

The 'Greek Man' or the Weight of the Roots . . .

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When I was preparing a paper about the problem Greek studies have with globalization of culture on the threshold of the twenty-first century¹, I was asked who the Greek man was, considered as a separate entity, and how future decades would see him. The question had all the appearance of a trap. The very idea of 'the Greek man' is disturbing, even though it is so commonplace that it is hard to trace it back to its origins. Of course it contains a well-established but ill-defined consensus around the Greeks as the first free, rational human beings to found a free polity, who furthermore presided over the creation of a literature without equal in Antiquity and an exceptional and innovative body of art. A more precise answer could also echo the prestigious and much discussed title of Werner Jaeger's indispensable and troubling volume: *Paideia. Die Formung des griechischen Menschen* (1934), and even become, rather insidiously because of its date and the last few words of the sub-title, a parasitic echo of the period when a mythical discourse evoked Aryans and non-Aryans. But we must take care not to place the thesis of Werner Jaeger, to whom I will return, in that company, since the title is less a reflection of a suspect mode of thought than a simple coincidence of choice of language. And the reason it turns up here is that Jaeger and Dodds, whom we shall meet later, are the two opposite poles of this paper, standing in Greek studies on either side of the bloodstained struggle that transformed Europe and the West's relationship with the rest of the world for ever.

All the same, the expression is ambiguous once 'the Greek man' is no longer merely a figure of speech. Is he the paradigm that a culture set up for itself or sought in another culture? Or does he simply belong to a group that, owing to its development through history and its social achievements, gave its members the potential to excel in a particular field, because this group, more than any other (and that is the interesting point), enjoyed the conditions necessary for the expression of that excellence? Or is he only an anonymous individual in the group, and regardless of the development of this group compared with others. The second definition is the one that, after considering many others, I have chosen to use here: the specific potential that Greek society, which was constantly evolving, developed in an individual or a group of citizens. At all events we must reject any notion of the underlying uniqueness of the Greek world; the whole of Greek literature displayed the multifarious nature of the people it brought into play, whether acting or thinking or struggling with conflict or doubt. This literature, which anticipated Theophrastus's *Characters* in its exploration of the problem of personality and behaviour differences, was fed from the outset by the problem of human diversity, which often causes conflict, and specifically diversity among Greeks.

Furthermore, the paradigmatic notion of 'the Greek man' would run up against a four-fold subjectivity. Jaeger's Pericles is the person Thucydides saw as a man of the Athens

classes and he unconsciously envisages his writing only in terms of his readers' subjectivity, which is essentially a collective sensibility, even if he wishes to create a work intended to last for all time and, in Pericles, a model of the absolute. Jaeger, or any one of us throughout history who wanted to claim the Greek man as a model, could only place him within our own time and space perspective, and there is nothing as subjective as the choice of parameters that would make us opt for a Greek or a Roman as a model. The last sixty years of this century have attempted to analyse how these subjectivities operate, either through research that remains within the great traditions of classical hermeneutics or by breaking new ground, inspired by advances in the humanities more generally. Here I intend to deal with this second aspect. And if 'the Greek man', who was paradigmatic because he was rational and master of beauty and truth, were destroyed but at the same time enriched by all the obscure elements people have discovered he contained, that only enhances the value of the amazing phenomenon that is the unique heritage of Greek culture.

In Archaic Greece, or at least in some regions such as the cities of Ionia or Greater Greece, in Crete, Boetia and Attica, people asked questions about the human race, about how to manage community life better, how human beings were connected with the extra-human, the gods, time, space, nature, *physis*, the strange processes of change completed and still active in which humans are caught up. As a result new concepts of justice and democracy and the beginnings of a secular society in the sense of an organized community began to form; and the first attempts to systematize philosophical and mathematical thought were made. We must not imagine this maturation was the result of the general development of the whole Greek world; it often emerged from small groups, sometimes even non-conformists. It is to them that we owe a large proportion of the Greek texts we read and interpret. This period gave rise to the first constitutions, the first legal codes, the Pre-Socratics and the early Sophists, the liberating discovery of prose and of the movement that finally brought sculpture to focus on the human form, even for representing the gods.

Already with reference to the Archaic period we wonder how coherent Greek culture was – the Greek culture we apprehend as the Greeks apprehended it to a certain extent by opposition in many fields to the outside world, seen as barbarian. But when I, as an outside observer, refer to an opposition, I am simplifying the tensions inherent in complex relationships made up of exchange and borrowing that has its part to play in creating Greek culture as a whole. Even if the Greeks felt they were different from and better than the Barbarians, for whom they sometimes expressed respect – we note the prestige the Egyptians enjoyed – we are never aware of them thinking that their culture ought to be disseminated or even to replace other cultures. It is not an ideal to be imposed, nor is it commodity to be exported. When Thucydides sees Athens in its entirety as a school transmitting Greek culture, he is thinking of the city's role as cultural mentor to the Greek world. In the Archaic period the Greek diaspora was composed of Greeks who took away with them the culture of a small group and did not disseminate it. If they had an active influence on their neighbours it was because their neighbours took the initiative. This is also true of the spectacular spread of Hellenism that followed in wake of the epic Macedonian adventure through Egypt and the East. We have found that people read Greek literature, and sometimes the most difficult works, from Afghanistan to the cataracts of the Nile. But the systematic dissemination of Greek culture, attested by so many papyri

and inscriptions, is to all intents and purposes restricted to Greek notabilities, both high and lowly, whose privileges it protected and maintained. Those Greeks unquestioningly kept alive a cultural past that was an insurance for their social future. It is true that in the East and Egypt, and not only in Alexandria, Antioch or Palestine, there were processes of cultural osmosis at work because non-Greeks constantly mixed with the social group that was supposedly Greek (and the descendants of these Hellenized people must often have felt Greek through and through). Spoken and more particularly written Greek naturally became the common communication medium (we only have to think of the Bar Koshiba partisan who was forced to correspond in Greek because he could not find anyone among his followers who could write Hebrew). In fact it was out of this cultural melting-pot that there emerged the first great literature in the Greek language with a missionary purpose, the New Testament texts, which surprisingly came out of a Hebraic society that was closed by design and a Greek society that was closed out of indifference. Greek culture was to spread because the receiving community spread it, and it often had the unintended effect of not only promoting progress but also initiating intellectual challenge. We remember the pull Greek culture had for republican Rome and the golden age of Empire in terms of drama, poetry, rhetoric and philosophy. And yet this very same Rome was suspicious of certain religious innovations and Greeks were often called *Graeculi*. The rhetoric teachers were in great demand, the first principles of philosophy were studied under the masters who had come to live in Italy or received students in Greece, the great doctors were asked to call, yet those men would have been unacceptable as sons-in-law; sometimes they were even high-class slaves, but slaves. Romans, Arabs, the whole Western world, which was developing systems of thought based on Aristotle translated into Latin, borrowed techniques for acquiring knowledge or thinking, but they were not interested in the Greeks. It was not until later that they began to be studied, when there was a gradual transition, which became decisive in the nineteenth century, from Greek culture, viewed as a more advanced cultural network to be plundered, to a Greek tradition seen as an exemplary source from which more general lessons could be learned. And in any case the culture was often the object of suspicion. When the influence of Byzantium was waning, *hellenizein*, thinking like a Greek, was tantamount to heresy, and even paganism, in the eyes of the Constantinople orthodox, who called themselves Romans, Rôméi. From one of these suspect centres, Mistra, Gemistes Pletho brought to Florence the Platonism that challenged Aristotle. And the New Testament in its Greek version was to transform the relationship of the faithful to evangelical tradition; it was not always easy to be a Hellenist. The men who then developed out of these Greek cultural influences were not akin to a paradigmatic Greek man, but to the new protean man of the Renaissance, which was first of all Latin; if they looked back for ancient prototype, they found him most closely in ancient Rome and this is still the case for the French Revolution. Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, which was a manual of classical behaviour to be imitated or eschewed, as well as a treasure trove of anecdotes, would not alter this view, neither would La Bruyère's *Caractères*, which described his contemporaries' faults using a Latin translation of Theophrastus as a model.

Somewhat arbitrarily I would like to take as the endpoint of this gradual movement towards the concept of 'the Greek man' the work I mentioned at the start of this paper. It cast a long shadow over our student days, mainly because it had to be read in German, and aroused great enthusiasm among classicists, as well as considerable reservations,

which were caused more by a linguistic misinterpretation, however, than any problem of content. The first edition of the first volume of Werner Jaeger's *Paideia* was published in Berlin and Leipzig in 1934 with the sub-title I have quoted above: *Die Formung des griechischen Menschen*. The preface is dated 1933 and the book must have been written over a period of several years at the very time when Jaeger was battling against the decline in classical education in Germany. Among the chorus of praise that greeted the book, whose erudition was both wide-ranging and admirably well marshalled, there was one false note. Bréhier took the portrait of Pericles, the very epitome of the Greek man, the esteemed leader of democratic Athens, as an apology, if not for Hitler, at the very least for the Führer principle. However, in 1936 Jaeger voluntarily gave up a brilliant academic career to go into exile in the United States; and he never disclaimed those pages in later editions and translations. When it is re-read, bearing in mind the terrible crisis Germany had been going through since 1919 in its quest for stability and recognition, Jaeger's argument appears more like an over-intellectualized attempt to offer a form of authority different from the one that, at that time, it was the world's and Germany's misfortune to witness being imposed, by methods we are all aware of. Be this as it may, the sub-title still sums up very well the ambiguity of our theme. It refers to a '*Griechisches Mensch*', an absolute, but also to '*Formung*'. The first volume is the history of this creation up to Thucydides. The fundamental weakness of Jaeger's analysis, as well as the work's great value, is that, according to his thesis, literature produces culture and at the same time is the product of it. Imprisoned in this vicious circle, Jaeger foresaw, rather than argued for, the ghetto he constructs for us when his research leads to the notion that Greco-Latin culture is available only to the Christian world of the West. And this was at a time when the Greeks and Greek studies, which emerged from a world with no missionary intentions, were beginning to look like an instrument for disseminating a Western political and religious ideology that was set to conquer the world's riches. We must be fair: the reason why the professor turned his back on Nazi Germany was in fact that a censor had blue-pencilled a minor statement that stood as a modest declaration of belief in universalism. In Jaeger's view, there had been a continuous attempt, from Homer to the Sophists, to set up a type of universal humanist education, but it was universal and humanist as Jaeger projected it forward on to himself and his readers. Furthermore – and this is a second ambiguity – the Pericles paradigm of the Greek man of destiny appears even in Thucydides as the exception, who is fated to be succeeded by pale imitators leading Athens and the democratic party.

The next few years, which were marked by the great catastrophe of the twentieth century, were to tone down the image of the Greek man, the Athenian, the rational being who created the democratic polity and philosophy and who provided the impulse for scientific thought. For some time in fact linguistics, and particularly comparative grammar and later comparative studies, had been suggesting how the scope of research might be widened. Above all archaeology, inscriptions, papyri, coins and eventually Mycenaean tablets revealed little by little a Greece that was much more extensive and varied than the few centres that cropped up in historians' writings, notably the city of Athens. Newly discovered sources were giving rise to a qualitatively diverse definition of what 'a Greek man' might mean, and there were indeed many 'Greek men'.

In 1951 a book was published that was also to influence a whole generation of readers, particularly as it emerged from the most orthodox of Oxford backgrounds and had its

first outing at the prestigious Berkeley Sather Lectures. Dodds, who was its author, had given his lectures the overall title *The Greeks and the Irrational*, which for the time was somewhat provocative. The innovative aspect of this study of ancient mentality did not lie in the fact that it revealed practices and beliefs that had already for the most part been described, but in its denial of a perception of Greek classicism that saw it as banishing the irrational in favour of the rational in a gradual but sustained progress towards objective abstraction and balanced behaviour. Dodds did not deny that classical Greek culture had been wide-ranging and rich, but it had not obliterated the Greek's primitive substrate, even among the thinkers of the Greek city. When we re-read it forty years later, the book seems to be an intrusion, on the academic perception of a rationalist Greece, of a substantial body of opinion that had already had an influence on certain fields of study, such as the history of religions. I cannot refrain from mentioning in this context the classes at the University of Brussels in which Werner Kamps, only a few weeks before he tragically disappeared in the North Sea on 28 May 1940, attempted to demonstrate to us that anthropology would henceforth tell us more about social and legal relationships in ancient Greece. In 1949 Lucien Lévy-Bruhl's posthumous *Cahiers* had decisively modified his lengthy analysis of the primitive pre-logical and mystical mentality, which he had long considered incompatible with rational thought. At the end of his career he conceded that it was possible for both to co-exist. And in fact Dodds was to take as his starting point this Lévy-Bruhl, whom he quotes verbatim and in French: 'dans tout esprit humain, quel qu'en soit le développement intellectuel, subsiste un fond indéradicable de mentalité primitive' (in every human mind, no matter what its level of intellectual development, there remains an ineradicable primitive element). What is almost as interesting as the new ground he was to break in order to apprehend the Greeks with all the rigour of a prominent Hellenist is the care he feels he needs to take with his language. To the educated reader he explains he is dealing with only some aspects of the Greek mentality, what my title calls 'the Greek man', aspects which, he says, were not adequately explored in the nineteenth century. His writings are not intended to replace, but to refine the overall perception the educated lay public has of the Greek man. In relation to classicists, his 'fellow professionals'², he is on the defensive. He hopes they will not condemn him without hearing him out, even if he draws on such suspect elements as the latest developments in anthropology, psychology or sociology. It is with them in mind that he quotes Lévy-Bruhl and, in order to reassure them but also shift to the attack, mentions the great Nilsson, who had just produced an entirely new approach to the history of Greek religion, a reference beyond dispute. Dodds quotes him somewhat cheekily: 'Primitive psychology gives us a very good description of the mental activity of most of the peoples living today, except when we are talking about technical or deliberately intellectual functions.' And then he states his working hypothesis: 'Why should we endow the Ancient Greeks (and that includes Jaeger's *Griechischer Mensch*, among others) with the privilege of not being subject to primitive modes of thought when we find them in all the societies we can observe directly?' He maintains, and this is his final magnificent defence, his right to make mistakes because, he says, 'forward-looking mistakes are better than those that look backwards and in science mistake is another name for the progressive approximation to the truth.'

If I have focused on this preface – a preface is always important because it is written after the book and because then the author feels like the king with no clothes appearing before his future readers and in particular his colleagues – it is in order to give a clearer

idea of how topical was the issue of the perception of the Greek man that I have taken as my title. Not all the prejudices have disappeared.

Dodds uncovers, beneath the stratified unity of the rational Greek man, the stratified unity of successive influences that have all survived. He takes a diachronic approach, starting with the society of Homer's time, where he detects a primitive scheme of prestige-bearing human relations: the search for *timè*. The noble individual can be neither ridiculous nor contemptible. Dodds sees here the primitive 'shame culture', the culture of *aidos*, that would long leave its mark on the value judgements about human behaviour. With the Archaic period, Dodds claims, the Greeks moved to a 'guilt culture', with the appearance of elements that are present as early as the *Iliad* and are still identifiable behind thinking about fate in post-Archaic writers such as Pindarus, Herodotus or Sophocles. In the area of guilt, but without there necessarily being a reason for it, we find the link to a hostile divinity, a god who is, as Herodotus has it, *phthoneron kai tarachôdes*, jealous and demanding, as well as aware of his right to intervene in fate. The possible metamorphosis of this divine *phthonos* into the moral figure of Nemesis, the just anger of the gods, is an early attempt to rationalize this link with the supernatural, the transformation of the arbitrary and absolute into all-seeing justice, whereas to primitive thought misfortune is not punishment but a condition of life. However, divine hostility striking the innocent remains one enigma among many that crush humanity in Attic tragedy.

It is impossible to refer here to all the aspects of the irrational that Dodds uncovered in the classical period, from the divinity attributed to madness and poetic inspiration to ecstatic rites and interpretation of dreams. He even detects the irrational in Plato.

There is one disturbing, paradoxical point in Dodds's research that is relevant to our topic and is not entirely convincing. When the Greeks had developed fully the Aristotelian analysis of the world and the mechanisms of rhetoric, and had at their command a diverse range of philosophical constructions, according to Dodds they had a unique opportunity to move on to thorough-going rationalism. In his view the city's loss of political freedom left them a free space in which they could have rationalized their philosophical and scientific speculations. Under the evocative title *The Fear of Freedom* Dodds demonstrates that the Greeks did not seize this opportunity and that the irrational was to become once more a prime factor in their investigations with the start of Stoicism and well before the development of theurgies, Neoplatonism and magic. I do not believe the men of the Hellenistic cities noticed that their city was no longer free, nor that the ordinary citizens could have accepted that this possible new free space should be appropriated by intellectuals with the task of teaching them pure reason, whose methods, in any case, were still to be invented. Their blinkered religiosity and practical moral code, which was appropriate for day-to-day life, set comfortable boundaries within which the irrational has always had its place. Perhaps we should also modify our notion that the Greek man, or rather the elites who, until Aristotle, gave rationalism progressively greater importance in their dialectic or their vision of the relationship between humanity and the world, would have overcome the epistemological obstacles that had hitherto prevented them from turning this rationalism into the sole basis for their thought or behaviour.

A negative reply to this proposition was later given by Claire Préaux in her magisterial study of *La Lune dans la pensée grecque* (The Moon in Greek Thought, 1973), which demonstrated that the co-existence of the rational and the irrational is not a shortcoming, but a diversified mechanism for explaining the world, and it is used at the highest level,

in the fields of astronomy, mathematics, physics. The questions philosophers raised, from the pre-Socratics on, about matter, measurement, distance, the moon's phases and eclipses, are answered by direct observation overlaying presupposition about the cosmos which the rational accepts as a premise, supporting as well shaping it. On the subject of the stars, for example, Aristotle 'offers as the most rational view and the one most compatible with his preceding thinking' – and here we see the chink in the armour of this rationalism – 'that each star is composed of the same matter in which it happens to move. Thus the stars are made of the subtlest and highest body, the fifth body in Aristotle's physics of the elements where the stars are'. Claire Préaux showed more generally that this use of reason, the most specific characteristic attributed to the Greek man, is not intended to substitute the rational for belief but instead to integrate beliefs with the rational and use them by retaining them, quite logically it seems, as part of the presupposition on to which the rational is grafted. Often they are the sole basic building block for the rational argument. Claire Préaux also demonstrates the importance of the notion of *sumpatheia*, particularly in the Stoics' method of argument and their physics of a continuous and coherent world – the 'sympathy' that unites creatures, things and the surrounding universe. In Claire Préaux's view this 'sympathy' is one of the most primitive feelings and is part of 'savage thought'. This same 'cosmic sympathy', which is the basis for the Stoics' version of rationalism, was to trigger the vogue for astrology and the allegorical strands in late philosophies.

However, the study of the moon highlights another aspect of the non-rational constants haunting the Greeks, and here we are talking about a very ancient remnant, which is both emotional and instinctive in the male hunter or warrior – the depreciation of the female that goes well beyond the Athenians' misogyny. The antithetical pairing of the sun and moon as male and female, right and left, hot and cold, even and odd, becomes part of the system of oppositions and similarities which Claude Lévi-Strauss saw as a mode of classifying and apprehending facts, as far back as 'savage thought'. Claire Préaux saw these pairings, in which a valued element is contrasted with a devalued one related to it, as a projection of the supposed inequality of the human couple. Nevertheless, this irrational idea is the basis for the appearance of the female moon in a whole range of speculations, from rational medicine to astrology or eschatological myths.

But Claire Préaux's research has taken us too far on in time. Elsewhere other approaches to rethinking the study of the Greek psyche were already being developed on the basis of the work done by the ethnologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, who gradually replaced Lévy-Bruhl's notion of primitive pre-logical thought with the concept of 'savage thought' with its logic of classification. Within this attempt to rethink the Greeks, their cities, their history, the wealth of Greek literature, in a wider critical context than the classic interpretative methods applied to the written heritage of Greece, it is impossible to mention everything that has been achieved in Europe and the USA. Following Louis Gernet there is the team from the Centre de recherches comparées sur les sociétés anciennes, called the Ecole de Paris (Paris School) outside France, which gives a false impression of it since it brings together independent scholars, and what they have in common to a certain extent is Lévi-Strauss's methods, while at the same time they take care to distance themselves from him in their individual ways.

Jean Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, as well as others such as Nicole Loraux or Marcel Detienne, have reread critically Lévi-Strauss's *Anthropologie structurale* and the work in which he explains the structure and meaning of myths. They have distanced

themselves from him by rejecting the use of models and emphasising practical research into the background and the local vernacular. Thus Jean-Pierre Vernant, for example, points out that Lévi-Strauss chooses to construct an abstract model – a pure given – in order to decipher the Oedipus myth, whereas he himself adopts the position of the reader of works written as part of a literary genre produced in a social and psychological context which must be discovered at its roots. Rather than inventing constructs of ‘savage thought’, it is necessary to go back through the myths to the archaic psyche and its influence. We seem to be coming round again to Jaeger’s link between the work and the man, but both articulation and perspective are reversed. The work, which must still be studied closely, provides the link that must be deciphered at each level between subconscious message, transmitted by the writer as a counterpoint to its subject, and the ancient audience or the modern reader, who take it in according to their own critical and affective limits. Pierre Vidal-Naquet, who is the most structuralist of them but allergic to any notion of models, has pinpointed both this ‘immersion’ of classical author and work in the surrounding milieu, which includes the writer’s imagination, and the shifting nature of the work’s meaning as it is received through the centuries. We are very far now from the concept of a human paradigm arising from the logical unfolding interplay between Greek culture and that culture’s people.

Of course the relations between the Greek man and the city state as it was created and experienced, particularly in Athens, attracted these researchers because it is a field where people have enjoyed seeing the effect on institutions of an emerging rationalism. But democracy is a difficult subject, since even in its most egalitarian forms it was a ‘men and citizens only club’, a mechanism for excluding a section of the city’s population, women, slaves, often even craftsmen, the agricultural proletariat or the inhabitants of the port area, whose status was indeterminate. This probably did not concern our bourgeois democracies overmuch when they were, both legally and socially, based on property, but more pressing questions began to be asked when the principle of egalitarian democracy gained ground.

Vidal-Naquet’s writings mainly consist of a long exploration of democracy and its historiography³, an exploration that is for the most part conducted from the standpoint of ‘elsewhere’ or rather several different ‘elsewheres’. He puts into perspective the non-democratic Greek world that preceded the city, pays attention to the people who, being excluded from the running of the city, had no political voice and yet were essential elements of the group. He shows how, seen from a distance, whether of space, time or political system, democracy, a moment of social reality, becomes the shifting image we construct of it from outside, starting with Plato, an opponent of democracy, and ending with the numerous variations on the theme which are the constantly rehashed subject of historiography and, I might add, classroom teaching.

In *Les enfants d’Athéna, idées athéniennes sur la citoyenneté et la division des sexes* (Athene’s Children, Athenian Ideas of Citizenship and the Separation of the Sexes, 1981) Nicole Loraux, drawing on the myth of Erichonios, identifies one of the main elements of the classical city in a civic imaginary conditioned by patriotism, ‘a city that is the orthodox representation of collective belonging’, but a belonging where everything, including the virginity of Athene, rejects the wife and mother.

I would like to close with the theories that Paul Veyne included in an article in this journal entitled ‘Did the Greeks experience democracy?’⁴. In his view the most important

part of the 'hidden iceberg' of classical democracy is what he calls citizen militancy; 'in ancient times citizens had no human rights or citizen's rights, no freedoms nor even any freedom: they had duties'. This throws light on the consistent political discourse of the city, the unconditional demands it made on its inhabitants, which Nicole Loraux has identified in funeral orations⁵, where in the end the best Athenian is the one who dies in defence of the city and its democracy. When the city declined into the day-to-day mechanics of the Hellenistic or imperial town, this requirement came to be based on evergetisme and recognise the pre-eminence of the evergete. Veyne's statement probably needs to be modified, since democracy, especially in Attica, was an evolving concept and, as far as the citizen was concerned, was backed up by a legal framework which offered a small degree of protection, but it changes our view of a system that stood accused of starting by excluding the majority of its working population. In the final analysis, then, there was a positive choice, because citizenship was imposed only on those who could as of right be required to carry out the 'job of citizen'. But at the same time, behind this political choice, we come again upon the primitive irrational solidarity where individual sacrifice is just a necessary condition to be accepted for the survival of the group. It gradually came about that this acceptance was publicly proclaimed to be outstanding civic behaviour, a rationalized version of the irrational.

This also reverses, without weakening it, the importance of the Greek city's message. This vision of the citizen of the classical period brings us back to one of the most serious of current questions. At many international gatherings, contrary to UNESCO philosophy, there seems to be taking shape one of the most severe threats to what we call the universal declaration of human rights: its universality is being contested and it is accused of being a by-product of propaganda on behalf of the West. Indeed priority is claimed for the defence of the community's rights over the individual and furthermore there is a wish to whittle the human rights down to the smallest common denominator of rights acceptable to all religious and political systems. This means resurrecting the monitoring authorities that the declaration had removed from the discussion once for all. The Greek city with its militant citizens only appears to be the example that might justify such a backward step. First it has to be set in historical context: it is not a paradigm outside time, but a staging post that contrasts with present-day societies in its involvement of citizens and in the fact that the idea of the city and the citizen is the basis for political and social relations. The spoken and written word pointed to free men's prime responsibility. The Greek city itself is not to be condemned, but rather those who did not extend this first attempt at responsible freedom or who curtailed it. This falling short has never ceased and there has been no democracy that has not to a greater or lesser degree been a travesty or a lie.

In addition Greece, and especially the city, happened to have, rather than deliberately created, the conditions in which an important cultural message was articulated, sometimes even a heterodox one, that saw human beings in terms of their particular destiny as seeing, thinking, speaking animals, very different from anonymous insects. And we must find ways to ensure that this message is not reserved for the West and the few universities where it has alighted and been spread. The world has become more open and we can only hope this will continue. On the brink of the globalization of culture Greek studies are more meaningful than ever, because the values that have inspired us are transcultural values. It is up to us to pass the message on, in particular by abandoning the model of a

transcendent man arising out of special conditions, when it is only those special conditions that can be the subject, fascinating it is true, of generalizable critical study. Through the range and quality of its written heritage Greek culture remains a major element of a universal culture and its masterpieces are masterpieces of humanity. We should ensure that they are not completely drowned by the breaking wave of a multitude of modern cultural messages or, and this is a further danger, lost in the proliferation of specialisms. The interest in Greek philosophy that is becoming more widespread throughout the world is already a signpost for the future of classical studies. Unfortunately for Greek, pressure of time threatens a school subject that until recently kept the Greek message alive and disseminated it, in some privileged quarters of the globe at least. Nevertheless, one of the essential functions of the teaching of Greek, critical access to source texts as they were originally expressed, was to be rekindled by the new perception of the Greeks, not as an academic paradigm, but as human beings composed of reason and irrational roots, with a cultural potential that managed to come to fruition. Greek culture offers enough valuable arguments for us to attempt to love it with all its gaps, contradictions, hesitations, which were the price that had to be paid for that slow, stumbling movement towards human progress and dignity, a small price when we remember that Greece began that movement earlier than many other cultures and often explored in depth. The hesitations on that fumbling path also teach us worthwhile lessons.

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Notes

1. It deals with an aspect of a speech that I was invited to give at the recent Naples colloquium 'The humanities at the crossroads of the 20th and 21st centuries', which commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the UNESCO International Philosophy and Humanities Council. This article draws on part of that paper, which can be found in the proceedings of the colloquium.
2. We should not see in this any animosity towards a milieu which is also that of Dodds the scholar. At the time his book was published, the Classical Association was preparing the impressively scholarly round-up of *Fifty Years of Classical Scholarship* (Oxford 1954, first ed), in which the first article, on Homer, is by E. R. Dodds. And the preface to this first edition took as the epigraph for the collection a quotation in French from Anatole France: 'Chaque génération imagine à nouveau les chefs-d'œuvre antiques et leur communique de la sorte une immortalité mouvante' (Each generation has a fresh vision of the ancient masters and so gives them a kind of shifting immortality).
3. A convenient synthesis and exegesis can be found in his preface to his collection *La démocratie grecque vue d'ailleurs* (Greek Democracy seen from Elsewhere, 1990).
4. Published in *Diogène*, no. 124, pp. 3–33, and reprinted in *Diogène. Une anthologie*, Paris, Gallimard 1998, pp. 211–241.
5. *L'invention d'Athènes: histoire de l'oraison funèbre dans la 'cité classique'* (The Invention of Athens: history of the funeral oration in the 'classical city'; 1981).