

The Future of the Classics: Introduction

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I firmly believe that if modern Western society is to continue to endorse the study of the Classics, it is essential that we, as classicists, actively participate in a public discussion of what exactly it means to pursue such study. Too often, we allow anachronistic definitions of our field and its significance to populate the marketplace of ideas. Do we really expect those who hold power over the dollars that fund education to make informed decisions about the value of Classics if we ourselves are not regularly reminding them of exactly what that value is? The following papers represent an effort to contribute to such a discussion of the discipline, its value and concerns for the future, and to foster an on-going, public debate of the future of the Classics. When I was first asked by the editorial team of *Expositions* to offer my ruminations on the state of Classics, I had the good fortune to be in residence at the Center for Hellenic Studies (CHS). As one of CHS's missions is to act as a conduit between classicists and society at large, I, in consultation with the Director and the rest of the management team, arranged to host a symposium on the future of the Classics, in order to provide a jumping off point for a self-examination of the discipline, in the hopes of spurring more analysis and debate. The breadth we were seeking is embodied in the contributors themselves, who represent several countries, from Greece to the US, and have various institutional associations, from middle schools to top-rank research universities. The resultant picture of the state of the discipline contained in these papers is rather varied and nuanced, informing as much through the similarities as the differences revealed in each contribution. Yet, the contributions all share a basic approach, in that each surveys the past with an eye toward how that past has shaped the present state of the discipline, finally offering some suggestions for the future. As evidence of the fecundity of this approach, many unforeseen connections and unaddressed problems, as well as other visions of the state of the discipline and its future, were broached in discussion after the oral presentation of the papers. While it has proven impossible here to include a sense of the vibrant discussion that followed the live presentation of the papers (presented to an audience of classicists at CHS and broadcast on their website), I encourage readers to watch a recording of the original event (including both the papers and discussion) at the following url: <http://vimeo.com/channels/chsfellows>. It seems that such a broad-ranging and free discussion of the state of Classics as a discipline could only be possible in the context of the Center for Hellenic Studies. Indeed, time and again CHS has shown its leadership in the field (and in the Academy more generally) by supporting innovative projects that address concerns far beyond those deemed traditional, and the present endeavor owes its existence to the Center's progressive agenda. I especially would like to thank Greg Nagy (the director of CHS), Kenny Morell, and Doug Frame for marshaling the resources of the Center for

Hellenic Studies in support of this project. Special thanks are due to Rob Jensen, for recording the symposium; and to Ruth Taylor, Lanah Koehl, and Allie Marbry for ensuring all aspects of the event came off without a hitch. It remains to thank my fellow contributors, who took time out of their ongoing work to share their thoughts on the state of the discipline – these papers stand as testaments to their commitment to fostering the kind of public debate without which the future of the Classics would be rather uncertain.