

CONCLUSIONS

WHO are we? The answer is neither a given nor immutable through time. It depends on changing external conditions and also on our origins, history, and relationship with the geographic elements of our existence—territory and networks. It would be naïve to attempt an answer to such a question by means of an essay in mythistory and myth-geography. What is of importance at present is this: the existing answers hamper our adaptation to the environment, and we have to look for new answers and revise the old ones. This search must rely on the clearest possible understanding of the nature of changes in the world. It is necessary to determine and analyse the advantages and disadvantages in the ensemble within which we seek to adapt. To be sure, not even this ensemble is clearly delineated. Depending on the answer, the limits of the question ‘Who are we?’ can be expanded or reduced.

The attempt to investigate the foregoing questions has led us to a few provisional conclusions. Mankind is shifting into a new era, escaping from the conditions established three centuries ago. We

are at a historical crossroads similar to that of 1821. Two hundred years on, we need to change. A tall order; but Hellenism, owing to its pre-1821 past, is fortunate to possess the necessary resources. These have remained hidden, often dormant or at the margins, in suspense but in any case as a living force for two centuries.

Our first responsibility is to stop disparaging these resources in a desperate attempt to fall in line with outdated Westphalian logic; we must, on the contrary, try, where possible, to restore these as indispensable to the future. We must also understand the meaning of the moment we are living. Pessimism and often desperation are justified. The Greek crisis, which is economic but chiefly a crisis of destination and direction, is the result of problems in the system into which we were integrated two centuries ago. If the crisis appears to be more severe here than anywhere else, this does not mean that we are worse than others. It is, on the contrary, proof of the role of Hellenism in European history.

Greece occupies a central, not a peripheral position—it is ahead of Europe. Whatever Greece is living through during this political and moral crisis reveals European problems in magnified form; her birth pains herald rebirth—or destruction. Contemporary Hellenism, not present-day Greece, serves as the mirror and vanguard of Europe. Open and sensitive to the transformations of mankind, Hellenism has a cultural diversity hidden behind the mask of *Homo hellenicus*, that is, the ‘Greek’ as constructed by the Greek state. Through these particular traits Hellenism can help alleviate the pains experienced by Europe—pains caused by the necessary redressing of the enormous geographic inequalities that attended the ascendancy of the continent.

Through the conflict of ideas, the maximisation of new possibilities, the search for new roles, a new Greek iconography will be elaborated. This iconography will be more favourable to circulation and hence less phobic; more open to others and hence less clear-cut; developed on more levels, hence less pyramidal and hierarchical.

This new iconography can make Greeks proud and creative again.