



Thomas Jefferson and His Philhellenism

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First, some introductory remarks on the classics, philhellenism, and the founders of the American Republic. The defeat of the British in 1781 at Yorktown ended the military phase of the American War of Independence, and the Treaty of Paris of 1783 officially gave birth to a new nation. But one or thirteen nations? Even before the Declaration of Independence, leaders of the thirteen colonies realized the necessity for a common constitution and an effective administration which would unite the thirteen states into one.

But what kind of a constitution? What form of government? An Athenian type of direct democracy, or Roman republicanism? Carthaginian aristocracy, or Spartan mixed democracy? What happens if in adopting an Athenian type of democracy it breaks down and leads to a civil war, as happened in the Golden Age of Athens? And what kind of guarantees are there to safeguard Roman republicanism from breaking down into military dictatorships and imperialism as it did in the Roman republic during the first century before Christ?

These and other similar questions were raised before and after the Constitutional Convention of 1787 in Philadelphia. On the basis of a common core of classical learning, the Founding Fathers in their debates appealed to classical antiquity for lessons and guidance. The Federalist Papers reveal that the Founding Fathers were well read in the classics and some of them knew Greek and Latin. Plato and Aristotle, Herodotus and Thucydides, Polybios and Plutarch, Sallust and Livy, Cicero and Tacitus served as sources for the drawing of parallels and lessons.

Greek and Latin were systematically taught in the nine Colonial Colleges, from Harvard, Dartmouth, Brown and Yale in the North, to King's College (Columbia), Queen's College (Rutgers), College of New Jersey (Princeton) and Pennsylvania in the center, to William

and Mary in the South. For some thirty years in particular, between 1760 and 1790, the Greek and Latin classics enjoyed a great popularity in the thirteen states. Writing in 1765, the Bostonian John Adams advised: "Let us study ... the history of the ancient ages; contemplate the great examples of Greece and Rome..." For Adams "the republics of Greece and Rome were the seats of liberty." In a letter to Lafayette, he adds: "Two republican powers, Athens and Rome, have done more honor to our species (humanity) than all the rest of it. A new country can be planted only by such government."

Though Adams admired both Athens and Rome, he judged Sparta's constitution to be a model for the new nation. Sparta for him was a model of freedom and order, a stable, long-lived commonwealth, its people distinguished by virtue, simple life-style, patriotism, vigor." For others such as John Dickinson, James Otis, James Madison ancient Greece presented better examples for the young American republic. For Dickinson, Sparta produced "as brave and as free a people as ever existed." And Otis articulating the prevailing opinion in the colonies said: "Greece was a better mother of colonies than Rome which dominated hers overbearingly and brutally."

The constitutional thought and legal practices of Solon of Athens and Lycurgos of Sparta, as well as the experiences of Catharge and Rome were studied and served as the background to the mixed constitution which was ultimately adopted by the Founding Fathers. The debates on federalism too, paid much attention to the strengths and weaknesses of Greek Leagues such as the Aetolian, the Achaean, the Lycian and the Amphictyonic council. For James Wilson, the Amphictyonic Council was "the Congress of the United States of Greece," a proper model for the American Congress.¹

Overwhelming evidence confirms that there were many philhellenes in the colonial, revolutionary, and the early national period of the United States. Hellenism became popular because of the values it had emphasized, because of the constitutions it had made. Solon's teachings about *isonomia*, equality under the law; Kleisthenes' concept of *democratia*, as power that resides with the *demos*, the people; Socrates' emphasis on the importance of *logos*, thinking right and speaking logically; Plato's belief in *dialogue*, the principle that it is better to

¹ For the Greek and Roman heritage in the United States and the study of classics in American Colleges and relevant bibliography see Meyer Reinhold, *Classical America* (Detroit, 1984).

find ways to talk with each other than be left talking about or against each other; Aristotles' verdict that *ptocheia*, poverty is the greatest defect of democracy and the cause of civil wars and social conflicts; Saint Paul's teaching that *pistis* (faith) is trust, conviction and persuasion, were ancient Greek ideals and principles which became very dear to the Founding Fathers of the young American nation.

Christian Hellenism, Byzantium too, made its contributions to the ideology of the American republic. For example, Patriarch Photios' teaching that the basis of lawful government is the consent and the goodwill of the subjects had found fertile ground in Western European political philosophy and by way of England it had reached the American colonies. The Greek classical concept of statesmanship had been revived by Saint Photios in the ninth century and subsequently it exerted a profound influence on the development of political thought from the age of the Renaissance to the age of the Enlightenment in Western European states and in the United States. Saint Photios' views are echoed in Thomas Jefferson's proclamation of independence that "governments are instituted among men deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

Thus philhellenism became a matter of sympathy and empathy not only for the struggling Greeks who revolted in 1821 to free themselves from Ottoman Turkish rule but also for their language and literature, art and architecture. Hellenism became a state of mind, a point of view, a departure from and adoption of political and social philosophy to the extent that Hellenism, its ideals and principles, became components of the American ethos, a common heritage of us all.

The best illustration of philhellenism among the Founding Fathers is Thomas Jefferson, the writer of the Declaration of Independence, George Washington's Secretary of State, and third President of the United States (1801-1809). His writings and his policies reveal that he was an enthusiastic philhellene – a student, admirer, and lover of Hellenism.

In my essay, based primarily on Jefferson's own correspondence, I propose to review briefly four areas of Jefferson's life and activity which manifest his ardent philhellenism. First, his education and educational ideals; second, his attitude toward the cause of the Greek War of Independence; third, his direct or indirect contribution to the movement toward a revival of the Greek classics, including the arts and architecture; and, four, his friendship and cooperation with other European and American philhellenes.

1

Thomas Jefferson studied law at William and Mary but his education went far beyond the study of jurisprudence and relevant fields, such as political philosophy and history. He became well versed in the classics, including Greek and Roman history, language, and literature. He was nearly seventeen years of age when on January 14, 1769, in a letter to John Harvie, his guardian after his father's death, young Thomas expressed the desire to attend College where he expected to receive a serviceable education, which would include Greek, Latin, and mathematics. Ultimately he became proficient in Greek to the extent that he was able to study the Greek classics in the original. In a letter to Dr. Joseph Priestley, dated January 27, 1800, Jefferson writes: "I enjoy Homer in his own language infinitely beyond Pope's translation of him."² Homer became his favorite Greek poet because he perceived an affinity between epic poetry and history. Jefferson was a man who understood the power of language and fought through language to influence history. For him "epic poetry resolved a dichotomy between word and action, a kind of poetry in which the singer and the soldier were fused, the poet animating the soldier, giving life and killing creatively. Epic poetry created history. It used language to confer immortality."³ Thus Jefferson's love affair with Homeric Greek led him to the study of several Greek historians of ancient and medieval Hellenism.

Writing from Paris to his favorite nephew, Peter Carr, on August 19, 1785, Jefferson advised the young man to study hard, develop his interests, pursue integrity, honor and an honest heart. Furthermore he counseled him to begin a course of ancient history, reading everything in the original and not in translation. As a preparation, the first book Jefferson recommended was a history of Greece written by Oliver Goldsmith. In addition to Goldsmith's textbook, Peter Carr was advised to study Herodotos, Thucydides, Xenophon's *Anabasis*, Arrian, Diodoros Siculus, and Curtius a historian of Alexander the Great. Of the Greek poets he recommended Homer, Anacraeon, Euripides, Sophocles, and Theokritos. Greek philosophy was the third category of readings Jefferson recommended. His favorites were Plato's Socratic

² Adrienne Koch and William Peden, *The Life and Selected Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (New York, 1944) pp. 351-54.

³ Emily Townsend Vermeule, "Jefferson and Homer," *Proceedings of the American Society* 137, 4 (December, 1993) pp. 689-90.

dialogues, Epiktetos, and Xenophon's *Apomnemoneumata* (Memoabilia).⁴

Jefferson gave similar pedagogical advice to Francis Wayles Eppes, a young student going to South Carolina College, present day University of South Carolina, at Columbia, SC. In a letter dated October 6, 1820, Jefferson recommended the young man to study the classics. "Your Latin and Greek should be kept up assiduously by reading at spare hours ... I would advise you to undertake a regular course of history and poetry in both languages. In Greek, for prose go first thro' the *Cyropaedia* (sic) [Kyrour Paideia], and then read Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon's *Hellenu* (sic) [Hellenika] and *Anabasis*, Arrian's *Alexander*, and Plutarch's *Lives*." For poetry he recommended young Francis to study Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Euripides and Sophocles, and Demosthenes for oratory.⁵

Specialists do not agree whether Greek had only a token role in the traditional humanistic curriculum of the colonial period, and whether during the Revolutionary times Greek and Hellenism had receded into the shadows. However there is little doubt that after 1800 a new interest was born for the Greek language and Hellenic culture. For example while in 1787 Jefferson himself had said that in the study of foreign languages "Greek is the least useful," later he praised Homer as "this rich source of delight." Also, while in 1779 he proposed to discontinue the teaching of Greek and Latin at his alma mater, William and Mary, because the income should be used for instructors in the natural sciences, in his *Notes on Virginia* he advocated a scheme of education for the teaching of all the children of the state, turning out ten annually of superior genius, well taught in Greek, Latin Geography, and the higher branches of arithmetic.⁶ The curriculum, he wrote, should include the history of Greece, Rome, Europe and America.⁷ Jefferson wrote to George Washington Lewis on October 25, 1825,⁸ that the history of Greece must be studied on the basis of

⁴ Koch and Peden, *The Life*, pp. 373-77.

⁵ Edwin Morris Betts and James Adam Bear, Jr., *The Family Letters of Thomas Jefferson* (Columbia MO, 1966) pp. 433-34.

⁶ Ibid. pp. 262-63. For an account of the controversy concerning classical learning in colonial and revolutionary America and the debt of the Founding Fathers to the study of the Greek and Roman classics, see the excellent book, *The Founders and the Classics: Greece, Rome and the American Enlightenment* by Carl J. Richard (Cambridge, 1994) esp. pp. 1-11.

⁷ Betts and Bear, *The Family Letters*, p. 264.

⁸ Ibid. pp. 722-26.

original authors such as Herodotos, Thucydides, Xenophon, Diodoros, Arrian, Polybios, Plutarch, and Dionysios of Halicarnassos. The older he grew, the greater his admiration for the classical heritage of the Greeks. His philhellenism was not a static infatuation with the past. It increased as a result of his daily experiences in the young Republic and his interaction with many philhellenes in Europe.

Jefferson's generation included several brilliant people in America. Nearly all of them considered the study of the Greek and Latin classics not as an ornament for polite and impressionistic conversation in social gatherings and political parties, but for practical preparation and useful guidance in daily life. Greek and Latin literature were looked upon as supreme sources of moral and political guidance. The philosophies of Zeno and Epiktetos and the biographies of Plutarch provided ethical instructions and human prototypes for emulation in daily life.

This general atmosphere toward the classics and the strong belief in their practical value as well as Peter Jefferson's, Thomas' father, advice determined Jefferson's interest in classical education and his philhellenism. Thomas' father had left instructions that upon his death his son's education should not be neglected; instead he should be given the best instruction in the Greek classics.⁹ Thus upon his father's death at the age of nine young Thomas began the study of Greek, Latin and French. In his later years he wrote that the study of classical literature was for him "the ultimate source of both delight and instruction," the basis of his ethical and philosophical beliefs and the means of satisfying his esthetic longings. From the study of the Greeks and the Latins he expected the people to learn lessons of history valuable to the preservation of republican liberty.¹⁰ From the study of the ancients but also through his acquaintance with contemporary Greeks he received his inspiration to become one of the leading American philhellenes.

2

When the Greek War of Independence broke out in 1821, the United States was 35 years old with a population of less than 10,000,000

⁹ Henry S. Randal, *The Life of Thomas Jefferson* (New York, 1859) 1, p. 18; Louis B. Wright, "Thomas Jefferson and the Classics," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 87 (1943-1944) 87, pp. 223-33, esp. 224.

¹⁰ Ibid. Wright, pp. 225-26; Douglas L. Wilson, "Jefferson's Library," *Thomas Jefferson: A Reference Biography*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York, 1986) p. 159.

(9,638,453). Since 1453, when the capital of medieval Hellenism fell to the Ottoman Turks, the Greeks had raised several revolts in different parts of the subjugated Greek world but with no positive results. It was the success of the American revolution more than any other single event that inspired the Greeks with confidence and determination to succeed in their renewed effort.

The Americans were a small state of less than 4,000,000 (3,929,214) citizens when they defeated the most powerful empire on earth. Thus the Greeks, too, though a small nation like the Americans, could achieve their freedom from the mighty Ottoman Empire. Not only the Greeks under Ottoman rule, but all the Greeks of the *diaspora*, intellectuals and merchants, played an equally important role in the course of Greek independence. Adamantios Koraes was one of the protagonists and guiding lights of the Greek diaspora.

Born in Smyrna in 1779, Koraes spent six years in Amsterdam, six years in Montpellier, and forty-five in Paris where he distinguished himself as a philologist, physician, philosopher, and classical scholar. There he became editor and commentator of several of the ancient masters as a result of which he established an international reputation. But Koraes was not only a contemplative, theoretical scholar – he was also an activist who had taken a tremendous interest in the liberation of Greece. His fame and his concerns had reached the small coterie of American political thinkers and classical scholars that included Thomas Jefferson.

Jefferson and Koraes had much in common. Both were lovers of the Greek classics. Koraes had produced editions of Aristotle, Plutarch, and other masters, and Jefferson was one of their devoted students. Both were "patriots" and "revolutionaries" – enlightened revolutionaries. The two men were introduced by John Paradise, "a gentleman and man of learning by education," sometime in 1785 in Paris where Jefferson served as the young republic's ambassador, and where Koraes had made his home. Soon after Jefferson and Koraes met again in private and had dinner together.

Following Jefferson's return to the states in 1789, the two men continued their friendship with correspondence and exchanges through common friends. In his correspondence with Koraes, Jefferson expressed his deep appreciation of Hellenism's contribution to Western Civilization. For example, in his first letter to Koraes dated October 31, 1823, Jefferson writes of "the splendid constellation of sages and

heroes" whose blood is still flowing in Koraes' and his contemporary Greeks' veins. He writes of the deified spirits (the Manes) of Homer, Demosthenes, and the rest.¹¹ In his belief that the American democracy was superior than all forms of democracy, including the Athenian and the Roman, Jefferson stressed that times had changed and the doctrines of antiquity were not equal to the needs of his time. "The equal rights of man, and the happiness of every individual are ... the only legitimate objects of government" he wrote. While the government of Athens was that of the people of one city "making laws for the whole country subjected to them" and Lacedaemon was ruled by the few, a small and imperfect mixture of aristocratic hereditary representatives, "all the branches of the Government [of the United States] are elective by the people themselves, except the judiciary."¹²

But the struggling Greeks, who in 1823 fought alone, having not only the Ottoman Empire as their chief enemy but also the so-called Holy Alliance, needed more than praises for their ancestors; they expected acceptance, diplomatic recognition of a free Greece. Koraes continued his appeals to philhellenes to intervene in their respective governments for the Greek cause. In his response to Jefferson's lengthy and instructive letter, Koraes wrote on December 28, 1823, thanking him for his advice and urged him to continue his interest in the Greek cause. Jefferson had indicated however that "the fundamental principle of our government never to entangle us with the broils of Europe" prevented the young republic for any direct involvement in the Greek War of Independence.

Koraes was not discouraged and kept writing about the need for a prompt recognition of a free Greece. In a third letter to Jefferson dated January 30, 1825, he emphasized once again the pressing need for the American government to take the initiative and formally recognize a free Greece. He believed that the young Republic should be the first to establish diplomatic relations with the new Hellas. Either because Jefferson did not receive this letter, or because of illness or old age he could not respond, Koraes turned to Edward Everett, a common friend and a great and sincere philhellene.

¹¹ *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Andrew A. Lipscomb and Albert Ellery Bergh, 15 (Washington DC, 1903) 15, p. 490. The same letter in Koraes corpus of writings, K. Th. Demaras, General Editor, *Adamantios Koraes Allelographia* (Athens, 1983) 5, pp. 87-92.

¹² Lipscomb and Bergh, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, 15, p. 482.

In two letters to Everett dated September 11, 1825 and November 13, 1825, Koraes urged his friend for every effort and intervention possible by Everett and other American philhellenes so that the American government would take the initiative and grant recognition to the emerging new Greece. He explained why it would be to the best interest of both new nations to inaugurate diplomatic relations. Both nations distrusted British paternalism, feared its consequences, and disliked the Holy Alliance, the "Fellow Christians" who cooperated with Muslim Turkey rather than the struggling fellow believers. Koraes adds that on the subject of Greece's recognition, he had also written "a long time ago" to Thomas Jefferson.¹³

There is no evidence that Jefferson replied to Koraes' third letter dated January 30, 1825, but it is certain that even in his old age Jefferson continued to correspond with European friends such as Corrêa da Sérra, the Portuguese botanist and statesman; Thaddeus Kosciuszko, the Polish patriot and general; probably Adamantios Koraes; and other representatives of oppressed people. He encouraged them to sustain their courage and emphasized his belief in the ultimate and inevitable recognition and adoption throughout the world of the principles of democracy, albeit American style. It has been observed that Jefferson's letters to friends on democracy are not letters for propaganda's sake but a manifestation of his profound conviction and optimism about the future of democracy and his aversion to despotism.¹⁴

It has been maintained and it has survived as a popular notion, that Jefferson was a deist because he had come under the influence of writers like Voltaire, Diderot, and Rousseau. Yet Jefferson's writings do not contain a single quotation from these French writers. Instead his writings indicate that he was a student of Greece. In his early studies he had come under the influence of Henry St. John Bolingbroke an English statesman and political thinker from whom he learned methods of historical criticism and scientific doubt. When he became of mature age and formulated his own political and ethical philosophy "he gathered all the material stone by stone and maxim by maxim, from the old Greek Stoics." He "felt more kinship with Greece and republican Rome than with the philosophers of London, Paris, or Geneva."¹⁵ In Homer he found the code of honor and friendship, his

¹³ Koraes, *Allelographia* 5, pp. 265-66, 274-77.

¹⁴ Gilbert Chinard, *Thomas Jefferson: The Apostle of Americanism*, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor MI, 1963) pp. 516-17.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 21.

ethics in the writings of the Greek Stoics through Cicero; his faith in natural law. He believed that man's sense of right and wrong is an innate quality of human nature. "The moral sense, or conscience is as much a part of man, as his leg or arm" he wrote to his nephew in 1808.¹⁶ His ethical views were a fusion of the teachings of Epictetus, Epicurus and Jesus of Nazareth. In a letter dated October 19, 1819, he wrote to his secretary, William Short: "Epiktetos and Epikouros give laws for governing ourselves, Jesus a supplement of the duties and charities we owe to others."¹⁷ Rather than describe Jefferson as a secularizer of Christianity, who produced an Epikourian version of it,¹⁸ it seems to me that his effort to synthesize classical moral philosophy with Christian ethics brought him closer to the spirit of early Christian theologians and Church Fathers who had not rejected Greek philosophy but had used it as a propaidea to Christianity.

3

Jefferson favored the Romanized form of Greek architecture. His views however did not prevail and ultimately he yielded to the adoption of the genuine Greek style. Jefferson's architectural credo was that the buildings "should be more than things of beauty and convenience, above all they should state a creed."¹⁹ And his creed was to link the newness and rustic American experience with universal patterns of acknowledged beauty.

Jefferson's views did not find support because the Roman style was attacked as lavish, ornamental, ponderous – reminiscent of Roman imperial grandeur. It was Benjamin Latrobe (1764-1820) who pioneered the Hellenic Revival. In 1811 speaking before American artists in Philadelphia, he eulogized Greece as the fountainhead of the arts, proving in its stupendous creativity that the Greek arts symbolize freedom, simplicity, sanctity and eternity. Latrobe indirectly criticized Jefferson's architectural preference as myopic. He concluded by saying I pray that "the days of Greece may be revived in the woods of America, and Philadelphia become the Athens of the western world."²⁰

¹⁶ Ibid. pp. 25-26; Susan Ford Wiltshire, *Greece, Rome, and the Bill of Rights* (Norman OK, 1992), esp. pp. 9-29, 184-86.

¹⁷ *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, 15, pp. 219-20.

¹⁸ Peter A. Lawler, "Classical Ethics, Jefferson's Christian Epicurianism, and American Morality," in *Perspectives on Political Science* 20,1 (1991) pp. 17-22, esp. 19.

¹⁹ Meyer Reinhold, *Classica Americana* (Detroit, 1984) p. 218.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 218.

Latrobe's views ignited a fire and the pure Greek style in art and architecture became the dominant forms from 1820 to 1860. The Greek style became popular because it is simpler to construct and it combined the newness, changeability, and materialism of the new republic with the aura of sanctity, beauty, aesthetic creativity.

On the importance of the Greek style of architecture in America, Robert Mills, the first native-born professional architect, wrote the following:

It was fortunate that this style was so early introduced into our country, both on the ground of economy and of correct taste, and it exactly suited that character of our political institutions, and pecuniary means ... Mr. Jefferson was a Roman in his views of architecture ... It required all the talents and good taste of a man as Mr. Latrobe to correct it by introducing a better style. The national good taste and the unprejudiced eye of our citizens required only a few examples of the Greek style for public structures, and its simplicity recommended its introduction into our private dwellings.²¹

The Greek style reflected its spirit, its logic, order, beauty, which was perceived to fit better to the American scene. The young republic hoped to create a unique American style out of the pure sources of the classical world, a style suited to its own aspirations for greatness – not necessarily a new architecture but a judiciously planned, dignified, eclectic tradition founded on those models which, Thomas Jefferson said, had "the approbation of thousands of years." When in 1785 Jefferson was asked to design the new Virginia state capital at Richmond, he saw "a favorable opportunity" he said, "of introducing into the state an example of architecture in the classic style of antiquity."²²

Here, too, he favored the Roman imitation of Greek architecture for the state capital as well as the University of Virginia. But his taste was modified by Benjamin Latrobe who had been appointed by Jefferson surveyor of public buildings in Washington in 1803.

The Bank of Philadelphia building completed in 1801 was the first

²¹ Ibid. pp. 218-19.

²² Kimball Fiske, *Thomas Jefferson: Architect* (Boston, 1916); Russel Blaine Nye, *The Cultural Life of the New Nation* (New York, 1960) p. 272.

of the pure Greek Revival public buildings in America. It was widely copied to the extent that ten years later the great architect said: "I have changed the taste of a whole city." In a letter to Jefferson he wrote: "I am a bigoted Greek ... My principles of good taste are rigid in Grecian architecture." He felt that the Roman style was overblown and grandiose ... the product of an empire hardly democratic in character. On the other hand "Greek art and Greek democracy, and American art and American democracy grew from the same roots." Along with Latrobe, George Tucker advised that "the forms of ancient Greece furnish the most suitable models for the architecture of republican America."²³

In addition to architecture, the art that adorns the capital in Washington is no less indicative of the influence of the ancient Greek heritage. The sparkling and colorful frescoes of the capital reflect the ideal of the early Americans, of Jefferson and Adams, Madison and Monroe, and symbolize the themes of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." The thirteen maidens which represent the original states, and many designs and scenes painted on the Senate side of the capital are taken from Greek mythology.

Constantine Brumidi (1805-1880) the Greco-Roman painter, the son of Stavros Brumidis from Filiatra in the province of Messenia in the Peloponnesos, was trained in the classical tradition and he arrived to place his talent in the service of the young republic. I called him Greco-Roman because his father was a Greek and his mother an Italian. In a copy of the Bible given to him by the American Bible Society upon his arrival in New York in 1848, he wrote: "Constantino Brumidi, born in Rome July (sic) 26th 1803 by Stavro Brumidi of Philiatra, province of Arcadia in the Peloponnesus (Greece), and Anna Bianchini of Rome."²⁴ Incidentally, Thomas Jefferson's portrait on the wall of the President's room in the Capital by Brumidi is considered by experts to be the most lifelike.

If one is known by the books one reads and keeps, to paraphrase Norman Cousins, who wrote on the religious beliefs and ideas of the

²³ Ibid. pp. 270-71.

²⁴ Myrtle M. Murdock, *Constantino Brumidi: Michaelangelo of the United States* (Washington DC, 1965) p. 90: Murdock fails to mention Brumidi's hand-written inscription. But see Harry Fournier, *Konstantinos Broumidis: ho Michael Angelos tou Kapitoliou* (Athens, 1980), and Helen Wright, "Brumidi, Constantino (July 26, 1805)" *Dictionary of American Biography*, 2, pp. 184-85.

American Founding Fathers,²⁵ one must conclude that Jefferson's personal library is one more indication of his philhellenism. We have seen that not only did he find a great pleasure in reading the Greek classics but that he urged others to assiduously study the Greeks and Latins. In a letter to Dr. Joseph Priestley dated 27 January, 1800, Jefferson wrote of the "elegant luxury of reading the Greek and Roman authors in all the beauties of the original."²⁶

But how many and what kind of books did Jefferson read and possess? We do not know how many he had read but we do know that his collection was in the thousands. By 1783 he had 2,640²⁷ but by 1815 his library included nine to ten thousand volumes. In a letter to his friend Samuel H. Smith dated 21 September 1814, Jefferson describes his library and writes about the opportunities he had while in Europe to buy many more books. He adds that he had standing orders during the whole time he was in Europe, on its principal bookstores, particularly Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Madrid, and London, for works relating to America but also for whatever was rare and valuable in every science.²⁸ In 1815 he sold 6,707 volumes to the Congressional Library which had been burned by the British in the war of 1812.²⁹ But he continued buying books after 1815, and at the time of his death in 1826, he had assembled about 1,000 volumes.³⁰

The catalogue of Jefferson's library with the entries in his own order reveals that he had chosen his books with great care, and the number of his classical authors confirms his profound respect of the Greek and Roman inheritance. Some of the books were bought to be used as sources of inspiration and guidance. For example, the architecture chapter of his catalogue begins with volumes describing the ruins of Greece and Rome "suggesting that these extant buildings should be the model for all the structures that followed."³¹

²⁵ Norman Cousins, *In God We Trust: The Religious Beliefs and Ideas of the American Founding Fathers* (New York, 1958) p. 114.

²⁶ *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, 15, p. 208.

²⁷ James Gilreath and Douglas L. Wilson (eds.) *Thomas Jefferson's Library* (Washington DC, 1989) p. 1.

²⁸ Koch and Peden, *The Life*, p. 651.

²⁹ Gilreath and Wilson, *Thomas Jefferson's Library*, p. 1; Douglas Wilson, "Jefferson's Library," *Thomas Jefferson: A Reference Biography*, p. 158.

³⁰ Douglas L. Wilson, "Sowerby Revisited: The Unfinished Catalogue of Thomas Jefferson's Library," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 41-44 (October 1984) pp. 617-18.

³¹ Gilreath and Wilson, *Thomas Jefferson's Library*, p. 9.

While most of his books were in government, politics, law, and natural sciences, he had 300 volumes of poetry, drama, elegies, tragedy, and other types of literature in Greek and Latin, featuring major authors such as Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Anacreon, Theokritos, Pindar, Callimachos, Tyrteos, Sappho, Aristophanes, Menander, Philemon, and others.

Under ancient history he had several copies in Greek, Latin, and English translations of the Greek historians of both antiquity and the Byzantine era including Herodotos, Thucydides, Xenophon, Polybios, Diodoros Siculus, Dionysios Alikarnaseus, Arrian, Appian, Herodianos, Apolodoros, Plutarch, Diogenes Laertios, Prokopios, Agathias, Menandros, Theophylaktos Simokates, Anna Komnene, Niketas Choniates, Pachymeres, Ioannes Kantakouzenos, Doukas, and others. His collection of ecclesiastical historians included Eusebios of Caesarea, Socrates Scholastikos, Theodoretos, the Chronikon Paschale, Evagrius, Photios, and Nikephoros Kallistos.

His lifelong interest in learning came to encompass the whole range of recorded knowledge, including religion and Christianity in particular. Not only did he possess copies of the Greek New Testament and two copies of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, but also a number of Greek Church Fathers, ecclesiastical writers and theologians such as the apostolic fathers and apologists Justin, Athenagoras, Theophilus, Ignatios, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Gregory Nazianzenos, John of Damaskos, and others.

Jefferson was more interested in moral philosophy than epistemology or other brands of philosophy. He loved Epiktetos, Epikouros and Aristotle more than Plato. His collection included not only these major Greek thinkers but also Theophrastos, Hieroclis, Xenophon's memorabilia, Aeschines, Alexander of Aphrodisias, Philostratos, Maximos Tyrios, the opera of Plotinos, and others. In brief, Jefferson had an extensive collection, mostly of primary sources in Greek and Latin on the Greco-Roman world "just before and after the time of Christ" including "authoritative works of the Early Church Fathers."³²

Thus, whether directly or indirectly he contributed immensely to the discovery of Greece, its people, language, literature, political and social values, its art and architecture. American philhellenism was not the result of the study of English and German poets such as Herder, Lessing, Schiller, Shelley, Goethe and other but an indigenous phenomenon.

³² Charles B. Sanford, *Thomas Jefferson and His Library* (Hamden CT, 1977) p. 139.

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Americans began to discover Hellenism (ancient, medieval, contemporary) by themselves, and impressions and accounts from abroad strengthened Jefferson's as well as America's philhellenism. Nicholas Biddle of Philadelphia was the first American to visit Greece in 1806. "The soil of Greece is sacred to genius and to letters" he wrote. Other young restless students of the classics followed. In 1808 young Sam Houston from Tennessee, who at the age of 16 had fallen in love with Homer's Iliad in Pope's translation, visited Greece. Several other young Americans became champions of Hellenism: George Ticknor, Joseph Cogswell, George Bancroft, and of course Edward Everett, who at the age of 21, in 1815, became the first Eliot Professor of Greek at Harvard. While in Göttingen, Germany, Everett met Georgios Glarakis, a student from Chios. In 1816 he wrote home with excitement: "I have seen a genuine Greek, a fellow-countryman of Homer."³³

It was Everett's efforts that built the foundations of philhellenism in New England, where initial reactions to the Greek revolution were reserved and even negative because of its trade interests with the Ottoman Empire. Everett was an admirer of Koraeos who had impressed him with his erudition, personality, and balanced attitude toward liberalism and conservatism. In the Parisian publication of Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* Koraeos included a prologue with an extensive account of affairs in Greece in 1822. In a review of Koraeos' work, Everett published the 1822 Greek Constitution and the appeal of the Messenian Senate to "the citizens of the United States of America." With a translation of relevant passages from Koraeos' work and his own commentary, Everett presented to the American academic community an opportunity to admire a 19th century Greek scholar and the reason to side with the Greek cause.³⁴

Thomas Jefferson's love for Hellenism found support through his correspondence with Edward Everett. They exchanged several letters on political, international, and educational subjects. In a letter dated February 24, 1823, from Monticello, Jefferson thanked Everett for sending him a copy of his translation of Buttman's Greek Grammar.

³³ Reinhold, *Classica Americana*, 216-17; More on meeting between Americans and Greeks in Europe in Stephen A. Larrabee, *Hellas Observed: The American Experience of Greece 1775-1865* (New York, 1957); for Everett's meeting with Glarakis, p. 32.

³⁴ Carl R. Zimmerman, "Philhellenism in American Press during the Greek Revolution," *Neo-Hellenika* (1975) 2, pp. 181-210, esp. 195. For Everett's philhellenism see George G. Arnakis, *Neo-Hellenika*, pp. 149-59.

He found himself in agreement with Everett's critical scholia and his argument in favor of an ablative case in Greek grammar. Jefferson's comments reveal that he had an excellent command of Greek and that he had a personal interest on the subject.³⁵ He had a genuine love for languages and in literary discussions he found a source of delight.

Nearly a year later, in a letter dated March 27, 1824, Jefferson replied to Everett who had sent him his *Greek Reader*, a text he had prepared for the use in schools. Jefferson commended Everett for his text and added that "on the subject of Greek ablative, I dare say that your historical explanation is the true one." He goes on to inform Everett of a letter he had received from Coray (Koraes) at Paris on the 28th of December [1823] in which he informed him of naval successes of the Greeks. Notwithstanding the good news, Koraes had conveyed "a melancholy fear for the nation" of the Greeks.³⁶ In another letter addressed to an anonymous person and dated December 22, 1824 on the subject of the future of William and Mary College and other institutions, Jefferson emphasized the need for the classical languages, in the curricula adding that "in these schools should be taught Latin and Greek to a good degree."³⁷

As already indicated, Jefferson loved the Greek classics for both useful knowledge, and for the intrinsic beauty of the language itself. He loved Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* for their educational and instructional value, for the moral issues and the power of their language to sharpen the skills of the reader. Homeric language stirred him as a model of growth. But he loved Greek dialects of later centuries as well. In a letter to John Waldo (1813) Jefferson raised the question:

Did the Athenians consider the Doric, the Ionian, the Aeolic, and other dialects as disfiguring or beautifying their language? Did they fastidiously disavow Herodotos, Pindar, Theocritus, Sappho, Alcaeus?... On the contrary they were sensible that the variety of dialects, still infinitely varied by poetical license, constituted the riches of their language, and made the Grecian Homer the first of poets, as he must ever remain, until a language equally ductile and copious shall again be spoken.³⁸

³⁵ *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, 15, pp. 410-15.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 16, pp. 20-22.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 16, p. 86.

³⁸ Emily Townsend Vermeule, "Jefferson and Homer," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 137, 4 (December 1993) p. 690.

For Jefferson "Homeric language was as rich as English might aspire to become."³⁹ The Greek language was a precious prototype for other languages to imitate and grow richer. As the Athenians did not consider the Greek language adulterated by Doric, Aeolian, Ionian, and other dialects, but on the contrary welcomed them as an enrichment, likewise the English language would be enriched from American-English dialects.

There is little doubt that Edward Everett was the most active and influential of the American philhellenes but there were several more active philhellenes such as James Monroe, Samuel Gridley Howe, Jonathan Miller, William Washington, John Ross, Henry Clay, Daniel Webster and George Jarvis who contributed to the change of the climate and the popularization of philhellenism in the young republic. However, this is not the place to write about them⁴⁰ – only a few more remarks are in order about the philhellenic atmosphere and the Greek cause.

The news of arbitrary, humiliating and inhuman execution of the Patriarch in Constantinople, of Greek successes, reports that prominent Europeans such as Lord Byron, Lafayette, Joseph Bonaparte, were not only sympathizers but some of them were on their way to fight for the Greek cause, editorials in newspapers and magazines about the descendants of the heroes at Marathon, Thermopylae and Salamis fighting for their own survival inspired many Americans to join Greek committees and offer both moral and economic support.

Among the many philhellenes who deserved to be mentioned were newspaper editors such as John P. Sheldon of the *Gazette* (Detroit), Hezekiah Niles of the *Niles Weekly Register* (Baltimore), William L. Stone of the *Commercial Advertiser* (New York), Jesse Buel of the *Argus* (Albany), John Bradford of the *Kentucky Gazette* (Lexington), William Duane of the *Aurora* (Philadelphia), Thomas Richie of the *Richmond Enquirer*. As editors of leading newspapers and magazines, they contributed to the recognition of the new Hellas as a free and independent nation.⁴¹

³⁹ *Ibid.* p. 702.

⁴⁰ See Chris Stratakis, "America, the Greek War of Independence and Adamantios Korais," *Journal of Modern Hellenism* 6 (1989) pp. 135-66; and especially Larrabee, *Hellas*, esp. pp. 93-147.

⁴¹ See Carl R. Zimmerman, "Philhellenism and American Press," pp. 181-210.

In summary, Thomas Jefferson's philhellenism was genuine and profound, it began to develop from as early as he was exposed to the study of Greek at the age of nine; it evolved stronger as he began to study ancient Hellenism, people, language, poetry, political philosophy, art and architecture, but it increased in depth and breadth, vertically and horizontally when he made his acquaintance with contemporary Greeks of the diaspora, such as the learned George Paradise, the physician Count Harvouris, and especially the brilliant philologist, physician and educator Adamantios Koraes.

Like his contemporary Founding Fathers, such as John Adams, Jefferson read the classics because he found analogies between past history and his own times. On the basis of their readings and also their experiences in politics, the Founding Fathers believed that the best men should form a government – not necessarily aristocrats and plutocrats – people of talent and ability, the *aristoi*. Inferring from his experience, Adams writes that as in ancient times, people do not always look for the best. Adams quotes Pseudo-Xenophon's Athenian Constitution where the author indicates that the assembly of citizens "always chose the worst men they can find, because none others will do their work."⁴²

Jefferson continued to study the ancient Greek and Latin masters even after his retirement from political life. In a response to a John Adams letter, written on January 21, 1812, Jefferson writes of politics, "...I have taken final leave – I think little of them and I say less. I have given up newspapers in exchange for...Thucydides...and Euclid; and I find myself much the happier."⁴³

"...the classics supplied mixed government theory, and principle basis for the U.S. Constitution. The classics contributed a great deal to the founders' conception of human nature, their understanding of virtue, and their appreciation of society's essential role in its production. The classics offered the founders companionship and solace, emotional resources necessary for coping with the deaths and disasters too common in their era. The classics provided

⁴² Lester J. Cappon, ed. *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, 2 vols. (Chapel Hill, 1959) 2, 350-52; Susan Ford, "Thomas Jefferson and John Adams on the Classics," *Arion* 6 (Spring 1967) pp. 116-32, esp. 117-19.

⁴³ Koch and Peden, *The Life*, p. 617; Cappon, *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, 2, p. 341.

the founders with a sense ... that their exertions were part of a grand universal scheme. The struggles of the Revolutionary and Constitutional periods gave the founders a sense of kinship with the ancients, and thrill of excitement at the opportunity to match their classical heroes' struggles against tyranny and their sage construction of durable republics."⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Richard, *The Founders and the Classics: Greece, Rome, and the American Enlightenment*, pp. 7-8; relevant also is W. Bruce Leslie, *Gentlemen and Scholars: College and Community in the 'Age of the University': 1865-1917* (College Park PA, 1992), who maintains that interest in the study of the classics continued unabated long after the age of the founding fathers. Relevant and valuable also is Richard M. Gummere, *The American Colonial Mind and the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge, MA, 1963), esp. pp. 173-97. For bibliographic recommendations I am grateful to my colleagues, William Gilmore-Lehne and Fred Bjornstad.