Introduction

A newspaper article from January 2001 outlines the ethical debates around saving the lives of high-risk infants who, if they survive, are at risk for later disability.[1] Diana Aitchison concludes that decisions over whether or not to let a baby die rest on a gamble: "Which babies will, even with disabilities, grow to make major contributions to society, like Helen Keller, Stevie Wonder or physicist Stephen Hawking, and which will rely on public medical assistance all their lives is anybody's guess."[2] This article highlights issues that must be part of any investigation in the history of disability: economic assumptions about disability, the idea that a disabled person must make extraordinary contributions to society in order to be worthy, and the categorization of people according to their medical status.

Physical disability considered as a social construct rather than as a medical condition constitutes a valuable category of analysis for ancient social history. Karen Hagrup explains that "the introduction of a disabled/nondisabled dimension in historical studies brings to light new issues not revealed by familiar categories such as gender, class, race, ethnicity, age, occupation, or rural versus urban settings."[3] I examine ancient Greek material through the lens of disability studies, which approaches the phenomenon of disability by assuming that there is nothing inherently wrong with the disabled body and that the reaction of a society to the disabled body is neither predictable nor immutable.

Looking at disability in the ancient world from the perspective of disability studies has led me to make two major, interrelated points throughout this book. First, our assumptions about the place of people with disabilities in the present day have colored, often falsely, our interpretations about people with disabilities in the ancient world. Second, these skewed interpretations of the ancient world bolster modern discriminatory attitudes toward people with disability, giving the attitudes an apparent historical precedent.

The Greek material that mentions or depicts physical disability comes from a wide variety of sources, and mention is rarely overt. One of the contributing factors to this state of the evidence is that the Greeks did not perceive a category of physical disability in which people were a priori banned from carrying out certain roles and compartmentalized into others. In the 1928 work *The Young Cripple and His Job* we see a blatant example of the level of abstraction in which a physically disabled person is banned from her societal role on the basis of physical disability alone: a 1928 social worker reports the case of Elizabeth Morris, "a woman who walks with the aid of one crutch and limps only slightly," yet who was ineligible to be a school clerk solely because of her physical handicap, not because of her capability or lack thereof.[4] At the beginning of the twenty-first century, assumptions about physically disabled people are more subtly expressed. Joseph Shapiro observes the flip side of the poster child, the "supercrip," whose ordinary feats are admired out of proportion.[5]

In fact, the Greeks would not have known what to make of this discussion of physical disability. This is not to suggest that the Greeks did not notice physical disability or that physical disability did not have consequences. Rather, the consequences varied from one individual to the next and from one situation to the next, as the discussion of the Greek terminology in each chapter demonstrates. Yet ideas about disability in the ancient world are part of our common consciousness. Homer, Teiresias, and Oedipus, along with the phenomenon of Spartan infanticide of deformed infants, are often the first images that come to mind. Classicists and nonclassicists alike are quick to remember that the Greek Classical ideal included the notion of the perfectly proportioned human body and to conclude that all disabled people who varied significantly from this ideal must have been uniformly reviled. Modern assumptions that disabled people are inherently flawed, less capable, and unfortunate distort any reading of ancient historical material. One of the intents of this study is to show that able-bodiedness has unreflectively been assumed to define the essential nature of the human body and that this assumption falsely colors our interpretation of the past. The falsely colored interpretation of the past perpetuates the unreflective modern assumption that the nondisabled body is the standard against which the disabled body should be evaluated. In other words, my study reveals the distortion inherent in contemporary beliefs about disability as reflected in the portrayal of ancient Greek notions of disability. Disability in ancient Greece was treated as a family and civic issue, in which disability status was defined and negotiated between individuals on a case-by-case basis within a community, rather than as a medical one, in which what was conceived of as a "problem" was inherent in the individual. Rational medicine was in its infancy in the fifth century B.C., and for this reason if no other, disabilities were not seen as the categorizable medical phenomena that they are today.

"Physical disability" is a nebulous term. A scholarly debate over the nature of disability persists within the Society for Disability Studies, the extreme side holding that disability is entirely a cultural construction and that it does not exist intrinsically outside of any culture's definition. While I will not go that far for the purposes of this investigation, I do believe that the concept of physical disability is shaped and defined by its economic, military, political, religious, social, and technological environment. It would not make sense to approach this investigation expecting to find modern concepts and definitions of disability in the ancient world. I use modern medical terms such as "cerebral palsy," "multiple sclerosis," and "quadriplegia" for convenience, recognizing that while the medical criteria for these conditions existed in the ancient world, no ancient person would have had such medical categories in mind when observing a person with any of these diagnoses. I also use the term "physical disability" for convenience, even while I argue that no Greek would have thought about physical disability as a modern audience does.

I do not argue that the Greeks did not even notice disability or that there was a utopian continuum, with the perfectly able-bodied on one end and the totally disabled on the other, everyone else blending in a happy rainbow of varying ability. Indeed, the Greeks noticed disability, commented on it, and sometimes made fun of it in ways that would make us shudder. This does not mean that people in the ancient Greek world despised all disabled people as a class or even grouped disabled people in a class.

The "ancient Greek world" is also a nebulous term. While ancient Greek history spans the second millennium B.C. through the Roman period in the fifth century A.D., most of the surviving major historical sources are from fifth- and fourth-century B.C. Classical Greece, before the conquest of Philip II and Alexander the Great, and these centuries are the main focus of this study, though other periods are included. Furthermore, there was no "Greece"; rather, the Greek world included three or four hundred individual, autonomous city-states in various and changing alliances with each other and with their own cultural differences. The largest and most successful of these city-states in cultural, economic, and political terms was Athens, which produced the bulk of the surviving literary material.

The closest we can come to the everyday life of people with physical disabilities is by assembling a patchwork of incidental information about the political, military, economic, social, and religious consequences of disabilities. In comparison with later periods of history, not much material survives even from Athens in the Classical period. The evidence for physical disability is scattered, scant, and often contradictory. For example, no discussion of disability survives that is composed by a person who identifies himself or herself as disabled. Nevertheless, literary, papyrological, and archaeological primary sources contribute to our knowledge about disability.

The literary material includes the Hippocratic corpus, a key work in this investigation, which provides a good example of the nature of material available. The Hippocratic corpus is a compilation of material that spans the fifth through the second centuries B.C. It includes writings by the author credited with the discovery of rational medicine, Hippocrates himself, although nothing is identified securely. The corpus also includes writings by the students of Hippocrates and other medical writers. The corpus is especially valuable in that it offers an idea of the vocabulary for various conditions that we would call physical disability. Literary material, from the Homeric poems the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey,* set down in writing around the eighth century B.C., through the corpus of Galen, from the second century A.D., has been relevant. I have also used some very late literary material, such as the tenth-century encyclopedic collection that draws on earlier sources, the *Suidae Lexicon,* commonly known as the *Suda.* Although the Christian Gospels are also recorded in Greek, I omit them from my investigation because they reflect Hellenized Jewish attitudes more than Greek or even Graeco-Roman attitudes. Scholarship on disability in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures has been carried out as a separate undertaking.[6]

Documents recorded on papyrus, such as letters and legal documents, provide valuable information about daily life. Papyrological material is late in date and from Egypt, not Greece, and it is not always clear whether any given piece reflects Hellenistic (fourth through first century B.C.) or even later, Roman imperial culture. Nevertheless, the material is written in Greek and therefore has, at least, linguistic continuity. I have used papyrological material up to the sixth century A.D.

Archaeologically, Classical Greek skeletal evidence is rare. In 1946, the archaeologist J. Lawrence Angel counted the skeletal remains of eighty men and five women for all of Greece and for all periods, Neolithic through Byzantine, and concluded that it is impossible to calculate the frequency of pathology from such data. Of course, more skeletal evidence has come to light since 1946; still, the best that skeletal evidence can offer for my purposes is confirmation that various conditions existed.[7] I have used skeletal material from the Bronze Age (ca. 3000–1100 B.C.) through the eighth century A.D., in the Byzantine period, to confirm the existence of some conditions.

Because of the nature of the evidence, I paint with extremely broad strokes. There were differences, surely, between the experiences of a wealthy Athenian blind man in the Mycenaean age of powerful kings and the blind daughter of a poor island family in any period. Yet even such a huge distinction is lost, to say nothing of subtle differences. Still, some generalities can be pieced together and inferred, with the support of a wide variety of modern material. This material includes autobiographies of and poetry by people with disabilities, medical research, and theoretical works in disability studies, all of which give some shape to the scattered ancient references to disability. The physical nature of cerebral palsy has not changed over the centuries, and while there is no ancient account from a person with cerebral palsy, a modern account sheds light on everyday life in terms of physical characteristics of this disability. The humanity of disability is lost from the ancient Greek record, but poetry such as Jim Ferris's "Poems with Disabilities," the epigraph for this book, transcends time and space to express universal human experience. Poetry also makes powerful statements about common misperceptions of disability, as in the case of Lynn Manning's "The Magic Wand," in chapter 5.

Issues of disability have been very visible since the 1990s. Recent interest in disability can be seen in the political arena with the 1990 passage of and recent challenge to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The activist group Not Dead Yet framed the Kevorkian trial as an issue of disability rights. Scholarly interest in disability is also growing, as demonstrated by the interdisciplinary Society for Disability Studies, which meets annually; numerous publications such as the *Disability Studies Quarterly;* the presence of very active groups such as the Committee for Disability Issues within the Modern Language Association; graduate programs in disability studies; and Web sites such as DISC, "A Disability Studies Academic Community" (<http://www.mith2.umd.edu:8080/disc/index.html>), which represents the profusion of recent scholarship.

There has also been a growing scholarly interest in the topic of physical disability in the ancient world. Veronique Dasen couched her 1995 iconographic study of dwarfs in Greece and Egypt as a study of physical minorities.[8] Robert Garland published *The Eye of the Beholder,* a survey of deformity and disability in the Graeco-Roman world, in 1995.[9] Michael Garmaise completed his dissertation thesis, "Studies in the Representation of Dwarfs in Hellenistic and Roman Art" (McMaster University), in 1996. Daniel Ogden published *The Crooked Kings of Ancient Greece* in 1997.[10] In addition, interest in the study of the human body in the ancient world is represented by a special volume of *Arethusa,* titled *Vile Bodies: Roman Satire and Corporeal Discourse,* and by a 1999 collection edited by James Porter, *Constructions of the Classical Body.*[11]

Even some of this material suggests that disabled people in Greece were thought of as different, special, excluded, and extraordinary.[12] I argue that an inaccurate picture of disability in Greek society results from imposing the models of pity, charity, and categorization of disability onto the ancient Greek material. This study seeks to give an account of the daily realities of ordinary disabled people and investigates the persistence of our beliefs about disability in Greece.

While I limit the scope of this project to physical disability, excluding psychiatric and cognitive disorders, I also exclude two categories of physical disability in this investigation: dwarfism and epilepsy. Both categories, mostly because of their religious associations, so far transcend status as physical disabilities that they require separate investigation, and scholarly work has been done on each topic, such as the work on dwarfs mentioned earlier. On epilepsy, the classic work remains Oswei Temkin's *The Falling Sickness*.[13]

Finally, I discuss disability, not teratology. There is a difference in the Greek record between people who were physically noteworthy and people who were considered monstrous. References to blindness or lameness as descriptive markers of otherwise ordinary people do not suggest that such common conditions were considered monstrous. Aristotle describes monstrosity as the failure to resemble a human being at all (*Generation of Animals* 4.767 b 5–6). While we may not be able to determine the exact parameters of what the Greeks would have perceived as within the normal range of human variety, we can at least acknowledge that not all physical oddities would have been considered monstrous. Some of the Greeks' beloved figures, most notably Homer himself, were, in modern terms, disabled. Monstrosities such as the ones Aristotle describes (*Generation of Animals* 769 b) include aberrations such as animal heads on human bodies or humans with extra heads. Thus, in my view, the fourth-century B.C. oath that promises monstrous offspring (*terata*) to the oath breaker (Tod, *Greek Historical Inscriptions* 2:204.39–45) is not a comment about the Greeks' view of what we would term disabled people, but rather about a creature born outside the range of normal human parameters.

This book is organized into five narratives of disability in ancient Greece. The first chapter is a sketch of the Greek population in terms of its disabled element. I aim to show that the ancient Greek landscape included a wide variety of human variation, far more varied than portrayed in images of Greek perfection that are the legacy of Renaissance and Neoclassical painting. I go on to discuss daily life for people with disabilities against the modern popular idea that all "deformed" babies were killed at birth. While I do not argue that no deformed infant was ever put out to die, I point out that the lurid image of the Greeks unreflectively killing all their imperfect young is an unfounded conclusion of nineteenth-century scholars. Next, I take up the modern ideal of overcoming disability by looking at the case of Demosthenes' stutter. The fourth chapter, on deafness, continues to highlight the differences between ancient and modern understandings of disability by showing that deafness was perceived more as an intellectual impairment than as a physical disability. In the fifth chapter, I challenge the notion that blindness was always a horror or a blessing—or both—and that we can even speak of ancient and modern blindness in the same way. I conclude by challenging the translation of the term "unable" (*adunatos*) as "disabled," with all its modern associations.

While many of my colleagues have made the switch to B.C.E. ("before the common era") and C.E. ("common era"), I persist in using B.C. ("before Christ") and A.D. ("anno domini," "the year of our Lord"). It seems to me that the B.C.E./C.E. system adds yet another layer of artificiality and Christian-centricism to an already artificial and Christian-centric system of dating (after all, we do not know precisely when Jesus was born, and people had no idea that they were living in the B.C. era).[14] The "common era" in B.C.E./C.E. dating corresponds to the supposed birth of Christ—there's nothing else common about it—and thus, using B.C.E./C.E. seems to me to highlight, rather than downplay, the already artificial and Christian-centric system.

1 The Landscape of Disability

Our mental image of the ancient Greek landscape is shaped by indelible literary and artistic Renaissance and Neoclassical depictions of the idealized Greek physical form. Johann Joachim Winckelmann, the eighteenth-century scholar of art history, wrote that

> the most beautiful body of ours would perhaps be as much inferior to the most beautiful Greek one. . . . The forms of the Greeks, prepared to beauty, by the influence of the mildest and purest sky, became perfectly elegant by their early exercises.[1]

This image is immortalized in the visual imagery of Renaissance painting, for example, Raphael's *School of Athens,* in which perfectly proportioned bodies gather around perfectly proportioned buildings (see fig. 1).[2] Such visual imagery is continued in Neoclassical painting, such as David's *Death of Socrates.* In both cases, even Socrates—whose physical form, ironically, is described as ugly in the historical sources (e.g., in Plato *Symposium* 215 a–b)—is painted in perfect proportion.

In fact, the ancient Greek world was inhabited by people with a wide range of visible physical disabilities. In any given public gathering place, one would have seen a much greater variety of physical conditions than one would see in the developed world today. This variety of physical forms would have included not only the beautiful bodies of Winckelmann's conjecture but also children affected by clubfoot and rickets, people with spastic cerebral palsy, disabled war veterans, and people with a host of other somatic variations. The physical environ-

[To view this image, refer to the print version of this title.]

The Renaissance image of Classical Greece: perfectly proportioned bodies are arranged in harmony with perfectly proportioned buildings. Raphael, *School of Athens*, 1510. Fresco in the Stanza della Segnatura, Palazzi Vaticani, Rome. Scala/Art Resource, N.Y.

ment in which these people lived differed vastly from Renaissance and Neoclassical depictions and from the modern, developed world. Not only the physical but also the cultural environment—the environment of attitudes—differed significantly from that of the modern, developed world, as I will argue here and in subsequent chapters.

As a preliminary to discussion of what physical disability meant to the Greeks, it is useful to consider first the varieties of physical disability. Following a brief discussion of the vocabulary for physical disability, a catalog of the physical handicaps that existed in the ancient Greek world highlights the differences between the ancient and modern profiles of physical disability and suggests that physical impairment was common in the ancient world. This suggestion comes as no surprise, since vaccines and antibiotics as we know them today did not exist in the ancient world. Furthermore, a catalog of the many physical impairments is a corrective to the image of the perfect Greek human body that has been left to us in Greek statuary and fortified by erroneous artistic depictions of everyday Greek life. In this chapter, I limit the discussion to physical conditions that affect the limbs. I deal with conditions leading to blindness, deafness, and speech disorders in separate chapters.

Although there is an extensive list of Greek terms that describe conditions of being maimed, blind, and so on, there is no Greek equivalent for the modern, overarching term "disabled," with its many social and political connotations. Permanent physical disability was not the concern of doctors in antiquity beyond recognition of incurability, and the vocabulary for physical disability appears vague, at best, to the modern audience. References to permanent physical handicaps are scattered throughout nearly all the literary material, but handicaps did not belong in the domain of rational medicine, which treated curable diseases; in fact, a Hippocratic practitioner's ability to distinguish an incurable case as opposed to a curable one was part of his skill.[3] The Greek terms for physical impairment are general and describe outward appearances or symptoms; in contrast, we in the developed world are accustomed to technical, medical categorizations of specific physical conditions. Inherent in a modern term such as "cerebral palsy" or "muscular dystrophy," for example, is the etiology, range of symptoms, prognosis, and so on. In the ancient world, the term "maimed" or "formless" implied a varied range of conditions, so a Greek would form a mental picture of a maimed or formless person, but not an accompanying etiology or prognosis. The difference, though, is that the image intended by any given term varied from usage to usage, informed by the context and by the public reading or performance. We have only the written terms, for the most part. Without the context, the specifics of the terms are usually lost, to say nothing of subtle shifts in meaning between audiences and over time. It is also important to note that no term refers exclusively to physical impairment. Most of the terms are part of a general vocabulary as opposed to a medical vocabulary, and the terms are generic, even interchangeable, taking on specific meaning only in the individual contexts in which they were used.[4] It is also important to note that none of these terms refers exclusively to human physical impairment. Theophrastus, a fourth- and third-century B.C. botanist, for example, uses "maimed" (*pepêrômenon*) to refer to parts of plants (*On the Causes of Plants* 3.5.1).

Nevertheless, it is useful to set out some general definitions, along with a sense of each term's extreme breadth. "Maimed" (*pêros*) and all its variations—such as "much-maimed" (*anapêros*)—is an extremely general term for any body that deviated significantly in outward appearance from the standard. We can sense the huge breadth of this term when, writing in the fourth century B.C., Aristotle refers to the "deformity" (*pêrôsis*) of baldness (*Generation of Animals* 784 a) but also refers to monstrosity as the state of being very disfigured (*anapêria*) (*Generation of Animals* 769 b). The term was used to describe everyone from Thamyris, whom, the eighth-century B.C. Homeric writings tell us, the Muses maimed (*cholôsamentai pêron thesan*) because he boasted that his musical skills were as great as theirs (*Iliad* 2.599), to Aristotle's speculation (*Generation of Animals* 737 a) that a female is technically a deformed (*pepêrômenôn*) male. Herodotus, the fifth-century historian and chronicler of the Persian Wars, uses this most broad term when he has the wisest man in the world say that the fortunate man is the one who ends his life "without disfigurement [*apêros*], sickness, or evil" (1.32).

Another term that sometimes describes people with physical handicaps usually means "disgrace," but also "ugliness" (*aischos;* also *aischros,* "ugly"). Thersites' limp, his rounded shoulders, and his bald head add up to an overall appearance of the ugliest man (*aischistos de anêr*) among the Greek forces in the Trojan War (Homer *Iliad* 2.216). While the detailed description of Thersites' ugliness paints a distinctive appearance, what Plato had in mind specifically when he discusses a crude form of dance that imitates the movements of ugly people (*aischionôn*) is anyone's guess (*Laws* 7.814).[5] The term is also used in a very general sense when Plato, writing in the fourth century B.C., has Socrates contrast weakness (*asthenountes*) with health (*hugiainontes*) (*Alcibiades* 2.139 a).

"Weakness" (*astheneia*) also leaves much to the modern imagination. An author in the Hippocratic corpus, for example, describes weakness as a symptom of a certain withering disease (*auantê*) in which the legs become weak and heavy and the patient wastes away (*Diseases* 2.66). The term is also used throughout the Hippocratic corpus as a general term for sickness (e.g., *Ancient Medicine* 12, 13; *Regimen in Acute Diseases* 11). Aristotle uses the term in a similar way when he warns that the children of both too-young and too-old parents are imperfect (*ateleis*) and weak (*asthenês*) in body (*Politics* 1335 a–b).

"Incompleteness" or "imperfection" (*ateleia*) sometimes refers to physical handicaps, such as when the biographer Plutarch (ca. A.D. 50–120) describes the child of Isis and Osiris, born "weak in his lower limbs" (*asthenê tois katôthen guiois*) (*Moralia* 358 e). Aristotle also uses the term to refer to children who were born imperfectly (*atelê*), but in this case, it refers to a far less severe condition, in which passages in infants' ears or nostrils are not fully formed but correct themselves in time (*Generation of Animals* 775 a).

"Maimed" or "mutilated" (*kolobos*) is a general but fairly unambiguous term that can refer to physical impairment. Aristotle plainly states that the term can only refer to an object or a body that is missing something, such as a vessel missing a handle or a person missing an irreplaceable extremity (*Metaphysics* 5.27.3–4 1024 a). Thus Plutarch paints the paradox of a mutilated man (*kolobou*) fearing he will become hundred-handed (*Moralia* 93.1 c).

The meaning of "lameness" (*cholos*) is a straightforward reference to lameness in the leg. Plutarch writes that each body part has its own weakness: the eye is prone to blindness; the leg is prone to lameness (*chôlotêta*) (*Moralia* 963 c–d). Within this specific definition, though, the range of application is enormous. Plutarch, for example, uses the same term to refer to both the Spartan king Agesilaus, whose limp was so slight that it was barely noticeable (*Agesilaus* 2.2–3), and to a man who could not walk at all (*Pericles* 27.3–4).

"Unable" (*adunatos*) is potentially a dangerously misleading term, because it is so close in meaning and sense to the modern "disabled," with all its political and cultural associations. There are crucial differences between the Greek "unable" and the modern "disabled," differences that I discuss in this book's conclusion. The Greek term is literal and is seen in many situations in which one is not able to accomplish something. Herodotus, for example, uses the same term, "unable" (*adunatoi*), in the context of a group of people who are unable to persuade another group of people (3.138) and to describe ships that had been disabled (6.16).

Any population, ancient or modern, includes people with physical handicaps, but medical science has altered the profile of types of physical disability. On one hand, there are people with disabilities in the modern world who would not have survived in the ancient world. People have been able to survive spinal-cord injury, for example, only since the 1960s; survival of injury high in the spinal cord, which implies paralysis from the shoulders down, only became possible in recent decades. On the other hand, the ancient world included people with physical handicaps that are not commonly seen today in the developed world, such as clubfoot, broken bones that have not healed properly, and the effects of epidemic diseases such as tuberculosis.[6]

The following catalog of physical handicaps likely to be found in an ancient Greek population is organized along the life cycle, beginning with a discussion of congenital physical handicaps. A survey of physical handicaps resulting from injury and disease is followed by some remarks on several disabling conditions such as cerebral palsy and multiple sclerosis. I close by mentioning the disabling conditions that might accompany old age.

From the standpoint of modern science, congenital handicaps result from three categories of causes: heredity, the circumstances of gestation, and the conditions of birth. The Greeks also observed that one might be born with an "inherited" physical handicap in imitation of one's parents. Aristotle observes that physically impaired children are born of physically impaired parents; for example, lame parents sometimes produce lame children (*History of Animals* 585 b, 586 a). Also, Aristotle observes that mutilated children are born of mutilated parents (*Generation of Animals* 721 b). The Roman scholar Pliny echoes this observation five centuries later: lame children, he writes, are born from lame parents (*Natural History* 7.11.50). Such births were common enough for Pseudo-Aristotle, an anonymous student of Aristotle whose work was traditionally ascribed to Aristotle, to ask why it is more common for the human being than any other animal to be born lame (*Problems* 895 a). Several centuries before Aristotle, Greek audiences heard the blacksmith god Hephaestus blaming his parents for his lameness, and thus for Aphrodite's preference for the war god Ares, in Homer's *Odyssey* (8.308–12):

> Yet for this is none other to blame but my two parents—would they had never begotten me![7]

In later tradition, two sons of Hephaestus were lame. Apollonius Rhodius, the third-century B.C. author of the *Argonautica*, explains that Palaemonius was born of Hephaestus and because of this (*tounek'*) his feet were crippled (*Argonautica* 1.202–6). Apollodorus (3.16.1) tells the tale of Periphites, another son of Hephaestus, who had weak feet (*podas de astheneis*). A Hippocratic author observes that lameness lies in heredity (*Sacred Disease* 3). Of course, ancient scholars were not equipped to understand the differences between birth defects caused by heredity on the one hand and chromosomal aberration on the other, but simply recorded their observations. So Aristotle also remarks that children sometimes inherit such characteristics as scars and brands (*Generation of Animals* 724 a).[8]

Circumstances of gestation constitute another category of congenital physical disability. Impairments such as spinal malformation and clubfoot can be acquired in the womb regardless of genetic configurations.[9] In the United States today, one in one thousand children are born each year with clubfoot.[10] Again, while ancient observers had no way to distinguish what was genetically determined and what was a result of the mother's inadequate nutrition, for example, they did guess that a baby could acquire a deformity during the period of gestation and as a result of the circumstances of gestation. A mother's inadequate nutrition was a significant factor in the ancient world in terms of producing offspring with physical anomalies.[11] Aristotle observes that babies might be born with too many or too few parts, such as toes, as a result of the "setting" process of gestation, which can also result in unusually large hands or feet, or several of them (*Generation of Animals* 772 b). Further, he explains that offspring might be born without an extremity, as a result of a small abortion of that particular extremity (*Generation of Animals* 773 a).[12]

The conditions of birth constitute the third cause of congenital deformity. Even if a fetus were to grow unharmed in the womb, its birth might be premature. While Plutarch is not discussing physiology in his tale of Isis and Osiris, it is interesting that he blames the untimely birth of their son, Harpocrates, for his unfinished body (*Moralia* 377 c, 378 c). Specifically, he describes Harpocrates' unfinished body as having "weakness in his lower limbs" (*Moralia* 358 e). Pseudo-Aristotle answers his own query about why it is more common for man than any other animal to be born lame by explaining that men have many seasons of birth, including the seventh, eighth, and tenth months of pregnancy (*Problems* 895 a). Aristotle writes that seven-month children are born imperfectly but that many survive (*Generation of Animals* 775 a).[13] Prematurely born babies are, in fact, at risk for physical impairment such as cerebral palsy and motor incoordination.[14]

Children born without a handicap could acquire one from a variety of circumstances later in life. Permanent physical disability could result from injured, diseased, and lost limbs; from diseases such as arthritis; and from several other conditions. Some Greeks believed that physical handicaps might result from additional factors such as curses. We see a possible example of this in an inscribed curse from the fifth century B.C., in which the victim is cursed to fall from sickness into permanent handicap.[15] Another sort of curse was the evil eye, the belief that some people can inflict harm by looking at other people or their property.[16] Protective devices against the evil eye, still in use all over the world today, have a long tradition. One of the earliest protective devices used by the Greeks was the head of the Gorgon.[17]

With or without the influence of magic, even the most minor injury could have permanent consequences. Accidents or events causing fractures were common. Whether as a result of improper healing or as the result of infection, fractured and dislocated bones were likely to result in a permanent physical handicap in the ancient world. In the developed world, we take for granted that, with medical attention, even the most severe fracture will be undetectably repaired. Without medical attention, fractures sometimes spontaneously and completely heal, but not always. There is evidence in a male from the Middle Bronze Age (second millennium B.C.) of a right humerus fracture with a resulting fifteen-degree angulation and shortening of the bone. In another male, from the Protogeometric period (the twelfth through eighth centuries B.C.), a fracture of the left tibia shaft resulted in five-degree angulation and shortening, and in a male from the Hellenistic period (323–146

B.C.), a fracture of the left femur angled twenty degrees and thickened.[18]

A simple accident, such as a fall, could have irreversible consequences in the ancient world. A Hippocratic writer explains that people who leap down from a height and land violently on the heel will separate the bones and risk necrosis and gangrene (*On Fractures* 11). Concern over permanent impairment takes on mythical proportions in the tale of the god Hephaestus, whose lameness was connected, in some versions, with his long fall from the heavens to the earth.[19] Herodotus tells us that the Persian ruler Darius, having dislocated his foot in the process of dismounting from his horse, gave up hope of ever using the foot again, and this despite having the best doctors (3.129–30). This passage is not straightforward testimony, of course. Rather, Herodotus tells the story as a showcase for the art of Greek medicine.[20] Nevertheless, it had to ring true among Greek audiences. A similar example, of a humbler person, Cephesias, comes from a fourth-century B.C. dedicatory inscription at the healing site of Epidaurus, the domain of the healing god Asclepius. Cephesias had been thrown from his horse, and his foot was maimed, to the point that he had to be carried into the temple. Cephesias was said to have received this injury as divine punishment because he had laughed at the Asclepiadic cures for lameness, and he was cured only after he recanted.[21]

While it is assumed in the developed world that medical attention to a broken bone will result in its healing, a visit from a doctor in Classical Greece could have a range of possible results. In the ancient world, a doctor's training was not standardized, licensed, or necessarily respected. As a Hippocratic writer warns, some doctors, through their showy bandagings, do the patient more harm than good (*On Fractures* 1). We read instructions for reduction—restoring a bone to its normal position—which, in most cases, could only have caused further damage (*On Fractures* 13). A broken thigh bone that results in a shortened thigh because of faulty medical treatment, we are told, is evidence of poor medical judgment. It is not clear if the writer is giving literal advice or simply making a point when he advises the physician that it is better to break both legs and at least have them in equilibrium (*On Fractures* 19).[22] The second-century A.D. physician Galen, who continued and elaborated many aspects of Hippocratic rational medicine in the Roman world, also describes elaborate methods of reduction (13.333–34, 18b.400–404). There was no standard medical treatment for any given malady, but rather a variety of treatment methods. Some treatments seem sound; others seem of dubious value to the modern eye. For example, Galen was in favor of letting blood as a remedy for injured limbs (5.118–19, inter alia).

Even if a bone is tended to and set properly, it must remain immobilized to effect complete healing. While animals with broken bones do this by instinct, the need to tend a shop or a field would probably override any human instinct to remain idle. In fact, a Hippocratic writer notes that while a patient with a broken foot should remain immobile for twenty days, "patients, despising the injury, do not bring themselves to do this, but go about before they are well" (*On Fractures* 9).[23] Also relevant is a passage from the Hippocratic corpus that states that when the bones are not completely regenerated, the hip, thigh, and leg gradually become atrophied and that when recuperation is prevented, the limbs become convex or concave and there is shortening of the bone (*On Fractures* 14, 16). A Hippocratic writer notes that fractured bones tend to become distorted during the mending (*On Fractures* 8). Of a certain kind of bone displacement in the leg, we read a warning that the doctor should know that such injured people will be lame (*On Joints* 63). A dislocated bone or one that has healed crookedly can be reduced, but the reduction of broken bones is difficult even in modern times, mostly because of the muscle spasms that accompany the procedure. The procedure also requires proper anesthetics, unavailable in the ancient world.[24]

Some war wounds would leave men permanently physically handicapped.[25] An ancient Greek audience would have known that Eurypylus, limping back from the battlefield with a wound in his thigh, was in serious danger (Homer *Iliad* 11.809–11). The immediate measures taken by his companion Patroclus may indeed have killed the pain and stopped the flow of blood (Homer *Iliad* 11.842–48), but an injury to the femur, the largest bone in the body, leads to complications such as torn muscles and long-lasting infections. Indeed, a Hippocratic writer reports that the fractured thighbone will lead to a shortened thigh (*On Fractures* 19) and that the thighbone distorts easily (*On Fractures* 20). There is, of course, a wide range of additional war injuries that would have led to permanent physical handicaps if the injured person had survived. The paleopathologist Srboljub Živanović writes that "the morphological deformities that arose are really beyond imagination at the present time."[26]

Permanently irregular gait was so common that a Hippocratic author cataloged the varieties of gait. In the case of a certain type of hip dislocation, for example, the patients "have an even swaying gait to this side and that" (*On Joints* 56). Patients with another sort of hip dislocation might "keep the leg raised and contracted, and walk on the other, supporting themselves, some with one and some with two crutches" (*On Joints* 58). Adults with dislocated thighs "keep the whole leg straighter in walking," and "sometimes they drag the foot along the ground" (*On Joints* 60).

However one treated a bone injury, it was not just the injured bone, but rather the infection that might ensue, that was responsible for extreme damage. A Greek would have been lucky if the bone simply healed crookedly, because every bone injury was also susceptible to infection.[27] Untreated by antibiotics, an infection can spread throughout the surrounding tissues, then the bone itself, attacking even the bone marrow. In Sophocles' tragedy *Philoctetes,* the stench of Philoctetes' wound, which had festered for ten years, was a literary device, certainly, but surely familiar to the fifth-century B.C. Athenian audience and drawn from direct observation of a festering wound.[28] Neoptolemus and Odysseus, Greek soldiers of the Trojan War who are looking for Philoctetes on his island of exile, find evidence of his presence:

> *Neoptolemus:* Aha! Here's something else! Yes, some rags drying in the sun. They're reeking with matter from some terrible sore. (*Philoctetes* 38–39)[29]

If the injured person survived severe infection, the necrotic bones could become extremely deformed, not just at the injury but around the whole area.[30] Some limbs did not heal at all but, diseased, fell off. Ischemia (localized anemia) and gangrene (decay of tissue resulting from this lack of blood supply) are common results of injury.[31] Limb loss could also result from ischemia and gangrene from advanced diabetes. While inherited diabetes is probably as old as the human race, it is not identified by the Hippocratic writers, although it does appear in the writings of Celsus, a first-century A.D. Roman author who assembled Hellenistic medical knowledge, and in the writings of Galen.[32] We hear, too, of frostbite and consequent loss of fingers, toes, and limbs of soldiers in cold countries from the fourth-century military historian

Xenophon (*Anabasis* 7.4.3); the first-century B.C. historian Diodorus (3.34.2, 14.28.3); and Lucian, from the second century A.D. (*The Ignorant Book-Collector* 6). Cold injuries have been documented at surprisingly warm temperatures, up to twelve degrees Celsius, or about fifty-four degrees Fahrenheit. The limbs do not fall off immediately from the cold, but rather mummify and fall off on their own or can be removed with forceps a few weeks later. In frostbite injury, the deep damage is not recognizable from the external injury and sometimes is not discovered until months or years later.[33] Limb loss was enough of a concern that Diodorus's utopian island (2.58.4–5) included the feature of limb reattachment: the blood of a certain tortoiselike animal is used, he tells us, to glue back on severed limbs; of course, the cut must be fresh and the severed part not a vital part.

It is safe to assume that gangrene led to a wide variety of outcomes in a world without antibiotics. Today, minor amputation can forestall or prevent major limb amputation, and no amputation necessarily means death by infection, as a range of antibiotics is now prescribed for the healing process. Preventative amputation seems not to have been practiced during the Classical period. In the Hippocratic corpus, amputation is always a passive matter; that is, the limb falls off on its own or is pulled off only when it is ready to come away anyway. We learn from Hippocratic writers the details of when and how the necrotic bones might fall off. We read, for example, that "the more porous bones come away more quickly, the more solid more slowly" (*On Fractures* 33). Similarly, in *Prognostic*, the author observes that when a patient's fingers and feet are blackened, the patient will lose the blackened parts (9). It is difficult to determine exactly when amputation became a medical practice; it could have existed all along as a sort of barbershop service. Plato implies that amputation has become an active matter by the time of his writing in the fourth century B.C., rather than a passive one of waiting for the bone to fall off, when he makes an analogy stating that men are prepared to have hands and feet cut off, if they believe that they are harmful (*Symposium* 205 e). Of course, he may have been exaggerating. Plutarch, writing five centuries after Plato, is more specific about amputation when he makes his analogy: he writes that when one's foot or hand is mortified, one pays to have it cut off (*Moralia* 831 d).[34] By Celsus's time, amputation is taken for granted and must have been practiced by the Hellenistic Alexandrians.[35] In any case, people with missing limbs were common enough that Aristotle could include as an example of artful refutation that "biped" is not truly a property of man, because not every man is in possession of two feet (*Topics* 134 a).

In addition to injury and infection, disease could be responsible for permanent physical impairment. Osteoarthritis, the degenerative joint disease, is, in the United States today, second only to cardiovascular disease as a cause of chronic disability among adults.[36] Osteoarthritis was present in the ancient world, estimated by J. Lawrence Angel to have occurred at an 8 to 15 percent frequency in the general ancient Greek population.[37] There is evidence of arthritis in skeletons ranging from the Sub-Mycenaean through the Hellenistic period (i.e., from ca. 1100 B.C. through the second century B.C.).[38] Rheumatoid arthritis, a chronic, inflammatory disorder of the connective tissue that today affects three million Americans, also existed in the ancient world.[39] Rheumatoid arthritis is incurable, but its symptoms are handled today with a range of treatments, such as steroid drugs and surgery, that were not available in the ancient world. Gout, too, was recognized and discussed by the Hippocratics.[40] The skeleton of a female from the Protogeometric period shows signs of a big-toe inflammation, a common symptom of gout.[41] Gout can be kept under control today by a variety of drugs; while we do not know the specifics, people suffering from gout in the ancient world also had treatments available.[42] Infectious arthritis is not a well-known phenomenon in the modern world, as it can be treated with antibiotics; sterile treatment for injuries has led to fewer cases of infectious arthritis. In the ancient world, however, infectious arthritis developed freely and led to major destruction of the joints.[43]

Possible portrayals of people affected by arthritis appear in the literature. Hesiod, critiquing Archaic Greek society around 700 B.C., describes the "three-legged One, whose back is broken and whose head looks down upon the ground" (*Works and Days* 533–35). This image could be based on the common sight of a man with osteoarthritis; the "swollen foot with a shrunk hand" could describe the effects of gout (*Works and Days* 497).[44] A man who visited the temple of Asclepius because of a severely sore toe, and who left dedicatory thanks for his cure, may have been experiencing gout.[45] Another example of a passage that could refer to arthritic limbs or other disease-related conditions is Aristotle's example of youthful hyperbole, "legs twisted like parsley" (*Rhetoric* 1413 a). Also, Xenophon compares the gait of horses to that of a twisted-legged man, saying that horses with flat hooves tread with the strongest and weakest parts of the foot simultaneously (*Art of Horsemanship* 1.3).

Epidemic diseases could leave whole groups of people with permanent physical handicaps. A Hippocratic writer observes an epidemic of erysipelas—literally, "red skin," an acute streptococcal disease of the skin and subcutaneous tissue that spreads—in which the flesh and sinews fell away. "Many," he reports, "lost the arm and the entire forearm" (*Epidemics* 3.4). Thucydides, the historian who chronicled the Peloponnesian War at the end of the fifth century B.C., reports the loss of extremities due to the plague of 429 B.C. (2.49.8).[46] This Athenian plague was unique only in its careful documentation; there were other plagues.[47] Tuberculosis, for example, occurs in epidemics.[48] While we have no direct written evidence for the crippling results of tuberculosis, we do have paleopathological evidence of its results in the ancient world.[49] Bone and joint tuberculosis causes various bone changes; for example, paraplegia can develop from spinal tuberculosis.[50] A certain Hermodicus was "paralyzed in body," whether by tuberculosis or some other condition (*ACIT* 232–33). In the modern world, we think of impairments in terms of their medical cause; in the ancient world, such medical compartmentalization was not standard.

In addition to congenital handicaps; injured, diseased, and lost limbs; and the results of diseases such as arthritis, we can conjecture the presence of other conditions associated with physical impairment even if the details are irretrievable. Cerebral palsy, for example, must have existed—it results from brain damage during gestation or birth—even though we have no written medical acknowledgment of it. A sketch of brain damage at birth might be seen when Aristotle describes the birth of babies who appear bloodless and dead, but whom skilled midwives can revive (*History of Animals* 587 a). An inscription from Epidaurus (*ACIT* 237) describes a man "paralyzed in the knees," which could describe the gait of cerebral palsy; of course, it could also describe a number of other maladies. We see a possible portrayal of cerebral palsy in a Hellenistic sculpture of the head of a man with facial asymmetry.[51] Pseudo-Aristotle's "morbid character" typifies a person affected by cerebral palsy: "weak-eyed, knock-kneed, his head inclined to right, his palm upward or slack, and he has two gaits: he either waggles hips or holds them stiffly" (*Physiognomics* 808 a). Similarly, although the effects of cerebral palsy were not recognized per se, perhaps it was the visual image of a person with spastic cerebral palsy that Herodotus had in mind when he relates that when men or animals passed by the site of the murdered Phoecaeans they "became distorted and crippled and palsied" (*apoplêkta,* literally, "stricken") (1.167).

Multiple sclerosis is a disease of the central nervous system white matter that causes symptoms in the brain, spinal cord, and optic nerves. Greece lies within the medium zone of prevalence of multiple sclerosis; that is, there are between five and thirty people in ten thousand with multiple sclerosis in Greece today.[52] A similar incidence in the ancient world cannot be ruled out; the etiology of multiple sclerosis is unproven. We may see the unpredictable and episodic symptoms of multiple sclerosis in the second-century B.C. series of decrees honoring Archippe, a benefactress who seems to have had recurring bouts of weakness followed by health (*SEG* 33.1035–41).

Malnutrition, too, was responsible for some physical impairments.[53] The bones of children who were underfed would not have had a chance to develop properly. While very little is known about the feeding of infants in ancient Greece, cereals were probably a common supplement for children.[54] This diet would have led to protein deficiency and was probably associated with poverty, as it is now.[55] Vitamin deficiencies, especially in combination with swaddling, likely led to such malformations as rickets.[56] Malnutrition in general was common in all young children, even those of the rich.[57]

Cardiovascular accident (CVA, or "stroke") can result in permanent physical impairment. A Hippocratic writer describes the symptoms quite clearly, even if he attributes them to certain weather conditions: old men, he observes, become paralyzed in their right or left side *(Airs Waters Places* 10). Aristotle may describe the symptoms of CVA as well when he uses as a simile "the case of paralysis" in which when one "wills to move his limbs to the right they swerve to the left" (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1.13.16). Galen describes hemiplegia following damage to either the right or the left side of the brain (8.230).

Several additional conditions probably existed in the ancient world, such as the results of cancers, spina bifida, post-polio syndrome, and brain trauma.[58] While it is out of the scope of this discussion to detail each condition, they round out this catalog of the possible types of physical impairment likely to have been present.

Finally, equating old age and physical weakness is common in Greek literature.[59] Old age is associated with physical infirmity from the earliest Greek literary record. The prototype of the old soldier, Nestor, acknowledges his old age by pointing out his physical characteristics (Homer *Iliad* 23.627–28):

> My limbs are no longer steady, dear friend; nor my feet, neither do my arms, as once they did, swing light from my shoulders.[60]

We see the equation of old age and stiff limbs in fifth-century comedy. Aristophanes has the chorus of Acharnians, neighbors to the Athenians in Attica, identify themselves as old men by cataloging their physical woes: "Now because my joints have stiffened / and my shins are young no more" (*Acharnians* 219–21).[61] The solution to the riddle of the Sphinx depends upon an understanding that old men use canes with which to walk just as surely as all babies crawl. Aeschylus alludes to the riddle of the Sphinx in the tragedy *Agamemnon:* "extreme old age walks on three feet" (79–80). Pliny remarks that "the senses grow dull, the limbs are numb, and the sight, hearing, gait, and teeth die before we do" (*Natural History* 7.50.168). The reverse of reality is seen in the inhabitants of a utopian island in Diodorus's imagination who live 150 years in perfect health; anyone who becomes impaired must, by law, commit suicide (2.57.5).

Thus, the ancient Greek population included a substantial portion of people with permanent physical handicaps. There were many conditions that would have resulted in a physical handicap, several of which have been controlled or eliminated in the modern, developed world.

Mobility is another factor in the landscape of disability. People who were missing limbs or who had other significant mobility impairments probably got around as best they could, using crutches if necessary. There is absolutely no evidence for the wheelchair, today's universal symbol of disability and favorable parking spots. Nor is there evidence for small carts on which people could propel themselves. A Hippocratic writer describes young children with dislocated limbs who "crawl about on the sound leg," supporting themselves with the hand on the sound side on the ground, and indicates that some adults crawl around as well (*On Joints* 52).[62] For distances, the ancient equivalent of a wheelchair was probably the donkey, such as Hephaestus rides in the depictions of his return to Olympus (see fig. 2; note that the god's feet are turned backward).[63] This transportation perhaps produced the slightly obscene expression, "the lame man rides best" (Mimnermus

[To view this image, refer to the print version of this title.]

Hephaestus rides the ancient equivalent of the wheelchair. Note that his feet are turned backward in this early sixth-century depiction. *Hephaestus' Return*, first quarter of the sixth century B.C., Corinth. National Archaeological Museum, Athens. Cat. number 664 (CC 628). Reproduced with permission from the National Archaeological Museum, Athens.

frag. 23; Athenaeus 13.568 e).[64] People who could not walk, temporarily or permanently, could be transported in carts, presumably, though we only see people who were able to walk carried in carts, such as the ox cart (e.g., Herodotus 1.31). Litters were also available for transporting the sick and the injured, as well as people permanently unable to walk, such as those who were carried into the Asclepiadic temple at Epidaurus (*ACIT* 236). Artemon, a lame (*chôlon*) siege-engine designer, was also carried in a litter (Plutarch *Pericles* 27.3–4).

People who could walk but who had difficulty walking probably used staffs or canes. As Plutarch puts it, the lame man makes no progress without his stick (*Moralia* 922 b). Plutarch explains that Hephaestus is associated with fire because he would make no progress without his cane, just as fire makes no progress without wood.[65] We see another example of a lame man (*chôlos*) with his stick on a fourth-century B.C. stele at Epidaurus (*ACIT* 233.) Indeed, the staff was an emblem of the unsteady feet of the old, part of Odysseus's disguise as a hobbling beggar (Homer *Odyssey* 17.203, 336–38).

While a slight limp does not impede progress very much, a missing foot, for example, makes mobility quite difficult.[66] In addition to crutches or staffs, apparently there were other aids for people who had difficulty walking, such as the corrective boots and shoes mentioned incidentally in the Hippocratic corpus (*On Joints* 62). Plutarch may have such a boot in mind in his story of Damonidas the music master, who prays, when he loses his boots, specially made for his crippled feet, that they might fit their finder (*Moralia* 18 d).[67]

Prosthetic devices are not mentioned at all in the Hippocratic corpus. The scraps of evidence that survive indicate that prosthetic aids were individually crafted items, not medically prescribed implements.[68] Herodotus tells us that Hegesistratus, the diviner on the staff of the Persian general Mardonius, forced to cut off his own foot in order to escape from a Spartan prison, fashioned a prosthetic foot out of wood (9.37).[69] Lucian tells the tale of a man who, having lost his feet to frostbite, strapped on wooden feet and hobbled with the help of servants (*The Ignorant Book-Collector* 6). Pliny relates the story of the Roman general Sergius, who, having lost his right hand, has a very unlikely prosthetic hand made of iron (*Natural History* 7.28.104–5). It is difficult to believe that any prosthetic device would have been practical as well as cosmetic. Even today, with advanced understanding of preprosthetic preparation and a wide array of prosthetic choices, prosthetic devices are often discarded because of the great energy expenditure that it takes to use them.[70] Additional complications from prosthetic devices can result, such as limited use of other parts of the body and skin problems, even in properly fitted prosthetic devices.[71]

An archaeological example confirms that wooden prosthetic devices existed in the ancient world: an artificial leg of wood, covered with bronze sheathing, was found on a skeleton from Capua, from about

300 B.C.[72] While this is the only archaeological example of a true artificial limb from the Classical period, there is an example from mythology: Pelops's shoulder, after it was mistakenly eaten as part of the stew that his father, Tantalus, served to the gods, was replaced by one of ivory.[73]

The institution is another difference between the modern and ancient landscapes of disability. For better or worse, nursing homes and other institutions have been the homes—or warehouses, depending on one's perspective—of disabled people who are unable to carry out their own daily living independently. By contrast, the ancient state was not involved in the care of such people.

Even if some war veterans were maintained by the state at Athens, as Plutarch suggests (*Solon* 31), the maintenance was a small monetary amount, and no provision for physical care was made.[74] Physical care for an ordinary handicapped person was a family matter.[75] A letter from the fourth century A.D., though admittedly late and from a man who is injured, not necessarily permanently physically handicapped, illustrates both the difficulty faced by people unable to care for themselves and the reliance on one's family for physical care. The writer, Judas, has had a riding accident and is in Babylon, far from his home in Egypt: "For when I want to turn on to my other side, I cannot do it by myself, unless two other persons turn me over, and I have no one to give me so much as a cup of water" (8–11). The writer goes on to ask the recipient of the letter, his sister, to travel to him (16) (*P. Oxy.* 46.3314). We can only guess at the range of conditions that must have existed for physically handicapped people who required physical assistance, but we do not have any direct information. The surviving literature shows us only the extremes of solicitousness and neglect and only the case of old or ill people, not permanently physically handicapped people. On one hand, the legendary models of devotion, Cleobis and Biton, were so dutiful that they yoked a cart to themselves in order to transport their old mother (Herodotus 1.31). In contrast, in a third-century B.C. petition, a man complains that although he is stricken with bodily infirmity and failing eyesight, his daughter won't care for him in his old age (*Sel. Pap.* 2.268). We also get a glimpse of at least one person's attitude to caring for a family member—again, not a physically handicapped family member, but rather an old and sick one—in a speech of the fourth-century Athenian rhetor Isocrates. Isocrates has helped his client argue for the right to the inheritance of his father by describing the drudgery of caring for him when he lay bedridden for six months (*Aegineticus* 24–29).[76]

People who were unable to care for themselves were not routinely segregated from the public, but part of the family and the community. This is not to say that the Greeks should be taken as humanitarians who practiced mainstreaming before their time; indeed, some families, then as now, may have abused, locked away, or killed family members who became burdensome. Assuming that this was the exception and not the rule, people with a wide variety of physical disabilities were a normal part of the human landscape. As the epigraph for this book suggests, disabled people are always in our midst, and we are all potentially disabled. Acknowledging that disability was significant in the Greek population gives rise to questions about the social, economic, religious, and military status of people with disabilities, discussed in the next chapter.