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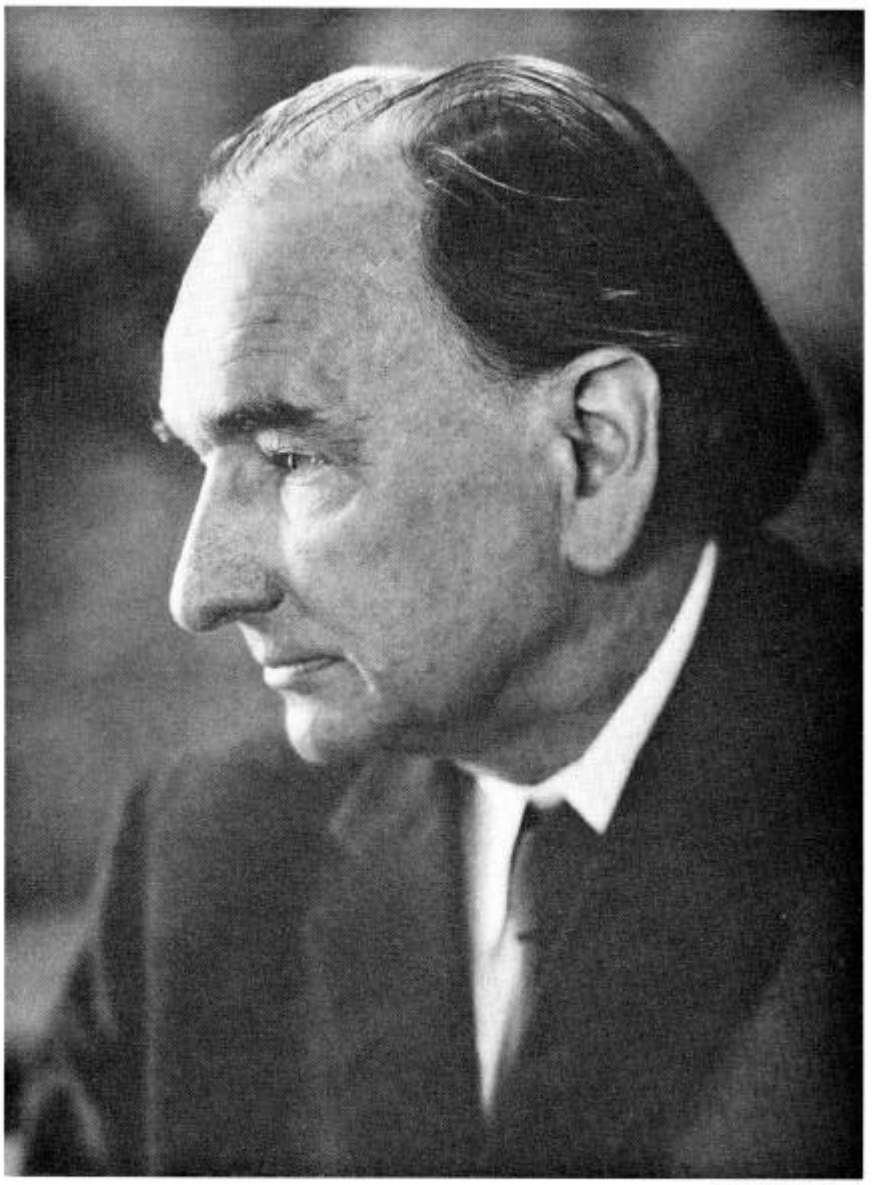

Gabriele Gräfin Arnim

RUDOLF PFEIFFER

RUDOLF CARL FRANZ OTTO PFEIFFER

1889–1979

RUDOLF CARL FRANZ OTTO PFEIFFER was born on 28 September 1889, the son of Carl Pfeiffer and his wife Elizabeth, born Naegele. His family lived in Augsburg, a city which had played an important part in the cultural history of both medieval and Renaissance Bavaria. They occupied the house which had belonged to Conrad Peutinger, the Augsburg town chronicler and imperial councillor who studied in Italy and has a place among the noted humanists of his time. Peutinger gave his name to the medieval copy of an ancient map discovered by Conrad Celtis and finally published by Marcus Welser; and he had decorated the walls of the house with beautifully executed maps, which made a deep impression on Pfeiffer from his earliest years.

Pfeiffer received his early education in the Benedictine Abbey of St. Stephan. Although a comparatively recent foundation, having originated in 1828 when Ludwig I was working to re-establish the Benedictine Order in Bavaria, this school belonged to a great tradition; its sister establishment, St. Anna, went back to the sixteenth century, and had had as headmaster Hieronymus Wolf, the editor and translator of the Attic orators, and the neighbouring Abbey of St. Ulrich had existed for eight centuries before its suppression during the Napoleonic period. In Pfeiffer's time St. Stephan's had a celebrated headmaster, Dom Beda Grundl, to whom Pfeiffer acknowledged a special debt of gratitude. In a speech delivered at St. Stephan in 1953, Pfeiffer said that it inherited both the proud tradition of the Benedictine order and also the intellectual tradition transmitted from the ancient world; there was naturally a certain tension between them, but such tension might lead to a compromise that turned out fruitful. Throughout his life Pfeiffer remained faithful to both traditions, and his career certainly testifies to the fruitful nature of the compromise. He was a devout Catholic, but he was a Catholic after the fashion of Erasmus, with nothing of the bitter partisanship of the Counter-Reformation.

At the start of the nineteenth century Bavaria had a great cultural leeway to make up. Its Academy had been founded in

1759, and its University, which had begun in modest circumstances at Landshut, moved to the capital only in 1827. But under the direction of Friedrich Thiersch, a Thuringian educated at Schulpforta who had been a pupil of Hermann, Wolf and Heyne, classical studies there were set on the right path. Before the end of the century they were flourishing under the leadership of distinguished scholars like Karl Halm and Wilhelm Christ, and Munich had become the home of the great Thesaurus Linguae Latinae under the direction of Eduard Wölfflin. At the University of Munich, Pfeiffer was fortunate enough to be the pupil of Otto Crusius, a man of keen intelligence and wide culture, and a lover of music as well as literature. Crusius had been taught at school in Hanover by H. L. Ahrens, the initiator of the modern study of the Greek dialects, editor of the Greek bucolic poets, and notable authority on Aeschylus; Ahrens himself had been taught by Karl Otfried Müller, and had inherited his sympathy with German romanticism. Later, Crusius had been a pupil of the great Latinists Ritschl and Ribbeck at the University of Leipzig before succeeding Erwin Rohde first in Tübingen and then in Heidelberg before coming to Munich. Crusius did important work on Babrius and on Greek fables, on Herondas and the mime, and on Greek music; he laid the foundations of the study of the Greek collections of proverbs. He communicated an interest in this subject to Pfeiffer, who at one time thought of producing the edition of the Greek paroemiographers that Crusius had died without achieving, but in the end handed on the task to his gifted pupil, Winfried Bühler. Crusius's biography of Rohde is an important document for the history of the distinctively South German school, interested in Greek religion and early thought, to which both men belonged. Rohde had been an early friend of Nietzsche, and had defended his *Birth of Tragedy* against the ferocious onslaught of the young Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellandorff; his great book *Psyche* shows the influence of Nietzsche's distinctive contribution to the study of early Greek thinking, with its special stress upon the treatment of irrational elements. Crusius also strongly felt the influence of Nietzsche, and unlike most scholars took note of his warning that the scientific study of the ancient world as it developed in Germany during the second half of the nineteenth century had become incompatible with humanism. But Crusius believed that with proper care the modern scholarship of the time could be invested with a humanistic purpose; 'das Ideal des Neuhuma-

nismus', he wrote in 1910, 'ist durch das Läuterungsfeuer der Geschichtswissenschaft gegangen und hat standgehalten'. Crusius took a special interest in the inflence of the classical tradition on succeeding ages; with Otto Immisch and the Polish scholar Thaddaeus Zielinski he edited the series 'Das Erbe der Alten', and in 1912 he added the words 'und sein Nachleben' to the subtitle—'Zeitschrift für das Klassische Altertum'—of the journal *Philologus*, which he long edited. This learned and cultivated scholar had a profound influence upon Pfeiffer.

In 1913 Pfeiffer obtained his doctorate with a study of the Augsburg Meistersinger and translator of Homer, Johannes Spreng. It is significant that he began his career with a work inspired by local piety; but in Pfeiffer's case local piety involved allegiance to a universalist tradition. Then he obtained a post in the University Library at Munich; but soon afterwards his career was interrupted by the First World War. Pfeiffer was severely wounded, and at one time seemed unlikely to survive. But he was nursed back to health by the devoted care of Mina Beer, whom he had married in 1913. Frau Pfeiffer was a gifted musician and a woman of great kindness of heart, and till her death in 1969 she and her husband remained a singularly devoted couple. In 1918 Pfeiffer was appointed a Sub-Librarian in the library of the University of Munich. He was still occupied with Renaissance studies, but he also found time for Greek poetry.

In 1920 he was given a year's leave to continue his studies in Berlin, where like another student from a very different background from that of Prussia, Karl Reinhardt, he fell under the spell of Wilamowitz. The distance that separated the outlook of the Bavarian Catholic from that of the East Prussian nobleman, whose atheism retained a distinctly Lutheran cast, did not prevent Pfeiffer from being deeply impressed by the vast learning, keen intelligence, and complete devotion to scholarship of Wilamowitz. Berlin provided him with something he could not have found at home, at least before Eduard Schwartz came to Munich from Strasburg in 1919. But his Berlin experience did nothing to weaken the links that bound him to his place of origin.

Otto Schneider's edition of the hymns, epigrams, and fragments of Callimachus had appeared as long ago as 1870, and though the hymns and epigrams had been edited by Wilamowitz, the publication of new papyri had created an urgent need for a collection of the new fragments. This Pfeiffer satisfied by editing *Callimachi Fragmenta nuper reperta* for the series of Kleine Texte für Vorlesungen und Übungen founded by Hans Lietzmann; the book

appeared in 1921, and a second edition, rather misleadingly entitled an *editio maior*, superseded it in 1923. Meanwhile, in 1922, he had discussed some of the problems arising from the new discoveries in a small but brilliant pamphlet called *Kallimachosstudien*. These works were enough to prove that Pfeiffer was an editor of Greek poetry of the highest quality.

In 1921 Pfeiffer had become Privat-Dozent in the University of Munich; but in 1923 he returned to Berlin as Professor Extraordinarius, joining for a time the sessions of the famous 'Graeca', the private seminar held by Wilamowitz after his retirement from his Chair. Wilamowitz greatly appreciated Pfeiffer's scholarship, and later named him as one of the editors of his *Kleine Schriften*. Almost immediately, he was appointed to a full professorship in the then new university of Hamburg, which at that time was a centre of great intellectual activity, stimulated by the proximity of the Warburg Institute. Pfeiffer's publications at this time show that he was still occupied with Callimachus. In 1925 he reviewed Wilamowitz's great book on Hellenistic poetry together with a fourth edition of his text of the hymns and epigrams, and in 1928 he dealt with the newly published fragment of the prologue to the *Aitia* in a masterly article, which is still indispensable for the study of the poem.

Despite the attractions of Hamburg, Pfeiffer could not have remained in the north of Germany for ever, and in 1927 he accepted a call to Freiburg im Breisgau, inaugurating his tenure of the Chair with a fine lecture on 'Gottheit und Individuum in der frühgriechischen Lyrik' which he later offered to Wilamowitz on his eightieth birthday. Soon afterwards, in 1928, a vacancy occured at Munich, and Pfeiffer could not resist the temptation to return to his Bavarian home.

He worked steadily away at Callimachus, in 1932 devoting to the important new fragment of the Lock of Berenice an article of the same high quality as that about the *Aitia* prologue, and in 1934 bringing out an important study of the newly-discovered summaries of Callimachean poems called the *Diegeseis*. He also wrote articles about important new papyrus texts of other authors, such as the *Skyrioi* and *Inachus* of Sophocles, the *Niobe* and *Diktyoulkoi* of Aeschylus, and new fragments of the pseudo-Hesiodic *Catalogue* and the Homeric scholia; and he pursued his interest in the history of scholarship, publishing his first important study of Erasmus, notable studies of Goethe in relation to the Greeks and of Wilhelm von Humboldt, and (in 1938) a discussion of the historical relationship

between classical scholarship and humanism which contains already the whole outline of the great *History of Classical Scholarship* whose first volume was to appear thirty years later.

As early as 1926, Pfeiffer had alluded to 'a resistance to the principle of humanism that is deeply rooted in the German nature'. When he left for Munich he had been succeeded in the Chair at Freiburg by a younger scholar of great ability, who soon after called on him in his new home to ask why he did not show more respect for 'die ehrenwürdige Gestalt des Führers'. Pfeiffer made no response to this enquiry, and soon afterwards reminded his visitor that he had a train to catch. Even if his wife had not been of Jewish origin, he could never have compromised with National Socialism, whose total incompatibility with his beliefs had been apparent to him from the beginning. In 1937 he resigned his Chair and went with his wife to England.

Arriving in Oxford virtually without means of support, the Pfeiffers were rescued by the great generosity and resourcefulness of Father Martin D'Arcy, S. J., Master of Campion Hall, the Jesuit house in Oxford. Pfeiffer's old Freiburg colleague, Eduard Fraenkel, had been established in Oxford as Corpus Christi Professor of Latin since 1935 and was able to explain the great intellectual distinction of the new arrival, and to introduce him to the congenial society of Corpus Christi College, whose last President had been P. S. Allen, the editor of the letters of Erasmus. But Pfeiffer's command of English was at that time and for some years after imperfect, and it was not found possible before 1946 to provide him with a university post. However, he was invited to lecture in the University, the *Odyssey* and the early lyric poets being the first topics that he chose. These first lectures were not easy for English undergraduates, used to a very different approach; but the exceptional gifts of the lecturer and his impressive character were apparent even to this audience. In their small house in Walton Well Road, he and his wife were kind and generous hosts to undergraduates.

Further support came from the Clarendon Press which, under the enlightened direction of Kenneth Sisam, was quick to undertake to publish the edition of Callimachus at which Pfeiffer had so long been working. Everyone who met Pfeiffer at this time could see that he had been greatly stricken by his grievous experience, which must have been truly shattering for a man so devoted to his own part of the world and its traditions. But for

the edition of Callimachus the exile turned out to be a blessing. The great collection of papyri excavated by Grenfell and Hunt at Oxyrhynchus at the turn of the century contained a number of so far unpublished manuscripts of Callimachus, which Edgar Lobel was engaged in editing with his unique skill. In 1939 another eminent Greek scholar, Paul Maas, arrived from Germany, and was appointed adviser to the Clarendon Press. Pfeiffer not only had the great advantage of being able to examine the new papyri at first hand, but of that of doing so together with Lobel and Maas, and of dicussing with them the many problems which the new material posed. These three men were perhaps the three living persons best qualified for the task, and they discharged it with astonishing success. Further, the Bodleian Library has great attractions for any classical scholar, but for one with Pfeiffer's strong interest in the history of scholarship the advantage of being able to use it was especially great.

The first volume of the Callimachus, containing the fragments, appeared in 1949; it has a full apparatus criticus and a concise but exhaustive commentary in elegant Latin. Pfeiffer had complete command of the whole relevant literature, including the ancient grammarians; the fragments from papyri were handled with masterly palaeographical skill; and the text of fragments preserved in quotations rested on an intimate acquaintance with the textual tradition of each author by whom a quotation had been preserved. Where no kind of certainty could be attained Pfeiffer was cautious; but he was capable of brilliant supplements and emendations, so that he did much to improve the quality of the text. It is hard to think of a critical edition of an ancient text that comes nearer to perfection.

Pfeiffer was not anxious to edit the hymns and epigrams; but the Press felt that the edition should be completed by a volume that contained them, and this duly appeared in 1953, together with the scholia on the hymns and with prolegomena and indexes to the whole work. The archetype of the hymns is reconstructed in masterly fashion, and the work in general is of high quality; but the small number of conjectures mentioned in the apparatus suggests that Pfeiffer did not give the work quite the same degree of critical attention that he had bestowed upon the fragments, and he effected fewer improvements in the text than might have been expected of such a scholar. He was already much occupied with his next great work, the *History of Classical Scholarship* which he had been planning for many years.

In 1946 Pfeiffer was appointed to a special University

Lecturership in the History of Scholarship, in 1948 he was made Senior Lecturer, and in 1950 Reader. By now his spoken English was a great deal better, and his gentle charm and humorous modesty had made him many friends in Oxford. But in 1951 he accepted a pressing invitation to return to his old Chair in Munich. His wife missed her native country, and Pfeiffer himself felt a duty to return home and help in re-establishing the cultural traditions of his country which had been so brutally interrupted by the National Socialist interlude. For many years after his return Pfeiffer kept up his ties with England by returning each summer with his wife to work in the Bodleian, always finding time to renew relations with his English friends. Their only complaint about his conversation was that, unlike other learned exiles, he was unwilling to talk 'shop'.

He was now free to concentrate upon his *History of Scholarship*, all the more after retirement from his Chair in 1957. Sometimes he published articles about Greek poetry, usually when stimulated by a new papyrus; but from this time on most of his publications were related to the subject of this work. In 1955 he brought out an important study of Erasmus, based on a lecture given in England during the war, in 1957 a notable account of French humanism, and in 1961 a sketch of the history of philology from his own point of view. On his seventieth birthday in 1959 he was honoured by the printing of a selection from his shorter writings, with a complete list of his publications, admirably edited by Winfried Bühler (*Ausgewählte Schriften*: *Aufsätze und Vorträge zur griechischen Dichtung und zum Humanismus*).

The first volume of the *History*, dealing with the period from the beginnings to the end of the Hellenistic age, appeared in 1968; it was published by the Clarendon Press, and by the author's own wish the language of the book was English. The first chapter deals with the period from the eighth to the fifth century B.C., the second with the age of the sophists, and the third with that of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Part Two contains six chapters on Alexandrian scholarship, each of them, except the first, built around a leading figure (Zenodotus, Callimachus, Eratosthenes, Aristophanes, Aristarchus): then follows a chapter on the Pergamenes and another on the later scholars from Aristarchus to Didymus.

Pfeiffer's commitment to the thesis that philology in the proper sense begins with scholar poets, who are impelled by their love of poetry to preserve the poetry of the past, led him somewhat to depreciate the progress towards scholarship made by

the Greeks before the Hellenistic age. Soon after the book was published, the discovery of a papyrus at Derveni containing a fourth-century commentary on an early Orphic poem startlingly demonstrated that scholarly exegesis did not begin at Alexandria; and it may be argued that Aristotle and his school deserve more credit than they are given. But the work is one of immense learning, for the author's command over the great mass of primary and secondary literature seems virtually complete, and the innumerable details are never allowed to obscure the connecting themes or to blur the underlying humanistic purpose.

In 1969 Pfeiffer suffered the heavy blow of his wife's death; and from now on his health gradually deteriorated, chiefly owing to the effects of the wound he had received during the First World War. His doctor recommended exercise, but he could walk only if supported on both sides; he bore these afflictions with unvarying cheerfulness and patience. In 1970 he was saddened by the death of his old friend and colleague Eduard Fraenkel, who had been unwilling to survive the death of his beloved wife. To a friend who in an obituary notice had defended Fraenkel's suicide as being wholly in accord with his own rule of life, Pfeiffer wrote that while he would never presume to blame Fraenkel for his action, he thought that sufferings must be endured but not evaded. He lived on, still working, till 6 May 1979. The learned world should be grateful to him; for though the second volume of his *History* has by his high standards many defects, it is still a work of very considerable value.

Pfeiffer acted wisely in taking Fraenkel's advice and continuing with the Renaissance period, leaving out the Middle Ages. He would never have denied the importance of that period, and certain passages of his writings suggest that his treatment of such figures as Clement, Origen, Augustine, and Cassiodorus would have been of great interest. But his main interests had never lain there, and if he had tried to write about it he would have had wholly insufficient time for the later period of which he had so great a knowledge; as it is, his second volume, which appeared in 1976, is nowhere near as complete as he would have wished. Part One deals with the Italian Renaissance, Part Two with the Netherlands and Germany in the Renaissance period, Part Three with the period between the French Renaissance and what Pfeiffer calls 'German Neohellenism', and Part Four with German Neohellenism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, ending somewhat abruptly in 1850.

Once more at the beginning of the work the insistence that

philology must begin with a scholar poet, in this case Petrarch, has caused the author to be less than just to that poet's precursors; the early humanists on whom Giuseppe Billanovich and his school have thrown so much light in recent years, hardly receive their due. But by far the least satisfactory part of the book is the last, dealing with the great age of scholarship in Germany. The method of concentrating attention on a few leading figures tends to obscure the links connecting them, which often involve lesser scholars who find no place here; the scholars are seldom considered in their social and historical context; and towards the end the work becomes almost desultory, such great figures as Lobeck and Meineke finding no mention. This must have come about partly because this section of the work came last; but it is clear that Pfeiffer felt less sympathy with the scholars of a secular age than with their Christian predecessors. But when all this has been said, the second volume has great merits. The treatment of Petrarch and Politian is of high quality; and so is that of Erasmus and of Bentley, though the timidity and vacillation of Erasmus is hardly glanced at, and the importance of Christianity as an influence on Bentley may be found somewhat exaggerated.

Pfeiffer's distinctive conception of classical scholarship was developed in response to the general crisis of humanism in his time and in his country. The scholars of his generation were confronted by the recurring problem of the relationship between scholarship and humanism in a particularly acute form. Goethe and his contemporaries had been the first modern Europeans to make a serious attempt to see the Greeks directly, and not through Latin spectacles; in their time classical scholarship had a directly humanistic purpose. But as the new scientific study of the ancient world developed on a gigantic scale, classical philology became only one of the various disciplines that made up its totality, and literature was often judged by standards that took no account of literary values. From the point of view of the scholar, it was an advantage that the Greeks were no longer idealized; from another viewpoint, it meant that the study of Greek literature and art was ceasing to be humanistic. The central issues became buried beneath vast heaps of facts; the classicism of the age of Goethe was derided as feeble sentimentalism. Nietzsche in his early work on the advantages and disadvantages of history was the first to warn of the impending crisis; but the time was not ripe for the German learned world to be alerted to its nature. By their ability and

energy, Wilamowitz and his contemporaries were able to put off the day of reckoning, so far as the study of the ancient world was concerned; but after the First World War, German scholars were faced with a formidable dilemma. If they continued on the same path, their studies might become dry and technical beyond endurance; if they tried to return to the humanism of an earlier age, they would risk sacrificing honesty and exactitude for the sake of a facile and superficial substitute for the real thing.

During the late twenties and early thirties, Werner Jaeger tried to deal with the problem by institutionalizing what he called a 'Third Humanism'. Like Karl Reinhardt and Bruno Snell, Pfeiffer showed no enthusiasm for this attempt, which in any case was destined to peter out miserably when the National Socialists came to power. For Pfeiffer the relations between humanism and philology were determined, in the last resort, by his religion. Clement and Origen had brought philology into the service of the Church by applying the critical methods of Aristarchus to the study of the Bible; and Erasmus had gone back to Origen, taking philology into the service of his *philosophia Christi*. Pfeiffer found it natural to adapt Leibniz's phrase '*philosophia perennis*' and entitle an account of the history of philology '*philologia perennis*'.

Even those who have no sympathy with Pfeiffer's Catholic faith must acknowledge that it lends a singular unity and simplicity to his conception of humanism and philology and the relationship between them. Furthermore, the history of scholarship has seldom been written from a Catholic point of view, and Pfeiffer was able to correct several misapprehensions. In modern times it has been generally recognized that the Renaissance was very far from being a movement in the direction of paganism, and also that the Reformation was by no means altogether a movement in the direction of humanism and enlightenment; Pfeiffer's treatment does full justice to these undoubted truths. Again, his Erasmian Catholicism saves him from the element of Lutheran rusticity and provincialism that is present in the work even of some of the greatest German scholars; for him humanism is a European, even an oecumenical phenomenon. Marcello Gigante has rightly written that Pfeiffer does not reject the historicism of German philology, but renews it, purged of its excesses and its nationalistic element, by means of the sensibility of one who stands in the mainstream of a European culture. Even apart from his great achievement as a scholar and an historian of scholarship, Pfeiffer has made

a valuable contribution to the modern discussion of the fundamental purpose of the study of the ancient world. So long as that subject continues to be studied, Pfeiffer is likely to be remembered as one of the leading scholars of his time.

Pfeiffer was a member of the Bavarian Academy, to whose proceedings he made notable contributions, and became a Fellow of the British Academy in 1949. He was also an Honorary Member of the Austrian Academy, the Academy of Athens, and the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Letters. He held the Bavarian Order of Merit, the Greek Order of the Phoenix, and the Grand Cross of the Federal Republic of Germany; and he was an Honorary Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Oxford.

HUGH LLOYD-JONES