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IN GREEK

English Translation

Panos Antsaklis

"Those of us who live far away have a little bit... of Odysseus inside us"

Drawing: Titina Chalmatzi

Column of Anna Grimanis

Is Greekness a feeling or a conscious state?

It depends on where you live. Abroad, Greekness becomes consciousness, because one understands that it is deeply connected with what we know about history, civilization, language, tradition, all the things we absorb in school and the environment. In Greece, we live Greekness everyday and so it becomes more of a feeling than something we consciously think about. You get to know your country better when you live abroad because this is when you compare and question. I remember how surprised I was when I realized how much our every day lives in Greece are connected to the church calendar, when we say for example that we will do this after Epiphany or the other after the Dormition of Theotokos on August 15!

What small Greek thing I loved most.

The colors and smells. The blue bay in Kalamata, the white Cycladic houses in Sifnos, the red sunset at Cape Sounion, the flowering orange trees, the heavy, sweet scent of jasmine in the garden.

The best version of the Greek.

It is the confidence that he will succeed and his creativity, and an amazing ability to

adapt to circumstances.

What spoils it for me.

When the above pluses, which can make us Greeks fantastic, are used to try to show that we are smarter than others; what we really accomplish is only to diminish the reputation both of ourselves and our country.

Is it an advantage or a disadvantage being Greek today?

It is an asset. We are and should be proud of our unique heritage, which also carries significant obligations, if we want to preserve our cultural traditions. We should not forget that we can learn a lot from other peoples with their own cultural heritage.

Does the modern Greek contribute to civilization or does he remain stuck with a Greekness that is only rhetoric?

I am more familiar with the field of science and technology and there the Greeks have had major successes. The rhetorical Greekness does not help when competing with scientists from India or China or other countries of the world. The modern Greek contributes to civilization inspired by Euclid, Archimedes, and Diophantus, supported by his family and by working very hard.

With which identity do Greeks reach the modern world?

With different identities. Greeks adapt, some retain a strong Greek identity, others become citizens of the world, but deeply inside are always Greeks - the ones that renounce their Greek identity are few. We need to strengthen the Greekness of the Greek families abroad so their children can learn at least our history and feel proud of their heritage. It seems to me, though, that Greece always has other worries and other interests and problems, that tend to acquire great significance through the media, independently of the degree of their real importance, and so they distract from the real issues.

My Greek "why" and a "must" that I threw away.

I do not think I have thrown away anything, perhaps only the Greek characteristic to hold others responsible for our actions and failures... something that I never learned growing up.

My Greek poet.

Cavafy with his Ithaca and Homer with the Odyssey – we in particular who live far away have a little bit ... of Odysseus inside us! If however you had asked me who were the Greeks scientists, inventors, engineers I admire, I would have said Archimedes, Diophantus, Heron and Ktesivios of Alexandria.

My non-negotiable Greek truth.

As a state we have made many mistakes in the past 180 years, but we have also made progress, perhaps not as much as we could have made. Greek education, which is my non-negotiable truth, that determines the future for young people, should be decided solely on the basis of what is best for their education.

The Greek road in the world map - define it.

The Greek scholars abroad and their enormous potential and achievements in my opinion define the modern Greek road. This is something Greece should take advantage of now, by making it possible for scholars to visit Greece periodically as research visitors, either for lectures or research. Let's find a way to accomplish this ourselves and not to expect everything from the state -"Sin Athina kai xeira kinei" ("Together with the help of Athena one should also act on his own") used to be said in Ancient Greece and they knew what they were talking about!

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