

**Vision and Language**  
**The Modern Greek World Embodied in Architectural Form**

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## **Declaration**

**This thesis has been composed by myself and is my own work.**

**Styliane Philippou**

Part of Chapter Eight of this thesis was presented at the UIA (Union Internationale des Architectes) Conference: *Leisure, Tourism and Sport; Architectural and Cultural Values - Towards the Year 2000*, (Santorini, Greece, October 1993), under the title "Dimitris Pikionis' Built Guidance on the Attic Hills (ΑΤΤΙΚΩΝ Λόφων Περιήγησις, διά χειρός Δημήτρη Πικιώνη)".

Chapter Three of this thesis was included in a paper presented at the Chandigarh Conference: *Theatres of Decolonization; [Architecture] Agency [Urbanism]*, (India, January 1995). This paper was entitled "Architecture under the Curse of Babel".

*To the memory of*

*Professor C. B. Wilson*

## *Abstract*

This thesis is concerned with architecture as a creative process which is distinct with respect to the physical appearance of its end products and the manual operation exclusively proper to the architect, yet it can be contextualised within the wider circle of human making with respect to the mental image to which all artists work - when their interest focuses on an inner world of reality - and to the noetic and imaginative operations proper to all makers.

First, it embarks on a theoretical inquiry into the nature of architecture as a creative activity or process whereby man is brought into dwelling commensurate with human nature. The purpose of this inquiry is to illuminate the meaning of architecture and the formal principle that finds expression in its products, the kinship between architecture and poetry, and the pivotal role and function of language in the significant act of architectural creation.

## *Abstract*

This theoretical inquiry establishes the perspective within which the architectural making process is examined in the modern Greek socio-cultural context, the distinct historical milieu of Greece after Independence. Viewing architecture as a human poetic projection, as a realisation of the unity of being with word, vision with language, this examination aims at delineating this long poetic journey that through stages of loss and recollection brought about the embodiment of the inner reality of the Greek world in architectural form, made by the hand of Dimitris Pikionis. The stages of this process are traced and paralleled to those of modern Greek poetry, a contemporaneous art process directed towards making intelligible the same reality, and one with a privileged position in the cultural life of modern Greece.

Subsequently, the thesis focuses on the making process as a personal creative experience. An account of Pikionis' personal poetic journey is followed by a close reading of his most accomplished work on the Attic hills. This work is viewed as the built product of his self-knowing and world-knowing process, the embodiment of his vision of "the mythical reality of the world", the same vision of the eternal and sacred aspect of visible things that *The Axion Esti* of Pikionis' contemporary poet, Odysseus Elytis, seeks to evoke. A comparison is ventured between Pikionis' architectural work and *The Axion Esti* of Elytis, two art-acts which are not simply contemporaneous but also in the same spirit of loyalty - loyalty without servility - to the values and principles of the cultural order in which the two individual creators found themselves embedded and which, for them, conforms to the order of the natural world which they inhabit.

Finally, the suggestion is put forward that the architectural act, and the art-act in general, the begetting of a significant form which 'speaks' about and of the created world-order, is essentially a 'world-redeeming' act, an act directed towards a re-creation of the world as it was in the beginning.

## *Acknowledgements*

This thesis is the outcome of a long spell of work. It is dependent on what I have learned from many, to all of whom I am beholden.

Particularly, however, the present thesis owes its existence to Professor C. B. Wilson, a master in the noblest sense of the word, under whose inspired, generous and perceptive guidance I have been fortunate enough to work. Without the uncompromising integrity of his scholarship, his unerring judgment, indispensable intellectual encouragement, and invaluable critical advice, I feel, I would have never been able to put matters in a coherent perspective. His early death has left a constant void. There are dark places in this thesis on which he would have been the first to throw searching light. It is with everlasting gratitude that I dedicate this piece of work to his memory.

## *Acknowledgements*

A separate debt is due to Dr Deborah Howard for her co-supervision during the first year of research. Needless to add that none can be held responsible for the inaccuracies, errors, and omissions which still remain in this thesis and for which my often strongly held ideas should be made answerable.

During the years of research at The University of Edinburgh, I have learned a great deal from my fellow research students in the Department of Architecture and benefited from exchanges with them in the course of the annual series of Postgraduate Seminars, where some of the ideas contained in this thesis first came up. All who have attended these occasions will know how much everybody owes to the vigilant and fatherly chairmanship of, and stimulating discussions with, Professor C. B. Wilson who gave the warmth and authority of his presence to each one of them.

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## *Prefatory Notes*

### **Transcription of Greek Personal and Place Names**

In the case of ancient Greek names such as Heracleitus, Plato, Ictinus, Athens, and the like the familiar Anglo-Latin forms have been adopted. Place-names such as Nauplia, Corfu, Zante, Crete, et cetera, which have become part of the modern English nomenclature, have also been used unchanged. Naturally, when these occur in quotations, the author's spelling has been preserved. Other less familiar names, especially modern Greek ones, have been transcribed, as far as possible, directly into the corresponding English letters. This principle was compromised in cases where the author himself has suggested a particular form of his name in English (Cavafy is a case in point). For convenience of reference, in bibliographical references the form of the author's name as offered by himself or the translator of his work has been preserved. This is the reason why at times two English forms are used for the same personal name.

## **Greek words**

Some words such as *Λόγος*, *φωνή*, *ἄνθρωπος*, et cetera, appear in Greek throughout the text. The first time each of these words is used, a transliteration is added in parenthesis, e. g. *ἄνθρωπος* (*anthrōpos*).

## **Illustrations**

Except where these are reproductions of photographs taken by myself, the source is acknowledged as follows: at the end of the relevant caption, the name of the author or editor of source is added in parenthesis, following the word *After*. All sources of illustrations are included in the Bibliography.

## **Bibliographical References**

The standard *op. cit.* and *ibid.* system of referencing has been adopted. That is, bibliographical details appear in a footnote only the first time each work is referred to. Except for references to original sources offered in another author's work, full bibliographical details (including the publisher's name which does not appear in footnotes) are given in the Bibliography.

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*Introduction*





## 1. Architecture and Reality

### 1. 1. Architecture and the Vision of Reality

#### Some Questions Concerning Theory and Method

"The work of art", said the modern Greek architect Dimitris Pikionis (1887-1968), "is the expression of the inner reality of the World".<sup>1</sup> This statement of Pikionis' reflects two ideas. The first concerns his understanding of the world as a twofold reality, outer and inner; it reflects, it may be said, Pikionis' world-view, this kind of world-view which depends upon a belief in a transcendent reality, and is generally dismissed by modern rationalists as little more than metaphysical sentimentalism. In the later chapters of this dissertation, Pikionis' spiritual view of the ultimate nature of things, that is, his recognition of the presence of the sacred in the objects and rhythms of the cosmos, will be discussed in detail. Before proceeding to such a discussion, however, it is necessary to say something concerning the method which will be adopted in order to examine Pikionis' theory of art and to try to understand his architectural works in the light of the thought that shaped them.<sup>2</sup> It should be said that the aim of the examination which will follow is to consider the extent to which Pikionis' works may be regarded as successful solutions for the purpose for which they were designed. This aim would be hardly possible to achieve, if the analysis of the particular architectural works disregarded the intentions of their creator and the values they were made to serve. This does not imply, of course, that it is necessary to commit oneself to an approval of the architect's value system before grasping the problems which his task of embodying certain values in his art presented to him.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ ἐνδράση τοῦ θεατῆ", (1953), in: Agnes Pikionis and Michalis Parousis (eds.), *Δημήτρη Πικιώνη Κείμενα* (Dimitris Pikionis' Texts), Athens, 1987, p. 118. Except where otherwise stated, all quotations from, or references to, Pikionis' writings are from the above posthumous publication. The title in quotation marks gives the title of each text, the date in parenthesis refers to the first publication of it, and the page number to the above collection of texts, where the original Greek text can be found. All translations are from my own hand. Cf. Dimitris Pikionis, "Αἰσθητικὲς ἀρχὲς τῆς ἀρχιτεκτονικῆς τοῦ Αἰξινωικοῦ Συνοικισμοῦ", (1952), p. 257, where Pikionis argues that the creative activity of the architect is determined by his world-view. Cf.: "Since the work is the product of a spiritual and material civilisation, their symbol, and all its elements are products of this civilisation, how can these elements be viewed without consideration of their content and of the world-view which brought them into being?" Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 241, n. 2 (p. 204).

2 See also below, Chapter Seven, 7. 4.: "Reading Pikionis' Works".

3 See: E. H. Gombrich, "Art and Self-Transcendence"; in: E. H. Gombrich, *Ideals and Idols: Essays on Values in History and in Art*, London, 1979, 1994, pp. 123-30.

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The second idea reflected in the above statement of Pikionis' concerns his understanding of the work of art as a mirror of the world's inner or higher reality which is manifested outwards in the physical world and within which the latter participates; it may be seen as the expression of his attitude towards the work of art, its nature as well as its end, and of his perception of his cardinal task as an architect, as the task of revealing the true nature of things. Pikionis seems to have applied to the work of art the Platonic concept of cognitive truth (i.e., correspondence to "the inner reality of the World" or to the Platonic Ideas) as a measure of value, thus, endorsing Plato's rejection of the 'mimetic' arts which aspire to a faithful reproduction of the outer world.<sup>4</sup> For Pikionis, the artist's work should intend to reveal, that is, to induce the user, the critic or the reader of the particular art-form to recollect, the invisible reality of the world, with which - according to Plato - true knowledge is concerned.<sup>5</sup> The architect's work, thus understood, is to be perceived as the fusion of the inner in the outer, the result of the work of his hands *and* his intellect, and the architect himself not as mere *χειροτέχνης* (*cheirotechnēs*)<sup>6</sup>, pursuing and displaying skill for its own sake, but an architect in the true sense of the word: a lover of wisdom.<sup>7</sup>

It should be noted that the cosmological conception which informs Pikionis' work characterises all of the traditional cultures. It should now be explained that, striving to understand Pikionis' architecture, or any work in which the Platonic or traditional theory of art is implicit, presents a second methodological difficulty. An understanding of "a work of art ... will always demand" what Gombrich referred to as "a thorough familiarity with the traditions and the problems within which the work took shape."<sup>8</sup> Yet, although it need not be argued that there are no universally valid systems of thought, and that it would be an undeniable historical error to try to judge a work of

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4 See: Erwin Panofsky, *Idea: A Concept in Art Theory*, Berlin, 1960 (in German), New York, 1968, "Introduction", pp. 1-7.

5 Cf.: "not the knowledge which is attached to things which come into being, nor the knowledge which varies with the object which we now call real, but the absolute knowledge which corresponds to what is absolutely real in the fullest sense." Plato, *Phaedrus*, 247d-e. Cf. also: "learning is recollection." Plato, *Phaedo*, 76a. And: Plato, *Meno*, 81d.

6 From the noun *χείρ* (*cheir*) hand, a mere artisan, a manual labourer.

7 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I.1. 17; Xenophon, *Vect.* v. 4. References offered in: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "Athena and Hephaistos"; in: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *What Is Civilisation? And Other Essays*, Ipswich, 1989, p. 185. Cf.: "We translate *technē* by 'knowledge'. ... knowledge in the authentic sense of *technē* is the initial and persistent looking out beyond what is given at any time." Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, translated by Ralph Manheim, New Haven and London, 1959, 1987, p. 159.

8 E. H. Gombrich, op. cit., p. 129.

## Introduction

Pikionis by the values pursued by, say, Leone Battista Alberti, or *vice versa*, modern scientific researchers appear, more often than not, highly reluctant to familiarise themselves with traditional or 'traditionalist'<sup>9</sup> views of art, rejecting them as contemptible versions of Platonising mysticism, a rejection which is not unrelated to the 'modernist' (modern, Western) "set of values built upon beliefs in progress and in the overarching explanatory power of scientific thought."<sup>10</sup> For the latter, the very concept of cognitive truth (i.e., correspondence with a supersensual reality which is, ultimately, eternal and absolute) as a measure of value, and the notion of the nature of the Platonic Ideas as metaphysical substances existing outside the world of sensory appearances are in sharp contrast to their scientific world-view. Therefore, familiarisation with, let alone interpretation of works of art based on, a system of metaphysics seem suspicious, illegitimate, unjustifiable in scientific terms, even when apparently in accordance with the most objective demands of scientific scholarship.

Art historical research, and historical research in general, seem particularly affected by modernist contentious reactions to traditionalists approaches to understanding and interpreting works of art in the light of the thought implied by the spiritual world-view and "gnostic frame of mind"<sup>11</sup> which inspired them. Their belief in the scientific non-existence of a world beyond the material one makes it difficult for modernist historians to accept that, even if such a belief is superior to any other, the material fact that it was

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- 9 For lack of a better term, 'traditionalism' is used here, accepting Wilson's definition of it as "the approach and position adopted by a school of twentieth-century writers including Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, René Guénon, Titus Burckhardt, Fritjof Schuon and Seyyed Hossein Nasr." See: C. B. Wilson, "On Modernist Reactions to Traditionalist Interpretations of the Art and Architecture of Traditional Societies"; Part I in: *Edinburgh Architecture Research*, Vol. 17, Edinburgh, 1990, pp. 124-43; and Part II in: *Edinburgh Architecture Research*, Vol. 19, Edinburgh, 1992, pp. 58-79. (The quotation is from *ibid.*, Part II, p. 58). For a discussion on the term 'tradition', see: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "What Is Tradition?"; in: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred: The Gifford Lectures, 1981*, Edinburgh, 1981, pp. 65-92. Here Nasr notes: "Various languages before modern times did not use a term corresponding exactly to tradition, by which this premodern humanity itself is characterised by those who accept the traditional point of view. Premodern man was too deeply immersed in the world created by tradition to have the need of having this concept defined in an exclusive manner."
- 10 C. B. Wilson, 1990, 1992, *op. cit.*, Part I, p. 125. Wilson notes that "modernist thought has been growing in the West from the period of the Renaissance" (*ibid.*) and it was "the Renaissance", Panofsky contends, that "removed the object from the inner world of the artist's imagination and placed it firmly in the 'outer world.'" (Erwin Panofsky, *op. cit.*, p. 50). Wilson summarises: "In short, by 'modernism' I mean the ideology amounting to a world view which most people living now in the West - and in varying degrees in most other places to which its influence has spread - will have absorbed largely uncritically in their education and daily life." C. B. Wilson, 1990, 1992, *op. cit.*, Part II, p. 60.
- 11 See: *ibid.*, Part I, p. 127.

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not so for certain artists and certain societies in history makes consideration of the categories of thought implied by beliefs which are in clear contrast to those of our modern age crucial to any critical discussion of these societies' ways of living and their art in the terms by which this was made, independent of the modernist approval of such terms. Thus, the scientific cosmology is being transformed into a weapon against scientific scholarship, thereby leading to the impoverishment of historic works of art of their intellectual content, and to their evaluation from without the philosophical context that brought them into being and on the basis of criteria which would have been foreign to this context. In a paper, upon which I have been drawing and which explored some of the difficulties of dialogue faced by modernist and traditionalist writers on the art and architecture of traditional societies, Wilson concludes:

*it is surely necessary when considering interpretations of the art and architecture and every other product of traditional societies to distinguish between the concordance or otherwise of the interpretation with the beliefs and practices of the tradition in question and the modernist acceptance or not of the validity of those beliefs.*<sup>12</sup>

This leads to another point. Although modernist art historians seem ready to accept that certain artistic phenomena are the result of living within a particular tradition, religion or cultural environment, they feel quite uncomfortable when the requirement of compatibility between a particular artistic theory and the examination of its products can only be met by the introduction of appropriate conceptual tools, such as the notion that the events of history take place on a permanent stage provided by metaphysics or that an artefact has inner qualities which have to be questioned as such, for "metaphysical systems are themselves regarded as products of history"<sup>13</sup> and inner questions as not empirically demonstrable and irrational. But, to artists such as Pikionis, transient things are revelations of things eternal, and the reality which their material artworks attempt to make intelligible is above or beyond time, and, therefore, what is represented in these works cannot be explained in merely historical terms. Considering that one's schooling in, and habitation to, a particular kind of perspectival construction of space makes one overlook or even deny that he perceives things which

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12 Ibid., p. 134.

13 John Macquarrie, *Heidegger and Christianity: The Hensley Henson Lectures 1993-94*, London, 1994, p. viii. Macquarrie adds that "This might be called 'secularity' in the strict sense of the word - everything is embraced and given its character by the *saeculum* or age, so that secularization is simply historicization." Ibid.

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his physical eye does register,<sup>14</sup> may make it easier to understand how difficult it is for one accustomed to seeing through a historicist perspective not to take for granted that traditional systems of belief and cosmologies are products of history. Doubtless, "methods of representing space will always correspond more or less to contemporary habits of vision".<sup>15</sup> But it is equally important to stress that the habits of vision of one epoch should not inhibit this epoch's application of suitable methods in order to understand and interpret the space-representation (ultimately, world-representation and world-perception) methods of a different epoch; the interpretation methods should be compatible with the space-representation ones which constitute the object of study, and not with the habituation of the interpreter. A purely historical interpretation of what Wilson calls "the inner domain of an artefact", that is, one which ascribes to this domain a temporal and relative validity, would transfer what belongs to the metaphysical ontological level to the physical one, detach the artwork from its essential frame of reference and, so, equate visible symbolic references to invisible things with these things themselves and annihilate the cognitive or gnostic dimension of the work (its primarily revelatory or initiatory function<sup>16</sup> and the distance between the object of the artist's vision and the object he makes by art). The scholarly study of this dimension demands what could be termed 'gnostic schooling'<sup>17</sup>, i.e., familiarisation with traditional notions of gnosis - of the immemorial and universal wisdom - and its function, and the traditional conception illustrated by artists such as Pikionis or Dante,

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14 See: Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, New York, 1991, pp. 33-4.

15 Ananda Coomaraswamy, "The Theory of Art in Asia"; in: Ananda Coomaraswamy, *The Transformation of Nature in Art*, New York, 1934, 1956, p. 30. Cf.: "style or idiom represents a particular modality or partiality of vision". Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "Meister Eckhart's View of Art"; in: *ibid.*, p. 85. Cf. Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἰδεογράμματα τῆς ὀράσεως", (1935), *passim*. Cf. also: "[the vision] which is the glorification of the ephemeral and that other one which [is] the symbolic expression of the eternal." Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 241, n. 5 (p. 206).

16 It should be noted here that the primacy of this function by no means implies that the artist overlooks his work's other functions. On the contrary, it is through the skilfully crafted object, its material, outer elements, that the interior model may be 'seen' or known; but skill is not pursued for its own sake, the outer exists for the sake of the inner. Cf.: "The value of these ceremonial images [of Romanesque art] ... is to introduce the subject into an alternate parallel world which allows for psychic experiences and spiritual illuminations that are otherwise inaccessible." Mircea Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas*, 4 Vols.; Volume 3: *From Mohammad to the Age of Reforms*, (Paris, 1983, in French), Chicago and London, 1985, p. 99. Eliade notes that "As depth psychology has shown, the same process, however impoverished and degraded it may be, is attested in contemporary desacralized societies." *Ibid.*, n. 45.

17 See: C. B. Wilson, 1990, 1992, *op. cit.*, Part II, "Gnostic Scholarship", pp. 62-4. The term 'gnosis' usually refers to knowledge of divine or sacred realities, to the Platonic 'true knowledge' or recollection. As Wilson says, "it is a prerequisite for ... scholars [who pursue this kind of 'gnostic scholarship'] to adopt 'a spiritual world view and a gnostic frame of mind' ". *Ibid.*, p. 76.

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*according to which art, and especially poetry, is a privileged means not only for communicating a metaphysic or theology, but for awakening and saving mankind.*<sup>18</sup>

Without further digression on this difficult and delicate methodological problem, it should be pointed that the present study adopts the point of view that, if a work of art is to be interpreted as a whole, it has to be accorded both its exoteric and esoteric dimensions, and to be interpreted in its proper historical and spiritual or mythological horizon. To this end, artworks conceived in the manner suggested by Pikionis have to be viewed from a perspective which has less in common with that of the artistic practice of the Renaissance, with its externalisation and objectification of reality and the artistic object, and more with this kind of "evangelical perspective"<sup>19</sup> which is typical of the icons of the Eastern Orthodox Church (or of the Indian and Far Eastern icons) and which, in correspondence with the nature of the events represented, "transcends the rationalistic logic of men" and "inverts [the perspective] of the world"<sup>20</sup>. In order to be efficiently studied, artefacts conceived as verbal or visible icons of reality - i.e., as integrated images of the cosmos, the invisible which we perceive spiritually and the visible which we perceive with our senses - have to be viewed not only as historical documents, but also as literally liturgical images, manifesting forth and making known the divine reality of the world and expressing "the spiritual experience of holiness"<sup>21</sup>, to use a phrase of an acclaimed student of such icons. The difficulty which the student of this kind of works faces lies in the fact that, although the "narration of things seen" is relatively easy to understand and describe in terms unlikely to arouse controversy, the scholarly approach to the "concept" of the work in question, i.e., "the idea born in the [artist's] mind"<sup>22</sup>, can only follow the path of gnosis which leads to things which the modernist mind considers illusory. Such works intend to communicate a direct experience of sanctification, and the task they assign to the beholder is to look at their physical reality and, simultaneously, to contemplate the metaphysical structure of things, which they reveal, and to participate

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18 Mircea Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas*, Vol. 3, p. 102.

19 Leonid Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon*, 2 Vols., Crestwood, New York, 1992, Vol. 1, p. 192.

20 Ibid., pp. 191-2. For these icons are meant to function as 'windows on Eternity' or 'on Heaven', to reveal eternity in time, to bear witness visibly to these *two* realities: the historical reality of the world and the reality of God. (Ibid., p. 167). Ouspensky notes that "the meaning of the events that the icons represent is not limited to their historical place, just as, while having taken place in time, they surpass the moment when they occurred." Cf. Ananda Coomaraswamy, "The Theory of Art in Asia"; in: Ananda Coomaraswamy, 1934, 1956, op. cit., pp. 30ff.

21 Leonid Ouspensky, op. cit., p. 172.

22 St. Symeon the New Theologian; quoted in: *ibid.*, pp. 171-2.

in it ("a process in which love and faith have a necessary part")<sup>23</sup>. Amplifying Wilson's words, it may, therefore, be said that this study cannot afford to avoid adopting "a spiritual world view and a gnostic frame of mind"<sup>24</sup> and to be independent of traditional metaphysics.

Pikionis' view of the world as a synthesis of outer and inner reality and his commitment to the expression of the world's inner reality by means of the material reality of the architectural form derive from his insight into Platonic thought as well as from his affiliation to the Orthodox Christian tradition within which he lived and worked and which he followed and cherished throughout his life. As already noted, Pikionis' ideas are also consistent with the view of art which is implicit in the art-forms of traditional cultures, and with the theory of art intrinsic to the *Philosophia Perennis*, "an all embracing metaphysics or science of first principles and of the true nature of reality"<sup>25</sup>, as conceived by Ananda K. Coomaraswamy.<sup>26</sup> Pikionis refers explicitly to this primordial catholic tradition,<sup>27</sup> acknowledging Coomaraswamy's

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23 C. B. Wilson, 1990, 1992, op. cit., Part II, p. 72.

24 Wilson writes: "gnostic scholarship can be pursued by one who is not a practitioner of a gnostic path or even a religion, although it is a prerequisite for such scholars to adopt 'a spiritual world view and a gnostic frame of mind', which, at least in regard to traditionalism, means in effect to accept the traditionalist approach to the truths embodied in sacred texts and authoritative accounts of gnostic practices and experiences". Ibid., p. 76.

25 Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "A Lecture on Comparative Religion". Quoted in: Roger Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy*, Princeton, New Jersey, 1977; Volume 3: *His Life and Work*, p. 275. Cf.: "Guénon ... once questioned the term ... he suggested that *Sophia Perennis* made more sense than *Philosophia Perennis*." Ibid., p. 277. Cf. also: "the 'Philosophia Perennis' or 'Universal and Unanimous Tradition' ". Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "The Nature of Mediæval Art"; in: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art*, New York, 1956, p. 114. And: "the tradition or 'handing on' of which we are speaking is an Eternal Philosophy." Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "The Philosophy of Mediaeval and Oriental Art"; in: Roger Lipsey (ed.), *Coomaraswamy*, 3 Vols., Princeton, New Jersey, 1977; Volume 1: *Selected Papers; Traditional Art and Symbolism*, p. 43. For a discussion on the term *philosophia perennis* and its history, see: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "What Is Tradition?"; in: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 1981, op. cit., pp. 69ff. See also: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "The Cosmos as Theophany"; in: ibid., pp. 189-90, where Nasr speaks of a *cosmologia perennis* "which, in one sense is the application and, in another, the complement of the *sophia perennis*". And: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Encounter of Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man*, London, 1968, pp. 81ff.

26 The *Philosophia Perennis*, as Coomaraswamy hastens to add, "must not be confused with the empirical and systematic 'philosophy' ... that is now usually taught in our universities, or with the 'philosophies' of individual 'thinkers' " (Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "On the Indian and Traditional Psychology, or Rather Pneumatology"; in: Roger Lipsey (ed.), op. cit., Volume 2: *Selected Papers; Metaphysics*, p. 344, n. 43); it is the language or formulation of a universal culture, which "was spoken before the 'confusion of tongues' ". (Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "Gradation and Evolution"; in: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "On the Pertinence of Philosophy"; in: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, 1989, op. cit., p. 80).

27 "the one and indivisible [tradition] of the world", Dimitris Pikionis, "Τό πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 34, n. 3; "the tradition of all the peoples of the earth", Dimitris Pikionis,

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guidance.<sup>28</sup> This view of art affirms, as Coomaraswamy often repeated, "the unity and interdependence of all life".<sup>29</sup> And, in Wilson's words,

*The task of explaining the integration of inner and outer [in each tradition or traditional work of art] is accomplished within the framework of a universal metaphysics - the metaphysics of the uncreated and its manifestations. [...]*

*As a standpoint from which to understand the art and architecture of traditional societies [or individuals leading traditional lives and adopting the 'traditionalist' position], the traditionalist position gives priority to their inner determinants: to their origin as manifestations of absolute truth, and - since the purpose of expressing truth in form is that it shall be known - to their function as instruments of knowledge.<sup>30</sup>*

Pikionis' participation in a living tradition - namely that of Eastern Christianity - determined the nature of his work. It was the path which this tradition revealed to him that he followed in order to ascend to a metaphysical view of things, although he recognised that a vision of the unity of the world, of the wholeness of life, is enshrined in all the great spiritual traditions of the eastern world.<sup>31</sup> In modern Greece, however, such a vision had been subjected to the forces of disruption which were in operation since the time of Independence, when the country was introduced to the modern humanist Western civilisation, by means of politics, economics, education, et cetera. The scientific and rational world-views embodied in this civilisation that was foreign to Greek soil were not simply opposed to those implicit in Greece's Christian and pre-Christian tradition, but they had also produced a social and cultural order that was irreconcilable with the social and cultural order that lay behind the developments of Greece's historical life. The "mythical vision of the world" which Pikionis saw expressed in the art and life of the Greek people<sup>32</sup> had been obscured by modern temporal ideals; it was, however, on the realisation of this vision afresh that he believed the preservation of the integrity of all art and life depended. Pikionis sought to realise this 'mythical' vision in architectural terms, in order to reaffirm its actuality and to restore it at the centre of life. He saw the architect's task as that of creating an architectural form capable of evoking a higher or mythical reality by means of a historical reality, in his case a modern Greek reality.

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"Τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς παράδοσης", (1951), p. 157; "the primordial tradition of the World", Dimitris Pikionis, "Λόγος εἰς πνευματικὴν ἑορτὴν εἰς μνήμην τοῦ ἀρχιτέκτονος Γ. Κοντολέοντος", (1953), p. 176; "the most ancient tradition of the World, the one and indivisible", *ibid.* p. 177. See also: Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἀντώνης Σῶχος", (1961), p. 96.

28 Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ ἔκθεση τῆς γλύπτριας Ναταλίας Κωνσταντινίδου", (1963), p. 114.

29 See: Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 244, n. 23 (p. 218).

30 C. B. Wilson, 1990, 1992, *op. cit.*, Part II, p. 59.

31 Dimitris Pikionis, "Αὐτοβιογραφικὰ σημειώματα", (1958), p. 35.

32 Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἀντώνης Σῶχος", (1961), p. 91.



## **1. 2. Modern Greek Architecture and Contemporary Greek Reality**

Dimitris Pikionis postulated that the modern Greek architect's work has to be able to respond to the physical world, in the life of which it is intended to participate, and to embody a vision of this world's metaphysical presence. In contemporary Greece, there is abundant evidence of how this had been achieved in the past. The forms of the ancient Greek world, the Byzantine, the Ottoman, the modern bear testimony to the variety of shapes that have housed the invisible world in the course of history, and preserve the memory of the history of the life of the spirit. In Pikionis' view, it is this history that the contemporary Greek architect has to continue, by creating anew the historical receptacle of the same spiritual reality of the world. To this end, he has to embody in the forms of his historical time, and thereby to re-enact "the Cosmic myth which the Greek earth itself reveals"<sup>33</sup>, as Pikionis phrased it.

Since the early nineteenth century, the efforts of Greek intellectuals to discover the Greek identity had led modern Greek architects to partial selection of forms out of a vast body of architectural heritage, in an attempt to construct their separate visions of the Greek world. Searching for a lost vision, they drew on ancient, Byzantine and vernacular sources, in accordance with the prevailing - often contradictory - definitions of the Greek identity. The architectural evocation of the ancient Greek world, the mediaeval Byzantine or the vernacular manifested the yearning of modern Greek architects for a language which would enable them to identify their work with their native landscape, but provided no link between past and present. The contribution of Neo-Classical historicism was restricted to the acquainting of modern Greeks with the vocabulary of a classicising architectural language, which in its ancient form had lost its living actuality, and in its Renaissance and post-Renaissance form it was an artificial invention of a world west of Greece. They thus failed to realise what Pikionis saw as their obligation: to "establish a creative relationship with the past".<sup>34</sup> The architectural language of the Modernist reaction to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries' academicism - itself foreign to the Greek landscape in spite of its advocates' arguments for its affinity to the architectural tongue of antiquity and the native

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33 Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 242, n. 6.

34 Ibid., p. 206. See: Dimitris Pikionis, "Εισήγησις τῆς Αἰσθητικῆς Ἐπιτροπῆς τῆς Γενικῆς Γραμματείας Τουρισμοῦ ἐπὶ τῶν ἀρχῶν ἐπὶ τῶν ὁποίων πρέπει νὰ βασισθοῦν τὰ νομοθετικὰ μέτρα προασπίσεως τῆς Αἰσθητικῆς τῆς Χώρας εἰς τὰς Τουριστικὰς Ζώνας", (1946), p. 147.

vernacular - impeded further the modern Greek language of architecture. Until the Second World War, the latter remained in a state of polarisation between forms which were parochially rhetoric, aiming at enhancing the Greek historical consciousness, and forms which were innovative for the sake of participation in the history of the modern world. It radically transformed the image of modern Greece - at least in its urban centres - bringing the country closer to the West and the forms its life had assumed in the recent past. On the other hand, it fashioned an image of the Greek world which was incompatible with its inner identity as it was expressed in the forms of its tradition.<sup>35</sup> The growing awareness of the strangeness of the world that was being built on soil which had guarded the roots<sup>36</sup> of a creative tradition made apparent the need for reconciliation with, and cultivation of, the 'Greek earth'<sup>37</sup>.

### 1. 3. Historical and Mythical Visions of Reality

The nineteenth century interest of Greek intellectuals exclusively in the Classical world had been followed by the rehabilitation of the world of Byzantium in the Greek cultural consciousness - in line with renewed interest in the West in the mediaeval European Christian world - accompanied by an increased respect for the living Orthodox tradition, and a renaissance in the practice of the arts within this tradition. By the Interwar years, the foreign-inspired awakening of interest in the field of folklore studies,<sup>38</sup> however nationalist in spirit, shed searching light on the contrasts between the official romantic view of the Greek identity and culture and that of the rural population which had been neglected by the classically educated modern Greeks for its oriental 'backwardness'. It revealed many aspects of the Greek culture that had been kept alive by the unlearned common people whose art, customs, beliefs and language reflected what Pikionis called "the mythical vision of the world"<sup>39</sup>.

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35 "... leading to the loss of the inner vision, and hearing, and smelling, and tasting, of the sacredness of life". Dimitris Pikionis, "Εκθεση του Καθηγητή Δημήτρη Πικιώνη προς τον κ. Κωνσταντίνο Α. Δοξιάδη", (1961), p. 199.

36 The "metaphysical roots" (Dimitris Pikionis, "Αντώνης Σώχος", (1961), p. 91) which Pikionis saw "still alive" (Dimitris Pikionis, "Η ένδραση του θεατή", (1953), p. 119).

37 "we must look in the earth, because it is there that everything is being prepared". Dimitris Pikionis, "Γάλας άτίμωσις", (1935), p. 127.

38 On Greek folk-lore studies and 'folklorism', see: Michael Herzfeld, *Anthropology through the Looking-Glass: Critical Ethnography in the Margins of Europe*, Cambridge, 1987, 1989, p. 29 and passim. See also: Alki Kyriakidou-Nestoros, *Η θεωρία της Έλληνικής Λαογραφίας: Κριτική Ανάλυση*, Βιβλιοθήκη Γενικής Παιδείας, Athens, 1978, 1986, passim.

39 Dimitris Pikionis, "Αντώνης Σώχος", (1961), p. 91.

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It was not until the years after the Second World War and the civil war, that this vision was embodied anew in architectural form, most profoundly in the mature works of Dimitris Pikionis. He believed that the vital elements of the Greek world were to be found in the natural world of Greece and in the works of the people. Their art, he contended, should not be approached with "the methods of the science of folk-lore, which often merely erect a scientific construction on the art of the 'simple', without revealing its 'inexplicable' depth"<sup>40</sup>. It is not enough to discover or admire the vernacular in pursuit of a primarily historical or antiquarian interest. One has to proceed from aesthetic appreciation and scientific investigation to the re-discovery of the spiritual sources of this spontaneous art that is not conscious of time and history, in the modern sense, but speaks in terms of images and symbols of a mythical reality which breaks through and acquires existence in the historical world of change. For the architect who is seeking to re-make the world, "discovers the world as though he were present at the cosmogonic moment contemporaneous with the first day of the Creation"; he "is trying to see it as if there were no Time, no History, and in this his attitude is strangely like that of the 'primitive', of the man in traditional society."<sup>41</sup> Most modern Greek architects before Pikionis resorted to history, searching for knowledge about, and models of, the Greek world. Perceiving their world as created by History - in accordance with contemporary tendencies in modern Western philosophy<sup>42</sup> - they ascribed to historical reality an ontological validity, and, consequently, created imitations of the imitations, "images at the third remove from reality"<sup>43</sup>, "artificial and spiritually vacuous works"<sup>44</sup>, unworthy of a place in the Platonic Republic. In modern Greece, architecture before Pikionis may be regarded as the manifestation of the awakening of the consciousness of the historicity of the Greek world, to which it itself contributed. With Pikionis, and particularly with the completion of his work on the Attic hills (1957),<sup>45</sup> a turning point occurred in Greek architecture. The role of this seminal work was to resolve the crisis of modern Greek

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40 Ibid., p. 99. Cf. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "Primitive Mentality"; in: Roger Lipsey (ed.), op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 286-307. Cf. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "Symplegades"; in: ibid., pp. 535-6.

41 Mircea Eliade, *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries: The Encounter between Contemporary Faiths and Archaic Realities*, Paris, 1957 (in French), London, 1960, p. 36. Eliade says this with reference to "great poets". See also: Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἐκθεσις ἐπὶ τῶν ἔργων διευθετήσεως ἐν Δελφοῖς", (1946), p. 247, where Pikionis remarks that for the primitive man "the monuments of the past, ... the works of his ancestors, ... have the value of mythical symbols".

42 See: Mircea Eliade, 1957, 1960, op. cit., p. 233.

43 Plato, *Republic*, X 599c.

44 Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ ἀνοικοδόμησις καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς παράδοσης", (1946), p. 160.

45 This work of Pikionis' will be discussed in detail in Chapter Eight.

architecture. It was the result of a long creative process during which Pikionis sought to re-establish contact with his "spiritual earth"<sup>46</sup> and to re-collect its myths. Calling into question the validity of historicist models, he attempted to re-identify the historically concrete with its mythological archetype. Pikionis was the first modern Greek architect who opposed the idolisation of history in favour of its integration into the structure of reality. He saw the creations of the past as revelations of the 'cosmic myth'.<sup>47</sup> He perceived 'historical memory', the remembering of the events that took place in time,<sup>48</sup> as a step towards attaining knowledge of the primordial exemplary history. He considered vision of the "things which now we suppose to be" as a stage before recollection of "that which truly is", and "initiation into the perfect mystic vision"<sup>49</sup> which transcends historical vision and is the Platonic homologue of the 'archaic' or 'primitive' mythical vision of cosmic reality.<sup>50</sup>

## 2. Reality and Visible Form

### 2. 1. Pikionis' Architectural Voice of Modern Greek Reality

Pikionis' stated understanding of the work of art as "the expression of the inner reality of the World" was followed by another statement regarding the way he thought this task can be accomplished: "... and this cannot be expressed but by means of symbols, which are the same in every art."<sup>51</sup> In these words, he expressed his awareness of the meaning, purpose and power of symbols. As understood by Pikionis, symbolism is the only way to express a transcendental meaning in terms of a particular historical situation; to communicate a vision of the archetypal realities and to craft a work of art in an image worthy of these realities. The successful realisation of the form of the work, as well as its full appreciation, depends on the extent to which the universal language of symbols has been mastered by both the maker and the reader. Although the terms of this language are culturally and historically conditioned, their meaning and

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46 "the spiritual earth within which the seed of tradition is preserved". Dimitris Pikionis, "Σπουδαστικός κόσμος", (1955), p. 121.

47 Dimitris Pikionis, "Η ένόραση του θεατή", (1953), p. 118.

48 See: Dimitris Pikionis, "Εισήγησις ...", (1946), p. 149.

49 Plato, *Phaedrus*, 249.

50 See: Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, New York, 1963, London, 1964, pp. 111-3 and 119ff.

51 Cf. Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), passim. Cf. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "The Christian and Oriental, or True, Philosophy of Art"; in: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, 1943, 1956, op. cit., pp. 50-1.

purpose are of universal value and oecumenical importance. "The traditional symbols are, in fact," in Coomaraswamy's words, "the technical terms of the *Philosophia Perennis*".<sup>52</sup> When such symbols are becoming the terms of the architect's language, they function by 'opening the doors to the spiritual world'; they are not merely means of communication but the terms of a revelation, 'supports of contemplation' with a view to re-collection, to which the true philosopher's life is dedicated.

Dimitris Pikionis described the process of creation as a process that requires both forgetfulness (*ἀμνησία, amnēsia*) and recollection,<sup>53</sup> and identified it with the process of self-knowing and self-realising;<sup>54</sup> the process of losing the memory of all that is bound with the world of time and place that one is conscious of, and of regaining the memory and the mythical consciousness that one possessed in the beginning. For him, this process started with his approach to his native, "spiritual earth" which conceals and reveals the universal *Λόγος (Logos)*, and in the likeness of which he had to build in the manner his ancestors did.<sup>55</sup> He pursued reconciliation with his earth and sought to learn the language of the highly symbolic language of the unlearned builders who were building following the natural patterns of this earth. In modern Greece, this was the only architectural language that Pikionis - the architect and scholar - believed to have preserved its living actuality and revelatory function. In the creative shaping of his own voice, he employed the symbols he saw preserved by the people of his land, aware of their real significance and conscious of their power. For, as Mircea Eliade avers, "the memory of the people preserves above all these symbols which refer to 'theories', even when these theories are no longer understood."<sup>56</sup> Having mastered the traditional language of symbols which the unlearned builders had kept alive and effective, Pikionis was able to develop a voice which is the formal representation of the true reality of the Greek world - the fusion of its outward and inward elements; language *and* vision.

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52 Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "On Hares and Dreams"; in: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, 1989, op. cit., p. 98.

53 Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ ἀνοικοδόμησι καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς παράδοσης", (1946), p. 166.

54 Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἐισήγησις ...", (1946), p. 146; Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 206.

55 Dimitris Pikionis, "Γαίτας ἀτίμωσις", (1935), p. 127.

56 Quoted in: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "On Hares and Dreams"; in: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, 1989, op. cit., p. 103. These 'theories' which 'folk' symbols refer to are visions of the ultimate reality of the things of the world, and such symbols are 'folk' only in respect to their transmission, not in origin. See: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "The Nature of 'Folklore' and 'Popular Art' "; in: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, 1943, 1956, op. cit., pp. 130-43.

2. 2. Reality in 'Well and Truly Made'<sup>57</sup> Artefacts  
On the Benefits of a Parallel Reading of Different Art Forms

*E la forma sia l'abito del vero senso profondo d'ogni cosa.*

Dionysios Solomos<sup>58</sup>

Pikionis also acknowledged that symbols "are the same in every art", which implies that all arts spring from the same source and share a common spiritual end; for the pattern of ultimate reality is pregnant with all possible expressions. Pikionis' words point at the fundamental unity of all arts<sup>59</sup> and at the role common to all artists, which is to address the consciousness of the individual and to awaken it. All traditional arts, however different the material necessities they intend to serve, aim at the "edification of the souls of the citizens"<sup>60</sup>, and one end is not to be pursued to the detriment of the other, the two ends - material and spiritual - are to be served together.<sup>61</sup> Pikionis' observation on the symbolism of art and on the unity of all arts has to be appreciated in relation to his understanding of art as a kind of knowledge of the inner nature of the world, which art intends to render intelligible. In this sense, the products of all arts are expressive likenesses of the archetypal patterns and all arts are imitative.<sup>62</sup> "All arts are kinds of poetry, and their craftsmen are all poets"<sup>63</sup>, says Plato. And each poet - in the wide sense of the word - makes use of the terms accessible to his specific audience,

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57 "The expression 'well and truly made' is often used in the art studies; it refers to Coomaraswamy's demand for *well-made* artifacts that *truly* reflect, in an external material, the artist's inward vision." Roger Lipsey, "Introduction"; in: *ibid.*, p. xxxiii. n. 5. See: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "A Figure of Speech or a Figure of Thought?"; in: *ibid.*, pp. 20ff. Cf.: "when the human artificer feels he has made anything well, that is to say well and truly, or as *it* ought to be, rather than as *he* might have liked it to be". Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "The Philosophy of Mediaeval and Oriental Art"; in: *ibid.*, p. 48.

58 From a note to Solomos' *The Woman of Zakynthos* (1826-1829). Cited in: Philip Sherrard, "Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857)"; in: Philip Sherrard, *The Marble Threshing-Floor: Studies in Modern Greek Poetry*, London, 1956, New York, 1970, Limni, Evia, 1981, 1992, p. 15.

59 See: Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ Λαϊκὴ μας Τέχνη καὶ ἐμεῖς", (1925), p. 62. First published in: *Φιλικὴ Ἐταιρεία*, 4, Athens, 1925, pp. 150-1.

60 Plato, *Gorgias*, 503a. Cf.: "For us moderns, on the contrary, the beautiful is what reposes and relaxes; it is intended for enjoyment and art is a matter for pastry cooks. It makes no essential difference whether the enjoyment of art serves to satisfy the sensibilities of the connoisseur and esthete or to provide moral edification." Martin Heidegger, 1959, 1987, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-2.

61 Cf.: "dealing with men's bodies and souls is a twofold business". Plato, *Gorgias*, 517d.

62 "tradition assumes that the symbol exists for the sake of the referent [which is the same for all traditional arts]". Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "Imitation, Expression and Participation"; in: Roger Lipsey (ed.), *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 279, n. 19.

63 Plato, *Symposium*, 205c. Cf.: "The artist is not a special kind of man, but every man is a special kind of artist." Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "Meister Eckhart's View of Art"; in: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, 1934, 1956, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

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through which he can restore an awareness of the poetic essences which he himself has first mentally entertained before actively imitating. The final end of everything man does creatively, of art, is happiness;<sup>64</sup> and "happiness can only come to a city when its lineaments are traced by an artist working after the heavenly model"<sup>65</sup>, as Plato maintains. Or, "Knowledge and ignorance are the boundaries of happiness and unhappiness."<sup>66</sup> Yet, since no perceptible model can *be* the eternal model, but only a temporal image of it, every man-made form, however complete, will be imperfect. For only the divine creation *is* truly beautiful or contains the beauty and truth; human creations are beautiful in the sense that they participate in the beauty of the divine form. All works of human art that are '*well* and *truly* made' reflect, or are reminders of, aspects of truth, they point to *the* truth, but Truth lies beyond all human words and thoughts. Reference is not identity.

The light which inspires the artist and illuminates the form of his work is conditioned by the individual artist's envisaging capacity, by the particular context of time and place where he lives and by the media he is working with. The visible material form of the work made by art may be likened to a kind of glass which allows only some of the colours of the rainbow to pass through, while it filters out others. The material product of human craftsmanship is only a partial representation of the archetype, restricted by its materiality, practicality, age, the degree to which accuracy in the representation is superseded by parallel aims, et cetera. Or, in Platonic terms, "of this region beyond the skies no mortal poet has sung or ever will sing in such strains as it deserves"<sup>67</sup>;

*the clear truth no man has seen nor will anyone know concerning the gods and about all the things of which I speak; for even if he should actually manage to say what was indeed the case, nevertheless he himself does not know it; but belief is found over all.*<sup>68</sup>

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64 "to remove those living in this life from a state of misery and to bring them to a state of happiness". Dante, *Divina Commedia*; as cited in: Philip Sherrard, *The Sacred in Life and Art*, Ipswich, 1990, p. 51.

65 Plato, *Republic*, VI 500.

66 Clement, *Miscellanies*, V xiv 140.5-6.

67 Plato, *Phaedrus*, 247. Cf.: "Part of Shakespeare's poetic belief is that what is cannot always be said. ... 'The Phoenix and the Turtle' ... his furthest reaching out in words towards what cannot be articulated". K. Muir and S. Schoenbaum (eds.), *A New Companion to Shakespeare Studies*, 1971, pp. 104-5. Quoted in: Peter Levi, "Visionary Poets"; in: Peter Levi, *The Art of Poetry, The Oxford Lectures 1984-1989*, New Haven and London, 1991, p. 90. Cf. Wendell Berry, "Notes: Unspecializing Poetry"; in: Wendell Berry, *Standing on Earth: Selected Essays*, Ipswich, 1991, p. 141. Cf. Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Complete Works*, New York, Mahwah, New Jersey, 1987, p. 53.

68 Xenophanes of Colophon, B 34; in: Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Mathematicians*, VII 49. The numbers of all Presocratic fragments hereafter are those in: H. Diels and W. Kranz, *Die*

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The unity of all arts that belong to the category of arts with ends as described above, their commensurability but also their complementarity, is apparent within traditional cultures with a metaphysical view of things and with a clear understanding of the destiny of man and of the whole created world, envisaged by all members of the community. In settled traditional societies, all artists order their work with a view to facilitating spiritual understanding and spiritual fulfilment. It is this common end and common function that unite all arts in a traditional context, and it is through the co-ordination of all arts that they can be best achieved.<sup>69</sup> A comparison between different kinds of art - as long as they are pursued along the same lines of thought and are made in accordance with the needs and the limitations of a particular audience - can help to clarify what all arts affirm in common, the particular tradition's understanding of man's destiny and potentiality and the way it is to be attained. Moreover, it can guide an approach to the mental image to which traditional artists work, and, therefore, to the unconcealment or recollection of the eternal form, which is the way to obtain knowledge of the archetypal patterns of experience which these artists express in terms of a particular time and place. A 'processual' comparison which takes into account the historical and cultural contexts may be useful because what is clear in one form of expression could help to bring forth the meaning of what may be obscure in another; what is more explicit in one artefact may shed light on something fragmentarily or incompletely expressed in another; what is fully developed in one work may be used as a guide to the understanding of something implicit in another. Furthermore, it is only such a reading, *through* the material of the work, that is consistent with the creation process of art-forms which intend to embody the unseen world; it is the same process reversed, a process of re-creation of the essence of the work of art.

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*Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Berlin, 1952, tenth edition. Translations into English are those in: Jonathan Barnes (ed.), *Early Greek Philosophy*, London, 1987.

69 In Chinese garden architecture, for example, the poets' inscribed verses are as indispensable as the doorways, the pavilions, and the plants; a garden deprived of its poetic verses would remain incomplete. Another example can be drawn from the Orthodox Christian tradition, where the synergy of the arts is manifested in the celebration of the liturgy. Through the symbolic structure of the building of the church, the holy icons, the incense, the lighted candles, the psalmody, the readings of the Word, the mysteries, the idea of the participation of sensible existence in the life of the spirit is induced to the worshipper. All forms of this liturgical art are part of an organic whole; they belong to the framework of the Christian liturgy, and they function within this framework. They all assist man's deliverance from the constraints of the senses by activating all bodily senses, by supporting participation of the whole man in a spiritual experience, and, finally, by raising the senses to a level that is sacred, uniting all that is material and spiritual into one. (See: John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, *Modern Greece*, London, 1968, pp. 198ff). Ancient Greek drama can also be said to exemplify the same concept in an another context.



### **3. The Modern Greek World Embodied in Architectural Form**

#### **3. 1. The Greek World Embodied in Modern Architectural Form The World Embodied in Modern Greek Architectural Form**

As earlier said, Pikionis' theory of art, or what may be called the traditional or Platonic philosophy of art, affirms the unity and interdependence of all life and fosters human creation as the expression of this unity. Pikionis' architectural creation is the projection of this view; it is the outcome of his understanding of architecture as the imitation of the cosmic picture in terms of stone, brick, timber, iron or clay; it is the exercise of his artistry subordinated to a fully understood end. With Pikionis, the problem of architectural expression is perceived as the problem of the expression of the true nature of things which has to be first known and experienced, or re-collected; ultimately, it is understood as the endeavour towards fulfilment of all cosmic reality; the creative process is homologised with the *active* re-collection process, the re-making of the world of reality, intelligible and sensible, which is the task of man in his distinctive function as an artist that awaits fulfilment. In accordance with Pikionis' view of art, it may be said that his concrete works, writings and buildings, are the traces of his 'remembering', that function by guiding the viewer's re-minding, assisting him to form or re-member a mental image in the way the architect did in the first place.

Pikionis' seminal work on the Attic hills (1951-57)<sup>70</sup> bodies forth the architect's journey towards this state of the soul that Plato describes as "dwelling in memory". The paths he carved on the hills of Athens, a city that during the previous years had staged the architecture that sprang from a loss of memory - the demythicisation and concomitant historicisation of the Greek world - incarnate a modern Greek architectural resolution to the timeless question of building and housing a world commensurate to the heavenly model. Pikionis' work points the way towards rehabilitation not of the Greek world which unfolds historically, but of the mythical Greek landscape that had been preserved in the collective memory of the people.

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70 "For the first time, 120 years after the founding of modern Athens, one was confronted with the task of remodeling [sic] and incorporating an extensive excavation site into the city fabric. ... For the first time a reevaluation and enhancement of the ancient heritage was discussed." Alexander Papageorgiou-Venetas, "The Ancient Heritage in Modern Metropolitan Life: Landscaping the Archaeological Sites of Athens"; *Annales d'Esthétique*, Bulletin Annuel, Extrait, Vols. 29-30, Athens, 1990-1991, p. 30.

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Pikionis did not re-discover the Greek world in its mythical dimensions, he merely asserted - by way of his art - that this was actually the world the Greeks were still inhabiting, and that it was in the image and likeness of it that they ought to be housed. This seems not to have been the view of the majority of modern Greek architects before Pikionis, who had alienated themselves, as well as their architectural iconography, from their native mythical world. Yet, it was thanks to the efforts of the latter that the manifestations of the historical life of the Greek world had been remembered and at least formally understood. Their works were the fruits of the historical memory their creators had obtained, or, in reaction to this approach, attempts to break away from the past, to free architecture from the burden of history, with the purpose of making history rather than overcoming it. Although they only did justice to the external reality of the world they aspired to express, they functioned as stepping-stones towards an architectural recollection, a recovery not merely of the memory of the events but also of the truths of the Greek world that are beyond history. Pikionis' work marks the culmination of this restoration process, sealed with a concrete act of philosophical recollection which, by raising the level of reference from the model below to that above, led to the embodiment of the Greek world in modern - in the historical sense - architectural form.

### **3. 2. An Approach to Modern Greek Architecture with Modern Greek Poetry as a Gnomon**

It has been argued that a parallel reading of different art-forms can be of value as long as it is directed towards the mental image which the artist beheld and towards which he aspired to turn the readers' intelligence; when the means of communication are read as an index to the theme. A 'processual' comparison of various products of human artistic creation is only possible when the ends of the particular creative processes are more or less identical. In integrated traditional societies - as the Greek society was before Independence - it is easier to establish the themes and preoccupations that distinguish the communication of the art produced within the community. The clarity of the world-view of the particular society, conveyed by a language sanctioned by custom and convention, provides the ground for a comparative reading of different kinds of art-forms, each of which functions within a well established and coherent framework. In such societies, the unity of communal life supports the unity of art.

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In the modern Greek socio-cultural context - the distinct historical milieu of Greece after Independence - the artistic process cannot be discussed along the lines of art produced within a settled traditional society, where environment and historical context change little. For the very factor which determined Greece's modern encounter with Clio was change; change in the ways the Greeks perceived the world to which they belonged, change in the ways they thought of themselves as a historical people. Yet, change of historical context does not necessarily imply destruction of the apprehensible language of art, neither radical change in the understanding of art and its function within a particular society, nor in the artists' perception of their role. And unless works made by art are regarded merely as products of a particular historical context, it is possible to investigate the view of art in accordance with which they were made, and the degree to which that view changed as a result of change on the historical plane. For, as long as the art historical phenomena remain within the eternal Ideas, change may occur at the level of external appearance or style, at the level of art as a physical and personal operation, but not at the level of the intelligible meaning of art, that is, at the level of art as an intellectual and imaginative operation.

It has been indicated how architecture in modern Greece wavered uncertainly for a century, before the idea of the world which architects willed to embody in their work became articulate in Pikionis' later creations. Since the traditional artistic universe of the Greeks, which in the past had bound together all human operations and ensured their skilful conduct, could not survive the introduction of modern ways of learning, not only modern Greek architects but all learned artists who consciously willed to raise a world fully alive encountered the difficulty of finding and learning the language which would enable them to understand the principles of the tradition they had inherited, and to express themselves within the same tradition. For their training was undertaken along the lines of a Western education system, from without their native tradition, and Greek art had been emancipated from art as a collective expression. This problem, compounded by what the poet George Seferis called "the calamity of academic intervention"<sup>71</sup>, was not particular to one or the other kind of creative expression; language was the issue confronted by all artists who searched for the means to represent the world they lived within through a voice bespeaking the entire world, shaped by the symbols of the meaning of the world which unfolds historically.

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71 Quoted in: Edmund Keeley, *Modern Greek Poetry: Voice and Myth*, Princeton, 1983, p. xiv.

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It seems that a resolution was first reached by the poets of modern Greece. And it could hardly have been otherwise, not only because "poetry is the proper and primary literary vehicle for the communication of the great imaginative truths"<sup>72</sup>, but also because the demotic tradition of modern Greece had already before Independence found its most effective, eloquent and comprehensible expression in poetry.<sup>73</sup> The building of works able to accommodate the world of the Greeks and to become not merely informative about, but informed by, its myths and the reality of which myth partakes, was undertaken by a series of modern Greek poets who, for almost two centuries, acted consciously, re-membering the fragments of their world and ordering them truthfully, "with time and toil"<sup>74</sup>, and with the purpose of reproducing the inner image of Greece. Despite personal accents, their poems reflect a coherent vision which

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72 John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, op. cit., pp. 237-8. These authors also add that "as a general rule the development of poetry precedes that of prose". Ibid.

73 It was only at the turn of the twentieth century that prose-writers like Alexandros Papadiamandis became concerned with "portraying the true Greek world" in prose terms. Ibid., p. 241. The circumstances that favoured the development of the novel in the western Europe (and Russia) of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries did not exist in pre-Independence Greece. Cf. George Steiner, "Literature and Post-History"; in: George Steiner, *Language and Silence: Essays 1958-1966*, London, 1967, 1985, pp. 420-2. Other kinds of art with stronger representative aspects, like painting and sculpture, had no strong precedents in Greece's recent past. (The only kind of major figural art - as opposed to so-called minor folk arts - that had been produced within the Christian Orthodox tradition was that of religious iconography, and, in this case, the images depicted are inwardly known and handed down from generation to generation. Iconography has been the subject of a considerable renaissance in twentieth century Greece.) The modern learned artists relied entirely on western European models and, as a result, an 'academic art', secular as well as religious, developed. Art historians tend to divide this art into categories according to the place where the artists studied and worked; accordingly, there is Greek painting under Italian influence, chiefly before 1830, under Munich influence until the beginning of the twentieth century, and under Parisian influence thereafter. (See: Stelios Lydakis, *Geschichte der griechischen Malerei des 19ten Jahrhunderts*, Munich, 1972.) Only as late as in the 1920s, a learned artist, Photios Kontoglou (1897-1965), turned towards Byzantine and popular art, searching for a pictorial language which would enable him to submit the individual artist in him to the living tradition of his native land, and to the expression of this land's "inner beauty". Kontoglou wrote: "The creation by the individual of a completely new form of expression, that is to say a new technique, is an illusion and a juvenile nonsensical aspiration." Translated by Nicos Hadjinicolaou; in: *Theophilos, Kontoglou, Ghika, Tsarouchis: Four Painters of 20th Century Greece*, (exhibition catalogue), London, 1975, p. 29. See: "Αφιέρωμα: Φώτης Κόντογλου"; in: *Διαβάζω*, 113, Athens, 27 March, 1985, pp. 9-58. See: Christos Yannaras, *Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ Δύση στὴ Νεώτερη Ἑλλάδα*, Athens, 1992, pp. 414-8. Other painters and sculptors after Kontoglou, such as the painter and writer Nikos Gabriel Pentzikis continued the conscious search for the true aspects of Greek reality, aiming at the creation of works which are true to, and reconciled with, their tradition, building upon the achievements of their precursors, learned and unlearned. (See: *ibid.*, pp. 418-22. Pikionis refers to "the great labour undertaken by [a new generation of painters]: to perceive the inner Greek world and to express it by means of the symbols of their Art, rather than to merely describe it." Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 206.)

74 From a note of Solomos' to his poem: *Ode to the Death of Lord Byron*.

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any attempt to understand the erection of the same world in architectural - or other - form can ill afford to ignore. The mythical universe of the Greeks, with its entire iconostasis: images and symbols, heroic figures, rituals, patterns of behaviour, exemplary adventures and labours, sacred trees and water-fountains, seas and mountains, found auspicious soil in poetry which in its modern metres continued to transmit an understanding of this world's connection to the historical Greek world, and an understanding of the way the modern world of the Greeks participates in the timeless universe of archetypes. Any undertaking of the task of assessing the extent to which this universe informed the forms of any other art in modern Greece can be aided by an understanding of the ways the poets' works make this world intelligible; it is these works that grant artists and readers access to the inner reality of "THIS WORLD / this small world the great" (Elytis), which Pikionis longed to express.

Furthermore, these poets have bequeathed to future generations the documents of their laborious search for "the true face of Greece" (Elytis), their vigorous endeavour to regain "The Consciousness of [their] Earth" (Sikelianos), a pursuit to which they stated their devotion, as well as the literature of their artistic operation, of their relentless struggle to accomplish their task which, in Seferis' way of putting it, was "to hear what the things of the world say to me, to discern how they interweave themselves with my soul and my body and to express them"<sup>75</sup>; to express in words-symbols this world's inner world and its *Λόγος*, its origin which is no other but the origin of the poet - the maker - and his work:

And the One I really was, the One of many centuries ago  
the One still verdant in the midst of fire, the One still bound to heaven  
entered into me, became  
the one I am  
At three o' clock in the morning  
above the shacks, distant  
the first cock crowed  
For a second I saw the Upright Pillars, the Metope of Powerful Beasts  
and Men bringing Knowledge of God  
The Sun assumed its face, the Archangel forever on my right  
THIS I then  
and the small world the great!<sup>76</sup>

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75 George Seferis, "A Letter on 'Thrush' "; in: *Anglohellenic Review*, Vol. 4, 12, July-August 1950, p. 504. Quoted in: Philip Sherrard, "George Seferis (b. 1900)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 186.

76 From Elytis' poem *The Axion Esti*, "The Genesis". Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), *Odysseus Elytis: The Axion Esti*, Pittsburgh, 1974, London, 1980, 1984, 1991, p. 28.

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Modern Greek poetry found nourishment in the images and symbols of the living spiritual tradition of Greece and grew from within its vehicle, the living language of the Greeks, which was adopted by the poets who realised<sup>77</sup> that it was the only tongue able to fertilise their imagination and to carry into their work the wisdom of the centuries. Wrestling with the demotic Greek language, which they had few ways to be taught<sup>78</sup> - for it had been condemned by those educationists of liberated Greece whom Palamas called "trophy-bearers of the empty word"<sup>79</sup> - all poets, from Solomos to Elytis, went through a long study of their means, seeking to learn the language which had survived in the works of the unread, yet cultivated masters, like the anonymous creators of the folk songs and ballads, and like General Makriyannis (1797-1864),<sup>80</sup> and which enabled them to give audible matter and form to their world. Modern Greek poetry stems directly from the demotic tradition of Greek poetry, however greatly influenced by the liturgical poetry of Byzantium and the poetry of the ancient Greek world. This devoted study has not only borne fruits in poetry characterised by a distinct ethos, but it has also taught artists in modern Greece how to proceed in the learning of their craft, a lesson which Pikionis often acknowledged.

The text which follows is a long essay, in the old sense of the word; an attempt to look at architecture in modern Greece as a creative process that brought about the embodiment of the Greek world, "this small world the great", in the materials of the architects' craft in modern times, and to trace and elucidate this long poetic journey, the architectural making process that led to the creation, by the hand of Pikionis, of a significant form - a form which was not intended to be merely informative or useful but endowed with a meaning beyond its own. Viewing architecture as a human poetic projection, as a realisation of the unity of being with word, vision with language, and aiming at an understanding of this process that, by a conscious act of transformation,

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77 Cf.: "Meanwhile, let us remind the younger generation that if the movement towards the use of the demotic language is for us one of the major events in our national history, this is because, above all, it symbolizes the first step and turning point towards the truth." George Seferis, "Dialogue on Poetry: What Is Meant by Hellenism?"; George Seferis, *On the Greek Style: Selected Essays on Poetry and Hellenism*, Boston, 1966, London, 1967, Athens, 1982, p. 95.

78 Seferis wrote in his diary about "the ghastly situation of the young generation who want to write": "There is not even a basic book to teach them the language." Quoted in: Philip Sherrard, "George Seferis 1900-1971: The Man and his Poetry"; in: Philip Sherrard, *The Wound of Greece: Studies in Neo-Hellenism*, London, Athens, 1978, p. 101.

79 George Seferis, "Makryannis"; in: George Seferis, 1966, 1967, 1982, op. cit., p. 35.

80 An illiterate hero of the War of Independence, who learnt how to read and write in order to write his memoirs, and about whom Seferis writes: "I regard him as a great teacher of our language. ... He is a surefooted messenger of the long and unbroken tradition of the people". *Ibid.*, p. 63.

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brought forth the inner reality of the world in the mode of the modern Greeks, a study of architectural products from within the cultural life in which they arose will be undertaken with modern Greek poetry as a gnomon to the reality of life. For buildings and poems that are 'well and truly made' "are conceived as both physically efficient and metaphysically linked to the inner life of a people"<sup>81</sup>, and when architects and poets consciously will to produce such works, their inner experience and mythical vision of life as well as the way they proceed to make the inner nature of life intelligible by means of symbols are the same, independent of the art they practise.

An appreciation of Pikionis' architectural voice will be sought through a close reading of his most accomplished work on the Attic hills. An attempt will be made to draw parallels between Pikionis' perspective of the world and that of his contemporary poet Odysseus Elytis (b. 1911), as it emerges through a reading of his poem *The Axion Esti* (1959). This poem of Elytis' seeks to evoke his vision of the eternal aspect of the "small" world of visible things, of the immanence and the transcendence of the archetypal world, "the great", in its sensible counterpart, a vision of the world of archetypes and archetypal experiences, which is the world Pikionis sought to embody in architectural form. *The Axion Esti* of Elytis is "a kind of spiritual autobiography"<sup>82</sup>, an account of the poet's experience of the world, his contemplation of the world-model that is finally given birth - is re-created - in his own work. It is at once a journey and an Ithaca, an account and the fruit of this kind of process that led Pikionis to affirm that "The work of art is the expression of the inner reality of the World" and show how this can be achieved in architecture.

### 4. Articulation of the Thesis

The main text of this thesis falls into three Parts, all of which are concerned with architecture as a process of creation which is distinct with respect to the physical appearance of its products and the manual operation exclusively proper to the architect, yet it can be contextualised within the wider circle of human making with respect to the mental image to which all artists work - when their interest focuses on an inner world of reality - and to the noetic and imaginative operations proper to all makers. The first

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81 Roger Lipsey, "Introduction"; in: Roger Lipsey (ed.), op. cit., Vol. 1, p. xxxiii.

82 Edmund Keeley and George Savidis, "Preface"; in: Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 9.

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Part I is a theoretical discussion on this theme and an attempt to expound the principles underlying the pursuit of the architectural activity - in the narrow and the wider sense - meant to provide guiding orientation and a framework or, rather, a theoretical environment for the Parts which follow, and to inform the argument in this thesis. Parts II and III attempt to put into practice the theoretical concepts introduced in Part I. The second Part concentrates on the architectural and the poetic creative processes within the particular modern Greek historical and socio-cultural context, and refers to their stages without, however, suggesting a smooth progression and making no claims to have achieved a comprehensive coverage of the subject. The focus of attention in the third Part is the same making process as a personal creative experience. An account of Pikionis' personal poetic journey is followed by a close reading of his architectural work on the Attic hills, a work which exemplifies *par excellence* the embodiment of the Greek world in architectural form, in modern times. In the same part is ventured a comparison between Pikionis' architectural world-image and *The Axion Esti*, a poem of his contemporary Odysseus Elytis, and between the cosmological visions which inform the two artefacts.

The three chapters of Part I are intended to prepare and to lead to a critical examination of the nature of modern Greek architecture, by means of a consideration of the nature of human dwelling and the manner in which it is revealed and acquires an appearance in the historical world of mortals; the human energies through which it is manifested in architectural form in the essential sense of the word. This theoretical inquiry follows the path which language and etymology indicate in an attempt to proceed in a stepwise fashion, with the purpose of illuminating the meaning of architecture and the formal principle which finds expression in its products; of identifying the common dimension in architecture and poetry; and of investigating the pivotal role and key function of language in the significant act of architectural creation.

Chapter One is confined to sketching the conception of architecture as a conscious creative activity, a work of art governed by will, reason, and imagination, in accordance with the Platonic or the traditional philosophy of art. This chapter, as well as those which follow, relies upon Platonic and Christian sources - the particular expressions of the essentially universal and unanimous traditional doctrine of art that have been the leaven in the life and art of the Greek world in its ancient and mediaeval Christian form and up to modern times - as well as upon modern scholars' writings on



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traditional teachings and on the principles of traditional art, such as those of Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, Philip Sherrard, Mircea Eliade, Vladimir Lossky, et cetera.

Chapter Two considers the relations between architecture and poetry, viewing building and poetising as conscious expressions of human creative dwelling that make use of language in order to voice and give image to the maker's vision of the world he dwells within, and to make dwelling in human fashion in the historical world possible for his fellow-men. Relying to a great extent on etymological or other linguistic considerations and on Heidegger's accounts of dwelling, language, the work of art, building, and poetry, it attempts to explore the interaction between architecture and poetry by means of a discussion of the poetic character of building and the tectonic one of poetising, which may shed light on the kinship between architecture and poetry.

Chapter Three looks at the phenomena of the architecture of men on this earth, who, being verbally divided, produce culturally distinct architectures. It views the art of building as an art that is attached to its native landscape and argues that architecture ought to be a creation from within the language which it inherits and which dictates a distinct kind of building, if it is to accomplish the task of communicating the truth inherent in the words-elements of this language, of generating the things which these words name. Drawing an analogy between architectural and verbal language and dwelling upon the character of natural language and the way it functions, this chapter questions the validity of an inter-cultural architectural language. Furthermore, it is meant to lead to the discussion of architecture in modern Greece from within the language which is peculiar to the world of the Greeks.

The second Part of this thesis turns towards the historical milieu of Greece after Independence, in order to trace the modern Greek artists' search for "the true face of Greece" and the means appropriate to its creative expression. Inquiring into the history of the nature of modern Greek architecture, Part II aims at delineating the architectural making process that brought about the embodiment of the inner reality of the Greek world in the historically distinct architectural work of Dimitris Pikionis. The stages of this process are traced and paralleled to those of modern Greek poetry, a contemporaneous art process directed towards making intelligible the same reality, and one with a privileged position in the cultural life of modern Greece. This part is also organised in three chapters.

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Chapter Four introduces the historical and intellectual modern Greek context and investigates the problems which all makers in modern Greece, but especially architects and poets, encountered in their strife to find, learn and preserve their native living tongue - the language in which they craved to be housed as craftsmen. It seeks to view this problem within the problem of creative expression and within the particular perspective of the historical and cultural life of the Greek people. It outlines the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries' visions of the Greek world and the corresponding pursuits of the architectural 'face' of this world, and, finally, contrasts Pikionis' cosmic vision and his choice of architectural language to those of his predecessors and contemporaries.

Some aspects of modern Greek poetry, which seem to qualify the art of poetry as the primary vehicle of Greece's creative life in modern times, are dealt with in Chapter Five. It is suggested here that a reading of modern Greek architecture through the looking-glass of its contemporary poetry - an activity with analogous features and securely rooted in the life of Greece - can give appropriate weight to the historical, social and intellectual context, as well as to the most important and all encompassing context of life. That it can be fruitful in instructing an appreciation of the function of architecture at the non-purely utilitarian level - the level at which architecture and poetry function in the same way - and it may facilitate the investigation of the relations between the language which modern Greek architects employed and the end towards which their works were directed. This chapter explains that architecture and poetry will be viewed as imitative activities, in order to assess the degree to which the specific architectural creations addressed here succeeded in expressing the true reality of the modern Greek world, the same reality that modern Greek poets consciously willed to embody in their works.

The actual building of such works - architectural and poetical alike - and the way in which they endeavoured to accommodate the Greek world, past and present, and to manifest it corporeally is discussed in Chapter Six. This discussion does not intend to assemble, or to provide a chronicle of, architectural facts<sup>83</sup> and poetical events, neither

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83 This has been accomplished with all requisite learning by Professor Dimitris Philippides. Hereafter I will frequently refer to his best known work on the history of modern Greek architecture: Dimitris Philippides, *Νεοελληνική 'Αρχιτεκτονική: 'Αρχιτεκτονική Θεωρία και Πράξη (1830-1980) σάν 'Αντανάκλαση τών 'Ιδεολογικών 'Επιλογών τής Νεοελληνικής Κουλτούρας*, Athens, 1984.

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to express an opinion upon the stylistic qualities of the works it presents.<sup>84</sup> It rather attempts to give examples of realisations of the historical and the mythical visions of reality in terms of architecture and poetry in the modern Greek historical context (the sequence is not strictly chronological), to evaluate the modern Greek architectural making process in order to understand its significance and inherent logic, and to illustrate its stages up to its fulfilment (a term which should not be understood to refer to a smooth progression or evolution) with the work of Pikionis, which is introduced here and placed in its proper historical and intellectual setting.

The central purpose of Part III of this thesis is to offer an account of Pikionis' personal poetic journey, his views, aims, and achievements, and to present the built offspring of his self-knowing and world-knowing process, the articulate embodiment of his vision of "the mythical reality of the world", the same vision of the eternal aspect of visible things that *The Axion Esti* of Odysseus Elytis seeks to evoke. This part aims at making apparent the profound compatibility of Elytis' articulate vision of the Greek world (and by implication of the world at large) with that of Pikionis, and of the metaphysical presuppositions on which their world-views are based, as well as of their perceptions of the function of artistic creation in the contemporary world. Part III consists of a further three chapters.

Chapter Seven depicts Pikionis' experience of the world he lived within and pursued knowledge of, before the act of creation. With the aid of his own writings, it follows his personal seeking and learning, or remembering, process in order to understand how he perceived his role as an architect and to illustrate how he shaped his architectural voice and succeeded in resolving the duality between language and end, form and function, and between the poetic and the tectonic dimensions of architecture. This chapter also argues that the nature of Pikionis' work requires a reading process that resembles the creation process; a reading of the architect's work and of the process of its creation; an active and receptive reading which aims at re-creating the cosmic picture - spiritual and bodily - that the work was intended as the copy of, and which it endeavours to re-evoke in the consciousness of the spectator.

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84 The architects and poets to whom I will refer in the following chapters are representative of the creative process that I am discussing here, and not the only ones whose work I value. Restrictions of space, more than anything else, forced me to exclude from this discussion many signposts along the path of modern Greek architectural and poetic creation, most reluctantly the architect Aris Konstantinidis (1913-1993) and the poet George Seferis (1900-1971).

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Chapter Eight proceeds to read Pikionis' most accomplished work on the Attic hills - his native earth and the place which for him epitomised the spiritual Greek world - by means of a contemplation journey on the paths which he carved and informed with his vision of the true nature of worldly things. The objective of this journey is to elucidate the principles underlying the way Pikionis' work was imagined and executed, and to ascend towards the Idea of the world that the architect himself experienced and skilfully made manifest in architectural form.

In Chapter Nine, follows a discussion of Elytis' birth- or form-giving process and of the fruit of this process, *The Axion Esti*, which is, at once, his poetic account of his process of world-knowing and self-knowing and a veritable icon of the world of all reality. The poetic re-creation of the world-model by Elytis in this poem and the way *The Axion Esti* succeeds in transmitting an understanding of the relation of this timeless world to the historical modern Greek world are set against Pikionis' architectural re-collection of the world of reality and its embodiment in an architectural form which is able to provide modern Greeks with a means of communion with this trans-historical cosmic reality. This chapter ends with some reflections on the two art-acts which, as it is shown, are not simply contemporaneous, but also in the same spirit of loyalty - loyalty without servility - to the values and principles of the cultural order in which the two creators found themselves embedded and which for them is a natural order. It is argued here that Pikionis' and Elytis' artefacts point to a time when the world images of architecture and poetry in modern Greece coincide; that their methods of representing the world "correspond more or less to contemporary habits of vision" (Coomaraswamy). It is also postulated that the icons of the world which they bring forth are consistent with a theory of cosmic reality, the realisation of which depends equally on a way of living and a way of building or poetising, and which points towards a theory of life or art which fosters human creation as the expression of the unity of life and art.

A separate chapter, subsequent to the third Part, concludes the thesis. Here the suggestion is put forward that the architectural act, and the art-act in general, the begetting of a significant form which 'speaks' about and of the created world-order, is essentially a 'world-redeeming' act, an act directed towards a re-creation of the world as it was in the beginning.

## *Part I*

### **Prologue**

The first Part of this thesis is intended to prepare and to lead to a critical examination of the nature of modern Greek architecture, by means of a consideration of the nature of human dwelling and the manner in which it is revealed and acquires an appearance in the historical world of mortals; the human energies through which it is manifested in architectural form in the essential sense of the word. This theoretical inquiry follows the path which language and etymology indicate in an attempt to proceed in a stepwise fashion, with the purpose of illuminating the meaning of architecture and the formal principle which finds expression in its products; of identifying the common dimension in architecture and poetry; and of investigating the pivotal role and key function of language in the significant act of architectural creation.

## *Chapter One*

### **The Genesis of a House**

*IN the beginning God created the  
heaven and the earth.*

*2 And the earth was without form,  
and void; and darkness was upon  
the face of the deep. And the Spirit  
of God moved upon the face of the  
waters.*

*3 And God said, Let there be light:  
and there was light.*

*Genesis 1:1 - 1:3*

## 1. 1. The Historical Genesis of the House of Man

Man dwells on earth. Human dwelling is brought into being, is manifested in form, through human building. The history of man's dwelling on this earth can be traced through - made known by means of - the products of man's building activity, since the latter emanates from human thinking and as such distinguishes man from all other living creatures on earth; the history of man's historical existence can be thought of in terms of human building. Building in human fashion is a creative activity, and creative and structured dwelling - architecture - is the mode of activity proper to the human nature; an activity in which man's hands, his imagination, and his intellect are at work. Architecture thus understood is not confined to the building of a lodging; it is, rather, the building of a house that can be thought as commensurate with architecture essentially understood. Humanly built products are the historical - temporal and spatial - expression of human dwelling, of the manner in which humans are in the earthly world. The material architectural form defines the boundaries of man's earthly existence; it does not merely denote dwelling, but signifies human dwelling, in the sense that it constitutes the visible mode in which man's dwelling nature is made manifest. It is through his active - constructive - dwelling, the confining and ordering of the land followed by the erection of his house, that man inhabits the world, the true home of mortals. The architectural form exists latent in human nature and, when actualised and externalised, its outer dimension 'half reveals and half conceals' man's true nature - the archetypal man - and the true reality of the world of which it partakes.

The genesis of a house on earth recapitulates the human condition. When man contends himself with the creation of his dwelling place he affirms his earthly ties and his desire to rise from earth unto heaven. The erected house is at once the home of man and the concretisation of man's nature and constitution; it is a home within the world-home - a world within the world - a whole world in miniature,<sup>1</sup> denoting man as human being, as microcosm<sup>2</sup>. The house of man rooted into the earth stands on the

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1 See: Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, London and Sydney, 1958, pp. 367ff.

2 Man as microcosm sums up all creation in himself. See: *Genesis*, 1.29,30. On the term *mikrokosmos* see: C. B. Wilson, "Dwelling at the Centre of the World"; *Cosmos*, The Yearbook of the Traditional Cosmology Society, Vol. 8: "Sacred Architecture in the Traditions of India, China, Judaism and Islam", Emily Lyle (ed.), Edinburgh, 1992, p. 113. Cf.: "Man, the greater world contained in a lesser, concentrates all that is into one whole and crowns God's creation". Gregory Palamas; cited in: Philip Sherrard, *The Greek East and the Latin West: A*

earth upright; it rises upwards towards the skies, made by humans and of the things of the world below after the model above, in the manner befitting humans, men gazing upwards towards what is truly real<sup>3</sup>. The historical genesis of the house of man is the affirmation and preservation of the true nature of humans, "created mortal, but given immortality by grace of participation in Logos"<sup>4</sup>.

## 1. 2. On the Word ἄνθρωπος

*Numberless wonders  
terrible wonders walk the world but none the match for man*

Sophocles, *Antigone*

Human nature discloses itself in the name ἄνθρωπος (*anthrōpos*) which sets up the context of conscious and constructive human dwelling. A hermeneutic explanation of the word, with the aid of etymology,<sup>5</sup> is undertaken below, in order to reflect upon the 'natural meaning' of ἄνθρωπος as presented in the Greek language. The Greek word for the human being, ἄνθρωπος, derives from ἄνω θερεῖν, ἤγουν ἄνω βλέπειν, to look up, that is, man is the only upward-looking animal.<sup>6</sup> Or, from ἀναθερεῖν (ἀ

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*Study in the Christian Tradition*, Oxford, 1959, Limni, Evia, 1992, p. 42. Cf.: "You are a world within a world: look within yourself, and see there the whole creation." St. Nilus of Ancyra; cited in: Bishop Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, Crestwood, New York, 1990, p. 86. See also references in: G. W. H. Lampe (ed.), *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Oxford, 1961, p. 772, and: Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford, 1843 (first edition), 1940 (new, ninth edition), p. 985.

3 Plato, *Phaedrus*, 499c.

4 Athanasius Alexandrinus; quoted in: G. W. H. Lampe (ed.), op. cit., p. 142. Cf.: "human nature is capable of sharing in immortality". Plato, *Timaeus*, 47bc. See: Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, Cambridge, 1957, 1991, pp. 116ff.

5 Coomaraswamy quotes the words of René Guénon's in order to say of etymology that it is precisely one of those "modern sciences which really represent quite literally 'residues' of the old sciences, no longer understood." Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "*Nirukta = Hermeneia*"; Roger Lipsey (ed.), op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 257. Cf.: "the connection of a word with its sense is not due to convention, but is by nature inherent in the word itself." Ibid., p. 257. Cf. also: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "The Symbolism of the Dome", (Part II); Roger Lipsey (ed.), op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 432, where Coomaraswamy refers to the etymon of a word, its derivation from "a 'root' or archetype". Cf. also: "The still extant sacred and archaic languages are a witness to the remarkable treasury of metaphysics embedded in the very structure of language itself. In fact, in certain societies to this day metaphysics is taught as a commentary upon a sacred or archaic language, for example, in certain schools of Sufism." Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Scientia Sacra"; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 1981, op. cit., p. 155, n. 7 (p. 133). And: Ex Anastasio Montis Sinae Monacho, "Περὶ Ἑτυμολογίας"; Thomas Gaisford, *Etymologicon Magnum: Seu Verius Lexicon Seapissime Vocabulorum Origines Indagans, Ex Pluribus Lexicis Scholiastis et Grammaticis, Anonymi Cuiusdam Opera; Concinnatum*, Amsterdam, 1848, 1962, 827ff.

6 "μόνος γὰρ τῶν ἄλλων ζῶων ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἄνω βλέπει". Ibid., 109,16-7.



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ὄπωπεν, ἤγουν ἀναλογίζεσθαι ἃ εἶδε καὶ ἤκουσε, τῶν ἄλλων ζώων μὴ λογιζομένων καὶ προνοουμένων).<sup>7</sup> That is, man is the only living creature able to think and contemplate all he sees and hears. Or, from the verb δρωῶ, τὸ βλέπω, ἄνθρωπος καὶ ἄνθρωπος,<sup>8</sup> to see. Or from ἄνω ῥέπειν, ἀνώροπος τις ὤν,<sup>9</sup> to incline upwards. Or from τὸ ἔναρθρον ἔχειν τὴν ὄπα, τουτέστι τὴν φωνήν. Or from ἀθηρὰν ὄπα ἔχειν.<sup>10</sup> That is, man is equipped with sound and voice,<sup>11</sup> he is able to express himself (not his private self) through language.

As Anastasios of Mount Sinai notes,<sup>12</sup> humans are named after the way in which their nature is manifested, and hence ἄνθρωπος does not denote the essence of man but the human energies through which humanness is revealed and becomes manifest. The etymology of ἄνθρωπος suggests that it is in the very nature of humans to look up towards the divinities and not only to see but to apprehend and to know<sup>13</sup> "those things which our souls beheld aforetime as they journeyed with their god"<sup>14</sup>; the Platonic phenomenon of recollection or ἀνάμνησις (*anamnēsis*) is a phenomenon of the human nature, manifested in the name ἄνθρωπος. In ἄνθρωπος a connection

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7 Ibid., 109,17-21. The quotations are from Plato, *Cratylus*, 399c. Cf.: Plato, *Timaeus*, 47c.

8 Thomas Gaisford, op. cit., 109,22-3.

9 Ibid., 109,23-4.

10 Ibid., 109,24-5. The ἄνω θεωρεῖν, ἄνω ἀθρεῖν, and ὀρθῶς περιπατεῖν (Cf. Plato, *Timaeus*, 90b) are also suggested origins of the word ἄνθρωπος. Ibid., 306A. See also: Hjamar Frisk, *Griechisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 2 Vols., *Indogermanische Bibliothek* series, Heidelberg, 1960-72, Vol. 1, p. 110-1; Émile Boisacq, *Dictionnaire Étymologique de la Langue Grecque Étudiée dans ses Rapports avec les autres Langues Indo-Européennes*, Heidelberg, first edition 1822, fourth edition 1950, p. 63; Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, op. cit., pp. 141-2; J. B. Hofmann, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Griechischen*, Munich, 1949; and W. Pape, *Griechisch - Deutsches Handwörterbuch*, revised by M. Sengebusch, 2 Vols., Braunschweig, 1866, Graz, 1954.

11 Cf. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "A Figure of Speech or a Figure of Thought?"; Roger Lipsey (ed.), op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 36, 39. See below, Chapter Two, 3.

12 Ex Anastasio Montis Sinae Monacho, op. cit.; Thomas Gaisford, op. cit., 828,43f. Anastasios of Mount Sinai here notes for both titles attributed to Christ, namely Θεός and ἄνθρωπος - God and man - that neither the first signifies the οὐσίαν of the divine, nor the second denotes the φύσιν of the human, but their manifestations. This is correlated to the Christian theanthropocosmic vision, the vision of God as the spiritual essence and archetype of man and of the world. Is the word κόσμος not denoting the ordered revelation and manifestation of the divine Logos, the created aspect of the world, as well? For a discussion of the doctrine of the God-man, of how the inner relations of Godhead and manhood in Christ are the same as those effective between God and the world, see: Philip Sherrard, *Human Image: World Image; The Death and Resurrection of Sacred Cosmology*, Ipswich, 1992, especially chapter 7, pp. 147-81.

13 Cf.: "According to Plato (in the *Phaedrus*, 249b55-c6), a living thing that has never seen the truth can never take on the shape of a human." Martin Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, (1978, in German), Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1992, (c/1984), p. 148.

14 Ibid., 249c.

between *θεωρεῖν* (*theōrein*) and its object, the realm of Ideas<sup>15</sup> above, is established prior to the Platonic formulation of the doctrine of Ideas. Man is, by virtue of his nature, capable of *θεωρεῖν*; he is a philosopher in the true sense of the word.<sup>16</sup> As the etymological inquiry into the word *ἄνθρωπος* reveals, being human means seeing those pure things above and beholding with the eyes that Platonic "full vision of the perfect mysteries"<sup>17</sup>, and "drawing nigh to the divine"<sup>18</sup> becoming more perfectly human, "truly perfect"<sup>19</sup>, 'immortal' in accord with the aforementioned Christian formulation.<sup>20</sup> For, as emphasised in Greek Patristic texts, "the reason why man was created in the image [of God] was that he should know God"<sup>21</sup>, in other words, that he should know his own spiritual essence; and he has been endowed with those qualities that make him a "*φιλόθεον ζῶον*" (*philotheon zōion*)<sup>22</sup>, apt to be united to God.<sup>23</sup> The name of man is correlated to his will and inherent ability to "fly upward"<sup>24</sup> and to address those things in the region of the heavens<sup>25</sup> by means of the gift man is bestowed with, the *φωνή* (*phōnē*); to view and contemplate the beautiful and, consequently, to voice that which truly is, which is the final end of all human activity.

### 1. 3. On Dwelling in Human Fashion

The etymology of *ἄνθρωπος* illumines the nature of human dwelling as creativity expressed in response to human nature. Human dwelling is a conscious and active dwelling and, as such, it aims at the voicing of truth, at a revelation through word and language. Men whose minds are directed toward heaven and are able not only to see with their bodily eyes, but to search with their intellect and to enter into the Platonic realm of Ideas, are capable of dwelling. That is, they are capable of building on the

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15 The word *ιδέα* (*idea*) is also related to seeing (*ιδεῖν*, *idein*).

16 Cf.: Martin Heidegger, *What Is Philosophy?*, (1956, in German), Plymouth, 1989, pp. 56f.

17 Plato, *Phaedrus*, 249c. "that blessed vision"; *Ibid.*, 250b. Cf.: "the eye receives the impression of light, because it has the property of heaven." Meister Eckhart, *Sermons and Treatises*, London, 1979, Dorset, 1987, Rockport, 1991, Vol. 1, p. 288.

18 Plato, *Phaedrus*, 249d.

19 *Ibid.*, 249c.

20 "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; ... they shall all know me". Jeremiah, 31: 33-4. Cf. Plato, *Timaeus*, 90b.

21 Athanasius Alexandrinus; cited in: G. W. H. Lampe (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 415. But see: Vladimir Lossky, *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction*, Crestwood, New York, 1978, pp. 22ff.

22 Clemens Alexandrinus; cited in: G. W. H. Lampe (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 142.

23 See references in: *ibid.*, pp. 414-5.

24 Plato, *Phaedrus*, 249e.

25 Cf. Plato, *Timaeus*, 91e.

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earth below an image of the truth above which can attune rightly the minds of their fellow-men, awaken in them the organs wherewith men approach images, and enable them to behold the builder's "blessed vision" of beauty that their own soul yearns to remember. They are capable of enshrining the truth which they have spiritually apprehended in an earthly image, and of providing the nourishment required for the souls of men to grow again the wings they possessed aforetime.<sup>26</sup>

The edification<sup>27</sup> of a house on earth, "instinct with life and truth"<sup>28</sup>, summarises the consequences of the nature of human dwelling. The house built in human fashion, allows man to have a place on the fertile earth - the mother that "gives birth to all beings, feeds them, and receives back from them the fertile seed"<sup>29</sup> - and establishes a connection between earth and heaven, the fertiliser of the earth and of man's earthly creations, the source of visions and revelations.<sup>30</sup> The erected house provides for mortals to dwell on this earth and facilitates man's skyward looking and essential upward movement. Dwelling as *ἀνθρωπιος* is a need and a task;<sup>31</sup> it is fulfilled through building. Man's proper building act is a threefold act: an act of seeing intellectually, an act of imaging something not yet material and an act of making visible or materialising. Human dwelling is manifested in an act of creation inspired by a noetic act, "the act of the supreme cognitive faculty in man", what Dante calls "our noblest part, that most of all is the object of the love rooted in us"<sup>32</sup>. Human building activity, architecture proper, is critical to dwelling in human fashion; it is the process whereby man seeks vision and, subsequently,<sup>33</sup> embodies this vision in material form with a view to leading to vision. It is the process whereby humans dwell humanly, that is, creatively, and architecture in the narrow sense is a distinctive way in which human dwelling is accomplished; the house man builds and inhabits is one mode of embodiment of the nature of human dwelling.

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26 Plato, *Phaedrus*, 251b.

27 Both in the sense of building and in the sense of upbringing.

28 As opposed to 'false phantoms'. See: Plato, *Theatetus*, 150c.

29 Aeschylus, *Choephoroi*, v, 127-8.

30 See references to *οὐρανός* (*ouranos*, sky, heaven), in: G. W. H. Lampe (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 979.

31 Heidegger's etymological investigation of the Old English and High German word for building, *buan*, to dwell, leads him to the following conclusion: "To be a human being means to be on the earth as mortal. It means to dwell." Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking"; Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, New York, 1975, (c/1971), p. 147.

32 Quoted in: Philip Sherrard, 1990, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

33 This succession or posteriority implied is not a temporal but, rather, a logical one. The two operations, vision seeking and vision embodying, are inextricably united; it may be said that the former continues for the whole duration of the latter.

## 1. 4. On Building in Human Fashion

*The real dwelling plight lies in this, that mortals ever search anew  
for the nature of dwelling, that they must ever learn to dwell.*

Martin Heidegger<sup>34</sup>

Human dwelling on earth occurs in a building manner;<sup>35</sup> man defines formally the earth as his dwelling place when he builds humanly. The creative character of dwelling proper to humans is manifested through building on this earth beneath the sky, in so far as a building commensurate with human nature is pursued. Building as a conscious expressive activity is directed towards making present on earth the realities beyond the earthly level, of which humans are able to attain vision and conscious experience. The fruit of human building is a sensible form that corresponds to - is symmetric to - these realities or Ideas. Bad or inhuman building arises when these spiritual realities have been inadequately experienced and incorrectly expressed, therefore not expressed. Bad building disables human dwelling, for it fails to provide the bridge between the terrestrial and the celestial level, thus impeding upward looking. Good or human building is the crystallisation of seeing, which supports human dwelling by allowing viewing and seeing *through* the material in which it is embodied; building in human fashion is, in this sense, making a form that is transparent and translucent; that makes the luminous things on high appear and shine here below.

All human making is a kind of building, a kind of constructing a link between the material and the immaterial, the spatial and that which is beyond space, the temporal and that which is separated by time<sup>36</sup>, the perishing and the incorruptible, that which is contingent by nature and that which is an absolute stability<sup>37</sup>, the abstract and the concrete, the created and the uncreated; a mode of affirming and making apparent the interpenetration of the human and the divine. This kind of constructing is the mode of activity proper to man striving for knowledge of the world of spiritual essences in the image of which the sensible world is created, for knowledge of the spiritual archetype that is the true subject of his own being, his divine inner reality shown forth and

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34 Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking"; Martin Heidegger, 1975, op. cit., p. 161.

35 Cf.: "We attain to dwelling ... only by means of building." And: "*Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build.*" Ibid., pp. 145 and 160.

36 "all that is here below, separated by time from the things on high." St. Gregory Nazianzen; quoted in: Vladimir Lossky, 1957, 1991, op. cit., p. 44.

37 Ibid., p. 45.

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named after its manifestation *ἄνθρωπος*. It is in this sense that the kind of knowledge that enables man to build creatively is a self-knowledge, the knowledge of man's self as human created in the image of God,<sup>38</sup> "ἔχοντα ἐν ἑαυτῷ πάντα τὰ μέρη τοῦ ὅλου"<sup>39</sup> and being conscious of his epiphanic quality. Building in human fashion is conditioned upon dwelling in human fashion, striving for vision of the *λόγοι* (*logoi*) of all things in the created world and the *Λόγος* which dwells in man.

The building of the house of man as *ἄνθρωπος* is the temporal and formal realisation of the possibility of dwelling humanly; of "remaining before the divinities"<sup>40</sup> and of breaking through from the level of earth to that of heaven. The edification of man's house constitutes the phenomenon of his natural capacity for contemplation leading to knowledge and is symbolic of this human act of contemplation that allows man to ascend from earth unto heaven. At the same time, the erected house, the symbol of, and reference to, that breaking-through from one level of existence to a higher one, is the fruit of human building which is intellectual as well as manual. The house built in human fashion provides for the life of the whole man, by supporting his bodily life on the earthly level and his intellectual wayfaring life along the vertical axis that unites the universal progenitors: Earth and Sky.<sup>41</sup> The house built humanly on this earth is the actual visualisation and material representation of the cosmos that remains united through man himself "τὸν μικρὸν κόσμον, τὸν σύνδεσμον πάσης τῆς κτίσεως"<sup>42</sup>. The form of everything that humans build in this fashion corresponds to the form of the world and to that of the human being.

Man's building is man's re-creation of the world; it is a creation of order analogous to the mythical creation of the cosmos<sup>43</sup>. The genesis of the house of man repeats the cosmogonic separation of the elements which were previously united<sup>44</sup> and manifests the potentiality for unity which is latent in the nature of the cosmos. Human houses on

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38 "ὁ κατὰ μίμησιν ὑπὸ θεοῦ γενόμενος, τουτέστιν ὁ ἄνθρωπος". Johannes Damascenus; quoted in: G. W. H. Lampe (ed.), op. cit., p. 410.

39 (comprising in his self all parts of the whole). Methodius Olympius; quoted in: ibid., p. 772.

40 Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking"; Martin Heidegger, 1975, op. cit., p. 149.

41 Cf.: "Since you are a twofold being ... you must likewise have twofold nourishment" Symeon the New Theologian, *The Discourses*, New York, Ramsey, 1980, XXVI, 140 (p. 278).

42 (the small world, the bond of the whole created world). Cosmas Indicopleustes; quoted in: G. W. H. Lampe (ed.), op. cit., p. 141.

43 For the meanings of *κόσμος* (*cosmos*, order, natural order, ornament, decoration, ruler, regulator, world-order, universe, et cetera) see: Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, op. cit., p. 985.

44 Cf. Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Mythe et Pensée chez les Grecs: Études de Psychologie Historique*, Paris, 1965, 1990, p. 377.

earth materialise a bond uniting earth and sky, and thus re-establish the primordial unity which, as cosmogonic myths assert, was disrupted in the beginning. The house is, at once, founded on the earth and the earthly materialisation of the celestial dome echoed in the Latin *domus*.<sup>45</sup> The man-made house-microcosm is the product of man's valiant strife to perceive and, finally, to know the world. At the same time, it is the means by which man can pursue - according to his individual capacity - knowledge of the world and, through this, of the Divine Architect, its creative and indwelling single Cause, and, thus, achieve liberation. The structured, created form of the house is the result of the transformation of the vision of truth into image with the assistance of, or rather through, the human art of speaking;<sup>46</sup> it is the truth expressed outwards, by art, in the terms of a formal language, which are employed with a view to structuring an accurate re-presentation of the cosmic paradigm and to revealing the intelligible structure and the beauty of the universe and the structure and beauty of man, who is himself a created image depicting the cosmos.

## 1. 5. Making a House by Art

Making a house by art is a mimetic, an iconographic activity; the architect's task is to fashion the product of his hands according to the archetype which was not made by hands; to imitate the divine harmony in mortal motions, as Plato would express it.<sup>47</sup> The house-model according to which man moulds his dwelling place, the vessel to contain his life and to participate in the life of the world, is the world itself, "the Intellectual Cosmos [which] may be revealed to contemplation."<sup>48</sup> Making a house by art is a difficult task. Its fulfilment depends on the extent to which the final product is a faithful image of the archetype, and this is a matter dependent on the extent to which the architect's perceptive organs have been activated at the moment which precedes creation. Architecture requires of the architect that he acts consciously and fully aware

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45 See: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "The Symbolism of the Dome"; Roger Lipsey (ed.), op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 415-64; C. B. Wilson, "The Centre of the World and the Interpretation of Architecture"; *Edinburgh Architecture Research*, Vol. 11, Edinburgh, 1984, pp. 50-9; C. B. Wilson, "Building a Microcosm"; *Shadow*, 3, 1, June 1986, pp. 9-19; and: C. B. Wilson, "Dwelling at the Centre of the World", 1992, op. cit., pp. 111-32.

46 "There is not nor ever shall be ... a genuine art of speaking which is divorced from grasp of truth." Plato, *Phaedrus*, 260e.

47 Plato, *Timaeus*, 80b. Cf. Plato, *Laws*, Book II, 668bc. Cf. also: Plotinus, *The Enneads*, V, 9, 11. And: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 1981, op. cit., p. 272.

48 Plotinus, *The Enneads*, V, 8, 1.

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of his functional role as a mediator, as a bridge between the non-temporal and non-historical model and the temporal and historical product of his mediative act which aims at generating, as proximately as possible, an image of the prototype.

The intellectual pursuit of knowledge precedes the outgoing act of architectural creation.<sup>49</sup> The architectural process begins with the architect's seeking of knowledge of the universe, for the sake of forming in his mind the mental image of the cosmos, the embodiment of which in matter he will actively pursue at a second stage. It is a process of a literally philosophical nature, with a practical end. The architect pursues a path on this earth, in the world which he is able to understand and experience. Along this path, he sees with the bodily eyes he is equipped with, and he applies his intellect to the contemplation of the phenomena in nature, seeking this kind of inner transformation which will enable him to ascend towards the reality which earthly things reveal and which a work moulded by art ought to express. This philosophical process is the determining factor in the essential nature of the final work of the architect, although this work may be conditioned by various other historical factors.

The transportation of the world-model perceived by the habitual sense to the region of the intelligent mind involves a certain transformation of the sensibly acquired image; it involves restitution of all deformity in the sensible image, and a detachment from age, time, place and all that belongs to the category of the relative and restricts the view of things as they really are. The Golden Fleece of the architect is exactly this model in the purified condition; the intelligible idea which dwells in his imagination when he has surpassed corruptible appearances. By diligent contemplation, the architect collects knowledge of the intelligible idea which acquires an image in his imagination, and with the active, diligent and skilful<sup>50</sup> operation of his hands, he proceeds to the unconcealment of his acquired wisdom, the fashioning of the material icon, symbolic of the mental image in which it remains rooted. The originality of the artefact he produces in this manner depends on this rooting. The architect's intention is to deliver the truthful and beautiful image - the origin of his work - into the world of perceptible reality, and to let it diffuse its beauty into matter and illuminate the visible form of his tangible product, in the measure in which its materiality allows it.

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49 "unless he becomes an adequate philosopher he will never be an adequate speaker either on any subject." Plato, *Phaedrus*, 261a.

50 "But if any man come to the gates of poetry without the madness of the Muses ... then shall he and his works of sanity with him be brought to nought by the poetry of madness". *Ibid.*, 245a.

## 1. 6. The Creative Role of the Architect

If the architect's individual inner experience and journey towards knowledge of the primordial model are personal, his built work is for the benefit of all, it can be experienced by everybody, and it is only when such work has been carried out that the architect's role is fulfilled. It is only when the immaterial archetype is embodied in physical form that it acquires a cosmic existence. The architect's contemplative and active operations are inseparable. The journey towards knowledge is the means which enables the architect to reach his Ithaca: the work of architecture. The architect does not pursue knowledge for its own sake, he performs his deed by interpreting the model - the divine creation - and he must do so humbly, not for posterity, not in order to be glorified as an inventor himself, but out of hope that he might be granted the privilege to compose according to the laws of his learnt craft, the "invention of the Muses"<sup>51</sup>. The role of the architect is to act as an intermediary; it is through him that the visualised model will come into being as an artefact useful to men.

The product of the architect's work will be useful in providing shelter for, and in accommodating human bodily life and, at the same time, in functioning as a channel through which the souls of the architect's fellow citizens that yearn for knowledge will be guided towards the knowledge of the immaterial model with which the architect consciously informed his material work. It will be then that the highest and noblest goal of architecture as a human creative activity will have been achieved, and the architect himself will have fulfilled his role as a *psychopompos*. For architecture will become instructive, providing an opening to the timeless and non-historical world which architectural form attempts to define, however inferior to, and unable to exhaust, its reality. The work of architecture, however poor and deficient before the divine model, can in this way educate the citizens of an ideal Republic; by becoming a threshold to the world of higher reality. The architect's ultimate end in view is a practical one;<sup>52</sup> and it does not differ in any sense from that of any other human creative activity, which is "to produce order and proportion in the soul [of men]"<sup>53</sup>.

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51 Plato, *Ion*, 534e.

52 Cf. Dante's statement with reference to his *Divina Commedia*: "the whole work was undertaken not for a speculative but a practical end. ... The purpose of the whole is to remove those who are living in this life from the state of wretchedness and to lead them to the state of blessedness". Cited in: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "*Ars sine scientia nihil*"; Roger Lipsey (ed.), op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 229. Parallel statements of other artists' are also cited by Coomaraswamy in *ibid*.

53 Plato, *Gorgias*, 504d.



## *Chapter Two*

# **The Common Dimension in Architecture and Poetry**

*It is bad that poetry has a special name and that the poet represents a profession apart.  
Poetry is not anything special in itself. It is but the mode proper to the human spirit.  
Are not the imaginative powers of man's heart at work every minute ... ?*

Friedrich von Hardenberg-Novalis

## 2. 1. Language and Λόγος

*can anything exist which does not lean on the divine Logos?*

St. Gregory of Nazianzus<sup>1</sup>

When man builds in response to his human nature he voices the truth which his soul, by reason of her nature, had contemplated.<sup>2</sup> For, according to Plato's account, it is impossible for a soul that has never seen the truth to enter into human shape.<sup>3</sup> Through word and language man discloses the truth and lets it enter into history; words are the embodiments of true things and a means to the recollection of the latter. Humans bestowed with φωνή vocalise and bring to language, and thus into time and history, the Ideas, archetypes or eternal reasons - the λόγοι, in Christian terms<sup>4</sup> - of all things, contained within the divine Logos, the ground of cosmic order<sup>5</sup>. Things named and vocalised in language are thus brought to birth and signified by manifold names.<sup>6</sup> The all-articulating unity of the Λόγος is latent in the multiplicity of names in language; but "it takes a man to understand and to collect out of the multiplicity of sense-impressions a unity arrived at by a process of reason."<sup>7</sup> Dwelling commensurate with human nature is the creative recollection process which the plural linguistic expressions guide, and whereby man hears what is spoken and manifested in the totality of language with a view to recollection of the primordial unity, the Λόγος, the Heraclitean "Ἐν Πάντα<sup>8</sup>.

As Heidegger says, in a discussion of the *logos* as Heraclitus thought it,

*There can be true speaking and hearing only if they are directed in advance toward being, the logos. Only where the logos discloses itself does the phonetic sound become a word. Only where the being of the essent is heard does a mere casual listening become a hearing. But those who do not grasp the logos, akousai ouk epistamenoι oud' eipein, 'are not able to hear*

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Novalis' words on the previous page are cited in: Christopher Bamford, "Friedrich von Hardenberg-Novalis: A Portrait"; in: *Temenos*, 9, London, 1988, p. 61.

1 Quoted in: Vladimir Lossky, 1978, op. cit., p. 56.

2 Plato, *Timaeus*, 47d.

3 Plato, *Phaedrus*, 249b, 249e-250a.

4 "the divine 'willings' are the creative ideas of things, the *logoi*, the 'words'." Vladimir Lossky, 1957, 1991, op. cit., p. 98. Cf. Pseudo-Dionysius, op. cit., p. 102.

5 See references in: G. W. H. Lampe (ed.), op. cit., p. 808. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 772.

6 "words ... exhibiting images of all things". Plato, *Sophist*, 234c. Language is φωνή σημαντική (*phōnē sēmantikē*). Cf. Martin Heidegger, 1959, 1987, op. cit., p. 58.

7 Plato, *Phaedrus*, 249c. Cf.: "in all diversity is concealed that which is one and eternally identical". St. Maximus the Confessor; cited in: Philip Sherrard, 1959, 1992, op. cit., p. 42.

8 See: Martin Heidegger "Logos (Heraclitus, Fragment B50); Martin Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking: The Dawn of Western Philosophy*, pp. 59-78. See also: Martin Heidegger, 1959, 1987, op. cit., pp. 128ff.

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*or to speak' (Fragment 19). They cannot bring their being-there to stand in the being of the essent. Only those who can do so master the word; these are the poets and the thinkers.*<sup>9</sup>

Heidegger introduces poetry, the art of the spoken word, as the mode in which true speaking and hearing occurs. In everyday life, man uses language casually, for the purpose of mere communication or "with a view to irrational pleasure"<sup>10</sup>, forgetting that words function as re-minders of the things named; thus, in casual speech words become impotent. It is in poetry that words recover their magical potency and become the means to the knowledge of the *λόγοι* which they embody, for the speaker and for the hearer or reader. When man ignores the relation between names and the essence of things which names imitate,<sup>11</sup> when man "acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man"<sup>12</sup>, the work he creates becomes meaningless, disguising the real nature of things, and even misguiding the receiver by directing his thought to bring "false phantoms" to birth.

But verbal language is only one type of language in which truth is disclosed. All conscious human expressive activities, which are directed towards making present in realities of a lower order those of a higher one, make use of a language. Architecture, poetry, sculpture, painting, music, dance, et cetera use a language in order to voice and give image to the maker's vision of true reality. All art is linguistic. Yet art does not merely employ some language; it rather takes place in a language which guides the creation process, the re-remembering of the *Λόγος* of which the words that make up the language of the particular kind of art partake. Only in so far as art arises with respect to the significance of words given by likeness, art casts in light the *Λόγος* which words symbolise in multiple forms. The poet, in the narrow and the wider sense, employs words to this end: that they might aid the reader in restoring his soul to order. The very word *ὄνομα* (*onoma*, name), which, as Plato suggests, signifies "ὄν οὐ ζήτημα (being for which there is a search)"<sup>13</sup>, demands of man to exercise memory in order to be humanly creative; to not merely hear but to seek and finally to know, in the Platonic sense. Subsequently, man as a craftsman is able to proceed, according to his individual skill, to the orderly evocation and nomination of the idea conceived in his

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9 Ibid., p. 132.

10 Plato, *Timaeus*, 47d.

11 See: Plato, *Cratylus*, 422ff. Cf.: "he who knows names will also know things." Ibid., 435e.

12 Martin Heidegger, "... Poetically Man Dwells ..."; Martin Heidegger, 1975, op. cit., p. 215.

13 something "still more obvious in *ὄνομαστὸν* (notable), which states in so many words that real existence is that for which there is a seeking (*ὄν οὐ μάσκα*)". Plato, *Cratylus*, 421a.

intellect, with a view to inviting and directing the reader to an act of remembrance analogous to that by which the artist's work was intellectually created before being physically materialised.<sup>14</sup> The greater the artist's skill the more his eloquence is subdued to the service of the communication of the Form conceived in his mind, rather than to that of the display of his own personality.<sup>15</sup> Language, for all modes of artistic, that is, in-formed creation, traces the passage of meaning and activates the reader's creative faculties by both urging and supporting his contemplation of the theme creatively addressed in the artwork. Yet, the communicative role of language remains secondary to its primary poetic function. "Language, by naming beings for the first time, first brings beings to word and to appearance ... Language itself is poetry in the essential sense", in Heidegger's words.<sup>16</sup>

## 2. 2. Language and Poetry

As Heidegger points out,

*the chorus from Antigone (lines 332-75) has told us: simultaneously with man's departure into being he finds himself in the word, in language.*<sup>17</sup>

[...] *In this departure [he adds] language was being, embodied in the word: poetry. Language is the primordial poetry in which a people speaks being.*<sup>18</sup>

Speaking is λέγειν (*legein*), and λέγειν forms beings by naming them and bringing them to word. Reading, like speaking and hearing, is a λέγειν; a re-collecting<sup>19</sup> of the Λόγος which has already been sheltered, and revealed and acquired a presence in language. Heraclitus advises: "οὐκ ἐμοῦ ἀλλὰ τοῦ Λόγου ἀκούσαντας"<sup>20</sup>. This hearing or reading proper to humans is the re-collecting of the unity, the Λόγος manifested in the multiplicity of λέγειν, the Ἐν Πάντα. which determines "The way of proper hearing"<sup>21</sup>.

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14 Let us repeat that this sequence is not strictly temporal. What is meant is that the craft-work is generated by the intellectual act; yet in art the two are inseparable, the one presupposes the other.

15 Cf.: "in great art ... the artist remains inconsequential as compared with the work". Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art"; Martin Heidegger, 1975, op. cit., p. 40.

16 Ibid., pp. 73-4.

17 Martin Heidegger, 1959, 1987, op. cit., p. 171. See: *ibid.*, pp. 146ff.

18 Ibid., pp. 171-2.

19 See: Martin Heidegger, 1975, 1984, op. cit., pp. 60ff.

20 (Listening not to me but to the account, it is wise to agree that all things are one (ὁμολογεῖν σοφόν ἐστὶν Ἐν Πάντα)). Heraclitus, Fragment B 50.

21 Martin Heidegger, "Logos (Heraclitus, Fragment B 50)"; Martin Heidegger, 1975, 1984, op. cit., p. 67.

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Poems can function by serving not only the eyes and ears of the hearers but their intellectual sight and hearing as well; each word in the poem and the poem as a whole offer symbolic images to this intellectual sense of the reader. The sound and appearance of words - the outward expression of the invisible ideas in language - are themselves a mode of symbolisation.<sup>22</sup> Symbolism flows along the linguistic signs, in order to fulfil the task of transferring the meaning.<sup>23</sup> Words are only one type of signs used in languages to communicate meaning. The composition of words by the poet is also significant in the precise sense, that is, symbolic. Even natural languages are not exclusively phonetic. "In some languages, as in Chinese, the visual element is as necessary to thought as the phonetic, if not more so."<sup>24</sup> Words, consisting the linguistic signs in natural languages, are the vehicles of what has been known and is meant and expressed by the speaker, intending to give birth to the *Λόγος*, the ultimate origin of the ideas in the creator's mind, of language and poetry. The *λέγειν* of each word is the shelter of the *λόγος* of the thing named and the evocation of the *Λόγος* which speaks (*λέγειν*) in the language (*λόγος*). Each word reflects and symbolises in a different manner an aspect of the *Λόγος* from which the ensemble of language issues. *Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ Λόγος* (John 1:1). The *Λόγος* is reborn and formed in *λέγειν* as hearing or reading. When a poetic hearing occurs, the *logos* in *λέγειν* is in harmony with the *λόγοι* of things and the real things are being evoked and called and spoken and communicated. The experience of what is spoken in language as *λόγος* gives again birth to the formless *Λόγος* in the reader.

Language is the means by which man as a poet attains knowledge of the world and of himself as part and image of it. He then employs a language in order to structure and furnish the cosmic image, to transmit his vision of the reality of things to image. But language itself "springs from the wholly internal thirst for knowledge and the struggle to reach an intuition of things."<sup>25</sup> Language is a poetic activity and the composition of the poetic image is a linguistic activity, targeting to make the creator's vision discernible. As Heidegger says, "Poetry is the saying of the unconcealedness of what

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22 Nasr speaks of "the symbolic possibilities hidden in the very structure of words", in: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Scientia Sacra"; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 1981, op. cit., p. 155, n. 7 (p. 133).

23 Cf. Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, 3 Vols., Yale, Virginia, 1985, Volume 3: *The Phenomenology of Knowledge*, p. 338.

24 H. Steinthal, *Grammatik, Logik und Psychologie, ihre Principien u. ihr Verhältn. z. einand*, Berlin, 1855, pp. 153-8. Quoted in: Benedetto Croce, *Aesthetic: As Science of Experience and General Linguistic*, London, 1959, pp. 329-30.

25 Benedetto Croce, op. cit., p. 327.

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is"<sup>26</sup>, which has already happened in language. And his understanding of the relationship between language and poetry is described as follows:

*But since language is the happening in which for man beings first disclose themselves to him each time as beings, poesy - or poetry in the dictionary sense - is the most original form of poetry in the essential sense.<sup>27</sup>*

The relationship between language and poetry can be realised through the perspective of their respective centripetal and centrifugal character. Language as human activity is constantly orientated, and moves, towards the knowledge, the *Λόγος*, which abides at the centre of beings. On the other hand poetry, the poetising activity, springs from the gained knowledge of beings.

We are too late for the gods and too  
early for Being. Being's poem,  
just begun, is man.<sup>28</sup>

Man grows out of "Being's poem" and exists as a mortal, distinguished from plant and animal by his capability of speech.<sup>29</sup> Language manifests the possibility of dwelling in the manner befitting humans; it enables the builder to create in images and the dweller to behold a vision of the cosmic harmony in the image of which language, which issues from *Λόγος* and returns to *Λόγος*, is fashioned.

### 2. 3. On the Words *Πόλησις* and *Ἀρχιτεκτονική* : Some Linguistic Considerations

It was said earlier that it is man's nature and constitution that urges him to found, structure, and consciously erect his dwelling place upright on this earth, in a manner which unveils the essence of man as *ἄνθρωπος*, as well as the principle which governs his own creation by the Divine Artist. In possession of the divine *moira* which Prometheus bestowed upon them<sup>30</sup> - Athene's artistic wisdom and Hephaestos' effective art - men are capable of fulfilling their dwelling nature as *ἄνθρωποι* in a twofold way: as *homines sapientes* and as *homines fabri*. They are naturally capable of

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26 Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art"; Martin Heidegger, 1975, op. cit., p. 74.

27 Ibid.

28 Martin Heidegger, "The Thinker as a Poet (Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens)"; *ibid.*, p. 4.

29 Heidegger presents the idea that: "Man is said to have language by nature", quoting Wilhelm von Humboldt's words. Martin Heidegger, "Language"; Martin Heidegger, 1975, op. cit., p. 189.

30 Plato, *Protagoras*, 321d.

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scaling the intellectual ascent and entering into the realm of invisible archetypes, and of descending to impart their knowledge of the divine to their fellow-men<sup>31</sup>, by constructing the icon of this reality which they viewed on high, to function as a ladder for the spectators of their work to ascend. Human λόγος (speech, discourse, language), the visible aspect of man's share in the divine all-naming Λόγος (Word), enables mortal man to live humanly, that is creatively. But it is from human λόγος (reason, mind, intellect) that man-made things emanate, made in the λόγος, in man's intellect, and fashioned by his bodily operation in material form wherein the λόγος, which communicates in the Λόγος,<sup>32</sup> ultimately resides. By virtue of this process, all man-made visible creations may be seen as 'ἔνλογα' in essence, and, as such, as true manifestations of the nature of humans for whom St. Athanasius says: "ζωοποιούμεθα ... λογωθείσης τῆς σαρκός"<sup>33</sup>.

The creative process, whereby man as a creator gains vision of reality and realises this vision in material terms, has two dimensions: a poetic and a tectonic one. Language itself hearkens human making, πόησις, and human orderly building, ἀρχιτεκτονική, back to their original conception. The meaning of architecture, the activity which allows men to dwell humanly, by either house-building or poetising, and the formal principle that finds expression in its products, as well as the kinship between architecture and poetry may be revealed along the path indicated by language. The relations between language and poetry, and between language and architecture, can provide the basis for an exploration of the interaction between building and poetising. Poetry is the process whereby names return to their essential λόγοι in the poet, and these are, subsequently, externalised by the poet in mortal motions, and contained within the audible veil of the poem. The λέγειν of the poet brings forth the Λόγος and lets it lie before us. The Greek verb λέγω means to say, utter and to speak<sup>34</sup>. It is used to express any communication by word of mouth: to call, declare, speak of, et cetera. It also means to wish to say or to mean (frequently in Plato), nominate, et

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31 The law of the Platonic city requires them to do so. See: Plato, *Republic*, VII, 519c-520c.

32 "This then is how the material thing becomes beautiful - by communicating in the thought (Reason, Logos) that flows from the Divine." Plotinus, *The Enneads*, I, 6, 2.

33 (we acquire life ... when the flesh has become logified). Athanasius Alexandrinus, *orationes tres adversus Arianos*, 3.33; J. P. Migne (ed.), op. cit., 26.396A. Quoted in: G. W. H. Lampe (ed.), op. cit., p. 811. Heidegger discusses the formula: "*anthrōpos = zōion logon echon*: man, the animal equipped with reason", in: Martin Heidegger, 1959, 1987, op. cit., pp. 175ff.

34 Never in Homer, first in Hesiod, *Theogony*, and frequently from Herodotus and the Tragic writers downwards, but rarely in Plato and the Orators. Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, op. cit., p. 1034.

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cetera. Further, it means to choose, gather, collect, and to pick up or pick out.<sup>35</sup> The verb λέγω, in its first meaning, means to put, store, bring to bed, lay, lull to sleep. It contains the root λεχ-, like the nouns λέκτρον (bed) and λέχος (bed, marriage, storage, bird's nest) and the verbs λέχομαι and λοχεύω.<sup>36</sup> Λοχεύω means to bring forth, bear, give birth; λόχευμα is that which is born; λοχεία is the child-birth; λεχώ the woman who has just given birth. Correlated verbs can also be found in Latin, Germanic, Baltic, Gothic and Hittite. The early meanings of λέγω provide useful information about the function of language and, particularly, about the language of poetry. The poet, in possession of the natural expressive faculty of the φωνή, λοχεύει the λόγος and so brings it to world in his λέγειν, while the latter secures that the Λόγος lies before us in unconcealment.

The Greek word for poetry, *ποίησις* (*poiēsis*), means the *ἐνέργεια* (*energeia*), the action and the outcome of *ποιεῖν* (*poiein*), the making, the production, the creation. The noun *ποίησις* means, also, the composition of verses, the *ποιητική* (*ars poetica*), poetry or poesy. It signifies the act of the poet, in the narrow sense, and of the human being, in general, that acts by making, by producing *ἔργον* (*ergon*). *Ποίησις*, in this respect, remains man's everyday activity and mode of expression, in accordance with his real nature. The Greek verb *ποιέω* (inf. *ποιεῖν*) is used in two general senses: to make and to do.<sup>37</sup> It is used in the sense of making, first of something material, as manufactures, works of art, et cetera, and in Homer frequently in the sense of building. Further, *ποιέω* means to create, construct, bring into existence, effect, procure; to shape, beget, and to conceive (a child), grow, raise. In the passive voice, it means to become. In Homer, the verb *ποιέω* means also to represent in poetry, describe in verse. It also means to put, invent, and, in later Greek, to perform the rites of sacrifice. It is also used simply for λέγειν. *Ποιητής* is the maker, the inventor, the workman and, since Hesiod and Pindar, the composer of poems or music, the poet. *Ποιητικά ἐπιστήμαι* are the arts, more precisely, the Productive Arts. *Ποίημα* (*poiēma*) is the end result of the poet's art, the outcome of *ποιεῖν*, anything made or done; a piece of art. It is also any poetical, especially metrical, form, the literary piece in verses as opposed to the prosaic, and, in a

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35 The lexica consulted for this investigation are the ones referred to in Chapter One, 2.

36 Related words may be found in old ecclesiastical Slavonic (*lože*, bed, river bed) and Bulgarian (*lǒže*, uterus).

37 Cf.: "Everywhere, doing and making will be found to be either an attenuation of vision or a complement of vision". Plotinus, *The Enneads*, III, 8, 4.



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metaphorical sense, it is a piece of paramount beauty. *Ποιητικὰ ὄργανα* are the instruments of making, defined by Aristotle as the ones which produce, the tools and the artisans.<sup>38</sup> *Πολίησις* describes the poet's making, the making as a skilled production, as an activity based on knowledge. The double meaning of the word *πολίησις*

*makes a semantic connection between a specific kind of making and producing and other forms of the same activity. From the social point of view, on the other hand, this corresponds to the fact that the poet occupied a position alongside the king and the orator, and was the only artist who was not considered a mere artisan. This understanding shared by both forms of techne, the manual and the poetic, is clearly determined by the kind of knowledge involved. For knowledge and facility direct the productive activity of both the craftsman and the poet.*<sup>39</sup>

The poet's vocation and activity are thus clearly distinguished from these of the mere artisan who operates with his hands alone.<sup>40</sup> For *τέχνη* (*technē*) Plato states that it is the activity of craftsmen who do not proceed at random, but each "chooses and employs means and materials ... in order that what he is fashioning may have a definite form."<sup>41</sup> Art which is not mere 'flattery' "aiming at what is pleasant ignoring the good"<sup>42</sup> produces, according to Plato, something which is "ordered and regulated" and brings "order and regularity" to the soul of the citizens<sup>43</sup>. Art as a whole belongs to the realm of knowledge and "Each separate art has had assigned to it by the deity the power of knowing a particular occupation"<sup>44</sup>. But poetry in particular is "not an art; it is a power divine"<sup>45</sup>. The type of inspiration connected with poetry is conceived by Plato as "divine madness"; when the poets become inspired, they are "possessed",

*the deity has bereft them of their senses, and uses them as ministers, along with soothsayers and godly seers; it is in order that we listeners may know that it is not they who utter these*

38 See: Jean-Pierre Vernant, 1965, 1990, op. cit., pp. 299ff. At the etymological origins of the verb *ποιέω* are found the Sanskrit words *cinóti* and *cáyati*, which mean to arrange in order or in line, to construct, and to build, and the Slavonic *činiŭ*, meaning to put in order, in a series.

39 Hans Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and other Essays*, Cambridge, 1986, p. 118.

40 Coomaraswamy notes that the Sanskrit "*Kāvya*, specifically poetry (prose or verse), also embraces the general idea of 'art'; essential meanings present in the root *kū* include 'wisdom' and 'skill.' "Ananda Coomaraswamy, "The Theory of Art in Asia"; Ananda Coomaraswamy, 1934, 1956, op. cit., p. 195, n. 34 (p. 46).

41 Plato, *Gorgias*, 503e. Discussed in: Paul Oskar Kristeller, "The Modern System of the Arts: A Study in the History of Aesthetics", I; *Journal of the History of Ideas*, A Quarterly Devoted to Intellectual History, Vol. XII, 4, Lancaster, Pa., and New York, October 1951, pp. 496-7.

42 Plato, *Gorgias*, 465a.

43 Ibid., 504a-d.

44 Plato, *Ion*, 537c.

45 Ibid., 533d.

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*precious revelations while their mind is not within them, but it is the god himself who speaks, and through them becomes articulate to us. ... poets are nothing but interpreters of the gods, each one possessed by the divinity to whom he is in bondage.*<sup>46</sup>

The poet's *ποεῖν* consists of this activity through which he gives away what he has known, what has been revealed to him. The poet then works under the direction of Love, the Platonic divine poet that "can kindle in the souls of others the poetic fire"<sup>47</sup>. However, it is not only the poet in the narrow sense that has this god as his teacher, that is 'in love', but the creative maker of anything. This creator then "achieves the brightest of fame, whereas the man who is untouched by Love remains obscure."<sup>48</sup> For the ancient Greeks, it is not the individual artist who creates the work of art. It is the divinity that in-spires the artisan. The source of the work which the artist creates is the wisdom of god, not of the artist.<sup>49</sup> This conception of art applies not only to the art of ancient Greece but to all traditional art.<sup>50</sup> But the human artist is, first of all, a human being, and it is by virtue of his human nature that everything he makes is a work of both his intellect and his particular skill; both the kind of noble knowledge which is appropriate for every man to seek and the technical knowledge which is peculiar to each artisan are involved in the production of the *truly* and *well* made works of the craftsmen. For men, as Plato affirms, have two fountains of wisdom at their disposal, and good results are the results of a good mixture.<sup>51</sup>

*But if any man come to the gates of poetry without the madness of the Muses, persuaded that skill alone will make him a good poet, then shall he and his works of sanity with him be brought to nought by the poetry of madness, and behold, their place is nowhere to be found.*<sup>52</sup>

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- 46 Ibid., 534c-e. Cf.: "the greatest blessings come by way of madness ... madness comes from God whereas sober sense is merely human." Plato, *Phaedrus*, 244a-d. Cf. also: "For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." Matthew, 10:20.
- 47 Plato, *Symposium*, 196e.
- 48 Ibid., 197a. Cf. Plato, *Timaeus*, 71dff. Inspiration is discussed in: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "A Figure of Speech or a Figure of Thought?"; Roger Lipsey (ed.), op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 31-4.
- 49 Plutarch, in his *Life of Pericles*, attests that "No gifted young man upon seeing the Zeus of Pheidias at Olympia ever wanted to be Pheidias nor, upon seeing the Hera at Argos, ever wanted to be Polykleitos. ... For it does not necessarily follow that, if a work is delightful because of its gracefulness, the man who made it is worthy of our serious regard." Cited in: Colin Renfrew, *The Cycladic Spirit: Masterpieces from the Nicholas P. Goulandris Collection*, New York, 1991, p. 175; referred to the quotation in: J. J. Pollitt, *The Art of Greece 1400-31: Sources and Documents*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1965, pp. 226-7.
- 50 Cf.: "The art alone belongs to the painter; the ordering and the composition belong to the Fathers" (Second Council of Nicaea). Cited in: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "The Symbolism of the Dome", (Part I); Roger Lipsey (ed.), op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 427.
- 51 See: Plato, *Philebus*, 55df, 61b-d.
- 52 Plato, *Phaedrus*, 245a. Cf. Hesiod, *Theogony*, 31.



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The Greek word τέχνη means art<sup>53</sup>, skill, cunning of hand, an art or craft, i.e., a set of rules, system or method of making or doing, whether of the useful arts or of the fine arts. It also means way, manner, or means whereby a thing is gained, without any definite sense of art or craft. Τέχνη denotes the knowledge of making of the δημιουργοί (*dēmiourgoi*), the artisans.<sup>54</sup> The word τέχνη derives from the verb τεύχω which means to fabricate, make, prepare, build, construct, create, or to produce by work of art. Τεῦχος is the tool, the implement and the arm, and it is cognate with the Irish *duan*, which means poem. The verb τεχνάζω means to employ art, contrive cunningly, deal subtly, devise, make by art, execute skilfully. Τέχνης is the craftsman, as opposed to the farmer, and one who does or handles a thing by the rules of art, a skilled workman as opposed to the ἄτεχνης. Τεχνάρχης is the master of a craft. Τέχνη is related to ἀρχιτεκτονική (*architektonikē*, architecture). Architect: ἀρχιτέκτων, τεκτονουργός, or τεκτόναρχος, is the chief of the builders, the τέκτονες, the master-builder, the director of works, the architect, the engineer, and generally an author and a contriver. Ἀρχιτεκτονική or ἀρχιτεκτοσύνη is the art or skill of the architect. In Plato and Aristotle, the term ἀρχιτέκτων is used to denote the man who works intellectually, and to distinguish him from the labourer and the ordinary artisan, the χειροτέχνης, who works manually; the architect's activity is of an essentially mathematical order.<sup>55</sup> Τέκτων (*tektōn*) is the maker<sup>56</sup>, originally the worker in wood - a "slave of Athene"<sup>57</sup>, the carpenter, the joiner, and generally any craftsman, artificer, or workman who is taught and protected by Athene.<sup>58</sup> Τέκτων is also the planner, the contriver, the plotter, generally an author, and a master of any art. The Greek words τέχνη and τέκτων (*tektōn*) both stem from the same root τεκ-, like the verb τίκτω (*tiktō*), and they are related to the latter. Τίκτω means to give birth, to bring into the world, beget, bring forth, and to bear, used for the mother and father as well as for the animals and the earth. Metaphorically, it means to engender, to generate

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53 On the history of the word 'art' see: R. G. Collingwood, 1938, 1958, op. cit., pp. 5-7.

54 See: Jean-Pierre Vernant, 1965, 1990, op. cit., pp. 302ff.

55 See: *ibid.*, pp. 306f, 320-1. A Muse is called τεκτόναρχος because she is the chief of the builders of verse.

56 Pausanias refers to a sculptor called Τεκταῖος in: Pausanias, *Periegeta*. Reference in: Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, op. cit., p. 1769.

57 Hesiod, *Works*, 430.

58 See: J.-P. Vernant and M. Detienne, *Μήτις, Ἡ Πολύτροπη Νόηση στήν Ἀρχαία Ἑλλάδα*, Athens, 1993 (Paris, 1974, in French), pp. 274ff. Cf. Mircea Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas*; Volume 1: *From the Stone Age to the Eleusinian Mysteries*, (Paris, 1976, in French), Chicago and London, 1978, pp. 281-2. The correlated Sanskrit *táksan* denotes the builder, or joiner and carpenter, as opposed to smith; *táksati, tāsti* means to engender, create, et cetera.

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and to produce a thing, a word, an expression, a saying, tale or song. The etymological origin of the words τέχνη and ἀρχιτεκτονική has been pointed out by Heidegger who claims that

*To the Greeks techne means neither art nor handicraft but rather: to make something appear, within what is present, as this or that, in this or that way. The Greeks conceive of techne, producing, in terms of letting appear. Techne thus conceived has been concealed in the tectonics of architecture since ancient times.<sup>59</sup>*

He hastened to emphasise, however, that

*The erecting of buildings would not be suitably defined even if we were to think of it in the sense of the original Greek techne as solely a letting-appear ... The nature of building is a letting dwell. ... Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build.<sup>60</sup>*

Dwelling in human manner occurs when the operation of the τέκτων's limbs is subdued to the moulding of the form of his terrestrial house upon no model among things of sense; when the shape of his edifice corresponds to the fruit of his capacity to reach the source of knowledge and the source of all beautiful and good Forms, and to be in-spired by the divine, the cosmic Love; to become a ποιητής and to let the Λόγος and measure of everything created, honour the πόλημα of his hands by making it its dwelling place, a fountain of goodness and beauty for mortal dwellers.

### 2. 4. Man's Ποιήματα : The Manifestations of the Human Poetic Capacity

Bestowed with φωνή, man is capable of voicing and manifesting to hearing the knowledge descended upon him, of revealing the truth through word and language and letting it dwell in the poem which he builds orderly, according to the rules of his τέχνη and with this purpose in view. The poet acts as a τέκτων in his making, in his pursuit of the final product of his twofold activity, seeking to satisfy the rules of art and to preserve the truth creatively. Heidegger maintains that "Art is the setting-into-work of truth. ... Art lets truth originate"<sup>61</sup> and since "Art is historical ... it is the

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59 Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking"; Martin Heidegger, 1975, op. cit., p. 159.

60 Ibid., pp. 159-60.

61 Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art"; in: ibid., p. 77. Heidegger explains that the truth of which he speaks "does not coincide with that which is generally recognized under the name and assigned to cognition and science as a quality in order to distinguish from it the beautiful and the good". In: ibid., p. 81.

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creative presenting of truth in the work."<sup>62</sup> When a work of art commensurate with human nature is created, it is the intellectually apprehended truth that is brought to birth in the world of becoming, concealed in the tectonics of the man-built work. The work itself, the *ποίημα*, is at once the incarnation of truth and a source of the truth, its origin, in which it participates. It is in this sense that a *well* and *truly* made work establishes a link between man, the creator and the listener, and his origin; it becomes the point of contact with the *Λόγος*. Through art, history and a people's historical existence acquire a meaning and cease to be a burden or riddle. History becomes penetrable and man's *ποιήματα* function as thresholds, manifesting the possibility of, and assisting, his overcoming of history and his tending upwards towards his end.

In Heidegger's words, "The history of the nature of Western art corresponds to the change of the nature of truth."<sup>63</sup> Keeping in mind the primary notions of poetry and Heidegger's advice: "we must leave it open whether art in all its modes from architecture to poesy, exhausts the nature of poetry"<sup>64</sup>, the paraphrase may be ventured: poetry lets truth originate and the history of the nature of Western poetry corresponds to the change of the nature of truth. The change of the perception of the nature of truth, which fathered the modern Western aesthetic theory of art, corresponds to the change of the meaning of the word 'art', and of the word 'truth' as *ἀ-λήθεια* (*a-lētheia*). Art has ceased to be an occasion for recollection, for the overcoming of forgetfulness or *λήθη* (*lēthē*), and, by consequence, its products, in most cases, stem from human forgetfulness, and sink into oblivion, unable to manifest and to stimulate man's poetic capacity which is, primarily, a capacity for recollection. But poetic creation, which lets man dwell as *ἄνθρωπος*, is a kind of building.

*Thus we confront a double demand: for one thing, we are to think of what is called man's existence by way of the nature of dwelling: for another, we are to think of the nature of poetry as a letting-dwell, as a - perhaps even the - distinctive kind of building. If we search out the nature of poetry according to this viewpoint, then we arrive at the nature of dwelling.*<sup>65</sup>

The poet builds acting as a *τέκτων*, while the *τέκτων ποιεῖ* like the poet, both creating *ποιήματα*: the dwellings proper to man. The reciprocal relation between the *ποιητής* and the *τέκτων* is based on the common ground of their activities. Searching

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62 Ibid., p. 77.

63 Ibid., p. 81.

64 Ibid., p. 74.

65 Martin Heidegger, "... Poetically Man Dwells ..."; *ibid.*, p. 215.

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out the nature of poetry we arrive at the nature of dwelling; but is not the nature of dwelling our destination as well when searching out the nature of building? Poetic creation which lets man dwell as *ἄνθρωπος* is the kind of building which stems from memory and activates the memory of the receiver. But the kind of building which emanates from *λήθη λανθάνει* (*lanthanei*); it lets truth remain hidden in obscurity and keeps the receiver in a state of forgetfulness and embroilment. The compatibility of building and poetising, lies in the essentially poetic nature of both and the identity of their ends, which they both pursue with 'technical' means. If the poet or the architect intends his work to be truly effective, to support human dwelling, he must first learn to dwell, he must pursue the kind of knowledge which embraces both gnosis and technical mastery. The spectator or the user of the artefact is in need of a similar kind of training, in order that he may dwell poetically and not be merely sheltered.

Man's dwelling is his primary and fundamental existential concern. Man dwells and, in distinction to the animals, he possesses thought; this is what makes man's dwelling conscious. Conscious dwelling is poetic dwelling. "Poetry is what first brings man onto the earth, making him belong to it, and thus brings him into dwelling."<sup>66</sup> His dwelling springs from his ability for a distinctive *ποιεῖν*. Architecture stands for human building. Dwelling in the sense of occupying a lodging is a physical necessity. But human dwelling is conscious and active. "Man ... finds himself when he *settles*, and his being-in-the-world is thereby determined."<sup>67</sup> When man settles, and, at this stage, *natural dwelling* - in Norberg Schulz's terms - takes place, he immediately proceeds to *conscious dwelling* and puts himself to work, namely to building; he becomes productive. At the first stage, it is man's physical or corporeal aspects which find refuge, and this 'physical' dwelling is rather passive and instinctive. At the second stage, man is energetic, his thinking is activated and he sets into *πόλεις*; man's conscious action produces his *ἔργον*, his *πόλημα*, to dwell within. Once man's inward-bent faculty has been activated, man forms his *ἔργον* in the image of the object of his intellectual seeing. He thus acts as a *τέκτων σοφός* (*tektōn sophos*), a poet that "can kindle in the souls of others the poetic fire"<sup>68</sup>.

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66 Martin Heidegger, "... Poetically Man Dwells ..."; Martin Heidegger, 1975, op. cit., p. 218. Here Heidegger draws a distinction between poetry understood as belonging to the realm of fantasy and poetry as denoting poetic dwelling.

67 Christian Norberg-Schulz, *The Concept of Dwelling: On the Way to Figurative Architecture*, New York, 1985, p. 13.

68 Plato, *Symposium*, 196e.

## 2. 5. On Poetic Building

At the stage when *conscious dwelling* takes place, man's *πόλις* is externalised and man's making in all its modes, his *πόλις*, brings his dwelling nature into image.

This column has a hole:  
can you see  
Persephone?<sup>69</sup>

asks the poet. For Seferis, the column, the architectural element, represents man's concrete creation wherein he dwells. The column 'cultivated' by man grows out of the earth and rises towards the sky, evoking the world axis which interconnects the chthonic, the terrestrial and the celestial realm, and allows the perpetual passage from one state of being to the other, annulling the unbridgeable distance between Hades and Olympus,<sup>70</sup> and making possible a rupture of levels. The hole underlines its penetrability and its rooting into the earth, providing a view to the nether world, the kingdom of the dead, and strengthening the bond between the different levels of existence. The pure and clear geometry of the symmetric architectural element makes it appear as a shell to be inhabited. Seferis' architectural element creates an enclosure for humans to live as *ἄνθρωποι*; it realises in material poetical terms the umbilical cord that keeps man connected to the earth he inhabits and to the sun which fertilises the earth. It is an image of the cosmic house of man, that grows out of the earth-mother, with its nether pole firmly grounded in it; that creates and preserves the bridge for man to reach the sky; and that constitutes the thread which keeps man held from beyond the sky whereto the column's unseen apex extends. It is the petrification of the universal axis, situated at the centre of the earth rising as far as the infinite, uniting the earthly and the heavenly, the human and the divine, designating and illustrating the dwelling place of man, contemplated, imaged and constructed architecturally - intellectually, imaginatively and manually. The man-made pillar-house stands in the world where man lives in every sense of life, horizontally and vertically, and unites the different dimensions of its reality. Through its central hole or hearth, the lower abode of Persephone - the woman who reconciles the upper with the lower world - may be

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69 From: George Seferis, Book III, 1.10 of his *Meditations*, Athens, 1965. In English in: Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (trs., eds.), *George Seferis: Collected Poems*, Princeton, London, 1982 (expanded edition), p. 95. (Nr. 14, from "Sixteen Haiku, Τοῦτο τὸ ἀκαριαῖον ... Marcus Aurelius").

70 "according to the tradition ... She [Persephone] had annulled the unbridgeable distance between Hades and Olympus." Mircea Eliade, 1976, 1978, op. cit., Vol. 1, op. cit., pp. 292-3.

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seen, and she can travel perpetually from one world to the other; the poet materialises the communication channel and the possibility for reconciliation. In Seferis' imagination this single column is a whole house, growing vertically, with deep roots, penetrable, made of stone and vapour, a shell, a ladder and a gate. By means of his poetising it has been expressed and communicated in a whole intelligible haiku, composed architecturally, that is, consciously and knowingly *well* and *truly* made.

### 2. 6. On Poetic Dwelling

*We must say really excellent things, because little boys  
are taught by schoolmasters, but adolescents listen to the poets.*

Aristophanes<sup>71</sup>

"Poetry is the mother tongue of the human race"<sup>72</sup> and, in Freud's words, "Poets ... drink at sources not yet made accessible to science."<sup>73</sup> Freud refers to science in the most narrow sense. But poets, in so far as they poetise in response to the speaking of language, drink at a source of knowledge that is accessible to everyone.

Full of merit, yet poetically, man  
Dwells on this earth.<sup>74</sup>

In the verses preceding the above affirmation, Hölderlin sheds light on the path which men follow in the process of dwelling as humans:

May if life is sheer toil, a man  
Lift his eyes and say: so  
I too wish to be? Yes.

Man, the only upright standing and upward looking animal, is capable of looking towards the divine realm above the earthly one. "The upward glance", Heidegger explains, "spans the between of sky and earth. This between is measured out for the dwelling of man."<sup>75</sup> The culmination of this intellectual spanning activates man's image-making faculty and he receives the measure for his dwelling. When man dwells commensurately with his human nature, his dwelling manifests and preserves this

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71 Quoted in: Peter Levi, *The Noise Made by Poems*, London, 1977, p. 66.

72 Benedetto Croce, op. cit., p. 26.

73 Cited in: A. Breton, *Les Vases Communicants*, p. 160. Quoted in: Anna Balakian, *Surrealism: The road to the absolute*, Chicago, 1959, 1970, 1986, p. 132.

74 Ibid., p. 218 and passim. These and the verses which follow are taken from a late poem by Hölderlin, referred to: Stuttgart edition 2, 1, pp. 372 ff.; Hellingrath VI, pp. 24ff (ibid. p. 213).

75 Ibid., p. 220.



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measure-taking, the bridge between earth and heaven. The measure<sup>76</sup> is not to be thought of in quantitative terms; it is the fruit of man's seeking and knowing, applied by man in his architectural dwelling. And it is the taking of measure that is the poetic element in dwelling.<sup>77</sup> Man successfully takes the measure for poetic dwelling,

As long as Kindness,  
The Pure, still stays with his heart, man  
Not unhappily measures himself  
Against the godhead.

The godhead, the unmeasured, the One who does not dwell within bounds, is the measure of man's Being. But the unmeasured remains unmanifested; what is manifested to man is the *Λόγος*, Plotinus' "verbal formula - the revealer, the bridge between the concept and the image-taking faculty"<sup>78</sup>.

Is God unknown?  
Is he manifested like the sky/ I'd sooner  
Believe the latter. It's the measure of man.

And elsewhere<sup>79</sup>:

What is God? Unknown, yet  
Full of his qualities is the  
Face of the sky.

Man takes the measure to dwell, and he makes his dwelling on earth only when he takes the measure in his skyward flight. Building in human fashion requires, and is conditioned upon, this poetic measure-taking. As Heidegger asserts, "Authentic building occurs so far as there are poets, such poets as take the measure for architecture, the structure of dwelling."<sup>80</sup> When the measuring becomes manifest to sight and hearing through man's *ποιήματα*, spoken and gathered into earthly humanly built images, man dwells poetically on this earth, that is, he lives as *ἄνθρωπος*, inclining upwards.

Full of merit, yet poetically, man  
Dwells on this earth. But no purer  
Is the shade of the starry night,  
If I might put it so, than  
Man, who's called an image of the godhead.

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76 Cf.: " 'measure' and etymologically 'matter,' that which is known in terms of 'form and phenomenon' "; Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "Some Pāli Words"; Roger Lipsey (ed.), op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 322. See: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "Measures of Fire"; *ibid.*, pp. 162-4.

77 Martin Heidegger, "... Poetically Man Dwells ..."; Martin Heidegger, 1975, op. cit., p. 221.

78 Plotinus, *The Enneads*, IV. 3, 30.

79 Hölderlin's verses referred to: Stuttgart edition, 2, 1, p. 210. Martin Heidegger, "... Poetically Man Dwells ..."; Martin Heidegger, 1975, op. cit., p. 225.

80 *Ibid.*, p. 227.

## *Chapter Three*

### **Architecture under the Curse of Babel**

*With what stones, what blood, and what iron,  
With what fire are we made  
Though we seem pure mist  
And they stone us and say  
That we walk with our heads in the clouds  
How we pass our days and nights  
God only knows.*

*My friend, when night wakens your electric grief  
I see the tree of the heart spreading  
Your arms open beneath a pure Idea  
To which you call  
But which will not descend  
For years and years:  
It up there, and you down here.*

*And yet longing's vision awakens flesh one day  
And there where only bare solitude once shone  
A city now laughs lovely as you would have it  
You almost see it, it is waiting for you  
Give me your hand so that we may go there before the Dawn  
Floods it with cries of triumph.*

*Give me your hand - before birds gather  
On the shoulders of men to announce in song  
That Verginal Hope is seen coming at last  
Out of the distant sea.*

*We will go together, and let them stone us  
And let them say we walk with our heads in the clouds -  
Those who have never felt, my friend,  
With what iron, what stones, what blood, what fire,  
We build, dream, and sing.*

Odysseus Elytis

### 3. 1. The Architectures of Verbally Divided Men

"And Adam gave names", and, still in Biblical terms, men who first were one people with one language were scattered all over the face of the earth when God had confused their tongue<sup>1</sup>. As described in the *Genesis*, when men possessed one language they set on building themselves a city which they abandoned once they were not all housed in a common language. The biblical passage clearly relates one of the basic human requirements, the need to dwell - in the broad and the narrow sense of the word - with the human capability of speech, and the existence of different tongues among men with the inhabitation of different places on the planet. Did the confusion of men's language lead to a confusion of their cities, of their way of inhabiting the earth, of their building? It is said that after God's intervention they left off building their city, which was called Babel because there God confounded the language of all the earth, and which was originally intended to be the city of the one people. If one now looks at architecture across the earth, one can observe that what men built ever since they were scattered by God varies as much as human speech varied henceforth. The prodigality of human tongues is concordant with the prodigality of architectural languages.

This last observation, however, is far less true if one looks at modern cities all over the earth. They tend to become universal places - or no-places, pretending to be the cities of one people having inherited one language. The battle for an international, inter-human architecture took shape in our century, but had been pre-conditioned and given impetus much earlier. Is such a battle not determined to be lost just like a battle for a universal tongue would be? Can one ever attempt to verify the hypothesis of the possibility of inventing an architectural *interlingua*, if one is wise enough to see the failure of all pursuits of a *lingua universalis*,<sup>2</sup> all attempts for constitution of an idiom - verbal or other - in which the individual and communal life of all men all over the world could find adequate expression?

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Elytis' poem on the previous page is from his collection *Sun the First*, (XVI), (1943), translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard; in: Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (eds.), *Odysseus Elytis: Selected Poems*, London, 1981, 1991, p. 31.

1 *Genesis* 2:20, 11:1-9. All Biblical citations in English hereafter are from the King James Version of The Holy Bible.

2 See: L. Couturat and L. Leau, *Histoire de la Langue Universelle*, Paris, 1903, 1907. See also: George Steiner, *After Babel; Aspects of Language and Translation*, Oxford, New York, 1975, 1992, pp. 207ff.

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Such an undertaking - though it may proceed with forcefulness, scholarship and labour - seems condemned to viewing architecture as a transient phenomenon, an accident of the human nature. It has to assume that architectural elements and the way these are composed are independent of the place where they originated; that they bear no relation whatsoever with the creative thinking and making of their producers, and the purpose they were intended to serve. Hence, architectural products will have to be assumed to be self-contained works, rising from the earth without any roots in it. The task will demand to deal with them as objects for analysis and dissection, ignoring the cause and the end of the work of their creators, avoiding even consideration of the fact that they are *made*, and that they are significant of something that can be apprehended by those for whom they are made. Architecture could be then seen as an *art-détaché*, and its products as light enough to be transferred with the force of the wind across the earth, able to wander the earth and to migrate from one place to another and from one historical period to another, mere fancy shapes without any meaning, aspiring to no communicative effects. Man, the receiver of these products, will have to be seen as able to inhabit one or the other architectural environment indifferently, for this is viewed as confined within a scientific object-sphere. Architectural emigration will cause man no feeling of displacement or alienation; built products, having been divorced of their inherent meaning and significance and retrenched to their rudimentary utilitarian functions, will provide shelter and comfort to native and foreigner in all four corners of the earth, with few alterations which contemporary technological progress makes possible and the intercontinental trade of our time facilitates. The question is whether it is not, perhaps, this technological progress that is to be made answerable for the mist that has obscured some aspects of architectural creation. Its immense power, grown out of proportion to human nature, has inflated the material world with an ever increasing supply of objects that are even more marketable when they apply to a wider range of consumers. Through excessive investment in the 'marketable aspects' of architecture, our technologically inventive civilisation enables the members of a materialistic mass-consumer society to choose the architectural wrapping which suits best their ephemeral needs and keeps them on the track of fashion, but has, sadly, caused an atrophy to the bones, endangering the very blood, of architecture, what intimately connects it to life.<sup>3</sup> What follows does not intend to diminish the importance of the material external aspects of architecture, and of concern in them, but to argue

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3 Cf.: "it might be that our unpoetic dwelling, its incapacity to take the measure, derives from a

that these are only part of the whole: the manner in which architecture appears, in which it is being materialised, and according to which it can be classified into conventional styles, and ought not to be considered as 'essential'. It attempts to demonstrate that exclusive concern with the purely material level of architecture is unable to generate the kind of architecture that can serve man at any other level of his nature, but can only produce a type of architecture that cannot function except on purely utilitarian grounds, and may, finally, disable man from activating any other but the purely sensual organs of perception.

In order to understand the role and function of language in architecture, to know of its instrumentality in the act of voicing and giving image to the maker's vision, it is necessary to understand the architecture of language, to know of the capacity of language to carry into itself the sum of human experience and life, to articulate and order the world and man's experience of it, to house man and the world he dwells within poetically.

### 3. 2. The Topographic and Typological Character of Language

In the passage from the *Genesis*, a close relationship is drawn between place and natural tongue. It is possible to observe how notably a language changes and splits into dialects when it is being used by men in another place on the planet. It adopts, to variable degrees, elements of the local pre-existing linguistic landscape, borrows from neighbouring languages and, often, develops into separate tongues, the similarities of which with the *Ur-Sprache* are often difficult to discern. Language is yoked to the place where it grows and develops in an organic relationship with it. (Scholars have observed constant change in the language of nomads). At the same time, it remains essentially the same in the way it describes the world, as viewed from the particular point on earth where it lives. By adapting itself to time language conquers time. It is parallel to history, creative of history,<sup>4</sup> older than history and contemporary with every event for the recounting of which it is used; it even aspires to be synchronic with future events.

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curious excess of frantic measuring and calculating." Martin Heidegger, "... Poetically Man Dwells ..."; Martin Heidegger, 1975, op. cit., p. 228.

4 Cf. George Steiner, 1967, 1985, op. cit., p. 12.

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Language is inherited; it is a given thing. But it is not at all a 'thing'; it is a living organism, its energies cannot be dissected. It can only be effective within the community that uses it, understands it and shapes it with mastery, or changes it by force of imaginative need, in this place on earth which the particular language describes and makes intelligible. Language speaks about, and of, the world. It is through his mother tongue that every human being grasps his own existence and the existence of all things. Words name and, at the same time, explain the physical phenomena, being extremely sensitive to those of the place where the particular language lives and from which it draws nourishment. Languages map the phenomenal world and man's life in it in radically diverse ways; they refer to pictures of the world viewed from an angle peculiar to this place, something that can be the cause of resulting contradictions and nonsense when a language migrates to a place where things can only be viewed from a different perspective.<sup>5</sup> Natural languages have, it may be said, a topographic character that grants them the power to speak in the terms which the physical world - including man's physical existence - is moulded, and so to reveal the inner essence of physical entities in a way that conforms to their outward appearance, to speak of the internal and bring it into perfect alignment with the external. Words and sentences do not define the things of the world in the sense of confining them within limits; they rather point to what is undefinable and cast light on the unspeakable essence of the world. In "Sir Thomas Browne's magnificent phrase, the speech of a community is for its members 'a hieroglyphical and shadowed lesson of the whole world'."<sup>6</sup> It is this organic relationship between words and the natural world that allows language to become a source of knowledge about, and of, the world and its life-giving source.

Language assumes forms which do not define life partially. They are terms of reference to the whole of human life, viewed as such, lived humanly - not merely empirically experienced. Natural language is modelled on life and, since it is the primary means for communication between human beings, it expresses the life that is common to all those who share a common language. It is a part of its/their landscape, it serves every aspect of life equally and every individual that is born into it; for it is more than individual, in the possession of the whole of the community that uses it. Yet

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5 Consider terms such as 'Oriental' or 'Far East' in American or Australian English.

6 Quoted in: George Steiner, 1975, 1992, *op. cit.*, p. 489.

language remains alive and acts as a living force only as long as individuals speak, activate part of their given tongue, in order to shed permanence to their own personal and temporary experience, in order to mould their thinking, to identify their actions, and to make them conform to those types of activity which their community unanimously accepts and their language names. Human activities respond to the call of language; they take place in a particular time, while words describe the type of activity in all times. Language has a typological character; it is a diachronic living body that functions within time by registering the everyday individual experience and referring it to one or the other type; it functions by aiding man to perceive the non-physical cause of natural effects, to view the phenomena in an absolute perspective, to visualise them in their continuous condition.

### 3. 3. The Use of Language for Making

*You say my poems are poetry?  
They are not.  
Yet if you understand they are not  
Then you see the poetry of them!*

Ryôkan<sup>7</sup>

Natural tongues are used not only for telling but primarily for making. Language is not merely an instrument of communication, but also one of creation. Yet, it is not the intention or the profession of the user that places it in one or the other category, but the user's conscious will to fulfil his role as a maker, a poet in the widest sense of the word. In this pre-eminent function of language, the identity of the user and the time in which he speaks is of little importance; what is mirrored in the poem is not the particular poet's idiosyncratic understanding or his personal likes, but that of a supra-individual truth and beauty, which he himself has experienced, entertained in his mind, and called forth into the poem which it illuminates. As Plato says, it is

*only when he discerns beauty itself through what makes it visible that a man will be quickened with the true, and not the seeming, virtue - for it is virtue's self that quickens him, not virtue's semblance. And when he has brought forth and reared this perfect virtue, he shall be called the friend of god, and if ever it is given to man to put on immortality, it shall be given to him.*<sup>8</sup>

7 Cited in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, "The Lost Center"; in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, *The Lost Center and Other Essays in Greek Poetry*, Princeton, New Jersey, 1980, p. 113.

8 Plato, *Symposium*, 212a. Cf. John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, New York, Ramsey, Toronto, 1982, p. 179. Referred to: St. Nonnus, bishop of Heliopolis.

### Chapter Three

Poetry is the process whereby man seeks this transformation with a view to immortality and conceals the perfect truth which has quickened him in his poem, with a view to quickening and transforming his audience by admitting it to the vision of truth. Poetry is not to be recognised in enchanting rhymes, but in the pursuit of truth encoded in words and rhymes, stone or pigment; in the hoarding of the memory and knowledge which words carry and bring forth in the poem. A reflection of this truth has to be sought in poetry, in the narrow sense of the word, because daily casual speech, in its focus on the utilitarian aspect of language, tends to move away from the words' inherent truth, using language almost exclusively for the purpose of communication in the limited sense. Poetry is this mechanism that endeavours to metamorphose human language, to elevate words from the level of current reality to the level of higher reality; to lead them away from quantitative, material values in order to recapture their analogies in the world of qualitative, spiritual values. In its invisible operation it transforms the words' references to temporary phenomena and transient events. Poetry lets sensible reality participate in its transcendent counterpart by redeeming language from everyday usage. It allows nouns and verbs to function in a way that things that cannot happen in everyday life happen in poetry. It is in the school of great poetry that one can acquire an understanding of language, of things named as they are out of their worn condition, and a vision of the path which he has to follow if he is to create something that stands in the world and becomes part of it; if he aspires to speak in the language of his own world and wants his work to be intelligible.

"True poetry ... is always a creation from within language" and "every language makes a poet express definite things."<sup>9</sup> When the poet - the creator or *δημιουργός* (*dēmiourgos*) - works creatively, he works (*ἐργάζεται*, *ergazetai*) for the community (*δῆμος*, *dēmos*) within which he lives, as the etymology of the word implies. The material which he uses to construct the end product of his work is the language he possesses as a member of the community. Thus, the maker's art-work or art-act<sup>10</sup>

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9 Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; ; from an interview with Ivar Ivask, in Athens, March 1975, translated from the French by Ivar and Astrid Ivask; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), *Odysseus Elytis: Analogies of Light*, Norman, Oklahoma, 1975, 1981, 1990, p. 8. Elytis does not speak about verbal language only; he says: "One could not imagine, for example, the cathedral of Chartres on Delos. There is always this analogy between nature and language in their eliciting definite forms." In: *ibid.*, p. 12. Cf. Odysseus Elytis, "Τὸ Χρονικὸ μιὰς Δεκαετίας"; in: Odysseus Elytis, *Ἀνοιχτὰ Χαρτιά*, Athens, 1974, 1982, 1987, p. 451.

10 George Steiner uses the term 'art-act' to denote "an artist's perception of an event or a scene". He borrows this term "from linguistic philosophy where 'speech-act' is current." George Steiner, *Real Presences*, London, 1989, 1991, p. 18.



arises out of his community which it addresses or serves and cannot be viewed as autonomous. The outcome of his poetic activity, his *δημιουργία*, is to be judged in terms of skill, knowledge of the material and the rules of his craft, and according to the extent to which he succeeds in subordinating perfection achieved in matter to the higher purpose of his art; to bring truth into being before a historical people. Each time a creator achieves the latter, truth becomes historical, and it is only due to this achievement of the artist that his historical existence acquires importance. It is for this reason that an artefact of great craftsmanship that conveys no meaning might be of great interest to the art historian but received with indifference by the community whose members it ought to address. Every creation that uses words as its material can only exist and function within a particular language; every poem participates in human life through its existence in the language of the people who speak it and understand it. And as long as men remain linguistically divided, every artificially created inter-human language is bound to remain out even of the dreams of its inventors.

### 3. 4. The pursuit of the *Ἔτυμον*

*Poetry proper is never merely a higher mode (melos) of everyday language. It is rather the reverse: everyday language is a forgotten and therefore used-up poem, from which there hardly resounds a call any longer.*

Martin Heidegger<sup>11</sup>

*Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ Λόγος.* In the beginning was one language and one truth of divine origin. The Word is reborn and formed and given in the speech of men; and it is in words that truth - the *ἔτυμον* (*etymon*) - dwells. In the confusion - the *babel* - of tongues, human speaking and human creating through language were scattered all over the earth. Human speaking and the profoundly creative speaking, namely poetry, aspires to get closer to the original speaking, the *Ur-Sprache* of men. Human speech appears to be in a fallen condition, in a continuous struggle for ascent towards the truth, the *ἔτυμον*; words are thirsting for the primordial unity, fusion with the eternal *Λόγος*. Man's natural impulse for creation, for the practice of art, is the means he possesses in order to regain contact with the *Λόγος*; to recover his lost memory. In this sense, man's creative activity is the realisation of the Platonic process of *ἀνάμνησις*; his way to realise the primordial realities in his distinct kind of poetry and

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11 Martin Heidegger, "Language"; in: Martin Heidegger, 1975, op. cit., p. 208.

to present them as living actualities to the community of which he is a member. A reading of the products of this kind of human creation which gives undue attention to the outward features of the creator's language is literalism. A reading that is proper to *well* and *truly* made artefacts is one which reaches out towards the inner form and resembles an 'etymological' analysis of the artefact. Such an analysis ought to lead to the same archetypal image of the truth, to the re-membering of the archetypal language of humankind which the poet sought to bring to his fellow-men. In his poetic endeavour, the *askesis* of his art, his journey towards the truth, man is aided by the language which he inherits. Human languages change in the course of time and they seem to change faster in less settled societies, where there is constant change in their living environment. When language is being used exclusively for the communication of transient phenomena, especially when these change rapidly, language changes and this change may cause the complete transformation of the content it elicits.<sup>12</sup>

### 3. 5. The *Ethos*<sup>13</sup> of Language

The existence of poets - in the narrow and the broad sense of the word - is a good sign in our *dürftiger* (destitute) time. Of course, the way the poets who poetise are recognised today has radically changed. In our days, it is easy to discern the identity of the poet from his personal way of writing, and he is highly acknowledged for his use of language which differs from that of his fellow countrymen and his predecessors. "Today we suppose that every poet ... has to have an individual style and tone and personality in verse. He is a poet when he can write as no one else can write. This is peculiar", says Peter Levi, "because in the past you were recognized as a poet only when you could write just the same as everyone else, with no lapses from the common standard"<sup>14</sup>; the language and form of the poem were pre-determined, it

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12 "Modern languages", Nasr observes, "have decayed in their symbolic and hierarchic aspects but ... nevertheless contain metaphysical possibilities". Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Scientia Sacra"; in: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 1981, op. cit., p. 133. See: *ibid.*, p. 155, n. 7 (p. 133).

13 Odysseus Elytis' term.

14 Peter Levi, "Anon."; in: Peter Levi, 1991, op. cit., p. 118. Cf.: "We dwell with satisfaction upon the poet's difference from his predecessors, especially his immediate predecessors' ... Whereas if we approach a poet without his [this?] prejudice we shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously." T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and Individual Talent"; in: T. S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood; Essays on Poetry and Criticism*, London, 1920, 1928, 1932, 1934, 1945, 1948, 1950, 1960, p. 48.

was a given thing. The freedom of the poet was understood in terms of content, not in terms of style. This observation applies to all art-makers. As Wilson says,

*In a traditional culture a new house will be like any other in its essentials and its general appearance. ... But in the post-traditional world, everything is designed almost from scratch. One house may look like another, or like no other. Either way its appearance has to be imposed by its builder or architect.*<sup>15</sup>

Yet, the poet cannot escape his tongue. And each language dictates a distinct kind of poetry; it carries the wisdom of the centuries and the weight of the tradition of which it is part. Its deeply idiomatic character is its distinct *ethos*; it is this *ethos*, an *ethos* analogous to that of the earthscape in which it lives, that makes poetry geographical and cultographical (perhaps ecographical?). It is this *ethos* that reflects a particular people's world-image, shapes poetry and is responsible for the untranslatability of the most profoundly particular elements of the poem.<sup>16</sup>

### 3. 6. Architecture under the Curse of Babel

It has been said that the curse of Babel falls heavier on poetry. But it does not fall only on poetry; there it is only more evident since the material which poetry uses is the natural language. At least, when one reads poetry translated into another language, he is fully aware of the fact that what he reads is not quite what the poet wrote, and of the fact that "all good poetry can only be approximated when it is transposed into another language."<sup>17</sup> When reading other kinds of art, the danger is greater, exactly because most confident readers, unconscious of the babelic spell, do not realise that they read their own translation of the piece of art in question. The added problem is that poetry is usually translated by poets, who provide additional notations and more or less adequate commentaries, and always by people with a competent understanding of the poet's native language, whereas in the other arts every reader has full confidence in his own, often incompetent, translation. When one serves an apprenticeship in architecture, when one tries to understand architecture, it is essential to keep in mind that what one is expected to do is to *read* the work of architecture, a process which

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15 C. B. Wilson, "The Aesthetics of the Good Life"; in: *Edinburgh Architecture Research*, 20, Edinburgh, 1993, p. 125.

16 Steiner refers to "the essential fact that translation means the meshing of two different world images, of two entirely different patterns of human life." George Steiner, "To Civilize our Gentlemen"; in: George Steiner, 1967, 1985, op. cit., p. 85.

17 George Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy*, London, 1961, p. 47.

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resembles the process of its creation; it requires time and labour in order to learn the language which the particular architect uses and, most importantly, to perceive the *ethos* of this language. In this process, encounter with the great poems - in the narrow sense - written in the mother tongue of the architect, created from within the speech-world that is common to the architect and the poets, can be of valuable assistance, since it is in the poem that the *ἔτυμον* that dwells in words is being revealed after they have been immersed in the purifying waters of poesy. And it is the poets that "tell us of what poetry is saying when, exactly when, words fail it."<sup>18</sup> Poetry uses language as its material, its means of meaning, and projects the *ethos* of the particular language in the most direct manner when poets are conscious of the fact that words are not mere sounds. It is the same *ethos* that gives architecture its inner and most universal dimension, when architects have learned the significance of the architectural elements-signs which they use to build humanly. It is this yearned-for dimension that keeps the houses built architecturally linked to the centre of all reality. The work of architecture created in this fashion is most profoundly useful and functional for men; for it guides them towards the other reality, the one in which the architect's or the poet's imagination dwelt and which he sought to bring into genuine appearance. The reading of such a work can be done through an etymological analysis of architecture, through the pursuit of truth that might let its deeper meaning yield to us.

The preservation of the organic connection between any architectural language, which time and native ground have provided with the capacity to convey the inward life of the world with which it is organically connected, and the world in which it ripens and to which it grants admission is crucial to the intelligibility of the civilisations of verbally divided men, which guarantees their creative survival. Architectural creation from within such a world-bound, mature and intelligible language can provide the means for a creative and life-giving reading of architecture, a creative process whereby we can re-trace and re-experience the coming into form of a particular world. And if we are able to acquire knowledge of it, we will have been led from the particular to the universal character of language and creation. We will have become able to dispel the babelic powers of confusion and to dwell in the memory of the garden where the tree of life grew<sup>19</sup>, the garden of one people and of one tongue.

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18 George Steiner, 1989, 1991, op. cit., p. 216.

19 *Genesis* 2:9.

## *Part II*

### **Prologue**

The second Part of this thesis turns towards the historical milieu of Greece after Independence, in order to trace the modern Greek artists' search for "the true face of Greece" and the means appropriate to its creative expression. Inquiring into the history of the nature of modern Greek architecture, Part II aims at delineating the architectural making process that brought about the embodiment of the inner reality of the Greek world in the historically distinct architectural work of Dimitris Pikionis. The stages of this process are traced and paralleled to those of modern Greek poetry, a contemporaneous art process directed towards making intelligible the same reality, and one with a privileged position in the cultural life of modern Greece. This part is organised in three chapters.

## *Chapter Four*

### **The Modern Greek Voice in Transition**



*They read the world greedily with eyes now open forever, there where they  
were suddenly flung by the Immovable,*

*Face-down, and where the vultures fell upon them violently to enjoy the  
clay of their guts and their blood.*

Odysseus Elytis

#### 4. 1. Intellectual Pursuits of 'the True Face of Greece' since the Early Nineteenth Century

*I and my generation ... have attempted to find the true face of Greece.  
This was necessary because until then the true face of Greece  
was presented as Europeans saw Greece.*

Odysseus Elytis<sup>1</sup>

The Greek War of Independence that broke out in 1821 led to the liberation of Greece and the emergence of the independent modern Greek state in 1830. The Greeks, however, had not passed through the Symplegades yet. While sailing towards independence, and yet more persistently after they gained it, they were faced with the most difficult question of identifying who they, the inhabitants of the newly born Greek state, really were.<sup>2</sup> Looking in the mirror the western European Romantics held in front of them, they saw themselves as the descendants of glorious beings,<sup>3</sup> their features unrecognisable, their land turned into an idol, assumed birthplace of a European civilisation which ignored the recent forms of their spiritual tradition, and which was now for the first time being planted onto Greek soil. Turning eastwards, on the other side of the Aegean Sea, they recognised the vales and cities which had nurtured them and their ancestors, the lands where the spiritual tradition to which they felt they belonged was a living experience. They saw the earth of Ionia and Byzantium that had brought up the ancient Greek tradition with her spiritual wisdom, and bore the fruits that nourished the Fathers of the Eastern Church who carried the metaphysics of this ancient tradition into the Christian one. The enlightenment to which this tradition of the East had led was of a completely different kind to the one Western philhellenes were knowledgeable about.

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Illustration on previous page: The gate of Athene Archegetis (Pazaroport), Roman Agora, in the bazaar of Athens in Ottoman times. J. Stuart and N. Revett, Engraving, 1751-55. (After Philadelphus).

Elytis' verses on the previous page are from his poem *The Sleep of the Brave*, in his collection *Six and One Pangs of Conscience for the Sky*, (1960), translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard; in: Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (eds.), op. cit., p. 68.

- 1 Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 7.
- 2 In the Constitution adopted by the first National Assembly of Epidaurus (1822) Greeks were defined as follows: "All autochthonous inhabitants of Greek territory that believe in Christ are Greeks." (Part B, §b). Cited in: Christos Yannaras, 1992, op. cit., p. 17 (my translation).
- 3 Cf.: "The modern Greek is the descendant of those glorious beings whom the imagination almost refuses to figure to itself as belonging to our kind." From Percy Bysshe Shelley's preface to his drama *Hellas*, published in 1822. Quoted in: Philip Sherrard, "Introduction; Who are the Greeks?"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1978, op. cit., p. 9.

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Striving to live on the narrow piece of land they had fought for and which was to become the country of the nation of the Hellenes - as they consequently started perceiving themselves, complying with contemporary romantic Eurocentric world models - presupposed coming to terms with their newly acquired spatial and historical existence. Their new name<sup>4</sup> and their new spatial dimension implied a separation from the Orthodox Christian people<sup>5</sup> - 'God's chosen people'<sup>6</sup> - of whom they were members, and of the physical earth where their spiritual roots lay and where the centre of the cultural and religious tradition of Byzantium, preserved under the Ottomans, still remained. And since language was used by nineteenth century Greek nationalist ideology as the hallmark of nationality, according to the contemporary European trend, they were faced with further challenges. The definite geographical boundaries, which for the first time in the nineteenth century defined the spatial existence of the Greeks,<sup>7</sup> left outside the domain of the independent Kingdom the majority of the Greek-

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4 Proposals for the re-founding of ancient Hellas first appeared in the first half of the fifteenth century, at the end of the Byzantine period. The Byzantine Empire, an officially Greek-speaking empire since the sixth century, adopted the term 'Hellenic' in the tenth century in order to distinguish its cultural identity and civilisation from the new civilisation that was then being born in the West.

5 Within the Ottoman Empire the inhabitants of Greek lands were regarded - in accordance with Islamic law - as members of the nation (*millet*) of all Christians, subjects of the Sultan, but with their own spiritual and temporal ruler (*millet-bashi*), the Oecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople.

See: "The appearance of national definitions [in the literature of the closing years of the eighteenth and the first two decades of the nineteenth century], which registered an awareness of ethnic distinctions among the Orthodox Christian groups of Balkan society, illustrates in a precise manner the transition from the ecumenical community of Balkan Orthodoxy and the religiously defined *millets* to a still inchoate, inarticulate and uncertain world of modern linguistic nations." In: Paschalis M. Kitromilides, " 'Imagined Communities' and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans"; in: Martin Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremis (eds.), *Modern Greece: Nationalism and Nationality*, Athens, 1990, p. 25.

6 "But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light". Peter, *The First Epistle General*, 2:9.

See also: "according to [the Orthodox Christian tradition] Orthodox Christians were the chosen people of God's earthly kingdom whose consummation was, whatever the appearance of things, ultimately certain". John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-5.

And: "The Byzantines ... did not either call themselves Hellenes, or think of themselves as Hellenes. They were members of the Roman Empire in the Eastern and Christian form which had been conferred on it by Constantine the Great. As such they were not only Roman citizens, but also God's chosen people, while their Empire was the area in which God's earthly kingdom was in the process of being fulfilled." *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

7 See appended map illustrating the territorial development of the Greek Kingdom (1832-1947) in: *ibid.*

Cf.: "the limits of the new Greece, although narrow, happened to reflect what philhellene Europeans then considered to be homogeneously 'Greek' and what, moreover, their classical education had taught them ought to be Greek." *Ibid.*, p. 79.



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speaking Christian population in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the national community within independent Greece as well as the one beyond its borders, of which she assumed the role of focal point,<sup>9</sup> were linguistically divided.<sup>10</sup> The date of birth of the modern Greek state (1821) marked the time when the history of the Greeks ceased to be the history of a civilisation and became the history of a nation state, however ambiguous the associations between state and nation remained until the early twentieth century.<sup>11</sup>

The break between the two worlds at the sides of the Aegean Sea became irreversible in 1922<sup>12</sup> with the uprooting of the communities of Greeks in the Anatolian seaboard of Asia Minor and the destruction of Smyrna, one of the principal centres of the Greek world since ancient times. The Treaty of Lausanne (24 July 1923)<sup>13</sup> concluded the centuries-long life of the Greek communities dispersed within the 'Oecumene'<sup>14</sup> of a theocratic empire of intermingled ethnic and religious communities and strengthened the modern ambitions of Greeks to live in the Western institution of the homogeneous nation state, united along a temporal dimension. The Aegean Sea ceased to be an access route, and, for the first time, it became a barrier marking the division between

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8 "At its foundation the Greek kingdom had a population of about 800,000 while two and a half million Greeks remained in the unredeemed provinces." *Ibid.*, p. 93.

9 This "extensive national community was defined by certain supposedly shared cultural characteristics - language, religion, historical memories and ethnic loyalties." Paschalis M. Kitromilides, " 'Imagined Communities' and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans"; in: Martin Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremis (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 42.

10 "The islands of the Aegean with some partial exceptions, the 'great islands' Crete and Cyprus and the seven Ionian islands, which had formed the 'Septinsular Republic' at the dawn of the nineteenth century and had passed under British protection in 1815 were the only geographical areas where the Greek language had survived as the sole and exclusive tongue of the inhabitants." *Ibid.*, p. 43.

Large numbers of Albanian speaking Christians were included in the new state. The mosaic of nationalities, linguistic and religious groups in the territories where Greek nationalist aspirations extended, the *irredenta*, is described in: *ibid.*

11 See: Thanos Veremis, "From the National State to the Stateless Nation; 1821-1910"; in: Martin Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremis (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 9-22.

12 The complex developments that led to the Asia Minor catastrophe and "the brutal ending of the long history of Hellenism in Asia Minor", in August 1922, cannot be followed within the limits of this chapter. For an abbreviated account see: John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-29. (The above quotation is from: *ibid.*, p. 126.)

See also: *Ιστορία του Έλληνικού Έθνους*, 16 Vols., Volume 15: *Νεώτερος Έλληνισμός από 1913 ως 1941*, Athens, 1978.

13 Greece and Turkey had signed a separate convention for the return of prisoners of war and political hostages, and the compulsory exchange of Greek and Turkish populations on 30 January 1923.

14 Militant Balkan nationalism led also to the uprooting of the Greek communities in the Slavic Balkan states.

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the two worlds on the Aegean shores, that of the East and that of the West. A traditionally sea-centred world was struck at its heart; this time not by the physical forces of a cosmic catastrophe but by the destructive powers of human wilderness.

For a people loyal to a spiritual tradition which emphasises the participation of the sensible in the divine nature, the expulsion from their blessed and God-protected earth, the very source of their life and the bearer of the roots of their families for some three thousand years, signified a loss and a rupture with the past<sup>15</sup> which could not be compensated by citizenship and arable land.<sup>16</sup> "This time exile was to our own homeland", as one of the refugee women put it.<sup>17</sup> It was on the physical body of this 'homeland', which the Greek-speaking population of Asia Minor had come to identify with, where they now had to settle.<sup>18</sup> It was this until then imagined 'homeland' they now had to cultivate, re-define in all its dimensions and be loyal to.

After the end of Greek irredentism (liberation of ethnic brethren under Ottoman rule), the unification of Greek-inhabited territories and the incorporation of over a million ethnic refugees, the Greek nation and the Hellenic state converged, and a growing Western influence on the shaping of Greek identity brought them closer to the West and its ideals. Nationalisation of the regional Orthodox Churches in the respective Balkan countries irrevocably broke the unity of the community of Orthodox Christianity, and the sense of identity with which it had provided its members for a period of almost a millennium was gradually replaced by a sense of nationality, of belonging to a nation defined not in universal terms of faith and culture, but in terms of geographical factors, racial continuity, supposedly shared cultural and social characteristics and common language, according to the prevailing notions in the contemporary West. Language had provided the first criterion in defining Hellenic identity, and finally Orthodoxy was encompassed within the ethnic definition of

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15 This nostalgia and sense of loss of a homeland is echoed throughout the poetry of George Seferis, a native of Smyrna.

See: "George Seferis 1900-1971: The Man and his Poetry"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1978, op. cit., pp. 94-117.

16 See: John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, op. cit., pp. 138ff.

17 Centre d' Études d' Asie Mineure, *Η Ήξοδος*, Vol. 2, Athens 1982, p. 477. Cited in: Paschalis M. Kitromilides, " 'Imagined Communities' and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans"; in: Martin Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremis (eds.), op. cit., p. 51.

18 "the Greek state, bankrupt after ten years of intermittent war and political crisis ... [was] now called upon to accept a destitute population equal to about one-quarter of its own." John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, op. cit., p. 138.

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Hellenism. The modern political Hellenic state, a product of western European romantic ideology, became the necessary form of the Greek nation, the only form in which the latter could be admitted to the social and political premises of modern Europe.

The establishment of a national university in the capital of the Kingdom in 1837 and the creation of the autocephalous national church by the Greek state cemented national identity and interrupted a centuries-old religious tradition. Until the Greek War of Independence, all major institutions of learning were religious and operated under the aegis of the Oecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. However, the currents of Western thought had begun to penetrate into the Greek East in the centuries before the War of Independence through the University of Padua and centres of education founded in Greek lands within or without the Ottoman Empire, and had - with official encouragement by the heads of the Greek hierarchy - led to the secularisation of education and its emancipation from its connection with theology.<sup>19</sup> After independence, the role of the new University as a transmitter of Western culture to the East was clearly stated and its fulfilment intensively pursued.<sup>20</sup> Yet, despite every effort, tensions and contrasts persisted. The majority of the Greek people, a predominantly rural population, preserved a religious conscience and remained linked through the liturgy and ritual of the Church to a metaphysical tradition, both Christian and pre-Christian, the symbols and principles of which their manner of life reflected. The collective memory of this people was the transmitter of values irreconcilable with those, dominantly secular and profane, of the contemporary Western civilisation that the Greek state was propagating.

Moreover, the shift in western European mentality had come about after a long process of systematisation of learning and gradual replacement of interior, qualitative and synthetic knowledge by an exterior, quantitative and analytic one that started in the

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19 See: Philip Sherrard, 1959, 1992, *op. cit.*, pp. 175ff.

On the secularisation and 'Westernisation' of theology in Greece, its estrangement from the Christian Orthodox Tradition, through the founding of the first School of Theology in the first Greek university and its organisation according to the principles of Latin scholasticism and 'scientism', on the models of the German Protestant schools, as well as their consequences to this day, see: Christos Yannaras, 1992, *op. cit.*, pp. 303-347.

20 Paschalis M. Kitromilides, " 'Imagined Communities' and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans"; in: Martin Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremis (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 40 and references in p. 63, nn. 55-6.

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twelfth century,<sup>21</sup> and, after several centuries, led to a complete secularisation of knowledge and materialisation of thought. The disruption of the unity of knowledge and the consequent rise of modern scientific knowledge, dependent exclusively on the sensible world, the exterior phenomena of nature and empirical facts, which came to be regarded as the only knowledge there is,<sup>22</sup> had led to a dichotomy between outer and inner reality and a shift of vision from the whole - the unity of spirit and matter - to the parts. The natural world - and man along with it - was assumed empty of anything spiritual; visible creation itself was reduced to dead matter, a sum of material objects submitted to positivist study and analysis, and human creation as a mere synthesis of these.

Such ideas and views, however championed by the educated and mercantile classes in Greece - particularly in Athens - during the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, could not alter overnight the conscience of the Greek people who still lived in an organic relation with the natural world and whose life depended on these forces active in nature, which they feared and venerated. The technical mastery of the West, which resulted from "the 'secularisation' of nature that permits it to be regarded as an object and so to be exploited technically", and the products of this technical mastery: "concrete results of a quantitative kind"<sup>23</sup>, came to serve the members of Greek society, carried in the baggage of bourgeois foreign educated Greeks at the turn of the century, but were unable to transform overnight the Greek society to one with the characteristics of those that had produced them. The greatest part of the Greek population lived in small village-communities, based on the family nucleus. Until the end of the first half of the twentieth century, industry consisted of small factories and artisan workshops.<sup>24</sup> External and internal migration and urbanisation, which

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21 As Philip Sherrard says, "the ground had already been prepared by the excessive logicity of so much Western theology". Philip Sherrard, 1959, 1992, op. cit., p. 166.

22 See: Philip Sherrard, 1992, op. cit., p. 102.

23 Philip Sherrard, *The Rape of Man and Nature: An Enquiry into the Origins and Consequences of Modern Science*, Ipswich, 1987, 1991, p. 67.

24 "In 1930 only 1.4% of industrial enterprises employed more than 25 staff, the average number of workers was 3.7." BIT (Bureau International du Travail), *Les Problèmes du Travail en Grèce*, Geneva, 1949, p. 83. As quoted in: Yannis Polyzos, "Η Αθήνα Πρωτεύουσα του Ελληνισμού" (Athens, Capital of Greece); in: The Ministry of Culture, *Η Αθήνα στον 20ο Αιώνα: 1990 - 1940*, 2 Vols., Athens, 1985; Volume 1: *Αθήνα Ελληνική Πρωτεύουσα*, p. 26.

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increased between the wars of 1917 and 1920,<sup>25</sup> as well as the application of "the administrative philosophy of a western centralized bureaucracy"<sup>26</sup> to control traditional village-communities, affected the values on which life in the rural communities was based but did not alter entirely the inherited traditional pattern of life and the people's attitude towards it, at least until the end of the civil war which followed the Second World War.

The Greek people's tradition, with its myths, its images, signs and symbols, was the vehicle of a metaphysical tradition - "the ever-living spiritual tradition of the East", as Zissimos Lorentzatos calls it<sup>27</sup> - which through Byzantium could be traced back to its ancient form. For this people it was always 'their' tradition, "the same yesterday and today"<sup>28</sup>, which they preserved intact through the centuries. Moreover, 'their' tradition had never gone through a crisis "in the face of physical foes or a spiritual enemy, such as philosophical doubt"<sup>29</sup>, until they found themselves forming part - physically, politically and intellectually - of a world they had before lived apart from. The European world had adopted liberated Greece and the Greeks were cast in the role of living ancestors of European civilisation.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, waken into the enlightened world of Neoclassical Europe they were persuaded to espouse its values and to cleanse the face of their land of the stains of oriental barbarity, in order to make her features

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25 The economic recession of the 1890s helped to begin the migratory movement to the United States of America "which between 1906 and 1914 attracted more than a quarter of a million migrants." John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, *op. cit.*, pp. 97-8.

Between the two World Wars, the late growth of light industry and the services which supported them helped to increase the rate of internal migration. *Ibid.*, p. 357.

The vast rural exodus of the 1950s and early 1960s, whether abroad (mainly to West Germany) or to towns and cities of Greece (80 per cent of the persons who left the countryside in the five years between 1956 and 1960 went to Athens, *ibid.*, p. 328), progressively weakened the life of the Greek countryside.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 356.

27 Zissimos Lorentzatos, "The Lost Center"; in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, 1980, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

28 *Hebrews* 13:8, Quoted in: *Ibid.*, p. 115.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 130.

30 Cf.: "the West supported the Greeks [in their fight for independence] on the implicit understanding that the Greeks would reciprocally accept the role of living ancestors of European civilization - the standard, for most romantic writers, of civilization in the most general and absolute sense." Michael Herzfeld, *op. cit.*, p. 19. Herzfeld argues that Greece "as a whole has been forced to play the contrasted roles of *Ur-Europa* and humiliated oriental vassal at one and the same time" (*ibid.*), and modern Greeks those of fossilized ancestors and of European aboriginals. The Greek society, in his anthropological perspective, "brings together the stereotypes of the exotic and the European" (*ibid.*, p. 1).

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conform to those of her step-parents who saw the Greek land as the matrix of their civilisation.<sup>31</sup>

What was until then regarded as holy ("Statues are holy things", says Makriyannis<sup>32</sup>) was either to be removed from the context it was made for, in order to be neatly catalogued and displayed - arranged according to style in what Coomaraswamy has called "our archaeological mortuaries"<sup>33</sup> - for viewing and studying by cultivated spectators, or to be completely destroyed simply because it was classified into a category of style aesthetically inferior to another for which it should clear the way, as it happened with much Byzantine and post-Byzantine art and architecture.<sup>34</sup> This process led to the elimination of successive layers of creative life, in an attempt to sanitise the celebrated edifices of antiquity by erasing the traces of 'tasteless barbarians'; to unearth the forms of an age long gone, because they were seen as the most appropriate to embellish the modern Hellenic state and, at the same time, to prove the purity of its inhabitants' genealogy. Moreover, since Greek civilisation was not recognised in the West as the basis of Byzantine civilisation, nor the latter as a new historical phase which the Greek civilisation entered at the moment when it came into contact with Christianity, anything that stood as a reminder of the dark Byzantine age, an era viewed as one of misfortune and decline and excluded from the moral sphere of

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- 31 Similarly, in the nineteenth century British colony of Cyprus, the intention of the British rulers was to restore the ancestral civilisation: "Nothing has occurred to Cyprus, since the British occupation, so calculated to quicken this civilising motion as the Colonial and Indian Exhibition. It is the first direct touch between the Cypriots and the great British public, and the warmth of that touch cannot fail to produce an electrifying influence upon the dry bones which, in Cyprus, have been pulverising during centuries of neglect and oppression. ... The youth who visits to-day many objects in the Cyprus Court will probably, long before his head is grey, have to search for them in museums of antiquities." R. Hamilton Lang, "On archaic survivals in Cyprus"; in: *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 16, 1887, pp. 186-8. As quoted in: *ibid.*, p. 74.
- 32 General Makriyannis, *Memoirs*, B, 63. As quoted in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, "The Lost Center"; in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, 1980, *op. cit.*, p. 131.  
See: Edward Dodwell, *A Classical and Topographical Tour through Greece during the Years 1801, 1805 and 1806*, 2 Vols., London, 1819, pp. 325ff.  
Cf.: "the Parthenon is regarded with respect not only by the Greeks but by the Turks; for it was dedicated to Saint George, when it became a Christian church; and was converted into a mosque when Athens fell under Turkish dominion." *Ibid.*, p. 325.
- 33 Ananda Coomaraswamy, "Walter Andrae's *Die ionische Säule: Bauform oder Symbol?: A Review*"; in: Roger Lipsey (ed.), *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 342.
- 34 According to Dodwell, "the interior of all the churches, particularly the pavements, merit observation" merely because "The majority of the Athenian churches are built upon the ruins of ancient fabrics, and are composed of blocks of stone and marble, with a great number of inscriptions, altars, pedestals, and architectural ornaments." Edward Dodwell, *op. cit.*, p. 380.

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Europe,<sup>35</sup> or gave evidence of the time when Greece was under Oriental yoke, was to be eliminated. Modern Greece, a renascent Hellas, had to mirror its ancestral purity and to reincarnate its ancient self.<sup>36</sup>

The pursuit of the 'Hellenisation' of modern Greece - a 'Hellenisation' which was intended to make the face of Greece conform to the illusory classical image which enlightened western Europeans had moulded and presented to the Greeks - ran parallel to the pursuit of the modernisation of the country (in terms of a 'Westernisation' or a 'Europeanisation' as it was perceived at that time) which was seen as the only way to catch up with the developments of modern European civilisation. What this meant was that on the one hand the Greeks were to prove themselves the true heirs of Pheidias and Aristotle, and, on the other, that in order to achieve this, they had to copy the models Europe provided them with, since it was to Europe that the 'Greek lights' had fled, and in Europe that, during the period of Islamic rule in Greece, the classical ideals had formed a basis for the new humanist world and modern Western civilisation.<sup>37</sup>

Hence, the intellectual and cultural models for modern Greece could, without contradiction, be at once Classical Hellenic and modern European, or so it was assumed by foreign philhellenes and domestic intellectuals and politicians who attempted to impose such models.<sup>38</sup> The 'enlightened prophets' of modern Greece,

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35 Although "geographically included in Europe, [the Greeks of Byzantium] were leaving the moral sphere of Europe". Federico Chabod, *Storia dell'idea d'Europa*, edited by Ernesto Sestan and Armando Saitta, Bari, 1964 (1961), p. 37; in: "Biblioteca di Cultura Moderna"; "Universale" edn. As quoted in: Michael Herzfeld, op. cit., p. 37.

Cf.: "From the 17th century onwards till comparatively recent times Byzantine art was regarded as crude and rather absurd, the expression of a superstitious and puerile mentality. The whole of Byzantine civilization had a bad press in those days." Sir Steven Runciman, "Byzantine Art and Western Mediaeval Taste"; in: Office of the Minister to the Prime Minister of the Greek Government, Department of Antiquities and Archaeological Restoration, *Byzantine Art: An European Art, Lectures*, Athens, 1966, p. 3.

36 The pursuit of the architectural 'Hellenisation' of modern Greece will be considered in detail below, in Chapter Six.

37 Cf.: "If the European heritage was truly grounded in Greek philosophy and art, the Greeks argued, they had an ancestral, participatory right to the new modernity." Michael Herzfeld, op. cit., p. 53.

38 The emergence of the concept of a Greek nation and the propagation of the ideals of secular liberalism and humanist enlightenment preceded, and prepared, the outbreak of the War of Independence. Romantic philhellenism encouraged the Greeks to restore the Hellenic nation in the form of the western European civil state, and Greek intellectuals such as Adamantios Korais (1748-1833) envisaged and undertook the re-education of modern Greeks through the study of the 'ancestral' classics, a prerequisite of their admittance among the nations of modern Europe. The teachers' mission was, according to Korais, to "wash off the stain left on the bright countenance

like Korais, dedicated themselves to the popularisation of the dynamic Western philosophy of secular liberalism and classical enlightenment, ignoring the fact that the Greeks had survived without it and that its imposition on Greek territory could have a distorting effect.<sup>39</sup> The consequences of these pursuits became more and more apparent in the people's conduct of life - in urban centres first and in village-communities later - in their relations with, and use of, the natural environment and in the connection between their life and the forms of their art. The destructive influence of the values of Western material culture severed traditional values and inherited practices. Fragments of a traditional pattern of life co-existed with a conflicting style of behaviour determined by the ever-growing number of material needs and economic factors.<sup>40</sup>

#### 4. 2. The Struggle for the Preservation of the Integrity of Language and Life, Led by Modern Greek Poets

*the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.*

Paul<sup>41</sup>

From the early years of the life of the modern Greek state, the Greek language was chosen as the most effective medium through which European culture was to be

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of the Hellenic nation by the barbaric yoke." Cited in: S. G. Chaconas, *Adamantios Korais: A Study in Greek Nationalism*, New York, 1942, p. 66. As quoted in: Philip Sherrard, 1959, 1992, op. cit., p. 183.

On Korais and his disciples see: Christos Yannaras, 1992, op. cit., pp. 214-39.

See also: K. Th. Demaras, *Ιστορία της Νεοελληνικής Λογοτεχνίας: Από τις Πρώτες Ρίζες ως την Έποχή μας*, Athens, 1967, 1972, 1975, 1983, 1987, pp. 193-213.

Cf.: "Some of Korais's close disciples, most notably Theoklitos Pharmakides, ... became major protagonists in the whole affair of Greek autocephaly [the creation of an autocephalous national church]." Paschalis M. Kitromilides, "Imagined Communities' and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans"; in: Martin Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremis (eds.), op. cit., p. 39. Reference to: Charles Frazee, *The Orthodox Church and Independent Greece 1821-1852*, Cambridge, 1969, pp. 102-5, 109-10, 187-9.

39 It was under Korais' direction that "the Greek government ... severe[d] connexion with the Patriarchate of Constantinople and ... established an independent, autocephalous church under its own aegis." Philip Sherrard, 1959, 1992, op. cit., p. 185; referred to: S. G. Chaconas, op. cit., pp. 120ff. But Korais' main concern was the reform of the language, which he advocated as the means to shape a linguistically homogeneous and, thus, united nation, and to emancipate the Greek language from barbarity, bringing it closer to its classical prototype. On the application of these proposals of Korais', see below: Chapter Six.

40 See: "The Greek countryside"; in: John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, op. cit., pp. 322-63.

41 Paul, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 3:6.



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transmitted to the East.<sup>42</sup> Not surprisingly, the linguistic model imposed on the newly born nation of the Hellenes by its own learned men was as artificial as the intellectual model of a classicising modern Greece, both products of a romantic nostalgia for the glory of ancient Greece which they aspired to resurrect. The common spoken language of the Greek people - the vehicle of their tradition, the one in which the divine utterances of this tradition were pronounced - was to be despised as "vulgar", and the masterpieces of seventeenth century Greek literature, written in the authors' mother tongue, were scorned and called "barbarous" and "freakish offspring[s] of poor tormented Greece"<sup>43</sup> by Korais, the very person who aspired to become the legislator of the Greek language.

The so-called 'language question', which has hampered the Greek language since the first century BC when the idea that the written language must be other than the spoken one was first introduced by the literati with the movement of Atticism, led to the nineteenth and twentieth century nationalisation and politicisation of the Greek language. It came to a conventional conclusion only in 1975, when the common spoken language of the Greeks was established as the official language of the Greek state.<sup>44</sup> The impediments to the living language were seen by Solomos - the poet who became "the legislator of the written [Greek] language"<sup>45</sup> in the way Dante was for the Italian language - as impediments to "the ways in which knowledge flows"<sup>46</sup>. It is thanks to the unceasing efforts of poets like Solomos, and others that followed on the

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42 This "meant essentially the incorporation of the Greek speaking Orthodox populations of the Ottoman Empire into the value system of Greek nationalism." Paschalis M. Kitromilides, " 'Imagined Communities' and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans"; in: Martin Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremis (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 41.

43 Adamantios Korais referring to *Erotokritos*, a Cretan poem in fifteen-syllable verse, in a letter to A. Vassiliou. In: Adamantios Korais, *Prologue to Heliodorus' Aethiopica*, Paris, 1804, 2 Vols. Quoted in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, "Solomos' *Dialogos* and Dante"; in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, 1980, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

Cf. The observation of the French writer Houssaye on the Greek folk songs: "Grammar would find a good deal to criticize in them, as would good taste. ... They are not works of art at all. They are the tears, the smiles, and the sighs of a people". In: Henry Houssaye, *Athènes, Rome, Paris: L'Histoire et les Mœurs*, Bibliothèque Contemporaine, Paris, 1879, p. 174. As quoted in: Michael Herzfeld, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

44 For the different solutions suggested in the last two centuries, see: Georgios Babiniotis, *Σύντομη Ιστορία της Ελληνικής Γλώσσας* (Short History of the Greek Language), Athens, 1986, pp. 165-77. The 'language question' will be discussed in more detail below, in Chapter Six.

45 Zissimos Lorentzatos, "Solomos' *Dialogos* and Dante"; in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, 1980, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

46 Cited in: *ibid.*, p. 169.

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path he had revealed, that the present generation of Greeks is the heir of a voice which is genuine and alive.

"It may be", says Peter Levi, "that modern Greek writers, so unlucky in some ways, have been lucky in another, since the difficult history of modern Greek has forced them to grapple consciously with the problem of language."<sup>47</sup> Dionysios Solomos was also the first to show a way out of the deadlock to which so much sterile nationalism had brought poets and all other Greeks who struggled to identify the elements of their true Greek voice and to create truly Greek works. He taught them that "the nation must learn to consider national everything that is true"<sup>48</sup>, and that the language of the poet must conform to the language of the people who speak it, not only in the letter but in the spirit as well. For it is to the spirit of language and life, to the common Heracleitean *Λόγος*,<sup>49</sup> that the poet aims, guided by the letter of language<sup>50</sup> which must, therefore, also be common. The purpose of poetry is to seize the truth and to transfuse it into the poets' fellow-men by means of language; the means have to be fully submitted to the expression of the truth, something that led Solomos to the conclusion that imitation is impossible in poetry.<sup>51</sup> This seems to have been the lesson Seferis had assimilated when, in 1968, he was giving the younger generation the

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47 Peter Levi, *op. cit.*, 1977, p. 57.

48 Quoted by Polylas in: Iakovos Polylas, "Prolegomena"; in: L. Politis (ed.), *Διονυσίου Σολωμού Αὐτόγραφα Ἔργα*, Thessaloniki, 1964, p. 28.

Cf. Odysseus Elytis, "Οἱ Κίνδυνοι τῆς Ἡμιμάθειας", (1938); in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, *op. cit.*, p. 468.

49 Cf. Polylas' statement on Solomos' work: "His work in Art, as well as in conversation, was a spontaneous uninterrupted endeavour to extinguish his individuality in absolute truth, giving effect to the axiom of Heraclitus: 'Although possessing a common Word, the majority live as though they have a wisdom of their own.'" Iakovos Polylas, 1964, *op. cit.*, p. 30. Cited in English in: Philip Sherrard, "Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

50 Cf. George Seferis, "Ἑλληνικὴ Γλώσσα"; in: George Seferis, *Δοκιμές*, 3 Vols., Athens, 1974, 1981, 1984, 1992, Vol. 1 (1936-1947), Cairo, 1944, Athens, 1962, 1974, 1981, 1984, 1992, p. 70. Seferis here says that one has to use language in the way Solomos suggested. The note of Solomos' (in connection with the writing of his poem *The Free Besieged*) to which Seferis refers is the following: "Apply to the spiritual form the development of the plant, which begins with the seed and turns back to the seed, after it has been through, as stages of evolution, all natural forms, *i.e.*, root, stem, leaves, flowers, and fruit. Apply it and reflect deeply upon the nature of the subject and the form of art. See that this work is performed without interruption." Solomos' note is cited in English in: Philip Sherrard, "Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

51 See Lorentzatos' discussion of Solomos' thesis in: "A Definition of Style by Solomos"; in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, 1980, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-84.

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following advice: "they must remember that the only job in which one cannot lie is poetry."<sup>52</sup>

It may be argued that what stimulated the fight for the preservation of the integrity of life in modern Greece, the free life for which the War of Independence was fought, was the yearning for the preservation of the integrity of the language of the Greek people, which had survived through the vicissitudes of the centuries and had served for the transmission of their common experience. A line of poets after Solomos has participated in this fight which continues up to the present day. These poets of modern Greece, who had an immensely rich tradition to draw from, found in the vernacular language and the collective memory of the simple people the values that were to shape their voice. Each time these poets humbled themselves before the linguistic material they inherited,<sup>53</sup> their conscious voice became the carrier of their tradition into modern times, and their work grew naturally, nourished with the innate wisdom of their tongue. The vitality of their voice and the fact that their conscious and active concern was with the living language - the material of their art - have placed them at the centre of Greek life; their descent into the depths of language has generated an ascent towards what Solomos named "il commune e proprio"<sup>54</sup> and identified with language.

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- 52 Edmund Keeley, *A Conversation with George Seferis*, bilingual edition, Athens, 1986, p. 130. Also quoted in: Peter Levi, "George Seferis"; in: Peter Levi, 1991, op. cit., p. 215. The above conversation is also published as a postscript in: Edmund Keeley, 1983, op. cit., pp. 180-217. Cf.: "And let us advise them [the younger generation] to seek truth". George Seferis, "Dialogue on Poetry: What Is Meant by Hellenism?", (1938-39); in: George Seferis, 1966, 1967, 1982, op. cit., p. 95.  
Cf.: "The last and most interesting internal law of poems is moral. ... The continual expression of reality in speech requires great honesty and courage." Peter Levi, 1977, op. cit., p. 66.
- 53 Cf.: "first submit to the language of the people, and then if you are able, master it." In Solomos' seminal text on the Greek language, *Dialogos*, (1824). Quoted and discussed in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, "Solomos' *Dialogos* and Dante"; in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, 1980, op. cit., p. 153.
- 54 "... that which belongs to all ... and that which belongs to the individual ..., that which is common to everyone and particular to everyone." (As translated in: *ibid.*, p. 151.) The origin of Solomos' maxim, Lorentzatos suggests (*ibid.* p. 151), can be found in Dante's "commune nec proprium ulli" (from his *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, in Latin: Paris, 1577); in the Italian translation of Trissino (Vicenza, 1529), which was known to Solomos (*ibid.*, p. 148): "commune a tutti, e proprio di niuno" (*ibid.*, p. 151). In this essay Lorentzatos compares the two parallel texts, Dante's *De Vulgari Eloquentia* and Solomos' *Dialogos*. Solomos' maxim comes from a note of Solomos' to his poem *The Free Besieged*: "Il tuono fondamentale del poema sia dal principio alla fine il commune e proprio radicato et immedesimato colla lingua." (Let the fundamental rhythm of the poem be from the start to finish the common and the essential, rooted in and identified with the language.). Cited and discussed in: *ibid.*, p. 151.  
Solomos, descending from an old noble family of Zante (these families spoke Italian among themselves at the time) and having been educated at Venice, Cremona, and at the University of Padua, spoke the Zantiot Greek dialect which he learnt from his mother, a probably monolingual woman from the people, but wrote his notes on his poetry in Italian. This, however, does not

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Solomos himself had served his humble apprenticeship with those whom Korais called "vulgar populace", "robbing them of their language"<sup>55</sup>, and with the great masters of his art, such as Dante and Shakespeare. In the soul of the common people he found the fertile soil from which his art grew and he paid his debt to them by giving them back the language he had mastered, the same language the literati were trying to deprive them of. When the Pedant in Solomos' *Dialogos* asks the Poet: "Do you know Greek?", the Poet replies: "Do you know the Greeks?"<sup>56</sup>. Solomos himself, with "time and toil"<sup>57</sup>, sought to master his living mother tongue and to get to know the Greeks; and he bequeathed to them the kind of self-knowledge they were in need of.

All these modern Greek poets after Solomos who chose to be guided by a language which, as Odysseus Elytis says, "insists on a noble attitude toward the phenomenon of life",<sup>58</sup> and to express themselves through the images and symbols they inherited from their tradition and shared with the rest of the society they lived in, appear to have intended to assert the sacredness of man's life and to find the means to regenerate a sense of the wholeness of life and a sense of destiny irreconcilable with the one which the political leaders of Greece had fabricated according to modern ideals and practices. They also seem to have understood the purpose of their work as a strictly practical one, and their position within the society as functional; they believed that the Greek people needed their voice and that this voice had to be one with the voices of their fellow-countrymen.<sup>59</sup>

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diminish the importance of his services to the Greek language in which he started composing poems in 1822. (The *Dialogos* is written in demotic Greek.) See: Romilly Jenkins, *Dionysios Solomós*, Cambridge, 1940, Athens, 1981.

The Corfiot poet Martinelli has left an account of Solomos' mode of composition: "Solomós formulated his ideas for the most part in Italian, and his Italian thoughts, which he frequently committed to paper, he then translated into Greek prose, which he afterwards ingeniously versified." *Ibid.*, p. 97.

Cf.: "is there anything else in my mind but freedom and language?" Dionysios Solomos, *Dialogos*; quoted in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, "Solomos' *Dialogos* and Dante"; in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, 1980, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

55 Dionysios Solomos, *Dialogos*. Referred to the Pedant, exponent and defender of the 'purist' idiom of Korais.

56 Quoted in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, "Solomos' *Dialogos* and Dante"; in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, 1980, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

57 Cf.: "by constant practice throughout a long period". Plato, *Letters*, VII, 344b.

Cf. also: Meister Eckhart's "industry and patience", quoted in: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "Meister Eckhart's View of Art"; in: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, 1934, 1956, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

58 Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 9.

59 Solomos wrote in 1842: "Only then can our Future be great, ... when literature is cultivated not for idle display, but for the benefit of the people which requires nurture and education divorced from pedantry." Quoted in: Romilly Jenkins, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

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If, as Philip Sherrard says, "the poet is pursuing consciously, as a way of life, what the rest of the society does unconsciously"<sup>60</sup>, then the conscious and active - that is creative - reaction of a line of modern Greek masters of poetry against the policies of Westernisation that were endangering the roots of Greece's historical life may be seen as directly reflecting the unconscious and instinctive resistance felt by the Greek people to the new ideas and values imposed on their lives.<sup>61</sup> As Sherrard showed in his comparative study of five major poets of modern Greece, *The Marble Threshing Floor*,<sup>62</sup> the nature and the distinctive qualities of the poetry of four of them - those of the main stream - are common, in spite of individual variations of style, and indicate that the possession of a common traditional background has given to their art a character closer to that of traditional art<sup>63</sup> than to the 'humanist' art of the modern West. Sherrard argues that the reason for this is that Greece did not suffer the collapse of traditional society and the break that took place in the intellectual life of western Europe at the time of the Renaissance, and never lost her traditional roots, something that can be seen not only in the works of the simple people or earlier masters, such as El Greco, but also in those of modern Greek poets which he considers in this study.<sup>64</sup>

Modern Greek poets, such as Solomos, Kalvos, Palamas, Sikelianos, Seferis, Ritsos, Gatsos and Elytis, who produced their finest work when they based themselves upon, and drew from, their native tradition, sought to make their voice heard in order to hamper the process of dissolution which a new seductive material culture had begun to induce. The role they assumed and desired to fulfil could be described with the words Yeats used to describe the role suitable for all poets, when he wrote: "The arts are, I believe, about to take upon their shoulders the burdens that have fallen from the shoulders of priests, and to lead us back upon our journey by filling our thoughts with the essence of things, not with things."<sup>65</sup> Considering also the fact that, since the

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60 Philip Sherrard, "Constantine Cavafis (1863-1933); in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 91.

61 See: "The Non-Christian Sequel", in: Philip Sherrard, 1959, 1992, op. cit., pp. 186-95.

62 Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit.

63 traditional cultures being "those based on principles enshrined and preserved in a living religious tradition". Philip Sherrard, "Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857)"; in: *ibid.*, p. 17.

64 Philip Sherrard, "The Poetry and the Myth"; in: *ibid.*, pp. 235f.

65 W. B. Yeats, "The Autumn of the Body", 1898; in: A. Norman Jeffares (ed.), *W. B. Yeats, Selected Criticism*, London, 1970, p. 41. Cited in: Philip Sherrard, *W. B. Yeats and the Search for Tradition*, Ipswich, 1975, pp. 3-4.

Cf. Wallace Stevens' words: "After one has abandoned a belief in God, poetry is the essence which takes its place as life's redemption." Cited in: George Steiner, 1989, 1991, op. cit., p. 228. Cf. also: "Like Wordsworth, Solomos believed that poetry stood side-by-side with religion

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formation of the modern Greek state, the ecclesiastical hierarchy had been deprived of its direct social role, with a consequent loss of spiritual leadership, it was natural that such an understanding of the social, educational, and prophetic role of poets should arise in the modern Greek consciousness.

Moreover, as John Campbell and Philip Sherrard have pointed out,<sup>66</sup> modern Greek poets have significantly contributed to the affirmation of the beauty and significance of creation in the modern Greek consciousness. This affirmation - as Campbell and Sherrard attest - came about during the present century, through these poets' re-appropriation of the positive content and significance of the ancient Greek world, most profoundly in the poetry of Sikelianos. It led to the repossessing by the Greek of his natural world and the eventual healing of the breach established in his consciousness between the pagan and the Christian worlds. For, although Orthodox Christian doctrine acknowledges and affirms the divine presence in visible creation,<sup>67</sup> the devaluation, by much of Christian thought, of the ancient Greek world and its 'false gods' had been associated with the devaluation of the natural world and had contributed to the separation of the created and the uncreated.<sup>68</sup>

The main theme of man's reciprocity with the physical earth that had been at the roots of the consciousness of the Greek people, as it is reflected in their ballads and folk

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in its role of offering spiritual uplift to the people, and his insistence on this mission (as well as his doubts about his abilities to perform it adequately) is frequently expressed in his manuscripts." Peter Mackridge, *Dionysios Solomos*, Bristol, New Rochelle, 1989, p. 19.

And: Odysseus Elytis, "Τὸ Χρονικὸ μιᾶς Δεκαετίας"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., pp. 414-5.

66 John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, op. cit., pp. 228-37.

67 "He conceals Himself mysteriously in the interior causes (*logoi*) of created beings ... present in each totally and in all His plenitude;" St. Maximus the Confessor, "Ambigua", op. cit., 91, 1285D. Quoted in: Philip Sherrard, 1959, 1992, op. cit., p. 42.

Cf.: "we may call this universe the composition of the hypostatic Logos." *Gregory Palamas, Twenty-Two Homilies*, op. cit., p. 172. Quoted in *ibid*.

68 Augustinian and Scholastic Thomist theology which reached the point of declaring that matter "nullum esse habet", is essentially non-existent, can be held responsible for the devaluation of the material world in the religious conscience of Christians and the sense of guilt towards the world of the senses which came with it. Greek theology has been influenced by Western theological thought since the fourteenth century and more intensively in the years after Independence. See: Christos Yannaras, 1992, op. cit., and Christos Yannaras, *Σχεδιάσμα Εισαγωγῆς στὴ Φιλοσοφία*, Athens, 1988.

Cf.: "the moral bias of Christianity, the intrusion into its mythology of a dualistic ethic, for which, indeed, as Nietzsche pointed out, the philosophers of classical and post-classical Greece prepared the way, divided the two traditions [the Byzantine and the Orphic and Pythagorean]." Philip Sherrard, "The Poetry and the Myth"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., pp. 233-4.

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songs, has been resumed into the poetry of modern Greece. The idea that man himself and the physical world in which he lives and of which he is an essential part are essentially of the same nature - indwelt by, and dwelling in, spirit - has been repeatedly expressed in modern Greek poetry, naturally in the terms of the Greek physical world, something that has facilitated identification with the particular world in its timeless condition. The affirmation of the holiness of 'everything that lives' had to take eventually a Christian orientation; as Odysseus Elytis states, "I am an idolater who, without wanting to do so, arrives at Christian sainthood."<sup>69</sup> The overcoming of the cleavage between the world of the senses and the world of the spirit has, in the post-war years, brought a sense of reconciliation of the two worlds which represent Greece in the consciousness of the Greek people: the ancient pagan Greek world and that of Eastern Christendom.

Through the repossessing by the Greek of his physical earth and the realisation of its spiritual fertility, initially by poets and other isolated individuals and eventually by many creative intellectuals and artists, it became possible for the Greeks who pursued "the true face of Greece" (Elytis) to raise the curtain which obscured it since the Renaissance (Sikelianos), and to acknowledge the unity of the thread they held and could trace back through Byzantium to the metaphysical tradition of the ancient world. The Greek world they pursued was the present Greek world, the one which continues to embody - and only as long as it does it is worthy of its name, not geographically or racially - the values and the principles of this centuries-long tradition in a new historical form. This world could never conform to the artificial idealised classical image of ancient Greece, neither could this image be revived outside the dreams of the Romantics who fabricated it.

The struggle for the recovery of the true Greek world in its integrity, proper scale and place within the greater whole - the world which all modern Greek poets sought to portray - revealed a bridge between the worlds of past and present, the two worlds at the sides of the Greek archipelago, the pagan and the Christian world, the worlds of matter and spirit. This bridge seems to have found its materialisation in the poetry of Elytis in the Aegean island world which this poet worships.<sup>70</sup> In his poetic imagination

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69 Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 15.

70 As Elytis notes, Andreas Kalvos (1792-1869) "was the first modern Greek poet with a maritime awareness (in a superb combination of Aegean and Ionian nature) ... with a sensibility open to the purest elements of life he was influenced by the most representative nature of the land and it

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the convergence of the two worlds takes place at the centre of the Aegean archipelago, at the very location of "the Atlantis of which Plato speaks as a kind of paradise" and where Elytis himself finds "the paradise which [he] seeks"<sup>71</sup>. In the centre of this sea-microcosm: "innocent and tremulous like a vineyard / deep and unscarred like the sky's other face, / A drop of soul amidst the clay"<sup>72</sup>, which eventually encompasses the whole Greek world of the poet, opposites are reconciled and united. The chasm which was gaping between the two worlds, that of Olympian gods and that of Christian saints, is being healed by the miraculous powers of the absolute sun, *The Sovereign Sun, Sun the First*,<sup>73</sup> and the poet foretells the re-emergence of the body of Atlantis in fruition.<sup>74</sup> The contemplation of the Aegean world led to the painful realisation of a loss. The Aegean world, a world lost and recollected, has recovered in Elytis' poems its purity, transcended into an earthly heaven which encompasses all things and all their aspects, their ephemeral elements of the now and their eternal essence of the forever.<sup>75</sup>

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gave it the leading place in his poetry." Odysseus Elytis, "Ἡ Ἀληθινὴ Φυσιογνωμία καὶ ἡ Λυρική Τόλμη τοῦ Ἀνδρέα Κάλβου"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., pp. 86-7. Translated by Philip Ramp and cited in: Yiorgis Yiatromanolakis, "The Aegean and Greek Literature"; in: Lambrini Papaioannou and Dora Comini-Dialetti (eds.), *The Aegean: The Epicenter of Greek Civilization*, Athens, 1992, p. 444.

- 71 Odysseus Elytis, "Πρῶτα - Πρῶτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 13.
- 72 From Elytis' poem *The Axion Esti*. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 20.
- 73 Titles of two collections of poems by Elytis, published in 1971 and 1943 respectively. (*The Sovereign Sun* was published together with *Variations on a Sunbeam*.)
- 74 Cf.: "For me the Aegean is not merely a part of nature, but rather a kind of signature (as one critic rightly observed). ... The sea for us [Greeks] is something very familiar and not at all savage; it is like a second earth to be cultivated. ... I have often referred to the sea as a garden. ... I consider the sea to be the heir of the Hellenic tradition." "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 7, 9, and 13.  
See: Odysseus Elytis, "Ἐπίμετρο", (1971); in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 601.
- 75 See the third section of Elytis' *The Axion Esti*, "The Gloria", a long hymn of praise of the sensual and the spiritual beauties of the world. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., pp. 75-92. See also below, Chapter Nine.



### 4. 3. Modern Greek Architects in Search for a Lost Vision

*Having loved and lived for centuries within the sea I learned to read and write*

Odysseus Elytis<sup>76</sup>

It was not until well into the present century that the healing of the chasm between the two worlds found its concrete materialisation in the mature architectural language of Dimitris Pikionis. In modern Greece, architecture had been impeded by the same forces that endangered the living spoken tongue, and by the pursuits of the enlightenment of men, their lives and cities that so disquieted Solomos. What distinguished modern Greek architecture from its predecessor was the fact that, for the first time in the modern Greek state of the nineteenth century, it disengaged itself from the matrix of traditional craftsmanship, became a learned art and was practised by architects (until the beginning of the twentieth century mostly foreigners) who had received their professional education in western European universities or, from 1917,<sup>77</sup> in Greek universities which followed Western models and were initially staffed with western European teachers. These architects directed their efforts to the re-discovery of the classical thread they believed to have been used in the weaving of the cities of the West from the Renaissance onwards. This, they were convinced, was the only appropriate thread to make the architectural cloth of truly Hellenic cities.

Neoclassicism provided the models for the re-building of the cities of a revived classical Hellas, but the inflow of styles from western Europe did not stop there. Following in the footsteps of Europe, in search for a lost vision, Greek architects shifted their purely stylistic focus from Greek Classical and revived classical Renaissance models to Byzantine, Romanesque and Gothic ones, only to abandon them later when the ghosts of the age favoured the simplicity of 'archaic' and 'primitive' geometric forms. While the modern Greek capital was being stripped of not less than seventy-two surviving churches, in order to raise funds and building

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76 From Elytis' poem *The Fresco*; in his collection *The Light Tree and the Fourteenth Beauty*, (1971). Translated by John Stathatos; in: Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (eds.), op. cit., p. 84.

77 The year when a School of Architecture was founded within The National Technical University of Athens (Ethnico Metsovion Polytechnion). This School had 25-30 students per year.

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materials for the construction of her new metropolitan church (1846-1862),<sup>78</sup> a new 'Greco-Byzantine' style was emerging; and while elements of Byzantine ecclesiastical architecture were being transposed to modern secular edifices, the pioneers of the Modern Movement in Greece - and elsewhere - recognised the compatibility of ancient Greek rationalism with modern rationalism,<sup>79</sup> and of Modernist architectural functionalism with that of vernacular architecture.<sup>80</sup> In the meantime, vernacular art and architecture had been reappraised in Greece and in the West.

However paradoxical it may sound, since Greek architects set on chasing the dream of a classical and at the same time modern Greek architecture they went on copying the models they received from western Europe, always justifying their actions with arguments which were meant to prove the identity of their models' aesthetic principles with the Greek Classical ones.<sup>81</sup> When the Neoclassicists' repatriation of the classical orders (such efforts continued at least until the late 1930s) was banned by the Purists as "imitation of surfaces", the latter had to resort for 'standards' to a revised aesthetic appreciation of the Parthenon reduced to 'primary forms',<sup>82</sup> compared with a machine to suit the 'Machine Age'.<sup>83</sup>

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- 78 Costas Biris, *Αί Ἀθήναι ἀπὸ τοῦ 19ου εἰς τὸν 20ον Αἰῶνα*, Athens, 1966, Vol. 1, p. 91. Cited in: Christos Yannaras, 1992, op. cit., p. 258. See Philippides' comparison of the result with the old Byzantine metropolitan church of Athens, part of a twelfth century monasterial complex, standing next to it. In: Dimitris Philippides, 1984, op. cit., pp. 94-5. See Fig. 6.35, below.
- 79 See the speeches held by Greek architects at the 4th of the Congrès Internationaux de l'Architecture Moderne (CIAM), in: "Τὸ IV Συνέδριον Νεωτέρας Ἀρχιτεκτονικῆς"; in: *Τεχνικὰ Χρονικὰ*, Year B/IV, 44-45-46, Athens, 15 October-15 November 1933, pp. 1-94.
- 80 Cf.: "Rural architecture with its essentially regional features, is perfectly at home with today's rationalism. In fact it embodies in practice all those functional criteria on which modern building methods are essentially based." Alberto Sartoris; quoted in: Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*, London, 1980. 1985, 1992, p. 322. See below, Chapter Six, 2.
- 81 See: Savas Kondaratos, "The Parthenon as Cultural Ideal: The Chronicle of its Emergence as a Supreme Monument of Eternal Glory"; in: Panayotis Tournikiotis (ed.), *The Parthenon and its Impact in Modern Times*, Athens, 1994, pp. 20-53.
- 82 See: Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, translated from the thirteenth French edition with an introduction by Frederick Etchells, London, 1987, 1989, (London, 1927, first edition of the English translation; in French: *Vers une Architecture*, Paris, 1923, first edition), p. 29.
- 83 Cf. Le Corbusier's words about the Parthenon: "We are in the inexorable realm of the mechanical. There are no symbols attached to these forms: they provoke definite sensations"; and: "All this plastic machinery is realized in marble with the rigour that we have learnt to apply in the machine. The impression is a naked polished steel." Ibid., pp. 211, 217. Cf. also: "our apprehension of the Parthenon can only correspond nowadays ... with sensations of a mechanical kind". Ibid., p. 144. See: Yannis Tsiomis, "The Acropolis in the Service of Industry"; in: *Architecture in Greece*, Annual Review, 21, Athens, 1987, pp. 107-9.

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Lost in the pursuit of the true architectural face of Greece, most of these architects failed to see that the features of this face were to be found behind the death masks they were trying to cast on it.<sup>84</sup> The Western influence on the shaping of modern Greek identity and modern Greek cities had brought the Greek people and the forms of their architecture closer to the West and its ideals. Yet, neither Greek society and its means, nor the face of the Greek land could have been transformed overnight. Since in the centuries before the Greek War of Independence there was no so-called 'high' art and architecture created in Greek lands (with few exceptions, within some monasteries), the architectural features of the true face of Greece could only be seen alive in the humble forms of the arts of the Greek people. One century after independence, these people had preserved a way of life incompatible with the one that produced the forms which had been offered to accommodate it. The growing awareness of the principles on which this life was based led to the realisation of the distance that was separating the world which was moulding these forms from the world of the Greeks, of the inconsistency between the way in which architects were learning how to build and the contemporary Greek way of living, thinking and being.

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See also: Giuliano Gresleri, "Ch. E. Jeanneret: From Prague to the Parthenon. The 'Drift' and the 'Perfect Ecstasy' "; in: *ibid.*, pp. 99-103.

Cf. Fernand Léger's writings on the Acropolis, where he exclaims: "This is what the Parthenon originally was; perfect in the way a 1934 microscope is." *Le Voyage en Grèce*, pamphlet, Paris, Spring-Summer 1934, p. 6. Cited in: "From the Acropolis to the Eiffel Tower", in: "Acropolis and the Moderns"; in: *Tefchos*, Bilingual Review of Architecture, Art and Design, 2, Athens, September 1989, p. 27.

Cf. also: "The Parthenon, a terrible machine, grinds and dominates". Le Corbusier (Charles-Edouard Jeanneret), *Journey to the East*, edited and annotated by Ivan Žaknić, translated by Ivan Žaknić in collaboration with Nicole Pertuiset, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, 1987, 1989. (In French: *Le Voyage d'Orient*, Paris, 1966), p. 212.

84 A detailed and illustrated account of the architectural languages employed by Greek and foreign architects in modern Greece since the early nineteenth century will follow in Chapter Six.

#### 4. 4. Vision and Language in the Architecture of Dimitris Pikionis

*Houses, you know, grow stubborn easily when you strip them bare.*

George Seferis<sup>85</sup>

In 1925, in an article entitled "Ἡ Λαϊκή μας Τέχνη κι ἑμεῖς" (Our Folk Art and Ourselves),<sup>86</sup> Dimitris Pikionis criticised the architecture of his time and contrasted it with the native one. He saw the "arbitrary games of the pencil transferred onto our sacred earth"<sup>87</sup> endangering this earth itself and man's life on it. At the 4th of the CIAM (Congrès Internationaux de l'Architecture Moderne), in 1933, in Athens, he expressed his reservations against the new 'rationalist' architecture and the modern mechanistic views, urging the Greek architects to consider the solutions offered by the West with caution.<sup>88</sup> Pikionis himself had served his apprenticeship in these European forms that had dominated the Greek architectural scene since the beginning of the nineteenth century, and soon after his first exercises with them he saw the futility of every effort that was directed towards arbitrary imitation of external geometry, dressed in more and more revolutionary material.<sup>89</sup> He realised that the problem faced by Greek architects was not how to design buildings reduced to their purely functional components, but that man's house was seen as functioning at no other than the purely material level - including the aesthetic one - and that the architect's role had been limited to the designing of houses that were healthy for man's body alone, and pleasing to his carnal eye. The form of the human dwelling place had been defined empirically, in terms of abstract mathematical relations and geometric rules, and emptied of symbolic meaning. The formal principles that found expression in the products of the architecture of avant-garde Modernist movements were predominantly aesthetic, often borrowed from contemporaneous art movements. Man's house had

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85 From his poem "*Thrush*", translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard, in: Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (trs.), op. cit., p. 321.

86 Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ Λαϊκή μας Τέχνη κι ἑμεῖς", (1925), pp. 53-69. First published in the art review *Φιλική Ἐταιρία*, Year 1, 4, Athens, April 1925, pp. 146-7.

87 Ibid., p. 57.

88 Dimitris Philippides, 1984, op. cit., p. 189.

See: Dimitris Pikionis, "Γύρω ἀπὸ ἓνα Συλλέγριο", (1933), pp. 169-70.

89 See below, Chapter Six, 9 and, for a detailed account of Pikionis' architecture, Chapters Seven and Eight.

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been assumed into the modern registry of machines, in the form of which the whole world had been reduced in order to be observed, measured, analysed and, ultimately, exploited.<sup>90</sup> A house or any other human structure could be "constructed well", that is, it could be ordered or "regulated" by means of "measurement" and "elementary mathematical calculation", to this end: "to obtain solidity and utility in the work"<sup>91</sup>.

Pikionis believed that the architect's concern for the material 'flesh' and 'bones' of his work should be subjected to the animating spirit; that the lost vision that was the architect's task to search for was a spiritual vision, the vision which the work of architecture ought to incarnate. The architect's efforts should be directed towards the guarding of the indivisible unity of form and content, matter and spirit, which is the goal of everything that man does creatively. For Pikionis, the relation between form and function was a qualitative one, and the architect ought to order his house to this end: to express '*well* and *truly*' the inner reality of the work. As Solomos said with reference to poetry, Pikionis might have said with reference to architecture: "E la forma sia l'abito del vero senso profondo d'ogni cosa."<sup>92</sup> What Pikionis proposed, when he realised that a crisis was about to break in architecture, was not a revision of the physical forms which served it, but a total revision of the relationship between the forms that architects were building and the vision they intended to convey, as well as a questioning of the validity of this vision.

When Pikionis was learning the vocabulary of his art - the necessary equipment in his struggle for expression - he found the language of Greek architecture in a condition of uncertainty, characterised by a polarisation between an avant-garde Modernist experimentation and an erudite historicist form-moulding, unable to convey the experience of everyday life. This compelled him to look for a model, a master who would act for him as a guide, a compass to lead him on the roads that grow naturally

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90 Cf.: "For Newton, the celestial spheres are a machine, for Descartes, animals are machines, for Hobbes, society is a machine, for La Mettrie, the human body is a machine, eventually for Pavlov and his successors human behaviour is like that of a machine. ... The whole physical world is regarded as no more than so much inanimate dead matter whose chemical changes are mechanical processes based upon the so-called law of the conservation of mass. Everything, including the mind of man, is aligned on the model of a machine constructed out of dissections, analyses and calculations." Philip Sherrard, 1987, 1991, op. cit., p. 69.

91 Le Corbusier, 1923, 1927, 1987, 1989, op. cit., pp. 70ff.

92 From a note of Solomos' to his *Woman of Zakynthos* (1826-1829). Cited in: Philip Sherrard, "Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 15.

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out of the architectural and cultural history of the people he had to work for. Modern Greek architecture was in a state of ambiguity and confusion. Having refused until then to use the native common architectural language, the living language of the people, and thus having cut communication channels, it had lost its organic connection to life, ignored the realities of life and had become increasingly estranged from the sources of the spiritual and artistic tradition of the people of the land where it stood. In 1954, in a letter to his wife, Pikionis criticised the imitation of foreign models<sup>93</sup> and added: "God bless our people who preserve, without knowing it - exactly because they do not know it - the memory of the Greek essence."<sup>94</sup>

Solomos' fight to serve the living spoken tongue of the Greeks and his poetic accomplishment - the instrument for, and the material of, which was the native tongue - encouraged and guided Pikionis in his own struggle to house the people who spoke it and who were in need of it. Since he returned to Greece, after having studied in Munich and Paris, "the need for realising what Solomos defines as 'il commune and

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93 Cf.: "Greece ... needed a *culture worker* rather than a *culture importer* (to use Pikionis's words) who would do more than merely imitate modern architecture as the eclectics had done formerly". Emile Chlimintzas, "Pikionis Built a Way of Thinking"; in: *Forum voor Architectuur*, Vol. 27, 4, Hilversum, June 1982, p. 15.

94 From a letter of Pikionis' to his wife Alexandra Pikioni, (Munich, 21/8/1954); in: Δημήτρη Πικιώνη *Κείμενα*, op. cit., p. 44.

See: Zissimos Lorentzatos' Preface to the collection of Pikionis' writings. Ibid., pp. 7-13. Here, Lorentzatos points out that the meaning of Pikionis' "Greek essence" has to be understood as related to that of Solomos' "Great Essences" ("le Grandi Sostanze") and not in a nationalistic sense (pp. 8-9). Pikionis' own words, in an interview on Greek architecture, justify Lorentzatos' view: Dimitris Pikionis, "Η Έλληνική 'Αρχιτεκτονική", (Interview, 1951), p. 172.

See also: Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 218.

And: Dimitris Pikionis, "Εἰσήγησις τῆς Αἰσθητικῆς Ἐπιτροπῆς τῆς Γενικῆς Γραμματείας Τουρισμοῦ ἐπὶ τῶν ἀρχῶν ἐπὶ τῶν ὁποίων πρέπει νὰ βασισθοῦν τὰ νομοθετικὰ μέτρα προασπίσεως τῆς Αἰσθητικῆς τῆς Χώρας εἰς τὰς Τουριστικὰς Ζώνας", (1946), p. 150. Cf. Dimitris Pikionis, "Η ἀνοικοδόμησι καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς παράδοσης", (1946), p. 162.

According to Lorentzatos, the four cardinal principles implicit in Pikionis' writings are: the spirit of the works of Solomos, the threefold relationship 'reversibility', 'foresight' and 'graciousness' of Proclus, Plotinus and Sikelianos (see: Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἐκθεσις τοῦ Καθηγητῆ Δημήτρη Πικιώνη πρὸς τὸν κ. Κωνσταντῖνο Α. Δοξιάδη", (1961), p. 199), the teachings of Plato, and Orthodoxy. Zissimos Lorentzatos, *Ὁ Ἀρχιτέκτονας Δημήτρης Πικιώνης*, Athens, 1969, pp. 38-55.

See also: Yorgos Simeoforidis, "One of Pikionis's Works in its Context"; in: "The Work of Dimitris Pikionis around the Hills of the Acropolis and the Philopappus in Athens"; in: *Lotus International*, Quarterly Architectural Review, 72, Milan, May 1992, pp. 20-2.

Condaratos notes also that Pikionis "frequently mentioned French and German philosophers and poets, and was fascinated by Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West*", and refers to "the presence in his library of works by Leon Chestov and Rabindranath Tagor [sic]." Savas Condaratos, "Dimitris Pikionis in Context"; in: Architectural Association, *Dimitris Pikionis, Architect 1887-1968; A Sentimental Topography*, London, 1989, p. 19.

'il proprio' became [his] constant pursuit", as he says in his "Autobiographical Notes".<sup>95</sup> It was in the difficult times in which Solomos lived that the Greeks were in need of a master who would draw the line between the natural or true language and the other, the artificial or unnatural;<sup>96</sup> and it was, in a similar way, in Pikionis' times that they found a master-builder who saw the analogies between natural language and architecture, and who realised the need for an architectural language which should be no other but the common tongue of the people he was to build for. His own way of building, Pikionis averred, could only be fruitful if he could proceed in the manner of the simple artists of the people, the same as that of the great masters,<sup>97</sup> which Pikionis described paraphrasing Solomos' apophthegm: "Conviene che in prima la mente concepisca, e poi il cuore senta caldamente ciò che la mente ha concetto."<sup>98</sup> Pikionis followed the example set by Solomos when he wished to apply in his search for the language of his craft the criteria that belong to the cultural history of the place and the community in the life of which his products were to participate. Such criteria could have been no other but the ones Dante bequeathed to Solomos and the latter applied in

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- 95 Dimitris Pikionis, "Αὐτοβιογραφικὰ σημειώματα", (1958), p. 31.  
It was also this "commune e proprio" that Pikionis discerned in ancient Greek and folk art. See: Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ λαϊκὴ μας Τέχνη κι ἐμεῖς", (1925), pp. 67-9. Solomos' words crown this article of Pikionis', together with the following words of Browning's: "God plants us where we grow." Ibid., p. 53.  
See also: Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ Ἑλληνικὴ Ἀρχιτεκτονικὴ", (Interview, 1951), p. 172.  
And: Dimitris Pikionis, "Αἰσθητικὲς ἀρχὲς τῆς ἀρχιτεκτονικῆς τοῦ Αἰξινικοῦ Συνοικισμοῦ", (1952), p. 256. And: Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ θεωρία τοῦ ἀρχιτέκτονος Κ. Α. Δοξιάδη γιὰ τὴ διαμόρφωση τοῦ χώρου εἰς τὴν ἀρχαία Ἀρχιτεκτονικὴ", (1937), p. 196, n. 2. Pikionis quotes the whole phrase of Solomos' in: Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἐποθῆκες ἀπὸ τὴν ἑλληνικὴ παράδοση", (1963), p. 282. Cf. Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 206.
- 96 Dante's "naturalis est nobis" and "potius artificialis"; Dante, *De Vulgari Eloquentia*; quoted in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, "Solomos' *Dialogos* and Dante"; in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, 1980, op. cit., p. 149.
- 97 Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ λαϊκὴ μας Τέχνη κι ἐμεῖς", (1925), pp. 67-9.  
Cf. Solomos' note to his *Hymn to Liberty* "Who told me this? The secret of my art and the example of the great masters." As quoted in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, "Ἐπιτομὴ: Solomos"; in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, 1980, op. cit., p. 184.
- 98 Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ λαϊκὴ μας Τέχνη κι ἐμεῖς", (1925), p. 69. Pikionis quoted the same apophthegm of Solomos' in his speech to the Third Conference of Greek Architects, in Nauplia, in December 1963. Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἐποθῆκες ἀπὸ τὴν ἑλληνικὴ παράδοση", (1963), p. 282. Also in: Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 245, n. 31 (p. 225). Solomos' words in the English translation of Sherrard read: "First the mind must conceive strongly and then the heart must feel warmly what the mind has conceived." Philip Sherrard, "Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 15. Solomos is reported to have replied to Monti in these words: "Non bisogna tanto ragionare, bisogna sentire" ("One must not think so much, one must feel"). The citations can be found in Italian in: Romilly Jenkins, op. cit., pp. 20-1.

his search for the common tongue of the Greeks, their first true language<sup>99</sup> and the one in which Greeks understand each other.

Pikionis strove to shape his works using the language that was still alive at his time and continued to serve the needs not for architectural expression *per se*, but the needs for expression through the medium of architecture, the needs of creative life itself. "The people who entrusts the words to the writer", he wrote, "hands down to us these forms which are to become the words of our plastic language."<sup>100</sup> Pikionis' task as an architect was to transpose the principles from literature to architecture or, rather, to extract from the language of the people - the verbal and the plastic - and from that of the great poets of Greece<sup>101</sup> these elements that characterise and qualify their way of living which was also to be his way of building. His own venturesome inquiry into the nature of architectural language, directed by the conflicting currents of his time, led him away from the Sirenian calls of newly imported modern technology, towards the masters of the native architectural tongue of his land, the builders who pursued not to 'order' nature but to be taught by nature how to build orderly in the manner of nature. For Pikionis, "nature concealed the revelation of the intelligible world."<sup>102</sup> Attracted by the sweetness of its radiance, he pored over nature and all that was built in it by the generations of builders and craftsmen before his time with a thirst for knowledge - a kind of knowledge different to the one he had acquired during the years of his formal education - and with the conviction that he was to acquire it creatively; his own architecture was a creation from within the language of his antecedents, distant and

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99 Dante's "nostra vera prima locutio"; Dante, *De Vulgari Eloquentia*; quoted in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, "Solomos' *Dialogos* and Dante"; in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, 1980, op. cit., p. 149.

100 Dimitris Pikionis, "Η Λαϊκή μας Τέχνη κι έμείς", (1925), p. 69.

Cf.: "the shapes one carves on wood ... are the words of carpentry". Ibid., p. 64.

Cf. also: "the sober structure of the [ancient Greek] language is like that of the statues..."

Dimitris Pikionis. "Συναισθηματική Τοπογραφία", (1935), p. 78.

And: "It is the people who are the guardians of our mother tongue ... and who can teach us the language, the Greek ethos, and their crafts." Dimitris Pikionis, "Αντώνης Σώχος", (1961), p. 91.

Pikionis underlines the analogies between verbal and plastic language also in: Dimitris Pikionis, "Η άνοικοδόμηση και τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς παράδοσης", (1946), pp. 161, 162.

101 Pikionis often refers also to the example set by Sikelianos; e. g.: Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς παράδοσης", (1951), p. 159.

102 Dimitris Pikionis, "Γαίλας ἀτίμωσις", (1954), p. 127.

Cf.: "for the invisible things of God since the creation of the world are seen and apprehended in created things." St. John of Damascus, "de imaginibus oratio"; in: J. P. Migne (ed.), op. cit., 94, 1241B.



immediate.<sup>103</sup> What he learnt from them was the way to cultivate this language in a manner that would perpetuate its ability to re-create the world - man's dwelling place - in our own age.

Pikionis' work, as Yannaras attests, is characterised by a great respect for matter which, according to the Orthodox Christian tradition, is "the built flesh of the unbuilt Λόγος"<sup>104</sup>, and by an affirmation of the positive value of the material world and of the relation between created things and the uncreated Λόγος. As Yannaras points out, the Greek Church had adopted a negative attitude towards the material world which was considered adulterated or evil, an attitude which reflected "the popularised Platonic dualism of Western Christianity"<sup>105</sup>. Pikionis' work as well as his writings, Yannaras adds, emphasise the positive content and significance of creation, giving effect to the axiom of St. John of Damascus: "Σέβων οὐ παύσομαι τῇ ὕλῃ δι' ἧς ἡ σωτηρία μου εἴργασται"<sup>106</sup>. In a discussion with Yannaras, Pikionis explained that "one can only build a church if he knows how to imprint on the building the way in which people give shape to matter for life to function in its every aspect."<sup>107</sup> And he is reported to have taught his students that there can be no distinction between sacred and profane art. In Byzantium, he is reported to have said in one of his lectures, there was

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103 See: Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 206, where Pikionis asks for an attempt for "a creative relation with the past", quoting the words of Georgoulis' (K. D. Georgoulis, *Ἡ Μελέτη τῶν Ἀνθρωπιστικῶν Γραμμάτων*, 1938).

Pikionis quoted with approval Eliot's words (in Greek, probably from memory), in: Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἐπιστολὴ στὸν Δήμαρχο Ἡρακλείου γιὰ τὸ Μνημεῖο τοῦ Καζαντζάκη", (23/3/1958), p. 273. The precise words of Eliot's are the following: "the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order." T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and Individual Talent"; in: T. S. Eliot, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

104 Christos Yannaras, 1992, *op. cit.*, pp. 418-20.

See: Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἱστορικὲς καὶ Ζωντανὲς Μορφές"; in: *Αἰξωνή*, Vol. 1, Issues 1-12, October 1950-December 1951, pp. 31-5.

See also: P. Vassiliadis; in: "Γνώμες γιὰ τὸν Πικιώνη Σαράντα Ἀρχιτεκτόνων, Διανοουμένων καὶ Καλλιτεχνῶν"; in: *Ζυγός*, Monthly Art Review, 27-28, Athens, January-February 1958, p. 18.

105 Christos Yannaras, 1992, *op. cit.*, pp. 418-9.

106 (I ceaselessly respect matter through which my salvation has been prepared). *Ibid.*, p. 419. The axiom of St. John of Damascus is referred to: *Λόγος ἀπολογητικός*, I, 16, published by Kotter, p. 89.

107 Christos Yannaras, *Καταφύγιο Ἰδεῶν: Μαρτυρία*, Athens, 1987, 1988, 1990, p. 295.

See: Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 227 (on ecclesiastical architecture).

Cf. Odysseus Elytis, "Πρῶτα - Πρῶτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

no such distinction. "There was one art. And this is how it should be. The values of life are not sacrilegious, they are holy."<sup>108</sup> Although he is said to have admitted that he never dared build a church,<sup>109</sup> Pikionis' works are testimony to his continuous endeavour to find, learn and, finally, elevate with mastery and force<sup>110</sup> the common making language of the people these works address. And they seek to satisfy all the needs of these people's life, to house their material daily life and to "put [them] in sane touch with that which transcends, with matters 'undreamt of' in [their] materiality."<sup>111</sup>

Pikionis spent many years studying the language of the vernacular architecture of Greece.<sup>112</sup> Through strenuous study,<sup>113</sup> he sought to learn the living language of the people, to interpret its images and symbols, and to find the correspondences between these and their metaphysical archetypes. Submitting himself to the living idiom of his art, he tried to master it<sup>114</sup> and use it, putting into practice Solomos' advice, "in the

108 Konstantinos G. Xynopoulos, "Αναμνήσεις από τον Πικιώνη"; in: The National Technical University of Athens, *Δημήτρης Πικιώνης: Ἀφιέρωμα στὰ Ἐκατὸ Χρόνια ἀπὸ τὴ Γένησσή του*, Athens, 1989, p. 148.

109 Christos Yannaras, 1987, 1988, 1990, op. cit., p. 295. In 1927, Pikionis designed, in collaboration with the architect E. Kriezis, the Church of Sts. Anargyroi in N. Ionia (Athens). Christos Tsilalis, *Ἡ Ζωὴ καὶ τὸ Ἔργο τοῦ Πικιώνη*, Thessaloniki, 1970, p. 340.

110 Dante's "magistratu et potestare"; Dante, *De Vulgari Eloquentia*; quoted in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, "Solomos' *Dialogos* and Dante"; in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, 1980, op. cit., p. 152.

111 Steiner's words, from: George Steiner, 1989, 1991, op. cit., p. 227.

112 Pikionis wrote a study on the vernacular architecture of Chios, in 1925, entitled *L'Architecture Civile de l'île de Chio depuis la Conquête Genoïse jusqu'à nos Jours*, which was never published. Christos Tsilalis, op. cit., p. 340.

Unpublished also remained a collection of further studies of his on Greek vernacular architecture, entitled *Πνακοθήκη τῆς Τέχνης τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ Λαοῦ*. Ibid., p. 349.

Two studies of Pikionis' in collaboration with the society *Ἑλληνικὴ Λαϊκὴ Τέχνη* (Greek Folk Art), one on the mansion-houses of Kastoria (*Ἀρχοντικὰ Καστοριάς*) and one on those of Zagora in Pelion (*Σπίτια Ζαγοράς Πηλίου*), were published in 1949 and awarded a prize by the Greek National Academy. Ibid., p. 350.

Between 1937 and 1940 Pikionis, in collaboration with the society *Ἑλληνικὴ Λαϊκὴ Τέχνη*, undertook a series of studies on Greek folk art and architecture. Ibid., p. 348.

Pikionis emphasises the urgency of the need for such studies on "the architecture of [our] tradition"; in: Dimitris Pikionis, "Εἰσήγησις τῆς Αἰσθητικῆς Ἐπιτροπῆς τῆς Γενικῆς Γραμματείας Τουρισμοῦ ἐπὶ τῶν ἀρχῶν ἐπὶ τῶν ὁποίων πρέπει νὰ βασισθοῦν τὰ νομοθετικὰ μέτρα προασπίσεως τῆς Αἰσθητικῆς τῆς Χώρας εἰς τὰς Τουριστικὰς Ζώνας", (1946), p. 151.

Between 1923 and 1924 Pikionis also taught at the School of the Greek Manufacturing Company, in the Department of Carpentry. Ibid., pp. 333-4.

113 Cf.: "[Tradition] cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour." T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and Individual Talent"; in: T. S. Eliot, op. cit., p. 49.

114 Pikionis quoted Solomos' words: "first submit to the language of the people, and then if you are able, master it." (See earlier note.) Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ Λαϊκὴ μας Τέχνη κι ἐμεῖς", (1925), p. 69.

essence, not merely formally"<sup>115</sup>. As he explicitly affirmed, "the language of form" has to express both "the essence of the tradition and the historical time of the architect"<sup>116</sup>. For, as Solomos said about poetry, "it is certainly good to tread in those tracks, but not to stop there: one must raise oneself up perpendicularly"<sup>117</sup>. Pikionis attempted to revive the spirit - not the letter - of the living language of architecture;<sup>118</sup> mastering this language meant to him making it richer not in form but in content, "acting in the way the unlearned peasant acts: with truth - not need alone - as a gnomon."<sup>119</sup> And he used the "ideographic"<sup>120</sup> language of traditional Greek architecture (ancient, Byzantine and post-Byzantine vernacular) not in a formal, imitative, but in an imaginative manner, in order to manifest and transfuse to others the consciousness of the validity of the vision of life which it carried down to us. The wealth of the tradition of which the Greek vernacular architectural language was the vehicle was, for Pikionis, the most vital force of life;<sup>121</sup> the force that could give vitality to his own architectural language, and endurance to the inherited language that his architecture ought to preserve.

His choice was neither arbitrary nor easy; it was a choice affecting not only his way of building but his whole way of living. For only when everything one does is directed towards the same end it is possible for one to create a form which is "the expression of

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115 "Chi si una della lingua clefta lo facesse virtualmente, non formalmente, m'intendi?" Solomos here speaks of the use of the Klephtic language (that of demotic Klephtic songs), in a letter he wrote on 1 June 1833 to G. Tertsetis. Cited in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, "Solomos' *Dialogos* and Dante"; in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, 1980, op. cit., pp. 153-4.

116 Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 225.  
Cf. Ibid., p. 245, n. 31 (p. 225).

117 "E quanto al poetare ... è bene sì, piantarsi su quelle orme, ma non è bene fermarvisi: conviene alzarsi perpendicolarmente". Cited in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, "Solomos' *Dialogos* and Dante"; in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, 1980, op. cit., p. 154.

See: Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ λαϊκὴ μας Τέχνη κι ἐμεῖς", (1925), pp. 54ff.

118 See: Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ ἀνοικοδόμησις καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς παράδοσης", (1946), pp. 160f. Here Pikionis points out that "the imitation of the outer forms of our tradition is unable to substitute its inner essence."

See also: Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 227.

119 As quoted in the report (29 October, 1924) of the committee of the School of Architecture, to which Pikionis submitted his studies on Greek vernacular architecture, in support of his candidature for a professorship. The members of the committee were: A. Orlandos, E. Kriezis and I. Chatsopoulos. Cited in: Christos Tsilalis, op. cit., p. 334.

120 Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἀντώνης Σῶχος", (1961), p. 98.

121 Giakoumakatos criticises Pikionis' "utopist" approach to the vernacular architecture, in: Andreas Giakoumakatos, "Ἡ λαϊκὴ μας Τέχνη, ὁ Δημήτρης Πικιώνης καὶ ἡ Πλάνη τῆς Νεοελληνικῆς Ἀρχιτεκτονικῆς"; in: *Architecture in Greece*, Annual Review, 21, Athens, 1987, pp. 17-9.

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a spiritual content", a form like the ones the unlearned people created.<sup>122</sup> Pikionis' entire life was guided by the life of the tradition which this people had kept alive, for he believed that only in this fashion it was possible for his own work to prolong it. The product of his architecture had to be the product of his inherited tradition, the communal tradition which is the bond between the architect and the people; its outward form had to "reflect the relation of the artist with his fellow-men"<sup>123</sup>, and its formal principle had to be "rooted in the unity of all the activities of the nation"<sup>124</sup> of which he is a member. By humbling himself before his earthly land, Pikionis founded his architectural products in it, leaving the land unharmed; his architecture seems part of the native landscape; it grows out of the body of the earth like an arm or a leg; it breathes the air she breathes; shaped in her manner of shaping the forms of the natural world, it is fed by her and becomes an integral part of hers.<sup>125</sup> Pikionis acknowledged that his design had to conform to the order in nature, which is of a physical as well as a metaphysical kind.<sup>126</sup> Architectural order has to be of the same kind as the natural order for life to be lived in it humanly, not merely functionally in the narrow sense to which Modernist architecture confined functionality.

Pikionis viewed and pursued architecture within human life;<sup>127</sup> he believed that the only way to proceed on the way towards a truthful architecture, one that does not

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122 Dimitris Pikionis, "Η Λαϊκή μας Τέχνη κι έμεις", (1925), p. 67.

123 Ibid.

124 Ibid.

125 Pikionis admired ancient Greek architecture exactly for this quality: "its products appear like a continuation of nature." Ibid., p. 65.

In September 1993, I met a taxi-driver strolling around the Philopappus area which Pikionis landscaped. He observed the work and, unable to date it, he asked me whether "these were ancient things". When I told him that they date only from the fifties, he exclaimed: "you mean, it has not always been like this here?"

Cf.: "The whole completely fits into the historic space and has thus been appropriated by the Athenians. Moreover, the unobtrusiveness, even modesty of Pikionis' whole gesture, his artistic quality has been asserted in two ways: for the layman his structures appear timeless, as though they have always been there as an integral part of the setting. A trained eye appreciates, however, the marvel of the careful integration, the respect of the genius loci, the submission to the primacy of the great architectural heritage." Alexander Papageorgiou-Venetas, 1990-1991, op. cit., p. 38. A detailed account of Pikionis' architectural work on the Attic hills will follow in Chapter Eight of this thesis.

126 Pikionis' approach to nature will be discussed below, in Chapter Seven, 1. and 2.

127 See: Dimitris Pikionis, "Η Έλληνική Αρχιτεκτονική", (Interview, 1951), p. 173.

Cf.: "Indeed, the meaning of life is the same as that of art." Dimitris Pikionis, "Η άνοικοδόμηση και τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς παράδοσης", (1946), pp. 158, 164.

Cf. also: "The architect has to submit his work to the sacred demands of life"; in: Dimitris Pikionis, "Γύρω ἀπὸ ἓνα Συνέδριο", (1933), p. 169.

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betray life, was to immerse architecture in life itself. This is what mainly distinguishes the way he proceeded from that of all other modern Greek architects before him. While the representatives of both historicist academicism and Modernist 'avant-garde' tendencies were seeking to seize the truth through the contours of a material form empty of life, Pikionis saw exterior form as the means to bring truth into being, which is the end of every work of art. To bring just one example, the building of a Christian church in Greece in the glittering form reminiscent of a temple of Classical antiquity divorced the form itself from the context that brought it into being, and from the cosmological revelation to which the building of the ancient temple was directed; at the same time, it shaped a church in a form alien to the Orthodox tradition and to the fundamental idea of the participation of sensible created form in the world of the spirit. The means employed in such a case have absolute priority; the use of one rather than another style or type of form becomes the end of the work of architecture. In contrast, in Pikionis' architecture the means are wilfully and consciously completely subordinate to what they express, the definite purpose of his work.<sup>128</sup>

In modern Greek architecture, the moment when the search for an architectural language had reached a point where the limits of the horizontal plane of external forms started becoming apparent coincided with the appearance of Pikionis. The problem of true architectural expression was a problem to be solved not with the eye and reason exclusively, but with the activation of the imagination of the architect, which follows the perpendicular. Pikionis freed himself of the philosophical principles developed in the modern West, on which he saw modern architecture being based, and opposed a synthetic method to the dried-up analytical one. He immersed himself in what Lorentzatos calls "our double tradition of vigorous folklore and scattered elements from a more distant past"<sup>129</sup> and he realised the need to read the past creatively, with a

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And: Dimitris Pikionis, "Αισθητικές αρχές της αρχιτεκτονικής του Αλεξιωνικού Συνοικισμού", (1952), p. 257.

128 Pikionis, quoting Solomos' words, says: "the difficulty which an artist experiences (I speak of great artists) does not consist in showing imagination and passion, but in subordinating these two things, with time and with labour, to the intelligible meaning of Art." Dimitris Pikionis, "Υποθήκες από την ελληνική παράδοση", (1963), p. 282. Solomos' words are cited in English and referred to a note of Solomos' to his *Ode on the Death of Lord Byron*; in: *Dionysios Solomos, The Complete Works*, edited and introduced by J. Polylas, Athens, 1948, p. 133, in: Philip Sherrard, "Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 15.

129 Zissimos Lorentzatos, "Solomos"; in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, 1980, op. cit., p. 17.

philosophical mind<sup>130</sup> and with an activated soul,<sup>131</sup> searching for the "mother ideas"<sup>132</sup>. His approach to ancient Classical architecture differs from that of the Neoclassicists in the sense that, while theirs was restricted to a superfluous application of the canonical classical conventions on surfaces, according to the architectural tradition of the Renaissance, Pikionis saw the Classical canonical form not as an end in itself but as the result of a coherent and consistent treatment of form, regulated by conventions of conformity to type. As he explicitly stated, he consciously intended his works to follow the Classical, Byzantine and post-Byzantine vernacular architectural tradition of conformity to type, while he strongly opposed and criticised the imitation of particular architectural styles<sup>133</sup> which he saw in his days in abundant supply in the modern *Marché Imaginaire*.<sup>134</sup>

Pikionis perceived the unity of the architecture of the Greek worlds of past and present along a continuous tradition. And he discerned this unity in all kinds of art, pointing at the "homologous" expressions of the same tradition in ancient, demotic, and modern Greek poetry.<sup>135</sup> He saw "the deities of polytheism" enshrined in the Christian tradition, transformed into "powers and angels", and saints of "the Christian pantheon", and illumined by "the spiritual light of the New Teaching".<sup>136</sup> He discerned the analogies between the hymns of the pagan Greek world and those of Christianity, and in the "words and forms" of the "symbolic language" of both worlds he saw the revelation of the "unspoken beauty" and "the truth of the intelligible world"<sup>137</sup>. The words of ancient and Christian poetry, and of the poetry of the people reflected a "mythical vision of the world"; the same vision which Pikionis saw expressed in the

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130 Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 222.

131 Ibid., p. 221.

Cf.: "Bad witnesses for men are the eyes and ears of those who have foreign souls". Heracleitus, B 107; in: Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Mathematicians*, VII 126.

132 Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἱστορικὲς καὶ Ζωντανὲς Μορφές"; in: *Αἰξωνή*, Vol. 1, Issues 1-12, October 1950-December 1951, p. 35.

133 Ibid. Here Pikionis refers to the contemporary trend of creating works according to the recipe: "Un poco moderno, un poco stile di paese".

134 In his article "Ἡ Λαϊκὴ μας Τέχνη κι ἐμεῖς" (Our Folk Art and Ourselves), (1925), p. 54, Pikionis wrote: "History of art, the way we understand it, is like a shop with plaster moulds. One enters and chooses according to one's taste".

Cf. Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ ἀνοικοδόμησι καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς παράδοσης", (1946), p. 166.

135 See: Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ Σκέψη καὶ ἡ Μέσα Βλέψη" (extract from a lecture); in: *Ἄντι*, Fortnightly Political and Cultural Review, B, 363, New Year 1988, pp. 42-5.

136 Dimitris Pikionis, "Σπουδαστικὸς κόσμος", (1955), p. 122. Here Pikionis uses the word Διδαχὴ (Teaching) instead of Διαθήκη (Testament).

137 Ibid.

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forms of ancient,<sup>138</sup> Christian,<sup>139</sup> and vernacular architecture.<sup>140</sup> But, he says, one can only perceive the beauty and "unspoken fragrance" of these forms with the spiritual senses and only after a long purification process<sup>141</sup>, with "the spiritual sight and hearing and taste", one must "receive them in the depths of one's soul (έν βένθεει καρδίας)."<sup>142</sup>

Pikionis' approach to the built past, which not only materialised the history of his craft but also formed an integral part of the physical environment which was to receive the products of his own creative building, is also in conflict with that of the representatives of the Modern Movement in Greece. Greek Modernists opposed volumes to surfaces, and their preoccupation with geometric precision, simplicity, and reduction led them to an interpretation of the Classical, the archaic and the primitive (in the sense that it does not belong to the Greek-to-Renaissance tradition) according to the new conventions which they established once they had willingly overturned those of the old norm. It is difficult, however, if not impossible, to find any such pure Euclidean forms as those championed by the Purists - cubes, cones, spheres, cylinders, et cetera - in any ancient or vernacular examples. The latter stand next to the Modernist ones more as "witnesses than models"<sup>143</sup>, very much like the African sculptures in the studio of Picasso.

In Greek vernacular architecture and in all folk works made by art, the economy of means, the highly symbolic language and the strict typology induce a sense of simplicity and reduction to essentials which is not, however, to be understood as an autonomous form of expression characterised by a desire for abstraction and governed by the law of a narrowly defined functionality, but as a result of adherence to conventions regulating the 'right way' of building, governed by the law of necessity. It is a form of expression that is simple and reduced to essentials, for the sake of accuracy and immediacy of a language employed to serve a clearly defined purpose. Simple and unaffected by self-conscious concerns for style and self-expression, the anonymous buildings are the concrete product of collective experience within a

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138 Dimitris Pikionis, 1988, op. cit., p. 45.

139 Dimitris Pikionis, "Τò πρόβλημα τής μορφής", (1950), pp. 204-46.

140 Dimitris Pikionis, "'Αντώνης Σώχος", (1961), p. 91.

141 Dimitris Pikionis, "'Η Λαϊκή μας Τέχνη κι έμεϊς", (1925), p. 55.

142 Dimitris Pikionis, "Σπουδαστικός κόσμος", (1955), p. 123.

143 W. Rubin (ed.), *'Primitivism' in Twentieth Century Art*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1984, p. 17.

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common system of belief and the manifestation of the high degree of commensurability of works produced within an integrated community, something often underlined by Pikionis.<sup>144</sup> His long acquaintance with, and study of, Greek vernacular architecture and folk art helped him to see the fundamental difference between the principles on which its production was based and those which governed the production of the so-called Functionalist architecture. The Classical, Byzantine and post-Byzantine vernacular adherence to type and canonical conformity, and indifference to historical expression or self-expression, in contrast to approaches to architectural creation in the West since the Renaissance,<sup>145</sup> led Pikionis to the realisation that architectural creation cannot be a matter of inspiration, invention, or genius of the architect - a *jeu d'esprit* ou du crayon<sup>146</sup> - but has to be based on a prototype. Neither can the work be subsequent to the idea, as in historicist solutions, nor the idea subsequent to the work, as in the Modernist case; the two must co-exist. The work of the architect has to be the embodiment of the idea, its faithful copy, and, in this sense, architecture must have an iconographic character.

*It has to be the symbolic expression of the inner reality of each people.*<sup>147</sup>

Pikionis' own works produced in the twentieth century may be regarded as contemporary with the ancient and the Byzantine ones and with those of the anonymous builders, not historically but in a transcendental time; none of these works are to be known by mere observation of the outward appearance of form. They all serve the same purpose and have a common origin. This is what distinguishes architecture from mere building: that it emanates from a higher reality which is not particular to any historical time. With Pikionis, the problem of architectural expression was viewed within the problem of creative expression and within what is called cultural life of a people, in his case, the cultural life of the Greek people. He was the first Greek architect to see that the problems faced by architecture could not be solved

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144 Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ Λαϊκή μας Τέχνη κι ἑμεῖς", (1925), pp. 54, 67, 69; Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἀντώνης Σῶχος", (1961), p. 91; Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ ἀνοικοδόμησι καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς παράδοσης", (1946), *passim*; et cetera.

145 Paraphrasing Elytis, it may be said that Western architecture starts at the moment when men do not build a house (*o'altra cosa*) but 'this' house. Elytis' words are the following: "Western poetry starts at the moment when men do not write a poem but 'this' poem." Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Μικρὰ Ἐψίλον"; in: Odysseus Elytis, *Ἐν Λευκῷ*, Athens, 1992, p. 211.

146 See: Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ Λαϊκή μας Τέχνη κι ἑμεῖς", (1925), p. 57.

147 Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ ἀνοικοδόμησι καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς παράδοσης", (1946), p. 162. Cf. Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 206.



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within architecture as a self-existent value. The solutions he offered suggest a creative reading of the past and a reading of architecture within the perspective of the cultural history of Greece, which is incompatible with the history of the outer dimensions of the country of the Greeks. Pikionis' architectural solutions suggest a way of building which intends to fix the architect's work to place, where this place is not seen as a piece of geography, but, rather, in its cultural dimensions, the outer and the inner ones. Pikionis' works and writings suggest that the inner dimension of Greek culture - the permanent one - is a mythological or metaphysical dimension<sup>148</sup>; it is the immutable spiritual axis around which architecture (*o'altra cosa*) revolves.<sup>149</sup> Greece has been the heir of a spiritual tradition within which Pikionis lived and which informed and enlightened his work. In his manner, he kept this tradition alive and prolonged it in his historical time, offering it to the coming ages. "Continuation is implicit in tradition", he says, "a continuation which is the expression of the unchanging principles that govern each tradition."<sup>150</sup>

The nature and the content of works produced in modern Greece, like those of her major poets<sup>151</sup> or the mature ones of Pikionis<sup>152</sup>, suggest that the Greek people have eventually come to terms with their name, their new historical dimension and the material dimension of their land. In the powerful voices of their poets - in the wide sense of the word - they have found the support they need in their never-ending struggle to recover the spirit which dwells in the depths of this land, to recover her natural moorings and to realise her potentiality; in order to conclude the liberation of Greece for which the War of Independence was fought.

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148 See: *ibid.*, p. 206.

See also: Dimitris Pikionis, "Η άνοικοδόμηση και τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς παράδοσης", (1946), *passim*.

And: Dimitris Pikionis, "Αντώνης Σῶχος", (1961), pp. 91, 101.

149 Cf.: "Things which have a natural circular motion are preserved and stay together because of it - if indeed, as Heraclitus says, the barley-drink separates if it is not moving (B 125)." Theophrastus, *On Vertigo*, 9.

150 Dimitris Pikionis, "Σπουδαστικὸς κόσμος", (1955), p. 122.

151 See: John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, *op. cit.*, pp. 214-37.

See also: Philip Sherrard, "The Poetry and the Myth"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, *op. cit.*, pp. 233-55.

152 See below, Chapter Six and, on Pikionis' most accomplished work on the Attic hills, Chapter Eight.

## Chapter Five

# Modern Greek Poetry as the Starting Point for an Inquiry into Modern Greece's Creative Life

*Poetati sunt arte regulari*

Dante

Silver Gift Poem

*I know that all this is nothing and that the tongue I  
speak has no alphabet*

*Since both the sun and the waves are a syllabic script  
you decipher only in times of sorrow and exile*

*And our land a mural with successive overlays Frankish or  
Slavic and if you try to restore it you are immediately  
arrested and made answerable*

*To a host of foreign Authorities through your own always*

*As happens in disasters*

*Yet let us imagine that on a threshing-floor of olden times  
which may well be in a tenement house there are children  
playing and that the loser*

*Must according to the rules tell and give the others a  
truth*

*So that in the end they all find themselves holding in their  
hand a small*

*Silver gift poem.*

Odysseus Elytis

## 5. 1. Aspects of Modern Greek Poetry

*Once again I took the shape of my native country*

Odysseus Elytis<sup>1</sup>

It has often been said that the Greek tradition in poetry is the longest continuing tradition in the Western world. Twentieth century Greek poets have contributed crucially to this tradition, to the extent that one may now say that modern Greek poetry represents the most significant voice of the nation's intellectual life. Beyond the differing personal modes of expression of modern Greek poets lies a permanent preoccupation with human life, in particular Greek life, and a concern with human existence; both are shared by most of these poets and, at the same time, reflect the preoccupations of the Greek people as a whole in their struggle to identify their relation with the past and present fate of their country.

As Sherrard says, in the Preface to the First Edition of *The Marble Threshing-Floor*,

*The problems with which they [five poets of modern Greece] wrestle, the imaginative patterns which their poetry reveals, are those that lie at the roots of the life of the Greek people.*<sup>2</sup>

"They are also those of the life of all people", he adds.<sup>3</sup> In the last two centuries, Greek poets have produced works which remain true to the Greek literary tradition of almost three thousand years and, at the same time, are of a universal significance. The persistence of themes that occur and recur in their work, and the consistency with which they are confronted manifest a coherent and essentially unchangeable attitude towards the mystery of human life. The shared tragic sense of life which Edmund Keeley discerns amongst modern Greek poets, "embodied in a mature - if sometimes delayed - vision of the human predicament, often seems to have emerged from a catharsis that was more than merely stylistic".<sup>4</sup> The striking constancy and tenacity in

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Elytis' poem on the previous page is from his collection *The Light Tree and the Fourteenth Beauty*, (1971), translated by George P. Savidis and Bette Anne; in: Ivar Ivask, "Preface"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., pp. ix-x.

1 From Elytis' poem *The Axion Esti*, "The Passion", Ode j. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 65.

2 Philip Sherrard, "Preface to the First Edition"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit.

3 Ibid.

4 Edmund Keeley, "Preface"; in: Edmund Keeley, 1983, op. cit., pp. xiv-v.

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the modern Greek poets' preoccupation with the poet's creative role and his relation to his nation's past, which have been illustrated by critics such as those mentioned above, as well as the conviction with which they speak of, and for, modern Greek reality, qualify modern Greek poetry as the primary vehicle of Greece's creative life in modern times and the clearest mirror of the Greek nation's recent intellectual history.<sup>5</sup>

Modern Greeks have always felt the presence of their mediaeval Byzantine and post-Byzantine heritage in their contemporary life. Intimately familiar with the sacred art of the Christian Orthodox tradition and the liturgical poetry of the Church, as well as with the poetry of the Ottoman period - the anonymous folk songs and the poetry of the sixteenth and seventeenth century Cretan Renaissance - they viewed poetry as an active presence in their life and not as a preoccupation of the educated classes. Contemporary poets have exploited this tradition, at least as much as the tradition of Classical and pre-Classical Greece, if not more so. Their own work carries forward the Byzantine and demotic tradition from which they inherited their themes<sup>6</sup> and heroes, as well as their language and literary metres. Consciously willing to find identification with the physical environment of their land and its people, to speak in the common language of the world and the fate they shared with the rest of Greeks, they employed images and popular myths that they had inherited in common with the rest of the society and which could be easier understood if clad in the traditional verse lines.<sup>7</sup> As Kimon Friar observes, with reference to Elytis' *Heroic and Elegiac Song for the Lost Second Lieutenant of the Albanian Campaign* (1943),<sup>8</sup>

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5 Cf.: "It is often said that the Greeks are a nation of bards, and it is true that if there is one form of expression which particularly distinguishes their creative life it is their poetry." John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

Cf. also: "The Greek War of Independence broke out in 1821. Since that date, the vitality of Greece has manifested itself in many ways. But perhaps nothing has been so striking as the growth and fecundity of her intellectual life. And here pride of place goes to the poets and to poetry." Philip Sherrard, "Preface to the First Edition"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, *op. cit.*

6 Such as the demotic song heroes' wrestling with Charon on the marble threshing-floor, which appears in Elytis' *Heroic and Elegiac Song for the Lost Second Lieutenant of the Albanian Campaign*, (1943).

7 Cf.: "the nation seeks from us the treasure of our individual intelligence clad in national dress." ("la nazione vuole da noi il tesoro della nostra intelligenza individuale vestito nazionalmente.") Solomos, in a letter he wrote on 1 June 1833 to G. Tertsetis. Cited in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, "Solomos' *Dialogos* and Dante"; in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, 1980, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

Cf. also Solomos' note in connection with the writing of his poem *The Free Besieged*: "Let the poem possess a bodiless soul, which emanates from God, and which is then embodied in the organs of time, of place, of nationality, of language ...". Cited in English and referred to

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*His verse line now departs from the irregularity of free verse and hovers around the traditional fifteen-syllable line of demotic poetry ... His images ... are now subdued to the service of greater clarity, to the fulfilment of a vow, to a need to find national identification and thus speak not only for himself but also for his nation.*<sup>9</sup>

The Greek poets of the last two centuries who wrote in a language in transition - as the Greek language was during most of its recent history - were the ones who re-created the language of the re-born nation, who taught the Greeks how to express themselves. Since the recovery of the roots of the Greek language has in modern Greece been identified with the recovery of what is most genuinely Greek, it was the preoccupation of these poets with the material of their art and their native literary tradition that guided their pursuit of the most vital elements of the Greek landscape, those elements which are at the same time vital for poetry and for life. In their striving to identify these elements, most modern Greek poets have acted in the way Peter Levi attributes to George Seferis, who "follows the natural grain of the wood, in language and in the experience of life."<sup>10</sup> Having first learnt the language which the simple people around them spoke, they used this vernacular language to compose works able to bring out all its inner beauty, its natural colour and vividness. And this was the only way to overcome the added difficulty they faced each time they attempted, in the words of Elytis,

*to express the things [they] love most in words that were once used by Sappho and Pindar, but that are now deprived of the audience, the vast repercussion they had in what was then the entire civilized world.*<sup>11</sup>

The high respect which modern Greeks feel for the wealth of poetry their race possesses has led them to regard poetry not as an autonomous domain of artistic

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*Dionysios Solomos: The Complete Works*, op. cit., pp. 207-9, in: Philip Sherrard, "Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 16.

8 Kimon Friar (tr.), *Odysseus Elytis: The Sovereign Sun: Selected Poems*, Philadelphia, 1974, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1990, pp. 87-97.

9 Kimon Friar, "Introduction; in: *ibid.*, pp. 18-9.

Elytis received the 1979 Nobel Prize for Literature "for his poetry, which, against the background of Greek tradition, depicts with sensuous strength and intellectual clear-sightedness modern man's struggle for freedom and creativeness." The poet accepted the Swedish Academy's tribute as "not only an honour for me but for Greece and its history through the ages, ... the most ancient tradition in Europe."

See also Analis' article on Yannis Ritsos: Dimitri T. Analis, "La Voix d'un Peuple"; in: *Europe, Revue Littéraire Mensuelle*, Vol. 71, 774, 1993, pp. 8-10.

10 Peter Levi, "George Seferis"; in: Peter Levi, 1991, op. cit., p. 218.

11 Odysseus Elytis' Nobel Prize acceptance speech, translated into English for the occasion of the Nobel Prize ceremony by Cay Cicellis; quoted from the translator's typescript in: Edmund Keeley, op. cit., p. xiv.

creation, to all appearances quite useless except for its entertainment-value, or as the private affair of an élite with a cultivated literary taste,<sup>12</sup> "brought up on the idea of poetry as a genteel amusement",<sup>13</sup> but as belonging to both learned and simple people who are of equal need of the poets' words. And they share this view with their poets themselves who appear to have been, like Seferis, "convinced that poetry is absolutely necessary to modern mankind"<sup>14</sup>, and to man's bodily and spiritual life.<sup>15</sup>

## 5. 2. Modern Greek Poetry as Index and Canon to the Understanding of the Modern Greek Architectural Creative Process

*By now have seven and sixty years  
been tossing my thought about the land of Greece;  
and from my birth there were twenty five to add to them*

Xenophanes<sup>16</sup>

In the short history of modern Greece her poets have led the quest for the meaning of man's life, Greek life in particular, in the modern world; not only have they asserted the necessity for the quest, but they have also provided indispensable guidance. The central place which poetry occupies not only in the Greek literary world, but in the life of the Greek people still today, has cultivated in the poets themselves a sense of responsibility and an awareness of the mission their society expects them to fulfil. The particular character of their poetry is not one which could easily classify it in one or the

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12 Cf.: "poetry now, with some exceptions, is written to be printed in small volumes for educated people of eccentric sensibility. In England if not in America there are poems still being written to be bought by a very genteel, respectable class of people." Peter Levi, 1977, op. cit., p. 63.

13 The phrase is borrowed from R. G. Collingwood, 1938, 1958, op. cit., p. 335.

14 Peter Levi, "George Seferis"; in: Peter Levi, 1991, op. cit., p. 223.

Cf.: "Art is the community's medicine for the worst disease of mind, the corruption of consciousness." R. G. Collingwood, 1938, 1958, op. cit., p. 336.

15 One of the most distinguished modern Greek poets, Nikos Gatsos, wrote song lyrics for a living, Elytis has written many songs, and Seferis himself wrote couplets for knife-blades for a knife-maker on the island of Amorgos (Peter Levi, "George Seferis"; in: Peter Levi, 1991, op. cit., p. 218), as well as a series of funny limericks for one of his grandchildren. (A translation into English can be found in: *ibid.*, Appendix, pp. 230-3).

See: Odysseus Elytis, "Ποίηση και Μουσική"; in: *Αιολικά Γράμματα*, Vol. 7, 43-44, Athens, January-April 1978, p. 25. Here Elytis expresses his satisfaction with Mikis Theodorakis' music for *The Axion Esti*, especially because, having been set to music, his poem "met with the feelings of thousands of people who know how to sing what they love, and for the mouths of whom it was destined from the start."

16 Xenophanes of Colophon, 21 B 8; in: Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers*, IX 18.

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other stylistic category or one which could baptise a School of poetry. It may be said that it is one which allows life and all that is essential to life to possess it. It may even be argued that the type of poetry which has been produced in modern Greece refuses categorisation to the extent that the only name it could bear, able to characterise it adequately as a whole, is the one of the language in which it is written. It is precisely the nature of the poetry which has been produced in modern Greece and the pattern of life it reveals that make modern Greek poetry an indispensable guide and rule for any inquiry into the history of one or the other type of creative activity in this country, which is meant to probe the type of thought from which the products of the particular activity emanate, rather than to remain confined within the limits created by these products' external dimensions and subject to the constrictions of their outer form.

As indicated in the introduction to this thesis, this inquiry is not concerned with a strictly stylistic analysis of modern Greek architectural phenomena. It is an attempt to view these phenomena as an index to the content of the architectural works and the imaginative patterns they reveal. It considers architecture in modern Greece as a creative process that brought about the embodiment of the Greek world, "this small world the great" of the poet, in the materials of the architects' craft, in modern times. Modern Greek architecture is discussed here as an architectural recollection process, a process directed towards the recovery not merely of the memory of the events but also of the truths of the Greek world - past and present - that are beyond history. The way architects operate, the way they view and image the world which they consciously will to embody in a form made by art, *well* and *truly*, does not differ in any way from that of other kinds of artists. In this thesis, the historical architectural making and ordering of the world is read with a view to approaching the mental image of the world which each individual architect beheld and intended to conceal in, and reveal by means of, the solid forms which he built. The extent to which the architects' images, the ideas they conceived inwards and expressed through their work outwards, appear to coincide with those contemplated by their contemporary poets is a measure of the extent to which different kinds of art in modern Greece have common points of departure and common ends, and of the degree to which modern Greek artists share a common understanding of the task they have to fulfil; and these are indicators of the degree of unity of art and communal life. As argued in Chapter Two of this thesis, the history of the nature of art or architecture corresponds to the history of the perception of the nature of truth. And it may be said that the history of the nature of modern Greek

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architecture corresponds to the history of the perception of the nature of the world it aspires to embody, and of the perception of the human poetic or recollecting capacity; of the theory of art and the view of the role of man as an artist - poet, architect, or reader - in the modern Greek historical and cultural context.

An inquiry into the history of the nature of architecture, an activity the products of which are undoubtedly in the service of human life, cannot be restricted to a collection of measurements, drawings, photographs et cetera, data which - in spite of other benefits - divorce architectural works from life, expel life from the architects' creation.<sup>17</sup> An analysis of data and facts relevant to the particular architectural products and their creators should be conducted within the context of human life, in a way that the type of life which the architect - and the user - participated in, acknowledged and aimed to serve fully, is taken into consideration and provides a lexicon for the understanding of empirically observed materials. A synthesis of these materials is required to take place within the framework created by the parameters of the life native to the same soil where the buildings under investigation stand, a process which resembles a translation of empirical data into the language of human life. Such synthesis is meant to lead to the unconcealment of the cause and the end of the works of architecture, to view them as full of life, situated at the centre of human life, and to contribute to the preservation of the humanness of life. In order to draw the picture of architecture in modern Greece, it is necessary to define the level at which modern Greek architects aimed to serve human life; to reach an understanding of their vision of life and of the degree to which they shared this vision with the rest of the society to which their works were addressed. Since the strictly practical function of architecture is evident, it remains to question whether the particular works were intended by their creators to be useful at any other level than the purely utilitarian one, in order to discuss the level at which architecture in modern Greece is in bondage to life, and the qualities of this bondage.

Modern Greek poetry provides a threshold to the life it presents - which is not the product of illusion but the mirror-image of reality - and a measure of the extent to

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17 "We thus have the paradoxical situation that archaeology, the only method of investigating man's past in the absence of written records, becomes increasingly less effective as a means of inquiry the more nearly it approaches those aspects of human life which are more specifically *human*." R. J. C. Atkinson, *Stonehenge*, p. 169; quoted in: Keith Critchlow, *Time Stands Still: New Light on Megalithic Science*, London and Bedford, 1979, p. 6.



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which a vision of the organic wholeness of life is preserved within modern Greek society; for it is primarily in poetry that such a vision finds expression. This is particularly true in a society where the poets choose to speak on behalf of their neighbours and intend their work not only to be understood by everybody native to the same language, but also to be useful for the whole of society;<sup>18</sup> where the poets insist on communicating a vision<sup>19</sup> and the voices of their predecessors have made sure that the channels of communication are kept open. The voice of these poets is not a record of personal feelings, passions, and private visions, but the controlled voice of artists who struggle to transcend their own individuality and to evoke a vision of man and life in their original condition, a vision which their works embody and of which they become the reminders.

In contemporary Greece such a vision, however obscured or even completely lost in everyday life - a process which was speeded up by the application of the Western system of education and its implicit view of life as a sum of autonomous and closed circles<sup>20</sup> - seems to have survived in, or, rather, to have passed on, to poetry. The analytic spirit of modern education which has resolved the world and human life into numerous parts and is guiding the process of dissection<sup>21</sup> without consideration of the whole, or even as if each fragment were a complete whole existing in its own right, has in modern Greece been able to expand and to widen the "chasm between the life of poetry and the poetry of life, between the image and the act, between the Logos and history."<sup>22</sup>

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18 See: "The poet, if he is truly a poet, is well aware that through poetry he struggles to attain genuine liberation. He does not try to attain this for himself only, but as an initial stage in the liberation of mankind." Anghelos Sikelianos, "John Keats"; *Anglo-Greek Review*, Vol. 2, Nr. 11. Athens, 1947, p. 347. Quoted in: Philip Sherrard, "Anghelos Sikelianos and his Vision of Greece"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1978, op. cit., p. 85.

19 See: *Every word is a doorway  
to a meeting, one often cancelled,  
and that's when a word is true; when it insists on the meeting*  
Yannis Ritsos, *The Meaning of Simplicity*

In: *Parentheses 1946 - 47*, translated by Edmund Keeley and cited in: Edmund Keeley, op. cit., p. 152.

20 Cf. Odysseus Elytis, "Ποίηση και Μουσική"; in: *Αιολικά Γράμματα*, Vol. 7, 43-44, Athens, January-April 1978, p. 23.

21 Cf: *We murder to dissect*  
Wordsworth

22 Philip Sherrard, "Anghelos Sikelianos and his Vision of Greece"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1978, op. cit., pp. 89-90.

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Of course, poets and poetry did not remain unaffected by the modern dualistic criteria and the modern habits of viewing the world. Yet, it was in poetry that the first warning signals were heard, and within this poetry that the violation of the integrity of life was condemned. The dismemberment of the vision of the original wholeness of life alarmed the poets, and it is due to the efforts of those who followed in the footsteps of their predecessors and ancestors that it can still be restituted in the Greek consciousness. The disintegration caused by human violence - its signs appearing like scars on the Greek landscape - the distortion and alienation caused by the forces of mechanisation and commercialisation on the man-made elements of this landscape, and the fragmentation of the human image itself could not have been ignored by the poets. Throughout modern Greek poetry is expressed an awareness of the sin committed against "the human measure" (Seferis), and a longing for the redemption of man and the natural world, his proper dwelling place. Moreover, it is in the poetry of modern Greece that the necessity for man's organic connection with the natural world was asserted, and it is again in poetry that the umbilical cord which unites man to the earth on which he dwells has been traced.

Modern Greek poetry has woven its history so closely to the historical life of Greece that in the process of the last two centuries they seem to share a destiny as common between the two as between the mountains and the sea; it is this destiny that the poets evoke. Committed to the faithful representation of the physical Greek world - not in a naturalistic way - the poets of modern Greece have integrated their life into the life of this world, and their creative soul has been able to draw from its purest sources. Their poetry provides access to these sources. The high degree of consistency or, at least, similarity, observed by the critics, in what concerns the manner of expression in modern Greek poetry has allowed for a coherent critical exploration of the work of a number of poets, which has identified the type of relations between outer form and inner meaning, manner and content, language and vision, which prevail in this form of expression. Beyond stylistic variations and personal modes of expression, modern Greek poets chose to embody their ideas, in most cases, in "poetry of relative simplicity, economy and objectivity."<sup>23</sup> Consistency in the means as well as in the themes and the underlying poet's vision has given modern Greek poetry a unity uncommon for poetry written in the modern Western world.

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23 Edmund Keeley, *op. cit.*, p. xv.

### 5. 3. Modern Greek Architecture through the Looking-Glass of Modern Greek Poetry

*Musicorum et cantorum magna est distancia:  
Isti dicunt, illi sciunt quae componit musica.  
Nam qui canit quod non sapit, diffinitur bestia;  
Bestia non cantor qui non canit arte, sed usu;  
Non verum facit ars cantorem, sed documentum.*

Guido d'Arezzo<sup>24</sup>

An inquiry into the nature of architecture in modern Greece with a parallel reading of its contemporary poetry may illuminate the problem of change and continuity in contemporary architecture; it may help identify the prevailing themes in modern Greek architectural thinking and the major aspects and stages of the architectural making process in modern Greece. The architects' struggle for identification of the surviving elements of the inherited ways of building, the search for a particular cultural character in any making by art, reflects the anguish of the creative soul to find the vital vein from which a work of art could emerge and draw nourishment. Since such concerns cannot be particular to one or the other type of creative activity, when they arise repeatedly and move along the same path within a society, they indicate a certain coherence in the creative thinking, which is more important than the ingenious solutions suggested by individual artists, and allow for a coherent treatment of different kinds of creative production within this particular society.

In any case, what counts in architecture - perhaps even more than in poetry - is the extent to which it is able to accommodate and assert the continuity of human making, in the sense of emphasising the need for man-made products to be useful for men. A reading of architectural works through the looking-glass of poetry can give appropriate weight to the historical, social, and intellectual context, as well as to the most important and all encompassing context of life. It can be fruitful in instructing an appreciation of the function of architecture at the non-purely utilitarian level. It is at

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24 Cited in: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "Why Exhibit Works of Art?"; in: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, 1943, 1956, op. cit., p. 55, n. 21. Coomaraswamy offers the following translation: "Between the 'virtuosi' and the 'singers' the difference is very great: the former merely vocalize, the latter understand the music's composition. He who sings of what he savours not is termed a 'brute'; no 'brute' is he who sings, not merely artfully, but usefully; it is not art alone, but the theme that makes the real 'singer'." Ibid.  
See also: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "Ars sine scientia nihil"; in: Roger Lipsey (ed.), op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 230.

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this level that architecture and poetry function in the same way; by "produc[ing] order and proportion in the soul"<sup>25</sup>. Such an inquiry may add clarity to the process of creating an architectural work within the particular context, and can help to identify the position and function of the architect within his society as well as his understanding of his task. It will facilitate a reading of architectural works closer to the one suggested by their own creator, and a definition of the level whereon may be based the judgement on how successful a work of architecture is.

Whether being concerned with modern Greek poetry or architecture, it is important to bear in mind that in both cases poets and architects have been exposed to the influences of the age in which they lived and worked and to those of the work of their contemporaries in Greece or in western Europe. Frequency of such influences was unavoidable - and very natural - for architects and poets.<sup>26</sup> Yet, as Elytis says, "It is difficult, so difficult to allow your epoch to set its seal on you without distorting you."<sup>27</sup> However enriching such influences may have been for their work, when assimilated and rooted in the architects' and poets' native landscape, their struggle to find vital nourishment in order to perceive and to voice the timeless elements of "the Greek truth" (Elytis) was made less difficult each time they aligned themselves with the principles on which they saw the art of their predecessors having been based, that of the renown and that of the anonymous masters. Regeneration of their imagination seems always to have come after they became acquainted with their past and, subsequently, acquired the strength to fuse past and present experiences and to bring the essence of the past into contemporary context; to create effectively works able to

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25 See: Plato, *Gorgias*, 504d.

26 Comparisons between contemporary Greek and western European poets have brought to light similarities and differences. The type of differences discerned by critics is often illuminating. For example, in a comparison between Solomos and Byron Jenkins notes: "But with all these similar traits ... one profound difference is discernible in their work. The poetry of Byron is exclusive presentation of his own personality. ... Solomós, with all Byron's egotism, never allowed his own personality to obtrude in his compositions ...". And further he adds: "Byron's ideal was an idealized Byron. Solomós' ideal was Greece." Romilly Jenkins, op. cit., pp. 210-1.

27 Odysseus Elytis, "Τὸ Χρονικὸ μᾶς Δεκαετίας"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 442. In English in: Odysseus Elytis, "Selections from the *Open Book*"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 32.

Cf.: "The more an artist is 'true to himself' - and here I am thinking not so much of the superficial consciousness as of that knowledge that goes deep down to what is least known in human existence - the more completely will he instil his own time into his work. The bond between the artist and his time is ... the umbilical cord that connects mother and child, a purely biological attachment." George Seferis, "Art in our times", (1945); in: George Seferis, 1966, 1967, 1982, op. cit., p. 195.

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conceal and to reveal the eternal reality of the world in modern times. Dwelling upon the themes poets and architects concerned themselves with is necessary in order to understand the degree to which the works they produced allow humans to dwell within humanly - that is, creatively - and the degree to which they are effective in reminding mortals of the human measure which life and art - the way life is lived - ought to respect at all times.

The task is a comparative one. The directions given by the poets and the critics of modern Greek poetry for a study on the nature of the modern Greek intellectual discourse offer the advantage of immunisation from fashionable theories as tools in the interpretation of the architects' intentions, and protection from the dangers of categorising tendencies, and provide a compass for the travel through the mist of architectural criticism. Appreciating individual architects, through a close reading of their thought and material work in parallel with a reading of the contemporaneous poetic thought and its materialisation, provides protection from digression from the context in which these architectural works were produced and wherein their reading has to take place.

Over a period of several decades, the leading authorities in the field of modern Greek studies (to whom there is frequent reference in this thesis) have persistently explored the modern Greek poetic sensibility, being chiefly concerned with the way the poet operates, the type of poetry he produces, and the imaginative pattern which this poetry reveals. It is these studies which have focused on the practical purpose of poetry - rather than those concerned with questions of style, technique, and biography - that have provided access to the inner world of the poets' imagination. Moreover, these studies are most useful guides in the understanding of the cultural environment within which modern Greek architects worked, the one which induced them to produce works with a practical purpose analogous to that of their contemporary poetry and with analogous features. For the mental image to which the creator works - when his interest focuses on an inner world of reality - does not depend on the tools he holds, neither on the kind of art he practises, nor on the historical period in which he lives. When the concern of architectural criticism is with the ideas and qualities of architecture that transfigure the forms in which they are embodied, the method to approach these seminal ideas, the causes of the architectural act, is to follow the path towards the inner imaginative patterns; modern Greek poetry guarantees that this path

does not lead to a void. It is, therefore, worth embarking on an investigation of modern Greek architecture under the good auspices of modern Greek poetry.

#### 5. 4. Modern Greek Architecture and Poetry in the Image of the Greek People

*Brothers, wherever evil finds you,  
wherever your minds grow muddled,  
Invoke Dionysios Solomos,  
Invoke Alexandros Papadiamandis.*

Odysseus Elytis<sup>28</sup>

Modern architectural criticism assumes that one is content, and indeed often accustoms one to be content, with an analysis of architectural products which views them as objects composed rationally and for a strictly utilitarian purpose. Although a kind of architecture for mere amusement has existed at least since the eighteenth century, the fact that architecture serves a strictly practical need in everyday life has never been contested. Yet, in the modern Western world, this need is defined in quantitative terms, in the terms in which man's life itself is defined. Architectural products are viewed as meant to be useful, that is, as intended to function by providing comfort and pleasure exclusively to the senses of the users, and profit and fame to the architect. Architecture is considered an autonomous activity, an *art détaché*, and its products are viewed as the offsprings and concrete expressions of particular theories branded as '-isms'<sup>29</sup> or of a particular architectural movement's world-view and, since the end of

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28 From Elytis' poem *The Axion Esti*, "The Passion", Psalm XI. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 58.

29 See: C. B. Wilson, "Theorising in Practice"; in: *Edinburgh Architecture Research*, Vol. 13, Edinburgh, 1986, pp. 11-29. Here Wilson is principally concerned with that kind of modern architecture "which is the process and product of a theory/practice nexus". Architectural criticism often assumes buildings to be such products, sidestepping the architects' own explicitly expressed intentions.

In writings of Greek architects and critics one often meets the word 'Pikionism'. Pikionis' architecture is most often judged on aesthetic grounds, his architectural attitude is seen as an aesthetic one, in the narrow sense of the word (N. Th. Cholevas, "Γιά τον Δημήτρη Πικιώνη"; in: National Technical University of Athens, op. cit., pp. 273-4); his approach to the ancient Greek world is judged as 'anti-classical', rather unlearned and selective, sentimental and aesthetic (Ch. Bouras, "Ο Πικιώνης και οι 'Αρχαίοι Έλληνες"; in: *ibid.*, pp. 135-43); his approach to nature as purely sentimental. Pikionis himself is classified as an aesthete, an eclectic, an 'anti-rational' (*ibid.*), a romantic dreamer (Alison and Peter Smithson; in: Architectural Association, op. cit., p. 65); or even as a pioneer of the Modern Movement (Christos Tsilalis, op. cit., p. 348; Anastasia Dimitracopoulou, "Dimitris Pikionis (1887-1968):

the Modern Movement, of the individual architect's subjective view of the world and personal aesthetic attitude. On the other hand, poetry - and the fine arts - are generally regarded as more or less useless in everyday life; life and art are seen as mutually exclusive. Modern aesthetic theories - and most readers - perceive poetry as having, or as needing to have, no direct connection to reality and to man's life,<sup>30</sup> and no strictly practical purpose; a leisurely play with words euphonically arranged; a sum of verses put together in order to entertain; mere strings of words without significance, uttered in order to impress, give delight, arouse emotions<sup>31</sup> or give evidence of the poet's talent; to express the author's thoughts, feelings and passions; to be idly enjoyed, but surely not to be taken seriously, nor to instruct in any way.<sup>32</sup> In our age, human creation seems to appear as a globe with two poles; architecture is its North pole and poetry its South pole. The poles move constantly further and further apart, increasing their distance from the centre of the globe of creation where the original model for every work made by art stands. As the distance between poetry and architecture grows, the two activities seem to have increasingly less in common, apart from the historical time in which their products are composed.

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Pioneer Greek Modernist"; *Architectural Association Quarterly*, Vol. 13, 2/3, London, January-June 1982, pp. 59-68), whose "teachings [were] the expression of Le Corbusier's principles" (Dimitris Fatouros, "The Oppressive and Liberating Influence of Le Corbusier"; in: *Architecture in Greece*, Annual Review, 21, Athens, 1987, pp. 122-6).

- 30 Cf.: "Art is not the most precious manifestation of life. Art has not the celestial and universal value the people like to attribute to it. Life is more interesting." Tristan Tzara, "Lecture on Dada" (1924); in: H. B. Chipp (ed.), *Theories of Modern Art*, Berkeley, 1971. Cited in: C. B. Wilson, 1986, op. cit., p. 21.

Cf.: *Art is not life, and cannot be  
A midwife to society.*

Auden, *New Year Letter*. As quoted in: George Seferis, "Art in our times", (1945); in: George Seferis, 1966, 1967, 1982, op. cit., p. 194.

- 31 But cf.: "The poetry may be an accidental stimulus. The end of the enjoyment of poetry is a pure contemplation from which all the accidents of personal emotions are removed; thus we aim to see the object as it really is ... And without a labour which is largely a labour of the intelligence, we are unable to attain that stage of vision *amor intellectualis Dei*". T. S. Eliot, "The Perfect Critic"; in: T. S. Eliot, op. cit., pp. 14-5.

- 32 Cf.: "The critic is working in a world where most people, when they speak of a good painting or a good piece of writing, mean simply that it pleases them, and pleases specifically in the way of amusement." R. G. Collingwood, op. cit., p. 90.

Cf. Aristophanes' words: "We must say really excellent things, because little boys are taught by schoolmasters, but adolescents listen to the poets." Quoted in: Peter Levi, 1977, op. cit., p. 66.

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But, as Eliot says,

*Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things.*<sup>33</sup>

And Polyas confirms that

*[Solomos'] work in Art, as well as in conversation, was a spontaneous uninterrupted endeavour to extinguish his individuality in absolute truth, giving effect to the axiom of Heracleitos: 'Although possessing a common Word, the majority live as though they have a wisdom of their own.'*<sup>34</sup>

Pikionis' writings espouse the same view of art. "Architecture, and every kind of *πολίσις*", he remarks, "cannot be pursued within its own narrow limits."<sup>35</sup> And the architect ought not to work as though he had a wisdom of his own; he ought to escape from his personal emotions and his individual ego,<sup>36</sup> for the creation process is identical with the process of "attaining knowledge of, and realising, our true self"<sup>37</sup>.

A reading of modern Greek architecture as a creative process which was directed towards the knowledge of the true reality of the Greek world and its realisation and re-creation in architectural terms cannot afford to ignore this world's past and present existence, and the way these were perceived by the Greek people as a whole, nor its most representative voices, those of its poets. A reading through the looking-glass of modern Greek poetry, not intended to offer judgements on architectural products according to aesthetic criteria, is forced to identify what architecture and poetry in modern Greece have in common as creative operations, irrespective of the material used for the making of their products, the style of expression, and the private life of the makers. It is what architecture and poetry express, and not the individual maker's likes and dislikes, that gives the measure of the distance between the two types of

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33 T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and Individual Talent"; in: T. S. Eliot, op. cit., p. 58.

Cf. R. G. Collingwood, 1938, 1958, op. cit., pp. 315ff.

34 Iakovos Polyas, 1964, op. cit., p. 30. Cited in English in: Philip Sherrard, "Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 15. See: Peter Mackridge, op. cit., p. 18.

35 Dimitris Pikionis, "Αίσθητικές αρχές της αρχιτεκτονικής του Αιξωνικού Συνοικισμού", (1952), p. 257.

36 Ibid., p. 256.

37 Dimitris Pikionis, "Εισήγησης της Αισθητικής Επιτροπής της Γενικής Γραμματείας Τουρισμού επί των αρχών επί των όποιων πρέπει να βασισθούν τα νομοθετικά μέτρα προασπίσεως της Αισθητικής της Χώρας εις τὰς Τουριστικές Ζώνας", (1946), pp. 140-1.



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creation, and, therefore, also of the distance of any human activity (since every human activity is to be pursued creatively) from the centre of creation, at a given historical time and in a particular place. The extent to which human making - architectural or other - is understood as an imitation of the archetypal model is the measure of the distance between the surface of the globe of creation and its centre.

Viewing architecture and poetry as imitative activities and, thus, as human activities of the same kind, the extent to which their products are faithful material likenesses of the archetype and the level at which the products of architecture and poetry bear similarities - are alike - in terms of purpose, function, concept and content, serve to indicate the degree to which they affirm the understanding of creation as a recollection of the truth in the model, and the understanding of the work of the artist - the man who makes creatively - as one that takes place as close to the centre as humanly possible. For in a human society creations of different kinds, the artists' visions embodied in different forms of art, seem to keep equal distance from the centre of artistic creation. Artists project the immaterial centre in multiple ways onto the historical surface of the sphere in which they live and work. An understanding of creation as a human activity centripetally directed towards the centre of art, determined to minimise the distance between the centre and its final materialisation, cannot arise but within a society which has not completely lost contact with the sacred centre of life and art, but consciously or unconsciously seeks to live close to it, fighting to preserve her integrity against the forces of fragmentation and disruption. For human life differs from that of beast and plant in that it is a creative life, and life and creation in the world of mortals obey the same rules of motion.

The works of modern Greek architecture and poetry reflect the state of the consciousness of their makers and the extent to which their consciousness represents that of the Greek people as a whole. When buildings and poems are not viewed as products of autonomous activities, self-generated works, but as the material results of activities in accord with life and all that is essential to it, intended to participate in this life; when they can be seen - so to speak - as isotopes of the particular society that brought them into being; then they mirror the way of life of the people that dwell or speak in them. They are founded on the principles on which this particular people's life is based, they reflect their experience, and they can be considered as made *by* this

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people, as liturgical works in the literal sense of the word, works of the people and for the people.<sup>38</sup>

How strongly the Greek people can identify with, and can be identified through, the works of a particular artist is an indicator of this artist's intentions, of his understanding of the purpose of his work, as well as of the society's understanding of the artist's position within it, and of the task he is expected to assume for himself to fulfil. In modern Greece, such artists who can be regarded as representative voices of their country's cultural and intellectual life are more isolated cases than in other periods in the history of Greek culture, when art as a whole expressed the myths, beliefs and experience common to all members of the society in which it flourished. What was then regarded as genuine was what was native to the society and its belief-system, and so of the same genus as every other work produced within the same society; what emanated naturally from, and bore the marks of, the tradition within which the artist lived, rather than from the creative genius of the artist. But these isolated individual voices of modern Greece are those who opposed the ideas and values foreign to the Greek soil which were endangering the traditional pattern of Greek life, obscuring the vision of the wholeness of life and alienating the criteria according to which any work made by art was to be judged, sanctioned by tradition. These are the artists who affiliated themselves - each in his own manner and according to his ability - with the spiritual tradition accessible to the Greeks, in the belief that the principles of aesthetic rationalism and humanism, on which art in the modern West had been based, were not native to their land, and that their arbitrary transplantation onto her soil could only damage the roots of what was growing naturally out of it.

Given Greece's marginality to both the traditional and the modern context, it may be said that the state of the arts - to use a general term - in contemporary Greece and their kinship to the Greek tradition indicate that they have not emancipated themselves entirely from the traditional philosophy of art, and that the Greek people have not completely lost contact with their long-travelled native tradition. The modern Greek creators' insight into their native land's traditional culture has conferred on the modern Greek people the prolongation of their spiritual tradition in the contemporary historical

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38 Cf. Yeats' reference to an art speaking "out of a people to a people". W. B. Yeats, "A General Introduction to my Work"; in: A. Norman Jeffares (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 256. Quoted in: Philip Sherrard, 1975, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

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and geographical context; these creators' works are the expression and worthy products of this tradition. That these artists exist at all, and that they are those who, by means of their art, materialised communication channels with the rest of society, indicates the existence of an understanding of the function of art beyond the material one, and the existence of a need for art to function on a higher level, a need that the Greek people have not dispensed with, and the fulfilment of which makes the artists.

## Chapter Six

### Modern Greek Architecture and Poetry

#### From the Idolisation of History to its Integration into the Structure of Reality

*Today, looking down from above, as for instance from the theatre, it is as if you have beneath you a descending sea-bed where everything is reduced to the same level: the pieces of marble, the cut stone, the rocks which years ago rolled down from Parnassus and where the Sibyl once sat: the bed of a quiet shallow sea full of these pebbles which each of us, according to his nature, deciphers: a polygonal wall so living that your hand instinctively repeats the movement of the mason who cut and fitted the stone; a bending of thumb and forefinger as they raise a dress with a grace such as that you saw yesterday in a Greek village, a living thing, as the knee bends for a woman to descend from the chariot; a Sphinx's head with the eyes neither open nor closed; the smile, which they call archaic - but that isn't really adequate - of a Hercules or a Theseus: some such fragments of a life which was once complete, disturbing fragments, close to us, ours for one moment, and then mysterious and un-approachable as the lines of a stone licked smooth by the wave, or of a shell in the depths.*

George Seferis, *The Last View*

## 6. 1. Images of the Greek World in Greek Architecture and Poetry

Before presenting the works of modern Greek architects and poets who aspired to express the reality of the Greek world, let us go back to dwell upon some historically earlier visions of this reality embodied in the forms of the art of the Greek people. This digression is necessary in order to understand the kind of vision into which such works were rooted and which they were able to generate, and how this vision was different to the idealised classicised vision of Hellas that had captured the Western mind during the post-Renaissance centuries. It was, in the first place, the perception of this difference that compelled modern Greek poets and architects, and all kinds of artists, to rend the veil that had fallen on, and was preventing the view of, the past in its true dimensions, and to "destroy the tradition of rationalism which lay heavily on the Western world" in order "to link [themselves] physiologically with [their] soil and to regard Greek reality without the prejudices that have reigned since the Renaissance."<sup>1</sup> In order to liberate the image of Greece from the Western humanist stereotype and to perceive "the Greek truth"<sup>2</sup>, the world of Greece in its physical and metaphysical dimensions, and to become able to root their images of the Greek world in its past and present life, the modern Greek artists addressed themselves to their ancestors, the dead creators. Sikelianos offers an account of his labour to regain contact with

*that holy circle where these great, living, authentic creators of all ages, to whatever level they belong, have, we feel, some common bond between them. We must try to approach them not through what in an external sense we are in the habit of calling their work, whether this is religion, or poetry, or art, or thought or even science, and which is set out statically in*

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The citation on the previous page is from: Philip Sherrard (ed.), *The Pursuit of Greece*, An Anthology selected by the editor, Great Britain, 1964, Athens, 1987, p. 156. Referred to: George Seferis, *Delphi*, Athens, 1963, pp. 13-4.

- 1 Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 7.  
Cf.: "Since the death of ancient Greek civilization a heavy and almost unliftable curtain has fallen between the ancient and the modern world, and has covered the intellectual, aesthetic and psychic radiance of hellenism: aesthetic rationalism which, under the common name of 'paganism', issued from Rome and her politico-religious pandemonium, most forcibly underlined later by the Italian Renaissance and raised on a pedestal by the eighteenth century, has been established as the absolute criterion of the ancient world for European civilisation." Anghelos Sikelianos, "Είσαγωγή στο Καλλιτεχνικό Έργο του Conrad Westpfahl καὶ τὸ Πολιτικὸ τῆς Κας Westpfahl"; in: *Ὁ Κύκλος*, Year 4, Nr. 5, Athens, 1937, pp. 141-2. Cited in English in: Philip Sherrard, 1959, 1992, *op. cit.*, p. 192. Also in: Philip Sherrard, "Anghelos Sikelianos and his Vision of Greece"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1978, *op. cit.*, p. 77.
- 2 Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 7.

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*churches or museums or books for us to respect and admire; but we must try to approach them in their very depths, in their original and existential depths, where the wound of their universal and historical and individual being is always open; that secret, open wound, that generative wound which, as the womb of the mother that night and day nourishes the embryo with her own blood, itself nourishes the work that they were born to bring for all of us into the light and into life.*<sup>3</sup>

Sikelianos and many other modern Greek creators regarded this as a prerequisite for their recapturing of the essence of past and present Greece and for their re-creation of this essence in the forms of their historical time. They believed that the creative spirit that had once taken residence in the ruined monuments which still stood on their land could blow a breath of vitality into their work and support them in their own creative labour. In order to become able to address the present and the future, to go on and incarnate the timeless spirit of their land in the temporal works of their hands, they turned towards the past; for, in Elytis' words, "it is not a small thing to have the centuries on your side"<sup>4</sup>. Modern Greek artists' pursuit of the true image of Greece, away from the distorting mirrors of the erudite Renaissance, made them conscious of the place and time in which they worked, and aware of their responsibility to create their own works in a manner that would make them conform to those of the past, in a way that their artefacts and those of their ancestors would compose a simultaneous order.<sup>5</sup>

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3 Anghelos Sikelianos, "Ἡ Ἐλευσίθεια Διαθήκη"; in: *Νέα Γράμματα*, 2, Athens, 1936, p. 41. Cited in English in: Philip Sherrard, "Anghelos Sikelianos and his Vision of Greece"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1978, op. cit., p. 76.

4 "an endless row of ancestors, fierce, tortured, proud, moved each one of my muscles. Oh yes, it is not a small thing to have the centuries on your side, I kept saying all the time, and I went on." Odysseus Elytis, "Πρῶτα - Πρῶτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 45. In English in: Odysseus Elytis, "Selections from the *Open Book*"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 30.

5 Cf.: "[Tradition] involves, in the first place, the historical sense ... and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional." T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and Individual Talent"; in: T. S. Eliot, op. cit., p. 49.

Cf.: "Art develops via reflection of and on preceding art, where 'reflection' signifies both a 'mirroring', however drastic the perceptual dislocation, and a 're-thinking'. It is through this internalized 're-production' of and amendment to previous representations that an artist will articulate what might appear to have been even the most spontaneous, the most realistic of his sightings." George Steiner, 1989, 1991, op. cit., p. 17.

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Greek Classical architecture and poetry are both concerned with the relation of man to the gods, and both convey, in comparable ways, the same patterns of life and conceptions of reality. The gods, the supernatural beings to whom epic, lyric and dramatic poets refer and whom the architects housed in domestic altars or public temples, are the ones who direct their life and that of their contemporaries, and those who speak through the poet and the seer, are present in the symbolic icons made by the sculptors and inhabit the temples. The activity of the architects and the builders of the Classical cities and temples was directed by the gods; the outcome of this activity was a manifestation of the divine order, an evocation of a world that is sacred in a form, an εἶδος (*eidos*), that is known. Poems were composed and recited, and houses built, with a practical purpose;<sup>6</sup> they were intended to instruct the spectators, the artists' *συν-ανθρώπους* (*syn-anthrōpous*, fellow-men), to protect them, to initiate them and admit them into the Platonic perfect mystic vision, into the world of eternal verities, and, thus, support them in their struggle to fulfil their dwelling human nature. Poetry, architecture and all arts were epiphanic and liturgical. The architect and the poet expressed in the language of the people among whom they lived - their own mother tongue - the fundamental and most real elements of their world and their common life. In Classical Greece, architecture and poetry had a functional role in the people's life, every member of the society communed with them, they were as essential for man's bodily and spiritual life as life was for them.

The Hellenistic world, which emerged following the conquests of Alexander the Great, looked back towards ancient Greece in search for models to build its cities, to speak and compose its literature. Life and art in this new world tried to follow the Classical prototypes which were regarded as ideal and were systematically studied and copied. Reflections of the newly adopted attitudes towards life and its revised connections with the arts can be sought in both architecture and poetry. Fifth-century Athens provided models for admiration and imitation as much in terms of life as of language and artistic expression. Although these Attic models were part of the cultural heritage of the Greek diaspora that inhabited the prosperous Hellenistic cities of the Middle-East and Egypt, such as Alexandria, Ephesus, Antioch et cetera, they had no local roots in the area. It was then that the "great process of the idealization of the

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6 See: Jean-Pierre Vernant, "La Voix des Poètes"; in: Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Mythe et Religion en Grèce Ancienne*, (La Librairie du XXe Siècle, Collection dirigée par Maurice Olender), France, 1990, pp. 23-9.

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Classical golden age of ancient Greece which has so befuddled the subsequent intellectual history of Europe"<sup>7</sup> was initiated. "In the Hellenistic period one gets the impression that life was sometimes seen as a reflection of the theater."<sup>8</sup> Menander's 'New Comedy' and the humane attitude it proclaims could be related to the manipulation of space for emotional effects by Hellenistic architects, their fondness for dramatic settings and taste for a kind of façade architecture, possibly influenced by stage settings. The theatrical rhetorical character as well as the pedantic scholarly mentality of the age prevailed in both architecture and poetry. The learned poets used a language other than the one the people used, and one which appealed only to the learned few; their works were based on literary convention; they were the products of learning rather than of divine inspiration, linked to a mythologised historical past rather than to a mythical ancestral archetypal beginning. An essentially didactic application of a series of rules can be traced in the Hellenistic architecture which became increasingly that of wealthy patrons in need for luxurious palaces and private houses. The main emphasis on oratory style and the romantic rhetoric of the literature of the time finds its parallel in the predominantly secular architecture of the Hellenistic age, with its concern with aesthetic effects, its manipulation of the naturalistic Corinthian in relationship to the other orders and its general preference for the Ionic and Corinthian orders for their purely decorative values.

The Hellenistic idealisation of the Classical tradition involved a mythological sanctioning of certain values which were

*above all those that envisage a purely human and secular excellence to be realised in and through a man-made civil and social order which reflects as far as is possible the norms of a rationalistic interpretation of life.*<sup>9</sup>

This 'classicising' tradition of the Hellenistic world was inherited by Rome and developed with an emphasis on external forms and aesthetic effects. It was the classical tradition in this Romano-Hellenistic form that provided the Italian Renaissance humanists with the models and the values for the new civilisation which was then emerging.<sup>10</sup> However, the impact of these ideological developments in western Europe and the idealisation of ancient Greece was limited among the Orthodox

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7 John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

8 J. J. Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age*, Cambridge, 1986, 1988, p. 4.

9 John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 29.



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Christians in Greek lands who remained loyal to the cultural and religious tradition of Byzantium, at least until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when the movement for the regeneration of the Hellenic nation on the basis of the classical tradition encouraged the Greeks to fight the War of Independence.

Byzantium, as a Christian Empire, was opposed to the ideals and morality of Hellenism which represented paganism and polytheism. The Byzantines thought of themselves as members of the Roman Empire in that Eastern and Christian form which had been conferred to it by Constantine the Great in the fourth century BC. They were Roman citizens living in the area where God's earthly kingdom was in the process of being fulfilled.

*...the notion that they formed a nation or ethnos in the modern sense was something which they would have repudiated with distaste: the word ethnos (nation) served to indicate lesser breeds without the law, tribes or races of barbarians or heretics (or both together) that had not the privilege of living within the bounds of Christ's terrestrial kingdom or of being ruled over by His divinely-appointed vicegerent, the Christian Emperor of Byzantium.<sup>11</sup>*

The Byzantine Empire, an officially Greek-speaking empire since the sixth century, adopted the term 'Hellenic' in the tenth century in order to distinguish its cultural identity and civilisation from the new civilisation that was being born in the West. Yet, the maintenance of a tradition of Hellenic culture was chiefly reserved to language, literature and education, and did not imply any 'ethnic' identification with the ancient Greeks or any idealisation of the ancient Greek world and the social and religious forms of its life. On the contrary, Hellenism as a philosophical or moral force was officially opposed; it meant paganism and polytheism.<sup>12</sup>

An immense wealth of poetry was written in Greek during this period, the most significant part of which is religious, springing from a devotion to Christianity and its mysteries. The religious conceptions of life penetrated all Byzantine arts. The synergy of these sacred arts<sup>13</sup> is apparent in their highly symbolic language, their spiritual function, and their common origin and end, which is the divine world of reality. Rituals, liturgical hymns, ecclesiastical chants, readings of the holy scripture, holy icons, sacred buildings, church ornaments, et cetera are "liturgical symbols" (St.

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11 Ibid., p. 20.

12 See: *ibid.*, pp. 20f.

13 See: Photios Kontoglou, *Ἐκφρασις τῆς Ὀρθοδόξου Εἰκονογραφίας*, 2 Vols., Athens, 1960, 1979, Vol. 1, p. 12.

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Maximus) which support spiritual ascent and prepare initiation into a mystery, "the revelation of a reality which is always present in the Church."<sup>14</sup> They are addressed to all, their form derives from spiritual vision, and they all serve the same purpose: to state in intelligible terms, and proclaim, the truths of the Christian religion, and to express through a material medium and render present, visible, audible and active things in themselves immaterial and invisible. Holy images are "material centre[s] in which there reposes an energy, a divine force, which unites itself to human art."<sup>15</sup> The architectural building and ordering of a church is a making of the mirror of the Kingdom of God, an icon of the universe, this "marvellously composed hymn to the power of the Almighty", as St. Gregory of Nyssa described the latter.<sup>16</sup>

The arts of the Christian Orthodox tradition, iconography, hymnography, psalmody, architecture, et cetera, show an impressive workmanship and a deep religious feeling. All arts aim at the edification of the souls of the believers, at aiding theological teaching and contemplative understanding of, and participation in, the divine mysteries. The vocabulary of all sacred arts in the Eastern Church is the vocabulary of the sacred books and the Holy Tradition. They are liturgical arts: they are the means through which the basic realities of the Christian faith are conveyed to the worshipper, so that he is led to the climax of the Christian mystery. They do not seek to enter into competition with, or to represent, the natural world, and their nature cannot be understood unless artefacts are "seen in relationship to the organic whole of the spiritual structure of which [they] form a part."<sup>17</sup> The iconographic, architectural and hymnographic scheme of the church and the coordinated symbolic structure of its architecture<sup>18</sup> convey the image of the divine into the human and natural world and unite the spiritual and the sensible into one, through the processes of incarnation and transfiguration.

After the fall of Constantinople (1453) and through the centuries of the Ottoman occupation, the Greek people remained dominantly a Christian people, united on the

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14 Vladimir Lossky, 1957, 1991, op. cit., p. 189.

15 Ibid.

16 St. Gregory of Nyssa, "In Psalmorum Inscriptiones"; J. P. Migne (ed.), op. cit., XLIV, 441 B. As quoted in: *ibid.*, p. 95.

17 See: Philip Sherrard, 1990, op. cit., p. 72.

18 For a description of this symbolic structure see: John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, op. cit., pp. 200-2.  
See also: Leonid Ouspensky, op. cit., Vol. 1, Chapter 1: "The Symbolism of the Church", pp. 17-33.

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basis of their common faith and the spiritual tradition, which they inherited from Byzantium together with the forms of its art and which they preserved with endurance under often extremely difficult circumstances<sup>19</sup>. Within the Ottoman Empire, the Greek people continued to live with, and practise, the sacred arts of the Orthodox Christian Church alongside the so-called folk or anonymous arts of a not strictly religious content or, rather, not under the aegis and the direction of the Church.<sup>20</sup> Various kinds of these folk arts were often practised by, and addressed equally to, different religious and ethnic groups in the Balkans and in Asia Minor.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to liturgical poetry there is to be found the poetry of the popular ballads and the demotic poems, in the spoken idioms, some of which may be traced back to Homeric times.<sup>22</sup> The great epic cycle woven around the Byzantine heroic figure of Basil Digenis Acritas - the border-fighter who wrestled with Charon upon the marble threshing-floor - is perhaps the most significant. The epic took shape in the tenth century in the eastern provinces of the Byzantine Empire<sup>23</sup> and, with the passing of the centuries, grew in numerous versions which celebrated the deeds of the hero and thus equipped Digenis with a mythical biography. Acritic and later klephtic<sup>24</sup> ballads

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19 See: Sir Paul Ricaut, *The Present State of the Greek and Armenian Churches, Anno Christi 1678, 1679*. And: Sir Paul Ricaut, *The History of the Present State of the Ottoman Empire* (1668), 1682. References in: *ibid.*, p. 194.

20 Cf.: "it is not at all clear how a distinction is to be made between sacred and profane in the products of traditional civilizations, given that everything is made within the tradition and that the latter has a sacred origin." C. B. Wilson, "The Centre of the World and the Interpretation of Architecture"; in: *Edinburgh Architecture Research*, Vol. 11, Edinburgh, 1984, pp. 55-6.

Cf.: "the only profane activities are those which have no mythical meaning, that is, which lack exemplary models. Thus we may say that every responsible activity in pursuit of a definite end is, for the archaic world, a ritual." Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, London, 1955, p. 28.

21 As Eleni Bastéa observes, in modern research on the vernacular domestic architecture of Greece "the relative homogeneity of the present population is often erroneously projected onto the past." Eleni Bastéa, "The Sweet Deceit of Tradition: National Ideology and Greek Architecture"; in: *Art & Culture*, School of Art & Design, College of Architecture, Art & Urban Planning; The University of Illinois at Chicago, 20/1, Vol. 1, 2, Chicago, Spring 1990, p. 88.

22 See: C. A. Trypanis, *Medieval and Modern Greek Poetry: An Anthology*, Oxford, 1951.

23 According to Trypanis, it may be safely said that "the original and now lost model, though drawing for its subject and inspiration on the folk-songs of Commagene, was written in a scholarly form of Greek by an erudite poet." *Ibid.*, p. xxvi.

24 During the years of Ottoman rule, the *klephts* were Christian outlaws who took to the hills and became brigands. By virtue of their defiance of established authority, the *klephts* captured the popular imagination and were exalted in the folk songs of the region. They fought against the Turks in the War of Independence and participated in irredentist bands of irregulars after independence. John S. Koliopoulos, "Brigandage and Irredentism in Nineteenth-Century Greece"; in: Martin Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremis (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 69.

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provided the Greek people<sup>25</sup> with a mythical, archetypal hero who combined elements of an Achilles or an Odysseus with those of a St. George, a St. Michael or a St. Dimitrios, and with a model of behaviour and a set of exemplary mythical actions<sup>26</sup>. It was the ultimate of these actions, the fight with Death himself, that brought Digenis' historical life to an end and initiated the mythical life of the immortal Greek hero. Death addressed him first:

'Take off your clothes, young man,  
Lay down your arms, and fold  
Your hands across your breast,  
So I take your soul away.'  
'I'll not take off my clothes,  
Lay down my arms or fold  
My hands across my breast,  
For you to take my soul away.  
We're men and both are brave,  
So let us fight it out  
On the marble threshing-floor,  
Where we won't shake the mountains  
Or terrify the village.'  
They went away and wrestled  
On the marble threshing-floor.  
Nine times the youth threw Death,  
And the ninth time Death was hurt.  
He seized the young man's hair,  
He forced him to his knees.  
'Death, leave my hair, grasp me  
About the waist, and then  
You'll see how young men fight.'  
'By the hair I seize them,  
Men young and old, and girls,  
and children with their mothers.'<sup>27</sup>

In this demotic poetry, written in the fifteen-syllable line, the central preoccupations and themes concern man's freedom and his relationships and sense of reciprocity with the natural world and the earth on which he is born, as well as man's consciousness of death "which seems both a negation of his freedom and a total severance of these ties which link him so strongly to the natural world that he finds it difficult to conceive of human life in any other terms that would make it worth living."<sup>28</sup> As Campbell and Sherrard argue,

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25 A Russian version of the twelfth century has also been documented. C. A. Trypanis, *op. cit.*, p. xxvi.

26 Cf.: "On the shores of the Black Sea the Pontic Greeks still expected as late as 1922 to see him rise from his tomb, armed with his terrible club and making Mohammedan Asia shudder at his war-cry!" *Ibid.*, p. xxviii.

27 As cited in English in: John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 220.

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*these themes and preoccupations, transposed as they may be to a new level of understanding, continued and still continue to be those that above all distinguish the communication of modern Greek poetry.*<sup>29</sup>

The endless variety of forms of vernacular architecture,<sup>30</sup> full of respect for the landscape, the climate and the sacred needs of life and of the people they were made to accommodate, made 'well and truly', useful and meaningful, has always been sung, literally and metaphorically, in these folk songs and popular ballads. But the traditional village-settlements of the Greek countryside are not simply the products of the work of architects in the narrow sense; they are the result of the co-ordinated knowledge, experience and labour of various kinds of craftsmen and artisans; the fruit of the arts of the priest, the schoolmaster, the musician and the baker no less than of those of the painter, the wood-sculptor, the architect, the iron-smith, and the stone-mason. Orderly grown around the village-centre, the square where the church, the school, the plane-tree, the community house and the coffee-shop are gathered and the feast-days are celebrated, they are the manifestation of the unity, the commensurability, and the complementarity of all arts of making practised within the community by its members who practised their particular kind of 'art', each according to his individual function and capacity, and in conformity to the communal traditional pattern; they are the built, living expression of communal life itself. They represent a microcosm of the Christian Oecumene, a cosmos in the manner envisaged by the members of the community,

*a space blessed by God and protected by His Grace against natural and demonic forces outside its boundaries which though not intrinsically evil were dangerous to men and might be invoked and used by the Devil, especially against the innocent or spiritually unprepared.*<sup>31</sup>

The actual construction of the village houses was carried out by the owner of the house together with his relatives and fellow-villagers or, and especially for more complicated structures, by a group of itinerant builders - masters, assistances and apprentices - who often came from the same village<sup>32</sup> and travelled widely within the Balkans and up to Egypt, adapting their vocabulary to local conditions and building

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29 Ibid.

30 See: Dimitris Philippides (ed.), *Ελληνική Παραδοσιακή Ἀρχιτεκτονική* (Greek Traditional Architecture), published simultaneously in Greek, English, French, and German, Athens, 1983 onwards.

31 John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, op. cit., p. 356.

32 Most often from upland villages where the soil and the yield of cultivation were poorer.

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practices.<sup>33</sup> Such groups continued the tradition of the Byzantine guilds - *τάξεις*, *τάγματα*, or *σώματα* - in Ottoman times, protected by state decrees.<sup>34</sup> After the fifteenth century, they were known as *ισνάφια* or *έσνάφια* or *ένσάφια*, or *ρουφέτια*, they had a strictly hierarchical organisation and were mainly Greek, Vlach, and later also Slav speaking.<sup>35</sup> They developed a number of secret languages<sup>36</sup> and worked under the direction of the most experienced and skilled master-builder who was well acquainted with the technical symbolic language of the craft and the appropriate rituals, which accompanied its practice and the performance of which guaranteed the stability of what was to be erected, as well as the commensurability of its ordered form to the cosmic order in which this symbolic and significant form participates.<sup>37</sup>

The architecture of the traditional settlement as a whole, as well as that of the individual house - grand mansion or humble dwelling - path, chapel, bridge, or caïque, not only as a product but most apparently as a process of human building, has a symbolic and a mythical meaning; it stems from man's intimate relationship with the natural world and from his vision of the world he lives within;<sup>38</sup> it conforms to the exemplary order in nature and is organically connected with life-and-death which lies at the foundation of the true significance of living, dwelling and building. The traditional builders' work was based on the principles enshrined and preserved in their living and fundamentally religious tradition; it involved sacrifice, contemplation,

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33 See: Nikolaos Moutsopoulos, "Οι Πρόδρομοι τῶν Πρώτων Ἑλλήνων Τεχνικῶν Ἐπιστημόνων, Κουδαραῖοι Μακεδόνες καὶ Ἡπειρώτες Μαῖστορες"; in: Pavlos Kyriazis and Michalis Nikolinakos (eds.), *Πρώτοι Ἑλληνες Τεχνικοί Ἐπιστῆμονες Περιόδου Ἀπελευθέρωσης*, The Technical Chamber of Greece, Athens, 1976, pp. 353-433.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 356.

See also: Auguste Choisy, *L'Art de Bâtir chez les Byzantins*, Paris, 1883, p. 174.

35 Nikolaos Moutsopoulos, 1976, *op. cit.*, p. 354.

See also: Sotir Tomosky, *Makedonska Narodna Arhitektura*, Skopje, 1960.

36 The languages of the guilds of builders were the richest among such languages. See: Nikolaos Moutsopoulos, 1976, *op. cit.*, p. 362, and appended glossary in pp. 414-33.

See also: Manolis Triantafyllides, "Ἑλληνικὲς Συνθηματικὲς Γλῶσσες"; in: Manolis Triantafyllides, *Ἄπαντα*, Manolis Triantafyllides Foundation, Thessaloniki, 1963, Vol. 2, pp. 318f.

37 Cf.: "Construction rituals repeat the primordial act of the cosmogonic construction. The sacrifice performed at the building of a house, church, bridge, is simply the imitation, on the human plane, of the sacrifice performed *in illo tempore* to give birth to the world." Mircea Eliade, 1955, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

38 Cf.: "His [nature-man's] visions are ... not only real; they form his objective insight into a higher world. ... Natural man, to whom vision and thought are identical." Schmidt, *Dawn of the Human Mind*; as quoted in: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "Primitive Mentality"; in: Roger Lipsey (ed.), *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, pp. 301-2.

See: A. N. Tombazis, "Anonymous Greek Architecture"; in: *Architecture in Greece*, Annual Review, 3, Athens 1969, pp. 18-74.

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imagination, imitation, expression, experience and knowledge not only of the technique but, most necessarily, of the rituals of the building process and the patterns which the architecture of mortals ought to reveal. The forces that erect the building are of the supra-natural world, and the artistic operation is of no efficacy if they are not respected and propitiated. The erection of the building does not signify a victory but a reconciliation. This literally typical - i.e., exemplary - architectural making process is described in the mythological terms of the following poem:

There were five-and-forty masons, and sixty workmen more,  
Who toiled to build the tower-pile upon the bridge of Arta;  
The whole day through they built it up, and at night it tumbled down.  
The builders groaned and fretted, and ever made lament;  
The workmen they were merry, to have earned a new day's wage.  
It fell on one fine Sunday - it was a high feast-day -  
The master-builder laid him down to take a little sleep,  
And in his sleep he had a dream - a vision as he slumbered -  
Unless a victim perished the pile would never hold.  
And neither rich nor poor man, nor any one on earth,  
Save his, the master-builder's, wife, would make the foundation stand.  
He called out to a labourer to go and do his bidding:  
'Now go and tell thy mistress, the mistress of the house,  
To dress herself and deck herself, put on her golden gauds,  
Put on her gauds of silver, put on her silken gown -  
Now swiftly speed and swift return and swiftly tell her thus.'  
He went and found her where she sat at sewing and at song.  
'Now greet thee well, my mistress, the mistress of the house,  
The master-builder sends me, bids you put on the gold,  
Put on the gauds of silver, put on your silken gown,  
And come to feast with us. ...'  
She dressed herself, she decked herself, put on her gauds of gold,  
Put on her gauds of silver, put on her silken gown;  
And there she went to find them, whereas they sat at meat.  
'Now greet thee well, my mistress, the mistress of my house,  
My wooing-ring has fallen down - the first I ever wore -  
And therefore did I send for thee to come and pick it up.'  
Then, as they let her down into the midst of the tower-pile,  
One heaped in earth upon her, another heaped in lime,  
And he, the master-builder, he struck her with his mallet.  
'Three sisters were we once, and all three of us were slain.  
There was one killed in the church, and one in the monastery,  
And the third, the fairest of the three, upon the bridge of Arta.  
Now as my hands do tremble may its pillars tremble too,  
And as my heart is throbbing, so may the bridge throb too!'<sup>39</sup>

It was this mythical exemplary creation process which the peasant people of Greece still imitated in their building activity in Pikionis' times, with a view to expressing in the mortal terms of architecture their mythical vision of the world, the vision of the

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39 *The Bridge of Arta*, translated by Renell Rodd. In: Philip Sherrard (ed.), op. cit., pp. 167-8.

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higher world, which their life as a whole expressed. It was the same vision of the archetypal world that had found its historical embodiment in the arts - architecture, poetry, dance, et cetera - of the ancient Greeks<sup>40</sup> and in those of the Byzantines; and it was on a realisation of this vision afresh that Pikionis believed the preservation of the integrity of art and life in modern times depended. In the architecture of the people of his land he found a source of life for contemporary Greek architecture, and in their collective memory he recognised the source of Memory, the mother of the Muses, and invited all artists to drink from it.<sup>41</sup>

### 6. 2. Drawing upon the Classical Ideal

*Humankind cannot bear very much reality*

T. S. Eliot

*Scattered drums of a Doric column  
Razed by unexpected earthquakes  
To the ground. ...*

Anghelos Sikelianos<sup>42</sup>

For at least the first one hundred years of the life of the modern Greek state, however, the learned architects of modern Greece reverted to models from Classical antiquity. And it was not only the architects who turned towards the Classical past; it was generally assumed that the modern Greek nation as a whole - conceived as a cultural community - was to enhance its cultural unity within the intellectual framework of this antiquity, which would provide its members with a sense of identity. The ideological basis upon which the unity and cohesion of the modern Greek society could be established was assumed to be that of Classical antiquity. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, architectural imagery was employed for the cultivation of a national identity among the Greek people.

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40 See: Dimitris Pikionis, "Η ένόραση τοῦ θεατῆ", (1953), pp. 117-20.

41 See: Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς παράδοσης", (1951), p. 158.

42 From the fifth and last part of Anghelos Sikelianos' "Prologue to Life", "The Consciousness of Personal Creativeness"; in: Anghelos Sikelianos, "Lyrical Life", 3 Vols., Athens, 1946-47, Vol. 2, p. 237. Cited in English in: Philip Sherrard, "Anghelos Sikelianos (1884-1951)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 154.



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The independent Greek national state emerged in 1830, after the ten-year War of Independence. The construction of a Greek national identity, however, a prerequisite for the establishment of a homogeneous state, had started much earlier. The Greek struggle for liberation and the foundation of the modern Greek state was a result of the emergence of the concept of a Greek nation which the Greek people came to identify with. The inhabitants of this new state thought of themselves as, and called themselves, Hellenes. They saw themselves as members of the modern Hellenic nation which was to join the nations of modern Europe, and they constructed their sense of identity along with the cities of their new state. The modern Hellenic nation was formed out of the contemporary inhabitants of the ancient Greek world and, therefore, its members had the right to lay claim to a Greek classical heritage. In accordance with the ideas of the Enlightenment, the modern Hellenes were proclaimed, by its western European and Greek exponents, the true racial and cultural representatives of the ancient Hellenes. But how did such claims emerge? And how were they historically justified? In order to trace the development of such notions of identity among the Greek people, it is necessary to look back into the centuries preceding the outbreak of the Greek War of Independence (1821), especially since the meaning of words such as 'nation', 'Greek' or 'Hellenic', 'classical' et cetera underwent significant transformations over these centuries.

It has already been said that the Byzantines thought of themselves as Roman citizens and as God's chosen people, and that they did not identify themselves with the ancient Greeks. The unity of their culture was based on common participation in the Christian tradition, it was determined by the intellectual framework of Christianity, and the Empire of which they were members was perceived as the earthly embodiment of the Kingdom of God. Although they did maintain a tradition of Hellenic culture, this was reserved to language, literature and education, "for ancient philosophy had more dangerous implications"<sup>43</sup>. It was in the closing years of the Byzantine Empire that a new attitude towards the Hellenic past developed within a small intellectual élite that recognised in the Platonic tradition the philosophical basis of their ancient Hellenic patrimony, and in the Greek lands the cradle *par excellence* of Hellenism, where a new Hellenic society could replace the rapidly disintegrating Byzantine Empire. These 'Hellenizantes' saw the inhabitants of the Peloponnese as the direct descendants of the

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43 John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

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ancient Greeks and aspired to regenerate a new Hellenic society in mainland Greece. Cut off at its birth by the fall of Constantinople, in 1453, and the subsequent conquest of continental Greece by the Ottomans, the movement for the refounding of ancient Hellas had little influence among the inhabitants of Greek lands. Its claims stood in great contradiction to the supranational universalism of Byzantine imperial and theocratic theory, and it had little influence among the majority of the Orthodox people for whom the names Hellene and Plato were alien and abominable.<sup>44</sup> For the Orthodox Christians, the conquest of Constantinople signified a divine intervention. One day God would restore to His people all they had lost to the Turk and the Frank: the Christian Empire, God's terrestrial Kingdom.<sup>45</sup> Thus, concerning the future of the subjects of the Ottoman Empire in Greek lands, two incompatible myths were formed: one for the resurrection of Christian Byzantium, and another for an erected Hellenic Kingdom. It was the first that preserved the Orthodox cultural tradition and gave them a sense of identity during the years of Ottoman occupation, but it was the second - strengthened by the reaffirmation of the classical tradition in the Latin West - that affected the cultivation of a sense of national identity to the members of the modern Greek national state after independence.

Between November 1437 and February 1438, George Gemistos Plethon (b. c. 1370) - the most important representative of this first 'hellenising' movement<sup>46</sup> - travelled from Constantinople to Venice as a member of the Greek delegation to the Council of Florence. In spite of this Council's failure to unite the two divided halves of Christendom, strong links between Greek and Italian 'humanists' were established. The intellectual exchanges between them were followed by a proliferation of studies on Greek philosophy, first in Florence and later in Rome, but mainly in Padua where the first chair of Greek was founded in 1463.<sup>47</sup> The Renaissance respect for classical literature, which, in the first place, derived from Latin authors, increased considerably after the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries' contacts with Greek scholars who made the original Greek texts accessible to western European humanists. Originally, however, admiration for the classical literary tradition was accompanied by contempt for the ancient Greeks themselves and, by implication, for their racial descendants. In Latin

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44 See: John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-43. In the fourteenth century an official anathema was declared by the Holy Synod against the 'Platonic ideas'. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 25.

46 On Plethon and his thought see: Philip Sherrard, 1959, 1992, *op. cit.*, pp. 120ff.

47 See: *ibid.*, pp. 168ff.

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literature the word 'Greek' had a derogatory sense; according to Virgil, Plautus, Juvenal, the elder Pliny, Cicero, Livy, Seneca and many others, the Greeks were characterised by impudence, double-dealing, mendacity, lechery, vanity and scurrilous servility.<sup>48</sup> This attitude towards the Greek character was transferred by the men of the Renaissance and their classically-minded successors in Italy, France, England and elsewhere, to the contemporary inhabitants of Greek lands, and was echoed in modern European literature down at least to the nineteenth century.<sup>49</sup>

The Renaissance reappropriation of the 'classicising' literary tradition of the ancient world inspired an interest in the artistic masterpieces of 'classical' antiquity - a term which referred to pre-Classical, Classical, Hellenistic and Roman antiquity in a way that assumed that all pre-Christian 'pagan' culture belonged to the same cultural unity. But the 'classicising' tradition that the Renaissance men came to adopt was a fabrication of the Hellenistic world, inherited by the Romans. By its origin, it was a tradition dominated by an uncritical and sterile imitation of idealised Classical models which the 'classicist' tradition since the Renaissance erected into universal aesthetic standards. In the centuries which followed the Renaissance, it was no longer only the humanists - originally "those whose studies centred in grammar and rhetoric as opposed to the logic and natural philosophy of the scholastics"<sup>50</sup> - that drew their models from classical antiquity. It was the ancient world as a whole that became a model for the new European world which, for this reason, called itself a 'humanist' world. This new 'humanist' European world saw the classical ideals and values<sup>51</sup> as those that were at the basis of its own civilisation. Man and man-made products were to be judged according to the classical norm of excellency. Academic information about this norm could be supplemented through the study of ancient artistic masterpieces and other solid objects which could be found in the lands of the ancient world.

By the seventeenth century, the classically educated European bourgeois had acquired a classical taste which could be indulged "in a way which flattered their own vanity

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48 John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

49 *Ibid.*

50 *Ibid.*

51 "As for these values themselves, they are above all those that envisage a purely human and secular excellence to be realized in and through a man-made civil and social order which reflects as far as it is possible the norms of a rationalistic interpretation of life." *Ibid.*, p. 28.

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and was in harmony with the finest values of civilisation."<sup>52</sup> Italy first and Greece later became the favourite destinations of dilettante gentlemen who travelled in search for learning and for "specimens of Grecian art"<sup>53</sup>, to the transportation of which the new class of traders and merchants was of great assistance. Manuscripts were to be found in monastic libraries,<sup>54</sup> and marble relics were scattered all over Greece, a "sad relic of departed worth"<sup>55</sup> herself. The Greek people themselves were of no interest except to reassure travellers and their readers of their "vice, ingratitude" and "extreme misery".<sup>56</sup> In the eighteenth century, Gibbon wrote of his contemporary Athenians who "walk with supine indifference among the glorious ruins of antiquity; and such is the debasement of their character that they are incapable of admiring the genius of their ancestors."<sup>57</sup>

Since the fall of Constantinople, the inhabitants of Greek lands had lived within the Ottoman Empire as members of the *millet* (nation) of Orthodox Christians subjects of the Sultan, in accordance with Islamic law, but with their own spiritual and temporal ruler, the Oecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. They continued the cultural and religious tradition of Byzantium, and their attitude towards western Europeans, the 'Franks',<sup>58</sup> was as unfavourable as that of the 'Franks' towards them. This attitude was nourished by the occupation of Orthodox Christian lands by the Venetians and the Genoese, and by the proselytising activities of Jesuits and French Capuchins who had established themselves in Athens (Jesuits, 1645; French Capuchins, 1658), Constantinople, Corfu, Zante, the Aegean islands and elsewhere.<sup>59</sup>

By the second half of the eighteenth century and particularly in the early nineteenth century, however, the spread of Romantic ideas in western Europe had brought about

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52 Ibid., p. 30.

53 Edward Dodwell, op. cit., p. 323.

54 "In 1801, D. E. Clarke seized Plato's Codex [twenty-four dialogues] by force from the hands of the monks [on the isle of Patmos], with the help of mercenaries and with the acquiescence of the Turks". Zissimos Lorentzatos, "The Lost Center"; in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, 1980, op. cit., p. 162, n. 4. (Reference to: I. Sakellion, *Πατμιακή Βιβλιοθήκη (Patmian Library)*, 1890, p. 1, fn. 5.)

55 Lord Byron

56 George Sandys, *Relation of a Journey begun An. Dom. 1610*; quoted in: John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, op. cit., p. 31.

57 Cited in: *ibid.*, pp. 31-2.

58 Cf.: "the Crusades, and particularly the sack of Constantinople by the 'Crusaders' in 1204, had left a legacy of extreme suspicion of, not to say hostility towards, the presence of western Europeans in the eastern Mediterranean and the adjacent lands". *Ibid.*, p. 33.

59 *Ibid.*

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a change in the way the Greek people were regarded by western Europeans. As genuine descendants of the ancient Hellenes, they could not be wholly without virtue; their present condition was probably the consequence of several centuries of captivity and slavery. But the time had come for them to enter into the inheritance of which they had so unjustly been dispossessed. Their fight for liberty and their right to live as an independent nation was in accordance with Romantic ideas. The struggle of the Greeks caught the imagination of Romantic philhellenes who saw the Hellenic nation - their own idealised ancestor - in the process of being restored.

Moreover, the currents of Western thought had already penetrated into the Greek East through the Venetian Republic and the schools on the Greek islands under her control,<sup>60</sup> through the Academy of the Patriarchate which had been reorganised by Theophyllos Corydaleus (director 1624-41) along the lines of the University of Padua and, since the second half of the sixteenth century, was furnished with 'scholarchs' (directors), the chief of whom were from Padua.<sup>61</sup> Other centres of Greek education, founded in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Greek lands within and without the Ottoman Empire and supported by the Greek ecclesiastical hierarchy<sup>62</sup>, were also functioning as media for the transmission of Western thought and culture to the Greek East.<sup>63</sup> Through Greek commercial colonies in all major commercial centres of Europe also the political prototypes of the Western Enlightenment had reached Greece.

The modern Greek state was to be shaped as a liberal state, in accordance with Western prototypes as these had evolved after the decline of the absolutist regimes. The French state-model in particular was seen by Korais as a direct descendant of an ancient Greek democratic polity.<sup>64</sup> The role of the modern state was to shape up the

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60 Rhodes, Cyprus, Chios, Crete, Monemvasia and the seven Ionian islands.

61 Philip Sherrard, 1959, 1992, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

"In 1405 Padua was occupied by the Venetians; the Venetian senate confirmed the University autonomy and privileges ... the new spirit of scientific secularism was free to develop there in a way which was impossible in any other European University, for the Court of Rome and the Inquisition were powerless to intervene in the internal affairs of the Venetian Republic. ... by virtue of that same independence, Padua was able to admit among its students those of the Orthodox faith." *Ibid.*, p. 172-3.

62 The Greek ecclesiastical hierarchy was, at least since the eighteenth century, under the influence of the 'enlightened' Phanariot aristocracy. See: *ibid.*, pp. 102ff and 178.

63 *Ibid.*, pp. 177-8.

64 Thanos Veremis, "Introduction"; in: Martin Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremis (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 6.

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national identity and to cultivate a national consciousness among the Greek people.<sup>65</sup> Although this people belonged to what was still an essentially traditional society, linked to a metaphysical tradition through the liturgy and ritual of the Church, the assistance of the European Powers in the establishment of the Greek state and the following surrender to the West and its ideals meant a denial of this long spiritual tradition in both its Christian and pre-Christian form, something which could not have remained without consequences.

In the nineteenth century, modern Hellas had to legitimise its position in the modern European world, a world that saw her as the matrix of its own civilisation. The modern Hellenic nation was seen as the legitimate heir of the ancient classical civilisation; classical antiquity could, therefore, provide the models of thought and culture for the nation's regeneration. But since the classical ideals had formed a basis for modern Western civilisation, Greeks could revert to models from Europe that would be at once classical and modern. Early nineteenth century European neoclassicism, with its focus on the Hellenic cultural heritage, provided prototypes not only for statebuilding, legal and educational institutions, et cetera, but also for the architectural landscape of the cities that the reborn Hellenic nation would inhabit. The 'Hellenisation' of modern Greece was conceived as the process that could make Greece conform to the classical illusory image that had been fabricated in the West during the period she was under Islamic rule. Cultural 'Hellenisation' found strong support in architectural 'Hellenisation'. But what may be called 'architectural Hellenisation' in nineteenth and early twentieth century Greece was not restricted to the style according to which modern Greek buildings were to be designed. Additionally, it implied a general mobilisation of the physical remains of the architectural heritage of Classical antiquity, aiming at the classical integration of new Greek cities into the ancient architectural context.

All efforts were directed towards Greece's emancipation from 'barbarity'; the state embarked on a process of modernisation which was intended to transform peasant subjects into full-fledged citizens of a unified liberal state and to restore the cultural dignity of the nation.<sup>66</sup> Soon this process started bearing fruits. The 'Europeanised'

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65 See: Paschalis M. Kitromilides, " 'Imagined Communities' and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans"; in: Martin Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremis (eds.), op. cit.

66 See: Thanos Veremis, "From the National State to the Stateless Nation; 1821-1910"; in: Martin Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremis (eds.), op. cit.

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artist-engineers that had worked abroad returned to liberated Greece to offer their services together with western European architects who came to Greece with the Bavarian King Otto of Wittelsbach.<sup>67</sup> King Otto and his advisers, most of them pedantic Germans, were deeply interested in the Classical past, with a contempt for the Middle Ages. Their decision to refound the city of Sparta (the new city was inaugurated in 1834), which compelled the people living in Mistra to abandon their ancestral homes,<sup>68</sup> is a case characteristic of the interests and aspirations of the new rulers of Greece.



Figure 6.1. Nauplia on the eve of the Greek War of Independence. (After Dimakopoulos, ed.)

Even more profoundly, the transfer of the capital of the Hellenic Kingdom from Nauplia to Athens, in 1833, (Figs. 6.1, 6.2) marked the aspirations for an inauguration of a new era and a restoration of the Hellenic nation around a new centre, its original cradle.

*The main reason for the choice ... was the strong attachment of the philhellene King Ludwig I of Bavaria (father of Otto, the first king of independent Greece) to the cultural heritage of the city and the persistent pressure he exerted upon the regency council of Greece to adopt his views on the matter.<sup>69</sup>*

As the architectural advisor to King Ludwig I of Bavaria, Leo von Klenze (1784-1864),<sup>70</sup> stated at the time: "The sole name of Athens will help to reconstruct the city. Athens would have remained the capital of Greece even if another town had been declared the capital."<sup>71</sup> The intention was to make Athens the dominating centre of

67 Ioannis Kapodistrias was the first head of the independent Greek state, succeeded by the Bavarian regency, and King Otto after he reached his majority (1835).

68 Steven Runciman, *Mistra: Byzantine Capital of the Peloponnese*, London, 1980, p. 146.

69 Alexander Papageorgiou-Venetas, "Green Spaces, Archaeological Excavation Areas and the Historic Site in the Town Planning Schemes for the City of Athens: German Plans and Other Concepts during the Foundation Decade (1833-1843)"; in: *Planning Perspectives*, 6, U.S.A., 1991, pp. 69-70.

70 See: *Leo von Klenze (1784-1864)*, Ausstellung des Stadtarchivs, der Wissenschaftlichen Stadtbibliothek und des Stadtmuseums Ingolstadt, (exhibition catalogue), Ingolstadt, 1993.

71 Alexander Papageorgiou-Venetas, 1991, op. cit., p. 70.

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independent Greece. The city had to be distinguished from the rural centres of 'backward peasants' by new urban forms appropriate to accommodate its newly developed urban élite.

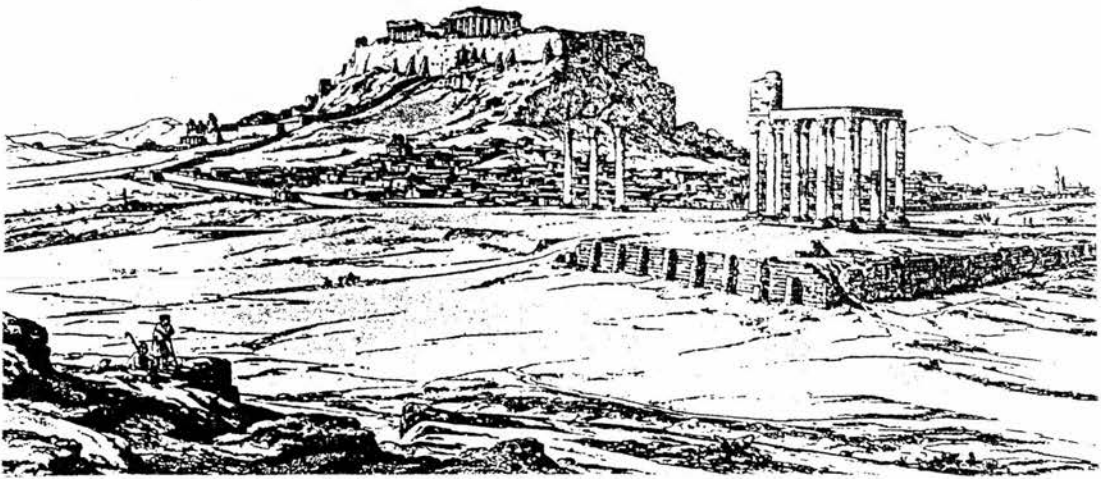


Figure 6.2. C. R. Cockerell, Athens, engraving, 1816. (After Russack)

But travellers to Athens on the eve of its declaration as the capital of the Kingdom had expressed their disappointment. Greece did not stand up to her legend, she did not resemble her marmoreal image; this theme recurs in their memoirs. Ludwig Ross(1806-1859) described the ruined Athens of 1833 as "a monotonous grey mass of rubble and dust", where

*only the fort of the Acropolis and the 'Theseus' temple gave testimony to the historic city. Historic sites like the Academy and Kolonos Hippios were totally abandoned, and the Acropolis was deformed by the batteries and fortified gates at the Propylaea. The rock of the Areopagus was occupied by the hut of a Dervish inviting the Moslems to prayer.*<sup>72</sup>

Athens, then a small village of 8,000-12,000 inhabitants (Figs. 6.3, 6.4) and almost completely destroyed during the war, experienced a rapid urban development resulting in the weakening of other provincial cities. But this 'pseudo-urbanisation' did not

72 L. Ross, *Erinnerungen und Mittheilungen aus Griechenland*, 1863, pp. 171-2. Quoted in: *ibid.*, p. 71.



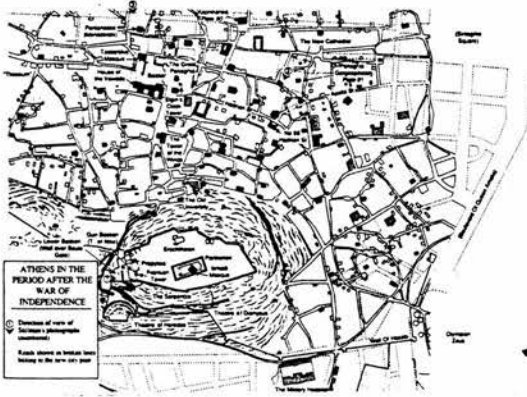


Figure 6.3. Map of central Athens after the War of Independence. (After Tomlinson)



Figure 6.4. Louis-François Cassas, Athens drawn in situ, 1785. (After Papageorgiou-Venetas, 1991)

correspond to the transformation of the nineteenth century Greek society, which was much less significant until mid-century. The most important change since the foundation of the state was the introduction of a constitution, in 1844, and the simultaneous revival of parliamentary politics.<sup>73</sup> At the same time, the irredentist creed (liberation of ethnic brethren under Ottoman rule) was progressing,<sup>74</sup> but the centre of gravity of the Greek economy remained in Constantinople, Smyrna and Alexandria until 1860.<sup>75</sup>

*Early nineteenth century European Neoclassicism inspired two antagonistic trends in Greek nationalist thought, one based on the Classical example of fifth-century Athens and the other on Alexandria as the cultural capital of a Hellenistic world. Each focused on a different era of a glorious heritage for the delimitation of Hellenism's natural boundaries and championed contradictory definitions of the Hellenic identity.<sup>76</sup>*

The nationalist doctrine of the so-called 'Great Idea',<sup>77</sup> the explicit evocation of which was made in 1844 by the prime

73 Thanos Veremis, "From the National State to the Stateless Nation; 1821-1910"; in: Martin Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremis (eds.), op. cit., p. 12. In accordance with the 'terms' of the constitution, all foreign civil servants were removed from the public positions which they held, something that affected the foreign teaching architects and those foreign architects working on state commissions.

74 Irredentist fever was at about the same time infecting Italy. Ibid.

75 K. Tsoukalas, *Η Ελληνική Τραγωδία*, Athens 1974, p. 5.

76 Thanos Veremis, "From the National State to the Stateless Nation; 1821-1910"; in: Martin Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremis (eds.), op. cit., pp. 10-1.

77 For the unity of the entire nation and the liberation of the 'unredeemed' brethren.

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minister Ioannis Kolettis, was also inspired by romantic Neoclassical ideology and "came in the context of a debate over the issue of the autochthonous versus the heterochthonous citizens of the Greek state."<sup>78</sup> Such ideas provided the necessary faith in the future of the national state, on the grounds of a historical continuity with the glorious past; they served nationalistic aspirations and stressed the hopes for a reunited Hellenism; and, finally, their international standards were proved capable of securing the compatibility of the Occidental culture with the 'eternal Hellenic ideas' which were considered to be at its foundations. The umbilical cord connecting Greece's intelligentsia with its western European kin was strengthened and the Greek utopias found support. Moreover, the spread of education in Greece in the western European pattern secured the reorientation of the public consciousness towards the values of Hellenism at the expense of the living tradition. The theories of nationalism and the national irredentist pursuits found further support among the growing urban middle class of educated professionals, public servants and retail traders.<sup>79</sup>

"Although in material terms the weak Hellenic Kingdom had little in common with industrialized Europe, a Greek élite made Western ideas a constant feature of social discourse."<sup>80</sup> Western European schools of art were very much appreciated by the 'educated' Athenians of the nineteenth century. The art of lithography was welcomed when the painter G. Margaritis introduced it to Greece (1836), and its importer praised in the press.<sup>81</sup> Even the Byzantine and post-Byzantine art of iconography was replaced by a religious painting on the western European pattern.<sup>82</sup> What was important in those days was not the content of the art itself, but the fact that it constituted an element of progress, and progress was to come from the West<sup>83</sup> to liberate Greece from 'barbarity'.

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78 Paschalis M. Kitromilides, " 'Imagined Communities' and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans"; in: Martin Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremis (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 39.

79 See: John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, "The Historical Development of the State"; in: John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, *op. cit.*, pp. 81-185.

80 Thanos Veremis, "From the National State to the Stateless Nation; 1821-1910"; in: Martin Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremis (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 12.

81 Dimitris Philippides, 1984, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

82 The metropolitan church of Athens was painted by the German painter Seitz. Christos Yannaras, 1992, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

83 See the speech of Lyssandros Kautantzoglou, director of the Royal School of Arts, at the inauguration of an exhibition of students' works in 1844. In: Costas H. Biris, *Ιστορία του Ε. Μ. Πολυτεχνείου 1836-1916*, Athens, 1957, p. 76.

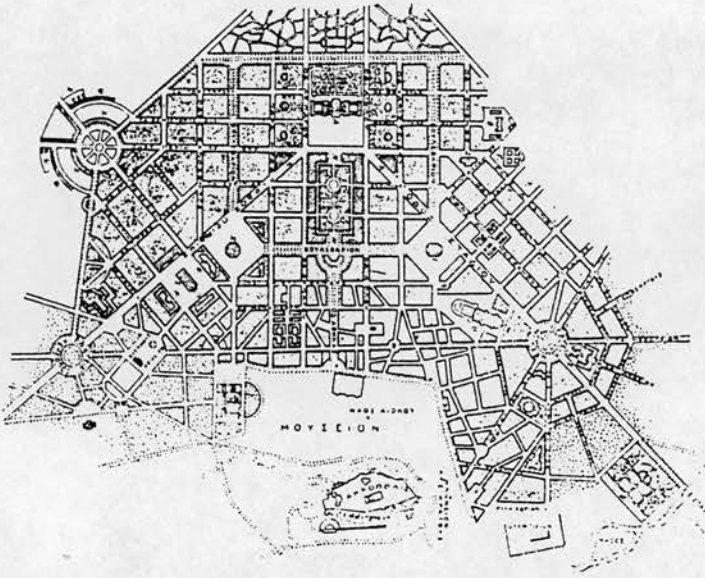


Figure 6.5. The Kleanthes-Schaubert Plan, 1833. (After Russack)

The initial plan for Athens was drawn by Schinkel's students Stamatis Kleanthes (1802-1862) and Eduard Schaubert (1804-1860).<sup>84</sup> (Fig. 6.5) The term 'antiquisation' has been coined "by architectural historians to refer to the Renaissance practice of giving a city the appearance of ancient Rome or Athens through

the introduction of structures organized in the classical mode."<sup>85</sup> In the case of the plan for modern Athens, application of the typical asteroidal pattern of the eighteenth century European capitals aimed at a 're-antiquisation' of the city and intended to make its features conform to the Eurocentric classical image. The main axes designed by Kleanthes and Schaubert radiate from the royal palace and establish visual connections between the centre and the ancient monuments, following the connections in the valleys between the hills of the Athenian basin.<sup>86</sup> Yet the new city was conceived as an early Mediterranean 'garden-city' with an imposing royal palace; Schaubert himself expressed his and Kleanthes' wish "to make Athens like a village settlement where each single house will have its own garden or courtyard"<sup>87</sup>. The houses for the city's residents were to be all one storey high, accommodating one family each, for, according to the architects' observations, this would suit the way the Greeks lived. The area south of the Acropolis, the adjoining hills and the banks of the river Ilissos were left vacant in order to form a vast archaeological zone, comparable in size with

84 29 June-11 July 1833. Dimitris Philippides, 1984, op. cit., p. 74.

85 Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre, *Classical Architecture: The Poetics of Order*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, 1986, 1987, p. 263.

86 On the characteristics of this scheme see: Alexander Papageorgiou-Venetas, 1991, op. cit., p. 72. See also: Costas H. Biris, *Τὰ Πρώτα Σχέδια τῶν Ἀθηνῶν Ἱστορία καὶ Ἀνάλυσις τῶν*, Athens, 1933.

87 In a letter to Schinkel (January 1832); quoted in: Hans Hermann Russack, *Αρχιτέκτονες τῆς Νεοκλασικῆς Ἀθήνας*, Athens, 1993, (in German: *Deutsche Bauen in Athen*, Berlin, 1942), p. 30.

the new city. The old town on the north slope of the Acropolis was proposed for demolition in the upper part and for urban re-modelling in the lower part, to allow for the uncovering of the ancient city.<sup>88</sup>



Figure 6.6. The Klenze Plan, 1834. (After Russack)

The first plan was revised one year later by Leo von Klenze who adapted it to the political and financial realities of the state. He reduced public spaces and changed the 'garden-city' conception into that of a Mediterranean city, as he knew it from Italian prototypes, with continuous frontages along the streets of the new town. Klenze's interpretation of the classical ideal city was in contrast to the "rigid monumentality of Central European classicism, foreign - as he thought - to the Greek spirit."<sup>89</sup> Klenze's plan for Athens (Fig. 6.6) intended to demonstrate a continuity of ancient and modern Greek architecture. He believed that an urban setting on classical soil should follow the free composition of ancient lay-outs and pleaded for "picturesque effects".<sup>90</sup> Yet, he could not re-



Figure 6.7. Th. Du Moncel, Kapnikarea, Athens, 1846. (After Costas H. Biris, 1940)

88 Ross "proposed the establishment of learned societies abroad for 'the enhancement of the excavations in Athens.'" Alexander Papageorgiou-Venetas, 1991, op. cit., p. 75.

89 Ibid., p. 76. Needless to say that 'the Greek spirit' Klenze refers to is that of the ancient past.

90 Ibid., p. 78.

See also: Dimitris Philippides, 1984, op. cit., p. 390. And: Xanthippe Skarpia-Heupel, *'Η Μορφολογία του Γερμανικού Κλασικισμού (1789-1897) και η Δημιουργική Άφομοίωσή του από τήν Έλληνική Άεχτεκτονική (1833-1897)*, (doctoral dissertation, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki), Thessaloniki, 1976, pp. 175-7.

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design the Kleanthes-Schaubert plan which had already been officially adopted. The principal objective of Klenze's revision was to reduce the need for compensations which the state could not afford.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, although he is reported to have suggested the preservation of all monuments, Classical, Byzantine and Islamic,<sup>92</sup> he proposed the demolition of two major eleventh century Byzantine churches - the Kapnikarea (Fig. 6.7) and the church of Sts. Theodoroi<sup>93</sup> - and recommended the clearing of the plateau of the Acropolis of all buildings of post-Classical periods.<sup>94</sup> His attitude towards mediaeval and vernacular architecture was altogether unfavourable; the creations of the latter "had no trace of the beauty of the Southern ... pictorial character"<sup>95</sup>. The most important change Klenze made to the initial plan for the city of Athens concerned the position of the royal palace.

Klenze criticised the initial plan for Athens for its austere geometry, a characteristic, he thought, of German classicism but not of the ancient Greek cities.<sup>96</sup> He favoured a plan where only the ancient monuments deserved special emphasis, and proposed for the palace to be built on the north-western slopes of the Pnyx, within a large romantic landscape garden which would include the Theseion "as an authentic ancient *objet trouvé*"<sup>97</sup>. The choice of the location of the royal palace in Athens became a point of controversy. Maximilian, crown prince of Bavaria and brother of King Otto, invited Karl Friedrich Schinkel to prepare a project for the Athenian royal palace. Schinkel favoured the building of modern Athens on the "hilltown pattern", as opposed to the "town in the plain", and he imagined the modern city built around the Acropolis hill, with the Acropolis itself as its revitalised modern centre.<sup>98</sup> So he responded to

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91 Ibid., p. 75.

92 Alexander Papageorgiou-Venetas, 1991, op. cit., p. 79.

93 Xanthippe Skarpia-Heupel, op. cit., p. 177. Reference to: Costas Biris, op. cit., pp. 38-9.

The Kapnikarea church was finally saved because it attracted the attention of King Ludwig I who stopped the demolition process. Christos Yannaras, 1992, op. cit., p. 259. The church of Sts. Theodoroi has also survived to this day.

94 Alexander Papageorgiou-Venetas, 1991, op. cit., p. 79. An entire quarter for the Turkish garrison and their families, a Frankish tower, and a mosque (within the Parthenon, built after its destruction by Morosini), stood on the summit of the Acropolis.

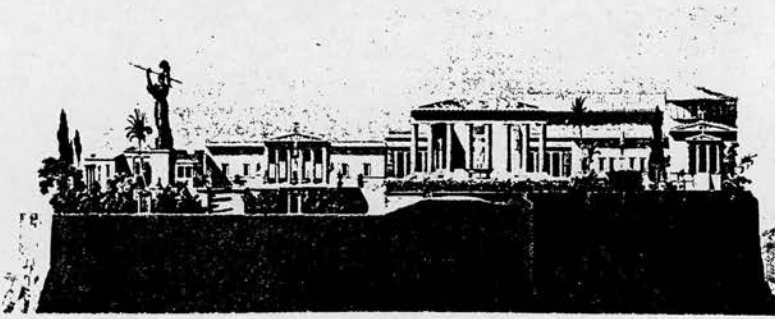
95 Leo von Klenze, *Aphoristische Bemerkungen, gesammelt auf seiner Reise nach Griechenland*, Berlin, 1838, p. 445. Quoted in: Xanthippe Skarpia-Heupel, op. cit., p. 180.

96 O. Hederer, *Leo von Klenze*, Munich, 1964, p. 142. Quoted in: Xanthippe Skarpia-Heupel, op. cit., p. 175.

See also: Dimitris Philippides, 1984, op. cit., p. 390.

97 Alexander Papageorgiou-Venetas, 1991, op. cit., p. 78.

98 See: *ibid.*, pp. 79-82.



**Figure 6.8.** Karl Friedrich Schinkel, The Royal Palace on the Acropolis. Western façade. (After Russack)

the invitation with a project for the royal palace on the Acropolis of Athens. (Fig. 6.8) He never went to Athens; he practised what has been called 'Greek abstinence', avoiding a confrontation with

real Greece in order to maintain his idealised vision of it. In his project for the royal palace he aimed at a romantic "dialectic symbiosis of neo-classical architecture with the ancient heritage - in utmost opposition to the purist, academic conservationist approach which has prevailed in Athens ever since"<sup>99</sup>. At the same time, however, he sought to 'order' the apparent 'disorder' of Classical antiquity, by "cover[ing] up the embarrassing unrelatedness of the antique buildings on [the Acropolis]".<sup>100</sup> (Figs. 6.9, 6.10) As it appears from a letter he sent to Crown Prince Maximilian (1834), where he argued that the young Greek sovereign should adopt a lifestyle compatible with "the customs and necessities of the country"<sup>101</sup>, Schinkel perhaps believed that the customs of the modern Greeks had not changed substantially since the Periclean age. Quast, who praised Schinkel's project and paralleled its patterns to those of the poetry of Schiller and Hölderlin<sup>102</sup>, proposed (1834) the erection of the new metropolitan church on the Areopagus "as a symbolic reference to Apostle Paul, who preached there and converted the Athenians"<sup>103</sup>.

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99 Ibid., p. 80.

100 Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre, 1986, 1987, op. cit., p. 261.

101 Alexander Papageorgiou-Venetas, 1991, op. cit., p. 92, n. 11.

102 Hans Hermann Russack, op. cit., pp. 53-4. Reference to: A. Ferdinand von Quast, *Mittheilungen über Alt- und Neu-Athen, Darunter: 'Neubau der Stadt Athen und des Königlich Schloßes auf Seiner Burg*, Berlin, 1834; in: Alexander Papageorgiou-Venetas, 1991, op. cit., p. 93.

103 Ibid., p. 80, and Hans Hermann Russack, op. cit., p. 26. On Schinkel's proposal, see: *ibid.*, pp. 41-54.

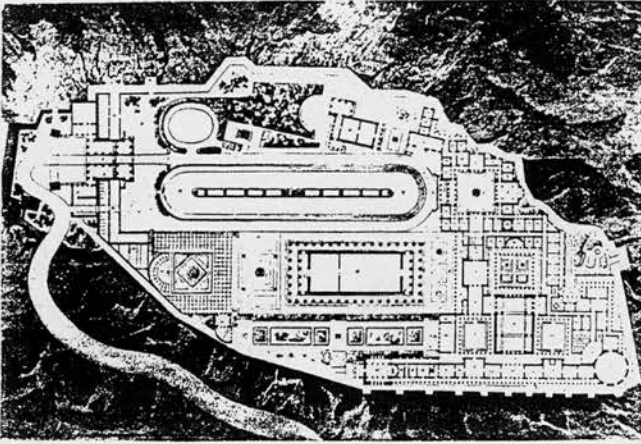


Figure 6.9. K. F. Schinkel, The Royal Palace on the Acropolis. Ground-plan. (After Russack)

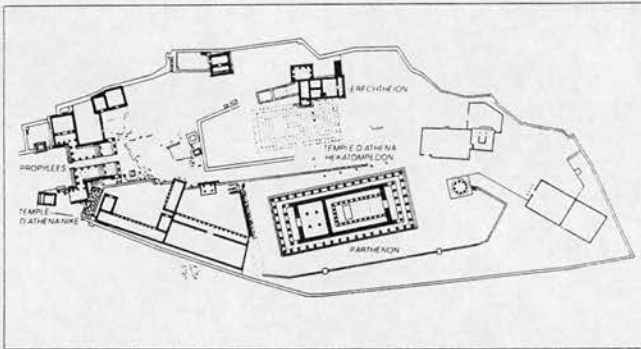


Figure 6.10. Plan of the Acropolis, 5th c. BC. (After École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts)

Finally, Schinkel's project, a "midsummer night's dream of a great architect"<sup>104</sup>, as Klenze characterised it, was rejected and, following the advice of King Ludwig I, nothing was built next to the sacred monuments. The modern city kept a respectful distance from the Acropolis with its monuments in "splendid isolation"<sup>105</sup>.

On 10 September 1834, on the Acropolis, Klenze addressed King Otto during the inauguration ceremony for the Parthenon restoration work.<sup>106</sup> In his memoirs he described the moment when restoration work started as one of the only two moments of real joy and satisfaction in his life.<sup>107</sup>

Restoration, or rather purification, works had been carried out on the Acropolis during the summer preceding the inauguration ceremony, under the supervision of Klenze.<sup>108</sup>

104 Ibid., p. 81.

105 Ibid.

106 See: Charalambos Bouras, "Restoration Work on the Parthenon and Changing Attitudes towards the Conservation of Monuments: A Theoretical Contribution to Restoration Work Today"; in: Panayotis Tournikiotis (ed.), op. cit., p. 320.

107 Leo von Klenze, op. cit., p. 387. Quoted in: Hans Hermann Russack, op. cit., pp. 86-7.

108 Ibid., pp. 68f. Kyriakos Pittakis had started restoration work on the Acropolis before Klenze's arrival. After Klenze's departure from Athens, restoration work was supervised by Ludwig Ross, Eduard Schaubert and Christian Hansen.

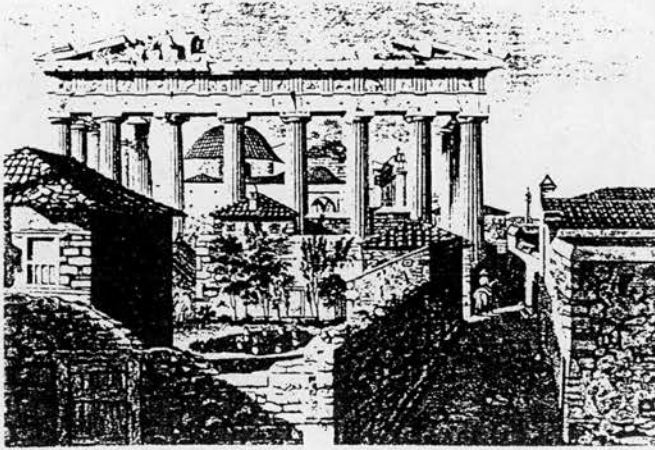


Figure 6.11. The Parthenon and the mosque inside it which survived until 1843. View from the East.. W. Pars: J. Stuart and N. Revett, Engraving, 1751-55. (After Philadelphus)



Figure 6.12. The Acropolis castle after its liberation and restoration, twentieth century photograph. (After Miliadis)

The contemporary passion for the golden age of Pericles and Klenze's own wish to save "the eternally most beautiful building in the world [the Parthenon]"<sup>109</sup> led to the demolition of post-Classical structures on the hill, a process of profanation which continued during the following decades on the Acropolis and elsewhere.<sup>110</sup> (Figs. 6.11, 6.12)

The second moment which Klenze referred to was when the foundations of the Walhalla<sup>111</sup> were laid on the banks of the Danube near Regensburg (18 October 1830) where, as Klenze says, "[he] was allowed to compete with the creator of the Parthenon."<sup>112</sup> Klenze's design, which had won the competition of 1821, was in accordance with drawings he had made sixteen years earlier

(1814) "for a monument of universal peace - the dream of every artist". He designed "a monument of German grandeur and glory", as it was first conceived by King

109 Klenze's letter to King Ludwig I (18-11-1819); cited in: Xanthippe Skarpia-Heupel, op. cit., p. 127.

110 Such as the dwellings of the Turkish garrison, the mosque inside the Parthenon, the Frankish tower, et cetera.

111 *Wal-Halla*, the Hall of the Dead.

112 Quoted in: Hans Hermann Russack, op. cit., p. 87.



Ludwig I, "in order to strengthen the national feelings of the Germans", in the form of a Doric temple.<sup>113</sup> (Fig. 6. 13)

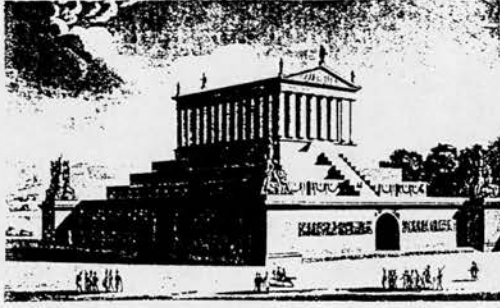


Figure 6.13. Leo von Klenze, The Walhalla at Regensburg. Drawing, 1814. (After Russack)

There, Klenze had the opportunity not only to build a Parthenon on the bank of the Danube, which was to embody the German nation's ideals,<sup>114</sup> but also to realise in concrete architectural terms the theories of Georg Ludwig von Mauer (1790-1872). Mauer, a member of the Bavarian regency in Greece while King Otto was still a minor, thought he "found in the Greek people an amazing inclination towards the old German customs" and believed that the reason for this was that "the Pelasgians were closely related with the ancient Indogermans"; therefore, the "ancient German element" which he discerned in both modern and ancient Greeks was explained.<sup>115</sup>

In his speech on the Acropolis, Klenze expressed the hope that "the Greek nation will find in ancient art an element of identification and inspiration in the search for new artistic achievements."<sup>116</sup> However, the first architects who responded to Klenze's calls were foreigners, led by Klenze himself. For, as Charles Blanc remarked, at the time when the Renaissance flourished in Italy and was under preparation in France, and the great architects of the West needed to get to know the true models in order to

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113 Ibid., pp. 89ff.

See also: Sokratis Georgiadis, "A Parthenon by the Banks of Danube"; in: *Tefchos*, Bilingual Review of Architecture, Art and Design, 5, Athens, March 1991, pp. 40-4.

114 It must be noted that Klenze, in his letter to King Ludwig I to which reference has already been made, opposed the idea of a Doric Walhalla. See: Xanthippe Skarpia-Heupel, op. cit., p. 127.

Later, however, when his design was strongly criticised, particularly by those in favour of a Gothic Walhalla, Klenze saw his critics as no more than "a couple of idiots, who are so strongly bound to the bad things of Gothic that they are unable to understand anything of classical architecture". Quoted in: Sokratis Georgiadis, op. cit., p. 42.

115 Nikolaos Pantazopoulos, "Τίς και Μάουερ: Κοινωνικός Ρεαλισμός και Ιστορικός Ρομαντισμός στο Δίκαιο της Αναγεννώμενης Ελλάδας"; in: Goethe Institut Athen, *Friedrich von Thiersch και η Γένεση του Ελληνικού Κράτους από τη Σκοπιά του 20ου Αιώνα*, (Conference Proceedings), Athens, 15-17 October 1990, p. 38.

116 Alexander Papageorgiou-Venetas, 1991, op. cit., p. 79.

117 C. Blanc, *Grammaire des Arts du Dessin*, 1870 (second edition), p. 172. Quoted in: Bruno Foucart, "La Modernité des Néo-Grecs"; in: *École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris -*

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find inspiration"<sup>117</sup>, Greece was, by "a fatal coincidence"<sup>118</sup>, subjected to the Turks. But now the time had come not only for the architects to get close to the ancient models, but also for their own works to stand in direct confrontation with those of the great masters. The opportunity to build next to the authentic monuments, or to assist in the unearthing of some of them, became the dream of every ambitious western European architect. This opportunity became a challenge for many of them and gave rise to theories concerning the appropriate way of building on the very soil where the glorious Classical monuments were first created and still stood.<sup>119</sup>

The nineteenth century western European classicism of the arts was satisfactory for those looking for a 'Hellenic' artistic inspiration, either because of its 'classical subjects' or its 'classical', 'atticist' style, or even its colours, if those happened to be the ones of the Greek flag. The Classical civilisation of the Greeks had escaped to the West and was now returning to its cradle.<sup>120</sup> The classical ideals were the autochthonous ideals of an art to be identified as, and coined, Hellenic. Additionally, the despotic ruler, against whom the Greeks had fought, had been identified as "oriental", alien to classical culture and hostile to the absolutist European regimes.<sup>121</sup> The classical architectural orders applied in Greece by foreign or foreign educated architects were enthusiastically accepted. The choice was easy. The ways in which the Greeks were building their dwellings until then were immediately rejected as the products of slavery, parochial and unsuitable to serve the needs of the new era.

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*Rome - Athènes: Le Voyage en Grèce des Architectes Français aux XIXe et XXe Siècles*, Paris, 1982, 1983, 1986, p. 50.

118 Ibid.

119 See: Leo von Klenze, op. cit., p. 327. Here Klenze argues against "servile" and "eclectic" imitation. Cited in: Hans Hermann Russack, op. cit., p. 181.

See also: Costas Biris, 1966, op. cit., pp. 92ff.

And: Xanthippe Skarpiá-Heupel, op. cit., pp. 197, 200 and passim. See also: François Loyer, *Architecture de la Grèce Contemporaine*, (Université de Paris, Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines, Doctorat de 3<sup>me</sup> cycle en Philosophie à la Sorbonne), Paris, 1966, pp. 29ff.

And: Dimitris Philippides, 1984, op. cit., pp. 77f.

120 See the speech of Lyssandros Kautantzoglou, director of the Royal School of Arts, at the inauguration of an exhibition of students' works in 1844. In: Costas H. Biris, 1957, op. cit., p. 76.

121 Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre, "The Grid and the Pathway: An Introduction to the Work of Dimitris and Susana Antonakakis. With Prolegomena to a History of the Culture of Modern Greek Architecture"; in: *Architecture in Greece*, Annual Review, 15, Athens, 1981, p. 166.

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The learned architects' concern for the ancient prototypes and the Attic landscape, their physical setting, increased demands for a neo-Hellenic classicism. In Greece the prototypes of Neoclassical - or "pseudoclassical", as Seferis called it<sup>122</sup> - architecture were closer to the ancient ones,<sup>123</sup> as the latter were easily accessible to study, the scale was smaller, to match the smaller budgets, the expression soberer and the geometry more austere. This rigid respect of the classical canons was further assisted by the lack of a Renaissance or a Baroque architecture in the country. Yet, these canons were those which had dominated the western European classicising architectural scene since the Renaissance. They were the canons of the architecture of the golden age of Pericles, idealised and rationalised in an empirical and scientific manner; they had been observed, analysed and measured, and, having been divorced from the historical reality that brought them into being, they had been put to the service of fabricating the harmonious image of the humanist world. Neoclassical architecture in Greece, and elsewhere, followed the Classical canons in this 'abstracted' form which bore only the external features of the architecture of Classical antiquity. Architectural Neoclassicism has been called by Tzonis "historicist regionalism"<sup>124</sup> and, according to him,

*the absence of the tragic, the flight from dilemmas and conflict, the avoidance of commitment to catharsis became the fate of regionalist neo-classicism in Greece but also of historicist regionalism around the world*<sup>125</sup>

Klenze's initial theory, which favoured faithfulness to the ancient architectural principles with regard to the form and the spatial composition of buildings<sup>126</sup> and rejected the supporting of arches and vaults by Doric columns,<sup>127</sup> was compromised

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122 George Seferis, "Dialogue on Poetry: What Is Meant by Hellenism?"; in: George Seferis, 1966, 1967, 1982, op. cit., p. 94.

123 Skarpia-Heupel argues that the German architects of the Ottonian period, in their attempt to build in a way suitable to the Greek physical environment and to avoid competition with the neighbouring ancient monuments, adopted an architectural style which has been defined as "Deutscher Hellenismus" (H. Russack, op. cit.) and which is clearly differentiated from the style of the works of the same architects in Germany. Xanthippe Skarpia-Heupel, op. cit., p. 205-7, and, with particular reference to Gärtner's, Schinkel's and Klenze's designs for the royal palace: pp. 197-200.

124 Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre, 1981, op. cit., p. 166.

125 Ibid., p. 169.

126 See: Klenze's references to these principles, in support of his design for the Museum - *Pantechnion* - of Athens (1836), which was never built; quoted in: Hans Hermann Russack, op. cit., p. 82.

127 Leo von Klenze, op. cit.; quoted in: Hans Hermann Russack, op. cit., p. 181.

by arguments for classical echoes in Byzantine architecture,<sup>128</sup> but references to the latter were to increase only much later. The rebirth of the beauty of the unsurpassed



Figure 6.14. Friedrich von Gärtner, The Royal Palace, Athens, 1840. (After Philippides, 1984)

Classical antiquity, for Athens to regain its former lustre, was the cardinal task of the architects of the first civil buildings of modern Greece. For its lack of respect towards this antiquity, Schinkel's proposal for the palace on the Acropolis was rejected as a "sacrilege",<sup>129</sup> and Klenze's design, revised and "rationalised"<sup>130</sup> by the other 'Isar Athenian'<sup>131</sup> architect of King Ludwig I, Friedrich von

Gärtner (1836-40), was finally approved and built (1840).<sup>132</sup> (Fig. 6.14) Klenze's next task was a museum to house the masterpieces of antiquity. He worked in Munich for a building that had to be free of "the sterile academic form which characterise[d] the buildings and complexes of modern architects and made them appear as if they were drawn by machines"<sup>133</sup>, in accordance with the explicitly expressed desire of King Otto.

128 Cf. "We study these aspects of Byzantine architecture where we can prove that there are elements of an ancient conception and building attitude, echoes of the Greek antiquity". Leo von Klenze, op. cit., quoted in: *ibid.*, p. 182.

Theophil von Hansen argued that the origins of Byzantine architecture are to be found in the ancient Classical one. C. von Lützow, "Das Choragische Denkmal des Lysikrates in Athen nach Th. Hansens Restaurationsentwurf"; in: *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst*, 1867, p. 266. Quoted in: *ibid.*, p. 132.

129 Dimitris Philippides, 1984, op. cit., p. 78.

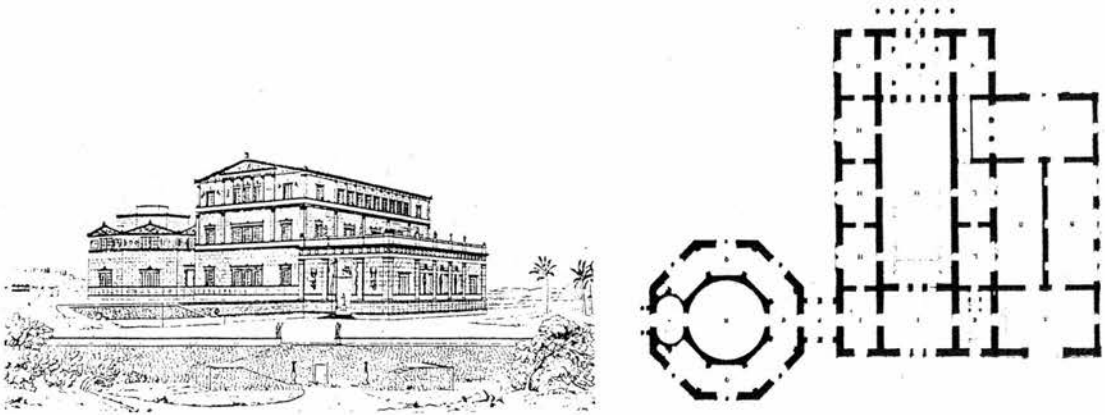
130 Xanthippe Skarpia-Heupel, op. cit., p. 199.

131 Klenze and Gärtner were named 'Isar Athenians' after the Munich river Isar. G. Akerström-Haugen. "Konshistorisk Tidskrift"; *Art Review*, published by the Society of Art, Stockholm, 1972, Nr. XLI, p. 41. Quoted in: *ibid.*, p. 193.

132 The final decision was taken by King Ludwig I himself, during the winter of 1834-35 when he was in Athens. Hans Hermann Russack, op. cit., p. 77.

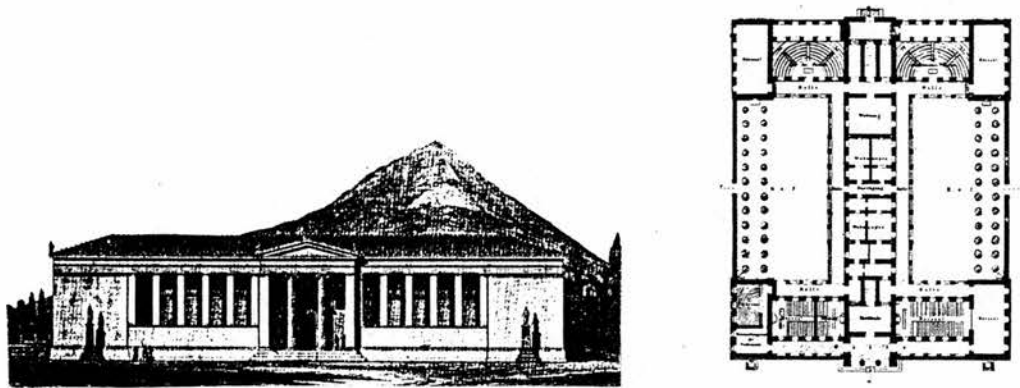
Gärtner's "palace, in its regularity, austerity and geometrical clarity of design, is a finer archetype of the most rigid Romantic Classical ideals than anything Gärtner built in Munich." Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1958, 1967, 1968, 1971, 1977, 1987, p. 68.

133 Cited in: Hans Hermann Russack, op. cit., p. 82.



Figures 6.15 and 6.16. Leo von Klenze, The Athens Museum, 1835. (After Russack)

Klenze applied his romantic preference for a lay-out in accordance with that of ancient complexes, but finally the project was not executed.<sup>134</sup> (Figs. 6.15, 6.16)



Figures 6.17 and 6.18. Christian Hansen, The University of Athens, 1839-43. (After Russack)

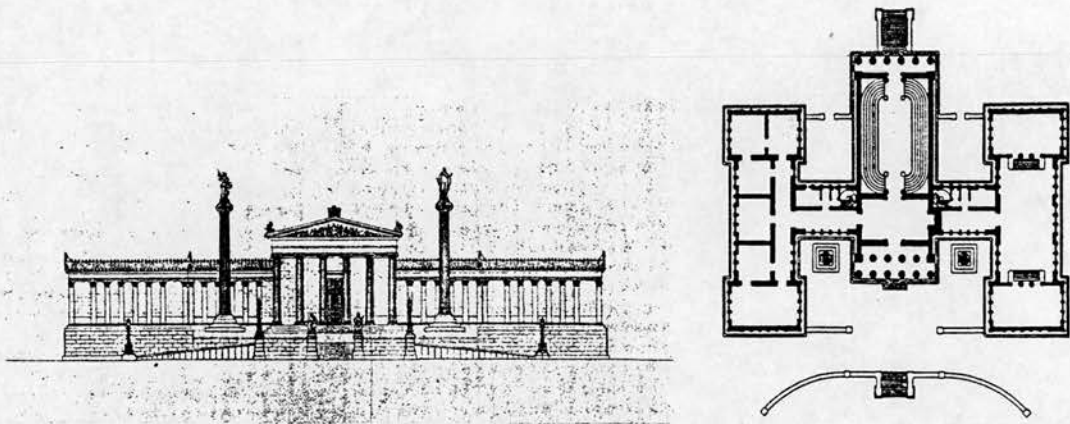
Following the same romantic classicist ideals as Schinkel and Klenze, the Danish architect Christian Hansen (1803-1883) designed the University of Athens (1839-43)<sup>135</sup> (Figs. 6.17, 6.18), and his brother Theophil von Hansen (1813-1891) the Observatory (1842-46) and the other two buildings of the 'trilogy', as he called the group of buildings which comprises the National Academy (1859-85) (Figs. 6.19,

134 The only building designed by Klenze that was built is the Roman Catholic church of St. Dionysius (1853).

135 See: *ibid.*, pp. 106-13.

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6.20), the University and the National Library (1888-91)<sup>136</sup> (Figs. 6.21, 6.22), and the design of which was confided to him by King Otto, in 1859.<sup>137</sup> Theophil von Hansen is said to have been the first architect who used in his buildings some of the ancient architectural 'refinements' which Schaubert observed and proved on the Parthenon, such as the curvature of the horizontal lines of the stylobate and the entablature.<sup>138</sup> In his design for the façade of the Academy, Hansen copied the measures and proportions he had studied on the Erechtheion.<sup>139</sup> His intention, as Russack suggests, was to achieve the same harmony he saw in his prototype, "tutta quella musica", as Leone Battista Alberti had defined it.<sup>140</sup>



Figures 6.19 and 6.20. Theophil von Hansen, The National Academy, Athens, 1859-85. (After Russack)

136 Ernst Ziller made the first draft design for the National Library, in 1885 he sent it to Hansen in Copenhagen, and the latter worked on it until 1888 when he brought it to Athens for approval. Hans Hermann Russack, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

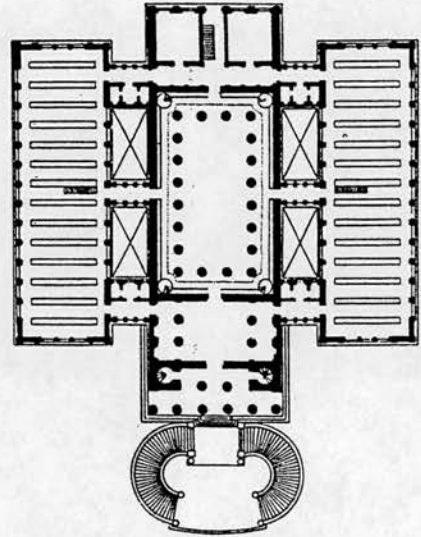
137 See: Xanthippe Skarpia-Heupel, *op. cit.*, pp. 217-35.  
See also: Hans Hermann Russack, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-57.

And: G. Niemann and F. Feldegg, *Theophilus Hansen und seine Werke*, Vienna, 1893. Theophil von Hansen is regarded as the first architect in modern Greece who sought his models in the architecture of the Renaissance. Dimitris Philippides, 1984, *op. cit.*, p. 80. Theophil Hansen is also responsible for the final version of the Zappeion, the construction of which had started according to Boulanger's design.

138 Hans Hermann Russack, *op. cit.*, p. 138. Vitruvius had set out these refinements in his writings. According to Russack, it was finally Ernst Ziller who applied these refinements on the Academy. Ziller supervised the construction of the building, after Hansen left Athens.

139 *Ibid.*, p. 139.

140 Leon Battista Alberti, *De re aedificatoria*, 1726.



Figures 6.21 and 6.22. Theophil von Hansen, The National Library, Athens, 1888-91. (After Russack)

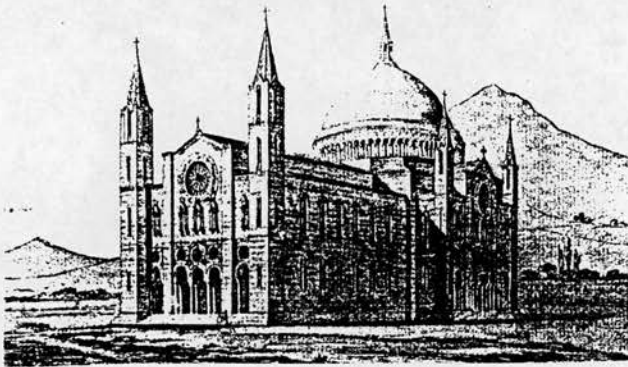


Figure 6.23. Theophil von Hansen, The Athens Metropolitan Church, 1842. (After Russack)

Theophil von Hansen's design for the new metropolitan church of Athens (1842)<sup>141</sup> (Fig. 6.23), characterised by a pluralism<sup>142</sup> of architectural styles, a syncretic composition of Romanesque, Gothic, Byzantine and Renaissance elements, may be seen as reflecting a new direction which romantic architectural thought had taken in the West.

Paul Delaroche had already finished his painting for the *École National Supérieure des Beaux-Arts* in Paris, where the personified Gothic Art had been welcomed to the company of Greek Art, Roman Art and that of the Renaissance.<sup>143</sup> (Fig. 6.24)

141 Hansen's design was revised by D. Zezos, in 1846. When the latter died (1853), he was replaced by F. Boulanger who supervised the construction of the church until its completion, in 1862. The colouring of the façades was an initiative of Boulanger's. Dimitris Philippides, 1984, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

142 Xanthippe Skarpia-Heupel, *op. cit.*, pp. 230-1.

143 Marie-Christine Hellmann, "Envois de Rome et Archéologie Grecque"; in: *École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts*, *op. cit.*, p. 48.



**Figure 6.24.** Paul Delaroche, 1841, detail. Salle de l'Hémicycle, École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris. Centre: Apelles with Ictinus to his right and Pheidias to his left. Left: Greek Art and Gothic Art. Right: Roman Art and the Renaissance. Middle: the Spirit of the Arts. (After Hellmann; in: École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts)

The reaffirmation of the Gothic architectural tradition was followed by an appreciation of Byzantine architecture. The young architects of the Prix de Rome were coming to Greece to rediscover "l'essentiel de la leçon grecque: la liberté de la conscience, l'exercice d'une raison libre capable de jouer au mieux avec les programmes, les matériaux, la nature des choses et des

hommes."<sup>144</sup> The growing romanticisation of the contemporary Greek people, their picturesque "colourful clothes" and the light of their land,<sup>145</sup> together with the recently grown admiration for the discovered polychromy of the ancient monuments,<sup>146</sup> had led western Europeans to turn once again to contemporary Greece for an exploration of the values on which their civilisation was assumed to have been based:

*Cette compréhension neuve est celle des deux grandes vertus des temps modernes: le libéralisme, le nationalisme. Dans la Grèce libérée on découvre ... l'art libre d'un peuple libre. ... About ... souligne la passion de la liberté chez les Grecs d'aujourd'hui et de toujours*<sup>147</sup>

The development of nationalist ideas and the 1850s' introduction of Byzantine civilisation as an integral part of the history of Greece, however opposed by the exponents of the Enlightenment,<sup>148</sup> were not incompatible with the concurrent Western

144 Bruno Foucart, "La Modernité des Néo-Grecs"; in: *ibid.*, p. 51.

145 *Ibid.* (Reference to: J. J. About, *La Grèce Contemporaine*, 1855, second edition, p. 5). Cf.: "the white ideal Greece is nothing but an illusion". *Ibid.*

146 See: Hans Hermann Russack, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

147 Bruno Foucart, "La Modernité des Néo-Grecs"; in: *École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts*, *op. cit.*, p. 51. (Reference to: J. J. About, *op. cit.*, p. 53).

148 Konstantinos Paparigopoulos (1815-1891) "stroved to justify the continuity of Greece in geographical terms by proving its continuity in historical time. His multi-volume history begun to appear in the 1850s and introduced Byzantine civilization, which had been excluded by the exponents of the Enlightenment, as an integral part of Greek history." Thanos Veremis, "From the National State to the Stateless Nation; 1821-1910"; in: Martin Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremis (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 12.



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European romantic reappraisal of the Dark Ages. In Greece, Orthodoxy had been encompassed within the ethnic definition of Hellenism, and the nationalisation of the Church<sup>149</sup> was followed by the nationalisation of Byzantine art.<sup>150</sup> The flexibility of the architectural theories of the times in Greece and the conclusions their supporters drew cannot be considered more extravagant than those of their foreign counterparts. While for Viollet-le-Duc "L'architecture dite gothique n'a qu'un vrai répondant: l'architecture grecque, la Saint-Chapelle n'a qu'un équivalent, l'Erechthéion"<sup>151</sup>, the Greeks started discerning the same virtues of Classical architecture in the Byzantine one. King Otto himself was a great supporter of the revival of the Byzantine orders<sup>152</sup> in ecclesiastical architecture, something stimulated by his support of the 'Great Idea' and the nation's irredentist struggles. Hansen saw the proportions and grace of mediaeval Byzantine architecture as proofs of its descentance from the ancient Classical one.<sup>153</sup> Revised architectural theories legitimised a blending of neo-Lombardic, neo-Romanesque, neo-Gothic and neo-Byzantine elements with neo-Renaissance and neo-Classical ones, justified by arguments which intended to prove the identity of principles between the different architectural traditions from which such elements issued, and by others based on theories of historical continuity, supported by the development of nationalism all over Europe.<sup>154</sup>

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149 "The proclamation of the independence of the Church of Greece from the Patriarchate of Constantinople was urged in the very first years of the War of Independence by Adamantios Korais ... as an essential precondition of national liberation. ... The independence of the Church of Greece, which according to Orthodox canon law could only be granted by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, was proclaimed unilaterally by a local synod of Greek bishops in 1833 at the initiative of the Bavarian regency. ... eventually, in 1850, at the initiative of the Greek state, the Patriarchate issued a tome granting administrative autocephaly to the Church of Greece". Paschalis M. Kitromilides, " 'Imagined Communities' and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans"; in: Martin Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremis (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 39-40.

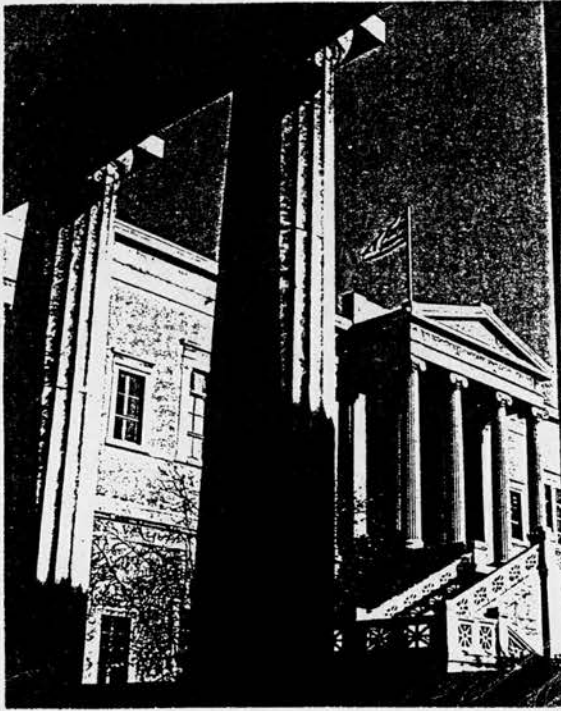
150 See below in this Chapter, 8.

151 Bruno Foucart, "La Modernité des Néo-Grecs"; in: École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, *op. cit.*, p. 51. Reference to: Viollet-le-Duc, *Entretiens sur l'Architecture*, Vol. 1, p. 56.

152 Xanthippe Skarpia-Heupel, *op. cit.*, pp. 211-6.

153 See note above, in this Chapter, 2.

154 See: Dimitris Philippides, 1984, *op. cit.*, pp. 69ff.



**Figure 6.25.** Lyssandros Kautantzoglou, The National Technical University of Athens, 1861-76. (After Philippides, 1984)

Among the architects of Greek Neoclassicism two main tendencies developed: the classical and the romantic. The first followed demands for a sanitised Greek Neoclassicism, purified of foreign "disguises" and "transplanted as a genuine offshoot of the ancient Greek art".<sup>155</sup> The demand for a sanitised Greek Neoclassicism was in accordance with contemporary western European Romantic trends. Lyssandros Kautantzoglou (1812-1885),<sup>156</sup> director (1843-1862) of the National Technical University of Athens (then Royal School of Arts), appeared as the strict supporter of orthodox classicism, at least in his theories. His major work, the National Technical University of Athens (1861-

1876) (Fig. 6.25) aspired to be the most impressive building of Athens at the time and became the paradigm of the 'official' architecture of the Greek state.<sup>157</sup> Kautantzoglou's original strict classicist style which the National Technical University of Athens and the Arsakeion (1946-52) (Figs. 6.26, 6.27) reflect, was eventually compromised; his neo-Byzantine Ophthalmological Hospital (1852) (Fig. 6.28) reflects his later romantic tendencies. Kautantzoglou also formulated an alternative planning scheme (1839) for Athens, which "represents an improved proposal for the harmonic coexistence of the new city and the ancient heritage."<sup>158</sup>

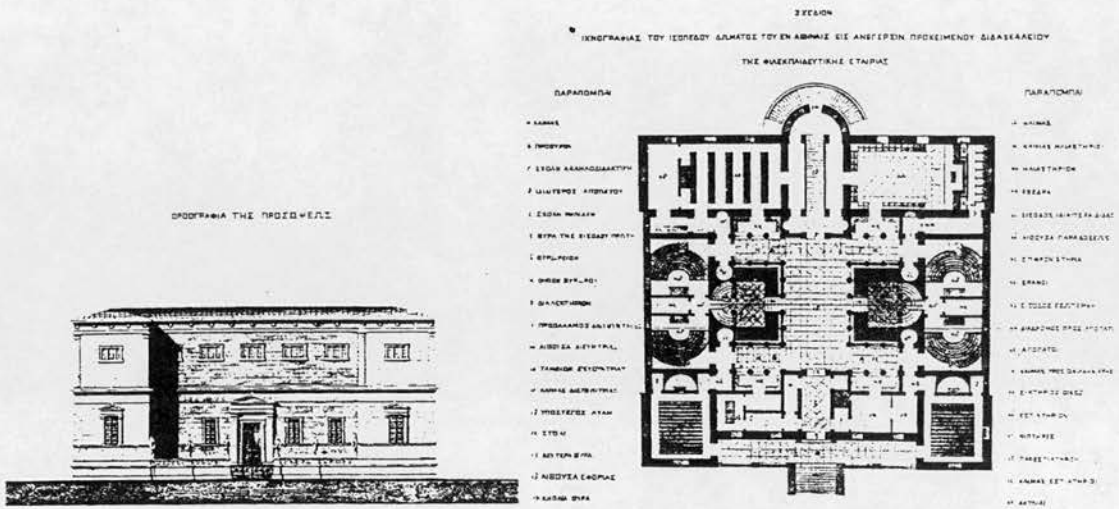
155 Lyssandros Kautantzoglou, *Λόγος Έκφωνηθείς κατά την Έπέτειον Τελετήν του Βασιλικού Πολυτεχνείου*, Athens, 1855, pp. 20-1. Quoted in: Dimitris Philippides, 1984, op. cit., p. 70.

156 See: Babis Eustathiades, "Λύσανδρος Κανταντζόγλου. Ό Πρώτος Πρύτανης του Πολυτεχνείου και ό Οικοδόμος του"; in: Pavlos Kyriazis and Michalis Nikolinakos (eds.), op. cit., pp. 171-94.

157 See: Dimitris Philippides, 1984, op. cit., pp. 86-8.

158 Alexander Papageorgiou-Venetas, 1991, op. cit., p. 83.

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Figures 6.26 and 6.27. Lyssandros Kautantzoglou, Arsakeion Girls' School, Athens, 1846-52. (After Philippides, 1984)

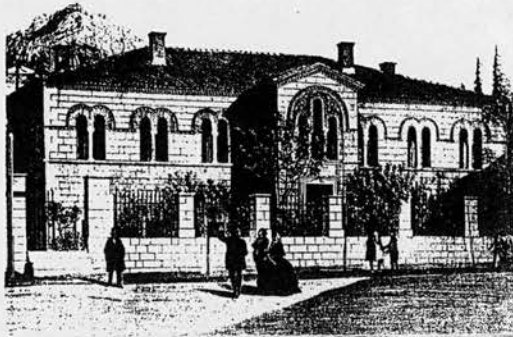


Figure 6.28. Lyssandros Kautantzoglou, The Ophthalmological Hospital, Athens, 1852. (After Kyriazis and Nikolinakos, eds.)

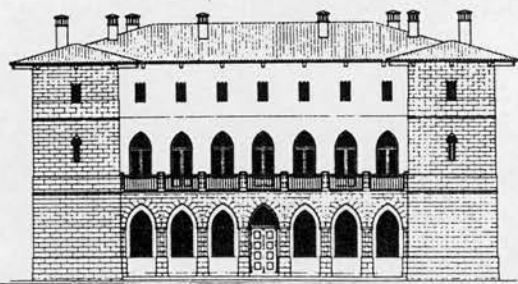


Figure 6.29. Stamatis Kleanthes, Ilissia, Athens, 1840-48. (After Philippides, 1984)

Stamatis Kleanthes<sup>159</sup> appeared as the representative of the romantic direction. He made the first step towards Greek vernacular architecture, the elements of which he used rather unconsciously.<sup>160</sup> Most characteristic of Kleanthes' romantic tendencies are his buildings for the Duchess of Piacenza (Fig. 6.29), where the Italian elements prevail,<sup>161</sup> and his feebly Gothic English Church (1836), a building which was very

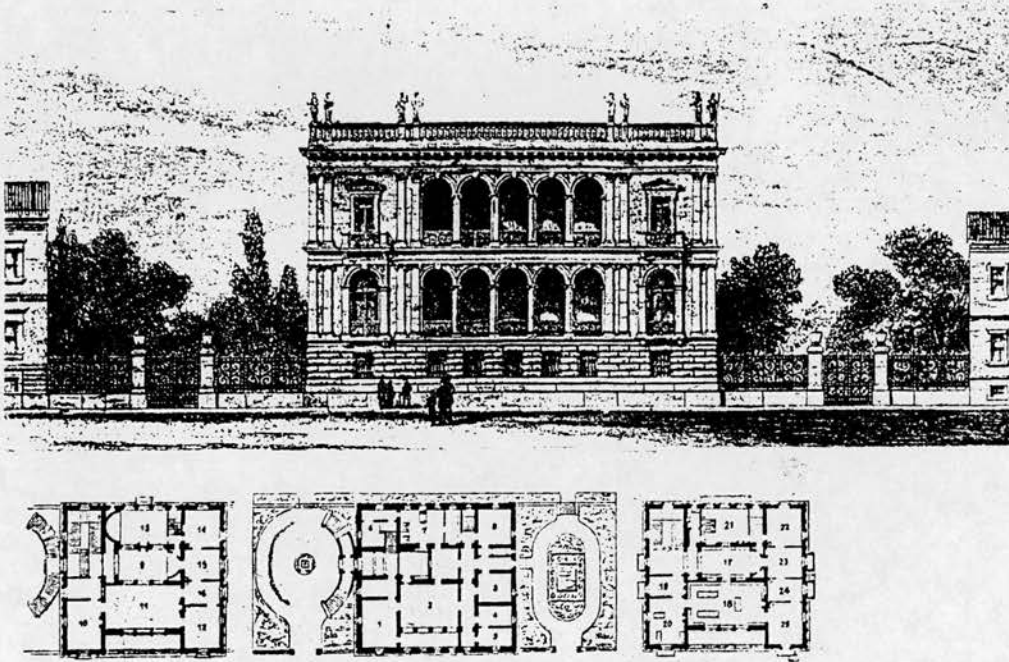
159 See: Costas H. Biris, "Σταμάτης Κλεάνθης. Ὁ Μεγαλοιδεάτης Ἀρχιτέκτων τῶν Ἀθηνῶν"; in: Pavlos Kyriazis and Michalis Nikolinakos (eds.), op. cit., pp. 59-84.

160 Alexander Papageorgiou-Venetas, 1991, op. cit., p. 93.

161 See: Vincent Scully, "Kleanthes and the Duchess of Piacenza"; in: *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Volume 22, 3, Charlottesville, Virginia, October 1963, pp. 139-54.

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much criticised when erected.<sup>162</sup> The "popular" architecture of Kleanthes, as opposed to the "aristocratic, Palladian" of Kautantzoglou,<sup>163</sup> was regarded by the latter as unfaithful to the Greek prototypes.



Figures 6.30 and 6.31. Ernst Ziller, The House of Schliemann, Athens, 1878-89. (After Russack)

While the debate between the supporters of architectural classical orthodoxy and those of a romantic picturesque architecture continued, Ernst Ziller (1837-1923) had come to Greece to supervise the construction of Hansen's projects, after the latter had gone to Vienna.<sup>164</sup> Ziller was to become the dominant architect of the last quarter of the nineteenth century in Greece. In his secular buildings, he was more faithful to classicism which, he thought, should be distinguishable for its Greek character,<sup>165</sup> but his classicism was not free of elements from the Renaissance or from contemporary European architecture, such as that of Rundbogenstil. (Figs. 6.30, 6.31)

162 According to Hitchcock it is based rather curiously on a design by C. R. Cockerel, much modified in execution. Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

163 François Loyer, *op. cit.*, p. 106-8.

164 Hans Hermann Russack, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

165 Xanthippe Skarpia-Heupel, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

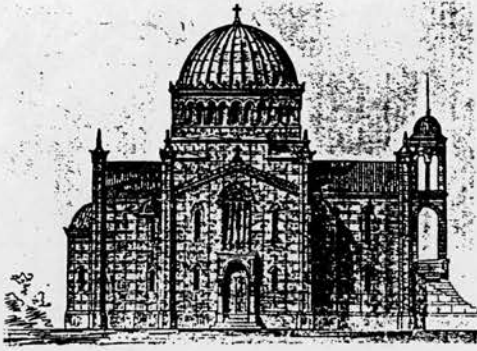


Figure 6.32. Ernst Ziller, Drawing for a church. (After Russack)

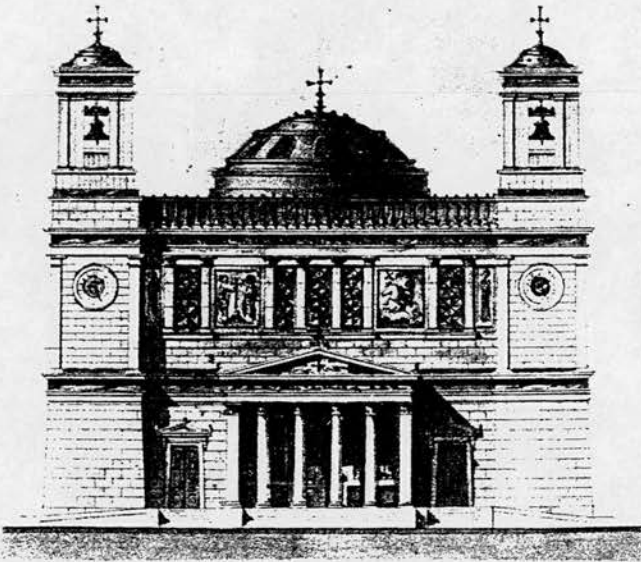


Figure 6.33. Lyssandros Kautantzoglou, the church of St. Konstantinos, Athens, 1869-93. (After Philippides, 1984)

In his ecclesiastical buildings, neo-Romanesque elements merged with elements from Renaissance prototypes and Byzantine ones. (Fig. 6.32) His eclecticism was usually modest, a classicising one, inspired by a respect towards the local conditions and social needs.<sup>166</sup> Skarpia-Heupel considers Ziller the founder of historicism - within the framework of classicism - in modern Greece.<sup>167</sup>

A similar eclecticism characterises the ecclesiastical buildings of the other nineteenth century architects in Greece, who tended to design variations of a neo-Byzantine style enriched by 'solutions' from other orders. (Fig. 6.33) Often, these churches came to replace

Byzantine ones which were demolished. The new metropolitan church of Athens, built between 1846 and 1862, is a typical early example of such tendencies.<sup>168</sup> The result stands next to the surviving old metropolitan church of Athens, the Byzantine church of Panayia Gorgoepikoos (or St. Eleutherios), part of a twelfth century monasterial complex which has not survived. (Figs. 6.34, 6.35) The arbitrary form of the modern

166 Dimitris Philippides, 1984, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

167 Xanthippe Skarpia-Heupel, *op. cit.*, p. 262.

168 The metropolitan church of Athens was designed by Dimitris Zesos in 1842. Zesos died in 1857 and the construction continued under the direction of F. Boulanger and Panayotis Kalkos. See also above, Chapter Four, 3.

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church next to the one built in the Byzantine tradition reveals to the spectator the essential difference in the process that brought each one of them into being.<sup>169</sup>



**Figure 6.34.** The old metropolitan church of Gorgoepikoos or St. Eleutherios, 12th c. (After Philadelphus)



**Figure 6.35.** The new metropolitan Athens, Panayia church of Athens next to the old one. Engraving, 19th c. (After Kyriazis and Nikolinakos, eds.)

Ziller was also an architect with great interest in archaeology. He excavated the Athenian stadium of Hadrian (1869-70) and the ancient theatre of Dionysus, and escorted Schliemann on the trip that led to the discovery of Troy.<sup>170</sup> He later built Schliemann's house in Athens. Ziller proved beyond doubt the existence of architectural 'refinements' in ancient Classical buildings.<sup>171</sup> The second half of the nineteenth century was the period when foreign architectural missions came to Greece to excavate the major centres of the ancient Greek world. These excavations were characterised by a general contempt for everything that belonged to the post-Classical past. Many Byzantine and post-Byzantine monuments were destroyed in the process, at least until 1860,<sup>172</sup> in order to bring to light the reminders of the Classical world.

169 See: Christos Yannaras, 1992, op. cit., pp. 259-60.

170 Xanthippe Skarpia-Heupel, op. cit., p. 258. And: Hans Hermann Russack, op. cit., p. 161.

Ziller's studies on the ancient monuments were not inspired by a purely archaeological interest; his main purpose was to extract rules and guidelines for the application of 'refinements' in modern buildings. See: *ibid.*, p. 166.

171 *Ibid.*, pp. 163-6.

172 Dimitris Philippides, 1984, op. cit., p. 78. In 1930, the American School of Classical Studies started excavations at the ancient Agora, at the foot of the Acropolis. The special Greek law covering the Agora excavations (Law 4212 of March 23, 1929, article 3) reads: "on the completion of the excavation, and insofar as consistent, in the opinion of the Archaeological Council, with the good preservation and the proper display of the ancient remains, the area shall be turned into a park". Cited in: Alexander Papageorgiou-Venetas, 1990-1991, op. cit., p. 19.

See: Ioannis Travlos' survey of the demolished quarter, in: Ioannis Travlos, *Πολεοδομική Εξέλιξις τῶν Ἀθηνῶν ἀπὸ τῶν Προϊστορικῶν Χρόνων μέχρι τῶν ἀρχῶν τοῦ 19οῦ αἰῶνος*, Athens, 1960, p. 253.

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Architects participated in these excavations in order to stimulate their imagination, but also in an attempt to understand the Greek landscape.<sup>173</sup> It was this landscape - in the wide sense of the word which includes the Greek cityscape - that suffered most of the consequences of these scholarly pursuits.<sup>174</sup>



Figures 6.36 and 6.37. The gate of Athene Archegetis (Pazaroporta), Roman Agora, in the bazaar of Athens in Ottoman times (6.36) and in modern times (6.37), after archaeological excavations (1890-91, 1910), protected behind bars. (After Miliadis)

Kleanthes' and Schaubert's proposals for a "world-unique garden-museum of ancient art ... dotted with few small picturesque (ruined) churches of the Byzantine Middle Ages, in charming contrast to the works of the ancients"<sup>175</sup>, a romantic 'Ruinenpark', and hopes for the complete uncovering of the ancient city of Athens remained "a unique chance ... lost forever"<sup>176</sup>. But, as a result of extended excavations, cities that house death came to replace the ones which housed the life of the Athenian people for centuries.<sup>177</sup> Henry Miller describes this result in the following words:

173 Xanthippe Skarpia-Heupel, (particularly for Christian Hansen and Ernst Ziller), op. cit., pp. 194-5, 257-8.

174 See: Costas H. Biris, *Αί Ἐκκλησίαι τῶν Παλαιῶν Ἀθηνῶν*, Athens, 1940, pp. 18-9.

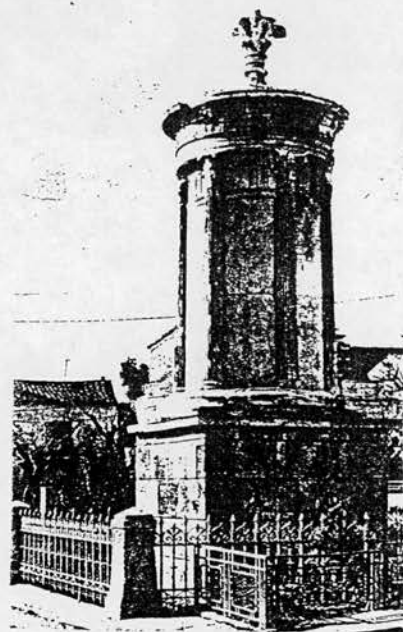
175 Stamatis Kleanthes and Eduard Schaubert, *Erleuterung des Planes der Stadt Neu-Athen*. Handwritten, undated and unsigned original of the explanatory memorandum to the Regency, attached to the plan of Athens (1833), kept in the 'Klenzeana III, 22' archives of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich. Quoted in: Hans Hermann Russack, op. cit., p. 189.

176 Raoul Rochette, letter published in *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Paris, 15/10/1838. Quoted in: Alexander Papageorgiou-Venetas, 1991, op. cit., p. 89.

177 Kautantzoglou had expected that "the settled Athenians would gradually abandon their inherited old-fashioned dwellings and move to the new 'European' city. Urban land would thus be depreciated in the area of the *intra mures* old city, and expropriations for the excavations of the ancient city - a European dream - would be within the reach of public finances". Ibid., p. 84.

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*The archaeologists have ruined the place; they have laid waste big tracts of land in order to uncover a mass of ancient relics which will be hidden away in museums. The whole base of the Acropolis resembles more and more a volcanic crater in which the loving hands of the archaeologists have laid out cemeteries of art. The tourist comes and looks down at the ruins, these scientifically created lava beds, with a moist eye. The live Greek walks about unnoticed or else is regarded as an interloper.<sup>178</sup>*



**Figures 6.38 and 6.39.** The choric monument of Lysicrates partly immured in the south-east angle of the convent of Capuchin missionaries (6.38, J. Stuart and N. Revett, Engraving, 1751-55) and the same monument restored to its pristine glory (6.39, After Miliadis).

The noble ruins and antique objects were saved from earlier witnessed 'barbarous' uses: "Inscribed stones were used for modern staircases, and sarcophagi as wash-basins."<sup>179</sup> Although they were not used to adorn the gardens of the villas of the well-to-do, as Gutensohn had suggested,<sup>180</sup> those that could be transferred were taken to the museums and the others were secured in cages, protected, removed from people's life; "venerable ruins" in "splendid isolation" (Ludwig I King of Bavaria). Instead of enhancing the appreciation of Classical art, the monuments' purification process - as it was conceived - led the people who had lived with it for more than two thousand years

178 Henry Miller, *The Colossus of Marousi*, Great Britain, 1941, 1950, p. 47. Cited (except for the last sentence) in: Alexander Papageorgiou-Venetas, 1990-91, p. 46, n. 20.

179 Ludwig Ross, op. cit. Quoted in: Alexander Papageorgiou-Venetas, 1991, op. cit., pp. 71-2.

180 Ibid., p. 86.



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away from it, but left them rich in "material for academic study"<sup>181</sup>. (Figs. 6.36-6.41) Yet, it revealed that the white marmoreal image of Classical Hellas which such attempts were aiming at reviving was more like an image of death. The "European dream" (Kautantzoglou) of a total elimination of the old city of Athens was "cherished up to the 1960s"<sup>182</sup>, but the early uncontrolled building of this area, the Plaka, prevented its realisation. The Plaka and the Psiri districts have survived to this day.



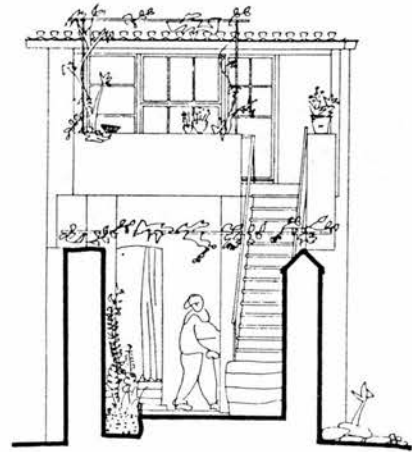
**Figures 6.40 and 6.41.** The Ancient Agora before (6.40) and after (6.41) archaeological excavations. (After Miliadis).

From the early days of modern Greece until recently, Plaka housed the middle and lower classes of Athenians. Although the archaeological excavations came to destroy essential parts of it, it has kept its post-Byzantine character; it contains many Byzantine churches and a few Ottoman buildings as well as the market area, its vital element. Its houses were either rebuilt or modified in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; they are houses of a small scale, built by local craftsmen who looked for prototypes in the monumental civil buildings of Athens and the residences of the grand-bourgeoisie, in the construction of which many had participated. These houses had to satisfy the need of their owners for social ascent and their every-day life's needs. As this life had not changed very much since the days before independence, the only thing in which its lodgings changed was the enrichment of the front façade with classicist mass-produced elements<sup>183</sup>.

181 Ferdinand von Quast, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-3. Quoted in: Hans Hermann Russack, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

182 Alexander Papageorgiou-Venetas, 1991, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

183 E. Ziller designed many of these elements for mass production.



Figures 6.42 - 6.45. 'Neoclassical vernacular' architecture in Plaka. (6.42 and 6.44 after Philippides, 1984; 6.43 and 6.45 after Antoniadis, 1979)

The life of the family remained unchanged - on the traditional, pre-independence pattern - on the other side of the wall which enclosed the courtyard and the house, reflecting the principles and the practices of vernacular architecture.<sup>184</sup> (Figs. 6.42-6.45) Notwithstanding influences from the learned nineteenth century Greek architecture, this popular one represented a natural organic development which

184 See: Johannes-Konstantinos Biris, *Αί 'Αθήναι τοῦ Νεοκλασικισμοῦ*, Athens, 1939, Introduction. See also: Konstantinos Biris, "Τὸ Παλιὸ 'Αθηναϊκὸ Σπίτι"; in: *'Αθηναϊκαὶ Μελέται*, 3, Athens, 1940. And: Ioannis Travlos, *Νεοκλασικὴ Ἀρχιτεκτονικὴ στὴν Ἑλλάδα*, Athens, 1967, p. 36.

followed the patterns of the architecture of the preceding historical periods, Byzantine and post-Byzantine.<sup>185</sup> Soon, it spread not only around the neighbourhoods of Athens, but all over the country, adopting itself to the regional climatic conditions and the local architectural traditions.<sup>186</sup>



Figure 6.46. House in Anafiotika, 1860s. (After Chrabanis; in: The Ministry of Culture)

Another urban and architectural phenomenon bears witness to what may be called the influence of Classical models on the architecture of the descendants of the ancient Hellenes. At the time when the 'official' architectural image of Athens was being created according to the classicist norm, the groups of builders and artisans that migrated to the new capital in search for jobs built their own houses in the manner their fathers had built theirs in their native lands. Whole neighbourhoods emerged, named after the place of origin of the new-comers' houses. The 'Maniatika', the 'Cretika', the 'Hydraeika', the 'Chiotika' et cetera (houses of Mani, Crete, Hydra,

Chios, et cetera) formed small settlements within the alien capital.<sup>187</sup> The most interesting, and still surviving, of these is the 'Anafiotika' neighbourhood, built in 1860, on the north side of the hill of the Acropolis by two craftsmen from the island of Anafi, in violation of the law which prevented building in this area. In need for housing, they chose to build on the part of the Athenian land that was most similar to

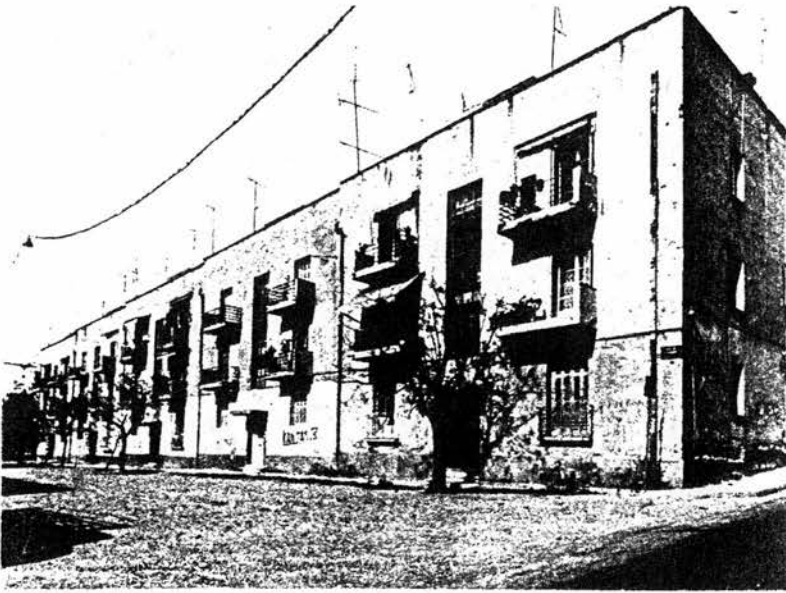
185 See: Aris Konstantinidis, *Τὰ Παλιὰ Ἀθηναϊκὰ Σπίτια*, Athens, 1950.

186 See: Dimitris Philippides, 1984, op. cit., pp. 98-103.

187 Pavlos Chrabanis, "Ἡ Αυθαίρετη Δόμηση II" (Illegal Housing); in: The Ministry of Culture, Vol. 1, 1985, op. cit., p. 143.

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their island's land. Their houses, and those of other Anafiots who joined them later, were easy to build on the rock in the way houses had always been built in Anafi, and the final complex has all the characteristics of a vernacular Cycladic village.<sup>188</sup> (Fig. 6.46) In 1922, when the refugees from Asia Minor came to Athens, this phenomenon re-appeared. While the Greek state was planning to house them in Modernist concrete blocks (Fig. 6.47), the settlers built in the centre of Athens their own houses in the vernacular mode. The settlement - although it cannot be considered complete, for it consists exclusively of houses - grew organically on a traditional pattern, and its architectural cohesion was unconsciously established.<sup>189</sup> (Figs. 6.48-6.50)



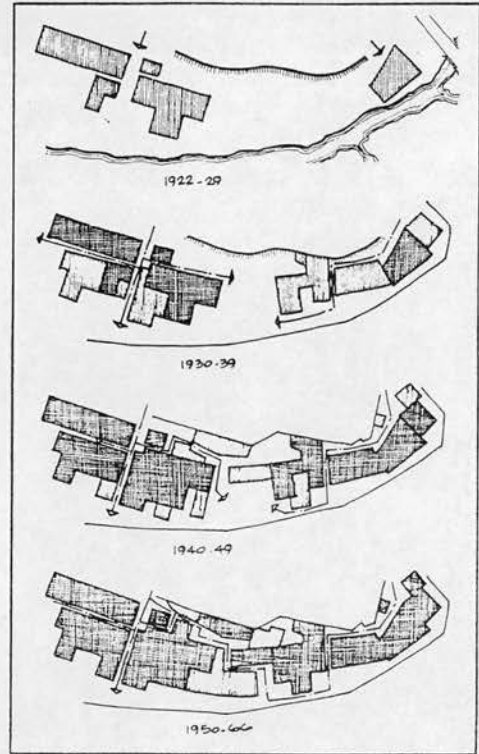
**Figure 6.47.** Social Housing, Athens, 1933-35. (After Konstantinopoulou; in: The Ministry of Culture)

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188 See: *ibid.*, pp. 144-5.

189 See: *ibid.*, p. 148.

See also: Dimitris Philippides, "The Autonomous Settlement of Ilissos in Athens"; in: Orestis Doumanis and Paul Oliver (eds.), *Shelter in Greece*, Athens, 1974, 1979, pp. 159-71.



Figures 6.48 - 6.50. The Ilissos settlement. (After Philippides, 1974, 1979; in: Doumanis and Oliver, eds.)

By that time, the winds of Greek architecture had blown in different directions.<sup>190</sup> While attempts to demonstrate the purity of the genealogy of the Greeks continued and architects still chased the vision of a classicising Athens<sup>191</sup> (Figs. 6.51, 6.52), architectural 'purism' took two directions. First, it inspired a parochial classicism

190 According to Philippides, Classicism in Greek architecture preserved its homogeneity until 1880 (Dimitris Philippides, 1984, op. cit., p. 90). The new tendencies emerged out of the disintegration of this homogeneous "monolithic Classicism" (ibid., p. 124).

191 See: Maria Manoudi, "Οι Προτάσεις Hoffman και Mawson και ο Αθηναϊκός Τύπος" (The Proposals by Hoffman and Mawson and the Athenian Press); in: The Ministry of Culture, 1985, Vol. 1, op. cit., pp. 47-57.

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which, with official approval from the state, tried to create a 'hellenised' and 'sanitised' classicism of simple geometric forms, 'purified' of non-functional ornaments, romantic elements and colours, a movement which continued with some force until the middle of the twentieth century with Anastasios Metaxas (1863-1937) as its leading figure.<sup>192</sup> (Fig. 6.53)

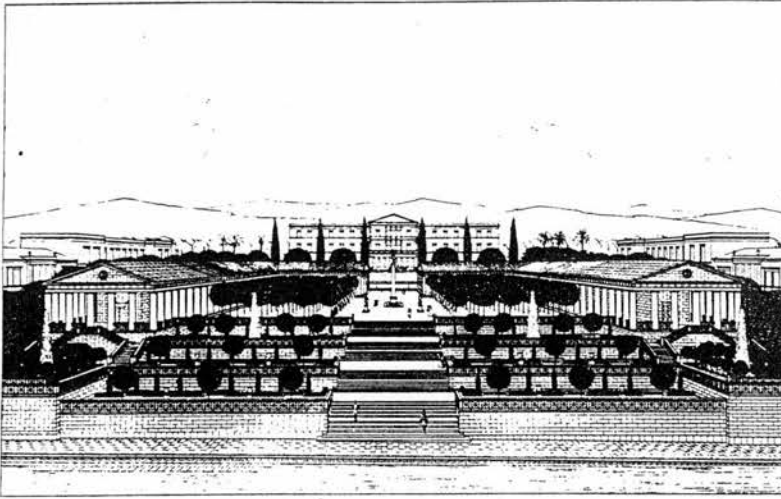


Figure 6.51. Ludwig Hoffman, Proposal for Syndagma Square, 1908-10. (After Manoudi; in: The Ministry of Culture)

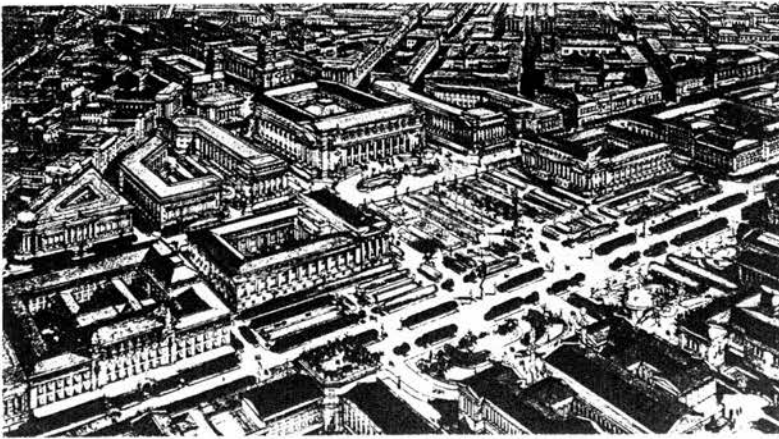


Figure 6.52. Thomas Mawson, 'The New Athens', 1918. (After Manoudi; in: The Ministry of Culture)

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192 See: Dimitris Philippides, 1984, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-31.



Figure 6.53. Anastasios Metaxas, The house of Merlin. (After Philippides, 1984)

While the reappraised 'archaic'<sup>193</sup> and 'primitive' Greek art stimulated new theories in support of 'modern classicist' designs,<sup>194</sup> in a reaction to this 'historicist' architectural expressions, the interwar generation of Greek architects raised demands for even further 'modernisation' and utilisation of modern technology, proposing solutions which this time could guarantee loyalty to the 'eternal' Greek - and the Mediterranean, in general - aesthetic principles,<sup>195</sup> defining the latter in terms of purity of form.<sup>196</sup> Calling for a fearless break with the past and its "hollow idols"<sup>197</sup> and identifying modern technological rationalism with ancient Greek rationalism, the architectural 'avant-garde' of the 1930s found the "archetypes of Modern architecture" in the "humble [Cycladic] island houses".<sup>198</sup> (Fig. 6.54) Vernacular art had been reappraised in Greece and in the West.

193 The excavations of Schliemann at Mycenae and of Evans at Knossos had provided architects with new models.

194 See: Dimitris Philippides, 1984, op. cit., pp. 166-8.

195 See: Alberto Sartoris, "Τὸ Νέον Πνεῦμα εἰς τὴν Ἀρχιτεκτονικὴν"; in: *Τεχνικὰ Χρονικά*, 6, Athens, 1932, pp. 285-8. On this article, see: Jaques Gubler, "Alberto Sartoris"; in: *Architectural Design*, 1-2, London, 1981, pp. 64-71. See also: Alberto Sartoris, "Gli Elementi dell' Architettura Moderna"; in: *Sintesi Panoramica dell' Architettura Moderna*, Milan, 1931. See also: Heinrich Lauterbach, "Notizen von einer Reise in Griechenland"; in: *Die Form*, Vol. 7, Nr. 11, 15, November 1932, pp. 336-48.

196 "The 'purity' of the archaic Greek world", says Kenneth Frampton, "was the inspiration source of the [Corbusian] puristic ethos". In: Kenneth Frampton, *Μοντέρνα Ἀρχιτεκτονική, Ἱστορία καὶ Κριτική*, (Modern Architecture: A Critical History, op. cit.), preface to the Greek edition, p. 15.

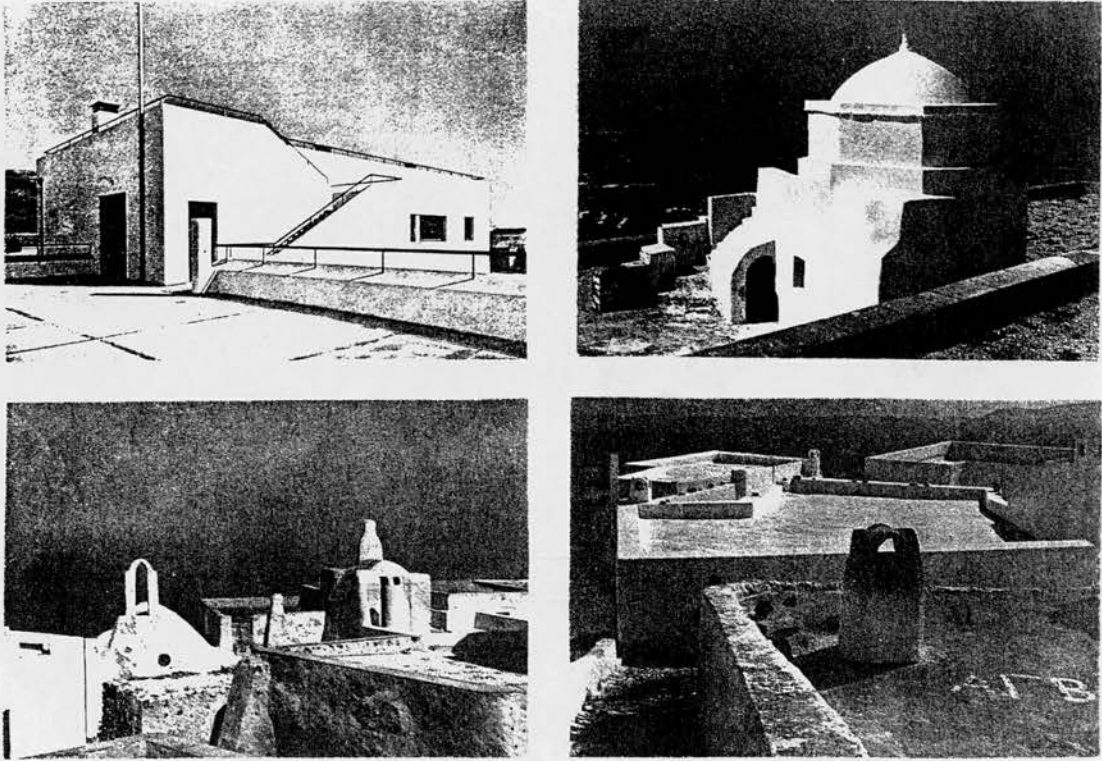
197 Dimitris Philippides, 1984, op. cit., p. 190.

198 See the speeches held by Greek architects at the 4th of the CIAM, in: "Τὸ IV Συνέδριον Νεωτέρας Ἀρχιτεκτονικῆς", op. cit., pp. 1-94.

Cf.: "It is the Acropolis that made me a revolutionary". Le Corbusier, "Ἀήρ - Ἥχος - Φῶς"; in: *Τεχνικὰ Χρονικά*, 44-46, General Issue, Athens, 1933, p. 1012.

Cf. also: Le Corbusier's words: "La premiere [sic] idée que j'ai eu c'était [sic] à Santorin", quoted in: Anthony Antoniadis, *Σύγχρονη Ἑλληνική Ἀρχιτεκτονική*, Athens, 1979, p. 30, n. 18.

And: "As for the dependence of Greek architecture on the leading international movements, it seems that the Corbusian influence is largely present in Greek architecture; quite naturally so, since at some points it coincides with certain of the traditional features of the anonymous architecture." Dimitris Fatouros, "Greek Art and Architecture 1945-1967: A Brief Survey"; in: *Balkan Studies*, Vol. 8, Thessaloniki, 1967, p. 431.



**Figure 6.54.** The architectural 'avant garde' of the 1930s found the "archetypes of Modern Architecture" in the "humble [Cycladic] island houses". Top left: A. Siagas, Elementary School in Ampelokipi, Athens, 1930s. Top right and bottom left and right: vernacular architecture on the island of Santorini. (After Amourgis)

The invocation of a crystallised example of Classical architecture recurs in Modernist architectural writings. Modernist interpretations of ancient Classical architecture identified Doric austerity with the Modern Movement's favourite elimination of "all that is accidental in Art"<sup>199</sup>, and raised the Parthenon to the status of an "emblem of Western civilisation"<sup>200</sup>. Le Corbusier saw it as the apogee of man's creation, a genius invention<sup>201</sup>, "a pure creation of the mind"<sup>202</sup>, and believed that "His [Pheidias']

199 Le Corbusier, 1923, 1927, 1987, 1989, op. cit., p. 204.

See also: Henry van de Velde: "Πρόγραμμα"; in: Ulrich Conrads, *Μανιφέστα και Προγράμματα της Αρχιτεκτονικής του 20ου Αιώνα*, (Programme und Manifeste zur Architektur des 20. Jahrhunderts), translated by George Vanvalis, Athens, 1977, (Braunschweig, 1975, Munich, 1964, 1971), p. 9.

200 See: "Acropolis and the Moderns", op. cit., pp. 14-34.

See also: Panayotis Tournikiotis, "The Place of the Parthenon in the History and Theory of Modern Architecture"; in: Panayotis Tournikiotis (ed.), op. cit., pp. 201-29.

201 Le Corbusier, 1923, 1927, 1987, 1989, op. cit., p. 211.

202 Ibid., p. 209; "the apogee of this pure creation of the mind", *ibid.*, p. 218.



vision would have seen in our [Le Corbusier's] epoch the conclusive results of his labours."<sup>203</sup> Fernand Léger saw in the Parthenon "the perfection which [he] recognised in a 1934 microscope"<sup>204</sup>, and Le Corbusier juxtaposed the Doric monument with a 1921 Delage Grand-Sport car. (Fig. 6.55)



Figure 6.55. Le Corbusier, *Vers une Architecture*, p. 135.

The Parthenon was perceived as "the masterpiece of rationalism"<sup>205</sup>. As a proof of this, Pier Maria Bardi published<sup>206</sup> "an exceptional photograph" of "a school built [in 1932, designed by Patroklos Karantinos] according to the rules of the most intransigent rationalism, beneath the wall of the Acropolis"<sup>207</sup> and admired its virtues. (Fig. 6.54) Without hiding his intention to "scandalise the tutors of the Italian picturesque", Bardi argued in this article that the works of Walter Gropius, those of Leon Battista [Alberti] and the Parthenon have a common origin.

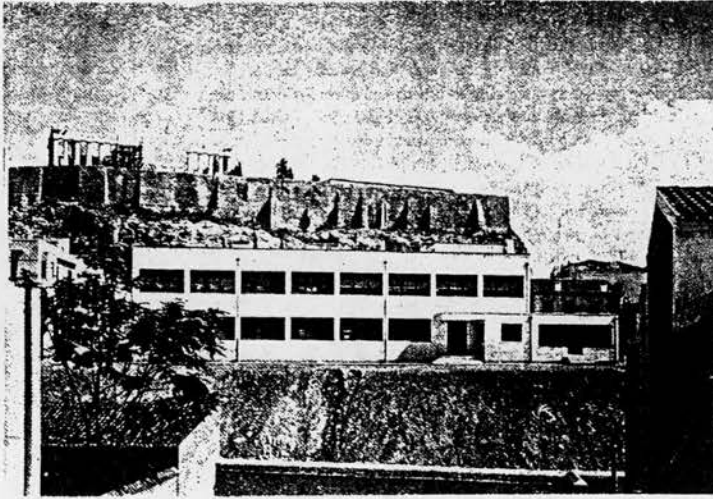
203 Le Corbusier, 1923, 1927, 1987, 1989, op. cit., p. 145.

204 "Acropolis and the Moderns", op. cit., p. 14, p. 27.

205 Pier Maria Bardi, quoted in: *ibid.*, p. 23.

206 Pier Maria Bardi, "Cronaca di Viaggio"; in: *Quadrante*, Milan, September 1933, pp. 5-35. Also published in: *ibid.*, pp. 19-23.

207 In: *ibid.*, p. 21.



**Figure 6.56.** Patroklos Karantinos, Elementary School beneath the wall of the Acropolis, 1932. The photograph published by Pier Maria Bardi. (After "Acropolis and the Moderns")

It was in the late 1950s that Dimitris Pikionis built the approach - physical and metaphorical - of a modern Greek architect to the Athenian monuments of Classical antiquity.<sup>208</sup> Pikionis' "Reading [of] the marble ruins"<sup>209</sup> did not take the form of yet another classical revival, but the form of the Greek landscape itself, the same landscape which had called into being that Classical ideal vision of the world which had been petrified in the Doric temple two and a half thousand years earlier.

### 6. 3. Nineteenth Century Greek Cultural and National Evangelism

Reference has already been made to the linguistic model which was imposed on the newly born Hellenic nation in the early nineteenth century, and which was a product of classical erudition, like the intellectual model of a classicising modern Greece which her enlightened learned men aspired to resurrect and to which her architects strove to give concrete shape. The late eighteenth century demands of Adamantios Korais (influenced by his contemporary German philologists) for a classicising, therefore

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<sup>208</sup> This work of Pikionis' will be discussed in detail in Chapter Eight below.

<sup>209</sup> From Elytis' poem IV (*Drinking the Sun of Corinth ...*); in his collection *Sun the First*, (1943). Translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard; in: Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (eds.), op. cit., p. 27.

genuine Hellenic, education and language had paved the way. Korais' ideas have been particularly influential in the definition of ideological orthodoxy in Greece down to the present day and have caused a tremendous confusion about the factors that determine the Greek, or Hellenic, identity and the criteria of nationality ever since. The cultivation of a homogenising national identity became an integral part of the domestic statecraft and foreign policy of the new state which emerged in independent Greece, in 1830.<sup>210</sup> The ideological developments in the theoretical project of Greek nationalism determined the Greek state's policies concerning education and language, not only for the Greeks within the borders of the new Greek state, but also for the large numbers of Orthodox Christians outside the domain of the independent Kingdom of Greece.

Language was used as the hallmark of nationality, according to the trend in romantic Europe. Korais' proposals for a linguistic and educational hellenisation process, that could instil and cultivate - or 'awaken', "as older nationalist historiography might say"<sup>211</sup> - an identification with the Greek nation among the linguistically diverse Orthodox population within and without the independent Hellenic Kingdom, served the nineteenth century Greek state in its endeavours to forge a collective identity and, thus, construct a homogeneous national community.<sup>212</sup> Korais' language was an artificial language of his own invention, a 'modified purism'<sup>213</sup> which combined the grammar and syntax of the ancient Greek language with the vocabulary of the modern educated middle class, which had been 'purified' of Turkish and other 'decadent' and 'vulgar' 'corruptions' that had tainted the 'pure' idiom of Demosthenes and Plato and were reminiscent of the centuries of captivity.<sup>214</sup> This was the language that was

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210 Paschalis M. Kitromilides, " 'Imagined Communities' and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans"; in: Martin Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremis (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 35.

211 *Ibid.*, p. 41.

212 "This process was carried out through the activities of two complementary institutional networks, one directly under the control of the Greek state, the other operated by local Greek-speaking or Christian Orthodox communities, but both staffed by cadres trained in Athens. These were the network of Greek consulates and vice-consulates, which from 1836 onward extended from city to city in the Balkans and Asia Minor; and the network of Greek schools, organized by local communities but following educational models imported from the Greek state." *Ibid.*, p. 44.

213 Earlier proposals for the reintroduction of Classical Greek in its fifth century B.C. Attic form had been met with defeat. A "more realistic solution" had suggested a neo-Attic language and had found great support among the Phanariots (the intellectual aristocracy of Constantinople, administrative officials of the Patriarchate or the Ottoman government, from the Phanari area in Constantinople). See: Georgios Babiniotis, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-9.

214 Such 'purification' processes included the replacement of Slavic or Turkish toponyms with those of ancient settlements, as well as translation of non-Greek names of architectural elements and use of extensive calquing.

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considered, by the nineteenth century Greek romantic nationalists, as the most suitable for the members of the reborn Hellenic nation which was expected to 'sanitise' and 'hellenise' its official spoken and learnt language as well as the language of artistic expression and of all manifestations of life.<sup>215</sup> Yet, in subsequent years, the definition of the true Greek language underwent significant transformations and remained an issue of constant concern for generations of intellectuals and politicians, and a problem unanswered to the present day. In the long search for prototypes, attempts have often been made to bridge the distance between the two poles, antiquity and Byzantium.

Against the older concept of continuity under the unifying tradition of Orthodoxy, the modern secular concepts of statehood and nationality defined the separate Orthodox nations in terms of language. The ideas of the Enlightenment and Western rationalism were to be transmitted through language and education, in order to establish the concept of a distinct Greek nation held together by the bonds of language and cultural heritage. The task of cultivating a national identity "which the Orthodox Church could not fulfil, because of the traditional character of its philosophy and policies, was quite suitable to the purposes of the modern Greek state."<sup>216</sup> By "the end of the nineteenth and in the early years of the twentieth century the imagined community of the Greek nation [had been] created over a vast geographical area."<sup>217</sup> This community, which identified vaguely with the distant Greek Kingdom as the focus of its hopes for redemption, was held together by the cultural ties of education and language. This had been achieved through an effort of Greek cultural and national evangelism directed by the Greek state, through a crusade of national education in the 'unredeemed' territories and a process of linguistic hellenisation of a large Orthodox population. The revival of the Greek language "in regions where it had been spoken in the past but displaced in medieval and early modern times"<sup>218</sup> and the introduction of a new secular nationalist value system, fundamentally alien to the principles of the Orthodox Church, opened the way for the "cultivation of feelings of ethnic identity, the politicisation of ancient

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215 Cf.: "Stamati Boulgari, the French-trained Greek architect engineer who renovated the city of Nafplion in 1828, proposed abolishment of the *sahnisin* (enclosed second-story projection) in the houses, purportedly to improve the hygienic conditions of the town. ... Even small Byzantine churches were demolished to make way for straight roads because crooked streets were reminiscent of hated 'Turkish villages'." Eleni Bastéa, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

216 Paschalis M. Kitromilides, " 'Imagined Communities' and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans"; in: Martin Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremis (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 35.

217 *Ibid.*, p. 46.

218 *Ibid.*, p. 45.

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memories, and the gradual transformation of traditional religious loyalties into national attachments."<sup>219</sup> The nationalisation of the Church<sup>220</sup> and the creation of a national university in the capital of the Kingdom were "the two explicit ideological initiatives whereby the Greek state attempted programmatically to cement national identity"<sup>221</sup>. Following the exchange of Greek-Turkish populations in 1923, Greece "emerged as one of the most ethnically homogeneous states in Europe."<sup>222</sup>

### 6. 4. Dionysios Solomos' 'Great Realities'

*Let the poem possess a bodiless soul, which emanates from God,  
and which is then embodied in the organs of time, of place,  
of nationality, of language, with different thoughts, feelings, inclinations, etc.  
(let a small bodily world be adequate to reveal it); finally, the soul returns to God*

Dionysios Solomos<sup>223</sup>

For many years after the War of Independence Greece was under the influence of western European movements. The traces of this influence are to be found not only within the frontiers of the state of King Otto of Wittelsbach or King George I, but also in the Ottoman occupied Greek territories and, of course, in those under Italian or English rule. The Ionian islands, in particular, had constant relations with the West since the twelfth century (under Venetian, and then French and British rule until 1864). During the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a remarkable urban architecture flourished in these islands, as well as in Rhodes (capital of the state then under the rule of the Knights of St John), Cyprus, Chios, Crete and Monemvasia. The influence of the Italian culture and civilisation was expressed in the formation of a local aristocracy and, indirectly, in the works of art produced in these areas; in the painting of El Greco (Domenicos Theotokopoulos),<sup>224</sup> in the architecture produced to

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219 Ibid.

220 See note above, in this Chapter, 2.

221 Paschalis M. Kitromilides, " 'Imagined Communities' and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans"; in: Martin Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremis (eds.), op. cit., p. 39.

222 Ibid., p. 50.

223 A note of Solomos' in connection with the writing of his poem *The Free Besieged*. Cited in English in: Philip Sherrard, "Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 16.

Cf.: "the perfection of the work [of art] is 'to prepare all creatures to return to God' ". Meister Eckhart; quoted in: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "Meister Eckhart's View of Art"; in: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, 1934, 1956, op. cit., p.

224 John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, op. cit., p. 221.

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accommodate this aristocracy, as well as in monasterial and ecclesiastical architecture,<sup>225</sup> and in the creations of the Cretan dramatic and epic poetry.<sup>226</sup> The masterpiece of this poetry is the epic *Erotocritos* by Vizentzos Kornaros, a work "written in the fifteen-syllable metre, though with rhyming distichs, and incorporating much of the imagery and spirit of the demotic tradition"<sup>227</sup>. The great flourishing of the arts (architecture, poetry, iconography) in the Ionian islands was strengthened by the influx of refugees from Crete, after the latter fell to the Turks, in 1669. The eighteenth and nineteenth century architecture of the Italian-speaking bourgeoisie in these islands, mainly Corfu and Zante, reflects contemporary western European ideals as imported mainly from Veneto.<sup>228</sup> Corfu is considered the place where the earliest Neoclassical buildings in Greek lands are to be found, the palace of St. Michael and St. George (1819-1823) and the Maitland monument (1821), designed by the English military engineer George Whitmore.<sup>229</sup>

It was in the Ionian islands that the first major modern Greek school of poetry flourished. Its central figure, Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857),<sup>230</sup> to whom reference has already been made, was a native of Zante, as were the poets Ugo Foscolo and Andreas Kalvos (1792-1869)<sup>231</sup>. Solomos was educated in Venice, then in Cremona

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225 In the Ionian islands the architectural books of Sebastiano Serlio were already in use in 1644. Jordan Dimakopoulos (ed.), *Ἀνθολογία Ἑλληνικῆς Ἀρχιτεκτονικῆς: Ἡ Κατοικία στήν Ἑλλάδα ἀπό το 15ο στόν 20ο Αἰώνα*, (An Anthology of Greek Architecture: Domestic architecture in Greece: 15th-20th Centuries, with an appended summary in English), Athens, 1981, p. 31.

In the Aegean islands one often finds single-aisled basilicas with two niches, sanctuary apses, a type of church that suited the mixed - Orthodox and Roman Catholic - society, and in which both rites were performed. See: D. Vassiliadis, *Θεώρηση τῆς Αἰγαίοπελαγίτικης Ἀρχιτεκτονικῆς ὑπό Ἀνήσυχη Ὀπτική Γωνία*, (A View of Aegean Architecture from a Restless Optical Angle), Athens, 1979, pp. 95-133.

226 Crete had been under Venetian rule from 1204 until 1669. It has often been speculated that, had Crete not fallen to the Turks in 1669, the Cretan variant of the demotic Greek language as developed in these works would have become the common modern Greek literary language ever since.

227 John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, op. cit., p. 221. Large parts, or even the whole of *Erotocritos*' verses (10,052) are still recited by heart by peasants in Crete. The *Erotocritos* "became, in spite of its literary and sophisticated character, immensely popular throughout the Greek world". Ibid.

228 On the architecture of Zante, see: Dionysis Zervas, "Ἡ Ζακυνθινή Ἀρχιτεκτονική γύρω ἀπό τήν Περίοδο τῆς Ἀπελευθερώσεως"; in: Pavlos Kyriazis and Michalis Nikolinakos (eds.), op. cit., pp. 129-50.

229 Jordan Dimakopoulos (ed.), op. cit., p. 29.

230 See: Romilly Jenkins, op. cit.

231 See: Philip Sherrard, "Andreas Kalvos and the Eighteenth-Century Ethos"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1978, op. cit., pp. 17-50.

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and at the University of Padua,<sup>232</sup> and he wrote his first poems in Italian. Soon, however, he started writing in Greek (he returned to Zante in 1818) and was to become the national poet *par excellence* of modern Greece. The first stanzas of his *Hymn to Liberty* (composed in 1823 and published in 1835)<sup>233</sup> became the Greek national anthem in 1863.<sup>234</sup> Contemporary intellectual disputes on Romanticism and Neoclassicism in Italy, as well as the discourse on the Italian language were among the interests of the young Solomos. It seems, however, that he was also influenced by the ideas of the French Enlightenment<sup>235</sup> and the idealism of contemporary German philosophers, particularly of Schiller.<sup>236</sup>

Solomos was born in an old noble family of Zante, of a mother of the lower orders, probably monolingual.<sup>237</sup> His parentage, says Sherrard,

*betokens his future poetry, that fusion, as the poetry of Dante to which he was so greatly devoted, of an aristocratic spirit with the simplicity and freshness of his mother tongue, the demotic Greek language*<sup>238</sup>.

Undoubtedly, it is to this living spoken Greek vernacular tongue that Solomos made his major contribution. Solomos chose to write his poems in this mother tongue of his, the language of the folk songs of the blind, probably Cretan, singer to whom he listened with great rapture in the streets of his island, and he gave it the form of a modern Greek literary language. His deliberate choice and his struggle to learn, master and, finally, ennoble by literary usage the common Greek language reflects his conscious fight against purist pedantry which considered the spoken idiom unsuitable for written literature. "My soul is sick", he wrote in his *Dialogos*, "our countrymen are spilling their blood beneath the standard of the Cross to make us free, and this Pedant and his like are striving to make them inarticulate for their reward."<sup>239</sup> In 1822,

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232 See: Romilly Jenkins, op. cit., pp. 15ff.

233 K. Th. Demaras, op. cit., p. 233.

234 Romilly Jenkins, op. cit., p. 67.

235 K. Th. Demaras, op. cit., p. 229.

236 See: Romilly Jenkins, op. cit., pp. 147, 165-9.

237 See: *ibid.*, pp. 6ff. See also earlier note, in Chapter Four, 2.

238 Philip Sherrard, "Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 1.

239 Dionysios Solomos, *Dialogos*, (1824). Quoted in: Romilly Jenkins, op. cit., p. 84.

Cf.: "a book will shortly be published, written in the language of the people of Greece. ... They told me that the author is a young man who is always fighting for the common language." Dionysios Solomos, *Dialogos*, (1824). Quoted in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, "Solomos' *Dialogos* and Dante"; in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, 1980, op. cit., p. 149.

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Tricoupis had told him: "Greece is waiting for her Dante"<sup>240</sup>; and Solomos had turned to his mother tongue and mother poetic tradition, the Cretan and the folk.<sup>241</sup> He became the father of modern Greek literature in the way Dante - Solomos' model of the true poet<sup>242</sup> - is for the Italian.

Solomos was also profoundly stirred by the Greek Revolution of 1821. In his *Dialogos*, he wrote: "Have I anything else in mind but liberty and the language?"<sup>243</sup> But talking about liberty he did not mean only the liberty of his country; in his countrymen's struggle for freedom Solomos saw a reflection of man's struggle for essential and absolute freedom. His choice of the demotic language marks his choice of a language in which he could address the people who spoke it, and through which he could fulfil his role as a poet and achieve his task of communicating and bringing into the readers' consciousness what he called the "Great Realities"<sup>244</sup>. In 1842, he wrote:

*Only then can our future be great, when everything is founded on morality, when justice is triumphant, when literature is cultivated not for idle display, but for the benefit of the people, which requires nurture and education divorced from pedantry.*<sup>245</sup>

The symbolism of Solomos' mature poetry indicates his commitment to revealing to the reader's consciousness the possibility, if not the duty, of an inner transformation leading to a liberated existence. In his major and most ambitious poetic endeavour, the

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240 Tricoupis records the meeting with Solomos in a letter to Polyklas from London, 6 June 1859. As quoted in: L. Politis, *A History of Modern Greek Literature*, Oxford, 1973, p. 114.

241 See: Romilly Jenkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-82.

Cf.: "we do find those themes we have singled out as characteristic of demotic poetry to be the ones with which [Solomos] is most concerned." John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

242 John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

243 L. Politis, 1973, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

244 Sherrard notes that Solomos' 'Great Realities' recall Schiller's 'pure intelligences'. Philip Sherrard, "Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1970, 1981, 1992, *op. cit.*, p. 20, n. 1.

245 Cited in: Romilly Jenkins, *op. cit.*, p. 177. The citation is from a letter that Solomos wrote to Tertsetis in 1842. Zissimos Lorentzatos, "Solomos' *Dialogos* and Dante"; in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, 1980, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

With reference to Solomos' "ignorance of classical Greek", Jenkins says: "That Europe in general was fired to defend the Modern Greeks in their struggle out of gratitude to the creators of a language and a literature to which their own culture owed its finest flowers is indisputable; but for a Greek poet who wished to speak, not to the countries of Europe, in what our schools and universities wittily call 'Greek Verse', but to the hearts of his own people in their own tongue, in words that the peasant and shopkeeper could understand no less than the priest and the schoolmaster, classical Greek would have been a hindrance rather than a help." Romilly Jenkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-6.



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poem *The Free Besieged*, of which he only left "a series of densely charged fragments consisting of verses of three independent drafts"<sup>246</sup>, he sought to embody and mirror his vision of the primordial realities and of man's struggle for freedom - outer and inner. The symbolic drama unfolds in Missolonghi, the town where Byron died and the scene of an historical siege during the War of Independence. But it is not the historical event that the poet wished to document; rather, he attempted to link "the [historical] situation ... to the universal pattern"<sup>247</sup> and to reveal the relationship between inner or mythical reality and historical reality, the way the latter participates in the former: "from the smallness of the place which battles with huge contrary powers, will come forth the Great Realities"<sup>248</sup>. Notwithstanding his recognition of the difficulty of the task, Solomos' aim was to arrange the poem so as to become the expression of "the Intelligible Meaning, as a self-existent world, graded mathematically"<sup>249</sup>.

The poem opens with an invocation to Divine Nature, whom Solomos worshipped in his earlier lyrical works:

Mother, great-hearted in glory and in suffering,  
If always in the secret mystery live your children  
With thought, with dream, what joy have then the eyes,  
These eyes, to behold you in the desolate wood...<sup>250</sup>

The besieged's love of life is revealed through a contemplation of the beauty of the natural world:

Blond April dances with Eros, and nature knows  
Her best and richest hour. In the swelling  
Shade which closes coolness and fragrance, un-  
Heard of birdsong trembles. Clear lovely waters,  
Sweet waters, spill through scented caverns,  
Steal the scent, leave their coolness, and,  
Showing to the sun the treasurers of their source,  
Hither and thither dash, and sing like nightingales.  
Life throbs through earth, through wave and sky.  
But over the clear, the dead-calm lake,

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246 John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, op. cit., p. 223.

247 From a note of Solomos' to the poem *Duty*, the first title of *The Free Besieged*. Cited in: Philip Sherrard, "Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 26.

248 Ibid.

249 From another note of Solomos' to *The Free Besieged*. Cited in: ibid., p. 16.

250 Cited in English in: ibid., p. 27.

Cf. Solomos' note: "Art silently worships nature, which, in reward for this distant love, dances naked before her. These forms echo back in the mind of Art and she offers them to mankind." Cited in English in: ibid., p. 29.

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Dead-calm, clear to the depths, the butterfly  
Who had perfumed her sleep within the wild lily  
Was with a small unknown shadow playing.  
Light-shadowed seer, what did you see this night?  
Miraculous night, night with magic sown!  
Without the earth, the sea and sky to breathe  
Even as the bee close to the little flower,  
The moon round something motionless, that  
Shimmered on the lake, alone was pulsing;  
And beautiful a young girl came out in her light.<sup>251</sup>

And even the natural forces fight against the besieged:

*This evening, while they had the windows open for coolness, one of them [the women], the youngest, went to shut them; but another said to her: 'No, my child, let the smell of food come in. We must be used to it: a big thing is patience; God gave it to us, and it contains treasures. We must have patience even if all the scents of earth, sky, and sea come in.' So saying, she opened the windows again, and the many scents flooded in and filled the room. And the first said: 'Even the wind fights against us'<sup>252</sup>.*

On the final night, Solomos' mythical heroes take the decision for self-sacrifice and the women make a final prayer and frightened they weep. As the dawn breaks they make their sortie; Missolonghi becomes a kind of marble threshing-floor<sup>253</sup> where the brave fighters face death; they fight, and they issue free.

The sky looked on proudly and all the earth applauded;  
And every voice stirring then toward the light echoed,  
Most noble flowers of love scattering all around;  
'Unconquered, rich, and beautiful, venerable too, and holy!'<sup>254</sup>

Solomos' vision of reality was a mythical vision, and the purpose he sought to realise was to compose a poem that would preserve the memory of the mythical landscape of Greece where the War of Independence was fought, and would place the actions of the Greek heroes in the perspective of myth-history; to smith the form of his artefact in such a manner that it could reveal the mythical vision of life<sup>255</sup> and provide access to

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251 Translated by Philip Sherrard in: *ibid.*, pp. 30-1.

252 From Solomos' final note to the poem. Cited in English in: *ibid.*, p. 32.

253 John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

254 From the third draft of the poem. Translated by K. Mitsakis, in: K. Mitsakis, *Modern Greek Music and Poetry*, Athens, 1979, p. 157. Cited in: M. Byron Raizis, *Greek Poetry Translations: Views - Texts - Reviews*, Athens, 1981, p. 58.

255 Cf.: "the vision of life which this poetry expresses, the image of human destiny and purpose it seeks to establish, are those of the Christian tradition, which Solomos re-joins less through East Christian examples than through such as Dante and St. Augustine." Philip Sherrard, 1959, 1992, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

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the mythical heritage of the Greeks; to fashion a form '*well and truly*', that is, adequate to become "l'abito del vero senso profondo"<sup>256</sup>. As Jenkins remarks,

*The Free Besieged will make a better Greek citizen than the history of the War of Independence, embroidered though the latter may be with deeds of nobility and courage unexampled in her story for two thousand years.*<sup>257</sup>

### 6. 5. The Nineteenth Century Discourse on the Greek Language

*GREEK the language they gave me;  
poor the house on Homer's shores.  
My only care my language on Homer's shores.*  
[...]  
*My only care my language with the very first Glory be to Thee!*  
[...]  
*My only care my language with the first words of the Hymn!*  
Odysseus Elytis<sup>258</sup>

While in the Heptanese Solomos was writing his *Hymn to Liberty* and was composing the mythical biography of the Greek heroes, purism and pedantry lay like a curse over Greece.

*Solomos did not write like a schoolmaster, and that was all one needed to know. 'With all his innumerable errors in speech and rhythm', wrote the ineffable Soútzó in 1833, 'which mar every one of his compositions'; and the dictum of an usher named Chrysovérgi that 'the tongue, metre and form of Solomós' poetry are of no value whatsoever' was generally felt to be just.*<sup>259</sup>

It was only in the 1850s that the Athenian literary critics started recognising the merit of his poetry,<sup>260</sup> and "only in 1863, after the dethronement of Otho, was the *Hymn to*

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256 From a note of Solomos' to his *Woman of Zakynthos* (1826-1829). Quoted in: Philip Sherrard, "Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 15.

257 Romilly Jenkins, op. cit., p. 208.

258 From Elytis' poem *The Axion Esti*, "The Passion", Psalm II. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 32.

259 Romilly Jenkins, op. cit., p. 202.

260 The effect on the common people of Greece was, however, immediate and "electrical. 'From the Heptanese', wrote the poet Zalokósta, 'the dithyramb of Solomós flew like lightning to the comrades in Greece. In every mouth were his patriotic phrases, which fanned the flames of the fire lit in every heart.' " Solomos' reputation in Europe had spread far and wide since the second edition of the *Hymn to Liberty* (Paris, 1824). Ibid., pp. 67-8.

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*Liberty* canonized as the national hymn and its first two stanzas, sung to Mánzaro's jiggling air, adopted as the anthem of Greece."<sup>261</sup>

The spread of 'enlightened' ideas about Greek antiquity and the idealised classical world, particularly in the second half of the nineteenth century, had been vigorous and pervasive. The nationalist ideology of the Greek state had been developed on the basis of national continuity and had stressed the Classical roots. The promotion of the idea of national unity and the spread of education based on the new values-system aimed at the linguistic homogenisation of the population. Any linguistic cleavages had to be put aside for the sake of national unity. In 1836, Demetrios Chatziaslanis (Vyzantios) wrote the satirical play *Babylonia* (Babel), making apparent the linguistic diversity within the Greek Kingdom. In the play, effective communication among those Greeks speaking different dialects is impossible and the consequences are dramatic. The 'correcting of the common language' and the spread of Greek education, in accordance with Korais' suggestions, had, eventually, by the end of the nineteenth century, produced a linguistically homogeneous society,<sup>262</sup> but it had also left Greece "wronged in its mastery of the language given it by nature"<sup>263</sup>, according to Solomos.

The official language adopted by the Greek state was a hybrid atticising language, in the pattern proposed by Korais, but even further purified in order to stress its resemblance to the ancient one.<sup>264</sup> This purist (*καθαρεύουσα*, *cathareuoussa*) language was to reflect the Hellenic origin of the Greeks<sup>265</sup> and to contribute to the revival of a

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261 Ibid., p. 67. Proposals for its replacement "by another 'of a nobler and higher language.' ", however, did not cease until much later. Zissimos Lorentzatos, "Solomos' *Dialogos* and Dante"; in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, 1980, op. cit., p. 172.

262 Paschalis M. Kitromilides, " 'Imagined Communities' and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans"; in: Martin Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremis (eds.), op. cit., p. 38.

263 Quoted in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, "Solomos' *Dialogos* and Dante"; in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, 1980, op. cit., p. 165.

Cf.: "Those who agitated for the artificially 'purist' language ... With touching obstinacy, with sweat and toil ... tried to purify the national language from the stains of 'barbarity' and hoped that slowly but surely we should attain once more the language and the art of Sophocles and Plato. And their reward was what might have been expected - a destruction and a drying up of Hellenism's fairest and truest streams." George Seferis, "Dialogue on Poetry: What Is Meant by Hellenism?"; in: George Seferis, 1966, 1967, 1982, op. cit., p. 91.

264 In 1827, A. Kalvos had already promised the readers of the *Revue Encyclopedique*: "Encore dix ou quinze ans et notre langue sera fixée". Quoted in: Mario Vitti, *Ιστορία τῆς Νεοελληνικῆς Λογοτεχνίας*, Athens, 1978, (in Italian: *Storia della Letteratura Neograeca*, Turin, 1971, Munich, 1972), p. 236.

265 As well as to prove the falsity of the contemporary attacks on the theory of this origin (by Fallmerayer, et al.).

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new Hellenic civilisation, to the hastening of "the progress of the Greek renaissance"<sup>266</sup>, as Korais wrote. The Athenian bourgeoisie considered the 'purification' of the language a matter of national dignity and a proof of their liberation from foreign oriental rules. The intellectual élite saw this language as the vehicle of universal values and the University of Athens promoted its use as the literary language. The *καθαρεύουσα*, a "dead, atticising, artificial" language, was something like "an enormous shroud", as Seferis says, "which does not cover the dead, but the living."<sup>267</sup> The literary schools of the Ionian islands and Crete were treated with contempt, mainly for the 'poverty' of their language, and the new poets were called to adopt the *καθαρεύουσα* and to contribute to the 'national awakening' and the cultivation of an ethnic consciousness.

The poets who formed the first literary group of free Greece - known as the Old School of Athens<sup>268</sup> - turned for inspiration to the classical ideals, as these had been developed in the West, and produced an epico-lyrical poetry, consciously classicising and often exuberant and grandiloquent. "The founder and leading spirit of this school"<sup>269</sup> was Alexander Soutsos (1803-1863), to whom reference has already been made in connection with his views on Solomos' poetry. French Romanticism had a great influence on these poets, most of whom were descendants of Phanariot families and educated in Paris or Bavaria, leading them to a kind of neoclassical arcadian escape from reality. As their language turned more and more towards a linguistic archaism, the romantic lyricism of their early poems faded in favour of a polished neoclassical expression, a "pseudo-Byronic air", a "rhetorical profuseness" and a "hackneyed patriotism".<sup>270</sup> Yet, echoes of the still-alive demotic tradition can sometimes be discerned beneath the conventional language of *καθαρεύουσα*,<sup>271</sup> which kept these poets isolated, cut off from the rest of their community.

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266 In a letter to his friend A. Vassiliou. Quoted in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, "Solomos' *Dialogos* and Dante"; in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, 1980, op. cit., p. 173.

267 George Seferis, "Κωστής Παλαμάς"; in: George Seferis, 1974, 1981, 1984, 1992, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 216.

268 See: C. A. Trypanis, op. cit., pp. xlix-li. Achilles Paraschos (1838-1895) is regarded as "the greatest figure in the second and last period" of the School (1850-1880). Ibid., p. 1.

269 Ibid.

270 Ibid., p. li.

271 With reference to the poetry of Ioannis Karasoutsas (1824-1873), Politis observes that "the poet first conceived his impressions in demotic and later in his 'study' translated them into the established archaistic *καθαρεύουσα*". L. Politis, 1973, op. cit., p. 144.

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However, while the artificial *καθαρεύουσα* language had been fully adopted as the language of the state, of education, and of the learned artists and their audience, the vast majority of the Greek people continued to speak - and write - in the demotic, a language which had developed naturally from the Greek of the Gospels.<sup>272</sup> This was the language of the great demotic poetic tradition and the language of Solomos' poetry. It was in this actual-speech language that General Makriyannis wrote his *Memoirs*.<sup>273</sup> Thus, the situation was that of a *diglossia*,<sup>274</sup> the disastrous consequences of which are still apparent in Greece. The coexistence of the two languages and the two conflicting traditions which they represented, and the effects of this phenomenon on education and cultural and social life in general led to a series of reactions, towards the end of the nineteenth century, centred around the 'language question' but extending against the whole spirit of classicism and the myth of a return to the ancient glory.

The tendencies against the weight of the Classical tradition, accompanied by an emerged hostility against the foreign presence and importations, led to a turn towards the people and the demotic living tradition. The urban élite yearned for a rapprochement of the town with the country where its roots lay. An increasing awareness of the city-alienation of the values on which the life of the majority of the people living in Greece was based, and for which they had fought, led to a demand for exploration of the genuine sources and forms of expression of Greek traditional life. In 1871, N. G. Politis (1852-1921), the leading Greek folklorist and the founder of the discipline in Greece,<sup>275</sup> published the first folk-lore study and found many followers.

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272 Cf.: "the Church - which throughout the initial period of the martyrs and apologists had used the simple language (one could even say that the New Testament is the most ancient text in the modern language) - was forced to accept the learned Greek idiom, and during the fourth century A.D., the Fathers of the Church also 'atticised' their language." Zissimos Lorentzatos, "Solomos' *Dialogos* and Dante"; in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, 1980, op. cit., p. 157.

273 On General Makriyannis see note above, in the Introduction to this thesis, 3. 2. The *Memoirs*, a prose-work of great significance for modern Greek literature and a unique historical document, were lost until 1907 (the date of their first publication, by Yannis Vlachoyannis) and they were greatly appreciated only just before the Second World War. See: Philip Sherrard, "General Makriyannis: The Portrait of a Greek"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1978, op. cit., pp. 51-71.

274 Babiniotis argues that the Greek term *διγλωσσία*, which has been used to define the situation and corresponds to the English *bilingualism*, has created a 'pseudodilemma' which has polarised and complicated matters even further. In reality, he says, the *καθαρεύουσα* and the demotic are two parallel forms of one and the same language. Georgios Babiniotis, op. cit., pp. 171-2.

275 See also: Alki Kyriakidou-Nestoros, op. cit., passim.

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The dispute on language was stirred up by a series of conflicting philological publications and took a decisive turn in 1888, when Yannis Psycharis (1854-1929) published his travel journal *Tò Ταξίδι μου* (My Journey), advocating an uncompromising establishment of the demotic tongue. Psycharis, a professional philologist educated in Paris and Germany,<sup>276</sup> became the leader of the demoticists in Greece (although he lived in Paris), and the struggle continued and came to a conventional end only in 1976, when the demotic language was finally canonised as the official language of Greece. The movement towards the use of the demotic language had a great impact on every aspect of life.<sup>277</sup> The living common language was adopted at an early stage as the literary language, but the most important influence of the movement of demoticism was on the Greek language in the wider sense; it made modern Greek artists conscious of their responsibility to create works that can be understood by the people among whom they live, and of the fact that to this end they are free to use both "the royal treasury of the ancient language and the poor purse of the demotiki", as Polylas put it.<sup>278</sup> Among other things, the linguistic movement towards the demotic turned the attention of the Greeks towards the contemporary poetry of Solomos and the poetry and language of the folk-songs. In Seferis' words, the movement of demoticism "symbolizes the first step and the turning point towards the truth."<sup>279</sup>

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276 L. Politis, op. cit., p. 171.

277 Psycharis himself associated the 'language question' with contemporary nationalism: "The language question is a political question; what the army is fighting to attain for the geographical borders, language wants to attain for the borders of the spirit". Yannis Psycharis, *Tò Ταξίδι μου*, Athens 1971 (first edition Paris, 1888), p. 201.

278 Quoted in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, "Solomos' *Dialogos* and Dante"; in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, 1980, op. cit., p. 180.

279 George Seferis, "Dialogue on Poetry: What Is Meant by Hellenism?"; in: George Seferis, 1966, 1967, 1982, op. cit., p. 95.

## 6. 6. The Late Nineteenth Century Reassessment of Greek National Values

*A pot of basil may symbolize the soul of a people better than a drama of Aeschylus.*

Ion Dragoumis<sup>280</sup>

"During the last quarter of the nineteenth century Greek nationalism underwent a serious identity crisis."<sup>281</sup> The expanding Greek state faced a series of external obstacles and internal financial problems, and by the end of the century it had lost all its credibility.<sup>282</sup> With the bloodless incorporation of the Ionian islands, in 1864, and the lands of Thessaly and Epirus, in 1881, the land of the Greek state increased by more than a quarter. In 1897, Greece was defeated by the modernised Ottoman army in the plain of Thessaly. Through "foreign intervention she was saved from catastrophe but the price of this service was the establishment of an international financial control agency to supervise the repayment of Greece's debts to her foreign bondholders."<sup>283</sup> The attempts for modernisation of the state had led it to bankruptcy, public administration was suffering and the general public discontent with the state's representatives was developing in parallel with a nationalist fever, revived by the struggle between Greeks and Bulgarians for the domination of Ottoman Macedonia.<sup>284</sup>

In his political theories, Ion Dragoumis (1878-1920) rejected the modern concept of the Greek state on which he put the blame for all the recent misfortunes of Greece, and proposed a model for national organisation based on a secular version of the pre-independence system of self-governing communities. He rejected Western rationalism and sought to resuscitate the communal tradition.<sup>285</sup> What Dragoumis discerned was the impact which Western civilisation had on the traditional pattern of Greek life:

*Before [independence] everything was in order, everything was put in its place, Byzantine survivals, a distilled life, the outcome of old civilizations and ages. Then suddenly in 1821 a Greek state became independent, ... and ... a greater revolution took place than had taken*

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280 *Greek Civilization*, Athens, 1927 (second edition), p. 230. Cited in English in: Philip Sherrard (ed.), op. cit., p. 19.

281 Thanos Veremis, "From the National State to the Stateless Nation; 1821-1910"; in: Martin Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremis (eds.), op. cit., p. 14.

282 Ibid., p. 15.

283 Ibid.

284 Ibid., p. 16.

285 See: *ibid.*, pp. 15-6. Veremis notes the influence of the ideas of Maurice Barrès's and Nietzsche's on Dragoumis' theories. *Ibid.*, p. 15.



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*against the Sultan. And since everything was slowly turned upside down, nothing remained in its place ... The invasion of contemporary civilization ... rots us and contaminates us and dissipates us.*<sup>286</sup>

But, although Dragoumis opposed Western civilisation, his secular nationalism was hardly compatible with the principles of the Christian Orthodox tradition on which the pre-independence life of Greece had been based.

In his flight from Western values and his calls for a return to nature, Dragoumis found support in Pericles Yannopoulos' (1870-1910) aesthetic theories. The latter worshipped the Greek light and landscape and glorified the "Natural Colour", the "lightness of the Earth" and the "Greek Line", the elements which he believed to be at the basis of "Greek Aesthetics".<sup>287</sup> On these elements he based his theses on the cultural continuity and superiority of Hellenism, with their racial overtones. He emphasised the "Greekness of the only real beauty", which "can be found equally ... at the peasant's dress ... at the marble ancient statues ... and at the Byzantine icons of Virgin Mary." Yannopoulos cursed the "barbarous ruler", "European manners", "European lines", "European aesthetic values" and "European architecture", and, in the light of the hymnified race's virtues, he called upon the new generation for a "Greek Renaissance".<sup>288</sup> Dragoumis' nationalist theories and Yannopoulos' aestheticism were not far removed from the contemporary revised image of Greece in the West. Nietzsche's theories about the Classical world and the one it had replaced, the emphasis on the pre-Classical Dionysiac spirit, the unearthing of evidence of the archaic civilisations, the shift in the attitude towards the Middle Ages and, of course, the acquaintance of the contemporary Greek people who did not match the humanist models that the West had assumed for their ancestors, they all had their effects.

The movement of demoticism and, hence, the whole discourse on the 'demotic aspect of Hellenism' - so to speak - had also made evident the necessity for a revised

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286 I. Dragoumis, *Ο Έλληνισμός μου και οι Έλληνες*, Athens, 1927, p. 23. Cited in English in: Philip Sherrard, 1959, 1992, op. cit., pp. 188-9.

287 Pericles Yannopoulos, *Άπαντα*, edited by D. Lazogiorgiou-Ellenikou, Athens 1963, Vol. 1, pp. 16-7, 40, and passim.

See also: Dimitris Philippides, op. cit., pp. 108-9.

288 Seferis later (1946) referred to Yannopoulos as follows: "In Greece, alas, if you want to see all the time, you must keep narrowing the diaphragm, as one does in photography. Otherwise you become a victim like the late Yannopoulos. (I have in mind of course the men who can see with their eyes)." In: George Seferis, *A Poet's Journal: Days of 1945-1951*, translated by Athan Anagnostopoulos, Massachusetts, 1974, p. 53.

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definition of the 'Greekness'<sup>289</sup> of anything, based not only on the artificial classical models, but on the whole Greek tradition. As the glare of the unreal image of what Seferis calls 'European Hellenism'<sup>290</sup> was fading - in Greece and in the West - the first calls for adjustments to the image of Greece, for a search of the image of 'Greek Hellenism', were heard. About this 'Greek Hellenism' Seferis says:

*But before we can say that we can see its face clearly, many great works will have to be created and many men, great and small alike, will have to work and to struggle. For this particular Hellenism will only show its face when the Greece of today [1938-39] has acquired its own real intellectual character and features. And its characteristics will be precisely the synthesis of all the characteristics of all true works of art which have ever been produced by Greeks.<sup>291</sup>*

The different approaches to the subject of that 'Greekness' (ἑλληνικότητα), aesthetical, nationalist, historicist, et cetera, influenced the expression of the Greek artists and motivated various attempts directed towards giving material image to the different visions of the true face of Greece. The question, however, is not whether or not and in what quantities there is 'Greekness' in the creations of the Greeks, but how "the overflow of [their] soul[s]"<sup>292</sup>, to use Solomos' words, is expressed each time they take Seferis' advice and "seek truth". For "since they are Greeks, the works created out of their souls cannot be anything else but Hellenic"<sup>293</sup>, as Seferis says.

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289 A word which has undergone a series of abuses from the time it was first devised up to the present day.

290 George Seferis, "Dialogue on Poetry: What Is Meant by Hellenism?"; in: George Seferis, 1966, 1967, 1982, op. cit., p. 94.

291 Ibid., p. 95.

292 Quoted in: Romilly Jenkins, op. cit., p. 73. Jenkins notes here that this phrase recalls Wordsworth's 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'.

293 George Seferis, "Dialogue on Poetry: What Is Meant by Hellenism?"; in: George Seferis, 1966, 1967, 1982, op. cit., p. 95.

## 6. 7. Costis Palamas' 'Great Visions'

*Within a garden, in the shadow of a palm-tree, some blue flowers,  
here a deep blue, there a more open blue, speak.  
A poet (who is now dead) passes and gives shape to their words.*

Costis Palamas<sup>294</sup>

The growing awareness of the overshadowing presence of the idealised ancient world and its vacuous idols in modern Greek life, a life so intimately connected with a tradition incompatible with this classicising world and unable to worship its idols, led to a nostalgia and a growing anguish for a vanishing life. The painful realisation of the tragic situation of which modern Greeks had been the victims was accompanied by a feeling of "something like a sin, and like a fall, like a descent, like exile, loss of some paradise that ... life was destined to dwell in originally, a displacing on to a now barren and joyless earth"<sup>295</sup>, as Costis Palamas (1859-1943) describes it, and then a "desire for the Christian and Buddhist confession of sin."<sup>296</sup> Palamas' 'suffering', representative of his generation's suffering, awakened his consciousness and took shape in his poetics and his poetry; and the struggle between the two worlds - the lost ideal world and the one in which the poet found himself - stimulated his voice and became a creative struggle, a struggle for redemption from suffering. The longing for this golden world of beauty and lament for its replacement by another, "ugly", "ruined" and "accursed", pervades Palamas' early poetry. But he soon foresaw the possibility of a metamorphosis:

All the beautiful things of earth,  
to be more beautiful, and the world's ugly things, to be  
stirred by the breath of loveliness, seek a priest to confess  
them, seek a love to kiss them.<sup>297</sup>

In death, Palamas saw the possibility, and the condition, of rebirth and resurrection; the earth was the womb of life, and for the creative artist in the stream of life there is flowering:

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294 From Costis Palamas' introductory note to "The Palm-Tree"; in: *The Poetical Works of Costis Palamas*, Athens, 1952, Vol. 4, *Life Immovable*, pp. 92-102. Cited in English in: Philip Sherrard, "Costis Palamas (1859-1943)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 48.

295 Costis Palamas, *Poetic*, Vol. 1, Athens, pp. 130ff. Cited in: *ibid.*, p. 40.

296 Costis Palamas, *Poetic*, Vol. 1, Athens, p. 67. Cited in: *ibid.*, pp. 40-1.

297 Costis Palamas, *Altars*, 1st Series, Athens, 1915, p. 54. Translated by Philip Sherrard and cited in: *ibid.*, p. 53.

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The eternal circling-round of May and January  
Governs History, as it governs too the lilies ...<sup>298</sup>

What Palamas was experiencing and understanding, however, was not only his own subjective experience, but the expression of the society in which he lived.<sup>299</sup> His conception of his role as a poet was that of a prophet and a mystagogue, of the one that can "redeem the time" and reconcile the opposites, for

The ancient, the new, marbles, trees, what has gone, what remains,  
seek a reconciliation in a single embrace<sup>300</sup>

It was this role that he attempted to fulfil as he desired in his trilogy under the collective title *Great Visions*.<sup>301</sup> The third and longest poem of this trilogy, *The Dodecalogue of the Gypsy* (first published in 1907), is described by the poet himself as "the poem which integrates all his ideas"<sup>302</sup>. In the preface to this poem, he wrote:

*And then I saw that I am the poet, surely a poet among many, a mere soldier of the verse, but always the poet who desires to close within his verse the longings and questionings of the universal man, and the cares and fanaticism of the citizen. I may not be a worthy citizen; but it cannot be that I am the poet of myself alone. I am the poet of my age and of my race. And what I hold within me cannot be divided from the world without.*<sup>303</sup>

The poet's awareness of the tradition of his land and his participation in it is best revealed in this poem; and his poetry becomes a reflection of his life and experience. In the *Dodecalogue of the Gypsy*, Palamas explores the visions of past worlds, pagan and Christian, and anticipates the coming of a new age, "the new age of Greece", as Sherrard notes.<sup>304</sup> His prophecy is death as well as a future resurrection. In this particular moment, the poet overcomes his egocentricity, frees himself from selfish passions, from his "ego-pathic" self,<sup>305</sup> and, with his conscience redeemed,<sup>306</sup> he becomes the hierophant of his race.

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298 Costis Palamas, *Life Immovable*, op. cit., p. 115. Cited in English in: *ibid.*, p. 57.

299 See: Christopher Robinson, "Greece in the Poetry of Costis Palamas"; in: *Review of National Literatures*, Fall 1974, pp. 42-5.

300 Costis Palamas, *Life Immovable*, op. cit., p. 182. Cited in English in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 59.

301 *Ibid.*, p. 60.

302 Palamas, *Poetic*, op. cit., p. 67. Cited in English in: *ibid.*, p. 66.

303 Costis Palamas, Preface to *The Dodecalogue of the Gypsy*; cited in: Aristides E. Phoutrides, "Introduction"; in: Costis Palamas, *Life Immovable*, First Part, translated by Aristides E. Phoutrides, with an introduction and notes by the translator, Cambridge, U. S. A., 1919, p. 3.

304 Philip Sherrard, "Costis Palamas (1859-1943)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 67.

305 Costis Palamas, *Altars*, op. cit., p. 11. Cited in: *ibid.*, p. 40.

306 "from one point of view, a large part of Palamas' poetry is ... the expression of his endeavour to redeem his conscience, his very life". *Ibid.*, p. 48.

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And your Soul, accursed City,<sup>307</sup>  
will not find rest;  
the ladder of evil it will  
step by step descend,  
and wherever it goes, wherever it stops,  
into a worse body will it enter ...  
Until the god of love  
has mercy on you,  
and a dawn breaks,  
and deliverance summons you,  
O Soul tormented by crime!  
And you will hear the deliverer's voice,  
you will shed the dress of evil,  
and again controlled and light  
you will move like the grass, like the bird,  
like the breast of woman, like the wave,  
and not having beneath another step  
to fall lower  
down the ladder of evil, -  
for the scent again to which he summons you  
you will feel there blossom on you  
the wings,  
your great original wings!<sup>308</sup>

In Palamas' next long epic, *The King's Flute*, Christian and ancient traditions eventually fuse into one,<sup>309</sup> the one he sees emerging and best expressing the Greek soul. Palamas was the first modern Greek poet capable of continuing the Greek poetic tradition on the path Solomos had shown.

### 6. 8. Emphasis on the Byzantine Heritage

At the dawn of the twentieth century, life in Greece reflected the contemporary national circumstances. Public dissatisfaction, inadequate means and instability in political life continued during the first decade of the century. The pursuit of irredentist claims and an attachment to the 'Great Idea', the dream of Greece astride the Aegean, remained the single issue on which the great majority of the Greek people felt a sense of unity of purpose. In 1910, Eleutherios Venizelos came to power and concluded the unification of Greece (1912-19). In Venizelos, a charismatic and popular personality

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307 Constantinople in the years of its fall, the scene of the main action of the poem.

308 Costis Palamas, *Dodecalogue of the Gypsy*, pp. 146 and 148. Cited in English in: *ibid.*, pp. 73-4. See Sherrard's discussion of "the main features of the understanding of life that seems to lie behind" this poem, in: *ibid.*, pp. 78-81.

309 This fusion is also reflected in Palamas' great mastery of the Greek language.

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and "a statesman of the highest calibre",<sup>310</sup> was seen both the reformer and the national leader. The contemporary nationalist ideology, based on the 'continuity theory',

*stressed classical roots but also traced from Byzantium through Tourkokratia to Independence the survival of the Greek nation, the Greek language, Greek customs, and of course, the Greek Orthodox religion.*<sup>311</sup>

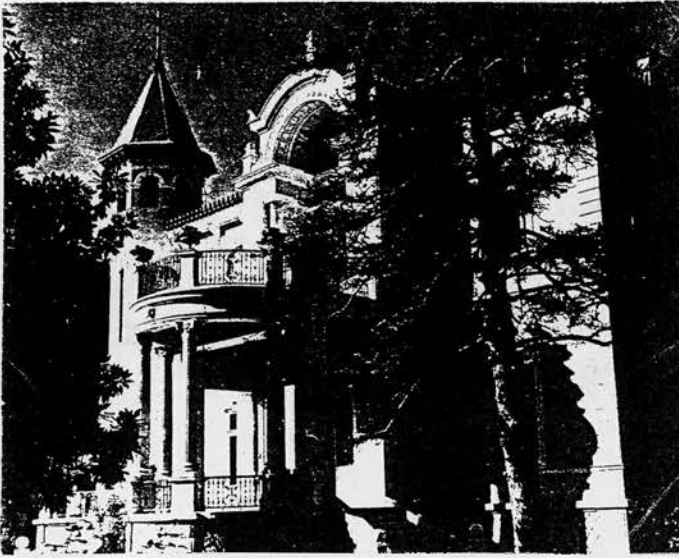
At the turn of the century, architectural transformation was determined by the historical circumstances, the romanticised views of a resurrected Byzantium and the new social structures. Architecture had to express the new aspirations and to comply with the early twentieth century political, economic, social and cultural requirements. The continuous increase in the population of Athens, both from Greeks of the diaspora and those migrating from rural areas, diversified the residential architecture according to social and economic factors. In the urban centre homes of the upper class prevailed a preference for a classicism 'purified' from foreign influences and modified in accordance with the 'eclectic' preferences of each architect, some of which have been discussed above. For the villas of the upper class in the Athenian suburbs and the countryside no stylistic restrictions were applied. The architects composed works eclectically, in a variety of 'picturesque' forms with elements borrowed from Neo-Baroque, Art-Nouveau, Rustic, Art Déco, et cetera (Fig. 6.57), together with those echoing Greek vernacular architecture, since the latter had been admitted into the 'learned salons'.<sup>312</sup> In the early twentieth century, the breaking of the full tide of romanticism, the revived Greek irredentist pursuits and new national orientations, and the consequent demands for a truly Greek architectural face gave impetus to two new consecutive trends in Greek architectural iconography. The first was based on the Byzantine models and the second on the reappraised autochthonous vernacular ones. The architects of both trends took upon themselves the task of realising in the concrete terms of their art the new historical vision of Greece. To her 'sad relic' classicising image, they appended Byzantine architectural survivals and/or elements cast in post-Byzantine folk moulds. Still viewing the Greek world through an exclusively historical perspective, they worked with refreshed zeal to attain faithful images of the

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310 Thanos Veremis, "From the National State to the Stateless Nation; 1821-1910"; in: Martin Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremis (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 17.

311 Evangelos Kofos, "National Heritage and National Identity in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Macedonia", in: Martin Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremis (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 106.

312 See: Dimitris Philippides, 1984, *op. cit.*, pp. 131ff.



**Figure 6.57.** Early twentieth century 'Picturesque architecture' in the Athenian suburb of Kefissia. (After Philippides, 1984).

phenomena of the past and present life of their land, creating semblances of her historical or outer reality.

The focus of interest shifted to Macedonia, a land for the identity of which historians of the competing Balkan nationalist ideologies came forward with numerous theories. Greek national ideology emphasised the legacies of Hellenic - and Hellenistic - Macedonia, of the mediaeval Byzantine

Empire and the traditions of the Christian Orthodox Church which had been given a Greek identity.<sup>313</sup> In the development of the nationalist ideology, as earlier discussed, the relation between nationality and Orthodoxy remained a point of controversy. While during the years when the Balkans remained under Ottoman rule the distinction was religious in content, since the creation of the different independent Balkan states - and the consequent declaration of the autocephalous national Churches - this distinction became national and the preservation of the mediaeval heritage arose as a political issue. In Greece, the importance of the Byzantine heritage, perceived as Greek, was stressed, emphasising the idea of national continuity. In the dream of the advocates of the 'Great Idea' for "the modern Greek state to act as a nucleus for a resurrected Byzantium"<sup>314</sup>, Macedonia held a pivotal role. After the 'Macedonian Struggle' (1903-8) and the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, Greece had annexed a little over fifty per cent of the Macedonian region.<sup>315</sup> Greek territorial aspirations were fulfilled and the Greeks appeared as the legitimate heirs to the Macedonian historical and cultural heritage.<sup>316</sup>

313 See: Evangelos Kofos, "National Heritage and National Identity in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Macedonia", in: Martin Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremis (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 103-41.

314 *Ibid.*, p. 108.

315 *Ibid.*, p. 115. "This", Kofos observes, "roughly corresponded to the assumed territory of ancient Macedonia."

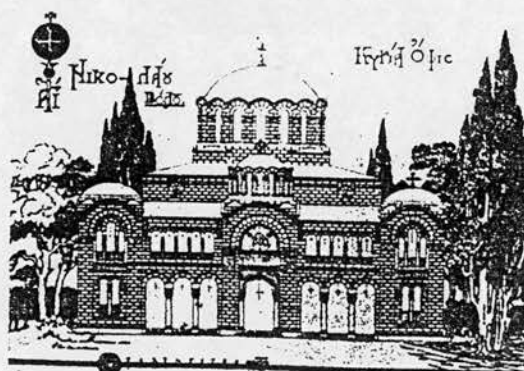
316 See: *ibid.*, pp. 103-41.

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The spirit of the times found its best architectural expression in the Byzantine Revival, of which the architect Aristoteles Zachos (1872-1939) was the most faithful representative. (Figs. 6.58, 6.59) Zachos was, like Kleanthes, a native of Macedonia, educated in Germany where he spent seventeen years and worked as an assistant of Professor J. Durm.<sup>317</sup> After his return to Greece,<sup>318</sup> he travelled widely in the country and, as he later confessed, strove for seventeen years to find his "Greek self".<sup>319</sup> In 1911, he wrote the first article in Greek on Greek vernacular architecture.<sup>320</sup> In Greek 'folk' art and architecture, he discerned the principal characteristics of the arts of ancient Greece. For Zachos, Greek folk art was the natural descendant of ancient Greek and Byzantine art. At the time, his studies, which focused on Byzantine and post-Byzantine vernacular architecture, were viewed as pursuits suitable to the "ideal Greek architect", as Yannopoulos had already described him, and as following Dragoumis' advice.



**Figure 6.58.** Aristoteles Zachos, Zossimaia Library, Ioannina, c.1930. (After Philippides, 1984)



**Figure 6.59.** Aristoteles Zachos, the church of St. Nickolaos, Volos, 1911-28. (After Cholevas)

317 Dimitris Philippides, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

318 *circa* 1906, when Durm acted as a consultant to the restoration works at the Parthenon. *Ibid.*

319 Nickolas Th. Cholevas, "Αριστοτέλης Ζάχος: Άφορμή από μιὰ Συζήτηση με τὸν Ἀρχιτέκτονα Ἀγγελο Σιάγα"; in: *Ζυγός*, Monthly Art Review, 25, Athens, March-April 1977, p. 57.

320 Aristoteles Zachos, "Λαϊκὴ Ἀρχιτεκτονικὴ"; in: *Ὁ Καλλιτέχνης*, Year B', 17/1911, p. 185. Reference in: Kiki Economou and Vaso Roussie, "Κατοικία και αρχιτεκτονική έκφραση" (Housing and Architectural Expression); in: *The Ministry of Culture*, 1985, Vol. 1, *op. cit.*, p. 123.



In his native land, Zachos had the chance to apply his new ideas for the first time. From 1913 to 1914, he participated in the works of the Planning Committee on the master plan for the city of Thessaloniki.<sup>321</sup> After the great fire of 1917, when the major part of the city's centre was destroyed, the need for the city to be rebuilt became

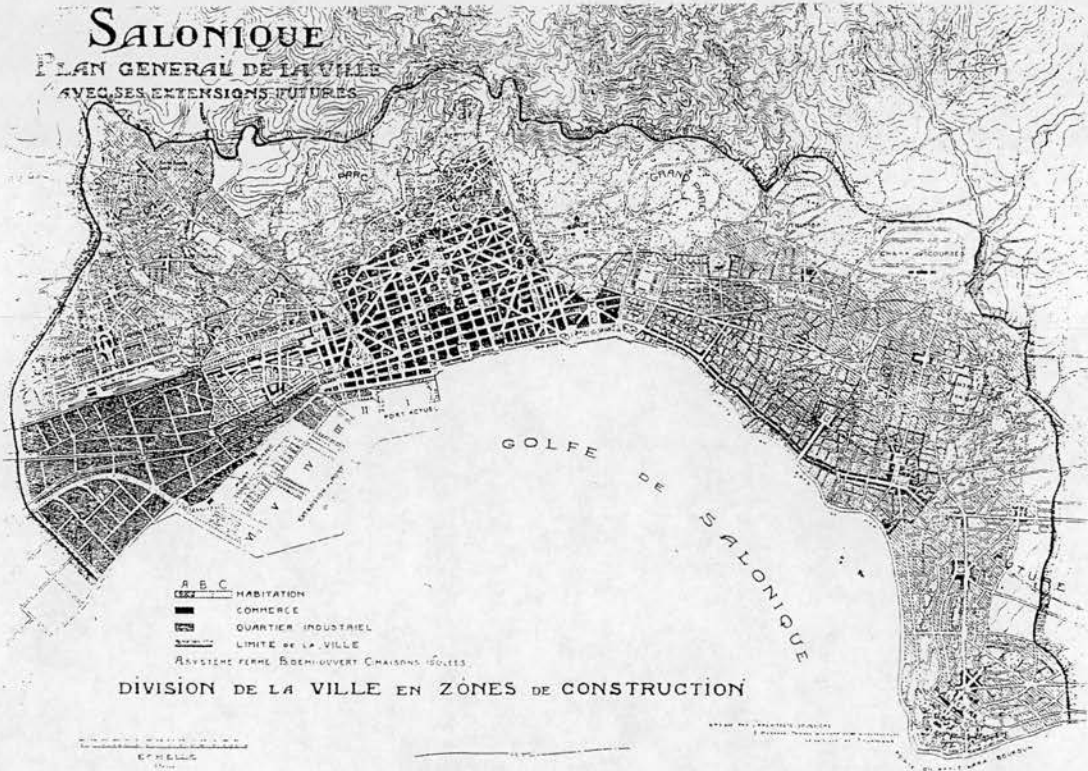


Figure 6.60. The master plan for Thessaloniki, 1918. (After Karadimou-Yerolympos)

urgent. This provided architects and town planners with a great opportunity. The result of their work was a plan for Thessaloniki which, as Kitsikis later claimed, "distinguishes itself by its academicism and its focus on, and exaltation of, the city's outstanding Byzantine monuments."<sup>322</sup> (Fig. 6.60)

321 Dimitris Philippides, 1984, op. cit., p. 122. The other members of this committee were: the architects Ernst Hébrard, Thomas Mawson and Konstantinos Kitsikis, the civil engineers Jos. Pleyber and Anghelos Ginis, and the representative of the municipality Konstantinos Anghelakis. Nikos K. Moutsopoulos, *Θεσσαλονίκη 1900-1917*, Thessaloniki, 1980, p. 52.

322 Konstantinos Kitsikis (1893-1969) was educated in Berlin where he had spent seventeen years and had worked under L. Hoffman. He also mentions that the planning regulations for the city of Berlin were his prototype. Quoted in: *ibid.*

Further intentions of the committee, concerning the character of the city, were stated by Mawson: "While the role of Athens as the seat of government should be insisted upon, Thessaloniki, by way of contrast, should be steered towards being a major harbour and centre for

purpose as an architect was to find an architectural expression suitable for his native land and its people, and capable of continuing this people's tradition that the common folk had preserved alive. He considered the unlearned demotic tradition of Greece as the only possible, and the natural, basis for modern Greek civilisation, something that the eminent archaeologist and architect Anastasios Orlandos (1887-1979) had emphasised already in 1926, in the prologue of his book on monasterial architecture.<sup>345</sup> Zachos played a major role in the movement calling for a 'Return to the Roots', not only with his work as an architect, but also through his influence on the young students of the School of Architecture which had been founded in 1917.



Figure 6.61. Aristoteles Zachos, The house of A. Chatzimichali, Athens, 1924-27. (After Philippides, 1984)

As the latter obtained their education not only at the School, but also on the premises of The Architectural Association of Greece (established in 1922), it was there that Zachos offered them lessons on, and directed their interests towards, the art of Byzantium and the vernacular architecture of the Cyclades and of the mansion-houses of Macedonia and Thessaly.<sup>346</sup> His shift of interest towards the vernacular architectural tradition, which became more apparent in the 1920s, was based on his belief in the continuity of Greek architecture, from that of Classical antiquity to the vernacular one, through Byzantium. Yet, failing to discern the principles on which the architecture of the Greek world had been based in the past, he remained, as an architect, a pupil of Eclecticism. (Figs. 6.61, 6.62)

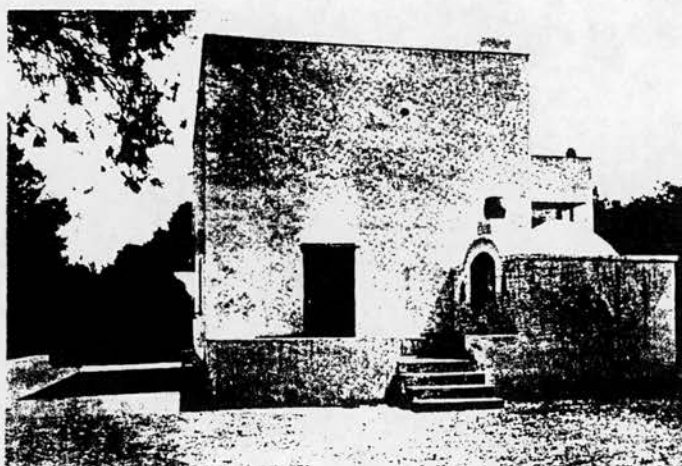
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Zachos, "Ἡπειρωτικά Σημειώματα"; in: *Ἡπειρωτικά Χρονικά*, 1928, p. 301. Quoted in: Dimitris Philippides, (1980), 1983, op. cit., p. 38, n. 53.

345 Anastasios Orlandos, *Μοναστηριακή Ἀρχιτεκτονική*, Athens, 1927. Quoted in: *ibid.*, p. 37. See: Charalambos Bouras, "Ἡ Προσφορά τοῦ Ὀρλάνδου στὴ Μελέτη τῆς Λαϊκῆς Ἀρχιτεκτονικῆς"; in: *Α. Ὀρλάνδος: Ὁ Ἄνθρωπος καὶ τὸ Ἔργον του*, Athens, 1978, pp. 581ff.

346 Dimitris Philippides, 1984, op. cit., p. 198.

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**Figure 6.62.** Aristoteles Zachos, The holiday house of Lovertos, Tatoi, Athens, 1928-30. (After Roussi; in: The Ministry of Culture)

As already indicated, the Interwar nationalist theories and those architectural ones which advocated, and tried to justify, the new purist architectural language of Modernism brought Greek vernacular architecture to the fore again, particularly the 'plain and austere' one of the Cyclades. The 4th of the CIAM, in Athens, 1933, and the publications which followed it<sup>347</sup>; Le Corbusier's travel notes on "the art of the peasant" and the architecture of Mount Athos,<sup>348</sup> and his articles in the *Cahiers Périodiques de Tourisme*, one of which was on the 'naive' painter Theophilos;<sup>349</sup> the identification of the principles of the 'New Art' with those of Aegean vernacular architecture;<sup>350</sup> and the contemporary theories which stressed the "Greekness" and the "Mediterraneity" of the International Style,<sup>351</sup> persuaded the orthodox proponents of

347 See: Dimitris Philippides, 1984, op. cit., pp. 188-194.

348 Le Corbusier, 1966, 1987, 1989, op. cit. See Le Corbusier's note on "the Athos church": "The powerful unity of its language is so sober that it confers to this impression the purity of a diamond, Hard and solid, it is the crystallization of a Hellenic clarity, mysteriously combined with undefinable Asiatic evocations." Ibid., p. 197.

349 Le Corbusier (Charles-Edouard Jeaneret), "Le Voyage en Grèce"; in: *Cahiers Périodiques de Tourisme*, Paris, 1936.

350 See: P. Paraskevopoulos; in: *Νέα 'Αλεξάνδρεια*, Athens, 1931, p. 5.

See also: Savas Kondaratos, "Νεοελληνική Αρχιτεκτονική και Παράδοση: Από το Αίτημα της 'Ελληνικότητας' στη Σύγχρονη Προβληματική"; in: Savas Kondaratos, *Αρχιτεκτονική και Παράδοση: Ιδεολογίες, Πρακτικές και Προβλήματα στη Χρήση του Αρχιτεκτονικού Παρελθόντος*, Athens, 1986, pp. 96-7. And: J. Lyghizos, "Le Mouvement Architectural en Grèce"; in: *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, 10, 1938, p. 58.

351 See: Anthony Antoniadis, 1979, op. cit., pp. 34, 35, 47.

See also above, in this Chapter, 2; Dimitris Philippides, 1984, op. cit., pp. 187ff; and Andreas Giacumacatos, "European Rationalism and Greek Architecture during the Period between the Wars: A Critical Review of the Autochthonous Architectural Production"; in: *Architecture in Greece*, Annual Review, 16, Athens, 1982, pp. 75-92.

architectural Modernism in Greece, such as Patroklos Karantinos (1903-1976), that it may be possible "to seek a local architectural character through the vernacular building tradition" and, at the same time, to maintain "a strict adherence to the principles of Modernism dictated by the work of European masters like Loos, Gropius, A. Perret and, above all, Le Corbusier."<sup>352</sup> (Fig. 6.63)



Figure 6.63. Patroklos Karantinos, sketch for the cover of the review *Ἀρχιτεκτονικά*. (After Giacumacatos)

The first architects of the Modern Movement in Greece viewed themselves as the prophets and the founders of a new age, "a Modern Architectural Renaissance"<sup>353</sup> and "a new world"<sup>354</sup>. The new architectural style epitomised rationalism, modernity and progress; its adoption by the architects of Greece was a proof of the country's modernisation and her creators' emancipation from Romanticism. Furthermore, the rationalism that had brought into being the Classical Doric temples and the simple cubic forms which shelter the life of the people of Greece was assumed to be the same rationalism which the European masters of Modernism had espoused.<sup>355</sup> During the subsequent decades, the advocates of architectural Modernism in Greece continued

352 Andreas Giacumacatos, "The Writings of Patroklos Karantinos and Le Corbusier"; in: *Architecture in Greece*, Annual Review, 21, Athens, 1987, p. 138.

353 Ibid., p. 139.

354 I. Saportas; in: "Τὸ IV Συνέδριον Νεωτέρας Ἀρχιτεκτονικῆς"; in: *Τεχνικά Χρονικά*, Year B/IV, 44-45-46, Athens, 15 October-15 November 1933, p. 10.

355 See above, in this Chapter, 2. See also: Andreas Giacumacatos, 1987, op. cit., p. 138.

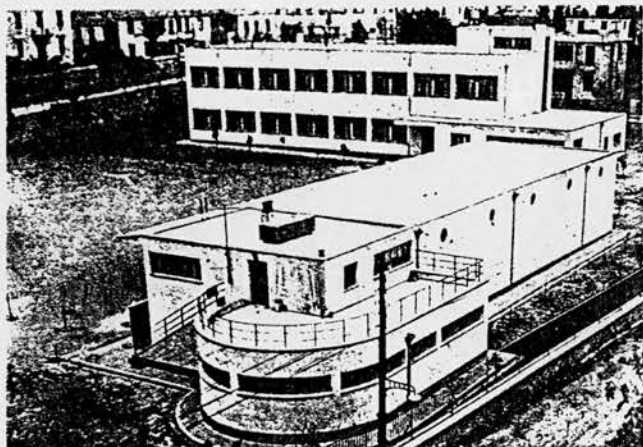


Figure 6.64. Patroklos Karantinos, Elementary School, Lesbos. (After Karantinos, ed.)

arguing that the functionalism which the Modern Movement viewed as the principal generator of form was akin to the functionalism which had dictated the Cycladic vernacular architectural creations<sup>356</sup> of the unschooled builders' "positivist mind"<sup>357</sup>, therefore, its principles were in no conflict with the local architectural tradition. The most important patron of architectural

Modernism in Interwar Greece was the Ministry of Education, which, in 1930, established a Technical Department staffed with young architects, most of whom had studied or worked in central Europe.<sup>358</sup> Within few years, this group completed a programme of design and construction for some 4,000 schools throughout the country.<sup>359</sup> These 'Schools of the '30s', designed along the lines of Purism and

356 See: C. Papas, *L'Urbanisme et L'Architecture Populaires dans les Cyclades*, Paris, 1957, p. 151. Quoted in: Dimitris Philippides, (1980), 1983, op. cit., p. 44.

357 Christos Iakovides, *Νεοελληνική Αρχιτεκτονική και Αστική Ίδεολογία*, Athens, Ioannina, 1982, p. 18.

358 The architects who worked on the school building programme of the '30s were: K. Demou, I. Despotopoulos, V. Douras, P. Georgakopoulos, N. Kakouris, P. Karantinos, D. Klapsis, K. Laskaris, N. Mitsakis, S. Legeris, O. Maltos, P. Michaleas, K. Panayotakos, K. Pantzaris, G. Petritsopoulos, D. Pikionis, A. Siagas, Th. Valentis, A. Zachos, and G. Zogolopoulos.

359 See: D. A. Zivas and M. Kardamitsis-Adamis, "A Brief Outline of School Building in Greece"; in: *Architecture in Greece*, Annual Review, 13, Athens, 1979, pp. 180-3.

See also: Bouki Babalou-Noukaki, "Τα Σχολικά Κτίρια" (School Buildings: Classicism, Localism, Modern Movement); in: The Ministry of Culture, 1985, Vol. 1, op. cit., pp. 109-16.

And: S. Amourgis, "Greek Architecture of the Twenties and Thirties"; in: *Architecture in Greece*, Annual Review, 1, Athens, 1967, pp. 146-9.

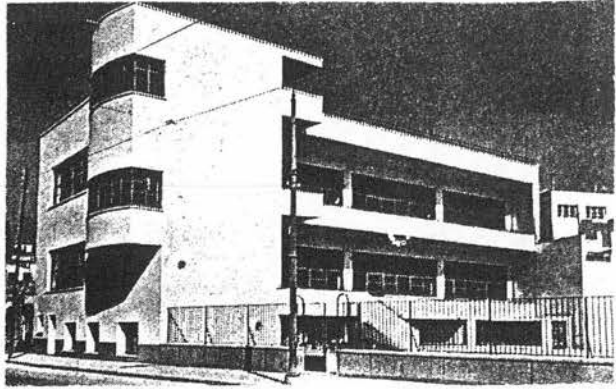
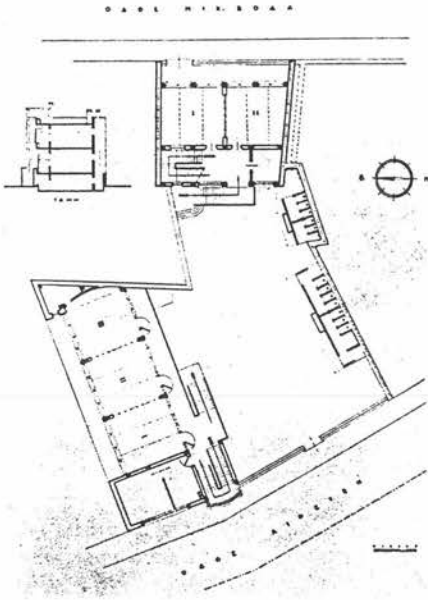
On the contemporary Italian Architectural Modernism of the Dodecanese, see: Anthony Antoniadis, "Η Αρχιτεκτονική των Ιταλών στα Δωδεκάνησα"; in: *Ο Δρόμος*, Monthly Review of the Dodecanese, 17-18, Rhodes, December 1983, pp. 20-30.

See also: Anthony Antoniadis, "Ιταλική Αρχιτεκτονική στα Δωδεκάνησα, (Μιά Προκαταρκτική Εκτίμηση)"; in: *Δελτίο Συλλόγου Αρχιτεκτόνων*, 4-5, Athens, July-October 1985, pp. 14-29.

And: Anthony Antoniadis, "Italian Architecture in the Dodecanese: A Preliminary Assessment"; in: *Journal of Architectural Education (JAE)*, 38/1, Fall 1984, pp. 18-25.

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Bauhaus with occasional classicist or byzantinist overtones, were presented in a single volume, published in 1938.<sup>360</sup> (Figs. 6.64-6.67)



Figures 6.65 and 6.66. K. Panayotakos, School Complex, Athens. (After Karantinos, ed.)



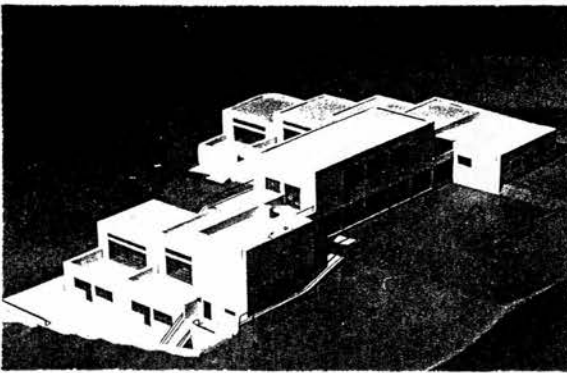
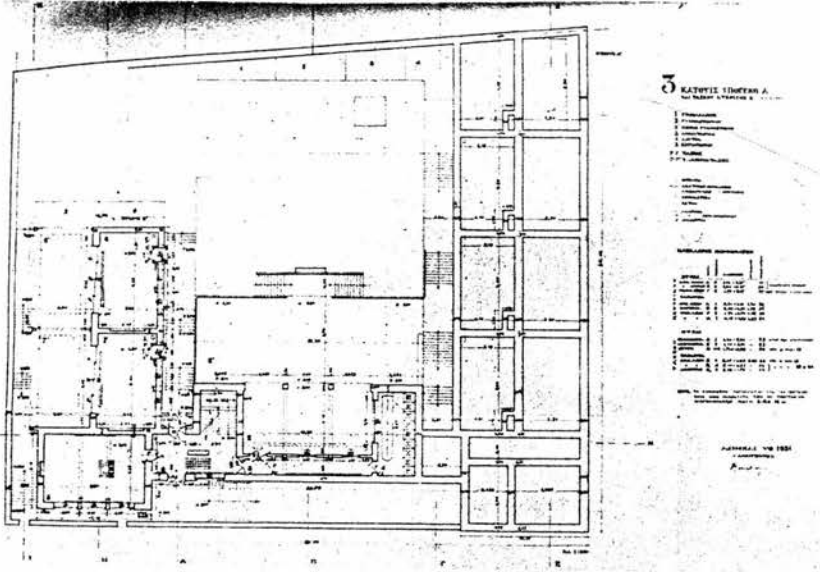
Figure 6.67. Nickolaos Mitsakis, Aristotle's Girls' Gymnasium, Athens. (After Karantinos, ed.)

It has already been mentioned that during the 4th of the CIAM in Athens Pikionis expressed his doubts about the new 'rationalist' architecture, urging the Greek architects "not to submit" blindly to its dogmatic and simplistic axioms, to rise "above the ephemeral slogans which

360 Karantinos, Patroklos (ed.), *Tà Néa Σχολικά Κτίρια*, (Les Nouvelles Écoles), The Technical Chamber of Greece, Athens, 1938 (in Greek and French).

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confine art within the limits of rationalism", and to consider the solutions offered by the West with caution.<sup>361</sup> As one of the architects who worked for the Ministry of Education, Pikionis had, in the same year, designed a school in Pefkakia (Lycabettus Hill) embracing the Modernist aesthetics. (Figs. 6.68-6.70)



**Figures 6.68 and 6.69.**  
Dimitris Pikionis, Elementary School in Pefkakia,  
Lycabettus Hill, Athens. (6.69 after Karantinos, ed.;  
6.70 after Architectural Association)

361 Dimitris Pikionis, "Γύρω από ένα Συνέδριο", (1933), pp. 169-70. Pikionis argues extensively against rationalism in: Dimitris Pikionis, "Έκθεση του Καθηγητή Δημήτρη Πικιώνη προς τον κ. Κωνσταντίνο Α. Δοξιάδη", (1961), pp. 199-200.

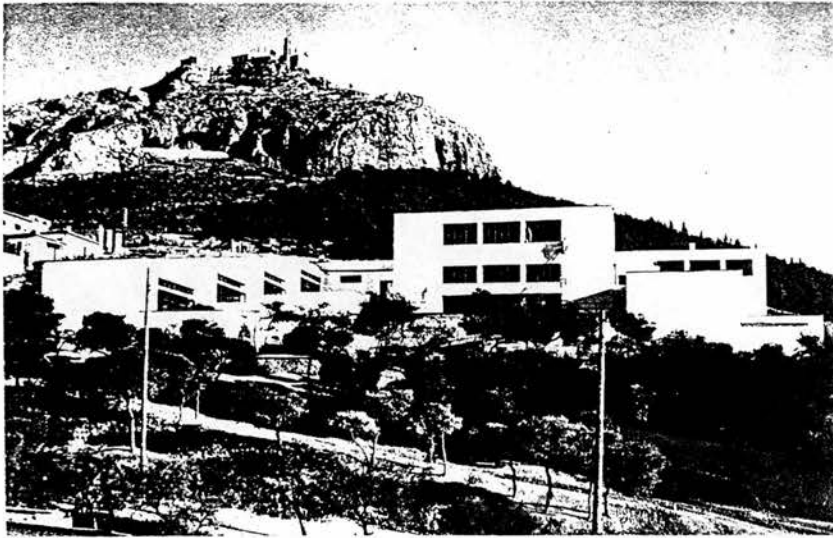


Figure 6.70. Dimitris Pikionis, Elementary School in Pefkakia, Lycabettus Hill, Athens, 1933. (After Karantinos, ed.)

This school is the concrete manifestation of his first reading of the theories of the Modern Movement and of the impact this reading had on the fashioning of his early architectural voice. The contemporary calls for a revision of values and the theoretical appeals of the architects of the Modern Movement to universal and timeless principles had led Pikionis to state, in 1931, that "The new architectural spirit that is coming into being is no other but the age-old one"<sup>362</sup> and that "The new [era] is being inaugurated by those artists, architects, sculptors or painters who strive to recollect the universal aesthetic pattern of our epoch, a task the accomplishment of which will enable us to overcome the inferior forms of naturalism and realism and to approach the essence of art."<sup>363</sup> In his later words,

*When I was first introduced to the [Modern] Movement, I felt close to it. If the more perceptive among us accepted it then, it was for the following reasons: it was promising the embodiment of organic truth; it was austere and simple, and governed by a geometry of a universal pattern capable of symbolising our own age.*<sup>364</sup>

When the school which Pikionis designed in the language of Purism was completed, "it did not satisfy [him]."<sup>365</sup> He wrote:

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362 Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἐποχῆς μας", (1931), p. 89.

363 Ibid.

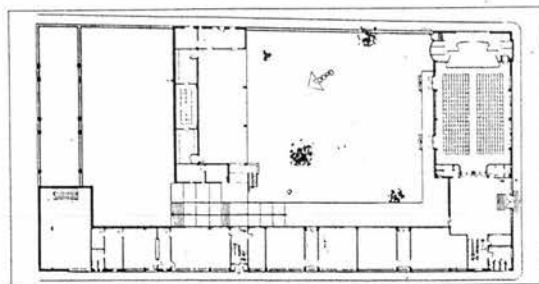
364 Dimitris Pikionis, "Αὐτοβιογραφικὰ Σημειώματα", (1958), p. 33.

365 Ibid., p. 34.



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*It was then that I thought that the oecumenical spirit has to be interwoven with the spirit of nationhood; out of these thoughts emerged my subsequent works: the Experimental School in Thessaloniki (1935) [Figs. 6.71, 6.72]<sup>366</sup>, the apartment block in Heyden Street (1938, the ground-plan was designed by Mitsakis), and the house for the sculptress Phrosso Euthymiadi (1949).<sup>367</sup>*



**Figures 6.71 and 6.72.** Dimitris Pikionis, Experimental School, Thessaloniki, 1935. (After Architectural Association)

In 1946, Pikionis referred again to the Cubist aesthetic allusion to the universal principles which he saw inherent in "all the great traditions of the Ancient World ... and in our [Greek] folk tradition."<sup>368</sup> Nevertheless, he had already realised that the western European standardisation and industrial "*tale quale* imitation of reality"<sup>369</sup>, the "shallow and narrow [Modernist] interpretation of principles correct in themselves"<sup>370</sup> and, above all, the rationalist and materialist interpretation of the practical end of the architectural work<sup>371</sup> had found expression through the arbitrarily international and

366 See: Emile Chlimintzas, 1982, *op. cit.*, pp. 16ff.

367 Dimitris Pikionis, "Αὐτοβιογραφικά Σημειώματα", (1958), p. 34.

368 Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ ἀνοικοδόμησι καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς παράδοσης", (1946), p. 163. In this text, Pikionis acknowledges the contribution of the "New Art ... to the recognition of the value of primitive art and every kind of spontaneous expression." *Ibid.*, p. 166, n. 3.

See: Savas Kondaratos, "Dimitris Pikionis in Context"; in: Architectural Association, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-1.

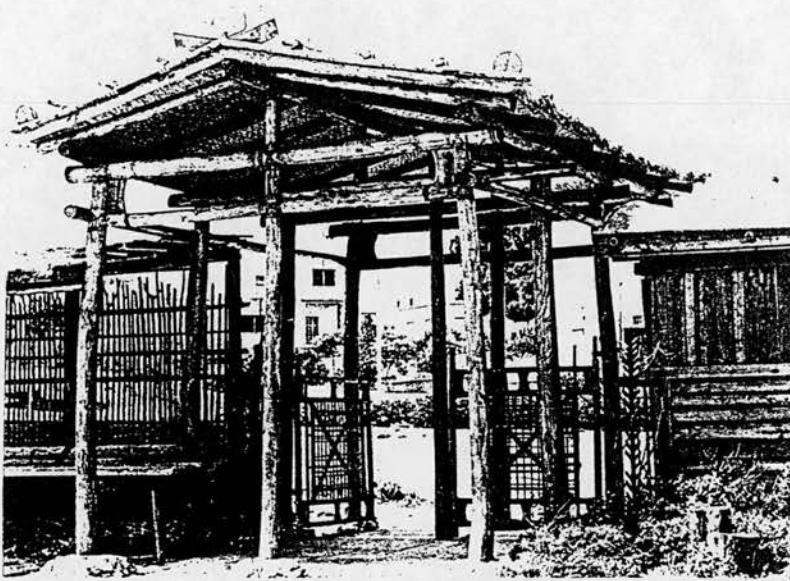
369 Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὰ παιχνίδια τῆς ὁδοῦ Αἰόλου", (1935), p. 87.

370 Dimitris Pikionis, "Αἰσθητικὲς ἀρχὲς τῆς ἀρχιτεκτονικῆς τοῦ Αἰξινικοῦ Συνοικισμοῦ", (1952), p. 256.

371 "rationalism ... aims at serving the human needs in a purely materialistic manner, ignoring completely the spirit." *Ibid.*

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quantitatively uniform language which he had used for the Lycabettus Elementary School. Pikionis' yearning to join his creative journey with that of the creative craftsmen of all great traditions of the world and of the vernacular architectural tradition of his own land, and his eventually transformed voice found effective expression through the highly symbolic language of his major work on the Attic hills (1951-57) and his Children's Garden in Philothei (Athens, 1960-65)<sup>372</sup>. (Fig. 6.73)



**Figure 6.73.** Dimitris Pikionis, Children's Garden, Philothei, Athens, 1960-65, entrance propylon. (After Architectural Association)

372 See: Dimitris Pikionis, "Αὐτοβιογραφικά σημειώματα", (1958), p. 34.

See: Yannis Liapis, "Ἡ Παιδικὴ Χαρὰ τοῦ Πικιώνη στὴ Φιλοθέη"; in: *Νέες Μορφές*, 1, Athens, 1962.

See: Alexander Papageorgiou, "Kinderspielplätze - Garten in Filothei bei Athen"; in: *Bauwelt*, 27, Gütersloh, 1 July 1968, pp. 813-5.

See also: Emile Chlimintzas, 1982, op. cit., pp. 16ff.

And: Emile Chlimintzas, "Children's Playground, Philothei, Athens 1960-65"; in: Architectural Association, op. cit., pp. 59-61.

## 6. 10. Anghelos Sikelianos : A Pantheistic Vision

"In the modern world possession of a national identity became as inevitable as religious affiliation had been in medieval times."<sup>373</sup> In nineteenth and twentieth century modern Greece, in the process of construction of a national identity, the need for identification of authentic national values made the intellectuals turn (in most cases in a highly eclectic way) to the vast body of Greek history and tradition. As already seen, the most tolerant theory proved to be the one of 'national continuity'. The persisting tolerance of this theory, however, is not unrelated to the living landscape of Greece. What was irrelevant, in the first place, was the image of the Classical Greek world in the way it had been shaped by Western scholars and romantic philhellenes. Since it became evident that modern Greeks - the configurations of their land and their creations - could not conform to this idealised image, but still they and their lives possessed characteristics which were compatible with those of their so-called ancestors, new perspectives of the Greek world were opened up. Moreover, the criteria of what constitutes a people and the factors on which its identity depends had been revised. A glance at the life, beliefs, common ways of thought and practices of the modern Greek people was able to prove a certain degree of truth in the claim of continuity of inheritance from the ancient Greek world to the present.<sup>374</sup> Yet, an identification of the Greek values which remained the same from antiquity to modern times, via Byzantium, arose as the most difficult task.

"Our tradition", says Seferis, "is full of contrasts."

*Only great men can bring them into harmony. In Greece there are the figures of Dionysus and of the Crucified Lord. But it needed the powerful pressure of the voice of Sikelianos to incarnate this word in our flesh:*

Sweet child of mine, my Dionysus and my Christ<sup>375</sup>

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373 Thanos Veremis, "Introduction"; in: Martin Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremis (eds.), op. cit., p. 7.

374 See: Philip Sherrard, "Introduction; Who are the Greeks?"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1978, op. cit., pp. 1-16.

See also: Costa Carras, *3,000 Years of Greek Identity: Myth or Reality?*, Athens, 1983.

375 George Seferis, "Sikelianos" (Broadcast from the BBC, London, July 7, 1951); in: George Seferis, 1966, 1967, 1982, op. cit., p. 16.

Cf.: "The persona sometimes actually assumes the identity and style of a self-ordained hierophant, an ascetic who has been initiated into the mysteries of both Dionysus and Christ". Edmund Keeley, "Sikelianos: The Sublime Voice"; in: Edmund Keeley, 1983, op. cit., p. 34.

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Anghelos Sikelianos (1884-1951) was a poet who saw the dangers of the alienation that was infecting Greek life, and the artificiality of a civilisation based on a dead or alien language; he saw the intimate connection of man with his sacred earth in danger, and the vision of the organic wholeness of life obscured.<sup>376</sup> His voice, however, was the poetic voice of a whole people who started seeing signs of destruction in their own life. He heard and understood the yearning - and the need - of this people around him (and of his own) for recovery of the true spiritual roots of their native world, the sources of their own existence, and for drawing nourishment from them. For him, this could be attained by regaining contact with those powers which dwell in the depths of their soul.

And to the people I descended;  
and the doors of the houses  
opened so quietly  
as if the doors of a tomb.  
And it was as if they embraced me  
returning from the grave -  
thus  
the fates the thread had woven -  
or as if for me the dead  
had come alive again:  
so deep in the ground did our roots mingle,  
so were our branches raised  
into the heavens.<sup>377</sup>

Sikelianos addressed himself to the sources: to nature, to the collective memory of the people, to the great poets of ancient Greece, to the great religious traditions of the East.<sup>378</sup> And he sought to regenerate life in its authenticity and its integrity; aspiring to the status and function of "truly a poet ... through poetry he struggle[d] to attain genuine liberation. He [did] not try to attain this for himself only, but as an initial stage in the liberation of all mankind"<sup>379</sup>; beyond the seeming contradictions and conflicting

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376 See: Philip Sherrard, "Anghelos Sikelianos and his Vision of Greece"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1978, op. cit., pp. 72-93.

377 Anghelos Sikelianos, 1946-47, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 28. Cited in English in: Philip Sherrard, "Anghelos Sikelianos (1884-1951)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 129.

378 Cf.: "He was well aware of the 'Oriental background against which classical culture arose and from which it was never completely isolated save in the minds of classical scholars.'" Philip Sherrard, "Anghelos Sikelianos and his Vision of Greece"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1978, op. cit., p. 83. (Quotation referred to: E. R. Dodds, *Humanism and Technique in Greek Studies*, Oxford, 1936, p. 11).

379 Anghelos Sikelianos, 1947, op. cit., p. 347. Quoted in: *ibid.*, p. 85.

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visions, he saw and prophesied the eventual merging of "all myths into one Myth"<sup>380</sup>. Sikelianos perceived myth in the way Schelling had, "not as a fabrication but as a revelation of divine truth, a revelation of what is universal and timeless, with gods seen not merely as symbols but as living beings."<sup>381</sup> In a poetic fusion of myths he evokes

the primordial image of the Great Goddess,  
the Eternal Mother, sacred in her affliction,  
who, in human form, was called Demeter  
here at Eleusis, where she mourned her daughter,  
and elsewhere, where she mourned her son,  
was called Alcmena or the Holy Virgin.<sup>382</sup>

A religious poet, Sikelianos considered the gift of poetry as "inseparable from divine inspiration"<sup>383</sup>. In true poetry he found the vehicle of universal values. He ventured to fulfil his mission as a poet of Greece in an attempt to reveal, through the agency of myth, the spirit of his land, its "hidden spiritual life"<sup>384</sup>, "Greece's most ancient, universal and historical foundations"<sup>385</sup> which had been so misunderstood.<sup>386</sup>

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380 Anghelos Sikelianos, "Ἡ Ἐλευσίνεια Διαθήκη"; in: *Νέα Γράμματα*, 2, Athens, 1936, p. 51. Quoted in: *ibid.*, p. 76.

381 Edmund Keeley, "Sikelianos: The Sublime Voice"; in: Edmund Keeley, 1983, *op. cit.*, p. 32. Sikelianos had quoted with approval the words of Schelling on mythology; in: Anghelos Sikelianos, 1937, *op. cit.*, p. 141. Quoted in: Philip Sherrard, "Anghelos Sikelianos and his Vision of Greece"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1978, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-9. See also: Edmund Keeley, "Sikelianos and Greek Mythology"; in: Edmund Keeley, 1983, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-52.

382 From Anghelos Sikelianos' "The Sacred Way"; cited in: Edmund Keeley, "Sikelianos: The Sublime Voice"; in: Edmund Keeley, 1983, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

383 N. K. Chandwick, *Poetry and Prophecy*, Cambridge, 1942, p. 14. Quoted in: *ibid.*, p. 86. Cf.: "Poetry ... is a force which at the impulsion of the divine Logos not only combines all musical 'modes', like the Lydian, the Phrygian, the Dorian and the Aeolian, but also inspires the Amphictyonic Councils and the constitution of the most creative and civilizing institutions." Anghelos Sikelianos, "Ἡ Ζωὴ καὶ τὸ Ἔργο τοῦ Πινδάρου"; in: *Anglo-Greek Review*, Vol. 3, 7, Athens, November-December 1947, p. 194. Quoted in: Philip Sherrard, "Anghelos Sikelianos (1884-1951)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

384 Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard, "Introduction"; in: Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (trs.), *op. cit.*, p. xvii.

385 Anghelos Sikelianos, cited in: T. Dimopoulos, *Ὁ Διθύραμβος τοῦ Ρόδου τοῦ Σικελιανοῦ*, Athens, 1934, p. 116. Quoted in: Philip Sherrard, "Anghelos Sikelianos and his Vision of Greece"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1978, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-2.

386 "The pre-Socratic tradition also gave the poet his highest calling, that of inspired prophet and seer, a teacher and mystagogue, a calling that Sikelianos himself aspired to in modern Greece, as he believed Pindar and Aeschylus had in the classical period and as Wallace Stevens, in our day would have understood with the largest sympathy since he gave poets the title 'priests of the invisible.'" Edmund Keeley, "Sikelianos: The Sublime Voice"; in: Edmund Keeley, 1983, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

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O Hercules,  
to what depths I sunk  
to bring back  
pure as never before  
the sacred voice of Greece!<sup>387</sup>

In all Sikelianos' poetry, there is implicit a mythological attitude towards the Greek world or, rather, towards the world which, for him, was expressed in the terms of a Greek landscape. As a whole, this poetry is, at once, the embodiment of Sikelianos' vision of this world's inner principle and of the potential realisation of union with it, and the depiction of the creative process on which Sikelianos himself embarked in order to re-collect this vision; to perceive, that is, the essential identity of all mythical expressions and to unite all myths into one Myth, manifesting the common origin of all myth;<sup>388</sup> to re-member the true life that has been enshrined in multiple myths and to recover the unity of the original life to which all myths refer and in which they participate; to express the potentiality for 'wheatful' unity which is latent in the nature of cosmic life, in the nature of man and in the nature of the cosmos.

But you, great father, father of all of us  
who from our earliest years have seen that everything  
lies in the grave's shadow and who, with words  
or chisel, have struggled with all our spirit  
to rise above the flesh-consuming rhythm:

father,

since for us too the earth and the heavens are one  
and our own thought is the world's hearth and center,  
since we also say that earth may mingle with the stars  
as a field's subsoil with its topsoil, so that the heavens too  
may bring both wheat:

father, at those times  
when life's bitterness weighs with its full burden  
on our hearts, and our strength can be roused no more by youth  
but only by the Will, that stands watchful  
even over the grave, because to It the sea  
which hugs the drowned remorselessly is itself shallow,  
and shallow too the earth where the dead sleep;  
in the dawn hours, as still we struggle on,  
while the living and the dead both lie in the same  
dreamless or dream-laden slumber, do not stop  
ascending in front of us, but climb always

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387 From the first part of Anghelos Sikelianos' "Prologue to Life", "The Consciousness of My Earth"; in: Anghelos Sikelianos, 1946-47, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 50. Cited in: Philip Sherrard, "Anghelos Sikelianos (1884-1951)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 141.

388 "this great truth that behind all the gods and all the myths is hidden the inexhaustible generative source of myths and gods, our own soul". Anghelos Sikelianos, November-December 1947, op. cit., p. 194. Quoted in: *ibid.*, p. 150.

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with slow even wings the heavens of our Thought,  
eternal Daedalus, Dawnstar of the Beyond.<sup>389</sup>

In his "Consciousness of Personal Creativeness", Sikelianos re-members "the Word of Greece"<sup>390</sup>:

Scattered drums of a Doric column  
razed by unexpected earthquakes  
to the ground!<sup>391</sup>

and he attains a vision of "the world's deepest Unity":

And yet I know  
how in this deep silence,  
over the surface of the world,  
are still after centuries scattered  
the peaceful limbs of my God,  
the peaceful limbs of the great Dionysus,  
the peaceful limbs of the great Poetry,  
the peaceful limbs of the world's deepest Unity!<sup>392</sup>

But, since this is not meant as an analysis of Sikelianos' poetry, let us just listen to the words of the poet George Seferis about Sikelianos' "effort to embrace life and death together"<sup>393</sup>:

*Indeed, I would say that his work could be set in the frame of that  
loftiest form of springtime that I know - a Greek Passion Week.*<sup>394</sup>

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389 From Anghelos Sikelianos' *Daedalus*. In English in: Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (trs.), op. cit., p. 95. Daedalus, as Keeley points out, is "the great artificer, model for the poet". Edmund Keeley, "Sikelianos: The Sublime Voice"; in: Edmund Keeley, 1983, op. cit., p. 36.

390 Anghelos Sikelianos, 1946-47, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 235. Cited in: Philip Sherrard, "Anghelos Sikelianos (1884-1951)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 154.

391 From the fifth and last part of Anghelos Sikelianos' "Prologue to Life", "The Consciousness of Personal Creativeness"; in: Anghelos Sikelianos, 1946-47, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 237. Cited in: *ibid.*

392 Anghelos Sikelianos, 1946-47, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 242. Cited in: *ibid.*, p. 156.

393 George Seferis, "Sikelianos"; in: George Seferis, 1966, 1967, 1982, op. cit., p. 15.

394 *Ibid.*

**6. 11. "... among the same monsters and the same longings ..."**<sup>395</sup>

As mentioned in the Prologue to this Part of the thesis, the central objective of this Part is to trace the modern Greek artists' search for "the true face of Greece" and the means appropriate to its creative expression. In order to try to depict Pikionis' experience and pursuit of knowledge of the Greek world within which he lived, and to attempt a reading of the built expression of his personal creative process in the next Part of the thesis, the stages of the modern Greek architectural making process have been discussed here in parallel to the stages of the contemporary poetic making process, so that the nature and the purposes of the architectural making process may be perceived from within the world that shaped the images which this process produced, and that the veracity of these images may be assessed.

The architects of modern Greece turned to the past in their quest for a vision of the Greek world and for a language that would enable them to shape a voice in which this vision could find expression. Claiming that they were weaving their works with the thread of their native architectural tradition, they wandered uncertainly and nostalgically among the physical remnants of the past, and, selecting antique yarns, threading them and stringing the new thread on a new loom, they set on weaving on a historicist or a 'futurist' pattern. But "one cannot take a piece from the whole without being a liar"<sup>396</sup>, says Pikionis. Forms - architectural or other - cannot be divorced from a civilisation's view of the world which they embody and within which they function.

*All these partial truths, in the language, in the ethos, the customs, in short in every expression of the life and the art of a people, are interrelated and spring from the depth, the essence of the whole.*<sup>397</sup>

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395 From "an illuminating comment [of Seferis] on the role of mythical characters in his verse". George Seferis, "'Ένα Γράμμα για την Κίχλη' "; in: *Άγγλοελληνική Επιθεώρηση*, Vol. 4, 12, July-August 1950, p. 501. Translated by James Stone as "A Letter on 'Thrush' "; in: *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora, A Quarterly Review*, Vol. 7, 2, New York, Summer 1980, p. 10. The above translation is from: Edmund Keeley, "Seferis's Elpenor: A Man of No Fortune"; in: Edmund Keeley, 1983, op. cit., p. 55. Also quoted in: Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard, "Forward"; in: Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (trs., eds.), op. cit., p. xi.

396 Dimitris Pikionis, "Η Λαϊκή μας Τέχνη κι έμεϊς", (1925), p. 55.

397 Ibid., p. 54.



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This depth, "this nucleus where one's life and art ought to stem from", was perceived by Pikionis as a "spiritual"<sup>398</sup> one, a metaphysical one, one that is not to be sought in the outer forms of the language of the past, but in the spirit which governed this language and ought to illuminate the language of contemporary art, the forms of which are to be modified in keeping with new needs.

The language of most architects of modern Greece before Pikionis was a language learned in the architecture of previous ages, a language that shaped an architectural voice which evoked - however eclectically - the architects' historical and empirical visions of the Greek world. It is such kind of vision that constitutes the theme of all revivalist architectural works. The language of such architectural works produced in modern Greece was, in correspondence with their theme, only sufficient to voice the architectural events that took place in former eras, to represent them - however fragmentarily - and to give them an idealised image. In accordance with the architects' commitment, these works can lead the most apprehensive spectators' eyes towards what their creators have presented: a nostalgic image of the Greek world that emerged from the architects' search for their "Greek self" and their identification of it with a past that was beyond recall. The revolutionary language of Purism that followed the exhaustion of revivalist tendencies in modern Greek architecture was considered by its own advocates as the language of the architectural avant-garde, thus, axiomatically, one which they did not share with the rest of society and which set them apart from it, although they eventually ventured to probe the affinities between the novel language and the languages that had been used by their predecessors. Discrediting the values of the past, the Greek architects of the Modern Movement orientated their vision towards the future, substituting the anachronistic image of the Greek world with an alien one, the product of a blind imagination and one that could not stimulate the spectator's imaginative faculties and was not even intended to do so.

Although they did justice only to the external reality - historical or physical - of the Greek world, all these architectural works that aspired either to recreate a historical past or to fashion an imaginary future anticipated, and gave way to, Pikionis' perception and experience of the past and the present Greek world and his quest for the real values and roots of the historical life of this world. Transcending the outer

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398 Ibid., p. 55.

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forms of the past, "the homologous expression of one unified and unbroken myth",<sup>399</sup> Pikionis attempted to regain sight of the formless and eternal or mythical reality of this world, to envisage the past as a reflection of eternity itself, and to contemplate the present in order to voice its eternal aspect himself. In this manner, he drew from the sources of the tradition of the Greek world and his participation in this living tradition determined the nature of his work.

Pikionis was not alone in this creative journey. The poets of modern Greece had embarked on a similar journey, seeking a harbour where "the true face of Greece" would be revealed to them, wandering always - like Seferis' mythic characters -

*among the same monsters and the same longings. So ... keep[ing] the symbols and the names that the myth ha[d] brought down to [them], realizing as [they did] so that the typical characters have changed in keeping with the passing of time and the different conditions of our world - which are none other than the conditions of everyone who seeks expression.*<sup>400</sup>

These voyagers sought knowledge about, and of, the Greek world and the means appropriate to the expression of its reality. Each according to his nature wove the cloth of his art and passed on to his descendants the edge of the thread of his native art, together with the knowledge of the craft and the duty to continue the weaving in the same manner. Pikionis was joined by new companions, and before proceeding to an account of Pikionis' own journey, the most recent work of one of them will be discussed briefly.

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399 Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ ἐνόραση τοῦ θεατῆ", (1953), p. 118.

400 George Seferis. See note above.

## 6. 12. The House of Byzantine Art 'Well and Truly Made' by Kyriakos Krokos

- "The statues are in the museum."  
- "No, they pursue you, why can't you see it?  
I mean with their broken limbs,  
with their shape from another time, a shape you don't recognize  
yet know.

George Seferis<sup>401</sup>

It is less than a year since Kyriakos Krokos - a graduate of the National Technical University of Athens (1967) and a student of Pikionis' - built the response of a modern Greek architect to the Byzantine heritage, an actual house for the fragments of the Byzantine civilisation, in the very city that had become the major host of the early twentieth century Byzantine revival. (Figs. 6.74, 6.75) The Thessaloniki Byzantine

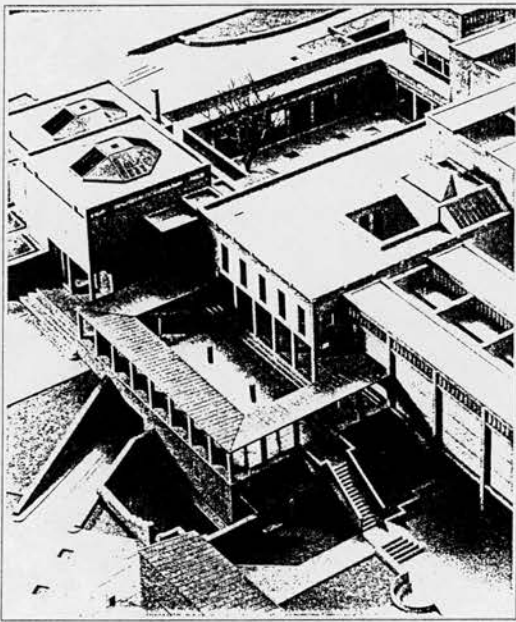


Figure 6.74. Kyriakos Krokos, The Thessaloniki Byzantine Museum, model. (After *Architecture in Greece*, 23, cover illustration)

Museum of the architect Kyriakos Krokos appears to be not a mere reference to the historical reality of Byzantium, but a work nourished by this "old root" that Krokos "willed" to find in order to be connected "with the tradition [itself], not with its forms ... with the 'true essence' of its teaching"<sup>402</sup>; for "there is no 'soothfast' art ... nor assuredly will there ever be one, without grasp of truth."<sup>403</sup> Conscious of the difficulties which man encounters today in his struggle "to preserve his memory alive, while everything helps to forget"<sup>404</sup>, he searched for these roots which lead,

401 From Seferis' poem "*Thrush*". In English in: Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (trs., eds.), op. cit., p. 325.

402 Kyriakos Krokos; in: *Architecture in Greece*, Annual Review, 23, Athens, 1987, p. 120.

403 Plato, *Phaedrus*, 260e.

404 Kyriakos Krokos, 1987, op. cit., p. 120.

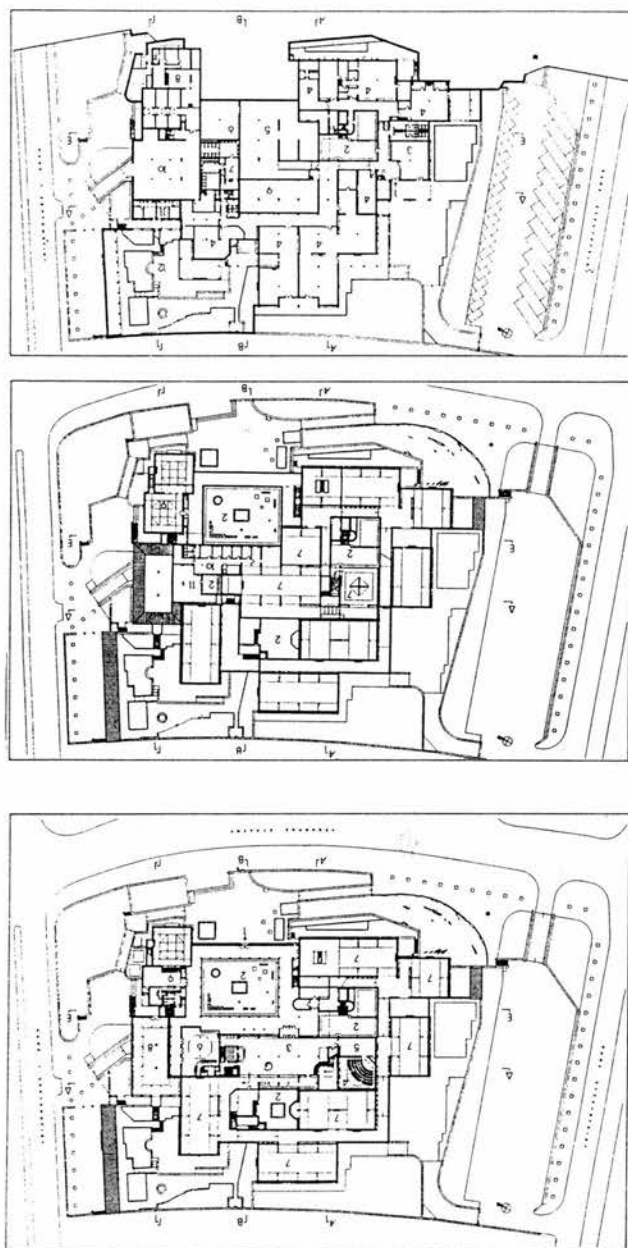


Figure 6.75. Kyriakos Krokos, The Thessaloniki Byzantine Museum, plans. (After Krokos, 1987)

he believes, "to the centre of the civilisation of this land [Greece]"<sup>405</sup>. This "lost centre", as Krokos characterises it recalling Lorentzatos' essay<sup>406</sup>, is the centre whence one's work has to issue.<sup>407</sup> And he sees the search for this centre - this memory-preserving or memory-awakening process - as a primarily inward search, a search for one's true self; for "unless one discovers it [this centre] within his own self, one's real self will remain unapproachable."<sup>408</sup> Krokos expresses thus his awareness of his task as an architect to build in response to human nature and the nature of the world in which he lives, and identifies the architectural making process with the process of self-knowing and with that of world-knowing,<sup>409</sup> in the way Pikionis did before him.

Describing the way he worked on the museum of Byzantine art,

405 Kyriakos Krokos, "On the Plans for the Thessaloniki Byzantine Museum"; in: *Tefchos*, Bilingual Review of Architecture, Art and Design, 2, Athens, September 1989, p. 47.

406 Zissimos Lorentzatos, "The Lost Center"; in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, 1980, op. cit.

407 Kyriakos Krokos, 1989, op. cit., p. 47.

408 Ibid.

409 "The demolition of the old buildings - still solid, still testifying to the humanism of the 19th century - cut off the last roots leading down to the centre of this country's culture. Their replacement with the buildings dictated by modern fashion progressively built up the wall which shut us out of the world." Ibid.

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he says that he first tried to approach the 'idea' of the work. And he hastens to explain that he does not mean an idea of his own invention, but "the idea which always comes from afar."<sup>410</sup> Then, he tried "to tie this idea to the centre"<sup>411</sup>. His intention was to create something true to the idea, or *λόγος*, which he first attempted to approach through the active contemplation process; to create "the embodiment" of the idea "that would reveal an understanding of life"; to proceed in this fashion to the second, the centrifugal, stage of creation that has been inspired by the first stage, the centripetal and noetic, and aims at making intelligible the idea of the work, at inspiring a centripetal creative act in the viewer whereby he may re-create *il vero senso profondo*. By directing his creative labours towards this making of a *true* artefact, this architectural voicing of truth, Krokos felt "he could be drawn closer to this spiritual centre which we call tradition."<sup>412</sup>

Krokos goes on to explain how he worked later in order to transmit his vision of the immaterial idea, to project it in visible and tangible form, and the difficulties which he faced when he was striving to make his artefact *well*. He drew the first plans for the Byzantine museum, and won the first prize in the architectural competition, in 1977. Already then, he says,

*I had realised that technology, creating the illusion of progress, was leading us towards a thoughtless imitation of the principles of the modern movement. ... The wall which the modern movement called surface covered up things in our land before we had a chance to look at them.*<sup>413</sup>

The main materials which he chose for the building are unplastered reinforced concrete and brick.<sup>414</sup> With these, "the 'ordinary' materials of my time", he explains, "I tried to put things in order. ... Matter, with adequate processing, can give a face to the work: a face with which the work will exist in the light that will judge it."<sup>415</sup> And he adds:

*The criteria I applied to the selection of the method of construction and the detailing were determined by the availability of materials and by my knowledge of what one can do with them, [when one works] with craftsmen that shape them without faith and with building contractors that usually see profit as the end of their co-ordination work.*<sup>416</sup>

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410 Ibid.

411 Ibid., p. 48.

412 Ibid.

413 Ibid., p. 47.

414 Cf.: "an image I have of apartment blocks before they are plastered"; in: *ibid.*, p. 48.

415 Ibid.

416 Ibid. For the choice of the construction solutions, at this stage, seven years after the first plans were drawn, Krokos collaborated with the architect G. Makris.

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Finally, Kyriakos Krokos had the good fortune to collaborate with a contractor, the builder-architect George Georgiadis, the fruitful collaboration with whom led to the erection of the Byzantine museum. "For us, the architects of application", says Georgiadis, "the texts, the sketches, and the words of Kyriakos Krokos were much more important than the scores of closely printed pages of which the technical specifications consist."<sup>417</sup> He explains how the team of engineers and labourers worked on the construction site, realising "that they were building something important, and it was as if they were putting all their skill, their enthusiasm and their faith into doing the job as well as possible."<sup>418</sup> Working in this manner, Georgiadis adds,

*one feels satisfaction, he feels that he participates, even to a small degree, in creating an architectural work that will resist both light and time.*<sup>419</sup>

Krokos often acknowledged his debt to Georgiadis; when it was pointed out to the latter that the Byzantine museum is a building which "will make history - thanks precisely to the quality of its construction"<sup>420</sup>, he replied with humility:

*A building which is simply well-constructed is only interesting in terms of structural know-how and site organisation.*<sup>421</sup>

The house that is now being furnished with the physical remnants of the Byzantine civilisation is ordered around a central courtyard. This courtyard, the itinerary towards the exhibition spaces and the lighting are the main features of the museum<sup>422</sup> which has been characterised as an introvert building that "reveals itself to the visitor as a city in miniature"<sup>423</sup>. The visitor enters into 'the centre of the house' through the only gate

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417 "On Public Architecture: A Discussion with George Georgiadis"; in: *Tefchos*, Bilingual Review of Architecture, Art and Design, 12-13, Athens, 1993, pp. 158-9.

418 Ibid.

419 Ibid.

420 Ibid.

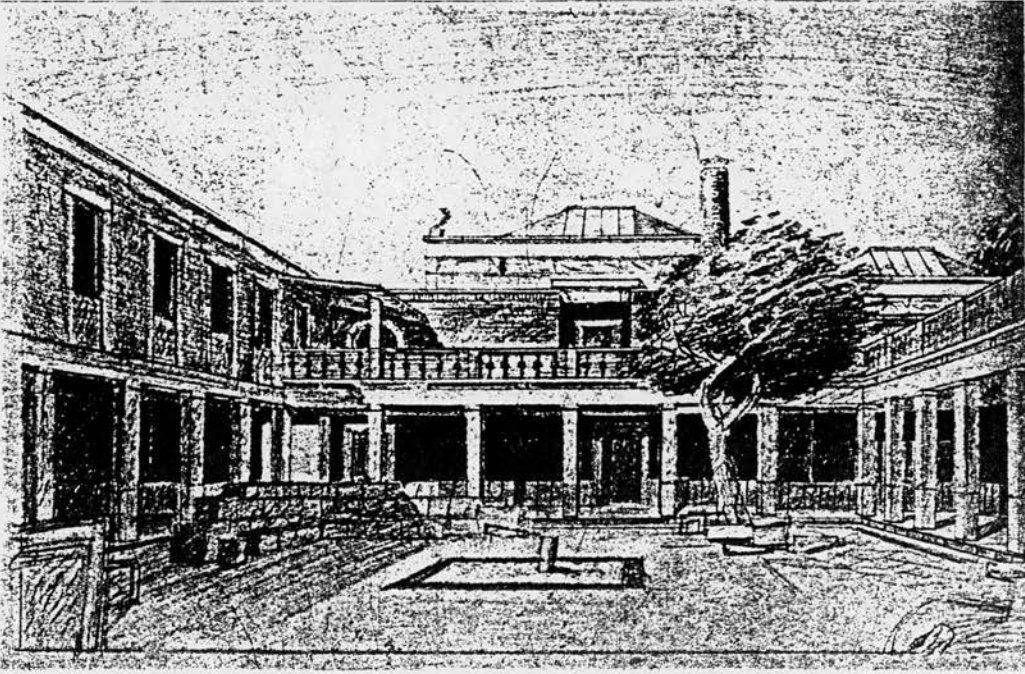
421 Ibid.

Cf.: "Architectural orders and -isms appear at a rate faster than that at which the world of construction can absorb the new techniques. ... I would really like to build the same building over and over again, with more knowledge each time, slightly better materials, corrected details, and craftsmen and labourers who would have gathered experience from repetition. Perhaps in a different era I would have done exactly this." Ibid.

422 Kyriakos Krokos, "Byzantine Museum of Thessaloniki"; in: *Architecture in Greece*, Annual Review, 23, Athens, 1987, p. 122.

423 Yorgos Simeoforidis, "The Thessaloniki Byzantine Museum: A Project by Kyriakos Krokos"; in: *Tefchos*, Bilingual Review of Architecture, Art and Design, 2, Athens, September 1989, p. 36.

that opens to the city, an arrangement which is reminiscent of monasterial architecture, and finds himself inside this centre, protected from the north wind and from the noise and haze of the city by a high wall. This central 'retreat' of the museum which receives and welcomes the visitor is intended by its architect to function "in a revelatory manner, in activating the memory [of the visitor]."<sup>424</sup>



**Figure 6.76.** Kyriakos Krokos, The Thessaloniki Byzantine Museum, sketch for the central courtyard. (After Tefchos, 2)

One can access the museum only through its courtyard, this rectangular space where the architect requires of the spectator that he activates the perceptive organs of his soul, in order that he may dwell poetically in this house of art and that he may see *through* the material of the works exhibited; for "eyes and ears are bad witnesses for men with barbarian souls."<sup>425</sup> By placing this unembellished, enclosed and precisely ordered space right after the entrance and before the exhibition areas, Krokos states that, as for the architect so for the visitor, the penetration into the real nature of things requires, first of all, a penetration into his own depths. (Fig. 6.76)

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424 Kyriakos Krokos, "Byzantine Museum of Thessaloniki", 1987, op. cit., p. 122.

425 Heraclitus, Fragment B 107; in: Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Mathematicians*, VII 126.

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Then the visitor, with the faculties of his soul activated, can pass through the arcade that runs around the courtyard and take the journey towards a vision or theory of the spiritual world that in a former historical era had been embodied in the artefacts that are exhibited in the museum, signposted by the material terms of the language of the artists and the tradition that created them. The visitor can travel along an ascending spiral path, a symbolic "inner pathway"<sup>426</sup>, as Krokos calls it, which leads to, and unifies, the separate exhibition spaces and, finally, takes the visitor back to the entrance courtyard. This path, which raises the visitor slowly through ramps, one metre at a time, is the material manifestation of man's inner ascending journey, the journey that the architect invites the visitor to take in order that he may gradually find his "lost self"<sup>427</sup>, the inner self that Krokos himself sought within himself and whose needs he wished to serve with his work. The edification of a building on earth in accordance with the dwelling needs of man was an imperative for Krokos, who saw these needs as those "of the soul"; the serving of these needs was the task that he assumed for himself to fulfil as an architect, the practical end of his work. And he believes that it is when such needs will be recognised again, "and alas if this does not happen, only then it will become possible to bring order back into the [natural] environment and into our buildings"<sup>428</sup>, for creative building itself, architecture proper, arises from these truly human needs, and it is needful for human life to be lived humanly.

Krokos did not resort to history for models for his work; he sought to re-establish contact with the inner reality of the world; to re-collect "the true icon of the world" which nature reveals to the children,<sup>429</sup> to the pure, and of which the architect has to

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426 Kyriakos Krokos, "Byzantine Museum of Thessaloniki", 1987, op. cit., p. 123.

427 Kyriakos Krokos, 1987, op. cit., p. 120.

428 Ibid.

429 Ibid.

Cf. Pikionis' frequent quotation from the Scripture: "Εὐχαριστῶ, ἀββᾶ μου πάτερ, ὅτι ἀπέκρυψες αὐτὰ ἀπὸ ὀμμάτων σοφῶν καὶ ἀπεκάλυψας αὐτὰ νηπίοις." Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἀντώνης Σῶχος", (1961), p. 94, n.; Dimitris Pikionis, "Υποθήκες ἀπὸ τὴν ἑλληνικὴ παράδοση", (1963), p. 287.

Cf.: "the call is uttered to formative men in general and the creative artist in particular: maintain the transparency of the material, that it may be saturated with the spirit. He can obey this command only if he maintains his own transparency - and this is the rock on which most of us are apt to break. Each and every one reaches a point in his life when he begins to stiffen, and - either congeals in fact, or must by a superhuman effort recover for himself what he possessed undiminished in his childhood but has been more and more taken away from him in youth: so that the doors of the spiritual world may open to him, and the spirit find its way into body and soul." Walter Andrae, *Die ionische Säule: Bauform oder Symbol?*, Berlin, 1933. Cited in:



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attain vision, so that he may "light his work correctly" and let it be "judged by the light."<sup>430</sup> He rendered his vision in a voice that is controlled, and creates an effect of economy, humility and harmony. He recognised, as Solomos had before him, that man's work ought "to worship nature", not to "offend" it, and that all the present disorder in the natural world has been caused by "these artificial needs which increasingly confuse us and make us forget our real needs"<sup>431</sup>; that the "chemical air" around us prevents us from seeing "the light which reveals the truth and begets the beauty"<sup>432</sup>. And he wished to bring adequate and "proper" light to his work, to give it "something of the light within ... the light that we have received naturally"<sup>433</sup>. The great concern of Krokos' for the correct lighting and colouring of his work reflects, precisely, this recognition of his of the metaphysical light which nourishes the physical world and which he endeavoured to allow to come and light his own building.

His respect for matter, which the way in which he executed his work emphasises, underlines his struggle to defend the natural world against the forces aiming at its destruction. He "wanted", he says, "to create a building which, even when it will be old, will not resemble rubbish and will not disturb the natural order of the world"<sup>434</sup>, and he often repeated this wish to the team of builders he worked with on site.<sup>435</sup> The construction of the Byzantine museum, the material and imitative evocation of the true icon of the world that Krokos had contemplated before setting on building his work, was carried out with time and labour, with skill and imagination, with art and knowledge. Builders and craftsmen put all their technical knowledge and effort into producing "the right hand-made bricks and the right colour and texture of the mortar (*kourasani*), into working the surface of the stone and the concrete, into choosing the size, grain and texture of the marble tiles, into getting right the width of the scotias, the colours of the plaster and the thickness of the calibr  of the iron plates."<sup>436</sup> The outcome of the work of both the architect Kyriakos Krokos and the construction team

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Ananda Coomaraswamy, "Walter Andrae's *Die ionische Sule: Bauform oder Symbol?: A Review*"; in: Roger Lipsey (ed.), op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 347.

430 Kyriakos Krokos, 1987, op. cit., p. 120.

431 Ibid.

432 Ibid.

433 Ibid.

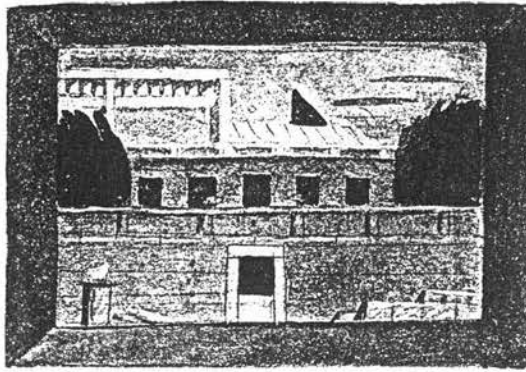
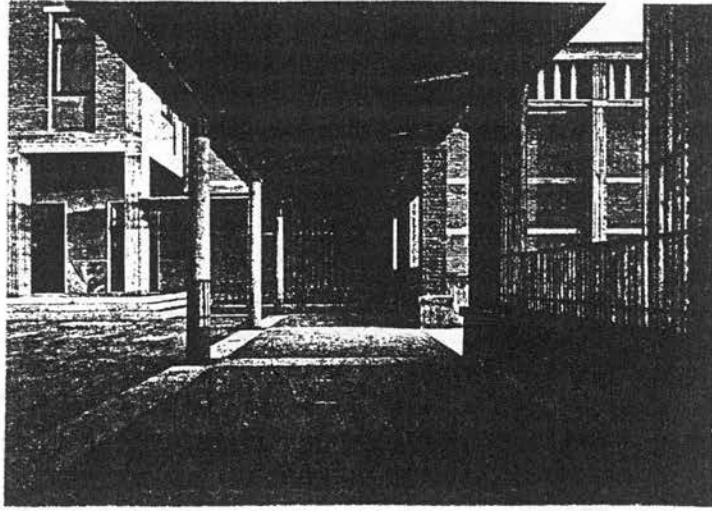
434 Ibid.

435 "On Public Architecture. A Discussion with George Georgiadis", op. cit., pp. 158-9.

436 Ibid.

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that collaborated with him is a house for Byzantine art, *well* and *truly* made; an edifice which opens a door to a courtyard for re-collection and invites one to ascend and be drawn near "the spiritual centre which we call tradition" and which has the power to nourish. (Figs. 6.77, 6.78)



Figures 6.77 and 6.78. The House of Byzantine Art, *well* and *truly* made by Kyriakos Krokos. (After *Tefchos*, 2)

## *Part III*

### **Prologue**

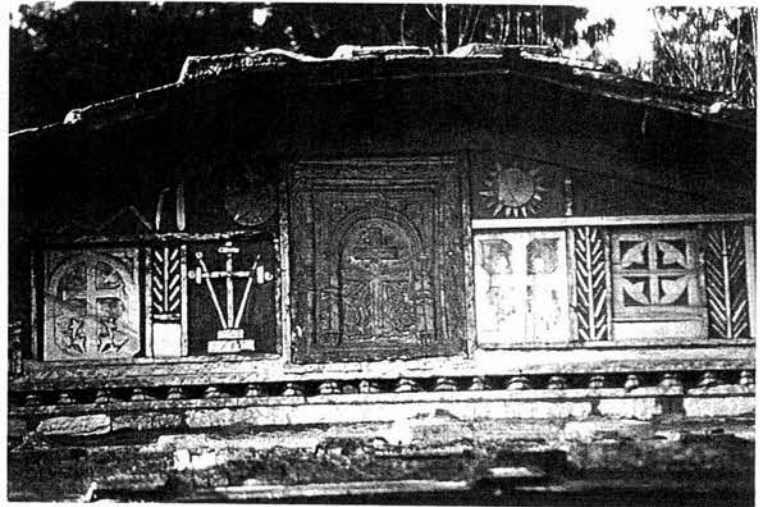
The nature of the architectural making process, the meaning of architecture and the formal principle that finds expression in its products have been discussed in the two previous Parts of this thesis, first on a theoretical level and second by means of a critical evaluation of the modern Greek architectural making process and a comparison of its ends and the means by which these were pursued with those of modern Greek poetry. The nature of the developments and changes in the cultural life of modern Greece - as these are reflected in the architecture and poetry which emerged from this matrix - have been related to, and assessed against, the principles underlying the pursuit of the architectural activity, in the narrow and in the wider sense, as these have been expounded in Part I of this thesis. In this way, Part II has also served to illustrate these principles which form the basis of this study.

Having viewed the architectural creative process within the particular modern Greek historical and socio-cultural context, the third Part of this thesis focuses on the making process as a personal creative experience. Its central purpose is to offer an account of Pikionis' personal poetic journey, his views, aims, and achievements, and to present the built offspring of his self-knowing and world-knowing process, the articulate embodiment of his vision of the inner reality of the world, which is the same vision of the eternal and sacred aspect of visible things that *The Axion Esti* of Pikionis' contemporary poet, Odysseus Elytis, seeks to evoke. This Part aims at making apparent the profound compatibility of Elytis' articulate vision of the Greek world (and, by implication, of the world at large) with that of Pikionis, of the metaphysical presuppositions on which their world-views are based, as well as of their perceptions of the function of artistic creation in the contemporary world.

Furthermore, the three following chapters try to seize upon some of the most characteristic points of the thought and work of Pikionis and Elytis. This will help to determine the proper intellectual setting of their art-acts which, as it will be shown, are not simply contemporaneous but also in the same spirit of loyalty - loyalty without servility - to the values and principles of the cultural order in which the two creators found themselves embedded and which, for them, conforms to the order of the natural world which they inhabit, which lives in, and can be regenerated from within, the art-language in which they were born and fully housed.

## *Chapter Seven*

### **The Architecture of Dimitris Pikionis**



*With my works, I want to teach the Greeks to remember - not to learn.*

Dimitris Pikionis

## 7. 1. Pikionis' Growing Consciousness of his Native Earth

*when he that loves beauty is touched by such madness is called a lover.  
Such a one, as soon as he beholds the beauty of this world,  
is reminded of true beauty, and his wings begin to grow;  
then is he fain to lift his wings and fly upward*

Plato<sup>1</sup>

The architectural works of Dimitris Pikionis (1887-1968) are testimony to his struggle to fulfil what he regarded as his task. This task seems to have been twofold. On the one hand, Pikionis endeavoured to experience and understand the physical world around him, including human creation as part of this world, and to use this present experience as a means of recollecting the world of reality. According to the Platonic theory of recollection, or *anamnesis*, man can be reminded by the sight of beauty on earth of all truth and beauty his soul had already contemplated before entering into creation. Man's continual initiation into the perfect mystic vision is possible by recollection.<sup>2</sup> Pikionis seems to have sought to recover the memory of this world's metaphysical realities. He embarked on a pursuit of this condition of the soul, which Plato describes as "always dwelling in memory as best it may upon those things which a god owes his divinity to dwelling upon."<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, as an architect, Pikionis attempted to find or, rather, to recover the language of symbols which would shape his works in a form that conforms to the material as well as the spiritual form of the world. In a decisive passage of his essay "Ἡ ἐνόραση τοῦ θεατῆ" (The inner vision of the spectator, 1953), Pikionis says: "The work of art is the expression of the inner reality of the World, and this cannot be expressed but by means of symbols, which are the same in every art."<sup>4</sup> His work was determined by a continuous effort to re-create the language of Greek architecture, not for the sake of novelty, but in order to reveal the meaning embodied in the symbols this language makes use of, and to voice

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The citation on the previous page is from: Anghelos Dimitriou, "Δημήτρης Πικιώνης... 1887-1968"; in: The National Technical University of Athens, op. cit., p. 58.

1 Plato, *Phaedrus*, 249d-250a.

2 Ibid., 249c; Plato, *Phaedo*, 74e-76a.

3 Plato, *Phaedrus*, 249c.

4 Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ ἐνόραση τοῦ θεατῆ", (1953), p. 118.

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his vision of "the eternal" aspect of the things of the world in terms of intelligible images and symbols, rather than to "glorif[y] ... the ephemeral"<sup>5</sup>.

Dimitris Pikionis was born in Piraeus in 1887. His parents originally came from the island of Chios, the inhabitants of which had fled as refugees to Syros, in 1822, and later settled in Piraeus. In his "Αὐτοβιογραφικὰ σημειώματα" (Autobiographical Notes, 1958)<sup>6</sup>, Pikionis starts recounting his early childhood and adolescence, a period which he considered as particularly influential to his further development. He places a great value on the background and the tradition he inherited, experienced and lived within. For Pikionis was born in a Greece where traditional memory was still present in legend, myth, beliefs, the art and language of the folk, which, however subconsciously, carried an ancient wisdom. This wisdom he sought to bring into consciousness, and with it to nourish present life in the same way as the lives of previous generations had been nourished.

Pikionis devotes a part of his "Notes" to the "sacred memory" of his parents; "for it is from our parents that our being takes roots".<sup>7</sup> His devotion to, and consciousness of, his roots are of great significance for his work which, he believed, had to spring out of the rich sources of his native tradition that he came in contact with from early childhood. As a child, he was initiated to the "magical world" of the demotic poetry and the poetry of Solomos by his cousin, the poet Lambros Porphyras, to whom he owed "everlasting love and gratitude"<sup>8</sup>. Pikionis first heard and learnt from his father many "folk terms" and, as he says, it was these "terms of a universal folk tongue"<sup>9</sup> that guided his first steps. Pikionis wished to learn and, finally, to master the 'dialect' of this universal metaphysical tongue which he inherited, and to speak in this tongue - his mother tongue - in a way comparable that in which the songs of the people and the 'naive' drawings of the simple men of his homeland spoke.

"Children learn by listening to secret, inner voices", Pikionis continues in the same text.

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5 Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 241, n. 5 (p. 206).

6 Dimitris Pikionis, "Αὐτοβιογραφικὰ σημειώματα", (1958), pp. 23-38.

7 Ibid., p. 23.

8 Ibid., p. 24.

9 Ibid., p. 23, n. 1.

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*They learn at every moment and hour of the day, always at the right time, as only children can learn, by themselves. I drew knowledge from all things, from nature, from the behaviour of people.*<sup>10</sup>

And further, he remembers:

*every day my grandmother was taking my sister and me down to the rocks of Phreatys. Among these rough rocks, where the sea-breeze stirred gently the stalks of the plants that were sprouting in the cracks of the rocks, at the god-bearing soil studded with antique shards; there, among the yawning wells that spoke to me of the ancient dwellers of this earth - my earth - I was forming in my mind my consciousness of her, and I was moulding her history ...*<sup>11</sup>

In his first contacts with his native physical world, Pikionis' imagination was stimulated not only by the earthly beauties around him, but also by the abundant evidence of an ancestral creative spirit. Through the experience of this physical world: rocks, plants, sea-breeze, olive-groves, hills and mountains, ploughed soil and broken ancient vases, Pikionis was growing aware of his land's living and historical reality. His everyday contact with the past of his present earth that sprang and blossomed before his eyes was shaping "the Consciousness of [His] Earth", to use the words of his contemporary poet<sup>12</sup>. It was, at the same time, his own self-consciousness that was being shaped and that was forming his attitude towards history and towards human creation.

In his solitary walks in the Attic landscape, where past and present fuse, Pikionis marvelled equally at the sight of "the orchard's freshly ploughed soil, steaming under the fiery rays of the sun", and of "Athene's most noble temple".<sup>13</sup> His earth spoke of a former knowledge in words of an actual language, and spoke of the divine powers it conceals in her myths and the upright temples of the gods. Pikionis placed great value on the direct sensual contacts with, and on the influences he received from, nature in his early years; in the years that the child's pure soul welcomes without prejudices every gift nature has to offer.<sup>14</sup> It was through this first sense-perception of nature that he was moving closer to a memory of the true beauty of all things. What he was

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10 Ibid., p. 25.

11 Ibid., pp. 25-6.

12 "The Consciousness of My Earth" is the first part of Anghelos Sikelianos' poem "Prologue to Life"; in: Anghelos Sikelianos, 1946-47, op. cit., Vol. 2. Cited in: Philip Sherrard, "Anghelos Sikelianos (1884-1951)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 135.

13 Dimitris Pikionis, "Αὐτοβιογραφικά σημειώματα", (1958), p. 26.

14 Ibid., p. 25.



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unconsciously sensing as a child was later to develop into a different or, rather, a complete perception of life on earth.

In 1908, Pikionis graduated from the National Technical University of Athens as a civil engineer. Shortly after, he went to Munich to study painting, having previously been the student of the painter K. Parthenis. "Three paintings of Cézanne ... made me abandon Munich"<sup>15</sup>, Pikionis says, and he went to Paris where he first studied painting and later, as funds became scarce, architecture. It was at about that time that Pikionis started to form in his consciousness his understanding of the meaning of art and the demands it was making upon him. He began to grow aware of "the path" he had to follow; of that process which, "with time and labour, enables the proselyte to enter into the sanctuary where the inner truth will be revealed to him"<sup>16</sup>, the Platonic sanctuary of Love.<sup>17</sup> In Paris, Pikionis studied architecture through an apprenticeship at the studio of Chiffot and became acquainted with "the metaphysical theory [of Giorgio de Chirico] and its apocalyptic light"<sup>18</sup>.

In 1912, he returned to Greece. "As the ship reached the port of Patras", Pikionis thought: "Now I have to review everything I have learned."<sup>19</sup> In the years after his return, he tried to re-establish contact with his native land and culture and to deepen his understanding of his relationship with them. He began his inquiry into the living Greek landscape, physical and metaphysical, natural and human, and sought to understand its mystery and to move towards its inbound and unmoved Principle. His attempt to gain an understanding of his land and its life-giving powers corresponds to his endeavour to approach the roots of his own being, to descend to the depths of his own existence where his creative energy would spring from. He felt that he had to recover an organic relationship with his natural soil, the earth of his birth, where the artist in him was to grow again out of and to build on. In order to attain his vision of

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15 Ibid., p. 28.

16 Ibid., p. 29.

Cf. "The difficulty which an artist experiences (I speak of great artists) does not consist in showing imagination and passion, but in subordinating these two things, with time and with labour, to the intelligible meaning of Art." A note of Solomos' to his *Ode on the Death of Lord Byron*; in: J. Polylas (ed.), 1948, op. cit., p. 133. Cited in English in: Philip Sherrard, "Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 15.

17 See: Plato, *Symposium*, 211.

18 Dimitris Pikionis, "Αὐτοβιογραφικὰ σημειώματα", (1958), p. 31.

19 Ibid.

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the world and of life in it he had to restore the organic and integral life he was yearning for. His creative life could only exist within this life which is in contact with the non-temporal sources and creative powers of all life on earth.

Creation was seen by Pikionis as regeneration, as a recovery of the inexhaustible fecundity of the lean soil out of which creative art is to grow. As an artist, he was to reanimate the generative spring which, he believed, was to be found in nature.<sup>20</sup> He had to submit himself to the laws that govern human life and the life of the natural world, and to dedicate his own life to the service of these "universal and eternal Laws."<sup>21</sup> For "art is obedience to [these] Laws", Pikionis says.<sup>22</sup> And elsewhere: "art is, to me, a religious act of veneration and worship of Mother Nature."<sup>23</sup> He knew that *all great art imitates Nature in her manner of operation*, and there was in him what Eliade calls "a sense of cosmic relatedness with his local environment ... a sense of cosmobiological participation in the life around him."<sup>24</sup> But in order to design and build himself a world-integrated work, to realise in his own work what he had felt and intellectually understood, he followed the path of what he called a "spiritual ascent"<sup>25</sup>; he mounted his personal spiritual ladder of ascent, in order to raise himself from the level of tangible reality that can be observed and carefully studied to the level of an inner, spiritual reality that has to be contemplated. This ascent corresponds to an inner development that takes place in the architect himself - in every architect who strives to bring true works to birth and to bring them up well. It is this inner transformation that enables the architect to participate in the higher world and to attain knowledge of the 'forms' that are offered not only to him as an individual, but through him to mankind. And it is the duty of each and every architect to inform his work with this attained knowledge, and so let all men commune with it.

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20 Cf.: "The whole creation is, then, a family; and whoever is unresponsive to the innermost nature of an animal or tree is unresponsive to his own Inner Man." Ananda Coomaraswamy, "Chinese Painting at Boston"; in: Roger Lipsey (ed.), *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 313.

21 Dimitris Pikionis, "Αὐτοβιογραφικά σημειώματα", (1958), p. 33.

22 Ibid.

Cf.: "The issue of obedience is obsolete in the modern mind." Wendell Berry, "Notes: Unspecializing Poetry"; in: Wendell Berry, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

23 Dimitris Pikionis, "Αὐτοβιογραφικά σημειώματα", (1958), p. 33.

Cf. Solomos' note: "Art silently worships nature, which, in reward for this distant love, dances naked before her. These forms echo back in the mind of Art and she offers them to mankind." Cited in English in: Philip Sherrard, "Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

24 Mircea Eliade, 1957, 1960, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

25 Dimitris Pikionis, "Αὐτοβιογραφικά σημειώματα", (1958), p. 35.

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Living in a vividly changing environment, Pikionis realised that such an understanding of art and the artist's responsibility was not common to all the artists of the time, and even less among those Greek intellectuals and artists educated in the West.<sup>26</sup> He saw it most profoundly reflected in the art of Eastern Christianity and the anonymous folk art of Greece. The people of Greece still lived within an ancient spiritual tradition, even if they were no longer conscious of it, but it was this tradition, its collective memory, that gave their life and art a noble and dignified character. For Pikionis, the Greek people's earth-rooted tradition was an irreplaceable source and support of spiritual history and wisdom; the principles it enshrined were those the modern artist was in need of, and the same in essence which the ancient and Christian tradition of Greece had been based on. It was the product of the same fecund Greek earth of rocks and humble sacred olive trees, of scattered mountain tops of Atlantis, and proud people that stubbornly persisted and endured the cruelty of the Greek sun.

Like some other modern Greek artists, poets and painters, Pikionis understood that the only way to recover contact with this tradition, the principles of which his work would have to reflect, was to address himself to the sources, to bend over the "spiritual earth within which the seed of our tradition is preserved."<sup>27</sup> This earth was, for Pikionis, "an earth with soul"<sup>28</sup>, it was the people of Greece; these "simple in spirit"<sup>29</sup>, "who preserve, without knowing it - exactly because they do not know it - the memory of the Greek essence."<sup>30</sup> Pikionis realised that this people instinctively rejected monophysitic materialism and preserved a vision of the wholeness of life;

*the primordial myth of this land is kept, by divine will, ... [in the soul<sup>31</sup>] of the simple and humble people, the anonymous, that have no fame but the most valuable of all: that they remain united with the fathers ...*<sup>32</sup>

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26 However, he also saw it growing anew among the younger generation of Greek painters and sculptors.

27 Dimitris Pikionis, "Σπουδαστικός κόσμος", (1955), p. 121.

28 Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 219.

29 Ibid.

30 From a letter of Pikionis' to his wife Alexandra Pikioni, (Munich, 21/8/1954), p. 44.

Cf. St Symeon's words: "the Spirit of God is revealed not to the rhetoricians or philosophers, not to those studying foreign works, but to the poor in spirit and in life, to the pure in heart and in body." Cited in English in: Philip Sherrard, 1990, op. cit., p. 100.

31 "a soul full of souls", as Pikionis expressed the way he perceived it, quoting from Solomos' poem *La Navicella Greca*. Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἀντώνης Σῶχος", (1961), p. 102.

Also in: Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ λαϊκὴ μας Τέχνη κι ἐμεῖς", (1925), pp. 67, 69.

Cf. Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ ἀνοικοδόμησι καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς παράδοσης", (1946), p. 162. And: Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ Ἑλληνικὴ Ἀρχιτεκτονικὴ", (Interview, 1951), p. 172.

32 Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἀντώνης Σῶχος", (1961), p. 98.

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Pikionis saw the life and art of the Greek folk reflecting the principles of an ancient spiritual tradition and expressing "a mythical vision of the world"<sup>33</sup>. He recognised that, in Greece, modern temporal ideals, which had been reflecting the prevailing contemporary Western ones, were obscuring this myth which was the essence of this spiritual tradition. For him it was essential to assert and preserve the myth that was living in its Christian form, in order to avoid further deterioration of the quality of life. The modern Greek artist - the heir of this tradition - who had been educated in the West, had to struggle in order to find again the lost thread of this tradition<sup>34</sup> which Pikionis saw as irreconcilable with the ideals and values of Western education and civilisation. He had to strive to understand the true nature of the doctrines, the symbols and the myths that survived in the people's traditional culture, and to submit himself to the principles on which these depended. Discarding individual will, the artist had to draw his attention towards the values that are common to all and which he had to share with the rest of society, if he wished his work to be useful and functional for the society.

Pikionis lived in a country which was still rich in myths. Even if the ancient myths of the Orphic and the Pythagorean traditions had lost their actuality, without however losing their genuineness, the principles they enshrined were kept alive in the Christian and demotic myths. The lives of saints and of heroes of the War of Independence functioned as 'exemplary patterns of life' and inspired the lives of men; popular songs talked of the mythical forces of life and death; the everyday life of the simple people was reminiscent of a mythical behaviour; and most profoundly, Greek language itself had preserved the reality and actuality of the mythical terms in which man's life and destiny on earth was expressed. Greece had not lost her traditional roots; in Pikionis' words,

*the daemon of our times has not yet managed to cut the ancient roots of our tradition; these roots are still alive. The priceless gifts of our old glory are latent in our popular tradition, even just as Memory, as a seed that awaits the Poet ...*<sup>35</sup>

The search for the "seed"<sup>36</sup> in the depths of the Greek people's tradition was considered by Pikionis as a prerequisite for the development of his own creative

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33 Ibid., p. 91.

34 Ibid., p. 95.

35 Dimitris Pikionis, "Η ένόραση τοῦ θεατῆ", (1953), p. 119.

36 Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 219.

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activity. In order to fulfil his role as an architect, as a creator, as a poet in the full sense of the word, he had to approach and understand this tradition; he had to be initiated into the spiritual knowledge it concealed. His works were meant to have an educational role. They were to function in disseminating his own inspiration among the people who would come into contact with them. The role of the architect, as understood by Pikionis, was that of the poet - in the wide sense of the word - who can, through his work, stimulate and orientate the process of initiation for the whole of society. Because, as Odysseus Elytis says, " 'TO SEE', FOR AN ARTIST, means: 'to make the others see'." <sup>37</sup>

The architect's built products would have to be founded deeply in this sacred, dark earth where the memory of the Λόγος is preserved, and they would have to mix their roots with the roots of the demotic tradition, the roots of the world as a whole, of physical entities and metaphysical ideas, created and uncreated. Pikionis sought to renew and to continue the myths depicted in images and symbols of old times and to bring them afresh before the spectator, in an attempt to evoke his consciousness of an old memory he has only temporarily lost. His architectural work can be considered an attempt to repeat the mythical themes and so to project the truths they conceal; he sought to prolong the function of the myths into modern times in order to bring the spectator into contact with the higher reality these myths speak of, in terms of an analogous reality. Pikionis' architectural works were meant not only to be used, but to act in such a way that they could teach the Greeks not a way of learning, but a way of remembering, a way of realising that the reality of the myths they make reference to is a living reality; it is the inner reality of human life. For "myths", as Eliade expresses it, "reveal the structure of reality and the multiple modalities of being in the world." <sup>38</sup>

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37 Odysseus Elytis, "Ἐπίμετρο, John Veltri", (1971); in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 599.

Cf. "through our long friendship and mutual esteem, [Pikionis] helped me to learn how to see." Antonis Sochos; in: "Γνώμες για τὸν Πικιώνη Σαράντα Ἀρχιτεκτόνων, Διανοουμένων καὶ Καλλιτεχνῶν"; in: *Ζυγός*, Monthly Art Review, 27-28, Athens, January-February 1958, p. 22.

38 Mircea Eliade, 1957, 1960, op. cit., p. 15.

## 7. 2. Pikionis' Approach to the Language of Symbols

*Human culture is a unified whole, and in the various cultures one finds the dialects of one spiritual language.*

Alfred Jeremias<sup>39</sup>

Pikionis' extensive studies on the symbolic language of folk art<sup>40</sup> - where he saw best preserved the memory of a knowledge which his contemporary world was so much in need of, and so much moving away from - reflect his continuous pursuit of a precise expression to be embodied in architectural context in a way that could best preserve the metaphysical content of the symbols it makes use of. Pikionis called this expression "ideographic", in the sense that it is the only appropriate 'graphie' to create an image faithful to the archetype and adequate to imitate the immaterial idea of which it has to be the reminder.<sup>41</sup>

The language of symbols is, for Pikionis, "the only one that refuses to submit to the representation of the ephemeral phenomenon, the only language able to express the transcendent mystery."<sup>42</sup> The



Figure 7.1. Dimitris Pikionis, drawing from the 'ΑΤΤΙΚΑ series. (After The Architectural Association of Greece)

symbols art employs are the external forms that represent and house the invisible and intelligible form; they are the material icons - the ξυλον εἶδος (*enylon eidos*), in Aristotelian terms<sup>43</sup> - of the immaterial Ideas. Pikionis' work intended to make appear, to bring

39 Alfred Jeremias, *Handbuch der Altorientalischen Geisteskultur*, Berlin, 1929, p. x. Quoted in: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "Two Passages in Dante's *Paradiso*"; in: Roger Lipsey (ed.), op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 241.

40 See earlier note in Chapter Four, 4.

Pikionis quoted Solomos' words: "first submit to the language of the people, and then if you are able, master it." In: Dimitris Pikionis, "Η Λαϊκή μας Τέχνη κι ἑμεῖς", (1925), p. 69. (See also earlier note in Chapter Four, 2.).

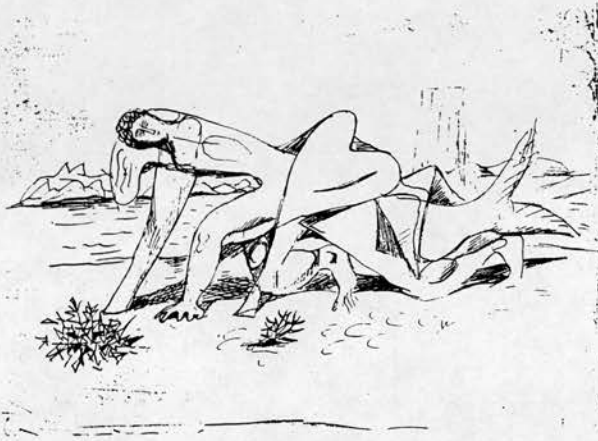
41 See: Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), passim.

42 Dimitris Pikionis, "Σπουδαστικὸς κόσμος", (1955), p. 122.

43 Pikionis refers to this Aristotelian term in: Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἐποθῆκες ἀπὸ τῆν ἑλληνικὴ παράδοση", (1963), p. 281.

Cf.: "By *εἶδος* I mean the essence of each thing, and its primary substance". Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 987b10.

forth, the ideas that he himself had known intellectually; in this sense, it is primarily iconographic. In his iconic creations (drawings and buildings) he undertook the effort to present "what eternally exists, unchangeable in spite of the vicissitudes of time that alter only the external form."<sup>44</sup> (Figs. 7.1, 7.2)



**Figure 7.2.** Dimitris Pikionis, drawing from the 'Αττικά series. (After The Architectural Association of Greece)

The study of the 'given symbols' of folk art<sup>45</sup> made him aware of their catholic meaning. He realised that these symbols are those one generation has been entrusting to the next, from time immemorial. The truths they refer to are not particular to the place or time where the oldest record of these symbols is to be found; they are inherited truths of oecumenical importance. For Pikionis, the symbolic forms of Greek folk art were those that, in spite of their poverty, maintained "the essence of ancient virtues"<sup>46</sup> and those that "conceal the seeds of the Greek essence"<sup>47</sup>. They are the fruit of the work of those who "guard the tradition of the Spirit against extinction"<sup>48</sup>, those who have been "determined, by divine will, to become the irreplaceable yeast for every regeneration."<sup>49</sup> In the life and art of the folk, Pikionis perceived reflections of a primordial catholic tradition. He felt that this tradition was not particular to the Greek world, but only the local embodiment of the "one and indivisible [tradition] of the world."<sup>50</sup> Pikionis writes:

44 Dimitris Pikionis, "Η άνοικοδόμηση και τό πνεύμα τής παράδοσης", (1946), p. 162.

45 Pikionis' studies on folk art were not concerned with Greek art exclusively.

See: Dimitris Pikionis, "Τό πρόβλημα τής μορφής", (1950), p. 215ff.

See also some of his drawings of elements from the Japanese architecture in: The Architectural Association of Greece, *Άφιέρωμα τοῦ Συλλόγου Άρχιτεκτόνων στή Μνήμη τοῦ Άρχιτέκτονος-Καθηγητοῦ Δημήτρη Πικιώνη, Άκαδημαϊκοῦ*, folio, Athens, 1968, pl. 18.

46 Dimitris Pikionis, "Τό πρόβλημα τής μορφής", (1950), p. 222.

47 Dimitris Pikionis, "Άίσθητικές άρχές τής άρχιτεκτονικῆς τοῦ Αίξιωνικοῦ Συνουκισμοῦ", (1952), p. 258.

48 Dimitris Pikionis, "Τό πρόβλημα τής μορφής", (1950), p. 219.

49 Dimitris Pikionis, "Υποθήκες άπό τήν έλληνική παράδοση", (1963), p. 287.

50 Dimitris Pikionis, "Αὐτοβιογραφικά σημειώματα", (1958), p. 34.

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*The study of the peoples' traditions leads to the following conclusions:*

*1. That these traditions are survivals of ancient rhythms or forms that have preserved intact their primordial essence, in spite of the transformations they have suffered in the course of time.*

*2. That each one of them is a genuine expression of the soul of each nationhood, of its basic autonomy, but they all belong to the universal family of the one, the universal, tradition of all peoples on earth.<sup>51</sup>*

Pikionis believed that, beneath trivial differences, one can discern the inner essential identity that unites the traditions of all peoples. He also believed that there are peoples in the modern world that live still close to the centre of the primordial tradition, and others that have moved too far away from it. And he felt that, for modern man, the only way to restore contact with the one, "indivisible tradition"<sup>52</sup>, "the primordial tradition of the World"<sup>53</sup>, is to move away from "the ideals of the West"<sup>54</sup> that have obscured the principles on which life and art should depend, if these are to participate in this "most ancient"<sup>55</sup> Cosmic Tradition. Pikionis looked towards the East. In the "ideographic language"<sup>56</sup> of the traditional art of the eastern world and Byzantium,<sup>57</sup> he discerned a fundamentally unanimous view of life, based on the same principles and responding to the same eternal laws. The teachings of the ancient Egyptians, the Brahmins, the Indian poets, the masters of Zen, the Orthodox Christian Church and so on spoke, for Pikionis, in different dialects of a common spiritual language, a universal tongue that, like a womb, had preserved the fundamental essence. He looked towards Asia, "Mother Asia", as he called her, to the ethos of which the body of Greece lies closer.<sup>58</sup> And, in the "ideographic interpretation of [her] art",<sup>59</sup> he discerned a religious practice which aims at the revelation of beauty, spiritually understood.

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51 Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς παράδοσης", (1951), p. 157.

See also: Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἀντώνης Σῶχος", (1961), p. 96.

52 Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἀυτοβιογραφικά σημειώματα", (1958), p. 34, n. 3.

53 Dimitris Pikionis, "Λόγος εἰς πνευματικὴν ἑορτὴν εἰς μνήμην τοῦ ἀρχιτέκτονος Γ. Κοντολέοντος", (1953), pp. 176, 177.

54 Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἀυτοβιογραφικά σημειώματα", (1958), p. 35.

55 Dimitris Pikionis, "Λόγος εἰς πνευματικὴν ἑορτὴν εἰς μνήμην τοῦ ἀρχιτέκτονος Γ. Κοντολέοντος", (1953), p. 177.

56 Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), pp. 210, 215 ("the ideographic interpretation of the East"), 216, 244 n. 17 (p. 216).

57 Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἀυτοβιογραφικά σημειώματα", (1958), p. 35.

58 Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 241, n. 3 (p. 204).

59 Ibid., p. 215.



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In the sacred art of Orthodox Christianity which impregnated the piety of his soul, Pikionis discerned the same spirit of the East and the same yearning not for the "kingdom of the earth", not for "science and logic"<sup>60</sup>, but for the salvation of the soul and of the spiritual heritage<sup>61</sup>, for truth, beauty and goodness. He saw the sacred artists of the Orthodox Christian icon fulfilling the role of a mediator between the image - the natural shape - and the archetype. It was exactly in the pictorial language of Christian art that Pikionis saw the significant difference between the two traditions in art, the Eastern and the Western one:

*The comparison of the icons of the Theometor [Mother of God], as realised by the two traditions, that of the East and that of the West, shows the deeper difference that separates them. ... there - in the West - the representation of the Mother of God is no more than the portrait of a mother of man ... In the art of the Eastern Christianity, the Theometor is, we may say, the synopsis of the woman of the East.*<sup>62</sup> [Figs. 7.3, 7.4]



**Figures 7.3 and 7.4.** Figures 14 and 15 (detail) in Pikionis' essay "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 240, illustrating his comparison "of the icons of the Mother of God, as realised by the two traditions, that of the East and that of the West". 7.3: 'The Glykofiloussa', by the hand of Emmanouel Lambardos, 1609 (Benaki Museum, Athens). 7.4: Detail from the "Chan-Zanti-Metjid, the French chapel, Frankish building", Rhodes. (After Pikionis and Parousis, eds.)

60 Ibid., p. 216.

61 Ibid., p. 219.

62 Ibid., p. 243, n. 14 (p. 213).

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The art produced within the Eastern tradition, the Orthodox Christian art, the art of India, the art of Japan, Islamic art and so on were seen, by Pikionis, as being situated closer to the 'spiritual centre' of the universal tradition than the art of the West. The Eastern artist, he says,

*has acquired full knowledge of the real, but does not submit himself to the service of the phenomenal as the Western artist does. ... Following the operative principle of Nature, he mystically reveals the inner reality of the phenomenon, which he presents by means of symbols.*<sup>63</sup>

In the art of Eastern Christianity, Pikionis looked for the symbols of a metaphysical language that can be equally found in the works of well known artists and in those of the humble faithful craftsmen. He looked for this 'seed' which he believed to be still alive "in the depths of our being"<sup>64</sup> and in the arts of the simple in spirit. He endeavoured to move towards the depths of the human soul in order to discover the forces and principles of life that the folk and the Orthodox tradition reflect. He struggled to assimilate the voice of the Greek tradition and to recover the consciousness of the true nature of its regenerative source. This source is for Pikionis the same for the ancient, the Byzantine, and the folk tradition of the Greek world, as and the source of any other earthly tradition; it is a metaphysical source, One, beyond time and place.

Recognition of this source is recognition of the truth concealed in the symbolic language of every tradition that can be revealed only to the "philosophical mind"<sup>65</sup>, to the soul that has been activated<sup>66</sup> and longs for communion with it. The man who aims at recovering this faculty of the soul which will enable him to discern truth and beauty and goodness, aims at knowledge of true beauty and the supreme knowledge of the source of eternal beauty.<sup>67</sup> And the man who will be able to see divine beauty unseen by physical eyes

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63 Ibid., n. 13 (p. 213).

64 Ibid., p. 206.

65 Ibid., p. 222.

66 Cf. "Ears and eyes are bad witnesses for those with barbarian souls". Heracleitus, Fragment B 107; in: Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Mathematicians*, VII 126. Pikionis refers to this axiom in: *ibid.*, p. 221.

Cf. also: "The uncomprehending, when they hear, are like the deaf: the saying applies to them - though present they are absent." Heracleitus, Fragment B 34; in: Clement, *Miscellanies*, V xiv 115.1-3.

67 Cf.: "It is a principle with us that one who has attained to the vision of the Intellectual Cosmos and grasped the beauty of the Authentic Intellect will be able also to come to understand the Father and Transcendent of that Divine Being." Plotinus, *The Enneads*, V, 9, 11.

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*will be able to bring forth not mere reflected images of virtue but true virtue, because he will be in contact not with a reflection but with the truth. And having brought forth and nurtured true virtue he will have the privilege of being beloved of God, and becoming, if ever a man can, immortal himself.*<sup>68</sup>

Recognition of his potential existence is, for Pikionis, recognition of his task as a man and an architect, a difficult task which can be fulfilled when he will have achieved to "realise [his] self in the likeness of what [he] really [is] ...", when he will have got "to know [his] self ..."<sup>69</sup>.

### 7. 3. Pikionis' Perception of his Creative Role as an Architect

*The path up and down is one and the same.*

Heracleitus, Fragment B 60<sup>70</sup>

The body of Pikionis' work reflects his tireless, faithful and hopeful search for an architectural language which, drawing on the stream of architectural tradition, would be able to revive its fertility and its most valuable elements, those elements that resist time. He aspired to speak in words of an immemorably old and yet eternally fresh language of architecture; "Our attempts", Pikionis says, "should aim at ... making us able to go beyond the lower forms of naturalism and realism and bring us closer to the essence of art."<sup>71</sup>

A deeply religious and pious man, Pikionis based his life and work, as part of his life, on the principles preserved in the religious tradition in which he lived. His way of building was his way of being and his way of living. Pikionis' words are governed by

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68 Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 211. Pikionis quotes Plato (*Symposium*, 212a).

Cf. John Climacus, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

69 Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 206. See: Dimitris Pikionis, "Εισήγησις τῆς Αἰσθητικῆς Ἐπιτροπῆς τῆς Γενικῆς Γραμματείας Τουρισμοῦ ἐπὶ τῶν ἀρχῶν ἐπὶ τῶν ὁποίων πρέπει νὰ βασισθοῦν τὰ νομοθετικὰ μέτρα προασπίσεως τῆς Αἰσθητικῆς τῆς Χώρας εἰς τὰς Τουριστικὰς Ζώνας", (1946), pp. 146, 147.

70 Pikionis quotes this Heracleitean fragment in: Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ ἀνοικοδόμησι καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς παράδοσης", (1946), p. 164.

71 Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἐποχῆς μας", (1931), p. 89.

Cf.: "the vulgar realism of our epoch sacrificed and still continues to sacrifice the needs of the inner life of man"; in: Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ Ἀρσάκειο", (1948), p. 137.

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the teachings of the Fathers of *The Philokalia*, whose writings had become his constant reading in the nights of the last years of his life.<sup>72</sup> In the living Greek Orthodox Tradition, Pikionis found alive "the seed of life", the seed which "lives in the soul of the people and the soul of the poet". It was this seed which the people of Greece had treasured in their yeasty and ardent soul that he saw growing in the poetry of modern Greek poets like Solomos and Sikelianos; and it was their view of art and the artist's task that he adopted. However, Pikionis recognised that these poets' ideas about art and the role of the artist are implicit in all forms of this type of art that may be called traditional, since it is based on a living spiritual tradition. The artists' work that is governed by these ideas then, ceases to be the product of the individual and becomes the product of the whole of the society that lives within the same tradition. Pikionis remarked that when he looked at the products of the ancient civilisations and at the "slums of the folk" of his time in Piraeus, he saw in both cases the embodiment of the same principles. "Ever since then", he says, "the need of combining [in my work] what Solomos defined as 'il commune e proprio' became my most persistent pursuit."<sup>73</sup> And elsewhere he explains:

*Looking at a work of ancient art, one feels that the form is the result of an ideal relation between the artist and the people around him; one realises that it is not the work of one man, but of many. It conceals something so fundamental that it becomes the common property of everybody.*<sup>74</sup>

For Pikionis, the architect has to combine all three: "knowledge, virtue and humility"<sup>75</sup>, in order to raise his consciousness to the intelligible meaning of art. For "architecture, as every other *ποίησις*, is not an activity that can be isolated from the wholeness of the spirit"<sup>76</sup>. While the technical knowledge required is different for every art, the purpose for which it is applied is always the same; it is to facilitate the delivery of the Common Word. The perfection of the technical language that the artist attempts to acquire will serve to draw the 'flesh' of his work to a dignity close to that of the spirit it contains. Striving for technical perfection conforms to striving for likeness. The continuous pursuit of mathematical accuracy aims at the creation of a

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72 Zissimos Lorentzatos, 1969, op. cit., p. 52.

73 Dimitris Pikionis, "Αυτοβιογραφικά σημειώματα", (1958), p. 31.

74 Dimitris Pikionis, "Η Λαϊκή μας Τέχνη κι έμεις", (1925), p. 67.

75 Dimitris Pikionis, "Υποθήκες από την έλληνική παράδοση", (1963), p. 281. Pikionis says this with reference to Solomos' advice.

76 Dimitris Pikionis, "Αίσθητικές αρχές της αρχιτεκτονικής του Αιξιωλικού Συνοικισμού", (1952), p. 257.

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beautiful and truthful image capable of becoming the reminder of ideal beauty in the archetype. But skill and geometry is only the means to realise order in the creation of beauty; their application may amount to decadence "if the divine character of Number is forgotten."<sup>77</sup>

Beauty in art is attained by accuracy and truthfulness. The work of art will be beautiful and capable of reminding of uncreated beauty when it is drawn closely to the idea - and away from the phenomenon - of which it aspires to become the flesh. The artist's intention is so to perfect his language that his work will conform to the divine work in nature. Such work of art does not represent the world of the individual artist but "conforms to his conception of the world"<sup>78</sup>. And "the highest law of the life of the spirit requires us", Pikionis contends, "to extinguish our personality for the sake of absolute truth".<sup>79</sup> The work of art is not the work of a particular man, but of men, all men and all souls. The means to produce an orderly work of art and, as Plato says, "the means to produce order and proportion in the soul are called 'regulations' and 'law': these are what make men law-abiding and orderly". With these ends in view, the artist will influence the souls of men and will bring "virtue to birth in the souls of his fellow-citizens"<sup>80</sup>. What is, therefore, required of the artist who works towards this practical end is

*obedience to the laws that govern the universe, this kind of obedience that does not correspond to a passive state, but on the contrary, to an active one, one that is reached by the activation of the entirety of the powers of the mind and the soul and is accompanied by this*

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77 Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ θεωρία τοῦ ἀρχιτέκτονος Κ. Α. Δοξιάδη γιὰ τὴ διαμόρφωση τοῦ χώρου εἰς τὴν ἀρχαία Ἀρχιτεκτονική", (1937), p. 196.

Cf.: "All that has by nature with systematic method been arranged in the universe seems both in part and as a whole to have been determined and ordered in accordance with number, by the forethought and the mind of him that created all things." Nichomachus of Gerasa; quoted in: Keith Critchlow, op. cit., p. 51. Referred to: M. L. D'Ooge (tr.), *Introduction to Arithmetic I*, New York, 1972, Chapter 3(5).

See: Keith Critchlow, op. cit., especially Chapters 3 and 5.

78 Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἀλθητικὲς ἀρχὲς τῆς ἀρχιτεκτονικῆς τοῦ Ἀλεξωλυκοῦ Συνοικισμοῦ", (1952), p. 257.

79 Ibid., p. 258.

Cf. Polyas' words on Solomos' work: "His work in Art, as well as in conversation, was a spontaneous uninterrupted endeavour to extinguish his individuality in absolute truth, giving effect to the axiom of Heracleitos: 'Although possessing a common Word, the majority live as though they have a wisdom of their own.'" Iakovos Polyas, op. cit., p. 30. Quoted in English in: Philip Sherrard, "Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 15.

80 Plato, *Gorgias*, 504d-e.

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*divine madness which, as Plato asserts, makes the ποιησις of those who are possessed bring to nough that of the sane.*<sup>81</sup>

Pikionis stressed these points throughout his life because, as he repeatedly pointed out quoting Heracleitus, "although the Word is common to all, most men live as if they possessed a wisdom of their own. ... Insofar as we commune with the memory of the common Word we speak the truth, but whenever we act according to ourselves we lie"<sup>82</sup>, "we sin", Pikionis adds<sup>83</sup>. The artist who longs for his work to be truthful in this sense, to spring from the memory of the common Word, has to surpass his individuality and to shift his concern from the representation of the world of time and place to the presentation of the world of constant ideas. The artist who wants to perceive and express the world of metaphysical reality can only do so with his spiritual intellect which participates in the common Λόγος, not with his individual mind. And in order that he may nourish his own soul as well as the soul of the receptive spectator, he has to concentrate his efforts not on the expression of his personal intelligence, but on the manifestation of the Divine Wisdom where all Ideas derive from.<sup>84</sup> His work would have to be a pursuit not of innovation but of likeness. His entire life will have to be centred around a "spiritual nucleus" where art will spring from.<sup>85</sup> He will have, Pikionis says, "to discard everything artificial and dispensable within himself ... and, cleansed and pure he will feel he stepped onto the fiery ground of reality."<sup>86</sup>

81 Dimitris Pikionis, "Αίσθητικὲς ἀρχὲς τῆς ἀρχιτεκτονικῆς τοῦ Αἰξινωικοῦ Συνοικισμοῦ", (1952), p. 258. In a note to this text, Pikionis refers to Plato's words: "But if any man come to the gates of poetry without the madness of the Muses, persuaded that skill alone will make him a good poet, then shall he and his works of sanity with him be brought to nough by the poetry of madness, and behold, their place is nowhere to be found." From: Plato, *Phaedrus*, 245a. Pikionis quotes the same passage in: Dimitris Pikionis, "Ὑποθῆκες ἀπὸ τὴν ἑλληνικὴ παράδοση", (1963), p. 283.

Pikionis refers to his life-long search for "this which *brings to nough the sanity of the sane*" also in: Dimitris Pikionis, "Αὐτοβιογραφικὰ σημειώματα", (1958), p. 25; and in: Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἐπιστολὴ στὸν Δήμαρχο Ἡρακλείου γιὰ τὸ Μνημεῖο τοῦ Καζαντζάκη", (23/3/1958), p. 276.

Cf. *Acts*, 26:19.

82 Heracleitus, Fragment B 2; in: Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Mathematicians*, VII 133.

83 Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 209.

And: Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς παράδοσης", (1951), p. 158.

See also: Dimitris Pikionis, "Ὑποθῆκες ἀπὸ τὴν ἑλληνικὴ παράδοση", (1963), pp. 282-3.

And: Dimitris Pikionis, "Συναισθηματικὴ Τοπογραφία", (1935), p. 76, n. 2.

84 "that Wisdom which, according to Proverbs, III, 18, 'is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her.'" Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism*, Paris, 1952 (in French), London, 1961, p. 162.

85 Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ Λαϊκὴ μας Τέχνη κι ἐμεῖς", (1925), p. 55.

86 Ibid.

Pikionis considered Solomos' work paradigmatic as a "spontaneous uninterrupted endeavour to extinguish his individuality in absolute truth"<sup>87</sup>. The work of art, according to Solomos, has to function in such a way that it brings forth the 'Great Realities', the primordial truths; "E la forma sia l'abito del vero senso profondo d'ogni cosa."<sup>88</sup> Following the example of Solomos, Pikionis endeavoured to become the servant of the 'Great Realities'. He sought to understand, experience and participate in a higher reality, beyond the temporary one, which he had to imitate in his work. In order to appreciate Pikionis' works the spectator should go beyond mere enjoyment and try to understand the principles which govern their creation and the meaning the architect intends to communicate, not to the individual, but to man in the purified condition Pikionis spoke of.

His exercises with, and respect for, the material in use should be understood as part of his wrestling to recover the material's transparency that may let its spiritual qualities illuminate its form. Concerning the needs his work would have to serve as well as the process of execution of the built product, he transcended the dualism matter-spirit and viewed architecture as a whole that has to be the product of synthetic knowledge. He postulated that the representation of the archetype has to be skilful, respectful of human needs - material and spiritual - capable of balancing the world of the senses and the world of the spirit.<sup>89</sup> Craftsmanship has to be of the highest possible standard for

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87 Dimitris Pikionis, "Υποθήκες από την ελληνική παράδοση", (1963), p. 283. Pikionis quotes Polyas' words, from: Iakovos Polyas, op. cit., p. 30. Cited in English in: Philip Sherrard, "Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 15.

Cf.: "The greater the master, the more completely his person vanishes behind his work." Martin Heidegger, "Memorial Address" (speech presented at the celebration of the 175th birthday of the composer Conradin Kreutzer, on October 30, 1955, in Messkirch); in: Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, A translation of *Gelassenheit* by John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund with an introduction by John M. Anderson, New York, 1966, 1969, p. 44.

88 From a note of Solomos' to his *Woman of Zakynthos* (1826-1829). Cited in English in: Philip Sherrard, "Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 15. Refer to Chapter Four, 4., above.

89 See: Dimitris Pikionis, "Αντώνης Σώχος", (1961), pp. 92-3. Here Pikionis quotes and discusses the following words of Plato's: "that we should not move the body without the soul or the soul without the body, and thus they will be on their guard against each other and be healthy and well balanced. And therefore the mathematician or anyone else whose thoughts are much absorbed in some intellectual pursuit, must allow his body also to have due exercise, and practise gymnastics, and he who is careful to fashion the body should in turn impart to the soul its proper motions". From: Plato, *Timaeus*, 88b-c.

Cf. Pikionis' words with reference to mediaeval art: "The church, the utensil, the icon, they all fulfil their material function and, at the same time, they are the embodiments of the spirit." In: Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 212.

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the work to become the adequate expression of the idea it intends to evoke. The form, Pikionis believed, has to be not merely a reflected image of virtue, but the incarnation of virtue herself.<sup>90</sup> Then, there is no need for "pomposity, grandiloquence and veneer ... the soul of the spectator recognises virtue by her radiance" and "true virtue does not submit to phoney means."<sup>91</sup>

The architecture of Pikionis is the outcome of a long ascetic discipline and devotion to trying to acquire the knowledge of his craft. At the same time, it is the result of the conviction that the basis of great architecture is virtue - not technical knowledge; that "it is the inner spiritual light of virtue that illumines the form of art"<sup>92</sup>. He was also aware of the fact that

*the difficulty which an artist experiences (I speak of great artists) does not consist in showing imagination and passion, but in subordinating these two things, with time and with labour, to the intelligible meaning of Art.*<sup>93</sup>

For Pikionis, art does not have to be a self-expression, neither should it attempt to express the artist's individual self. "Art is the submission to the universal and eternal laws", he wrote.<sup>94</sup> In order to approach these laws that govern human life, he knew that he had to submit himself to the discipline of learning and practising a given language, the one into which he was born, which is the vehicle of an ancient wisdom.

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See also: Dimitris Pikionis, "Αισθητικές αρχές της αρχιτεκτονικής του Αιξιωλικού Συνοικισμού", (1952), *passim*.

90 Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 209.

Cf. Plato, *Symposium*, 212c, quoted by Pikionis in: *ibid.*, p. 211.

91 *Ibid.*, p. 209.

92 Dimitris Pikionis, "Υποθήκες ἀπὸ τὴν ἑλληνικὴ παράδοση", (1963), p. 281.

Pikionis quoted with approval Eugène Carrière's phrase: "Les vertus humaines sont les vertus artistes." In: Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ λαϊκὴ μας Τέχνη κι ἐμεῖς", (1925), p. 65; in: Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 208; and in: Dimitris Pikionis, "Αισθητικές αρχές της αρχιτεκτονικής του Αιξιωλικού Συνοικισμού", (1952), p. 257n.

93 Dimitris Pikionis, "Υποθήκες ἀπὸ τὴν ἑλληνικὴ παράδοση", (1963), p. 282. Pikionis quotes Solomos' words from a note to his *Ode on the Death of Lord Byron*. Cited in English in: Philip Sherrard, "Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

Cf.: "... by constant practice throughout a long period ..."; Plato, *Letters*, VII, 344b. Pikionis probably refers to these words of Plato's in: Dimitris Pikionis, "Εισήγησις τῆς Αἰσθητικῆς Ἐπιτροπῆς τῆς Γενικῆς Γραμματείας Τουρισμοῦ ἐπὶ τῶν ἀρχῶν ἐπὶ τῶν ὁποίων πρέπει νὰ βασισθοῦν τὰ νομοθετικὰ μέτρα προασπίσεως τῆς Αἰσθητικῆς τῆς Χώρας εἰς τὰς Τουριστικὰς Ζώνας", (1946), p. 149.

94 Dimitris Pikionis, "Αὐτοβιογραφικὰ σημειώματα", (1958), p. 33.



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"In order to say what you want to say now, you must learn the language that so many before you have used", Pikionis was advising an artist.<sup>95</sup> Language can never be the artist's invention, but each artist has to learn his given tongue and to understand it in depth before beginning the work. And then:

*You must 'remember' well before you realise the sculpture. Only with the true memory of the archetypes you can draw correctly.*<sup>96</sup>

In these words, Pikionis expressed his recognition of the position of the artist between the world of archetypes or essences and the world of tangible reality. By means of his art and after having attained a vision of the world of spiritual reality invisible to the senses, the artist can participate in the latter and let it inform his work. His function is to communicate his spiritual vision to the spectator.

The genuine artist, Pikionis kept repeating, has to have at the centre of his intentions the utterances of the Dionysian dancer:

*Ἐνωθῆναι θέλω καὶ ἐνώσαι θέλω, νοῦς ὦν ὅλος. Ὁ χορεύων νοεῖ ὅτι σὸν ἐστὶ τὸ πάθος. Ὁ ἰδὼν δὲ πάσχω, ὡσεὶ πάσχοντα εἶδες καὶ ἰδὼν οὐκ ἔστης, ἀλλ' ἐσείσθης ὅλος· οἴκουσ' ἔχω καὶ οἶκον οὐκ ἔχω· τόπους ἔχω καὶ τόπον οὐκ ἔχω· ἀπαξ ἔπαιξα πάντα καὶ οὐκ ἐπησχύνθην· ἐγὼ μὲν ἐσκίρτησα, σὺ δὲ νόει. Τὸ ὅλον, ᾧ χορεύω, ὑπάρχει.*<sup>97</sup>

Art is, for Pikionis, a continuous strife for divine union:

*The continuous ascent in art is an ascent within his [the artist's] soul (ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ), an ascent that brings him ever closer to his Creator*<sup>98</sup>

This is the final cause of every work of art, and the vital end which the real artist keeps in mind. As the whole creative endeavour has been summarised in one of the notes of Solomos',

*Let the poem possess a bodily soul, which emanates from God, and which is then embodied in the organs of time, of place, of nationality, of language, with different thoughts, feelings,*

95 Natalia Mela-Konstantinidi, in: The National Technical University of Athens, op. cit., p. 89.

96 Ibid. Cf: "Reflect deeply and firmly (once and for all) upon the Idea before you realise the poem." A note of Solomos' in connection with the writing of his poem *The Free Besieged*. Translated by Philip Sherrard and cited in: Philip Sherrard, "Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 16.

97 Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἵποθήκες ἀπὸ τὴν ἑλληνικὴ παράδοση", (1963), p. 283; Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ ἔκθεση τῆς γλύπτριας Ναταλίας Κωνσταντινίδου", (1963), p. 114; and Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ ἐνόραση τοῦ θεατῆ", (1953), p. 120.

98 Dimitris Pikionis, "Σπύρος Παπαλουκάς. Ἀφιέρωμα εἰς τὸν ἄνθρωπο καὶ τὸν καλλιτέχνη", (1958), p. 109.

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*inclinations etc. (let a small bodily world be adequate to reveal it); finally, the soul returns to God.*<sup>99</sup>

As Pikionis gained the consciousness of his native earth, its spiritual tradition and its natural beauty which concealed the memory of supranatural beauty, he wished his architectural work to become the revelation of his acquired knowledge. He attempted to shape well and to metamorphose the object of the senses, to allow the spirit to saturate its palpable form, to restore its integrity and thus make it capable of serving human life in its wholeness. His writings reflect his desire to scale the intellectual ascent and to see those things above and behold with "the clear-sighted eyes of spiritual knowledge" (St. Neilos the Ascetic) that Platonic "full vision of the perfect mysteries" which enables the architect to build in response to human nature and, thus, to communicate his "vision of the very soul of beauty"<sup>100</sup> to the viewer of his work, enabling the latter to remember. They document Pikionis' struggle to fulfil his task as an architect, to build in the manner of man as *ἄνθρωπος-ποιητής*, to create poetically and, thus, to facilitate upward looking, human dwelling commensurate with human nature; for "architecture is", in Pikionis words, "the art *par excellence* that can bring *poetry into everyday life*."<sup>101</sup>

### 7. 4. Reading Pikionis' Works

*Wer den Dichter will verstehen  
Muss in Dichters Lande gehen*

Goethe

The nature of Pikionis' work seems to require this kind of reading which, as earlier discussed, resembles an 'etymological' analysis of the architectural artefact; a reading which is concerned with the evaluation neither of the extent to which Pikionis' work succeeded in producing results of aesthetic merit, nor of the extent to which his built products are capable of granting a pleasing experience, but with the re-creation of the archetypal image which the architect as a messenger sought to present to his fellow-

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99 A note in connection with the writing of his poem *The Free Besieged*. Cited in English in: Philip Sherrard, "Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 16.

100 Plato, *Symposium*, 211d.

101 Dimitris Pikionis, "Η Λαϊκή μας Τέχνη κι εμείς", (1925), p. 69.

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men. This is a reading which aims to approach the meaning of Pikionis' works and to decipher the process which led to their creation, his 'remembering'; it is a life-giving "translation" of the artefact, like the one Pikionis urged the readers of all "true art" to pursue,<sup>102</sup> which - with the aid of his own writings - may bring an understanding of the way he imagined and executed his work. The nature of Pikionis' work itself argues for the possibility of, and requires, a creative act of reading which resembles the process of the creation of the architectural work itself; a process whereby one can re-trace and re-experience the coming into form of the particular world which this work aimed at embodying.

The function which Pikionis sought to fulfil as an architect was to represent - or, rather, to express in his architecture as well as in his paintings<sup>103</sup> - the patterns of life he had first understood himself, and to restore the reader's memory of them. He strove to recover the evocative energies of his native architectural language, the status of which he saw being undermined, and to create works which are intelligible, made of words-elements that may function as spokes leading to the pivotal reality which Pikionis endeavoured to provide with a presence. Therefore, he expected the reader to contemplate his work, rather than leisurely observe it; to see not with his private carnal eyes, but with the unblinking eye of the soul which is common to all.<sup>104</sup> His architecture was intended to be functional and useful in the sense that it intended to recall into the consciousness of the spectator the awareness of an existing memory, and make him enter into the process of anamnesis.

The purpose of Pikionis' architectural work, as of any other work of great art, was to become the reminder of "the inner reality of the World" and to make the spectator experience, and participate in, the spiritual reality of which the work is the 'copy' and which lies outside empirical seizure. And, when the work of the architect begins with the vision of this world of spiritual realities, it is to this world that the reading process has to provide access. This reading has to be done with the help of the architect's notations and thoughts according to which his work was imagined and finally built. It is a process which can be expressed in the same words that Pikionis used to describe

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102 Ibid., p. 66.

103 See some of his paintings published in: *Zyγός*, Monthly Art Review, 27-28, Athens, January-February 1958, pp. 8-9.

104 See Pikionis' letter to Y. Despotopoulos; in: Agnis Pikionis, "Landscaping the Athens Acropolis"; in: Architectural Association, op. cit., p. 76.

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the process of the creation of the architectural form itself: as a process that requires both an activation of the memory and a loss of memory, "both memory and forgetfulness (ἀμνησία)"<sup>105</sup>, the latter understood as an instrumental purification, as a constant cleansing of the soul, a catharsis, which is necessary for the tuning of the soul.

It is demanded from the reader to act the same way as the creator did: to forget outward appearances and to look for, and be reminded of, the immaterial idea which is the final cause of the work; this can be achieved once his soul has been restored to its original purity. The memory he has to activate is the same Memory of the Ideas that the artist's soul dwelt in at the moment of inspiration, in the literal sense of the word; it is *Μνημοσύνη*, as Pikionis underlines,<sup>106</sup> the daughter of Earth and starry Heaven, the mother of the nine Olympian Muses that "bring forgetfulness of evil"<sup>107</sup>, according to Hesiod's *Theogony*<sup>108</sup>. The reader is to experience with his senses and perceive with his soul. He is to be guided to a process of initiation which is active and creative, and, like any initiation, requires a sacrifice, the death of the "memory of sensation and of glory"<sup>109</sup> that will awaken the memory of the soul.<sup>110</sup> In Pikionis' words,

*in order to understand the images [of the symbolic language of art] and to feel their unutterable fragrance one has to see with one's spiritual vision, one's spiritual hearing and tasting. One must receive in the depths of his soul (ἐν βένθει καρδίας)*<sup>111</sup>

Pikionis' students talk of his tutorials as "a teaching of the reading of art"<sup>112</sup>. His works were meant to function in a similar way. They are to teach not exclusively architects, but every man who is willing to see and experience their usefulness, not only for the satisfaction of the body but of the soul as well and simultaneously. The spectator is to approach the works with a philosophical mind; he can then find enhancing guidance in order that his soul may mount the heavenly ladder and ascend

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105 Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ ἀνοικοδόμησις καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς παράδοσης", (1946), p. 166.

Cf.: "the good soul is the forgetful." Plotinus, *The Enneads*, IV. 3, 32.

106 Dimitris Pikionis, "Γ. Μπουζιάνης", (1956), p. 36.

107 Hesiod, *Theogony*, 135-8.

108 Ibid., 53, 916-7.

109 Dimitris Pikionis, "Γ. Μπουζιάνης", (1956), p. 36.

110 Cf.: "When we use the word recollection we imply by using it that knowledge departs from us; forgetting is the departure of knowledge, and recollection by implanting a new impression in the place of that which is lost, preserves it, and gives it a spurious appearance of uninterrupted identity. ... This device, Socrates, enables the mortal to partake of immortality, physically as well as in other ways". Plato, *Symposium*, 207e-208b.

111 Dimitris Pikionis, "Σπουδαστικὸς κόσμος", (1955), p. 123.

112 Soula Tzakou, in: The National Technical University of Athens, op. cit., p. 256.

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from the sensible to the eternal world, and he can come upon the knowledge of the models or Forms the works refer to. This learning that Pikionis wished to support and guide "is really remembering", as Plato says<sup>113</sup>; it is recalling the knowledge of virtue and of all other "holy objects", which the soul acquired when it followed the procession of the gods upon the "plain of truth".<sup>114</sup>

His own ambition as an architect was never to offer mere pleasure, to enchant, or to be admired and distinguished for his personal, individual architecture. His life was a process of self-denial or self-annihilation and self-realisation. Pikionis wished to free himself from the individual man and architect, and to reach knowledge of the Man and the Architect that abides within, and is the source of, all things. He spent a long and remarkably modest life devoted to his ascetic work; a life filled with toils and "filled with wonder at how many tears ... *man ó άμφω βροτόσωμος και άμβροτος άκαμάτοις θεότητος όροις*, is destined to suffer for his spiritual ascent."<sup>115</sup> He wished to escape his personality, to liberate and purify himself, in order to gain sight through an absolute perspective, in order to grow able to perceive the sacred dimension of things and so to enter into the light of a gained reality. "Then", he says,

*there is no need for your work to be noticed, it may remain in oblivion forever; for what is the need for your work to be noticed when God Himself notices it? Does a mother need her love for her child to be noticed? You will feel that you must make a useful work. Can you ask for anything else? For your descendants you will feel that you have prepared the higher reality you willed for.*<sup>116</sup>

Pikionis spoke of the "trough of obedience"<sup>117</sup>, "τὸ σκάμμα τῆς ὑποταγῆς τὸ σπάνιον καὶ δυσεύρετον" of St. John Climacus, and of "the gift of tears" - "the

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113 Plato, *Phaedo*, 76a; Plato, *Meno*, 81c-d.

114 Plato, *Phaedrus*, 249c.

115 Dimitris Pikionis, "Αὐτοβιογραφικὰ σημειώματα", (1958), p. 35.

See also: Dimitris Pikionis, "Αντώνης Σῶχος", (1961), p. 95.

Cf. "God heals in no more certain way than through suffering." Gregory the Theologian; quoted in: Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*, (The Classics of Western Spirituality: A Library of the Great Spiritual Masters), edited with an introduction by John Meyendorff, translated by Nicholas Gendle, New York, Ramsey, Toronto, C. II. ii. 6; (p. 49). Referred to: Hom. XXIV.11, PG XXXV, 1181B; (in: *ibid.*, p. 128).

Cf. also: Meister Eckhart, "Sermon Two"; in: Meister Eckhart, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 22.

116 Dimitris Pikionis, "Η Λαϊκή μας Τέχνη κι έμεϊς", (1925), p. 55.

Cf.: "how could anyone escape the attention of that which never sets?" Heracleitus, Fragment B 16; in: Clement, *Pedagogue* II x 99.5.

117 Dimitris Pikionis, "Αντώνης Σῶχος", (1961), p. 96; Dimitris Pikionis, "Αὐτοβιογραφικὰ σημειώματα", (1958), p. 35; and: Dimitris Pikionis, "Υποθήκες από την έλληνική παράδοση", (1963), p. 287.

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infallible sign that the heart has been overwhelmed by the love of God."<sup>118</sup> His most important role as a teacher led him to end his *Autobiographical Notes* thus:

*Young men, discard individual will and descend into the trough of obedience. This, and only this, will grant you true freedom. Do not slacken, for it is written that 'we may one day be forgiven for not having been able, but never for not having tried'.*<sup>119</sup>

### 7. 5. Pikionis' Self-Knowing Process

*I think that along whatever path man searches for truth,  
he is bound to arrive at nature. ... if nature did not exist,  
it would have to be invented,  
because otherwise one could not be.  
The final goal of every exploration is inescapably nature.*

Odysseus Elytis<sup>120</sup>

*Light flashed and the young man knew himself.*

Dionysios Solomos<sup>121</sup>

In his long and difficult process of self-realisation, Pikionis first sought to re-establish contact with his earth, the bearer and fertiliser of his roots and the roots of all beings. As in the book of *Genesis*: "καὶ ἔπλασεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον, χοῦν ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς"<sup>122</sup>, the realisation of Pikionis' creative task starts from his approach to the earth, which is no other than the Primordial Earth, "the oldest of the gods ... the immortal, the inexhaustible"<sup>123</sup>, the broad *Terra Mater*, the Eternal Mother or Eternal Wisdom, the womb of all ideas. Pikionis believed that the form of created art should conform to

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118 Vladimir Lossky, 1957, 1991, op. cit., p. 205.

Cf. "If in your prayer you have obtained tears, then God has touched the eyes of your heart, and you have recovered intellectual sight." Gregory Palamas, op. cit., C. II. ii. 7; (p. 50).

119 Dimitris Pikionis, "Αὐτοβιογραφικὰ σημειώματα", (1958), p. 35; and: Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἀντώνης Σῶχος", (1961), p. 96.

Cf. "When our soul departs from life we shall not be accused because we have not worked miracles, or have not been theologians, or have not seen visions, but we shall all certainly have to give account before God because we have not wept unceasingly for our sins." St. John Climacus; quoted in: Vladimir Lossky, 1957, 1991, op. cit., p. 205. Referred to: St. John Climacus, 'Scala paradisi, gr. VII'; J. P. Migne (ed.), op. cit., LXXXVIII, 816D. (Also in: John Climacus, op. cit., p. 145).

120 "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 9.

121 From Solomos' poem *The Shark*; translated by Philip Sherrard and cited in: Philip Sherrard, "Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 36.

122 (And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground). *Genesis*, 2: 7.

123 Sophocles, *Antigone*, (Chorus), 382-3.

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the form of nature, meaning the *natura naturans perpetuam divinitatem*. The vision of this earth would grant him the understanding of the principles his work should be governed by or, more exactly, an experience of the ideas his work would have to be the likeness of. For he was to build in a time and a place, in the likeness of the work of the Builder 'in the everlasting beginning'. His creative effort had to pass from this state of understanding when, beyond temporal images, the artist is able to attain vision of 'eternal likeness'. The work of building that Pikionis perceived as his task was to be an 'imitation' of the Building, the cosmic *Κτίσις* (*Ktisis*). The tectonic praxis had to be of such a quality that would enable the *κτίσμα* (*ktisma*, building, created product) to become a microcosm for the *Λόγος* to dwell therein. This is why Pikionis kept repeating the Psalm: "Ἐὰν μὴ Κύριος οἰκοδομήσῃ οἶκον, εἰς μάτην ἔκοπίασαν οἱ οἰκοδομοῦντες".<sup>124</sup>

In his seminal text "Συναισθηματικὴ Τοπογραφία" (Sentimental Topography, 1935)<sup>125</sup> Pikionis is trying to communicate exactly this vision he had been striving for. He had embarked on the Platonic process of recollection, by which man can re-inhabit the world of his original self, and he had come to discern the unity which embraces all multiple appearances: "*nothing exists alone; everything is part of a universal Harmony*".<sup>126</sup> The part reflects the whole; the small is the great,<sup>127</sup> the One disclosed

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124 Zissimos Lorentzatos, 1969, op. cit., p. 21. (Except the Lord build the house they labour in vain that build it). Psalm 126:1.

Cf. Meister Eckhart's words: "yonder no work is done at all ... if the carpenter were perfect at his work he would not need materials; he would no sooner think a house than, lo, it would be made". Cited in: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "Meister Eckhart's View of Art"; in: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, 1934, 1956, op. cit., pp. 87-8.

125 Dimitris Pikionis, "Συναισθηματικὴ Τοπογραφία", (1935), pp. 73-81.

126 Ibid., p. 81.

Cf.: "Nothing exists for its own sake, but for a harmony greater than itself, which includes it. A work of art, which accepts this condition, and exists upon its terms, honors the Creation, and so becomes a part of it." Wendell Berry, "Notes: Unspecializing Poetry"; in: Wendell Berry, op. cit., p. 141.

127 Cf.: "And each of them [these divine beings] contains all within itself, and at the same time sees all in every other, so that everywhere there is all, and all is all and each all, and infinite the glory. Each of them is great; the small is great; ... While some one manner of being is dominant in each, all are mirrored in every other." Plotinus, *The Enneads*, V. 8, 4.

Cf. William Blake's "To see a World in a Grain of Sand."

Cf. Hölderlin's "Oft offenbart sich das Grösste ins Kleinste"; Hölderlin, *Hyperion*.

Cf. also the Japanese *hokku*: Granted this dewdrop world is but a dewdrop world,

This granted, yet ...

Cited in: Ananda Coomaraswamy, "The Theory of Art in Asia"; in: Ananda Coomaraswamy, 1934, 1956, op. cit., p. 43.

Cf. also: Elytis' verses from *The Axion Esti*: "and you'll come to learn a great deal  
if you study the Insignificant in depth"

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in plural images, the Heracleitean *Ἐν Πάντα* embodied in the "harmonious ordinance" which is the created universe fresh from the hands of the God of *Genesis*, as it has been described by St. Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>128</sup>

Pikionis saw all things in a process of metamorphosis and in a condition of transparency, illumined and nourished by their own inner principle:

*before this primordial image of the Earth, the soul receives a mystical tremor ... The light moulded this World. The light preserves it and fertilises it. This [light] reveals [the world] to our material eyes, so that it may be made luminous by the light of our soul ...*<sup>129</sup>

The physical light which makes created beauty visible stimulates the inner source of this light which partakes of that all encompassing light which makes metaphysical beauty shine immaterially. It is with his bodily eyes that man can perceive created beauty in nature, but it is with the 'eye of the soul', as the Greek Fathers called it, that man can contemplate all uncreated truth and beauty, attain vision of the sacred reality of the world and become wholly human. To this inner, spiritual vision Pikionis added the spiritual hearing and touching and tasting and smelling,<sup>130</sup> all senses spiritualised. Man has to strive with all his senses for a spiritual understanding of the world, for an understanding of the spirit that penetrates the earth, and preserves, shapes and eternally renews the world. It is this spirit, this "light unapproachable"<sup>131</sup> that is revealed in the image of physical light; that links the created to the uncreated. It is a creative light which penetrates the entire universe; "an interior light ... which transforms nature in deifying it."<sup>132</sup>

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Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 21.

And: "As the prophet Zechariah warns us, we are not to 'despise the day of small things' (4:10). 'True mysticism', says Olivier Clément, 'is to discover the extraordinary in the ordinary.' " Bishop Kallistos Ware, 1990, op. cit., p. 159.

128 Quoted in: Vladimir Lossky, 1957, 1991, op. cit., p. 95. Referred to: "In Psalmorum inscriptiones"; J. P. Migne (ed.), op. cit., XLIV, 441 B.

129 Dimitris Pikionis, "Συναισθηματική Τοπογραφία", (1935), p. 74.

130 See: Dimitris Pikionis, "Σπουδαστικός κόσμος", (1955), p. 123.

131 "God who dwells in light unapproachable", Basil the Great; quoted in: Gregory Palamas, op. cit., E. III. i. 13; (p. 74). Referred to: Ps. Basil, c. *Eunom.* V, PG XXXIX, 640AB; (in: *ibid.*, p. 139).

132 Vladimir Lossky, 1957, 1991, op. cit., p. 220.

Cf: "there is nothing in the visible world to which the light does not reach in all its abundance. It is responsible for the origins and life of perceptible bodies, nourishing them and causing them to grow, perfecting them, purifying them, and renewing them." Pseudo-Dionysius, The Aeropagite, "The Divine Names", 700A; in: Pseudo-Dionysius, op. cit., pp. 74-5.



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Pikionis talked of the mystical experience of the divine light. In the spiritual light the unity which potentially exists in all things can be restored. The various natural forms, the different elements of the surrounding landscape, the "stony ground", the "springing water", the "breeze", "the texture of the soil", "the vegetation", the "mysterious exhalations [that] seem to rise from the earth", "this cave: the abode of mysterious spirits and supranatural forces", "the venerable ancient places of worship", the "fire [that] moulded this stone's divine shape", are all manifestations of the original primordial Earth.<sup>133</sup> In his own native earth Pikionis saw manifested the primordial Earth, the eternal feminine, the Mother Earth, which he recognised as the source and measure of all forms of life and art, the flesh of the spirit, the stimulus of the imagination and guiding power of creation. It is this earth, the "wide-bosomed Earth, the eternal safe seat of all"<sup>134</sup>, the repository of universal wisdom, the great Genetrix, deathless Gaia, the august goddess that was worshipped in ancient Greek tradition - as in any other tradition - the one "through whom creation is reborn"<sup>135</sup>, the all-holy Mother of God incarnate - "Γῆ ἀγαθὴ, εὐλογημένη Θεόνημφε"<sup>136</sup> - who is "the holiest and most divine of all. The highest conception of Greek Christianity ... the precious symbol of the immortality of Greek art and the spirituality of its interpretative means"<sup>137</sup>, the one that gave her flesh to the *Λόγος*.

It is her that Pikionis presented in one of his drawings. The inscription names her ΔΗΜΗΤΡΑ (Demeter), the oldest and "most popular among the goddesses worshipped in all the regions of [ancient] Greece and the Greek colonies"<sup>138</sup>, the one who taught the Eleusinians all her mysteries and procured wheat and who "did not abandon the site of her most dramatic theophany", but survived in the framework of Christian experience and imagination, becoming Saint Demetra of Eleusis, "a saint

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133 Dimitris Pikionis, "Συναισθηματικὴ Τοπογραφία", (1935), p. 74.

134 Hesiod, *Theogony*, 117.

135 "hail to you through whom creation is reborn; hail to you through whom the Creator becomes a child". (*Χαῖρε, δι' ἧς νεουργεῖται ἡ κτίσις· χαῖρε, δι' ἧς βρεφουργεῖται ὁ Κτίστης*). From the *Ἀκάθιστος ὕμνος*, anonymous, 5th century, translated by Constantine A. Trypanis, cited in: Simoni Zafiroopoulos (ed.), *Greece in Poetry*, Athens, 1993, p. 66.

136 (Blessed Earth, Bride of God). From the liturgy of St John the Chrysostom (*Theotokion*).

137 Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 213.

138 Mircea Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas*, Vol. 1, p. 300.



**Figure 7.5.** Dimitris Pikionis, 'Demeter', drawing. (After The National Technical University of Athens)

who is unknown elsewhere and who has never been canonized."<sup>139</sup> The pictorial form of Pikionis' Demeter echoes the sacred figure of the blessed Virgin Mary of the icons of Eastern Christianity, symbolic ears of corn flank her. In her image, ancient and Christian myths have been united.<sup>140</sup> Pikionis' representation pays homage to what Eliade calls "the religious mystery of womanhood"<sup>141</sup>, in a manner strongly reminiscent of that of Sikelianos' verses from his "The Sacred Way" cited above.<sup>142</sup> (Fig. 7.5)

Pikionis saw in nature a source of wonder and tried to understand it in order to grow able to build in it. The earth he was pacing upon was to become the grounding base of his architectural works. As he said, the architecture of his time ("Urbanisme moderne") seemed to him

*a completely artificial work, a product of the drawing board; arbitrary games of the pencil on paper transferred onto our sacred earth.*<sup>143</sup>

In contrast to this, he described the work of the traditional builder, "the natural man" of the people, as a work done in direct contact with the earth:

*He needs no drawing board, neither a pencil to draw the futile lines of his imagination. He has read no book of architecture. He does not understand of orders and style. But he realises them unconsciously, following nature. He knows his needs fully. He traces the space that is useful for his house directly on the ground. He sees already the space in his imagination as if*

139 Ibid., Volume 2: *From Gautama Buddha to the Triumph of Christianity*, translated from the French by Willard R. Trask, Chicago and London, 1982, (in French: *De Gautama Bouddha au Triomphe du Christianisme*, Paris, 1978), p. 415.

140 Cf.: "She [Demeter] is the Earth ... Call her what you will!" Euripides, *Bacchae*, 274.

141 Mircea Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas*, Vol. 2, p. 410.

142 Chapter Six, 10.

143 Dimitris Pikionis, "Η Λαϊκή μας Τέχνη κι εμείς", (1925), p. 57.

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*the finished house stood already in front of him; and the builder sets upon his work with the stones which he has hewn himself.*<sup>144</sup>

Pikionis admired the great instinct which guides the work of the humble villagers who build their own houses, "this poetical instinct, the building instinct *par excellence*", as Elytis called it<sup>145</sup>, as well as the finished product of their work, and he wished his work to possess the same qualities.

He went towards his native sacred earth in order to get to know himself and his purpose as an artist; in order to perceive the universe in its unity and to achieve essential contact with the spirit it conceals. His understanding - that the native, the subjective natural earth can awake the memory of the ideal Earth - came as a result of his vision of the spirit that dwells in, and moulds, all things around him, not at the time of observation but in the eternal time. In each part of the whole he saw the likeness of the Whole, and he realised how this had been conceived in the past. Likening the globe to a single limestone, Pikionis wrote:

*You [limestone] compose the lineaments of the landscape. You are the landscape itself. Even more, you are the Temple that will crown the precipitous stones of your Acropolis.*<sup>146</sup>

Human life and creation have not been excluded from such an understanding of the integrity of the part within the whole. The same spirit takes up residence and governs all creation on earth. The earth that bears the spirit and brings it to the world speaks in words of the original Word, the *Λόγος* which is concealed in all diversity and revealed through a process of creative re-collection. This *Λόγος*, the One without parts that is brought forth in multiple parts, is the same principle that determines human making, building, creating, speaking, the begetting of a tangible work of art within which the intangible dwells. In Pikionis' words, the earth is perceived as the temple of Wisdom, the Virgin, the *Θεοτόκος* "in the name of whose the whole history of the divine economy in the world is contained."<sup>147</sup>

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144 Ibid., p. 56.

145 Odysseus Elytis, "Équivalences chez Picasso", (1951, in French); in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 595. In English: Odysseus Elytis, "Picasso's Equivalences", translated by Ivar Ivask and Astrid Ivask; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 26.

146 Dimitris Pikionis, "Συναισθηματική Τοπογραφία", (1935), p. 76.

147 Vladimir Lossky, 1957, 1991, op. cit., p. 140.

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*All the forces of nature co-operate in the moulding of the shape [of the Temple]: this subtle air, the explosive light, the colour of the sky, the cloud on high, this mountain-ridge, the boulders that are scattered around its stylobate, the grass that grows between its cracks.*<sup>148</sup>

[...]

*As I walked upon this land, this kingdom of limestone and clay, I saw the rock transforming into an architrave, and the red clay colouring the walls of an imaginary cella. The pebbles of the Cladeus river appeared to me as heads of heroes and the statues on the pediment as mountains.*<sup>149</sup>

The whole nature, the *natura naturans*, *Creatrix Universalis*, *Deus*, is seen as the one that gives guidance to the work of the architect. The earth and all her elements, all creatures, are the manifestations of the models, the *παραδείγματα* (*paradeigmata*), the ideas or acts of will of God. By contemplation of these elements, man can achieve knowledge of all created things, spiritually understood, and it is "through this knowledge" that "one will arrive at knowledge of God"<sup>150</sup>. By contemplating created things in nature, man can achieve essential knowledge and conscious experience of the immanent divine spirit which the artist engaging in his creative building activity, dwelling in human fashion, has to house in his sensible work.

*Oh number pantokrator, what mystic relations you establish today between the geometry of creation and this crystal air that allows the unadulterated essence of divine light to come to us?*<sup>151</sup>

In his spiritual search, his search for knowledge "which is the personal and conscious experience of spiritual realities"<sup>152</sup>, Pikionis came to transcend the limits of time and place. His understanding of the unity and spiritual identity of Creation encompasses the unity of time and space. What he understood as a spiritual ascent was the realisation of the source of his acquired knowledge. His intellectual wisdom could be restored in unity with the Eternal and Universal Wisdom. "The mystery of time becomes one with the mystery of space."<sup>153</sup> In this vision of the universal and eternal aspect of the Earth all opposites are reconciled. Multiplicity turns into unity; opposites eventually merge; an original unity, the Heraclitean *ἐκ τῶν διαφερόντων καλλίστη*

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148 Dimitris Pikionis, "Συναισθηματική Τοπογραφία", (1935), pp. 76-7.

149 Ibid., p. 77.

150 Gregory Palamas, op. cit., C. II. ii. 19; (p. 54).

Cf.: "misuse of the knowledge of created things engenders the 'wisdom which has become folly'." (Quotation referred to: 1 Cor. 1:20).

Cf.: "for the invisible things of God since the creation of the world are seen and apprehended in created things." St. John of Damascus, "de imaginibus oratio"; in: J. P. Migne (ed.), op. cit., 94, 1241B.

151 Dimitris Pikionis, "Συναισθηματική Τοπογραφία", (1935), p. 78.

152 Vladimir Lossky, 1957, 1991, op. cit., p. 202.

153 Dimitris Pikionis, "Συναισθηματική Τοπογραφία", (1935), p. 79.

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*ἀρμονία*<sup>154</sup> is restored. As earth unconceals her generative metaphysical source, as she reveals her unfathomable mystery, all apparent disunity vanishes and the initiated soul transcends all antithetic dualisms and reaches an understanding, the kind of understanding that can only be achieved through the process of recollection and amounts to the eventual recovery of the memory which man has only temporarily lost.

In 1958, in a speech about the Attic landscape, Pikionis referred to the disfiguring of the face of Mother Earth, caused by the "road-roller of [modern] times".<sup>155</sup> What he regarded as his task was to save the holy landscape, which former generations had respected and worshipped, from this modern "hubris"<sup>156</sup>. For, in Pikionis' eyes, it is an act of hubris to turn the Attic hills into quarries and to vitiate the holy rivers and these sacred dwelling-places of chthonic goddesses, which for "our ancestors", as he points out, "were inviolate" and protected even from utterance of their names.<sup>157</sup> Pikionis saw Pindar's "divine city", "the bulwark of Hellas", in danger. Lycabettus Hill, the Musaeum (or Hill of Philopappus), the very place where, according to Euripides, "fair-haired Harmony gave birth to the nine pure Pierian Muses"<sup>158</sup>, and even more the Hill of the Nymphs had suffered from the quarrying that had provided Athens with its fine neo-antique buildings. The river Ilissos had become the recipient of the waste of the new civilisation and Eleusis, "the sanctum of the Soul"<sup>159</sup>, All-feeding Demeter's final settlement and resting place, was being overrun by factories. Pikionis had already warned his contemporaries many years earlier - in his essay "Γαίας ἀτίμωσις" (The Rape of Earth, 1935) - that if they continued acting in this manner, if the replacements of the "altars ... that signified an act of worship" by "the offices and machinery of [their] businesses" continued, hubris would invite disaster and all that would remain to them and their children is "the lowest form of relationship with Nature: exploitation."<sup>160</sup>

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154 "Heracleitus says that opposition concurs and the fairest connection comes from things that differ". Heracleitus, Fragment B 8; in: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1155b.

Cf. Odysseus Elytis' Nobel Prize acceptance speech (Stockholm, 1979). In French and in Greek in: Odysseus Elytis, 1992, op. cit., pp. 322-3.

155 Dimitris Pikionis, "(Όμιλία για τὸ τοπίο)", (1958), p. 135.

156 Ibid., p. 136.

157 Ibid., p. 135. See also: Dimitris Pikionis, "Γαίας ἀτίμωσις", (1935), pp. 131-3.

158 Euripides, *Medea*. Quoted in: Dimitris Pikionis, "(Όμιλία για τὸ τοπίο)", (1958), p. 135. Cf. Hesiod, *Theogony*, 916-7.

159 Ibid., p. 136.

160 Dimitris Pikionis, "Γαίας ἀτίμωσις", (1935), p. 132.

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Pikionis started his call for justice to the holy landscape by narrating an episode from the last days of the War of Independence:

*When Androutsos<sup>161</sup> was besieging the Turks who were in hold of the Acropolis [of Athens], suddenly, the sound of breaking marble was heard. The Turks were in need of lead [for bullets] and they were breaking the marbles to take some from the dowels. Androutsos sent four of his lads to find out why the Turks were breaking the marbles. Once they returned and reported to their leader, he sent to the Turks a few sacks of lead.<sup>162</sup>*

For all this for which the previous generations of Greeks had fought, "the architects of [the newly liberated Greek state] took no care", Pikionis says,<sup>163</sup> and then they even came upon the sacred hills with excavators and road-rollers, ignoring their debts to "Mother Earth" to whom their ancestors had fulfilled their duty "with piety and love"<sup>164</sup>. But

*People will not look forward to posterity who never  
look backward to their ancestors*

With this phrase of Wordsworth's Pikionis crowned his speech about the landscape<sup>165</sup>, and with this in mind he had approached the Attic landscape wherein, in the immediately preceding years, he had come to create his own work.

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161 A hero of the Greek War of Independence.

162 Dimitris Pikionis, "(Όμιλία γὰ τὸ τοπίο)", (1958), p. 134.

163 Ibid.

164 Ibid., p. 135. Pikionis quotes a verse of Rabindranath Tagore's.

165 Ibid., p. 134.

## *Chapter Eight*

### **Landscaping the Attic Hills**



*And he drew thread through the stones  
And brought forth slate from the entails of the earth  
laid broad steppingstones all around the slope*

Odysseus Elytis

## 8. 1. Pikionis' Consciousness of the Sanctity of the Place

*Ἐὰν μὴ Κύριος οἰκοδομήσῃ οἶκον, εἰς μάτην ἐκοπίασαν οἱ οἰκοδομοῦντες*

Psalm 126:1<sup>1</sup>

After the completion of the architectural work which Pikionis carried out on the western Attic hills, Y. Despotopoulos wrote to him from Munich:

*... On Good Friday I happened to follow a religious procession to the small church on the [Philopappus] hill ... I was therefore able to see how your work has turned the entire area into a single, well balanced space of exceptionally high quality, bringing all the area's scattered monuments and ruins into the lives of ordinary men and women. I watched these people behaving in a reverent, other-worldly manner while attending the simple, homely ceremonies in the precincts of the church or wandering around on their Sunday outing. Until then I had never been able to discern any trace of moral elevation in the architectural works of this day and age - even though architecture can have no loftier purpose than to create an environment which ennobles the spirit. I assure you that I have noted and pondered upon this phenomenon many times on feast-days, at night or on Sunday morning walks. I urged several distinguished foreign friends of mine to visit the site, and they, too 'behaved reverently' the moment they entered this area where you have unified 2,500 years of history.*

Pikionis replied to this letter as follows:

*Thanks, a great many thanks for your letter, dear friend. I only hope I am worthy of it, and that your praise will turn out to be what the ancient Greeks desired: 'neither more nor less than what is due'. But then you are not fool enough to venture into aesthetic analysis, which more often than not proves uncertain, or worse, barren. Instead, your instinct proved the most trustworthy guide; it enabled you to read into the souls of simple people and appreciate their unerring judgement. This is precisely how I proceeded while I was working on the project - how else could I have possibly found the courage to continue?<sup>2</sup>*

In 1951, Pikionis was commissioned for the 'improvement' and 'ordering' of the archaeological site surrounding the acropolis of Athens and the nearby hills that had been neglected, abandoned and even suffered sacrilegious interventions.<sup>3</sup> Pikionis was called to create his architectural work on the very landscape that had stimulated his imagination in the years of his youth; in the very physical world in the image of which he had worshipped Nature. The Attic land of his solitary walks, that made him

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Elytis' verses on the previous page are from his poem *The Axion Esti*, "The Genesis". Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 19.

1 (Except the Lord build the house they labour in vain that build it).

2 Both letters are cited in: Agnis Pikionis, "Landscaping the Athens Acropolis"; in: Architectural Association, op. cit., p. 76.

3 See Warner's account of the previous condition of the area: "If lucky or accurate, for the place is not easy to find, one will in the end arrive at a dusty and derelict open space, looking like some part of a bombed area that no one has bothered to make tidy." In: Rex Warner, *Views of Attica and its Surroundings*, London, 1950, p. 20.



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experience a religious communion with nature, was to receive the product of his own creation. This land was Pikionis' native earth, "the mother and the nurse of the great cosmogonic Attic myths"<sup>4</sup>, "the cradle and the womb of the past and the future glory"<sup>5</sup>. It was the land of the Attic cosmogonic myth depicted on the western pediment of the Parthenon, an act which, for Pikionis, "betokens the religious relation of the ancients with mother Nature"<sup>6</sup> and which he held as a paragon. It was the land that inspired him with her wisdom and instructed him that it is only to man who approaches nature in a religious manner that she reveals the spirit she conceals, "the cosmic ... essence"<sup>7</sup>. It was this Terra Mater that made Pikionis come to believe in her sanctity and made him feel that he is mystically united with her.<sup>8</sup>

The mythologic memory of the Attic landscape starts, for Pikionis, before Phaëthon, at the time when - according to the words of the Egyptian priests to Solon<sup>9</sup> - goddess Neïth ("the same whom the Hellenes call Athene", according to these priests<sup>10</sup>) selected this land as her dwelling place. Because it was the place of the "κάλλιστον καὶ ἀριστον γένος"<sup>11</sup> of men which almost vanished in one of the great destructions by water. The owl-eyed goddess, receiving the seed of the Athenian race from Earth and Hephaestos, brought up and educated the city of Athens,<sup>12</sup> "the eye of Greece", as the Spartans called it (Polybius). Athene, herself "a lover both of war and of wisdom", selected the place, "with an eye to its temperate climate, ... which was most likely to produce men likest herself in character."<sup>13</sup> She "ordered and arranged and first of all herself settled that spot of the earth where you [the Athenians] were born"<sup>14</sup>,

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4 Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ Ἀρσάκειο", (1948), p. 138.

5 Dimitris Pikionis, "Γαίλας ἀτίμωσις", (1935), p. 131.

6 Ibid.

7 Dimitris Pikionis, "Εἰσήγησις τῆς Αἰσθητικῆς Ἐπιτροπῆς τῆς Γενικῆς Γραμματείας Τουρισμοῦ ἐπὶ τῶν ἀρχῶν ἐπὶ τῶν ὁποίων πρέπει νὰ βασιθοῦν τὰ νομοθετικὰ μέτρα προασπίσεως τῆς Αἰσθητικῆς τῆς Χώρας εἰς τὰς Τουριστικὰς Ζώνας", (1946), p. 145.

8 Cf.: "It is in this sense that autochthony should be understood: men feel that they are *people of the place*, and this is a feeling of cosmic relatedness deeper than that of familiar and ancestral solidarity. ... This kind of cosmo-biological experience rooted man in a mystical solidarity with *the place* which was intense enough to have survived till now in folk-lore and popular traditions." Mircea Eliade, 1957, 1960, op. cit., pp. 164-5.

9 Dimitris Pikionis, "Γαίλας ἀτίμωσις", (1935), pp. 128-30. Retold by Critias in: Plato, *Timaeus*, 21e-24d.

10 Ibid., 21e.

11 (the most beautiful and wisest of men); *ibid.*, 24d.

12 "the founding of a city in fact represents a repetition of the cosmogony." Mircea Eliade, 1976, 1978, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 108.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid., 24c. Quoted by Pikionis in: Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ Ἀρσάκειο", (1948), p. 138.

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Solon was told. After the great earthquake and the vanishing of Atlantis into the sea, the cosmic forces shaped the Attic landscape in its present form.<sup>15</sup> Its re-birth coincided with the birth of its myths, which sustained the memory of a divine origin. The form of Attica is the product of the bosom of the Earth and the ancient city of Athens is, in Pikionis' words, "the product of the absolute obedience to the Principles [of Nature]", product of a time when "the unity of the creative powers of man was intact."<sup>16</sup> Drawing again on Plato, Pikionis describes the landscape of the prehistoric land of Athens<sup>17</sup> when the Acropolis was different: it "extended to the Eridanus and Ilisus, included the Pnyx and was bounded on the opposite side by the Lycabettus; it was covered with soil and for the most part level."<sup>18</sup> What has remained of that original territory after the rich soil was washed away is, Plato says, "rather like the skeleton of a body wasted by disease"; what is left of the fertile land of those days is "nothing but skin and bone."<sup>19</sup>

In Pikionis' perception of the earth as the womb of creative powers, the stones of the Attic earth represent the bones of the much revered Earth Mother, the sources of re-birth.<sup>20</sup> These stones were to become the material of his architecture; the stones of his pavements were to emerge from the bosom of the earth, to form part of the thread from the great earth spider. His task as an architect was to order his work in such a way that it would conform to the order of nature; he had to look for the existing thread, to find its edge and weave his work with it. Pikionis saw his architectural intervention on the Attic hills being confined to the pious arrangement of the earth's bones, to their re-integration with the natal Earth, in the fashion that could best reveal the divine image of the sacred Earth and the absolute character of its eternal laws, and in a way that could awaken the feeling of mystical union with the body of the Earth. (Fig. 8.1)

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15 Cf.: "Emergence repeats the cosmogonic act of formal manifestation, while immersion is equivalent to a dissolution of forms. That is why the symbolism of the Waters includes Death and Re-birth." Mircea Eliade, 1952, 1961, op. cit., p. 151. In the myth of Phaëthon, distraction on earth is caused by fire. It is Fire here that brings Death, a prerequisite for Re-birth.

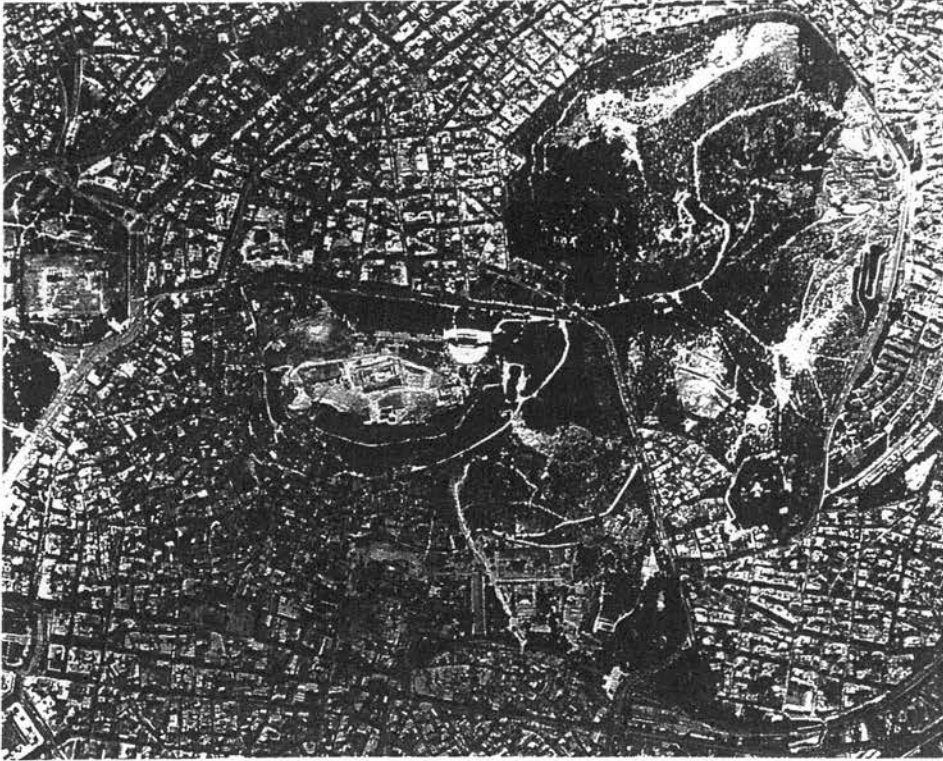
16 Dimitris Pikionis, "Γαίης ἀτίμωσις", (1935), p. 130.

17 Ibid.

18 Plato, *Critias*, 112a.

19 Ibid., 111b.

20 See: Mircea Eliade, 1957, 1960, op. cit., p. 169.



**Figure 8.1.** Aerial view of central Athens showing Pikionis' landscape planning of an area of 10ha. (After Architectural Association)

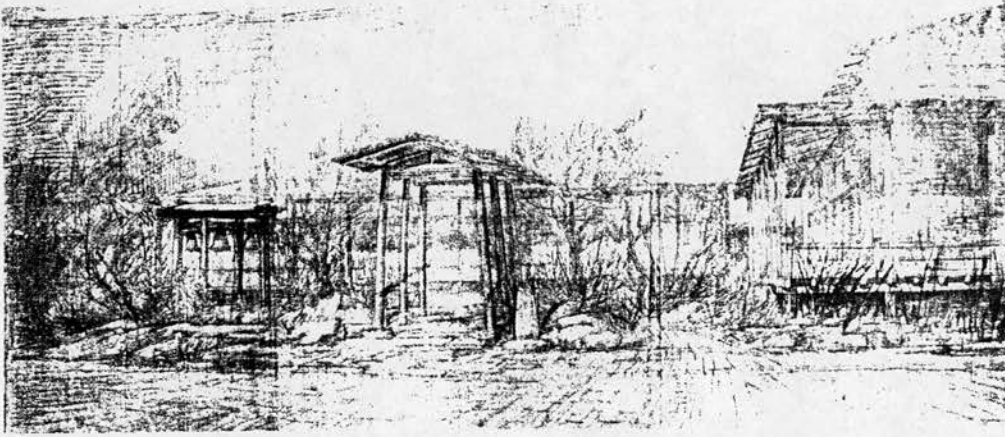
With only very few plans and some sketches,<sup>21</sup> he started the work which was largely designed *in situ*. "Plans and instructions are insufficient" for this work "which cannot be described by convention", Pikionis was saying in 1955, "for the plan is not applicable as it stands, but serves only as a gnomon to the general idea which must be interpreted."<sup>22</sup> Progress was slow and Pikionis faced constant pressure from Government officials. His architecture, he believed, had to be 'planted' in the place, to grow out of nature and to spread its roots deeply into the earth. Landscape and man-made architecture had to interpenetrate, to be linked into an organic whole. The work of the architect as a whole and each minute part of it had not only to be born

21 Jan van Geest discusses some of the drawings for the paths in: Jan van Geest, "Some Thoughts from abroad about the works of D. Pikionis"; in: The National Technical University of Athens, *op. cit.*, pp. 279f.

22 Dimitris Pikionis, "Επιστολή προς τὸν Ὑπουργὸν Δημοσίων Ἔργων", (12/5/1955), p. 268.

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in nature, but also to be brought up with skill and love, with great care, with method and wisdom, with time and with labour. This is a slow and assiduous process. (Figs. 8.2-8.4)



**Figure 8.2.** Dimitris Pikionis, sketch for the entrance to the enclosure on the Hill of Philopappus. (After Architectural Association)



**Figures 8.3.** The path towards the Propylaea under construction. (After Miliadis)



**Figure 8.4.** Landscape and man-made architecture had to be linked together into an organic whole



Figure 8.5. Pavement Patterns.



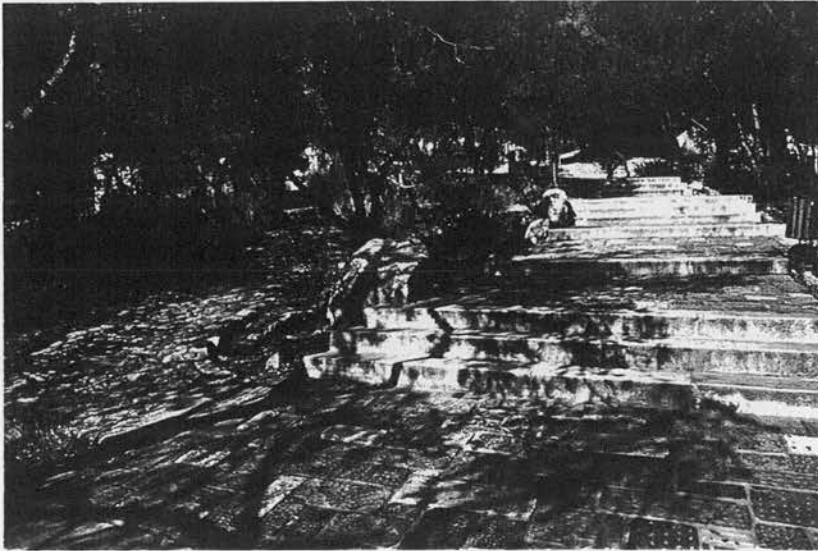
Figure 8.6. Symbolic motif on the path.  
(After Architectural Association)

First, Pikionis removed all offending installations like the asphalt on the street leading to the Propylaea, the high barriers which were separating the archaeological site from daily life, et cetera. He did not design completely new paths, but preferred to materialise the old ascending ways which devout walkers had used for millennia.<sup>23</sup> He paved these paths, which had outworn several centuries, with different types of local limestone from the Attic hills, composing motifs, patterns and ornaments of great interest and variety, a whole network of expressive technical references to what he called "the indivisible wholeness of the spirit"<sup>24</sup>. (Figs. 8.5, 8.6) These ornaments are not only meant to convey the rudimentary pleasure of decoration, but to mean, to allude symbolically to the realities that lie beyond 'realistic' depiction, and to function as a means to an inward vision of these realities. They point to the hierarchical structure of reality and the correspondence between the different levels of reality.

23 Cf.: "What constitutes Pikionis' intention cannot but remind us of the ancient *peripatos* (walk around), which went around the foothills of the acropolis from the archaic and even Mycaenean times, leading to the altars and the sanctuaries sculpted on the rock. The contemporary stonepaths in the greater area around the acropolis, are saturated with memories from the archaic pathways, the realm of Goddess Hecate who accepted offerings laid down on the paths, the Classical paved streets marked by stone boundaries, the so-called *horos* (boundary), the public streets at the agora with *hermes* (the God Hermes' heads) alongside to protect the walkers." Vassilios Ganiatsas, *Permanence and Change: A Philosophical Inquiry into the Problem of Relating New Architecture to Existing Settings*, (unpublished doctoral dissertation, The University of Edinburgh), Edinburgh, 1987, pp. 163-4.

24 Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 204.

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**Figures 8.7 and 8.8.** The man-made work does not overtake nature, neither does it compete with her.

In the whole landscaping project nature has absolute priority. The man-made work does not overtake nature, neither does it compete with her. It rather approaches nature eerily, in a desire for union with her. (Figs. 8.7, 8.8) The overall project reflects a sombre dignity. The paths are like currents along the skeleton of the earth, rising here to protect her fruits, there to form a bench to provide walkers with relief from fatigue, further to incorporate a venerable ruin or to trace an ancient relic. They incorporate all natural elements on their way; they move aside to leave a rock intact, they break apart to respect a root of the holy olive tree emerging unexpectedly from the ground, they



Figure 8.9.

adapt their edges to the streams of water welcoming and courteously caring for the rain water, they form steps or ramps, they orientate physically and metaphysically, they stimulate and guide the movement of body and spirit. (Figs. 8.9-8.12) They are composed of slabs, paving stones of the modern Athenian city's streets, spolia - mostly marble members from demolished nineteenth century houses - treated for the protection of walkers, polished at one place to glitter in the light, rough at another not to offend it, fully integrated in the Attic landscape of which they are members. The sombre ground surrounding them makes the noble stone patterns appear in their full depth.



Figures 8.10, 8.11 and 8.12.

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Pikionis' paths emerge from the ground naturally, articulated with words of a forgotten language which he intended to revive and use, in order to build the appropriate syntax and the accurate form that may conceal and reveal its spirit; to speak in a poetic manner with the voice that will best reveal the essence of the language in which his architectural work speaks and which sustains it. (Figs. 8.13, 8.14)



Figures 8.13 and 8.14.

Pikionis had been drawing the landscape of Attica, "the work of the gods and of the ancient heroes" (Strabo), since his youth. In the years from 1940 to 1950, he produced a series of drawings which he called *Ἀττικά* (Attic).<sup>25</sup> In simple and severe black lines, these drawings reflect his endeavour to understand the timeless character of the place and to approach the great forces of the land that was teaching him his/her language and was guiding his steps. They bear witness to his attempt to represent the Attic landscape in a continuous condition and at the moment of its creation. In a pictorial language of symbols, these drawings talk of earthly shapes and cosmic energies; they bespeak something of the beauty that grows out of the land, the

25 See: Dimitris Philippides, "Τὰ ΑΤΤΙΚΑ ΣΧΕΔΙΑ ΤΟΥ Δ. ΠΙΚΙΩΝΗ"; in: The National Technical University of Athens, op. cit., pp. 259-67.

Seven of these drawings are included in: The Architectural Association of Greece, op. cit., pls. 1-7. See another four of them in: Savas Condaratos, "Dimitris Pikionis in Context"; in: Architectural Association, op. cit., pp. 18, 20.

See another of these drawings in: J. Liapis, "Dimitris Pikionis (1987-1968)"; in: *Architecture in Greece*, Annual Review, 3, Athens, 1969, p. 84.



transparency of light and the spirits that dwell within. They are the outcome of a contemplative experience of nature, where the idea of the divine presence in nature reigns. (Figs. 8.15, 8.16)



Figure 8.15. Dimitris Pikionis, drawing from the 'Αττικά series. (After Architectural Association)

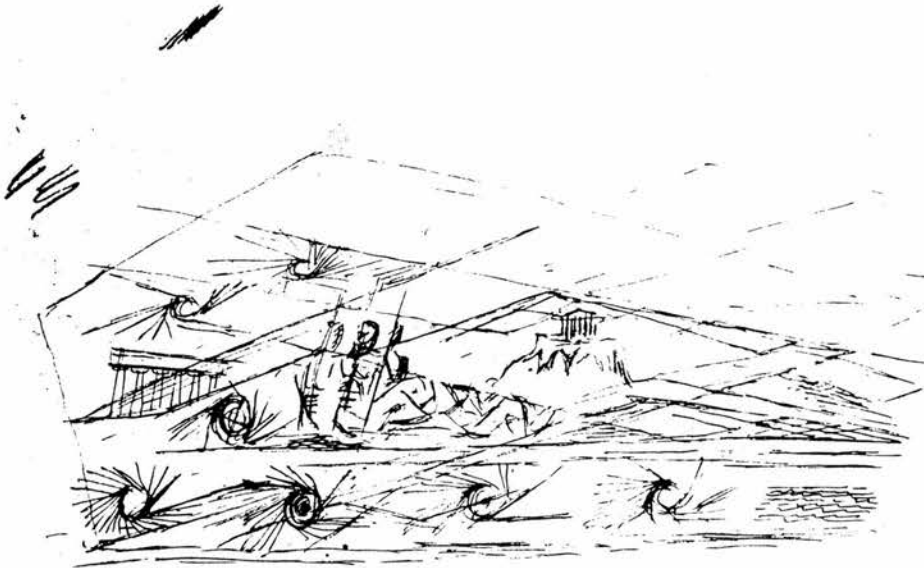
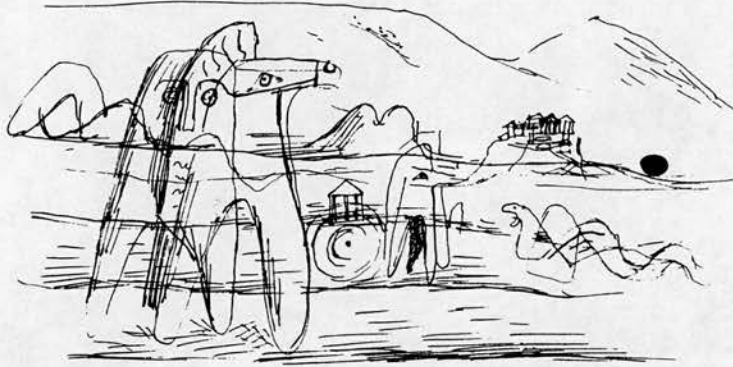


Figure 8.16. Dimitris Pikionis, drawing from the 'Αττικά series. (After The Architectural Association of Greece)

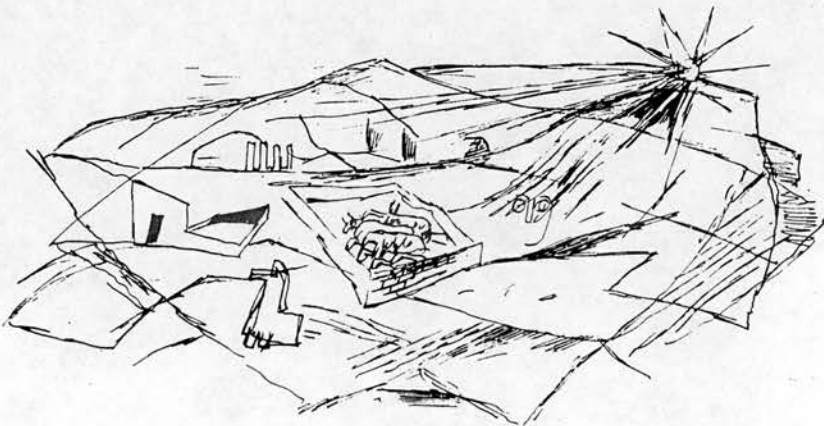
In a realm of analogies, the familiar skyline of the Attic hills is repeated in the shape of the chthonic snake: Erechtheus incarnated, symbol of autochthony and of the sovereign telluric powers; the line of the mountain becomes the line of the Classical pediment; mythic beasts from Parthenon's frieze take up soul; the city assumes the shape of fearsome Athene, with her lance rising and the mermaid on her breast; the skeleton of the earth forms her temple - embodiment of the mythological origin of the

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city and of perennial virtue. Sea-forms announce the proximity of the sea, the sacred tree speaks of eternal renewal, images of the archaic Hecatompedon of piety, upright pillars of the desire for union with the earth and for spiritual ascent; man himself appears in his solitary voyage, passing through the Symplegades. Through the metaphors of the cosmogonic myths of Attica, Pikionis' drawings speak of the flesh and bones of the earth; through the images of her temples they call to mind the origin of the place and its people, they recount their creative passage from history. Historical memory fuses with the Memory of the soul; the perspective suggests a timeless, absolute condition and a vision of the unchanging aspect of the Attic landscape. In a direct manner, Pikionis' iconography expresses his great belief in the fertility of the Attic rocks, the sacredness of these rocks and the divine presence in the hills. (Figs. 8.17-8.19)



**Figure 8.17.** Dimitris Pikionis, drawing from the *Ἀττικά* series. (After The Architectural Association of Greece)



**Figure 8.18.** Dimitris Pikionis, drawing from the *Ἀττικά* series. (After The Architectural Association of Greece)



Figure 8.19. Dimitris Pikionis, drawing from the 'Αττικά' series. (After Architectural Association)

The main path which Pikionis was to curve leads towards the Acropolis - the top of the city - where the sacred temples stand, the centre of the World for "the children of Erechtheus"<sup>26</sup>. (Figs. 8.20, 8.21) In the past, this place had been consecrated to



Figure 8.20. Dimitris Pikionis, study for the landscaping of the area below the Acropolis. (After Vassiliadis, 1962)

various religious rites, traces of which are to be found on the slopes of the 'holy rock'. The way towards the summit is a sort of transition between past and present, a movement during which present and past interpenetrate, an ascending movement on a pavement that achieves to blend past with present, to dim the passage of time, and to suggest a time and a place when Apollo, Adonis, Dionysus, Digenis and Christ coexist and are worshipped together, where they are brought naturally together into one myth, very much like in the verses of Sikelianos'. The rock itself is the point where

26 As Euripides calls the Athenians in *Medea*.

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Neolithic cults of spirits and daemons,<sup>27</sup> Mycaenean Homeric gods and Christian religion meet. It marks a place of unceasing worship, sowed with caves, sanctuaries, altars and traces of troglodytic settlements still visible on the north side of the rock, remnants that pay tribute to the continuous experience of the sacred in nature and human life throughout the centuries.<sup>28</sup> While the contemporary Athenian walks on the holy rock of the Acropolis, the thought of a world that once existed imparts to the movement, and this world is perceived not as a dead unrecapturable world but as a mythical world, living and taking up images of his own life, forms of his own religion, the rites of which are performed in the same places, the same altars.<sup>29</sup> The sacred mound becomes the embodiment of uninterrupted worship, the emblem of a continual rite through the centuries; it is the centre of worship and tradition.



Figure 8.21. The beginning of the ascent towards the Acropolis. (After Miliadis)

27 See: "And the shrines which still survive at these former springs ..." Plato, *Critias*, 111d.

28 "Almost every cavern about Athens has its particular virtues; some are celebrated for providing its fair votaries with husbands, after a few sacrifices; others are resorted to by women when advanced in pregnancy, who pray for prosperous parturition, and male children; while others are supposed to be instrumental in accomplishing the dire purposes of hatred and revenge." Edward Dodwell, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 397.

29 In Byzantine or post-Byzantine times, some of the caves had been converted into Christian chapels, e. g. the Panayia Chrysospeliotissa chapel. See: "Panagia Speliotissa": engraving, in: Edward Dodwell, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, between pp. 300 and 301.

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Conscious of the sanctity of the place, Pikionis saw the Parthenon as the profound expression of the "religious relation of the ancients with mother Nature"<sup>30</sup>. Constructed merely with the bones of the "marble breasted Penteli", it is "flesh of [her] flesh"<sup>31</sup>, continually renewed from the earth-matrix. It is, in a way, the skull of the earth, dedicated as it was to Wisdom herself, the grey-eyed goddess Athene that sprang fully armed from the cranium of the aegis-bearing Zeus,<sup>32</sup> the mind of God. The temple is the product of the city that was "brought up and educated by Wisdom herself"<sup>33</sup>. On the pediments of the Parthenon - that took its name from the 'Virgin's (Parthenos') Chamber' in it - are depicted the great myths of the miraculous birth of the mighty goddess who "in the period of the philosophers" became "the symbol of divine knowledge and human wisdom"<sup>34</sup>, and of her victory over Poseidon for the guardianship of the city.<sup>35</sup>

For Pikionis, the Parthenon is ideal in the mathematical sense. It is the epitome of the "many-souled myth of a people, the reality of a city"<sup>36</sup>. And it is the perfect imitation of nature in her manner of operation. Standing on "this stone that is the Acropolis, the stone which was destined by divine providence for this temenos"<sup>37</sup>, it is "first of all the explanation of 'the architecture of all' [of the whole, the entirety of things, τὸ πᾶν]."<sup>38</sup> It is not merely the product of a historical epoch, but the manifestation of eternal beauty and truth. It is the petrification of eternal recurrence in nature, the perfect transformation of stone in art. Its formation is governed by the same law that governs and explains nature; its Doric column is likened by Pikionis to "an animated being which, thirsting for union, revolves round [its] axis"<sup>39</sup>. The "realisation of this union", Pikionis continues, "is the culmination of the tragic mystery of nature, embodied in a form of art homologous with nature."<sup>40</sup> While its external appearance is

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30 Dimitris Pikionis, "Γαίας ἀτίμωσις", (1935), p. 131.

31 Ibid.

32 Hesiod recounts the myth of the birth of Athene in: Hesiod, *Theogony*, 866ff.

33 Ibid., p. 127.

34 Mircea Eliade, 1976, 1978, op. cit., Vol. 1, op. cit., p. 282.

See: Plato, *Cratylus*, 46d ff.

35 The central scene on this pediment is lost. All that survives are the sculptures at either extremity.

36 Dimitris Pikionis, "Γαίας ἀτίμωσις", (1935), p. 130.

37 Ibid.

38 Dimitris Pikionis, "Συναισθηματικὴ Τοπογραφία", (1935), p. 76. Pikionis paraphrases Sextus Empiricus' comment on Heracleitus' "explanation of the arrangement of the whole", and cites Heracleitus' words in a note. (Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Mathematicians*, VII 133).

39 Dimitris Pikionis, "Συναισθηματικὴ Τοπογραφία", (1935), p. 79.

40 Ibid.

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historical, this is only the flesh of the immanent eternal spirit of which it becomes the revelation in all historical times. Pikionis' approach to the Parthenon is an approach to the spirit that dwells within; an approach, in response to the Heracleitean advice: "οὐκ ἔμοῦ ἀλλὰ τοῦ Λόγου ἀκούσαντας", to the *Λόγος* which abides at once in nature, in the sanctuary built for the goddess and in each artisan-made element of the ancient temple.

The temple of Pallas Athene stands on the very place where she confronted Poseidon for the tutelage of Attica and, with her offer of the olive tree to the city, won the verdict of Kekrops, the first mythical king with the chthonic serpent's tail. The divine gift, the sacred olive tree born out of the living rock - symbol of peace and manifestation of natural eternal regeneration - is hence the sacred tree, the link to previous cults, the Cosmic tree of life, Athene's sacred temple and image, "Wisdom Herself."<sup>41</sup> It is to this primordial hierophany and to the invisible presence of the gods that the olive tree refers, standing immortal on the Acropolis.

In the Parthenon frieze, are depicted certain sequences of the ritual Panathenaic procession which was held every four years at the Great Panathenaia. Its "formal object"<sup>42</sup> was to convey Athene's new *peplos* to the King Archon, for him to place on the olive-wood *xoanon* of Athene Polias. The procession "left from the Dipylon Gate, crossed the Kerameikos (Potters' Quarter) and the Agora, and entered the Acropolis".<sup>43</sup> The last part of Pikionis' path materialises the last 100m of this processional route to the Propylaea. The stone-patterns on the steep way become of a more sober and severe quality as they approach the Acropolis, pieces of white glowing Pentelic marble appear more frequently, the geometric austerity contributes to the solemnity of the last part of the ascent. Near the entrance, the path forms an open space embracing and letting lie together a relic of a Doric and one of an Ionic column,<sup>44</sup> a symbolic gesture illustrating the element of variety, divergency and even

41 Proverbs 111, 18. See: Mircea Eliade, 1952, 1961, op. cit., p. 162.

42 Luise Bruit Zaidman and Pauline Schmitt Pantel, *Religion in the Ancient Greek City*, translated by Paul Cartledge, Cambridge, 1992, (Paris, 1989, in French), p. 105.

43 Ibid. "It thus passed through the city's most vital points, the Agora (heart of political life) and Acropolis (its spiritual crown)." Ibid.

44 Cf.: "The harmonisation of the opposites: Ionic and Doric, marks the moment when the particular enters the catholic." Dimitris Pikionis, "Η θεωρία του ἀρχιτέκτονος Κ. Α. Δοξιάδη γιὰ τὴ διαμόρφωση τοῦ χώρου εἰς τὴν ἀρχαία Ἀρχιτεκτονική", (1937), p. 188.

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antithesis<sup>45</sup> that is present on these hills, and introducing the ascending man to the Classical mind that brought together the Ionic and the Doric thought in harmony,



consistent with the Heracleitean *Ἐν Πάντα*. Along the steep way to the top of the hill one does not see the Parthenon all the time but gets glimpses of it at different points, in different angles, visible suggestions of the views of the statue of the patroness of the city, the symbolic source of illumination, that former walkers received while proceeding towards the holy summit. The wondrous statue of Pheidias' represented Athene in all her splendour, her awful wisdom unuttered by the artist,<sup>46</sup> shielded by the gaze of the public in her helmet, in the Athenian windy sky.<sup>47</sup> (Figs. 8.22, 8.23)



Pikionis was assigned the task of re-planning and landscaping the entire area. According to the wish of the Greek Government, cited by Pikionis in his letter to the Minister of Public Works, the result had to be "a work embodied in a form commensurate with the historical mandate arising from its very nature."<sup>48</sup> Pikionis' own wish, however, was not to produce a work for the sake of the Classical temple alone, a homage to a particular historical moment or to a particular work of art, but to reveal with his work the eternally religious character of the place, which had at one particular moment been embodied in the form of the Classical temple. The Parthenon was seen as a work of great ancient art that served the same purpose

Figures 8.22 and 8.23.  
The ascent towards the temple.

45 See: *ibid.*, p. 188n. Pikionis observes here that this element of antithesis is to be found equally in the ancient and in the folk Greek tradition.

See also: *ibid.*, p. 196n.

46 Cf.: "unspeakable words, which is not lawful for a man to utter." Paul the Apostle, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 12:4.

47 See: Dimitris Pikionis, "Γαίαν ἀτίμωσις", (1935), p. 131.

48 Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἐπιστολή πρὸς τὸν Ὑπουργὸν Δημοσίων Ἔργων", (12/5/1955), p. 269.

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which Pikionis believed to be his duty to serve in his own times. He maintained that his task was to preserve and protect the sacred place from anything that could alienate its spirit.<sup>49</sup> He was convinced that "modern life and occupation guide the soul of man away from the religious essence of the past"<sup>50</sup>. With his work he undertook the effort to embody this essence in architecture, to bring to light again what had been obscured in history, and to secure that the soul of modern men journeying in the Attic hills, perceiving with eyes and ears, will not remain foreign. The degree to which he succeeded in preserving this essence and grounding its historical importance corresponds to the degree to which he had acquired true knowledge of it. As Pikionis points out, the problems which the landscape imposes on the architect

*can be identified with the problems of our spiritual existence, they cannot be dealt with partially. The successful confrontation of the former depends on the degree to which these have been hierarchically related to the whole of our spiritual problem which in its innermost essence consists in the knowledge and realisation of our true self, and therefore demands from us to strive for a genuine relation with the values of the past which are latent in the living tradition of the [Greek] Nation.<sup>51</sup>*

Pikionis attempted to bring to, and let lie together on, his paths fragments of past epochs not out of a nostalgia for the historical times that created them, neither in order to exhibit them as products of great skill or proofs of the achievements of the national ancestors. He rather regarded them as embodiments of "the common and the particular, that is, the catholic and the essential"<sup>52</sup>, the eternal values of oecumenical importance; he viewed them as reminders of "true virtue" which is not particular to any historical time, historical people or land, but becomes historical anew and particular to

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49 See also Pikionis' proposal concerning the intervention in the archaeological site at Delphi (1946), Dimitris Pikionis, "Εκθεσις ἐπὶ τῶν ἔργων διευθετήσεως ἐν Δελφοῖς", (1946), pp. 247-52.

50 Ibid., p. 248.

51 Dimitris Pikionis, "Εἰσήγησις τῆς Αἰσθητικῆς Ἐπιτροπῆς τῆς Γενικῆς Γραμματείας Τουρισμοῦ ἐπὶ τῶν ἀρχῶν ἐπὶ τῶν ὁποίων πρέπει νὰ βασισθοῦν τὰ νομοθετικὰ μέτρα προασπίσεως τῆς Αἰσθητικῆς τῆς Χώρας εἰς τὰς Τουριστικὰς Ζώνας", (1946), p. 146.

Cf.: "Pikionis taught us that ... if our environment shows inconsistency, frivolity or a lack of judgement, it is because these elements are to be found somewhere within us. Therefore, to elaborate an architecturally coherent space, we have to refer to a mystical life that begins in the depths of our consciousness and reveals itself as it relates to our surroundings." Dimitris Antonakakis, "Dimitris Pikionis, Elaboration and Improvisation"; in: Architectural Association, op. cit., p. 11.

52 Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ Ἑλληνικὴ Ἀρχιτεκτονικὴ", (Interview, 1951), p. 172. See Pikionis' references to "il commune e proprio", the often quoted maxim of Solomos', in: Chapter Four, 4.



a land-bound people, each and every time they are embodied afresh in a form of the art of this historical people.<sup>53</sup>

## 8. 2. The Ascent towards the Temple

*Wriggling like sperm in a dark womb,  
The terrible insect of memory breaks through the earth*

Odysseus Elytis<sup>54</sup>

As an old man, Pikionis himself walked again upon the earth, "rejoicing as a child at the movement within creation - the alternating disruption and restoration of balance that is walking."<sup>55</sup> In Rodin's words, quoted by Pikionis, "Man is a walking Cathedral". This is precisely how Pikionis felt walking in nature; he felt like a walking world himself, a microcosm on which the whole of the surrounding environment with its traces of different historical periods was projected. In his understanding of walking as a humanly walking along a spiritual path, it is exactly in this type of human upward movement that man can realise his potential existence and become the microcosm he really is. It is along this spiritual - and, therefore, ascending - path that he recovers the memory and the integrity he has only temporarily lost.

Walking in the Attic nature, Pikionis felt like participating in the memory of the natural world which was, at the same time, his own memory and that of his ancestors. Before him he saw the realities of nature: shapes and forces, pagan sanctuaries and places of Christian worship, scattered drums of columns, shards of ancient pottery and Byzantine tiles, age-old olive trees with fresh fruits and creaking cicadas, traces of local historical experience, fragments of a Turkish minaret, of the wall of Themistocles and of statuary, scrawls and autographs of modern men on ancient marble or, rather, on marble bearing the traces of ancient peoples, vestiges of ancient days and of recent years, all parts of the same world where one easily loses the sense of time, a world which bears the marks of life in an eternal present. All historical relics are seen as

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53 Cf.: "art is by nature an origin: a distinctive way in which truth comes into being, that is, becomes historical." Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art"; in: Martin Heidegger, 1975, op. cit., p. 78.

54 From Elytis' poem *The Axion Esti*, "The Passion", Ode d. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 43.

55 Dimitris Pikionis, "Συναισθηματική Τοπογραφία", (1935), p. 73.

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different manifestations of the same spirit, manifold expressions of the experienced reality of the place, the earth with which man strives for union.



Figures 8.24 and 8.25. Sitting areas on the way to the Acropolis.

Pikionis tried to embody this world which he experienced and sought after in his own work on the slopes of the Attic hills; to embed the same eternal spirit of the place in the architecture of his paths. He attempted to make his architecture manifest exactly this spirit that is fecundating in all epochs. He wished his work to partake of the same



Figure 8.26. Detail.

objective reality of which he felt to partake himself and of which his ancestors partook. It had to be at once truthful to the reality of his historical time and respectful of the coexisting times, and an expression of the other reality which is beyond time, enabling the man of modern times to be reminded of that reality, that world wherein saints and Olympian gods co-dwell. Pikionis did not ignore current reality, modernity and technological progress; but the conviction that the end product of his artwork had to be able to serve the integrity of human needs, those of his contemporary man driving a car<sup>56</sup> and those of the ever ascending man, was fundamental to his work.

56 Note Pikionis' reinforcement of the pavement of the road leading up the Hill of Philopappus with concrete where it was intended to be used by vehicles. (Fig. 8.27)



**Figure 8.27.** Reinforcement of the pavement of the road leading up the Hill of Philopappus with concrete where it was intended to be used by vehicles.

It had to care for the body *and* the soul of men on the way. (Figs. 8.24-8.27)

There could be no better symbolism for the spiritual path along which man is destined to walk, no better image of the Path, than the material path ascending towards the temple of Virtue and Wisdom<sup>57</sup>, the same path along which many walk towards the place where the One dwells. And, however linear it may appear, it is actually a circular movement that this path suggests, a circular movement that is to be completed at the level of higher or inner reality where man is returning to his origin, the Origin of human existence. The patterns which Pikionis used to ornate, to order his pavements with, are symbols of that origin and symbolic images of the higher phenomena that

cannot be known but as such. They are the elements, the signs, of a language which strives for symmetry, in the sense of commensurability, with the manifold expressions of the truth of the world of which it is a member, out of which it grew and from which it draws sustenance. Along the ascending path, Pikionis assembled stones of different sizes and textures, ceramic tiles and limestone gravel, modern and archaic architectural elements with which he composed images and symbols that have been present in Greece from time immemorial, that constitute the emblems of the spiritual culture of the place and retain the universal and perennial qualities of the archetypes. (Fig. 8.28)

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57 "During the past few decades for many attracted to the call of tradition, the meaning of tradition has become related more than anything else to that perennial wisdom which lies at the heart of every religion and which is none other than the Sophia whose possession the sapiential perspective in the West as well as the Orient has considered as the crowning achievement of human life." Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "What Is Tradition?"; in: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 1981, op. cit., p. 68.

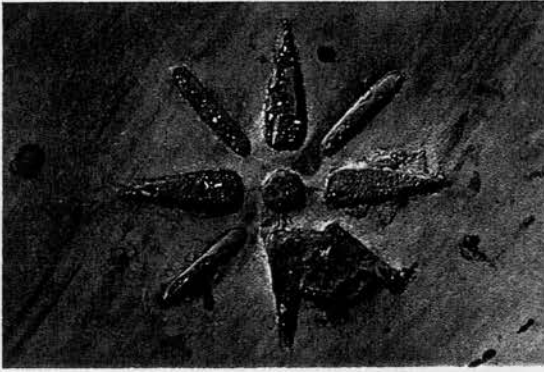


Figure 8.28. Symbolic motif on the pavement.

nearby, to follow an Easter procession or to stroll on a Sunday. Wherever though one heads, the movement is one of ascent, a movement that implies 'celestial ascension',<sup>58</sup> that leads to the highest point, the source and the centre. (Fig. 8.29) A path expands from the edge, the top of the hill crowned by the temple of Wisdom, the image of the divine origin where all creation springs from and which illumines all. Man is called to walk along the path, to climb up in a ritual approach to the house of the immortal God.



Figure 8.29. Wherever one heads for, the movement is one of ascent.

It is this arduous human journey towards the summit, the way towards absolute knowledge, that Pikionis intended to materialise, support and orientate. Along the way, examples of earthly beauty - which alone among all Platonic beloved objects "has been ordained to be most manifest to sense and most lovely of them all"<sup>59</sup> - are to be used as "steps to ascend"<sup>60</sup>; they are intended to support initiation into the perfect mystery of Nature. "Once the pilgrim ... passes through the Propylaea", Pikionis says, "the image of the sacred buildings will appear before him ... governed by the harmony of number and destined for this particular position and this particular moment. They [the sacred buildings]", he explains, "stand on these pure heights,

58 See: Mircea Eliade, 1952, 1961, op. cit., p. 51.

59 Plato, *Phaedrus*, 250d

60 See: Plato, *Symposium*, 211c.

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solitary in the blue ether, because the view towards the landscape from this point has disappeared, as if intentionally, and with it every memory of earthly things."<sup>61</sup>

### 8. 3. The Role of Appropriate Vegetation

*And so they found that the gold of the olive root had dripped in the recesses of his heart.*

Odysseus Elytis<sup>62</sup>

The purpose of the entire architectural project, Pikionis believed, could only be fulfilled with the appropriate plantation of suitable vegetation, for which he took great care. He considered plants to be of great importance in the creation of balance and harmony between the parts and the whole. He "strengthened the existing verdure" and selected the plants that were to be added according to the needs of the overall synthesis, the plants' "appearance, colour, shape, and symbolism"<sup>63</sup>. Ordered vegetation provides an intermediary level. It functions as transition from man-made architecture to nature. The whole has been treated as a unity where nothing can exist on its own but only as part of the whole, where every detail, even the apparently insignificant, every ray of light, every sprig of verdure, and every leaf's whisper contributes to the symmetrical formation of the whole.

Pikionis insisted that, in order to prevent alteration of the harmonic creation of nature, only "autochthonous vegetation" should be used. Because, as he wrote,

*the relation between the earth and the indigenous flora is not coincidental. The relationship of the specific flora - trees or shrubs - with its particular shape, colour, nuances and aroma, to the earth that gave it birth is one of intimate and profound harmony. The prevailing preference for non-indigenous species, for the only reason that they grow faster, is arbitrary and puts in danger, destroys, this mystic harmony ... For it is not only the outward harmony ... that is being destroyed, but something more valuable than physical harmony. What is being destroyed is the metaphysical harmony, the psychic symbol that the image of vegetation consists for us.*<sup>64</sup>

61 Dimitris Pikionis, "Η θεωρία του αρχιτέκτονος Κ. Α. Δοξιάδη για τη διαμόρφωση του χώρου εις την αρχαία 'Αρχιτεκτονική", (1937), pp. 189-90.

62 From Elytis' poem *The Autopsy*; in his collection *Six and One Pangs of Conscience for the Sky*, (1960). Translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard; in: Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (eds.), op. cit., p. 66.

63 Dimitris Pikionis, "Εισηγητική έκθεσις ἐπὶ τῆς συνεργασίας μου εἰς τὰ ὑπὸ ἐκτέλεσιν ἔργα τῶν περὶ τὴν Ἀκρόπολιν ἀρχαιολογικῶν χώρων", (1955), p. 271.

64 Dimitris Pikionis, "Εισηγησις τῆς Αἰσθητικῆς Ἐπιτροπῆς τῆς Γενικῆς Γραμματείας Τουρισμοῦ ἐπὶ τῶν ἀρχῶν ἐπὶ τῶν ὁποίωις πρέπει νὰ βασισθοῦν τὰ νομοθετικὰ

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For Pikionis, even the fact that the native species grow slowly teaches the architect that "the higher achievement requires time and labour, and the easy is of no importance."<sup>65</sup> The architect has to approach the indigenous vegetation (αὐτοποιδὸν φύτευμα)<sup>66</sup> and all the elements of the natural world with a "religious love"; with a sense for the sacred, the spirit that breathes in nature; with a pantheistic attitude like that of the ancients or the living simple people.<sup>67</sup> Only then will he be able to reveal their divine character and to preserve their physical and metaphysical qualities.

Pikionis wanted the architectural project to be carried out in a manner that could enable it to be linked organically with the place. Strong relations had to be established between the elements of the place and the architectural elements, analogous to those he saw established between the Parthenon and its natural ambience.<sup>68</sup> For Pikionis, architecture had to become part of the earth, of her physical beauty, able to receive its inner spirit; the architect's actions should not prevent the earth from moulding the modern architectural form herself, as she did mould the ancient one.<sup>69</sup>

Vegetation is, for Pikionis, the "perfect culmination of the soil's thirst for form"<sup>70</sup>. Within the architectural composition it had to receive primary attention. He rejected any non-indigenous species and spaced out those which, according to him, were distorting the character of the place (e.g. cypresses, because their verticality reduces the impact of the verticality of the ancient columns<sup>71</sup>), were out of scale or excessive.<sup>72</sup>

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μέτρα προασπίσεως τῆς Αἰσθητικῆς τῆς Χώρας εἰς τὰς Τουριστικὰς Ζώνας", (1946), pp. 144-5.

65 Ibid., p. 145.

66 Pikionis uses Sophocles' phrase. Ibid.

67 Ibid.

Cf.: "He who has no sense of the sacred cannot perceive the traditional perspective, and traditional man is never separated from the sense of the sacred." Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "What Is Tradition?"; in: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 1981, op. cit., p. 76.

68 Cf.: "its equilibrium, the ordering of its volumes is like that of the mountains, of the vegetation and of all living creatures." And: "These stones, the bitter grass, this green shadow, the voices that streak the air, the southern breezes, the torn plumes of the clouds are mystically related with the equation of [the] grooves [of the Doric column]". Dimitris Pikionis, "Συναισθηματικὴ Τοπογραφία", (1935), pp. 76, 80.

69 Cf.: "The coldness of the marble and the austerity of the vertical shaft and of the parallel lines: have they not been fused with the warmth of the sun and the sensitivity of the spirit inside [the Doric column]?" Ibid.

70 Ibid., p. 74.

71 Dimitris Pikionis, "Εἰσηγητικὴ ἔκθεσις ἐπὶ τῆς συνεργασίας μου εἰς τὰ ὑπὸ ἐκτέλεσιν ἔργα τῶν περὶ τὴν Ἀκρόπολιν ἀρχαιολογικῶν χώρων", (1955), p. 271.  
Cf.: "Some extreme aesthetic positions are however to be found in Tsarouchis [a modern Greek painter] - and also his mentors' [sic] Pikionis' - arguments: Both insist on the fact that cypresses with their stern perpendicular shape compete visually with the marble columns of the ruined

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He kept the existing native bushes and shrubs and enriched vegetation with "wild and grafted olive trees" and with species which were, since ancient times, considered appropriate for sanctuaries: "pomegranates, laurels and myrtles."<sup>73</sup> These were arranged according to size, scale, form of foliage, particular habits of growth, et cetera, in consistence with the needs of the architectural design and the nature of the ground. Their role in the project is complementary, symbolic and utilitarian. They organise the space, order the views, underline the sanctity of the place, provide walkers with shade, filter the light or hold the rain-waters, well accommodated within the simplicity of Pikionis' architecture. The predominant sacred olive tree - the symbol of unction, "the vine of the Scripture", as Pikionis calls it<sup>74</sup> - with its silver leafage creating a great equilibrium of shade and light in all seasons, its tortured sturdy trunk tracing the centuries, its roots among the limestones enduring scarcity of water, epitomises the austerity of the Attic landscape and manifests the mystery of matter.

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monuments and should therefore be excluded from the repertoire of trees, suitable for the historic site! The argument seems absurd if one takes into consideration the entirely different texture (i.e. manmade white stone artifacts versus dark green plants) and the totally different display (i.e. rhythmical alignment of the columns versus free 'at random' dispersion of the trees) of the respective elements." Alexander Papageorgiou-Venetas, 1990-1991, op. cit., p. 15.

Cf. also: "The romantic visions of both Schinkel and Klenze to plant characteristic southern trees - like cypresses or palmtrees - next to the ruins on the Acropolis in order to enhance the 'picturesque' quality of the site have been rejected from the beginning". Ibid., p. 18. Reference to: Leo von Klenze, op. cit., in: *ibid.*, pp. 42-3, n. 11.

72 When Pikionis visited the site, long after the completion of the project, he remarked that the vegetation had not received appropriate care and that excessive growth and inappropriate planting had altered the original balance. See: Dimitris Pikionis, "Εισηγητική έκθεση επί της συνεργασίας μου εις τὰ ὑπὸ ἐκτέλεσιν ἔργα τῶν περὶ τὴν Ἀκρόπολιν ἀρχαιολογικῶν χώρων", (1955), p. 272n (eds.), (extract from a letter of Pikionis' to a German colleague).

73 Ibid., p. 271.

74 Dimitris Pikionis, "Αὐτοβιογραφικὰ σημειώματα", (1958), p. 32.

Cf.: "τοῦτον καὶ ἀνάπαυσιν καλοῦμεν καὶ ἄμπελον καὶ χάριν καὶ λόγον τοῦ πατρὸς". *Vita Abercii*, T. Nissen *Teub.* 1910, I6 (p. 14.18). In: G. W. H. Lampe (ed.), op. cit., p. 809.

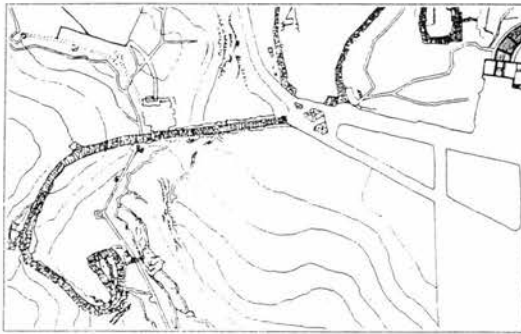
Cf. also: "He [Christ] is the 'vine' and we the 'branches' ". Nicholas Arseniew, referring to John 15:4. In: Nicholas Arseniew, *Mysticism and the Eastern Church*, translated from the German by Arthur Chambers, London, 1926, p. 76.

## 8. 4. On the Hill of Philopappus

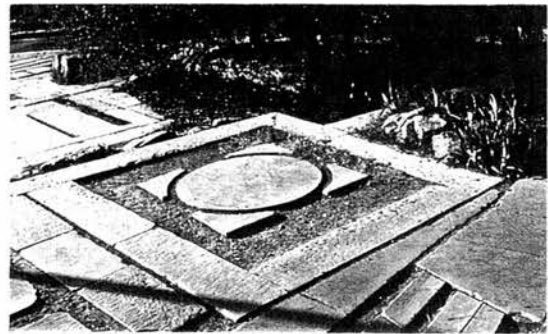
*Mother, great-hearted in glory and in suffering,  
If always in the secret mystery live your children  
With thought, with dream, what joy have then the eyes,  
These eyes, to behold you in the desolate wood ...*

Dionysios Solomos<sup>75</sup>

The complete architectural project includes the Pnyx, the hill of the sweet-voiced Heliconian Muses and the hill of the Nymphs (Observatory Hill). The Museaeum is more often called Hill of Philopappus, from the monument to the Syrian prince, counsel of Rome and benefactor of the city of Athens, Gaius Antiochus Philopappus, which stands on its summit. The hill was the haunt of *Moirai* (Destinies), "the redoubted sisters". At least until one century ago, Athenians brought small feasts to their cavern, "consisting of a cup of honey and white almonds, a cake, on a little napkin, and a vase of aromatic herbs burning, and exhaling an agreeable perfume"<sup>76</sup>. This hill is also sowed with votive niches, caves with sepulchral chambers of ancient families, altars, et cetera.<sup>77</sup> Here too the grounds are holy.



**Figure 8.30.** Plan showing the three stone-paved islands on the Avenue of Dionysius the Areopagite and the path up the Hill of Philopappus to the South-West. (After Architectural Association)



**Figure 8.31.** Pavement detail on one of the islands on the avenue.

The stone path descends from the ancient citadel towards the Avenue of Dionysius the Areopagite. Three stone-paved islands on the modern tarmac avenue participate in the

<sup>75</sup> From Solomos' *The Free Besieged*, Draft C, II. Cited in English in: Philip Sherrard, "Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>76</sup> Edward Dodwell, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 397.

<sup>77</sup> The most notable cavern is popularly known as 'Socrates' prison'.



life of the megalopolis, introducing a dialogue with the sacred precincts, juxtaposing the eternal and absolute qualities of the site with the evanescent character of modern life. At the same time, these islands seem to emerge from the past, from an underlying layer, determined to penetrate into contemporary life, denying a break between past and present Athenian worlds. From this point to the South-West one finds the steep



Figure 8.32. The path ascending towards the monument to Philopappus.

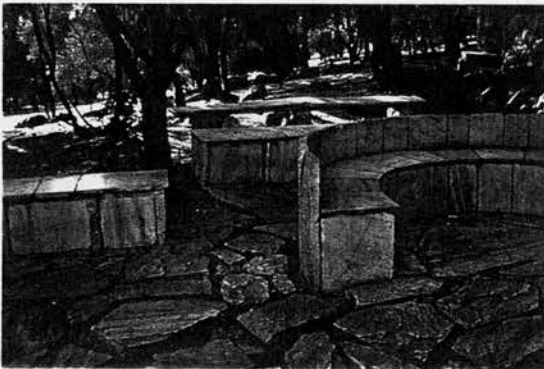


Figure 8.33. Sitting area on the Hill of Philopappus.

stone-thread unfolding upon the Hill of Philopappus. (Figs. 8.30-8.32) The gradually ascending stonepath is bordered on both sides by steps; at places widens to capture a view of the landscape, the city or the Parthenon; forms a niche where it rises to articulate a stone bench for the sunset watch; embraces a rock, encounters perpendicular steps carved in the slope, or finds a secondary path that provides access to an ancient relic or leads to the semicircular Pnyx terrace. (Figs. 8.33, 8.34)

The motifs on the winding paths introduce the walker to the realm of symbols, mainly in their Christian and popular transformations. The language Pikionis adopted for this part of the walk expresses the historic *and* timeless character of the place, with constant echoes of the language of Christianity, forms which are meant to link his design to the Byzantine and post-Byzantine tradition, while emphasising their actuality. The words-symbols he employed are iconographic interpretations of the meaning embodied in the language

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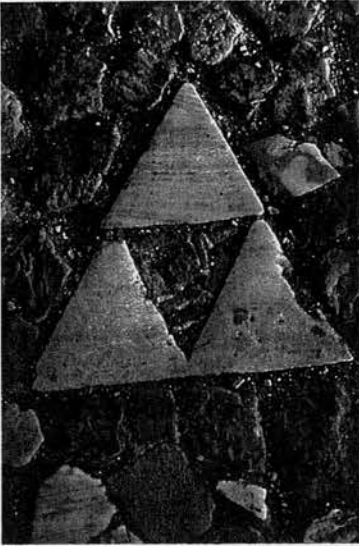
Figure 8.34. Secondary path on the Hill of Philopappus.

of the Orthodox liturgy and that of the built spaces where it takes place, resuscitations of the Common Word embodied in Christian or other myth. They are meant to lead to the discovery of the transcendent reality of the world which is the same in all myths. Their presence in post-Classical form on the Hill of Philopappus, in connection with the Classical elements nearby, strengthens the idea of unity, continuity and interaction between the numerous historical worlds, pointing towards a direction, an end, which has always been and *is* always the same, something however that can perhaps be grasped only once a vision of the end has been achieved. (Figs. 8.35, 8.36)



Figures 8.35 and 8.36.

Here, fragments of images and orders of the past have been assembled and re-interpreted by Pikionis, in an attempt to assert the contemporaneity and the immortality of each symbolism. Ideograms - human creations of incalculable epochs, languages or races - acknowledge a common understanding and perception of truth, beauty and goodness in the world, facilitating the awakening of the memory of true beauty and



Figures 8.37 and 8.38.

goodness. Suns, fishes, tridents, ears of corn, the Alpha and the Omega, waves, founts, rays, a child, a woman, serpents, spirals, meanders, stars, eyes, squares, triangles, circles, geometric patterns: all are symbols of the living, not the dead; images of the immortal that exist in the historical now as well as in the transhistorical always, true stepping stones meant to support and facilitate the present walker and that of the generations to come, speaking to Greek or foreigner in a language which is,

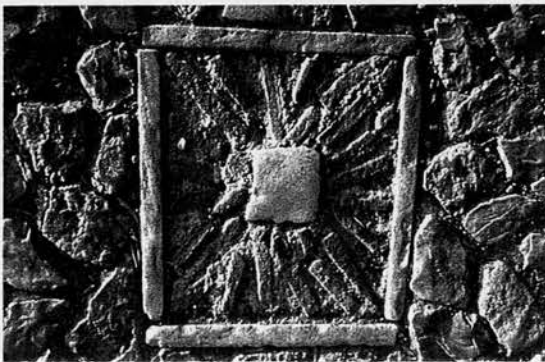


Figure 8.39.

at once, particular and oecumenical, popular and hieratic, "a hieroglyphical and shadowed lesson of the whole world"<sup>78</sup>. (Figs. 8.37-8.39) Pikionis' repetition of the "technical terms" of this perennial symbolic language aimed at guarding and preserving the dialect of the true spiritual and universal culture which he believed to have survived in modern Greece;<sup>79</sup> at recovering its

78 Sir Thomas Browne's phrase, cited in: George Steiner, 1975, 1992, op. cit., p. 489.

79 Cf.: "a parabolical or magical phrase or dialect is the best and plainest habit or dress that mysteries can have to travel in up and down this wicked world." Jacob Böhme, *Signatura rerum*, Preface. Quoted in: Ananda Coomaraswamy, "Literary Symbolism"; in: Roger Lipsey (ed.), op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 330, n. 6.

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energies of invocation and at ensuring its vitality. Pikionis' historically modern redeption of the images and symbols of the language of the primordial catholic tradition<sup>80</sup>, "a spiritual language that transcends all confusion of tongues and is not peculiar to any one place or time"<sup>81</sup>, aimed at sustaining their intelligibility and function into contemporary society which he believed to be in need of these earthly pictures of the more real. For it is these images and symbols that "provide 'openings' into a transhistorical world"; it is their "presence ... that keeps the cultures 'open' "<sup>82</sup>.

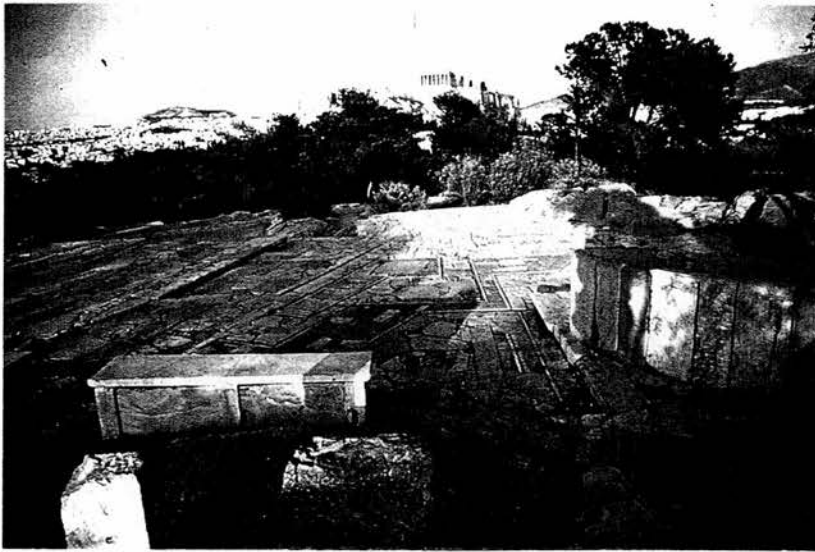


Figure 8.40. The belvedere on the Hill of Philopappus.

Halfway up the hill, the path stops to create the 'belvedere', a terrace provided with seating arrangements on different levels, offering a fine view of the Acropolis. (Fig. 8.40) At the top of the hill unfolds unrestricted the view of the physical Attic world: the circle of the coloured mountain-curves, the plain of Athens, the peninsula, the olive groves, the Saronic Gulf bounded by the Peloponnesian mountains, the red rock of Acrocorinth, the sea, the islands, the sky, the light, the air, the drifting clouds, the sound of bells, the smell of wild thyme, oleander and sage, the Roman theatre, the

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80 "... the one and indivisible [tradition] of the world". Dimitris Pikionis, "Τό πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 34, n. 3. See further references of Pikionis' to "the primordial tradition of the World" (Dimitris Pikionis, "Λόγος εἰς πνευματικὴν ἑορτὴν εἰς μνήμην τοῦ ἀρχιτέκτονος Γ. Κουτολέοντος", (1953), p. 176), in the Introduction of this thesis.

81 Ananda Coomaraswamy, "Literary Symbolism"; in: Roger Lipsey (ed.), *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 324.

82 Mircea Eliade, 1952, 1961, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

towering walls of the Acropolis, the Doric temple. All elements of the Greek physical world, various and simple, are present there. The spectator stands in the centre of this timeless Greek microcosm, the ancient, the Byzantine and the modern one. Before this view, connected with much history and mythology, he feels his sense of sight sharpened and senses the clear and vivid image of the world which is evoked and comes to life before him, composed of all reality: visible and invisible.



**Figure 8.41.** Plan of the building complex on the Hill of Philopappus. A: church, B: pavilion, C: porch. (After Architectural Association)



**Figure 8.42.** View across the enclosure towards the porch. (After Architectural Association)

At one of the gates of the ancient city, in the ruins of the ancient *Diateichisma*, one reaches an enclosure defined by a chapel, a café pavilion and perimetrical stone benches, "intended to be a place of rest and meditation away from the distracting bustle of the city."<sup>83</sup> (Figs. 8.41, 8.42) Pikionis (in collaboration with the architect Alexander Papageorgiou) renovated the pre-existing Byzantine-vernacular small basilica of St. Dimitris Loumbardiariis and built the pavilion adjacent to it and on the principal axis of the Parthenon. He created a place to offer hospitality to contemporary voyagers, exactly at the point where diverse historical periods meet: the church, which was originally built in the ninth century on the ruins of the ancient Athenian walls (the present basilica, however, expresses the contribution of the post-Byzantine period), is

83 Alexandra Papageorgiou, in: "St Dimitris Loumbardiariis Church and Pavilion, Athens 1951-7, With Alexander Papageorgiou"; in: Architectural Association, op. cit., p. 57.

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dedicated to the Christian warrior saint who had taken the place of goddess Demeter, becoming the patron of agriculture,<sup>84</sup> and to whom here popular imagination gave the epithet *Loumbardiaris*, after Morosini set the Acropolis on fire from this point, in 1687; it was here that the ancient visitor to the city of Athens found the *Dipylon* gate and once through it had the first opportunity to admire the Periclean monuments and it is the same location that Pikionis chose for placing a terrace from which modern tourists can view the west front of the temple in the creation of which, according to Plutarch, "some ever-flowering life and unaging spirit had been infused"<sup>85</sup>. It was also for this complex that Pikionis had made sketches which reveal his intention to add a wealth of forms in the folk vein, typically by the anonymous hands of the nineteenth century (or earlier) Greek artisans: a centrally located vessel with a winged-Niki-figure-head, zoomorphic sculptures, carved ornaments depicting idealised male heroic warriors and women in traditional costume, surrounded by vegetal decorations, forms inspired by a "mythical vision of the world" and its inhabitants, mixtures of pagan-and-Christian religious and historico-mythical memories, improvisations on a crystallised vocabulary of forms, sanctioned by local tradition. (Fig. 8.43)<sup>86</sup>



**Figure 8.43.** Dimitris Pikionis, sketch for the Philopappus' buildings complex. (After Architectural Association)

The enclosure, protected from the North, provides a calm and serene place for repose and contemplation, or for open-air religious ceremonies. The entrance is through a porch, a wooden *propylon*, (Figs. 8.44, 8.45) which takes the walker 'inside' a place

84 Mircea Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas*, Vol. 2, p. 415.

85 Plutarch, *Life of Pericles*, sec. 13.

86 No such forms were finally realised. The exterior decoration of the walls of the church was also never completed. Alexis Papageorgiou, "Έργα Ἀκροπόλεως: Μάιος 1954 - Φεβρουάριος 1958"; in: Agni Pikioni (ed.), *Δημήτρης Πικιώνης*, 8 Vols., Athens, 1994, Volume 7: *Διαμόρφωση τοῦ περὶ τὴν Ἀκρόπολη Ἀρχαιολογικοῦ Χώρου: 1954-1957*, p. 27.

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which one immediately feels familiar with, conveying an effect of peace and precision, echoing the courtyards of traditional Greek domestic architecture or similar enclosures of monasterial architecture. The same feeling of reverence that one feels while ascending is here induced in the spectator by the pervading peace and the achieved effect of intimacy. The architectural space Pikionis has created here may be seen as exemplary, not only because it highlights the architect's awareness and profound understanding of the specific complex historical, social and cultural context of his work, but also because he has succeeded in resisting concessions to both a single historical time of the past and to the so-called 'spirit of the time' when he designed it. Seemingly unaffected by the passing of time, respectful of modern Athenians' patterns of behaviour,<sup>87</sup> it has been appropriated by the latter as an organically integrated place, where there is no conflict between new and old, where what is evoked is the *genius* of the place rather than that of the designer.



**Figure 8.44.** Dimitris Pikionis, sketch for the southern façade of the church of St. Dimitris Loumbardiaris and the entrance to the enclosure. (After Architectural Association)

The space expresses something of a spiritual value drawn into everyday life through the sensitively handled humble materials, through the noble sobriety and simplicity of arrangement, through this architecture of dignity, humility and ardent piety which redeems the spirits that haunt the place. Here the architect has created a work that functions within human life while lifting life to a level that is sacred. Every fragment of past order asserts not the presence of the spirit of the times that gave it shape, but the presence of the spirit which it embodies; it asserts the validity and ingenuity not of the historical form *per se*, but of the archetype in the likeness of which it is made.

87 See: Alexander Papageorgiou-Venetas, *Athens: The Ancient Heritage and the Historic Cityscape in a Modern Metropolis*, Athens, 1994, pp. 368ff.



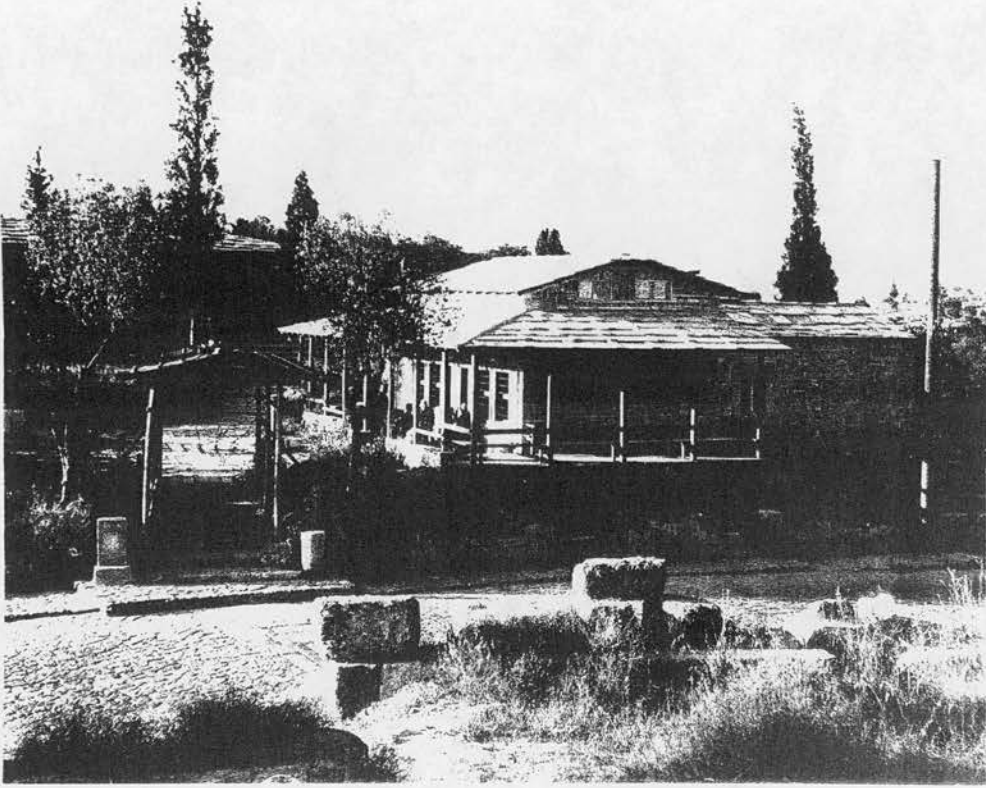
Figure 8.45. The entrance to the enclosure through a wooden *propylon*.

The man-made artwork has been so gently placed into the natural environment and the human measure so accurately preserved throughout, that man's reciprocity with the natural world appears evident - is made transparent - and unchangeable. The historically modern architectural form may be seen as the result of the co-operation of all the forces of nature, in the manner the nearby ancient temples were seen by Pikionis.<sup>88</sup> Next to the wooden *propylon*, he placed an ancient tomb stone, probably Hellenistic, which bears an inscription commemorating a woman: BEPENIKH / ΙΣΙΔΩΡΟΥ / ΜΙΛΗΣΙΑ / ΜΕΝΑΝΔΡΟΥ / ΑΙΘΑΛΙΔΟΥ / ΓΥΝΗ. In its modern context, this memorial may be seen as transformed into a kind of votive offering or thank-offering (such dedicatory inscriptions were common practice in ancient Greece) to Nature, giving praise and honour to the eternal feminine, the Mother Earth, whom, as already said, Pikionis recognised as the source and measure of all forms of life and art. It is the same deity in her Christian form that is celebrated every year here. During the three weeks preceding the feast day of the Dormition of the Holy Virgin (15 August), the icon of the Mother of God is placed in the outer narthex of the chapel of St. Dimitris Loumbardiariis for veneration.<sup>89</sup>

88 Dimitris Pikionis, "Συναισθηματική Τοπογραφία", (1935), p. 76.

89 Alexis Papageorgiou, *op. cit.*, p. 28.





**Figure 8.46.** The Philopappus' buildings complex from the south, with the church of St. Dimitris Loumbardiariis and the wooden *propylon* in the foreground. (After Agni Pikioni, ed.)

Conscious of the nature and symbolic significance of a church building and the rites performed in it, as well as of the religious needs of the laypeople participating in the divine services, Pikionis proceeded to the renovation and enlargement of the church of St. Dimitris Loumbardiariis, the Christian 'refuge' on the Hill of Philopappus. His intention was to re-create this building in the form that would best serve as a visual, iconographic interpretation of Christian theology, in a sense that encompasses the reality of human life and a higher reality that is present in the Church, as well as an interpretation of universal theology, so to speak, in a sense that encompasses the reality that had been embodied in the architectural forms of the past which remain rooted in the western Attic hills.

Pikionis' creative intervention did not in any way deprive the church building of the particular character it had acquired over the previous centuries. Like most of the ecclesiastical buildings of the late period of Byzantium and the centuries after its fall, it owes the picturesque character and poetic beauty of its architectural form to a dynamic

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process of development, continuous modification, improvised rebuilding of ruins and reusing of building materials from older structures. Pikionis' twentieth century renovation followed similar practices, aiming at continuing the same process, halting the process of deterioration of the structure and preserving the 'folk' qualities of the formal elements of the building.

He covered the basilica with a simple double pitched timber roof with small inclination, white marble tiles and a raking cornice protecting the elaborately ornamented pediments at each end, respectful of the skyline of the neighbouring Doric temple and the local climatic conditions.<sup>90</sup> He rebuilt the narthex of the basilica and added a second exterior narthex along the western side, which turns and continues along part of the southern wall. (Figs. 8.46, 8.48) This second narthex is constructed with timber, recalling similar structures from Greek vernacular and monasterial architecture, and is furnished with simple wooden benches like those found in the yards of monasteries. The pavement of the old basilica is a composition of reused stone and ceramic shards, many of which are antique, from the roof of the ancient Pnyx<sup>91</sup>. The narthex is also paved with white marble from Penteli and grey marble from Dionysos. (Fig. 8.53) Where structurally necessary and appropriate, concrete has also been used without hesitation.

A plurality of symbols and a powerful underlying unity govern the patterning of the exterior of the church walls: a synthesis of stone low-relievi, marble fragments, sundry clay and brick ornaments, Byzantine tiles and shards in geometric formations of inexhaustible imagination. The texture of the elevations is the result of an endless recreation of familiar techniques and iconographic forms from the Byzantine and post-Byzantine architectural tradition.<sup>92</sup> Most prominent and frequent among the Christian symbols employed here is that of the cross. With great variety in detail and accuracy in interpretation, the produced architectural form conforms to the spirit it houses and presents it to the believer while preparing, admonishing and instructing him before he enters into the nave for the Christian mystery. (Figs. 8.49-8.52)

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90 Papageorgiou observes that some of this roof's formal elements and their proportions derive from Classical rather than Neo-byzantine prototypes. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

91 *Ibid.*, p. 27.

92 The practice of enlivening exteriors in this manner had gained "an extraordinary diffusion in later Byzantine architecture, more in Greece and the Balkans than in Constantinople". Cyril Mango, *Byzantine Architecture*, Milan, 1974, London, 1979, 1986, p. 118.

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The treatment of the interior stands in sharp contrast to that of the exterior. Upon entering the dimly candle-lit "mysterious heaven"<sup>93</sup> of the chapel, which "contains not the tree of life" often depicted on the exterior of its walls, "but life itself",<sup>94</sup> one accustomed to the bright light of Attica is blinded. The progress from the exterior to the interior implies a progress from the created to the uncreated, to a new condition. The images depicted on the exterior of the church may be seen as intended to function as steps of the ladder of cataphatic theology, which the soul of man can mount to contemplation. But as one attains to the heights of contemplation and entering within the church his soul is seized by wonder, it is the apophatic attitude that is commended to him who may thus "penetrate to the darkness wherein He who is beyond all created things makes his dwelling."<sup>95</sup> And as one becomes gradually accustomed to the weak light in the nave, the badly preserved wall frescoes reveal something of that glory which according to Christianity belongs to the age to come, and the faithful is drawn towards God. But, in the words of St. Symeon the New Theologian,

*God can be known to us in the same way as a man can see an endless ocean by standing at the shore at night with a dimly lit candle. Do you think he can see much? Not much, almost nothing. And nevertheless, he sees the water well. He knows that there is an ocean in front of him, that this ocean is huge and that he cannot see it all at once. The same is true of our knowledge of God.*<sup>96</sup>



**Figure 8.47.** Dimitris Pikionis, sketch for the northern pediment of the church of St. Dimitris Loumbardiaris. (After Agni Pikioni, ed.)

93 St. Simeon of Thessalonica, quoted in: Leonid Ouspensky, op. cit., p. 23.

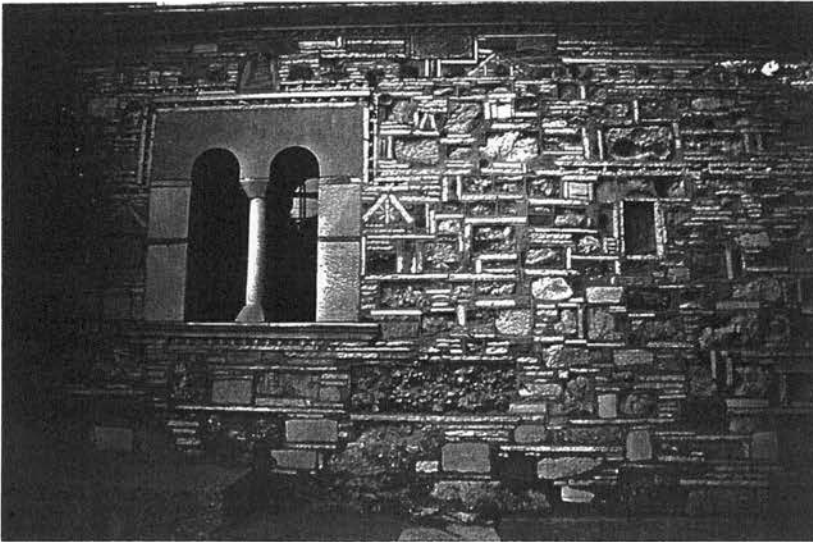
94 Ibid., p. 24.

95 St. Dionysius the Areopagite, *Mystical Theology*; quoted in: Vladimir Lossky, 1957, 1991, op. cit., p. 27. "apophaticism", notes Lossky, "constitutes the fundamental characteristic of the whole theological tradition of the Eastern Church." Ibid., p. 26.

96 *Works*, Oratation 61, Moscow, 1982 (in Russian), p. 100. As cited in: Leonid Ouspensky, op. cit., p. 33.



**Figure 8.48.** The church of St. Dimitris Loumbardiaris, western façade.



**Figure 8.49.** The church of St. Dimitris Loumbardiaris, southern wall patterning.

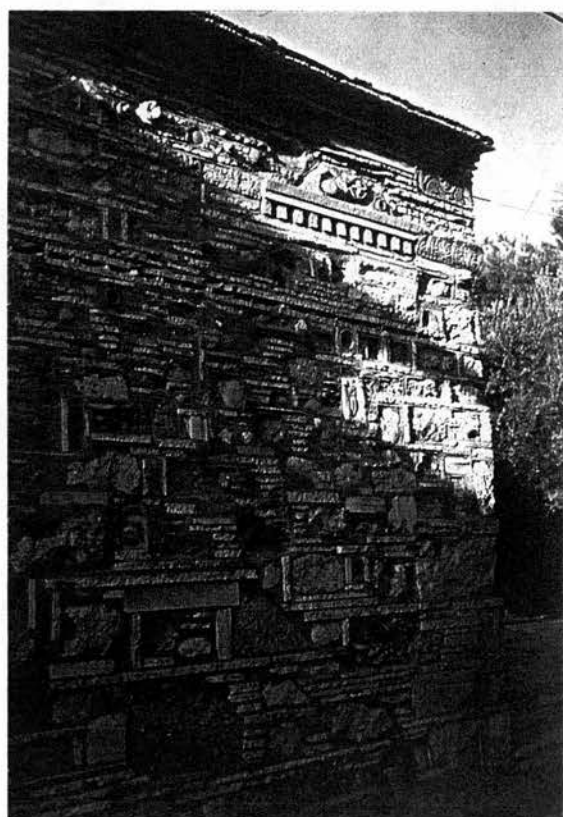
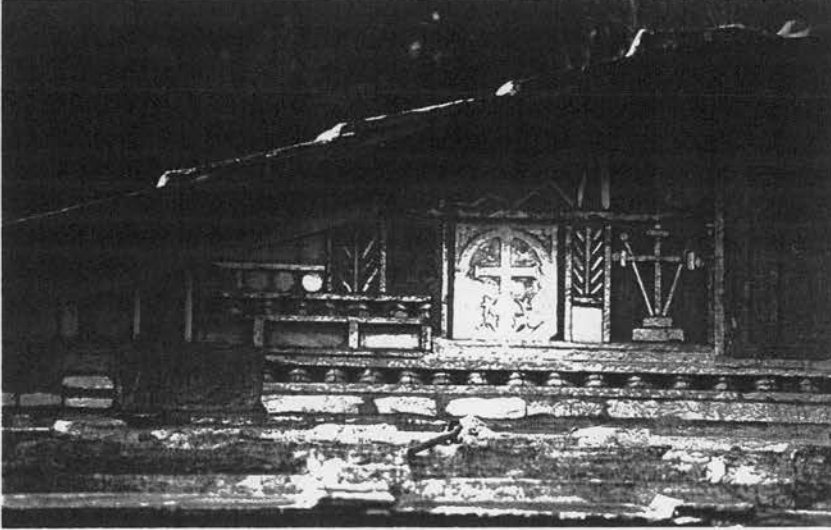
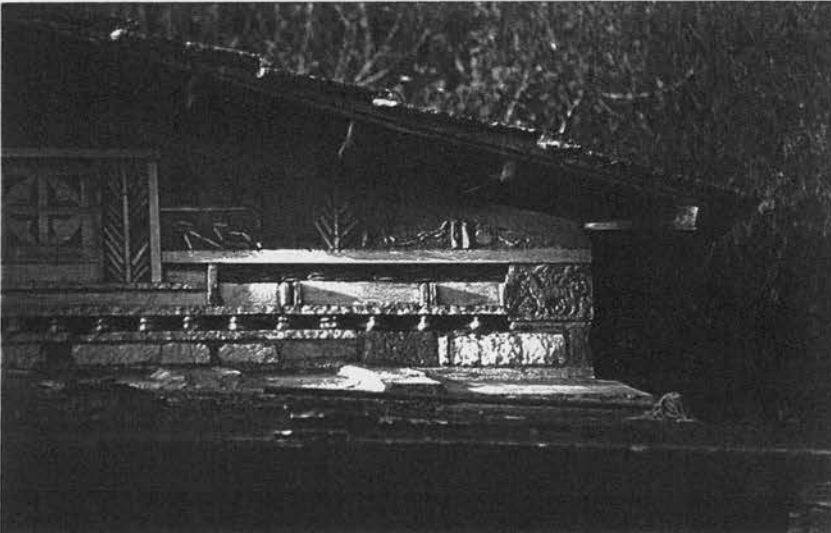


Figure 8.50. The church of St. Dimitris Loumbardiaris, southern wall patterning.



**Figure 8.51.** The church of St. Dimitris Loumbardiaris, southern façade, gable detail.



**Figure 8.52.** The church of St. Dimitris Loumbardiaris, southern façade, gable detail.



Figure 8.53. Church entrance.



Figure 8.54. Church wall, detail.

Pikionis' achievement is that he re-created the architectural order of the church and its surroundings in such a way that it brings forth the existing - ultimately in all things - hidden reality, and permits the visitor to the site to perceive it; to enter - as long as his soul is not foreign - into communion with it. In his letter to Pikionis quoted earlier, Despotopoulos remarks the reverent behaviour of the people in the precincts of the church. It is exactly this behaviour that reflects the way the architect himself acted. He approached the site with reverence, "with a sense for the sacred",<sup>97</sup> and, having himself perceived the essence of things, he succeeded in creating - without rhetoric - a work monumental for its simplicity, with a form worth becoming the receptacle of this spiritual essence. The activation of the architect's own perceptive organs rendered his work capable of activating similar ways of perception in the spectator. Pikionis' realisation of the truth which he himself had spiritually apprehended resulted in a work which attunes the mind and, in the words of Despotopoulos, "ennoble[s] the spirit", spiritualises the consciousness.

The adjoining café pavilion, in the place of an older one, is a well balanced synthesis of indoors and outdoors sitting areas interwoven with the ground formations. It is composed of a main stone-building, raised from the ground by five steps, and of a network of roofed hypethral timber-decks, providing places for intimate conversation, rest, gathering or

97 Dimitris Pikionis, "Εισήγησης τῆς Αἰσθητικῆς Ἐπιτροπῆς τῆς Γενικῆς Γραμματείας Τουρισμοῦ ἐπὶ τῶν ἀρχῶν ἐπὶ τῶν ὁποίων πρέπει νὰ βασισθοῦν τὰ νομοθετικὰ μέτρα προασπίσεως τῆς Αἰσθητικῆς τῆς Χώρας εἰς τὰς Τουριστικὰς Ζώνας", (1946), p. 145. Also quoted from conversations between the author and Pikionis in: Christos Yannaras, 1987, 1988, 1990, op. cit., p. 296.

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enjoyment of the gracious view of the Acropolis, saturated with the fragrances of thyme and rosemary. Roofs covered with slates, tiles, straw, reeds or branches of thyme, and scattered pine-trees enrich the tune, the quality and the variety of shade, light and colour. (Fig. 8.55)

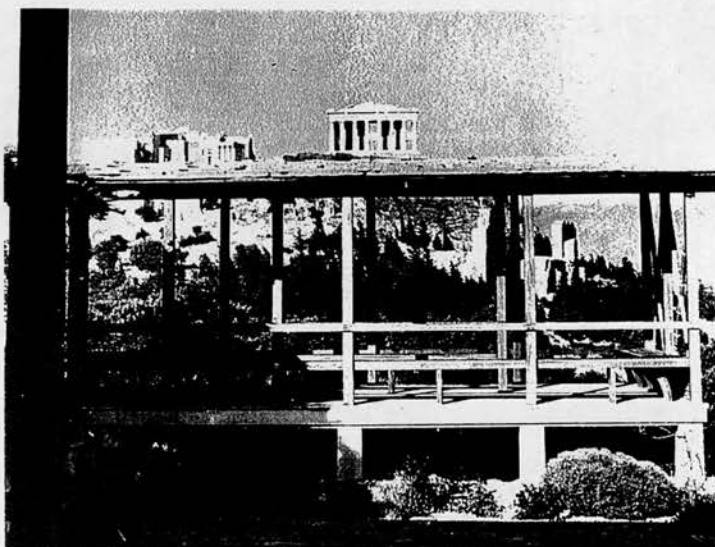


Figure 8.55. Café pavilion deck.

The architectural images at the site of the church of St. Dimitris Loumbardiariis and the pavilion reverberate familiar images primarily from Greek vernacular architecture, but are also conditioned by the region's wider historical and cultural inheritance. These historical and cultural references form a connecting thread that runs through the whole work and gives it its cumulative force and impact. Pikionis believed that art produced at any historical period "should be viewed with the inner sight, ... beyond the particular categories of time and space" and that "the eternal symbol of Greek art survives unchanged (*ἀίδιο*) within our folk tradition ..."<sup>98</sup>. The reason he drew primarily on the stream of this tradition is simply that he realised that there lay the immediate roots of his land's architecture.<sup>99</sup> And, as he says, "the pursuit of the real has never been as difficult - for all peoples - as in our times."<sup>100</sup> "Our epoch is so poor that we must bend and collect all the remaining crumbs on which the Form lives."<sup>101</sup>

98 Dimitris Pikionis, "Αντώνης Σώχος", (1961), p. 99.

99 Cf.: "A culture lived is one that draws for continuous, indispensable sustenance on the great works of the past, on the truths and beauties achieved in the tradition." George Steiner, *In Bluebeard's Castle: Some Notes Towards the Re-definition of Culture*, London, 1971, p. 70.

100 Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 209.

101 Dimitris Pikionis, "Πρόλογος γιὰ τὴ Λαϊκὴ Τέχνη", (1927), p. 52.



## 8. 5. Ground Geometry

*Know oh brother ... that the study of sensible geometry leads to skill in all the practical arts, while the study of intelligible geometry leads to skill in the intellectual arts because this science is one of the gates through which we move to the knowledge of the essence of the soul, and that is the root of all knowledge.*

From the *Rasa 'il* by the Brotherhood of Purity<sup>102</sup>

It has been pointed out<sup>103</sup> that, at the site of the church and the pavilion, as well as along the route up the Hill of Philopappus, Pikionis attempted to apply Doxiadis' theory on the organisation of space in Greek Classical architecture. It should also be kept in mind, however, that Pikionis viewed ground geometry as the means to reveal the inner absolute geometry of the earth;<sup>104</sup> as the appropriate means to create an analogy, to imitate the divine, original geometry.<sup>105</sup> He employed mathematical geometry in order to achieve unity in the composition, to support and realise order in the creation of a work that should conform to the mathematical beauty of Creation. He applied geometric principles in order to ensure economy of space, unity and sobriety in the composition, principles which he considered "truly Greek".<sup>106</sup> He used Euclidean geometry as a tool, in an attempt to project on the ground the divine character of the place, to order created space in a qualitative sense, to reconcile the opposites in nature, to create a space where the different stages of reality approach each other; in order to render his work capable of participating in the harmonious geometry of the physical ground, the ether and the light.<sup>107</sup> (Figs. 8.56, 8.57)

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102 Translated by S. H. Nasr, cited in: Keith Critchlow, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

103 Dimitris Antonakakis; in: Architectural Association, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

104 Cf.: "Outer geometry is a product of inner geometry." Dimitris Pikionis, "Αντώνης Σώχος", (1961), p. 97n.

105 Cf.: "If Plato specified that only geometers could enter into the temple of Divine Knowledge, it was because, as Proclus was to assert in his commentary upon the *Elements* of Euclid, geometry is an ancillary to metaphysics." Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "The Cosmos as Theophany"; in: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 1981, *op. cit.*, p. 202. Nasr also notes: "Of course although geometry is an ancillary to metaphysics, it is not only an ancillary. Rather, it is one of the most important of the traditional sciences in its own right and as these sciences are related to art." *Ibid.*, p. 217, n. 32.

106 Dimitris Pikionis, "Η θεωρία του αρχιτέκτονος Κ. Α. Δοξιάδη για τη διαμόρφωση του χώρου εις την αρχαία 'Αρχιτεκτονική", (1937), p. 188.

See Pikionis' remarks on the "economy of space" in ancient Greek architecture, in: *ibid.*, p. 187.

107 Dimitris Pikionis, "Συναισθηματική Τοπογραφία", (1935), p. 76n.

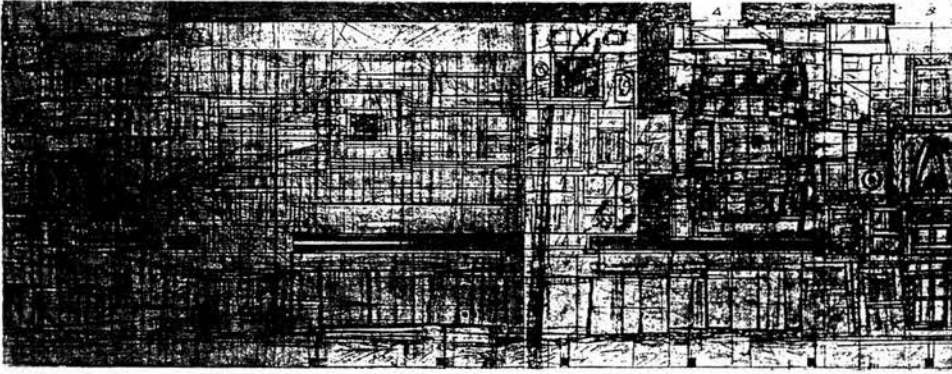


Figure 8.56. Floor pattering in pavilion enclosure. (After Architectural Association)

According to Pikionis, "pure mathematical" geometry de-phenomenalises ordinary reality and approaches the hidden principles where the phenomena derive from, while "the more complex geometry becomes, the more we move towards the phenomenon."<sup>108</sup> "Pure mathematical forms", Pikionis continues, are more appropriate "to interpret the symbolic element in the phenomenon"<sup>109</sup>, something reflected in his preference for Pythagorean geometric principles. However, it is

precisely in his article on the theory of Doxiadis that he points out: "the theory of Number, which in our times has shown a clear tendency for regeneration, can easily degenerate and fall from the high level of worship - where it ought to remain - to the rudimentary level of application, when those that apply it lack the necessary spiritual understanding, when the divine character of Number has been forgotten."<sup>110</sup>

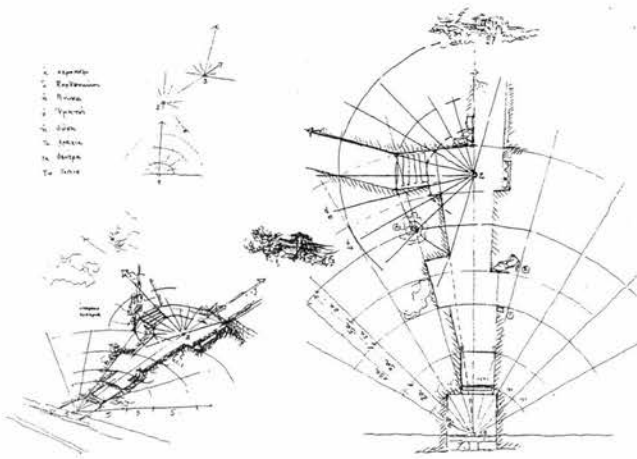


Figure 8.57. Dimitris Antonakakis, sketches illustrating Pikionis' application of Doxiadis' theory on space-organisation in Greek Classical architecture, along the route up the Hill of Philopappus. (After Antonakakis; in: Architectural Association)

108 Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 211.

109 Ibid.

110 Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ θεωρία τοῦ ἀρχιτέκτονος Κ. Α. Δοξιάδη γιὰ τὴ διαμόρφωση

## 8. 6. Execution of the Work

*I like to think - yes, I feel sure, that a future is coming in which  
we shall condemn as black magic,  
as the brainless, irresponsible product of instinct,  
all art which is not controlled by the intellect.*

Thomas Mann<sup>111</sup>

Pikionis' architectural project on the Attic hills reached its completion in 1957. He had devoted himself entirely to the project, which was his only occupation and preoccupation for seven years. He spent all his days, from early morning to sunset, at the site where, in close collaboration with other architects, craftsmen, masons and students, he proceeded with great caution and reticence in an effort to create a work to suit a place which for him epitomised the spiritual Greek world. The architecture had to grow out of the earth that bore the emblems of this world, leaving the earth intact and unrestricted to free her innermost essence.

This product of Pikionis' architectural creative process is the result of contemplation and skilful craftsmanship, denoting the sanctity of the place and, at the same time, associating with everyday life, sometimes easily accessible to the walker and the reader, sometimes inscrutable, but always demanding an active participation from his side. It was a similar kind of demands that Pikionis was placing upon his colleagues, artisans and students with whom he collaborated in the execution of the work. As one of them writes,

*His [Pikionis'] work on the Acropolis was indeed an act of confidence: confidence in those who would spend time in that place; confidence in the old folk who rested on the low stone walls or carefully walked down from one flight of steps to another; confidence in the children who hopped from one flat stone to another, taking care not to tread on the cracks - he watched them mesmerised, recognising in their dancing movement an interpretation of his own original decision. ... 'I trust you' he used to say. 'Trust leads to responsibility'.<sup>112</sup>*

And truly it did, as it appears from the following story which recounts an event that took place on the site, told by another of Pikionis' students:

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τοῦ χώρου εἰς τὴν ἀρχαία Ἀρχιτεκτονικὴ", (1937), p. 196.

111 Thomas Mann, *The Nation*, December 10, 1938. Cited in: Ananda k. Coomaraswamy, "A Figure of Speech or a Figure of Thought?"; in: Roger Lipsey (ed.), op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 42.

112 Dimitris Antonakakis; "Dimitris Pikionis, Elaboration and Improvisation"; in: Architectural Association, op. cit., p. 14.

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*It was a spring day when he [Pikionis] was working on the southern façade of the church. I went there, as I often did, then a student in the first years, in case I could understand something while watching him at work. He welcomed me with his usual goodness and he asked me to show a mason how the Byzantines were making the saw-tooth friezes with solid bricks. It is still there. 'I understood' the mason told me. 'Now come, I'll show you something and you will tell me your opinion.' He climbed on a ladder and, searching with his hand, he took among the tiles a clay shard, round, from the bottom of a vase, possibly ancient. 'You know', he said coming down, 'I found it on the hill', showing [the Hill of] Philopappus, 'while eating my lunch yesterday, and I kept it. Last night I dreamt that it suits this place. Don't you think it would be nice?', and he was putting it at the appropriate position for me to see.<sup>113</sup>*

Pikionis' work was intended to function for the whole man, body and soul. This is also the way it was imagined and executed, as a product of the mind, the soul and the hands. Architect and craftsmen alike executed the work not in a servile but in an active and consciously creative manner.<sup>114</sup> In the execution of the project, not only their body but their soul too participated actively and creatively. With reference to another architectural project, Pikionis wrote that "the execution of the work requires the participation (μέθεξις) of the soul of the workers",<sup>115</sup> a requirement that was met here. This is reflected in the finished work which is the product of a process whereby the participants' collective experience, creative imagination, instinct and oneiric inspiration have been translated with knowledge and skill, with time and labour, into palpable matter. The result is an architectural poetic creation, worthy of its neighbouring site where the temple of Athene and Hephaestos once stood.<sup>116</sup> Pikionis says: "the imagination of the architect must be able to dream",<sup>117</sup> and so did his and his

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113 Per. Panteleakis, "Πικιώνης, μια παγά λαλέουσα της εποχής μας"; in: The National Technical University of Athens, op. cit., pp. 161-2.

114 Cf.: "Ruskin ... insisted long ago that in the special case of architecture the best work demanded a genuine collaboration between designer and executants: not a relation in which the workmen simply carried orders, but one in which they had a share in the work of designing." R. G. Collingwood, 1938, 1958, op. cit., pp. 326-7.

115 Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἐπιστολή στον Δήμαρχο Ἡρακλείου γιὰ τὸ Μνημεῖο τοῦ Καζαντζάκη", (23/3/1958), p. 274.

116 Plato, *Critias*, 112b.

Cf.: "But Hephaestos and Athene, as they had a common nature, being brother and sister by the same father, and at one, moreover, in their love of wisdom and artistry, so also obtained one lot in common, this our land, to be a home meet for prowess and understanding. They produced from the soil a race of good men and taught them the order of their polity". Ibid., 109c-d.

Cf. also: "Fire was the gift of Prometheus, the secrets of the crafts were made known by Hephaestus and his partner in craftsmanship". Plato, *Statesman*, 274d.

See: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "Athens and Hephaistos", in: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, 1989, op. cit., pp. 183-7.

117 Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 245, n. 35 (p. 232).

Cf. Solomos' "With thought, with dream", a phrase from his poem *The Free Besieged*, which has passed into currency.

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collaborators'. The result bears the verily poetic qualities of the product of a team which worked as Pikionis wanted a team to work, as "a communion of souls"<sup>118</sup>.



### 8. 7. Epilogue

*"Ἐκαστος δὲ κατὰ τὸ αὐτοῦ μέτρον διαυγάζεται.*

Isaac the Syrian<sup>119</sup>

*"Each to his own weapons," he said*

Odysseus Elytis<sup>120</sup>

It has often been said that Pikionis was basically a self-taught architect. Perhaps because of this he searched without prejudices for the path which had been carved by the continuous walking of all previous generations of builders. Learning from the work of his unlearned predecessors, he grew able to use his natural native tongue and to build his work with words he uttered with faith and an unerring instinct, with an eye for the other reality, a genuine impulse for Good and an innate ability to

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118 See: Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἐκθεση τοῦ Καθηγητῆ Δημήτρη Πικιώνη πρὸς τὸν κ. Κωνσταντῖνο Α. Δοξιάδη", (1961), p. 203.

119 Quoted in: Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἀντώνης Σῶχος", (1961), p. 103.

120 From Elytis' poem *The Axion Esti*, "The Genesis". Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 17.

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distinguish Good from ephemeral goods. His manner of materialising Good, his way of speaking of Good is, if nothing else, not distorting Good.

Dimitris Pikionis' architecture, his poetry - I think we can talk of poetry without danger of error - springs from the other reality; it descends from the world of Memory where he, as a man and an artist, ascended in order to find his own true face and the true face of architecture, and to show it to mankind. In this sense, Pikionis belongs to the race of poets which Elytis talked about in the following words:

*this is indeed the common characteristic that distinguishes the race of the poets: their separation from current reality. Beyond that, their manner of reaction - which inevitably classifies them into separate groups - can for no reason whatsoever constitute a significant criterion.*<sup>121</sup>

For his descendants, Pikionis felt he had prepared the higher reality he had craved for.<sup>122</sup> His stonepaths may be likened to ploughed soil where he sowed the seeds he took from his earth.<sup>123</sup> Reaping, of course, remains entirely up to them.



121 Odysseus Elytis, "Πρώτα - Πρώτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 10. In English in: Odysseus Elytis, "Selections from the *Open Book*"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 27.

122 Dimitris Pikionis, "Συναισθηματική Τοπογραφία", (1935), p. 81. Cf.: Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 206.

123 Cf.: "I had the impression he [Pikionis] had a handful of seeds and he was throwing them while walking; and he knew one day they will fruit." Yannis Mrouzianis; in: "Γνώμες για τὸν Πικιώνη Σαράντα Ἀρχιτεκτόνων, Διανοομένων καὶ Καλλιτεχνῶν"; in: *Ζυγός*, Monthly Art Review, 27-28, Athens, January-February 1958, p. 20.

## *Chapter Nine*

# **Odysseus Elytis and his Articulate Vision of the Greek World**

*No man can create as did Shakespeare, Homer, Sophocles,  
who does not believe with all his blood and nerve, that man's soul is immortal.*

William Butler Yeats

## 9. 1. Two Parallel Formulae

*awake we have a common world, asleep each enters a private world*

Heracleitus, Fragment B 89

Pikionis elaborated the view that "The work of art is the expression of the inner reality of the World"<sup>1</sup>. Hence, his purpose as an architect was to make his work well and to order it so that it becomes the ad-equate expression of the intelligible reality of the world; that its symbolic form (the language of symbols is for Pikionis the only language which is adequate to this task<sup>2</sup>) is true to, or the accurate re-presentation of, this reality and, therefore, a symbol of it adequate to evoke it. Pikionis' perception of the world as a twofold reality - outer and inner - corresponds to his understanding of the art-act as a making of order commensurate with the experienced world-order; as a vital process of formal creation which aims at providing the inner reality of the world - its sacred dimension - with a palpable presence; at re-creating a world that is whole and can only be re-presented as such, in an art-form structured "as a self-existent world, graded mathematically"<sup>3</sup>, to use Solomos' phrase. Pikionis' understanding of his role as an architect is that of a cosmic master-builder.

His formula may fittingly be compared to that stated by a Greek poet of the same generation as Pikionis, Odysseus Elytis: "Every poem (I speak of good poems) is a small and perfect Universe".<sup>4</sup> Or, as Elytis wrote in a longer statement,

*I demanded from the ideal poem that it consist of a miniature of a heliacal system, complete with the same tranquillity and the same expression of eternity in its totality, the same perpetual motion in its isolated component parts. Even today this is how I perceive the*

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Illustration on page 314: Dimitris Pikionis, drawing from the *Ἀττικά* series. (After The Architectural Association of Greece).

- 1 Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ ἐνόραση τοῦ θεατῆ", (1953), p. 118.  
Pikionis argued that the creative activity of the architect is determined by his world-view. Dimitris Pikionis, "Αἰσθητικές ἀρχές τῆς ἀρχιτεκτονικῆς τοῦ Αἰξινικοῦ Συνοικισμοῦ", (1952), p. 257.
- 2 Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ ἐνόραση τοῦ θεατῆ", (1953), p. 118.
- 3 From a note of Solomos' to *The Free Besieged*. Cited in English in: Philip Sherrard, "Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 16.
- 4 This view, Elytis points out, is not far from Solomos' view of the "true poem" as a "ripe and beautiful democracy of ideas, that will present substantially the Monarch invisible to the senses." Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Κείμενα, Νόημα καὶ Ἀλληλουχία στὴ Νέα μας Ποίηση", (1944); in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., pp. 483-4. Solomos' words are from another note of his, in connection with the writing of his poem *The Free Besieged*. Translated by Philip Sherrard and cited in: Philip Sherrard, "Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 16.



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nuclear formation of a poem, like a closed unit, as well as its final self-powered centrifugation, always from the point of view of the meaning of the perceptible, which is consistently localized, isolated and illuminated by inspiration.<sup>5</sup> The difference is that, in order to acquire substance and effectively replace the sun as well as fulfil its mission in the system of images and meanings which it carries along, it is imperative that this meaning develop uninterruptedly and parallel with a symbolic transcription of its own signs of rhythmic and metrical weaving analogous to those which render the meaning of time sensible to human understanding.<sup>6</sup>

Let us look closer to Elytis' formation of his own poems, his poetic articulation of the "small and perfect Universe."

### 9. 2. Vision and Language in the Poetry of Odysseus Elytis

*I never did anything else. I took you the way you took unused nature and then worked it twenty-four times in the forests and the seas. I took you amid that same shuddering that turned words over and left them there like open and irreplaceable seashells. I took you as companion in the lightning, in awe, in my instinct. Because of this, every time I change day, wringing my heart to the nadir, you leave and disappear, conquering your presence, creating a divine solitude, a turbulent and incomprehensible happiness.*

*I did nothing else but what I found and imitated in You!*

Odysseus Elytis, *The Concert of Hyacinths*, IX<sup>7</sup>

Odysseus Elytis<sup>8</sup> (born Odysseus Alepoudelis) was born in Herakleion of Crete, in 1911, into a family descending from the Aegean island of Lesbos. Since 1914, he has lived in Athens, with two brief periods of residence in France (1948-1952 and 1969-

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5 Cf.: "Let the poem possess a bodiless soul, which emanates from God, and which is then embodied in the organs of time, of place, of nationality, of language, with different thoughts, feelings, inclinations, etc. (let a small bodily world be adequate to reveal it); finally, the soul returns to God." Another note of Solomos' in connection with the writing of his poem *The Free Besieged*. Translated by Philip Sherrard and cited in: *ibid*.

6 Odysseus Elytis, "Τὸ Χρονικὸ μιάς Δεκαετίας"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, *op. cit.*, p. 450. In English in: Odysseus Elytis, "Selections from the *Open Book*"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 32.

7 Kimon Friar (tr.), 1974, 1990, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

8 His pen name (Ἐλύτης) may be seen as Elytis' first poetic creation and as a framework for his poetics. The prefix of 'Elytis' is of words such as Ἑλλάς (Hellas), ἐλευθερία (freedom), ἐλπίδα (hope), and Ἑλένη (Helen, the most beautiful of all women). The letter Υ has been likened, by Elytis, to a Greek urn. (In his poem *Καὶ μὲ Φῶς καὶ μὲ Θάνατον*, 2; in: Odysseus Elytis, *Ὁ Μικρὸς Ναυτίλος*, 1970-1974, Athens, 1985, p. 28). The suffix -tis is one with no particular regional association such as those of the suffixes of other Greek names (e. g. the Peloponnesian -opoulos, the Cretan -akis, the Lesbian -elis, et cetera).

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1971).<sup>9</sup> He published his first poems in 1935, in the periodical *Tà Néa Grámmata* (The New Letters) which "became the principal outlet for the so-called 'Generation of the Thirties', which included George Seferis, Andreas Embirikos and several other poets who, along with Elytis, were responsible for introducing French surrealism into Greek poetry."<sup>10</sup>

During his formative years, his acquaintance with surrealism<sup>11</sup> "which aimed at spiritual health and reacted against the rationalist currents which had filled most Western minds"<sup>12</sup>, as Elytis says, enabled him and his generation "to regard Greek reality without the prejudices that have reigned since the Renaissance."<sup>13</sup> In order to do so, it was necessary "to destroy the tradition of rationalism which lay heavily on the Western world", obscuring the vision of "the only true reality"<sup>14</sup>. "Surrealism", Elytis notes, "with its anti-rationalistic character, helped us to make a sort of revolution by perceiving the Greek truth."<sup>15</sup> And since "when a revolution succeeds, you don't gain only the future but the past as well"<sup>16</sup>, as he writes elsewhere, the 'surrealist revolution' enabled the Greek artists of the so-called 'Generation of the Thirties' to align themselves with their native tradition or, in Elytis' own words, "to break the

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9 See: "Ὀδυσσεύς Ἐλύτης: Διάγραμμα Βιογραφικῆς Χρονολογίας"; in: *Αἰολικά Γράμματα*, Vol. 7, 43-44, Athens, January-April 1978, pp. 174-7.

10 Kimon Friar (tr.), 1974, 1990, op. cit., p. 113.

See: Odysseus Elytis, "Τέχνη - Τύχη - Τόλμη"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., pp. 115-53.

See also: Ketty Tsékénis and Nanos Valaoritis (eds.), *Surréalistes Grecs, Cahiers pour un temps*, Centre George Pompidou, Paris, 1991.

11 "Many facets of surrealism I cannot accept, such as its paradoxical side, its championing of automatic writing". Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 7.

See: Robert Jouanny, "Aspects of Surrealism in the Works of Odysseus Elytis", translated from the French by Seymour Feiler; in: *ibid.*, pp. 70-4.

12 Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: *ibid.*, p. 7.

13 *Ibid.*

14 Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Μικρὰ Ἐψίλον, Τὸ Χαμένο Θαῦμα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1992, op. cit., p. 204.

15 Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 7. Elytis, like many Greek artists of his generation, did what he says with reference to Yannis Tsarouchis (a modern Greek painter of the same generation): "he turned his organs of vision from the reality of the philhellenes to the reality of the Hellenes which was latent within us [the Greeks]." In: Odysseus Elytis, "Ἐπίμετρο, Γιάννης Τσαρούχης", (1971); in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 571.

Cf. Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Κείμενα, Τὰ Σύγχρονα Ποιητικά καὶ Καλλιτεχνικά Προβλήματα", (1944); in: *ibid.*, p. 497.

See: Edmund Keeley, "Elytis and the Greek Tradition"; in: Edmund Keeley, 1983, op. cit., pp. 130-48.

16 Odysseus Elytis, "Τὸ Χρονικὸ μιᾶς Δεκαετίας"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 427.

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harnesses" which kept them tied to "the Latin chariot" and to "enter into the [Greek] tradition from the back door."<sup>17</sup> In order to "find the true face of Greece", they had "to link [themselves] physiologically with [their] soil",<sup>18</sup> the physical and the spiritual soil of their native land.

*At the same time, surrealism contained a supernatural element, and this enabled us to form a kind of alphabet out of purely Greek elements with which to express ourselves*<sup>19</sup>

he adds. Already in the 1930s and 1940s Elytis had established his poetry in the centre of the Aegean island world, "the heir of the Hellenic tradition"<sup>20</sup>, which was also his own "ancestral estate which [he] was about to inherit."<sup>21</sup> This dazzling world, where "the metaphysical power of the sun"<sup>22</sup> is a felt presence, provided him with a whole lexicon of physical phenomena: zephyrs, leaves of eucalyptus, pomegranates and jasmines, pebbles, anchors, golden blue horizons and starfishes, which it was the function of his poetry to conduct to their inner spiritual analogies (a key term in Elytis<sup>23</sup>). As Lawrence Durrell observed, in Elytis' poetry these earthly phenomena - "the swallow-tailed birds", "the yellow flowers", "the suns"<sup>24</sup> -

*are at once 'real' and also 'signatures' in the alchemical sense. He makes his magic with them ... Using the most up-to-date methods of technique, he has, at the same time, insisted that at the bottom poetry is not simply a craft or a skill but an act of divination.*<sup>25</sup>

Neither in his early lyrical poems nor later did Elytis describe nature in the manner of a naturalist painter. "These [early] poems deliberately avoid depth of perspective or the

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17 Ibid.

18 Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 7.

19 Ibid. Cf.: "surrealism had proved useful in Greece because the Greek surrealists did not simply copy the French, but rather adapted surrealism to Greek reality." Ibid., p. 7.

Cf. also: Odysseus Elytis, "Τὸ Χρονικὸ μᾶς Δεκαετίας"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., pp. 427ff.

20 Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 13.

21 Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Κορίτσια"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 188. In English in: *ibid.*, p. 29.

22 Odysseus Elytis, "Τὸ Χρονικὸ μᾶς Δεκαετίας"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 427.

23 See below.

24 From Elytis' poem *The Fresco*; in his collection *Six and One Pangs of Conscience for the Sky*, (1960). Translated by John Stathatos; in: Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (eds.), op. cit., p. 84.

25 Lawrence Durrell, "The Poetry of Elytis"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 43.

Cf.: "For me the Aegean is not merely a part of nature, but rather a kind of signature (as one critic rightly observed)". Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: *ibid.*, p. 7.

Cf. also: Philip Sherrard, 1992, op. cit., pp. 131f.

And: "the contemplation of nature means that we see all things, persons and moments as signs and sacraments of God." Bishop Kallistos Ware, 1990, op. cit., p. 159.

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imitative realism of Renaissance painting, for in the clear light of Greece the near and the far seem to coexist on one flat plane, as in Japanese prints<sup>26</sup> and in Byzantine icons. Kimon Friar has likened Elytis' early poems to Byzantine mosaics where "each mosaic fragment retains its brilliance, its identity, its sharp outline; yet it is united with other, equally individual shapes, not by shading or contour, but by linear design and cluster associations of colors."<sup>27</sup> In these poems, the elements of the Aegean landscape and seascape are represented in a continuous condition, in an absolute light; as they are in all times rather than at a particular moment in time, 'as they are in themselves' rather than as they appear to be.

Elytis claims that it is exactly in this manner that things are represented in the Greek language, the verbal language as well as the language of art. "The day I became conscious of the fact that *in the Greek language there is no chiaroscuro*", he writes, "I understood how difficult it is for us [Greeks] to accept the Renaissance; and there was nothing to obstruct anymore my apprehension of the unity of art in ancient Greece, in Byzantium, and in modern times."<sup>28</sup> Elytis' poetic perspective, his method of representing space and things spatial without "shadows [that] divide the surface / Of vision"<sup>29</sup>, reflects the way he views these things. That is, it reflects that he does not perceive the natural world around him only with the blindness of physical sight<sup>30</sup> but, with an activated soul,<sup>31</sup> he tries to break through outward appearance<sup>32</sup> to the Platonic

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26 Kimon Friar, "Introduction"; in: Kimon Friar (tr.), 1974, 1990, op. cit., p. 8.

27 Ibid.

28 Odysseus Elytis, "Πρώτα - Πρώτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 29.

See: Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Μικρὰ Ἐψιλον, Ἄπ- και Εἰκονίζω"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1992, op. cit., pp. 211-4.

See also: Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Ἐπιτύμβια"; in: *ibid.*, pp. 28-30.

Odysseus Elytis, "Ἐπίμετρο, Ὁ Γλύπτης Χρήστος Καπράλος", (1972); in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., pp. 584ff.

And: Odysseus Elytis, "Ἐπίμετρο, Γιάννης Τσαρούχης", (1971); in: *ibid.*, pp. 575f.

29 From Elytis' poem *Seven Nocturnals*, VII; in his collection *Orientalisms*, (1940). Translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard; in: Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (eds.), op. cit., p. 7.

30 Cf.: "Subtract the mind, and the eye is open to no purpose." Meister Eckhart; quoted in: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "The Philosophy of Mediaeval and Oriental Art"; in: Roger Lipsey (ed.), op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 43.

31 "Bad witnesses for men are the eyes and ears of those who have foreign souls". Heracleitus, B 107; in: Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Mathematicians*, VII 126.

Cf.: Odysseus Elytis, "Πρώτα - Πρώτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 37.

32 Elytis underlines the contribution of surrealism to this "re-evaluation of the 'physical' ", which helped the artists to enter "freely in the, until then forbidden, realm of the Spirit". Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Κείμενα, Τὰ Σύγχρονα Ποιητικά καὶ Καλλιτεχνικά Προβλήματα", (1944); in: *ibid.*, pp. 507ff.

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world of Ideas,<sup>33</sup> in order to see with a "multidimensional sight"<sup>34</sup> and to perceive all levels of reality - outer and inner - and the way they interpenetrate, and to make his poem the vehicle, the "consistent localiz[ation]", of his vision. It is the universe "illuminated by inspiration", the universe in this "third" or "poetic condition"<sup>35</sup> which Elytis calls "Lyrical Reality"<sup>36</sup> or "*superreality* (*ὑπερπραγματικότητα*)"<sup>37</sup>, beyond any kind of dualism between matter and spirit, that is represented in his poems; it is the universe in a condition of 'luminous transparency'<sup>38</sup> in which inner and outer reality are fused without being confused; in which all things are united yet without being deprived of their identity. It is this kind of 'lyrical' or "poetic vision"<sup>39</sup> of the wholeness of the world, the vision of the things of the word in an absolute perspective, that all Elytis' poetry embodies (because "the world has remained for [him] the same down to the present day"<sup>40</sup>) and which may be compared with Pikionis' "mythical vision of the world", or with Sikelianos' vision of "the world's deepest Unity"<sup>41</sup>. The poet's role, as understood by Elytis, is to make his readers *see* what he himself has seen,<sup>42</sup> "to quicken into lit presence the continuum between temporality and eternity, between flesh and spirit, between man and 'the other'."<sup>43</sup>

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33 See: Odysseus Elytis, "Ἐπίμετρο, Γιάννης Τσαρούχης", (1971); in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 574.

34 Odysseus Elytis, "Ἐπίμετρο, Arthur Rimbaud", (1972); in: *ibid.*, p. 604.

35 Odysseus Elytis, "Πρώτα - Πρώτα"; in: *ibid.*, p. 11.

36 Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Κείμενα, Νόημα καὶ Ἀλληλουχία στὴ Νέα μας Ποίηση", (1944); in: *ibid.*, p. 484.

37 Odysseus Elytis, "Τέχνη - Τύχη - Τόλμη"; in: *ibid.*, op. cit., p. 140. And: *ibid.*, *passim*.

38 Cf. The first sentence of Elytis' Nobel Prize acceptance speech (Stockholm, 1979): "Qu' il me soit permis, je vous en prie, de parler au nom de la luminosité et la transparence." (Please, let me speak in the name of luminosity and transparency). In French and in Greek in: Odysseus Elytis, 1992, op. cit., pp. 316-7.

39 Odysseus Elytis, "Σχέδιο γιὰ μιὰ Εἰσαγωγή στὸ Χῶρο τοῦ Αἰγαίου"; in: *Αἰολικά Γράμματα*, Vol. 7, 43-44, Athens, January-April 1978, p. 10.

40 Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 11.

41 Anghelos Sikelianos, 1946-47, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 242. Cited in English in: Philip Sherrard, "Anghelos Sikelianos (1884-1951)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 156.

42 "TO SEE, FOR AN ARTIST, means: 'to make the others see.'" Odysseus Elytis, "Ἐπίμετρο, John Veltri", (1971); in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 599.

Cf.: "The reader ... 'sees all that' which the poet makes him see." Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Κείμενα, Τὰ Σύγχρονα Ποιητικά καὶ Καλλιτεχνικά Προβλήματα", (1944); in: *ibid.*, p. 511. See: Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Κορίτσια"; in: *ibid.*, pp. 175ff.

See also: N. Kershaw Chadwick, *Poetry and Prophecy*, Cambridge, 1942, pp. 88f.

43 George Steiner, 1989, 1991, op. cit., p. 227.

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Rooted in the physical world of Greece, tracing "the regal path of the senses"<sup>44</sup>, Elytis' poems open to the metaphysical. What is mirrored in the poem, for which the context is the particular time and place with which the poet is familiar, is not a place-bound historical reality but an eternal and absolute reality, not an event that occurs in historical time but a "play played eternally before all creatures". This manner of perceiving and representing space in poetry - and art in general - stands not only in contrast with Renaissance and post-Renaissance habits of viewing the Greek space, in particular, and of moulding "the image of Greece"<sup>45</sup> in art, but also with post-Renaissance habits of space-depiction and world-depiction, in general.<sup>46</sup> It implies a view of art which stands in contrast with post-Renaissance 'non-intellectual' artistic theory and practice,<sup>47</sup> the projection of rationalist world-views on art. It is, however, consistent with the Platonic or traditional view of the work of art "as the stimulus to the release of the spirit from all inhibitions of vision"<sup>48</sup>. Elytis knew, with Coomaraswamy and Pikionis, that "methods of representing space ... correspond more or less to contemporary habits of vision"<sup>49</sup>, but he also put forward the postulate of a correspondence between habits of vision and speech habits, which is pivotal in his poetry.

"Surrealism also stimulated us through the great importance it placed on the senses", Elytis says.<sup>50</sup> He perceived and apprehended the world within which he lived and worked "through the senses", in the manner of the ancient Greeks, as he remarks -

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44 Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Μικρὰ Ἐψιλον, Δήλωση τοῦ '51"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1992, op. cit., p. 206.

45 Cf.: "The Western world always conceives of Greece in the image created by the Renaissance. But this image is not true." Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 7.

46 See: Odysseus Elytis, "Ἐπίμετρο, Οἱ Θαλασσινὲς Πέτρεις τοῦ Νικολάου"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., pp. 580-3.

47 Cf.: "I am Greek not only by some coincidence but also in the organic sense; in the sense that I inhabit the same Homeric landscape and I have Plato in my blood. This is the reason that made me condemn the whole system of methods of expression, which the Renaissance bequeathed upon the Western civilisation." Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Μικρὰ Ἐψιλον, Δήλωση τοῦ '51"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1992, op. cit., p. 205.

48 Ananda Coomaraswamy, "The Theory of Art in Asia"; in: Ananda Coomaraswamy, 1934, 1956, op. cit., p. 57.

See: Odysseus Elytis, "Ἐπίμετρο, Ὁ Γλύπτης Χρῆστος Καπράλος", (1972); in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., pp. 584ff.

49 Ananda Coomaraswamy, "The Theory of Art in Asia"; in: Ananda Coomaraswamy, 1934, 1956, op. cit., p. 30. See: Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 241, n. 5 (p. 206).

50 Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 7.

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"except that they [the ancient Greeks] did not have the notion of sanctity which only appeared with the arrival of Christianity."<sup>51</sup> And he continues:

*I have tried to harmonize these two terms, that is, whenever I speak of the most sensuous matters, I conceive of them as being in a state of purity and sanctity.*<sup>52</sup>

In Elytis' poetry, "the senses are elevated to a level that is sacred"<sup>53</sup>, sensuality has a spiritual significance, a mystical dimension;<sup>54</sup> it is the means that enables the reader, as it did the poet, "to enter into the sanctuary where the inner truth will be revealed to him"<sup>55</sup>, to use a phrase of Pikionis'.

In his Nobel Prize acceptance speech (Stockholm, 1979), Elytis alluded to the fact that men inhabit thousands of mutually incomprehensible speech-worlds: "We suffer from the absence of a common language."<sup>56</sup> And he added: "Our values do not constitute a common language either." For the poet there is only one way out, he suggested: "the only common language which he can still use: the senses."<sup>57</sup> One can ill afford not to recall Jacob Böhme's 'sensualistic speech', "the language of Nature and of natural man"<sup>58</sup>. Elytis hastened to explain: "When I speak of the senses, I do not mean the immediately perceptible. ... I mean the 'analogies of the senses' on a spiritual level."<sup>59</sup> The search for the affinities between the phenomena of the Greek language and the physical phenomena of the Greek world, and between the latter and the phenomena of the spirit has been a constant preoccupation for Elytis.<sup>60</sup> He believed that there are more than simple affinities between them, and that the physical phenomena share in the nature of the spiritual phenomena, in the Christian sense. "The senses ... have an aura of sanctity"<sup>61</sup> and it is this aura that 'sounds through' words when these are brought by the poet to their translucent Adamic condition, to "the condition of the

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51 Ibid.

52 Ibid., pp. 7-8.

53 Ibid., p. 8.

"the Fathers speak of the five senses as the 'doors' of the soul ..."; see: Leonid Ouspensky, op. cit., pp. 180f.

54 See: Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Μικρὰ Ἐψιλον, Τὸ Χαμένο Θαῦμα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1992, op. cit., p. 204.

55 Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἀυτοβιογραφικά σημειώματα", (1958), p. 26.

56 Elytis' Nobel Prize acceptance speech, (1979); in: Odysseus Elytis, 1992, op. cit., pp. 330-1.

57 Ibid.

58 See: George Steiner, 1975, 1992, op. cit., p. 65.

59 Elytis' Nobel Prize acceptance speech, (1979); in: Odysseus Elytis, 1992, op. cit., pp. 330-3.

60 See: Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Μικρὰ Ἐψιλον, Δήλωση τοῦ '51"; in: *ibid.*, p. 206.

See also: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., *passim*.

61 Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 8.

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newly born"<sup>62</sup>; when their inner substance is "awaken"<sup>63</sup> and they are made fit for poetry.<sup>64</sup> The "many-rayed"<sup>65</sup> sun, which illumines, informs and, finally, transfigures the natural world, shines through names. The poet, every man who has learnt to hear the "echo of the phenomena"<sup>66</sup>, can recollect the *Λόγος* which sounds through the luminous veil of nature and to which the linguistic signs provide access.

GREEK the language they gave me;  
poor the house on Homer's shores.  
My only care my language on Homer's shores.  
There bream and perch  
windbeaten verbs,  
green sea currents in the blue,  
all I saw light up in my entails,  
sponges, jellyfish  
with the first words of the Sirens,  
rosy shells with the first black shivers.  
My only care my language with the first black shivers.<sup>67</sup>

Elytis' search for substantive correspondences or "identities"<sup>68</sup> between linguistic and natural phenomena is based on his understanding of the correspondence or coincidence between nature and the *Λόγος*, his view of nature and natural language as a mode of existence of the Divinity. But, as Elytis would comment, "Actually this is an old tradition in Greece."<sup>69</sup> For Elytis, the words of a particular natural language are not empty arbitrary signs. They are embodiments, evocations or "symbols" of the same ideas which are the *raison d'être* of the things of this language's natural abode; their form is akin to the form of these things.<sup>70</sup> There is a congruity between word and world, between names and things. When names recover their potency, in poetry, they

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62 Odysseus Elytis, "Πρώτα - Πρώτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 29.

63 Ibid.

64 Cf.: "I want the text to be completely virginal and far removed from the everyday usage of words. I would go so far as to say that I want it to be *contrary* to colloquial usage. The tone of my poetry is always somewhat elevated. I situate the words in such a way as to bring out their rarity." Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 9.

65 An epithet borrowed from Elytis' poem *The Axion Esti*, "The Genesis", First Hymn. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 17.

66 Odysseus Elytis, "Πρώτα - Πρώτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 29.

67 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Passion", Psalm II. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 32.

68 See: Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Κορίτσια"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., pp. 176ff.

69 This was his reply when asked "whether there is a relation between [his] concept of elevated language in poetry and [his] preoccupation with the sacred." Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 10.

70 Odysseus Elytis, "Πρώτα - Πρώτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 29.



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become the means to the knowledge or recollection of the *λόγοι* or essences of things, which names embody<sup>71</sup> and which await the poet.

And his voice, like memory become the present,  
assumed the voice of the trees, of the waves<sup>72</sup>

Elytis' poetry speaks in images. These are "symbolic transcription[s]"; images made of words, of verbal and graphic signs or symbols "which refer to 'theories', even when these theories are no longer understood."<sup>73</sup> And in these verbal images there is a concordance with the contours of the experienced world. The images or image of the poems, their form, speaks of, is significant of, the world. But, to repeat, Elytis' poems do not image the world in a realistic or naturalistic manner;<sup>74</sup> they rather quicken into presence the "Lyrical reality" of the world, the continuum between empirical and intelligible reality, between sensuality and sanctity, between language and *Λόγος*, lit by the "intelligible sun of Justice"<sup>75</sup>. The poem's presence (*παρουσία*) contains, participates in, and is guaranteed by, an essence (*οὐσία*). Its form embodies, and refers to, a vision of the "Lyrical reality" of the things of the world, a fulfilled reality; it is meaning-ful and functional; it is the "symbolic [and legible] transcription" of meaning; an intelligible veil spun by meaning itself.

*in other words: in each and every instance the development which is defined and the distribution of meanings must dictate a definite development of the parts; and, simultaneously, such a development and distribution of the parts must constitute a sine qua non of the fullness of the result.*<sup>76</sup>

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71 Cf. Plato, *Cratylus*, 422ff.

72 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Genesis", First Hymn. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 17.

73 Mircea Eliade's words, quoted in: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "On Hares and Dreams"; in: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, 1989, op. cit., p. 103.

74 "I have never picked a pencil simply to write that something is like this or like that! I have always been preoccupied with finding the analogies between nature and language in the realm of imagination, a realm to which the surrealists also gave much importance, and rightly so." Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 9.

Cf: Odysseus Elytis, "Ἐπίμετρο, Γιάννης Τσαρούχης", (1971); in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 577.

Cf. also: Odysseus Elytis, "Ἐπίμετρο, Οἱ Θαλασσινὲς Πέτρες τοῦ Νικολάου"; in: *ibid.*, p. 581.

75 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Passion", Ode f. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 50.

76 Odysseus Elytis, "Τὸ Χρονικὸ μιάς Δεκαετίας"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 450. In English in: Odysseus Elytis, "Selections from the *Open Book*"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 32.

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According to Elytis, the form of the poem is determined by speech habits which dictate certain poetry habits. The prodigality of human tongues is concordant with the prodigality of poetic forms, and this may be extended to art forms in general.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, there "is always this analogy between nature and language in their eliciting definite forms."<sup>78</sup> There are, Elytis contends, verse lines which are as incompatible with the Greek natural landscape and skyline, "with the blue [celestial] dome, as the spires of Chartres with the air of [the Greek isle of] Aegina."<sup>79</sup> The meaning or meanings which the poem conveys are, to a great extent, determined by form, that is, by the vital energies of the particular language which the poet uses and the ways in which this language has been used by his predecessors, the literary experience which has given it shape and handed it down to him as a living organism. The Greek language has remained the master of Elytis to the present day. With great awareness of its infinite resources, he has consciously let it determine the habits of his imagination and the tone of his voice or voices; he has made of the tongue which he inherited a house and a host for his own creation. Elytis is "convinced that every language elicits a certain content."<sup>80</sup> He knows that "True poetry ... is always a creation from within language and not from without it"<sup>81</sup>, a "poetising within the clearing of what is, which has already happened unnoticed in language."<sup>82</sup> He believes "that every language makes a poet express definite things. ... the Greek language does

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77 Cf.: "In principle, poetry can do whatever the language can do: a poem is nothing more than someone's particular human speech in which the pressure of the rhythm, alliteration and formal repetition have set up a counterpoint between the movement of his thoughts, his own presence and smell and linguistic habits, and a certain iron musical phrasing." Peter Levi, 1977, op. cit., p. 58.

78 Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: *ibid.*, p. 12.

79 Odysseus Elytis, "Τὸ Χρονικὸ μῦθς Δεκαετίας"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 451.

80 Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 8. Elytis added: "It seems to me that right now we are passing through a period which has a different attitude toward language, an attitude which I consider dangerous. Language is increasingly considered to be no more than a means to transcribe, to express certain convictions, to communicate a state of mind." *Ibid.*

Cf. George Steiner, 1989, 1991, op. cit., *passim*.

81 Elytis adds: "Ideas are born at the same time as their verbal expression." Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 8. And again: "I do not think of something and then *translate* it into language." *Ibid.*, p. 9.

Cf.: R. G. Collingwood, 1938, 1958, op. cit., pp. 305ff.

Cf. also: "To separate thought from language, intellect from imagination, and to concentrate on thought as distinct from imagination, is the characteristic of that type of consciousness which we call scientific." R. G. Collingwood, *Outlines of a Philosophy of Art*, 1925, Bristol, 1994, p. 92.

82 Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art"; in: Martin Heidegger, 1975, op. cit., p. 74.

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not, for example, accept expressionism - that is, excessive exaltation. It is a lean language which elicits a lean content."<sup>83</sup>

For Elytis, language is not simply an instrument,<sup>84</sup> it is "an instrument of 'magic', a vehicle of moral values"<sup>85</sup> and

*in the course of the centuries it acquires a certain way of being, a particular ethos. ... We must not forget that in the course of twenty-five centuries there has not been even one without poetry written in Greek. The Greek language bears the crushing burden of this tradition. Modern Greek poetry is the expressive image of this.*<sup>86</sup>

The Greek language, "the royal treasury of the ancient language and the poor purse of the demotiki"<sup>87</sup>, has provided Elytis' poetry with a context - a landscape - which is creative of, and created by, his poetry. Within this inherited and informing context, poetry and language interact closely to the benefit of both, and to that of the poet's fellow-countrymen and literary epigones. Elytis would agree with Heidegger that "Language itself is poetry in the essential sense."<sup>88</sup> And he would say, paraphrasing Steiner, that the best readings of poetry are poetry.<sup>89</sup> This does not mean that modern Greek has not been influenced by Elytis' poetry, his creative use of his native tongue. The fact that a number of words or phrases of his, or awakened by him, have passed into currency proves exactly the opposite. Elytis creates his poems "guided by language itself"<sup>90</sup>, from within the house of his native tongue, which is, thus,

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83 Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 8.  
See: Odysseus Elytis, "Τὸ Χρονικὸ μιάς Δεκαετίας"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., pp. 329f, 441.

84 Cf. Theodor Adorno's words: "Only he who is not truly at home inside a language uses it as an instrument." Quoted in: George Steiner, "K"; in: George Steiner, 1967, 1985, op. cit., p. 148.  
Cf. also Heidegger's words following his well known and already cited aphorism ("Man acts as though he were the master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man."): "When this relation of dominance gets inverted, man hits upon strange maneuvers. Language becomes the means of expression. As expression, language can decay into a mere medium for the printed word." Martin Heidegger, "... Poetically Man Dwells ..."; in: Martin Heidegger, 1975, op. cit., p. 215.

85 Elytis' Nobel Prize acceptance speech, (1979); in: Odysseus Elytis, 1992, op. cit., pp. 326-7.

86 Ibid.  
Cf.: "Languages codify immemorial reflexes and twists of feeling, remembrances of action that transcend individual recall, contours of communal experience as subtly decisive as the contours of sky and land in which a civilization ripens." George Steiner, "K"; in: George Steiner, 1967, 1985, op. cit., p. 148.

87 Iakovos Polyklas' phrase. Cited in English in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, "Solomos' *Dialogos* and Dante"; in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, 1980, op. cit., p. 180.

88 Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art"; in: Martin Heidegger, 1975, op. cit., p. 74.

89 "The best readings of art are art." George Steiner, 1989, 1991, op. cit., p. 17.

90 Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 9.

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creatively sustained and animated. By force of a creation in responsible response to the particular *ethos* of his tongue,<sup>91</sup> he harvests<sup>92</sup> and, at the same time, fertilises the linguistic soil out of which his poems grow.

Elytis himself says:

*If there is, I think, for each one of us a different, a personal Paradise, mine should irreparably be inhabited by trees of words that the wind dresses in silver, like poplars, by men who see the rights of which they have been deprived returning to them, and by birds that even in the midst of the truth of death insist on singing in Greek and on saying "eros, eros, eros!"<sup>93</sup>*

It is first of all Elytis' given tongue that "localize[s]" his poems. The elements of his language are "purely Greek", charged with a Greek way of living, being, and poetising, with Greek history, collective memory, and physical geography; yet they are "elevated", they have become the means for revealing the true significance, the sacredness, of the sensible world and of the historical world of time,<sup>94</sup> "the meaning of the perceptible". Their physical appearance conceals a supernatural, a mythical element; each one of them "has an 'analogy' in the world of spiritual values"<sup>95</sup>, in the world of one language. And they are consciously employed as referents to this supernatural world, to "the indivisible wholeness of the spirit"<sup>96</sup>. They are strung together in order to form a passage from the real world of the senses to the more real world of the "analogues of the senses"<sup>97</sup>, the supra-rational world of archetypes;<sup>98</sup> to function as steps in the ladder of spiritual ascent and to raise the spectator from the level of tangible, place- and time-bound reality to the level of eternal reality.<sup>99</sup> They are

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91 See: Elytis' Nobel Prize acceptance speech, (1979); in: Odysseus Elytis, 1992, op. cit., pp. 326-7. Cf.: "the responding in which man authentically listens to the appeal of language is that which speaks in the element of poetry." Martin Heidegger, "... Poetically Man Dwells ..."; in: Martin Heidegger, 1975, op. cit., p. 216.

92 "A harvest is a gathering", says Steiner (in: George Steiner, 1989, 1991, op. cit., p. 204), and λέγω means to gather (collect) and to speak (see Chapter Two above).

93 Odysseus Elytis, "Πρώτα - Πρώτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 41. Cited in English in: Andonis Decavalles, "Eros: His Power, Forms and Transformations in the Poetry of Odysseus Elytis"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 45.

94 See: Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Μικρὰ Ἐψιλον, Τὸ Χαμένο Θαῦμα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1992, op. cit., p. 204.

95 Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 8.

96 Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 204.

97 Elytis' Nobel Prize acceptance speech, (1979); in: Odysseus Elytis, 1992, op. cit., pp. 332-3. See: Odysseus Elytis, "Τέχνη - Τύχη - Τόλη"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 117.

98 See: Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Κορίτσια"; in: *ibid.*, p. 166.

99 Cf.: "Perhaps the most direct way of approaching the meaning of the sacred is to relate it to the Immutable, to that Reality which is both the Unmoved Mover and the Eternal. That Reality which is immutable and eternal is the Sacred as such, and the manifestations of this Reality in

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meant to metamorphose (a key term in Elytis), to sanctify the world of the senses (and man himself) through the agency of light, and to make it ever more transparent<sup>100</sup>; "to render the idol of man [and the world] constantly purer",<sup>101</sup> so that the inner light shines through; they are meant to initiate.<sup>102</sup>

I leave with a glance  
A wide glance in which the world is recreated  
Beautiful from the beginning to the dimensions of the heart!<sup>103</sup>

This is precisely how Elytis sees poetry: as a ritual act; as a "process of constant purification of the senses" until they reach absolute purity, "a state of sanctity"<sup>104</sup>. He perceives its function as that of "a contemporary kind of magic whose mechanism leads to the discovery of our true reality"<sup>105</sup> and the true reality of the world. It is a kind of sacrificial purgation, a *katharsis*, that Elytis' poetry aspires to effect on the things of "the material world", with a complete metamorphosis or, rather, a restoration in view. It is the same kind of metamorphosis, an inner spiritual transformation, that is simultaneously brought about in the poet himself<sup>106</sup>: "This is

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the stream of becoming and the matrix of time is that which possesses the quality of sacredness." Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "What Is Tradition?"; in: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 1981, op. cit., p. 76.

Cf. Odysseus Elytis, "Ἐπίμετρο, Ὁ Κάρολος Κούν καὶ ἡ Ἐποχὴ του"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 597.

100 Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Κορίτσια"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 171.

101 Odysseus Elytis, "Τὸ Χρονικὸ μιᾶς Δεκαετίας"; in: *ibid.*, p. 452.

Cf.: "Man's sense of the sacred is none other than his sense for the Immutable and the Eternal, his nostalgia for what he really *is* for he carries the sacred within the substance of his own being". Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "What Is Tradition?"; in: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 1981, op. cit., p. 76.

102 Cf.: "We must remember that all artistic operations were originally rites, and that the purpose of the rite (as the word *τελετή* implies) is to sacrifice the old and to bring into being the new and more perfect man." Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "A Figure of Speech or a Figure of Thought?"; in: Roger Lipsey (ed.), op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 20.

Cf. also: "The encounter with the aesthetic is, together with certain modes of religious and metaphysical experience, the most 'ingressive', transformative summons available to human experiencing." George Steiner, 1989, 1991, op. cit., p. 143.

103 From Elytis' poem IV (*Drinking the Sun of Corinth ...*); in his collection *Sun the First*, (1943). Translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard; in: Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (eds.), op. cit., p. 27.

104 Elytis' Nobel Prize acceptance speech, (1979); in: Odysseus Elytis, 1992, op. cit., pp. 332-3.

105 Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Μικρὰ Ἐψιλον, Δήλωση τοῦ '66"; in: *ibid.*, p. 207. In English in: Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 14.

106 See: Plato, *Phaedrus*, 243a-b.

Cf.: "any taking away of evil from the soul may be properly called purification." Plato, *Sophist*, 227d.

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what I await every year with one more wrinkle on my forehead and one less wrinkle in my soul: the complete antistrophe, absolute diaphaneity...."<sup>107</sup>

In the village of my tongue Sorrow is called Luminous.<sup>108</sup>

Poetry is, for Elytis as for Pikionis, a journey that brings man - poet and reader - ever closer to an absolute vision of things, to a vision of things as they are nearer to their source; it is a continuous and arduous ascent "ever closer to the light"<sup>109</sup>. "It is the interminable course toward the light which is the Λόγος and the Uncreated Light which is God."<sup>110</sup> Elytis also knows that poetry is a free act of imagination, whereby the poet, at a moment of revelation, perceives the true nature of things; he enters "a Platonic realm of abstraction and purification ... [he] passes 'straight into the heart of the sun' "<sup>111</sup>.

As in diving he would open his eyes underwater to bring his skin in touch with that whiteness of memory which pursued him (from a certain paragraph in Plato)

Thus with the same movement he passed straight into the heart of the sun and heard a stone throat rising and his innocent self roaring high above the waves

And until he rose to the surface again the coolness left him enough time to drag something incurable out of his entails onto the seaweed and the other beautiful things under the water

In such a way that he might glow at length within the *I love* as the divine light glows in the weeping of the newly born

And this is what the sea was murmuring as legend.<sup>112</sup>

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107 Odysseus Elytis, "Πρῶτα - Πρῶτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 45. In English in: Odysseus Elytis, "Selections from the *Open Book*"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 29. Cf.: "And the sieve of consciousness discards and retains continuously, retains and discards, until one day pure and diaphanous, such as all your secret inclinations wanted you to be and all conditions around you conspired to alter." Odysseus Elytis, "Τὸ Χρονικὸ μιᾶς Δεκαετίας"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., pp. 441-2.

108 From Elytis' *Book of Signs*, (1977). In English in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 35.

109 Odysseus Elytis, "Πρῶτα - Πρῶτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 30.

110 Ibid., p. 42.

Cf.: "The continuous ascent in art is an ascent ... that brings him [the artist] ever closer to his Creator". Dimitris Pikionis, "Σπύρος Παπαλουκάς. Ἀφιέρωμα εἰς τὸν ἄνθρωπο καὶ τὸν καλλιτέχνη", (1958), p. 109.

111 "One of Elytis's basic images for the moment of revelation is a dive into water which is at the same time a plunge into the sun. In this image opposites become one". Kimon Friar, "Introduction"; in: Kimon Friar (tr.), 1974, 1990, op. cit., pp. 33-4.

See: Odysseus Elytis, "Σχέδιο γιὰ μιὰ Εἰσαγωγή στὸ Χῶρο τοῦ Αἰγαίου"; in: *Αἰολικὰ Γράμματα*, Vol. 7, 43-44, Athens, January-April 1978, p. 10.

112 *Delos*. From Elytis' collection *The Light Tree and The Fourteenth Beauty*, Athens, 1971. In English in: Kimon Friar (tr.), 1974, 1990, op. cit., p. 142.

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Touched by Love, the Platonic divine poet, he may then transform the entire creation in the light of this revelation. He may create a Paradise built of words, an ideal world, "nevertheless made of soil and water, an 'Island of the Blessed,'<sup>113</sup> not at all drowned in natural or some other kind of wealth, but moderate and demanding at the same time, like the Parthenon, naked and adapted to the golden slashing of the winds, with the whitewashed little wall of a church above the most dazzling sea."<sup>114</sup>

Elytis' Paradise is "made of precisely the same material of which Hell is made. It is only the perception of the order of the materials that differs"<sup>115</sup>. It is a "revolutionary re-creation" of the world for which a *katharsis* is a prerequisite.<sup>116</sup> Because it is after such a *katharsis* that "implies ... a 'being out of oneself' that is a being 'in one's right mind' and real Self"<sup>117</sup>, a "separation from current reality"<sup>118</sup> and self-centred passions, that the poet "begin[s] to distinguish ... the true mountains and the true grass"<sup>119</sup>; he becomes aware of the dimensions of sacred space and time.<sup>120</sup> And like a newly born, inspired by Eros<sup>121</sup> that reconciles the opposites, he voices his "vision of

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113 Cf. Plato, *Republic*, VII, 519c.

114 Odysseus Elytis, "Πρώτα - Πρώτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 36. In English in: Odysseus Elytis, "Selections from the *Open Book*"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 28. Whitewash is, in Elytis, a symbol of purity and incorruption. See: Odysseus Elytis, "Τὸ Χρονικὸ μᾶς Δεκαετίας"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 453. And: Odysseus Elytis, "Πρώτα - Πρώτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 41.

115 *Ibid.*, p. 9. In English in: Odysseus Elytis, "Selections from the *Open Book*"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 27.

Cf.: "There is a search for paradise in my poetry. When I say 'paradise', I do not mean it in the Christian sense. It is another world which is incorporated into our own, and it is our fault that we are unable to grasp it." Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 13.

Cf. Solomos' "intellectual and moral Paradise". From a note to the poem *Duty*, the first title of *The Free Besieged*. Cited in English in: Philip Sherrard, "Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 26.

116 Cf.: "And if it [the world] did not become better, it is undoubtedly because of man's fear to look at himself and to accept who he is before he speaks. I speak. I want to descend the steps, to fall into this flourishing fire and then to ascend like an angel of the Lord ...". Odysseus Elytis, "Πρώτα - Πρώτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 31. In English in: Odysseus Elytis, "Selections from the *Open Book*"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 27.

117 Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "A Figure of Speech or a Figure of Thought?"; in: Roger Lipsey (ed.), op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 18-9.

118 Odysseus Elytis, "Πρώτα - Πρώτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 10. In English in: Odysseus Elytis, "Selections from the *Open Book*"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 27.

119 Odysseus Elytis, "Πρώτα - Πρώτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 45. In English in: *ibid.*, p. 29.

120 See: Bishop Kallistos Ware, 1990, op. cit., pp. 157ff.

121 See: Plato, *Symposium*, 196e-197a, *Timaeus*, 71dff.

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the divine realm"<sup>122</sup>; faithful not only to "what *is*, but also to what *may be*,<sup>123</sup> ... he makes visible the invisible, sensible the intelligible, real the non-real"<sup>124</sup>. Making use of appropriate analogies, rather than naturalistic depiction,<sup>125</sup> he evokes or, more exactly, he identifies<sup>126</sup> a certain level of reality with a reality of another level; thus, he admits his readers to a vision of a reality previously unknown<sup>127</sup>. It is in this manner that the poet performs his duty<sup>128</sup> which is to transubstantiate Hell into Paradise, evil into goodness, "to cast drops of light into the darkness"<sup>129</sup>. "The end result of our work", says Elytis, "the Paradise or the Hell that we will build, depends on how good or bad architects we are. What Poetry affirms, particularly in these *dürftiger* times, is precisely this: that despite all, our destiny is in our hands."<sup>130</sup>

For Elytis, poetry, both in its narrow sense and in the sense proclaimed in its etymology, is a moral act: "it bears on good and evil, on the enhancement or diminution of the sum of humanity in man and the city"<sup>131</sup>, as Steiner puts it. The responsibility of the poet is a moral one.

*the poet is a cutting edge of the moral and the real world. ... If there is a humanistic view about the mission of Art, this, I believe, is the only way it can be understood: like an invisible operation, which is a facsimile of the mechanism we call Justice - and naturally I*

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Cf.: "Eros has been the force that has driven both his [Elytis'] life and pen, the earthly yet transcending power that has aspired to accomplishing the happy marriage of earth and heaven. ... A declared Platonist, Elytis, in his own manner, has stood faithfully by Diotima's words, yet with a slight but significant difference. If, for the somewhat dualistic Diotima, the beauty of the body was there to lead the way to the beauty of the soul, the same is true for Elytis; but the body is not left behind. The two types of beauty exist as one." Andonis Decavalles, op. cit., pp. 45-6.

122 Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Κορίτσια"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 168. Here Elytis emphasises man's freedom to enter this realm.

123 Ibid.

Cf. Elytis' Nobel Prize acceptance speech, (1979); in: Odysseus Elytis, 1992, op. cit., pp. 36-7. Cf. also: "A remark by Professor K. T. Denver of Saint Andrew's about classical Greek writers applies precisely to Elytis also: 'The Greek writer, like the sculptor, was more interested in creating what ought to exist instead of portraying what does; but this idea of what ought to exist was always based on an acceptance of human life as he found it.'" Kimon Friar, "Introduction"; in: Kimon Friar (tr.), 1974, 1990, op. cit., p. 14.

124 Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Κορίτσια"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 176.

125 Ibid.

126 Ibid.

127 Ibid.

128 See: Plato, *Republic*, VII, 519c-520a.

129 Elytis' words cited in: Kimon Friar, "Introduction"; in: Kimon Friar (tr.), 1974, 1990, op. cit., p. 44.

130 Elytis' Nobel Prize acceptance speech, (1979); in: Odysseus Elytis, 1992, op. cit., pp. 334-5.

131 George Steiner, 1989, 1991, op. cit., p. 145.

See: Odysseus Elytis, "Τὸ Χρονικὸ μιάς Δεκαετίας"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., pp. 441f.



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*am not talking about the Justice of the courts but about the other Justice, which is consummated slowly and equally painfully in the teachings of the great magistrates of mankind, in the political struggles for social liberation and in the loftiest poetic accomplishments. From such a great effort, the drops of light fall slowly every now and then into the vast night of the soul like lemon drops into polluted water.*<sup>132</sup>

From his reader Elytis demands an "active participation", like surrealism did.<sup>133</sup> He invites him to become his "accomplice" to the poetic act, rather than a "passive observer"; to read and to apprehend actively; to activate all his organs of perception; to invest his own being in the process of poetic creation in order to make the poem "live in his imagination"<sup>134</sup> and release its "lyrical energy"<sup>135</sup> which may raise him "upward toward the truth of the mind's vision"<sup>136</sup>, and further: towards that which "words could not suffice"<sup>137</sup> to express, that "Something [which] must assuredly exist" even "When words withdraw"<sup>138</sup>. Elytis' poetry stems from memory, it is "memory become present"<sup>139</sup> and anchored to sensual experience. In turn, it seeks to activate the memory of the receiver; it demands of its receiver to exercise memory in order to read as total human being, that is, creatively; not merely to hear, but to seek and finally to know; to recover the vision of all truth and beauty that he lost when he entered time; to move in this 'other state of reality', in the manner of the poet himself.

*As a whole, poets, musicians, artists, despite their great differences, and occasionally thanks to them, in the depth and breadth of the ages constitute a second state of the world. It is open to everyone, and there has not yet been found a military demon strong enough to cut off the narrow streets. Only access sometimes becomes difficult, a difficulty corresponding to the*

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132 Ibid., pp. 452-3. In English in: Odysseus Elytis, "Selections from the *Open Book*"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 32.

133 Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Κείμενα, Τὰ Σύγχρονα Ποιητικά καὶ Καλλιτεχνικά Προβλήματα", (1944); in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., pp. 511.

134 Ibid.

135 Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Κείμενα, Νόημα καὶ Ἀλληλουχία στὴ Νέα μας Ποίηση", (1944); in: ibid., p. 486.

136 Pseudo-Dionysius, The Aeropagite, "The Divine Names", 592C-593A; in: Pseudo-Dionysius, op. cit., p. 53.

137 From Elytis' poem *Three Times the Truth*, III; in his collection *The Light Tree and The Fourteenth Beauty*; in English in: Kimon Friar (tr.), 1974, 1990, op. cit., p. 144.

138 Ibid.

Cf.: "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Paul the Apostle, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 2:9.

139 Odysseus Elytis, "Ἐπίμετρο, Ὁ Γλύπτης Χρῆστος Καπράλος", (1972); in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 584. Elytis makes clear that he talks of memory in the sense of recollection.

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degree of human stupidity. No one is obliged to be interested in Poetry. Once he becomes interested, however, he is obliged to 'know how to move' in this second state, to walk both in air and on water.<sup>140</sup>

### 9. 3. Paradise Lost

*I believe in the restitution of justice, which I identify with absolute light.  
And together with a glorious and ancient ancestor of mine,  
I am proud to say, in spite of the fashion of my time, that  
'I do not care for those gods whose worship is practiced in the dark.'*

Odysseus Elytis<sup>141</sup>

Elytis' first two volumes, *Orientalisms* (1940) and *Sun the First* (1943), appeared during the Second World War. The war carried the poet (as a second lieutenant in the Albanian Campaign that resisted the Italian invasion of Greece) away from the bright innocent Aegean world to a dark, inhuman world of evil, of suffering and of death, but also to a world of heroic action directed towards the overcoming of the injustice of death. It was the experience of this fight against evil, this struggle with "the terrible anonymity of death"<sup>142</sup> that made Elytis conscious of the human *dur désir de durer* (Éluard), and made him understand "the meaning of a true need for poetry"<sup>143</sup> and the mission of the poet "to restore to things their true names."<sup>144</sup> It was "the physical fear of war ... that annihilated within [him] all aspects of false literature" and led him to the recognition that man directs his creative efforts, "Each to his own weapons,"<sup>145</sup> towards the transcendence of death. The experience of a nightmarish reality of "faces cast in lead"<sup>146</sup>, smashing boots, savagery and horror made him aware of a need for

140 Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Κορίτσια"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 172. In English in: Odysseus Elytis, "Selections from the *Open Book*"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 29.

141 Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Μικρὰ Ἐψίλων, Δήλωση τοῦ '51"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1992, op. cit., p. 206. In English in: Kimon Friar, "Introduction"; in: Kimon Friar (tr.), 1974, 1990, op. cit., p. 20.

142 From Elytis' poem I (*I know the night no longer ...*); in his collection *Sun the First*, (1943). In: Kimon Friar (tr.), 1974, 1990, op. cit., p. 75.

143 From a letter of Elytis' to Kimon Friar describing his experience during the Albanian campaign and its consequences for his life and poetry. Cited in English in: Kimon Friar, "Introduction"; in: Kimon Friar (tr.), 1974, 1990, op. cit., p. 16.

144 From Elytis' poem *Sleep of the Valiant* (Variation); in his collection *Six and One Remorses for the Sky*, (1960). In English in: Kimon Friar (tr.), 1974, 1990, op. cit., p. 122.

145 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Genesis". Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 17.

146 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Passion", Fourth Reading: "The Vacant Lot with the Nettles". Ibid., p. 54.

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the forces of poetry to be directed "against a world [his] conscience cannot accept"<sup>147</sup>. Confronted by the powers of darkness and before the rattle of death, he felt an urge "to proceed toward the spear-point where life and death, light and darkness cease to be contraries."<sup>148</sup> *Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst / Das Rettende auch* (Hölderlin).<sup>149</sup> "We've worshipped danger long enough, and it's time it repaid us."<sup>150</sup> Having descended into the abyss of Hades, he had "to ascend like an angel of the Lord"<sup>151</sup>.

Elytis saw poetry as this agency of salvation that Hölderlin talks of. He prophesied: "dreams will take their revenge"<sup>152</sup>. And he swore "an oath in the name of the Resurrection of that brave Hellenic Hero"<sup>153</sup>, whom he "found embodied and living in his comrades"<sup>154</sup>, and whom he "saw in every period of our [Greek] history"<sup>155</sup>. For Elytis this ideal type was "the measure and worth of our [the Greek] civilization, compounded of his love not of death but of life."<sup>156</sup> The lyrical portrait of this mythical fighter whose most recent historical actualisation had taken place in the heroes of the Albanian Campaign - and who had qualities of an Achilles, a Digenis, a Makriyannis, and a Christian martyr - is depicted in Elytis' *Heroic and Elegiac Song for the Lost Second Lieutenant of the Albanian Campaign* (1945).<sup>157</sup> The poem draws into

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147 Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 14.

148 From Elytis' letter to Kimon Friar. Cited in English in: Kimon Friar, "Introduction"; in: Kimon Friar (tr.), 1974, 1990, op. cit., p. 16.

Cf.: "A teacher of most is Hesiod: they are sure he knows most who did not recognize day and night - for they are one." Heracleitus, Fragment B 57.

149 Cited by Elytis in: Odysseus Elytis, "Τὸ Χρονικὸ μίᾶς Δεκαετίας"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 397.

150 From Elytis' poem *Villa Natacha*, (1969), Thessaloniki, 1973.

151 Odysseus Elytis, "Πρῶτα - Πρῶτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 31. In English in: Odysseus Elytis, "Selections from the *Open Book*"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 27.

Cf.: *From depth to depth he fell until there was no other:  
Thence he issued invincible ...*

From Solomos' poem *The Free Besieged*.

152 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Passion", Sixth Reading: "Prophetic". Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 71.

153 From Elytis' letter to Kimon Friar. Cited in English in: Kimon Friar, "Introduction"; in: Kimon Friar (tr.), 1974, 1990, op. cit., p. 17.

154 *Ibid.*, p. 16.

155 *Ibid.*

156 *Ibid.*, pp. 16-7.

157 See: Vincenzo Rotolo, "The 'Heroic and Elegiac Song for the Second Lieutenant of the Albanian Campaign': The Transition from the Early to the Later Elytis"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., pp. 75-80.

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articulate linear form the "lyrical idea" which had been the poet's "talisman" in battle,<sup>158</sup> becoming a talisman itself. Elytis' "brave young man" is shaped

To stand again on the marble threshing floors  
And with his holiness grapple - ah, this time -  
Grapple with Death.<sup>159</sup>

His intention was to give form to his epic hero "on multiple levels woven together with the traditions of Greek history, but also involved - in particular - within and beyond death, in the Resurrection, the Easter of God."<sup>160</sup> Like the heroes of the klephtic ballads, Elytis' Second Lieutenant struggles not only for his own freedom but also for the freedom of his natural world with the destiny of which his own destiny is connected; he struggles for the conquest of fear and the reversion of the injustice of death. Housed in a verse which hovers around the traditional fifteen-syllable line, the basic metre of the demotic songs which had housed this same mythical hero for centuries, he "is dead, but yet he rises".<sup>161</sup> His sacrifice has redeemed himself and his country, and has heralded the redemption of the natural world as a whole:

He ascends alone and glorious.  
So drenched in the light that his heart shows  
The true Olympus shows through the clouds  
And the air is filled with the praise of friends ...  
Now dream beats swifter than blood  
Animals congregate at the edge of the path  
Grunt and gaze as though they were speaking  
The whole world is truly a huge giant  
Who cherishes his children.

In the distance crystal bells ring out  
Tomorrow, they say, tomorrow: Easter of Heaven.<sup>162</sup>

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158 From Elytis' letter to Kimon Friar. Cited in English in: Kimon Friar, "Introduction"; in: Kimon Friar (tr.), 1974, 1990, op. cit., p. 17.

159 From the *Heroic and Elegiac Song for the Lost Second Lieutenant of the Albanian Campaign*, IX. Translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard; in: Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (eds.), op. cit., p. 40.

160 From Elytis' letter to Kimon Friar. Cited in English in: Kimon Friar, "Introduction"; in: Kimon Friar (tr.), 1974, 1990, op. cit., p. 17.

161 Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 13.

162 From the *Heroic and Elegiac Song for the Lost Second Lieutenant of the Albanian Campaign*, XII. Translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard; in: Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (eds.), op. cit., pp. 42-3.

#### 9. 4. "THIS WORLD this small world the great!"

*And yet if you move from what is to what may be, you pass over a bridge  
which takes you from Hell to Paradise. And the strangest thing:  
a Paradise made of precisely the same material of which Hell is made.  
It is only the perception of the order of the materials that differs*

Odysseus Elytis<sup>163</sup>

*Aye on the shores of darkness there is light*

John Keats<sup>164</sup>

"Death", say Campbell and Sherrard in a discussion of Greek demotic poetry, "is the one experience which sets man radically apart from the rest of nature; it is the one experience too that appears to set a limit to his aspirations to freedom."<sup>165</sup> But "poetry", Elytis writes, "begins from the point where the last word does not belong to death."<sup>166</sup> As already said, his own bitter experience of the black mystery of death in the years of the Second World War, "The March toward the Front"<sup>167</sup>, starvation, the Nazi Occupation, the Civil War, both challenged<sup>168</sup> and strengthened his faith in the talismanic powers of poetry. "walking once more through this world, without gods, / but weighed down with what [he] had snatched from death while still living"<sup>169</sup>, he

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163 Odysseus Elytis, "Πρώτα - Πρώτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 9. In English in: Odysseus Elytis, "Selections from the *Open Book*"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 27.

164 From his *Sonnet to Homer*.

165 John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, op. cit., p. 218.

166 Odysseus Elytis, "Πρώτα - Πρώτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 45. In English in: Odysseus Elytis, "Selections from the *Open Book*"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 28. Cf.: "death is often only the result of our indifference to immortality." Mircea Eliade, 1952, 1961, op. cit., p. 56.

Cf. also: "The real death is elsewhere. ... It is at the point where words have lost their power to give birth anew to the things they name." Odysseus Elytis, "Ἡ Μέθοδος τοῦ 'ἄρα' "; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1992, op. cit., p. 177.

167 The title of the First Reading of "The Passion", the second section of *The Axion Esti*. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 34.

168 "It seemed to me scandalous that confronted by such sudden suffering and the dark and unknown future both of my country and of my personal fate, I should at all be disposed to think in poetic terms." From Elytis' letter to Kimon Friar. Cited in English in: Kimon Friar, "Introduction"; in: Kimon Friar (tr.), 1974, 1990, op. cit., p. 16.

169 From Elytis' poem *The Origin of Landscape or The End of Mercy*; in his collection *Six and One Pangs of Conscience for the Sky*, (1960). Translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard; in: Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (eds.), op. cit., p. 71.

resumed his weapons, to direct them against these dark forces which "were disfiguring nature for no reason."<sup>170</sup>

With an awareness of the tragic element in life and worldly reality, and, this time in a more sombre and dramatic mode, he set on building a counter-world<sup>171</sup>, a world which he had experienced in the innocent years of his childhood, had dreamt of and had come to know with subtle glimpses. It was such glimpses, such flickering images and "secret signs"<sup>172</sup>, or what he described as "instantaneous sensations"<sup>173</sup> and elsewhere as "inklings of an ideal perfection"<sup>174</sup>, that aided his re-collection of a paradise lost and engendered his hope for a paradise regained.<sup>175</sup> Furthermore, he had come to recognise that "death is that proportion of life that man leaves unused"<sup>176</sup>, and that a total understanding of life depends on the acceptance and integration of "the wilderness"<sup>177</sup> in life, of the 'destructive element' which "is not merely 'evil'," as Sherrard says, "but is another aspect of the same force on which all creative life depends."<sup>178</sup> In Greece's struggle for freedom, in the "Hellenic Hero[is] ... love of Freedom", he saw the possibility of a powerful "re-creat[ion of] life out of the stuff of death"<sup>179</sup>, the potentiality for a cosmic re-synthesis, a restored integrity, a reconciliation of opposites,<sup>180</sup> which is latent in the nature of the universe.

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170 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Passion", First Reading. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 34.

171 I have borrowed this term from Steiner. See: George Steiner, 1989, 1991, op. cit., pp. 203ff.

172 Elytis' expression. In: Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Κορίτσια"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 166. In English in: Odysseus Elytis, "Selections from the *Open Book*"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 29. Cf.: Elytis' expression. In: Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Κορίτσια"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 193.

173 Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 12.

174 Odysseus Elytis, "Πρῶτα - Πρῶτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 43.

175 Cf.: "[In Elytis' poems] every utterance about paradise lost engenders the hope for a paradise regained." Hans Rudolf Hilty, "Odysseus Elytis: A Contemporary Greek Poet", translated from the German by William Reggan; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 61.

176 Quoted in: Kimon Friar, "Introduction"; in: Kimon Friar (tr.), 1974, 1990, op. cit., p. 19.

177 'BUT FIRST you will see the wilderness and give it your own meaning,' he said

*The wilderness will precede your heart  
and then again the wilderness will follow it*

From *The Axion Esti*, "The Genesis", Sixth Hymn. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 23.

178 Philip Sherrard, "George Seferis (b. 1900)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 207.

179 From Elytis' letter to Kimon Friar. Cited in English in: Kimon Friar, "Introduction"; in: Kimon Friar (tr.), 1974, 1990, op. cit., p. 17.

180 "things, when carried to their extreme conclusion, will meet." Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 12.

## Chapter Nine

### *Laconic*<sup>181</sup>

Longing for death so scorched me that my brightness returned to the sun.  
Who now sends me into the perfect syntax of stone and air,  
So he whom I sought I am.  
O flaxen summer, discreet autumn,  
Most humble winter,  
Life contributes its mite, the leaf of the olive tree,  
And in the night of stupidities with a small cricket again vindicates the  
claim of the Unexpected.

This is one of six poems published by Elytis in 1960, but written during the years 1956-58, that is, concomitantly with *The Axion Esti*.<sup>182</sup> The title of this collection is *Six and One Pangs of Conscience for the Sky*, a title that expresses the poet's regret for a lost sky of infinite azure, a lost heaven or paradise. (The Greek word οὐρανός, as Friar points out, means both 'sky and 'heaven').<sup>183</sup> Yet, these poems do not lament for an innocent past world, they do not indulge in a feeling of guilt, powerless resignation and apathy. On the contrary, in their note of hope, courage and expectation, they convey a longing "to restore to things their true names"<sup>184</sup> and a feeling of certainty; they anticipate a moment of renewed purity, a new sky.

In his poem *The Free Besieged*, Solomos had written:

From depth to depth he fell until there was no other:  
Thence he issued invincible<sup>185</sup>

Following the war and post-war experience, the Elytis of the *Laconic* passes through death, destruction and darkness to a new condition, a liberated existence which in this poem is expressed in terms of final detachment from the world and acquisition of a spiritual state; he goes up to heaven and attains to union with the sun. Having been exposed to the heavenly fire, he returns to the paradisiacal stage of the world, "into the perfect syntax of stone and air", which he is capable to apprehend by an active consciousness. The elements of the Greek setting evoked in here are to be understood in the light of a verse from *The Axion Esti*., which also refers to such elements:

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181 Written in 1956 (Friar). From Elytis' collection *Six and One Pangs of Conscience for the Sky*, (1960). Translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard; in: Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (eds.), op. cit., p. 69. Also translated by Kimon Friar in: Kimon Friar (tr.), 1974, 1990, op. cit., p. 123.

182 Kimon Friar, "Introduction"; in: *ibid.*, p. 22.

183 *Ibid.*

184 From his poem *Sleep of the Valiant (Variation)*, in *Six and One Pangs of Conscience for the Sky*. Translated by Kimon Friar, in: *ibid.*, p. 122.

185 Translated by Philip Sherrard and cited in: Philip Sherrard, "Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 34.

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"*Secret syllables through which I strove to utter my identity*"<sup>186</sup>. In the *Laconic* also, they are "*Secret syllables*", followed by a triumphant assertion: "So he whom I sought I am." To recall again a verse of Solomos',

Light flashed and the young man knew himself.<sup>187</sup>

Not only the world of the *Laconic* but the poet too has undergone a transformation, or it is rather through the poet's eating from the tree of the knowledge of good *and* evil that the inner pattern of the world has been revealed to him. Having freed himself from the world of evil, he found himself awoken to a true knowledge of himself, able to contemplate the cosmic forms in their original condition: "O flaxen summer, discreet autumn, / Most humble winter".

His new knowledge enabled him to transform, to purify the world:

I threw the horizons into lime, and with slow but steady hand, set out to  
consecrate the four walls of my future.<sup>188</sup>

As an "Other Noah", he saved in his Ark

the farthest, most bypassed stream; and among the birds, the only  
one they left me, the sparrow; and from the scanty vocabulary of  
bitterness, two, at most three words: bread, longing, love.

"In the hope of obtaining a freedom from all constraints and the justice which could be identified with absolute light,"<sup>189</sup> "of vindicat[ing] the claim of the Unexpected", he undertook the vexing task of outstripping all things impure, in order to "begin to distinguish ... the avenged world"<sup>190</sup>. This new world is in no way of the poet's invention, it is "written in [his] entails"<sup>191</sup> and its members were found there when his body was subjected to a dissection:

the gold of the olive root had dripped in the  
recesses of his heart.

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186 *The Axion Esti*, "The Genesis", Second Hymn. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 21.

187 From his poem *The Shark*. Translated by Philip Sherrard and cited in: Philip Sherrard, "Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 36.

188 From his poem *The Other Noah*, in the collection *Six and One Pangs of Conscience for the Sky*. Translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard; in: Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (eds.), op. cit., p. 72. Also translated by Kimon Friar in: Kimon Friar (tr.), 1974, 1990, op. cit., pp. 125-6.

189 Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 15.

190 Odysseus Elytis, "Πρῶτα - Πρῶτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 45. In English in: Odysseus Elytis, "Selections from the *Open Book*"; in: *ibid.*, p. 29.

191 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Genesis", First Hymn. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 17.



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[...]

A little below the skin, the blue line of the horizon sharply painted. And ample traces of blue throughout his blood.

The cries of birds

[...]

Nothing in the brain but a dead echo of the sky.

Only in the hollow of his left ear some light fine sand, as though in a shell.<sup>192</sup>

It is the world of these elements that, at "the end of one life and the beginning of another, ... the soul [is able] ... to investigate"<sup>193</sup> and poetry to make apparent, audibly confirmed. It is the birth into a new life, a new "year" with "early fruit",<sup>194</sup> that the poet and his native world,<sup>195</sup> man and the world at large, can approach and attain to (and of which the soul has a prevision, according to Plato) by a mighty effort, an effort that resembles a wrestling with Charon on the marble threshing floor. This is what the poet strives for, what he takes great pains for: to translate his inner experience into verbal images; so to order the materials of this world - good and evil, "pain and mirth"<sup>196</sup> - that what Elytis calls "the other architecture"<sup>197</sup> may be born inwardly and cast drops of light outwardly. It is the precise moment of this birth that Elytis calls "the only and ideal justice"<sup>198</sup> and locates at the point where the world is renewed and recreated in immortality, where death ceases to be opposed to life; where

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192 Odysseus Elytis, *The Autopsy*, in the collection *Six and One Pangs of Conscience for the Sky*. Translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard; in: Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (eds.), op. cit., p. 66. Also translated by Kimon Friar in: Kimon Friar (tr.), 1974, 1990, op. cit., p. 120.

193 Odysseus Elytis, "Πρῶτα - Πρῶτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 42. In English in: *ibid.*, p. 28.

194 *The Autopsy*, concludes with the prophesy: "We shall have early fruit this year."

195 Cf.: "But as is usual in Elytis's verse from any period, the figure of the poet cannot be separated from its roots in his native soil, so that we come to see the dissected body of this poem [*The Autopsy*] as that of his country as well; and what the autopsy serves to reveal is the timeless synthesis of features that gives Greece what Elytis sees as her true face. ... this autopsy is also meant to suggest a ritual sacrifice preparing the way for perennial fertility in keeping with ancient tradition". Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard, "Introduction"; in: Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (eds.), op. cit., p. xiii.

196 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Genesis", First Hymn. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 17.

197 Odysseus Elytis, "Πρῶτα - Πρῶτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 10. In English in: Odysseus Elytis, "Selections from the *Open Book*"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 27.

198 "because justice is a precise moment and nothing else." Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Κορίτσια"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 189. In English in: *ibid.*, p. 30.

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life and death, light and darkness coincide; "the most extreme point ... where the Sun and Hades touch each other."<sup>199</sup>

*I sought whiteness to the utmost intensity  
of blackness, hope to the point of tears  
joy to the outer limit of despair*<sup>200</sup>

[...]

What is Good? What is Evil?:

"A point A point

and on it you find balance and exist  
and beyond it turmoil and darkness  
and before it the roar of angels

A point A point

and on it you can progress infinitely  
otherwise, nothing else exists any more"

And the Scales which, stretching my arms,  
seemed to balance light and instinct, were

THIS WORLD

this small world the great!<sup>201</sup>

But this cosmogonic moment coincides with the moment in which the poet's own existence finds its fulfilment, the inner and the outer self are undividedly united;<sup>202</sup> the soul frees itself "from all constraints"<sup>203</sup> and the *Λόγος* is born therein and shines forth.<sup>204</sup> For "When wholeness comes, the partial vanishes."<sup>205</sup>

And the One I really was, the One of many centuries ago  
the One still verdant in the midst of fire, the One still bound to heaven

199 Odysseus Elytis, "Πρώτα - Πρώτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 42. In English in: *ibid.*, p. 28.

200 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Genesis", Sixth Hymn. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 24.

Cf.: "The persona's progress illustrates one of Elytis' major theses in *Axion Esti*: that the measure of man's humanity is his ability to survive as neither angel nor devil but as something in between; and man cannot reach the point of balance between Good and Evil - between all antitheses - without knowledge of both". Edmund Keeley, " 'The Genesis': A Commentary"; in: *Poetry*, Chicago, October 1964, p. 18.

201 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Genesis", Sixth Hymn. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 25.

202 See: Odysseus Elytis, "Πρώτα - Πρώτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 42.

203 Cf. Seferis' words: "the longing and struggle of man for perfect liberation, which some call return to a lost Paradise and others union with God." George Seferis, "Ένα Γράμμα για την Κίχλη"; in: *Άγγλοελληνική Έπιθεώρηση*, Vol. 4, 12, July-August 1950, p. 504. Cited in English in: Philip Sherrard, "George Seferis (b. 1900)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 223.

204 Man has been "created mortal, but given immortality by grace of participation in Logos". See: Chapter One, 1, 2.

On freedom, the struggle for freedom, as the keynote of Greek poetry - demotic and modern - see: John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, op. cit., pp. 217-37.

205 Paul the Apostle, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 13:10.

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entered into me, became  
the one I am  
At three o'clock in the morning  
above the shacks, distant  
the first cock crowed  
For a second I saw the Upright Pillars, the Metope of Powerful Beasts  
and Men bringing Knowledge of God  
The Sun assumed its face, the Archangel forever on my right  
THIS I then  
and the small world the great!<sup>206</sup>

These lines are from *The Axion Esti* (1959), the poem in which Elytis, as a poet, accomplished this birth, this cosmogenesis and anthropogenesis, to the best of his ability. This poem is not only the fruit of Elytis' birth-giving or form-giving process, but also an account of this cosmogonic, this tectonic process *par excellence*. It is a poetic building-act, a transmission of vision to image projected in visible form, and an account of the act of creation which manifests and brings to fruition the natural capacity of man, as *ἄνθρωπος*, to see truly and to make apparent, to dwell on the earth "remaining before the divinities"<sup>207</sup>.

*The Axion Esti* "stands out" from the second period in Elytis' poetry<sup>208</sup> and constitutes a kind of *summa* of this period. In his first period, as he says, "nature and metamorphoses predominate (stimulated by surrealism, which always believed in the metamorphosis of things). In my second period ... there is great historic and moral awareness, yet without the loss of vision of the world which marks my first period."<sup>209</sup> It appeared after more than a decade of silence, a period of withdrawal, of contemplation and perhaps of 'initiation'. Elytis found the model for this poem above all in the liturgical tradition of the Orthodox Church. This is reflected in the poem's tone, diction and structure, but also - and this justifies the others - in the poem's underlying idea of the immanence and the transcendence of the Divine in the creation, and of the metamorphosis of the creation to which it bears witness. The sources of the poem range from Homer and Heracleitus, ancient myth and iconography, to Byzantine hymnography, demotic songs, French surrealist poetry, the prose of the *Memoirs* of General Makriyannis, and the Greek poetry of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

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206 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Genesis", Seventh Hymn. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., pp. 27-8.

207 Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking"; in: Martin Heidegger, 1975, op. cit., p. 149.

208 Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 12.

209 Ibid., p. 11.

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The non-classical sources are, however, the most dominant. *The Axion Esti* has a religious orientation and, more precisely, a Christian orientation in the metaphysical perception and the spiritual understanding of the world which it reflects. It also implies an understanding of man and his destiny in subjective - and by implication in universal - terms which presupposes the recognition of the religious metaphysical principles which seem to derive from Christian myth and from the Orthodox Christian theological tradition with which the poet was familiar.

The words *Axion Esti* in the title of the poem mean "worthy it is" and echo the double Mariolatric connotation which they have in the Orthodox ecclesiastical tradition: first, they are the first words of the magnificat to the Mother of God, the one most often chanted in the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom;<sup>210</sup> and second, *Axion Esti* is the name of a famous holy icon of the Virgin in a monastery on Mount Athos. They also occur in several hymns, particularly in a long funeral hymn sung on Good Friday which begins: "Worthy it is to glorify Thee, the Giver of Life, Thou who didst extend Thy hand upon the Cross, and shatter the power of the enemy. Worthy it is to magnify Thee, the Creator of all; for by Thy sufferings we are freed from suffering and delivered from corruption."<sup>211</sup> *The Axion Esti* is divided into three sections. "The Genesis", "The Passion", and "The Gloria".

Keeley and Savidis, the translators of the poem into English, say that "*The Axion Esti* can perhaps be taken best as a kind of spiritual autobiography which seeks to present an image of the contemporary Greek consciousness through the developing perspective of a first-person persona who is at once the poet himself and the voice of his country."<sup>212</sup> Elytis himself recalls the time when his work on *The Axion Esti* was at an advanced stage as the time when he had succeeded in "submerging her [Greece's] shape into the shape of *The Axion Esti*".<sup>213</sup>

It is in the natural world of Greece that the patterns of the supra-natural world of archetypes were revealed to him, and it is in a visible world that bears the characteristics of his native world that he draws the invisible world in his own poem.

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210 "Worthy it is to glorify Thee, the ever-blessed and most pure and Mother of God."

211 In English in: Kimon Friar, "Introduction"; in: Kimon Friar (tr.), 1974, 1990, op. cit., p. 26.

212 Edmund Keeley and George Savidis, "Preface"; in: Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 9.

213 Odysseus Elytis, "Τὸ Χρονικὸ μᾶς Δεκαετίας"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 457.

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The world which the poem reflects is the natural world surrounding the poet; for it is by contemplation of, and participation in, this small world that he gains knowledge of "THIS WORLD ... the great!" The things of the world of *The Axion Esti* are the things of the poet's native sense-world, yet these are for him "*Secret syllables through which [he] strove to utter [his] identity*"<sup>214</sup> and the identity of "this small world the great". It is through the physical world of Greece that he perceived the presence of a metaphysical world within, and came to realise that these are not two worlds blind to each other, but they mutually interpenetrate. It is in the image of the earth on which he treads that he sees the Mother Earth, the Creatrix, the eternal feminine, the source of visions and revelations.

In *The Axion Esti*, the poet's vision of the wholeness of the world, of the 'lyrical reality' of the world, is voiced and given image from within a language which follows the natural patterns of the physical world of Greece. Elytis' poetic voice is the expression of his lyrical vision of the world; it is the fusion of the inward and outward elements of the experienced world: vision *and* language. And it is at once his voice and the voice of a whole people, the voice of Greece,<sup>215</sup> his own subjective world within which an 'ideal', a 'perfect' world lies secreted. *The Axion Esti* is testimony to Elytis' struggle to fulfil what he regarded as the task given to him: to redeem the original world which dwells within the visible one, to fuse the universal reality of the world with the particular reality of Greece; to cast afresh, "with soil and water" and all things receptive to light, an image of this inner world of Greece which radiates outwards, "a small sister Greece in blue."<sup>216</sup>

"Your commandment," he said, "is this world"  
and it is written in your entails  
Read and strive  
and fight," he said

"Each to his own weapons," he said<sup>217</sup>  
[...]

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214 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Genesis", Fourth Hymn. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 21.

215 See: Odysseus Elytis, "Πρώτα - Πρώτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 40.

216 From Elytis' *Heroic and Elegiac Song for the Lost Second Lieutenant of the Albanian Campaign*, VIII. Translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard; in: Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (eds.), op. cit., p. 39.

217 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Genesis", First Hymn. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 17.

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"AND THIS WORLD you must see and receive,"  
he said: Look! And my eyes sowed the seed<sup>218</sup>  
[...]

Each to his own weapons, I said  
In the Straits I'll open my pomegranates.<sup>219</sup>

Furthermore, the half-mythical first-person who speaks in *The Axion Esti* is at once the poet himself and the universal man who strives for absolute freedom, for the recovery of the wholeness that he possessed "in the beginning". It is not only Odysseus Elytis' "half-self" - the individual "whose name may be found in the municipal registry" - but "his whole self".<sup>220</sup> It is the process of recovering the unity of the two 'selves', his original integrity, the liberating self-knowing process, that the protagonist of *The Axion Esti* both experiences and speaks of.<sup>221</sup> The autobiographical elements in the poem are the terms in which Elytis describes his own subjective experience; the particular historical context of his personal encounter and final union with the transcendent One, the inner and immortal Self who is this world's divine "Master Builder"<sup>222</sup>. Yet, this experience, he implies, is not in any way exceptional, it is supra-individual, it is archetypal. The central figure of the poem symbolically represents the universal man who strives to surpass his individuality, "to verify the self that is truly [his] by stripping his self free of the individual state of existence"<sup>223</sup>, as Elytis himself did. His voice is the controlled voice of a poet who believed that, in order to fulfil his purpose as a poet, he had to transcend his own individuality and to evoke a vision of man and life in their original condition; to fuse the universal human destiny with his own private one and to cast an image adequate to reveal the 'lyrical reality' of man, the fusion of his being with the self that is "common"<sup>224</sup> to all; "to extinguish his individuality in absolute truth", in the tradition of Solomos.<sup>225</sup>

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218 Ibid., p. 21 (Fourth Hymn).

219 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Passion", Psalm I. Ibid., p. 31.

220 Odysseus Elytis, "Πρώτα - Πρώτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 42.

221 Cf.: "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; ... they shall all know me". Jeremiah, 31: 33-4.

222 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Passion", Ode d. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 43.

223 Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Μικρὰ Ἐπιλον, Δήλωσι τοῦ '51"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1992, op. cit., p. 206.

224 Ibid.

Note Steiner's remarks on "the autobiographical motif": " 'Painting himself', ... the writer or artist re-enacts the creation of his own persona. ... The self-portrait is the expression of his compulsion to freedom, of his agonistic attempt to repossess, to achieve mastery over the forms and meanings of his own being." George Steiner, 1989, 1991, op. cit., p. 205.

225 Iakovos Polyklas, op. cit., p. 30. Cited in English in: Philip Sherrard, "Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857)"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 15.

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*And it is a lie that there is no Golden Fleece. Each one of us is our own self's Golden Fleece.  
And it is a deception that death does not allow us to see it and recognize it.*<sup>226</sup>

His task as a poet was to make the reader realise that the historical events represented in the poem, or the particular landscape experienced by him, are the scene of a temporal individual drama that corresponds to, and participates in, the universal drama of human life.<sup>227</sup> This perception of the relation between the physical presence of the poet and the metaphysical being of man, between his land's natural world and the supra-natural and supra-individual world, between the personal drama and the archetypal human drama, pervades the whole work. It is epigrammatically expressed in the fragment of the Psalm which crowns *The Axion Esti*:

*Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth:  
Yet they have not prevailed against me.*

PSALM 129:2

In "The Genesis", the first of the three sections of *The Axion Esti*, it is implied that the non-empirical process of world-knowing - or world-re-cognising - and, or rather through, the process of self-knowing - or self-realising - depends on an understanding of the cosmogonic act itself,<sup>228</sup> the divine act whereby "the One not made by human hand"<sup>229</sup> eternally creates all living things in and through light. It also depends on an understanding of the relationship between Creator and creatures, the uncreated Light<sup>230</sup> - His *Λόγος* - and the human, a relationship in which there is 'unity' and 'otherness'.<sup>231</sup>

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226 Odysseus Elytis, "Πρώτα - Πρώτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 45. In English in: Odysseus Elytis, "Selections from the *Open Book*"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., pp. 28-9.

227 For a discussion on this pattern as found in the poetry of four other modern Greek poets, see: Philip Sherrard, "The Poetry and the Myth"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., p. 233-55.

228 See: Odysseus Elytis, "Πρώτα - Πρώτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 30.

229 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Genesis", Second Hymn. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 18.

230 "The Logos is thus the first expression of the abundant creativity by means of which God moves out of His self-enclosed and utterly transcendent isolation, the first expression of the virtualities latent in the unsoundable depths of God's Being." Philip Sherrard, 1992, op. cit., p. 28.

231 See: *ibid.*, p. 178.

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IN THE BEGINNING the light,<sup>232</sup>

"The Genesis" starts, the primordial light, the source of all; and in the non-temporal beginning all things existed in light, in a primordial unity. And "In him was life, and the life was the light of men."<sup>233</sup> Thence, the light, the first word, is always present and active in all creation, in the eternal creative process, and in every created being. "It was the sun, its axis in me"<sup>234</sup>. In the Christian perspective this is the process of cosmic Incarnation,<sup>235</sup> whereby the world of divine Ideas, of spiritual energies, *λόγοι*,<sup>236</sup> or image-archetypes, is manifested in the visible universe. And it is through this light that pervades and transcends all things, their metaphysical principle, that the world can be known. "In Thy Light shall we see Light."<sup>237</sup>

In "The Genesis", the Creator is a living power, a personal God, like the God of Christianity,<sup>238</sup> who creates the world of multiplicity and diversity in seven stages, the seven 'paragraphs' or 'hymns' of this section.<sup>239</sup> On another level, it is also in seven 'hours' that man realises the full potentiality of his existence and, by a gradual process of purification and illumination, attains full deification without losing his humanity; that he attains world-knowledge and self-knowledge or, in Seferis' words, "that perfect liberation which some call return to a lost Paradise and others union with God." The moment of human fulfilment coincides with, or rather reflects, the moment when the whole natural order is fulfilled. It is this moment that is prefigured in the biblical genesis of the cosmos - inseparably linked to the generation of the *Λόγος* - and in "The Genesis" of *The Axion Esti*.

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232 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Genesis", First Hymn. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 17.

233 John 1:4. "The generation of the Logos ... is linked inseparably with the cosmogonic act, the act of creation. ... the generation of the Son is at once both generation prior to creation and simultaneously generation in creation." Philip Sherrard, 1992, op. cit., p. 166.

234 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Genesis", First Hymn. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 17.

235 In Christian terms, "one might say that the historical and individual Incarnation [of the Logos in Jesus of Nazareth], and its formal interpretation, are a kind of concentrated and paradigmatic recapitulation of the cosmic Incarnation. ... Christ, the divine Logos, embraces and recapitulates all the Image-archetypes of which He is the active subject and which are immanent in Him; while each creature is an individual manifestation of a single Image-archetype that, again, is immanent in its active subject, Christ." Philip Sherrard, 1992, op. cit., pp. 163-4.

236 "Since they represent differentiation within the Logos". Ibid., p. 158.

237 Psalm 36:9.

238 See: Philip Sherrard, 1992, op. cit., p. 20.

239 "According to the poet's commentary ... each 'paragraph' corresponds to a stage of the Creation, of the Ages of Man, of the hours from dawn to midday". Edmund Keeley and George Savidis, "Notes"; in: Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 95.



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Man's genesis and growth to maturity is in immediate relationship with that of the natural world. Their coming into being flows simultaneously from the same origin.

And the first hour  
when lips still in clay  
try out the things of the world  
Green blood and bulbs golden in the earth  
And the sea, so exquisite in her sleep, spread

unbleached gauze of sky  
under the carob trees and the great upright palms<sup>240</sup>

In light, and through the agency of light, comes into being the world of material realities, which is characterised by time and space qualities. This is at once the poet's subjective world, his birth-place indicated by the elements of the Cretan landscape, and the whole natural world, the entire universe. In the symbolic elements of the world of the poem are reflected the elements of the world of the *Genesis* of the *Old Testament*: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters."<sup>241</sup>

From the unity of light springs the multiplicity of nature. It is this light, the light that illuminates, the light that inflames, that emphasises the spiritual besides the physical existence of all things created. It is this quality of "the things of the world", incarnated in them at the very moment of the act of creation, that has the capacity to nourish the poet himself at the exact moment of his creation, while "still in clay". From this moment on, the life of the poet is organically related to the life of this world, part of which he is, which he experiences, and in which he participates:

There alone I faced  
the world  
wailing loudly  
*My soul called out for a Signalman and Herald*<sup>242</sup>

Together with the body the soul was created, and, as the poet's soul came into being, he acquired a new vision of the world and of life in it:

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240 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Genesis", First Hymn. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 17.

241 *Genesis* 1:1, 1:2.

242 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Genesis", First Hymn. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 17.

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I remember seeing then  
the three Black Women  
raising their arms toward the East  
Their backs gilded, and the cloud they were leaving behind  
slowly fading  
to the right And plants of other shapes  
It was the sun, its axis in me  
many-rayed, whole, that was calling And  
the One I really was, the One of many centuries ago  
the One still verdant in the midst of fire, the One still tied to heaven  
I could feel coming to bend  
over my cradle<sup>243</sup>

He saw his earthly life in the shape of the "three Black Women", the black-robed *Moirai* of the demotic tradition.<sup>244</sup> He saw Fate seeking to enter his life and to reveal his destiny. He saw life being governed by Fate, but he also saw Fate facing the rising light, the sun "that was calling", and he saw the light transcending all visible living things. The One, the source of life, the One in the image of whom the poet is created, manifested Himself, made Himself visible in creation. And "in Thy light we shall see light."<sup>245</sup>

Farther, he turns to recall the history of his own homeland; the neighbourhood where he was born and the liberation of Crete, just one year after his birth, are evoked:

"Each to his weapons," he said  
And he spread his hands as would  
a young novice God creating pain and mirth together  
First the Seven Axes, wrenched with force,  
pried loose from high up in the battlements,  
fell to the ground  
as in the great Storm  
at its zero point  
where a bird gives forth its fragrance  
from the beginning again  
the blood was homing clean  
and the monsters were taking on a human shape  
*So very manifest, the Incomprehensible*<sup>246</sup>

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243 Ibid.

244 Tasos Lignadis recalls also Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos from ancient Greek mythology, and the three women of Dante (*Inferno*, canto secondo). Tasos Lignadis, *Τὸ Ἄξιον Ἔστι τοῦ Ἐλύτη: Εἰσαγωγή, Σχολιασμός, Ἀνάλυση*, Athens, 1971, 1976, p. 50.

245 From the liturgy of St. John the Chrysostom (*Doxology*).

246 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Genesis", First Hymn. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., pp. 17-8.

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In the regained freedom of his birth-land Elytis sees another genesis, another beginning. At another symbolic "zero point", after the "great Storm", he sees the forces that were obscuring the true face of life vanishing and the "monsters ... taking on a human shape". Life is rising again and all nature has risen in its original beauty and fragrance. The freedom of the earth is a reflection of human freedom; the purification of the earth coincides with the homing of a purified blood. "*So very manifest, the Incomprehensible*". The poet has become aware of his own intrinsic potentiality and inherent capacity for a liberated existence. And his actual and potential existence are so intimately connected to the existence of the earth whose beauties he can worship as he grows rooted in it.

Then all the winds of my family arrived too  
the boys with puffed-out cheeks  
and tails green and broad, mermaidlike  
and others, old men: familiar, ancient  
shell-skinned, bearded  
And they parted the cloud in two, and these again into four  
and what little remained they blew away, chasing it off to the North  
With broad foot and proudly, the great Tower tread the waters  
The line of the horizon flashed  
so visible, so dense and impenetrable

THIS the first hymn.

By the end of the first hymn, the poet has come into being and has acquired the faculties for reading and contemplating the physical elements of the world and their indwelling spirit, the world without and the world within, the macrocosm and the microcosm.

"The Genesis" continues as a 'theophany', a revelation of the *Λόγος* which is concealed in the creation, the cosmos, and in man as a microcosm. Through his voice - His *Λόγος* - God creates the world, 'from the beginning', in a series of divine theophanies: "Each word a swallow"<sup>247</sup>, each utterance a revelation. The divine *λόγοι* receive visible forms. Such epiphanic forms are often simply enumerated in the poem; they are named and thus re-created:

[...] Olympus, Taygetus<sup>248</sup>  
white marble fountains  
mills of wind  
tiny pink cupolas

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247 Ibid., p. 18.

248 Names of Greek mountains. Ibid., p. 19 (Second Hymn).

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and tall perforated dovecotes<sup>249</sup>  
[...]  
Ios, Sikinos, Serifos, Milos<sup>250</sup>  
[...]  
There the asparagus, there the kale  
there the curling parsley  
acanthus and dandelion  
liatris and fennel  
*Secret syllables through which I strove to utter my identity*<sup>251</sup>  
[...]  
There the stork and pelican  
there the turtledove  
there the mallard and the owl<sup>252</sup>  
[...]  
sponges and starfish  
and slender, silent anemones<sup>253</sup>  
[...]  
mint, lavender, verbena<sup>254</sup>  
[...]  
Papados Plakados Paleokipos  
Skopelos Messagros<sup>255</sup>

All bodily creatures, *all* formed realities, are at once revelations of the Invisible source, manifestations of "the Incomprehensible", and the means to 'read' the world, not only to see but to experience, to apprehend and to know the divine realities in the image of which all created beings are made, to re-collect those things on high and finally to voice them in a work made by art. It is in this sense that human orderly creation is analogous to the creation of the cosmos; it echoes the eternal beauty at the beginning of things, it is heavenward leading.

"Good," he said, "you know how to read  
and you'll come to learn a great deal  
if you study the Insignificant in depth  
And the day will come when you take on helpers  
Remember:  
the hand-combatant Zephyr, the dark-destroying  
pomegranate<sup>256</sup>

But, as "THE HOURS turned like days"<sup>257</sup>, the poem's persona was brought face to face with "Necessity".

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249 Ibid.

250 Names of Aegean islands. Ibid., p. 20 (Third Hymn).

251 Ibid., p. 21 (Fourth Hymn).

252 Ibid.

253 Ibid., p. 23 (Fifth Hymn).

254 Ibid., p. 24 (Sixth Hymn).

255 Names of villages on the isle of Lesbos. Ibid., p. 26 (Seventh Hymn).

256 Ibid., p. 21 (Fourth Hymn).

257 Ibid., p. 25 (Seventh Hymn).

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"All this is the time of innocence  
the time of the cub and green shoots  
a time long before Necessity," he said  
And he prodded danger with his finger  
And he placed a black eyebrow on the ridge of the cape  
From an unknown source he poured out phosphorus  
"so you may see," he said  
"within your body  
veins of potassium, manganese  
and the calcified  
ancient remnants of love"<sup>258</sup>

He came to realise that he inhabits a world that is subject to growth and decay, that danger treads the earth which he treads and, at the same time, he was bestowed with the ability to see within himself, to penetrate into his own depths, so that he may transcend necessity and corruption.<sup>259</sup> And in order to understand how he may achieve this, how "the blood of someone killed" may return "to the upper world"<sup>260</sup> - to paraphrase one of the next verses - he was offered a model, the figure of God-man connoted in the title of *The Axion Esti*, who

*as a being made of earth has suffered in the flesh and yet as a God has remained without suffering and who in Himself has transformed corruption into incorruption and through His Resurrection has opened the well of immortal life.*<sup>261</sup>

it seemed for a moment that I saw Him  
He who gave his blood to make me flesh  
ascending the thorny path of the Saint  
once again<sup>262</sup>

He became aware of his task and of "the thorny path", the sacrifice to which he was summoned in order to realise the "Voids", to be raised to incorruption, to recover his integrity, and to re-deem and re-inhabit the world of which he has a foretaste.

he prepared the great Voids on earth  
and in man's body:  
The void of Death for the Coming Infant  
the void of Murder for Just Judgment

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258 Ibid.

259 See: Odysseus Elytis, "Πρῶτα - Πρῶτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 42.

260 Cf. Apuleius' phrase: to "tread the threshold of Persephone". In: Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, Book. II, Chapter 48. Quoted in: Philip Sherrard, 1992, op. cit., p. 23.

261 From the morning service for the Saturday of Holy Week. Cited in: Philip Sherrard, 1992, op. cit., p. 24.

262 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Genesis", Seventh Hymn. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 26.

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the void of Sacrifice for Equal Compensation  
the void of the Soul for Responsibility Toward Others<sup>263</sup>

Elytis saw "death" as "the only way to resurrection"<sup>264</sup>. The middle section of *The Axion Esti* enters into the realm of death and suffering, through the way down and up of Heracleitus,<sup>265</sup> the *Via Negativa* which leads to the triumph over death, the "Easter of God"<sup>266</sup>, "the sanctification of the Universe into its limits" to which a Byzantine hymn<sup>267</sup> refers. "The Passion", the principal source of which is the Greek Orthodox liturgy, focuses on the confrontation of death and its significance. It is a kind of 'study in dying',<sup>268</sup> like that of the true philosopher, the man who, through purification, moves towards knowledge.<sup>269</sup> It echoes the Passion of Christ, who "through His own choice enters into suffering as a way to spiritual liberation."<sup>270</sup> Under a figure at times reminiscent of the Second Lieutenant of the Albanian Campaign (who is also the figure Elytis "saw in every period of our [Greek] history") and at times portraying Elytis himself as a poet taking "Once again ... the shape of [his] native country,"<sup>271</sup> the protagonist 'drains the cup of human suffering'. But he does so in an active manner: fighting against evil, the power which is destructive of the natural order, which "disfigures nature", corrupts human life and negates the sacred reality of nature and human life.<sup>272</sup>

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263 Ibid.

264 Odysseus Elytis, "Πρώτα - Πρώτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., pp. 42-3.

Cf. Sikelianos' phrase: "The only method is death". The same pattern is found in *The Dodecalogue of the Gypsy* of Palamas, in *The Free Besieged* of Solomos and in Seferis' "Thrush". Sherrard discusses this key pattern in modern Greek poetry, in: Philip Sherrard, "The Poetry and the Myth"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1956, 1970, 1981, 1992, op. cit., pp. 247ff.

265 See Elytis' reference to this Heracleitean fragment in his letter to Friar. Cited in: Kimon Friar, "Introduction"; in: Kimon Friar (tr.), 1974, 1990, op. cit., p. 16.

266 The last words of the *Heroic and Elegiac Song for the Lost Second Lieutenant of the Albanian Campaign*, XIV. Translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard; in: Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (eds.), op. cit., p. 44.

267 Quoted in: Mircea Eliade, 1952, 1961, op. cit., p. 162.

268 Plato, *Phaedo*, 61b-69e.

269 Cf.: "When a man attaineth to purity, all things become subject unto him, as unto Adam in Paradise before the fall!" Attributed to Paul the Hermit. Quoted in: Nicholas Arseniew, op. cit., p. 52.

270 Philip Sherrard, 1992, op. cit., p. 24.

271 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Passion", Ode j. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 65. But here the poem presents us again with a transfiguration of the historical event into hierophany. See: Mircea Eliade, 1952, 1961, op. cit., pp. 168ff.

272 "The Passion" consists of eighteen Psalms, twelve Odes and six Readings, arranged into three parts. Each part is further ordered thus: PPOROPPOROPP. According to Elytis' commentary, the theme of the first of these parts is "Consciousness Facing Tradition", of the second "Consciousness Facing Danger", and of the third "Consciousness Surpassing Danger". See:

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His mightier weapon is his love of freedom and "The Vehicles of Freedom": Consciousness (Psalm I) and Language (Psalm II),<sup>273</sup> and such virtues as Frugality (Psalm III) and Pride and Rebellion (Psalm IV), "that is, The Pillars of the Native Land".

THOUGH very young I came to know the voices of a hundred years<sup>274</sup> and even "deeper elements": "the Guardians of Tradition: The Mountain (Psalm V) and the Sea (Psalm VI)". His struggle is external, against "The Enemy" (Psalm VII) and "The Protectors" (Psalm VIII), and internal, against "The Erring Bourgeois" (Psalm IX) and "The Decadent young" (Psalm X);<sup>275</sup> for, as he says in the Second Reading, "only he who wrestles with the darkness inside him will find his own place in the sun someday."<sup>276</sup> Raising the liturgical symbols of his poetry - those which he inherited - he exorcises all evil in the present world of distorted reality and strives to conquer blindness of vision; to realise himself as a man and a poet and to fulfil the task given to him at his birth. His is the struggle for his "image to be indelible / and remain what it is"<sup>277</sup>, for the absolute freedom he desires for himself and for his country, for his "life [to] shape to a point"<sup>278</sup>.

Brothers, wherever evil finds you,  
wherever your minds grow muddled,  
invoke Dionysios Solomos,  
invoke Alexandros Papadiamandis.  
Speech that knows no lie  
will put to rest the face of martyrdom  
with some tint of azure on the lips.  
The water good,  
and the hand of noon all stone,  
holding the sun in its open palm.  
Wherever your foot may tread, I shout,  
build, brothers,  
build a fountain,  
your own Mavrogeni fountain!<sup>279</sup>

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Edmund Keeley and George Savidis, "Notes"; in: Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 96, where the thematic structure of this section is fully explained.

273 Ibid.

274 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Passion", Ode b. Ibid., p. 37.

Cf.: "Oh yes, it is not a small thing to have the centuries on your side, I kept saying all the time, and I went on." Odysseus Elytis, "Πρῶτα - Πρῶτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 45. In English in: Odysseus Elytis, "Selections from the *Open Book*"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 28.

275 Edmund Keeley and George Savidis, "Notes"; in: Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 96.

276 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Passion", Second Reading: "The Mule Drivers". Ibid., p. 41.

277 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Genesis", Seventh Hymn. Ibid., p. 27.

278 Ibid.

279 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Passion", Psalm XI. Ibid., p. 58.

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Imitating "God [his] Master Builder"<sup>280</sup>, he consciously took the way of sacrifice; he entered his personal martyrdom; he and "[his] people" received "the fire and iron":

Thirty-three months and more the Evil lasted. While they kept on knocking at the gate of lambs. And no lamb's voice was heard except under the knife. Nor the gate's voice, except at the hour when it sank into the final flames to burn. Because my people are the gate and the gateway and the flock of lambs.<sup>281</sup>

And, like Him, he "felt the scent of Resurrection!"<sup>282</sup>

"The Passion" ends with a prophecy:

dreams will take their revenge, and they will sow generations forever and ever!<sup>283</sup>

The poet has "endured the desert like a pebble"<sup>284</sup> and he will acquire "a power divine"<sup>285</sup>; through a "divine madness", a possession "resulting ... [not] from human ailments, ... [but] from a divine banishment of the commonplace"<sup>286</sup>, he will become a true member of "the race of poets", he will separate himself from current reality<sup>287</sup> and in an intimate union with Love - "the divinity to whom he is in bondage"<sup>288</sup> - he will become her minister, the "Evangelist of a Transcendental Country"<sup>289</sup>.

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280 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Passion", Ode d. Ibid., p. 43.

281 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Passion", Fifth Reading: "The Courtyard of Lambs". Ibid., p. 64.  
Cf.: "I, who am but straw, receive the Fire, and - unheard of wonder! - am inflamed without being consumed, as of old the burning bush of Moses." St. Symeon the New Theologian (French translation in: *La Vie Spirituelle* XXVII, 3, 1931, pp. 309-10). Cited in: Vladimir Lossky, 1957, 1991, op. cit., p. 181.

282 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Passion", Ode d. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 43.

283 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Passion", Sixth Reading: "Prophetic". Ibid., p. 71.

284 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Passion", Psalm XV. Ibid., p. 66.  
Cf.: "In the Christian mystery, ... the whole drama of human life is focused on an inner, intimate, intensely personal exchange between the human and God, between the human creature and the uncreated Light. It is a drama that takes place within the human soul. And the most fertile scene for its enactment is thought to be ... the desert." Philip Sherrard, 1992, op. cit., p. 21.

285 Plato, *Ion*, 533d.

286 Plato, *Phaedrus*, 265a.

287 Odysseus Elytis, "Πρῶτα - Πρῶτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 10. In English in: Odysseus Elytis, "Selections from the *Open Book*"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 27. Cf. Plato, *Phaedo*, 64c.

288 Plato, *Ion*, 534e.  
Cf.: "the greatest blessings come by way of madness, indeed of madness that is heaven-sent. ... a valuable gift. ... madness comes from God whereas sober sense is merely human." Plato, *Phaedrus*, 244a-d.

Cf. also: "For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." Matthew, 10:20.

289 "The Poet as Evangelist of a Transcendent Country" is the theme of Ode I. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis, "Notes"; in: Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 96.



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I flung the darkness on the bed of love  
with wordly things naked in my mind,  
and I shot my sperm so far  
that women turned slowly under the sun, in pain,  
and once again gave birth to the visible.  
My God, you were calling me, how was I to escape?<sup>290</sup>

The Voids shall be fulfilled.

*But then, at the sixth hour of the erect lilies,  
When my judgment will make a crack in Time,  
The eleventh Commandment will emerge from my eyes:  
Either this world or none other shall be  
The Labor of Birth, the Union with God, the Forever,  
Which in the justice of my soul I will have proclaimed,  
I the more just.<sup>291</sup>*

[...]

I'M ON my way now to a far and sinless country.<sup>292</sup>

[...]

I'M ON my way now to a far and unwrinkled country.<sup>293</sup>

The last Psalm brings the revelation of the divine will, the "true Laws" to which the poet submits. Chanting he expresses the abundant joy which encompasses his purified heart.

Generations of myrtle have recognized me  
ever since I trembled on the water's sacred screen  
crying holy, holy.  
He, the conqueror of Hades and the savior of Eros,  
he is Prince of Lilies.  
And I saw myself painted for a moment  
by those same Cretan breaths,  
So that the crocus might be vindicated by the skies.  
Now to lime I entrust  
My true Laws.<sup>294</sup>

And eternity comes forth: "the Absolute Reality of the Spirit, Glory of the Poet and of Greece"<sup>295</sup>. "Death is swallowed up in victory"<sup>296</sup>, death grants life eternal,<sup>297</sup> the Spirit of justice is given to the brave; sorrow is overcome and the uplifted heart is drenched with joy; the Sun annihilates darkness; Easter bells are heard, they announce

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290 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Passion", Psalm XVI. Ibid., p. 67.

291 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Passion", Ode k. Ibid., p. 68.

292 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Passion", Psalm XVII. Ibid., p. 73.

293 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Passion", Psalm XVIII. Ibid., p. 74.

294 Ibid.

295 Edmund Keeley and George Savidis, "Notes"; in: *ibid.*, p. 96.

296 Paul the Apostle, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 15:54.

297 Cf. Jacob Böhme's words: "But the triumph that was in my spirit I cannot write or speak, nor can it be compared with anything save the birth of life in the midst of death, with the resurrection of the dead." Cited in: Nicholas Arseniew, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

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the revelation of eternity, the mysterious union, the supreme entry of all creation into uncreated Light:

I'm on my way to a far and unwrinkled country.  
Now it is the hand of Death  
that grants the gift of Life  
and sleep does not exist.  
The noon bell chimes  
and slowly on the scorching stones letters are carved:  
NOW and FOREVER and PRAISED BE.

Forever and now the birds sing  
PRAISED BE the price paid.<sup>298</sup>

The second section of the poem does not simply speak of the necessity to suffer; it also carries the message of eternal life and fullness of vision.<sup>299</sup> These confident prophetic utterances affirm the orientation of this section, and of the whole poem, towards the last section. "The Gloria" is the ritual culmination of the poem, which represents the Resurrection that follows the entombment of Good Friday, the day when "Death shall have no dominion"<sup>300</sup>. In this third section of the poem, its climax, *The Axion Esti* finds its fulfilment. It is here that the victory over death and darkness, the re-possession of eternal life, Sun-day, is glorified. Imitating the living God, the poem's persona "has risen from the dead, by death he has vanquished death. To those in the tombs he has given life."<sup>301</sup>

"The Gloria" is a long hymn of praise, a magnificat, to "THIS WORLD / this small world the great"; a world as it was created in the beginning, re-formed through the fulfilment of "the Voids"; a terrestrial world transfigured; a physical world irradiated with divine light, showing forth the light that is always invisibly present in the natural

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298 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Passion", Psalm XVIII. Ibid., p. 74. "PRAISED BE" is the translators' rendering of "ΑΞΙΟΝ ΕΣΤΙ" (AXION ESTI).

299 Cf.: "This message of the necessity to suffer with Christ and of the saving power of His suffering is in fact 'the stumbling-block and foolishness of the Cross' and at the same time the message of eternal life!" Nicholas Arseniew, op. cit., p. 77.

300 Cited by Elytis in: Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Κορίτσια"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 186.

Cf.: " 'Initiation' means ... the descent into Hell followed by ascension into Heaven." And: "The initiation ceremonies include a symbolic death and resurrection". Mircea Eliade, 1952, 1961, op. cit., pp. 49, 133.

Cf. also: "We must remember that all artistic operations were originally rites, and that the purpose of the rite (as the word *τελετή* implies) is to sacrifice the old and to bring into being a new and more perfect man." Ananda k. Coomaraswamy, "A Figure of Speech or a Figure of Thought?"; in: Roger Lipsey (ed.), op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 20.

301 From the Easter service.

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world; a small world fully enriched by the "Absolute Reality of the Spirit", "Beauty and Justice"<sup>302</sup>. It is also a hymn of praise to "the Poet": the human individual who has recovered the state that was his in the beginning, at "The Genesis"; the man who has come to know the world entrusted to him - good and evil - and to recover "full vision of the perfect mysteries"<sup>303</sup>, the capacity to perceive the divine image in every created reality; the person who experiences the waking of a new life through the fulfilment of "the void of the soul", through that resurrection of the soul which St. Symeon the New Theologian describes as "union with life"<sup>304</sup>. Naturally, "The Gloria" follows or, more precisely, is set against, "The Passion"; for the significance of this transfiguration can be grasped only when "it is set against the background of what in Christian terms is described as the fall of man [and the natural world] or the loss of his [and its] paradisaal state, which is his [and its] natural and normal state."<sup>305</sup>

In anticipation of this coda, in Ode j of "The Passion", the poet addresses a woman, a Mother of immortal virginal beauties, and makes a confession while calling her:

THE BLOOD of love has robed me in purple  
[...]  
Once again I took the shape of my country,  
I grew and flowered among the stones.  
And the blood of killers I redeem with light  
Mother far away, my Everlasting Rose.<sup>306</sup>

And at "the end of one life and the beginning of another," at the moment when the void of sacrifice has been fulfilled, death has been overcome and a transcendental world heralded, it is she again who is invoked to mediate between the spiritual and the material world and to preside over the process of this world's re-birth. For it is this process of giving form afresh to the redeemed world that Elytis is about to undertake in the last section of *The Axion Esti*, and he appeals to her, the one "through whom

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302 See: Edmund Keeley and George Savidis, "Notes"; in: Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 96.

303 Plato, *Phaedrus*, 249c. "that blessed vision"; Ibid., 250b.

304 St. Symeon the New Theologian, *Tà "Απαντα*, Thessaloniki, 1969, I, Homily 42, p. 194. Quoted in: Philip Sherrard, 1990, op. cit., p. 100.

305 Ibid., p. 87.

306 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Passion", Ode j. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 65.

The epithet 'Everlasting Rose' is traditional for the Holy Virgin, with a pictorial counterpart in post-Byzantine icons. It occurs in the *Akathistos Hymn* which is also echoed in Ode I (see: Tasos Lignadis, op. cit., pp. 230-3).

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creation is reborn"<sup>307</sup>, the all-holy Mother of God who "heralds the sun", to come to his assistance.

In the first edition of the Greek text, this last section had the same title as the entire poem (*The Axion Esti*), something that underlines the importance of this coda,<sup>308</sup> yet also suggests that it is precisely at this point, the summit of the poem, that Elytis wanted to evoke the presence of the Holy Virgin whom the words 'Axion Esti' traditionally address. This may be argued with stronger conviction, since the first words of "The Gloria" are 'AXION ESTI' and, more importantly, because the specific motif of the seven couplets at the end of the first of the three parts of this coda is "hail".<sup>309</sup> This salutation occurs in a series of hymns to the Holy Virgin known as "Salutations", the most beautiful of which is the *Akathistos Hymn*<sup>310</sup>:

Hail to you through whom joy will shine out;  
hail to you through whom the curse shall pass away;  
hail, redemption of fallen Adam;  
hail, deliverance of the tears of Eve;  
hail, height unattainable by human thought;  
hail, depth invisible even to the eyes of angels;  
hail to you, the throne of the king;  
hail to you who bear him, the bearer of all;  
hail, start [sic] that heralds the sun;  
hail, womb of divine incarnation;  
hail to you through whom creation is reborn;  
hail to you through whom the creator becomes a child;  
hail, wedded maiden and virgin.<sup>311</sup>

As Sherrard points out,

*Many of the characterizations of the Mother of God in this Hymn ... refer to her transhistorical and universal role as a cosmic principle - her role as Sophia aeterna, the Eternal Feminine.*<sup>312</sup>

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307 *Akathistos Hymn*. See below.

308 The title of this section was changed because it caused some confusion. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis, "Notes"; in: Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 100.

309 The structure of "The Gloria" and of each of its three parts is explained in: *ibid.*

310 Anonymous, *Ἀκάθιστος Ὑμνος* (*Akathistos Hymn*), a 5th century Hymn (a *kontakion*) of the Orthodox Church to the Mother of God, so called because it is sung before a standing congregation. The *Akathistos Hymn* is sung every Friday evening during the first five weeks of Lent. Modern scholarship tends to attribute this hymn to Romanos the Melodist, the greatest Byzantine poet (6th century). See: C. A. Trypanis, op. cit., p. xvi. Elytis has written an essay on Romanos the Melodist (Odysseus Elytis, "Ῥωμανὸς ὁ Μελωδὸς"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1992, op. cit., pp. 35-56).

311 Translated by Constantine A. Trypanis. In: Simoni Zafiroopoulos (ed.), op. cit., p. 66.

312 Philip Sherrard, 1992, op. cit., p. 177, n. 29. "The same", adds Sherrard, "applies to many of her characterizations in Orthodox Christian homilies and liturgical texts." *Ibid.*

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It is also to this role of Elytis' "girlchild who will save the world"<sup>313</sup> that his doxology refers. The modern Greek poet calls on her with similar long sequences of images:

Hail Girl Burning and hail Girl Verdant  
Hail Girl Unrepenting, with the prow's sword

Hail you who walk and the footprints vanish  
Hail you who wake and the miracles are born

Hail O Wild One of the depths' paradise  
Hail O Holy One of the islands' wilderness

Hail Mother of Dreams, Girl of the Open Seas  
Hail O Anchor-bearer, Girl of the Five Stars

Hail you of the flowing hair, gilding the wind  
Hail you of the lovely voice, tamer of demons

Hail you who ordain the Monthly Ritual of the Gardens  
Hail you who fasten the Serpent's belt of stars

Hail O Girl of the just and modest sword  
Hail O Girl prophetic and daedalic<sup>314</sup>

Elytis' girl is extolled as one who burns and yet is not consumed.<sup>315</sup> And, according to him, the girl hailed in these couplets "personifies the poetic idea"; she is the body of "the poetic idea"; she is herself this poem, the generative locus in and through which "the poetic idea" is made manifest in epiphany. She is the being in whom "the poetic idea", "THIS WORLD", the *Λόγος* of the human and the natural world, takes flesh and is given birth, is 'bodied forth', in the poet's creation. The *Λόγος* is embodied through, and continues to sound through, her person.

The understanding of this process of re-birth, this essential cosmogonic process, the process of sanctification of the material world (its elevation to "a state of sanctity"), depends on a recognition of this divine form-giving principle, the feminine principle in the Divine, the essence of which, as Sherrard says, "is to disclose in the transparency and beauty of living forms the Being by whom she herself is disclosed."<sup>316</sup> She is the Mother of God in an ultimate sense, the universal matrix, "the 'immaterial matter' in whom the Image-archetypes 'take flesh', or 'take body', though not initially a

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313 Edmund Keeley and George Savidis, "Notes"; in: Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 100. One recalls Dostoevski's aphorism: "Beauty will save the world".

314 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Gloria". Ibid., pp. 80-1.

315 The epithet 'non-burning bush' to the Holy Virgin also occurs in the *Akathistos Hymn*.

316 Philip Sherrard, 1992, op. cit., p. 176.

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material, a physical body. She is the universal Nature - *Natura Naturata*".<sup>317</sup> She is the one who is consciously and emphatically denoted in the title of *The Axion Esti*, a poem that is centred around this very theme of the sanctification of the creation, which is accomplished in its final section.

In Christian myth, the birth of the divine Logos through her, the Incarnation of the Logos, is "a kind of concentrated and paradigmatic recapitulation of the cosmic Incarnation."<sup>318</sup> Through her, the divine Logos, "in becoming the flesh of her flesh, initiated the process of the sanctification of this material world: her bodily assumption, as a consequence of this knitting together of flesh and spirit in her person, prefigures the final metamorphosis of the whole creation."<sup>319</sup> St. Gregory Palamas sees in "all-beautiful" Mary a created "image of all beauty", the manifestation of "the power of His art ... the ornament of all beings, visible and invisible"<sup>320</sup>. It is her, the sublime beauty of this world, the source of new life, that "The Gloria" magnifies.

It is the blending of all perfections, divine and human, the reintegration of the eternal world of the spirit in the time-bound world of the senses, the "Lyrical Reality" of the world, a world ennobled and uplifted, that "The Gloria" extols. It is also to this synthesis of matter and spirit, "clay and heavenliness"<sup>321</sup>, the union of the human and the divine nature in Christ, that the earlier mentioned funeral hymn (in which the words *Axion Esti* occur) also refers, affirming the potentiality of all creatures for transfiguration and divinisation; heralding man's union with God and the union of all creation with the divine, deliverance from suffering and corruption. "God may be all in all."<sup>322</sup>

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317 Ibid., p. 177.

318 Ibid., p. 163. "The visible universe is the living Body of God. It is the temple of the living God." Ibid.

Another hymn of the Orthodox Church refers to her "who appears as Heaven and as Temple of the Godhead". Cited in English in: Vladimir Lossky, 1957, 1991, op. cit., p. 195.

319 John Campbell and Philip Sherrard, op. cit., p. 203.

320 St. Gregory Palamas, *In Dormitionem*, CLI, 468AB. Cited in: Vladimir Lossky, 1957, 1991, op. cit., p. 194.

321 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Genesis", Sixth Hymn. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 24.

322 Paul the Apostle, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 15:28.



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FOR HE is Death and he Life  
He the Unforeseen and he the Laws  
[...]  
He the thirst that comes after the fountain  
He the war that comes after the peace  
[...]  
He the fuse that lips ignite  
He the unseen tunnel that outflanks Hades  
[...]  
He the darkness and he the beautiful folly  
He the vernal essence of the showers of light<sup>332</sup>

He unites the opposites of death and life. He is a dweller of the world which unfolds in time, but capable of freeing himself from the limitations of time; he is an inhabitant of both time and eternity,<sup>333</sup> earth- and heaven-bound; he possesses a bodily and a spiritual identity, as the world around him does. His soul has recovered the wings with which it was furnished aforetime,<sup>334</sup> and in her upward flight she has "elevated [all creatures] to a level that is sacred"; he has fulfilled his role as a *psychopompos*. "The Gloria" calls forth the entrance to eternity, a Sunday in which the first and the eighth day of the cosmic week coincide, the day of the creation and recreation of the cosmos by God, the day of the Resurrection and, on another level, the day of the regeneration of the cosmos by the poet through his own personal regeneration and 'glorification', the day on which he "escapes the slave's temporalness to enter symbolically into the Kingdom where the upright man, the saved man, participates in the brotherhood of the Resurrected."<sup>335</sup>

The words *Nūν* and *Alèν* (Now and Forever) are the specific motif of the couplets at the end of the third part of "The Gloria" and the central motif of the whole poem.<sup>336</sup> These two words - *Nūν* and *Alèν* - from the liturgical language of the Church are

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Cf. Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Κορίτσια"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 185.

332 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Gloria". Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 87.

333 "Mortals are immortals and immortals are mortals, the one living the other's death and dying the other's life". Heracleitus, Fragment 62.

334 Plato, *Phaedrus*, 251b.

335 Vladimir Lossky, 1978, op. cit., p. 62. (This is a point stressed by St. Basil, as Lossky notes). In the Orthodox Church the prologue of the Gospel according to St. John constitutes the Gospel lesson for the Easter night service.

The title of this third section of *The Axion Esti* in Greek is "Δοξολογία" (*Doxology*), at the root of which is *doxa*, a term which in the Christian mystical tradition denotes "the 'glory of God' visibly manifested under the form of a luminous appearance." A Monk of the Eastern Church, *Orthodox Spirituality: An Outline of the Orthodox Ascetical and Mystical Tradition*, New York, 1945, pp. 20-1, 62, 101-3.

336 Edmund Keeley and George Savidis, "Notes"; in: Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., p. 100.



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frequently repeated throughout the service.<sup>337</sup> The fact they have not been rendered into modern Greek indicates Elytis' intention to avoid "alienation of their mystical and transcendental character", like in his rendering of *The Apocalypse*.<sup>338</sup> Once again, these two words express the dynamic relationship between the natural and the supranatural world and their interpenetration. The Forever potentially exists in the Now and the Now springs from the Forever, they are mutually immanent. The conclusive verse evokes the poet's vision of their potential union. The eternal aspect of this world, explicitly affirmed at the end of the poem, is at the same time the condition of its genesis;<sup>339</sup> it is its spiritual cause, its indwelling creative spirit, the gladsome light in the atemporal beginning, before the appearance of time, and in the first verse of *The Axion Esti*. The dynamic symmetry of the whole poem and the integrity of its fabric are thus cemented in the expression of the idea of the immanence and the transcendence of the archetypal world, the Great, in its sensible counterpart.

NOW the myrtle's wild animal    Now the cry of May  
FOREVER the utmost conscience    Forever the full light

Now now the hallucination and the mimicry of sleep  
Forever forever the word and forever the astral Keel

Now the moving cloud of lepidoptera  
Forever the circumgyrating light of mysteries

Now the crust of the Earth and the Dominion  
Forever the food of the Soul and the quintessence

Now the Moon's incurable swarthinness  
Forever the Galaxy's golden blue scintillation

Now the amalgam of peoples and the black Number  
Forever the statue of Justice and the great Eye

Now the humiliation of the Gods Now the ashes of Man  
Now Now the zero

and Forever this small world the Great!<sup>340</sup>

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337 i.e. "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; both now and forever and in the ages of the ages."

338 Odysseus Elytis, "Note"; in: John, *Ἡ Ἀποκάλυψη*, Transcription into Modern Greek by Odysseus Elytis, Athens, 1985, p. 141.

339 Cf.: "*The Axion Esti* is at once an epilogue to the *Genesis* and a prologue to the *Revelation*." Helène Ahrweiler, "Ὀδυσσεύς Ἐλύτης: Ἐνας Εἰδωλόλατρης Μυστικός"; in: *Ἡ Λέξη*, 106, Athens, November-December 1991, p. 730.

340 From *The Axion Esti*, "The Gloria". Edmund Keeley and George Savidis (trs.), op. cit., pp. 91-2.

The last part of "The Gloria" is a triumphant affirmation of the eternal and sacred aspect of this world of visible things; of the material fact that all things created are holy; that there is a spiritual potency in created existence;<sup>341</sup> that "visible forms enshrine ... the divine life in all its fullness."<sup>342</sup> That through her, who is Elytis' world-redeeming girl, the "Gate of Heaven" in a Christian Orthodox hymn,<sup>343</sup> a new world is born within the finite world; the world of "the perfect mysteries"<sup>344</sup> assumes a material reality; a pure and luminous world over which death and time have no more dominion enters into this small world.<sup>345</sup> *The Axion Esti* is centred around this cosmic mystery, the mystery of the incarnate light, "the Incarnate Logos ... that through which the sacramental reality of the created world is consummated."<sup>346</sup> And She, the woman evoked in the title of the poem, is also present in its last verse; for she is herself the cosmic body, she is not simply the matrix of "the poetic idea": she is its physical body, she is herself this *ποίημα*.<sup>347</sup> She "is not simply the foundation of the world of creatures: she is herself this world. ... She is not only *Natura naturans*, she is also *Natura naturata*."<sup>348</sup> She is the whole world, the cosmic Burning Bush.<sup>349</sup> She is Life. And she is Poetry in its most essential sense.<sup>350</sup>

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- 341 Cf.: "zero is to number as possibility is to actuality." Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "*Kha* and Other words Denoting 'Zero' "; in: Roger Lipsey (ed.), op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 220. See: passim. Cf. also: "zero is ... the totality of + and - numerical series and, accordingly (like God), *et unicum et nihil et plenum*." Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "Symplegades"; in: Roger Lipsey (ed.), op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 527, n. 14.  
Cf.: "holiness is a task assigned to all men". Leonid Ouspensky, op. cit., p. 193.
- 342 Philip Sherrard, 1992, op. cit., p. 180.
- 343 Dogmatic of Great Vespers of the 1st tone. Cited in: Vladimir Lossky, 1957, 1991, op. cit., p. 195.
- 344 Plato, *Phaedrus*, 249c.
- 345 "But the notion of 'salvation' does no more than repeat and complete the notions of perpetual renovation and cosmic regeneration, of universal fecundity and of sanctity, of absolute reality and, in the final reckoning, of immortality". Mircea Eliade, 1952, 1961, op. cit., p. 163.
- 346 Philip Sherrard, 1992, op. cit., p. 181.  
Cf.: "transcendence is revealed in the immanence of the Incarnation." Vladimir Lossky, 1978, op. cit., p. 21.
- 347 Cf.: "She is the girl-ποίημα, the archetype. ... the immortal." Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Μικρὰ Ἐψιλον, Μίλτα ἢ Τὸ Ἀρχέτυπον"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1992, op. cit., pp. 263-4.
- 348 Philip Sherrard, 1992, op. cit., p. 181.
- 349 Cf.: "The world, as Gerard Manley Hopkins said, is charged with the grandeur of God; all creation is a gigantic Burning Bush, permeated but not consumed by the ineffable and wondrous fire of God's energies." Timothy Ware [alias Bishop Kallistos Ware], *The Orthodox Church*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1963, pp. 77-8.
- 350 Cf.: "these two beautiful and fiery synonyms: *life* and *poetry*." Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Κείμενα, Νόημα καὶ Ἀλληλουχία στὴ Νέα μας Ποίηση", (1944); in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 490.

## 9. 5. Two Parallel Art-Acts

*The mystery of language is a great one; the responsibility for a language and for its purity is of a symbolic and spiritual kind; this responsibility does not have merely an aesthetic sense. The responsibility for language is, in essence, human responsibility.*

Thomas Mann<sup>351</sup>

Pikionis' most accomplished work, his project on the Attic hills, reached its completion in 1957. Two years later, the publication of *The Axion Esti*, Elytis' most ambitious poem, ended the poet's more than a decade-long silence. The two artefacts are contemporaneous. But, further to their historical coincidence, they are both, at once, genuine products of, and accomplices to, the same cultural legacy; they are the concrete outcome of the work of two artists who became conscious blood donors to the organism that begot them, at once grateful inheritors and generous endowers. *The Axion Esti* of Elytis may be seen as the counterpart, in poetry, to the design of Pikionis' ascending paths on the Attic hills; its poetic depiction of the world of the senses as an embodiment of the world of the spirit is a verbal analogue of the iconic representation of the divine world-order in the controlled architectural form from the hand of Pikionis. They are both veritable icons of the world, in the sense that they intend to evoke the creators' vision of the transcendental reality of this small world of visible things and to provide a means of communion with it.

As already seen, what is of central importance in the work of both Pikionis and Elytis is their conscious and active concern with the language into which they were born as makers - the informing context and material of their art - and also their understanding of their given art-idiom as their most vital link with the world within which they lived and which it was their task to articulate and order in their significant art-forms. The form of their works was determined by the linguistic order in which they as individuals found themselves embedded and which, for them, is a natural order, as

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351 From his open letter to the dean of the University of Bonn, after the "sycophantic academics" of the latter "deprived him of his honorary doctorate" following his emigration. In this letter "Mann explained how a man using German to communicate truth or humane values could not remain in Hitler's Reich". Quoted in: George Steiner, "The Hollow Miracle"; in: George Steiner, 1967, 1985, op. cit., p. 125.

Cf.: "the effort to overcome corruption of consciousness, is an effort to be made not by specialists only but by every one who uses language, whenever he uses it." R. G. Collingwood, 1938, 1958, op. cit., p. 285.

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natural as the sea and the mountains about them. Moreover, they were both "preoccupied with finding the analogies between nature and language in the realm of imagination"<sup>352</sup>, in order to perceive the divine world-order and to receive into their image-making faculty<sup>353</sup> the "ideal prototype"<sup>354</sup>, of which the linguistic and the physical order are revealers, and to project the image or icon of the cosmos in the visible form of their work. It is this act of the imagination that the natural language and the language of art guides, for the artist as well as for the reader.<sup>355</sup> It is the beauty of the mental image that informs the material form of the tangible product, in the measure in which its materiality allows it. And, as Elytis says,

*It is the absence of imagination that changes man into a cripple unable to appreciate reality; and let practical men say what they may, men who one day depart from life without having even stammered it out are doubly ignorant.*<sup>356</sup>

The work of both Pikionis and Elytis is characterised by an uninterrupted endeavour to create an order commensurate with the order of the living language to which their art is native and, thus, with the natural world-order; to make their individual voice conform, as far as possible, to the voice of nature and, thus, guarantee its genuineness, its accuracy in the expression of the inner reality of the world and the experience of human life; ultimately, to bridge the "chasm between the life of poetry [and language] and the poetry [and language] of life, between the image and the act, between the Logos and history."<sup>357</sup> This of course does not mean that by following the guidance of language - verbal or architectural - they were less creative or imaginative, less 'inventive' or 'innovative'. One of the chief advantages of their personal 'speech' is that it breaks away from the habitual, the commonplace and the ephemeral; but it never overtakes the common language itself, neither does it compete with it.

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352 Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 9.

353 And "Remembrance ... is vested in the imaging faculty". Plotinus, *The Enneads*, IV. 3, 29.

354 Odysseus Elytis, "Τὸ Χρονικὸ μιᾶς Δεκαετίας"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 326.

355 See: Odysseus Elytis, "Πρόλογος", (1977); in: Odysseus Elytis, *Τὸ Δωμάτιο μὲ τις Εἰκόνες*, Athens, 1986, p. 7.

356 Odysseus Elytis, "Πρῶτα - Πρῶτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, *Ἄνοιχτὰ Χαρτιὰ*, Athens, 1974, 1982, 1987, p. 9. In English in: Odysseus Elytis, "Selections from the *Open Book*"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 27.

Cf.: "Logic can take you from A to B, but imagination encircles the world." Albert Einstein; quoted in: Keith Critchlow, op. cit., p. 11.

357 Philip Sherrard, "Anghelos Sikelianos and his Vision of Greece"; in: Philip Sherrard, 1978, op. cit., pp. 89-90.

Pikionis and Elytis did not try to escape their tongue, for they knew it would be futile; they knew that the end product of their work is accountable against their given art-language, and, for this reason, it has to be the fruit of a process that takes place within this language - not without it. They viewed language in an organic relation with the natural world, they accepted its phenomena in the way they accepted the physical phenomena,<sup>358</sup> and they respected them in order to safeguard the efficacy of their artistic operation. What matters more, perhaps, is that by doing so they also safeguarded the integrity of their personal 'speech'; they secured the unity of form and meaning in their work and its comprehensibility, its ability to express and communicate their subjective experience and to elicit response. Without forcing upon "the tree of [their inherited] language" concepts which are alien to it,<sup>359</sup> they strove to elevate it with mastery and force,<sup>360</sup> to make its geometry commensurate with the Platonic geometry<sup>361</sup> of the experienced world, and to "prolong the tradition of Solomos with a sort of miracle in view, awaiting something like a spark caused by the appropriate juxtaposition of two words"<sup>362</sup>.

Furthermore, Elytis and Pikionis viewed the language of their craft not merely as "the sum of words-symbols of [material] things"<sup>363</sup>, but as the means to approach that which transcends words; to address those things in the region of the heavens which are embodied in verbal forms, in the forms of the material world and in the art-forms which precede them; to view and contemplate the beautiful and the luminous, and, consequently, to "unravel the famous Gordian knot of reality"<sup>364</sup> by voicing "that

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358 See: Odysseus Elytis, "Πρώτα - Πρώτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 30; Odysseus Elytis, "Τὸ Χρονικὸ μιάς Δεκαετίας"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., pp. 329, 454. Elytis also referred to the affinities between the physical phenomena and the phenomena of the imagination. See: *ibid.*, pp. 451-2.

See also: Dimitris Pikionis, "Συναισθηματικὴ Τοπογραφία", (1935), pp. 76-7.

And: Dimitris Pikionis, "Ἡ ἐνόραση τοῦ θεατῆ", (1953), p. 118.

359 See: Odysseus Elytis, "Τὸ Χρονικὸ μιάς Δεκαετίας"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 330.

360 Dante's "magistratu et potestare"; Dante, *De Vulgari Eloquentia*; quoted in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, "Solomos' *Dialogos* and Dante"; in: Zissimos Lorentzatos, 1980, op. cit., p. 152.

361 See: Odysseus Elytis, "Ἐπίμετρο, Γιάννης Τσαρούχης", (1971); in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 570.

362 Elytis' Nobel Prize acceptance speech, (1979); in: Odysseus Elytis, 1992, op. cit., pp. 328-9.

363 *Ibid.*

364 Elytis' phrase. In: Odysseus Elytis, "Équivalences chez Picasso", (*Verve*, Paris, 1951). In French in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 591. In English: Odysseus Elytis, "Picasso's Equivalences", translated from the French by Ivar Ivask and Astrid Ivask; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 24.

which exists eternally"<sup>365</sup>, and to make their art-act attain "the mysterious gravity of a ritual act"<sup>366</sup>, an act of initiation or "divination."<sup>367</sup> For this reason, they strove to make the semantic pattern of their work conform to that of their native art-language. Viewing the language of their art as an analogue of the language of the natural world, as the projection of the cosmic picture into matter and into time and history, they used it as one integral whole; they discovered the foundations of their art in it, and, with their own art-acts from within their language, they preserved its integrity and enhanced its creative properties.

Seeking to apprehend the truth which words-symbols enshrine, to "decipher" the "syllabic script" which "the sun and the waves"<sup>368</sup> and all natural phenomena constitute, they embarked on a pursuit of this condition of the soul, that Plato describes as "always dwelling in memory"<sup>369</sup>. They sought not merely to hear, but to see intellectually and to know that which is truly real;<sup>370</sup> to re-create the transcendental forms which words-symbols imitate;<sup>371</sup> to follow "the natural movement of the soul"<sup>372</sup> and to see the world and their own self "pure and diaphanous"<sup>373</sup>, as they "*may be*"; to rise upwards and to become "citizen[s] of heaven"<sup>374</sup>, of the celestial world of archetypes which is also the world within, and to derive their images thence. At a second stage, they strove to shape their artwork so that it may become the receptacle of their vision, made of matter and yet "illuminated by inspiration"<sup>375</sup>, transformed through the beauty that informs it; a whole world in miniature, able to

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365 Dimitris Pikionis, "Η ανοικοδόμηση και τό πνεῦμα τῆς παράδοσης", (1946), p. 162.

366 Elytis' phrase. In: Odysseus Elytis, "Équivalences chez Picasso", (1951); in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 594. In English in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 25.

See: Dimitris Pikionis, "Σπουδαστικός κόσμος", (1955), p. 122.

367 Lawrence Durrell, op. cit., p. 43.

368 From Elytis' poem *Silver Gift Poem*; in his collection *The Light Tree and The Fourteenth Beauty*, op. cit. Translated by George P. Savidis and Bette Anne Farmer. Cited in: Ivar Ivask, "Preface"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. ix.

369 Plato, *Phaedrus*, 249c.

370 Ibid., 499c.

371 Dimitris Pikionis, "Σπουδαστικός κόσμος", (1955), pp. 122-3.

372 Odysseus Elytis, "Τὸ Χρονικὸ μᾶς Δεκαετίας"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 442.

373 "you will never find the truth if you oppose the natural movement of the soul". Ibid.

374 Ibid., p. 441.

375 Odysseus Elytis, "Τὸ Χρονικὸ μᾶς Δεκαετίας"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 450. In English in: Odysseus Elytis, "Selections from the *Open Book*"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 32.

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convey the inner beauty and harmony of a manifold world; "a small and perfect Universe"<sup>376</sup>, a universe restored to its initial and natural state of perfection.

The "alphabet" of the works of the two creators is "form[ed] out of purely Greek elements"<sup>377</sup>, twentieth century Greek, it may be added, the very elements which form the world which surrounded the artists themselves, and which aided their world-knowing process. It has been seen, in the previous chapters, that Pikionis' aim was so to arrange his architectural work that its design will conform to the order in nature, which was, for him, of a physical as well as of a metaphysical kind. It has also been seen that Elytis' "concept of an elevated language" is based on his understanding of the physical phenomena that form the language of the senses as analogues of metaphysical realities which can be perceived through the senses; that the cosmic luminosity he strives for in his poems is not effected by the light of a physical, but of a metaphysical, an "intelligible sun"<sup>378</sup>.

Elytis himself described the mission of the contemporary poet as that of "an oxygen donor".<sup>379</sup> And his statement on his "humanistic"<sup>380</sup> view of art cited earlier testifies to his awareness of the functional role of the artist as a man who employs the elements of his alphabet to this end: that they might aid the reader in restoring his soul to order. It also affirms his deep hope that from his own "great effort, the drops of light [will] fall slowly ... into the vast night of the soul like lemon drops into polluted water"<sup>381</sup>, that the supreme practical end of his own artistic operation will be met and his work will "produce order and proportion in the soul [of men]"<sup>382</sup>. In order to fulfil this role, it is

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376 Ibid.

377 Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 7.

378 *The Axion Esti*, "The Passion", Ode f. (Cf. the characterisations of the Holy Virgin in the *Akathistos Hymn*: 'ray of an intelligible sun' and 'vehicle of the intelligible sun').

Elytis spoke of "solar metaphysics". See: Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., pp. 11, 14.

Cf.: "This [metaphysical sun] of which the physical sun is simply the icon." Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Μικρὰ Ἐψιλον, Τὸ Θείκὸ Φῶς κατὰ τὸν Πλωτῖνο"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1992, op. cit., p. 312.

Cf. Dimitris Pikionis, "Συναισθηματικὴ Τοπογραφία", (1935), p. 74.

379 Odysseus Elytis, "Τὸ Χρονικὸ μιᾶς Δεκαετίας"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 414. In English in: Odysseus Elytis, "Selections from the *Open Book*"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 31.

380 Elytis does not use this term in the sense which it inheres in 'classic humanism'.

381 Odysseus Elytis, "Τὸ Χρονικὸ μιᾶς Δεκαετίας"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., pp. 453. In English in: Odysseus Elytis, "Selections from the *Open Book*"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 32.

382 Plato, *Gorgias*, 504d.

necessary for every artist to use an alphabet that can guarantee the intelligibility of his end product; a shared alphabet that may enable him to voice his vision of "the eternal" aspect of the things of the world, rather than to "glorif[y] ... the ephemeral"<sup>383</sup>, in terms of intelligible myths and symbols, the vitality of which he preserves through his own "Architectural Invention and Solar Metaphysics"<sup>384</sup>.

Both artefacts - *The Axion Esti* of Elytis and Pikionis' project on the Attic hills - are rooted into their native landscape, they have a distinctly Greek character.<sup>385</sup> This is not a matter of chauvinism in any way, as Elytis points out. Rather, "Greece represents for me/[them] certain values and elements which can enrich universal spirits everywhere. Being Greek, I/[they] try to present precisely these values on a universal level. It is not a nationalist bent which animates me/[them] to do this."<sup>386</sup> The natural phenomena to which architecture and poetry respond are the phenomena of a particular time and place, in this case, the phenomena of modern Greek reality. But what man "imagines is identical with what he sees, ... the natural phenomena are, too, phenomena of the spirit."<sup>387</sup> The 'alphabet' with which Elytis and Pikionis ordered their 'small universe' is formed out of these phenomena of the world which they inhabit, which are at once physical *and* metaphysical. The image of the world which

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383 Dimitris Pikionis, "Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς μορφῆς", (1950), p. 241, n. 5 (p. 206).

384 "Toward a Lyricism of Architectural Invention and Solar Metaphysics" ("Pour un lyrisme d'inventions architecturales et de métaphysique solaire") was the title of an article which Elytis began to write (during his first stay in Paris) for a French journal called *Empédocle* which René Char and Albert Camus intended to publish. The journal foundered and the article was never completed. See: Odysseus Elytis, "Τὸ Χρονικὸ μιᾶς Δεκαετίας"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., pp. 448ff.

See also: Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 11.

385 See: Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Κείμενα, Τὰ Σύγχρονα Ποιητικὰ καὶ Καλλιτεχνικὰ Προβλήματα", (1944); in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 497.

386 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

See: Odysseus Elytis, "Ἐπίμετρο, Γιάννης Τσαρούχης", (1971); in: *ibid.*, p. 575.

387 Odysseus Elytis, "Τὸ Χρονικὸ μιᾶς Δεκαετίας"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 407 (Elytis quotes Paul Éluard's phrase). In English in: Odysseus Elytis, "Selections from the *Open Book*"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 30. See: Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Κείμενα, Τὰ Σύγχρονα Ποιητικὰ καὶ Καλλιτεχνικὰ Προβλήματα", (1944); in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., pp. 504f.

Cf.: Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Μικρὰ Ἐψιλον, Σύντομη Ἀντιφώνηση στὴν Αὐλα τοῦ Πανεπιστημίου τῆς Ρώμης"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1992, op. cit., p. 303.

Cf.: "Every imaginative experience is a sensuous experience raised to the imaginative level by an act of consciousness; or, every imaginative experience is a sensuous experience together with consciousness of the same." And: "nihil est in imaginatione quod non fuerit in sensu." R. G. Collingwood, 1938, 1958, op. cit., pp. 306, 307.



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they craved to compose is this "superreal image"<sup>388</sup>, in which the fusion of the outward and inward elements of their world is accomplished.

The manner in which Elytis and Pikionis shaped their material works was determined by, and conforms to, the habits of the language and the modalities of the natural world to which they are native. Yet, their works are manifestations, in a particular historical context, of this universal human poetic capacity that allows man to experience the natural world, to find the sources of art - which are also the sources of the world with which each artist shares his life<sup>389</sup> - in the realities of experience, and to raise these realities to a higher level;<sup>390</sup> to use present experience as a means of recollecting the world of reality, as a means "to bring [their] skin in touch with that whiteness of memory which pursued [them] / (from a certain paragraph in Plato)" (Elytis), to know and to receive the truth which issues from the indwelling principle of all cosmic reality. They are based on the principle that every aspect of life has an equal value in a spiritual view, and an appreciation of these works depends on a recognition of this principle; for they are built works of this kind of poetry that is not "the ability to compose verses but, rather, the ability to re-create the world, literally and metaphorically, in such a way that the more the Poet's desires manage to materialize, the more they will contribute toward the realization of a Good acceptable by the totality of mankind."<sup>391</sup> And, for Elytis, all that is built in the solid manner of this kind of poetry, is "*useful* like boats and houses."<sup>392</sup>

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388 Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Κορίτσια"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 175.

389 Cf.: "my chief interest was to find the *sources* of the neo-Hellenic world ...". Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 11.

390 See: Odysseus Elytis, "Ἐπίμετρο, Ὁ Κάρολος Κουν καὶ ἡ Ἐποχὴ του"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 597.

Cf.: "It is not at all an accident that at epochs of sanity the Good was identified with the Beautiful and the Beautiful with the Sun." Elytis' Nobel Prize acceptance speech, (1979); in: Odysseus Elytis, 1992, op. cit., pp. 320-21.

Cf. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "Beauty, Light and Sound", in: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, 1989, op. cit., pp. 42-9.

Cf. also: "No object of sense in the whole world is more worthy to be made a type of God than the sun". Dante; quoted in: Ananda Coomaraswamy, "Literary Symbolism"; in: Roger Lipsey (ed.), op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 324.

391 Odysseus Elytis, "Πρῶτα - Πρῶτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 36. In English in: Odysseus Elytis, "Selections from the *Open Book*"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 28.

392 Odysseus Elytis, "Équivalences chez Picasso", (1951); in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 595. In English in: *ibid.*, p. 26.

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Furthermore, it may be postulated that the two artefacts point to a time when the world images of architecture and poetry in modern Greece coincide; that their methods of representing the world "correspond more or less to contemporary habits of vision" (Coomaraswamy). The two artefacts, their language, tone, design, rhetoric, associations, et cetera, have a distinctly Greek local habitation. They are rooted in their native physical, intellectual, artistic and mythical or spiritual landscape. They belong to their native tradition, they are grounded in, and charged with, Greek history, distant and recent. They reflect the circumstances and configurations of contemporaneous life and, at the same time, they shape the language of modern Greek life by using it in its full pitch of invention (Steiner's expression). They are artworks which have grown out of the life of the community to which the two artists belong, and it is by the existence of such world-integrated works that the unity and coherence of this life may be preserved. Yet, they also carry within themselves and express a world-view which, in the case of these two particular creators, derives from the metaphysical tradition in which they were rooted and which provided them with the myths and symbols they employed, but it is also implicit in the art forms of all major - and minor - traditional cultures, in the art expressions of every valid sacred metaphysical doctrine. This view of art looks at artistic creation as an activity directed towards the materialisation of the immaterial, intelligible model and affirms "the unity and interdependence of all life" (Coomaraswamy); for its principles apply as much to the art of life and language as to poetry and architecture; 'life' and 'poetry' are "two beautiful and fiery synonyms"<sup>393</sup>, Elytis insists. The icons of the world which Pikionis' architectural work and Elytis' poem bring forth are made according to these principles; faithful images of, and equal to, the archetypal world, the eternal and intelligible model which both artists imitated, each from the point of view of his own art and according to his ability. They are consistent with a theory of cosmic reality, the realisation of which depends equally on a way of living and a way of building or poetising, and points towards a theory of life or art which fosters human creation as the expression of "the unity of life and art"<sup>394</sup>.

Moreover, it is possible to discern a correspondence between the world experience of Pikionis and Elytis, two creators of the same age and the same inheritance, both wholly housed in, and creating from within, the same 'ideographic' language. The

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393 Odysseus Elytis, "Τὰ Κείμενα, Νόημα καὶ Ἀλληλουχία στὴ Νέα μας Ποίηση", (1944); in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 490.

394 Odysseus Elytis, "Πρῶτα - Πρῶτα"; in: *ibid.*, p. 18.

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elements of their language, its physical contours, its vital bearing, its historical foundations and its mythographic terms are inevitably and specifically Greek, firmly rooted in their native literary or architectural landscape. And it is their intimacy with the distinct *ethos* of their native idiom that shapes and sustains the expressive forms of their art, and that enables them to "adapt to the Greek light"<sup>395</sup> and to bring "into just relation with the Greek tradition"<sup>396</sup> the elements which they borrowed from older or alien idioms.<sup>397</sup> The Byzantine and the demotic tradition of Greece, carried forward chiefly by the poets of modern Greece, was considered, by both Pikionis and Elytis, as the most vital source and sustaining context of their art. Especially their major works grow from within this traditional environment; their nature is to a great extent determined by it. It is this audible memory, the echoes of their natural literary or architectural heritage, that links these two works organically to the tradition which nourishes them, that relate one to the other, and put those whom their labours intended to serve in natural touch with their historical, legendary, and mythical past<sup>398</sup> which is most accessibly present in *The Axion Esti* as well as in the paths of Pikionis.

And it is this felt presence of the past, the embodiment of their world in the art-forms of their predecessors, that guided Pikionis' and Elytis' making process, the process of re-cognition and re-creation of the cosmic picture whereby "the avenged world" was housed anew in modern Greek forms of art.

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395 Odysseus Elytis, "Odysseus Elytis on His Poetry"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 14.

396 Edmund Keeley, "Elytis and the Greek Tradition"; in: Edmund Keeley, 1983, op. cit., p. 135. See: *ibid.*, passim.

397 Such as elements from French surrealism in the case of Elytis, or from the architecture of Japan and the Far East in that of Pikionis (most pronounce in his *Children's Garden in Philothei*).

398 Cf.: "a cultivation of trained, or shared remembrance sets a society in natural touch with its own past." George Steiner, 1989, 1991, op. cit., p. 10.

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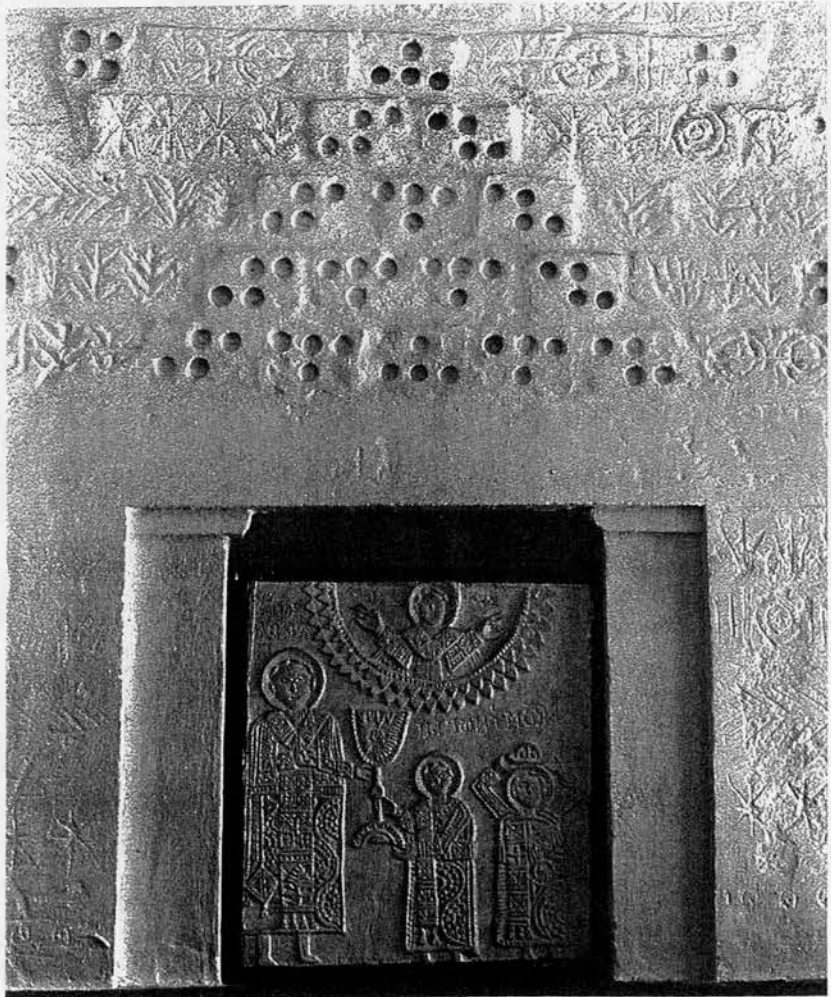
*A metaphorical summer was waiting for me, entirely the same, eternal, with the crackings of wood, the fragrances of wild herbs, the figs of Archilochos and the moon of Sappho. I was traveling as if I were walking in a diaphanous deep; my body was shining as green and blue currents were passing through it; I was caressing the speechless stone female figures, and in the reflections I was hearing by the thousands the chirpings of the glances; an endless row of ancestors, fierce, tortured, proud, moved each one of my muscles. Oh yes, it is not a small thing to have the centuries on your side, I kept saying all the time, and I went on.<sup>399</sup>*

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399 Odysseus Elytis, "Πρῶτα - Πρῶτα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., pp. 44-5. In English in: Odysseus Elytis, "Selections from the *Open Book*"; in: Ivar Ivask (ed.), op. cit., p. 28.

## *Conclusions*

### **The Architectural Act : Essentially a World-Redeeming Act**



*In my quality of earth, I am attached to life here below,  
but being also a divine particle, I bear in my breast the desire for a future life.*

St. Gregory of Nazianzus

## 1. Figures of Speech or Figures of Vision?<sup>1</sup>

*Who paints a figure,  
if he cannot be it, cannot draw it*

Dante<sup>2</sup>

In the early chapters of this thesis, it was argued that the building of a house, a poem, a sculpture or any artefact can be thought as commensurate with architecture, essentially understood, and that artefacts which do justice to man as *ἄνθρωπος* are the historical - temporal and spatial - expression of human dwelling; they constitute the visible mode in which man's consciously creative dwelling nature is made manifest. It was also explained that man's natural capacity to see truly (in the Platonic and 'traditional' sense) and his capacity to voice that which truly is and, thus, make it apparent - his visual and his vocal powers - are bound up together. The architectural act is a speech-act or a nomination act, whereby the builder 'names' the things of the world or, rather, discloses the relation between the names and the *λόγοι* of things and, thus, pours a flood of light on the inner reality of the world. The poetic building-act is a light-giving or life-giving act or process, in the likeness of the divine act of eternal life-creation in and through "the light of men"<sup>3</sup>, significant of the eternal cosmic regeneration process. The generation of a linguistic world-order by a human act of creation is an act of evocation or, rather, invocation, whereby the name is made transparent to the *λόγος*, the word to the living being, the symbol to the symbolised, the image to the idea, the corporeal universe to the intelligible, apparent plurality to essential unity, outer diversity to inner harmony, time to eternity, death to immortality, earth to heaven. The architectural act, the art-act in general, is ultimately a *λόγος*-act; an act of recollection of the all-embracing and all-articulating unity of the *Λόγος* and an act of revelation; a re-enactment of the act of creation and recreation of the world performed by God. It is a ritual act whereby heaven is made really present, the

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Illustration on previous page: Ornamental motif employed by Pikionis on the overmantel, in the dining room of the house of Potamianos, Philothei, Athens, 1954 (in collaboration with Alexander and Ino Papageorgiou). (After Architectural Association).

The citation on the previous page is from: Vladimir Lossky, 1978, op. cit., p. 70.

1 This is a paraphrase of the title of Coomaraswamy's famous essay: "A Figure of Speech or a Figure of Thought?"; in: Roger Lipsey (ed.), op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 13-42.

2 Dante, *Canzone XVI*.

Cf.: "in contemplative vision, ... the activity is towards the object of vision with which the thinker becomes identified". Plotinus, *The Enneads*, IV. 4, 2.

3 John 1:4.

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terrestrial and the celestial Kingdom are reconciled, a living link between the two is revealed and "heaven pervades the whole world"<sup>4</sup>, the world is made whole.

The generation of an artefact which binds the visible to the invisible universe, upright and with its root suspended from heaven - in the likeness of man who is himself "a plant not of an earthly but of a heavenly growth"<sup>5</sup> - is conditioned upon the artist's upward glance which "spans the between of sky and earth" (Heidegger). The uprightness of his offspring depends on the activation of his inward-bent, image-taking faculty which is the faculty that enables him to attain a realisation or actualisation of his upright self, the immortal part concealed in his mortality which urges him to procreation and whence emanates the power to create; to "conceive and bear the things of the spirit" which is "the office of every poet to beget"<sup>6</sup>; to discern and finally to father wisdom itself - not wisdom's semblance - and, thus, fulfil his procreant nature in the most noble manner, the manner of a true architect.

The artist's nomination act is inseparably linked to his visualisation act, his immersion in, and self-gathering towards, the object of his vision. It may be said that figures of speech - be they architectural, poetical, plastic or other - are, in fact, figures of vision. The soundness of the outcome of every maker's building activity is proportional to the clarity or lucidity of his vision; the illuminating power of the palpably perceptible fruit of human building or speaking depends on the light-summoning power of the builder's eye, the eye of the soul. The maker's intellectual eye may be likened to a lens whereby he collects the rays that beam out of the beautiful things upon which his carnal eyes rest and he is kindled to love, and focuses them upon the burning point of his imagination, where the immaterial figures of the spiritual realities are born. This act of imagination ensures that the artist's material forms or figures of speech correspond, may be equated, to the figures of his mental vision. And when the latter derive from heaven, when his "Intellect's object and lodgement is essence, not accident" (Meister Eckhart), it is a heavenly reality that overflows the artist's crystalline figures which are the means of communion with it; the light that springs from them is of one essence

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4 Jacob Böhme, *Vom Übersinnlichen Leben*, p. 42. Cited in: Nicholas Arseniew, op. cit., p. 115.

5 Plato, *Timaeus*, 90a.

6 Plato, *Symposium*, 209a.

Cf.: "And the motions which are naturally akin to the divine principle within us are the thoughts and revolutions of the universe." Plato, *Timaeus*, 90d.

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with the pure light which shines upon him and enlightens his mind, the steady light which fertilises all 'the words of creation', the eternal light born of the gods.

## 2. The Language Question

*Words derive their power from the original Word*

Meister Eckhart<sup>7</sup>

Human earthly dwelling occurs in a linguistic manner. The process whereby man is brought into dwelling is a conscious creative activity pursued from within a particular speech-world; its corporeal expression is founded on a particular tongue. Each artist's visualisation act is safely guided by the language of the art he practises, which is both peculiar to the sensible world which he inhabits and revelatory of the inner pattern of the world. Following Plato, the artist is led upwards, towards a personal experience of the truth of which the names of natural languages or the elements of any art language are dim reflections, by the names themselves, the external causes of his inner or intellectual vision. He becomes conscious of a divine Presence abiding in all things, by mounting the ladder of vision, the rungs of which are the words that make up the language which houses him as an artist. And it is the same words that the artist employs when he descends to impart his vision of "the reality of the beautiful, the just and the good"<sup>8</sup> to his fellow-men, by making the configurations of his speech adequate symbols of the object of his intellectual vision.

Throughout this making process, language and vision condition and ground each other mutually. The want of the *λόγοι* or essences latent and quiescent in words to be torn from oblivion meets the want of the artist's creative, light-seeking power to awaken them, to call words to perfection and make language live. The co-operation of the two energies is necessary, in order to ensure that the vocal utterances of the artist will be loaded with the dignity of the *λόγοι*, transfigured with their unnameable beauty. It is the conjoining of these two forces that gives birth to a work of art, first in the realm of the imagination and, finally, in the realm of the senses. The material product of this intercourse, inevitably, carries the impress of the particular physical, cultural and

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7 Cited in: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "Meister Eckhart's View of Art"; in: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, 1934, 1956, op. cit., p. 84.

8 Plato, *Republic*, VII, 520c.



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socio-historical context which receives it, and bears the distinctive marks of the artist's particular sensibility, his idiosyncrasy and his skill as a craftsman. As Elytis says,

*there are as many ways to give matter to the world beyond the current one, the second and real world, as our fingerprints.*<sup>9</sup>

But it is not the labours of the artist's limbs or the executive means peculiar to one or the other maker's activity that qualify the outcome of the making process as a work of art; it is the noetic operation proper to all makers that enables them to accomplish an art-act; to see, to image and, finally, "to see his own vision"<sup>10</sup>, and "make the others see" (Elytis) and enter into a life of awareness; "to raise reality to its authentic level, the level of the soul."<sup>11</sup>

Yet, although the visualisation act of the artist is directed towards what is beyond history and geographical or cultural setting, when the object of vision and contemplation is projected into a particular moment in history, it completes or, more exactly, fulfils history by rendering it meaningful. It is this projection that affirms and preserves the true nature of the world and the true nature of humans, the task which no artist can dispense with. In Pikionis' vein, it is the speaking of the world's inner reality into being that constitutes an art-act. Its end product can only function in actuating the receiver's process of knowing the world which "is written in [his] entails" (*The Axion Esti*), in inducing him to an act of recollection, if it is accomplished from within the particular symbolic speech-world which the artist and his audience co-inhabit. A work made by art becomes truly a work of art worthy of a place in the Platonic Republic, fulfils, that is, its meta-empirical purpose of revealing a modality of the real which is not evident on the plane of empirical experience, in so far as it is audible and based upon native ground. When the creative speaking of the artist is addressed to a particular people whose symbolic language constitutes its founding authority, what is spoken and meant and signified becomes temporalised and localised and immediately accessible, speaking "out of a people to a people"<sup>12</sup>. And the human artist's inherent ability to turn the soul's gaze upwards is brought to fruition; his vocal

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9 Odysseus Elytis, "Ἡ Μέθοδος τοῦ ἄρα"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1992, op. cit., pp. 173-4.

10 N. Kershaw Chadwick, op. cit., p. 88.

11 Odysseus Elytis, "Ἐπίμετρο, Ὁ Κάρολος Κουν καὶ ἡ Ἐποχὴ του"; in: Odysseus Elytis, 1974, 1982, 1987, op. cit., p. 597.

12 W. B. Yeats, "A General Introduction to my Work"; in: A. Norman Jeffares (ed.), op. cit., p. 256. Quoted in: Philip Sherrard, 1975, op. cit., p. 7.

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utterances assail the ears of his fellow-men to this practical purpose: that they might aid them in erecting an orderly world in their soul.

In the foregoing chapters, this human making process whereby the reality of a particular time and place appears in the splendour of its archetypal ever-present and ever-active reality, whereby historical reality is grounded in an absolute or mythical reality, was located in modern Greece, for the purpose of visibility. The dynamic streams of the creative process that led to the progressive emergence of an architectural form able both to house the modern Greeks and to let its inner form be housed in them were canvassed. The objective was to emphasise the centrality of the language question to all forms of human making activity pursued within an environment which is characterised by an erosion of the values which traditionally belong to it and a collapse of established collective conventions of formal expression, symptomatic of a breakdown of shared habits of vision.

The efforts of the modern Greek makers - especially poets - who dealt with this vexed question had a dual focus: first, to align the figures of their world-speaking with the figures of world-seeing which their craft's language had preserved and which they saw enshrined in their living spiritual tradition; and, second, to re-animate these manners of seeing the world which modern temporal ideals had displaced, and, thus, to reconcile the modern Greek ways of living, speaking or building with the principles of their tradition. It is also on the language question, to which Pikionis as an architect sought to give a complete and conclusive answer from within his native metaphysical tradition, that the validity of his work hinges. He concentrated his creative efforts on bodying forth anew "the mythical vision of the world", the figures of which he saw nascent in the architectural language in which the Greeks had been speaking their world into being for centuries, not in order to pay tribute to a nostalgia, but because he believed that the preservation of the integrity of life and art depends on the housing afresh of this vision of the divine reality of earthly things in a work of art which may, thus, express ad-equately a world that is whole and can only be fully seen, faithfully imaged, consciously experienced and truly known as such. It may be said that it is the investigation of this particular question in the light of the spiritual tradition to which their predecessors owed allegiance that led modern Greek makers to the root of life and art. And it is the clarification of this question that enabled Pikionis and Elytis to recognise the linguistic and cultural lineage to which they naturally belonged, and to accept their responsibilities towards it; to pore with affection over their native world

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and to infuse its inner light into their works, for which they chose the words with an eye to their light-permeability and their natural fitness for the articulation of certain forms.

With regard to the specific works of Dimitris Pikionis and Odysseus Elytis, to which the last chapters of this thesis focused, it should be said that the above inquiry into their historical and cultural nature, the conceptual framework that informs their representations of the world of Greece, and the difficulties they encountered when they sought to craft the image of a world which they saw as a coherent system of significances, was not undertaken in the hope of producing a final explanation, but in the hope of directing attention to some neglected aspects of the creative process that blossomed forth in these modern Greek artworks. In trying to shed light on the particular concrete demands in response to which these works were made and to question their relation to their linguistic context (in the wide sense of the term 'linguistic', which encompasses the historical and the cultural), the present study hopes to stimulate further search, so that it may have its suggestions tested and its interpretations modified by rival scholarly approaches. To closely follow the explicit intentions of the above creators and to take into account the recognition of an inner reality at the heart of all things that was enshrined in their thought, has served to produce a reading of their works which lays stress on certain aspects of their complex creative experience and some causes and effects of the material works presented here.

There are, of course, several lines of inquiry one could follow and none is free of faults or weaknesses, and, certainly, whatever conclusions this study may have reached are subject to this open-ended discussion on the significance of artworks of the past that does, and should, characterise the democratic field of art historical studies. But, as Gombrich never tired of repeating, the history of art - and he would not exclude the history of literature or any other product of a civilisation - is concerned with achievements and is interested in a variety of values and value systems, exactly because these have a bearing on such achievements.<sup>13</sup> And, for Pikionis and Elytis, the responsibility for language was a moral responsibility; they used the language of their craft to communicate truth and humane values, to point to a reality or situation concerning human existence. To disregard the standards of value embodied in

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13 See: Ernst Gombrich, "Approaches to the History of Art"; in: Ernst Gombrich, *Topics of Our Time*, London, 1991, pp. 62-73.

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Pikionis' and Elytis' skilfully made artworks, would not, I think, reinforce any historical study's claim to scientific objectivity; it would impoverish the works of the humane values to which skill was harnessed and, ultimately, it would dehumanise the practise of the humanistic (perhaps the Greek term *ἀνθρωπογνωστική*, *anthrōpognōstikē*, is clearer) discipline of art history.<sup>14</sup>

The extent of relevance of the language question to contemporary architecture, not only in the Western world but also, perhaps even more, in non-Western cultures where the importation of Western models from without has impeded the local architectural languages, is, I think, unmistakable. One can hardly emphasise sufficiently the need for architects today to confront and think about language and the significant act of architectural creation, to understand the pivotal role and key function of language in the act of voicing and giving image to the world with the purpose of accomplishing the cardinal architectural task of making dwelling in human fashion possible. The degree to which architects fulfil their task of embodying the true nature of human dwelling is a measure of the degree to which the possibility of breaking through from the level of earth to the level of heaven may be realised and man's spiritual potentiality actualised. For an architect, to recognise the capacity of architecture to condition contemporary manners of seeing and, thus, manners of dwelling, and, nevertheless, go about building in a world to the true reality of which he remains blind, would mean to deny his natural heavenward disposition and his mission to transmute the heavenly into the earthly, the metaphysical into the physical, and to overcome the primordial separation of the created and the uncreated; it would mean to cause a breach in the relationship between creation and Creator, and to deliberately negate the supreme function of architecture: to make dwelling on this earth humane. Ultimately, it would mean to negate man's humanity.

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14 "I have always been convinced that the humanities", wrote Gombrich, "must depend on a system of values and that this is precisely what distinguishes from the natural sciences." *Ibid.*, p. 71.

### 3. The World-Knowing Process : Essentially a World-Restoring Process

*I have never valued or studied the mere sophistry of world-knowledge  
set down in books in conventionalized form of questions and answers  
to be committed to memory (and fired off at one's opponents);  
these lead but to mental confusion and to such practice  
as bringeth actual realization of Truth.  
Of such world-knowledge I am ignorant;  
and if ever I did know it I have forgotten it long ago.*

Milarepa<sup>15</sup>

*The light of true knowledge is the power to discriminate without error  
between good and evil. Then the path of righteousness leads the intellect upward  
towards the Sun of Righteousness and brings it into the boundless illumination of  
spiritual knowledge, so that henceforward it will grow more and more confident  
in its quest for love.*

St. Diadochos of Photiki<sup>16</sup>

In the present thesis, the discussion of architecture, the making of order or the begetting of a significant form which 'speaks' about and of the created world-order, has been based on the axiom of a motive which is inherent in the human maker and which compels him to seek knowledge of the world which he inhabits, to decipher "the book of the world"<sup>17</sup>. The ultimate goal of this world-knowing process, of the maker's pilgrimage through the realms of knowledge and experience, is the recovery of fullness of vision and the effective ingression of vision upon matter; the accomplishment of an epiphanic act, an act of giving voice to that which the artist's fervent gaze has been fixed upon; a conscious act of naming and, thus, creating anew what has been disclosed in language - verbal or visual - and obscured in history. This goal is not peculiar to any kind of human making or to any specific cultural context; it is the final end of every conscious act of making, whatever the variety of the material

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15 Cited in: Keith Critchlow, op. cit., p. 20. Referred to: Evans Wentz (ed.), *Tibet's Great Yogi*, Oxford, 1928.

16 St. Diadochos of Photiki, "On Spiritual Knowledge and Discrimination: One Hundred Texts", 6; in: *The Philokalia*, compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth, translated from the Greek and edited by G. E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard and Kallistos Ware with the assistance of The Holy Transfiguration Monastery (Brookline), Constantine Cavarinos, Basil Osborne and Norman Russell, 2 Vols., London and Boston, 1979, 1983, Vol. 1, p. 254.

17 St. John of Damascus. Quoted in: Vladimir Lossky, 1978, op. cit., p. 58.

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in use, and the first principle on which the fundamental unity of the arts of making is based.

This kind of seeking necessarily entails a questioning which is directly addressed to the first act of creation; furthermore, it entails a nostalgia, a desire to know the world not as it appears to be, often inhospitable and even hostile to man, enslaved by sin and death, but as it 'was' fresh from the hands of the God of *Genesis* who saw that "*it was very good.*"<sup>18</sup> Man's shaping of a meaningful and intelligible form aspires to commensurability with this 'perfect' or complete and unstained world. It aspires to a creation of "a small heliacal system" which is untouched by sin, entirely devoid of corruption, where man is brought into dwelling without toil, where the seasons are mild and there is no need to learn anew to dwell, where there is no lapse of memory. The human artificer does not labour to create a replica of the world that may cause mortals to starve tomorrow, but a world where hunger is unknown and the harvest plentiful, fruits abundant and scarcity eliminated, "a small and perfect Universe", "a sinless" and "unwrinkled country", a world of justice and happiness as it was in the beginning and as it *may be* - not as it now appears to be. For this reason, his creative labours are directed, at once, towards a 'world-restoring' and a 'self-restoring' act. It is, in fact, his self-restoring or self-liberating act, the act whereby the human maker restitutes himself as a small and perfect cosmos - restores, that is, his capacity for resurrection to a higher world - that enables him to see and reveal the inner reality of the cosmos; to initiate into vision. His art-act is, essentially, an act of redemption like the one most magnificently performed by Elytis' mythical girl, an act of restoration of the anthropocosmic unity and a speech-act whereby the 'lyrical' world bespeaks itself through the human poet. Undoubtedly, in order to accomplish this task, the artist is in need of a framework of myth and symbol - a living language - rooted in, and nourished by, a metaphysical cosmological doctrine, wherein he may attain a vision of "the world's deepest Unity" (Sikelianos) and whence he may invoke his cosmological vision.

The ultimate end of the architectural making process, the art process in general, is to celebrate "the unending liturgy of epiphany and resurrection"<sup>19</sup>. The process of world-knowing has an eminently practical significance. It is, in the last resort, a means

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18 *Genesis*, 1:32.

19 Philip Sherrard, 1990, op. cit., p. 158.

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subservient to an end. This vital end is the witnessing to the wonder of cosmic redemption; the final mystery, the union of the natural world with its inner divine principle, the *Λόγος* whereby all things are renewed; the sanctification or resurrection of all. And it is through the subjective experience of the truth and a communion with the spiritual beauty of the world, through a personal regeneration, the regeneration of man, that the cosmos is regenerated and glorified. At the moment of perfect cosmic renewal, prefigured in the cosmogonic moment, the human being is restored to eternity and beatitude, he lives in the atemporal instant of the beginnings, inward sanctity is made outwardly manifest, the world is bathed in the light of the divine *Λόγος*. The experience of the reader of a work of art, which is consciously rooted in the natural world and meant to participate in its eternal processes, is akin to the experience of its creator. It effects upon the individual human being this kind of "perfect liberation which some call return to a lost Paradise and others union with God" (Seferis). In this sense, the renewal of the cosmos is accomplished not only at the moment of the creation of a true work of art, but each and every time this creative experience is repeated by the reader who approaches it in anticipation of a paradisaal dawn.

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