



Classical and Modern Interactions: Postmodern Architecture, Multiculturalism, Decline, and Other Issues

Karl Galinsky

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Postmodernism, multiculturalism, the alleged decline of the United States, deconstruction, leadership, and values—these topics have been at the forefront of contemporary intellectual and cultural debate and are likely to remain so for the near future. Participants in the debate can usefully enlarge the perspective to a comparison between the Greco-Roman world and contemporary society. In this thought-provoking work, a noted classics scholar tests the ancient-modern comparison, showing what it can add to the contemporary debates and what its limitations are.

Writing for intellectually adventurous readers, Galinsky explores Greece and Rome as multicultural societies, debates the merits of classicism in postmodern architecture, discusses the reign of Augustus in terms of modern leadership theories, and investigates the modern obsession with finding parallels between the supposed "decline and fall" of Rome and the "decay" of U.S. society.

Within these discussions, Galinsky shows the continuing vitality of the classical tradition in the contemporary world. The Greek and Roman civilizations have provided us not only with models for conscious adaptation but also points for radical departures. This ability to change and innovate from classical models is crucial, Galinsky maintains. It creates a reciprocal process whereby contemporary issues are projected into the past while aspects of the ancient world are redefined in terms of current approaches.

These essays result in a balanced assessment and stimulating restatement of some major issues in both contemporary U.S. society and the Greco-Roman world. The book, which speaks to a wide interdisciplinary audience, is based on a series of lectures that Galinsky gave as a national visiting scholar for Phi Beta Kappa. It concludes with a discussion of the role of classical studies in the United States today.

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