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The Language and Culture of Ancient Greece in Today's World

Abstract: In everyday life, we encounter the abiding presence of ancient Greek and Roman civilization while engaging in all sorts of activities, even if the ancient foundations of such activities are often evident only to those who have received a good classical education. Examples can be found everywhere: from newspapers to business and commerce, to mathematics, physics, and natural science. But it is above all in the realm of education that knowledge of ancient civilization proves to be essential, and indeed ineradicable.

Keywords: Ancient Greek language, argumentation, classical education, classical languages, grammar, rhetoric, scientific terminology

Notwithstanding the expectations from its title, my essay will not deal with Greek and Latin linguistics. Instead, I would like to reflect upon two related subjects, both of which have long been central to my thinking. The first subject is the science of grammar, understood as the description of how a given language functions; the second subject is the science of argumentation, i.e. the rhetoric, understood as a methodology for the organization of thought and for the construction of persuasive discourse. The sciences of grammar and rhetoric both constitute essential disciplines within the field of humanistic inquiry and are also forms of knowledge that came into being in Ancient Greece and continue to have a fundamental place within modern life. It is almost too easy, therefore, to discuss them within the framework of the continuity and the endurance of classical heritage.

It was the thinkers of ancient Greece — both philosophers and philologists — who definitively posed the question of linguistic propriety and, along with this, the question of how to describe a language systematically. The attempt to achieve a systematic understanding of how language works took its first steps among the philosophers, who invented categories to describe linguistic phenomena. The Peripatetics built upon the foundations laid by Aristotle; the Stoics revolutionized the way etymology was understood and analyzed (including the etymologies of proper names) and they created a comprehensive system for describing the different parts of speech. In the Hellenistic era, these developments — together with parallel developments in philology and textual exegesis — led to the birth of a new science, the *téchne grammatiké*, or the science of grammar, that is to say, *the scientific and systematic description of language*, which employed principles, categories, and

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terminology that would later be passed on from the Alexandrians to the Romans, and would ultimately prove to be definitive acquisitions within Western thought. Indeed, it is the Greeks who are responsible for the fact that, even today, when we want to describe a language, or when we want to teach a language starting from the basics, we use concepts and terms such as *letters, vowels, consonants, parts of speech, gender, number, tense,* and *mood*. Thus, whether linguists or schoolteachers, we continue to employ the basic elements of a science whose foundations were laid in ancient Greece, and which passed from Greece to Rome and Byzantium, and finally came down to us.

My second subject is *rhetoric* — another essential element of the cultural patrimony that we have inherited from the Greeks. In the ancient world, the term *rhetoric* indicated the science of argumentation, the art of speaking or writing — that is to say, the art of using language — in a manner that is correct, effective, persuasive, and appropriate to the circumstances within which one must communicate. In his treatment of the subject, in *Rhetoric* Aristotle describes the types of oratory in a systematic fashion (Book I, ch. 3, 1358 a 35 ff):

> Any given speech is composed of three elements: a person who speaks, the thing about which he speaks, and the person to whom he speaks. The purpose or goal of the speech is directed toward the latter person, that is to say, the listener. And this listener is, of necessity, either a spectator, or else a judge; and if he is a judge, he must be a judge either of past events or of future ones. With regard to future events, the person who judges is the citizen in the Assembly; with regard to past events, it is the juror in the courtroom; with regard to the orator's abilities, it is the spectator. As a result, there are of necessity three types of rhetorical speeches: deliberative, judicial, and epideictic.

The three types are therefore defined as, first, the *genos symbouleutikón* (or *genus deliberativum*), which comprises speeches delivered in political assemblies or in other deliberative bodies; second, the *genos dikanikón* (or *genus iudiciale*), comprising speeches delivered in the courtroom, along with other kinds of judicial oratory; and third, the *genos epideiktikón* (or *genus demonstrativum*), which refers to speeches delivered during public occasions, such as official ceremonies, solemn rites, and so forth. Already in the fifth century BC, the landscape of public oratory, with its various genres, was composed of those very elements which Aristotle would a little later codify and which indeed remain with us even today. One only has to think of modern politics, lawsuits, and public ceremonies to realize how pervasive and how important this 'invention' of the ancient Greeks still is in the contemporary world. And lord knows how much we all would benefit, if the art of expression and the techniques of argumentation were studied with greater diligence by those who give speeches nowadays, in all three areas specified by Aristotle.

This past summer, I had been trying to decide which aspects of these subjects I wanted to discuss with you in this meeting, when I came across a curious article in the *Economist* — a magazine I have been reading regularly for some years now. The article in question was dedicated to a recent discovery regarding the species *Australopithecus prometheus*.[1] Don't worry! I will not be speaking about prehistoric anthropology, since indeed I am not qualified to do so in the first place. Instead, as I was reading, I found myself wondering if all scholars of prehistoric anthropology would be able to fully understand the reason behind the definition of this species, that is to say, the motivation for choosing this specific name for it. If the answer is *yes*, then to them I say *bravo*! If the answer is *no*, then I cannot help but wonder how someone can study a phenomenon without precisely understanding its definition. However that may be, certainly the scientist who first baptized this ancient ancestor of ours must have known the myth of Prometheus, and the meaning of that myth, and so he or she must have had a classical education. Hats off to this person, at least!

As I was reflecting upon these questions, I recalled that some years ago, for fun, I decided to keep a list of the references to the ancient world that I encountered in daily life, especially those that seemed to be more or less intentional and readily recognizable. The resulting collection of passages was quite interesting, and I thought it would be worthwhile to dust off the old notebook in which I collected them. It took me quite a while to find it, but in the end, I managed to do so, and I thought that this lecture might be a good opportunity to make use of those old notes of mine once again.

Here is one example. In another issue of the *Economist,* I had read an article about the problem of North Korean nuclear rearmament. The article was entitled 'Disclosing Pandora's Box'; but in the body of the text there was no reference to the figure of Pandora, nor any explanation of her mythical box. The image was evidently chosen in order to express a specific concept concisely and vividly, to distill into one phrase an idea that could serve as the title of the article and would catch a reader's eye. In other words, the expression had been called in as a linguistic prop — a means of bolstering the text's effectiveness by appealing to a shared resource, a phrase so familiar that it evokes an image without the need of any further explanation. Indeed, if the phrase had to be glossed or explained at length, it would lose a large part of its efficacy. Put differently, the image is striking only if it is immediately perceived and if the force of all of its implications is immediately evident. If the cultural background underpinning those implications

1 *The Economist*, 30 July–12 August 2022, '*Australopithecus prometheus* is a million years older than previously thought.'

is no longer present to the reader, then the communicative gesture will be a failure, or at least it will be extremely weakened. Thankfully, some traces of the classical inheritance are still among us — at least, among persons with a certain level of education.

Leaving aside some other examples of the same type that I had collected, I come now to finish with a rather amusing case. Some time ago, one of the most widely-read Italian newspapers presented a review of an American TV series called *Men Versus Beasts* in which I came across the following clever remark: "The episode was presented by the Olympic champion Carl Lewis, but not even Homer would have been able to adequately narrate this epic duel, which pitted a brown bear against the world-champion hot-dog-eater in a race to consume 40 würstel… In the end, the bear won." The learned reference to the epic poet *par excellence* admittedly constitutes a pleasant touch of irony, and certainly some of the newspaper's readers will have caught and appreciated it — provided that they had at least a little exposure to classical culture. It remains doubtful, however, that Carl Lewis had been aware he was competing with Homer, or that the brown bear and the professional eater had drawn any inspiration from their heroic predecessors in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

It is easy to see how incidents like these (and the many I left out) might make someone ask in frustration: couldn't we simply eliminate Greek and Latin? Couldn't we just forget about the Greeks and the Romans and live our own lives in the modern world? Couldn't we begin anew, from a *tabula rasa*, and jettison all these tedious references, which require years of effort and study even to be simply understood?

Now, it can be fun to indulge in cantankerous remarks like these, and indeed I could go on at length before I ran out of examples. But I would like to submit that this is not simply a game, not simply a 'treasure hunt' for the innumerable references to Greek and Roman culture that can be found everywhere in our daily lives. Anyone who has sufficient expertise need only look around with an attentive and critical eye, and he or she will immediately discover how every moment of our lives is pervaded by the Greco-Roman heritage — from the words we use, to the concepts we think with, to the ways in which we argue and behave; not to mention the architecture, the monuments, the walls, and even the very rocks and stones that we find in our cities. For better or worse, then, the answer must be '*no*' — we cannot free ourselves from the Greeks and the Romans, simply because *we find them everywhere we look*: from democracy to tyranny, from *thalassotherapy* to *heliotherapy*, from bibliography to geothermics, from ellipses to parallaxes, from photons to leptons — the latter of which in particular feel quite familiar to me, with their Greek names, even though I know next to nothing about particle physics. And why in the world do we say that someone who is afraid of crowds

suffers from *agoraphobia*? If by chance there existed someone who had never seen a *telephone*, but by some strange twist of fate knew ancient Greek, the first time this person saw a telephone, or heard someone speak of a telephone, he would have no problem understanding what its purpose was, and he would even be able to explain its purpose to someone else quite easily.

Nowadays, loss of the ability to communicate and express oneself clearly, especially in writing, is increasingly highlighted. Generally, the problem is regarded as affecting the young, but it does not affect them alone. Certainly, however, it does represent a more serious obstacle for those who are only beginning to find their path in life and are starting to construct their own future. Every so often, the alarm is sounded: adolescents have an ever smaller vocabulary; they are unable to compose effective sentences with clarity of vocabulary and syntax; the basic structures of language seem to be foreign to them, as do the basic techniques for constructing effective arguments. In the long-term, we seem to be running the risk of living in a world where the better part of the population communicates via monosyllables, exclamations, clichés repeated in every context, short phrases with the most elementary syntax. What's next? to speak with grunts and physical gestures? The most recent editorial on this subject that I personally have read came from England. In my own country, Italy, I believe that we are faring somewhat better, thanks to our public school system. But how long will such a situation last? Or rather, what choices must we make so that it does last, or maybe even improves?

One of the most chilling examples of the debasement of language can be found in the speech of those who are trying to sell us something. In today's world, it is impossible not to have noticed this language, and it is impossible not to have had the thought: "This person must be swindling me." But sometimes the individual is not trying to deceive you; instead, he or she is simply unable to compose a coherent discourse in a given language (and sometimes they will attempt to be more persuasive by employing terms deriving from multiple languages, with all the improprieties that this usually entails). Maybe anyone who intends to pursue a career involving communication with the general public should be legally required to have a degree in Languages and Literature, with at least a few courses taken in Latin and Greek? What would you all say? — any career that involves explaining or describing something, from the characteristics of a shoe to the obscure provisions of economic legislation; any career that entails a communicative component, like writing a user's manual, whether it be for a household appliance or a computer; or like guiding tourists in a foreign city, or explaining public services to the locals.

In economically advanced societies, like our own, it is essential to be able to communicate. For, on the one hand, even an extraordinary product or service will remain useless, unless someone can adequately explain its purpose, its function,

and its capabilities; and on the other hand, buyers will necessarily make wrong decisions, or even be really deceived, if they are unable to understand critically the advertising employed to market a given product. We could state it as a general principle (and one with enormous implications): if a message is formulated badly, or if it is interpreted incorrectly, the result is a breakdown of communication, and the harm that ensues is easily imaginable. Modern individuals must be able to make use of the global market to their own advantage, and, at the same time, they must be able to defend themselves from potential threats within the global market. One must be able to communicate one's own ideas, understand the ideas of others, and make the necessary choices that follow. In other words, in the modern world it is vital for *everyone* to possess the tools of language and of argumentation — and thus, perhaps my talk has not strayed as far as it may have seemed from the two subjects I mentioned at the beginning: grammar and rhetoric. Modern individuals need a good basic education, both in the sciences and in the humanities; they need some background in history, in philosophy, in the history of art and music, languages and literature, Greek and Latin, mathematics, physics, and the natural sciences.

The situation is indeed serious, from both an economic and a social point of view — unless, that is, we are willing to accept the idea of a society in which only a very small number of individuals has the cultural and intellectual tools necessary to make well-informed decisions, from the basic decisions of every day to those decisions we may make only once in a lifetime. Such an *élite* would, in any case, be formed of citizens with a solid general education, which would include ancient culture, among other subjects. But if we want to make progress in society as a whole, we need not to *reduce*, but rather to *increase* the number of individuals who possess the tools required for understanding the world and for living a good life. And when I say that knowledge of the classical world belongs among those tools, I mean to say that we cannot eliminate the Classics, but I also mean to say that we cannot isolate the Classics, monumentalize the Classics, or plaster over the Classics.

For in fact the classical heritage is precisely the opposite of a single, homogenous block, consisting of unchanging received ideas. To the contrary, what we call 'the Classics' is a great web of contradictions and contestations, of differing ideas and approaches, which, in the course of history, have produced outcomes that vary tremendously and sometimes are even diametrically opposed to one another. This is the reason why the Classics remain so stimulating and provocative. If we have the proper background, we can turn to them for inspiration; but the 'Classics' are never definitive, they never stand alone; instead, they always stand in relation to other Classics and to the contemporary thinkers of every epoch. The

Classics are not mystically eternal; on the other hand, they are also not struggling to survive: for they are always present, alongside us. In short: we need to cultivate the Classics — not only the Classics, but certainly also the Classics.

Every so often one hears the tiresome and cliché question: "What is the use of studying classical languages and culture?" It is tempting to respond, admittedly with a certain degree of frustration and arrogance: "No use at all; for *you*, it has no use at all." Perhaps it is becoming clear that the distinction between what is useful and what is useless is not as evident as it seems to be to some of our fellow citizens, addicted as they are to their smartphones and other screens; perhaps, that which is called useless has a certain utility and a certain *raison d'être* all its own. Given the socio-cultural changes we are facing today, the study of classics should play an essential role, indeed a leading role, in modern life, for at least the following two reasons. First, history cannot be avoided: the long shadow that the past casts upon our present world cannot simply be ignored. Second, given the option of understanding or not understanding, it is always better to understand.

Therefore, we cannot get rid of the Greeks and the Romans. And in fact, the opposite idea — the idea that we could, or should, free ourselves of the classical heritage — would be rather strange, given that these ancient cultures are in effect the roots out of which our present world has grown, and from which our present world receives nourishment. The Greek and Roman past forms the life-giving sap of the tree of which we, in the present, form the branches and leaves. Indeed, I would like to insist upon this image of a tree, with its roots in the past and its leaves in the present and future. I want to fully commit myself to this metaphor, precisely because I would like to challenge certain recent interpretations which have attempted to call into question the metaphor's validity, like that of the philosopher and historian of philosophy Giusseppe Cambiano.[2]

Cambiano argues that the botanical metaphor does not offer any good reasons for defending the classics, because, as he says, it is all too easy to rebut that, if we take the metaphor seriously, we should concentrate our intellectual efforts on studying the tree itself, and we should leave the task of digging around in the earth and examining the roots of the tree to a select few specialists. Moreover, Cambiano states:

> This argument has a strongly teleological nature, and it leads one to the conclusion that the present is the inevitable fruit of the past, and that in no way could the present possibly have been different from what it is. We would thus have a history written only by the winners —

2 G. Cambiano, *La naturalizzazione degli antichi*, in *Rimuovere i Classici?*, a cura di Franco Montanari, Einaudi Scuola 2003, pp. 45 sgg., esp. 50–51; F. Montanari, ibid. pp. 89–90.

> a history which Walter Benjamin spoke of, a history written by winners who only speak about themselves, and who look to the past only for that which justifies their present.

Cambiano's considerations provide much food for thought. In the first place, among other things they confirm the idea that the Classics always present various alternatives and are always open to multiple readings — even at this broader level of interpretation. If we wanted to remain within the metaphor, we could respond that no botanist would only study the leaves of a tree without also taking into consideration its roots. But such a response runs the risk of degenerating into a rhetorical exercise, the elaboration of a complex and trivial allegory. Cambiano in fact is right to assert that the metaphor can give rise to a teleological interpretation and that the risks inherent in this are real. But that does not mean that the metaphor must be abandoned; it means that the *interpretation* of the metaphor should be the subject of discussion and analysis — of discussion and analysis which take into consideration the primary goal of rhetorical strategies of expression and argumentation, namely, the attempt to explain and to communicate a concept.

The goal of the botanical metaphor — like that of other biological metaphors — is not to depict a historical inevitability which supports the interpretation of history presented by the winners. Instead, the goal of the botanical metaphor is to depict an organic and inescapable relationship which is *like* a biological relationship but remains in the end a historical relationship — a relationship whose present outcomes have been determined by the attitudes and the choices adopted by past actors in the course of time; a relationship whose future developments depend on the choices that are being made even in the present. The thread that links past and present and future is one of *understanding*, not one of historical *necessity*; it is a thread made up of *choices*, not one determined by *fate*. And in order to make well-informed choices — even, one hopes, good and just choices — it is necessary to know the history of what has come before us. To return to the details of the metaphor, one could say that those roots must be continually watered and fertilized, in such a way that they continue to exert a decisive influence on the growth of the branches and the leaves; otherwise, the tree dies. The classics thus travel through time as our ever-present companions; they do not disappear, and they do not remain fixed: they change alongside us.

What we need to eliminate, instead, is the almost religious notion that the great classics of Greek and Latin literature (and those of other literatures, too) can somehow provide us with permanent and forever valid solutions to the problems of human society; in other words, the idea that they have formulated eternally-valid answers to the questions that humans face. This is not the case, nor could it possibly be the case, and the reason for this is precisely a historical one. The great classics, whether from antiquity or from any other period, are important because

they pose problems, not because they offer solutions. In the classics we confront the central questions of human life brought to the fore and articulated with clarity; but when the classics offer answers, they offer answers that are historically rooted and inevitably bound up with their time periods and their respective cultures.

Take the example of Sophocles' *Antigone.* To simplify in the extreme, the basic problem that this play poses is the question of who ought to make the fundamental ethical decisions regarding our lives, who ought to propose the answers to the eternal questions that humanity faces: should these decisions be made by secular, political authorities, or should they be determined by religion? These days in Italy there is an intense debate over questions regarding natural death and assisted suicide, and society seems to be torn between the idea that such decisions should be in the hands of the Parliament alone, or else that they should be dictated above all by religious authorities (which in Italy are particularly present and influential). This same conflict — between secular politics and religion — violently afflicts other modern states in our day, for instance in the Muslim world, as we have seen recently and continue to see in the news. It is the very problem that Sophocles articulated in the *Antigone*, a problem which continues to confront us and will do so for as long as humanity continues to exist: every epoch and every culture will need to address the problem in its own way, with the tools of its time. The *Antigone* helps us to understand the problem, it helps us to reflect upon the problem with honesty and with clarity of mind; by grappling with the *Antigone*, we learn to think about the fundamental issues at stake in this conflict and we become aware of their implications for human society.

Herodotus comes to mind as another example. In Book 2 of his *Histories*, Herodotus accepts the Egyptian priests' version of the events leading up to the Trojan War. In their account, Alexander (i.e. Paris) abducted Helen from Sparta and while returning to Troy, he stopped in Egypt. There, the Egyptian King Proteus learned Paris' story and decided to punish him for having violated the laws of hospitality vis-à-vis Menelaus; he therefore seized Helen and the goods that Paris had taken from Sparta. Paris thus returned to his homeland without his booty. Subsequently, a great Achaean army arrived at Troy and demanded the restitution of both Helen and the stolen goods; the Trojans of course responded that they could not restore Helen nor the goods, simply because they did not have them. The Greeks, however, thought that the Trojans were lying to them, and they continued their siege. Thus, only after destroying the city of Troy did they learn the truth, and Menelaus went to Egypt to get back his wife and his property. Herodotus remarks that, in his opinion, Homer knew this version of the story, but he intentionally ignored it, insofar as it was less suited to epic poetry. Herodotus then concludes this section by adducing the reasons why he believes the version of the

story recounted by the Egyptian priests: in his opinion, neither Priam nor the Trojans could have been so foolish as to subject their entire city to such danger simply because Paris wanted to live with his beautiful paramour — and all the more so, given that Paris was not even the heir to the throne (in fact, the heir was Hector). Moreover, Herodotus remarks, even if they had thought of resisting the Greeks at first, the subsequent death and destruction would surely have convinced the Trojans to surrender. It makes sense, then, that the Trojans were unable to restore Helen, precisely because they did not have her, whereas the Greeks continued to fight because they did not believe the Trojans' declarations of innocence. The tragic result was a devastating war, the futility of which became clear only at its very end. Herodotus remarks that in his opinion a divine power had set these events in motion, in order to make men understand how terrible is the punishment that awaits those who commit injustice. Paris was guilty of a grave fault, and as a result he brought his family, and his entire homeland, to complete destruction, thanks in part to a tragic and fatal misunderstanding.

It would be almost too easy to draw bitter connections between this story and recent events; but this is not the reason why I have recalled Herodotus' extraordinary narrative. For Herodotus, the events leading up to the Trojan war are of great importance, both because of their moral and religious significance (which he expresses with great force), but also because of their significance within his overall vision of the history of his people. At the beginning of Book 1, after mentioning the abductions of several mythical heroines, Herodotus reports that, according to the Persians, the Trojan War was the ultimate cause and origin of the hostility between themselves and the Greeks: all of the subsequent, episodic confrontations were part of this same story, which ultimately led to the great Persian invasion, which in turn would end with a Greek victory and the rout of the invading army after the Battle of Salamis (480 BCE). Later interpretations of history (well after Herodotus) would view Alexander the Great's expedition to conquer the East as a kind of revenge taken by the West upon the Persians — and thus, just one more episode in an eternal conflict between Europe and Asia. It is a story marked by great destruction and by the loss of many lives — tragedies which, to judge by historical accounts, have come in great, seemingly inevitable waves, notwithstanding the progress made by human society. The Napoleonic invasion of Russia forms another part of this story. Even if historians might not entirely agree with such an analysis, one nevertheless thinks of the unforgettable fresco of events narrated by Tolstoy in his *War and Peace*. And then there are, of course, more recent events, the events of our own time, darkened by the long shadow of earlier conflicts, of ancient and modern tragedies which humankind, with all its culture and civilization, seems incapable of bringing to an end.

A story of such proportions inevitably enters into territories where myth and history coexist, separated, if at all, only by a very subtle boundary. And this is not only true of the ancients. Even today, the question of the relationship between myth and reality in the story of Troy (to speak only of this) continues to be the subject of assiduous research and endless discussions: indeed, the intensity of the debate regarding the degree of historicity in the Trojan myth is perhaps unparalleled. In recent decades, the question has been reopened, and the ruins of Troy have begun once again to offer material for heated and epoch-making discussions among scholars. How much of the myth belongs to historical reality, and how much derives from the imagination of the poet (or the poets)? What, indeed, is the relationship between factual, historical occurrence and its mythical or literary elaboration? What is the relationship between real events and their rhetorical representation? And to what extent do such relationships influence modern reconstructions of great episodes of human history, such as the expedition of Alexander the Great, or Napoleon's Russian campaign, or the two World Wars of the twentieth century?

Clearly, as far as Herodotus the historian was concerned, Priam, Paris, Achilles, Hector, Helen, Menelaus, Agamemnon were all individuals who actually existed; the Trojan War was real; the destruction and the loss of life it involved were real. And yet Herodotus subjects the Homeric account of the war to a critical analysis, and in the end, he decides that things cannot have happened in the way Homer describes. In Herodotus' view, the poet selected a version of the story that was suitable to his own ends, because the truth of the matter was not fit for an epic poem. Herodotus therefore rejects a fundamental aspect of the Homeric narrative: he maintains that Priam and the Trojans could not have been so foolish as to act as Homer says they did. At this point, however, Herodotus stops, he does not take the argument any further. If he had taken the argument further, if he had followed his skepticism to its logical consequences, he might have concluded that the Trojan War and its protagonists had never existed at all, but instead were the products of poetic imagination. In this way, one of the essential pieces of his historical account, as he himself envisioned and articulated it, would have come crashing down, leaving in its ruins a beautiful poem, but also a huge gap in the historical record. Herodotus, therefore, stops short of following his reasoning to its furthest logical conclusions. But consider: if instead Herodotus had pursued his argument with relentless logical coherence, and if he had denied even the smallest kernel of historical truth to the Trojan myth, he probably would have been wrong: for in fact modern research has concluded that there is at least some historical truth in the myth — even if the debate continues to rage regarding its exact extent and character.

Thus, the 'father of history' — as he has been called — invites us to interpret events historically, he invites us to subject even authoritative accounts to rational investigation, he shows us how to examine received traditions with a critical eye, how to listen cautiously to the stories that people tell us. And yet, at the very same time, he also reveals the limits and the risks of such an approach, which can lead to the opposite errors of hyper-criticism and excessive skepticism. Herodotus therefore encourages us to carve out a space for the freedom of thought, a space that is generous, but also demanding; a space that is suspicious, but not despairing. For there is no harm in believing, but great harm can come from believing for bad reasons. This is one of the lessons that the Classics can teach us. And if they taught only this one lesson, for me that would still be enough reason to keep them in my own life, and in the lives of those I care about, and it would be enough reason to defend their presence within the systems of education that form the citizens of our modern world.