

remarks, they must not be extended to the whole of antiquity; and I moreover consider that we take a very limited view of antiquity when, in contradistinction to the present time, we restrict the term exclusively to the Greeks and Romans. A profound feeling of nature pervades the most ancient poetry of the Hebrews and Indians, and exists, therefore, among nations of very different descent—Semitic and Indo-Germanic.

We can only draw conclusions regarding the feelings entertained by the ancients for nature from those expressions of the sentiment which have come down to us in the remains of their literature, and we must, therefore, seek them with a care, and judge of them with a caution proportionate to the infrequency of their occurrence in the grand forms of lyric and epic poetry. In the periods of Hellenic antiquity—the flowery season in the history of mankind—we certainly meet with the tenderest expressions of deep natural emotion, blended with the most poetic representations of human passion, as delineating some action derived from mythical history; but specific descriptions of nature occur only as accessories, for, in Grecian art, all things are centered in the sphere of human life.

The description of nature in its manifold richness of form, as a distinct branch of poetic literature, was wholly unknown to the Greeks. The landscape appears among them merely as the back-ground of the picture of which human figures constitute the main subject. Passions, breaking forth into action, riveted their attention almost exclusively. An active life, spent chiefly in public, drew the minds of men from dwelling with enthusiastic exclusiveness on the silent workings of nature, and led them always to consider physical phenomena as having reference to mankind, whether in the relations of external conformation or of internal development.* It was almost exclusively under such relations that the consideration of nature was deemed worthy of being admitted into the domain of poetry under the fantastic form of comparisons, which often present small detached pictures replete with objective truthfulness.

At Delphi, pæans to Spring were sung,† being intended,

* Schnaase, *Geschichte der bildenden Künste bei den Alten*, bd. ii., 1843, s. 128–138.

† Plut., *de E. I. apud Delphos*, c. 9 [an attempt of Plutarch's to explain the meaning of an inscription at the entrance of the temple of Delphi.—*Tr.*]. Regarding a passage of Apollonius Dyscolus of Alexandria (*Mirab. Hist.*, c. 40), see Ofr. Müller's last work, *Gesch. der Griech. Litteratur*, bd. i., 1845, s. 31.