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978-0-521-12172-9 — Forever Young: Why Cambridge has a
Professor of Greek Culture

Paul Cartledge

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FOREVER YOUNG: WHY CAMBRIDGE HAS A PROFESSOR OF GREEK CULTURE



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 is the inaugural A. G. Leventis Professor of Greek Culture in the University of Cambridge. His many publications include *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Ancient Greece* (1997, rev. 2002), *The Greeks. A Portrait of Self and Others* (2002), *Ancient Greek Political Thought in Practice* (2009), and *Ancient Greece. A History in Eleven Cities* (2009). He holds the Gold Cross of the Order of Honour (Greece) and is an Honorary Citizen of Sparta, Greece.

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An A. G. Leventis Inaugural Lecture given in the
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UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi - 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of
education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521121729

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First published 2009

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-0-521-12172-9 Paperback

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To the memory of Constantinos Leventis (1938–2002)

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May you always do for others
and let others do for you
[from Bob Dylan, 'Forever Young', 1974]