

*From the desk of Pierre Beaudry*



**THE LIVING CURVATURE OF THE PARTHENON OF ATHENS AND  
THE PHEIDIAS CELEBRATION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF CREATIVITY**  
(An ancient pedagogical experiment.) Part II



by Pierre Beaudry 12/31/2008

**4- THE DIFFERENT TEMPORALITIES OF SIMULTANEITY OF ETERNITY AND THE THREE STEPS OF DISCOVERY.**

If the Great Panathenaia is to be viewed as an actual solution to the tragedy of Greek society, then, it cannot be event-driven from the past, like the Olympian gods proceed from. It can only be intention-driven from the future, as the creative mind proceeds from, that is, from the next coming axiomatic change of human history. Such is the central characteristic of the Parthenon and its Pheidias Frieze. Following what I have reported on earlier, one aspect of this creative process incorporated in the Parthenon was that the entire building was given a playful *in-betweenness life-like balance* expressed by right sidedness and left sidedness, a dissymmetrical chirality characteristic that belongs universally to all living and cognitive processes. During the middle of the fifth century BC that historical process of chirality was heading toward a predictable crisis point, toward a discontinuity breakdown or breakthrough, for Greek society as a whole. It is important to note, here, that such moments of chirality are characteristic of axiomatic changes in the process of universal history. The left and right spiral actions, adorning Ionic capitals of Greek columns, for example, were a mere shadow illustration of that chirality method of artistic and historical composition.

What remains to be discovered, here, is how the mystery of the *peplos* actually reflected the teleological force of historical progress that is pulling the whole of Greek society forward to an axiomatic change, as Plato described, in the *Timaeus*. The entire frieze, thus, relates to the creation of the soul of the universe expressed as the “movable image of eternity” within our solar system. This is how Plato described the creative event of Time in that soul:

“And when the Father that engendered it perceived it in motion and alive, a thing of joy (*ἀγαλμα*) to the eternal gods, He too rejoiced; and being well-pleased He designed to make it resemble its Model still more closely. Accordingly, seeing that that Model is an eternal Living Creature, He set about making this Universe, so far as He could, of a like kind. But in as much as

the nature of the Living Creature was eternal, this quality it was impossible to attach in its entirety to what is generated; wherefore, He planned to make a movable image of Eternity, and, as He set in order the Heaven, of that Eternity which abides in unity He made an eternal image, moving according to number, even that which we have named Time.” (5)

Here, Plato makes a delicious pun on the term *ἀγαλμα* which means both “painting or sculpture offering to God” and a “thing of joy” which he applied to the very act of weaving the soul of the Universe within its physical part as an act to be replicated, life-like, as in the simultaneity of eternity. And thus, Iktinos and Pheidias designed the Parthenon, accordingly, as a “thing of joy” with a series of non-linear dynamic features that made this work of artistic composition one of the greatest monist hylozoic puzzles of all times according to the model of the Pythagorean and Platonic soul of the Universe.

We have already come to realize that what Pheidias had been projecting onto the internal and external friezes of the Parthenon were merely shadows. But such shadows were both a lesson in history and a pedagogical experiment in what is required to develop the power of reason, and to solve the tragic crisis of Greek society. From that standpoint, the evidence at hand led us to hypothesize that *the true subject of the Great Panathenaia frieze was an epistemological experiment in the discovery of the universal physical principle of creativity*. Thus, the Great Panathenaia procession was nothing but an opposition to the Olympian gods and, at the same time, a reflection of the process of “cognition of God” (*Athenaia - hê theou noêsis*), as in the image of the Creator.

Those shadows, therefore, point to the catastrophic failure of the Greek tradition of the Olympian gods. Why is it that no one banned the event of that artistic composition as a sacrilege against the gods? This is precisely how Lyn hinted at this question when he posed the issue of creativity and immortality in his Windy Hill dialogue of Saturday, November 22, 2008. LaRouche said:

“That creativity is located, yes, in the individual; it’s expressed by the individual. But it’s more than that: it’s what defines the human species as superior to all other species. It defines the quality of society as measured by the degree to which it is subject to creativity, as opposed to convention, tradition. Tradition is the enemy.

“Now, tradition becomes the enemy, because of what’s set forth by the Olympian Zeus, the case of *Prometheus Bound*: You’re told to “stay in your place.” You’re told what you’re supposed to believe. You’re told only this. You’re told that creativity does not exist. You’re told that every human being, whether creative or not, is equally intellectual, which is not true. Intellectual power must belong, essentially, to the intellect and the development of the intellect, because that’s what distinguishes man from the ape. Whereas all these cultures, these populist cultures, and the typical populists themselves are all degenerating back toward the ape level! And that’s why societies, like the British society, can make fun of them, laugh at them, piss on them! Because the people themselves have put on their own chains.” (6)

The issue is breaking those chains. But, in order to do that, we are required to take several self-conscious steps that are now necessary to reconstruct for the benefit of the reader. Where do you locate those chains in the Pheidias frieze? What form do they take? How can we recognize them, since they do not have any visible linkage to people’s arms and legs? How do you discover the process of breaking away from inside of Plato’s Cave? This will require three very distinct steps.

The first step of this process is the state of *perplexity*, in which the spectator-participant of the Great Panathenaia has to eliminate his attachment to the idea that sense certainty is an expression of truthfulness: the certainty of “I believe only what I see” must be given up. That is the first chain to break from. The second step is the state of *awfulness*, in which the spectator discovers that his sense certainty is based on the wrong assumptions and on fallacies of composition of public opinion. Those are the chains that you put on yourself to remain in good standing with the gods. And, the third step is the state of *rejoicing* after breaking those chains, and celebrating Athena in the *principle of creativity reflected in the mystery of the peplos*.

This experiment, therefore, can only be realized by reliving the exquisite irony of the *peplos*, that is to say, by reconstructing, in its entirety, the process of what was woven in the minds of the participants of the Great Panathenaia, from the beginning of the procession, during the procession, and at the culminating discontinuity of the procession on the eastern frieze of the Parthenon. The reason for experimenting this unity of effect throughout the entire process is that creativity is not to be found in any of the particular moments of the procession, but in the process as a whole. Take, for example, the different forms of temporality included in the Parthenon.

The discovery of the principle of creativity requires the traveling from the port of Athens, across the city to the Acropolis, up to the Acropolis and around the outside of the Parthenon where the participants are divided into two groups. The two groups view the frieze from the starting point of the southwest corner of the Parthenon. One group moves along the south side, and the other larger group moves along the west side, and then along the north side to discover that the entire frieze reflected the procession of the participants below. The first discovery, therefore, is that the frieze is about you, the self-conscious viewer-participant! The frieze, then, acts as a mirror inversion of the creative process of the participants whose purpose is to discover the meaning of the two processional streams leading to the destination of joining them together, again, at the solemn mysterious scene of the folding of the *peplos* on the east frieze.

What has to be emphasized, in the first step of observing the frieze, is the function of *perplexity*, because the observers were deliberately forced into a very awkward position, since all of the scenes are in the shadows of the columns and of the entablature of the temple. These scenes are partly hidden and are constantly interrupted by the visual impairment of the columns and the architrave above them. This is a most disturbing moment, indeed. This is how Yale University Professor, A. W. Lawrence, described his own state of perplexity on the subject:

“The frieze of the Parthenon however ran also along the sides of the cella, completely surrounding it, and for that there was no precedent. The Frieze, nearly 524 feet long, and carved in greater elaboration than any previous relief, was, however, so placed that it could scarcely be seen. [...] In the comparatively small temple of Hephaistos, the frieze was not uncomfortably above eye level; in the Parthenon even the base stands nearly 40 feet above the pteron floor, which is only 15 feet wide and no human eyes can be turned up at such an angle longer than a few seconds. A slightly more distant view from still lower could be obtained from the ground outside, which, in antiquity reached up to the bottom step of the temple – it has now been cleared away, so that the rock is exposed all round the foot of the tall platform beneath the steps. If one walked along outside, however, the columns interrupted the continuity of the sculpture, and at a little distance the architrave of the pteron masked the frieze altogether.

“From any standpoint, the angle of vision must therefore have been awkward, and if the frieze had been carved in the normal way, to uniform depth, the legs of the figures would have masked their heads.” (7)

It is unfortunate that Professor Lawrence did not go beyond his academic discomfort on the matter of his *perplexity*. He did not even ask himself the question why that frieze was not built on the wall of the temple, at a more comfortable angle of vision, with seating accommodations and appropriate lamps. That could have been easily arranged, as it was later done, at the British Museum. However, this was obviously not what Pheidias had in mind. The idea was that the process had to be a living procession of the entire citizenry of Athens divided into those two opposite streams, and the purpose was to make a discovery of principle. The entire frieze includes 378 *dramatis personae*, and 245 animals, meticulously sculpted into 114 rectangular and square blocks whose design is represented as two seamless living flows oriented toward the opposite east ends of the Parthenon.

There never was such a great artistic composition that would involve the action of an entire society moving continuously across such a complex space-time progression that included four different periods of time in the same progression, which all culminated in the paradoxical climax of a gift in honor of the goddess. This is totally unique in Greek art. In fact, this is unique in the entire history of mankind!

The reader must relive this moment of *perplexity*, here, simply by imagining that he were standing approximately as in the position from which Stillwell had made the following drawing of the eastern frieze. (See Figure 11.) Note the awkward position of the angle and the size of the frieze that is not taller than about 3 feet high, running continuously around the entire temple. Your view is being interrupted by a total of 46 columns! That is, indeed, quite a challenge that required more than a usual amount of attention and patience on the part of the viewer-participant. However, if what Pheidias wanted us to discover was so important, why did he create such difficulties for the observer? This recalls another perplexing question which is, if God wanted man to abide by the truth, why did he make it so difficult for him to discover it?

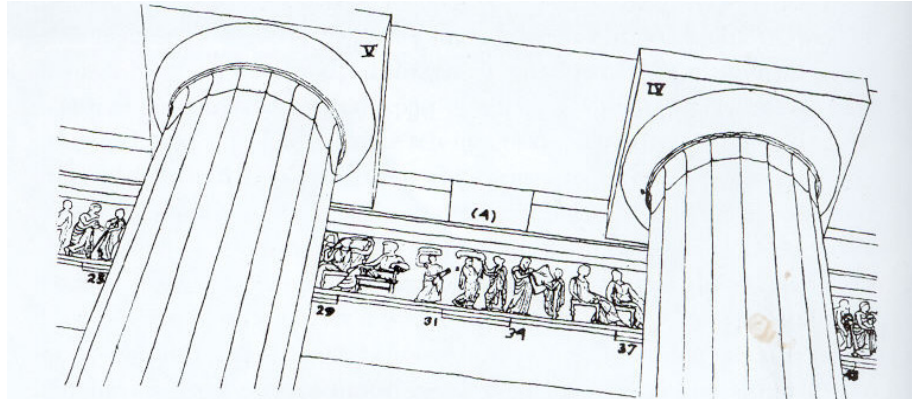


Figure 11. View of the central portion between the columns of the perystyle of the east frieze according to Stillwell, 1969. (From Jenifer Neils, *The Parthenon Frieze*, Cambridge University Press, after Stilwell.) No.34 depicts the folding F of the *peplos*.

What is the difficulty, here? The two Lawrences that I have referenced above seem to imply that Pheidias had made a mistake. As if to confirm the apparent necessity of excusing Pheidias for his blundering stupidity, the pre-Raphaelite British artist, Lawrence Tadema, painted Pheidias' portrait on a scaffolding to show his friends the frieze up close. Similarly, American Professor, A. W. Lawrence, described the physical difficulties of the anomaly that the frieze represented, as if it were necessary to climb up there in order to see the relief of the frieze more comfortably. In other words, it seems that according to both of them, what needed to be done was to go to the very bottom of Plato's Cave, in order to get a closer view of the shadow distortions. No doubt, that should be done, but is that going to make the shadows more truthful? What is there to see from above that cannot already be seen from below? Better, what is there to be seen from below that cannot be seen from above?



Figure 12. Reconstruction of the original right half of the east Frieze of the Parthenon [From [www.mlahanas.de/.../Parthenon/ReconFrieze.jpg](http://www.mlahanas.de/.../Parthenon/ReconFrieze.jpg)]

As seen from above, the left segment of Figure 12 represents the culminating point of the entire procession, showing the *peplos* later to be offered to the patron goddess Athena, sitting with her back turned to it. Next, from left to right, are sitting five other gods, namely Hephaistos, Poseidon, Apollo, Artemis, Aphrodite with her son, Eros. Further to the right stand a group of eponymous heroes of Attica, the mythical ancestors of the Athenians, who are greeting the parade participants that are coming from the north side of the Parthenon. Lastly, to the extreme right, young women with ceremonial vessels in their hands are the first to arrive from the north side.

Since the ceremonial procession of going around the Parthenon occurred every four years, the most fascinating aspect of this Great Panathenaia is reflected in the power of reliving the discovery of the principle of simultaneity of the past, present, and future which is especially reflected all around the Parthenon but, most strikingly and simultaneously, in the eastern frieze. This is manifest, most emphatically in the coming together of precisely identified four different periods of times reflecting a series of discontinuous singularities that require some attention.

This part of the procession represents the second step of the discovery, the *awfulness* of the moment of doing away with one's own self imposed chains; that is, the chains that tie you to the evil of a traditional past. First, when the flow from the north side comes together with the flow of the south side, there is a clash between the rigid tradition of the 12 gods of Olympus and the idea of creativity. What is remarkable in this Pheidias display is that the gods, who are no more than a third larger in size than the ordinary people next to them, stand in the way of progress and sit there in between the coming people and the event of the *peplos* as if they were completely indifferent to the whole process, in fact, as if they were against it!

The point that Pheidias seems to be making, here, is that the gods, fixed in their ways and their unchangeable posturing, always act from some outside domain that is foreign and opposed to human beings and to creativity. The gods don't mingle with ordinary people. They keep their distance. As a thought-object, the gods reflect cold logic and objective knowledge in which causality operates by so-called efficient cause from the past acting on the present, like hard balls hitting each other. This works in such a way that the gods always wait for one action to have consummated its effect before another action can take place in successive moments of time, one people against another, one war after another. This is a stupid

notion of causality based on manipulating the present in order to maintain the continuation of the past into the future. On the other hand, in the domain of classical artistic composition, change occurs by way of inversed causality and self-conscious time reversal. As Lyn showed, in the tradition of Plato, Leibniz, and Riemann, it is final causality which is the source of change. Creativity is not logical but teleological. Creativity always comes from the future.

Thus, Pheidias created two incoming flows of people, one coming from the north and the other coming from the south, both of whom were required to jump over a singularity gap and reach over the gods in order to have access to the creative event of the *peplos*. But, in the *awfulness* of that moment of willful decision on the part of human beings, the gods stop them from going any further and prevent them from accessing the creative mystery of the *peplos*. Even Athena has her back turned against the gift that will soon be offered to her. That is the axiomatic moment of change of the whole procession, a crucial discontinuity which none of the Greek historians have been able to explain satisfactorily.

Here, Pheidias has definitely created a break, a complete discontinuity between the people and the gods, a total discontinuity between the manifold of traditional past and the manifold of creative future. This break with the manifold of the gods is a true anomaly that has been explained away and smoothed over by Greek historians either as “a design flaw,” or as implying the “separate invisible power” of the gods. Such interpretations, and more, are of no interest whatsoever; because each and all of those proposed explanations are attempts to interpret away the discontinuity and to erase the uncomfortable tension that it creates. The tension of the viewer-participant, here, is a most essential time function of the experiment. It is the tension of the revolutionary moment of an axiomatic crisis, the tension of the inversion in the mirror image of change.

Recall, one more time, the experiment of the mirror I discussed in the first part of this report. People don't realize that when they look at themselves in a mirror, it is not their image they see, but the inversion of their image. If people paid attention to the intention of the mirror, they would discover that what is reflected is a revolutionary moment. What is on the right goes to the left and what is on the left goes to the right! It is this self-reflexive process of mental spiral action which is the permanent characteristic process of growth that pulls all living processes from the future. The same thing occurs in a historical moment of crisis such as the one that the whole of Greek society was going through at the beginning of the Peloponnesian Wars, and was featured prominently in the mystery of the *peplos*.

Yet, there is not a single so-called scholar or historian who considered that the discontinuity between the gods, the people, and the ceremony of the *peplos* might have been a deliberate design on the part of Pheidias and might have anything to do with the historical existential crisis that the Greek people were living at the time. Indeed, that is precisely the point that Pheidias was making. *The discovery of the axiomatic discontinuity between the gods and the people is precisely the subjective feature of creativity and the intention of the whole design of the Parthenon.* This is why the time of the gods is entirely out of sync with the time of creativity, because the gods hate human creativity, and it is the lack of creativity of god-fearing citizens that became the source cause of the tragedy of Greek society.

In other words, Pheidias created a paradox in which the Olympian gods who are everywhere displayed on the outside pediments of the Parthenon as victorious in war are cut to size, and become small, losers, and out of place with respect to the human creative process of the Great Panathenaia internal frieze. This is also the first time in Greek architecture that ordinary human beings are displayed so prominently on the frieze of a temple which was traditionally the place reserved only to the gods and to the heroes. This is a definite break with the consensus of public opinion and Greek Olympian tradition!

Thus, the most important place in the whole process is no longer reserved for the gods, but for the discontinuity of a rupture from the gods, an F# function which is no longer past-event-driven, but future-insight-driven for the incoming flows of the people advancing, inevitably, toward the mystery of the *peplos*. This is the sort of historical process of change that Rabelais later described, with the words of prophetic destiny carved in one of the loadstone squares at the entrance of the Temple of the Bottle in Lanternland: “Fate leads the willing, but the unwilling drags.” (*Les destinées meuvent celui qui consent, tirent celui qui refuse.*)

Also, note that the centerpiece of the *peplos* functions as a mirror for the whole east frieze in which the two clockwise and anticlockwise motions of the southern and northern flows of the procession coincide. To the left and to the right of the *peplos* are found two sets of obstructive gods, and numerous eponymous heroes of Attica who act as hosts to the two files of participants coming from the south and the north sides of the Parthenon. These heroes are the founding fathers of Athens, and their mythical time is ambiguously interwoven with the time of the celebration, as they appear to be a lively component of the ceremonial process itself. Their role is to welcome the new generations, and from that vantage point, they are always turned toward the future.

Thirdly and lastly, there is the time when the *peplos* is being folded by the high priest or the King-Archon with the help of a little boy. This is the high point of the whole procession to which the entire city, now standing below the east frieze, bears witness to the mysterious event. This is the third step, the time of *rejoicing* in the *peplos* exchange ceremony. This is a time for song and poetic speeches, the time when the new *peplos* was taken from the procession, folded before being taken inside of the Cella, the time when the old *peplos* was taken down, folded, and brought outside. This must have been like a rebirth of the creative moment, an idea that could only be seen in your mind's eye, because every four years a new golden woven *peplos* was created, with a new design to be given as a gift to Athena. It was that non-visible change in the design as the gift of creativity that represented the high point of the necessary changes that must have occurred in Greek society, otherwise, tradition inevitably lead that society to tragedy. However, that design remains unseen and its harmony unheard in the folded *peplos* of the frieze.

Thus, to recapitulate this process: each side of the Parthenon represents a different time frame, as the Great Panathenaia procession unfolds during all of these different periods of times. For instance, the West side represents the procession during archaic times relating to the Amazonomachy; the north shows the classic time relating to the Trojan War, and the south, represents the mythical period relating to Centauromachy. Thus, the division into two streams of participants became an expression of the political division of society itself along those traditional and progressive political lines. The east side captured all of those times combined, including the exclusion of the gods, the reflections of which come together in the simultaneity of eternity, as expressing the time of the principle of creativity.

The point to be made, here, is that the synchronization of these different times of the frieze into the simultaneity of eternity, highlighting the exclusion of the Olympian gods, must be discovered and internalized by the viewer-participants of the procession below, as the time of the test of truth and beauty which is the only time capable of making the future determine the direction of the present. That unique creative form of time had come to break with the tragic past of the gods. Causality was no longer in the past, but in the future. As LaRouche showed, creativity is precisely the highest state of mankind when the courage of man resolves the conflict with the tradition of the Olympian gods in such a process of time reversal. Therefore, the complex historical anachronism of the frieze is especially delicious because it brings together, in the same place, the mythical ancestors of the Athenians, the contemporary citizens of Athens, and the future generations who care to take pain in looking up into the hidden recesses of Pheidias's mind and discover the thinking process of his frieze. Thus, the procession of the Great Panathenaia culminates paradoxically in the simultaneity of eternity, reflecting both the paradox of different times in the same place, as well as the paradox of change and tradition at the same time.

I find this frieze of Pheidias to be a strikingly accurate artistic depiction of Lyn's idea of the simultaneity of eternity, in which the characters and the events of the different times come alive as united together in the same place, in your mind, as a universal moment of reliving the immortality of the human species through Greek Civilization. It is as if Pheidias had created in the frieze of the Parthenon, the solution to the tragedy of Greece in one eternal flowing moment, as a monad reflecting the solution to all future human tragedy. Such is the principle of creativity that lights-up the hidden recesses of Pheidias creative mind, and which has the power to keep the frieze of the Parthenon alive for all time.

However, it is important to remember that the simultaneity of this historical mental process is only successful through a rejection of sense certainty, and functions as if you were seeing through a glass darkly. This is the reason for elevating the difficulty of the experiment to the level of the internal frieze, as opposed

to a comfortable eye-level presentation as those marbles are presented to the spectator in museums, today. The point is that breaking with the supremacy of sense certainty puts you in the right frame of mind to make the required discovery of principle. Let us now see how Pheidias treated this third form of non-linearity embodied into the architecture of the Parthenon.

## **5. HOW PHEIDIAS PROJECTED CURVATURE ONTO THE WALL OF PLATO'S CAVE.**

A good example of the epistemological method that Pheidias used in establishing the curvature of the Parthenon is the change he made in the projection of the shadows most notable on the east frieze, as if they had been cast to emphasize the issue of the method of projection onto the dimly lit wall of Plato's cave. Here, Pheidias broke with the tradition of archaic low-relief sculpture and introduced a more refined and animated conception that completely revolutionized the art of Greek sculpture. How to extract the soul of living motion from inside of solid immovable marble represents one of the high points of that period of classical Greek artistic composition.

A keen observer will not fail to discover that some of the scenes of the Parthenon frieze are not cast in a traditional flat relief, precisely because of the awkward angle of their chosen location. Indeed, because of the angle of viewing the frieze, the feet and legs of the figures would tend to prevent the viewer from seeing their heads from below. In the eastern frieze, for example, Pheidias developed the genial idea of carving the feet of certain figures in very shallow relief, while the upper part of the bodies are carved deeper inward by a few inches, so as to stand out more. This was not simply a trick. This was an experimental proof that human beings are different from animals and that their power of reason is capable of judging and evaluating what their visual apparatus cannot perceive about the real world.

This is the proof that the frieze was conceptually meant to be viewed from below. Think of this idea of Pheidias as being created for the purpose of facilitating the resolution of the anomaly of observation of the frieze in such a manner that the correction of the visual impairment is substituted by a non-visible-non-linear change in the art form. The correction becomes visible only in your mind, or else, when the observation is carried up, artificially, to the level of the frieze. The change is not actually visible from below.



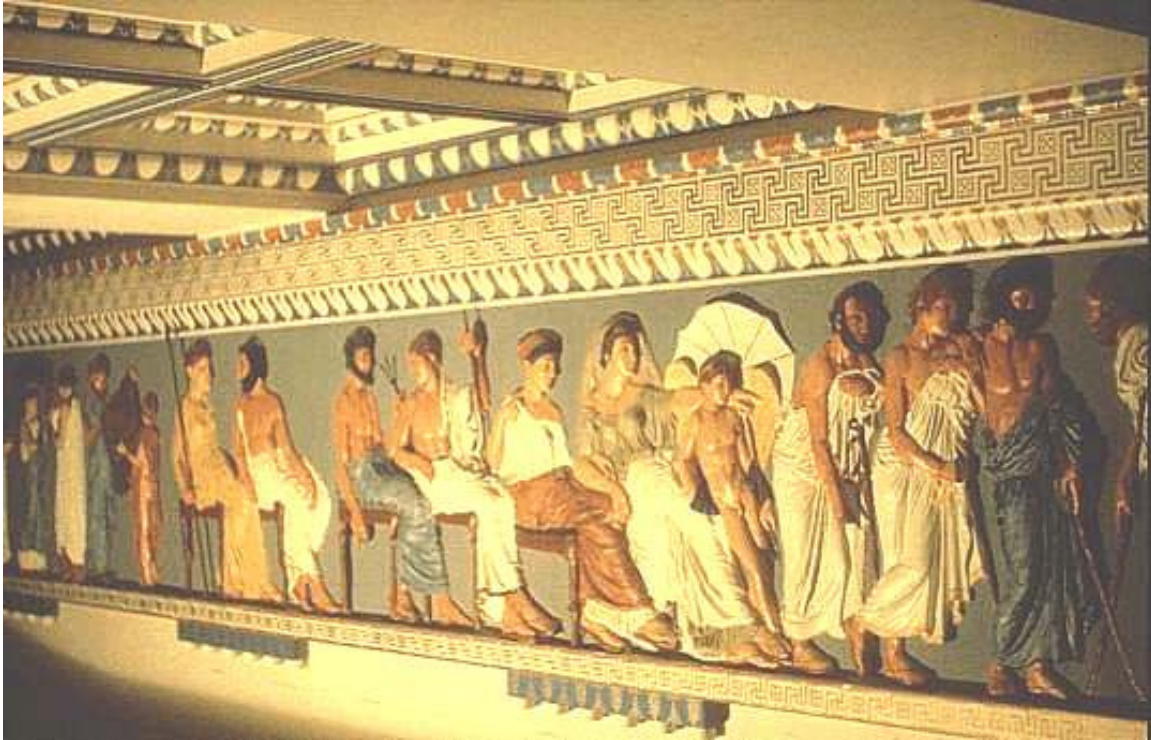


Figure 13. Reproduction of the eastern frieze showing the *peplos*, 6 gods of Olympus, and four eponymous Heroes of Attica.

Here, Pheidias is really forcing the spectator into participating actively in the creative process of the frieze. There are several points to be noticed in this regard. Note in Figure 13 how, at the upper level of the frieze, the camera light projection created the effect of maximizing shadows in the upper parts of the figures and minimizing them in the lower parts. This means that, if you were to observe the frieze from scaffolding, directly above the architrave, you could see, as the above scene shows, that the spear of Athena and the spear of Apollo appear to be both projected outward at least 4 to 6 inches.

From below, however, the same scene would not appear to be protruding at the top, but would simply appear as normal! This stereographic anomaly adjustment of a deeper cutting of the upper part in comparison with the lower part of the frieze was also resolved by the use of colour, in particular the blue background. As a result, the sculptured surface appeared to incline slightly toward the viewer, but in reality did not.

From this vantage point of composition, Pheidias's choice of a new method of creating low relief process clearly indicates that his purpose was to express motion and change, nothing static, in the mind of the spectator. As Heraclites put it, "{you can never swim twice in the same river.}"

## 6. THE TIMAEUS AND THE MYSTERY OF THE PEPLOS.

In the PBS television NOVA series called *SECRETS OF THE PARTHENON*, the team that produced the documentary gave a good explanation of the construction methods that had been originally used for the original building of the Parthenon and the difficulties that modern reconstruction teams had to confront, but they made no real effort to explain the conception that went into such a construction. At best, one can say that the scriptwriter had not gone beyond the first step of *perplexity* in the discovery of the

meaning and significance of this great work of art. What follows will explain the essential of what was missing. (8)

Since the word “*peplos*” has two very different meanings, there must have been quite an exquisite cross-voicing irony during the procession, something similar to the irony of the Beethoven quartet at the beginning of *Fidelio*. In fact, the word “*peplos*” signifies “dress;” but it also means “tapestry.” But, since the Greek radical for woven cloth is *πέπλ*, then, it is understandable that it represented the underlying root of those two meanings. Thus, the mystery of the *peplos* was a great moment of national unity, so to speak, because it reflected Athena as Plato had identified her as cognition of God (*theou noêsis*). (9) That’s what Great Panathenaia was to be the expression of: a display of divine cognition in honor of peace, creativity, and wisdom. However, one last observation is required with respect to the dynamics of space and time in this classical artistic setting of depicting a historical event in the simultaneity of eternity.

It is clear that the location of the ceremony of the *peplos*, in the center of the eastern frieze, represents the high point of the entire procession that is made to end there. However, the moment of the ceremony of the *peplos* represents another exquisite ambiguity. It is the focal point of the whole process of creativity to which the gods are lawfully turning their backs. What is, therefore, the significance of the folding ceremony of the *peplos*? What is happening with this enigmatic scene that is the only scene that is outside of the procession itself and is also separated from the gods? It is clear that the event of that scene is the key to the interpretation of the entire narrative of the frieze, but it lacks in the quality of visual attractiveness and clarity that such an important ceremony would normally require if its intention were to capture the visual attention of the spectator.

But, it is almost as if Pheidias was making a joke. It is as if he were saying: “O.K. folks, the show is over! Now, you can fold everything and go home!” The scene seems to be entirely anti-climactic, almost like a pun that all Greek historians have puzzled over for centuries without any understanding. Indeed, what is this mysterious idea of the climax ceremony of the *peplos* all about?

According to American archeologist, John Magruder Mansfield, the *peplos* of Athena was a tapestry woven every four years and was decorated with a representation of the deeds and prowess of Athena commemorating her wisdom in war as in peace. Those victories over her enemies became the metaphors for the victories of the Greeks over the Babylonian Empire, the victories of culture over barbarism, and the victories of man over the evil manipulations of the Olympian gods. Thus, the *peplos* was a great tapestry brought to Athens as the sail of the Panathenaic Ship that was pulled on land and, then, paraded throughout the city all the way to the foot of the Acropolis. From there, the *peplos* was to be taken from the ship and carried up in a procession around the Parthenon, probably like what is done with the standard of Mary Queen of Heavens raised over the crowd in Spain, during Catholic processions.

Mansfield, however, brilliantly clarified some of the crucial points; the main one being that according to the neo-Platonist Eusebios of Myndos, the idea of *peplos of Athena* was a beautiful metaphor for the creative process in the universe as a whole. Mansfield noted:

“7. Describing the creation in his oration in praise of Constantine (Eis Konstantinou Triakontaeterikos, 6.6, p. 207. Stahlin July 336 A.D.) Eusebios describes how God ‘Set shining the bright rays of the morning star, the variegated light of the moon, and the twinkling assembly of stars, thereby crowning all of heaven, like a great *peplos* with every beautiful effect of a painting.’”

Then, Mansfield goes to the heart of the matter, so to speak, and recognized that *peplos* was nothing but the artistic expression of the creative principle that Plato had developed in the *Timaeus* around the notion of the “soul of the universe.” Mansfield first noted that during his *Panathenaic Oration* of 154 A.D. Aristeides said: “Our speech has also been fashioned, just like the *peplos*, as an adornment (*kosmos*) for the spectacle of the Panathenaia.” Then, Mansfield found this extraordinary reference from another neo-Platonist, Damaskios:

“9. Damaskios, Aporiai, 339, II, p. 200.20 Ruelle, refers to the “hypercosmic *πεπλοποιά*” of Kore, the life-giving principle, the “tapestry” (?) being the transcendent second order, in which

are “woven” imitations of the intelligible forms. Ultimately, this metaphor probably derives from the passage in Plato, *Timaios*, 36 d-e, where the world-soul is said to be “interwoven” with the corporeal universe and also to “envelop it externally” or to cover it *as with a veil* (ἐζώθειν περικαλύψασα).” (10)

Thus, the *peplos* was to reflect the domain of higher intelligible forms as opposed to perceptions as Plato discussed in the *Timaeus*. The *peplos* was not a dress at all, but a great work of artistic composition, a “*heroic painting*,” woven as a large square tapestry of up to 64 square meters in surface reflecting in its weaving composition the principle of the “soul of the universe” as the Pythagoreans were teaching and as Plato described it as the self-bounding principle of a changing universe. The choice of subjects to be woven in the *peplos* would change and would have to be innovations every four years. It was not meant to dress the goddess, but to be presented as a work of art chosen to hang in front of her huge statue inside of the Parthenon, as the *veil enveloping the changing-living universe*, and representing on it the great deeds of changing Greek society that were congruent with the Creator weaving the Soul of the Universe. This Platonic idea is very close to the Judaic-Christian idea of man created in the Image of God.



Figure 14. A priestess and two girls carrying stools and the archon with a small boy folding the *peplos*.

The simplicity of this scene is completely disarming by comparison with the rest of the frieze. There is no display of artistic virtuosity, no apparent passion, nothing is self-evident, and the entire scene is treated with total simplicity, dignity, and grace. The question is: what does this sculptural narrative mean?





Figure 15- Are the Archon and the boy folding the old or the new *peplos*? [British Museum.]

The ceremony of the *peplos* appears to represent the exact moment just before or just after the climax of the procession of the Great Panathenaia, but it is not the climax itself. Therefore, on the one hand, if it is before the climax, then, the Archon and the little boy are folding the old *peplos* that was hanging inside of the temple for the last four years, and they are waiting for the new *peplos* to arrive with the oncoming procession. However, on the other hand, if it is after the climax, then, the Archon and the small boy are folding the new *peplos* that has just arrived with the participants of the procession and they are preparing to enter the temple and replace the old *peplos* by the new one for the next four years. Which one is it? Is it the one going out or the one going in? Does it have to be one or the other? Can it not be both? It seems that the observer is left, again, in a complete state of *perplexity*. And, what are the stools for?

The paradox is that the ceremony of the *peplos* reflects the moment of change in the creative process, and, yet, this is done in one of the most static and asymmetrical figures on the entire frieze. Barely any change or movement is being perceived as if to convey the idea that something is about to change or has just been changed.

The beauty of Greek sculptures of that classic period all express that subjunctive mode of undecidedness, of in-betweenness, of asymmetry. They never represent the climax of an action, but always the mid-motion of a process of change. The same thing is happening here. But, like the subjunctive mode, the *peplos* does not express the state of an object, but a state of mind of the subject. The situation is doubtful, uncertain, or hopeful, as if to express the state of uncertainty of the subjunctive, which is not yet

realized, but which expresses the process of becoming as the axiomatic mode of creativity. The *peplos* is neither this one nor that one, but, in reality, this one becoming changed into that one. That is the intention of the frieze: change.

Like the Chora of Plato in the *Timaeus* (52, b and c.), “the nurse of becoming,” the *phase space of change* is neither this nor that, but is the becoming of *this* in the process of changing into *that*. Since this is the case, then, Pheidias has rendered in stone the most beautiful ambiguity of the process of creativity, the ontological infinitesimal reflecting the passing from the before into the after, of the old into the new, of the past into the future, as if it were a musical interval of transformation that lies in between the notes, like the passing tone of a register shift. No wonder the gods are sitting down on this one and are looking the other way. They are all baffled by such an exquisite and simple depiction of the creative process! But, the gods are also being warned at the same time as the whole society is being warned: that unless they heed the warning of the creative singularity of axiomatic change, they will also be destroyed by their own follies.

Here, suddenly, the observer-participant is made to understand the reason for the presence of the two stools. The scene is announcing that there is going to be a ceremony of exchange between the two *peplos*, the old being changed for the new. But it is also announcing an axiomatic change which is about to occur in the whole of Greek society. The stools were used to place on them the two *peplos* during the speeches and songs of this ceremony of exchange. But, the first ceremony of exchange under the new frieze, probably in 438 BC, was also a sign that Greek society was about to be destroyed, unless creativity replaced tradition in the society as a whole. This was an ominous moment because this was a time when the Greek people were told to look back at the conflict between Lycurgus and Solon, the tragic division between Sparta and Athens, as the cause of the tragic unfolding of the coming Peloponnesian Wars that started seven years later in 431 BC.

The tragic historical irony was that the Greek population did not heed the warning and the Peloponnesian Wars began destroying ancient Greece, only a few years after the inauguration of the newly finished Parthenon, and after the first Great Panathenaia celebration around the newly finished frieze of Pheidias had taken place. This very first ceremony, therefore, was the living reflection of the unfolding of that universal tragedy, quite explicitly, in the simultaneity of eternity where the very first moment of the *peplos* ceremonial represented the eternal yet repetitive renewal, every four years, in the ageless honor of Athena for all time to come.

Interestingly, Greek historian Jenifer Neils came close to discovering the deeper meaning of this tragic irony when she wrote: “As if to capture that image for all time the designer has bracketed it with the two central columns of the eastern peristyle; it is the only self-contained scene in the entire frieze that is framed so carefully for the viewer approaching the temple. In this way, the ritual of the *peplos* is made static and eternalized.” Yes, static for the spectator’s eyesight, but extremely dynamic and passionate for the mind of whoever is seeking to discover the mere glimpse of a shadow of a universal physical principle. Unfortunately, however, Jenifer Neils has also been repeating the typical British Intelligence lie coming out of Princeton University and according to which the Panathenaia had been instituted for the purpose of celebrating a human sacrifice. (11)

## **CONCLUSION: THE SOUL “HERSELF REVOLVING WITHIN HERSELF.”**

To summarize briefly the iconography of the Pheidias frieze, it is important to note that the interpretations that the frieze described as a cult, a myth, an allegory, a history, a sacrificial drama, a pageant, etc, all fall short of the intended purpose of Pheidias. A classical artistic composition of this magnitude has to focus on the creative process, itself, and that, from the highest universal standpoint. This is no ordinary story, and, therefore, this story requires an extraordinary explanation, which must have the advantage over other explanations of not being simply another spin, but of being truthful.

Since the method of Pheidias demonstrates, to the highest degree, the mastery of the creative process, then, it becomes self-evident that the celebration of the procession of the *peplos* was the celebration of the creative process in the form of a “*heroic sculpture*” in the sense that Alexander von

Humboldt, and, later on, Frederic Church, gave to the meaning of a “*heroic painting*.” It was the celebration of the creative solution to the tragedy of Greek civilization; that is, of an actual definite break with the tradition of the Olympian gods and their capricious Delphic prophesies. There is a lot of evidence showing that Pheidias was, like Socrates, critical of the tragic manipulation of the Greek population by the priesthood of the Cult of Apollo. This is also reported by Greek historian, Martin Robertson who noted: “If we are right about the nature of the representation on the frieze, its sharp break with the tradition of religious art is exactly the kind of thing which those enemies used to discredit Pericles and his friends with the more conservative sections of the Athenian public.” (12) In fact, after the construction of the Parthenon, Pheidias was accused of embezzlement and was forced into exile.

Finally, the frieze of Pheidias addressed the question of the creative process of the principle of Hylozoic Monism as Plato had developed the conception in his *Timaeus*. The question was, how could an artistic composition replicate the inner soul of universal living motion as the expression of the boundary condition of the universe as a whole? In other words, how can the artist draw the inward mind out on the outward physical countenance of the universe? Ultimately, that was the question that Pheidias raised and celebrated in all of his sculptures. This is how the Prometheus of American art, Benjamin West, answered the question when he addressed the students of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts on the subject of the Pheidias frieze:

“It is the mental power displayed in the Elgin marbles that I wish the juvenile artist to notice. Look at the equestrian groups of the young Athenians in this collection, and you will find in them that momentary motion which life gives on the occasion to the riders and their horses. The horse we perceive feels that power which the impulse of life has given to his rider; we see in him the animation of his whole frame; in the fire of his eyes, the distention of his nostrils, and the rapid motion of his feet, yielding to the guidance of his rider, or in the speeding of his course: they are, therefore, in perfect unison with the life in each. At this moment of the animation they appear to have been turned into stone by some majestic power, and not created by the human hand. The single head of the horse, in the same collection, seems as if it had, by the same influence, been struck into marble, when he was exerting all the energy of his motion.

“These admirable sculptures, which now adorn our city, are the union of Athenian genius and philosophy, and illustrate my meaning respecting the mental impression which is so essential to be given to works of refined art. It was this point which the Grecian philosophers wished to impress on the minds of their sculptors, not to follow their predecessors the Egyptians in sculpture, who represented their figures without motion, although nearly perfect in giving to them the external form. ‘It is passions,’ said they, ‘with which man is endowed, that we wish to see in the movements of your figures.’ This advice of the philosophers was felt by the sculptors, and the Athenian marbles are the faithful records of the efficacy of that advice.” (13)



Figure 16. Pheidias, *Theseus Attempting to Calm His Runaway Horse*. Central West façade of the Parthenon frieze. ( Photo: Alison Frantz, in *The Parthenon Frieze*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1975.) Note how deeply the front legs and the head of the horse are carved in comparison with the hind legs!

This horse calming scene, located in the central section of the west frieze, is attributed to Pheidias, personally, because of the extraordinary quality of the passion that West referred to. This sculpture was still up on the frieze of the Parthenon in 1993 when it was taken down as the new repairs began. The state of balancing in mid-motion between the spookiness of the horse and the control of Theseus attempting to calm him is expressed in every fiber and muscle of the horse's body, including the exerting veins of its excited face and stomach, and the frightened look in its eye. However, this is not the representation of a horse; this is, as West remarked, the representation of a passionate human state of mind!

As West put it so beautifully, "it is passions" of the creative mind of man that is celebrated through the movements of such a figure, not the features of an animal. It is the soul and mind of man mastering the laws of the universe that is exhibited here as being different from the animal. The horse is merely the physical envelope of a state of mental exertion that is being exuded and is piercing through the dense matter of the marble. It is the inward soul of the external countenance of universal creativity. More, what is being displayed is the inward soul of the universe, as Plato understood it. Such was the whole intention of representing the Great Panathenaia procession and the function of its *peplos* ceremony, its ontologically efficient reality.

Thus, it was the principle of creative passion that Pheidias had in mind to celebrate in his Parthenon, as a means of efficiently getting out of the box of the tragedy of Greek society; that is, creativity as the only solution to escape the tragic. This frieze is, therefore, about you, the participant in such a

celebration and about your power of being a self-reflexive creative passionate human being capable of resolving the paradox of expressing the workings of the mind upon an external frame, just as the original frame of those marbles had inspired Keats in his *Ode On A Grecian Urn*:

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! With brede  
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,  
With forest branches and the trodden weed;  
Thou, silent form, does tease us out of thought  
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!  
When old age shall this generation waste,  
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe  
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,  
'Beauty is truth, truth is beauty, - that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.'

Similarly, Plato had identified in his hylozoic monism doctrine that the living principle of creativity was meant to express the soul of the universe. This is what archeologist John Mansfield perceived in *Timaeus 36d-e* as being the true subject of the *peplos* that is woven and is enveloping the universe from within and without. This is the principle, which can only be discovered by making the difference between opinion and true knowledge, between analog and digital; that is to say, the cognitive weaving of intelligible forms of a higher degree, as they appear on the way out of Plato's Cave. Thus, as Plato said:

“And when the construction of the Soul had all been completed to the satisfaction of its Constructor, then He fabricated within it all the Corporeal, and uniting them, center to center, He made them fit together. And the Soul, being woven throughout the Heaven every way from the center to the extremity, and enveloping it in a circle from without [εζωθεν περικαλύψασα], and herself revolving within herself, began a divine beginning of unceasing and intelligent life lasting throughout all time. And whereas the body of the Heaven is visible, the Soul is herself invisible but partakes in reasoning and in harmony, having come into existence by the agency of the best of things intelligible and ever-existing as the best of things generated.” (14)

This is the principle of creativity that went into building the Parthenon.

NOTES:

(5) Plato, *Timaeus*, 37d. Translated by Rev. R. G. Bury.

(6) Lyndon H. LaRouche Jr. It's a fight For Creativity, Per Se, Morning Briefing, November 23, 2008.

(7) A. W. Lawrence, *Greek Architecture*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1996, p. 114.

(8) *SECRETS OF THE PARTHENON*, produced for NOVA by Arte France, 2003.

(9) Athena was the goddess of Wisdom, the goddess of War, and the goddess of Arts and Crafts. Plato in his *Cratylus* has described the most revealing aspects of the personality of Athena.

” Hermogenes: Still there remains Athena, whom you, Socrates, as an Athenian, will surely not forget; there are also Hephaistus and Ares.

Socrates: I am not likely to forget them.

Hermogenes: No, indeed.

Socrates: There is no difficulty in explaining the other appellation of Athena.

Hermogenes: What other appellation?

Socrates: We call her Pallas.

Hermogenes: To be sure.



Socrates: And we cannot be wrong in supposing that this is derived from armed dances. For the elevation of oneself or anything else above the earth, or by the use of the hands, we call shaking (*pallein*), or dancing.

Hermogenes: That is quite true.

Socrates: Then that is the explanation of the name Pallas.

Hermogenes: Yes, but what do you say of the other name?

Socrates: Athena?

Hermogenes: Yes.

Socrates: That is a graver matter, and there, my friend the modern interpreters of Homer may, I think, assist in explaining the view of the ancients. For most of these, in their explanation of the poet, assert that he meant by Athena *mind (nous)* and *intelligence (dianoia)*. And the maker of names appears to have had a singular notion about her, and indeed called her by a still higher title, divine intelligence (*theou noêsis*), as though he would say, this is she who has the Mind of God (*ha theonoa*) – using alpha as a dialectic variety of eta, and taking away iota and sigma. Perhaps, however, the name *theonon* may mean *she who knows divine things (theia noousa) better than others*. Nor shall we be far wrong in supposing that the author of it wished to identify this goddess with moral intelligence (*en êthei noêsv*), and therefore gave her the name *Etheonoe*, which, however, either he or his successors have altered into what they thought a nicer form, and called her Athena." (Plato, *Cratylus 406d – 407c*. Translation by Benjamin Jowett.)

(10) John Magruder Mansfield, *The Robe of Athena and the Panathenaic "Peplos"*, University of California, Berkeley, PHD Thesis, 1985. p.10.

(11) Jenifer Neils, *The Parthenon Frieze*, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 70. In a previous book she edited, Jenifer Neils referred to the British concoction of Joan Connelly according to whom the whole of the Great Panathenaia had been aimed at representing the human sacrifice of a daughter of Athenian Archon, Erechtheus. Neils reported: "Joan Connelly, who delivered a paper at Princeton, has interpreted the central scene of the east frieze, the so-called peplos incident, as preparation for the sacrifice of the daughter of King Erechtheus which will insure success in war... While this view has not gained wide acceptance, it has stimulated closer scrutiny of the details of the frieze, as for example in Evelyn Harrison's Chapter in this volume." (Jenifer Neils, *Worshipping Athena: Panathenaia and Parthenon*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1996, p. 4.)

For identification purposes, Joan Breton Connelly is a typical archeology British agent who graduated from Princeton University in 1974. She is also a member of the Society of Antiquaries of London, the Oxford Philosophical Society, and a member of the nefarious British-run Pilgrims of the United States. Connelly wrote her fantasy spin in an article entitled, *Parthenon and Parthenoi: a Mythological Interpretation of the Parthenon Frieze*, *AJA*, 100. 1996, pp. 53-80. Take your attention away from British Intelligence for a single moment and they will be off somewhere creating a new satanic cult to subvert the natural creative powers of man.

(12) Martin Robertson, *The Parthenon Frieze*, New York Oxford University Press, 1975, p. 15. Moreover, the method of artistic composition of Pheidias displays only the shadows of the best "tapestry" that Greek artist weavers could produce, every four years, to celebrate the creative process of the power of reason, personified in the goddess Athena. Unfortunately, out of about 75, not a single trace of a *peplos* has survived to this day. There exist records, however, of different workshops throughout Greece where artists such as Akesas and his son Helikon from Salamis had worked and had won one of the earlier Panathenaic honor. In fact, artist-weavers would submit their specimens to a jury-panel that would decide on the winner, and so, the celebration also became a national consecration of the best artist-weaver of ancient Greece during three centuries.

(13) Benjamin West, *On the Philosophy of Character*, in John Galt, *Life, Studies, and Works of Benjamin West*. Part II, p. 150-52.

(14) Plato, *Timaeus*, 36e. Translation by Rev. R. G. Bury.



FIN OF PART II