While I consider him a great scholar and a true master, Garnik Asatrian is and remains for me, above all, a friend in every sense of the word. This is why I was initially hesitant to accept the request to write the preface for the Festschrift, yet felt very honoured by the invitation.

I still remember the first time I met Garnik Asatrian in 1985. It was during the noon banquet at the 3rd International Symposium on Armenian Linguistics. This first occasion was rather superficial, when people exchange only a few niceties. Some years had passed since when we met again, this time at the entrance of the National Academy of Sciences, which was then the Academy of Sciences of ArmSSR (Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic). He shared his desire to establish academic contacts with Italian Iranological centres. In the space of half an hour, there standing in the Academy’s court, he presented an outline of his projects for Armenia. Ambitious, indeed, he shared his vision to establish contacts throughout the world. I had not yet known him very well. While his speech was interrupted by my short and somehow hesitant questions, my thoughts alternated between admiration, amazement, and suspicions of utopia. I promised him, however, to do my best to help him in establishing contacts.

Our subsequent meetings took place at the height of the Karabagh Movement. Garnik was, among my younger friends, one of those very few, indeed, who did not give up their scientific career, even if he too followed, in his own way, the Movement. Today I can better appreciate Garnik’s stance, when I look at that period with the distance of time. Political passions were high during those years, but they caused a deep void in the scientific and scholarly potential of Armenia, one of the traditionally greatest sources of richness and power in this country.
I never asked Garnik about the reasons for his choice. I know, however, over the years his deepest concerns for human rights and justice, but also his view of the *longue durée*. Garnik engaged boldly his own way. Garnik developed his own vision of Armenia’s historical vocation, of Armenia’s role and place in the concert of the Middle and Near Eastern peoples, nations, and cultures and of those of the Caucasian region as well. He dedicated particular attention to the relationship between Armenia’s past and present. Consequently to this vision and coherently with it, Garnik conceived his academic programme whose realisation he pursued with the passion of his convictions and methodical consistency.

Wishing to sum up in a few words the *leitmotiv* of Garnik’s vision, I would employ the established and well-known French expression, *sortie du ghetto*, that is “way out from the ghetto”. With great consternation, he foresaw the trends in late Soviet and independent Armenia that could entangle Armenian scholarship and intellectual elite in ingenuously nationalistic or aggressively isolationist positions. With sagacity beyond his age, he warned that such intellectual streams would, instead of making stronger, rather weaken the historical and cultural identity of a nation, the self-consciousness that it has of its own being, of its roots and values, and finally its international prestige. This has been and is Garnik’s steady conviction. Conveying it with pupils, collaborators, colleagues, friends, and anyone he meets along the path. He often makes use of two key-concepts: “ghetto” and “metropolis”, in striking contrast one with the other, to express the above-mentioned paradox and to explain how to break its deadlock. While writing these lines, I hear those words resounding in my ears, which I have heard repeated by Garnik for many years and so often in our conversations.

Besides these two concepts, the former being of a basically negative, and the latter of a substantially positive valence in the context of his discourse, Garnik uses frequently a metaphor to put in a still clearer light what he means by “metropolis”: “wide horizon”, “enlarging horizons”. The continuous search for wide and wider horizons has been, we can say without any undue emphasis, a *leitmotiv* in Garnik’s personal yearning and academic ambitions, as well as in his scholarly programme and research. Such dynamics require the refusal of any collective narcissistic attitude, excessive national navel-gazing, and the intellectual atrophy that comes from self-contemplation, self-satisfaction, self-concentration. To achieve this kind of opening towards the “Others”, the ideal has been transnational and transcultural communication, to build new bridges or, rather, to re-open con-