The text of this inaugural lecture, delivered in the University of Cambridge on 16 February 2009, proposes that the newly established A. G. Leventis Professorship of Greek Culture is a new kind of chair: a chair not only for research but also for outreach, for the advancement of the public understanding of ancient Greek (pre-Byzantine) culture.

After explaining the Chair’s origins and causes, and pondering the possible meanings of the Professorship’s title, it seeks to explore and explode four ‘myths’ about the ancient Greeks and their culture (or cultures), myths deliberately chosen to illustrate the huge and diverse range of the Hellenic tradition that is still actively at work in our own contemporary culture. The four, in order of discussion, not necessarily of importance, are: (i) that there was an entity called ‘Ancient Greece’; (ii) that the ancient Greeks were technologically backward; (iii) that the ancient Greeks really were (or looked) anything like they are depicted in such Hollywood movies as *300*; and (iv) that the Greeks invented democracy in anything like the form and sense in which we understand that institution today.

PAUL CARTLEDGE

FOREVER YOUNG: WHY CAMBRIDGE HAS A PROFESSOR OF GREEK CULTURE

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More information
To the memory of Constantinos Leventis (1938–2002)
May you always do for others
and let others do for you

[from Bob Dylan, 'Forever Young', 1974]