

The agency of Greek and Roman statues

From Homer to Constantine

Abstract

In the Archaic period the Greeks did not yet conceptualize the difference between a divinity and its statue. Therefore, stories that stressed the agency of statues separate from their divinities must have seemed less strange at that time than when the statues had become independent, so to speak, from their gods or goddesses. The latter started to happen in the transitional period to the Classical era when the well-known triad of divinities—heroes—mortals came into being, and philosophers began to criticize the worship of statues. All these changes together led to a development in which the agency of statues increasingly became noteworthy. After the 5th century BC we keep hearing about the agency of statues but we can also notice a growing critique of the worship of statues by different philosophical schools. In both Greece and Rome divine statues manifested themselves in particular during moments of crisis or of a decisive political character. In the Greek East the belief in the agency of statues lasted until the 3rd century AD, as Archaic statues represented a kind of cultural capital for the Greeks under Roman rule. Yet, in the end the continuing philosophical critique, which had been radicalized by the Christians, made the agency of statues intellectually unacceptable.¹

In the more than one thousand years that we have evidence of the lives of Greek and, albeit to a lesser extent, Roman statues, the problem of agency of cult images was continually present. Beginning with Homer and the *polis*, then looking at the Hellenistic and Roman world, and ending with the last pagan authors on statues before the victory of Constantine, it is the aim of my paper to trace the ideas about the agency of statues over the whole of this period. For clarity, I add that I do not

use the term “agency” in the sense given to it by Alfred Gell (1945–1997) in his influential study on art and agency,² but in the more limited meaning of “performance of an action”. In other words, this is a study of statues that perform actions, such as turning their heads, closing their eyes, speaking, moving, sweating and bleeding—physical, counter-intuitive actions we do not normally associate with “lifeless” statues. Admittedly, it is not an easy task to trace the development of ideas about the agency of statues, as there are few studies that help us in this respect for the post-Classical period. Moreover, a major problem of the standard studies of ancient statues is the fact that data from all kinds of periods are often used in an indiscriminate manner so that the historical developments do not become properly illuminated. Yet, we should at least try, and it is the aim of this paper to make a start in this direction.

Greek and Roman terminology

Before we begin with the first mention of a statue in Western literature, it is necessary to observe that ancient Greece did not have a single term for what modern English studies call the “cult image” or the Germans *Kultbild*, that is, an iconic or aniconic image of a god that is a focus of worship.³ On the contrary, the ancient Greeks had a highly varied vocabulary for images and statues, such as *agalma*, *andrias*, *aphidruma*, *bretas*, *eidôlon*,⁴ *eikôn*, *hedos*, *hidruma*, *kolossos* (of which we finally have a satisfactory Indo-European etymology),⁵ and

¹ This is the revised and elaborated text of my Martin P. Nilsson lecture on Greek religion held at the Swedish Institute at Athens on 9 December 2010. I am most grateful for comments and information to Angelos Chaniotis, Hallie Franks, Anja Klöckner, Ken Lapatin, Ioannis Mylonopoulos, Peter Stewart, the anonymous referees of this journal and the original audience in Athens as well as to audiences in Leiden and Cologne (2010), Vienna (2011) and Salzburg (2012). Sarah Hitch kindly and skilfully corrected my English.

² Gell 1998.

³ I update and elaborate here Donohue 1997.

⁴ The usage of this term for statues seems to be fairly late and rare, but see Pol. 30.25.13, 15; Diod. Sic. 1.96.9, 16.92.5.

⁵ Vine 2006, overlooked by Beekes 2010, 1.739f.

xoanon.⁶ Of these terms, *bretas* was traditionally used only in poetry, *andrias*, *hedos* and *kolossos* referred to particular kinds of statues, and *xoanon* originally denoted a statue of stone, wood or ivory that had been smoothed or polished, although later on Pausanias used it mainly for wooden statues.⁷ In general, the Greeks mostly used *agalma* for the statues of the gods or mortals that received cultic honours, whereas *eikôn* was mainly employed for statues and images of mortals, from a king to the living emperor to a local official.⁸ This fluidity of terms does suggest that the Greeks did not have a sharply defined notion of what constituted a cult image.⁹ Elements such as its position, appearance and place in ritual all played a part in establishing the status of cult image,¹⁰ and although there are certain indications that the Greeks consecrated their images, the available evidence, little as it is, hardly enables us to establish the extent of this usage.¹¹

On the other hand, the Romans had a much smaller vocabulary for their statues, even though they customarily consecrated an image as “cult image”.¹² Differently from what we might think, *statua* usually referred to a metal statue, but much less to that of a divinity. The usual terms were *effigies*, *forma*, *imago*, *signum* and *simulacrum*. In the course of time, these terms were often used as synonyms, but *signum* is the oldest and most frequently found term in inscriptions and literature, whereas, most often, *simulacrum* comes closest to “cult image”.¹³ In fact, before Augustan poetry, the Romans also differentiated between *simulacrum* as “cult image” and *imago* as “statue” for a human, but this difference was gradu-

ally abandoned, although some more conservative Romans, such as Pliny the Younger, stuck to the difference.¹⁴

In any case, when looking at the ancient evidence, we should never forget that our modern category “cult image” is relatively young and probably influenced by the rise of archaeology and art history as separate disciplines: the German term *Kultbild* started to replace the older *Götzenbild* only at the end of the 18th century,¹⁵ and the English term “cult image” or “cult-image” appeared only at the end of the 19th century, when other terms, such as “temple-image”, “temple-statue” or “cult-figure”, were still current.¹⁶

Classical and Archaic period

Let us now turn to the oldest mention of a statue in Western literature. In Book VI of the *Iliad*, Homer tells us that Hector had requested his mother Hecuba to try persuading the goddess Athena with a *peplos* and twelve cows to have mercy on the city of Troy, their wives and children. Hecuba obeyed her son and when she arrived at the temple of Athena, the priestess Theano opened the doors of the temple:

And she, Theano with the beautiful cheeks, took the *peplos*

And placed it on the knees of Athena with the nice locks.

And she prayed to the daughter of great Zeus:

“Lady Athena, city protectress, noblest of goddesses”

(...) So she prayed, but Pallas Athena tossed back her head in refusal (VI.302–311)

For our purpose it is important to observe that in this description there is no distinction made between goddess and statue. The word “statue” does not occur in the text, yet the mention of her knees clearly suggests the presence of a statue of a sitting divinity, perhaps a *hedos*.¹⁷ Moreover, the goddess/statue gave a sign with her head. Hardly surprisingly, if tellingly, later generations thought this ridiculous (Schol. *Il.* VI.311).

⁶ For Greek cult images, see, most recently, Faulstich 1997; Oenbrink 1997; Scheer 2000; Bettinetti 2001; Graf 2001; Steiner 2001; Linant de Bellefonds 2004; Hölscher 2005; Mylonopoulos 2010a; Eich 2011, to be read with the, rightly, critical review of Mylonopoulos 2012. There is also much material in Funke 1981.

⁷ For the terms, see, most recently Donohue 1988; Malkin 1991 (*aphidruma*); Hermary 1994 (*agalma*, *andrias*, *eikôn*, *kolossos*); Dickie 1996 (*kolossos*); Scheer 2000, 8–18 (*agalma*), 19–21 (*xoanon*), 21–23, 120–122 (*hedos*), 24–33 (*bretas*); note also the Christian etymology by Clem. Al. *Protr.* 4.46); Bettinetti 2001, 25–63 (*andrias*, *eikôn*, *hidryma*); Vincent 2003 (*xoanon*); Anguissola 2006 (*aphidruma*); Platt 2011, 92–100 (*xoanon*), 104–105 (*hedos*); Badoud 2011 (*kolossos*); Lanérès 2012 (*agalma*); Bresson 2012 (*kolossos*).

⁸ The difference between *agalma* and *eikôn*, which is not always clear, was established by Robert 1960, 124 n. 2 and 1968, 832–840; see also Tuchelt 1979, 68–70; Price 1984, 176–179; Koonce 1988; Damaskos 1997, 304–309. For *eikôn*, see Saïd 1987, 319–330 and 1993; Bresson 2012; Ma 2013, 2.

⁹ As persuasively argued by Donohue 1997; Lapatin 2010, 132f.

¹⁰ For this problem, see, most recently, Gladigow 2005, 62–72; Boschung 2007; Prost 2009; Mylonopoulos 2010b.

¹¹ Pirenne-Delforge 2008b and 2010; add Callim. fr. 100 Pfeiffer = Harder; *Apocryphal Acts of John* 44.

¹² Koep 1957.

¹³ Daut 1975, 32–54; Stewart 2003, 19–28, 31–35, 184–193; Estienne 2010. In general, for Greek, Latin and modern terminology, see Panagl 2001.

¹⁴ Daut 1975, 41; Bowersock 1973, 185 (Pliny).

¹⁵ Following Nick 2002, 9–10; Ganz & Henkel 2004, 32–33, n. 5 wrongly ascribe the origin of “*Kultbild*” to German archaeology in the 19th century, but the term already occurs in Von Fleichen-Russwurm 1781, 460.

¹⁶ Farnell 1896, 1.113 (“cult-figure”), 1.205 and 2.671 (“temple-image”), 1.207 (“temple-statue”); *The Nation* 1897, 308 (“the cult-image for Caesar’s temple”); Hogarth 1899, 3, 9, 155 etc.

¹⁷ For such sitting statues, see Jung 1982; Graf 1985, 44f.

Somewhat later than Homer, around 600 BC, the poet Alcaeus from Lesbos described the notorious rape of Cassandra by Ajax the Lesser. During the fall of Troy, Cassandra had sought refuge in the temple of Athena where “she embraced the statue of Athena ... clasping its chin”, a traditional gesture of supplication.¹⁸ However, when Ajax entered the temple, presumably the same one to which Hecuba went:

seizing with both hands the maiden
as she stood by the (holy?) statue (*agalma*),
the Locrian (raped) her. He did not fear at all
the daughter of Zeus, giver of victory in war,
grim-eyed. But she, (...) terribly beneath her brows,
livid with anger
(darted) over the wine-dark sea and suddenly stirred
up hidden stormwinds.

(Alcaeus fr. 298.20–27 Voigt, tr. Campbell, slightly adapted)

The striking feature of this text is the fact that we are first told that Cassandra embraced the *image* of Athena, but subsequently that the *goddess* left her temple. The same “identification” between goddess and statue also occurred on the famous Chest of Kypselos, a chest with mythological representations, dating somewhat after 600 BC. Regarding the rape of Cassandra it carried the inscription: “Locrian Ajax drags Cassandra from Athena”. However, the traveller Pausanias, who described the Chest and its inscriptions in the later 2nd century AD, explained to his readers that Ajax dragged Cassandra “from the statue (*agalma*) of Athena” (5.19.5).¹⁹ And still around 480 BC, just before the battle of Salamis, as Herodotus (8.64.2) tells us, the Athenians had sent a ship to Aigina “to fetch the sons of Ajax”, presumably their cultic images.²⁰

The fluidity between image and living goddess is also well visible on the oldest, 6th-century representations of the rape of Cassandra on black-figure vases, where we see Athena leaning into the direction of Ajax as his real opponent; it is only towards the end of the 6th century that Athena clearly becomes represented as a statue.²¹ Similarly, on several later 6th-century prize amphoras and sacrificial scenes, it is not always clear if the painters wanted to represent a statue of Athena or a “living goddess”, as the discussions of modern archaeologists

show all too manifestly. In some cases the painter may well have unconsciously conflated the two, as the way Athena is shown on these vases sometimes reflects the influence of her statue.²²

In Alcaeus’s poem on Cassandra, the mutation of image into goddess takes place under our very eyes but without any elucidation of the transformation or of the leaving of the statue by the goddess in the text. Here we note a narrative ambiguity that strikes us, modern readers, as somewhat odd. Yet it is common in Homeric transformations of divinities into birds or mortals that what was “actually seen” cannot be determined.²³ To cut the Gordian knot—image *or* goddess—is to remove an ambiguity that clearly was still present in Archaic times, even if it hurts our rationalist feelings.²⁴

At the end of the 6th century, vase painters introduced the novel representation of the god or goddess next to his or her image, just as they started to represent the divinities more statue-like in vase-painting;²⁵ in the 5th century we also see this development in an unknown tragedy of Sophocles (F 452 Radt) where the gods are depicted carrying their own statues (*xoana*) out of Troy before its fall.²⁶ Fernande Hölscher has argued that this development is not part of the history of religion but “only of a history of the image in narrative scenes”.²⁷ I beg to differ. It is precisely at the end of the 6th century that the idea of a standardized group of twelve gods became accepted, the so-called *Dodekatheon*,²⁸ and at the same time the concept of the hero as a class of supernatural beings between gods and men materialized, even though some figures, like Heracles, kept hovering between the two categories.²⁹ In other words, at the end of the 6th century the distance between gods and mortals became enlarged by the introduction of the intermediate category of heroes. It will hardly be chance that at this very moment we can also observe Xenophanes’ (B 14–16 DK) famous attack on divine anthropomorphism as well as Heraclitus’s (B 5 DK) ridiculing of those who “pray to the statues here as if they were chattering with houses, not recognizing what gods or even heroes are like”.³⁰ When gods became more distant and their statues became differentiated from the gods themselves, both of them evidently became liable to criticism.

²² Shapiro 1989, 27–32; Bentz 1998, 41–43.

²³ Buxton 2009, 46.

²⁴ Gordon (1996, 7–8) rightly maintains the ambiguity.

²⁵ For this chronological moment, see Alroth 1992; Oenbrink 1997, 32; Marconi 2011, 158–161.

²⁶ Note also Eur. *Hipp.* 114–117.

²⁷ Hölscher 2010, 113f.

²⁸ Bremmer 2010; Rutherford 2010.

²⁹ Bremmer 2007 (with a discussion of the “origin” of hero cults), not refuted by Parker 2011, 287–292.

³⁰ Osborne 1997.

¹⁸ Naiden 2006, 46–49.

¹⁹ Snodgrass 2001.

²⁰ Harrison 2002, 83 n. 52.

²¹ See, recently, with comparable conclusions, Oenbrink 1997, 33–65; Mangold 2000; Knauss 2006, 316–321.

There is another corollary to the development I have just sketched. When divinities and statues were not yet conceptually differentiated, stories that stressed the agency of statues separate from their divinities must have seemed less strange than when the statues had become independent, so to speak, from their gods or goddesses. It is therefore, perhaps, not surprising that we find such agency more mentioned from the 5th century onwards, where we begin with three interesting examples, even though none of these is without problems. First, as Herodotus (6.82.2) tells us, when at the beginning of the 5th century the Spartan king Cleomenes had to explain to his compatriots why he had not taken Argos after having defeated its army, he told them that he had entered Hera's sanctuary and had offered a sacrifice to see if she would grant him further successes. However, a flame shot out from the breast of her statue, which he interpreted as a negative sign. The statue of Hera was a small, archaic image of pear wood, and it had the power to make people mad,³¹ as had happened in the case of the daughters of Proetus. These had mocked the statue, and as a result they had to wander around as cows before being caught and healed by the seer Melampus.³² Yet in the case of Cleomenes, we hear of Hera's reaction only from him: evidently, there were no other witnesses of this miraculous act.

Our second example also comes from Herodotus (5.82–86). At some point in the hoary past, the Athenians had landed on the island of Aegina in order to steal the statues of two minor, talismanic deities, Damia and Auxesia. Herodotus tells us two versions of the story. According to the local, Aeginetan version, the Athenians first tried to wrench the statues from their bases and then attempted to heave them until each statue fell upon its knees, and remained sitting in that manner ever since. The statues were made of olive wood (5.82), and such statues were usually smaller, according to Theophrastus (*Hist. pl.* 5.3.7); the small ancient, portable statue of Athena Polias at the Athenian Acropolis was made of olive wood too.³³ In other words, we seem to have here a type of older, smaller statue, such as sometimes was connected with rituals of reversal, as was the case at Aegina, where women mocked each other during the festival of Damia and Auxesia.³⁴ The story itself is clearly an aetiological one explaining an unusual type

of statue,³⁵ and it is not surprising that Herodotus explicitly declares: “personally I don't believe what they say, though perhaps somebody may”. Here we see a manifest disbelief in the agency of statues.³⁶

Our third example derives from Euripides. In his *Iphigeneia in Tauris*, which was first performed around 413 BC,³⁷ Iphigeneia deceived the Taurian king Thoas in order to save her brother Orestes. With an image of Artemis in her arms—clearly a small one—she told the king that the prospective victims for human sacrifice, Orestes and Pylades, were unclean. When the king asked how she knew this, Iphigeneia answered: “the statue (*bretas*) of the goddess turned away from its base”. When further pressed by him, she even added: “on its own and it closed its eyes” (1165–1167), clearly in disgust. This divine gesture can be paralleled in other, later authors, who let divine statues turn their heads or close their eyes at the sight of terrible murders or crimes.³⁸ According to Callimachus (fr. 35 Pfeiffer = Harder), Athena turned her eyes upwards when Ajax raped Cassandra, and a late scholion on Lykophron (984), which probably goes back to Hellenistic sources, mentions that when the Crotoniates destroyed the city of Siris in southern Italy, they killed 50 youths who had sought refuge with the statue of Athena. In utter disgust the statue had closed its eyes. These gestures seem quite old, and their prototype may well be found in an archaic epic about the fall of Troy. It is surely a sign of later times that Strabo (6.1.14) expresses his disbelief in the gesture.

Now we certainly cannot say with Tanja Scheer that Artemis's image is comparable to that of Athena in Iliion and those of Aegina in that “man glaubt, ihr Bild habe sich abgewandt”,³⁹ since, as the audience well knew, this was a lie of Iphigeneia. On the other hand, it seems reasonable to accept that the passage attests a belief in the agency of statues, as otherwise the lie would not have worked. And indeed, we have several other passages from the 5th century that suggests such a belief.

Our oldest passage comes from an earlier 5th-century satyry play by Aeschylus, *Theoroi* or *Isthmiastae*, where a character says: “Look and see whether you think at all that Daedalus' models are a closer image of my form than this is. All it needs is a voice!” (F 78a.5–7, tr. Sommerstein). Here we see only the close likeness stressed, but around 430 BC an author of comedies, Cratinus, evidently mentioned a statue in his *Thracian women* (F 75 KA) that “had run away, although being of bronze”. An unknown speaker comments: “was it perhaps one

³¹ Pear wood: Plut. Fr. 158 Sandbach; Paus. 2.17.4; Clem. Al. *Protr.* 4.41; Lapatin 2010, 145f. Making mad: Acusilaus *FGrH* 2 F 28 = F 28 Fowler, cf. Burkert 1983, 168f.

³² Henrichs 1974; Dorati 2004; Cairns 2005.

³³ Olive wood: Platt 2011, 98f. For its pose, see most recently Ridgway 1992, 120–127 (inconclusive whether the statue was sitting or standing).

³⁴ Hdt. 5.83; schol. Ar. *Plut.* 1014 with Tzetzes; Graf 1985, 81–96; Calame 1997, 139; Bremmer 2008a, 261–265.

³⁵ For the statue, Welcker 1850, 186–187 aptly compared Paus. 8.48.7 (birth goddess Eileithyia).

³⁶ For the anecdote, see Scheer 2000, 186–192.

³⁷ Marshall 2009.

³⁸ Heraclides Ponticus F 49 Wehrli² (statue of Hera). Ajax and Cassandra: Apollod. *Epit.* 5.22; Quintus Smyrnaeus 13.425–29.

³⁹ *Contra* Scheer 2000, 192.

made by Daedalus?”. In a satyr play of Euripides, *Eurystheus* (F 372 Kannicht), an unknown speaker says: “the Daedalic statues (*agalmata*) all seem to move and see, so clever is that man”, and the somewhat later comic author Plato, who, like Aristophanes (F 191–204) and the 4th-century Philippus (F 1 KA), wrote a comedy about Daedalus, has a statue saying: “I am Hermes with a voice from Daedalus, although of wood, I came here by foot on my own accord” (F 204 KA); undoubtedly, part of the joke is that statues of Hermes were often of stone, ithyphallic and, as herms, without feet.⁴⁰

Our final example brings us to Euripides’ tragedy *Hecuba*, which dates to the later 420s BC. Here Hecuba cries out: “If only I had a voice in my arms and hands and hair, and the motion of my feet, either through the craft of Daedalus or of some god ...” (836–838, tr. Collard). In a way, she sums up what apparently were the most remarkable aspects of the statues made by Daedalus: they had a voice, they could move and, we have to add, they could see. Three things seem particular noteworthy here. First, we note that the notion of divine statue has developed in such a way that we no longer find a narrative ambiguity, but the statue has been definitely humanized so that its miraculous qualities are the product of a human craftsman, Daedalus, not of a god. Secondly, although our quotes are fragments without contexts, the prominence of the theme in comedy seems to suggest that the Athenians were fascinated by stories about statues animated by the master craftsman, even though these stories were exploited for a laugh. When the category “(divine) statue” came into being, people apparently started to speculate about the limits of its agency.⁴¹ By retrojecting supernatural qualities of statues, such as moving, speaking and seeing, into the mythological past, these stories also made a statement about the present.

Thirdly and, for our subject most importantly, the statues ascribed to Daedalus were perceived as slightly odd, as several later authors assure us.⁴² It is clear that when the Greeks started to marvel at the impressive, larger than life size statues, like those fashioned by Pheidias, Polyclitus and, later, Praxiteles and Lysippus, they no longer were able to admire the old-fashioned and in their materiality much simpler statues of the previous centuries. In fact, in passing one may even wonder if those dazzling, distant,⁴³ colossal, precious statues themselves were not a reflection of the trend that the Greeks felt becoming distanced from their gods, a trend developing in the later 5th century and reflecting itself in the tragedies of Euripides.⁴⁴

In any case, people now started to look down upon the older statues from an aesthetic point of view, as is well illustrated by Plato’s (*Hippias Major* 282a) Socrates, who remarks that “... according to the sculptors, Daedalus would look ridiculous if he were to be born now and produce the kind of works that gave him his reputation”. But the sculptors were not the only ones who clearly found these statues ridiculous. The philosopher Diagoras, who was later known as an atheist and lived in the last decades of the 5th century,⁴⁵ reputedly chopped up a wooden statue of Heracles to make lentil soup as a kind of parody of the latter’s *apotheosis* by fire.⁴⁶

Yet these old statues had the aura of antiquity, and with that antiquity there also came a special quality that demanded an explanation for their still being present in temples and being worshipped. That is why they became upgraded and their now strange appearance explained as being *diopetês*, “fallen from heaven”, or *acheiropoiêtos*, “not made by human hands”. We do not know to whom we owe this new interpretation, but it may well have been the personnel of the temples in which these statues were standing. We encounter this strategy first in the already mentioned *Iphigenia in Tauris* (88, 977–978, 1384–1385) where Orestes tells Iphigenia that he was ordered by Apollo to fetch the *agalma* of Artemis “that had fallen from heaven”. The upgrading would be followed by other sanctuaries, as we know from the *Acts of the Apostles* (19.35) on the statue of Artemis in Ephesus, for example. At the same time, their strange, now uncanny appearance must have made these statues suitable for stories about their supernatural power.⁴⁷ In fact, we know that according to Aeschylus the old statues, though simply made, were to be considered divine, whereas the new ones did evoke admiration but had a less divine aspect to them.⁴⁸

There is one more type of statue to mention here. A Hellenistic author, Menodotus, mentions that the statue of Hera of Samos once was stolen by Etruscan pirates.⁴⁹ However, they could not depart with the image aboard and therefore left it at the beach, where it was found by the frightened Samians.⁵⁰ To prevent this from happening again, they fastened it to a willow bush. The statue thus was bound, and such bound statues occur also elsewhere in the Greek world, in particular in the

⁴⁰ Osborne 1985; Wrede 1985; Rückert 1998; Doepner 2002.

⁴¹ Gordon 1997, 8f.

⁴² Cic. *Brut.* 18.71; Diod. Sic. 1.97.6; Paus. 2.4.5, 9.40.3–4; Apollod. 2.6.3; Morris 1982, 238–268; Baudy 2002; Eich 2011, 375–379.

⁴³ Thus Osborne 2011, 206.

⁴⁴ Bremmer 1999, 90.

⁴⁵ For Diagoras, see most recently Winiarczyk 1981, to be read with Winiarczyk 1989; Bremmer 1995; Obbink 1995, 525–526; Parker 1996, 208; Hordern 2001, 33–38.

⁴⁶ Diagoras T 27–33 Winiarczyk.

⁴⁷ This is well argued by Graf 2001, 236–240. The chronological development is neglected by Platt 2011, 96–98.

⁴⁸ Aesch. apud Porph. *Abst.* 2.18 = *TrGF* 3 T 114, cf. Neer 2010, 103.

⁴⁹ For the statue, see most recently Hölscher 2005, 55 n. 8.

⁵⁰ Callim. fr. 100–101 Pfeiffer = Harder; Menodotus *FGrH* 541 F 1; Nicaenetus 2703–2710 Gow Page; Burkert 1979, 129–130; Dillery 2005, 511–514.

case of Ares, Artemis and Dionysos. In virtually all cases the statues in question are old-fashioned and connected with rites of reversal. In other words, these bound statues are considered dangerous and must be prevented from escaping from their temples.⁵¹

Finally, let me end our study of the Classical era with an anecdote regarding a Classical athlete, whose phenomenal physical power eventually led to his deification: Theogenes (later called Theagenes) of Thasos. This athlete lived in the first half of the 5th century, when he gained an impressive amount of athletic victories but was also politically active. As a young boy of nine he had already brought home a bronze statue, which he had taken away from its base: not surprisingly, Pausanias tells us that he was a descendent of Heracles. Last century, the base of his statue on the agora of Thasos was found: it dates from the later 5th century, became the centre of a hero cult in the course of time and was said to have healing properties; it must have helped here that he was worshipped “as a god”, as Pausanias says. Now the latter tells us too that a fellow inhabitant from Thasos had developed a grudge against Theagenes and had scourged the statue by way of revenge. One night, the statue fell upon this man and killed him. The statue was put on trial for murder and exiled by being thrown into the sea. After the Delphic oracle had declared that the country would remain in a period of barrenness until they restored the statue of Theagenes, it was recovered from the sea and they sacrificed to him “as if he was a god”. For our purpose it is highly interesting to note that Pausanias (6.11.9) mentions that “both among the Greeks and among the barbarians, statues have been set up of Theagenes, and that he himself (*auton!*) both heals illnesses and receives honours from the natives”. Although there are no precise indications, there seems to be no reason not to date this legend to the late 5th century.⁵²

In concluding these notes on the Archaic and Classical period we will give the last word to Plato (*Laws* 931a), who well summarizes the situation at the end of the Classical period:

Some of the gods whom we honour we see clearly, but of others we set up statues (*agalмата*) as images (*eikonas*), believing that when we honour these, lifeless (*apsychoi*) though they be, the living (*empsychous*) gods feel great good-will and gratitude towards us.

⁵¹ Graf 1985, 81–96; Faraone 1992, 136–140; Icard-Gianolio 2005; Eich 2011, 371–399.

⁵² Dio Chr. 31.95–99; Paus. 6.11.2–9; Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 5.34.13; Pouilloux 1994; Currie 2005, 120–157 (date); Gorrini 2012, 107–111.

The Hellenistic world

Old mentalities slowly die, as the French *Annales* School has taught us. This is also visible in the Hellenistic era. On the one hand, we can witness certain continuities, such as the close relationship between divinity and statue, which remains visible on 4th-century vases.⁵³ On the other hand, we can also observe an intensifying of philosophical criticism of statues, as Cynics, Stoics and Pythagoreans extensively condemned the worship of statues, although Epicureans were much more tolerant of the practice.⁵⁴

In the Hellenistic era we no longer see such artistic innovations, as we saw in the 5th century, but sculptors followed the iconographic pattern of later Classical times. The anthropomorphic statue had become the norm and was introduced in all new temples built in this period, often not without stressing the distance between worshipper and statue.⁵⁵ Virtually none of the images was small, such as the archaic cult images, but usually they were at least life-size. And even when they were not bigger, the fact that the new temples were frequently smaller than the older ones, made the statues look larger.⁵⁶

Hellenistic kings now acted as protectors of sanctuaries and of ancient cult statues, which were even transported back from Persia to the Greek world,⁵⁷ but the beginnings of ruler cult also affected the royal statues. Philip of Macedon and his son Alexander the Great now erected a chryselephantine family group at Olympia, within a stone’s throw of Pheidias’s famous statue of Zeus. This proximity must have made their statues, too, look more like cult statues, and ivory-clad statues were the most precious ones produced and the most life-like of all statues; moreover, both kings almost certainly received cult images, even though perhaps only posthumously.⁵⁸ Among their successors, Ptolemy Philadelphos commissioned chryselephantine statues of his parents Ptolemy Soter and Berenike as saviour gods (Theocritus 17.121–125), but many other Hellenistic monarchs, too, commissioned or received ivory or less expensive statues.⁵⁹ And in 45 BC the Roman senate decreed that an ivory statue of Caesar should be kept in the Capitoline temple, which was used at the *ludi*

⁵³ Lapatin 2010, 133–136.

⁵⁴ Cynics, Stoics: Geffcken 1916–1919, 289–290. Pythagoreans: Plut. *Num.* 8, 12–14; Clem. Al. *Strom.* 5.28.4; Philostr. *V A* 5.20. Epicureans: Obbink 1995, 10 n. 2; Koch Piettre 2005.

⁵⁵ Damaskos 1997, 212 (distance), 241 (iconographic pattern).

⁵⁶ Damaskos 1997, 208–213; Hölscher 2005.

⁵⁷ Scheer 2000, 248–270.

⁵⁸ Price 1984, 26–27; Damaskos 1997, 263–269; Lapatin 2001, 115–119; Schultz 2007; Neer 2010, 99–102; Versnel 2011, 489 n. 151 (with additional bibliography).

⁵⁹ Damaskos 1997, 269–315; add Paus. 5.12.7 (Nicomedes of Bithynia); Amm. Marc. 22.13.1 (Antiochus IV Epiphanes), with Den Boeft *et al. ad loc.*

Victoriae Caesaris and the *Parilia*, the festival celebrating the foundation of Rome.⁶⁰

It is in the Hellenistic period that we hear of other reactions of statues. Just before the battle of Leuctra, where the Thebans defeated the Spartans and thus ended their Greek hegemony, the Spartans heard the noise of arms in the temple of Heracles and saw his statue sweating; probably, this was an old-fashioned statue too, like the one burnt by Diagoras.⁶¹ Moreover, at the same time the most famous Spartan statue in Delphi, that of the great general Lysander, grew a crown of weeds on its head. In fact, Cicero has collected several portents connected to this battle, which show that this momentous event was soon connected with all kinds of signs *ex eventu*.⁶² Such signs now gradually seem to become more popular. When the *condottiere* Timoleon advanced on Sicily in the middle of the 4th century, the inhabitants of Adranum (modern Aderno) told him that when he had defeated his opponent Hiketas, the gates of the temple of their god Adranos had spontaneously opened and the god could be seen with his face dripping with sweat. Sweating of statues and spontaneous bellowings were reported after the battle of Chaeroneia, and the statues in the market of Thebes were seen to sweat at the arrival of Alexander the Great. The cedar statue of Orpheus in Macedonian Leibethra was reputed to have sweated before Alexander the Great started his expedition against the Persians, and this sweating Orpheus recurs in the Alexander Romance.⁶³ In these cases, sweat seems to be both positive and negative,⁶⁴ but for more sweat, though, we have to turn to the Romans.⁶⁵

Roman republic

When the Romans conquered the Greek world, their own narrative traditions gradually became incorporated into the material used by Greek authors on Rome, just as Roman authors appropriated Greek traditions: Ovid's (*Fast.* 3.45–46) observation that the statues of Vesta covered their eyes with

their virgin hands when Silvia gave birth to Romulus and Remus looks to be very much inspired by Greek traditions of statues turning away their eyes in disgust. Yet compared to the Greeks, the relationship between the Romans and their gods was very different. Whereas the Greek gods were rather arbitrary in their dealings with their worshippers, the Romans liked to think of a pact with the gods that was maintained by a strict ritual process. Divine warnings came in the form of prodigies, events that defied Roman concepts of normality.⁶⁶ From the middle of the 3rd century BC onwards—that is, in the middle of the First Punic War—the Romans started to keep lists of them, which were used by the historian Livy in his great history of Rome, *Ab urbe condita*, but which we mainly know through a dry summary of a certain Obsequens in late antiquity.

Three reactions of statues stand out: speaking, weeping and sweating. Let us start with speaking. In his *Life of Coriolanus* Plutarch reports that the Roman *matronae* were allowed to found a temple for Virtus Muliebris as thanks for their help in getting the Volsci to end the siege of Rome. This they did, and they collected so much money that they could dedicate two statues instead of one. When the second statue was erected, it actually thanked the ladies, and some even said that it had offered thanks twice.⁶⁷ The other case is Camillus's *evocatio* of Juno Regina from Veii.⁶⁸ Plutarch mentions that Camillus, during a sacrifice, had asked the goddess for her assent. The goddess had not only nodded but even spoken to express her willingness to leave the city. Livy already presents a rationalizing version of this event by telling that not the goddess herself but some youths who were present had spoken.⁶⁹ It can hardly be chance that the most striking act of these statues, speaking, is attested only for the oldest period of the Roman republic.

This is different with weeping. In 181 BC the *pontifex* announced that the statue of Juno Sospita at Lanuvium had wept (*Liv.* 40.19.2). For reasons that are no longer clear, this statue was credited with the largest number of miraculous acts of all Roman statues and also had already bled during the Second Punic War (23.31.15). Other statues wept, too, such as that of Apollo in Cumae in 169 BC, which wept for three consecutive days and nights (*Liv.* 43.13.4), and it did so again in 129 BC.⁷⁰ The latter example was taken up by Augustine, who argued that such divine weeping was not very proper, thus repeating a sentiment that can already be found in Ovid (*Fast.*

⁶⁰ Cass. Dio 43.45.2, cf. Weinstock 1971, 110, 271.

⁶¹ For wooden and/or archaic images of Heracles, see Paus. 2.4.5, 2.6.3 (cf. Hsch. s.v. *πλήξαντα καὶ πληγέντα*), 2.10.7, 7.25.10 (small).

⁶² Callisthenes *FGrH* 124 F 22; Cic. *Div.* 1.74–75, 2.68 with Pease *ad loc.*; Plut. *Mor.* 397F.

⁶³ Timoleon: Plut. *Tim.* 12. Chaeroneia: Ap. Rhod. 4.1284–1285 with scholion *ad loc.* Thebes: Diod. Sic. 17.10.4; Arr. *Anab.* 1.11.2; Quint. Smyrn. 12.507–509. Orpheus: Plut. *Alex.* 14.8; *Vita Alexandri* 1.42.4 Thiel.

⁶⁴ Note also Schol. Apoll. Rhod. 4.1284; Lydus, *Ost.* 8.

⁶⁵ I leave here aside the mechanical statues, which engineers such as Ktesibios, Philo and Hero, started to develop in Alexandria in the course of the 3rd century BC. See especially Von Hesberg 1987; Fragahi 2012; Frass 2012.

⁶⁶ Beard 1998, 1.36–38; see more in general: MacBain 1982; Rosenberger 1998; Engels 2007.

⁶⁷ Plut. *Cor.* 37.4, *Mor.* 318F.

⁶⁸ On the *evocatio*, see most recently Versnel 1998.

⁶⁹ Liv. 5.22; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 13.3; Val. Max. 18.3; Plut. *Cam.* 6; Lactant. *Div. inst.* 2.7.11.

⁷⁰ Obsequens 28; Cass. Dio 24 fr. 84.2; August. *De civ. D.* 3.11; Engels 2007, 547.

4.521), who comments on Demeter's crying for Persephone: *neque enim lacrimare deorum est*.⁷¹ In fact, as Augustine argued, the weeping of statues showed their powerlessness to prevent the suffering of their mortal followers, thus happily forgetting that Jesus had wept too (*John* 11.35).⁷²

If real gods don't weep, they certainly sweat. For example, before the disastrous battle against Hannibal at Lago Trasimeno in 217 BC a statue of Mars and the she-wolf started to sweat,⁷³ and during the same Punic War, in 210, we find cult images sweating even blood.⁷⁴ When the murderous Social War between Rome and its Italic allies started in 91 BC, the statue of Apollo in Cumae sweated,⁷⁵ and when there was total anarchy in Rome in 53 BC, Mars' statue sweated again,⁷⁶ just as statues did at the beginning of the civil war between Caesar and Pompeius as well as in prediction of the death of Caesar in 44 BC.⁷⁷

Finally, Caesar included in his account of the civil war the prodigy that the very day he gained the battle of Pharsalus, in the temple of Athena at Elis, the image of Nike, which used to face the statue of the goddess, had turned about toward the portal and entrance of the temple.⁷⁸ In, probably, 31 BC the already mentioned statue of Athena Polias at the Athenian Acropolis is also said to have turned: from east to west signalling the fall of Antony—and to have spat blood.⁷⁹ The turning of statues is Greek rather than Roman, but it is interesting to note the application of Greek traditions to contemporary Roman events.

Looking back, we can now see that in all cases the movements and actions of divine or heroic statues were connected to moments of crisis or of a decisive character. In other words, in the eyes of the Greeks and Romans it clearly was not normal for statues to act: they would only do so at very special moments in time.⁸⁰ Moreover, it seems that the gods of the Romans were more active through their statues than those of the Greeks.⁸¹ Was this because the Romans simply kept better track of their gods or can it be that the Greek gods still

could appear in historical times and did thus not (need to) act through their statues?

The Roman Empire

With the collapse of the belief in prodigies at the end of the Republic, virtually no more Roman examples of acting statues are attested in Roman literature, except in some poetic works of the early Empire that clearly hark back to the time of the Republic.⁸² This was different, though, in the Greek part of the Empire. Not only did the 3rd-century historian Cassius Dio give several examples of Roman statues that had moved or bled,⁸³ the traveller Pausanias, in particular, has given us plenty of evidence that the archaic cult images we met in Classical Greece survived to be worshipped well unto the end of the 2nd century;⁸⁴ moreover, we even continue to find the ambiguity between a divinity and its statue into late antiquity:⁸⁵ Symmachus, one of the last great pagans, and Macrobius (1.8.5) tell us that, when not celebrating the Saturnalia, the Romans shackled the cult image of Saturn: *Saturnus ipse in compedibus*.⁸⁶

Yet, this did not mean that regarding the statues time stood still, as the distance between old images and contemporary ones can have only increased in the Roman period. The Greek elite now invested less and less in their traditional gods, but more and more in Roman ruler cult. This means that new images would be mainly those of the Roman emperors, which were at least life-size and often bigger.⁸⁷ Yet the archaic statues kept being worshipped. An important reason will have been that although it had become part of the Roman Empire, the Greek world still looked back to its glorious period of the Archaic and Classical Age. As we can well see from Pausanias,⁸⁸ the old statues thus were also representative of that wonderful era, not just pieces from a religious museum.

A second reason for the continued worship of the traditional statues will have been that, beginning in the 5th century BC,⁸⁹ the distance between deity and worshipper was still

⁷¹ For this Roman sentiment, see Bömer on *Ov. Met.* 2.621–622.

⁷² Corbeill 2009.

⁷³ *Liv.* 22.1.8–20; *Cass. Dio* 13, in *Zonaras* 8.22.9 p. 200; *Engels* 2007, 434.

⁷⁴ *Liv.* 27.4.11–15; *Engels* 2007, 463.

⁷⁵ *Cic. Div.* 1.98; *Flor.* 1.24; *Obsequens* 54; *Engels* 2007, 581f.

⁷⁶ *Obsequens* 63; *Cass. Dio* 40.17.12; *Engels* 2007, 646.

⁷⁷ *Caesar/Pompeius: App. B Civ.* 2.36. *Caesar: Verg. G.* 1.480; *Ov. Met.* 15.792; *Sen. Thyest.* 702; *Engels* 2007, 698f.

⁷⁸ *Caes. B Civ.* 3.105.6; *Plut. Caes.* 47; *Obsequens* 65a. The same happened in Tralles: *Cass. Dio* 41.61.4.

⁷⁹ *Cass. Dio* 54.7.3, but *Neils* 1996, 47 thinks this is some other—outdoor—statue on the Acropolis.

⁸⁰ See also *Stewart* 2007.

⁸¹ Cf. *Rüpke* 2010.

⁸² *Luc.* 1.536–537; *Sil.* 8.645–646; *Stat. Theb.* 4.734.

⁸³ Many examples have been collected by *Wülker* 1903, 13–14; *Pease* 1920–1923, 1.271f.

⁸⁴ *Finkelberg* 2001 well analyses the difference between archaic and more modern, anthropomorphic statues in Pausanias.

⁸⁵ *Weinreich* 1909, 142 n. 7 compares *Chariton* 1.1.7 and *Paus.* 6.11.9; add *Plut. De Is. et Od.* 71, 379C; *Graf* 1985, 298 n. 27; *Faraone* 1992, 64 n. 87.

⁸⁶ *Symmachus Relat.* 3. p. 281 *Seeck*; for Saturn and the Saturnalia, see most recently *Versnel* 1994, 136–227.

⁸⁷ *Price* 1984, 170–206; *Steuernagel* 2010.

⁸⁸ See the excellent discussion of *Paus.* 2.4.5 by *Pirenne-Delforge* 2008a, 278f.

⁸⁹ *Oenbrink* 1997, 345–346; *Klöckner* 2010.

steadily increasing in Roman times, as inscriptions and votive reliefs show.⁹⁰ This must have made the cult image more and more important as *the* place of meeting with the divinities, a meeting that was of course promoted by all kinds of ritual acts, such as dressing, washing and worshipping the images.⁹¹ This importance may well explain why not only the archaic statues kept being worshipped, but even the simple aniconic stones that could be found in many places of the Roman, Greek and Near Eastern world.⁹² And both types of cult image were still being seen as effective in different ways, an efficacy that was not even denied by the earlier Christian apologists.⁹³

In Boeotian Hyettos, an “unwrought stone”, representing Heracles, healed the sick (Paus. 9.24.3), and simple stone images of Heracles and Hermes, if sometimes furnished with a beard, were ready to hear and answer the prayers of worshippers (Paus. 7.25.10 and 27.1). The oracle of Apollo of Claros recommended to fetch a statue of Artemis Ephesia and to put it in the temple of Sardeis in order to prevent the plague.⁹⁴ In fact, not only statues of gods possessed a healing power. Lucian (*Philops.* 18–20) has an over the top story about a certain Eucrates, who relates that he was healed by the statue of the Corinthian general Pellichos, which had the habit of wandering around at night. In Amphiarao’s sanctuary in Oropos there was an *agalma pausiponon*, “a pain stopping statue” (*I. Oropos* 380), and Pausanias mentions not only the healing statue of Theagenes but also that of the much less known 5th–4th-century athlete Polydamas at Olympia.⁹⁵ The Christian apologist Athenagoras mentions a healing statue of his contemporary Neryllinus in Alexandria Troas and an oracle giving statue of Peregrinus in Parion.⁹⁶ What is striking in these examples is that it is not the statues of the main gods but those of former humans that seem to have the most healing power. Is this perhaps one more indication of that distance between divinity and believer that we already observed?

Yet despite the continued belief in the healing activity of statues, we cannot fail to notice that the idea of the agency of statues had increasingly become unacceptable in more intellectual circles. The Romans already rationally explained sweating statues away, witness Cicero (*Div.* 2.58), and Plutarch even

dedicated an important passage to the phenomenon, which shows that around AD 100 many intellectuals barely accepted acting statues any longer:

It is not impossible for statues to appear to sweat, weep and emit a type of moisture resembling blood. For both wood and stone often attract mould that produces dampness, creating many colours and building up layers from the atmosphere (...) But for those who are sympathetically disposed and affectionate for their god, and also are unable to reject or renounce things of this sort, their faith is supported by the marvellous and by the transcendent character of divine power. For the divine in no way resembles the human in either its nature, movement, skill or strength. And it defies reason if it achieves the impossible, doing something that we are unable to do. Rather differing from us in every way, the divine power is the most dissimilar and distant from us in the actions that it performs.⁹⁷

Although in his *Life of Camillus* he was more outspoken against the agency of statues, it is clear that Plutarch cannot really accept such agency without any problems. Yet it was not only the agency of statues that became problematic in his time. From Celsus’s treatise *Alêthês logos* against the Christians, which probably has to be dated to the middle of the 2nd century, we can see that the very existence of statues had become problematic. With their rejection of gods, temples, altars and statues the Christians had radicalized the existing philosophical critique. As Celsus cites the already quoted passage by Heraclitus, it is clear that Christian apologists had mined the ancient philosophers in order to bolster and support their own critique. Unfortunately, Celsus’s polemics have survived only incompletely, but he seems to have stated that statues were only signs of the gods, and in this he resembles other contemporary intellectuals, who carefully distinguished between gods and their images.⁹⁸

This philosophical development, which made it impossible to accept statues as agents, was sufficiently influential in that we hardly hear any more of acting statues of divinities or humans, not even in the magical papyri.⁹⁹ There seem to be few exceptions to this rule. In his *Heroikos* (19.4) Philostratus relates that the statue of Hector in Ilion was so involved in the games in its honour that it sweated during the performances. Yet this seems more to be a witness to Philostratus’s interest

⁹⁰ Inscriptions: Versnel 1981; Pleket 1981. Votive reliefs: Schörner 2003, 187–198.

⁹¹ See also Elsner 2007, 29–48.

⁹² Apul. *Flor.* 1.4; Lucian *Alex.* 30; Clem. Al. *Strom.* 7.713B; Tert. *Apol.* 16, 56.6; Min. Fel. 3.1; Arn. *Adv. nat.* 1.39; more recently, Kron 1992; Graf 2006; Stewart 2008; Gaifman 2012. For the Near Eastern background, see López-Ruiz 2010, 205–210.

⁹³ Athenagoras, *Leg.* 23.1–2, cf. Nasrallah 2010, 207–210.

⁹⁴ Graf 1992.

⁹⁵ Lucian *Deor. conc.* 12; Paus. 6.5.4–9 (Polydamas, cf. Taeuber 1997), 6.11.2–9 (Theagenes).

⁹⁶ Athenagoras, *Leg.* 26.4–5, cf. Jones 1985. For the possible appearance of Peregrinus’s statue, see Smith 1998.

⁹⁷ Plut. *Cor.* 38.1–3, cf. Graf 2005, 255–257.

⁹⁸ Fazzo 1977.

⁹⁹ Haluszka 2008.

in the life-like properties of works of art than an attempt at revaluing heroic or divine statues.¹⁰⁰ The most important exception, though, was theurgy. Here statues did play an important role,¹⁰¹ and Eunapius (475) relates that when Maximus of Ephesus (d. AD 370) sacrificed a grain of incense to a statue of Hecate and recited a hymn, the statue first smiled and then seemed to laugh aloud; its torches burst into a blaze of light. Yet even our pagan source does not seem impressed and compares Maximus to a miracle worker. The tide had turned, and acting statues could no longer claim belief, not even in theurgical circles.

Finally, it cannot be chance that both Porphyry and Iamblichus wrote the only known books about pagan cult images in the later 3rd century. Porphyry wrote *On Images* in order to defend the cultic images by allegorizing them, and Iamblichus (Phot. *Bibl.* 215) authored a book, in which he argued that images are full with divine presence and presented many anecdotes about them, which makes the loss of this work the more deplorable. The 3rd century was the time when Christianity made great inroads in Roman society, and its arguments against “idolatry” must have become louder and louder.¹⁰² The Christians called the pagan cult images *eidōla*, as the term *eidōlon* carried the overtone of “phantom, unreal”, and its use indicated the fact that, from a Christian perspective, the pagan gods were nothing more than human imaginations and fantasy.¹⁰³ It is well known that many early Christians were opposed to the cult of images, although this was different for the more heterodox ones amongst them.¹⁰⁴ As was the case with the Jews and pre-Islamic Arabs,¹⁰⁵ there were different points of views among the early Christians, even if the majority was iconophobic. However, for reasons still unclear, the Christians no longer used three-dimensional representations of God or Christ in the first centuries after their victory, but preferred the two-dimensional icons.¹⁰⁶ This meant that after Constantine, the pagan cult images not only had lost their agency but also, gradually, disappeared from the temples, although the necessary attempts were made to integrate ancient pagan statues into the Christian cultural milieu.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Whitmarsh 2009, 226f.

¹⁰¹ Dodds 1951, 294 (with further references); Bouffartigue 2007, 59–64; Johnston 2008, 445–477.

¹⁰² Elliger 1930; Fredouille 1981.

¹⁰³ Van Winden 1982; Saïd 1987, 311–319.

¹⁰⁴ For a survey of the literature, see Feld 1990, 2–6; add Kollwitz 1957; Bremmer 2008b; Ivanović 2010; Brubaker 2012.

¹⁰⁵ Jews: see most recently Keel 2001; Koch 2002; Fine 2010. Arabs: Lecker 1993; Hawting 1999; King 2002; Basile 2002; Griffith 2009; Alpass 2010; Multhoff 2010.

¹⁰⁶ Bauer & Witschel 2007, 13–15.

¹⁰⁷ Jacobs 2010.

Conclusion

What have we learned? In the Archaic period, as we have seen, the Greeks did not yet conceptualize the difference between a divinity and its statue, which must have facilitated the belief in the agency of statues. This situation started to change during the transitional period to the Classical era, when both vase paintings and literature began to differentiate between divinities and their statues. At the same time the well-known triad of divinities—heroes—mortals came into being, which must have led to a widening distance between the divinities and their mortal worshippers; probably as a corollary of this development, philosophers now started to criticize the worship of statues. Apparently, all these changes together led to a development in which it became noteworthy when statues of divinities performed an, albeit limited, range of actions. At the same time, though, the fluidity between divinity and image never quite disappeared, and we can observe its continuing presence in Greek and Roman religions until the victory of Christianity.

Both developments intensified in Greece after the 5th century BC. On the one hand, we hear more about the agency of statues but, on the other, we can also notice an increasing critique of the worship of statues by different philosophical schools. A similar development took place in Rome, even though the Roman tradition mentioned speaking statues, which we do not find among the Greeks. In both cultures divine statues manifested themselves in particular during moments of crisis or of a decisive political character.

After the fall of the Roman Republic we hear almost nothing about the agency of statues in Rome, but in the Greek East this belief lasted until the 3rd century AD. Here the Archaic statues, which were most frequently attested in this regard, long represented a kind of cultural capital for the Greeks under Roman rule. Yet, in the end the continuing philosophical critique, which had been radicalized by the Christians, made the agency of statues intellectually unacceptable, and from the 3rd century onwards we hardly hear of it anymore in pagan writings. It is perhaps symbolic that the most striking exception to this rule is connected with the last scholar of the pagan Athenian Academy. Damascius relates that he himself and his master Isidorus saw a moving baetyl on their travels through Syria and Lebanon, which led the latter to Platonizing expositions that need not concern us here.¹⁰⁸ It would take several centuries before we would see again the agency of statues, if then in a Christian world. But that is another story.

¹⁰⁸ Dam. *Isid.* fr. 203 Zintzen = Phot. *Bibl.* 242.203 Henry, cf. Aliquot 2010.

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