

# Elysium: A Sacred Space of Culture

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Not everyone is aware that the European Union has its own official anthem – Beethoven’s famous ‘Ode to Joy’, based on Schiller’s lyrics. In the leitmotif sounds the Greek–Latin word *Elysium*:

*Freude, schöner Götterfunken,  
Tochter aus Elysium!*

Spark from the fire that Gods have fed –  
Joy – thou Elysian child divine...

In other words Elysium is the origin of our ‘joy’.

What does Schiller mean by this? Let us recall what this word, Elysium – central to the anthem – really stands for.

The first mention of Elysium is in Homer’s *Odyssey* where one of the characters is promised that the gods will send him to the Elysian Fields. A ‘newly born soul’ went across the river Styx: ‘Beyond the river, the soul is on her own ... With proud stance and wide steps, she goes upon the smooth meadow of asphodel, in joy ... The souls of the other famous dead approach to greet her.’[1]

According to Hesiod (VIIIth century BC), the indwelling of the Great was located somewhere far towards the West, beyond the Ocean, on the Isles of the Blessed. Hesiod points out that the Great do not go there after death, but somehow *avoid* death altogether, ‘continuing life’.[2] We learn from Pindar (c. 520–432 BC) that even there they retain their physical appearance, the expression of their eyes, their voice and their habits. They even keep their clothing and continue to do whatever they best loved in life, be it vaulting or composing poetry.[3]

Socrates, while discussing the immortality of the soul just before he took hemlock, supposed that he would soon meet the great men of antiquity. He was eager to talk with them and mentioned a ‘great abode not easy to describe’.[4]

This abode might not have been easy to describe, but Greek literature attempted it quite a few times. There are many tales remaining of harrowing journeys, *catabasises*, to the underworld – one of the more elaborate belonging to Er, a mortal who returned from the realm of the dead. Full of topographical detail, his survey was registered in Plato’s last book of *State* (c. 367 BC).

Greek comedy, too, had a habit of glimpsing into the other world (while tragedy focused on the circumstances that sent one there). In Aristophanes’ play *Frogs* (405

BC), the Beyond becomes the setting for the adventures of characters who went there to visit Aeschylus and Euripides.

There were amusing dialogues of famous persons at the meetings in the underworld; Lucian of Samosata (d. c. AD 180) has left us some stenography of it.

*Axiochus*, a mysterious writing of the early Hellenistic era (IIIth century BC), describes the repertory of rich delights of the Beyond: 'After being freed from the body, the soul is sent to the underworld, an invisible place where the palace of Hades stands; where one can hear the philosophers talk; where poets recite their works; where women dance and music plays; where the feasting is endless and nothing darkens the joy; where the airy breezes mingle with the gentlest rays of the sun.'[5]

The Greeks did not distinguish the fields of Elysion from the rest of the underworld. Even the learned Heraclides Ponticus does not properly clarify the question in his treatise *On Matters in Hades* (c. 320 BC), but then again, only small fragments of his work remain.

All the debates and questions related to the afterlife did not have time to pass through the paramount ancient spiritual authority that was Delphi, which was why the Oracle never proclaimed its official version of the Otherworld. Instead, what was available to benefit the unoriented Hellene were differing Beyond descriptions by the various Eleusinic, Orphic or Pythagorean mystic sects.

So one could only guess what might happen to the soul after its leaving the body. Guessing was what the Emperor Hadrian resorted to in poignant lines written right at the end of his life (AD 138):

animula vagula, blandula  
hospes comesque corporis,  
quae nunc adibis in loca?

Hadrian also revealed his true Roman temper when he built a park called Campi Elysii in his Tiburian villa. This was a simple meadow with a grove which provided a pleasant view from his window.

The genius of the Romans is of a concrete nature. It was the Roman poets who once and for all isolated Elysium from Tartarus. Virgil established that upon entering the kingdom of the afterlife, the soul sees a road that diverges into two paths: 'The right one goes to Elysium, (*hac iter Elysium nobis*); the left one leads the impious down into murky Tartarus.'[6]

The Greeks were always unsure where exactly the empirical entrance to the Other Side, to the 'invisible kingdom' could be found: was it by the Cape of Phenar, or in Laconia? Many even believed that the entrance was somewhere in the Black Sea.

Just as for Hadrian, it was practicality that led the Roman poets to find the right location. Statius accurately places the entrance into Elysium at the mouth of the

poet: 'felix Elysium tenes in ore' – the lips of the poet happily renew Elysium every time they create an apt and neat image – or, as Coleridge said, 'the most proper words in their proper order'.[7]

The *Aeneid* (written 29–19 BC) describes the Beyond in great detail. Virgil also has the honour of penning the classical account of the happy Elysian otherworld:

*locos lætos et amœna virecta  
fortunatorum nemorum sedesque beatas.  
Largior hic campos æther et lumine vestit  
Purpureo, etc.*

Where long extended plains of pleasure lay:  
The verdant fields with those of heav'n may vie,  
With ether vested, and a purple sky.[8]

And so, who exactly attains Elysium? Again, Virgil coins the following:

Priests of unblemish'd lives here make abode,  
And poets worthy of their inspiring god;  
And searching wits, of more mechanic parts,  
Who grac'd their age with new-invented arts...[9]

Besides the heroes, here are the great servants of the divine: the poets, who have said something that is worthy of Apollo, and all those who sweetened and civilized the life of men with art.

By enumerating all the categories of the immortals, Virgil makes a valuable step, in contrast to the Greeks, who had insisted on the simple-hearted belief that the blessed who dwell in Elysium are mainly statesman, tyrannicides, legislators and historical figures in general, as in Pindar or Homer, and that there is no room for poets and philosophers.

Virgil refines the concept of the 'heroic', being the first to count among the immortals those who undertook great feats of art. The Roman world pays its due to those who contributed to history not only through deeds, but also through words, wisdom and 'daring accomplishments in culture'.

Reinforcing this position, Suetonius writes a treatise on the sovereign exceptional-ity of poets. Horace claims that his works will win him immortality. In his antho-logical ode *I'll erect a memorial to myself* there are the words 'non omnis moriar' – not all of me will die.

For the poet Propertius, the dead are nothing: 'sunt aliquid manes'.[10] Ovid, in an elegy to Tibullus, refers to the poet's otherworld summit:

Si tamen et nobis aliquid, nisi nomen et umbra,  
restant, in elysia valle Tibullus erit[11].

In the catacombs of Bolsena I once found a curious epitaph: 'If the confines of heaven take pure souls, then you, O youthful Castorius, have attained the eternal abode of the blessed. Nobody believes that heaven-minded souls could pine away among the shadows – now, learned youth, so skilled in studies of Roman law, a multitude of the blessed will meet you amid green foliage.'

The Ancients came to accept the notion that the Elysian privilege is given to high souls, 'who are exempt from the fate of all after death in the stench of gloomy Hades', as one Greek rhapsodist put it. And, according to one Roman:

qua surgunt animæ potentiores,  
terras despicias et sepulcra rides[12].

At some point, a certain withholding process takes place to determine knowingly who attains Elysium. The judgment, as Virgil intimates, is severe: *pauci laeta arva tenemus* – in the sunlit fields not many of us shall find ourselves.

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With the end of the Ancient World, the old eschatology yields to the Christian vision of Paradise. Nevertheless, in practice, this underwent several curious mutations and adulterations, thanks to which the idea of Elysium survived the historical trial of the Middle Ages.

Up until the IVth century AD, the persistent pagan and half-fellow Christians such as Ausonius (310–395) still distinguished retrospectively 'the airy fields on the banks of the Lethe' where blessed shadows wander 'beneath uncertain light, amid heavy poppies by silent streams'. [13].

In the era of the first Ecumenical Councils, the Greek reader still welcomed the genre of 'conversations in the Realm of the Dead', and Lucian's fingerprint is clearly seen in the amusing *Timarion* (beginning of the XIIth century) – simultaneously a rare example of Byzantine freethinking and retentiveness.

The first apologists who came into the Christian community from a pagan environment, such as Clement of Alexandria or Tertullianus, still speak the language of a passing civilization. And when, in heated polemic, they introduce new terms from an oriental vocabulary such as Sheol, Gehenna or Eden, they are met with perplexity. Stubborn Celsius, for example, asks why clutter the language in vain, if one cannot find a fundamental difference between the new paradigm and the old: 'In truth, our ancient God-inspired men already talked of a blissful life for those among mortals who are worthy of it; some referred to 'the isles of the blessed', others to 'the Elysian fields.'

Officialdom waged a war against paganism, and the word 'Elysium' itself was placed under ban. But the vision prevailed. Elysium slipped into the Middle Ages as an uninvited guest, and, concealed, awaited its hour.

We can distinguish three of the myth's prominent survival strategies. First, the penetration of aspects of the Graeco-Roman image of paradise into the Christian construct.

Already during the Hellenistic Age, neo-Platonist philosophers placed Elysium somewhere in the celestial spheres. Porphyrius believed that the souls of the great are transformed into stars when they die. Aulus Gellius (2nd century AD) noted that, as stars, the souls converse among themselves at night through rays of protuberances. In this way, the theory that stars are conscious made its way into the works of the Christian apologist, Origen (AD 185–253). His passages about 'rational souls and their starry abodes' sound nostalgic and suspect. When Origen was asked to willingly confess where such ideas came from, he got distressed: 'If we are required to provide testimony from the Scripture for such subjects, we would answer that the Holy Spirit prefers to keep these testimonies hidden.' [14] Hidden where? Not, by chance, in the writings of the pagan masters? So, in the canonically censured *Philocalia* (AD 353) such views were prudently omitted.

In the Christian Paradise, the bliss of the chosen elect consists of beholding and contemplating the Supreme Being and of praising Him. It is an ever-singing chorus. Elysium, meanwhile, offered a different, polyphonic, so to say, model of bliss, freely breaking up its members into duos, trios and quartets. Those who make it into Elysium are free to converse among themselves: *homo homini Deus*, as Symmachus, one of the last pagans, liked to repeat. [15]

This concept was reinterpreted in European painting in the form of the 'Holy Conversation' genre, which flourished in the Quattrocento and exhibited its 'Elysian' nature barefaced in such famous works as Van Eyck's Altar of Gand (1432) and the 'pluralistic' paradise of Giovanni di Paolo (1450) where the blessed converse with each other. From there, artistic developments led to Raphael's great fresco *The School of Athens* (1510). And thus the idea of a polyphonic communion of 'stars' vanquished the early Christian monophonic vision of heaven.

The second strategy operated through the idea of personal glory, which the era's upper circle, the gentlefolk, were happy to cultivate. In its core, the aristocracy remained pagan. The 'proud and glorious name' was a cornerstone of knightly ethics. A knight passed his name to his descendents by his glorious deeds. Many ancient family mottoes testify to this, such as that of the dukes Serra di Cassano, *venturi non immemor aevi* (do not forget posterity). This is a classic ancient Greek imperative, and reminds one of what Demosthenes says of glory, namely, that it is the only thing which we cannot take away from the dead, and that it is through which the dead participate in a future life. Simonides writes as well: 'even though dead, they do not lie, since virtue raising them towards glory, draws them from the sites of Hades.' [16].

One can make out rudimentary notions of paganism in the ideology of the European nobility. This was observed by Erasmus of Rotterdam in his day: 'What is Glory if not a heathen relic?'

Barons' fortresses gave shelter to the gods and immortals of antiquity. The Castle of Manta in Piedmont has fresco images where one can recognize Hector, Alexander the Great, Hippolyte, Penthesilea, along with King Arthur and Godfrey of Bouglione, guests from medieval Elysium. The wall opposite shows a scene of the Fountain of Eternal Youth. This is a common theme from the classical tradition in secular Gothic art. The 'triumph over the transitoriness of life', of which Elysium, as we know, furnished for antiquity the best illustration, meant a haven of eternal glory. Hence the logical development by the medieval imagination of the metaphor of the 'fountain of eternal youth' – because 'glory refreshed'. So it was not by accident that the Fountain can be seen in front of Hectors and Hyppolytes - where else do they come from, our eternally young heroes?

It is not surprising that it was a lord of a castle, Tommaso III, Marquis of Saluzzo, who authored the knightly *Livre du Chevalier Errant* (1396), whose central character, tired of the tedium at court, undertakes a dangerous odyssey, and in addition to meeting the usual monsters, princesses, Knights of the Round Table, kings and popes, also encounters heroes of the Greek and Roman past, and listens to them with awe.

The constellation of the immortal Men of Antiquity is also a common motif in Gothic art throughout Europe, with samples that can be found, inter alia, from Augsburg to Barcelona and Siena. The demigods of the aristocracy's pantheon! One can imagine that the walls of the fortress of Octavian, Count of Tusculum, must have shown something similar, since the Count, at the height of the Christian Ages, evoked Zeus to help him in a game of dice! The situation is aggravated by the fact that this Octavian was at the time the Pontiff, the head of the Roman Church (AD 954–964).

During the hardships of the Middle Ages, the ancient myths had to become cunning to survive. The wandering students of the humanities swore in their songs by the name of a muse: 'unde iuro Musas novem'. At Wartburg and at other courts, refined poetic contests were given – and the air was filled with quotations from the classics. In the ruins of Montségure, they said, live the ghosts of antiquity's wise men, frightening local shepherds with their appearance. King Arthur, meanwhile, has never died because he is immortal, but has merely gone to heal himself on the mysterious island of Avalon. Lancelot follows Guinevere to the Kingdom of the Dead, 'dont nuls estranges ne retourne', in Orpheus' footsteps. Monasteries of the Benedictines are turned into citadels of culture, monks copy Lucian, Tibullus and Apuleius, while Virgil becomes the talk of the town, as well as being an immortal magician. Learned abbots write commentaries on the *Metamorphosis*. The quiet of the monastic porticos is soon filled with the shadows of the writers of antiquity, who now find their asylum among the cloisters. Already by about 1100, the abbot Lambert de Saint-Bertin names Statius, Ovid and Cato among his interlocutors and pens the following heartfelt lines:

Non moritur, vivit, loquitur bona lingua bonorum;  
Ergo deos dicamus eos vitaeque fruantes,  
Qui scribunt artesque bibunt ratione vigentes.[17]

And finally, the third strategy. Only in those fabulous times, when all evil could be concealed in an apple, as in the tale of Snow White, could Dante be born. The poetic make-up of the medieval temper allowed Dante to describe the entire excursion into the Kingdom of the Dead without reservation. He finds Elysium in the first circle of Hell. This 'primo cerchio' he calls Limbo, and it is not quite Hell yet; here, the poets and philosophers of antiquity are 'not made by torment sad, But by dun shade alone.'[18]

As Saverio Bettinelli, the poet and countryman of Virgil, will say 400 years later, Dante is exaggerating about the darkness. Bettinelli makes his objections in Virgil's name, in his *Lettere Virgiliane* written 1757 in the form of a message from the Elysian Fields, and accuses Dante of slander, saying the comedy is full of 'barbaric invention' and 'gothic taste'. In particular, it is impossible that Elysium (concealed by Dante under the pseudonym of Limbo) could be as shadowy as a druid forest. It should be bright, as in the one passage from Philostratus mentioning its important source of light, 'the brilliance of Phoebus'. Brodsky, in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech (1987), says that it is rather the 'shadows' of the Great which are the real source of light. So, 'non tristi da martir, ma da tenebri solo' – they sorrow not from torment, but from darkness?

In any event, Dante's pagan Great strongly regret that they were unlucky to be born before Christianity. However, their torments, which are inevitable from the rigorist point of view of the Middle Ages, do not hinder these 'sighing shadows' from taking serene promenades around their 'dungeon'. Their dwelling creates an impression of a comfortable, well-nigh cozy corner of Hell, with its garden and fortress on the hill. At the end of Canto IV of the *Inferno*, one may surmise that Dante is reluctant to part with his brethren – 'gente di molto valore in quel limbo eran sospesi' – and would have preferred to remain there with Lucian, Ovid, and Zeno:

Were shown me the great spirits, by whose sight  
I am exalted in my own esteem.[19]

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In accordance with the exacting theses set forth in Saint Augustine's *Confessions* (AD 398.), henceforth Christian dogma was implacable: if one had not been baptized, one could not enter Paradise, period. Consequently, and as unfortunate as it may seem, Aristotle, along with Plato and Socrates and their like, no matter how great they might have been, were deemed infidels and thus allotted their place in the netherworld.

The difficult task of making them Christian posthumously was taken on as early as AD 150 by Christianity's first philosopher, Justin. His *Apology* dealt a deft stroke to the dogma: namely, that because philosophers serve Logos, and Logos, as we know, was manifested in Christ, then it turns out that the philosophers' active revelation of Logos prepared minds for accepting Christ. So, the philosophers, in their own way, had been doing what the Old Testament's prophets had done. Congratulations, therefore, to Socrates, Plato, Heraclites and their brethren, because they lived according to Logos and are thus Christians *ante litteram* – even if they didn't know it themselves.

The prophets of the Old Testament, though not baptized, were more fortunate: according to Church tradition, Christ, while dead for three days before His Resurrection, was really on a visit to the Kingdom of Darkness, from whence he brought back with Him to Paradise all the righteous forefathers of the Old Testament, the ancestors and prophets. Why would the Greek and Roman 'prophets' be deemed any worse?

But Justin's intercession was not enough to dispel the curse imposed by the Apostle Paul upon Athens' 'vain sophistry'. The Apostle, delivering the sermon of God's Word was not met with much enthusiasm in philosophy's ancient capital...

Classical disciplines, *curricula artis liberalis*, continued to be taught in Europe, but the idea of faith being above the classics still held strong, and, consequently, Plato is a friend of mine, but the True Faith is a better friend, *magis amica*. Some of the more devoted students could not overcome a feeling of guilt before their teachers. The father of scholastic dialectics, Abelard, in his *Introductio ad Theologiam* (1113) argues that ancient philosophers were intrinsically Christians (*naturaliter christiani*), and so could not be denied eternal salvation.

But how could one rescue them from Hell, legally?

The solidarity of the medieval 'intelligentsia' with their spiritual forefathers was able to work wonders. The plan was achieved in the following way: first Elysium, the collective assembly of the Masters, was drawn into Hell's most neutral border territory, its threshold, and under the disguise of its heteronym, 'limbus'.

And then, a century later, thanks to the collective efforts of the humanist conspirators, Limbo as an official location of the 'innocent, esteemed though not baptized' was accepted as an official doctrine at the Council which was held in Florence in 1439. After an appropriate purification – here Limbo is equated with Purgatory and absorbed by it – its inhabitants could become worthy of Paradise.

Although the formula about the 'innocent' sounds perhaps a bit too general, it was dictated by a necessary sense of precaution, since the opponents on the other side of the argument were very relentless cardinals indeed, the true sons of the Middle Ages. (Torquemada, an uncle of the future Great Inquisitor, was among them, muttering 'reatus poenæ, reatus poenæ').

Thus, the simple word 'innocent' concealed hot debates and offstage intrigues in favour of an amnesty for the souls of antiquity's Great. Among the principal accomplices to this plot of the Council were Enea Silvio Piccolomini and the Greek Cardinal Bessarion, both of whom were protected by Pope Eugene IV, an important comrade in the battle. Not a few polemics were written by humanists from all countries, who were united in their efforts to save their favourites Homer, Epicurus, Virgil. Even paintings appeared depicting a Christ descended into Hell, who was leading out someone besides the Old Testament prophets. For example, one such *Descent* was done by Andrea da Firenze as early as 1369.

The generalized formulation, according to which, disguised as unbaptized babes, the bearded men of antiquity crept to glory, should not be misunderstood. It was a real theological victory, the fruits of which became obvious when a century later Erasmus of Rotterdam, permitting himself to be even bolder, composed a litany for a new saint: *Sancte Socrates, ora pro nobis* – 'Saint Socrates, pray for us'.

The haven for intellectual pagans, where Dante saw Aristotle, surrounded by his entire philosophical family, 'vidi il Maestro di color che sanno seder tra filosofica famiglia', turned out to be dogmatically accepted into the Catholic Church's bosom. Fatally, or, to be more precise, for political reasons, the dispositions of the ecumenical Florentine Council were not accepted by the established Byzantine spiritual leadership. A result of this was the theological hostility of the Greeks towards their own 'Elders'. In this way, the modern Greek world sentenced a good part of its cultural heritage, including Aristotle, the 'Maestro di color che sanno', to eternal torment for the sake of the True Faith's purity.

Within the Greek orbit of influence, there is little hope of discovering apocrypha that depart from this severe sentence upon the great minds of antiquity, except in painting. One of these secret routes was a certain provincial Bulgarian monastery in Arbanasi, where an artist represented our pagans with a nimbus, and the Cathedral of God's Epiphany in the Moscow Kremlin. Such faces as those of Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch and even Virgil (beneath the cover of a wide-rimmed pilgrim's hat) figure here among the prophets of the Old Testament (middle of the XVI century).

This stealthy visit takes place at the same time as the artist from Urbino confidentially puts the finishing touches to *The School of Athens* in the apartments of the head of the Catholic Church in the Vatican.

After the Florentine Council, the neo-Latin learned European world, having snatched the 'philosophical family' right out from under Hell's nose, takes advantage of its inheritance with renewed energy. I am happy to note that the triumph of the whole affair, which was so close to Dante's heart, took place precisely in Florence.

Everything points to the fact that this city repented of exiling its great poet. It brought to life the most sacred dreams of its sufferer and was the first to offer salvation to the exiled outcasts of antiquity.

Perhaps it is because of its very repentance that Florence will stand at the helm of the movement to repatriate the prodigal fathers, in a word, the Renaissance. Having learned to love the rejected, the humanists begin to dig up forgotten manuscripts with the poignant care of an archaeologist. They bring forth the pale classics of antiquity, which had hibernated during the Middle Ages in monastic crypts.

And now, Marcilio Ficino, right from the ecclesiastical pulpit, recommends that Plato be read on a par with the Bible.[20] Meanwhile, in one painting, Dosso Dossi depicts God the Father with hints of Plato.

It is as if the humanists created a safe harbour where they received ashore those '*rari nantes*' that floated up from a hostile millennium to form their new iconostasis. The forgotten name is also restored: Elysium. And humanists such as Salutati, Poliziano or Strozzi use the name without blushing. One of the first was Boccaccio in his commentaries on Dante, with a stipulation – just in case – that read: 'Our poets, accustomed to representing the beauties of the Elysian Fields, had in mind the sweetness (*dolcezza*) of Paradise' (1355). [21]

Having grown bored with the habitual other-worldliness of Christian doctrine, the humanists set up for themselves an alternative one, projecting their philological biases and cultural delights onto a new version of the Better World. The new humanist Paradise was better at least because in it classical Latin was spoken, since it was populated by the masters of style. Not a whit a Paradise of Scholiasts!

Gasparo Visconti, in his poem *Pasiphae* (1493), tells us, speaking on the part of the Roman poet Cecil:

Nel campo Eliso pien di eterna calma  
sto, senza sentir cosa che mi tedia  
in compagnia di più d'una excelsa alma  
che ivi dal Cel sortita ha la sua sedia;  
ma benché sii ogni spirto in virtù lauto  
pur più me stringo cum Terenzio e Plauto.

Visconti gives us an account of their pastimes which mostly include talking about literature (*litteral negozio*) and discussing each other's works. The dead are not wasting their eternity: 'qui ragioniamo, per non star in ozio.'

Thus the humanists of the Renaissance win back their paradise and spend a long time discussing its topographical aspects. Their awareness of antique eschatology reaches such proportions that by 1539 one of them, Nicolò Franco da Benevento, writes an ironic *A Most Delightful Dialogue* in which he presents us with a typical prig, a humanist scholiast named Borgio, who, having come to the very banks of the river Lethe, starts lecturing Charon himself as if he were some student, explaining to him everything he knows about the pagan Better World.

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For Renaissance philologists one of the conditions of joining ‘the pagan heavens’ (Enea Silvio Piccolomini) becomes the involvement in the accumulation of a ‘cultural layer.’

Honneurs divins au ciel sont ordonnez  
pour tous humains aux lettres adonnez;  
<...> meriteront, s’ilz font bons labourages  
honneurs divins,

Muse Urania informs in 1512 on accepting a knight, Guillame de Bissipat, ‘au meillieu des beaulx champs helisees’.[22]

When Ficino, at the height of the Quattrocento, recommended the study of Plato, he meant paying special attention to that passage in *Phaedrus* where the candidates, suitors for Paradise, are named; not ‘beati pauperes spiritu’ (blessed are the meek)[23], but blessed are those who seek after wisdom, blessed are those who seek after beauty, blessed are those who seek after love. The Greeks included in a single category those who qualify for ‘the benefits of the Muses.’

All intellectual and creative deeds of man abide under the blessings of Muses. Meanwhile, the Greeks called a-mousos those who were ignorant and indifferent to harmony. ‘Allow me not, O Gods, to find myself among the a-mousos!’ prayed Euripides.

The Renaissance, bowing before the Artist, praises this vocation to the heavens. Leon Battista Alberti coupled it with the highest possible service to the theologically transcendental ‘Beauty.’ He utters the following: an artist ‘quasi alterum sese inter mortales deum praestaret’.[24] Beginning with the quite hagiographical lines in Vasari’s *The Lives of the Most Excellent Architects, Sculptors and Painters* (1550), the artist comes to be seen in Europe as no longer a craftsman, but as a cultural hero, or at least as a relevant figure in social life.

The artist, formally recognized merely as someone ‘accomplishing orders’, is now accepted and celebrated as a creative agent who has a right to realize his own will. King Philip II of Spain addresses Titian as an equal and permits him to paint, inspired only by his own genius. Painters, sculptors and architects are now granted high titles equal in rank to statesmen and men of government. It is as if artists were accepted and considered as lords. Their work is begun to be seen as a noble (while the Greeks, incidentally, saw all manual labour as mean – even the work of great sculptors like Phidias or Praxiteles).

The reputation of a state now depended to a greater degree on its valiant artists and scholars than on its conquerors or politicians. But this was not so obvious to people then as it is today. That is why Francis I of France gave the title of Knight to professors at the Sorbonne (1533). Many were the cases of social promotion of philosophers, poets, architects, painters or even gardeners ennobled by the royal *motu proprio*: for example, Mantegna, Gentile Bellini, Pietro Manuzio, Lorenzo

Valla, Mattia Preti, Borromini, Lulli, Metastasio, Fontana, Lenôtre, Leighton and Ensor. Even today in Britain, accomplished conductors of the London Philharmonic and other eminent cultural personalities are granted the title of 'Sir'.

The Habsburg Emperor Charles V raised Titian to the dignity of count. The court would joke: 'where is the count's county?' to which the correct answer is, of course, that the county was the magical fiefdom of Titian's paintings. And Charles V could have answered with the words of Shakespeare's King Henry VI:

How sweet a thing it is to wear a crown,  
Within whose circuit is Elysium  
And all that poets feign of bliss and joy.[25]

Beethoven demonstratively disregarded the accepted social hierarchy and refused to yield the way to the aristocracy on his walks. In Rome, with the triumph of Petrarch in 1341, the tradition of crowning poets with a laurel wreath on Capitol Hill – the highest honour, which awaited Torquato Tasso – was seasonably restored. 'Crowned', this is the title of kings.

The pedestal that was erected for artists by the Florentine neo-Platonists raised them to sacerdotal dignity. Titian was called 'the dispenser of immortality' by his contemporaries. Just as in church there were administered the sacraments of extreme unction, so too religious rites of a similar kind were performed by the artist through the oil of the palette.

A portrait painted by Titian reunited the identity of the sitter to his Ideal, that is, with the Platonic Form, so emphasizing an 'eternal incarnation'. That is why the artist 'anoints' the mortal. The portrait somehow worked as a means of personal salvation (or, in some worse cases of damnation[26]) and as a viaticum, acquiring the function of applied soteriology (a science of Salvation).

The artist Federico Zuccari in a rather self-flattering treatise *Idea dei pittori, scultori e architetti* (1607), well-nigh canonized the conviction that versatility in the arts or sciences could be equal to the priest's mission, namely, the salvation of the soul, one's own and other people's. By virtue of his art – mixing mellow colours, striking the right note or putting words together 'in their right order' – the artist was guaranteeing for himself special privileges in the afterlife, preparing a warm corner in the esteemed Garden.

It was the revival of an old Graeco-Roman topos. 'Do not worry, oh anxious shadow, you won't be mixed with the dead, you will be sent to Elysium', said Ausonius in a epitaph to a valiant gentleman.[27] By this was meant a place that did not exist for everyone, but just for the *pars valentior* of humanity. These were chosen on the basis of their accomplishments and according to the severe proportions established by Heraclites: 'there are many of the multitude, but few of the best.'[28] Statius openly advocates this meritocracy. We can recall how tenderly he describes that place, where 'surgunt animae potentiores'.

Medieval orthodoxy was deaf, however, to any talk of a man's merit leading him to Heaven, for fear of falling into Pelagianism (the thesis of salvation through one's own efforts). Saint Augustine declared this doctrine a heresy and demonstrated that access to Paradise depended only on God's grace. The Pelagian heresy was indeed condemned by the Church in 529.

But in the ripe years of the Middle Ages, Dante already expresses some remarkable doubts: 'Many of those whose life must be completely mortal, just as animals, should not harbour hopes of living another life.' These words are gloatingly rephrased by Goethe:

Who wins no name, and wills no noble work,  
Belongs to the elements: so away with you! [29]

And this was how the first foundations of this spiritual meritocracy were laid. In Jean Paul's 1793 novel with the self-revealing title *The Invisible Lodge* these elected ones are called 'the high people' (hohen Menschen). Only they can handle Immortality, which, it turns out, is not for everyone. It is useless for small souls to even hope for it. And really, 'comment voulez-vous qu'une âme basse puisse être immortel', Jules Renard asks. Namely, immortality is not everyone's business. Kurt Schwitters utters: 'die Unsterblichkeit ist nicht Jedermanns Sache.' [30]

Aristotle would have agreed with everything here, because for him, being a poet, a composer or an artist is a virtue and a moral accomplishment, and not just a pastime or a vocation, as some would believe. [31] According to Aristotle, living life idly and meanly, or being graceless, is unethical and therefore blameworthy. So develop the science of aesthetics. Indeed, the question of admission to this or that paradise depended on the understanding of sin. And, if the question of what is sin and what is virtue was posed before a desirable but elusive Paradise, then the premise rises to the formation of pure aesthetic, elaborated as cognition of what is sin and virtue in art.

This is how the notion of 'impeccable taste' originates. This is precisely what will bring us there. That is why 'taste' acquires a fundamentally vital relevance, and will not necessarily be expressed in conventional art forms.

The 'Centuries of Taste' (XVI-XVIII) are characterized by the appearance of 'masterpieces of beautifully realized life', performed by such colourful personages as adventurers, witty charlatans and eccentric chamberlains. These characters do not write anything (except letters or *billets doux*), but their adventure novels are woven from their own whole biographies. Such characters must be ranked in the pantheon of fully fledged artists, just as those fascinating, stylish, worldly-minded muses, the astonishing femmes fatales whose qualities so delighted their contemporaries, and who themselves became masterpieces of their age.

Indeed, one who was born 'under the artistic star' did not have to choose between 'life' and 'art'. This extravagant attitude was expressed in a phrase by Tristan Corbière: 'Ce fut un vrai poète: il n'avait pas de chant' – (as a true poet, he wrote no poems).

For those to whom words were the very air they breathed, it was natural that with death they would not die, but merely stop writing; ‘not dead, but living voiceless,’ as Carlyle would put it.[32] There, in the philological empyrean where a field of quotations glimmers, a word gratefully revitalizes its author, and animates his tongue, his heart, his hands, his fingers, his brow. ‘This is our reward for our works’ (Ezra Pound). And little by little, the ability to hold endless discussions in the Elysian Fields is restored. In one of his essays, Saint-Beuve gives us a quick sketch of Elysium (‘I won’t continue this description, which, if it were full, would demand a volume’) with its rich cultural life, the discussion of novelties, the reconciliation of former foes, improvisations, table talk and the accounts of novices.

Obviously yearning to take part in these talks, even the clergy of the time showed their interest in joining this congregation of the privileged to be no less than that of the academics. This was why many of the sly abbots did not hasten to dethrone the alternative afterlife. On the contrary, some opportunists like Abbé Deslisle, de Fonteny, Marmontel, Dom Chandon, Bossuet, Prévost, Fénelon, Chaulieu, Galiani, Saint-Sorlin – they all mean to steal up to the splendour of the Elysian Fields. Even a protestant like Zwingli, who did not accept Purgatory, in anticipation of the afterlife’s cloudless landscape, ranks himself among the Aristides, Senecas and Aristotles.[33]

In the Baroque period (XVIIth century), at the high point of Europe’s cultural Golden Age, when there was a natural tendency towards the practical realization of Illusion, it was deemed necessary to establish appropriate institutions. Thus, starting with the Roman ‘Arcadia’, *académies des beaux esprits* flourished throughout Europe. Their purpose was to preach – these oases of culture serving as a propaedeutic for an otherworld’s vertex with Greats, a sort of *pregustatio elysii*. There, participants would grow accustomed to ‘artistic eternity’:

This life of mortal breath  
Is but a suburb of the life Elysian.[34]

Academies admitted the distinguished in the artistic profession. These arbiters of the fair, revering each other as demigods (members of the French Academy hold the title of ‘*Immortel*’ to this day), communicating with the world only through versified messages. In such conservatories, a caste of chosen, lucky guardians of Cleverness and chairmen of Culture was provided.

From that point onwards, stylistic fervour knew no boundaries. It could be explained by an obsession with defying the Lethean waters. Ariosto horrified fine-feeling readers with a vision of an elder throwing into the river Lethe handfuls of names of those who were sentenced to an eternal proscription:

With names he filled his mantle to the brim,  
Aye thinned the pile, but ne’er his labour ended;  
And in that stream, hight Lethe, next bestowed,  
Yea, rather cast away, his costly load. [35].

Aspirants for Salvation – who were in this life formal members of the Academies – would develop strategies of overcoming the waters of Lethe. One could get across only with the help of a certain style. Encyclopedists are advocates and apostles of a salutary Style. Therefore, taste, as a sense, made an extraordinary career for itself, becoming quite an ontological–mystical notion, a Creed of Faith. See the 25 fine-print columns in the article ‘Goût’ in the Encyclopedia, signed by Montesquieu. Not virtuous behaviour, but virtuous manipulation with the Word become a measurement of human merit. Moral heights become identified with high style. It is enough to recall Buffon’s speech 1753, when he was accepted into the Academy, which rephrased ‘*ecce homo*’ as ‘*l’homme, c’est style*’.

Never before did writers write so well and so much as in the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries. In France there was a cult of overpolished ‘Precicism’; in Italy, ‘Marinism’; in Spain, ‘Gongorism’; in England, Elizabethan ‘Euphuism’. These were all the extremes of attempts to distract death and Oblivion. The aspirants set about playing word puzzles, as though apprehending that Eternity is given to one who learns to construct right phrases out of bits of ice, just as Anderson’s character Caius tried in *Snow Queen*. And since the poetry above all nursed the Word, also decidedly ‘Poetry will save us’, Matthew Arnold promises. Elysium will open its gates to those who find a pass-word.

In modern Europe the salon can be considered as a private workshop for promotion to Elysian ambience, a culture of social entertainment. The tradition stretches from Renaissance get-togethers held in Isabella d’Este’s Mantuan garden, through Florentine meetings in the palazzo of Orazio Rucelai and the musical evenings in the Villa Rotonda, the disputes of the Münster circle in the gardens of Princess Amalia Galitzyn, the parties of the Davidsbund and the gatherings of other German Romantics, and culminates in the splendour of French salons such as de Lanclos or Sevigné.

The appearance of the salon phenomenon may have helped one of the finest arts to flourish on the European stage – by virtue of its ephemerality – the art of brilliant chatter (*causerie*). There are traces of this verbal art-genre glittering among the dialogues of some French and English novels of the XVIIIth century. Often their authors, partly emulators of this haughty culture themselves, could be repelled by the title of ‘writer’ as an intolerable profanation. Horace Walpole, for example, was far from flattered when he was taken for such a one by his contemporaries. It behoved to him to be a worldly man and witty company, and the rest was merely to pass the time away. If England had not come up with the institution of teatime, English literature might have risked becoming without limits.

Before and after tea, one took promenades in the park in order to converse. For this, in England and elsewhere, the outdoors was provided with a great multitude of parks. During promenades, the talk consisted of a little of everything, and was peppered with quotations from dear Ancients. No wonder that, with time, these

dear old men of antiquity started peering out of the bosquets. That is the reason why many parks in Europe were called Elysian fields. On the estate of Mauperthuis, an excellent example of Masonic garden architecture, a pyramidal gate led into 'Elysium'. A distant corner of the park at the estate of Ermenonville, where Rousseau spent the last years of his life, was also called Elysiée, and it had an island with poplars, as the mythical landscape had harboured, according to the sources. Elysian Fields were also worthily represented in Germany by a park in Stuttgart where Uhland liked to take walks. Goethe for his part liked to walk in the gardens of Prince of Anhalt-Dessau in Woerlitz, and he wrote in a letter in 1778 that this was the 'perfect Elysium'. Pushkin surnamed the park of Zarskoe Selo, with its busts in the Cameron's gallery, a 'hyperborean Elysium'. In England, in Buckinghamshire, there was a river called the Styx, and it flowed through 'Elysian Fields' at the Stowe estate of the Viscounts Cobham. Having taken a promenade through this park, a visitor would wander into the temple of Antique Virtues, to be greeted by busts of the legendary great men of the past: 'sacred band of princes, bards and sages', as one poem dedicated to the park sings (1731).

A similar literal population by busts of legends inhabits the Puccini garden in Tuscany. Even the earliest examples of the Italian villas greet one with some rather unequivocal allusions to the mythical character of landscape. In Italy there are countless gardens where Parnassus is present and where Muses allegedly reside, as is manifest at the entrance to the Villa Lante.

In France, Countess de La Tour d'Auvergne designed her *Champs-Élysée* garden. Between its paths were housed cenotaphs of the great minds of antiquity. This is the very park that gave a name to Paris's central avenue, which later appeared in its place.

One of the more ingenious sceneries of the XVIIIth century was created by the Polish magnate Potocky on his Sophiowka estate. There, in a distant part of the park, the river Styx was built underground (where it was supposed to flow in the first place). Enticing its guest to take a walk alone in this mysterious corner, the park's designer prepared a surprise: pausing by a deep grotto that led somewhere downward, the lonely visitor would suddenly be grabbed by a bearded giant in the guise of Charon, the infernal ferryman who would carefully place him on a boat and silently take him along the gloomy underground river, until they appeared at the sunlit side of the park. There, on a knoll, stood a brightly lit Greek temple, and they landed, of course, in Elysium.

Among the shadows of these parks, with scenery inviting the eager imagination in the appropriate direction, the genre of 'dialogues in the realm of the dead' re-emerged in Europe. One of the first was *Fontenelle's Dialogues des morts* (1683). In his Elysian Fields, he has Sappho and Laura discussing love, Socrates and Montaigne, virtue, and then Descartes, Pericles, Galileo, Raphael and Raymund Lullius all have their say. This genre, so well adapted to the 'querelle des anciens et des modernes' was given its due by Lyttleton, Wieland and Muravieff.

A curious occurrence, threatening to overturn a genre that had been established since the time of the Greeks, happened to Alessandro Verri, as he recounted in his

*Roman Nights*. Having taken a walk on a agreeable moonlit night in 1792 among the stones and pines of a Roman park by sepulchres of the Scipios, Verri suddenly stumbled upon a gathering of venerable Shades, veterans of Elysium, who came to visit the Scipios. With his wits in place, Verri gallantly offers to take the ghosts, who are mourning the fall of the Empire, on an excursion into Papal Rome. The ghosts agree. Turning Dante's model of posthumous journeys inside out, Verri took his company of souls along the streets and hills of the Eternal City, showing them the grandiose structures erected by popes and princes, the basilicas, the old Pantheon, and then led them up to the Vatican. The spirit of Vitruvius criticized the façade of St Peter, but there were those who would gladly accept Christianity, since it was capable of restoring their dear old Rome.

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The phenomenon of the Italian garden came as a frustrating but specific answer to the disenchanting European, who had lost hope of finding Paradise somewhere on earth.[36]

One could discern the isles of bliss on the ancient Ptolemaic geographic atlases, the *insulae fortunatorum*, a hereditary birthmark of the ancient world. They are somewhere beyond the Pillars of Hercules. And fantasy flew there. Seafarers, starting with the legendary Irish monk Brandan, who claimed to see them in the VIth century, searched for these chimerical, unattainable 'islands', embarking on circumnavigations. The utopian conscience imagines happiness as always on these islands, and it was no accident that Sir Thomas More described his 'Utopia' as a certain Insula.

While the sedate temperament of the English preferred to *cultiver son propre jardin* and to write (as Alexander Pope did) metaphysical pastorals, while quietly gazing at the gardens from one's window,[37] there emerged a more militant variety of garden planters. Utopian projects like Charles Fourier's communism were a subliminal by-product of that very frustration. Geographical discoveries were also merely another sideeffect of this longing for the Blissful Isles.

But from the time when no more white spots were left on the map (by the first half of the XIXth century, humanity had managed to discover even Atlantis, alas, forever buried by glaciers), Elysium ultimately removed itself to the Moon, *de facie in orbe lunae apparet*. This was an ancient hypothesis, once argued by Plutarch, among others. Dear old Cyrano de Bergerac informs us in his last monologue:

...I soon shall reach the moon.  
To-night, alone, with no projectile's aid! . . .  
I tell you, it is there,  
There, that they send me for my Paradise,  
There I shall find at last the souls I love,  
In exile, – Galileo – Socrates![38]

The first fantasy novels stage a true invasion of the Moon. While Jules Verne is busy writing his blueprint of fantasy and adventure for future generations to follow, one eccentric Muscovite, a library hermit by the name of Nikolaj Fedorov, develops a project of triumph over death, offering a 'return of the fathers,' the souls of whom abide – Plutarch, Proclus and Iamblichus were right! – on the Moon. Of course, that was merely a touching eugenic theory. But this dreamer had a follower, whose name was Tsiolkovsky and who was a man of a practical mindset. Science knows him as the inventor of the first rocket. The aim of his invention? To reach the moon and visit the Fathers. Another case of a bizarre origin for a serious scientific discovery.

While discoveries of this sort will herald ever deeper disillusionment, something else more constructive and more wondrous was in store. The day when the last geographical lacuna remained behind, two brothers with the very platonic name of Lumière were to invent the cinematograph. This invention was to become an unparalleled obscurantist realm of dreams, of blissful fantasy. What else draws as close to Plato's cave with its projected illusions? Except that this one throws soft chairs into the bargain.

Cinema handles perfectly its role as an ersatz model of immortality. No Hollywood movie ever 'ends' – a happy ending for characters implies the start of a new, happy life after all the tribulations of plot. Our favourite radiant actors, the true stars of the new sky, are immortal as far as is possible in a hopelessly sober era. Time in the XXth century is articulated through 'epochal' films, and the face of a decade is represented by icons of certain 'divas' (the word in Latin means goddess). The religious aspect of this super-art lies in the fact that, in its own way, cinema seeks a moment of harmony where there is room for miracles ('everything is possible in cinema'). Virtual reality easily compels belief, and renews one's strength in the battle with fate (so-called 'entertainment').

Not everyone remembers that this art stands close to the occult practices of necromancy, that is, reinvoking the larvae of 'divas' of history from the realm of dead. Some of the first magic lanterns and cameras obscura, harbinger of the film camera, were inabled to see legendary characters of the past. For example, the historical Doctor Faustus, using his camera obscura, showed Charles V imagery of Helen, Alexander the Great, and Roxana.[39] The emperor even consulted with Alexander. Where the resolution of the image was concerned, Marlowe informs us that the emperor was very satisfied to be able to perceive Roxana's famous beauty mark.

Hollywood mediating that same ancient pagan picture of the inexistant happy world, facilitates a spiritual communion with the Other Side. A world, moreover, which has hardly changed its name: Who doesn't notice someone of 'holy wood' in Hollywood? The extra 'l', apart from specifying the plant, only adds to the sing-song element, much like 'heigh-ho, sing heigh-ho! under the gre-en hol-ly...' in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*.

The Greeks believed that the sacred Elysian wood lies far away, on the isles of bliss, beyond the frontiers of the West. Hollywood, at least geographically, is where the West ends.

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A question arises: does the Old World share any sort of common spiritual denominator? We have tried to answer that. Usually, peering into the soul of contemporary Europe, people start talking for some reason about consumerism, as if nothing similar existed in the time of Ancient Rome. Accusations of consumerism, materialism or nihilism all miss the aim.

Modern Europe remains essentially a religious entity: it is devoutly reverent to its Elders. Officially, the European conscience is irreligious. In accordance with this, the attitude of the European is limited by a laical education of the 'cultured person'. But by becoming a 'cultured person' one subconsciously develop *faith* in culture.

We understand religion, in full accordance with Sir James George Frazer and many other anthropologists, to be any institution offering man afterlife comforts as triumph over death. For a European, the phrase 'Dante (or Shakespeare) lives' does not represent a mystic assertion. It is an axiom indeed, which all take for Gospel.

This implies a certain thought: through great works one can 'continue living', 'prolonging and transcending oneself'. Out of this arises the concept of an ideal reservoir for the 'living', who have resurrected themselves through their own genius. They are gathered together in Elysium.

Elysium must also be understanding as the 'sacred space' of Culture.

Culturosophy or culturolatry, a confession latently professed by all authentic Europeans (which doesn't hinder them from practising Christianity), shares certain characteristics with the Graeco-Roman faith: tolerance and polytheism. Everyone is free to choose one's 'gods' according to his own taste. Their abode is the home library, a coffee table filled with art-books, a stack of CDs.

'Secular religion' has its sacred places for the performance of its cults: these are the philharmonics, museums, cinema, public libraries. It has its own Dis Manibus altars – memorials to the Great on public squares. It has its own universal synods, such as the Venice Biennale, Cannes Festival, Kassel or the Frankfurt Buchmesse.

Art was directly associated with Religion by a number of passionate German Romantics. Novalis went so far as to declare the artist a Messiah for the modern

age. Wackenroder likens to praying the 'delight of the soul upon beholding a work of art'.<sup>[40]</sup> And Ludwig Tieck ascribes to Art a religious function: Revelation.

The expressions that Winckelmann uses to describe Apollo of Belvedere can be compared only with the exaltations of mystics: 'His gaze, directed at eternity, his hair, fanned by breezes from the blissful fields of Elysium...'.<sup>[41]</sup>

Elysium is not there by accident. The religion that Winckelmann helped found was to have a Promised Land like any other self-respecting religion. The promise of immortality in this 'secular religion' must be based on the hope of surviving through works of art, in the Sacred Space of Culture. Its visual manifestation is the image (or, if you wish, a blissful apparition) of Elysium. Faith needs images, and for the believer these are the same as reality is for the empirical.

A fresh breeze blows from Elysium on the finiteness of existence. It is Schiller's trust and 'joy'. It offers an acceptable version of immortality to modern man. This 'joy' eases existential longing and angst, simultaneously suggesting that man's purpose is to be an Artist, whatever the art.

And Europe? What importance are all these models of alternative

immortality to Brussels? What use is this 'joy' to Europe's work ethic? It turns out that Elysium can also be a source of joy for United Europe. Not just because the universality of the genre, which was nursed with equal attention by the Greek Homer, the Roman Virgil, the Italian Dante, the French Voltaire, the German Goethe, the Spanish Cervantes, the English Milton, or the Russian Pushkin. More importantly, coming into contact with the concept of Elysium, the irrelevance of the qualifier 'German' or 'English' suddenly becomes strikingly obvious. The consideration of artists of their tribal origin is an outrage, a slap in the face for culture. They do not have any 'origin', but rather a Destination. Great minds cannot be ascribed to any nation, and must feel embarrassment when they are taken as representative of a certain ethnos. In reality they belong to a different kind of homeland altogether. The name of their only homeland is that which has given this short sketch its title.

Nonetheless, Europe is known to fume: who hasn't, after all, based his

national pride on 'our Genius', or ever entertained a thought that 'our Great Minds Are Greater Than Yours?' This childish quarrel over prestige, where everyone draws a squad of national heroes, has found monumental embodiment for itself: we recall the Regensburg Walhalla temple, housing the busts of great Germans, the Pantheon for great Frenchmen, the park of Villa Borghese for great Italians, Westminster Abbey for great Englishmen.

The antidote for such national egoism is a vision of a supertribal brotherhood, where great minds communicate with one another across centuries, confessions and borders.

With these feelings in mind, the sculptor David d'Angers expressed his hope, in a letter to the painter Peter von Cornelius, that one day whatever it is that unites artists from the entire European family may be adopted by nations, in order that they might 'understand finally that the world has had enough of their petty grovelling rivalry, which has more than once made the nations enemies. Instead, it is time for a notion of noble competition in that which is truly sublime and fruitful.'

Nations fight with one another, geniuses commune. The vision of Elysium as a fellowship of people of culture is the foundation of the integrity of the European civilization, because it stimulates a craving for culture – the only uniting force there is.

Schiller's 'Joy' comes from that vision. It is the messenger of a future harmony between great minds. Maybe this is why the European Community chose the 'Ode to Joy' for its anthem?

This article is a summary of a book and an exhibit project, which is currently being distributed to organizations that are interested.

*Translated by Anna Viesel  
and Jennyfer Middleton Dove*

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[1] Homer, *Odyssey*, IV, 563–64: ἀλλὰ σ' Ἠλύσιον πεδίον [...] ἀθανάτοι πεμψουσιν, combined with id XI, 539–540: ψυχή ... φοίτα μακρὰ βίβασα κατ' ἀσφοδελὸν λειμῶνα, γηθοσυνε... αἱ δ' ἀλλὰ ψυχὰι νεκρῶν κατὰ ἔθνη ἰσταν

[2] Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 109ss–152ss / 166–73, and *Teog.* 950–5, 1035, L 602–604. Nilsson, M. (1941) *Geschichte der Griech. Religion*, vol. I, p. 302 ss.

[3] Pindar, *Olymp.* [full name required], II, 75

[4] Plato, *Fedone* 114c: καὶ εἰς οἰκροεῖς ἐτι τοῦτῶν καλλίους ἀφικνούνται, ἀς οὔτε ῥαδίου δηλοῦσαι, *ibid.* 115d. 'Nay, if this be true, let me die again and again. I, too, shall have a wonderful interest in a place where I can converse with Palamedes and Ajax and other heroes of old.'

[5] διατριβαὶ δὲ Φίλ' ὀσοφέν καὶ θεάτρα ποιητῶν καὶ κυκλίοι χοροὶ καὶ μουσικὰ ἀκουσμάτα οὐμποσῖα τε εὐμελῆ, *Ax.*, 371 c–e.

[6] Virgil, *The Aeneid*, VI, 540–43.

[7] Coleridge, S.T. *Table Talk*, 12.7.1827.

[8] Virgil, *The Aeneid*, VI, 638–40. Trans. by John Dryden.

[9] *ibid.*, 658–662: ...hic manus sacerdotes, / quiqui pii vates et Phœbo digna locuti, / inventas aut qui vitam excoluere per artes.

- [10] Propertius, *Elegies* IV, VII, 1.
- [11] Ovid, *Amores*, III, 9, 59–66.
- [12] Statius, *Silvae*, II, 7, 116–17 e 109–12. To dwell upon afterlife in Greek and Romans civilization: Dietrich, Rohde, Cumont etc.
- [13] Ausonius, *Cupido cruci ad fixus*, 5–7.
- [14] Origen, *De princ.* IV, 3, 11. Cfr. Platone. *Timeo*, 42 d...
- [15] Symmachus, IX, 114. Actually, a translation of a Greek proverb.
- [16] Simonides, *Epigrammata* 84 (99). For Demosthenes s. On the Embassy, paragraph 313.
- [17] Curtius, E.R. (1954) *Mittelalterliche Litteratur*, p. 477.
- [18] Dante, *Purgatory*, VII, 28.
- [19] *Hell*, IV, 44-45.
- [20] Communication of Jakob Burckhardt.
- [21] Boccaccio, *Trattatello in laude di Dante*, Ricciardi, Milano-Napoli, 1965, p. 619.
- [22] (1943) *Poètes et Romanciers du Moyen Age*, Paris, Gallimard, p. 1, 246
- [23] *Matthew*, v., 3.
- [24] Kantorowicz, E.H. (1961) *The Sovereignty of the Artist. A note of Legal Maxims and Renaissance Theories of Art*.
- [25] Shakespeare, *King Henry VI*, part III, act 1, scene 2.
- [26] See, for example, Titian's group portrait of the Farnese family or similar portraits of Velasquez, Fra Galgario, Moroni, Strozzi, Goya, Serov.
- [27] Ausonius, *Epitaphia*, XXXV 5–8: 'Sed neque finctorum socius miscere volgo nec metues [...] flebilis umbra [...] verum [...] Elysii [...] eris', or Statius, *Silvae* II 7, 116-7: 'Tu magna sacer et procul umbra / nescis Tartaron.'
- [28] Heraclites, Fragment No. 49, εἰς εἶμι μῦριοι, εἰν ἀριστος ἦ, 'to me one man is worth ten thousand if he is first-rate.'
- [29] Dante, *Convivio*, II, VIII, 11, and Goethe, *Faust*, II 9981–4: Wer keinen Namen sich erwarb noch Edles will, / Gehoert den Elementen an; so fahret hin!
- [30] This is a quotation I saw in a store in the Dalem Museum in Berlin in 1992. It was printed on a postcard, and no source was given. For J. Renard: *Journal*, March 25, 1907.
- [31] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1052. 'Esthetic sense is more reliable than ethics,' Brodsky will say.
- [32] Carlyle, T. (1872) 'The Hero as a Man of Letters,' in *Hero-Worship*.
- [33] Zwingli, H. (1513, published in 1828) *Opera*, III, p. 365.
- [34] Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Resignation*.
- [35] Ariosto, L. (1516) *Orlando furioso*, Canto XXXV, 11, 5–8 :
- [36] The *Encyclopedia Britannica* from 1771 contained an article on Elysium that was impressively curt: 'certain plains abounding with woods, fountains, verdure, and every delightful object...' For anyone familiar with English behaviour this should not be surprising: this is precisely the tone to be taken with something that has been a disappointment. The article *Gardening*, on the other hand, stretches on for dozens of pages, and is full of practical advice.
- [37] For example, George Herbert, *Sacred Garden*; Alexander Pope's *Seasons*; Keats: 'Our shadows

rove the garden gravel still.

[38] Je vais monter dans la lune opaline.../Mais oui, c'est là, je vous le dis, /Que l'on va m'envoyer faire mon paradis. / Plus d'une âme que j'aime y doit être exilée, / Et je retrouverai Socrate et Galilée!

[39] A story about Johannes Faust. See Volksbuch, A.D. 1587. The necromantic curiosity of the occultist emperor Rudolf II sparked a series of necromancy sessions in Prague. See Anastasius Kircher S.J. (1646) *Ars magna lucis et umbrae* II 1, p. 127–9.

[40] Novalis, *Die Jünger von Sais*, passim. Wackenroder, W.H. (1797) *Die Herzergießungen eines Kunstliebenden Klosterbruders*, p. 72 : 'Ich vergleiche den Genuß der edleren Kunstwerke dem Gebet.'

[41] Quoted in Hugh Honour, *Neoclassicism*, 1968.