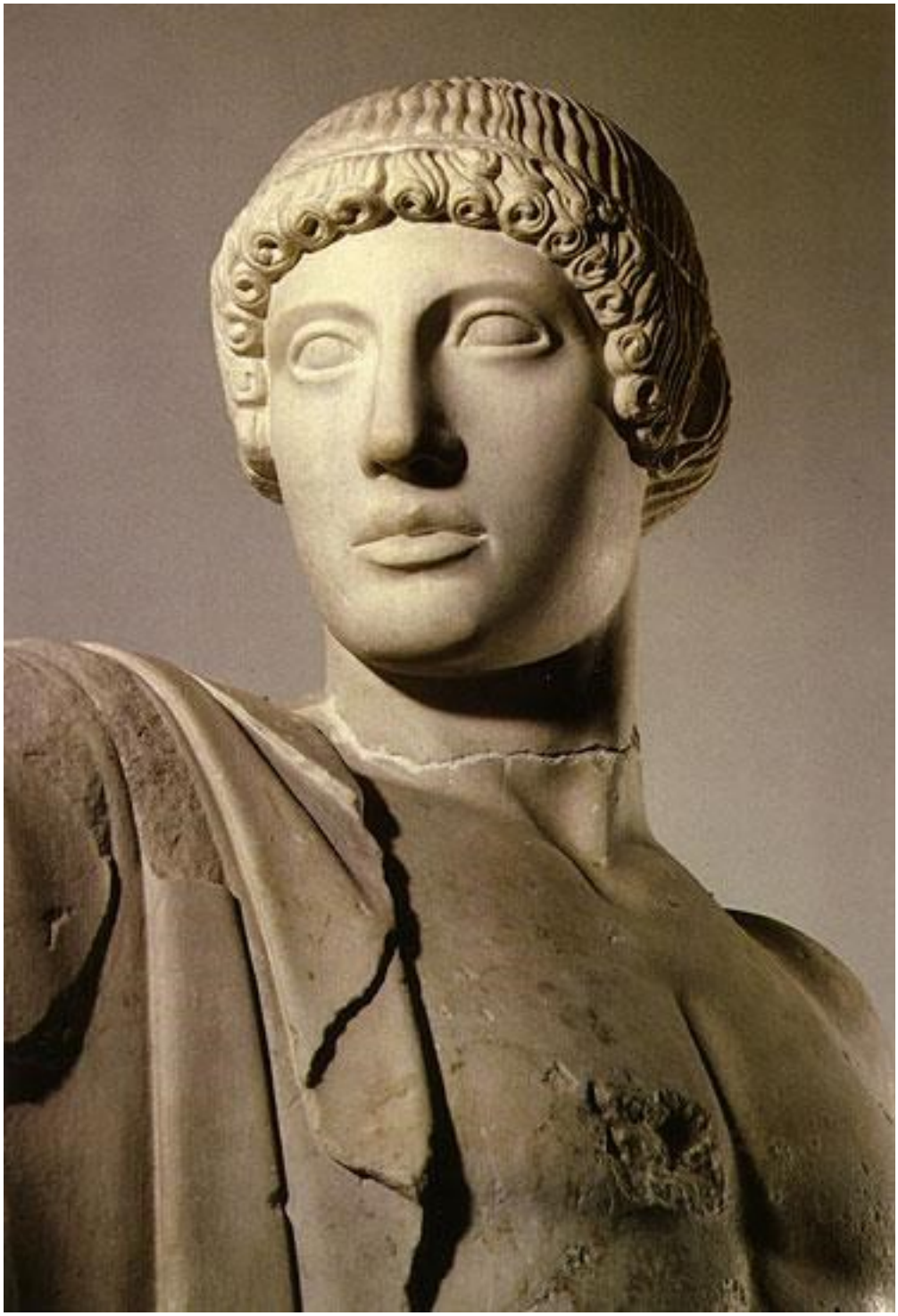
14) Ludovosi Juno, 1st century CE

14 c. Zeus *(see footnote)

And now we will go back to the figures from the temple of Zeus at Olympia. Here, too, the composition is magnificent:



15. Western Pediment. Temple of Zeus at Olympia.



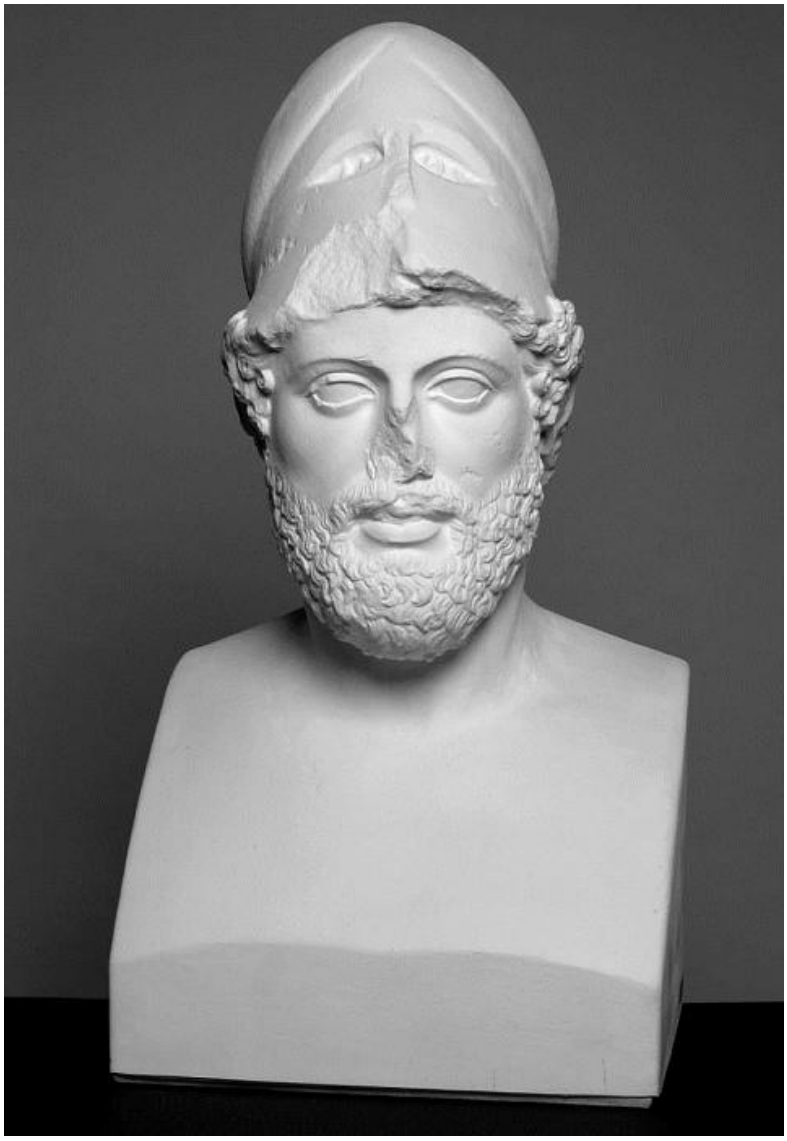
16. Figure of Apollo.

The next, too, is from the School of Phidias: —

17. Orpheus Relief. (Museum. Naples.)

We remember how Phidias was accused by his fellow-citizens of stealing gold for his gold-and-ivory statue of

Athene. His “grateful” fellow-citizens threw him into prison.



18. Bust of Pericles. (Berlin.)
Truly an ideal conception — lifted far beyond the sphere of portraiture.

The next is perhaps a work of Phidias' youth. —

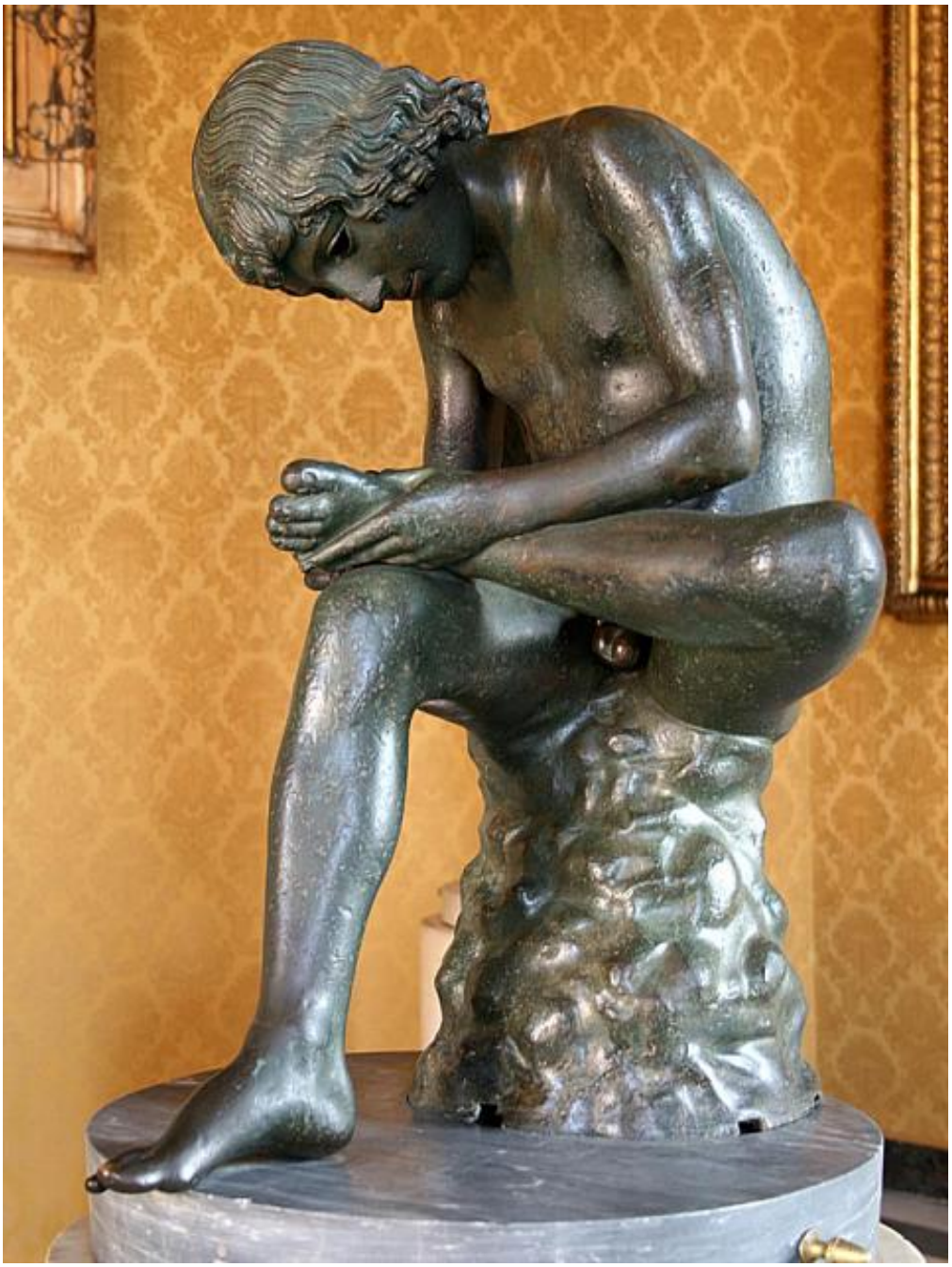

19. Amazon.

Here we will insert a work of Polycleitus: —

20. Amazon.
Myron and Phidias are the artists of the Golden Age of Grecian Art; they, indeed, created the traditions.

21. Amazon.

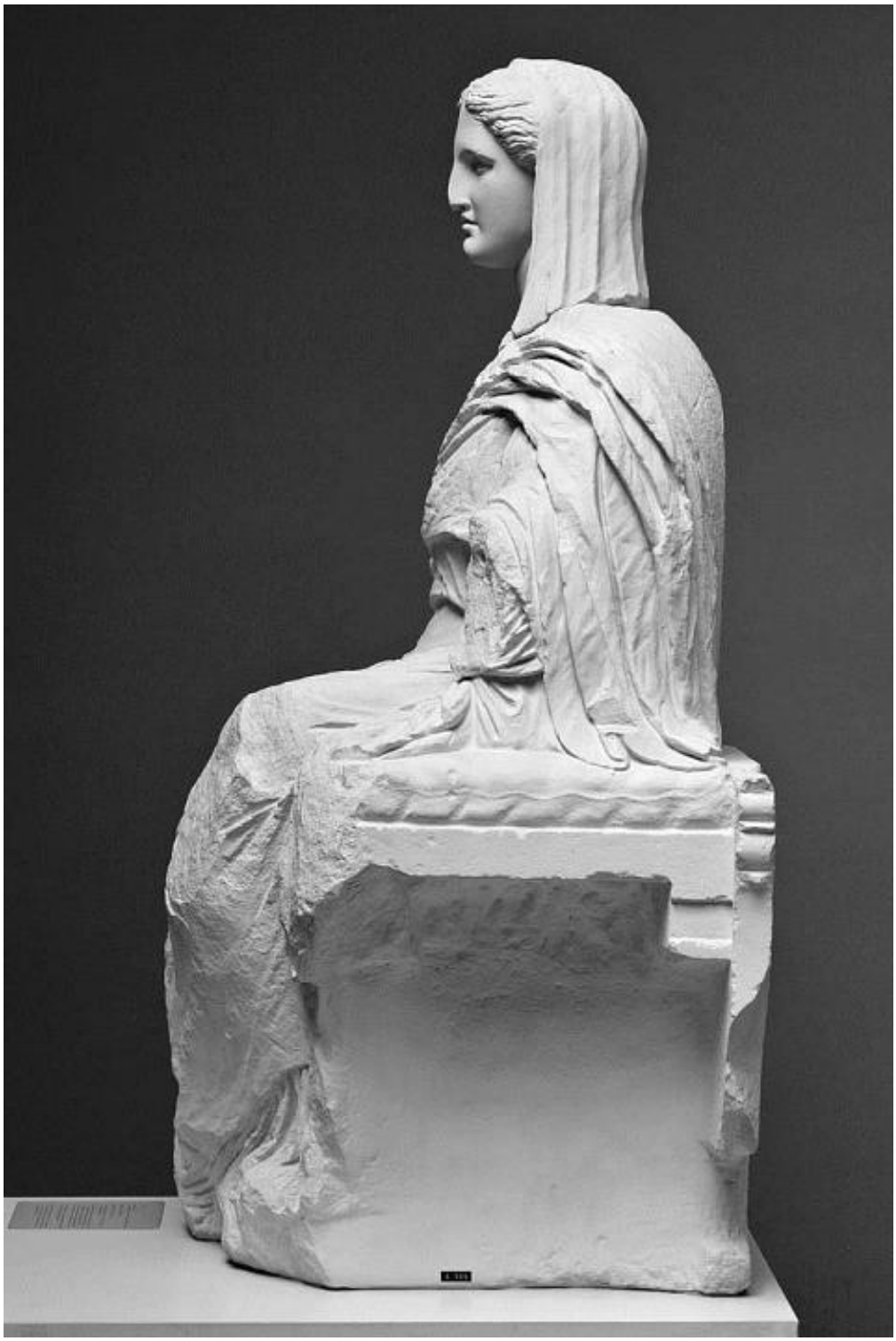
Another Amazon. The next is more difficult to date; it represents about the turn of the 4th and 5th centuries B.C. We insert it here to show that ancient Greece was quite capable of producing something of the character of Genre: —



22. Boy, extracting the Thorn from his Foot. (Rome.)
And now we gradually come into the age of which I tried to indicate just now that the whole conception is lifted down into a more human realm, even though the figures be still the figures of the Gods. Take the following, for instance: —


23. Aphrodite of Cnidos. (Vatican, Rome.)

Although it is the figure of a Goddess, it is brought down into a more human sphere. The sublimity of the earlier artists is made more human. We see this already in Praxiteles. This picture represents the so-called Aphrodite of Cnidos. Praxiteles brings us to the 4th century B.C. In connection with this we will also show the



24. Demeter of Cnidos. (British Museum.)
It breathes the same spirit. The next is the Hermes of Olympia:

25. Hermes of Olympia, (By Praxiteles.) — holding the Dionysos child in his left hand.


26. Satyr, by Praxiteles. (Capitol. Rome.)

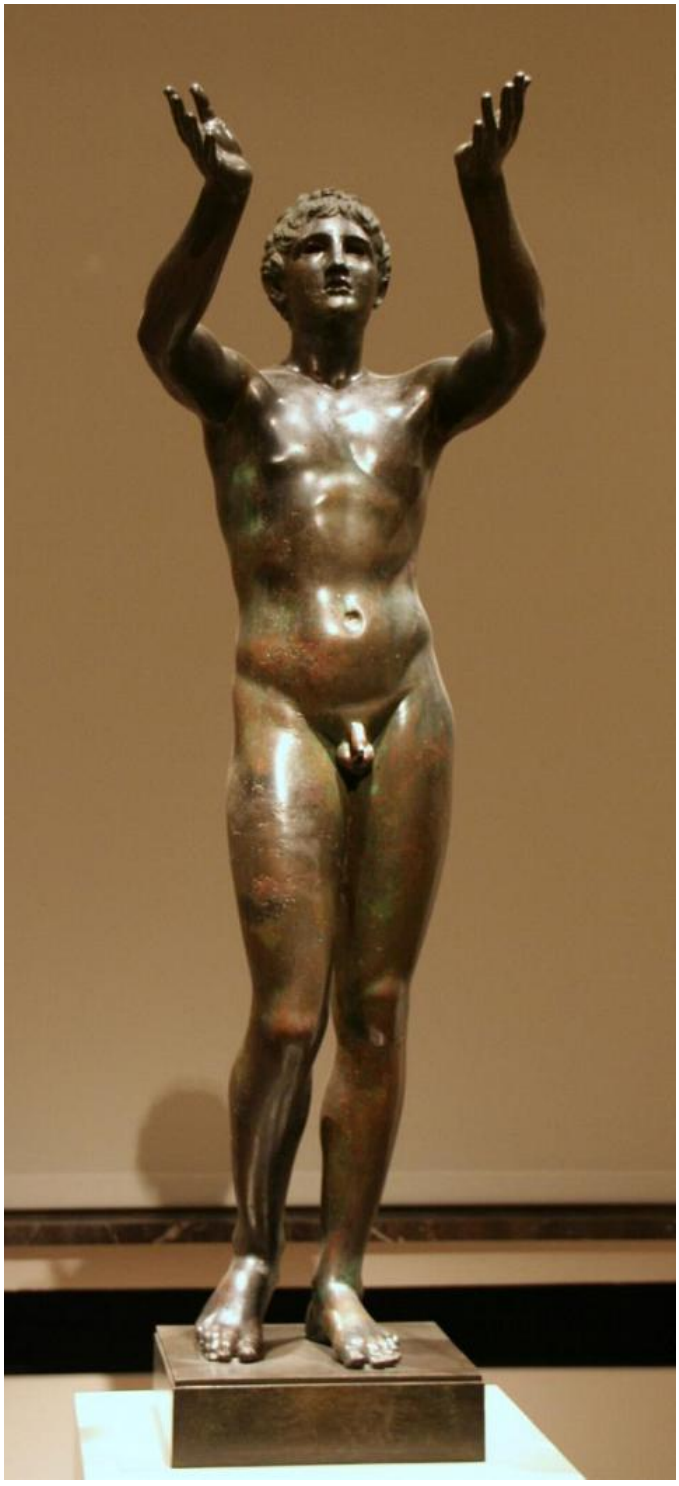
To the same epoch belongs the famous Niobe Group, — Niobe losing all her children through the wrath of Apollo.

27. Figure in Flight, from the Niobe Group. (Vatican. Rome.)

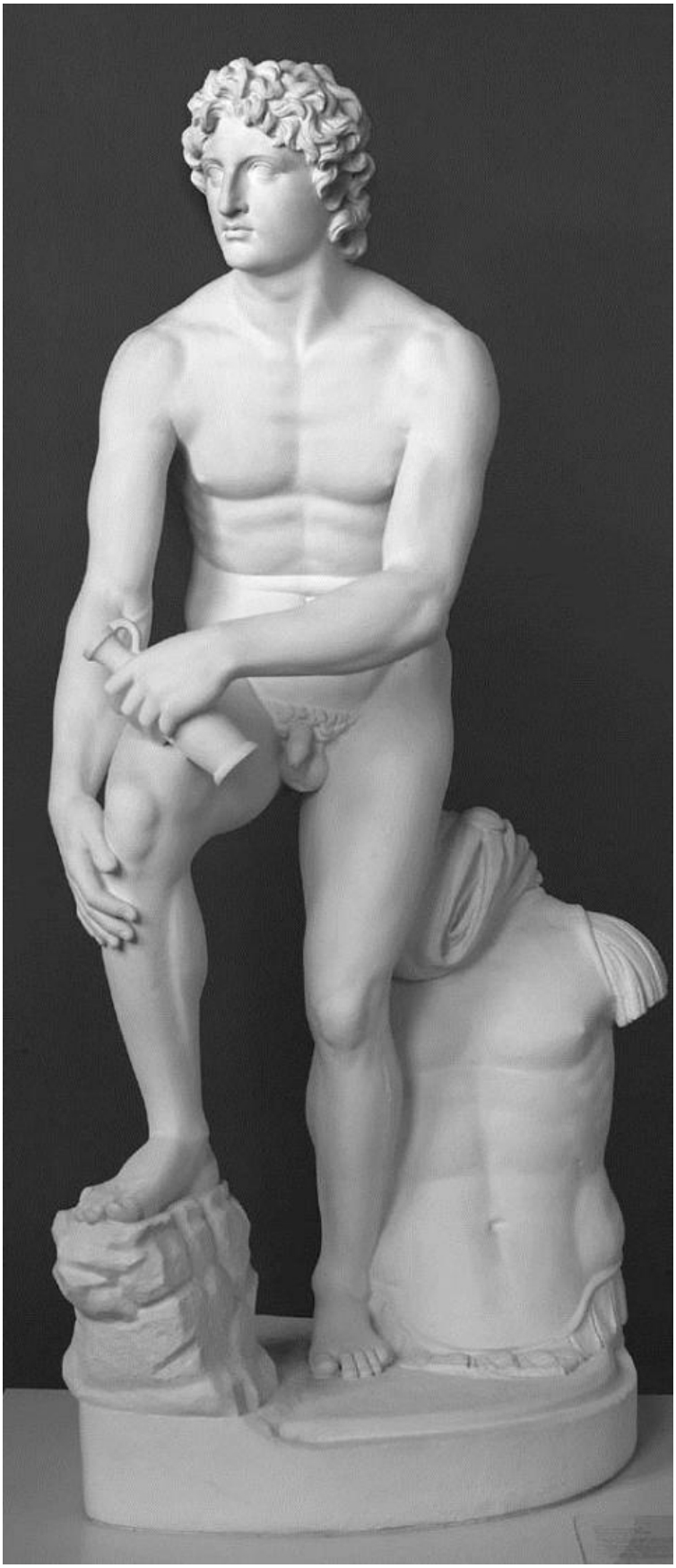
Going on into the 4th century, we come into the Alexandrian age. Lysippus actually worked in the service of Alexander the Great.

28. Bust of Alexander. (Louvre. Paris.)

29. Hermes. (Museum. Naples.)



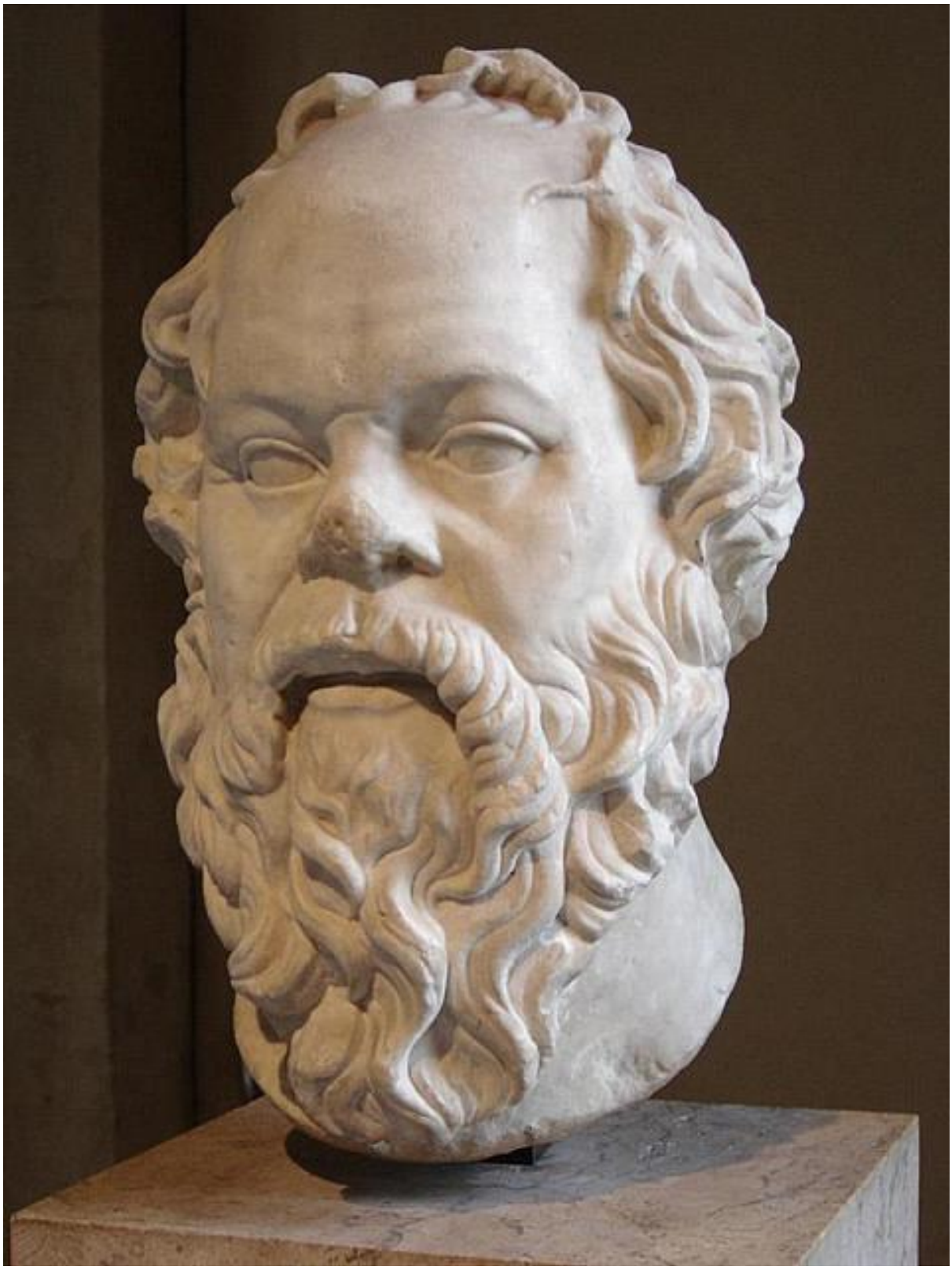
30. Youth, in Adoration. (By Lysippus.) (Berlin.) His arms are lifted up to Heaven in reverence, in prayer.



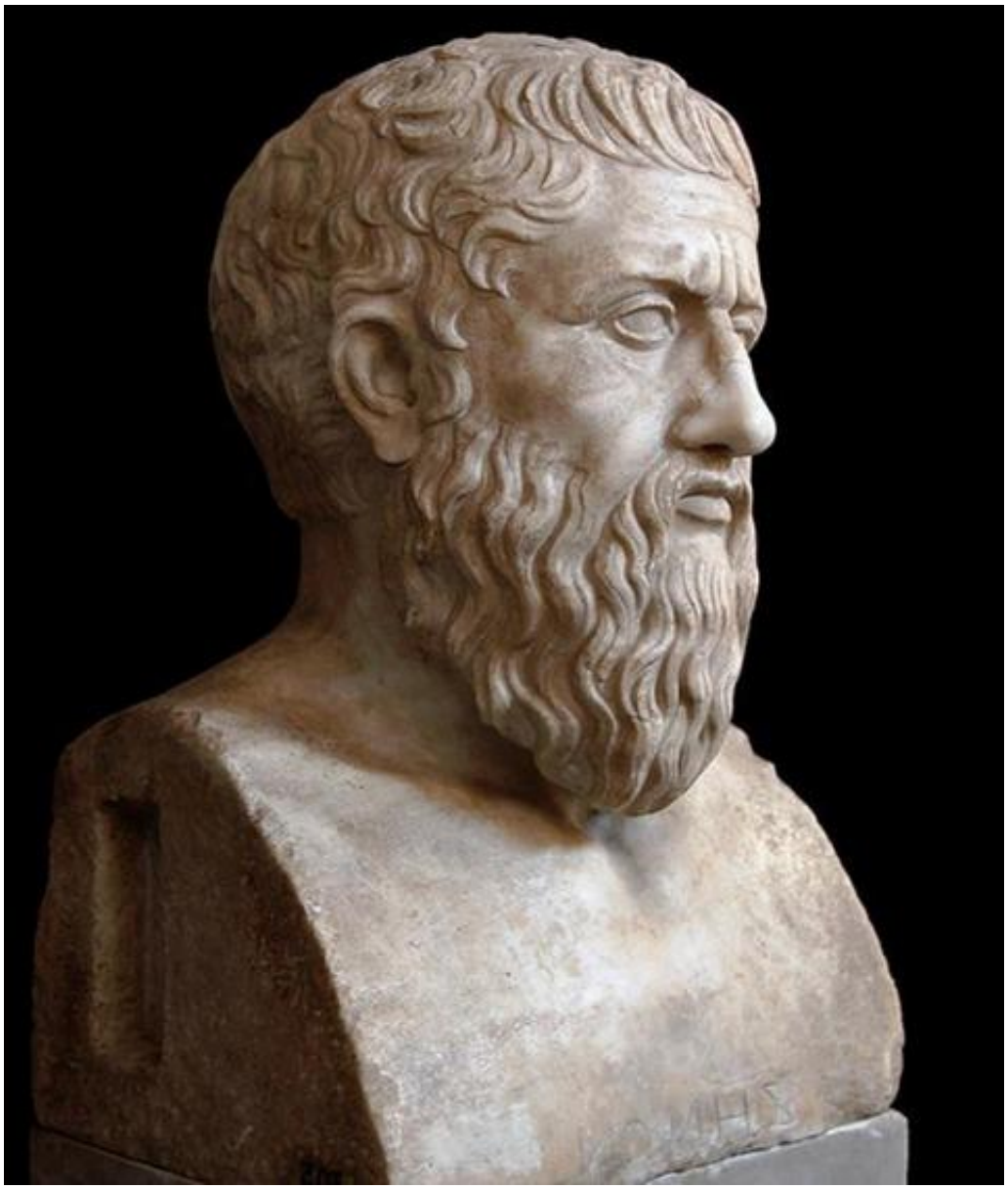
31. Alexander the Great. (Munich.)
Here we already see the descent of Art from the Typical to the Individual — though in the Grecian Art the process nowhere went as far as in the later epochs.

32. Medusa Head. (Glyptothek. Munich.)

33. Sophocles. (Vatican. Rome.)
This status reaches back again to the best, ideal tradition of the older times; it reminds us of the Golden Age. We might equally well entitle it: The Poet, as such. This is symbolized by the rolls of script which are put there of set purpose. Compare this with the figures that now follow, tending more or less towards a portrait likeness in each case. You will see how they strive away from the ideal type, towards the quality of portraiture.



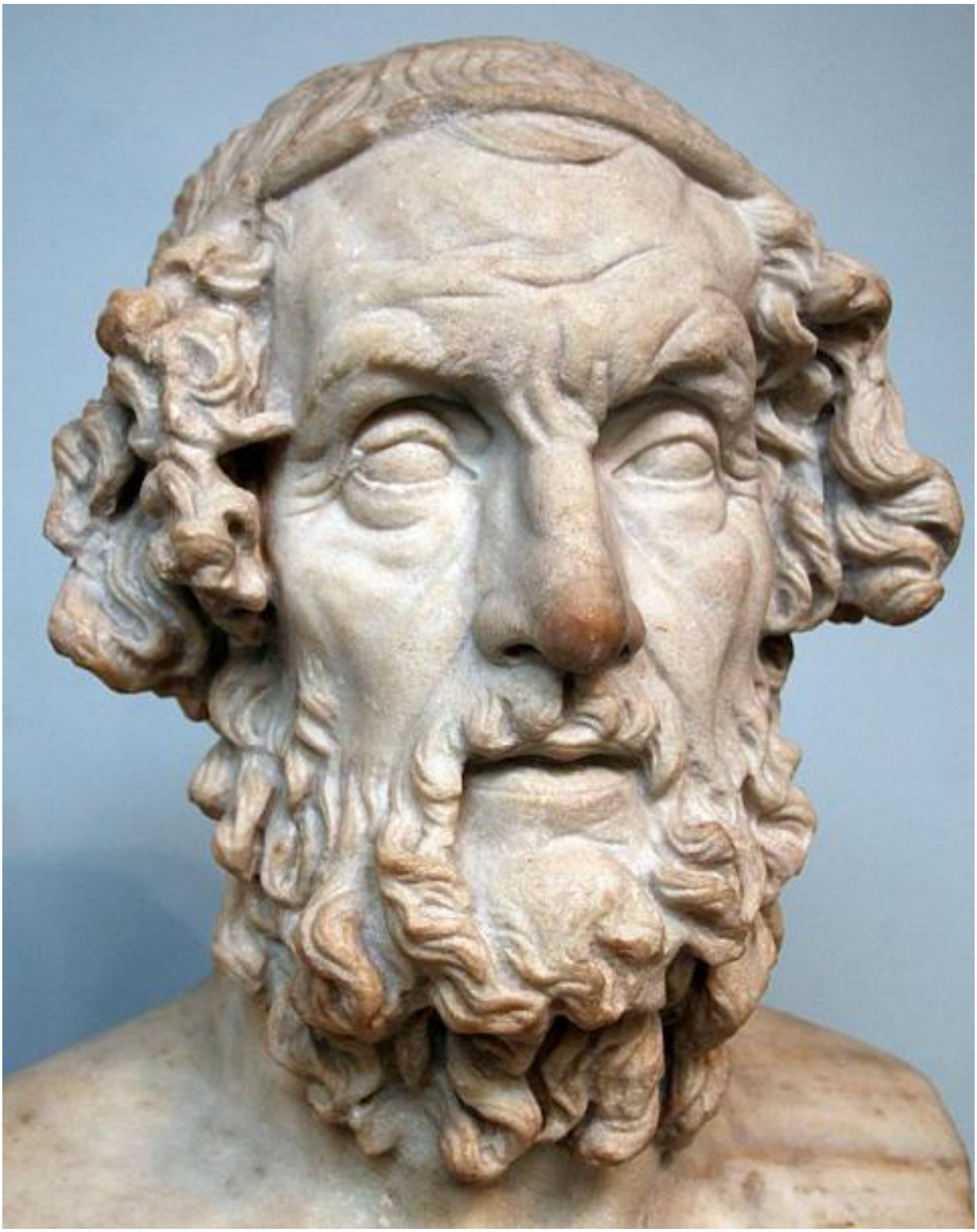
34. Socrates.



35. Plato. (Vatican. Rome.)

Of course, these portraits are not done from the model, but still there is an attempt at a human likeness — by which I do not mean to say that they are really like the original.

These remarks will refer especially to the Homer which will now follow: —



36. Homer. (Museum. Naples.)
Now we gradually approach the 2nd century.

37. The Victory of Samothrace. (Louvre. Paris.)

38. The Venus of Milo. (Louvre. Paris.)

This famous work does, indeed, preserve the tradition of the Golden Age, although it belongs to a later period. In the next picture, on the other hand, we see a fresh attempt to bring in movement: —

39. Sleeping Ariadne.

This is probably a work of the same period, but you will see a distinct contrast between the two.
And now we come towards the last century before the birth of Christ. We come to the School of Rhodes.

40. Laocoön. (Vatican. Rome.)
This is the famous Laocoön group — the starting-point, as you know, of many an artistic discussion, ever since Lessing's Laocoön of the 18th century. It is the work of

three sculptors of the School of Rhodes. Lessing's writings on this subject are, indeed, most interesting. He tried to show, you will remember, how the poet describes is not placed before the eyes. We must call it to life in our imaginations. Whereas what the plastic artist has created is there before our eyes. Therefore, says Lessing, what the plastic artist portrays must contain far more repose; it must represent moments which can at least be imagined — for a single moment — in repose.

Much has been said and written about this Laocoon group, especially in relation to Lessing's explanations. It is interesting how the aestheticist, Robert Zimmermann, — without, of course, having any knowledge of Spiritual Science — arrived at an explanation which needs, no doubt, to be supplemented, but which was none the less correct for an age that had not Spiritual Science. His explanation contains — albeit only as an instinctive suggestion — some element of what I have been setting forth today. We see the priest, Laocoon, with his two sons, wound around by the serpents and going towards their death. Now we cannot but be struck by the peculiar way in which the body has been moulded. Much has been written on this subject. Robert Zimmermann rightly pointed out: The whole representation is such that we have before us the very moment where the life (or, as we should say, the etheric body) is already fleeing

away. It is already a moment of unconsciousness. Hence the artist represents it as though the body of Laocoon were already falling asunder. That is the marvellous quality about this figure. The body is already being differentiated into its parts. Thus even in this late product we see how the Greek was aware of the etheric body. He brings to expression the actual moment where life is passing into death. It is the quick withdrawal of the etheric body through the shock — the shock that is expressed by the awful snakes coiling around. This effect of the etheric body withdrawing from the physical, and the physical falling asunder, is the characteristic thing in the Laocoon; not the other things that are so often said, but the peculiar way the body becomes differentiated. We could not imagine the body thus, unless we conceived it as the moment when the etheric body is drawing away.

And now two more examples — imitations of earlier works, perhaps, which have, none the less, made a great impression on later students of Art.

41. Apollo Belvedere. (Vatican. Rome.)
This is the famous Apollo Belvedere — Apollo represented as a kind of battle-hero.

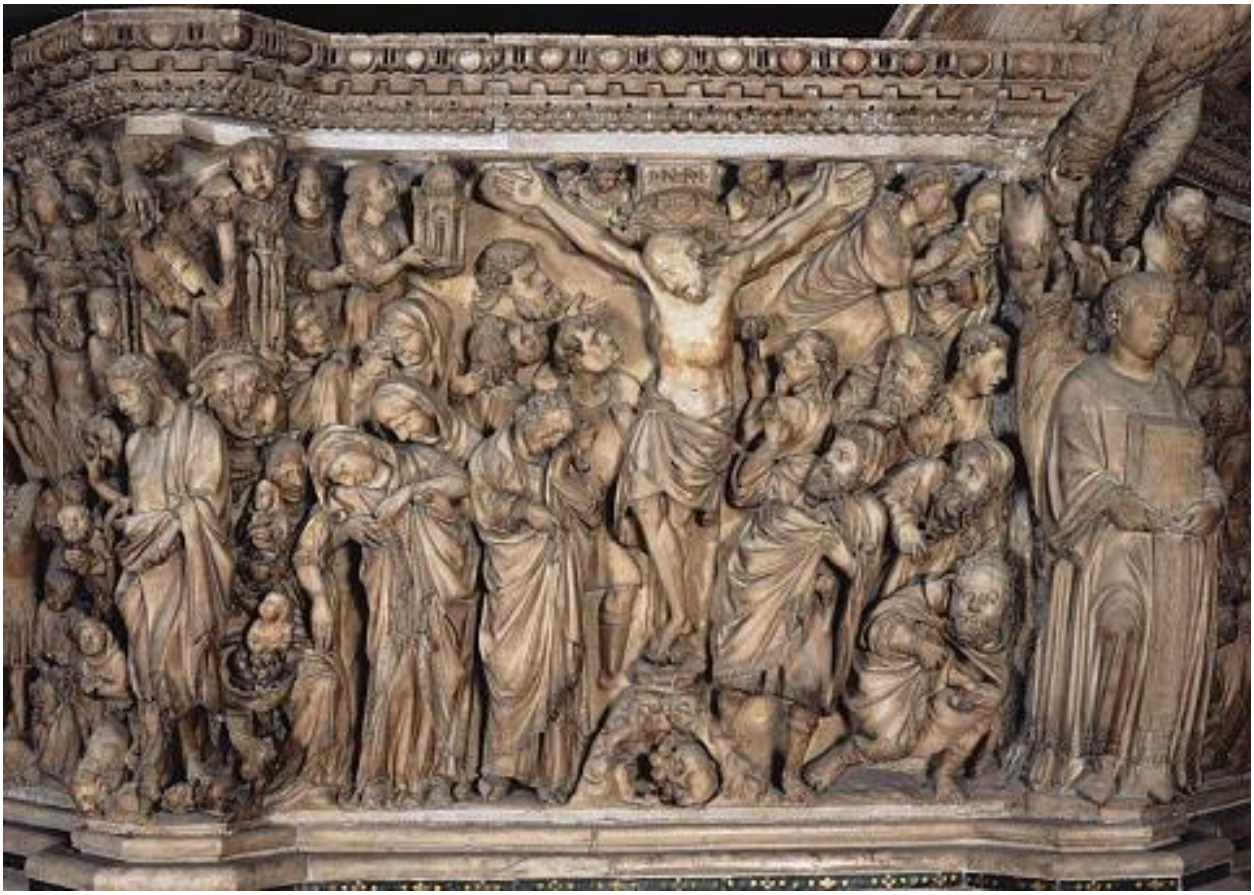
42. Artemis. (Louvre. Paris.)
This, too, will be a later imitation of an earlier work. Now, as we know, the Art of the ancient Greece gradually drew near its decline, when Greece was subjugated by Rome. In Rome, to begin with, there was a kind of imitation of the Greek Art. It was carried across to Rome, but it was soon submerged in the widespread unimaginativeness of the Roman people, to which we have frequently referred.
The next centuries, as you know ... were to a large extent a dark and troubled age for our evolution. Then a new age began. I will only repeat quite briefly: — In the 12th and 13th centuries in Italy, when through manifold circumstances they rediscovered some of the ancient works of Art that had been buried in the early Middle Ages, the contemplation of the ancient works kindled the rise of a new Art, which grew in time into the Art of the Renaissance. From the 13th century onwards, artists would educate themselves by means of the Antique — the works of Art that had been found or excavated, though the number at that time was relatively small.
We will now consider this re-discovery of the ancient Art in the period immediately preceding the Renaissance. In Niccola Pisano in the 13th century we find a wonderfully refined spirit who waxed enthusiastic over the relics of Greek Art, and tried to create once

more in the spirit of the Greeks — out of his own imagination fructified, as it were, by the Greek Art itself. Our first picture is the famous pulpit in the Baptistery at Pisa; note the reliefs in the upper portion: —

43. Niccola Pisano. Pulpit in the Baptistery at Pisa.

The pulpit is supported by antique columns between which are Gothic arches. Underneath are also lion figures; above are the relief in which he expressed so wonderfully what he owed to the inspiration of the antique. Niccola Pisano worked until the end of the 13th century.

44. Niccola Pisano. *Adoration by the Three Wise Men*. (Relief. Details of the above.)
Another representation of the same subject: —



45. Niccola Pisano: The Crucifixtion. (Relief. Pulpit in the Cathedral at Siena.)

We now go on to Giovanni Pisano. In his works you will observe already a far greater element of movement. A certain quietude pervades all the figures of Niccola Pisano.

46. Giovanni Pisano. Pulpit. (San Andrea. Pistoja.)

47. Giovanni Pisano. Capital from the above Pulpit.
Truly, it was due to the stimulus and inspiration of the Antique, arising, to begin with, in the Pisanos, that the Christian Art afterwards became able to express its motifs so perfectly as it did in
the Renaissance.

48. Giovanni Pisano. Bas-Relief from the same Pulpit.

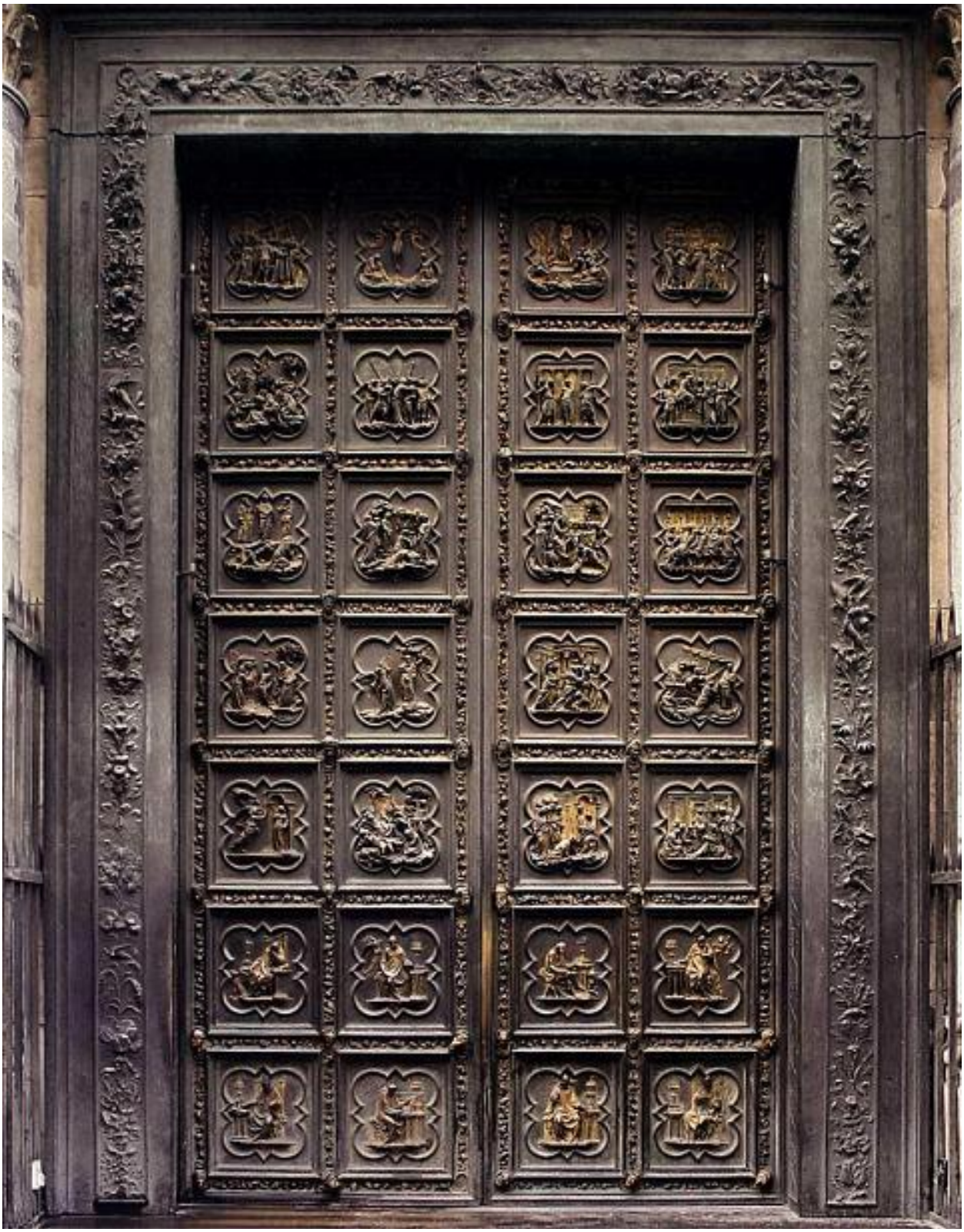
The next two are by Giovanni Pisano: —

49. Giovanni Pisano. Pulpit in the Cathedral at Pisa. We see at the same time how naturally the Antique grew together with the Gothic.
And two Madonnas from him:

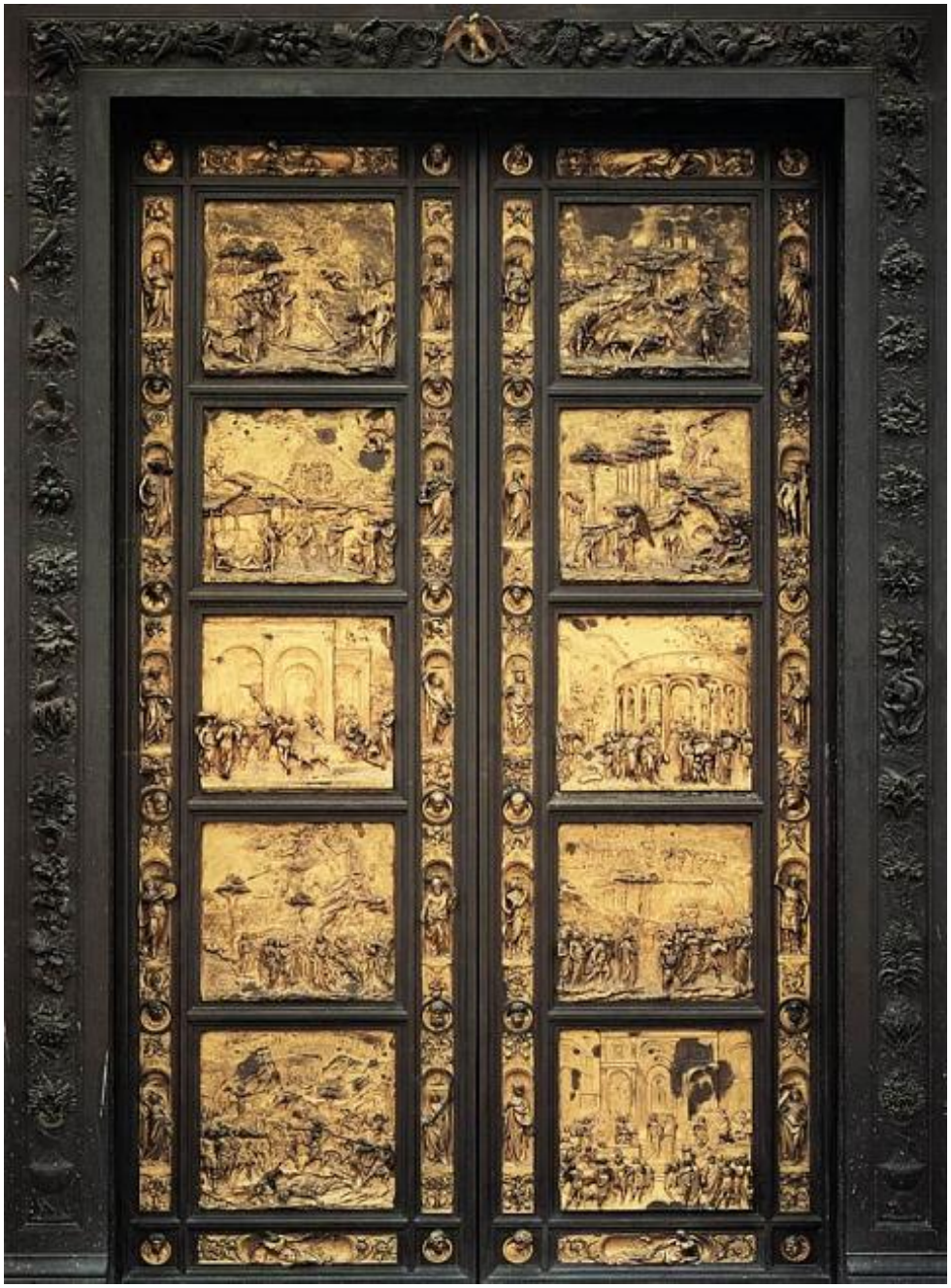
51. Giovanni Pisano. *Madonnas*. (Berlin and Padua.) And now we have a sample of the work of Andrea Pisano, who was summoned to do one of the Bronze gates of the Baptistery at Florence.

52. Andrea Pisano. *Tubal Cain*. (Campanile. Florence.)
A Bas-Relief representing Tubal Cain, inventor of the craft of metallurgy according to the Bible, the Old Testament.
We have thus approached the 15th century, and we come to Ghiberti, the great artist who at the age of twenty years was already able to compete with the others in designing the doors of the Baptistery in Florence.

53a. Ghiberti. The Offering of Isaac. (Baptistry. Florence.)



53b. Ghiberti. Northern Door of the Baptistery in Florence.
At the early age of twenty he was already allowed to do the Northern Portals. From a simple goldsmith's apprentice he grew to be one of the very greatest artists. These bas-reliefs of the doors of the Baptistery in Florence are, of their kind, among the greatest things in the whole evolution of Art. Afterwards the Eastern door was also given to him to do. It represents scenes from the Old Testament. Michelangelo said that these were worthy to be the gates of Paradise. [Note: the doors at the Florence Baptistery were moved causing some confusion as to where the works of Ghiberti and Andrea Pisano are located. – e.Ed.]



54. Ghiberti. The Gates of Paradise. (Baptistery. Florence.)

This work had, indeed, a great influence on the whole Art of Michelangelo himself. Even in the details we can recognize certain motifs in Michelangelo's paintings, which he took from these bronze reliefs.

55a. Ghiberti. Sacrifice of Isaac. (Detail from the 'Gates of Paradise.')

55b. Ghiberti. Creation of Man. (Detail from the 'Gates of Paradise.')

56. Ghiberti. St. Stephen

These works of Ghiberti's were undoubtedly due to a faithful contemplation of the Antique.

We will now insert the Art of the della Robbias. To begin with: —

57. Luca della Robbia. Dancing Boys. (Cathedral. Florence.)
The della Robbias are famous as the inventors of a special art — the use of burnt clay as a material. To a large extent their works were done in this material.

58. Luca della Robbia. Singing Boys. (Cathedral. Florence.)

Luca della Robbia covers practically the whole period of the 15th century.

59. Luca della Robbia. Madonna in the Bower of Roses. (Museo Nazionale. Florence. )

Observe once more the age that we have now come into. The Art of antiquity that had been derived from immediate inner experience — experience of the Etheric — works as a great stimulus and inspiration. Yet at the same time the Art of this age is founded on what is seen — the faithful representation of what is actually seen. It is no longer based on something felt and sensed inwardly. It is very interesting to receive the impression of the two epochs, one after the other, in this way.

60. Andrea della Robbia. Bambino. (Spedale degli Innocenti. Florence.)

61. Madonna (della Cintola Fojano). Andrea della Robbia.
The Madonna is shown in the spiritual world.

62. Giovanni della Robbia. Reception of the Pilgrims and Washing of the Feet. (Hospital. Pistoja.)

We now go on to Donatello, who was born in 1386. In him we observe the influence of the Antique combined already with a decided tendency to Naturalism. His vision has a naturalistic stamp. Donatello enters lovingly and sympathetically into Nature. But while he becomes a real naturalist, he derived his technique from what his predecessors had evolved out of the old tradition.

His naturalism went so far that his friend and companion in his strivings, Brunelleschi, seeing a Christ that Donatello attempted, exclaimed; “That is not a Christ that you are doing, that is a peasant:”

Donatello at first did not understand what he meant. The anecdote is interesting, if not historically true; it gives us a right impression of the relation between the two artists — the contrast between the two artists — the contrast between Donatello and Brunelleschi with his high idealism — immersed as he was in the contemplation of the Antique, in its rebirth. Brunelleschi thereupon himself undertook to model the Christ. Donatello — for they lived together — had gone out to buy things for their breakfast. He returned with all the dainties for their common meal wrapped up in a kind of pinafore. Just as he entered, Brunelleschi unveiled his Christ. Donatello gaped with wide open mouth, and his astonishment was such that he dropped all the breakfast on the ground. What Brunelleschi had achieved was a revelation to him. We cannot say that the impression he experienced went very deep. None the less, Brunelleschi undoubtedly had an ennobling influence on him. The above story goes on to relate, Donatello was so overwhelmed that he even imagined the breakfast had disappeared. “What have we now to eat?” he said. “We'll just pick the things up again,” said Brunelleschi. “I see I shall never be able to do any more than peasants,” said Donatello.


Donatello. Crucifix. (Florence.)


Filippo Brunellesco. Crucifix. (Florence.)

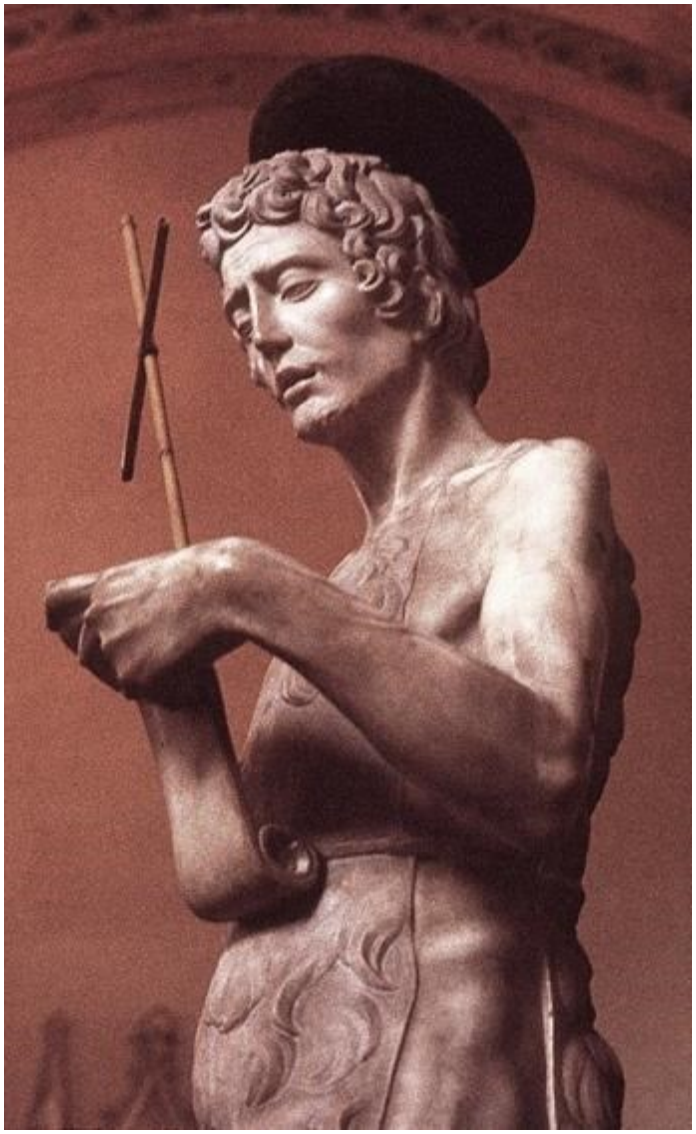
Donatello. *David*. (Florence.)
And now we come to the beautifully self-contained marble statues by Donatello in Florence, showing his ability — out of his naturalistic vision — to create human figures strong and firm, even as he wanted them, their feet firmly planted on the ground.

63. Donatello. David. (Museo Nazionale, Florence.)

66. Donatello. Jeremiah. (Campanile. Florence.)

Habbakuk

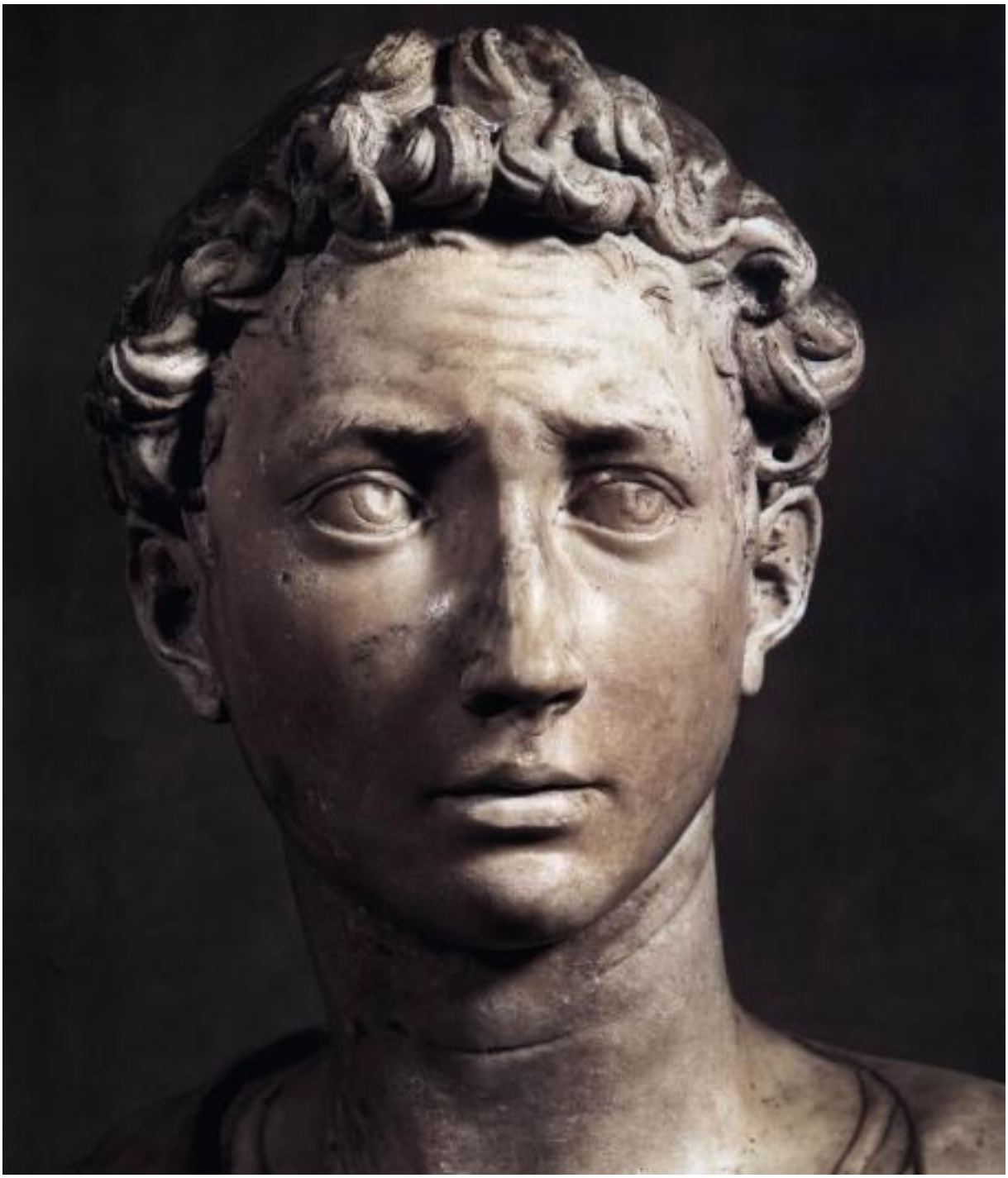
65. Donatello. St. Peter. (Or San Michele. Florence.)



67. Donatello. St. John Baptist. (Campanile. Florence.) In Donatello Naturalism certainly finds its way in. It is not the inner soul that we found in the Northern sculpture, but a decidedly naturalistic vision of what the outer senses see.

69. Donatello. Habakkuk. (Campanile. Florence.)
Niccola Pisano and Donatello were two artists who powerfully influenced Michelangelo. Those who afterwards saw what Michelangelo created — especially in his early period — remembered Donatello and coined the phrase which then became current: Donatello Michelangelosed or Michelangelo Donatelloised.

70. Donatello. Lodovico III Gonzaga

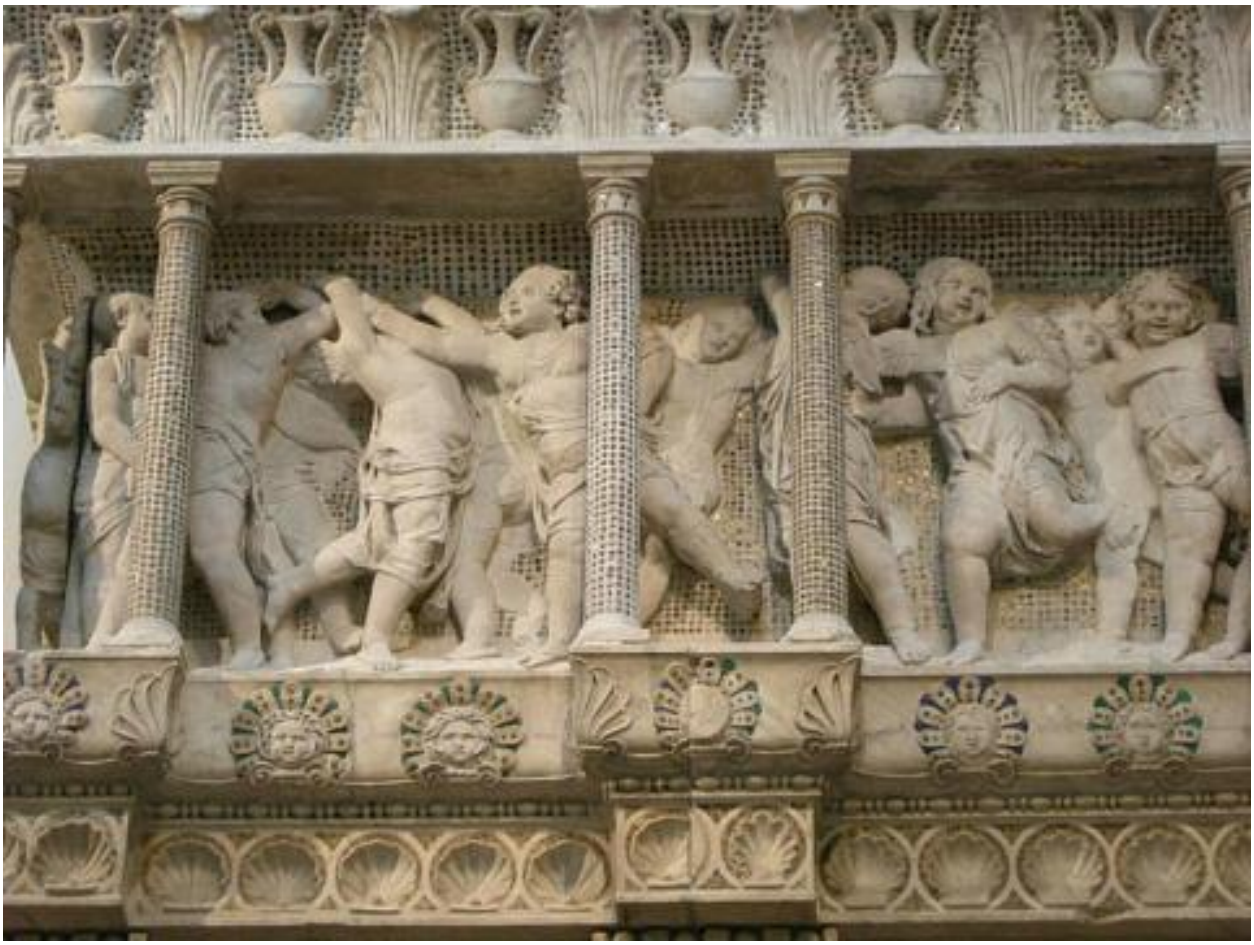


71. Donatello. St. George. (Florence.)
Most characteristic is this St. George by Donatello. All the power of his naturalism is in it. Such works of Art

arose out of the freedom of the free city of Florence, which also gave birth to Michelangelo.
By a wider historic necessity — a cosmopolitan historic necessity, we might say, — it was in Italy that the Antique came to life again. On the other hand, the naturalistic tendency everywhere was bound up with the mood and feeling that arose in the culture of the Free Towns or Cities. Here, as in the North — though in different ways, of course, according to the different characters of the people, — we find this element arising out of the life of the free cities, where man became conscious of his dignity, his freedom, his individual being. In the characteristic works of Art which we found in the Netherlands and other Northern parts, we were reminded again and again of the life of the free cities and the feeling that pervaded them. And so it is here, when we look at this figure of a man, so firmly established in the world of space, this Florentine St. George. We cannot but think of the civilization of the Free Cities, whose atmosphere made such a thing possible.

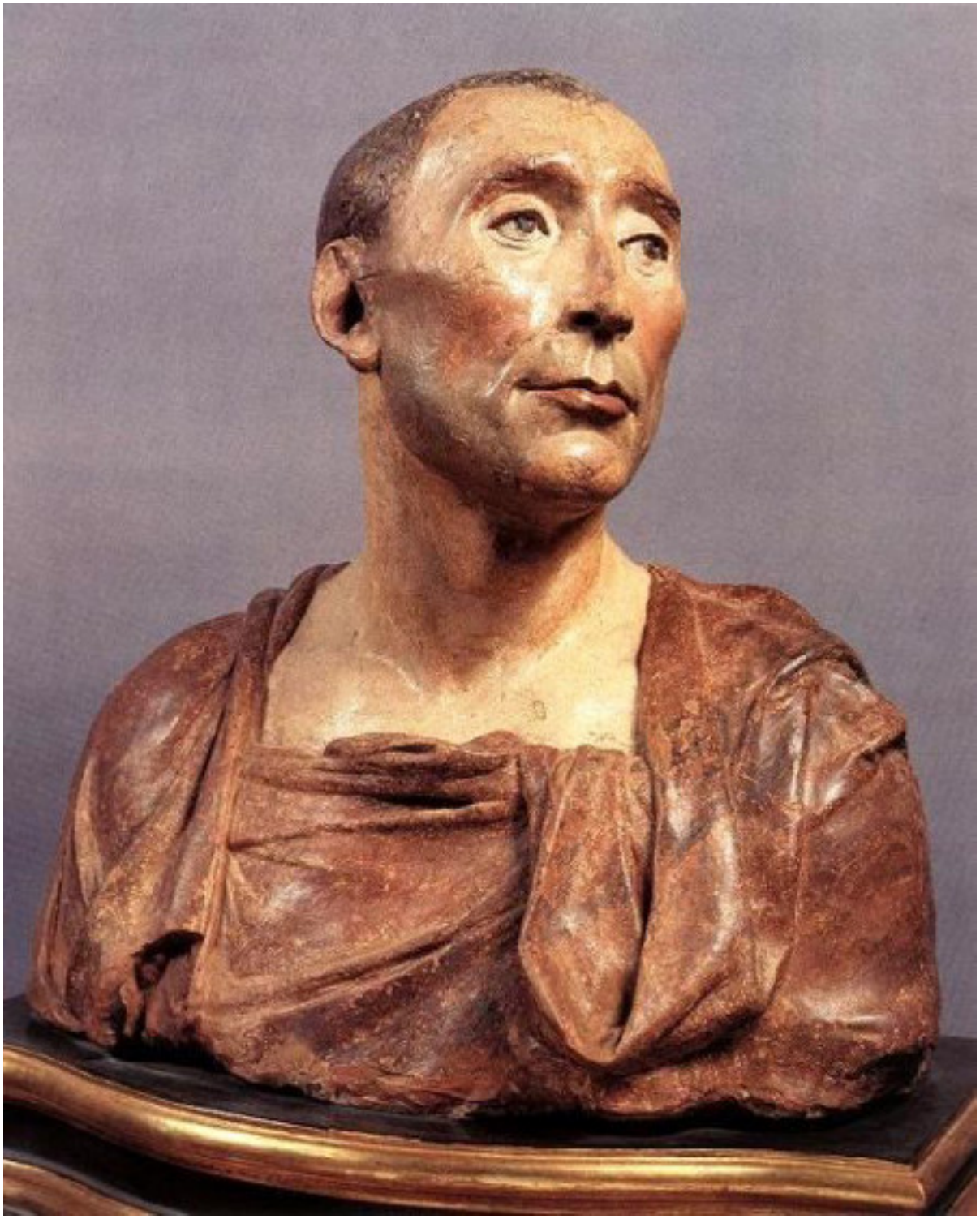
72. Donatello. Bas-Relief. St. George and the Dragon. (From the Base of the St. George Statue.)

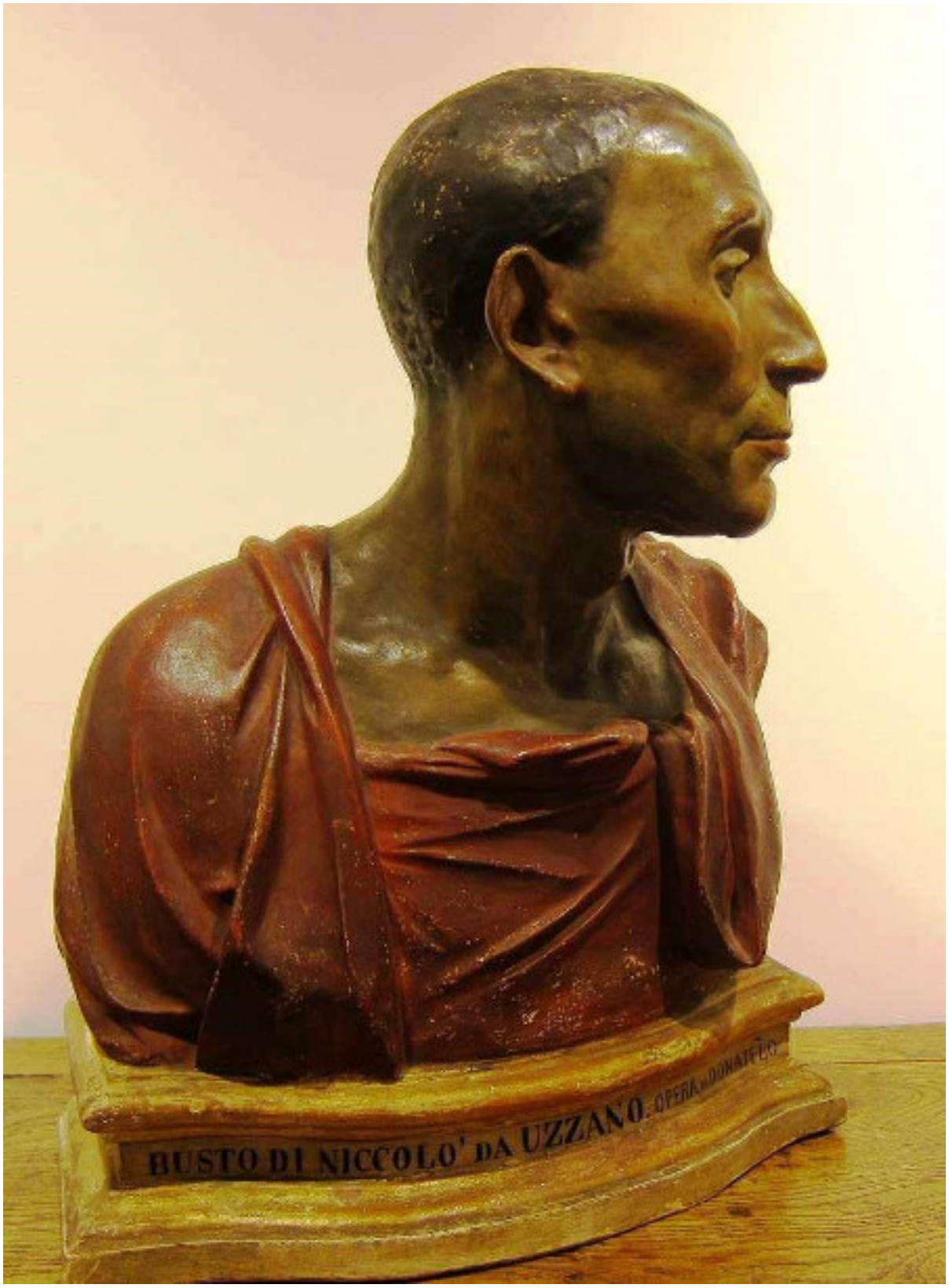
73. Donatello. Madonna Pazzi. (Berlin.)



74. Donatello. Bas-Relief. Angels Singing. (Uffizi. Florence.)

75. Donatello. Annunciation. (Santa Croce. Florence.)






76. Donatello, Portrait of Niccolo da Uzzano.

Donatello. *Gattamelata*.

Donatello. *Gattamelata*.

Finally, we will show some examples of Verrocchio — teacher of Leonardo and Perugino — in his capacity as a sculptor. First the famous equestrian statue: —

77. Verrocchio. Bertolomeo Colleoni. (Venice.)

79. Verrocchio. Head and Shoulders. (Detail of the above.)
80. Verrocchio. Guiliano de Medici. (Paris.)
And in conclusion: —

81. Verrocchio. David. (Museo Nazionale. Florence.)
And so, my dear friends, we have had before us the artists of the pre-Renaissance. They entered deeply

into the Antique and brought it forth again, in a time when men no longer lived within the soul in the same inward way as did the ancients. They brought to life again in outer vision, contemplation, what the ancients had felt and known inwardly — what they had feelingly known, knowingly felt, I should say. Moreover, they united this with the element which had to come in the 5th Post-Atlantean epoch — the element of naturalism, with clear outward vision. They thus became the fore-runners of the great artists of the Renaissance — of Leonardo, of Michelangelo, and, through Perugino, of Raphael himself. For all these were influenced directly by the Art of the precursors, whose works we have seen today. They stood, undoubtedly, on the shoulders of these artists of the pre- Renaissance period, the early Renaissance.

It is interesting to see, in relation to this figure, for example, how quickly they progressed in that time. Compare this David with the David by Michelangelo. Here you still see a comparative inability to dramatise the theme — to take hold of it in movement. Michelangelo, on the other hand, in his David, has seized the very essence of dramatic movement; he has caught the actual moment of resolve to go out against Goliath.

82. Michelangelo. David, Marble Statue (Florence, Academy)

Thus we have tried to bring these things to some extent before our souls: — On the one hand what radiates from the Greek Art itself, and on the other, its lighting-up-again in the age when Humanity was trying to find the life of Art once more with the help of the Greek Art which came to life again

**This Lecture version is from Rudolf Steiner Archive:**

## The History of Art

**On-line since: 15th February, 2015**
**By Rudolf Steiner**
**Translated by Christian van Arnim**
**Bn 292.1; GA 292; CW 292**

This is a typescript edition entitled, *The History of Art, with Slides*. The "slides," in this case, are images of the artworks that were presented with the lectures. The slides were not included with this typescript version, but we found these images and have added them to the text.*

The first nine lectures from the lecture series entitled, *The History of Art as an Image of an Inner Spiritual Impulse*, published in German as, *Kunstgeschichte Als Abbild Innerer Geistiger Impuls*.



***Please note*** - for this PDF, the mistakenly identified in the Rudolf Steiner Archive version as an image of ***(14) Zeus*** has been changed to the ***Ludovosi Juno*** and I have added an image of a Roman copy of Zeus from the 2nd century CE. It is after a Greek original from the 5th century BCE in the Museo Nationale Romano. It is unclear if the Juno was the original image in the slide lecture by Steiner, in which case he would be referring to it humorously as representing the 'fashion-plates'. ~ Malcolm