

Humanities

A Classical Dialogue

This dialogue is based on conversations with Classics Professor Gerald F. Else, Director of the University of Michigan Center for Coordination of Ancient and Modern Studies, and former member of the National Council on the Humanities.

It has been adapted from an article written by James E. Haney and published in the *Research News*, a publication of the University of Michigan's Office of Research Administration.

Professor Else, how do you respond to people who say that classical studies are not relevant to contemporary problems?

Certainly much has changed in the modern world, and much is still changing rapidly. But man himself has not changed much; human nature, human needs, human aspirations, are very much what they were 3,000 years ago. The study of history and philosophy and literature has to do with examining this issue of what is permanent and constant in human affairs. The study of other civilizations, especially such complex and sophisticated ones as the Athenian democracy and the Roman Republic, can provide a perspective on such questions.

You would place more emphasis on study of the ancient world than on the Renaissance?

Yes, at this particular time. The study of the Renaissance is enormously fruitful and worthwhile. However, the problems faced by the Athenian democracy in the fifth century B.C. are more like the problems confronting America today. Athens was a democracy and a superpower at a time when her people were simultaneously experiencing a collapse in their traditional scheme of moral values. I think we are in a similar situation.

By traditional American moral values, do you mean Christian values?

Yes, belief in the Judaean-Christian theology and ethic and a subspecies of it, the Puritan ethic. Athens also, in the fifth century B.C., saw a spectacular decline of faith in traditional values and a rise in radical re-examination of values, in uninhibited reasoning. The relativism, skepticism, subjectivism, nihilism, immoralism engaged in by some aristocratic or upper-middle-class Athenian youngsters frightened and infuriated the older generation. Then and now, leisure, combined with a desire to think seriously about society, is as

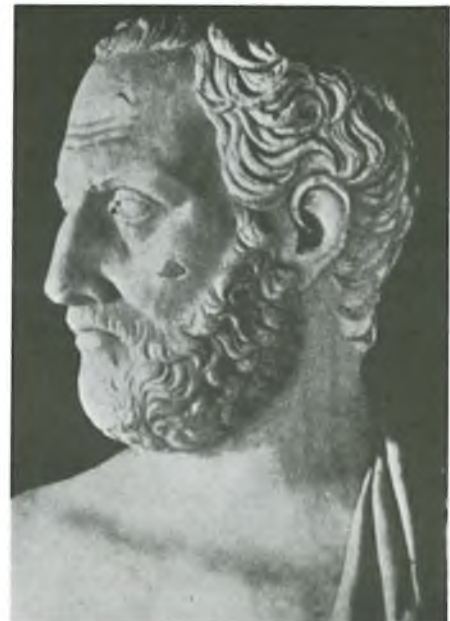
explosive a mixture today as it was twenty-five centuries ago. Yet this questioning attitude, leading to loss of religious faith or belief in traditional mores, has not happened often to a self-governing people in a conspicuous position of world leadership.

Is the function of the Center to promote the dissemination of that kind of historical perspective?

No, its purpose is really much broader than that. We want to break down the artificial, specialist barriers between ancient and modern studies in all disciplines—not only in history, literature, and the arts but in the social sciences, physical sciences, medicine and law. We encourage and facilitate contacts through conferences and symposia, and serve as a clearinghouse for information. All of the complex set of developments forming the background of our culture offer possibilities for comparative studies. For example, a young scholar affiliated with the Center during the past year, a specialist in Biblical history, was studying popular and revolutionary movements in other and more modern cultures.

You believe, then, that the Humanities, including studies of classical literature, should be part of modern studies in political science or sociology?

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Bust of Thucydides, historian of the Peloponnesian War

The social sciences seem to be imprisoned in the windowless room of the present, and in a quest for value-free, scientific objectivity at the same time they are attempting to be objective and scientific. Political scientists, for example, narrow the scope of their inquiries so that many of the most important political ideas—moral ideas, aesthetic ideas, spiritual ideas, humanizing ideas—are excluded. A common current assumption about the training of persons interested in the workings of our society is that they should major in the social sciences. Yet social scientists are faced by an enormous and growing number of students who don't really want to be social scientists or theorists; they want to be practical; they want to understand our system so that they can work in it, change it, improve it. These two aspirations—the scientific, theoretical, scholarly interest, and the real practical interest of many of the students—are in implicit conflict with each other.

Timeliness of Classical Studies

How would American politics be affected if our major political leaders were trained in Classical Studies?

Henry Steele Commager, the American historian, has said that if Lyndon Johnson had read Thucydides on the Sicilian expedition, things might have gone differently in Vietnam. Of course, if political leaders are to have this kind of background, they must acquire it before they achieve office. They have no time to learn then; they have to act. So we have to look to the high schools and universities. Historically there have been two avenues of access to classical literature and thought—through the original languages and through translations. The notion that an educated man has to have mastered at least one foreign language began with the Romans. They studied Greek to gain access to the ideas of the Greek philosophers, scientists, historians, statesmen, dramatists, poets. With the rise of Roman civilization Latin came to supplant Greek as the language of inquiry. This continued through the Middle Ages and beyond. The study of Latin reached a first peak in the Renaissance; then there was a second peak, in the nineteenth century, when both Latin and Greek were studied very intensively in high schools and colleges. High school students would study Latin grammar and then plod through Caesar—the *Gallic War*. Not the *Civil War*, mind you, which might have had some meaning for them, but the *Gallic War*. Students slogged through Gaul with Caesar, but too often no one let them in on what Caesar was up to.

Teachers didn't think it important that the students know that?

Too many of the teachers, I'm afraid, didn't know it themselves. Caesar subjugated Gaul because he saw it as an important province—a future breadbasket for the Roman Empire. He also had a private purpose; he wanted to build an army for himself. But that point never comes through in the *Gallic War*. Caesar never says what he's really doing, which is one reason why the work is a masterpiece. It's a super snow job on

the Roman public. It's also a stylistic masterpiece, but not a very good choice for American high school kids, the majority of whom considered the work drudgery. That kind of irrelevance couldn't go on forever. By the end of the nineteenth century the study of classical languages began dropping out of our curricula, and the trend has continued.

Can't a student gain access to classical thought almost as well through translations?

If he wants to become a scholar, linguist, translator, historian, then he must study the languages. If he intends to go into some other line of work, translations may serve him perfectly well. However, the study of another language gives one a deeper insight into the nature of language and of thought itself. A person who grapples with the mysteries of non-correspondence between two different languages is actually coming to grips with basic problems in logic, semantics, analytic philosophy, rhetoric. The net result, provided he goes into the other language deeply enough, is that the experience changes his perceptions—perceptions of his own language and of other things. Familiarity with a subject is not necessarily knowledge, and knowledge is not necessarily understanding; the differences might be called degrees of insight.

Support for the idea of Americans' learning foreign languages doesn't seem very strong, does it?

No, and that is unfortunate, because dealing with another person in his own language sharpens one's awareness of how he thinks, of how he feels about things.

What about the internal workings of the Athenian political system? Did their policy debates in the Voter Assemblies function to disclose basic issues better than our system does?

The Athenian political system was an educational system, in a sense. Ordinary Athenian citizens participated in governmental functions to a much greater extent than the ordinary American citizen does. But they were naive enough to be talked into some unwise foreign ventures, such as the Sicilian expedition. That touches on the question of the moral uses of power.

Such questions seem a fuzzy area in American political theory, do they not?

Politics: the Public Side of Morality

Moral behavior has traditionally been thought of in America in the private and individual sense. But morals and politics are intimately related. That's a Greek idea: that morality is the individual side of politics, politics the public side of morality.

Do you rank Thucydides as one of the significant thinkers in this area?

Oh yes. Unquestionably. And mind you, he was not a professional scholar but an activist—what the Greeks called a 'practical' man. He was an Athenian aristocrat and general, condemned for political reasons to sit out the Peloponnesian War. So he began to study, analyze, and record its progress. His education, his

(Continued on page 5)



NEH Grant Profiles



Rescuing the Romans

Vercingetorix and Catiline may have thought Caesar and Cicero were hot stuff, but today's high school students apparently don't. In 1964, about 978,000 American teens studied Latin; this year, that number will drop to 500,000—and Dr. Vincent J. Cleary of the University of Massachusetts' classics department believes that Julius' war memoirs and Marcus Tullius' oratory have contributed mightily to the decline.

Those aren't the only factors. Cleary thinks that the post-Sputnik emphasis on science, the Catholic Church's switch to the vernacular in its liturgy, and "a continuing emphasis in the schools on teaching marketable skills" have accelerated the drop in enrollments. But because neither science nor John XXIII can be repealed, Cleary decided to concentrate on what's left: curriculum.

Both Caesar and Cicero come at crucial times in high-school Latin. More than 75 percent of those who take it for two years decline it in the third—at least partly, Cleary believes, because those Latin authors project values in which modern teen-agers have little interest: Rome as a military nation and as a society concerned with law and order. Our own society is grappling with law and order, of course, and the issue is important—but more to adults than to adolescents.

Instead, Cleary wants to offer students relatively short readings that demonstrate the full range of Latin literature: comedy, lyric, elegy, biography, selections from a novel, and medieval Latin. In addition, he wants to play down the Romans as a people of principally historical interest, and to project them instead as "confronting the same problems which confront modern man, i.e., how shall I live, how shall I die?"

Since 1969, when he was at Ohio State, Cleary has been working in summer workshops with high school Latin teachers to develop an intermediate reader that would take the place of Caesar and Cicero. Now, after years of testing various candidates for inclusion in a text called *Novi Mundi* ("New Worlds"), Cleary and his colleagues are "about three-quarters finished" with a reader whose publication is virtually assured.

The reader includes Plautus' *Miles Gloriosus*, a dramatic comedy on Roman military types, vignettes of "the great, the near-great and not-so-great" from the Gracchi to Nero, and short poems on death, separation, love won and lost, and "what it was like to be young and very much alive 2,000 years ago."

The readings are blended with a new approach toward teaching Latin as a literature to be enjoyed in

itself, rather than as a code to be translated into English. To simplify the problem considerably, this means teaching the student so that when he reads *flumen*, he doesn't think "river"—he thinks "flumen".

"The whole thing is a gamble," Cleary concedes. "We're dealing with the literature of a hard language and, unlike modern languages, there is no juvenile literature in Latin to introduce students to the adult literature."

But unless someone gambles on new methods to rescue Latin, its secondary-level study will be "extinct in all but the best schools by 1980." Convinced that Latin is worth saving, NEH, through its Education Division, has supplied Cleary with chips to back his hunches. □

Fantasy as Social Criticism

Women are racking up impressive gains in virtually every other sector of our national life, but they've disappeared as heroines in children's fantasy. Lest that be accounted a minor loss, Dr. Ravenna Helson at the Institute of Personality Assessment and Research in Berkeley, California, argues that authors of fantasy—from Lewis Carroll to J. R. Tolkien—may have as much to tell us about the changing character of our times as any number of Brinkleys, Skinners, and other probers of our mass psyche.

Since 1969, with a Research grant from NEH, Dr. Helson has been analyzing two groups of fantasies written for children by U. S. and British authors: one group during the 19th century, the other since 1930. The hypothesis or hunch underlying her inquiry is that children's fantasy allows a writer to express ideas and drives that are not fully conscious, even to him—a kind of dreaming on paper—and that these works therefore offer psychologists "an intriguing access" to the hidden, socially suppressed cravings that nag people.

Her comparisons indicate several contrasts between 19th and 20th century fantasies. Whereas in the 19th, for example, children's stories stressed relationships between humans and animals (*The Jungle Book*, *Alice in Wonderland*), 20th century fantasies more frequently concern relationships between peers. In the 19th, more protagonists were young people of opposite sex; in the 20th, they tended to become a child and an adult of the *same* sex.

Perhaps the most marked difference, however, is the almost total disappearance of an alliance between the young protagonist and a wise or magical woman,

and the emergence of alliances with a wise or powerful man. Gone is the Fairy Godmother; the Wizard has taken over.

After studying the symbolism of the wise man or woman in the two sets of fantasies and comparing the cultural character of the two eras, Dr. Helson concludes that the change is precisely "what one would expect on the basis of the principle that the unconscious exerts a pressure compensatory to the conscious attitude." The Victorian and Edwardian lived in a time that emphasized self-reliance and "getting ahead"; people were greedy, but "they also felt guilty about it." Children's fantasy allowed authors to express more positive values—love, compassion, sympathy with the failure—than society countenanced. The wise woman offered not only magic but warmth.

By 1930, cultural conditions had changed, especially in England. During the postwar period, England was losing status, religion was shaky, and technology seemed "not only rampant but revolting." All the old verities were being questioned, and alienated writers (especially males) turned to male figures who could assert in the fantasy world a solid meaning and clear direction that no one provided in the real world.

The switch from Godmother to Wizard and the increased concern with same-sex relationships clearly says something about our times, Dr. Helson believes, for the authors of fantasy don't speak only for themselves. "Their work is healing for themselves, but also for others of their time. A really good children's book is good for adults." □

So What Else Is Old?

In 1949, the Yale Judaica Series published an English translation of *The Book of Civil Laws*, one of the 14 volumes of the *Mishneh Torah* (Repetition of the Law) by the medieval philosopher, physician, and rabbi Maimonides (1135-1204). In the 22 years since, the Series has published 10 more "Books", and has three to go—a pace which some observers have found a bit long on majesty but short on speed. Two decades plus, commented one scholar, is "far more than the master needed for the compilation and writing of his encyclopedic work."

True, but many specialists in classical languages have found that it takes longer to edit a translation than it does to write a book of similar length. The original must be compared with the translation, and scrupulous attention paid to terms whose connotations have changed over the centuries. The careful selection of translators and the painstaking scrutiny of Dr. Leon Nemoy, 70-year-old editor of the Series, have been justified: the volumes are on standing order with leading research libraries here and overseas, and they represent, in the view of one expert, "by far the most magnificent such series of translations of Jewish documents into a Western language that has ever appeared before."

The non-scholar, particularly the non-Hebraist, might wonder so what. Translations are not worthwhile sim-

ply because the author died, as Maimonides did, 750 years ago.

But more than any Jewish author apart from those who wrote the Old and New Testaments, Maimonides staked a claim on the intellectual credit of the West. His *Code*, a collection and exposition of the teaching of the rabbis on civil law, ritual practice, and the Scriptures not only gives us our most complete guide to the development of Jewish thought, but also an invaluable spoor for scholars trying to track the evolution of Christian thought. For nearly six centuries, from 500 to 1100 A.D., Aristotle was almost completely lost to the West. He was preserved by Arabian and Syrian scholars and by a few Jews who—like Maimonides—encountered those cultures in their persecution-driven wanderings.

After his birth in Cordoba, Spain, Maimonides fled the conquering Berbers (1148) by emigrating to Morocco, then moved to Palestine and finally settled in Cairo. In the process he learned Arabic, achieved remarkable note considering the limited communications of the day (he was appointed physician to Saladin's eldest son about 1170, and later turned down a similar offer from Richard I of England), and not only helped re-introduce Aristotelian thought to the West, but also introduced an enormously influential philosophic method. Among his most devoted readers, for example, were Spinoza, who hailed Maimonides as "the first who openly declared that Scripture must be accommodated to reason," and Thomas Aquinas, whose plan of harmonizing Christian revelation with Aristotelian logic in the *Summa Theologiae* might well have been patterned after Maimonides' effort to do the same for Jewish beliefs in *Guide for the Perplexed*.

As this edition of *Humanities* goes to press, so does Maimonides' *Book of Women*—a work which covers such topics as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and relations between the sexes. A translator for the *Book of Seeds* (on agriculture) has been found after years of searching, a man who understands the problems of botany as well as of Arabic and Hebrew terminology. Since 1968 these editions have been aided by grants from NEH, and Drs. Nemoy and Judah Goldin, chairman of the Series, now feel more confident that Maimonides' *Code* will be completely translated in their lifetimes. If so, their legacy to the English-speaking peoples—Jews, Christians, atheists, participants in encounter-groups, and other wanderers in our space-age *diaspora*—will tell us a little more about why we came this way. □

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(DIALOGUE, Continued from page 2)

experience, his situation, allowed him to record the fall of the Athenian empire—the campaigns, the victories and defeats, the treaties, the alliances, the deals both sides made with the uncommitted states, as well as the progressive moral deterioration of the Greek world at war. He knew precisely what he was attempting to do. As he says in his first Book:

The lack of picturesque stories in my narrative may well make it unattractive to the public; but it is meant for those in any period who wish to study the real course of past events and therefore of the similar or analogous events that are likely to occur in the future, according to all human probability.

The value of reading Thucydides lies less in its applicability to future situations than in encountering the questions the Greeks asked themselves, and debated, and put to the 'Third-World' nations, before they decided on a course of action. The quality, the probity, of their questions has not been surpassed in the course of human affairs over the last 2,500 years.

What does Thucydides' History say to American readers?

Thucydides can show how aware the Greeks were of themselves, of their culture, of the issues they faced, of the real interests held by the uncommitted and less developed powers the two sides were competing for. Ignorance of history seduces too many Americans into thinking that emerging nations today would be all right if they just learned to do things the way we do. Such myopia—call it provinciality, ethnocentrism, or what you will—is now being escalated by the technological revolution we are experiencing.

Isn't it true that young people often lack enough experience to be able to appreciate many classic works?

Yes, although much of that is the fault of bad pedagogy. The teacher must interest, excite, challenge, inspire the student, not stand over him and whip him psychologically. The essence of the process is the question: laying questions before the student—questions meaningful and interesting to *him*. His learning proceeds on the basis of interest subjectively perceived. But it is also true that real insight has to be assisted by broad knowledge and experience, or by sensitivity to issues treated in the works one reads. Arnold Toynbee has written that he didn't discover the contemporaneity of Thucydides until he was 25. The outbreak of World War I affected his perceptions of Thucydides' *History*. In 1948, in his *Civilization on Trial*, Toynbee said:

The experience that we were having in our world now, had been experienced by Thucydides in his world already. I was rereading him now with a new perception . . . his present had been my future.

I would add that a person is more likely to benefit from study of the Classics if he has had training and experience in modern studies.

You are not arguing against the study of the past in high school or college, or are you?

No, not at all; that is helpful, provided the students'



Detail from *The Landing of Julius Caesar* (A nineteenth century fantasy)

minds aren't poisoned against the subject through bad pedagogy. But I do want to argue for another kind and level of confrontation between present and past, at an age somewhere between 30 and 45, when certain persons have acquired the necessary knowledge or experience for a breakthrough. One of the functions of this Center is to assist and promote new effort at that level which could result in fruitful confrontations in the fields of the social sciences, the Humanities, and the arts. We are planning to hold an interdisciplinary symposium on the City, for example; on literature and psychology; on the nature of oral literature. The basic idea of our conferences is to bring together people who have potential interests in common but who would otherwise have no contact with each other. It's imperative that that be done within a larger framework in which so-called 'humanists' and 'social scientists' and other kinds of specialists can discover what they have to offer each other.

You don't believe that the present structure of universities promotes this?

No. The present departmental organization of our universities is very unfavorable to such enterprises, especially in the traditional Humanities. I am against this schema on practical grounds. Increasingly in our times the needs of the 'practical' man—the man headed for political and public life—are ignored or circumscribed. Our future Congressman is not likely to devote serious, mature study to either the Athenian democracy or the Roman Republic, since in the modern view Political Science deals with the present, not the past.

(Continued on page 8)

A Reading List On THE CLASSICAL PERSPECTIVE In The Humanities

This is the seventh of Endowment-sponsored reading lists in its "Good Reading in the Humanities" series. Previous lists are available on request. This reading list was prepared by a committee of the American Philological Association: George Kennedy (chairman), Professor of Classics and Chairman of the Department of Classics, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Gerald M. Erickson, Professor of Classics, University of Minnesota; Frank R. Kramer, Professor of Classics, Heidelberg College; and Richard T. Scanlan, Professor of Classics, University of Illinois. Reader comments are invited.

The Subject

In recent years the study of the classics—for centuries the core of a liberal education—has been scrutinized from new points of view, including those originating with modern social sciences. One result has been to make the experience of Greece and Rome seem more real and more relevant to our own and to add a new perspective to man's perception of himself alongside the traditional view of the creative achievement of antiquity as a model of excellence. The following reading list illustrates some of these trends. It consists of two parts. The first is general and deals with the mind, the ideals, or the values of Greek and Roman man as seen from a variety of modern points of view. The second is more specific and contains books devoted to religion, attitudes of the classical world toward other races, toward violence and alienation, which may have particular relevance to our contemporary situation.

Good Reading: The Mind of Classical Man

THE GREEK EXPERIENCE. C. M. Bowra. *New York: New American Library. Originally published 1957. 211 pp. Available in paperback.*

An assessment of what is most characteristic and striking about the Greeks, written by a distinguished professional classicist. His approach is basically literary, here broadened by some discussion of religion, philosophy, history, and art. This is a wide-ranging general work, literate and genteel, reflecting a thorough knowledge of texts and discussions, which well presents the idealistic and rationalizing view of the classics. It is traditional in the best sense.

THE GREEKS AND THE IRRATIONAL. E. R. Dodds. *Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1951. 351 pp. Available in paperback.*

Perhaps the most influential book on classical studies in the last quarter century, *Dodds' Sather Lectures* stripped off the formalism and romantic preconcep-

tions often held in regard to the Greeks. They stood revealed as men with passions rarely more than partially controlled by the rational forces of politics and philosophy. Dodds' main emphasis is on the early period when the Greeks moved from a "shame" to a "guilt" culture, but he deals with later centuries when, as he puts it, the rider and his horse, man and his passions, rode to the jump and lost their nerve. The result was the collapse of civilization. Dodds is inclined to hope that the next try, aided by the understanding of psychology and the other sciences, may succeed.

ENTER PLATO: CLASSICAL GREECE AND THE ORIGINS OF SOCIAL THEORY. Alvin W. Gouldner. *New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1965. 407 pp. Available in paperback.*

Gouldner writes from the point of view of a sociologist. In the first part of the book he looks at the early culture of the Greeks and develops a theory of the "zero-sum contest" as characteristic of relationships between men or cities in Greece. It was a world of aggression in which there could only be a victory if there was also a commensurable defeat. In the second part Gouldner considers Plato and his attempt to develop social theory as "an alternative to politics." This involves him in discussion of Plato's "legitimation" of slavery and his choice of the dialogue form as a fantasy of social control.

THE GLORY OF HERA: GREEK MYTHOLOGY AND THE GREEK FAMILY. Philip E. Slater. *Boston: Beacon Press, 1968. 513 pp. Available in paperback.*

This is an example of the psychological approach to classical civilization, beginning with a detailed study of the Greek family. There is a hostile, consuming mother, the absent and idealized father, the narcissistic child. From these relationships, according to Slater, grew a male-dominated adult society which romanticized homosexuality. The second part of the book then examines the popular classical myths about gods and heroes, especially Dionysus and Heracles, in anthropological and psychological terms. The author's provocative conclusions take a long leap from Greek narcissism to the competitive, self-destructive forces of contemporary western civilization.

THE MORAL AND POLITICAL TRADITION OF ROME. Donald Earl. *Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1967. 167 pp.*

The Romans inherited traditions of their own which they often interpreted and revised in terms of Greek culture as they came increasingly into contact with it. Their most characteristic institutions were legal and political. The theme of this book is the relationship between morality and politics as seen in the history of the Roman oligarchy. A number of key Roman moral and political terms are examined: *nobilitas*,

which is not nobility; *fides*, which is not honesty; *virtus*, which is not virtue.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE ROMAN WORLD: GIBBON'S PROBLEM AFTER TWO CENTURIES. Edited by Lynn White, Jr. *Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1966. 321 pp.*

This collection of eleven historical essays is based on a symposium which sought to reconsider the fundamental questions on the decline and fall of the Roman empire 200 years after Gibbon had formulated them. What really happened between the third and the ninth century A.D.? Why did Gibbon in the 18th century interpret those developments as he did? And why does our "angle of vision" today differ from Gibbon's?

Good Reading: Some Special Topics of Classical and Modern Interest

DEMOKRATIA, THE GODS, AND THE FREE WORLD. James H. Oliver. *Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1960. 192 pp.*

Oliver seeks to show that Greek democracy and Roman constitutional government, two features of antiquity to which we feel especially close, always maintained a strong religious basis. Though its historical range is broad, this is a highly specific book which can help to give modern readers a much more accurate feel for a remarkable political development. They should not be put off by occasional short quotations in Greek.

BLACKS IN ANTIQUITY: ETHIOPIANS IN THE GRECO-ROMAN EXPERIENCE. Frank M. Snowden, Jr. *Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970. 364 pp. Available in paperback.*

This is a careful and readable study, based on both literary and archaeological evidence, of the extent to which African people were known to the Greeks and Romans and of the reception they found north of the Mediterranean. Snowden's conclusion is that the Greco-Roman view of blacks, at first a romantic idealization of distant, unknown people, on better acquaintance became a fundamental rejection of color as a criterion for evaluating men.

VIOLENCE IN REPUBLICAN ROME. A. W. Lintott. *New York: Oxford University Press, 1968. 234 pp.*

"Roman tradition tolerated and even encouraged violence in political and private disputes," according to Lintott. He examines the psychological background of violence in the later Roman republic, the forms which it took, and the attempts to control it. His conclusion is that moral failure contributed to the overthrow of the republic not because of its choice of or indifference to objectives, but through its choice of the means of political action including violence.

ENEMIES OF THE ROMAN ORDER: TREASON, UNREST, AND ALIENATION IN THE EMPIRE. Ramsay MacMullen. *Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966. 370 pp.*

MacMullen is concerned with threats to the order of the empire which replaced the disintegrated republic. He sees no significant struggle of class against class, but a drift of directing power outward and downward with anti-establishment forces appearing in each rul-

ing group in turn. He compares this to the French Revolution and implies that more modern parallels are not far to seek.

Suggestions For Discussion

1. For all the differences in detail, how different are modern man's goals, values, and his inner life from those in classical times? What qualities of life have we lost or gained? What changes have there been in the role and organization of the family and in the status of women? Have these all been good? In what way and to whom?
2. To what extent can a civilization which depended on slavery nevertheless be considered "a model of excellence"?
3. How valid as a commentary on our own political processes is the conclusion that the Roman Republic was overthrown not by the quality of its objectives but by its choice of violence as the means of political action? Or was the fall of Rome inevitable? Must all civilizations, including ours, decline and fall?
4. How much are modern institutions and artistic concepts still defined by Greek and Roman forms? In the genres of literature (epic, lyric, tragic, etc.) or in plastic arts? In political or social institutions vs. economic or psychological ones?
5. How pertinent to consideration of our environmental and other national crises are Plato's proposals for a holistic society whose value systems are integrated and whose priorities are the goods of the soul? Would concentration on "the goods of the soul" make for a more or less humane society?
6. The books listed above relate primarily to intellectual history but draw often on literary sources. To encounter directly classical ideas and ideals, read some of the following works in a modern English translation: Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*; Sophocles' *Antigone*; Aristophanes' *Clouds*; Plato's *Symposium*; Lucretius' *On the Nature of Things*; Suetonius' *Lives of the Caesars*; Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*. □

Autumn Deadlines

For action by March 1973, the following divisional deadlines will apply:

Education: Project and Planning grants: November 1, 1972;

Public: Film/TV: November 1, 1972; Special Projects: November 15, 1972;

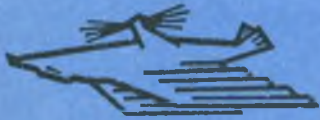
Fellowships in Selected Fields: Historical, social and cultural studies of U.S. ethnic minorities: November 6, 1972;

Youthgrants: December 3, 1972.

Research: for action by June 1973 the deadline is November 20, 1972. Projects relating to the Bicentennial are encouraged.

Prospective applicants should communicate with the appropriate division for specific information. □

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(DIALOGUE, Continued from page 5)

If you were a guest lecturer addressing a Political Science class, what would you say to arouse their interest in studying the Classics?

I might say this: Once upon a time there was a young republic which had only minor interest or importance in international affairs, devoting herself instead to internal development. Then came a day when she played a leading role in the victorious effort to defeat an aggressor who was threatening the entire free world. In gratitude, the other members of the victorious coalition acknowledged her leadership, through various treaties, and she became by far the richest and most powerful state in the free world. In time, however, her management of her power alienated her friends, and the world was more and more divided between her orbit and that of the second greatest power, a former ally. Finally she allowed herself to be drawn into a war with that former ally, and in spite of her incomparably greater wealth, freedom, and technical know-how, she was defeated and never became a world power again, except for one brief period—the republic is, of course, Athens between 480 and 380 B.C.

But what if someone in the class objected that his-

torical analogies are unverifiable?

Did I speak of an analogy? Did I mention two republics? But seriously, I would agree with him. On that particular analogy, I would say that he need not believe that America will share the fate of Athens; I don't think it will, either. In any analogy, the details are not the same; thus it would be unreasonable to assert that such constructs have predictive power. However, in this paralleling of Athens and America, I think our troubles are similar or analogous enough, as Thucydides puts it, to allow the experiences of the Athenians and Peloponnesians to be used as one important means of working our way toward a better understanding of our situation. But nothing of that sort is likely to happen unless outstanding people in both ancient and modern studies join in some productive, collaborative enterprises. That's what we're up to here; that's what we're trying to stimulate.

You're a revolutionist.

Yes, in a quiet way. Education itself is a revolutionary process, you know. There is no telling where it will end once you embark on it. But we are embarked on it—we and the rest of the world. So I think we should open up the focus. □