

Dialogues between bibliophiles.

The dialogues between bibliophiles, organised by the Hellenic Book Club, grew from the love for books, aiming at getting them closer especially to young people.

To those young people who have conscious or subconscious questions about books and their domain, their relation to the reader, life and culture.

Questions, which when they are not expressed and have no answer or when they have the wrong answer, lead to a negative relation of young people to books and thus to life.

These dialogues were created, so that a way is made for young people towards real books and the cultural horizons, which liberate the soul.

Their dialectic form is the most convenient, because it springs from the need of young people for the dialogue -that is the question and the answer- a form, which is widened through new questions and answers.

Like in those ancient dialogues of Socrates, where the only elicitation of the truth was the aim of the participants.

The letter of the young Eugene Eftaliotis, aged sixteen years old -letter addressed to the magazine *Women* and having as title "Which books should I read?"- served as a pretext and a beginning for the dialogues between bibliophiles.

Both the magazine and the Hellenic Book Club answered to this question... The distance between the two answers was more than obvious. It was great!

The dialogues between bibliophiles open a dialogue with culture. They radiate light, freedom and literary wealth.

Restless, true and "informed", they lead all eyes on good books and always bring up a new and interesting issue for discussion.

Whoever has questions regarding books, authors and readers, can formulate them to us, so that a constructive dialogue between us, bibliophiles, can be opened.

I have no time to read!

... could I share with you my distress?

-Hello, Mrs. Sophia! My name is Eleftheria Dimadis, I am fifteen years old and I've read two of your previous discussions about books. A young girl was asking what books she should read and Katerina, who read two of those books, got excited. Having liked these discussions and wanting also to read books, I'm addressing myself to you in order to tell you my problem. In four words: I don't have time! I don't expect a solution from you but, even so...

could I share with you my distress?

Console yourself. You're not alone!

-Yes, my dear Eleftheria, you can share with us your distress! Besides, as the saying goes: "A distress that is shared is always a half distress!" There is also another reason to console yourself: You are not the only one that has no time to read. There are plenty of fellow-sufferers... However, in most of the cases, I believe that they do not feel sorry for that; they rather have it as a clumsy and shallow excuse. They sense or have heard that books are a tool and a vehicle of culture, they feel somehow guilty about it and find as a clumsy alibi the lack of time. But, tell me, what's going on with you and you don't have time?

Busy days

-Well, my days are very busy. Apart from school, where I am on the first year of college, I'm taking lessons of English, in order to have the first certificate, lessons of classical dance, of guitar and swimming...

-And, of course, you have to study for school, for the English, for the guitar, you have to eat, to rest, to look after yourself, to associate with your friends, your parents or your brothers and sisters, to sleep... And yes, indeed, where can one find time to read?

-Precisely!

I am unaware of!

- But was it always like this? It's been two months since you started going to the swimming pool twice a week -about four hours in total. Two months ago, when you were not taking lessons of swimming, what were you doing during these four hours that were left every week? Were you reading a book?
- Honestly, I don't know what to answer; ... I had nothing else to do! But I didn't read any book... I am unaware of!
- Do you have a television at home?
- Of course, we have one!
- And how often do you watch television?
- I watch TV three or four times per week; let's say about six or eight hours. I watch very interesting movies. I wouldn't like to miss them... Besides, I am relaxing by watching them.

An unfortunate beginning

- Well, tell me Eleftheria, how long have you not read a book beside school ones, a literary book?
- Eh, it's been two years now. I had read two books by that time... The first one was *The Wooden Swords*, which I did not read very carefully. I don't remember at all the other one, despite the fact that I read it. However, it didn't make to me any particular impression.
- That's why you completely forgot it! It was neither *Little Maroula of Limnos* by Lambadaridos, nor the *White Nights* by Dostoyevski, nor the *Diary of Anne Frank*, nor... *Land of Men* by Saint-Exupéry...
- Nor any one of that list of the twenty books that you proposed.
- There is time for everything that touches us...
- But tell me, Eleftheria. Does the classical dance that you've been learning touch you?
- Oh, yes! I'd say very much. I think that I live in another magical world when I'm dancing.
- And what about the guitar? Does Tárrega equally touch you when you're playing the *Recuerdos de la Alhambra*?
- Of course not...! I very much like playing the guitar or singing at the same time with my friends. But it's a different sensation from that of the dance, which I live with my whole being.
- And swimming, do you consider it as a sport or an art?
- Of course as a sport. But the exactness and the rhythm in movements, the feel of the water on my body, the speed on the surface or the exercises that I'm doing in the air when I'm diving and those that I'm doing afterwards in the bottom, fascinate me. I couldn't imagine that my body could have such capabilities in water... Although I should have been prepared by the dance classes that I've been taking two years now.

Stimuli, acquaintances, emotions

- Well, tell me honestly, before learning how to dance, to play the guitar, to swim, did you feel at all you were touched by these activities?
- Yes, a little bit, especially when I was watching ballet presentations in theatres or on television. And when I was listening to someone playing the guitar. Not when I was watching the others swimming. But these emotions were quite superficial comparing to what I felt after I knew them myself and thanks to good teachers that I was lucky to have.
- Very nice! You had the experience and you felt touched by it. Regarding Literature did you have similar teachers and similar experiences?
- Of course not! Our literature teacher is good but... we get bored! I don't know if it's her fault or rather that of the curriculum or of the method of teaching.
- But were you lucky to read some excellent books for which you got excited?
- I remember, when I was in primary school, that *The Street-Urchin* written by Penelope Delta touched me and so did *David Copperfield* written by Charles Dickens. Later, in high school, I read a few books, but I remember only one, that I didn't finish...
- Can we then come to a first conclusion about you? That you only have time for what touches you?

- Yes... That's it! The dance, the guitar, swimming and television touch me and I have time for these interests.
- Books don't touch you, because you hardly know them. And so, you don't have time for them.
- Well, now, that you're saying it... I see it's like this. And I often find out that my friends have time for what touches them. Some of them like going for walks and chatting, others like doing sports, others dancing and singing, others reading books...

15 minutes of a moderate and qualitative beginning

- If you believe that reading voluntarily will be a plus to your education, should you rather choose one or two books from those that I proposed to you and spend a little bit of your time, let's say 10-15 minutes per day to read them?
- You know, that would be easy for me to read a book in bed, at night, before going to sleep.
- Exactly! To give you the chance to know books, which have something substantial to tell you and awaken another dimension of your spirit.

A subjective use of time. Choices.

- Thank you, Mrs. Sophia! You helped me to see how subjective is this "I don't have time". And how I can really make use of my time properly, without excuses.
- As you see, Eleftheria, there are many good things in this life and we don't have time for everything. You have to make your choices and set them in an order. Every choice is also a trial and a way, which however excludes the others. Will you have the criteria for the right choice? Will you find the strength to follow your decisions?

The power of the will goes also through books

- I don't know... It's not so simple! Though I believe, Mrs. Sophia, that books will also help me to see more clearly. To see with a larger perspective and with a stronger will.
- A will, which you already exercise by going to college, by taking lessons of English, lessons of dance, of guitar and swimming... This will of yours, will help you to enter this strong and particular domain of the spirit, which is represented by books. And which will enlarge your horizons, so that your other interests will become richer and more profound. If you read the book *Dance in our life* by Garaudy, you will see that you will consider dance and will live it in another dimension. And you deserve that progress. Because you're looking for it!
- Thank you, Mrs. Sophia. And me, in my turn, I wish you with all my heart that you have everything you want and... a healthy baby!
- Thank you, Eleftheria. You guessed right. But what I also want is your intellectual progress... Hope we'll meet again!

From the periodical *Book and Life*, 12th issue, p. 8-9

Which books should I read?

Mrs. Ivi Stavropoulos -the general secretary of the Hellenic Book Club- and the young Eugene Eftaliotis, in an effort for a more profound communication through books, open a dialogue on a question, which preoccupies young Eugene, aged 16 years old and that's not all...

"Which books should I read?" Eugene posed that question to a women's magazine. Both magazine and the Club answered the question. The distance between the two answers is more than obvious. It is great!

We welcome young Eugene, whose question will give us a chance to be informed about books, these precious and irreplaceable goods.

Eugene

-I don't know, honestly... I am really confused. I like literature and I like books. But so many of them circulate that it's impossible for me to choose.

What do you think about it? From which books should I start? I'd like to write good compositions, to improve myself intellectually and to open my horizons. I am sixteen years old. Which books are suitable for my age?

Mrs. Ivi

-Ohhh, Eugene, if only I could be sixteen years old once again! I would... read the world with different eyes! But, because we can't turn back time and the moment goes by and disappears, we should not waste it with mediocre books. For, real books elevate us, travel us, touch us and make us richer. You're right when you connect literature with your intellectual progress. However, in front of all these innumerable new titles, these covers and authors, the essence is lost. Among those hundreds of mediocre books, which are released, real books are lost and you, who get confused, are right when you don't know what to choose. But, tell us, do you buy books?

Eugene

Of course I buy, but I am wrong! The books that I myself myself, I did not understand them, though I'd been reading... and rereading them, thus following the advice of the magazine, which I questioned. Recently, I bought by ignorance a book that, in order to understand it, I should have known politics! I was disappointed... I lost my time and money. Why spending my money without reason, why failing to understand? Besides, I am a good pupil, is something going wrong with me?

Mrs. Ivi

Something, indeed, is going wrong, my Eugene, but that has nothing to do with you! It has to do only with books! This... "modern nonsense" as I.M Panagiotopoulos, one of our best men of letters, had once characterised them. There are insipid "writers", without any interest, who impress the ignorant readers, by writing incomprehensible and "arty" books.

Eugene

So, which readers are these books addressed to, who buys them, how many people understand them?

Mrs. Ivi

The first "victims" are the ignorant readers! Those who cannot imagine what's hidden behind a good cover, a good edition, a... let's say very promising front of a bookshop. Those people will stay with the complex that they are incapable of understanding the "noble" ideas!

If, now, they insist on reading these books... what a pity for them! They will begin to distort their thought, to become incomprehensible, to undergo a certain inflexibility! Besides, as the saying goes, like master, like pupil.

The second "victims" of these... "books", are those who, by snobbism, pretend that they understand them and they imitate them. They throw a title here, an author there, words elsewhere. These are those who look modern, the so-called intellectuals insipid themselves as the books that they are reading!

It's a wonder... one would say; such books become lesser and lesser. We hope that one day they will become an endangered species!

Eugene

And what's the role of their publishers?

Mrs. Ivi

"Paraliterature" often aims at the occasional money, my Eugene. It aims also at the ephemeral glory that brings the

recognition of those so-called “authors”, published by these publishers, as long as the first ones are in vogue. For, let’s face it... it’s only a vogue that will go out!

Eugene

And how can I me, a simple reader, be “protected” from low quality books?

Mrs. Ivi

You simply do not occupy yourself with them. You waste your precious time, by trying to do not occupy yourself with them. You go by them and you search for other books. The completion of the personality, the true entertainment and education are the result of the contact with real books!

Listen to some of them: *Socrates* by Zalokostas, the masterpieces *Letter to my Son and a Star* and *Little Maroula of Limnos* by Maria Lambadaridou-Pothou, *The Flower of Cinnamon* by Maro Vamvounaki, *The Home and The World* by Tagore; the books-diamonds like: *Aurora, Daughter of the Night* by Kostaridi, *Follow Your Heart* by Tamaro and *Athena-Fortunately I Was Not Born Pretty* by Karakasis. It’s also worth reading the following ones: *Book of Life* by Martin Gray, *The Fortress of Memory* by Aris Fakinos, *The Sun Of Death* by Pantelis Prevelakis and *Ports of the East* by Amin Maalouf. The autobiographical novel *Land of Men* by Saint-Exupéry, the essay *The Contestation of the Establishment* by Tsiropoulos, the sentimental works which are classic like *Jane Eyre* by Bronte, *White Nights* and *Poor Folk* by Dostoyevski...

I think that these books suffice for the moment, what do you say?

Eugene

You are a living library Mrs. Ivi. At last, you opened my eyes, you gave me many choices...!

Mrs. Ivi

... And most of all good ones!

Mrs. Ivi

Come to our Club to see them for yourself. You will feel like at home. The ambiance is friendly and welcoming; it inspires one to search for books, among many subjects and titles. Far from the systems of commercialisation and having only quality as its unique compass!

You can find us the mornings and the afternoons in Neo Psychico, at 15, Solomou Street. You can contact us by phone on these numbers: 210 6463888 and 210 6463263 or by e-mail at the following address: info@elbi.gr

Eugene

I’ll come tomorrow after school. I can’t wait to make my choices!

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