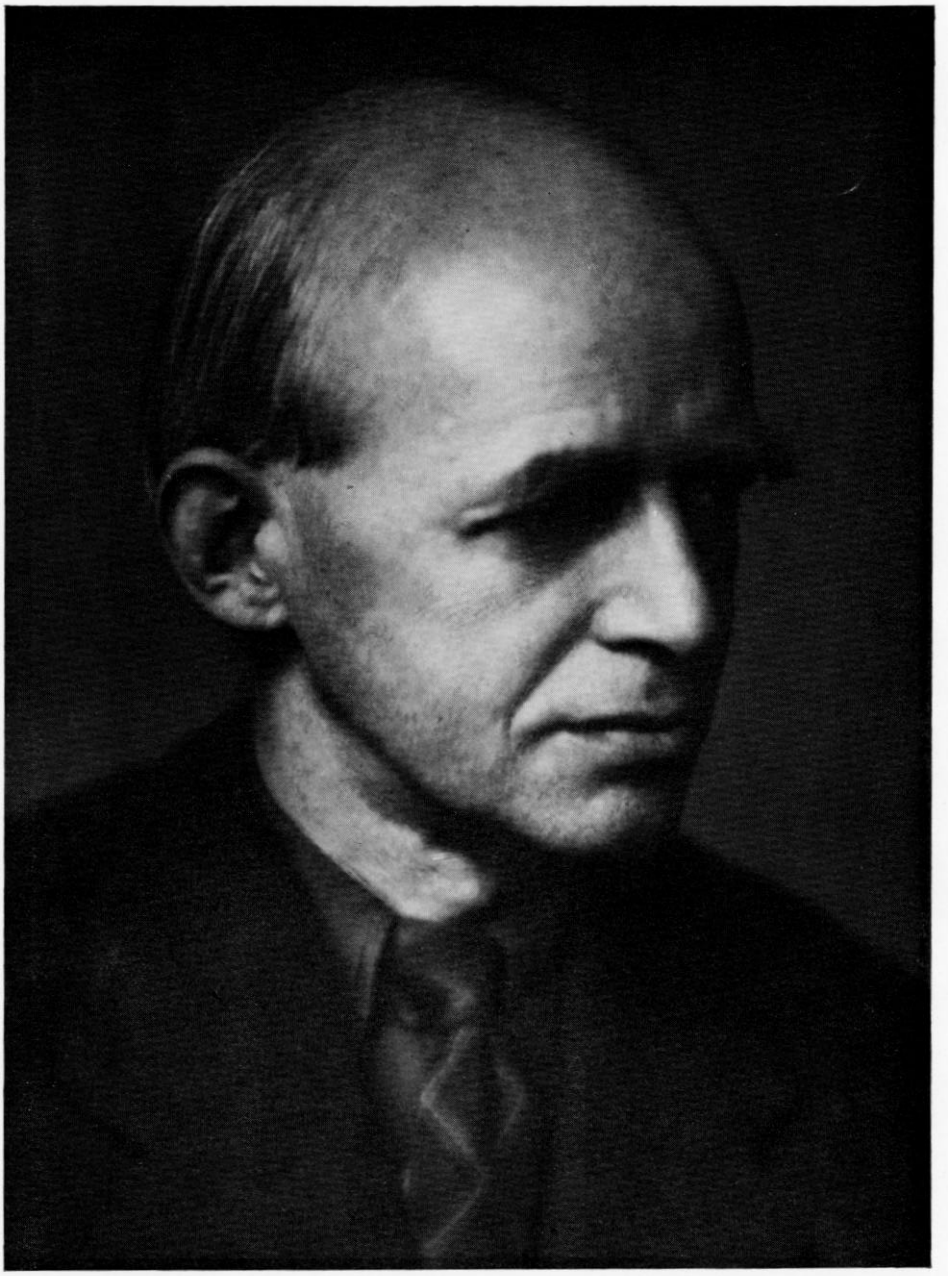
PLATE XVIII



Walter Stoneman

E. R. DODDS

ERIC ROBERTSON DODDS

1893–1979

I

ERIC ROBERTSON DODDS, who died at his home at Old Marston, just outside Oxford, on 4 April 1979, had been Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford from 1936 to 1960, and a Fellow of the Academy since 1942; in 1971 he received the Kenyon Medal.

Many memoirs could be written of this many-sided man; but whatever aspect of his life and scholarship one tries to describe, there is first the business of coming to terms with his autobiography, the carefully documented study which he put together in the years following his wife's death, partly as a consolation to himself. *Missing Persons*, which was published in 1977, is a book of much elegance and appeal, presenting a personality to which many readers have been strongly attracted. It received deserved acclaim, and was awarded the Duff Cooper Prize for Literature. But it certainly sets the memoirist a problem. Here surely is the votive tablet where the old man's life lies exposed. It is a mine of personal information, otherwise beyond reach. But, like everything this instinctive stylist wrote, it is a studied composition. Though he called it *Missing Persons*, recalling the potential Eric Doddses who one by one failed to develop, and though he clearly thought of the total picture as fragmented and incomplete, it strikes most people—as it struck Philip Toynbee in a review at the time—as presenting an unusually consistent and coherent character. Dodds's instinct, as he looked back on his life, seems to have been to focus on two things: on his independence and individuality, especially when manifested in opposition to authority; and on the way in which his growth and his experiences exemplify our common condition, as the psychologists of our age have seen it. Of his academic achievement and the particular cast of his scholarship he says comparatively little. This is partly because it is not the primary stuff of autobiography as he conceived it, but partly also because he habitually professed a certain shyness about it. He was writing for a public whom he believed inclined to view professors of Greek as extinct monsters (the phrase is his own)[1] and their occupations a barely tolerable eccentricity. But he was, of course,

[1] *Presidential Address to the Classical Association* (1964).

a scholar of outstanding success, whose achievements both as an editor of important texts and as an innovative interpreter of Greek civilization have had immense influence, probably more than those of any British Hellenist of our time.

In attempting here to outline this achievement and the course of his professional life, I have of course made much use of *Missing Persons*, but I have tried not to repeat too much of what is better said there, assuming that the reader will have read it himself. There is, however, an obvious initial difficulty arising from the fact that there were a number of large concerns in Dodds's intellectual life, not directly connected with his profession as a scholar, but none the less affecting it and affected by it. These concerns are more fully, but still not quite fully, set out in *Missing Persons*. First in importance among them is his role as a man of letters, a respected observer and participant in a significant chapter of English literary history. Was he not himself a poet? Did he not know Eliot and Yeats, Auden and MacNeice? True, his relations with the first two were comparatively slight, for Eliot's general views were poles apart from his, while Yeats was a much older man, and Dodds never found it easy to learn from the old. But his links with Auden and MacNeice, both dating from his Birmingham period (1924–36), were important to all concerned. MacNeice, whom he appointed to a lectureship in his department, he seems to have regarded as in some sense his creation; Auden was a more accidental acquisition. It is perhaps worth recalling here Auden's last tribute to one whom he regarded as a very wise man, the *Nocturne for E. R. Dodds*.[1] It is an apt tribute, for it abounds in allusions to Greek poetry, from Hesiod to Ptolemy, and combines this with a measure of disturbing contemporary reference; but it is also very penetrating, for the sense of wonder at a universe 'where weak wills find comfort to dare the Dangerous Quest' is a fundamentally optimistic one and Dodds was, for all his austerity and his air of expecting the worst, nevertheless an optimist. Not everyone could see this in him, but Auden evidently understood. What is difficult to assess, however, is how far Dodds's concern with contemporary poetry affected his scholarly attitudes. I suspect it was not very much. One common factor, indeed, was a love and mastery of words, instinctive and obvious in him from childhood. Like his poets, he readily abandoned conventional stylistic decorum for

[1] Published in the volume of the *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 'in honour of E. R. Dodds' (1973), p. 2. Humphrey Carpenter's recent *Life of W. H. Auden* contains many extracts from Dodds's correspondence, and is illuminating on all this aspect of his life.

the vivid word, even it if stuck out a mile in the context, and he did so with a sure touch. He could clearly have been a notable translator: witness the *Antigone* chorus at the end of Chapter II of *The Greeks and the Irrational*. Indeed, he sometimes regretted not having done more of this; Gilbert Murray's example might have urged him that way—or did it deter, by demonstrating that translation dates so soon?—and so might his awareness that the preservation of Greek studies rested more and more on the translators. But he did not respond, and we can only guess why. Another thing he shared with some at least of the poets was a passion (also to be discerned in him as a boy) for psychological analysis and exploration. But the main thrust of his mature scholarship was towards ideas, not words, and towards psychological generalization rather than the purely individual.

It seems to me, therefore, that it is the second of his extra-professional lives that probably impinged more strongly on his scholarship, and this indeed is how he saw it himself. This second life was his enduring activity in the realms of psychical research. He often took part in seances and experiments; the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* contain some of his most characteristic writing;[1] and he served as President of that Society in 1961–3. In all this, Gilbert Murray and a whole group of late Victorian classicists were his exemplars; but his interest seems to go deeper than theirs. It is not that he was more credulous—far from it; but the effort to state the probabilities and demolish the pretences and fallacies was something that he took very seriously indeed, and in which he felt his intellectual integrity at stake. This interest certainly squared with what became his central scholarly topic: the Greek reaction to what he called the 'surd' element in the world. The psychical researcher and the author of *The Greeks and the Irrational* were labourers in the same vineyard.

The third of these sets of extra-professional concerns was his public life. Dodds never ducked public issues. From his Fenian and non-combatant days onwards, he was a serious and austere judge of attitudes to public affairs. Where he could, he joined in—as in the affairs of the local school at Marston in his latter years. In this again, he was in the tradition of Murray, though his work was inevitably much more limited; and the links between his social conscience and his scholarship were always strong. It never

[1] Especially his personal statement, 'Why I do not believe in survival' (1934), his account of Murray's telepathic experiments (1957), and 'Supernormal phenomena in Classical Antiquity' (1971, reprinted in *The Ancient Concept of Progress*).

slipped Dodds's mind that the study of the ancient world had its lessons for the political world in which he and his pupils lived. The most notable example of this is to be seen in his *Gorgias*. The book arose, he tells us in the Preface, from 'lecturing to undergraduates who were soon to be soldiers' in circumstances which 'brought sharply home . . . the relevance of this dialogue to the central issues, moral and political, of our own day'.

'Our own day' covered two world wars, many persecutions, and two periods of distress and disturbance in his native country: ample evidence of 'failure of nerve' and 'flight from reason'.

II

He was born at Banbridge, Co. Down, on 26 July 1893. His father, Robert Dodds, was a graduate in classics of Queen's College, Galway, and headmaster of the grammar school at Banbridge. He died, an alcoholic, when Eric, who was the only child, was seven. The boy's upbringing thereafter fell on his mother, Anne Fleming Allen. Two or three years after Robert Dodds's death, they moved to Dublin, and Eric went to school there for a time; but in 1908 he was sent as a boarder to Campbell College, Belfast. Here the foundations of his classical learning and of his literary understanding and sensitivity were laid; he acknowledged his debt in an obituary of R. F. Davis, his principal teacher, published in *The Campbellian* in 1937. Here also he had the first of his tussles with authority, later recalled and recorded with pride, to the point of being expelled in the end for 'gross, studied and sustained insolence to the headmaster'. But there survives a diary for 1910–11 —the sole survivor of his early diaries, presumably the 'minor exception' alluded to in *Missing Persons*, 11—and it is no farouche rebel that is revealed, but a lively boy with a great many very ordinary tastes and ambitions, healthy, tough, and handsome. He is pleased with a faultless Greek prose, which even Davis could not scrawl over, but even more pleased at a successful game of rugby. He shows a good deal of anxiety about getting his prefect's duties over quietly. But the most striking thing is what seems today a quite extraordinary felicity of language (though perhaps it was not so unusual in 1910) and an uncannily mature taste for dissecting people's motives and reactions.

England, and especially Oxford, provided a great cultural shock. But Dodds's undergraduate career at University College was a distinguished one. He duly won his First in Honour Moderations (1914) and his Craven (1913) and Ireland (1914).

He attracted Gilbert Murray's attention, it seems, mainly by his efforts at the 'Art of Translation' class—an enterprise Dodds was to repeat for himself twenty-five years later—but it was in his third year, which was also the first year of the war, that he had the academic experience which seems to have had the most effect on him. He attended J. A. Stewart's class on Plotinus, at which T. S. Eliot was the only other persistent attender. The interest aroused —or was it already there?—lasted a lifetime. Plotinus' psychological insight, his imagery of illumination,[1] especially the grappling of his ratiocination with the unknown, remained in the centre of Dodds's scholarly concerns till the end. Indeed, if he identified himself with any ancient thinker—and he was interested in the way scholars do so identify themselves—it was with Plotinus, whom he saw, no doubt too simply, as a lone bearer of the light of reason in a darkening world of fear and superstition.

The war, however, made a rude break. Unable to comprehend or share English patriotic feelings, Dodds nevertheless volunteered in 1915 for service as a medical orderly in Belgrade; but the episode was a brief one, and he was back in Oxford in January 1916. The Easter rebellion of that year redoubled the difficulties of an outspoken Fenian in a shocked and bereaved England; on Dodds's own account, he expressed himself fairly forcefully, and was therefore 'advised' to leave Oxford in the summer, prepare for Greats at home, and come back to sit the examination in June 1917. All went according to plan; but when it was all done, he had to find a job, and proceeded to look for teaching posts and examinerships in Ireland. In the event, he spent about two years teaching classics in various schools—St. Columba's College, Rathfarnham; Kilkenny College; Dublin High School. He used later to urge that every university lecturer should have a spell in the school classroom; and it may well be that his always admirable power of putting things clearly, interestingly, and unpatronizingly was fostered in these years. The first break from the uncertainties and insecurities came with his appointment to University College, Reading, in 1919. Here he was encouraged and influenced by the Spinoza scholar W. G. de Burgh, with his broad smile and genial heart, and by his own departmental head,

[1] Professor A. H. Armstrong draws my attention to the importance of this. He adds: 'My last memory of him is of going round the great Turner exhibition at the R.A. with him, and of his pleasure in the way everything turned into light in the latest pictures: this was, he thought, a good way to see the world when one was old. Perhaps here we return to a deep reason for his affection for Plotinus, the philosopher of light.'

P. N. Ure. Here too he made friendships that lasted till his old age (as with J. D. Mabbott); and here he found his wife, Annie Edwards Powell—'Bet'—who was then a lecturer in the English department at the College. His knowledge of the Neoplatonists was now steadily deepening; and about the time of his Reading appointment we find him recommended by Stephen McKenna[1] to the SPCK as the possible compiler of an anthology of Neoplatonic texts, part of a series devoted to the origins and background of Christianity. He agreed, and the work, when submitted, was read for the publisher by W. R. Inge, who was enthusiastic about it. The two little volumes of these *Selections*—the translation volume (1923) preceded the texts (1924)—represent a very great deal of original work in a field still relatively uncultivated. Interest in these things had indeed been growing, thanks partly to Inge's own work and T. Whittaker's *Neoplatonists*, and it is certainly not true to say that Dodds initiated it in English scholarship. Still, it was an unusual speciality, and not one calculated to appeal to the classical orthodoxies of the time. He tells himself (*Missing Persons*, 75) the amusing story of how he tried to interest T. E. Page in a Loeb Plotinus—an enterprise effected many years later by his friend and disciple A. H. Armstrong.

He remained at Reading till 1924, but in 1922 (in the year before his marriage) he applied for a Fellowship by examination at Magdalen College, Oxford. He was not successful; it was H. H. Price who was elected—a man with whom he had, as it happened, a good deal in common. J. A. Smith wrote to de Burgh to explain why they had not chosen Dodds, and commented on Dodds's 'self-consciousness' and the excessive number of 'I holds' that marked his written style: a revealing comment, and one that rings true.

Dodds's appointment to a chair of Greek at Birmingham in 1924 (a year or so after his marriage) marks off the rest of his career from the formative and often stormy period that had preceded it. He was only thirty-one, and had published very little—and all of it on Plotinus and the Neoplatonists. So it was a bold move, and it was a brilliant success. For the next twelve years he and Bet lived happily among congenial colleagues and pupils and enjoyed a literary and cultural life, avant-garde and left-wing, which seemed to them, as *Missing Persons* makes plain, something of a paradise. There was a lot to do: teaching, building

[1] MacKenna, whose Journal and Letters Dodds edited, with a memoir, in 1936, had been working on Plotinus since about 1905; he often acknowledges Dodds's help, and Dodds for his part regarded this remarkable Irish patriot and scholar as something of a hero.

up a department, undertaking major tasks of scholarship—and making a garden, for Dodds now became a very knowledgeable and expert gardener.[1] Most important was the circle of friends, and especially perhaps Louis MacNeice, now a junior colleague, and W. H. Auden, the son of a Birmingham doctor. This was one of the last periods in which an English provincial city, prosperous and secure, could have a cultural life, even a rather radical one, of its own; and there can be no doubt that Dodds loved this and contributed to it greatly. He was also training young scholars who were to contribute notably to Neoplatonic and other studies; B. S. Page and R. E. Witt were research pupils of his at this time. At the same time, his own work went forward. In 1928 he published a very influential and original article on Plato's *Parmenides* and its importance to the Neoplatonists[2]—a milestone in the understanding of the relation between these later 'Platonists' and their master's works. In 1929, an article on 'Euripides the Irrationalist' appeared in the *Classical Review*; and here, for the first time, the future course of Dodds's researches could be seen. But as yet, this was a side line; he was busy on his exemplary edition (1933) of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, the most concise and comprehensive handbook of later Neoplatonism, the interpretation of which demanded a thorough understanding of the whole system. The edition remains what it was soon seen to be, a model of editorial technique and the most lucid introduction available to Neoplatonic ways of thinking. It established Dodds as a scholar with a mastery of all the approved skills; but so far as his own intellectual development was concerned, it was something of a dead-end. In later life, he was not particularly interested in Proclus, or in Iamblichus or Syrianus; and the large amount of work done in recent years to deepen understanding of this school received from him only rather distant encouragement. Much of Proclus was tedious, and there was a nasty air of superstition about it; perhaps only the taut, schematic *Elements* was worth a serious man's time.

It must largely have been the Proclus that made Dodds a possible candidate for Gilbert Murray to suggest as his successor at Oxford in 1936. It appears that A. D. Nock, whose *Sallustius* had made him an expert in the same sort of field, also lent his voice. The offer was made, and reluctantly—really reluctantly—accepted. It was an appointment that surprised many and

[1] He used to say at a later date that there were two jobs in Oxford for which he thought he might qualify: the Regius Professorship, and the post of Head Gardener at St. John's, also vacant.

[2] *Classical Quarterly*, 22 (1928), 129–42.

disappointed some. Not only were there likely local candidates—J. D. Denniston, C. M. Bowra—but there was the whole business of Dodds's repute as a non-combatant, if not an actual pacifist, in the Great War, not to speak of his Irish nationalism and his left-wing point of view. Neither he nor Bet was happy in the early years at Oxford; indeed, she hardly ever took any part in the life of a university which she plainly found distasteful. There were unhappily no children; and her life in the centre of Oxford, with few sympathetic friends, cannot have been easy. It is pointless now to apportion blame; Dodds was not a man to smooth his own way, and those who were antagonized by him were not easily reconciled. Coming two years after the appointment of Eduard Fraenkel, also controversial and also marvellously beneficial, this new and hardly less alien intrusion will have been hard for some to bear. In a long view, the antagonisms were childish. Undergraduates at least soon saw in Dodds a worthy successor of Gilbert Murray. His splendid delivery (no one ever forgets the cadence of his voice), his sharp mind and lucid exposition of knotty problems, the modernity of his culture, his obvious social concern, and the absence of any sort of talking down to the audience—all this made him a natural charmer of serious youth. It is this side of him that appears in his rather pretentious inaugural lecture, in which he emphasizes the need to make technique in scholarship the servant and what he called 'humanism' the mistress. *Mutatis mutandis*, this was the old Stoic image of Penelope and her maidservants; and it was not a very apt lesson for the time and place.[1] Dodds did indeed fight against the worse excesses of the D.Phil. industry most of his life, but Oxford in 1936 was not the battlefield on which to encounter that particular adversary. None the less, the lecture is worth re-reading, both for its faith in scholarship as a road to an honourable intellectual life, and for its prescience; for, as with other things that Dodds wrote, the problems he adumbrated were in the future.

The years before the war enabled Dodds to do most of the work for his commentary on the *Bacchae*, though it was not published till 1943. This is the most exciting volume in the series of which it forms part, for it shows Dodds's editorial mastery displayed in many thorny passages and also the understanding of Dionysiac religion hinted at in the Euripides article of 1929. Many people have testified to the protreptic power of the *Bacchae* commentary,

[1] So Dodds himself came to feel (*Missing Persons*, 127); compare also the slightly different account of these events in the excellent obituary by Dodds's successor, Hugh Lloyd-Jones, in *Gnomon* 52 (1980), 78 ff., reprinted in *Blood for the Ghosts* (1982), 287 ff.

as an exemplification both of the exactness of scholarly argument and of its subordination to important historical and literary issues.

The war of 1939 roused very different sentiments in Dodds's mind from that of 1914; moreover, the Irish complication was temporarily somewhat out of mind. The cause was righteous, and he was prepared to spend both mind and body in its service. His mind was called on first; he did a lot of work, under Arnold Toynbee's general direction, on German education, and in 1941 he published a pamphlet in which he set out his discoveries. Both Eduard Fraenkel and Rudolf Pfeiffer approved of *Minds in the Making*; Fraenkel 'read it as carefully as if it were Plato' and called it 'one of the occasions where one feels proud to be a British subject'. It also has its prescient moments, and it is tempting to quote a passage from near the end (p. 30):

> Occasionally . . . I have met innocent young people who assured me quite gravely that they were unable to make any distinction of kind between 'fascists' like Hitler and 'crypto-fascists' like Mr. Churchill or 'social-fascists' like Mr. Bevin. If any such are among my readers . . . I would ask them very seriously to apply for help to the nearest refugee. Even the young should not permit themselves to use important words—especially abusive words—without attempting to find out what they really mean in terms of living.

More strenuous times were to follow. He has himself recorded his experiences in Kuomintang China in 1942–3, when he went out with Joseph Needham to lecture in universities and report on ways in which academic co-operation between Britain and China could be fostered when better times came. Around the end of the war, too, he had spells abroad: a visit to America to investigate their ways of providing for the teaching of Oriental languages; and another to the universities of the British zone in Germany in the winter of 1946.

By this time he was already back lecturing and teaching. Few traces of the pre-war coldness remained. Those of us who first knew Dodds well in the late forties can recall only a few: some common-room embarrassments, and a sense (actually quite unjust) that it was not very generous of Christ Church to provide the Regius with nothing more than a time-share of a small and rather dark room, however friendly and accommodating his fellow-sharer. But in fact, the war had changed almost everything, and his *auctoritas* grew with startling rapidity. This was in part due to his work on Homer, his lectures on whom set a new standard of presentation, and were accompanied by some splendid 'hand-outs' which circulated very widely; the fruit of this appeared in his

chapter on Homer in *Fifty Years of Classical Scholarship* (1950), a balanced account of 'unitarians' and 'analysts' which held the field a long time, and is still worth reading. He was now on the point of producing his most characteristic and influential work, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (1951), the published version of his Sather lectures given at Berkeley in 1949. The book has eight chapters: the first is about Homer, and takes its start from Agamemnon's apology in the nineteenth book of the *Iliad*; the last—just like the last chapter of Gilbert Murray's *Five Stages of Greek Religion*—gives a view of a post-classical failure of nerve, or, in Dodds's metaphor, 'the refusal of the rider to jump'. For breadth of reference and apt choice of instances, it has few equals among modern works on Greek thought; and its notes and appendices are a very rich quarry. It made new links between psychology and anthropology on the one hand, and classical studies on the other, and this was widely recognized by experts in all these disciplines, as the fame of the book slowly grew. But it took—as Dodds recognized—an oblique look at Greek religion and philosophy, viewing the development less from the front, and so less completely, than either Rohde's *Psyche* or Murray's *Five Stages*, the two books which most influenced its structure and selection of material. It is in fact quite easy to criticize, and accordingly gave rise to a good deal of stimulating debate. What does he mean by the 'irrational'? No clear definition of Greek rationalism emerges in the book; and the beliefs which it does discuss are heterogeneous, for what is the necessary connection between orgiastic cults, consciousness of guilt, and belief in magic and dreams? Again, is it really possible to discuss these things, given our fragmentary knowledge, with such a tight historical framework? For this is very much a historian's book, in the sense that it is the chronological sequence, the movement of opinion from decade to decade and generation to generation, that poses the questions it attempts to answer. The *Iliad* is seen to reveal different attitudes from the *Odyssey*, the Archaic Age brings its innovations, and gets to know the shamans from somewhere in northern Asia, Euripides is 'a dramatist in an age of doubt'. It is this way of posing questions, this eagerness to label generations, that makes the book vulnerable to critics who question the fact of such changes or take more account than Dodds did of the literary sophistication and conventions of the poetry that inevitably forms the main body of evidence.

Meanwhile, the *Gorgias* edition, planned in the war, was moving forward. It was published in 1959, arguably the best all-round edition of any dialogue of Plato that we possess. Dodds did a

good deal for the still imperfectly known tradition of the text, and his exegesis of the argument is hard to fault. All this time, too, his local *auctoritas* was still increasing; this is by no means the place to touch on the parochial affairs of the Oxford faculty, but it was important during these years that there should be a professor who was generally respected, not only among his immediate colleagues but outside, and especially by historians and philosophers. Greek studies, as personified in Dodds, were by no means wholly linguistic and literary; the point was that his mastery of these realms could be seen to serve wider and more obviously serious issues.

The success of *The Greeks and the Irrational* made Dodds well known in the world of anthropology and psychology and he made many new contacts and friendships. One of these is worth singling out. About 1960, the psychiatrist and sociologist George Devereux sent Dodds a paper he had written about Oedipus. They met—I am not sure whether before or after this—at a conference at Royaumont, and evidently took to each other. At any rate, Dodds persuaded Devereux to add a knowledge of Greek to his remarkable polymathy, and a flood of correspondence and discussion followed. It may well be that Devereux's influence, and the contacts it opened up, gave Dodds's next book—*Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety*—a more sophisticated psychological basis than *Greeks and the Irrational* had had. *Pagan and Christian* was based on the Wiles lectures given at Belfast in 1963, after Dodds's retirement from Oxford. *Age of Anxiety* in the title is a phrase of Auden; it thus acknowledges both Dodds's desire for links with the literary world and his passion for labelling and defining generations—a passion which went on to the end, witness Devereux's account of his last visit to Dodds, who answered the question 'What are you working on now?' with the remark 'I am trying to understand our own age better'.[1] *Pagan and Christian* is a sequel to the earlier book but uses a smaller stage, a rather artificially defined period between Marcus Aurelius and Constantine, and deals mainly in individual cases. It has four chapters, dealing with attitudes to the material world, the daemonic world, and the gods, and then with the dialogue between pagan and Christian. It is a brave and important book, and contains some classic passages—for example, the survey of late pagan views of the universe and much of what is said about Aelius Aristides—but it does, I think, suffer like its predecessor from some lack of subtlety in handling literary texts: for example, Dodds apparently took Lucian's *Peregrinus* as pretty straight historical

[1] Preface to *Païens et Chrétiens dans un âge d'angoisse* (Paris, 1979); a very valuable piece.

material, and confessed to Devereux that if he had been a novelist, he would have made that extraordinary person his hero. None the less, it is all vintage Dodds; and it is fascinating to see how he sets his individual cases in the general framework without—as Devereux again pointed out—either succumbing to the heresy that we are all puppets of society or attributing to society a *psychē* of its own.

The early years of retirement were both happy and active. Dodds was himself not much troubled by ill health, except for a seasonal asthma that sometimes kept him home in the summer months; he was, as he would say, 'an old toughie', and the impression he made was one of an exceptionally hale, spare, and serene old age. Louis MacNeice's death in 1963 was the first blow: it was not only a great personal loss, but led to Dodds's involvement in a great deal of work as literary executor, an obligation he had accepted many years before, and which proved a much more demanding commitment than he had expected. Far worse was Bet's long and distressing illness; with her death in 1973, as he said, his 'occupation' was gone. There was little time for continuous academic work; but at eighty it is proper to *colligere sarcinulas* and this is exactly what Dodds did in 1973, by collecting some old essays and some new ones in a volume which took its title from an essay on the 'Ancient Concept of Progress' written in 1969 and arising largely out of his being asked to review L. Edelstein's posthumous *Idea of Progress* (1967).

The few years left to him after Bet died revealed him once again in a new light. His resilience asserted itself, and his ever energetic *daemon* made him embark on another and more complex gathering up of luggage, the composition of *Missing Persons*. This gave not only comfort but recognition; old acquaintances renewed contact, Ireland at last claimed him—or at least the Ulster radio and television services did. All this time he was encouraged and comforted by many friends at home. Some were old neighbours and colleagues; others were younger people (he often let rooms in his house to carefully chosen graduates or other lodgers) who knew a wise man when they saw one, and surrounded him with the kind of independent affection and respect that he liked. He died at home, in the seventeenth-century 'Cromwell's House' to which he and Bet had moved in 1946. When his obituary appeared in *The Times*, after the long interruption of publication, it chanced to be on the same page as that of Sir George Clark, who had lived in the same house before him. Dodds liked the touch in Clark's history of Marston, in which he contrasts

the 'mediocrity of its human population' with the distinction of the terrier bitch bought by the sporting parson Jack Russell in 1815.[1]

III

There can be little doubt about what Dodds did for Greek studies in this country. For one thing, he extended their range, and made the later phases of antiquity respectable, at least in their philosophical and religious aspects. But, more important, he made them, as Peter Levi succinctly put it,[2] completely modern and serious. The modernization was effected by constant reference to anthropology and even more to psychology; this was his way of bringing his life's work into what he guessed to be the mainstream of contemporary thinking. Perhaps he was too optimistic, perhaps he attached himself to ways of thinking that have not stood the test of time, perhaps he was too determinedly historical. In so far as that is so, his work is bound to have an ephemeral element; but how small this is, and how easily discounted, is evident when one thinks of the solidity of the Proclus, the controlled scholarship of the *Bacchae* and the *Gorgias*, and the range and precision of the material adduced to support, for example, his interpretations of maenadism and theurgy. Of course, his pattern of work and interests was of his time and place, and reflection on Gilbert Murray and Jane Harrison,[3] and on the disappointment of rationalist hopes in the twentieth century will go a certain way to explain it; but what endures, both of scholarship and of humane temper, is infinitely more important.

This enduring humanity is bound up with what Peter Levi called his seriousness. And this in turn raises certain questions. Was it of choice or because he had a blind spot that Dodds avoided talking or writing much about comedy or Hellenistic poetry or Latin poetry, or indeed anything (except Plato) where the qualities of urbanity and irony prevail over the meaningful and serious? He was certainly no stranger to fun; but he does seem to have had a horror of the frivolous and a suspicion of verbal point and sophistication which may have developed into a failure to understand and take account of what is, after all, a central feature of most ancient literature. For example, he was a magnificent

[1] *VCH Oxfordshire*, vol. 5, p. 215.

[2] *Classical Review*, 29 (1979), 134.

[3] This connection is well seen, from an outside point of view, by G. Mangani, 'Sul metodo di Eric Dodds . . .', *Quaderni di storia*, 11 (1980), 173–205.

interpreter of the *Gorgias*, where the message is impassioned and the humour destructive, but less at home with the *Phaedrus*, to judge by the solemnity with which he handles its 'blessings of madness' in a much-read chapter of *Greeks and the Irrational*.

Anyone who knew him will ask such questions, for the fascination of his personality and his learning was great; and I mean 'fascination' in a pretty strict magical sense. Many people found him austere and astringent. Disciples speak of his 'constructive discouragement', the rigorous criticism that urged putting the book away for nine years before publishing; others know that he could be warm and encouraging and that the born teacher understood who needed the spur and who the curb. Any pupil of his is bound to acknowledge, with much gratitude, the value, both in itself and as an example, of his perceptiveness and sympathy. If one tries to sum him up, it is in a series of paradoxes. He was at once rebellious and magisterial; diffident and serene; wise and immature. He was a master of words, but suspicious of rhetoric; a rationalist, but with an eye always open to the numinous; a passionate and rigorous scholar, and at the same time a man whose moral vision gave him a deadly hatred—or was it fear?—of the trivial and the *Nichtwissenswertes*.

Missing Persons does not wholly unravel the mystery. It rather intensifies our curiosity about a great scholar in whom many have properly seen something of a hero and something of a prophet.

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