

## **Laudatio**

**Professor Dame Helen Wallace DBE, CMG, FBA**

***All European Academies Madame de Staël Prize for Cultural Values,***

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Dame Helen Wallace is the second recipient of the All European Academies Madame de Staël Prize for Cultural Values, a prize co-sponsored by the Mercator Foundation and awarded annually to "eminent scholars whose work represents a significant contribution to the cultural and intellectual values of Europe and to the idea of European integration".

The Europe that we live in today is a complex and constantly evolving community, very different from the war-torn geopolitical entity of a hundred years ago; that it can have come so far is thanks to a polymorphous process of integration that continues as we speak, and that never ceases to present new challenges to all of those involved: the statesmen, politicians and economists, the scholars, intellectuals and theoreticians, and the ordinary citizens of twenty-eight nations who have to live with and make sense of the grand designs of the others. Madame de Staël, a citizen and protagonist of the Republic of Letters, believed firmly in the role of intellectuals in defending a European union of ideas which she called *l'empire de la pensée*, and might have difficulty in recognizing the need for the vast bureaucracy that today underpins the form that that union has taken. But she would certainly have wished to pay

tribute to a scholar who has devoted her career to ensuring, in the most pragmatic way, that the governance of Europe in all its present day complexity continues to rest upon the human and cultural values that have inspired its most creative citizens from the very beginning.

Dame Helen is indeed such a scholar, and an eminent one: she is a Fellow of the British Academy, and since 2011 has been its Foreign Secretary and Vice-President; she is an Associate Member of the Académie Royale des sciences, des lettres et des beaux-arts de Belgique, honorary Chair of the Conseil universitaire européen pour l'action Jean Monnet, and has been awarded honorary degrees by four British Universities and the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris. In addition, and more publicly, she has been honoured in her own country by her appointment as Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George, and Dame of the British Empire for her contribution to social science, and in France by her appointment as Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Mérite. But for all those who are concerned with contemporary politics and history, her public persona and name are inextricably linked with those of Europe. This can partly be explained by a volume which she edited and contributed to with her husband William (now Lord) Wallace as early as 1977, and which has very recently appeared in its seventh edition under the title *Policy-Making in the European Union*. For the past 40 years this has been judged the leading account of its subject, and is without any doubt outstandingly the best continuously developing interpretation of the history and politics of European integration. It has influenced generations of students and scholars with its amalgam of expertise, comprehensive coverage, balance and incisive analysis.

What began, as Dame Helen came to the end of her undergraduate degree - in *Litterae humaniores*, that classical seedbed of so much that is fertile and innovative in British society - [what began] as a fascination with political events unrolling before her very eyes was to become a life-long passion. She left Oxford and the ancient European world for modern European studies in Bruges, and then embarked on a PhD in Government at the University of Manchester. Even as General de Gaulle was uttering his second refusal to countenance the accession of the United Kingdom to the select body of six nations that then comprised the European Community, she was writing her thesis on the domestic policy implications of the Labour government's application for membership of the EEC. With arguably greater historical and political prescience than the General, she continued to focus on British involvement in the Community, and it is no exaggeration to say that she has remained deeply involved with, and even helped to guide, the expansion of Europe from the time of the UK's accession in 1973 to the richly diverse and complex organism that is the Union today.

Her truly distinguished career has most unusually managed to bridge the potential gap between the intellectuals and the politicians, the ivory tower and the "real world", for she has moved between universities - notably Manchester, Sussex, the European University Institute in Florence and the London School of Economics - and institutions closer to government: the Civil Service College, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House). In both domains she has taught and led research, but also acted as an advisor.

Her teaching, usually to groups of students of diverse nationalities, and often outside Britain - in the College of Europe for instance - was innovative: she

developed courses on how to negotiate in a European context when other people might have thought that that was an impossibility, and ran simulation exercises eagerly attended by both university students and civil servants. Among her ex-pupils she counts two current Prime Ministers of EU countries (Finland and Denmark); closer to home she trained several generations of British civil servants in European affairs and wider international relations. After a year's secondment to the Planning Staff of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, she subsequently became Director of the highly successful European Programme of Chatham House, which she ran for seven years. Then, as Jean Monnet Professor at the University of Sussex (1992-2001), she developed the Sussex European Institute, with a programme to teach talented young people from Central and East European countries about the workings of the European Union in the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall; many of these young people returned to their own countries and were instrumental in their transition from Soviet dirigisme to liberal market economies; some of them are now elder statesmen. She had a similar galvanising effect on several generations of young scholars as Director (1998-2001) of the United Kingdom's Economic and Social Research Council's 'One Europe or Several' research programme, and during her five-year directorship (2001-2006) of the Robert Schuman Centre of the European University Institute in Florence. This highly influential teaching activity, affirmed and augmented by a prodigious output of publications, conference papers and lectures, has made her commitment to Europe, and her unwavering scrutiny of every aspect of its development, accessible to a much wider audience than is usual for academics. It has also left its traces clearly visible across the community of academics who specialise in European affairs.

But more significant still, in her various advisory capacities Dame Helen has been able to reach the ears of the practitioners: the politicians and law-makers who, in the "real world", are at the heart of the European machine and not always amenable to the opinions of the scholars in the ivory tower. She has on numerous occasions given advice or evidence on European matters to British Parliamentary Committees and was particularly involved in the early discussions in the 1980s which in due course led to the formulation of the Single Market Programme. Outside Britain, she was for five years an active member of the Advisory Group for the Social Sciences for DG Research of the European Commission on the Sixth Framework Programme; she was a member of the "Sapir Group", a High Level Group asked by the President of the European Commission to produce *An Agenda for a Growing Europe*, which was duly delivered in July 2003 and published the following year; from 2005 to 2009 she served as a member of the Group of Political Analysis created to advise E.C. President Barroso; concurrently she was a member of the European Better Regulation Commission and a Special Adviser to Commissioner Olli Rehn, responsible for Economic and Monetary Affairs. These appointments demonstrate the respect in which she is held within the Commission, and the remarkable range of her competence.

As further evidence of her international reach one can mention her membership of the scientific advisory boards of such institutions as the University of Siena, the Universities of Bremen and Mannheim, the Catholic University of Louvain, the Austrian Institute of International Affairs, the Ortega y Gasset Foundation in Madrid, and the European Cultural Foundation in Amsterdam.

In all of this, Dame Helen, whose modesty is well-known, would argue that any difference that her often pioneering efforts may have made to the evolution of the European Union has been the effect of collaboration and collegiality; it is no accident that many of her most notable publications bring together the writings of the very best theoreticians and practitioners to create volumes that are a catalyst for change, and that she has been able to assemble wholes which are much greater than the sum of their parts. That is one aspect of her skill, but it is only one. It is characteristic of all her written work, and of her *modus operandi*, that she takes full account, in her analysis of the development of Europe, of both internal and external forces, and that she maintains a balanced perspective upon them, recognising that neither the study of ideas alone nor that of functionalist dynamics would provide a satisfactory account of, or design for, the process of integration. Instead the success of the European project must depend upon a full understanding of the dynamic interplay between the Member States and the unique development of supranational laws and institutions envisaged by the Treaty of Rome. In addressing these issues with a remarkable blend of incisive analysis and true pragmatism, her studies of the divergences between the Member States and their various degrees of bilateral relations or wider cooperation have achieved the status of classics, and are a point of reference for all those concerned with European institutions, as are also her writings on regulation, the workings of the Council of Ministers, and of the continuing and endlessly contentious process of enlargement.

To say that Dame Helen has made "a significant contribution to ... the idea of European integration" is to understate the case. Her grasp of the political systems of the members of the Union is such that she has been able to offer

exceptional insights into the complexities attendant upon the process of integration, and has through her advisory roles been able to argue that the very diversity that is at the heart of European culture should not simply be set aside in the forging of new instruments, but should be honoured and enshrined in the vision for the future. Her personal commitment to the European ideal and to the ideal of public service right across the Union, together with her scholarly integrity, ensure that her voice is heard, not just by the vast network of academics working on European matters, but also by those, scarcely less numerous, who work in the Commission and the corridors of power in Brussels. But at the same time those who know her well, and have been taught by her or have been her colleagues, know that she is always generous with her time and her advice, and that the shrewdness of her judgment and the acuity of her vision are tempered by a deep and compassionate awareness of human frailty and of the difficulties that can stand in the way of personal ideals and ambitions. She knows the importance of affective arguments - the heart dictating to the head - and the significance that such arguments can have in public debate. The future of Europe cannot depend upon them, but those responsible for it cannot afford to ignore them either.

Surveying her world at the turn of the nineteenth century, under the shadow of an encroaching absolutism very different from that even of the worst fears of the opponents of "Brussels" three hundred years later, Madame de Staël declared

*Les progrès des sciences rendent nécessaires les progrès de la morale; car, en augmentant la puissance de l'homme, il faut fortifier le frein qui l'empêche d'en abuser.*<sup>1</sup>

The New Narrative for Europe announced by EC President Barroso two years ago aims to **"give a voice to the artistic, cultural, scientific and intellectual communities to articulate what Europe stands for today and tomorrow"**. **This is where Academies can play their role:** in a Europe of Knowledge, where knowledge is understood not simply as scientific progress, but as encompassing the whole panoply of human intellectual endeavour embraced by the member-Academies of ALLEA. Dame Helen's entire career has been devoted to the creation of this new Europe, and has contributed signally not only to what in the broad sense one might call the scientific understanding of it, but also, by the integrity, perspicacity and sheer humanity of her work, to the moral dimension.

It was in the spirit of the New Narrative that ALLEA joined hands with the Mercator foundation to create the Madame de Staël Prize; it is in the spirit of Madame de Staël that ALLEA should now honour Dame Helen Wallace by presenting to her the Prize for 2015.

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<sup>1</sup> **[Scientific progress makes moral progress a necessity; for if man's power is increased, the checks that restrain him from abusing it must be strengthened]**. Preface to the 2nd ed. of *De la littérature considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales* (1799), in *Oeuvres complètes*, Paris 1871, p.199.