

While classical philology and ancient history seem to have found some middle ground between traditionally Germanic *Altertumswissenschaft* and the Anglophonic concept of a Liberal Arts education as articulated by Lee Percy, the study of the monuments and objects from the Classical world has not. This paper examines the current situation in America and compares it to that prevailing elsewhere, specifically in the UK and Germany, to explore how and why the study of Classical art and archaeology, has developed as it has in America and how other countries’ success in this regard—and in attracting students to the study of Classics—might find an American translation.

In America, the disciplines of Art History and Archaeology both lay claim to objects and monuments from ancient Greece and Rome, each seeing the other as doing something quite distinct—archaeologists (*Altertumswissenschaft*) describe art historians (Liberal Arts) as studying the history of artistic form, sometimes in historical/social context, sometimes not, while art historians regard archaeologists as concerned solely with “scientific” methods of study, such as geophysical surveys, soil sampling, and the like, and both tend to adopt a dismissive view toward the other. The more PC approach is to adopt the somewhat meaningless term, “material culture,” to talk about the study of objects and monuments from Greek and Roman cultures. This phrase fails to acknowledge the benefits and meaning endowed to Archaeology by Art History and vice-versa and also includes and equates everything under the sun from textiles to architecture, ivory sculpture to wagon wheels.

Interestingly, the situation is different elsewhere but not because or not solely because the arguments against Classics articulated by Percy do not apply. In the UK, the line between Art History and Archaeology is just as sharp but enrollments in university courses in Classical Archaeology are full to bursting. Few places are more keenly aware of class and class difference than the UK, yet charges of elitism against Classics and the claims of Classics’ lack of utility and value do not dominate the educational system. In Germany, the birthplace of *Altertumswissenschaft*, the dichotomy in Classics scholarship that exists in America has been successfully bridged: interpretive modes associated with American liberal arts have merged with traditional *Altertumswissenschaft* into a single discipline termed Classical Archaeology. The arguments against Classics have been made in Germany yet exhibitions of art from Greece and Rome are plentiful and popular throughout the country, and in spite of an acute and ever worsening shortage of university and government positions in Classical Archaeology, the field continues to be flooded with new PhDs and Habilitated students.

This paper argues that a combination of factors mark the distinction between the American and European attitude toward the art and archaeology of the Greek and Roman worlds. Physical distance and isolation, and the American desire to draw a sharp distinction between themselves and the Classical traditions of Europe are among the chief culprits that account for the failure of the American public to embrace all but the most sensational objects or monuments of the Greek and Roman worlds. At the university level, an emphasis on ideas at the expense of knowledge and the pressure to publish quickly have exacerbated the problem. As a partial remedy, this paper argues for a unity of vision of Classical Art and Archaeology that challenges Art Historians to embrace the hard study of facts, fabrics, materials, and statistics in order to gain a more accurate and thorough understanding of classical culture, and that encourages Archaeologists to adopt a more humanistic approach and consider how all that data actually says something not only about human behavior and daily life but also about human thought and belief. Such an ideal can only be achieved through changes in training, education, and attitude at the university level.