

Heleia 2008

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With my soul already burnt at the sight of the mountain above Tripia, Aegio, just 600 meters away from our summer house, and having just seen for the first time the ...“liquid” of fire so close to me, I found myself early in the morning on an unexpected journey to Amaliada, in between and along with ‘co-echoing’ colleagues -teachers, peers and friends- each with his own responsibility, undivided and collective, soon coming face to face -this is the right expression- with five young ladies, the staff of the Prevention Center, and trying to sense what a prevention center might need in the middle of a disaster, beside the embers.

It was five hesitant women that I saw, each at a different life stage, struggling between the search for a personal identity and their role in the family they are currently setting up, each having a permanent or a temporary position at the Prevention Center, even perhaps in the surrounding community as well, and certainly, I suppose, each one of them in her own important relationships. It was five young women that I saw, all hesitating to formulate their question, like “We want this or that....” or “We are thinking of...”, while, on the other hand, over there at the Center, I myself found it difficult and emotionally painful to imagine what I was meant to be doing in a village that had been burnt: if not to watch as a visitor, then to help, but how?

This impression of the first meeting in the Center was moderated by the experience at the burnt village, where we were welcomed by Mrs Litsa, strong and tough -“an example”, I thought at first, “of how one can discover something positive and find the strength to grab life again from the ashes”- but still ready to boast over what she had accomplished during a lifetime, just like sailors, who have a magic way to make you travel away.

Within this context, in the household-taverna of Mrs Litsa, with that most appreciated half-dry half-sweet red wine of hers, and her irresistible goodies, especially her tempting pork, a new spirit joined us in the table, so silently, as if under the table: the need for communication, the demand of sharing a common plate and drink, with no tasks to look after, without the restrictions of a project target, without the stress of one’s responsibility in a afflicted community that, even today, tries to recover through some ambiguous or ineffective activities.

Right here, I came up with some answers. By contributing with some money we left to Mrs Litsa and, I hope, to the whole village, we earned some real services, that is, first, Mrs Litsa herself as a paradigm, second, our sharing of tastes and emotions, like a frame, like a safety net for whatever cooperation might follow, if any, and, last, those little children in the yard, with their back leaning against the wall of the neighbour’s burnt house, playing dice the way God does. Little or older children in schools need such a wall, even a burnt one, a wall against which to lean their backs and play. The material wall of a room or a whole building would do, of course, but a symbolic wall seems closer to what we, as professionals, could provide: A HELPING HAND TO THE PARENTS, that is something lying within the responsibilities of a prevention center and within the frame of a school-year that comes to its end along with any opportunity to intervene. Or: A HELPING HAND (maybe a sort of supervision and/or training) TO THOSE WHO SUPPORT PARENTS, provided that they need our helping hand and want us to do so! Otherwise, let us go again to Mrs Litsa to join the place and people and leave some money. This is help, too. Or else, let us escape from the restrictions of our professional identity and, daring to play some more with our available sub-selves and the roles we possess, let us take over at a different level of responsibility, e.g. give a few days hospitality during the summer to the children who played with their back on the wall -but this calls for a clear talk with my wife and children.

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