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Book Review

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On the Unhappiness of being Greek

by Nikos Dimu

Istanbul, 2017

80 pages

ISBN 9786054640553

Nikos Dimu's book "On the Unhappiness of being Greek" was written in the dark years of the Greek Junta and published after its fall. (1975). With 32 editions to date, he is one of the longest lived and controversial books of every period in Greece.

English, German, French, Italian, Spanish, Bulgarian, Polish, Chinese and then finally published in Turkish. This book was translated into Turkish by Hercules Millas, who knows both sides of the Aegean well.

The original title «Η δυστυχία του να είσαι Έλληνας» was published in English as "On the Unhappiness of Being Greek". It is published in Turkish as "Ne Mutsuz Yunanım Diyen! "Ne Mutsuz Yunanım Diyen!" was published in Istanbul in september 2017 as the 38th book of İstos Publications. Haris Rigas and Seçkin Erdi are the editors of the book, which consists of 80 pages. The cover design was made by Aykut Kaplan. The ISBN number of the book is 978-605-4640-55-3

A series of 193 mostly brief, often cutting and at times satirical aphorisms about Greece and Greeks. Nikos Dimou says for the foreign editions:

"People who enjoy reading this book are probably not Greek. For a Greek this book is painful. He may smile at some aphorisms, even laugh sometimes, but closing it, he will feel well ...unhappy. It portrays the basic problem of his existence, his urge for more and his inability to cope with less. Conflicts undermine his identity, make him uncertain and changeable. He is divided between his glorious past and his meager present, between his Eastern mentality and his European aspiration – torn asunder by forces of tradition (like the Orthodox Church) and modernity. His is a difficult fate. This book is not a humorous collection of aphorisms about the shortcomings of Greeks – but a bitter reflection on their tragic destiny of being split among past and present, north and south, east and west.

It is a declaration of love for Greece, the true, the profound Greece – and not the superficial land of myths that Greek themselves have created in order to escape from reality.



By no means is it the work of an “Anti-Hellene” but the product of a man who cares deeply for his country, and tries to help his fellow citizens fulfill the Delphic motto: “Know thyself”. Something that can be a painful procedure, if your mentality, education and upbringing have taught you to avoid truth. Greece’s present predicament is to a large extent the result of all these flaws. More emotional and less rational, a Greek must re-think himself in order to survive in the modern world. This book tries to help him on the way.”

Herkül Millas says it for the book: "I hope that those who read this book do not read it as proof of their probable prejudices. My expectation from a careful reader should look at the flaws of the Greeks as if they were looking at a mirror." Herkül Millas and Istos publications have done a good job by interpreting this book to Turkish.