

# Building a Contemporary List of Texts for Teaching Greek on the Secondary Level

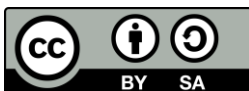
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**Abstract:** This article argues that it is necessary to redefine the canon of works of Greek literature that is read in schools. In addition, it undertakes the attempt to suggest directions in which we could look for new texts in this regard. An increasingly diverse student body and the emergence of new identities within Western Europe require us to go beyond the epic poetry of Homer and authors of the classical period. Pedagogical traditions and their limits of the past may not restrain us for the future. Neither in terms of its content nor in terms of the locations where it was written, was Greek literature ever restricted to what we today define as “Europe”.

**Keywords:** reading canon; teaching Greek; diversity; identity



## 1 Introduction

Why would you want to learn Greek (and so to study/read Greek literature) today? Ancient Greek in particular? I would assume, this is the most pressing question for every prospective student, for every parent of such a student, for everybody who already is enrolled as a student of Greek at any particular school or university, and ultimately for every teacher of Greek, too (cf. Adler, 2020; Aldenhoff, 2022; Sawert, 2018).

In order to answer this question directly, we need to take a little detour via Latin. There are those proponents of the classical languages – of Latin in particular – who point the prospective novice to all the supposedly nice side-effects of learning Latin: a thorough acquaintance with the methods of how to learn a language, a meticulous understanding of what is written in a sentence and what is not, certain advantages in understanding one’s own native language, a sensitivity for cultural developments over the ages, especially for one’s identity as a European, and so on and so forth (in particular Maier, 2014). Some of these arguments for learning Latin have come under heavy fire. Philologists have been accused of making their pertinent claims without any clear empirical data (cf. Gerhards et al., 2021, p. 310). And to portray the path of a learner of Latin as leading him or her on her or his way to understand the essence of European identity is highly problematic in a postcolonial society in which many other identities compete for attention (cf. Freund & Mindt, 2020; Grethlein, 2022). On the other hand, classical philologists have a long history of actually actively denying that there are practical advantages of knowledge acquired while learning Latin and Greek and while reading and interpreting Greek and Latin texts (cf. Eberle, n.d., pp. 6–8.). Purposelessness in fact was made the goal and signature characteristic of humanistic education in the old Gymnasium especially from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards until today (cf. Kranzendorf, 2018, pp. 13, 15f.). And this is where Greek comes into play. That teachers have tried to make extensive use of their subject’s alleged purposelessness is especially true of the teachers of Greek. Greek has been – and still is – taught mostly as the second “dead old” language in the Gymnasium after Latin. In Germany at least, there are only very few students in schools nationwide who decide to learn Greek without knowing Latin first. Therefore, the purposelessness of Latin looks to many people as if it would be squared if one should take both languages in school (cf. Schröder, 2022). And proponents of Greek sometimes bask in the claim that “purposeless” education is only complete when a student learns Greek. The German language without a doubt supports the thought: “zweckfrei” is not identical with “zwecklos”. Purposelessness, however, has to be affordable.<sup>1</sup> In this article, I would like to point out, however, that Greek in fact is fit to serve as a key to think about our current world beyond the limits that our own perception of “European” history has set for our thinking.

## 2 Greek for children

The fact that Greek in Germany is normally taught as your second old dead language has consequences for the teaching of Greek. Textbooks in fact heavily rely on their students’ grammatical and syntactical knowledge that they acquired when they learned Latin.<sup>2</sup> Phenomena like the different classes of declensions, the accusative with infinitive or the genitive absolute are nothing really new for the Latin student, but become a big problem for students who learned English and French only, for example, before starting to learn Greek, especially if they are – as they usually are – the minority in a class that consists of students with and without knowledge of Latin. Thus, there are not only the “usual”

<sup>1</sup> Also cf. Canfora (1982, pp. 5ff.), who emphasizes the connection between the political struggle surrounding the “Humanistisches Gymnasium” in Germany and the peak of Germany’s industrial and capitalistic development at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, there is no equivalent of Beyer (2019) for textbooks on ancient Greek.

problems of language-sensitive teaching that have to be dealt with (Große, 2014 [among others]; Große, 2017; Jahn, 2020; various articles in Karl & Tiedemann, 2018), but we encounter an additional set of linguistic challenges of diversity.<sup>3</sup> Yet, there is also an advantage to learn a new alphabet which in and by itself leads us to challenge common assumptions about scripts that seem to be indispensable even for “talking” to modern computers.

Aside from this “advantage” that Greek and Latin share some linguistic features (as other languages do, too): Where is the advantage of learning two ancient languages which at first sight seem to share the same culture and seem to come from the same civilizational background? What is the benefit of learning Greek in addition to Latin? This question, however, betrays that it is asked today. In antiquity, Latin was spoken in the West of the Mediterranean, Greek in the East. Both languages influenced each other.<sup>4</sup> Ill-willed people could say that our canonical order of the ancient languages is due to the fact that Latin is the mother of the colonial languages of modern times.<sup>5</sup> In spite of our ways to talk about Greco-Roman antiquity as if it was a monolithic cultural phenomenon without any differences and developments that allowed for variation and diversity, we need to begin to appreciate today that there is a significant overlap between those people who spoke Greek and those who spoke Latin, but that there are significant differences, too. Take, for example, Alexander and his immediate successors. The Roman empire later on differed a lot from Alexander’s realm not only in geographical terms and influenced different cultures and times. Alexander’s successors reigned in many countries that we today consider to be very foreign. Yet this very history connects us with the Near and Middle East even more closely than we typically are used to think.<sup>6</sup> And it is a popular claim, but absolutely not true, that the Romans translated everything that had any importance for today from the Greek (cf. e.g. Eberle, 1961, p. 9). This insight is not new, however. It was part of the core of Renaissance humanism already.<sup>7</sup>

If we turn to Wilhelm von Humboldt, we see that for him Greek language, literature, and civilization were the ideal against which we, particularly in German-speaking countries, would be able to reap the most benefits for our contemporary lives (cf. Rebenich, 2021, pp. 19–30). Greek political ideas and ideals, for example, were regarded as much more beneficial for Germans at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century than political habits of what was seen as Gallo-Roman centralism as documented by Napoleon’s ideals of government (cf. Rebenich, 2021, pp. 20, 30). Humboldt did not want us simply to repeat antiquity, but to improve our present with an eye on an idealistic picture of Greece that was heavily dependent on intellectual work done by Winckelmann, Schiller, Goethe and others (cf. Bölling, 2010, p. 28; Rebenich, 2021, pp. 19–30). This conviction was apparently shared by enough people at the time, so that it was possible to reserve a large number of weekly hours in school for learning Greek within the framework of the average lesson plan of a pupil in Prussia, even if this idea was met with skepticism (cf. Bölling, 2010, pp. 31, 35–37). At the same time, the Gymnasium soon was suspected of spreading republican ideas due to the fact that its students read and interpreted republican, even

<sup>3</sup> I do not know of any book or article that I could cite here. In my opinion, there is an urgent need for research on this topic for the instruction of Greek.

<sup>4</sup> Bilingualism, however, was of course not limited to Greek and Latin around the Mediterranean in antiquity (cf. the various articles in Adams et al., 2002).

<sup>5</sup> The history of Latin from antiquity through the Middle Ages to the Renaissance and the beginning of modern colonial times includes important documents about slavery as well as about the end of slavery (Adiele, 2021; Eckert, 2021; Fischer, 2018; Flaig, 2018). The term “Kolonialsprachen” in German used to mean those languages that were spoken in the then existing colonies. Cf., e.g., the then so-called *Zeitschrift für Kolonialsprachen*, which was established in 1910. Today, this term’s meaning obviously has changed significantly.

<sup>6</sup> These ties consist of more than politics and war (McEvelley, 2002, on philosophy and McLaughlin, 2016, on trade).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Erasmus of Rotterdam: “Sed in primis ad fontes ipsos properandum, id est Graecos et antiquos” (*De ratione studii ac legendi interpretandique auctores*, 1511) (cf. Kipf, 2005, p. 58).

democratic authors (cf. Bölling, 2010, p. 33). And this was the case not only in Prussia, but also in Bavaria and other states which had hitherto formed the Holy Roman Empire (cf. Bölling, 2010, pp. 35, 50–56). Thus, the aftermath of the battle of Jena-Auerstedt and Napoleon's occupation of Berlin were very significant also for the history of education in Prussia (cf. Osterhammel, 2012, pp. 7–8).

In short, learning Greek was regarded as an indispensable part of the young generation's education for the future that would lead the country into a better era. In doing so, by the way, Humboldt himself did not think that Greek should be a subject that would be restricted to the very few members of the future elite. In his "Litauischem Schulplan", for example, he foresees lessons in Greek for future cabinet makers, not just university students.<sup>8</sup> And the Germans were not the only ones who turned to ancient Greece (and their literature) for inspiration at the time. Look at the debates among the American Founding Fathers roughly thirty years before Humboldt initiated the Prussian education reform.<sup>9</sup> This latter reform later came to be called a part of the German New Humanism ("Neuhumanismus") by Friedrich Paulsen in 1884, when people in Prussia among others debated again what role this old Humboldtian Gymnasium and Latin and Greek would be able to play in times of industrialization and nationalism (Paulsen, 1884; cf. Prange, 2010). Emperor Wilhelm II was opposed to educating little Romans and Greeks, as he put it, but wished that young Germans would emerge from German schools.<sup>10</sup> Greek as a subject in school had come to be seen as revolutionary and politically suspect since the so-called Concert of Europe (cf. Bölling, 2010, p. 33; Fuhrmann, 2001, pp. 159–172). The amount of time allotted to instruction in Greek had subsequently been reduced significantly in comparison to Humboldt's original plans for the Gymnasium in Prussia – or Friedrich Immanuel Niethammer's plans for the Bavarian Gymnasium.<sup>11</sup>

### 3 Greek for the future

Let's leap ahead in time: We do not have to turn to Pierre Bourdieu in order to anticipate that no small part of the answer to the question what the study of Greek in today's classroom has to offer to contemporary students will be directed by the prospects that Greek offers you for your private and professional life.<sup>12</sup> And I would like to point your attention not only to German classrooms, but also to classrooms worldwide. Tim Sawert has recently shown that for some people in those German schools which his study examined, the expectation of gaining social prestige from learning Greek apparently outweighs the potential disadvantage resulting from the missed opportunity to learn a living language instead (Sawert, 2018). Sawert's thesis has come under heavy fire from teachers of the classical languages, so that Gerhards, Sawert and Kohler published a statement (n.d.) that tried to rebut many of the criticisms as they are summarized by Beyer, Liebsch and Kipf (cf. Beyer et al., 2019; Gerhards et al., n.d.). At the end of their statement, Gerhards, Sawert, and Kohler expressed their surprise that teachers of the classical languages were

<sup>8</sup> „Auch Griechisch gelernt zu haben könnte auf diese Weise dem Tischler ebenso wenig unnütz seyn, als Tische zu machen dem Gelehrten.“ (Von Humboldt, 1920, p. 278)

<sup>9</sup> Greco-Roman antiquity provided the models and anti-models for the generation of politicians who founded the United States of America (cf. Richard, 1995, pp. 232–243). Also cf. Ricks (2020, p. 3): "Colonial classicism was not just about ideas. It was part of the culture, a way of looking at the world and a set of values." At the same time, German New Humanism heavily influenced intellectual debates in the United States as well (cf. Winterer, 2002, pp. 50–62). In the light of current debates, it will be very interesting to see how the role of classical antiquity for the United States of America and its society will be assessed during the celebrations of the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the independence of the formerly British colonies in 2026.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. the emperor's opening speech during the "Schulkonferenz" in 1890 cf. Stiewe (2011, p. 1).

<sup>11</sup> On the development of the amount of time allotted to Greek and Latin in Prussia between 1816 and 1938 cf. Bölling (2010, p. 133). On Niethammer's efforts in regard to reforming the curriculum in schools in Bavaria cf. Fuhrmann (2001, p. 154), Schwarzmaier (1937, pp. 93f.) and Tenorth (2009, p. 72).

<sup>12</sup> On Bourdieu's theories on education and social status cf., e.g., Bremer (2008).

not happy with the positive connotations that people apparently ascribe to the canon of subjects in what is generally called “humanistisches Gymnasium” (cf. Gerhards et al., n.d., p. 6). Of course, people – some people – think that an education which includes Greek is beneficial to them. And this fact is wonderful, no doubt. Yet, this praise by Gerhards, Kohler and Sawert is poisoned, needless to say. Just as Humboldt did not reserve Greek to the elite, teachers of the classical languages do not want their subjects to be perceived as being elitist or even catering to some right-wing Eurocentric ideology of the oldest dead white males (cf., e.g., Doepner & Keip, 2021, pp. 2f.; Grethlein, 2022; Wesselmann, 2021; Zuckerberg, 2018).

Secondly, what I perceive as inherently problematic in Sawert’s study and the subsequent publication by Gerhards, Kohler and Sawert, is the fact that they equate the clientele that chooses to learn Greek with those parts of society that are usually identified as the traditional bourgeoisie. Moreover, they claim to have found out that choosing classical languages as a subject in school serves this bourgeoisie as a strategy to reproduce itself. In doing so, admittedly, they are by no means alone. In the US, for example, Classics both in high school and at the university level is widely seen as catering to the old WASP (White Anglo Saxon Protestant) elite even if in the US just as in France, for example, or in Great Britain, in Switzerland, or in Germany, studies and various projects show that potential advantages of learning classical languages are not restricted to the financially well-off upper classes.<sup>13</sup> Sawert and his colleagues, on the other hand, claim that there are no such advantages of learning dead languages. But most of all, societies and their composition are changing rapidly on both sides of the Atlantic (cf. Reckwitz, 2020, p. 77).

According to Bolte and Hradil (1988, p. 220),<sup>14</sup> around 1960 society in Germany looked like this: 58 percent of the population were equally distributed around the statistical center of society. The overlap of the so-called “old” middle class and the so-called “new” middle class as well as the so-called “working class” was quite significant.

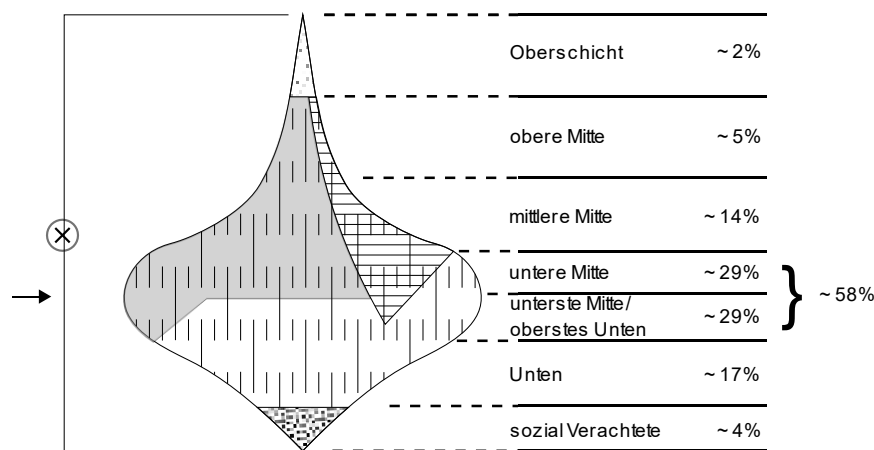


Figure 1: Makeup of society in Germany around 1960 (<https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bolte-Zwiebel>; cf. also Bolte & Hradil, 1988, p. 220)

Even in the 1980s, the old bourgeoisie of the days of Wilhelm von Humboldt did not exist in Germany anymore (cf. Kruse, 2012). Society had changed over the course of two wars and the Weimar Republic. Afterwards, the shape of society in industrial times after WWII, which was called “nivellierte Mittelstandsgesellschaft”, had to make room for a

<sup>13</sup> Cf., e.g., Bryant (2021), Kipf (2014), Rioux (2021), Wesselmann & Walker (2021) and also the program called “Diversity, Equity & Inclusion” launched by Cambridge University Press (<https://view.ceros.com/cambridge/latin-diversity-inclusion/p/1>).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. also similar analyses by other scholars, e.g. Reckwitz (2020, pp. 72–77).

new postindustrial society in recent decades, even if the nostalgic memory of the “Mittelstandsgesellschaft” still exists and continues to exert its own power (cf. Reckwitz, 2020, p. 77). Within this larger development, the segment of society that considered itself the bourgeoisie upper class in the 1980s has, according to Reckwitz’ analysis, shrunk significantly. According to his analysis, our current society shows the trend to favor singular achievements of individuals over universal attributes of larger groups. As a consequence, it seems, the larger middle class in a way had to make room for a plurality of more individual niches. This trend also becomes visible if one compares Bolte and Hradil’s (1988) account of Germany’s society of the 1960s with the SINUS-Institute’s analysis of the various groups and strata within Germany’s society in 2021 (cf. SINUS-Institut, 2021). The middle class consists of less than 50 percent of society. If we were to believe Sawert, as classical philologists we need to look at the members of the bourgeoisie in particular. The possible descendants of the old bourgeoisie account for approximately 30 percent of society and belong to all kinds of layers of society.

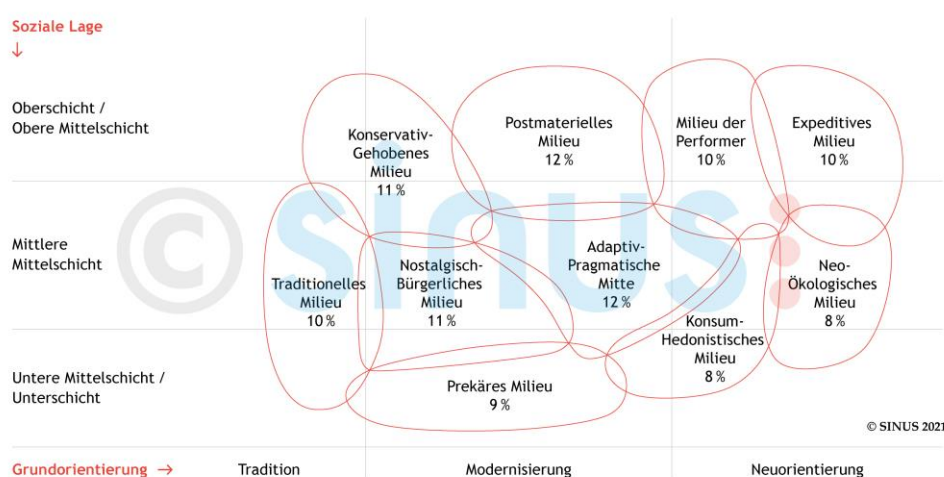


Figure 2: Makeup of society in Germany in 2021 (SINUS-Institut, 2021)

Thus, we see that the remains of the group that Sawert calls “Bildungsbürgertum” dwindled in terms of its percentage of the total population and split up into various and rather heterogeneous groups.

Sawert, as I said above, claims that this old bourgeoisie class wants to beget descendants of itself by means of teaching Latin and Greek (cf. esp. Sawert, 2018, p. 20). This may in part be true, but surely does not reflect the whole picture in today’s society any more. Instead, teachers of the classical languages have to reach out to new audiences and are eager to meet new expectations of the newly developed and more heterogeneous society (cf., e.g., Vogel, 2019). There is an urgent need to examine what all these groups of our society want from school in general and from Greek in particular. And at least some of us would like to see that children in school get an education in literature and culture and also in literatures and cultures of the past as well as of our present.

If the teachers of Greek would be content and agree with Sawert’s findings, they would be tying their fate to the sinking videlicet already sunken ship of the “nivellierte Mittelstandsgesellschaft”. As the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* reported last year on June 19<sup>th</sup>, then Foreign Minister Maas was of the opinion that his office was still fighting “die Folgen von Überresten elitär-bildungsbürgerlicher Inhalte” (cf. Kohler, 2021). Therefore, if Sawert’s thesis would be true, knowing Greek would be something that would not recommend you for service as a German diplomat. On the other hand, learning Greek then also would not appeal to Sawert’s “Bildungsbürgertum” anymore.

Instead, we simply have got to look at the texts that we read and the topics that we talk about in our Greek classes and question whether they still matter today. Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff did nothing else when he edited his *Griechisches Lesebuch* in 1902 in response to Wilhelm II. and other detractors of the usefulness of Greek in high school and for the young adult and for his or her future (von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, 1902).<sup>15</sup>

*Tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in illis*, of course. For example, in difference to von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff's times, today we would not be able to claim that the ultimate goal of teaching Greek in schools would be to win the students' souls for the Christian kingdom of God (cf. Canfora, 1982, p. 16). Needless to say, Greek was and still is very important for Christianity. Yet we can hear in Greek about many other beliefs, too. Von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff's *Lesebuch* aspired to broaden the horizon of the instruction of Greek beyond the classicistic canon and beyond the Greco-Roman Mediterranean (cf. Canfora, 1982, p. 19). We still need to execute what he set out to do. And maybe our times require that we do it even more than the times of the end of the German Empire and the Weimar Republic.

In my opinion, Greek – as well as other subjects in school, too – needs to be able to explain today what globalization is, what gender is, what language is, what culture is, independently of your background. What does the term heritage mean? Do we need to be choked by all that “old stuff” and “our” past? What exactly does “our” mean? Can we still create and accept new things?

#### 4 Outline for a new canon

I would suggest that we will have to read more about Alexander the Great, Hellenism, the literature of the imperial age, and Byzantine times. Aristotle's claim which he made in his *Politics* that there are slaves by nature, today needs to be included in the canon of texts that have to be read and discussed in school because it used to inflict so much suffering worldwide throughout modern history (*Politica* 1253b1–1255b40). Greek antiquity was neither an ideal nor a perfect world. Greek authors did not know modern racism, but they actually had to deal with their own prejudices against the Romans, the Jews, the Spartans, the Egyptians, the Persians and so forth and vice versa, too.<sup>16</sup> Yet we need to ask how and why people over the ages, including the Ottoman Empire and the “Latin” West, learned or failed to learn Greek. We need to do that, because it will yield an answer to why Europe was and still is split into a Western and an Eastern part. Greek and Latin alphabets, the division of the Roman Empire in 395 AD, and the schism of 1054 between the Eastern Orthodox and the Roman Catholic churches among other things have a lot to do with it (cf. Gahbauer, 1997, esp. Sections I and II). Also, the struggle between the Byzantine Empire and the Ottoman Empire had its consequences which continue to exert their influence still today (cf., e.g., von Schwerin, 2021). We can find reflections of that mixture of confrontation and collaboration in texts from that era that are employing classical Greek and classical role models of literary genres.<sup>17</sup> In other words, today's proponents of European integration also need to look at the roots of European disintegration, too.<sup>18</sup> And Johannes' Reuchlin's *de arte cabalistica* – in Latin –

<sup>15</sup> This book was quite successful (cf. Canfora, 1982, p. 14).

<sup>16</sup> Classical scholarship often failed to recognize its own theoretical foundation of how it talked about racism in antiquity. A case in point would be the scholarly treatment of Alexander and the weddings at Susa (cf. Diller, 1937, and McCoskey, 2021a, p. 1; see also Derbew, 2022; Isaac, 2004; McCoskey, 2019).

<sup>17</sup> Take the *Dialogues with a Persian* of Manuel II Palaiologus, for example (cf. Förstel, 1995). It caused quite a stir, when then Pope Benedict XVI quoted from one of these dialogues on September 12, 2006.

<sup>18</sup> It will not be sufficient to look at Europa and the bull on a 2 Euro coin and to think about whether that coin represents a reception of pertinent texts of Moschus or Ovid or wall paintings from Pompeii or elsewhere (cf. Wesselmann, 2021). By way of a side note, Anthony Doerr in his recent novel entitled “Cloud Cuckoo Land” (New York, 2021) connects Aristophanes' *Birds*, Antonius Diogenes' *Apista*, Apuleius'

presents us with an image of an Istanbul that looks like an ideal city for culture, philosophy and religious pluralism, basking in international flair, but not like a rundown city that would be occupied by a despot (cf. Reuchlin, 2010, pp. 36–39). These texts are not so much a “neutral space”. History happened and it grew out of sometimes conflicting interests and intentions of certain groups. A careful analysis of past ideas about what the future was supposed to look like and a diligent comparison with what that future, which actually is our present, now looks like should yield interesting questions and responses, maybe even answers.

Equally, we cannot be content any more with reading excerpts from the New Testament to fulfill our duties towards religious studies. Statistically, the religious background of our society in Germany will not even be predominantly Christian any more soon (cf. already Dobrinski, 2019). Therefore, Federal President Theodor Heuss probably would not repeat today that Europe was built on three hills in Rome, Athens, and Jerusalem only (Heuss, 1956, p. 32). And there are sources in Greek on the twelve Olympians, the Jews, Christians, Buddhism, the Quran, other religious beliefs, and atheism as well. Greek as a subject in school has to satisfy today’s demands of religious pluralism and is able to do that. On the other hand, why did Thomas More let his daughter learn Greek in the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century?<sup>19</sup> Why did Henry VIII order the professors at Oxford University to start teaching Greek?<sup>20</sup> They apparently wanted to overcome the backwardness of English affairs at the time.<sup>21</sup> (Thomas More, by the way, was of the opinion that a student would need to start to learn Greek and Latin at the same time, not one after the other [Schmidt, 2009, p. 236]). Why were the National Socialists in Germany opposed to, for example, Socrates, Alexander, and Demosthenes (cf. Chapoutot, 2014, pp. 210, 224ff., 357–361)? Where did their fascination with Sparta come from (cf. Chapoutot, 2014, pp. 227–238)? Their racism opposed ideas that are supporting a different, inclusive look at the world beyond Grecocentrism. The reception of Greek antiquity and the development of this reception is an important field through which our present can be understood and our future can be built.

Let us look at three more examples which hopefully will show why Greek is not an elitist subject in school. Nor should Greek be used to foster any classism. On the contrary, Greek can serve as a corrective.

Some people try to trace their definition of “Europe” to antiquity. Did, however, Herodotus really want to establish a dichotomy between Europe and Asia or rather between the Greeks and the Persians? And in how far do other peoples like the Phoenicians fit this picture? If we do not know anything about those ancient texts any more, we will fall prey to nationalist or even fascist interpretations of movies like *300* (cf. White, 2007). The line “This is Sparta!” from this movie may be famous, but cannot be found in Herodotus’ text.

Winston Churchill, when writing about WWII, used Thucydides and his description of the Peloponnesian War as a role model just as Livy had alluded to the Greek historian in his proem of his account of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Punic War (cf. Schelske, 2014, p. 82). Both wanted to make the purpose of their new books clear by quoting or alluding to Thucydides. Thereby they practiced what even more authors had done in the past, too. Take Sallust,

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*Golden Ass*, the siege of Constantinople, contemporary Idaho, and a sci-fi spaceship called “Argo”. Antiquity is by no means dead. Ancient Greek literature and our knowledge of it, as Doerr’s example shows, cannot be restricted and was never limited to premedieval times. On Apuleius’ *Golden Ass* see Doepner (pp. 134–152 in this volume).

<sup>19</sup> In the movie *A Man for All Seasons* (1966, Zinnemann), More’s daughter impresses even Henry VIII to the degree that he feels intellectually threatened by her abilities to converse in Latin.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. More’s letter to the University of Oxford (March 29, 1518) and Schmidt (2009, pp. 82f.). The letter can be found in More (1986).

<sup>21</sup> In his aforementioned letter to the professors at Oxford, More undertakes to show them how much their opposition against Greek differs from the consensus of all educated people, the decisions of councils of the church, the opinions of the three most influential people in England, and also the views held by their peers at Cambridge.



for example (cf. already Scanlon, 1980). Thucydides mattered time and again. It is necessary to know his text in order not to understand contemporary history primarily, but to grasp the meaning of the various interpretations of history as well as of present events.<sup>22</sup> One only has to look at the role of Thucydides in the debate about the Second Iraq War, for example. The same holds true of the role of his account of the plague in comparison to Covid-19 (cf., e.g., Fins, 2020).

When Wonder Woman, for example, recently identified Ludendorff's "Peace is only an armistice in an endless war." as a quote from Thucydides, it becomes clear, that Humboldt's recommendation that a carpenter needs to know Greek has almost become a requirement for today's moviegoers in order to understand contemporary pop culture and its fallacies. As far as we know, this alleged quote has been falsely ascribed to Thucydides and has been included in the movie rather naively as a "true" quote from this Athenian author. After all, DC's Ludendorff is surprised that Wonder Woman appreciates his quote: "Ah! You know your ancient Greeks?" As a matter of fact, it seems that the makers of this movie did not really know their ancient Greeks (cf. Miltimore, 2017). But in difference to General Ludendorff from DC Comics, we live in an age which has abandoned the concept of "high culture" for the most part.<sup>23</sup> Aristophanes for one wrote exactly about the dangers as well as about the beautiful aspects of shifting views of the role of research, truth, and education in a split society in his "Clouds".<sup>24</sup>

To summarize: We need to follow in von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff's footsteps, continue in his direction and write a new primer for teaching Greek language and culture that will enable us to educate our society's children for the world of tomorrow on the basis of today's world and its genesis.

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<sup>22</sup> This is true not only for historiography, but also in other genres of literature. The comic books about Asterix, for example, tell us a lot about how we today perceive antiquity and how this perception also changed over the years (cf. Fündling, 2020, pp. 54ff.).

<sup>23</sup> On the pertinent debate cf., e.g., van den Haak (2018).

<sup>24</sup> Of course, his piece is meant as a caricature (cf. Holzberg, 2010, pp. 108f.).

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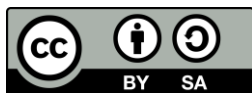
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