

APPENDIX

Graduate Studies in Classics Have They a Future?*

This topic is propounded for your consideration *existentially*, as part of a personal puzzlement, and not simply as an abstract thesis suggested by a disinterested love of "truth." This confession may perhaps justify a personal and existential beginning.

My first serious training in Classics was at Exeter College, Oxford. As is well documented, Oxford in the latter half of the nineteenth century was divided by a great debate. The protagonists were Mark Pattison, Rector of Lincoln College, and Benjamin Jowett, Master of Balliol. Pattison had noted the enormous strides that were being made in contemporary Germany by a university system which set a premium on the seminar, on research papers, on publications, on science. Jowett, the head of a famous and influential College, saw the aim of education as the equipping of soldiers, statesmen, civil servants to run Britain and the Empire. To that task Pattison's German model had, he believed, little relevance. His Oxford contemporaries agreed with him. It took the Great War of 1914-18 with all its traumas, and ultimately the arrival in Oxford of Eduard Fraenkel, to alter old ideas about the place of the Classics in the education of a gentleman.

Old ideas die hard, especially in Oxford. In a recent conversation, the new Kennedy Professor of Latin at Cambridge, formerly Fellow

* This paper was presented by the Editor in his capacity as Chairman of the Midwest Conference of Classics Chairmen to the annual meeting of the Conference at Northwestern University in October 1984. The privately expressed approval of some scholars, and the imminent appearance of a Latin translation by Glareanus in *Hermes Americanus*, suggested that the publication of a revised version of the original might be timely.

of Exeter College, Oxford, reminded me that he was probably the last of the "undoctored" generation of dons who went straight into College fellowships with nothing more than their B. A. degrees, and who acquired any more specific and technical training for their profession "on the job." Let it be freely admitted that many of them acquired it very handsomely!

American education never quite made the mistake that Oxford made, in spite of its often markedly Anglophile nature. Basil Gildersleeve is so clearly the product of German discipline. So is the systematic thoroughness of Goodwin's *Moods and Tenses*, even the old Lewis and Short, all the outgrowth of the best interaction between American energy and German guidance. The protracted seminar, the lengthy, footnoted term paper, the "publish or be damned" mentality: these are among the first shocks administered to the migrant from the British to the American campus. Of course, as one looks at the awful record of British economic incompetence since 1945 and indeed since Pattison's day, this American seriousness is salutary and necessary. Paradoxically, I now want to ask if it is going to destroy the Classics.

Classical studies are in the last resort concerned with the understanding of the literatures of Greece and Rome. I make this anodyne statement because I have heard a colleague murmur in approval of someone that he was "thoroughly acquainted with the literature," when in fact what he meant was that someone had read a lot of articles about a particular aspect of one author. But even this anodyne statement carries with it some revolutionary implications. It means, for example, that Classics is not primarily archeology, or even the study of Greco-Roman civilization, except insofar as both these occupations offer sidelights on the literatures, on the authors. My anodyne statement certainly means that codicology, paleography, textual criticism and all the rest of that invaluable discipline of *ekdosis* are ancillary to the understanding of the texts. It takes a profound awareness of literary possibilities to justify a single conjecture in a major author by this time. The first rule is: leave the transmitted text alone until you understand it!

I want now to advance a second anodyne statement. This one I justify (as I could have justified my first) by reference to the Alexandrian Museum. If we think of the first and even second generations of Alexandrian scholars—Philetas, Callimachus, Apollonius of Rhodes, Eratosthenes—the amazing thing is that so many of them were poets as well as scholars. Callimachus indeed took issue even with Plato, and said that he was incapable of judging poetry. We grasp something of his views on Pindar by studying the opening of the third book of

the *Aetia*. By studying the end of the *Argonautica* we know where Apollonius thought the *Odyssey* ended. For these scholar-poets, learning was the handmaid of literary creativity.

A vastly important corollary follows from the belief evinced by these early Alexandrians that scholarship and creativity are not to be divorced. This is that the evidence of poets about what authors mean is just as important as the evidence of more formal literary history and scholarship. Where poetic genius is transcendent, the evidence is correspondingly superior. The greatest commentator on Virgil is Dante, the greatest commentator on Ovid—Shakespeare. Dante's *Comedy* is a paradoxical work to have emerged from the "searching" of the *Aeneid* to which its author refers. It is paradoxical because, as scholars, we bring certain expectations about epic to high and continued poetry which Dante's oddly named *Comedy* flouts. But Dante quite decidedly rejected conventional expectations when he declined Giovanni del Virgilio's invitation to write a conventional eulogistic epic, and declined it in an *Eclogue*. Poor fellow, he evidently had not read K. Ziegler's *Das hellenistische Epos* might be one rejoinder, for then he would have understood what he was missing. Another rejoinder might be that, when he used an *Eclogue* to reject conventional epic, he was being faithful to the truest essence of the Virgilian tradition by repeating the pattern of Virgil's own sixth *Eclogue*. And when he wrote a *Comedy*, with its metamorphoses, its *communia verba*, its lyricism, its topsy-turvy world, its prophetic time, its vatic indignation, its visionary and alogical glories, perhaps he was telling us something about the understanding of the *Aeneid* which was missing from the handbooks of scholars and officially constituted defenders of tradition such as Vida or J. C. Scaliger, who praise Virgil's poem for its splendid diction and ideal characters, letting enthusiasm blur judgment. There would not have been need for R. Heinze's *Virgils epische Technik* which, elementary though it is, marks an epoch in the return to grasping what Virgil did, if Latinists had read more Dante, more Milton.

It can be seen that I am pleading for a view of classical study which cannot be limited by arbitrary dates like 410 or even 1453. Every new author of merit affects the way in which the existing canon of authors is perceived, since his novelty adds a fresh dimension to understanding. There is a continuous work of criticism of the "Classics" going on therefore, but it is not by professional scholars. Only a classical training which is a humanistic training will open our eyes and ears to this perpetual dialogue.

Professional scholars sometimes behave as if every item of information about the ancient world were of equal importance. The only

thing is to define an area of expertise so far unexplored by the majority, so that one need not fear challenge or anticipation. This is quite mistaken. We are not limiting our view of antiquity when we spend our time on its major authors, for what makes them major is precisely their imaginative range. The energy given over to Corippus or Flavius Merobaudes is only worthwhile if it can be shown how these two poets illustrate and respond to a continuing tradition. Otherwise, the class would be infinitely better employed reading Boccaccio or Ariosto.

It follows that a definition of classical scholarship is needed which does justice to the Alexandrian ideal of the scholar-poet. A large part of our audience comes these days from an educational background which is anti-foreign. At a recent conference on "The International Dimension of the University" a speaker explained how the U. S. Foreign Service washes out any quirky concern with alien cultures which its recruits may have picked up. A Ph. D. in Turkish, we were told, who has the luck to get a job with the Service, soon finds out that, if he is to attract attention and promotion, he must be a regular golf-playing, partying citizen. After a few years his knowledge of Turkish is growing pretty dim. Then he is ready to move up. Eventually, he hardly remembers where Turkey is. Then he is really hot.

Another speaker remarked that big corporations rarely find it worth their while to hire American experts, say, in Arabic. The Corporation is not interested in Arabic *per se*, only in business prospects. If there is any tiresome insistence on the local language, a local hiring will be made. The Corporation is content to be interpreted to the native culture always by foreigners, through foreign eyes.

In that case, I really can't see the point of the kind of scholarship which fixes attention on *minutiae* and refuses any sort of concession to contemporary, English-speaking society. First of all, such an attitude ill equips us for teaching courses to undergraduates who are heading towards jobs that will be anything but academic, and whose eyes are set on professional goals. If we know why we are studying Latin and Greek, we can easily give an account of our stewardship. If we are only interested in settling hoti's business, we shall be tongue-tied on the podium. I have distantly heard of departments that carry professors like this, around whom the rest of the faculty must tiptoe because they are engaged in serious research, and must not be interrupted by the vulgar concerns of students from agriculture or engineering. I am not sure it is fair to the rest of the faculty, and

not sure either how much chance younger academics with similar attitudes have of getting jobs in this day and age.

I'm not even sure that what such people do is "serious research." Does "serious" mean "divorced from the concerns of contemporary men and women"? The anti-foreign bias of which I spoke presumably arises from just such a perception of other cultures, that they and those interested in them are irrelevant to the way we live here. Should we train our students to reinforce that perception? Won't it eventually have dire consequences in State Legislatures?

Such an attitude clearly ill equips our students for jobs outside the traditional academic fields. The former Headmaster of Eton, Dean C. A. Alington, once defended the study of the Classics on the grounds that, without them, we have no adequate knowledge of what men have done and thought and suffered. But how many seminars on Thucydides take the imparting of that kind of moral awareness as their aim? How quickly do we get bogged down in the Tribute Lists and the topography of Syracuse! Surely those things are important, but only as ancillaries to the larger vision, the record of human idealism, folly, ambition, greed, endurance. But a student who has learned not to be afraid of wrestling with Thucydides' contorted Greek, who is not surprised by human behavior either for good or ill, who knows the value of measuring difficulties before an enterprise is under way, and who believes that a good rule is to get there firstest with the mostest, who has suffered in the stone quarries with the Athenian captives and has made up his mind not to add to the sum of human misery by maltreating his colleagues and his clients: such a recruit might be treasured by a Corporation that had not the slightest interest in the Classics in themselves. And a student who thought of the Classics as an introduction to human behavior might not regard himself as leaving his proper sphere if he were to enter the Corporation's service.

I want to follow therefore the Socratic maxim of going where the argument leads. Nobody more than I curled his lip with greater disdain of those old academic fogies who in our day still bleated about the true, the good and the beautiful. What an amazing contrast to their datedness was afforded by the bustling Eduard Fraenkel, who at Corpus began lecturing while still outside in the corridor, who knew all the answers to all the questions, who poured scorn on his adversaries, who once said to a brilliant undergraduate: "Mr. X, you have read books of which most of the dons here have not even heard the names." But in my old age I no longer see the question in such black and white terms!

Fraenkel himself, of course, was much given to quoting Petrarch

or Shakespeare to illustrate a point, and his insomnia was regularly solaced by reading Dante. His dogmatism in the lecture-room was largely inspired by his feeling that it really mattered what a particular passage meant. It would be utterly unfair to align him with the representatives of "pure" scholarship, to whom every last paring of Augustus' fingernails is as valuable as his views on poetry. What he wanted, like his master Wilamowitz, was an *informed* commitment to classical literature, but still a commitment.

It was from another, not German but German-trained professor (and Fellow of Exeter College), Constantine Trypanis, that I first heard the name of Werner Jaeger and his theory of the "Third Humanism." Jaeger wrote at a time when Germany was reeling under the effects of the defeat of 1918 and the disappearance of the monarchy. He believed that classical studies should have an effect on public behavior, even on public policy. Although he went into exile soon after Hitler's accession, he has been criticized as some sort of embryo Nazi. But there is a nucleus of truth in his theory that classical studies cannot be content with being a matter of mere intellectual curiosity. When we read about the fate of Achilles or Oedipus, we will be reading utterly differently from the Greeks themselves if all that happens is that we get an idea for an article. Plato did not expel the poets from his Republic because they inspired notes in *Classical Philology*! I say this of course with all due respect.

Perhaps it is here that we can most fruitfully reconcile the two opposing poles, as they have sometimes seemed, of *Wissenschaft* and *humanitas*. The greatest scholars have certainly been the masters of a learning which puts one to shame. But they have not typically deployed that learning on trivialities. I am thinking of someone like Eduard Norden, or, in a somewhat different area, Leo Spitzer or E. R. Curtius. In his commentary on the sixth book of the *Aeneid*, Norden at times translates bits of Virgil into Greek verse to make his point. Even Fraenkel sent an article to Housman preceded by some quite elegant Greek elegiacs. There is a critical moment at which scholar and poet coalesce. Callimachus described it as an encounter with Apollo. Do our students feel that we have encountered, and been changed by, Apollo? Are they changed in their turn? Do they think of Classics, thanks to our example, not just as *litterae*, but as *litterae humaniores*?

As with most wars, we can in the end see that the issues are not quite so clear-cut as my original account of the debate between Pattison and Jowett may have suggested. Pattison was right to call attention to the superior role of the German system in a world where economic empires would replace those won by the sword. Jowett

however was not wrong when he urged that Classics of all disciplines could never become merely another area of research, along with Home Economics or Veterinary Science. The classicist should be someone who understands where our civilization came from and what it is all about; but what it is all about *now*, not what it was all about in an age long dead. It seems to me that a classicist trained to be alert to this double dimension will both be able to take his place in the classroom in front of students who are fully aware of the modern world (at least in their own estimation), but not of any other, for he will have some allegiance to both: and to find a job in industry or business, because he will be able to relate in a human way to those around him, thanks to his training as a humanist.

I also think that, even in pure scholarship, such a classicist will make more progress in understanding than his blinkered rivals. Here, I would like to cite once again a passage from Machiavelli:

When evening comes, I return home and enter my writing-room. At the door I take off these everyday clothes, full of mud and filth, and dress in royal, courtly garments. Clad fittingly, I enter the ancient courts of the men of old, and there find a kindly welcome. There I feed on that food which alone is mine, and for which I was born. There I am not ashamed to converse with them, and to ask the reasons for their actions. And they, in their humanity, give me answer, and for four hours I do not feel any vexation, I forget every toil, I do not fear poverty, I lose my dread of death, I transform myself entirely into them.

(Letter to F. Vettori, December 1513).

Machiavelli was a philosopher, historian and poet. He has given an adjective to most modern languages, and perhaps part of his fruitful dialogue with the ancients was his familiarity with their language. He asked the right questions because, inspired by *umanità*, he wasn't continually glancing at his watch and the right-hand page of his Loeb. And again, I don't mean to deny that Renaissance authors used translations. But the unerring judgment with which even a genius who was no scholar, William Shakespeare, seized on the essence of the classical experience in order to reflect it back in his ideas and language suggests that these children of a humanistic age meant something different by "reading" a text from the hasty perusal which is too often for the modern scholar the preliminary to getting down to the real meat of the encounter, the interpretative article which tells the rest of us what to think. I don't know what is going to happen to the endless articles poured out in our day about this small point and that. I sometimes wonder what they have to do with humane education.

But what concrete proposals stem from all this? The first is that we should revive a German tradition which has been curiously neglected in the Midwest, and that is the peregrination of students from campus to campus in search of outstanding teachers. A system should be devised which permits the exchange of graduate students between Classics Programs, so that, without losing credit or ultimate allegiance to their home Departments, students who are unencumbered by family ties can know what is being offered in other Universities and take advantage of it in some way that will mean no extra financial burden. It is not a question of encouraging transfers or poaching, simply a matter of broadening horizons.

Secondly, areas of research should always be treated within the larger context of civilization and its traditions. We should take our commitment to modern foreign languages seriously. More basically, we should ask our students to demonstrate fluency with Latin and Greek, not just constipated sluggishness and inaccuracy. I believe I heard that some classical journals refuse to publish articles in Latin. It is outrageous. In the age of the taperecorder there is a golden opportunity to put back the aural/oral dimension of classical literature which is disastrously missing from some of our commentaries. Where are the plays which Renaissance students would have put on in the original? No doubt there were some unintentionally hilarious moments. But at the end of it, the more gifted at least could certainly write very convincing Latin!

Thirdly, collaboration with sister departments on campus should be the norm. Perhaps as a result of this some areas of purely classical research interest will lie neglected. I don't think this is very important in a time when, if we don't do something, all areas of classical research may lie neglected. Many classicists bring very poor critical principles to bear on the texts they read, so that one has to keep re-establishing the point, for example, that a poetic and a real "I" are not necessarily the same, or that consistency is not necessarily as important a virtue as persuasiveness, or that the author's intention is his work of art, and not something which he may or may not have said to his barber. Do we take kindly to the idea that a seminar in the English Department might be a useful introduction to a course in Latin elegy?

One of the sister departments with which communication has been shamefully neglected in traditional views of classical education is Religious Studies. Secular Greek scholarship can facilitate the understanding of the New Testament, for example, in the appreciation of rhythms (what the Formalists call "sound gesture") and subtle tense usages. And awareness of religious vocabulary can do much to illumine what so-called pagan authors are trying to say: for example, when

they use "weight" as a synonym for "glory," or employ the notion, so essential to the Roman way of looking at the world, of metamorphosis, of the present as bigger and better than the past. Lucan makes Caesar test the will of heaven by putting out to sea in Amyclas' boat in the teeth of several gales. He makes him dine at the scene of Pharsalia in view of his defeated foes. These are *religious* ideas. Thucydides says that the bravado of the Athenian fleet about to leave for Sicily filled spectators with *thambos*. This word is also religious. An increasingly secular age like ours is in danger of losing a whole dimension from the picture which the ancient world presents.

Another point of contact between classical study and the most pressing contemporary reality is Arabic. A book like *The Genius of Arab Civilization* (MIT Press, 2nd edn. 1982) opens one's eyes to the zeal with which Arab scholars assimilated and advanced Greek mathematics, astronomy, medicine, philosophy, in spite of the difference of language. When I was standing in the little cathedral square of Syracuse a year or two ago, outside a church which still rests on the pillars of a Greek temple, our guide gestured towards the Archbishop's palace and remarked that the Library was crammed with unread Arabic manuscripts. As late as the eighteenth century the classical languages were Latin, Greek, Hebrew and Arabic. What did the nineteenth century do to us?

Satis superque. My title asked: will graduate studies in Classics survive? I hope not, if we mean by that the continuance of the worst features of the present. Will *litterae humaniores* survive? We must bend our energies to the task of ensuring that they do, for without them nothing is left.