

# The reunification of the Parthenon Marbles

## A European Concern

The Parthenon is far more than a unique historical building, the national symbol of Greece and the highest cultural accomplishment of its people. It is also a major monument of European civilization and a powerful reminder of mankind's enduring values of democracy, freedom and personal liberty, and as such has long been a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The authors of this book stress that the Parthenon Marbles should be reunited in their original geographical and cultural context. They underline the uniqueness of this restitution claim which concerns the reunification of the architectural parts of a symbolic monument and therefore does not constitute a precedent.

Prof. Sidjanski sums up the very rich and diverse approaches of the authors: « At a time when Europe is striving to bring together the States and peoples divided for so long by the twists and turns of history, it is all the more important that we reunite the scattered pieces of this major monument of our European and Western cultural heritage, returning them to their home within sight of the Acropolis».

### Authors:

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Maurice Davies  
Tom Flynn  
Louis Godart  
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Jo Leinen  
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Edited by Patricia VAN GENE-SAILLET



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Centre Européen de la Culture



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of the Parthenon Marbles  
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## AUTHORS

**Professor Hans Henrik Brummer**, *Author, Curator and Art Historian, Board Member of the Swedish Parthenon Committee.* Hans Henrik Brummer served as professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, and at the University of Stockholm from 1965 to 1972. He was Museum Director at the Zorn Collections from 1972 to 1989, of Prince Eugen's Waldemarsudde Art Museum in Stockholm from 1989 to 2006, and Director General of the Swedish National Museum from 2000 to 2002. Since 1989 he has been a working member of The Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities and an honorary member of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts since 2005. His areas of research are the Italian renaissance, German new idealism and Swedish national romanticism.

**Maurice Davies**, *Museum Advisor and Commentator.* Maurice Davies is a leading commentator on UK museums. He is a partner in the Museum Consultancy and Head of policy and communication at the Museums Association. He recently co-led a research project « Evaluating Evaluation », at King's College London, where he is a visiting senior research fellow. He is also a visiting professor at Nottingham Trent University. He has previously been editor of Museums Journal and had curatorial roles at Manchester City Art Gallery and Tate.

He has been involved in a wide range of initiatives and policy developments including: sustainability and museums, illicit trade in cultural property, human remains in museums, improving use of collections, deaccessioning and sale of collections, the impact of museums and entry to and diversity of the workforce. He led the Museums Association's Museums 2020 initiative that culminated in the publication of *Museums Change Lives* in July 2013.

**Dr. Tom Flynn**, *Art Historian and Writer.* Tom Flynn, FRICS, is Senior Lecturer in the Art Market Studies Programme at Kingston University, London. His doctorate from the University of Sussex explored nineteenth-century reactions to Phidias's chryselephantine cult statues in Athens and Olympia. A former Henry Moore Foundation Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at the University of Sussex, he has

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broad experience across the academic, publishing and management sectors of the art world.

He is a member of the International Association of Art Critics and has written and lectured extensively on the art market and its institutions, art and design history, art crime, cultural heritage, the impact of technology on the art market and the historical development of museums. He is a visiting lecturer on the ARCA Masters course in Art Crime Studies in Amelia, Italy, and teaches at the Wallace Collection, London, at Sotheby's Institute of Art, and at Christie's Education.

His publications include: *The Body in Sculpture* (1997), *Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture and the Museum* (1998, co-edited with Tim Barringer).

**Professor Louis Godart**, *Advisor for the Conservation of Artistic Heritage to the Italian President*. Born in Belgium, Louis Godart is Professor of Aegean Civilization in the Faculty of Letters at the University of Naples Federico II. He has studied the antique scripts of the Aegean civilizations (Minoan and Mycenaean) and has assembled the various corpora on Cretan hieroglyphic scripts, Linear A, the Phaistos Disk and Linear B. He has carried out excavations on the island of Crete since 1969, first at Malia and then at La Canea and Monastiraki, and currently at Apodoulou in collaboration with the Greek Ministry of Culture.

He is the author of 70 monographs and 250 scientific articles on the Mediterranean civilizations and their history, on Europe, on cultural heritage, and on the Palace of Quirinale.

**Rodi Kratsa**, *President of the Konstantinos Karamanlis Institute for Democracy*. Rodi Kratsa was a Member of the European Parliament from 1999 to 2014 and served as Vice-President of the European Parliament from 2007 to 2012. Born and brought up on the Greek island of Zakynthos, she studied Sociology (specialising in political sociology) at the University of Geneva followed by postgraduate studies at the Institute of European Studies of the same University. While serving in the European Parliament, she undertook numerous initiatives aimed at promoting cultural and creative industries, and supporting causes such as the protection of Christians in sensitive parts of the world, the fight against violence towards women and the reunification of the Parthenon Marbles.

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Rodi Kratsa is a Member of the Board of the European Cultural Centre (Geneva), a founding Member of the Greek section of the European Movement and was a Member of the Cultural Council of the Union for the Mediterranean (2009).

**Jo Leinen**, *MEP, President of the European Movement International*. Jo Leinen studied law and economics at the Universities of Saarbrücken and Bonn and later continued his academic education at the College of Europe Bruges and the Institute for World Affairs in Connecticut. After serving his home region Saarland as Environment Minister in the State Government from 1985 to 1994, he was appointed as a Member of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) and Congress of Regions (CLRAE) of the Council of Europe. In 1997 he became President of the Union of European Federalists, Brussels, and since 2005 is their Honorary President. In 1999 he was elected to the European Parliament where he has served as a Member of the Convention for the Elaboration of a « Charter of Fundamental Rights », Chairman of the Committee for Constitutional Affairs (AFCO) and of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI). Since 2011 he has been the President of the European Movement International.

**Miguel Ángel Martínez Martínez**, *Former MEP, Vice-President of the Board of Trustees of the House of European History*. Miguel Martínez started his political work in the 1950s as a leader of the Spanish Socialist Youth Organization fighting against the fascist dictatorship in Spain. During the 14 years he spent in exile in France, Austria and Belgium, he became involved in institutional work in bodies like the Council of Europe or the ILO, dealing with youth, human and trade union rights. He studied in Madrid, Toulouse and Vienna. In 1977 he was elected as a Member of the Congress of Deputies of Spain and was re-elected six times until he ran for the European Parliament. During this time he became a Member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe which he chaired between 1992 and 1996 and the World Interparliamentary Union (IPU) which he chaired from 1997 to 1999. He was a Member of the European Parliament from 1999 to 2014 and served as a Vice-President from 2007 to 2014.

**Fabrizio Micalizzi**, *Advisor to the Chairman of the Swiss Committee for the Return of the Parthenon Marbles*. Fabrizio Micalizzi studied Social Sciences, Law and Economics at the



University of Erfurt. He then graduated in European Studies at the University of Geneva and later obtained a Master of Public Administration from the École Nationale d'Administration (class: Robert Badinter). He is currently working on his PhD thesis in Political Theory at the University of Erfurt. He is a founding member of the Swiss Committee and served the Committee as Secretary until 2010. In 2013, he also became Vice-Chairman of the Alumni Society of German ENA-Scholars.

**Professor Cléopâtre Montandon**, *Board Member of the Swiss Committee for the Return of the Parthenon Marbles*. Born in Athens, Cléopâtre Montandon obtained her Bachelor's degree in Economics at the University of Geneva and her PhD in cultural anthropology at Columbia University, New York. Professor of sociology of education at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Geneva, she was a guest Professor at the Universities of Quebec in Montreal and at Paris X. A specialist in the field of the sociology of childhood, she has conducted research financed by the Swiss National Fund for Scientific Research (FNRS), participated in numerous conferences and scientific committees and has published books and articles in the field of sociology.

She formerly chaired the Jean-Gabriel Eynard Greco-Swiss Association in Geneva of which she is an active member.

**Eddie O'Hara**, *Former Labour MP, Chairman of the British Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles*. Eddie O'Hara studied *Literae Humaniores* at Magdalen College, Oxford and has been General Rapporteur for the Cultural Heritage and Museums Rapporteur for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

He started his career in politics as a Councillor in Knowsley, near Liverpool, and Chair of the Education Committee, before becoming Labour MP for Knowsley South where he held his seat from 1990 to 2010. Throughout his parliamentary career he tirelessly promoted the case for the Marbles to be returned to Athens, using means such as Early Day Motions, parliamentary questions, debates, meetings with ministers and the presentation of a Museums Bill, whose purpose was to remove any question as to whether museum trustees could divest themselves of objects in their collections.

He has been Chair of the BCRPM since 2011 and is Honorary President of the Marbles Reunited campaign.

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**Henry Porter**, *Journalist and Author*. Having studied History of Art at Manchester University, Henry Porter is now a keen painter and museum-goer. He is the London editor of the American magazine *Vanity Fair* and a commentator for the *Guardian* and *Observer* newspapers, often covering the attack on civil liberties in America and Britain. He has debated both Tony Blair and David Cameron on the subject of the loss of civil liberties in Britain and in 2009 was the joint chairman of the Convention of Modern Liberties. Among his seven novels, *Brandenburg*, which is about the fall of the Berlin Wall, won the Ian Fleming Steel Dagger award for best thriller in 2005.

**Professor Dusan Sidjanski**, *Chairman and Founder of the Swiss Committee for the Return of the Parthenon Marbles*. Founder of the Department of Political Science at the University of Geneva, Dusan Sidjanski is Professor Emeritus of the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences and of the European Institute in Geneva. From 1956, he worked in close collaboration with Denis de Rougemont at the European Cultural Centre, which was founded in 1950 following the cultural Resolution of the Hague Congress in 1948. He was Chairman of the Centre from 2003 to 2008 and is currently Honorary Chairman. He is the author of numerous works on federalism, European integration and international relations, such as his authoritative and comprehensive book *The Federal Future of Europe*, University of Michigan Press, 2000.

He has been Special Advisor to the President of the European Commission since 2004 and Chairman of the Swiss Committee for the Return of the Parthenon Marbles since its creation in 2008.

**Professor Bernard Tschumi**, *Architect of the Acropolis Museum*. Bernard Tschumi is a graduate of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) in Zurich. He has taught architecture at a range of institutions including the Architectural Association in London, Princeton University, and The Cooper Union in New York. He was Dean of the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation at Columbia University from 1988 to 2003 and is currently a professor in the Graduate School of Architecture. Bernard Tschumi was awarded France's Grand Prix National d'Architecture as well as numerous accolades from the American Institute of Architects and the National Endowment for the Arts. In 2014 a retrospective of his work was exhibited at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris.

**Patricia van Gene-Saillet**, *Secretary of the Swiss Committee for the Return of the Parthenon Marbles*. Patricia van Gene-Saillet studied Modern Languages (French and German) at St. Hilda's College, Oxford. After graduating, she spent several years teaching English in Munich and London and as a freelance translator of media and commercial texts. She later settled in Geneva, occupying various administrative posts where she was called upon to use her editing and translation skills. Since 2007 she has been the personal assistant of Professor Dusan Sidjanski and was appointed as Secretary of the Swiss Committee in 2011.

**Androulla Vassiliou**, *Former European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism & Youth*. Androulla Vassiliou studied law and international affairs in London and practised law in Cyprus for 20 years (1968-1988). Before her appointment to the European Commission, she was actively involved in politics in her home country, Cyprus. She was twice elected to the Cypriot House of Representatives, in 1996 and 2001, representing the Movement of United Democrats (affiliated to the European Liberal Democrats and Reform Party ELDR).

As a Cypriot parliamentarian, she was an active member of the European Affairs Committee and represented the Cyprus Parliament at the Convention for the future of Europe as an alternate member.

Androulla Vassiliou was active in the field of international affairs and human rights as a President of the UN Association of Cyprus from 1978 until 1992 and as President of the World Federation of UN Associations from 1991 until 1995. She was unanimously elected Honorary President of the World Federation at the end of her term. Ms Vassiliou was also President of the Cyprus Federation of Business and Professional Women from 1996 until 2000, Vice-President of the ELDR and Chairperson of the European Liberal Women's Network (2001-2006). From 2002 to 2008 she chaired the Board of Trustees of the Bank of Cyprus Oncology Centre in Cyprus.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On behalf of the Swiss Committee for the Return of the Parthenon Marbles, I would like to warmly thank all of the speakers at the European Parliament Round Table on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2013, as well as those who subsequently provided articles, enabling us to publish this collective work.

We are indeed most grateful to the Ministry of Culture and Sports of the Hellenic Republic, without whose support we would not have been able to organize this event at the European Parliament and produce this publication.

I would also like to express my great appreciation for the assistance and contribution provided by my close friends Mr. Dimitris Avramopoulos, in his former capacity as Hellenic Minister of Foreign Affairs, and by the Secretary General, Dr. Arisitidis Calogeropoulos-Stratis. In his current role as Minister of National Defence, Mr. Dimitris Avramopoulos continues to support our cause.

My special thanks go to my former student and close friend Rodi Kratsa and to her whole team for their precious contribution to the success of our Round Table.

And last but not least, we acknowledge the invaluable role played by Patricia van Gene-Saillet and Fabrizio Micalizzi of the Swiss Committee who have enthusiastically devoted so much time and effort to our common, noble cause.

Dusan Sidjanski

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## FOREWORD

On 15<sup>th</sup> October 2013 at the European Parliament in Brussels, the Swiss Committee for the Return of the Parthenon Marbles organized a roundtable discussion on « The reunification of the Parthenon Marbles : a European concern » in collaboration with MEP Rodi Kratsa. A broad spectrum of nationalities were represented – Swiss, French, Belgian, Swedish, German, Spanish, Greek and three Brits – an eloquent example of solidarity amongst an ever-growing number of Europeans in favour of return. The purpose of our Round Table was not to preach to the converted, but to inform European parliamentarians of the issue and raise awareness among the European public about the necessity of preserving the integrity and unity of one of the major symbols of our common European cultural heritage. The subsequent articles published in the British,<sup>(1)</sup> Swiss<sup>(2)</sup> and German<sup>(3)</sup> press bear witness to the fact that, when informed, the public has difficulty countering arguments for return.

With this aim in mind, the organizers of the Round Table decided to publish this collective work containing the interventions by the invited speakers as well as other contributions highlighting the European dimension of the Parthenon Marbles and the uniqueness of this restitution claim. The return of the Parthenon Marbles is about the reunification of the integral architectural parts of a symbolic monument, not the restitution of a single painting or statue, and as such does not constitute a dangerous precedent.

It is undeniable that now that the Greeks have a magnificent, state-of-the-art museum at the foot of the Acropolis, waiting to reunite the treasures that adorned the Parthenon temple in their original

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(1) M. BANKS, « Join in mediation with Greece over Elgin Marbles, Unesco urges Britain », *The Telegraph*, 15th October 2013, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/greece/10381163/Join-in-mediation-with-Greece-over-Elgin-Marbles-Unesco-urges-Britain.html> (accessed 16th October 2013); O. KAMM, « The Elgin Marbles should go back home to Athens », *The Times*, 29th October 2013, <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/opinion/columnists/article3907032.ece> (accessed 30th October 2013).

(2) P. FLEURY, « Rendre à Athènes ce qui était à Athéna », *La Liberté*, 16th October 2013.

(3) V. NEUWALD, « Einzigartiges Denkmal europäischer Demokratie », *Badisches Tagblatt*, 2nd November 2013.

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geographical and cultural context, the British Museum can no longer justify the argument that they are better equipped to protect and exhibit the Marbles. The new Acropolis Museum, designed by Franco-Swiss architect Bernard Tschumi, is a gem of universal appeal to be appreciated by all nationalities alike, a hymn to the creative and democratic values which inspired the Ancient Greeks and which unite Europeans and indeed all of mankind today. If you have doubts about where the Parthenon Marbles belong, visit the Duveen Gallery of the British Museum, and then the Parthenon Gallery of the Acropolis Museum and you will surely advocate restitution to Athens.

The Swiss Committee believes that the restitution of the Marbles to Athens by the British Museum could be a win-win solution, symbolic of the cooperative spirit which, after all, is what all museums aspire to, as do the Member States of the European Union. Their aim is to promote cultural exchange for universal enjoyment and Greek museums could respond to the return of the Marbles by offering a wide range of long-term exchanges or even donations of certain collections. When the Marbles are finally reunified in Athens, they will achieve the original objective of their sculptor Phidias, namely unity and harmony rather than divisiveness.

Patricia van Gene-Saillet

*Secretary of the Swiss Committee  
for the Return of the Parthenon Marbles*

10<sup>th</sup> May 2014

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## ABBREVIATIONS

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BCRPM	British Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles
BM	British Museum
ELDR	European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party
EU	European Union
ICOM	International Council of Museums
ICPRCP	Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in Case of Illicit Appropriation
ILO	International Labour Organization
IQ2	Intelligence Squared
LibDem	Liberal Democrat
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MORI	Ipsos MORI Market Research Organization
MP	Member of Parliament
PR	Public Relations
The Met	Metropolitan Museum of Art
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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## **PRESERVING THE INTEGRITY OF OUR SHARED EUROPEAN AND WORLD HERITAGE**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to have this opportunity to address your meeting, and regret I could not be with you in person.

There are some heritage sites that are such landmarks of world history and civilization that they belong to the world. The Parthenon is one such monument. To borrow Ralph Waldo Emerson's words « Earth proudly wears the Parthenon as the best gem upon her zone ». <sup>(1)</sup>

At the same time, we cannot imagine Athens without the Acropolis and all the monuments on this sacred rock. The temple of Parthenon in particular – this gem of architectural perfection – captures the spirit of « Greekness » and has become over time a symbol of strength and survival for Greece. Indeed, heritage is what makes the strength of a place both in symbolic and material terms. Preserving the integrity of this heritage is about preserving the identity of a site and of its people.

I therefore welcome the recently built Acropolis Museum – an architectural work of art in its own right – which offers a home for all the treasures found on the rock of Acropolis and around it. And I am pleased that EU funds have helped to build this museum which is currently appreciated by locals and tourists alike.

The recent attempt by the UNESCO Secretary-General to initiate a mediation process on the question of the return of the Parthenon Marbles is also worth noting. Dialogue and cooperation are fundamental in protecting our European and world heritage.

I find it encouraging that there is growing awareness at all levels about the value of cultural heritage for our societies and economies. The diverse, rich, tangible and intangible heritage we share in Europe is a vital part of our shared identity as Europeans; it fosters social

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(1) R. WALDO EMERSON, *The Problem*, 1847.

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inclusion; it helps build confidence in local communities; it attracts tourism; it builds bridges between the past and the present, the local and the global.

Safeguarding and promoting cultural heritage of European significance is high on the European agenda. The challenges raised by this task go beyond the financing of the restoration of heritage sites. The illicit trafficking of cultural and artistic goods is yet another challenge that is actually becoming more threatening over time. The European Union is strongly committed to the protection and promotion of cultural heritage and our action supports and complements the action of our Member States. We also support heritage professionals and civil society stakeholders.

Our overarching objective is to help Europeans access and enjoy their heritage as a means of learning about their past and preparing for the future. I hope that this objective is shared by all those who are convinced about the value of our heritage.

Androulla Vassiliou

*European Commissioner for Education,  
Culture, Multilingualism & Youth*

Video message delivered on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2013  
to the participants at the Round Table

## **THE RETURN OF THE PARTHENON MARBLES : A MORAL OBLIGATION**

Dear Vice-President, Dear Miguel Ángel,  
Dear Chair, Dear Ambassador Kumlin,  
Distinguished Guests, Dear Panelists:  
Dear Professor Godard,  
Dear Professor Sidjanski,  
Dear Mr Flynn,  
Dear Mr Porter,  
Dear Mr Davies,  
Dear Colleague, Dear Jo,  
Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Firstly, allow me to warmly welcome our distinguished guests to the European Parliament, the House of the European People and the heart of the European Union. The European Parliament has always been at the forefront in protecting European heritage; hence, it is an honour and a pleasure to hold a Round Table on the premises of our House, and attempt to promote the European significance of the return of the Parthenon Marbles.

I would also like to warmly congratulate Professor Sidjanski and the Swiss Committee for the Return of the Parthenon Marbles for their constant efforts and strong determination. Their passion and dedication to the cause of the return of the Parthenon Marbles have greatly contributed to the realization of today's event. Finally, I would like to thank all the distinguished speakers that have accepted to join our Round Table and share with us their expertise.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The issue of the return of the Parthenon Marbles constitutes a longstanding Greek demand and at the same time a moral issue of European nature. It is a demand associated with the respect and integrity of the Parthenon, this landmark monument of European

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culture of universal significance. For this reason, the return of its Marbles is a moral obligation for the whole of Europe in the framework of the protection of our common cultural heritage.

The Parthenon is a Symbol. A symbol of ideas, values and ideals that have shaped European culture and inspired the whole of humanity. A symbol of harmony, balance (*metron*), the culmination of art and culture.

The Parthenon is a classic and unique phenomenon. Just as unique is the demand for the return of the Parthenon Marbles. This is not an issue of repatriation of just any sculptures. This is about restoring the Parthenon by returning pieces barbarically removed by Lord Elgin. The Acropolis Museum at the foot of the Sacred Rock is a « home » for the Marbles calling them to return in order to be reunified, enhancing their greatness.

The discussion of this issue in the European Parliament, at the heart of European democracy, between elected representatives of the peoples of Europe and prominent supporters of various European countries is of great importance. It conveys a strong message of our commitment to inform European public opinion in view of supporting the demand of the Greek people and the actions of the Greek government for the dream to become reality.

I thank you all for your kind attention. I am confident that today's exchange will convey a strong message of the European mission to protect our cultural heritage and its symbols, which constitute the core assets of European citizens and the soul of the European Union.

Rodi Kratsa

*MEP and former Vice-President of the European Parliament*

Speech delivered on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2013  
to the participants at the Round Table

## EUROPE AND THE PARTHENON MARBLES : A COMMON CAUSE

Why am I so passionately committed to the reunification of the Marbles? My interest was aroused when I studied architecture at the Polytechnicum in Lausanne where my main professor was none other than the father of Bernard Tschumi. He explained to us the evolution of architecture from the Egyptians to the Ancient Greeks and so on. The second reason for my commitment was the fact that I married a Greek woman and was invited to spend a year in Greece, where I attempted to learn Greek. Whenever I had any personal problems, I would go to the Acropolis. This was my place, where I could clear my head and regain perspective!

During the same period, 1955-56, I met Denis de Rougemont with whom we engaged in a dialogue about European culture and the founding principles of a future European federalism, our mutual dream. We agreed that European culture – culture in the sense of any creative work – is based on three major pillars; firstly the Ancient Greek pillar, secondly the Roman Empire and finally Christianity. Hence the importance to us of the Parthenon, the perfect embodiment of our Ancient Greek heritage.

It is interesting that we think the concept of the recognition of the « human being » can be attributed to Christianity. Before this Christian belief, the Hellenistic philosophy of Stoicism taught that we are all equal human beings. This was the first recognition of the person as such. For Denis de Rougemont and myself this was a bedrock of our European and Western culture.

The remarkable 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C., the Age of Pericles, represented the height of Ancient Greek culture. I have always felt inspired by the speeches of Pericles, particularly those he gave during the war against Sparta. Spartan culture was totally different, and the fight against Sparta represented the victory of democracy in Greece. In his speeches to fellow Greeks, Pericles stressed that Athens was functioning through power given to citizens, exercising their civic rights in the *Agora*. In fact already at that time, there was almost direct democracy. There were slaves during this period, but they were

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generally well treated and in many cases they were granted citizenship after some years.

I would like to consider briefly the history of the Parthenon. As we know, the Parthenon was built to replace an older temple on the Acropolis, also dedicated to Pallas Athena, the patron divinity of Athens, which had been destroyed during the Persian invasion of 480 B.C. Under the leadership of Pericles, who was determined to transform Athens into one of the most powerful and splendid cities in Greece, the rebuilding of the city commenced, and with it the construction of the most beautiful, perfect monument of the Ancient world. Work started on the Parthenon in 447 B.C. and was completed in 438 B.C. It was indeed a major feat to have erected this architectural masterpiece in only 9 years! It is also extraordinary to think that this monument has no absolute straight lines. Take for example the new Acropolis Museum whose columns are straight. When looking at the Parthenon, you have the impression that its columns are straight and of equal diameter all the way up, whereas in reality they are slightly curved. The Greeks developed an augmentation technique known as *entasis* to avoid an optical illusion caused by the shaft's fluting (parallel vertical lines). In a tall structure like the Parthenon, such lines appear concave. To compensate, the Greek architects made the columns slightly convex.<sup>(1)</sup> The architects of the Parthenon appear to have been excellent scholars of visual illusion. This proves that at that time the Ancient Greeks were already using highly sophisticated techniques regarding perspective.

Many Athenians were opposed to the construction of the Parthenon as they thought it wiser to invest money in a more powerful army and navy rather than in culture. A dilemma which still exists today. Pericles responded to his opponents by saying that the city's gold would be stored inside the temple, and if need be, the gold could be sold to finance the army. The Parthenon Marbles, the beautiful sculptures which adorned the temple, represent the daily lives of Greek citizens at that time as well as their gods. The cavalry is depicted, and it is these very riders and horses of the Parthenon frieze which inspired Sergei Eisenstein's epic film « Alexander Nevsky ».<sup>(2)</sup> In my

(1) N.S. GILL, « Doric columns and the other orders – optical illusions of the columns and Parthenon », [http://ancienthistory.about.com/od/partheno2/ss/aa061300a\\_6.htm](http://ancienthistory.about.com/od/partheno2/ss/aa061300a_6.htm) (accessed 1st April 2014).

(2) B. TSCHUMI ARCHITECTS (Ed.), *The New Acropolis Museum*, New York, Skira Rizzoli, 2009, pp. 88-89.

opinion, like the different shots of a sculpted film, the frieze forms a whole telling us the story of the Greek gods followed by that of Athenian democracy. This film was mutilated by Lord Elgin and it is our duty to reunify the different parts of this carved narrative which reproduces the most significant scenes of this Golden Age. Various fragments are to be found in several European museums, but approximately half of what survives of the Parthenon Sculptures is exhibited in the British Museum.

How did such a large part of the Parthenon sculptures end up in England? Lord Elgin was made British Ambassador to the Sublime Porte of Constantinople in 1801. Like many people at that time, he had a keen interest in Classical Greek art and culture. We cannot be sure of his motivations in removing the Marbles. One theory is that he wished to use them to decorate his home. On another occasion, he said he was motivated by the idea of the British Museum having an exceptional exhibition. Apparently, he also claimed that his intention was to save the Marbles. It cannot be denied that the Parthenon suffered extensive damage over the years before Elgin's arrival. In the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD it was converted into a Christian church. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, after the Ottoman conquest of Greece, the Parthenon was used as a gunpowder magazine and the temple was converted into a mosque. When the Venetians besieged the Ottomans on the Acropolis in 1687, a Venetian shell exploded the magazine, destroying the interior of the Parthenon and to a large extent the North and South sides of the frieze. However, the monument was subjected to even greater mutilation at the hands of Lord Elgin!

He is said to have received a letter of permission (*firman*) from the occupying Turkish authorities; however the only proof of this is an Italian translation of the lost original, made for Lord Elgin by a clerk at the British Embassy, which can be seen on the British Museum website. From a judicial point of view it can be argued that this was not a real *firman*, but rather just an ordinary permit of limited power. This is open to different interpretations. For example George Bizos, the Human Rights Advocate who represented Nelson Mandela, says that the legality of the document could be proven invalid in court. He points out that a *firman* had to be issued by the highest authority in Constantinople, the Sultan, beginning with an invocation to God: « In the name of Allah... ». It also would have been headed with the



Sultan's monogram.<sup>(3)</sup> However, we have never had the opportunity to see the original *firman*, just an Italian translation.

The fact is that under the Ottoman Empire it was possible to negotiate and obtain certain favours in exchange for gifts. Taking into account the general standards that applied under the Ottoman occupation, we can conclude that in fact, when one looks in detail at Elgin's letter of permission, he was granted limited power. It was through his own personal interpretation, and clearly an example of *abuse of power*, that he allowed himself to remove whatever he wanted from the Parthenon and take it out of the country. Moreover we know that Ottoman laws regarding antiquities did not allow for their export.

As Bernard Tschumi pointed out in his presentation,<sup>(4)</sup> Lord Elgin mutilated the Marbles by slicing off the backs of the blocks of the frieze in order to facilitate their transportation by sea. Further damage was inflicted by the fact that one of the ships carrying the treasures sank on its way to Britain and the salvage work nearly bankrupted Lord Elgin. Meanwhile he was captured and imprisoned for three years by the French and on his return to England was forced to sell the Parthenon Marbles to the British Parliament. He obtained much less money than he had expected from Parliament who decided to entrust the Marbles to the British Museum as its inalienable property.

I am personally always shocked to see that the name « Elgin Marbles » was given to these works of art which can solely be attributed to Phidias and his disciples. Not only was Greek ownership denied, but also copyright. Now fortunately the trend is changing – even the British Museum refers in its documentation to the Parthenon Marbles. But the major obstacle we face is that for the British Museum the debate centres around the question of property, whereas the Greek Government wishes to move beyond the issue of ownership. It is interesting to note that during the debate in Parliament in 1816 to ascertain whether Lord Elgin had legally acquired the

(3) G. BIZOS, « A legal and moral issue – was a valid *firman* issued ? », keynote speech, *International Colloquy on the Reunification of the Parthenon Sculptures*, London, 19th June 2012, <http://www.parthenonuk.com/articles-and-research/76-george-bizos-sc> (accessed 1st April 2014).

(4) B. TSCHUMI, « The Acropolis Museum – the ideal home for the reunited Marbles », video presentation, *The Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles : A European Concern*, European Parliament, Brussels, 15th October 2013.

Marbles, there was strong opposition amongst certain MPs. For example, MP Hugh Hammersley said that the Marbles should be returned once Greece had regained its independence. Another ardent critic was Lord Byron who regarded the actions of Elgin and the British authorities to have been dishonest.

As we know, it was Melina Mercouri, former Greek Minister of Culture, who initiated the fight for the return of the Marbles. The difference with our campaign today is that she was pleading a Greek cause on behalf of the Greek nation, whereas we believe – hence the title of our Round Table in Brussels – that we are defending a European cause. It is also a universal cause. Indeed Ancient Greek culture, at that time already so advanced in the field of mathematics, philosophy, science, the arts, forms the very basis of our modern civilization. One only has to look at the number of words in modern languages which originate from Ancient Greek and at the central role played by our Ancient Greek heritage in European culture.

To explain why I am against settling the issue of the Marbles in court, I would like to quote the historian Thucydides : « For you know, as well as we do that right, as the world goes, is in question only between equals in power, while the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must ».<sup>(5)</sup> In the case of Greece making a claim to the UK, we are dealing with an asymmetrical situation which makes me doubtful about justice being done. Therefore we should express our support for a European rather than a solely Greek cause. Melina Mercouri obtained the support of UNESCO when, at a meeting of Ministers of Culture in 1982 in Mexico, the Greek proposal for the return of the Parthenon Marbles was put to a vote and a vast majority of State Members voted in favour (54 for, 11 against, 23 abstentions). The following recommendation was issued:

« Considering that the removal of the so-called Elgin marbles from their place in the Parthenon has disfigured a unique monument which is a symbol of eternal significance for the Greek people and for the whole world,

Considering it right and just that those marbles should be returned to Greece, the country in which they were created, for reincorporation in the architectural structure of which they formed part,

(5) THUCYDIDES, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, Melian Dialogue, V (89), 431 B.C.

Recommends that Member States view the return of the Parthenon marbles as an instance of the application of the principle that elements abstracted from national monuments should be returned to these monuments ».

Looking in detail at the results, all the UNESCO Representatives from communist and developing countries at that time voted in favour. Those against were all representing developed countries such as USA, UK and many European countries in possession of large collections of cultural property. Obviously, their main concern was that the return of the Marbles would set a precedent leading to the emptying of their museums. Whenever the question of precedent is voiced, we reply by stressing that the Parthenon Marbles represent a *unique case*. We are asking to reunify a 160 metre-long frieze, a sculpted film, not to return to Greece every single sculpture now exhibited in a foreign collection.

After the UNESCO resolution, the European Parliament issued a Declaration in 1998 in favour of return, taking the view that:

« .... the return of the Elgin Marbles to Greece would be a key move in promoting Europe's common cultural heritage ».

In the same year, in answer to a written question from Greek Euro-MP Alexandros Alavanos concerning « unsuitable methods used by the British Museum to conserve the Elgin Marbles », the European Commission replied:

« The Commission shares the view of the Honorable Member that the Parthenon of the Acropolis and its sculptures form an integral and invaluable part of the European cultural and architectural heritage ».

More recently, in 2011 a final Act was passed by the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers establishing an EU « European Heritage Label ».<sup>(6)</sup> The Parthenon is already a UNESCO World Heritage Site and now that the new European label has been created, it will be able to gain official recognition of its European significance.

Various polls have been conducted on the issue of the Marbles which clearly indicate public support for their return. For example, according to a MORI poll conducted in the UK in 1998 – which is where public opinion interests us most – 40 % were in favour and 15 % against. A survey conducted by the campaign group « Marbles

(6) Decision No. 1194/2011/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council.

Reunited » in 2003 revealed 70 % for and 18 % against. More recently, in 2012 the result of the Museums Journal's poll showed 73 % in favour. Another highly significant barometer was the « Intelligence Squared Debate », broadcast in Britain in 2012, at which Stephen Fry and MP Andrew George, Chairman of Marbles Reunited, argued the case in favour of return. Before the debate 196 members of the audience were for return and 200 against, whereas after hearing the arguments, the number in favour had increased to 384, as opposed to 120 against. This goes to show that when the public are properly informed about the subject of the Marbles, how they were acquired and how they are preserved and exhibited today, they tend to advocate restitution. Influencing public opinion is the main challenge for our International Association and national Committees. We can count on the efforts of our members, but we need to broaden that support throughout Switzerland and beyond in other countries, starting with the UK.

Regarding future strategy, it is the Swiss Committee's view that the best way to move forward is through *dialogue* and pressure on the British authorities through the influence of public opinion. I must admit that dialogue is very difficult since at the moment neither the British Government nor the British Museum are willing to negotiate. For example, on a recent official visit to India, Prime Minister David Cameron publicly ruled out returning either the Koh-i-noor diamond to India or the Elgin Marbles to Greece, saying he did not believe in « returnism ».<sup>(7)</sup> Fortunately, the current strategy of the Greek Government is very similar to that of the Swiss and the majority of European Committees who feel that litigation would be an ambiguous and dangerous option. If a court is to decide the issue, which legislation is more legitimate, Greek or British? And if the Greeks lose the case, the Marbles will never be returned to Athens.

The latest initiative by the Greek Government, which is fully supported by the International Association for the Reunification of the Parthenon Sculptures, seeks a solution through mediation. The Greek Minister of Culture, Panos Panagiotopoulos, approached UNESCO last summer to initiate a new mediation procedure which came into effect in 2010. Letters have been sent to the British Foreign Secretary, the Secretary of State for Culture and the Director of the British

(7) T. TIMPSON, « Parthenon Marbles and Koh-i-Noor: Cameron opposes "returnism" », *BBC News*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-21623965> (accessed 4th March 2013).

Museum, inviting them to take part in this procedure to seek an amicable agreement. We are still waiting for a response from the British Government. I personally am dubious about the possibility of obtaining concrete results through UNESCO, but I am convinced that litigation is not a viable line of action, unlike certain American and Australian supporters of our cause.

I would like to underline the following points:

- This is a European cause ;
- This is a unique case and therefore does not set a precedent ;
- The new Acropolis Museum, so spacious and bathed in Attic light, is a much more suitable environment to exhibit the Parthenon Marbles than the gloomy, cramped Duveen Gallery ;
- The conservation techniques used in Athens are superior to those used by the British Museum ;
- What better place to exhibit the Marbles than in their original context, facing the Parthenon in the very place where they were crafted by Phidias?

To conclude, it is my personal opinion that the strategy of the Greek Government and of the International Association should focus exclusively on claiming the return of the Parthenon Marbles, namely the panels from the frieze, the metopes and the pediment sculptures which are exhibited in the British Museum. Moreover, since Melina Mercouri started campaigning in 1983, all Culture Ministers since then have been clear about this. If we go beyond this objective to include other sculptures from the Acropolis, we risk losing our legitimate cause, the integrity of an inseparable whole. In fact, we will not be able to advocate the uniqueness of our claim and will jeopardize any hope for reunification.

It is my dearest wish that we will gain enough dynamic support in the future to reach a win-win solution.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Professor Dusan Sidjanski

*Chairman of the Swiss Committee  
for the Return of the Parthenon Marbles*

Speech delivered on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2014 at Zurich University at the invitation of the Association of Greek Academics in Switzerland

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## WHO OWNS THE PAST? THE PARTHENON MARBLES IN A EUROPEAN CONTEXT

With the establishment of a Modern Greek state in the early 1830s, the Parthenon assumed a new significance. It had become a symbol of newly acquired national identity. Even if the Greeks may have appeared less concerned about the Parthenon in the years before independence due to their silencing under the Ottoman yoke, they now regarded the Marbles as their own property. And even if Lord Elgin may have performed an act of rescue, the new circumstances required an act of restitution. A long campaign had been initiated.

The current debate's point of departure was Melina Mercouri's passionate appeal for the return of the Parthenon Marbles delivered at the International Conference of Ministers of Culture in Mexico, August 1982. Melina Mercouri had an urgent message to convey. She was thinking of a day when the world would conceive of other visions, other notions about ownership, cultural heritage and human creativity. She fully appreciated that museums cannot be emptied. She wanted to remind us that in the case of the Parthenon Marbles she was not asking for the return of a painting or a statue. She was asking for the restitution of part of a unique monument, the particular symbol of a civilization.

The Greek claim for the return of the Marbles soon gained increasing international support in organizations such as UNESCO and ICOM. In the past, the case for the return was usually made at governmental level. Nowadays the emphasis has shifted towards mobilizing international opinion. The British Committee for the Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles was formed in 1983 by architect James Cubitt, who firmly believed that the Parthenon Marbles, as integral architectural parts of a unique monument, should be brought together in a museum as close to the Acropolis as possible.

The official Greek position has been drafted in the same spirit. Accordingly, the return of the Marbles is not a nationalistic claim made by the Greek government and the Greek people. It is a claim by the mutilated monument itself. The argument is that the sculptures are inseparable parts of the temple, the great immovable

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monument of classical antiquity. The Greek request does not, however, place the historic and legal dimensions of the issue at the centre of its argument. Since 1997 Greece has refrained from addressing the issue of ownership and suggested that the restitution of the Marbles be carried out in the form of a long-term loan. Today, there is a spectacular new Acropolis Museum in Athens where the Parthenon's sculptural magnificence could be shown in its entirety.

Melina Mercouri's vision was not only a question of national pride. In a way it challenged the status quo, it challenged the traditional museum structure based on eighteenth-century notions about the values of the encyclopedic museum. The issue has far-reaching implications. Is it at all possible to isolate the act of restitution of the Parthenon Marbles as a result of bilateral understanding without running the risk of causing a « snowball effect »? Indeed, such fears seem inevitable. What is feared is a disruption of the traditional museum structure.

The emotional magnitude of the restitution issue is apparent. The then Director of the British Museum, Sir David Wilson, spoke of cultural fascism: « To rip the Elgin Marbles from the walls of the British Museum », he said, « would be a much greater disaster than the blowing up of the Parthenon... ».

The arguments against restitution can be more carefully formulated. Some years ago, a declaration on the importance and value of universal museums was signed by directors of the leading museum institutions in the UK, the US, Germany, France, Spain, Italy and the Netherlands. Calls to repatriate objects that have belonged to museum collections for many years had become an important issue. The directors admit that each case has to be judged individually. But their main point is that museums serve not just the citizens of one nation but the people of every nation. Neil MacGregor, the present Director of the British Museum, has argued strongly along these lines. The British Museum collections provide a uniquely rich setting for the Marbles as an important chapter in the story of human civilization and cultural achievements. It is this story which the British Museum exists to tell.

And, in addressing the proposal to display the Marbles in Athens as a long-term loan, MacGregor maintains that the lending of such key objects would seriously impair the Museum's ability to fulfill its core function to the visitor. The British Museum is a truly universal

museum of humanity, accessible to five million visitors from around the world every year entirely free of charge. Only here can the world-wide significance of the Parthenon sculptures be fully grasped.

William St. Clair has reminded us of the options: « If the arguments for return are still, essentially, nationalistic, the arguments for the status quo are still, essentially, variations of older claims to imperial trusteeship and responsibility ».

In the view of the Swedish Parthenon Committee our choice is easy: respect the integrity of the monument itself by reuniting the *disjecta membra*.

Professor Hans Henrik Brummer

*Former Director General of the Swedish National Museum,  
Board Member of the Swedish Parthenon Committee*

5<sup>th</sup> March 2014





**THE PARTHENON MARBLES –  
AN OPPORTUNITY TO FOSTER CULTURAL  
UNITY IN A DIVIDED WORLD**

Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Colleagues,  
Distinguished Members of the European Parliament,

Let me begin by thanking Professor Sidjanski for the kind invitation to contribute to today's Round Table. It is a pleasure and an honour to be with you in Brussels.

What can we say about the case for reunifying the Parthenon Marbles that has not been said a thousand times before? What more can we add to the numerous persuasive arguments already made for reuniting the dismembered components of Phidias's finest achievement? How many more times must we convene to reiterate the importance of restoring coherence to a work of art whose desecration at the hands of Lord Elgin damaged one of Greece's greatest gifts to the world?

The answer to these questions is that there will always be more to say about the case for reunifying the Marbles. There will always be new and ever more compelling arguments for reuniting them in Athens. And until that happens our generation and future generations will continue to convene and will go on reminding the British Museum of its moral duty to restore to these objects the dignity that Lord Elgin so rudely snubbed. The story the Marbles tell is of a cultural moment that is a precious and irreplaceable part of our birth right as Europeans and the bedrock of our democratic ideals. That story loses much of its narrative charge while its components remain dispersed across different locations.

The Parthenon Marbles are more than just a work of art. They are more than a mechanism through which to increase the footfall of cultural tourism. They are more than a means by which to impose some meaning on the randomly accumulated collections of an encyclopaedic museum.

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One reason the Parthenon Marbles transcend conventional museum categorization is that they have the potential to demonstrate how in a time of global economic turmoil and geopolitical unrest cultural objects can unite us across national boundaries and remind us of our shared humanity. I say « potential » because there is an irrefutable logic to the proposition that a united, coherent sequence of objects that speaks with such clarity of our shared background is more likely to foster unity among nations than a fragmented series of objects that continues to symbolize disunion and cultural rupture. For this process to begin, however, the dialogue between Greece and London must rise to a higher level based on mutual trust and generosity of spirit.

The Parthenon Marbles are unquestionably important within the cultural landscape, but they have become renowned for all the wrong reasons. While they should be celebrated for representing the zenith of the Periclean building programme of fifth-century Athens, instead they are more widely recognized as the most controversial and divisive objects in world culture. They should be peacemakers but we are not allowing them to take up that peacekeeping role. Thus they have become emblematic of the wider disputes between western museums and developing nations that have become known as the « culture wars ». While the Marbles remain immured within the Stygian gloom of the Duveen Galleries where their true significance to European art and culture is so wilfully misinterpreted and misunderstood, our attempts to build harmony in the realm of cultural heritage will be impaired. The international museum community – but more specifically the British Museum – has the power to repair that rupture. The symbolic resonance of a unifying gesture of this kind could be profound and long-lasting.

Allow me briefly to frame this within a broader context. The events that unfolded in Iraq and Afghanistan, and more recently in Syria and Egypt, have brought unprecedented quantities of looted cultural objects onto the international art market. Many of these objects are removed from ancient sites under cover of darkness by local people seeking to scrape a meagre living for themselves and their families. Such subsistence looting destroys what archaeologists sometimes refer to as an object's « provenience », that is the specific positional coordinates and context in which the object was located in the ground, tomb or temple site. Having been extracted, the objects and

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artefacts are moved up the art market food chain, so to speak, before finally ending up in the home of wealthy collectors or museums.

Most museums now know better than to acquire objects of uncertain ownership history and the UNESCO guidelines have set down clear markers on acquisition. Moreover, thanks to the internet and related communications technologies the world's encyclopaedic museums are now vigilantly monitored by well-informed individuals and interested parties for any hint of a problematic acquisition. The social network has become a critical filter surveying the movement of cultural heritage goods and no longer can museums acquire or display suspect objects without risking public exposure and widespread condemnation.

Nevertheless, so profound and widespread is the political turmoil ravaging the Middle East that the traffic in cultural objects is now arguably out of control. It is unlikely to improve until peace and economic stability return to the nations affected. Museums are implicated in this food chain, chiefly as a consequence of their historical development as the repositories of cultural objects and partly because of their self-imposed obligation to continue collecting. In recent months a major Australian museum was found to have acquired an important temple statue of Shiva that had been looted from a site in South Asia. It now seems likely that other museums were recipients of objects through the same supply chain. That said, on the other side of the equation, many museums have taken it upon themselves to return objects that have been recognized as being of specific sacred or ritual value to the source nations and communities from which they were expropriated during earlier times.

It is against the background of ongoing cultural upheaval that the British Museum now has an opportunity to make an extraordinary gesture of reconciliation by reunifying the Parthenon Marbles. This would set an example to other museums around the world and would confirm that contrary to what many people have been led to believe, the British Museum *does* appreciate and respect the architectural significance of the Parthenon Marbles in relation to the Acropolis monument. It would be an acknowledgement that the Marbles' very uniqueness justifies an amendment to the British Museum Act that has hitherto obstructed substantive progress on the issue. Our most eminent cultural heritage lawyer, Professor Norman Palmer of University College London, has pointed out that such an amendment

would be perfectly achievable. This would clear the way for both parties to enter with open minds into a constructive mediation process. Instead of cleaving to an anachronistic legal instrument that will merely perpetuate the impasse, the British Museum now has an opportunity to demonstrate that Europe – and indeed the rest of the world – is *unified* by cultural objects, not divided by them.

Dr. Tom Flynn

*Art Historian and Writer*

Speech delivered on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2013  
to the participants at the Round Table

## UNITING WHAT BELONGS TOGETHER

Ambassador,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to congratulate the Swiss Committee for bringing this subject up for discussion at the European Parliament, the Citizens' Chamber of the European Union. It is sometimes an advantage not to be a member of the European Parliament because the mind is free to ponder the important things in this world rather than the finicky details of legislation.

Professor Sidjanski, you were formerly the Chairman of the European Cultural Centre in Geneva which was founded by Denis de Rougemont in 1950. When we speak about the founding fathers of Europe we always think about Jean Monnet and Alcide de Gasperi. But we should not forget Denis de Rougemont who reflected on the meaning of the « European idea » from a broader perspective. Unfortunately after the Second World War the concept of a United Europe was not based on shared culture but rather on industrial and economic unity and perhaps we lost some 50 to 60 years before discovering the roots and cultural origins of what keeps us together on this continent.

After hearing some excellent presentations I would like to add a few ideas. Jacques Delors said that we have to provide Europe with « a little more soul »<sup>(1)</sup> in order to be united. This soul does not lie within the institutions or the directives we issue. The soul of Europe is our rich heritage dating back thousands of years. Our values are what bonds us together and which we are proud to have in common.

The words of Willy Brandt come to mind when, on witnessing the fall of the Berlin Wall in the autumn of 1989, he proclaimed in a moving speech that « now grows together what belongs together ». In the first place he meant East and West Germany, but he also meant what

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(1) Address given by Jacques Delors to the European Parliament, Strasbourg, 17th January 1989, on the broad lines of Commission policy. *Bulletin of the European Communities*, 1989, supplement 1/89.

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we called East and West Europe. After the fall of the iron curtain many people had to learn that Prague, Budapest and Warsaw were not part of Eastern but rather Central Europe.

Watching the film which showed the Parthenon sculptures being dismembered, the arms and legs being cut off from the torso and the head, in the words of Willy Brandt I would again say that we have to unify « what belongs together ». It's simply absurd that the Marbles are divided between two cities. We know their history, but this should not be their future. I am sure my colleague and Vice-President of the European Parliament Miguel Ángel Martínez Martínez, who has done so much for the House of European History here in Brussels, another location where our citizens can really search for the soul of Europe, will also defend this cause.

Today you have won over a new supporter, and I speak not only for myself but also for the European Movement International.

Thank you very much.

Jo Leinen

*MEP and President of the European Movement International*

Speech delivered on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2013  
to the participants at the Round Table

## **A SOUTHERN EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE ON THE PARTHENON MARBLES**

Firstly, I would like to congratulate the organizers of this meeting and thank you for giving me the opportunity to participate, not only in a personal capacity but also in my role as Vice-President of the European Parliament.

Recovering the major part of the Parthenon Marbles in order to reunify them with their counterparts in Greece which were not pillaged is a fundamentally just initiative. I was first mobilized to support this undertaking many years ago when I was President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and Melina Mercouri, a close friend of mine, encouraged me to take part in this campaign for restitution in the name of justice. Furthermore, I completely agree that the reunification of the Parthenon Marbles is an initiative of European dimension and, as such, we should all join forces to support it. It is indeed in line with the project of continental integration, which the European Parliament embodies in its most authentic form.

Some days ago a journalist, who interviewed me on a TV show, asked me about the concrete contribution of Southern European countries to this project which has become the European Union. I spontaneously quoted three examples, which I probably could have expanded on given a little more time. I pointed out that Southern European countries, and especially Portugal and Spain, contribute their highly privileged relations with another major global actor, namely the whole of Latin America. Similarly, I said that together all Southern European countries, from Portugal to Cyprus, provide the Union with the benefit of their privileged relations with our interlocutors from the Eastern and Southern Mediterranean.

Secondly, I stressed that we contribute to European construction through our loyalty, trust, enthusiasm and sense of solidarity for a project that has proven to be and must continue to remain beneficial to us all. It is this very enthusiasm, solidarity and loyalty which have sometimes served to compensate for the doubts and scepticism expressed on other parts of the continent.

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But above all, Southern European countries provide their partners in Northern and Central Europe with 1000 to 1500 years of history, civilization and culture which implies values such as democracy, liberty and tolerance, perfectly perceptible in Ancient Greece as a model for the rest of mankind. The Parthenon Marbles are for many people in Europe and outside of Europe the major symbol of the oldest and most important contribution which has ever been made by any people to European civilization, with such an intensity that this contribution has also become decisive for universal civilization.

With all due respect, it is difficult to imagine a museum in Athens, Rome or Madrid devoted to Antiquity in the central or northern regions of our continent. However, when people in Berlin or London want to speak about their ancient past, the point of reference are the objects exhibited in the Pergamon or in the British Museum. We have come to share an abundance of culture and civilization, which before becoming abundant for everyone, originally belonged to a specific part of Europe.

It is my profound wish that the Parthenon Marbles, pillaged long ago, may return to the place that they should never have left. Sometimes I am stupefied to hear people argue that the Marbles are better protected in the British Museum and more accessible to a universal public. This argument seems even more absurd when we consider the splendid museum which our Greek friends have built at the foot of the Acropolis, subsidized moreover by European funds, and where there is a palpable void, crying out for justice and which we openly condemn.

Naturally, the claim we are making today and which some of us have been expressing for several years, will not be easy to realize. Our fellow Europeans in Britain are not used to easily letting go of what they once took away and what, over time, has become in their eyes their own property. In Spain we have good proof of what I have just declared, when we take into account the situation in Gibraltar. It was impossible for the British to transport the Rock to the North Sea, but for some centuries it has continued to remain a colony of her Majesty, becoming a symbol of tension. Our hope in this case, as in the case of the Marbles which reunites us here today, is that the United Kingdom might have the same intelligence and generosity which inspired it to give back Hong Kong to the Chinese. It is undeniable that China is an important partner, but it does not participate

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in those integration projects which closely link Greeks and Spaniards with Great Britain.

I truly hope that those younger members of the audience gathered here today will be able to see the Parthenon Marbles reunited in Athens, in the place where they were created and which history and civilization intended for them.

Miguel Ángel Martínez Martínez  
*Vice-President of the European Parliament  
and of the Board of Trustees of the House of European History*  
Speech delivered on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2013  
to the participants at the Round Table



## THE ACROPOLIS MUSEUM: THE IDEAL HOME FOR THE REUNITED MARBLES<sup>(1)</sup>

I'm pleased to be with you today, if not in person at least in spirit, to discuss the context in which the return of the Parthenon Marbles should be carried out. I want to talk about the Acropolis Museum, and some of the challenges that we faced.

It's very simple, our site was located 300 metres from the Parthenon, that most important and influential building in Western civilization. On the site were also ruins, extraordinary archaeological remnants, that we had to preserve and build above. And last, but not least, we had the presence in London of an important piece of that Museum.<sup>(2)</sup>



(1) Video message addressed to participants at Round Table on 15th October 2013 ; [http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x1u35mh\\_bernard-tschumi-on-the-parthenon-and-the-acropolis-museum\\_creation](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x1u35mh_bernard-tschumi-on-the-parthenon-and-the-acropolis-museum_creation)

(2) Photos and drawings pp. 43-46 and pp. 48-49 copyright B. Tschumi Architects (Ed.), *The New Acropolis Museum*, New York, Skira Rizzoli, 2009.

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So I want to show you what we achieved and encourage you to continue the fight for the return of the Marbles.

How do you proceed when you design a building for a particular location and particular purpose? We had to address the question of the Parthenon, the question of the main Galleries and also the question of the excavations, in other words, three items. And these three different parts of the building is what you see in the completed building.

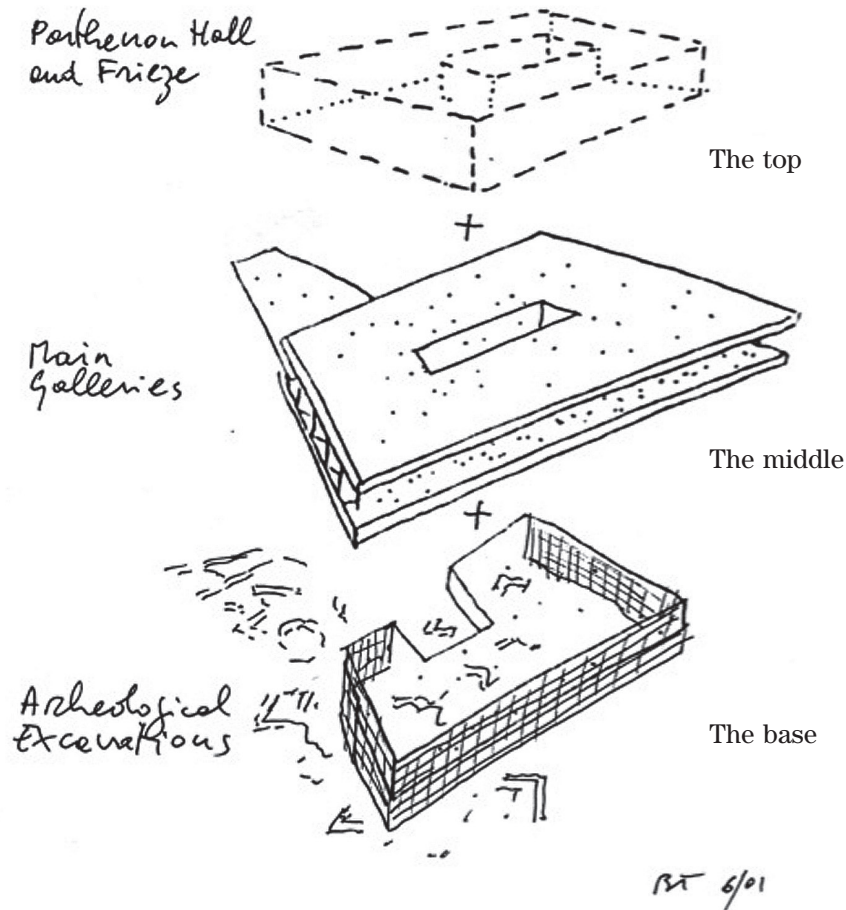
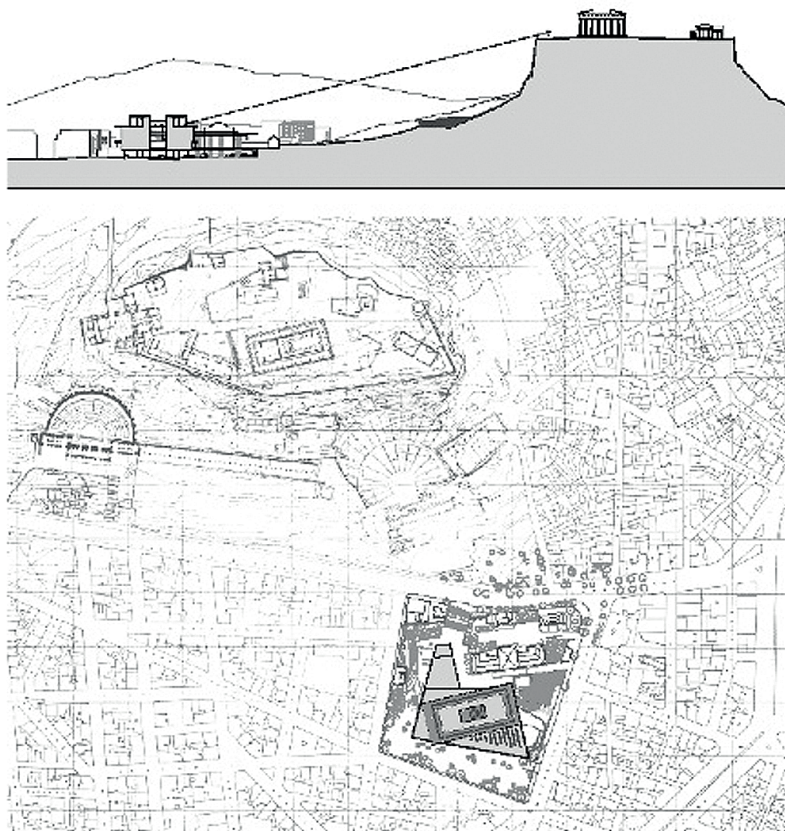


Figure 2

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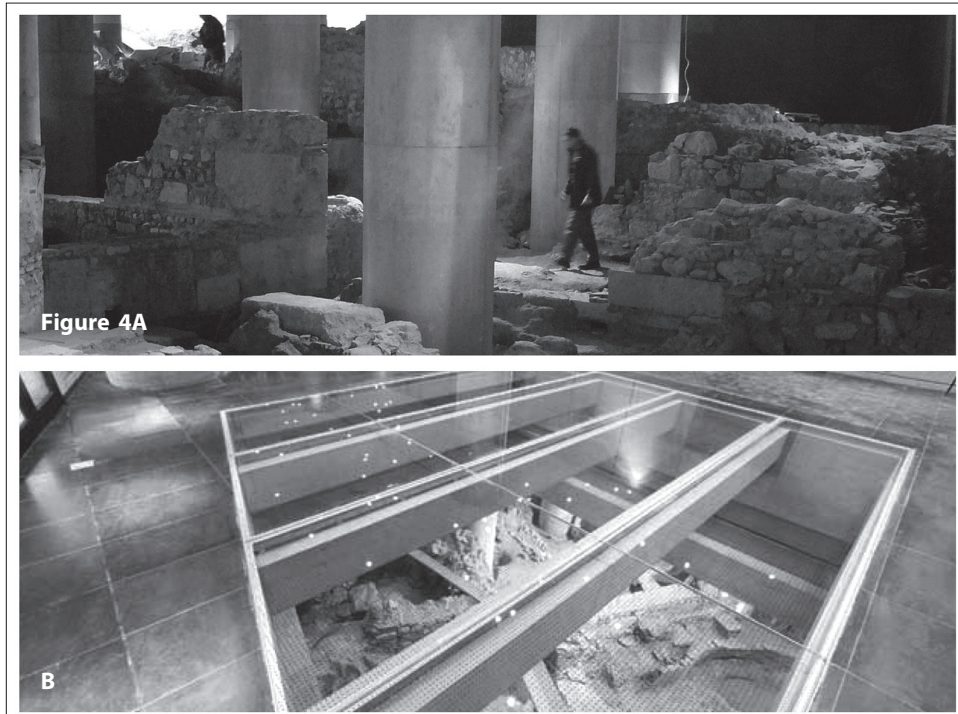
We noticed something interesting while we were designing it; that it was possible to align the large main glass room on the top of the Museum with the Parthenon itself, so that the light coming from the west or from the east would be exactly similar to that which illuminates the pediments of the temple. We took into account the fact that the Parthenon is on a rock, whereas the Museum is in the city. So this was a real concern, making the Museum part of urban life.



**Figure 3**

During the construction it was fascinating to observe that we had at our disposal the most sophisticated, state-of-the-art technology, while at the same time we had people working with little brushes and brooms looking for possible remnants and any archaeological findings. We were extremely careful when placing the columns between the old walls of what used to be a village so that we would not destroy any of these remnants.

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As a result, a fantastic area was created underneath the Museum where there was a double life, the life of the 21<sup>st</sup> century co-existing with objects which are 2500 years old. That double reading of the old and the new was in many ways part of our message. We made sure that through the glass floors of the Museum, below your feet, those remnants were clearly visible.

Then you would start walking up through the Museum along the glass ramps and daylight would actually light up the Propylaea and the actual sculptures. The relationship between the marble of the sculptures and the concrete structure of the Museum was highly significant – the concrete would absorb the light, whereas the marble would reflect it.

I would now like to draw your attention to something very important. At the top of the Museum we have reconstituted the continuity of the narrative, by reconstituting the continuity of the frieze. Look what we discovered. The blocks that are still in Athens are 60 cm thick or more, whereas the ones that are in London, because they were cut in half by Lord Elgin to facilitate transport, are much thinner.

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And you can see in this picture<sup>(3)</sup> the contrast between the original Marbles in Athens and the ones that were removed, replaced in the Museum by plaster copies which you can see here being installed.

It is interesting to see the history of this reconstitution. In this picture<sup>(4)</sup> you can see Professor Pandermalis who has played an incredible role, not only in making sure that this building would see the light of day, but also in ensuring that the campaign for the return of the Marbles would continue.



The Parthenon frieze is an astonishing piece of narrative. It's a single story that goes all around the temple. In many ways, it's simultaneously architecture, urbanism and sculpture. And of course culture. It has had an incredible influence on artists and filmmakers all over the world. It would be a pity not to be able to reconstitute it in its entirety instead of having part of it in its original form, and part of it in plaster reproduction. The Parthenon Gallery is extraordinary.

(3) Photo copyright Bernard Tschumi.

(4) Photo copyright Bernard Tschumi.





I always suggest to people that when they go there they should not take photographs, as they could never reproduce the extraordinary emotions that these artefacts arouse. It is architecture which belongs to a world culture of the past, but it is still part of our sensibility.

You see the temple in the background and the sculptures right here in the foreground. This is the dialogue we wish to continue, but this time with the existing original Marbles reunited.



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Here is a view again of the correlation between the new Museum and the ruins, the building at night with the glass enclosure and at the top you can recognize the frieze itself. This is my last slide, in the hope that there will be a happy ending.



Professor Bernard Tschumi

*Architect of the Acropolis Museum*

Video message delivered on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2013  
to the participants at the Round Table

### Illustrations

Figure 1

- A. View of the Acropolis from the site before construction
- B. Aerial view of the Makriyianni site: the ruins of the ancient city preserved under the new Museum
- C. The Parthenon Marbles as exhibited in the British Museum

Figure 3

Site plan showing surrounding neighbourhood and the Acropolis and the visual connection between the Museum and the Parthenon

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## Figure 4

- A. The Museum preserves the ruins by a group of columns, placed carefully with the assistance of archaeologists
- B. The lower level of the Museum contains frequent glimpses onto the excavations that help contextualize the artefacts seen elsewhere

## Figure 5

- A. Since the blocks of the frieze removed by Lord Elgin were cut in half to facilitate transport, the alcoves designed by the Museum to house the Parthenon Marbles which remained in Athens are much deeper than those waiting to house the Marbles currently in the British Museum
- B. Professor Dimitrios Pandermalis, President of the Board of Directors of the Acropolis Museum

## Figure 6

The Frieze as restored in the Parthenon Gallery

## Figure 7

The Parthenon as seen from the Parthenon Gallery

## Figure 8

The Museum and the Acropolis, seen together

## THE PARTHENON AND EUROPE

### Values passed down from Greece to Europe and the whole world

Amongst those values which form the immense heritage passed down to us by our Greek ancestors, there are two in particular which underpin our modern societies.

Let us address the first of these two values. Ancient Greece taught Europe and the whole world that it was mankind's duty to rise up against injustice.

It is the lesson passed on to us by Prometheus who chose to rebel against Zeus for allowing man to rot in a state of misery and ignorance.

It is the lesson provided to us by Antigone who violated the unjust law of Creon and buried her dead brother outside the city of Thebes, knowing full well that she risked the punishment that the relentless tyrant had in store for her and that she would be condemned to torture. It was at that moment that Antigone exclaimed to her executioner: « I was born to love, not to hate ».<sup>(1)</sup>

It is the lesson that modern Greece taught the whole world when, on 28<sup>th</sup> October 1940, it dared to say « Okhi ! No » and reject the ultimatum imposed upon it by fascist Italy and its « Duce » Benito Mussolini.

It is the lesson proclaimed in the autumn of 1974 by the girls and boys of the Athens Polytechnion who, at the cost of their lives, confronted the military regime which had been inflicting its iron rule on Greece since 1967.

The second of these values is democracy, a concept invented by Greece. Pericles' Funeral Oration delivered in 431 B.C. in commemoration of the first soldiers who fell during the Peloponnesian War is a stirring tribute to Athens' achievements. I quote:

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(1) SOPHOCLES, *Antigone*, 441 B.C.

« Our political constitution has no reason to envy the laws governing our neighbours ; far from imitating others, it is we who set an example. Due to the fact that, according to our laws, the State is managed in the interest of the general public and not of a minority, our regime has come to be known as a democracy ». Pericles went on : « We know how to reconcile the desire for beauty with simplicity, and a studious nature with a sense of energy. We employ wealth more for use than for show. For us, the real disgrace of poverty is not in admitting to the fact but in declining the struggle against it. » <sup>(2)</sup>

These values instilled in us by Greece were championed by the British. Europe will never forget how in May 1940, one of the most tragic moments in its history when the Nazi armies had crushed France and its allies, Great Britain single-handedly defended our civilization. In his famous speech on 20<sup>th</sup> August 1940, Winston Churchill paid a moving tribute to the RAF pilots who had held off the German Luftwaffe, declaring: « Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few ». This sentiment is shared by all Europeans who, like Churchill, feel indebted to the whole of the British people.

As for British institutions, their history right from the time of the *Magna Carta libertatum*, forced onto John Lackland on 15<sup>th</sup> June 1215, is characterized by a long journey on the road to democracy.

Nourished by those values which have made Greek civilization so great, England is therefore the daughter of Greece, just like all the countries shaped by Western history. How could England ever choose not to love and serve Greece, whose culture it claims to be its own ?

### The Parthenon

If there is a monument which symbolizes the eternal spirit of Greece through its history and perfection, it is indeed the Parthenon.

It is the monument which embodies courage, passion and respect for antiquity. In the aftermath of the Battle of Salamis it took great courage to reconstruct what the Persians had burnt down ; it took a sense of passion to embellish the sacred rock with immortal works of art: the Propylaea, the Temple of Athena Nike, the Erechtheion, the Parthenon are all a hymn to that very perfection that only passion

(2) THUCYDIDES, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, Book II (38), 431 B.C.

can create ; it took respect for the past to dare to cover over the ancient ruins with new edifices which would stand the test of time.

As « the sons and daughters of Greece » – and England is a daughter of Greece – how is it humanly possible not to be moved heart and soul by the message conveyed to us by the Acropolis ? In his speech of 28<sup>th</sup> May 1959, André Malraux referred to the Acropolis as « the only place in the world haunted both by spirit and courage ».<sup>(3)</sup> How can we not suffer and be outraged at the thought that Phidias's sculptures were ripped off the temple in 1801, at a time when Greece was being cowed under the Ottoman yoke ?

The time has come to return to this monument, the very symbol of Western civilization, what was barbarously torn from it over two hundred years ago.

### **The 2014 European elections**

In the run-up to the elections to take place in May 2014, which will influence the future of our continent, the Member States of the European Union would do well to reflect upon the lessons to be learned from the past both in terms of the present and the future.

Don't let ourselves be fooled: dark clouds are gathering in the European sky. In many EU countries (Greece, France, Italy, Hungary, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Holland and elsewhere) parties which are hostile to European construction are likely to gain a strong foothold in the European Parliament. Some of these parties even claim to be followers of Nazism. Who will oppose them? No doubt these prophets of doom will take advantage of the sense of resignation which is paralysing many European citizens preoccupied by the economic and moral crisis which has befallen us. In the current climate, there is a risk that the prevailing gloom and doom will drive these citizens to abandon the ballot boxes, thereby paving the way for the enemies of Europe to step into the breach.

It is important for people to regain confidence in Europe and to proclaim that the message of the founding fathers of united Europe is true now more than ever. Altiero Spinelli, Robert Schuman, Jean Monnet, Konrad Adenauer, Paul-Henri Spaak, Alcide De Gasperi and

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(3) Speech delivered by André Malraux, French Minister of Culture, on 28th May 1959 at the inauguration of the *Son et Lumière* show on the Acropolis in Athens.



so many others showed us the path to follow: namely the path of unity, without which we Europeans will be condemned to disappear. Therefore let us be inspired by the spirit and enthusiasm of the founding fathers.

The importance attached to symbols which have made a mark on our destiny is essential in this undertaking. One of these symbols is the Parthenon, which the people of Athens decided to build in the wake of the Persian destruction of the monuments on the Acropolis in 480 B.C.

The Parthenon is not only the most perfect temple that human art has ever crafted ; it is also the emblem of Ancient Greece which managed to withstand the oppressor and convey to the world a message of democracy and freedom.

At the cost of tremendous sacrifice, modern-day Greece has created a new museum to house the masterpieces originating from the sacred rock of the Acropolis. All of those who believe in Europe and in its symbols share the hope that the sculptures, snatched from Athena's abode by « that Caledonian who [ ] smashed your temple with the blows of a hammer to carry it off to Thule », <sup>(4)</sup> will return to Athens to be exhibited in this museum facing the Parthenon. The whole of Europe and Great Britain, in particular, would emerge all the greater for returning Phidias's marbles to the country which gave birth to the first European civilization.

Will the sparkling stars in the Athenian sky, which kept vigil over the men who died at Marathon and Salamis, which gazed upon the efforts of the city to erect a temple unlike any other, will they one day welcome Phidias's sculptures back to the foot of the sacred rock, in the magnificent museum which reunites the masterpieces of the Acropolis ?

This is my wish for Greece, for England and for Europe. For my part, I will spare no effort for this dream to become reality.

Professor Louis Godart

*Advisor for the Conservation of Artistic  
Heritage to the Italian President*

Speech delivered on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2013  
to the participants at the Round Table

(4) E. RENAN, *Prière sur l'Acropole*, 1883.

## THE SECOND STEP ON A LONG JOURNEY

Five years ago at a conference at the then New Acropolis Museum<sup>(1)</sup>, I called on the museum to try to work more closely with the British Museum, arguing that practical collaboration would build understanding and trust between the two organizations. I called this the first step on a long journey.

I said that we did not know where the journey might lead, but that didn't matter, the journey was still worth taking. For perhaps 200 years the opposing sides in the dispute over the Parthenon Marbles have forcefully made their case and it has got us precisely nowhere. I believe that there is some chance of progress being made if instead of making arguments, both sides focus on collaboration. Things are likely to change if the museums are allowed to focus on the things that unite them rather than the things that divide them.

By collaborating, the British Museum and the Acropolis Museum will be able to jointly advance understanding of and care for the Parthenon Marbles. They will be able to promote public understanding of the Parthenon and reach ever wider audiences.

I'm pleased to say that I think things are quietly improving. Ten years ago there was no proper communication between the British Museum and its Greek counterparts. Then Neil MacGregor arrived as Director of the British Museum and there was a feeling that some movement might be possible – perhaps a loan of some of the Marbles. But that opportunity was lost – as were the opportunities presented by the Athens and London Olympic Games and by the opening of the Acropolis Museum. Generally, the negotiating tactics employed have not been skilled!

But I do think relationships are better than they were. Five years ago staff from the British Museum enthusiastically participated in the conference on return and repatriation at the Acropolis Museum. Since then staff of the two museums have been working together occasionally. I hope they are getting to know each other,

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(1) *Athens International Conference on the Return of Cultural Objects to their Countries of Origin*, New Acropolis Museum, Athens, 17th-18th March 2008.



understanding that they have many common interests and increasingly trusting each other. Working together brings mutual benefits – most importantly, it brings public benefits.

Where might this collaboration lead? I have no idea, but it must be a good thing and it must be allowed to continue and to flourish. It gives a good chance of progress. But what do we mean by « progress »? I think we cannot define this yet – but collaboration and discussions are more likely to succeed if there are no expectations about the long-term outcome.

We need to trust the excellent, humanist, broad-minded staff of the museums to work together in the public interest. They should be gently encouraged by politicians and policy makers, but politicians should not be closely involved. Things will progress most smoothly if politicians stay at arm's length.

I find it inconceivable that in another 200 years time the Parthenon Marbles will still be in the British Museum, but I have no idea how that change might happen. I do know it will not be possible to reach a quick or easy solution. And I believe that the best chance of reaching a solution will be to allow the museums to work more and more closely together, to take a second step on their long mutual journey.

So that this journey can progress to a third and then a fourth step, it is crucial that politicians do not become confrontational. Gentle pressure and encouragement will help, but strong statements will send the museums backwards and discourage co-operation. Campaigners need to think carefully about the tactics that are most likely to promote progress. Sometimes that may involve shouting, but most of the time whispering may be more effective.

Every five years, I seem to be invited to talk about the Parthenon Marbles at an international event. When, as I anticipate, I'm next invited to talk about them in 2018, I'd be delighted to see perhaps a joint exhibition, organized by the Acropolis Museum and the British Museum working together, on an aspect of the Parthenon. This might be an exhibition in two parts – a London part and an Athens part. Or might it be an exhibition that travels to London and to Athens – and possibly to other places too? Or it could be in a « neutral » venue.

Or, might there be a project to reunite the fragmented sculptures from the Parthenon digitally, in a temporary exhibition or, dare I say it, for a longer period? Perhaps some of the sculptures would be

reunited in Athens, but some might also be reunited in London. Or, again, perhaps it will be easier for them all to be reunited in a neutral location. There are many possibilities.

If reuniting the fragments, or organizing an exhibition, is too difficult then perhaps the museums could at least work together to produce a book, a film or a website about the Marbles.

Any of these small steps would take us further on the journey. Any of these small steps would increase the public benefit from the Marbles.

The key to making progress is:

1. Stop worrying and arguing about legal aspects of ownership. The solution to disagreements about disputed cultural property is usually found by thinking about what's best for the present and the future, not by raking over what happened in the past and playing with the law.
2. Aim always to serve the widest public interest.
3. Respect the significance of different places.
4. Focus on common interests.
5. And finally, remember to take things one step at a time, with no preconditions about where the journey might end.

Maurice Davies

*Museum Advisor and Commentator*

Speech delivered on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2013  
to the participants at the Round Table



## THE PARTHENON SCULPTURES: IT'S ABOUT LIBERTY, TOO.

One of the reasons I am here is the late Christopher Hitchens, a good friend with whom I worked and argued for twenty years.

I disagreed with Christopher on practically everything – his belief in the innate corruption of Mother Teresa, for example, his enthusiasm for the Iraq invasion and for gun ownership in the United States.

But on the return of the Parthenon Marbles to Athens, Christopher was right, and I want to take the opportunity to salute the work he did in pressing the case for restitution. To some extent my contribution today is in memory of his stimulating company and his ability to make us all think and argue better, however crazy some of his notions. In his book *The Parthenon Marbles*<sup>(1)</sup>, he was at his most forensic, passionate and brilliantly polemical.

So, obviously I am not going to be arguing with Christopher today, but I will take issue with myself on a point in the abstract of my talk that you have in your programme, which I dashed off a few weeks ago. When I was thinking more about Edward Snowden than the Parthenon sculptures, I wrote: « Britain can take pride in the way it has cared for the Marbles in the British Museum ».

What utter nonsense.

The British Museum was, of course, responsible for a disastrous cleaning in the 1930's when the BM authorities attempted to mitigate a century and more of London pollution. (By the way, it always astonishes me how the British still talk about the atmospheric pollution of Athens, as if London had not been the world centre of the industrial pollution for well over 150 years. Only last week I heard a guide in the Duveen gallery talk about Greece's acid rain!).

Anyway, I tracked down the accounts of these cleaning operations in the newspapers of the time and came across an interview with the man responsible, one Arthur Holcombe, who was quoted in the Daily Express on May 1939, after the scandal erupted in the British press.

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(1) C. HITCHENS, *The Parthenon Marbles : The Case for Reunification*, Verso, 2008.

« I was told to begin cleaning them two years ago. As head man I was put in charge of six Museum labourers. . . .To get off some of the dirtier spots I rubbed the Marbles with a blunt copper tool. Some of them were as black with dirt as that grate », said Mr. Holcombe pointing to his hearth... One or two of the slabs of the frieze came up rather white, and I am afraid they caused the trouble ».<sup>(2)</sup>

What can I say? The only word is « sorry ».

Britain has a lot to apologize for and it is time we made amends by returning the Marbles to Greece to make the Parthenon as whole as is possible after 2,500 years.

But the campaign is tough because it challenges an almost superstitious belief that the Marbles are a British possession, just like the Rock of Gibraltar or maybe even the Falkland Islands – though, in truth, we have far better claims on those two dominions than the Marbles.

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Last weekend, I went to see the Marbles again. I often go, though increasingly I feel uncomfortable about it because the experience seems somehow illicit: in a way, it's like coming across a beautiful Renaissance drawing in a friend's apartment, which you know is stolen. The point is that true appreciation of a great work of art cannot be tainted by complicity in an illegal act.

I love the British Museum. It is a wonderful institution and Neil MacGregor is a really superb Director. But the shiftiness and dishonesty of the Museum's stance on the Marbles is a real problem for me. At the entrance to Room 18, otherwise known as the Duveen Gallery, is a notice that states :

« The Parthenon Sculptures in the British Museum were brought to England by Lord Elgin and bought for the Museum in 1816. Elgin's removal of the sculptures has always been a matter for discussion » – is that what they call 200 years of controversy? – « but one thing is certain – his actions spared them from further damage by vandalism, weathering and pollution. It is also thanks to Elgin that

(2) I. JENKINS « The 1930s cleaning of the Parthenon Sculptures in the British Museum », [http://www.britishmuseum.org/about\\_us/news\\_and\\_press/statements/parthenon\\_sculptures/1930s\\_cleaning/press\\_scandal\\_of\\_1939.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/about_us/news_and_press/statements/parthenon_sculptures/1930s_cleaning/press_scandal_of_1939.aspx)

generations of visitors have been able to see the sculptures at eye level rather than high up on the building ». (On the same criteria, the BM would no doubt advocate removing the Sistine Chapel's ceiling and placing it in more user-friendly surroundings).

« In London and Athens », the notice continues, « the sculptures tell different and complementary stories. In Athens they are part of a museum that focuses upon the ancient history of the city and the Acropolis. In the British Museum they are part of a world museum, where they can be connected with other ancient civilizations, such as those of Egypt, Assyria and Persia ».

The notice has all the duplicitous ease of a PR man whose corporation has just polluted your water supply.

But despite its many euphemisms and omissions, it is truly eloquent. The Museum authorities are reminding us that there are, in fact, no good arguments for retaining this stolen property. If there were, they would place them there for all to see.

But greater than the offence of omission is the sly attempt to make a virtue of the separation. The Marbles are one coherent work, and, as we know, a high point in all civilization that still draws gasps from a modern audience. The idea that they should serve different curatorial purposes in different locations is utterly false, but you can see why the BM authorities are presenting it this way. It's a necessary evolution of the British defence to cope with the opening of the beautiful new Acropolis Museum in Athens. So, instead of acknowledging the case for wholeness, they make a virtue of the Marbles' place in the context of the Museum's collection of antiquities.

I cannot tell you how angry this makes me.

~

I assume that everyone in this room knows the arguments for the return. They are as translucent and self-evidently right in every detail as the Parthenon itself. And I am not going to rehearse all of them here today

It's enough to say that a return of these sculptures would be a magnificent gesture to world culture and to the Greek people themselves. These works, commissioned and executed nearly 2,500 years ago, have meaning for all mankind, but they also lie at the core of Greek

identity and self-esteem. While the Museum argues that the Marbles perform a function in London that they cannot in Greece, because London is one of the truly « international » cities in the world, I'd like to remind the BM that there are millions of Greeks who will never be able to come to London to see them. And, besides, Athens can cater for a cosmopolitan audience just as well as London, as we all saw during the Athens Olympics.

The continued presence of the Marbles in London is not just an offence to wholeness, but it is a reminder of the feelings of powerlessness and injustice of occupation. These great works, containing the spirit of reason and the dazzling self-confidence and composure of the Athenian civilization, are also evidence of national humiliation two centuries ago, when Greece was unable to defend the essence of its culture.

It may be going too far to say that some part of Greece is still occupied by a foreign power, but that is the way I see it when I go to the Duveen Gallery. We are still – bewilderingly and illegitimately – in possession of a part of Greek territory.

Lord Elgin's theft was the most ignoble act of the neo-classical era. Today, his actions seem as redundant and repulsive as slavery and colonialism, and I am being quite serious when I say we should see the Marbles' continued presence in London as vestiges of both, for had the Greeks not been enslaved to the Ottomans, they would surely never have allowed this vandalism and theft to take place. I won't go on – it will be bad for all our blood pressure. But I will just say that there is a moral imperative to try to right the wrongs of the past, just as Her Majesty's Government has done by apologizing for illegal acts committed in Northern Ireland and Kenya.

~

I have a strategy when meeting people in London who oppose the reunification of Phidias's sculptures. It is to ask when they last went to see the Marbles. Most mutter that they have not managed to go to the Duveen Gallery recently, but then hastily add that this has no bearing on the argument, because you don't have to see the Marbles to know that they are as British as roast beef and Yorkshire pudding. They feel a deep, instinctive possessiveness, even if they have no

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knowledge of the Marbles, no grasp of the case for restitution and no understanding of the transparent sophistry used by the BM and the British Government to retain them.

It is truly a sense of colonialist entitlement that keeps them in London. People are not prepared to think too deeply about the issue because it affects our national *amour propre*, where reason is pretty much always absent. When pressed, they go to the default position of arguing that a return would lead to a flood of appeals from foreign countries for works of art.

That is simply wrong. The Parthenon Marbles have an obviously unique status. But where other national treasures – and that is a very rare and special category – are shown to have been separated or are marooned in some foreign institution, I cannot see the problem in considering a return.

It is simply a question of what is right.

~

London has a very lively debating culture nowadays. Last year one of the « Intelligence Squared » debates considered the future of the Parthenon Marbles.<sup>(3)</sup> The line up featured the historian and now Education Spokesman for the opposition Labour Party, Tristram Hunt, who was on the side of retention. At one stage Hunt said, « The Greek people should have intense pride that the Parthenon Marbles sit in the midst of the British Museum ».

I cannot think of a more arrogant line. Would the British feel pride if the royal tombs of Westminster Abbey were lying in The Met in New York, or half of Stonehenge had been transported to Athens or even Brussels? I very much doubt it.

Hunt topped this with the conclusion of his case. « Enlightenment, civilization and cosmopolitanism demand that the Marbles should remain in the British Museum, available to all the world. Remain true to the Marbles: keep them here! ».

(3) Debate on the question « Send them back : The Parthenon Marbles should be returned to Athens », Cadogan Hall, London, 11th June 2012, <http://www.intelligenceesquared.com/events/parthenon-marbles/>.



# ENLIGHTENMENT! CIVILIZATION! COSMOPOLITANISM!

Certainly the first two of these, and probably the third, dictate a return of the Marbles to Athens, and Hunt surely knows that.

His argument went down very badly with the audience, which had been broadly balanced on the issue at the beginning of the debate. At the start, 196 people were for sending them back, with 200 for retaining them and 158 don't-knows. At the end, 384 people voted to send them back and those against had been reduced to 125, with just 24 don't-knows.

So, a majority of four in favour of keeping the Marbles was reversed to a majority of 259 for sending them back.

When the issue is properly aired and the arguments properly heard, the case for return has an overwhelming moral appeal in Britain and that is why I know that one day we will make amends and return the Marbles in a gesture that I believe my country is fully capable of.

I will end with the last line of Christopher's essay.<sup>(4)</sup> « There is still time », he wrote, « to make the act of restitution: not extorted by pressure or complaint but freely offered as homage to the indivisibility of art and – why not say it without embarrassment? – of justice too ».

I would add to « justice » the word liberty. For that is what the Greeks will celebrate when they see the return of the treasures that were taken from them during the occupation by a foreign power. It will be a symbolic and actual liberation.

Thank you.

Henry Porter

*Journalist and author*

Speech delivered on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2013  
to the participants at the Round Table

(4) C. HITCHENS, *Imperial Spoils: The Curious Case of the Elgin Marbles*, Hill & Wang, 1989.

## **A UNIQUE CASE CALLING FOR A UNIQUE SOLUTION**

In the summer of 2013 the Greek Minister of Culture, Panagiotis Panagiotopoulos, asked the Secretary General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova, to help find a solution to the 200-year-old disagreement surrounding the return of the Parthenon Marbles. It is indeed one of the most famous and politically as well as emotionally charged disputes about cultural heritage. Through its new initiative, Greece opted for suggesting to the United Kingdom a mediation procedure under the 2010 UNESCO rules in accordance with the Statutes of the Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in case of Illicit Appropriation. Consequently UNESCO sent a letter to the British authorities, i.e. the Minister of Foreign Affairs, William Hague, the Secretary of State for Culture, Maria Miller, and the Director of the British Museum, Neil MacGregor, asking them to agree to discussions under these mediation rules.

By the spring of 2014, this request was still awaiting a response. Those observers familiar with the strategy of British decision-makers on the Parthenon Marbles issue recognize a well-known behavioural pattern, a means of playing for time. During this waiting game, they hope that public attention will diminish, that the Greek Government won't pressure too much for a solution. A few rhetorical smoke grenades on the part of Greek politicians will soon blow over. When the British authorities aren't playing for time, they try passing the buck between the British Museum Trustees, the Government and Parliament, thereby declining responsibility for finding a solution. Of course, no one is suggesting that it will be easy to reach a solution. But the complexity of decision-making processes is used by the British authorities to play a never-ending game of cat and mouse.

The time has come to put an end to these delaying tactics, to reply to an honest proposal to discuss the issue in good faith in accordance with UNESCO rules. It is a question of fairness to be willing to sit down at a table to review a matter of such importance for a

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fellow UNESCO and European Union Member State. Indeed, there is a specific sense of solidarity between European Member States, encouraging even greater openness to dialogue. But the desire to reunify the Marbles does not only represent the interests of one Member State, it is of concern for all Europeans, given the importance of the Parthenon as a major monument of European cultural heritage.

One of the major fears of the British Museum, and of other so-called « universal museums », is that the return of the Parthenon Marbles would open the floodgates, setting a precedent for all other requests for the return of cultural property to their countries of origin. This would in effect lead to the emptying of their wonderful galleries and stocks steadily replenished, which they have so diligently looked after for more than 200 years – although in some cases this is debatable. This fear is transformed into a political doctrine, which can be summed up by the words « I don't believe in "returnism" », as Prime Minister David Cameron glibly stated in 2013 during a visit to India.<sup>(1)</sup> It is an understandable psychological reflex, but when looking at the whole panoply of restitution requests one must admit that such a generalization can hardly be just and appropriate for every case. This is particularly true with regard to the Parthenon Marbles, as the following three arguments clearly demonstrate. Indeed, the demand for their reunification is a unique case, calling for a unique solution.

First of all, the Parthenon Marbles, i.e. the frieze, the metopes and the pediment figures, are a unique case because they constitute an artistic whole. The Parthenon Sculptures in the Duveen Gallery are an aesthetically inseparable part of this whole, which belong together with the Marbles which remained in Athens and are intrinsically linked with the temple as an architectural monument conceived by Phidias. The fact that they were barbarically chiselled and hacked off the Parthenon by Lord Elgin's henchmen led to the neologism « elginism », meaning an act of cultural vandalism. Of course we shouldn't judge history according to our contemporary yardsticks and values, but Lord Elgin's actions had already been largely contested by his coevals. Lord Byron is certainly the most famous of these critics, but

(1) T. TIMPSON, « Parthenon Marbles and Koh-i-Noor : Cameron opposes "returnism" », *BBC News*, 1st March 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-21623965>, (accessed 3rd March 2013).

also the British Parliamentarian Hammersley, the German writer von Suckow, the first Greek archaeologist Pittakis<sup>(2)</sup> and many others criticized Elgin's actions.<sup>(3)</sup> The massacre of an artistic creation has been evident to every generation since. Two more concrete aspects may demonstrate this. First, besides physically mutilating figures and the sculptural relief, the narrative they illustrate has been fragmented. Thereby their symbolic message, illustrating the Panathenaic procession like a continuous film, has been adulterated. Secondly, dismembered figures like the torso of Poseidon, with the rear part exhibited in London and the front part – today one could refer to it as the « six-pack » – remaining in Athens, show the complete absurdity of such separation. Seeing the mere physical result of the mutilation makes reunification a question of common sense.

Small steps towards reuniting the Parthenon Marbles have been made recently and show the growing understanding for unification. In 2006 the University of Heidelberg definitively returned a small fragment of the frieze to Athens, and in 2008 the Salinas Museum of Palermo and the Vatican Museums lent their fragments to the Acropolis Museum. In conclusion, the integrity of the Parthenon Marbles must be treated as a question of aesthetic justice, since their separation affects the intrinsic value of this unique work of art.

The second argument to be taken into consideration is that the Parthenon Marbles belong, as already mentioned, to an architectural monument, which was conceived and has existed for over 2500 years in a specific context, the Acropolis. It is this sacred rock which towered over the city of Athens, and inspired Phidias and his sculptors. But the context is more than just the physical location, it is also the light influencing ones vision, which Aelius Aristidis described so eloquently: « You could recognise the city at a distance by the air overhead, which is like a crown of light ».<sup>(4)</sup> Since then the term « Attic light » became a *topos* in its own right. It is obvious that the London climate is far removed from the attic light. Since 2008, the new Acropolis Museum has provided an ideal home for the Parthenon Marbles as it totally respects their original context. Every effort has been made to highlight this authentic setting. The museum's

(2) Cf. W. St. CLAIR, *Lord Elgin & The Marbles*, Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 332 sq.

(3) It is not surprising that the first official demand for the return of the Parthenon Marbles by a Greek Government was made shortly after Greek independence in 1835.

(4) AELIUS ARISTIDES, *The Panathenaic Oration*, 353.

architect explains the concept of his outstanding and amazing work of art in this publication,<sup>(5)</sup> of which these are the essential points: Visitors to the Parthenon Gallery, built in strict alignment with the temple, can not only admire the Marbles in direct view of the monument, they can also walk around the frieze as they would do by walking around the temple. Every piece is exhibited in its corresponding place, allowing the contemplation of the narrative as it used to be on the temple of Athena. In addition, the sculptures can be seen in the natural Attic light which enlightens the whole building and which makes almost every visit a unique one as it changes with the time, the seasons and the weather.

Finally, the reunification of the Parthenon Marbles is not only of great importance to Greece, but also to the whole of Europe as it concerns not only a question of national identity, but it is also an emblematic European monument. As a matter of fact, the Parthenon is an example of European heritage par excellence:

- It played a significant role in the history of Europe. Besides its association with ancient Athenian democracy, it witnessed the eventful history of South-Eastern Europe, the East-West schism, the Ottoman occupation for centuries and finally national independence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- The Parthenon has a European symbolic value. Having gained the approval of his fellow Athenian citizens, Pericles ordered the construction of the temple, which became a symbol of democracy<sup>(6)</sup>, liberty and freedom. It represents the essence of the classical roots of western philosophy, which developed a universal influence over time. Through this representation, European citizens may better reflect on democratic values and human rights.
- Europeans can also learn about their shared European cultural heritage. The Parthenon is an architectural as well as a sculptural masterpiece demonstrating the avant-garde technical and aesthetic skills and preeminence of the Ancient Athenians.<sup>(7)</sup> It

(5) Cf. B. TSCHUMI, « The Acropolis Museum – The ideal home for the reunited Marbles », article in this publication, pp. 43-49.

(6) Cf. L. GODART, « The Parthenon and Europe », article in this publication, pp. 51-54.

(7) Cf. D. SIDJANSKI, « Europe and the Parthenon Marbles: a common cause », article in this publication, pp. 21-28.

is undeniably a major benchmark in the field of architecture. Le Corbusier stated in his manifesto *Towards a new architecture*<sup>(8)</sup>: « There has been nothing like it anywhere or at any period. It happened at a moment when things were at their keenest, when a man, stirred by the noblest thoughts, crystallized them in a plastic work of light and shade. (...) For two thousand years, those who have seen the Parthenon have felt that here was a decisive moment in Architecture ». It is a genuine European monument of global significance.

Most sadly, the Acropolis and the Parthenon recently also became a symbol of the European sovereign debt crisis, illustrated by countless photos, sketches and caricatures printed in the press. Therefore this would be the ideal moment to return the Marbles, sending out a positive signal to Greeks and Europeans, proving that Europe does not boil down to debt and austerity measures. Such a gesture would serve to ease the pain inflicted by the financial crisis, to restore a sense of solidarity among European citizens who share common human values and cultural heritage.

It is important to point out once again that the demand for reunification only applies to the Parthenon Marbles. The Greek Government has always been clear on this point. There can't be a general « I am Greek and I want to go home »<sup>(9)</sup> policy in order to demand the return of all Greek artefacts from all over the world. No other pieces removed from other temples on the Acropolis are the object of this restitution request, not even the emblematic Caryatid from the Erechtheion temple. We must of course admit that not all actors campaigning for the return of the Parthenon Marbles have always been so clear on this point and that sometimes bankbenchers in Greece try to score with populist movements by obfuscating the legitimate claim. A myriad of Greek sculptures are rightly exhibited in foreign countries, thereby honouring the influence of Ancient Greece and enriching knowledge and arts in Europe and throughout the world.

(8) LE CORBUSIER, *Towards a New Architecture*, Dover publications, 1931.

(9) A. KOTSELL, «I Am Greek and I Want to Go Home». Movement for the Repatriation of Looted Greek Antiquities », *Greek Reporter*, 5th August 2012, <http://greece.greekreporter.com/2012/08/05/i-am-greek-and-i-want-to-go-home-movement-for-the-repatriation-of-looted-greek-antiquities/#sthash.TJs4rS7E.dpuf>, (accessed 30th August 2012).



A unique case deserves a unique solution. The proposed UNESCO mediation provides an ideal framework<sup>(10)</sup> for finding such a solution. Once both parties have agreed to discuss the case, they remain completely independent and autonomous in their action including the possibility of withdrawing from the procedure at any time (Art. 10, 1. d.). The deliberations are conducted in conditions of confidentiality and in accordance with the general principles of fairness, impartiality and good faith (Art. 3, 2.). The conduct of the mediation procedure is, like in a pragmatic discourse, largely structured by the exchange of arguments, facts and information with the help of the mediator (Art. 8.). The potential outcome only becomes binding if both parties agree to the binding effect (Art. 10, 4.). Furthermore, the procedure is ideal because negotiations take place at government-to-government level. In this context, the outlined delaying tactics on the British side will have to cease since the British Government will be representing the interests of other public and private institutions (Art. 4, 2.).

In order to have constructive negotiations on the Parthenon Marbles no preconditions or red lines should be formulated by either party. In particular, the intricate and emotionally charged question of property title should not be put on the table at the beginning of the process as it is the major obstacle to finding a creative solution. It is obvious that negotiations have to go beyond a mere win-lose scenario. By creating added value on the negotiating table, moves can be made towards a win-win solution. Some ideas in this direction have already been expressed. One such idea would be a permanent exchange agreement providing the British Museum periodically with exceptional Greek artefacts on a temporary loan basis, thereby complementing the British Museum's permanent collection with its universal pretensions and regularly renewing public attention. Another idea would be for the reunified Parthenon Marbles collection in Athens to be placed under the joint curatorship of both museums.

This is not the place to discuss such ideas in depth; it is up to the governments and their negotiators to prepare and evaluate solution-oriented ideas, which may lead to a win-win solution. This will

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(10) UNESCO Rules of Procedure for Mediation and Conciliation in accordance with Art. 4, para. 1, of the Statutes of the Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in case of Illicit Appropriation. CLT-2010/CONF.203/COM.16/7. Paris 2010. All quoted articles refer to this document.

be the pragmatic part of the discourse, which is inextricably linked with aesthetical, ethical and moral questions. From this perspective, the British Museum has little to lose, but a lot to gain. It stands to gain renown, respect, and the satisfaction of knowing that it has made a « classy »<sup>(11)</sup> gesture.

Fabrizio Micalizzi

*Advisor to the Chairman of the Swiss Committee  
for the Return of the Parthenon Marbles*

12<sup>th</sup> May 2014

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(11) « What greater gesture could be made to Greece in its time of appalling financial distress? An act of friendship, atonement and an expression of faith in the future of the cradle of democracy would be so, well just so damned classy ». Cf. S. FRY, « A modest proposal », 19th December 2011, <http://www.stephenfry.com/2011/12/19/a-modest-proposal/> (accessed 10th May 2014).





**THE PARTHENON MARBLES.  
WHERE SHOULD THEIR HOME BE ?  
SIX CONFLICTING VIEWS  
AND THEIR POSSIBLE RESOLUTION**

Together with the authors of this book, I long for the return of the missing parts of the 160-metre-long carved frieze, representing the procession during the Panathenaea festival, of the 15 orphaned metopes depicting the battles of the gods and of the missing sculptures of the two pediments devoted to Athena, the patron of the city of Athens. Born a Greek, tears ran down my eyes when I first entered the Duveen Gallery. I stood in shock in front of the abducted and mutilated masterpieces, fragments torn with no respect from the Parthenon, arbitrarily, without any plan as regards the themes they were supposed to narrate, « white bodies bleeding, without any trace of blood around », <sup>(1)</sup> « immured within the Stygian gloom » <sup>(2)</sup> of their present abode in London. And one could add Lord Byron's laments over the fate of the Marbles in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* <sup>(3)</sup>. But emotions do not preclude rational thinking.

Advocating the return of the Parthenon Marbles, however, should not prevent one from taking into account and understanding divergent points of view. In this short text I will try to enter the minds of those British citizens who want the original fragments, appropriated by Lord Elgin between 1801 and 1810 and sold by him to the British Parliament in 1816, to remain exhibited at the British Museum, and who oppose any action, or even discussion, concerning their restitution. Considering the main reasons they usually cite against their return, I will try to present some counter-arguments that might produce a change in their point of view.

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(1) I. THEODOROU, *The taste of the desert*, Athens, Pataki, 2012.

(2) Cf. T. FLYNN, « The Parthenon Marbles – An opportunity to foster cultural unity in a divided world », article in this publication, p. 34.

(3) LORD BYRON, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage II*, Stanza 15, 1812.

1. **The British Museum saved more than half of the Parthenon Marbles from the fate that was awaiting them, had they remained in Greece.** They could have been robbed by treasure hunters, illicit antiquity dealers or become the prey of nations or states who, since the early nineteenth century, collected antiquities for national prestige. They could have been destroyed during warfare, or just suffered from inadequate protection against the ravages of time. Yet, the Marbles that remained in Greece are not in such a bad condition. Pollution affected them until they were integrated in the new Acropolis Museum in Athens, whereas the Marbles exhibited now in the British Museum have not been spared. They were impaired when they were severed from the Parthenon, when the frieze was thrown to the ground and chiselled with huge saws to extract the carved parts only, in order to make them lighter for transportation. They were damaged while being transported in 1808 by sea: from their loading and unloading in inadequately protected crates, from violent storms and some from being shipwrecked. For almost ten years they were stored in the open air or in coal warehouses, where they lost their Attic shine. Last but not least, they were submitted to the catastrophic effect of being rubbed with blunt copper tools in 1930 to clean the effects of London's industrial pollution, a process described in Henry Porter's text in this volume. As for the present, one has to admit that the conservation of antiquities in Greece is in expert hands. An extensive, internationally acclaimed restoration and conservation programme has been taking place on the Acropolis since 1975. One has merely to browse the numerous videos on the Web to be convinced of the accomplishments.<sup>(4)</sup> In 2013, the project for the restoration of the Propylaea of the Acropolis and the long-standing contribution of the Committee for the Conservation of the Acropolis Monuments to the protection, conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage were awarded Europa Nostra Prizes. Moreover, Professor Manolis Korres, who participated in the restoration of the Acropolis, was awarded the « International Feltrinelli Prize » in 2013 for this contribution.

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(4) Cf. Acropolis Restoration Service site: <http://www.ysma.gr/en/>.

2. **The British Museum created the Duveen Gallery as a home for the Parthenon Marbles, whereas in Greece there was no adequate space for them in the local museums.** This argument is no longer valid; the new Acropolis Museum, less than 1000 feet from the Acropolis, now offers the perfect repository for Phidias's entire work of art in a space by far more hospitable than the Duveen Gallery, in direct sight of the Parthenon, bathed in the ambient Attic light, and offering an eye-level view of the Marbles. Close to other key archaeological sites of Athens and uniting collections formerly dispersed, the glass-enclosed gallery on the top of the new Acropolis Museum allows enough space for the whole frieze to be exhibited, for its narrative to be expressed to the full. The white casts replacing the missing parts of the frieze, the beheaded gods and horses of the pediments are there to remind us of their absent parts and to plead for their mutilated bodies.

It is undeniable that the British Museum receives, free of charge, many more visitors than any museum in Greece. Figures are not available on the number of people who actually enter the Duveen Gallery, but it has to be noted that the number of visitors to the new Acropolis Museum, which is hardly 5 years old, after a decline in 2011 and 2012 due to the economic crisis, is rising<sup>(5)</sup>, thereby offering its legacies to all nationalities alike. Furthermore, according to a panel commissioned by *The Times* to evaluate the 50 top international museums, the new Acropolis Museum was ranked third, right after the British Museum<sup>(6)</sup>. Finally, in the debate regarding the return of the Marbles, is the number of visitors a criterion which should override cultural and ethical considerations?

3. **The British Museum is a « universal », « encyclopaedic » or « world » museum, giving its visitors the opportunity to compare the different civilizations exhibited, whereas the Acropolis Museum is « local », focusing mainly on the history of Athens.** The argument that the two museums serve different curatorial purposes is recent, in reaction to the building

(5) Cf. <http://www.tanea.gr/news/culture/article/5024882/to-moyseio-akropolis-giortazei-ta-tetarta-genethlia-toy/>.

(6) R. CAMPBELL-JOHNSTON, « The world's 50 best museums », 11th May, 2013, <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/arts/visualarts/article3761376.ece>; [http://www.soanefoundation.com/press/2013/times\\_london.pdf](http://www.soanefoundation.com/press/2013/times_london.pdf).

of the widely acclaimed new Acropolis Museum. « Universal » museums are indeed essential, bringing different cultures together, helping to unite people. But in this respect, the British Museum has enough Greek works of art conducive to comparisons and more could be obtained from Greek museums in exchange for the return of the Parthenon Marbles. Universal museums today are not static institutions, they reconsider their politics, they seek opportunities to exchange and cooperate with other museums around the world. And let us not forget that the Parthenon Marbles' « acquisition » by the British Museum was not made according to a curatorial plan, but was haphazard, following Lord Elgin's enterprise, which, as we shall see, was illegitimate.

4. **The British Museum has the right to keep the Parthenon Marbles because they were lawfully purchased from the Turkish authorities.** Archival data, however, do not support this view. At the time the Marbles were removed, Lord Elgin was British Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire. The Acropolis being an Ottoman fortress, permission was acquired from the Turkish authorities to enter the site in order to make drawings, casts and possibly take a few pieces that were lying around. This permit in no way gave Lord Elgin's agents the right to tear down and dismantle the frieze and metopes<sup>(7)</sup>. In a letter to Lord Elgin<sup>(8)</sup>, Robert Adair, head of the British delegation in Constantinople, wrote in July 1811, « I have to inform your Lordship that Mr Pisani more than once assured me that the Porte absolutely denied your having any property in those marbles. ... the persons who had sold the marbles to your Lordship had no right so to dispose of them ».
5. **Defenders of the *status quo* are afraid that if the Marbles were returned, this would create a precedent, Greeks would ask for the return of other works of art, the *Venus of Milo* or the *Winged Victory of Samothrace* from the Louvre, and so on.** But this is not the case: the Greek government has made it clear that it is asking *only* for the return of the Parthenon

(7) Dr. Elena Korka has studied the correspondence as regards this matter, which clearly shows that Lord Elgin did not respect the *fîrmans* obtained from the occupying Turkish authorities (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j-8Xhp6nH8k&feature=youtu.be>).

(8) For further details and a copy of the letter, see <http://www.adairtoelgin.com>.

Marbles, because they form a whole and were conceived to be inseparable.

6. **A most compelling argument for non-restitution of the Parthenon Marbles could reside in the fact that British citizens, or at least some of them, are attached to the Marbles and believe they are part of their heritage.** How could that be? A very interesting historical analysis, recently presented by Fiona Rose-Greenland,<sup>(9)</sup> shows that Lord Elgin, who was ruined and saw a solution to his financial problems in the sale of the Marbles, initiated a quite brilliant public relations campaign by creating a connection between the initially unloved Parthenon statues and the extremely popular sport of boxing. Renowned pugilists, national heroes of their time, were invited to pose alongside the Marbles in different attitudes imitating the postures of the Parthenon figures. Their bodies were compared with those of the mounted figures of the Greeks. In a very modern way, Elgin and his followers encouraged the public, belonging to all walks of life, to feel as if they were « the embodied legacy of ancient Athens ». The sculptures found their natural place in Britain, their Greek origin was gradually ignored, they were represented in postcards, drawing books, magazines, cartoons, plaster casts and so on: « a new national identity was grafted onto them ». This identification might have played a role in the emotional attachment to the Marbles. But does this persist today, when figures in other sports have become national models? How many Britons have a genuine attachment and not just a proprietorial reflex?

So, where should the Parthenon Marbles be? This issue is now discussed within the framework of the European Parliament, UNESCO and the various intergovernmental committees dealing with cultural heritage matters. The return of the Marbles is supported by an important number of committees present and active in many countries, the British committees being particularly involved. The present circumstances favour a negotiated solution. Modern social media and networks allow the dissemination of information and help change the

(9) F. ROSE-GREENLAND, « The Parthenon Marbles and British Social Identity », *Open Democracy*, 25th October 2013; <http://www.opendemocracy.net/fiona-rose-greenland/parthenon-marbles-and-british-national-identity>.

perception of international public opinion with regard to the Marbles, including British public opinion. Although polls are not scientific sources of information, one has to admit that the results in the U.K. show that a great majority of the participants think that the British Museum should let the Marbles join their orphaned kindred in Athens<sup>(10)</sup>.

I hope that the arguments presented above will promote unbiased discussion. In a recent « Intelligence Squared »<sup>(11)</sup> debate broadcast by the BBC in London, the discussion led to a quite spectacular change of opinion among the public. A young Briton concluded « ... if we gave them back, we could have perfect copies of them as well as the friendship of the Greeks ».

Isn't it time for the British Parliament to take into consideration the above-mentioned developments and devise a means of circumventing the British Museum Act? As we know, in theory the Act would have to be amended in order to make it possible for the British Museum to divest itself of the Marbles. However, solutions are always possible, particularly if we focus on location rather than ownership. What if the Trustees granted a permanent loan? What if at the entrance to the Parthenon Gallery in the new Acropolis Museum one could read something along the lines: « This Gallery is under the auspices of the British Museum and the new Acropolis Museum. It contains the masterpieces from the Parthenon temple reunited, the British Museum having, by means of a permanent loan, returned the missing parts in the name of ideals shared by the British and Greek nations: democracy and European unity ».

Professor Cléopâtre Montandon  
*Board Member of the Swiss Committee  
for the Return of the Parthenon Marbles*  
24<sup>th</sup> February 2014

(10) The result of an online poll conducted by the Guardian newspaper in July 2009 showed 94.8 % in favour of return of the Marbles to Greece, and in February 2014 88 % of the public supported return.

(11) *Op. cit.*



**PUBLIC AND INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT  
FOR THE REUNIFICATION  
OF THE PARTHENON MARBLES**

It is an honour and a pleasure to have the opportunity to contribute to the proceedings of this Round Table. I congratulate the Swiss Committee for their initiative and sustained endeavour to promote the case for the reunification of the Parthenon Marbles in a European context, although I know from personal experience that it is not always easy to win support within an international « club » for action against a member of that club, not least because other members are often conscious of skeletons in their own cupboards. For example in the European Union France also has some prized elements of the Parthenon in the Louvre. My personal experience was within the Council of Europe, an organization with 47 members, for which I was for many years the General Rapporteur for the Cultural Heritage as well as Museums Rapporteur. For a number of years a festering sore was mutual complaints from the southern Caucasus countries Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia about mistreatment of their cultural heritage(s) in disputed territories, in particular within the enclave of Nagorno Karabakh claimed by Armenia within the borders of Azerbaijan. I made arrangements on a number of occasions to visit Nagorno Karabakh only to have the visit aborted on various pretexts. I hesitate to lay blame exclusively on any single party, but it was an object lesson in the politics of such disputes. There were others, less dramatic perhaps.

I was acutely aware of the Parthenon Marbles as a subject of inter-nation dispute and was aware that for reasons of sensitivity as just described it was a « no go » area. Apart from France, Russia, for example, which appropriated huge amounts of cultural property from the Germans in lieu of reparation towards the end of the Second World War, is a member of the Council of Europe. However just before I retired, I decided to test the water with a motion for resolution, which might have led to a formal report with recommendations on the dispute between Britain and Greece over the Parthenon Marbles. I certainly had no difficulty in collecting individual

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signatures for my motion, albeit largely from colleagues whom I knew personally. But when it came to formally presenting it at the Culture, Science and Education Committee, I was left in no doubt about how the vested interests fell into rank.

The even larger UNESCO is not immune from selective abstention in cases affecting national interests. I had some experience of this when preparing a report which I presented in 2000 for the Council of Europe on The Maritime and Fluvial Underwater Heritage, apparently known « in the trade » as « The O'Hara Report ». I had some interaction with UNESCO which was at the time working on a Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, eventually adopted in 2001. Of the members of the EU only Spain (2005) and Portugal (2006) ratified this convention relatively early, possibly out of concern for the relics of their early maritime history lying at the bottom of distant waters. Italy followed in 2010 and France and Belgium only recently in 2013. The UK has not yet ratified it, nor has the USA, two of the nations with the most extensive global maritime interests, and the USA being the world leader in the technology which has made possible the recent quantum leap in access to the underwater heritage.

Closer to home, much has been made recently of the Greek initiative in seeking mediation through UNESCO over the issue of the Parthenon Marbles; but since 1987 this has been a standing item on the agenda of UNESCO's Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to Countries of Origin and Restitution in cases of Illicit Appropriation (the ICPRCP). If not reluctance, this certainly suggests a lack of enthusiasm for resolution of this matter.

There is an additional little local difficulty in the UK where there is a strong tendency, particularly on the political right, to resent any hint of foreign diktat and indeed to regard as anathema any hint of direction from within the EU.

At this point you may fairly ask « Who is this Jeremiah, this prophet of doom, this bringer of gloomy counsel ? Has he not anything positive to offer? ». Well, yes, I have. I am a campaigner, and the first responsibility of any campaigner is to identify the obstacles and then to identify the means available to remove, surmount or circumvent them. In the case of our campaign, to me the most important factors are:

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1. The consistently high poll of opinion in favour of reunification when the public are asked:  
 1998 MORI: 40 % for, 15 % against  
 1998 UK Channel 4: 92.5 % for  
 2000 CNN: 82 % for  
 2002 MORI: 40 % for, 16 % against  
 2003 Marbles Reunited: 70 % for, 18 % against  
 2004 Oxford Union: 64 % for, 36 % against  
 2008 Cambridge Union: 71 % for, 21 % against  
 2009 The Guardian: 94.8 % for  
 2012 IQ2 Debate: 75 % for  
 2012 Journal of the Museums Association: 73 % for, 27 % against  
 2014 The Guardian: 88 % for
  
2. The difference to polling made by information on the subject. Gratifying though these consistently high polls are, the regrettable fact is that there is a low level of awareness and certainly of understanding of the subject. Raising of awareness and understanding produces a consistently higher vote in favour. The 2012 IQ2 debate<sup>(1)</sup> illustrates this well. A poll before the debate showed 196 for, 202 against and 158 undecided. After the debate this turned to 384 for, 126 against and 24 undecided. Thus not only were 134 « undecideds » recruited, 74 opponents were converted when exposed to the arguments. The 2012 poll of the readers of the Journal of the Museums Association is also worth noting in this respect. These readers are either museum professionals or members of the public informed in museums matters. This informed readership voted by 73 % in favour. However the cultural establishment seems to be out of step with this professional opinion.
  
3. The evident gap between political and public opinion. There is a poll of British MPs not included in the above list:  
 2000 poll of MPs by The Economist: (for) Labour 84 %, LibDem 83 %, Conservative 16 %

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(1) *Op. cit.*

These statistics incidentally reflect the distribution between the political parties of signatures on Early Day Motions promoting reunification. Sadly the strong support on the political left did not transfer into policy under a Labour administration. I believe that this reflects the influence of the cultural establishment within the civil service on politicians when they enter office. I will not name names, but I am aware of politicians who have publicly supported reunification when in opposition but have fallen in line with establishment opinion on entering office and certainly on achieving ministerial responsibility.

What should we conclude from these statistics? Surely that our prime task is the education of public and political opinion. Any government has a duty to take regard of the wishes of the public which it serves. Thus we must demonstrate to our politicians as often and as strongly as we can that in this matter they are out of step with the people they represent. This can be done not only on a general but also on an individual level. There is no more powerful pressure on MPs than individual lobbying from constituents.

Also, we need to take advantage of the global reach of the digital media. There is much excellent initiative coming from many points in our global campaign – witness this Round Table at the European Parliament, the November 2013 International Colloquy in Sydney and the 2012 International Colloquy in London. Disseminated through the digital media these ignite further initiatives. Add to this the consequent traffic in the social media and the increase in public awareness is exponential, both globally and in particular in the UK.

And the even better thing is that so many of the participants in this global traffic are relatively young. This is the key to unlocking the iron grip of the political and cultural establishment. Not only are these young people our crowd of today, amplifying the volume of our message. They also are the general public and the political and cultural establishment of the future. So, in terms of campaigning, this is a win-win situation. I am optimistic enough to believe that our campaign has gained new traction in recent months and years, not least thanks to initiatives like this one here and now in Brussels. But if we have to play a long game the tools are in our hands, we are using them and they are powerful enough to overrun, circumvent and ultimately supplant establishment opinion.

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This is the new meaning of « international support », of « global campaigning ». Through the digital media the global dialogue is direct, not through a hierarchy of representation. This is the age of webmasters, bloggers and tweeters. Let us not just rely on them, let us join them, let us BE them.

Eddie O'Hara

*Former Labour MP, Chairman of the British Committee  
for the Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles*

27<sup>th</sup> February 2014



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