



# HELLENIC LINK, Inc. ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΟΣ ΣΥΝΔΕΣΜΟΣ

Member Update Bulletin

Ενημέρωση Μελών, Φίλων, και Συνεργατών του Συνδέσμου

## Bulletin Number 167 JAN 2019

### Editorial Committee:

Achilleas Adamantiades

Dimitri Dandolo

Alex Economides

Gerasimos Merianos

Maria Eleftheria Giatrakou

Panagiotis Siskos

Fevronia K. Soumakis

Stella Tsirka

Associate Editor: Dean C. Lomis

Acting Editor: Costas Effthymiou



## GREEK LETTERS DAY 2019

January is the month in which Hellenism everywhere celebrates "Greek Letters Day" (Three Hierarchs Day, Jan.30) or "Greek Letters Week"; a few days later, on February 7, an appreciative international community will pay tribute to the Greek Language around the globe. Here in the USA as well as in Canada, the Omogeneia witnesses a plethora of cultural events dedicated to the legacy of the spiritual and cultural heritage of Hellenism, engendered by the three Great Hellene Hierarchs of our Church, Saints Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom. The Hellenic Link, Inc. in the context of its commitment of professional members and resources to Hellenic Education, has been making dedicated efforts to nurture and sustain this legacy for the sake of our children, the future of Hellenism and that of the society of which we are part.

The primary and secondary levels of Hellenic education may be considered nurseries of Hellenic Culture; for this reason, the Hellenic Link, along with other actors in this field, concentrated its concern to upgrading the status and quality of the existing system of education as well as opening it to children of nonhellenic origin. An example of this active concern nationally was the establishment of charter schools in a number of US urban centers; the distinguished educational accomplishments of some of these schools, as is known to our readers, have been repeatedly focused in issues of this Bulletin.

With the creation of Hellenic Studies programs in US and Canadian universities, interaction with the lower levels of education was initiated and a significant addition of programs for university students ensued, integrating structurally the cycle of Hellenic Education in North America; this integration, however, has not yet reached a sufficient level to cover the existing needs. To augment the Hellenic educational effort, the HL and others in collaboration with several Hellenic universities undertook to offer additional help: for example, at the insistent urging of a Greek American educator, leading member of our Association, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH) established a Modern Greek language program that would satisfy the two-year foreign language requirement for college graduation in the United States. Several other programs like that followed. Most recently, Stony Brook U. and Yale University at the fervent request of Hellenist faculty arranged similar summer courses for their students in collaboration with AUTH.

The Hellenic Link, Inc., participating in the auspicious celebration of the "Greek Letters Day", in this Bulletin focuses on some of the pioneers who through persistent concerted effort continue the course of the same legacy today shedding light on our lives, as well as on tributes to the continuity of the Greek Language and the value of the Classical Hellenic Culture. To all contributors of content, we owe our great appreciation and gratitude. **The Editor**

Dear Editor of the Bulletin:

With the upcoming GALA event of the Odyssey Charter School in Wilmington, Delaware on February 2, it is required to state that the success of the 'experiment' begun a decade and a half ago has reached its highest potential during the last two years, and the reason for its success has been the two individuals whose work was and is 'labor of love.' Specifically, Mr. Dimitri Dandolos, the volunteer leader of the AHEPA citizens' commitment, and the assistance of special envoy from the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki, Dr. Marina Matheoudakis, have been the model instruments for the School's achievement as one of the best 'public' schools of the State. The futuristic vision of senior AHEPA member George Righos for the founding and for the development of Odyssey as Charter School for Greek Language and Culture has offered to the general public the unique opportunity for young pupils to learn the Greek language, while pursuing their scholastic studies in accordance with educational requirements, and the Greek American Community's impetus for development of programs of interest and value FOR the younger Greek American generation current and future.

It is with gratitude that I call for salute to Mr. Dandolos and Dr. Matheoudakis in respect to their commitment and determination not only for the successes gained, but even more so for the objectives they have set forth for the continuity and expanded educational interrelationships of the School with similar educational institutions both domestically and in Greece.

The Hellenic Link, Inc., whose one of its major objectives from its founding has been Greek language education for our Greek American youth, proudly endorses Odyssey's future objectives, and in thanking Mr. Dandolos and Dr. Matheoudakis for their unparalleled efforts loudly heralds: ΕΥΓΕ!

Dean C. Lomis, Ph.D.  
Retired Director, International Center, University of Delaware  
AHEPA Member, Wilmington Chapter No. 95

## **The Three Hierarchs and Greek Letters Day**

The 30<sup>th</sup> January is celebrated annually as the "Three Hierarchs and Greek Letters Day". St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian, and St. John Chrysostom are honored as patron saints of education and students because of their love for scholarship and learning.

The Three Hierarchs lived in the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. at a time when Hellenism and Christianity represented two incompatible worldviews: Greeks who lived in the Classical Age but also those of the Greco-Roman period were considered to be pagans, they believed in a multitude of gods (polytheistic) and were seeking out the joys and pleasures of life on earth. Bible, on the other hand, taught that there is only one God (monotheistic), Christians believed in life after death and focused on divine revelation. Greeks' ideas about life (love for the beauty, arts, philosophy, nature, etc) were rejected by Christians whose mission in life was to save their soul.

The Three Hierarchs believed that, although Christian learning was superior over Hellenistic wisdom, Christians should not dismiss the scholarly and intellectual wealth of the ancient Greek civilization. With their writings and teachings, they achieved to bridge the chasm between those two opposing worldviews and to put the Greek philosophical thought, the Greek 'logos' and the Greek language to the service of the Christian faith. Those three spiritual figures united Christianity and Hellenism and the result of this union is a new construct that became the foundation of the Greek paideia and Hellenism.

As Greek Language educators who teach the Greek language, culture and values beyond the Greek borders, the commemoration of the Three Hierarchs should also aim at raising our awareness of our unique role as disseminators of the Greek paideia and heritage globally. For the last two years I have been working as the Dean of the Greek program at Odyssey Charter School in Delaware, a K-12 charter school that promotes the Greek language education and the Hellenistic Pedagogy. In this role, I have been working on the design, implementation and promotion of **an integrated American and Greek Educational Model** founded on and inspired by the Hellenistic values and Heritage. At the same time, I have been working on the creation and promotion of **networks of communication** with other educational institutions in the U.S. and in Greece.

One of the most significant partnerships the school has established is that with the **Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (A.U.Th)**, the largest academic institution in Greece. Our common efforts are focusing on the establishment of a branch of the **School of Modern Greek Language-A.U.Th in the U.S.**, which will be the first presence of a Greek university in the U.S. The main goal of this partnership will be to provide formal education and certification to teachers of Greek as a second language at all levels and thus promote the Greek language and paideia in the U.S.

Such dynamic networks of communication and collaboration ultimately realize our vision for a global education which addresses the citizen of the 21<sup>st</sup> century but is founded on the ideals of Hellenism and Hellenistic Pedagogy.

Marina Mattheoudakis  
Professor in Applied Linguistics  
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki  
Dean of the Greek Program  
Odyssey Charter School

## The Odyssey Charter School of Delaware Celebrates

To view the video click on the link:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1CqXGgaaQ3rDdtgzlkB7aTrFjPQAU5uu>

Χαρείτε τη συνέχεια της γλώσσας μας.

ΓΙΑ ΤΟΥΣ ΝΕΩΤΕΡΟΥΣ ΠΟΥ ΔΕΝ ΠΡΟΛΑΒΑΝ ΝΑ ΔΙΔΑΧΤΟΥΝ ΚΑΙ ΝΑ ΓΝΩΡΙΖΟΥΝ...

«Από την εποχή που μίλησε ο Όμηρος ως τα σήμερα, μιλούμε, ανασαίνουμε και τραγουδούμε με την ίδια γλώσσα». Γιώργος Σεφέρης

Ποια Ελληνική λέξη είναι αρχαία και ποια νέα; Γιατί μια Ομηρική λέξη μας φαίνεται δύσκολη και ακαταλαβίστικη;

Οι Έλληνες σήμερα ασχέτως μορφώσεως μιλάμε ομηρικά, αλλά δεν το ξέρομε επειδή αγνοούμε την έννοια των λέξεων που χρησιμοποιούμε.

Για του λόγου το αληθές θα αναφέρουμε μερικά παραδείγματα για να δούμε ότι η Ομηρική γλώσσα όχι μόνο δεν είναι νεκρή, αλλά είναι ολοζώντανη.

Αυδή είναι η φωνή. Σήμερα χρησιμοποιούμε το επίθετο άναυδος.

**Αλέξω** στην εποχή του Ομήρου σημαίνει εμποδίζω, αποτρέπω. Τώρα χρησιμοποιούμε τις λέξεις αλεξίπτωτο, αλεξίσφαιρο, αλεξικέραυνο αλεξήλιο Αλέξανδρος (αυτός που αποκρούει τους άνδρες) κ.τ.λ.

Με το επίρρημα **τήλε** στον Όμηρο εννοούσαν μακριά, εμείς χρησιμοποιούμε τις λέξεις τηλέφωνο, τηλεόραση, τηλεπικοινωνία, τηλεβόλο, τηλεπάθεια κ.τ.λ.

**Λάας** ή **λας** έλεγαν την πέτρα. Εμείς λέμε λατομείο, λαξεύω.

**Πέδον** στον Όμηρο σημαίνει έδαφος, τώρα λέμε στρατόπεδο, πεδινός.

Το κρεβάτι λέγεται **λέχος**, εμείς αποκαλούμε λεχώνα τη γυναίκα που μόλις γέννησε και μένει στο κρεβάτι.

**Πόρο** έλεγαν τη διάβαση, το πέρασμα, σήμερα χρησιμοποιούμε τη λέξη πορεία. Επίσης αποκαλούμε εύπορο κάποιον που έχει χρήματα, γιατί έχει εύκολες διαβάσεις, μπορεί δηλαδή να περάσει όπου θέλει, και άπορο αυτόν που δεν έχει πόρους, το φτωχό.

**Φρην** είναι η λογική. Από αυτή τη λέξη προέρχονται το φρενοκομείο, ο φρενοβλαβής, ο εξωφρενικός, ο άφρων κ.τ.λ.

**Δόρπος**, λεγόταν το δείπνο, σήμερα η λέξη είναι επιδόρπιο.

**Λώπος** είναι στον Όμηρο το ένδυμα. Τώρα αυτόν που μας έκλεψε (μας έγδυσε το σπíti) το λέμε λωποδύτη.

Ύλη ονόμαζαν ένα τόπο με δένδρα, εμείς λέμε υλοτόμος.

**Αρουρα** ήταν το χωράφι, όλοι ξέρουμε τον αρουραίο.

Τον θυμό τον αποκαλούσαν **χόλο**. Από τη λέξη αυτή πήρε το όνομα της η χολή, με την έννοια της πίκρας. Λέμε επίσης αυτός είναι χολωμένος.

**Νόστος** σημαίνει επιστροφή στην πατρίδα. Η λέξη παρέμεινε ως παλινόστηση, ή νοσταλγία.

**Άλγος** στον Όμηρο είναι ο σωματικός πόνος, από αυτό προέρχεται το αναλγητικό.

Το βάρος το αποκαλούσαν **άχθος**, σήμερα λέμε αχθοφόρος.

Ο **ρύπος**, δηλαδή η ακαθαρσία, εξακολουθεί και λέγεται έτσι - ρύπανση.

Από τη λέξη **αιδώς** (ντροπή) προήλθε ο αναιδής.

**Πέδη**, σημαίνει δέσιμο και τώρα λέμε πέδιλο. Επίσης χρησιμοποιούμε τη λέξη χειροπέδες.

Από το **φάος**, το φως προέρχεται η φράση φαινές ιδέες.

**Άγχω**, σημαίνει σφίγγω το λαιμό, σήμερα λέμε αγχόνη. Επίσης άγχος είναι η αγωνία από κάποιο σφίξιμο, ή από πίεση.

**Βρύχια** στον Όμηρο είναι τα βαθιά νερά, εξ ου και το υποβρύχιο.

**Φερνή** έλεγαν την προίκα. Από εκεί επικράτησε την καλά προικισμένη να τη λέμε «πολύφερνη νύφη».

Το γεύμα στο οποίο ο κάθε παρευρισκόμενος έφερνε μαζί του το φαγητό του λεγόταν **έρανος**. Η λέξη παρέμεινε, με τη διαφορά ότι σήμερα δεν συνεισφέρουμε φαγητό, αλλά χρήματα.

Υπάρχουν λέξεις, από τα χρόνια του Ομήρου, που ενώ η πρώτη τους μορφή μεταβλήθηκε - **η χειρ έγινε χέρι, το ύδωρ νερό, η ναυς έγινε πλοίο, στη σύνθεση διατηρήθηκε η πρώτη μορφή της λέξεως**.

Από τη λέξη χειρ έχουμε: χειρουργός, χειριστής, χειροτονία, χειραφέτηση, χειρονομία, χειροδικώ κ.τ.λ.

Από το ύδωρ έχουμε τις λέξεις: ύδρευση υδραγωγείο, υδραυλικός, υδροφόρος, υδρογόνο, υδροκέφαλος, αφυδάτωση, ενυδρείο, κ.τ.λ.

Από τη λέξη ναυς έχουμε: ναυπηγός, ναύαρχος, ναυμαχία, ναυτικός, ναυαγός, ναυτιλία, ναύσταθμος, ναυτοδικείο, ναυαγσώστης, ναυτία, κ.τ.λ.

Σύμφωνα με τα προαναφερθέντα παραδείγματα προκύπτει ότι: Δεν υπάρχουν αρχαίες και νέες Ελληνικές λέξεις, **αλλά μόνο Ελληνικές**.

**Η Ελληνική γλώσσα είναι ενιαία και ουσιαστικά αδιαίρετη χρονικά.**

Από την εποχή του Ομήρου μέχρι σήμερα προστέθηκαν στην Ελληνική γλώσσα **μόνο ελάχιστες λέξεις**.

Η γνώση των εννοιών των λέξεων θα μας βοηθήσει να καταλάβουμε ότι μιλάμε τη γλώσσα της ομηρικής ποίησης, μια γλώσσα που δεν ανακάλυψε ο Όμηρος **αλλά προϋπήρχε πολλές χιλιετηρίδες πριν από αυτόν**. **Φίλοι μου, προσθέστε και εσείς τις δικές σας γνώσεις που να σχετίζονται με το θέμα**.

Σκοπός μας είναι να ανακαλύψουμε τις έννοιες των λέξεων για να μπορέσουμε να επικοινωνήσουμε καλύτερα. Παλαιότερα όταν έλεγαν μια λέξη καταλάβαιναν όλοι το ίδιο. π.χ για τη λέξη **αρετή** ήξεραν ότι είναι η μεσότητα ανάμεσα σε δύο υπερβολές. Σήμερα ο καθένας για την ίδια λέξη εννοεί και κάτι διαφορετικό.

Πηγές: Απολλώνιου Σοφιστού Λεξικόν κατά στοιχείον Ιλιάδος και Οδύσσειας Εκδόσεις Ηλιοδρόμιο

(Συνεργασία Αλέξανδρου Οικονομίδη)



Lucanian red-figure volute krater (415-400BC). Photograph: Corbis

## Testimony for the “Greek Letters”

### by the British Newspaper *Guardian*

#### Classics

#### **Classics for the people – why we should all learn from the ancient Greeks**

The dazzling thought-world of the Greeks gave us our ideas of democracy and happiness. Yet learning classics tends to be restricted to the privileged few. It’s time for ‘elitist dinosaurs’ to embrace a citizens’ classics for all.

Edith Hall



Lessons in liberty ... ancient Greece produced ideas that have subsequently informed the most significant moments in western political history. Illustration by Romy Blumel for the Saturday Review

Just how special were the ancient Greeks? Was there really a Greek “miracle”? The question has become painfully politicized. Critics of colonialism and racism tend to play down the specialness of the ancient Greeks. Those who maintain that there was something identifiably different and even superior about the Greeks, on the other hand, are often die-hard conservatives who have a vested interest in proving the superiority of “western” ideals. I fit into neither camp. I am certainly opposed to colonialism and racism, and have investigated reactionary abuses of the classical tradition in colonial India and by apologists of slavery all the way through to the American Civil War. But my constant engagement with the ancient Greeks and their culture has made me more, rather than less, convinced that they asked a series of crucial questions that are difficult to identify in combination within any of the other cultures of the ancient Mediterranean or Near Eastern antiquity. This is why, as I will go on to argue, I believe in classics for the people – that ideas from the ancient Greeks should be taught to everybody, not just the privileged few.

The foundations of Greek culture were laid long before the arrival of Christianity, between 800 and 300BC. Greek-speakers lived in hundreds of different villages, towns and cities, from Spain to Libya and the Nile Delta, from the freezing river Don in the northeastern corner of the Black Sea to Trebizond. They were culturally elastic, and often freely intermarried with other peoples; they had no sense of ethnic inequality that was biologically determined, since the concepts of distinct world “races” had not been invented. They tolerated and even welcomed imported foreign gods. And what united them was never geopolitics. With the arguable exception of the short-lived Macedonian empire in the later 4th century BC, there never was a recognizable, independent, state run by Greek-speakers, centered in and including what we now know as Greece, until after the Greek war of independence in the early 19th century.



The Education of Achilles by Chiron fresco from Herculaneum. Photograph: Leemage/Corbis

Yet over the last two decades the notion that the Greeks were exceptional has been questioned. It has been emphasised that they were just one of many ethnic and linguistic groups centred in the eastern end of the ancient Mediterranean world. Long before the Greeks appeared in the historical record, several complicated civilisations had existed – the Mesopotamians and Egyptians, the Hattians and Hittites. Other peoples provided the Greeks with crucial technological advances; they learned the phonetic alphabet from the Phoenicians, and how to mint coins from the Lydians. They may have learned how to compose elaborate cult hymns from the mysterious Luwians of Syria and central Anatolia. During the period in which the Greeks invented rational philosophy and science, after 600BC, their horizons were dramatically opened up by the expansion of the Persian empire.

In the late 19th and 20th centuries, our understanding of the other cultures of the Ancient Near East advanced rapidly. We know far more about the minds of the Greeks' predecessors and neighbours than we did before the landmark discovery of the Epic of Gilgamesh on clay tablets in the Tigris valley in 1853. There has been a stream of newly published texts in the languages of the successive peoples who dominated the fertile plains of Mesopotamia (Sumerians, Akkadians, Babylonians, Assyrians). The words of Hittites on the tablets found at Hattuša in central Turkey and the phrases inscribed on clay tablets at Ugarit in northern Syria have been deciphered. New texts as well as fresh interpretations of writings by the ancient Egyptians continue to appear, requiring, for example, a reassessment of the importance of the Nubians to North African history. Many of these thrilling advances have revealed how much the Greeks shared with, and absorbed from, their predecessors and neighbours. Painstaking comparative studies have been published which reveal the Greek "miracle" to have been one constituent of a continuous process of intercultural exchange.



Erechtheion, an ancient Greek temple in Athens. Photograph: Alamy

It has become a new orthodoxy that the Greeks were very similar to their Ancient Near Eastern neighbours, in Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Levant, Persia and Asia Minor. Some scholars have gone so far as to ask whether the Greeks came up with anything new at all, or whether they merely acted as a conduit through which the combined wisdom of all the civilizations of the eastern Mediterranean was disseminated across the territories conquered by Alexander the Great, before arriving at Rome and posterity. Others have seen sinister racist motives at work and accused classicists of creating in their own image the Oldest Dead White European Males; some have claimed, with some justification, that northern Europeans have systematically distorted and concealed the evidence showing how much the ancient Greeks owed to Semitic and African peoples rather than to Indo-European, “Aryan” traditions.

Taken singly, most Greek achievements can be paralleled in the culture of at least one of their neighbors. The Babylonians knew about Pythagoras’s theorem centuries before Pythagoras was born. The tribes of the Caucasus had brought mining and metallurgy to unprecedented levels. The Hittites had made advances in chariot technology, but they were also highly literate. They recorded the polished and emotive orations delivered on formal occasions in their royal court, and their carefully argued legal speeches. One Hittite king foreshadows Greek historiography when he chronicles in detail his frustration at the incompetence of some of his military officers during the siege of a Hurrian city. The Phoenicians were just as great seafarers as any Greeks. The Egyptians developed medicine based on empirical experience rather than religious dogma and told *Odyssey*-like stories about sailors who went missing and returned after adventures overseas. Pithy fables similar to those of Aesop were composed in an archaic Aramaic dialect of Syria and housed in Jewish temples. Architectural design concepts and technical know-how came from the Persians to the Greek world via the many Ionian Greek workmen who helped build Persepolis, Susa and Pasargadae, named Yauna in Persian texts. Nevertheless, none of these peoples produced anything equivalent to Athenian democracy, comic theatre, philosophical logic or Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*.

I do not deny that the Greeks acted as a conduit for other ancient peoples’ achievements. But to function successfully as a conduit, channel or intermediary is in itself to perform an exceptional role. It requires a range of talents and resources. Taking over someone else’s technical knowledge requires an opportunistic ability to identify a serendipitous find or encounter, excellent communicative skills and the imagination to see how a technique, story or object could be adapted to a different linguistic and cultural milieu. In this sense, the Romans fruitfully took over substantial achievements of their civilization from the Greeks, as did the Renaissance Humanists. Of course the Greeks were not by nature or in potential superior to any other human beings, either physically or intellectually. Indeed, they themselves often commented on how difficult it was to distinguish Greek from non-Greek, let alone free person from slave, if all the trappings of culture, clothing and adornment were removed. But that does not mean they were not the right people, in the right place, at the right time, to take up the human baton of intellectual progress for several hundred years.

And that period of intellectual ferment produced ideas that have subsequently informed the most significant moments in western political history. Thomas Jefferson, framing the Declaration of Independence, took the idea of the pursuit of happiness from Aristotle. Toussaint Louverture read Plutarch’s account of Spartacus before leading the first successful slave rebellion in Haiti in 1791. Thomas Paine argued that issues such as the relationship of religion to the state should be discussed with reference to historical examples from antiquity onwards. Chartist leaders were inspired by the Athenian democratic revolution. Women suffragists recited at their meetings the resounding speech that the tragedian Euripides gives his heroine Medea on the economic, political and sexual oppression of the entire female sex.

The Greeks, more even than the Romans, show us how to question received opinion and authority. The earliest myths reveal mankind actively disputing the terms on which the Olympian gods want to rule them, and the philanthropic god Prometheus rebelling against Zeus in order to steal fire – a divine prerogative – and give it to mortal men. Sophocles’ *Antigone* refuses to accept her tyrannical uncle’s arbitrary edict, draws crucial distinctions between moral decency and contingent legislation, and buries her brother



anyway. Aristophanes, in his democratic comedies, subjected politicians who wielded power to satire of eye-watering savagery. Socrates dedicated his life to proving the difference between the truth and received opinion, the unexamined life being, in his view, not worth living. No wonder Hobbes thought that reading Greek and Roman authors should be banned by any self-respecting tyrant, in *Leviathan* arguing that they foment revolution under the slogan of liberty, instilling in people a habit “of favoring uproars, lawlessly controlling the actions of their sovereigns, and then controlling those controllers”.



*Cambridge University students on graduation day. Photograph: Paul Thompson/Paul Thompson/Corbis*

The recent general election has exposed the danger inherent in vote-based democracies: that they inevitably entail large disaffected minorities being excluded from executive power. The ancient Greek inventors of democracy vigorously debated this issue, having painful historical experience of it – recorded by Thucydides – and theoretical solutions – discussed by Aristotle. Yet in Britain today, few secondary school students are ever given the opportunity to investigate the dazzling thought-world of the Greeks. This is despite the existence for half a century of excellent GCSE and A-level courses in classical civilization, which have been a success wherever introduced, and can be taught cost-effectively across the state-school sector. The failure to include classical civilization among the subjects taught in every secondary school deprives us and our future citizens of access to educational treasures which can not only enthrall, but fulfil what Jefferson argued in *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1782) was the main goal of education in a democracy: to enable us to defend our liberty. History, he proposed, is the subject that equips citizens for this. To stay free also requires comparison of constitutions, utopian thinking, fearlessness about innovation, critical, lateral and relativist thinking, advanced epistemological skills in source criticism and the ability to argue cogently. All these skills can be learned from their succinct, entertaining, original formulations and applications in the works of the Greeks.

The situation is aggravated by the role that training in the ancient languages, as opposed to ancient ideas, plays in dividing social and economic classes. One of the many ways in which the schism between rich and poor in Britain is reflected educationally is in access to Greek and Latin grammar. In 2013 (the last year for which figures are available), 3,580 state-sector candidates took A-levels in classical civilization or ancient history. Greek A-level was taken by 260 candidates; 223 of these were at independent schools, which only 7% of our children attend; Latin was taken by 1305 candidates, a depressing 940 of who were at independent schools. High grades in the ancient languages – easily enough won by solicitous coaching – provide near-guaranteed access to our most elite universities. For those without Greek and Latin A-levels there are indeed Oxbridge opportunities: a four-year classics course at Cambridge and at Oxford the fast-track “Course II” as well as two smaller courses (ancient and modern history, ancient history and archaeology) focusing on history and material culture rather than literature and philosophy. The chances of admission for these are in line with other courses such as English and history. But it is easier to get into Oxbridge to read the long-established classics courses, requiring an ancient language A-level, than any other subject: between 2012 and 2014, for the traditional classics “Course I” at Oxford, 51 students were accepted from the state sector and 233 from fee-paying schools. There is nothing like such a high percentage of privately educated students on any other course; there is no similarly high chance of admission – at around 45%. Classics applicants have a comparable chance of getting into Cambridge, at 45%; Cambridge has only a slightly better ratio of state-sector students.

To me, as a Greek scholar, educated in the 1970s and 80s entirely at the taxpayer's expense at a direct grant school and at Oxford, this is profoundly embarrassing. Instead of Greek ideas expanding the minds of all young citizens, Greek denotes money and provides a queue-jumping ticket to privilege.

How can we eradicate the apartheid system in British classics? First, we need to support classical civilization qualifications, campaign for their introduction in every school and recognize their excellence as intellectual preparation for adult life and university. Specifically, classical civilization needs to be recognized in the English baccalaureate and given the same governmental support as Latin.

Second, we need to expand the tiny number of teachers trained to teach classical civilization via classics-dedicated PGCE courses, and also, crucially, encourage qualified teachers of other subjects in schools – English, history, modern languages, religious studies – to add classical civilization to their repertoire. Take Christ the King Sixth Form College in south London. A committed philosophy teacher there, Eddie Barnett, was inspired by the enthusiastic response elicited by the (small) Plato element on the A-level philosophy syllabus; he has recently secured an agreement that classical civilization will be rolled out at all three campuses of the college. Classical civilization qualifications are embraced by most universities already, and this is the first year in which it has been possible for Open University students to graduate with single honors in classical studies, even if they have had no contact with the Greeks and Romans previously. But Oxford and Cambridge, with their fame and brand, now need to lead by example and offer challenging classics courses that do not fetishize grammar and consequently repel state-sector students who have been excited by reading classics in English. This means engaging with literary texts fearlessly in translation plus increasing the importance of critical thinking and lowering that of language acquisition. Undergraduate degrees are supposed to produce competent citizens. Traditional classics courses are not making the most of those ancient authors on their curriculum who enhance civic as opposed to syntactical competence.



*The film adaptation of Jude the Obscure by Thomas Hardy, who was denied the opportunity to read classics at university. Photograph: Allstar/BBC*

There is, however, an obstacle to such citizen-friendly proposals for the future of classics – the contempt directed from some upper echelons of the classics community against GCSEs and A-levels in classical civilization. Some classics scholars and alumni happily maintain the exclusive private-school/Oxbridge monopoly on the Greeks. Almost all the energy currently expended by some classics-friendly charities on supporting a classical presence in the state system is directed towards Latin. I have, of course, no objection to Latin teaching, but focusing on it exclusively entails three dangers. First, plenty of talented young people with a great deal to offer society don't particularly enjoy grammar and are put off the ancient world forever by being offered a diet that is too heavy on language, when they might be thrilled by other aspects of antiquity. Second, omitting the broader, more conceptually stretching study of the ancient world, and especially of Greek thought, implicitly suggests that Latin has a prior claim on our citizens' attentions. Third, placing the emphasis on training in Latin grammar encourages classical Luddites (who would rather destroy the modern study of the ancient world than see any overhaul of pedagogical tradition) publicly to disparage classical civilization's in-depth study of ancient society.

One prominent Oxford-trained journalist, Harry Mount, in an article lamenting the decline of Greek in schools, recently described classical civilization qualifications as “intellectual baby food” with which students are spoon-fed, and as “classics lite”. This was to insult the entire community of state-sector classicists and anyone who ever read an ancient author in translation. He and his associates have forgotten Gilbert Murray’s injunction that it is the Greeks, not Greek, who are the true object of the humanist curriculum. They have forgotten Milton, who wrote in his treatise *Of Education* that language study “is but the instrument conveying to us things useful to be known”. If a linguist has “not studied the solid things in them as well as the words and lexicons, he were nothing so much to be esteemed a learned man, as any yeoman or tradesman competently wise in his mother dialect only”. Jefferson said exactly the opposite to Mount: he proposed that impressionable minds of the ablest younger children, including the poor ones he wanted to be funded by the state, could be kept safely occupied with rote learning of the minutiae of ancient languages, until they acquired sufficient intellectual robustness in mid-adolescence to cope with truly rigorous education in argumentation. That is, he saw language learning as the intellectual baby food.



*A section of the east frieze of the Parthenon showing Poseidon, Apollo and Artemis. Photograph: Gianni Dagli Orti/Corbis*

The instrumentality of ancient languages in social exclusion has an inglorious history which we surely do not want to perpetuate. In 1748, the Earl of Chesterfield wrote to his son: “Classical knowledge that is, Greek and Latin, is absolutely necessary for everybody ... the word illiterate, in its common acceptance, means a man who is ignorant of these two languages.” Classical knowledge is here limited to linguistic knowledge, education to men, and literacy to reading competence in Greek and Latin. Greek was also handy when white people wanted to deride the intellectual abilities of black ones. In 1833-4, American pro-slavery thinkers were on the defensive. The senator for South Carolina, John C Calhoun, declared at a Washington dinner party that only when he could “find a Negro who knew the Greek syntax” could he be brought to “believe that the Negro was a human being and should be treated as a man”. This snipe motivated a free black errand boy, Alexander Crummell, to head for Cambridge University in England. There he indeed learned Greek as part of his studies, financed by abolitionist campaigners, in theology at Queens’ College (1851–3).

The best-known example is the hero of Thomas Hardy’s Jude the Obscure. Jude Fawley, a poor stonemason living in a Victorian village, is desperate to study Latin and Greek at university. He gazes on the spires and domes of the University of Christminster – they “gleamed” like topaz. The lustrous topaz shares its golden color with the stone used to build Oxbridge colleges, but is one of the hardest minerals in nature. Jude’s fragile psyche and health inevitably collapse when he discovers just how unbreakable are the social barriers that exclude him from elite culture. Hardy was writing from personal experience: as the son of a stonemason himself, and apprenticed to an architect’s firm, he had been denied a public school and university education; like Fawley, he had struggled to learn enough Greek to read the Iliad as a teenager. Unlike Jude, Hardy rose through the social ranks to become a prosperous member of the literary establishment. But he never resolved his internal conflict between admiration for Greek and Latin authors and resentment of the supercilious attitude of some members of the upper classes who had been formally trained in them.

There is in fact a splendid history of the ancient authors being read by Britons far beyond the privileged elite, a history that has been ignored by those rich enough to be able to give their children the opportunity to learn ancient languages. Pope's early 18th-century translations of the Iliad and *Odyssey* brought Homer to a far larger audience, including women, than ever had access to an elite education. Take Esther Easton, a Jedburgh gardener's wife, visited by the poet Robert Burns in 1787. He recorded that "she can repeat by heart almost everything she has ever read, particularly Pope's 'Homer' from end to end" and "is a woman of very extraordinary abilities". Pope's Homer also captured the childhood imagination of Hugh Miller, another Scot, a stonemason and a distinguished autodidact, who grew up to become a world-famous geologist. He saw the Iliad as incomparable, and wrote in *My Schools and Schoolmasters* (1854) that he had learned early "that no other writer could cast a javelin with half the force of Homer. The missiles went whizzing athwart his pages; and I could see the momentary gleam of the steel, ere it buried itself deep in brass and bull-hide."

There is an alternative history of classical scholarship – the history of many individuals, brave, stubborn, naive, or all three – who, in the face of every kind of obstruction did succeed in "entering Minerva's temple", as the working-class imagination often framed the project of auto didacticism. The most prodigious of British autodidacts was Joseph Wright, a Victorian workhouse boy who became professor of comparative philology at Oxford. Illiterate at the age of 15, he discovered his aptitude for languages at a Wesleyan night school, funded a PhD in Greek at Heidelberg by teaching incessantly, and, before appointment to his chair, lectured for the Association for the Higher Education of Women.

The Reverend John Rely Beard was a crucial force behind the movement for popular education in Lancashire and never wavered in his zeal for universal education to the highest level. He wrote accessible works on classical and biblical subjects, *Latin Made Easy* and *Cassell's Lessons in Greek ... Intended Especially for Those Who Are Desirous of Learning Greek without the Assistance of a Master*. In this teach-yourself manual he is explicit about the readership he assumes: "The wants of what may roughly be termed the uneducated, will be carefully borne in mind by me, while I prepare these lessons ... My purpose is to simplify the study of Greek so as to throw open to all who are earnest the great work of self-culture." organized working-class libraries reveal a fascinating alternative canon of books relating to the ancient world, from the first workers' libraries in Europe established in the 1750s at Leadhills and Wanlockhead in Dumfries and Galloway to the foundation of the Workers' Educational Association. By the end of the 19th century, these libraries' holdings were often influenced by "Lubbock's List", the 100 books in 1887 deemed "best worth reading" by John Lubbock, principal of the Working-Men's College in London from 1883 to 1899. Lubbock, who became the first Baron Avebury, was himself from a privileged banking family, and educated at Eton. Although he did not attend university, he was a polymath, specializing in archaeology and biological sciences. The proportion of classical authors in his list is remarkable: Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, Aristotle's *Ethics and Politics*, Plutarch's *Lives*, Homer, Hesiod, Virgil, Aeschylus's *Prometheus and Oresteia*, Sophocles' *Oedipus*, Euripides' *Medea*, Herodotus, Thucydides, Livy and many more. In addition, two famous works on ancient history – Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* and Grote's *History of Greece* – make it on to the list, along with the most popular novel set in antiquity, Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *The Last Days of Pompeii*. More than a quarter of all the books are by classical authors, and more than a third addressed to classical antiquity.

The 109 libraries of the South Wales coalfield are a wonder of labor history, and the books really were taken out. At Ebbw Vale, each reader borrowed an average of 52 volumes a year. The "Condensed Accessions Book" of Bargoed Colliery Library details its holdings by 1921-2. Texts in Latin and Greek are absent: until 1918 almost all miners had left school on their 13th birthday. But the "alternative classical curriculum" of the miner was wide-ranging. He read translations and biographies such as JB Forbes's *Socrates* (1905). He learned about the Greeks from HB Cotterill's *Ancient Greece* (1913), the Egyptians from George Rawlinson's *Herodotean History of Ancient Egypt* (1880), and mythology from several books by Andrew Lang.

This inspiring past of people's Greek can help us to look forward. It is theoretically in our power as British citizens to create the curriculum we want. In my personal utopia, the ancient Greek language would be universally available free of charge to everyone who wants to learn it, at whatever age – as would, for that matter, Latin, classical civilization, ancient history, philosophy, Anglo-Saxon, Basque, Coptic, Syriac and Hittite. But classical civilization qualifications are the admirable, economically viable and attainable solution that has evolved organically in our state sector. Classicists who do not actively promote them will justifiably be perceived as elitist dinosaurs.

- Edith Hall gave the Gaisford Lecture at the University of Oxford. Her Introducing the Ancient Greeks is published by Bodley Head.



## HELLENIC LINK, INC.

A NON PROFIT CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC ASSOCIATION OF  
HELLENES AND PHILHELLENES INCORPORATED IN DELAWARE

Suite No. 278

38-11 Ditmars Blvd.

Astoria, New York 11105

Website: <http://www.helleniclink.org>

Email: [info@helleniclink.org](mailto:info@helleniclink.org)

Tel.: (718) 217-0430