

Why the Classics matter: Ancient Greece and the modern university

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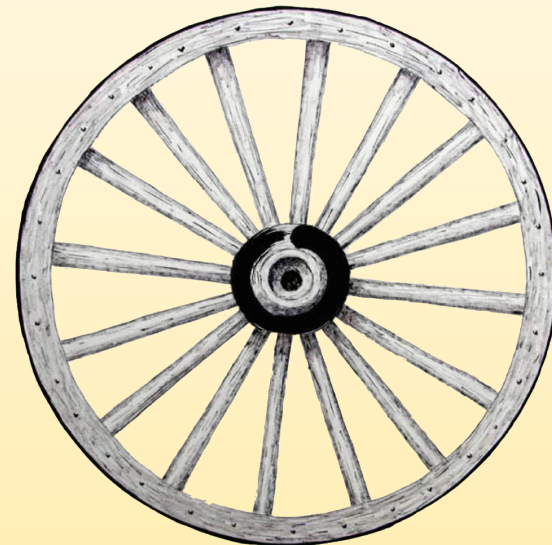


Focus on the hub



An exploration into
understanding who we are

What do we (here, now) have
in common?



My argument

- ◆ We share a western academic culture grounded in humanism
- ◆ Modern university is fragmented, unbalanced
- ◆ Need to rediscover humanist *core*
- ◆ Classical culture shows how
 - Beautiful, memorable, inspiring
 - Balance familiar and alien
 - Older than our divisive assumptions
 - Very, very easy to lose

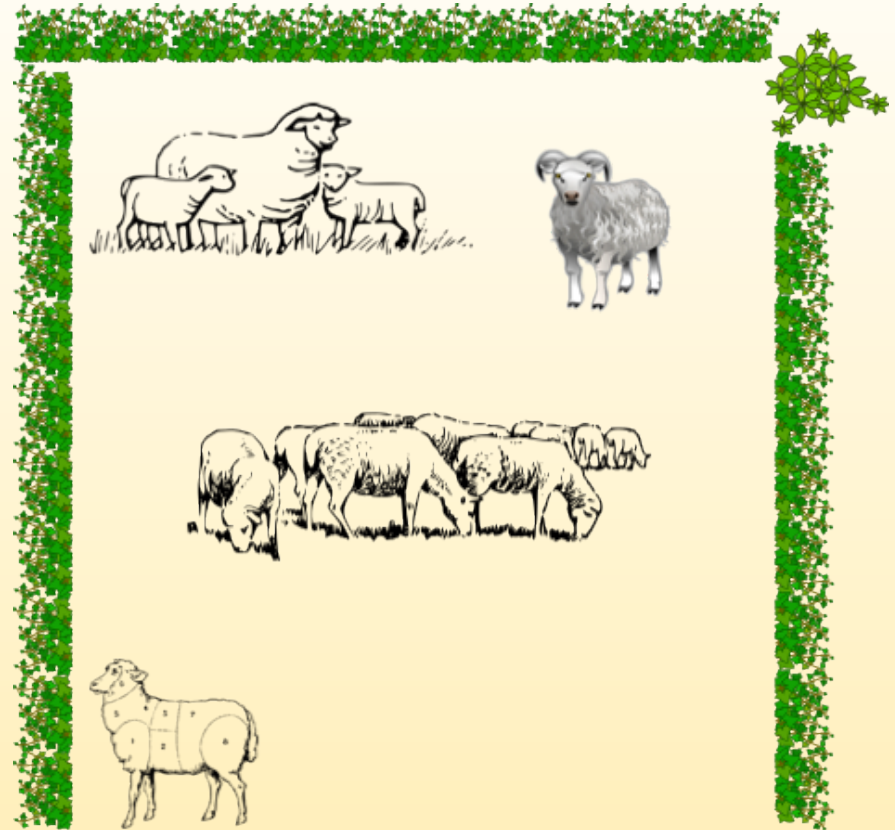
a little parable

Once upon a time...

Sheep were scary.
Some had big horns.
We drew pictures and
told stories about them.
And kept our distance.

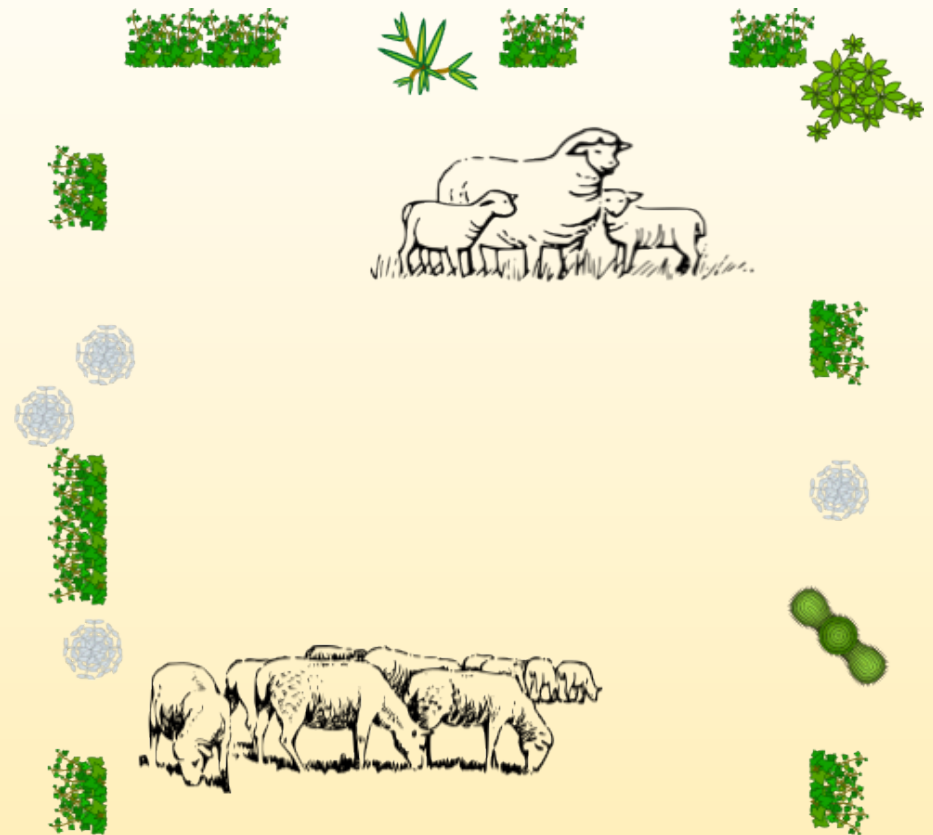


Then we built a hedge.
It was easier to grow and
catch the sheep!
Some sheep weren't so
scary after all!
Yummy, yummy sheep...



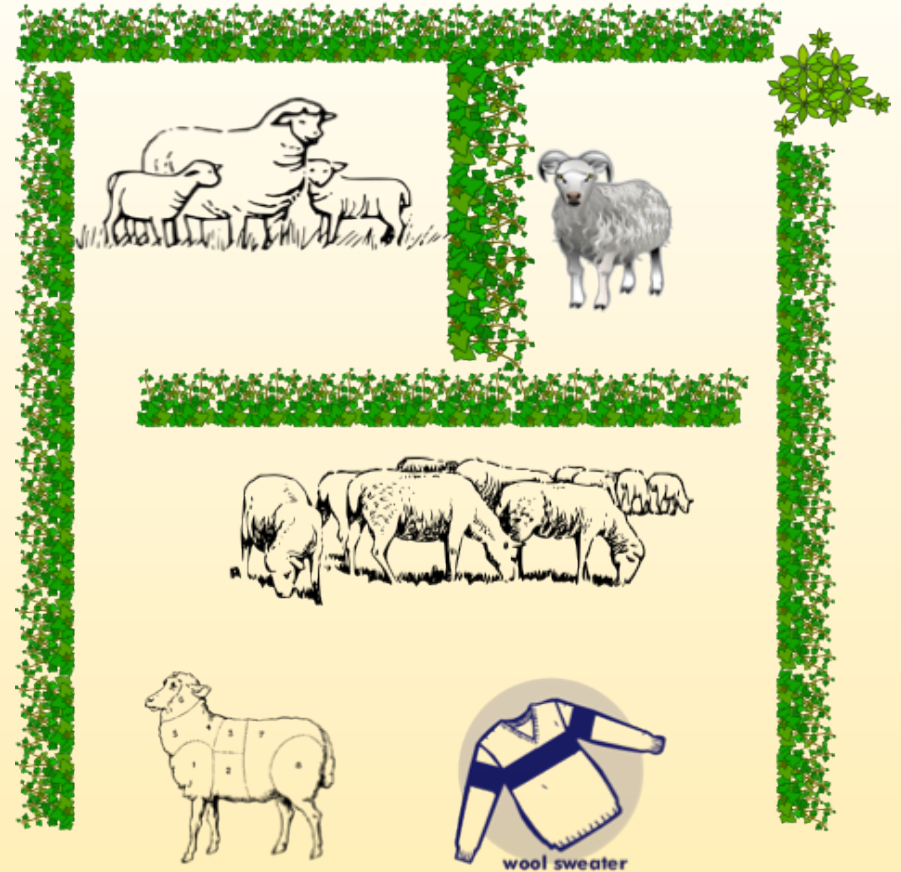
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We neglected the hedges.
Tasty sheep wandered off.
Wooly ones ran away.
Scary ones disappeared.
We were hungry and cold.
And sad.



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So, we built new hedges, to
separate the flocks.
Now, we could shear some.
Eat others.
And just look at some.
But the sheep got lazy.



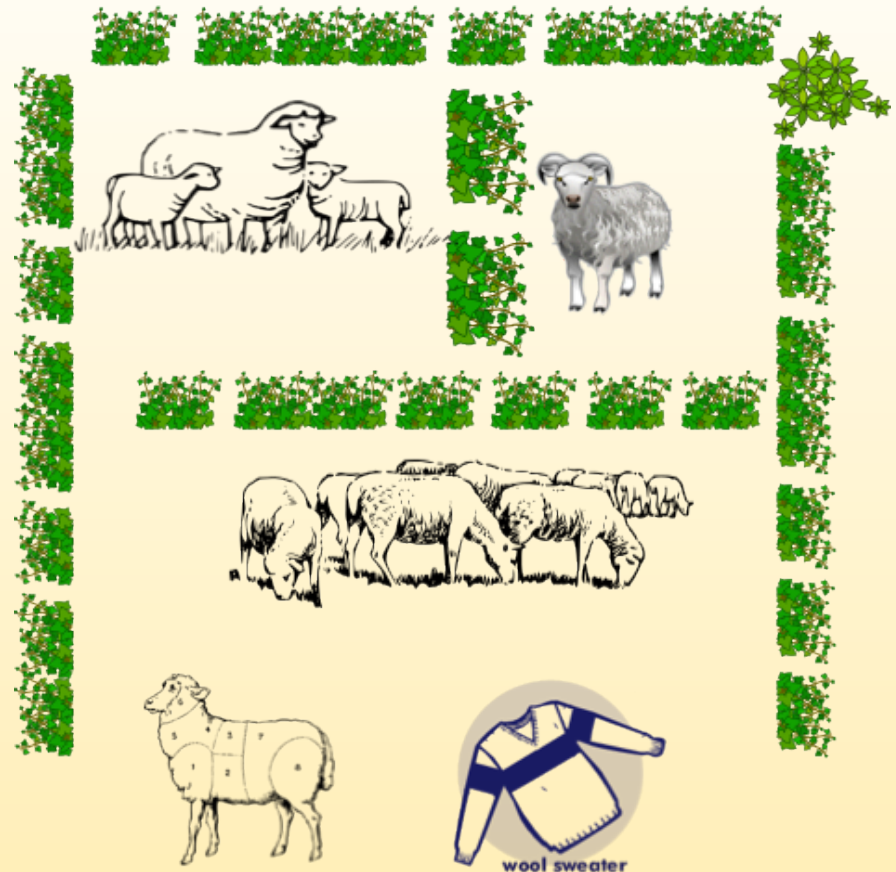
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So, we added little gaps, all
over the place.

Too small for sheep.

Some ran away.

Some stood very, very still.



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An elder suggested, let's...

Rebuild the ancient hedge.

Bring all the sheep together.

Put yummy greens in the middle.

Let all the sheep mingle.

Let the sheep be sheep.



History of the western university



- ◆ *Prehistory*: “Europeans” told stories
- ◆ *Classical Greece*: Enter the Academy
- ◆ *Middle ages*: Long periods of neglect
- ◆ *Renaissance*:
 - Classics (re)discovered
 - Science (re)emerges
 - Universitas Magistorum et Scholarium
- ◆ *Today*: Intellectual fracking
- ◆ *Tomorrow(?)*: Restore the classical academy, based on our common western heritage

Classics and Humanism

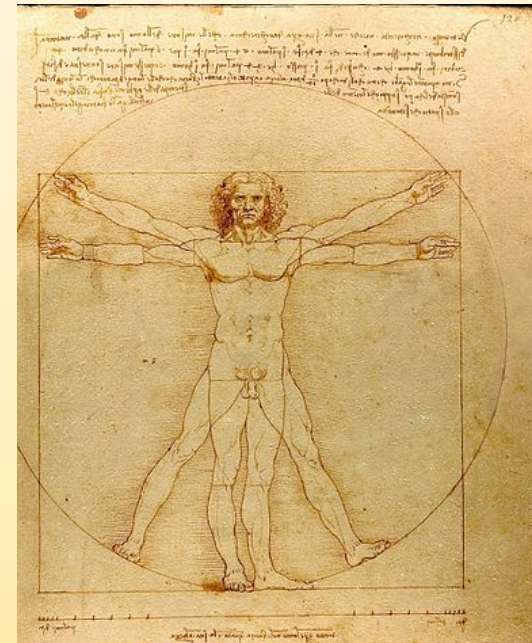
“Man is the measure of all things” (Πρωταγόρας/
Protagoras)

Reason

Passion

Community

- ◆ We share specific “excellences” with which we can
 - understand the world (Science)
 - understand war and peace (History)
 - live together (Democracy)

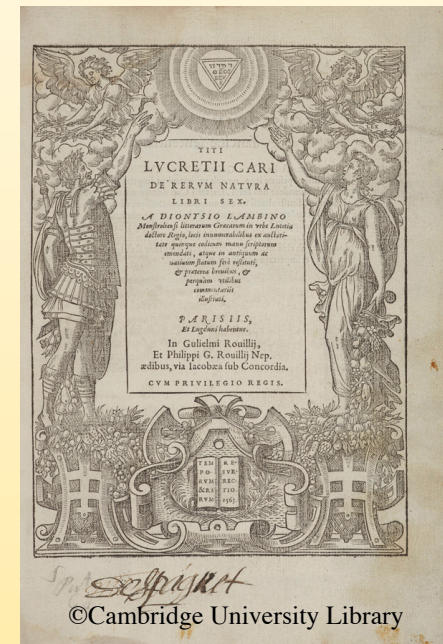


Understanding the world

I write clear verse about dark matters...
To rim the lesson, as it were, with honey,
Hoping, this way, to hold your mind with verses
While you are learning all that form, that pattern
Of the way things are. (Lucretius)

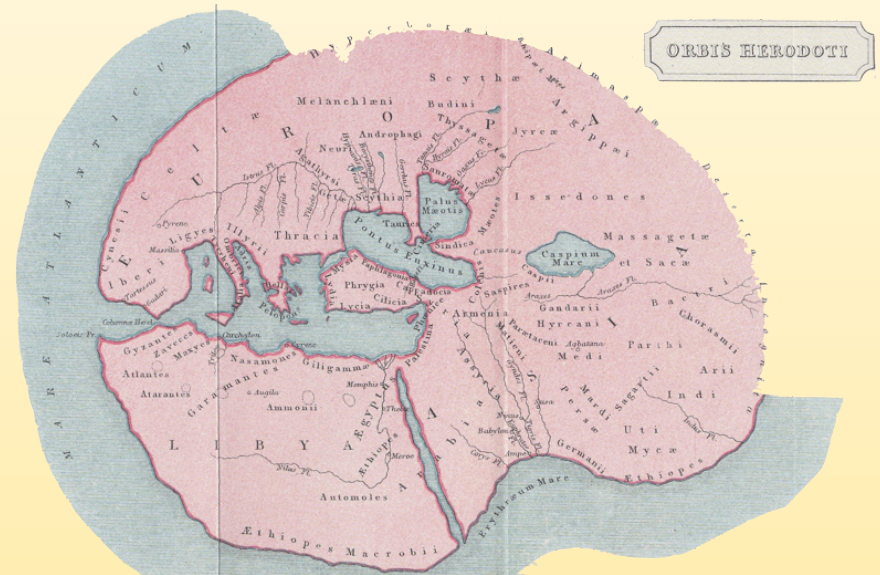


Marine Biology Lab. Woods Hole, MA.



War and Peace

(my) Researches are here set down to preserve the memory of the past by putting on record the astonishing achievements both of our own and of other peoples, and of how they came into conflict. (Ἡροδότου/Herodotus)



Living together

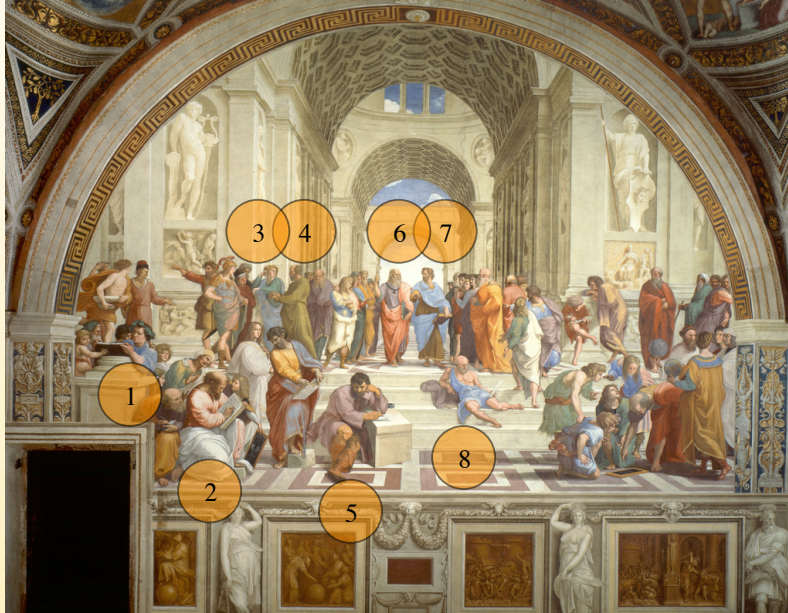
Justice will not come to Athens until those who are not injured are as indignant as those who are injured.
(Θουκυδίδης/Thucydides)



© theclovenfoot



Why the Greek classics?



School of Athens (Rafael). In the Vatican.

1. Epicurus
2. Pythagorus
3. Xenophon
4. Socrates
5. Heraklitus (Michelangelo)
6. Plato (Leonardo da Vinci)
7. Aristotle
8. Diogenes

UI Humanities Exploration: jaf 1/31/12

- ♦ Students will understand more
- ♦ Our graduates will be better citizens
- ♦ Invite research into **big** questions
- ♦ Promote university-wide academic discourse
- ♦ Obligation to ancestors and progeny

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Remember the sheep

Ignorant people don't know what good they hold in their hands until they've flung it away. (Σοφοκλής/Sophocles)



Thank you, to my teachers

- ◆ Leon Kass
- ◆ Amy Kass
- ◆ Cecelia Luschnig
- ◆ Rosanna Lauriola
- ◆ Larry Forney
- ◆ Holly Wichman

Suggested readings

- ♦ *Iliad and Odyssey*, Homer. Richard Lattimore's translation
- ♦ *The Swerve: How the world became modern*, Greenblatt
- ♦ *The Trial of Socrates*, IF Stone
- ♦ *The forgotten revolution: how science was born in 300 BC and why it had to be reborn*, L Russo
- ♦ *History of the Peloponesian War*, Thudydides
- ♦ *Histories*, Herodotus
- ♦ *On the nature of things*, Lucretius. Humphrey's translation