The Architect Dimitris Pikionis (1887-1968)

and the experience of his teaching at the Technical University of Athens*

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This is an hommage to the late Dimitris Pikionis, Greek architect and aestheticist, a man of excellence. I intend to speak about our teacher's virtue, his human and artistic ethos and his unprecedented teaching activity as both a polytechnic professor and a mentor who strongly promoted the notion of interpersonal relationship - a mentor whom I would call a soul-leader.

At the same time I would like to provide a picture of the scholastic atmosphere at the Athens Polytechnicum in the 1950s, thus inducing today's students to make useful comparisons, to the benefit of our current self-knowledge.

In a picture (Fig. 1) I took in 1967, just before my setting out to Germany and a year before his death, Pikionis is observing us with his watchful gaze. In that, one discerns both the austerity and the indulgence of a cognizant man - a man who probes into the human nature, into its manyfold possibilities along with its weaknesses. His face radiates what he called the "pain-smile". The artist, as any creator - he explained - has mixed feelings of joy and sorrow. Joy is born by the fact that he produces creative work; attrition is generated by his limitations: he can never approach his ideal. The photograph is deeply representative of his. He speaks to us through his expression, as he does through the following brief text of his. I read: *Every learning requires the living presence of a teacher, for there are certain things which emanate straight from the teacher, not from any book; this is a sort of suggestion and infusion of knowledge.* I think we should dwell on this statement for it succintly portrays the effort to establish a genuine exchange between teacher and pupil.

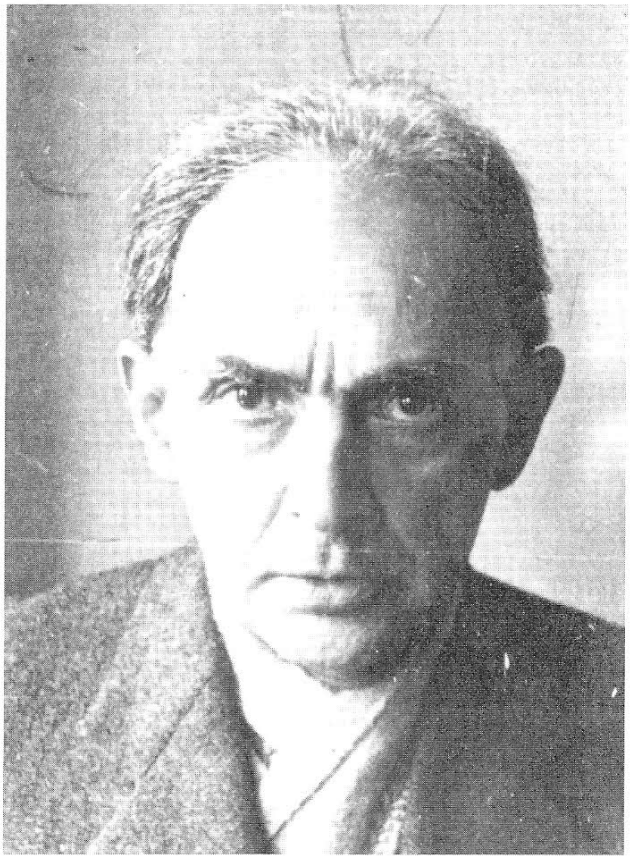

Fig. 1 Dimitris Pikionis

In the mid-1950s, the School of Architecture in Athens was an academic institution with a strong professional orientation. Its entry examinations were very strict. Only 25 students were admitted per year of a total of 150 candidates, while nowadays we have 300 students in each class! We graduated at the age of 23 after five years of study, and after having passed promotion tests at the end of each year. A routine eight-hour qualifying exam was often set up in which a small design project had to be carried out successfully. The range of class subjects was very broad: art, history, design, technology, aesthetics. The Humanities covered a wide spectrum then, not only in Greece, but in all other architecture schools of Europe, too. We passed those five years as inmates, spending twelve hours a day in school, on the upper floor of this very building where the airy big drafting rooms are located. Altogether we were 100-120 students, all very dedicated to the work. The requirements were very demanding. There was a workshop atmosphere; that is, we mainly worked in class, not at home as much.

Greece at that time was worn out from the civil war; living was not enthusiastic at all. We had a point of reference though, an architectural school in full blooming with a high educational level. Let me say a couple of words about the professors of that period of whom you have already heard much.

Panaghiotis Michelis was an authority on the aesthetics of visual arts, the only Greek professor who enjoyed an international recognition as an aesthetician and who insisted on an unprecedented idea: the famous student lectures, that is, a tradition still in effect in this School. That was a real breakthrough on the part of a program strictly focusing upon visual education; that is, assigning very young people to a specific topic which they had to thoroughly study and articulate in the form of a lecture at the end of their studies.

We practiced architectural surveying and measured drawing under Dimitris Konstantinidis, Michelis's delegate. This class included very intensive and advanced exercises. Anastasios Orlandos, a master of Greek archaeology, taught us the class of architectural history. Despite the fact that slide projecting was already around at that time, he would rather fill three boards with chalk drawings in a two-hour class. We, as young pupils, saw in awe all those forms coming to life before our eyes, which we then copied for an exercise. We thus received a great benefit, as all those architectural forms were registered permanently in our minds. I mention details of this sort in order to give you a feeling of the atmosphere of that time.

There were two chairs of architectural design in the School. One belonged to Konstantinos Kitsikis, the other to Evangelos Roussopoulos. Kitsikis was a cosmopolitan and an affable person. He was a dynamic and prolific architect, a manager of a big private architectural firm. Although he had no teaching skills, he had a specially powerful personality. Thanks to him, in 1955 the Greek architectural degree was officially recognized as equivalent abroad. He was the one who initiated the first exhibitions of students' work. In going around the classrooms in company of his five delegates, his usual comment was: *This is in the spirit,* or *that is not in the spirit.* The spirit, dovelike, was flying over; yet, no one knew what the "spirit" realy was. Regardless of all this, he was an industrious man who managed to teach us a great deal about the practical side of the profession.

We also had the painter Nikos Engonopoulos, Pikionis's assistant, as a teacher. He was unique both in his general education

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and in his technical knowledge of color. He was a great help to us. Antonis Kriezis, an erudite person and a scholar, was the first to teach urban planning in post-War Greece. The painter Nikolis Hatzikyriakos-Ghikas and the sculptor Antonis Sochos deservingly represented the artistic classes having their workshops on either side of the ceremonial hall.

This was the state of our studies in the fifties; but what was the spirit of the age then? As I said, we spent our youth in a country lying at the edge of Europe, severely tested by the War. Our special concern was to reconnect ourselves with the architectural vision of the Bauhaus - that is, the modern movement of the midwar period - which had come to an unglorified end upon the establishment of the Nazi regime in Germany. That Bauhaus spirit brought about a real architectural renaissance to the entire Europe, despite the fact that it ultimately degenerated into the amorphous International Style. At that time, our idols were architects, such as Louis Mies van der Rohe and Richard Neutra. The principle "form follows function" was our common belief; Mies's aphorism "less is more" was a motto in everybody's mouth. Of course, the latter was later ridiculed and parodied as "less is a bore". We were particularly fascinated by the building of the new capital city of Brazilia and by Oscar Niemeyer's daring architectural plans, in general.

Let me now come to Pikionis, his ideas and his personality. We should place the phenomenon "Pikionis" in the context which I have just sketched. Dimitris Pikionis had the chair of Decorative Arts and Design, also called the chair of "Interiors' Architecture". He was one of the first professors in the School having joined the faculty as an adjunct member in 1925. Konstantinos Kitsikis, who was very gentle and who admired Pikionis as a person, even though he never understood his teaching, used to lovingly call his colleague's section "the chair of sensibility". Regardless to say, Pikionis never spoke a word about decoration or interior design of fashionable modern buildings. His interests lay elsewhere! In reference to fashionable architecture at that time, Pikionis's orientation certainly struck us all as a kind of groundless anachronism. Here I shall pass criticism on some of my teacher's points, yet with much affection and respect for his memory. His ideas seemed to be reflecting an obsessive Hellenocentrism. His continuous references to a desired "Greekness" of forms cast us back to all the features of our immediate environment which - as I said - no matter how familiar it was, did not cease to be limiting, not to say, depressing back then.

Because of his preferences, Pikionis was much criticized for formalism and romantic localism. To be fair, we should say that he was a very early regionalist much before the term was even coined in Western Europe; in other words, he believed in the universal principles of functionalism, while, at the same time, he claimed that architectural forms be suitable to their natural and cultural context. On this claim alone he was a pioneer, much ahead of his time. Of course, whether formal referencing to the Greek vernacular architecture should be the only way to take, remains an open question. In any event, the formal quality of his drawings is admittedly superb; so is the craftsmanship and quality of execution of all the projects he supervised on the construction site. His work is recognized as both sensitive and perfect.

We never saw Pikionis deliver a lecture *ex cathedra.* Konstantinos Kitsikis had no skill in public speaking. Conversely, Pikionis, who had such a skill, did not believe in *ex cathedra* teaching. He followed the Socratic method of teaching; that is, the very ancient maieutic approach. In the absence of any assigned reading material, usual exams in his class were inconceivable. He was pleased with the mere students' presence, their receptivity, and their good design work. His influence consisted in discrete hinting and prompting. I would compare him to Apollo at Delphi: according to Heraclitus, he neither uttered nor hid his thought, but he provided pertinent signs. Pikionis functioned like a catalyst. He had his own believers in every class for certain; only a few, about one fifth of the class. Those were students who had figured out the personality of the man. Being only 20 years of age, we were not yet able to pass judgment on him; but some of us approached him by intuition.

He was a teacher-initiator, not the ordinary scholar and university professor, nor the successful professional and part-time teacher. Those, who joined him teaching, were fully aware of his particular properties and willingly surrendered to his influence. Among them there were certainly some who tried to imitate him, ending up in ridicule. They did not only try to imitate his design mannerisms - something almost inevitable when you are very young faced with an exceptionally gifted designer and artist - but also his expression, his gestures, even the tone of his voice. All this certainly created a quarrelsome atmosphere since the rest of the students mocked his faithful followers, no matter how unfair this was. Most of those, however, who at first openly declared themselves his followers and slavishly imitated him, abandoned him later; but those who made no attempt to imitate him, received his stimulating influence and his assistance both in their lives and in their careers.

The content of his teaching: he never favored the idea of extensive architectural projects, either in conception or in design execution. Pikionis was more interested in small scale design projects of an artistic nature, which he would rather pursue in greater depth. He gave himself up to the eternal pursuit of what he termed a "pertinent" solution. "Pertinent": this was a dear word to him, also meaning acknowledged, valid and acceptable.

He was then in the habit of assigning us, to begin with, to small design problems. That was the time when he was in charge of the construction of a private residence in Philothei. He presented us with his plans for the garden of the house and asked us to design the access situation, that is, the layout between the garden gate and the main entrance door. This was to include a few meters long pavement, a fountain, and a fence. We asked him for more details and instructions, in order to proceed to the design part. He responded gently, yet without committing himself to any explicit suggestions. He used to say: *Look into it, you'll get it, you'll get it better by yourself, you have your own way.* Or, *I cannot provide you with the solution, you have it yourself, you'll get it.* He relied on a powerful kind of subliminal suggestion while, at the same time, he discretely defined the direction.

He assigned us another exercise in the third or fourth year of our studies; The theme was a highly unspecified kind of a stage design. Would that be the backdrop for a Karaghiozis (shadow theatre) show? for a medieval play, such as Erotocritos? That was not clear either. He looked for an architectural setup whereby the student would practice the art of placing buildings together into a harmonious composition, so that the spatial effect - solely based on the skillful manipulation of the third dimension - would be perceivable frontally without any perspectival distortions.

He also introduced us to the theory of the harmonic subdivision of space; that is, an almost unknown subject to today's architects, yet very decisive in architectural training from the nineteenth century up to the 1960s. I remind you of Le Corbusier; I remind you of Doxiadis. In brief, this is usually a method of architectural synthesis; but also - and in Pikionis's case, in particular - it is a way of testing the aptness of a certain solution to an architectural problem: the checking of harmonious tracing lines both on the drawing and on the construction field on the basis of either simple proportions or dynamic proportions stemming from the mathematical properties of numerical roots or of the golden section.

He certainly discussed with us such issues as the uniqueness of the Greek landscape and the forms of modern Greek architecture as he envisioned it for the times to come. Still at that early age, he touched upon subjects of preservation both of the environment and of vernacular architecture. He stigmatized the

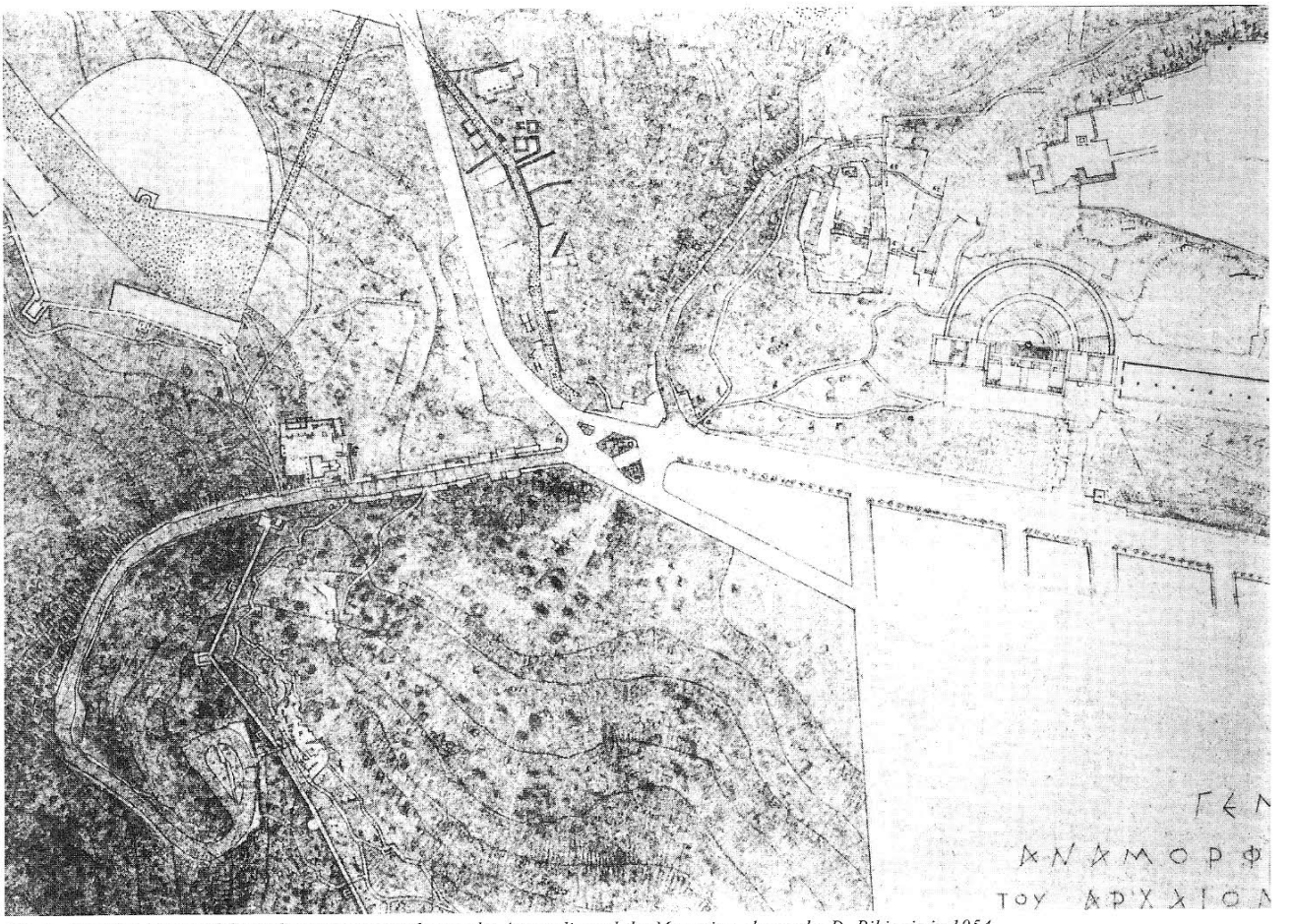

Fig. 2 General layout of the pedestrian approaches to the Acropolis and the Mouseion, drawn by D. Pikionis in 1954.

destructive deformation of the landscape of Attica caused by the quarries. Moreover, he put out specific design proposals for the proper management of archaeological sites, that is, a matter he faced with some scepticism mainly due to the changes that archaeological excavations bring about to the natural landscape.

There are some open questions about his teaching: what induced Pikionis gradually to that one-sided and exclusive affection for the East which surfaced through his classes? I refer to the East in its two possible meanings: the near East, that is, the Eastern Mediterranean region, and the broader East, that is, Asia as a whole. Did he foresee - I wonder - the voracious and expansionist menace of the West, that is, the Protestant Anglo-Saxon West, which has been heading the world for the past five centuries? Did he prophetically sense the self-destructive course of a world that abuses mother earth through exploiting her resources in order to enjoy only short-term benefits - all that at a time of unrelenting development still to be felt in our days? Or, was that preference for the East the mere upshot of an aesthetic perception of the world built on some specific artistic qualities of that tradition, such as directness and symbolism, which guided his thought, his feeling, and his creativity? Maybe both. And the next question: what was that "Greekness" which our teacher embraced and aimed at through his entire life? Was the womb that nourished him purely Greek? Did he know his own roots better than anyone of us, or was he taken up by an artistic fixation? This is a tough word to use: fixation. By that I mean an obsessive personal preference. I loved my teacher and I honor his memory. However, questions such as these are still waiting for an answer.

Definitely, there was no such a thing as an academic lecture by Pikionis. At certain times though, he did make his views public, especially during moments of crisis calling for his militant intervention. He spoke in a very low voice, almost by mumbling his words, yet without ever cutting the meaning short. The meaning was crystal clear to those who were open to it. The tone of his voice was very discrete. We were all tacitly under the same impression - and rightly so, I believe: this suggestive manner of expressing himself, plus his pauses and sharp glances, ensured him the attention of the small groups that surrounded him; this is how he aroused their interest in his work and in his choices, not in his person *per se.*

Only very few students had him as an advisor for their final thesis. That would have been a precarious decision to make as the teacher's real wishes were unfathomable. Those who dared to take their thesis with him ended up with a presentation layout on coarse paper or hardboard of two or two-and-a-half meters long. That was a painting composition, normally based on an architectural theme, which could be also taken for a rough drawing of a mural or for a portable painted picture. The subject often was a conjectural landscape, beyond space and time, mixing scattered visual memories of Pompeian fresco, Byzantine iconography, and the folk tradition. The product was a non-specific architectural composition: an architecturally worked out landscape, more like an artistic vision than a plan drawn for execution. Hence, we had only one, two, or three design theses per year supervised by Pikionis.

His design tactics, his work on the drafting-table: he started with a very concrete problem, preferably a subject related to his current design undertaking. He solicited our opinions on it in the form of a drawn, not a verbal, response to his own drawings which he presented to us in class. This method of getting your students actively involved in design I consider very creative. Through it a sort of a living dialogue comes forth which stimulates both parties to critical thinking. This is what I would call a living class.

How did we work through such a drawing exercise? Exeptionaly we did work at home and showed up once or twice a week for a review of our drawings. He had two delegates, Engonopoulos and Liapis. His review always consisted in his counter-proposal. The drawings were small, only 30 or 40 centimeters long. At first, he

insisted that we should draw with a pencil. Some of us picked this up. Thanks to his great talent for painting, he had a very distinctive way of sketching with a pencil, either by pulling it sideways, thus producing the effect of atmospheric mist with its full range of tones and half-tones, or by moving the point forward to draw a sharp outline. We promptly copied this manner for its novelty.

One should be reminded that the customary way of drawing at that time was the exact opposite: simple and minimalist drawings with harsh cast shadows. Naturally, Pikionis's technique was completely foreign to this trend. Together with Engonopoulos, he introduced us to color techniques, what I would call "color cooking". He showed us collage and painting works by Cezanne, by Klee, and by Kandinsky, in particular. On that he sought Engonopoulos's active involvement. We became very interested in all this, especially because it enriched our training in freehand drawing, that is, a very strict class taught by Nikolis Hatzikyriakos-Ghikas whose emphasis was on seeing right and sternly. We encountered issues of color only as late as in our last year of study when both Pikionis and Hatzikyriakos assigned us collage exercises. Our teachers were sceptical in regard to the so called "freedom of inspiration" and the freedom of splashes; I put it in somewhat daring terms.

A story comes up to my mind, a very revealing one of his ways on the drafting table. We used to gather in small groups. In a class of 25, those groups included 5 or 6 students for the review. The group gathered around a table on which Pikionis threw his tracing paper over a student's study drawing which he criticized while he was drawing his own counter-proposal. The subject at hand was a small guard-house for an archaeological site. He started by sketching a small tormented pine-tree which seemed as though it emerged from a Japanese woodcut. This lasted for ten minutes. One of the group, the least patient, was prompted to sarcasm and said: *Professor, this is a very charming and beautiful small tree that you draw, but it is going to grow and then....* He did not complete his phrase, but what he was aiming at was evident, that is: teacher, what you are doing is mere formalism; we, on our part, do architectural design and you, on your part, try to embellish it with a small tree which will not stay the same. In other words, design-wise the tree is not bound to the building for good for it will grow and have its form changed.

Fig. 3 The paved road to the Mouseion.

Of course, no word of the above was spoken out, only hinted at. That was my first time I saw Pikionis in despair. He, who was always very calm and sweet despite his austerity, angrily threw his pencils on the table and uttered this unforgettable phrase: *Either we follow or not; we are not allowed to trivialize everything here.* If such words were pronounced today by a faculty member of an academic institution, this professor would be considered arrogant, bad-tempered, and condescending. Pikionis was none of these. He only wanted to stress that either there is receptiveness which we have developed after certain years of study, or there is not; that we should not force interpretations upon everything, or explain every word, or play the smarties with our ploys. The thing I perceived as central to his thinking was not architectural design *per se,* but a complementary dimension of it, that is, the pervading spatial ambiance which he sought to represent.

I would like to add some considerations now about his work in the construction field. I would like to make a special mention of his students in this context, that is, their role and participation in the landscaping project by the Acropolis in the years 1953 to 1957. I am not referring here to his personal partners of work, namely his friend and brother-in-law, professor Alexis Papageorgiou, and all the other architects and colleagues. I just speak about the very few of us who, still students, had the chance to modestly provide our assistance in the last phase of the so called "Acropolis project". He never urged us to go and work on the construction site; nor did he take such a service as a prerequisite for our graduation. Some of us sensed the opportunity ahead and volunteered our work.

He had an ingenious way of improvising in the field. Pikionis laid out his ideas as to how this project could be carried through in his famous work reports to Karamanlis.[1] He improvised in the design process through his incremental and repetitive method, as much as he did in the field. His design aim was never fully specified. The project was set only in rough outlines and in terms of a general intention. What he held for himself was the possibility of constant adaptations in the field. Notorious are his confrontations with Karamanlis, a politician difficult to get along with, who put him under severe time pressure. Pikionis, on the other hand, managed to impose his own will through his dedication to the project and through convincing him that this could be completed only by small construction teams under his own supervision.

How did he work with the craftsmen? He had selected some fifty of them, both old and young, who worked in small teams in the traditional way. He was in a constant dialogue with the craftsmen while he tried to guide them through specific suggestions and examples; that is, a way similar and parallel to his method of teaching students. In 1956 nearing his seventies, with a straw hut on his head under the burning sun, he almost held their hands during the work. Then resting on a small stool, he let them free. He initiated an intensive process of exchange of views. Of course, he was the one who always had control over the basic choices, the guiding construction lines. He praised the craftsman's inventiveness by saying: *you know it better yourself, do it in your own mode.* Here, once more we encounter the maieutic method, by which he was promoting the identification of the workman with his project. This was his charisma: the strengthening of his collaborators' creativity. He always said the same thing: *Try it as you know; you have your*

1 Minister for Public Works in the period 1952-1955, and then Prime Minister (1956-63).

own way. I only gave you an idea. I am certain that you can set it up better. All this happened while he was in control. This was his way of provoking the craftsmen's input to the project.

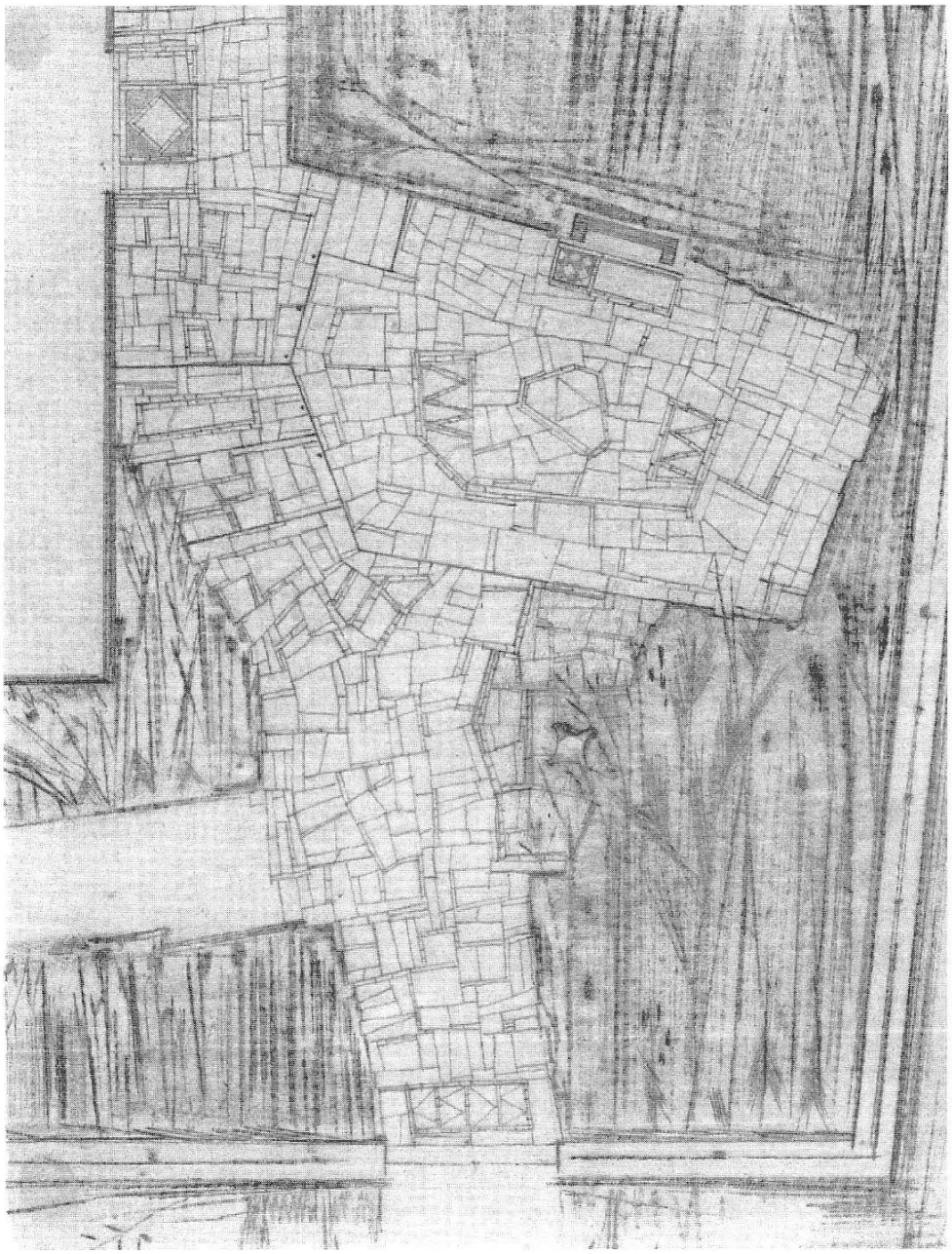

Fig. 4 Pavement of a courtyard. Pensil drawing by the author. Student project under the guidance of D. Pikionis (1953).

Which was our contribution as students to the field work? Only few of us were entrusted with the honorable mission of "holding threads". This means to hold the guiding aids for the construction of the paved paths and the outlines of the terraced parts. In the field Pikionis employed the harmonic tracing lines to his service. To mark the paths, he selected a series of crucial points related to orientation, shift of course, and views. He selected them by intuition, I believe, in his effort at producing a sequence of psychological experiences to the walker-visitor - in fact, to the "pilgrim", to use his own terminology - such as surprise, admiration, curiosity; also at strengthening the joy of discovery and providing room for aesthetic contemplation. There were promising solutions which he eventually gave up after testing them in the field through the aforementioned process of creative improvisation. Our contribution had to do precisely with this process in situ.

Let me now come to a crucial issue, not directly related to his teaching, yet important in the context of his work: his views on history and the historic topography of a place. In his interventions to the historical landscape of Athens, Pikionis was guided solely by his artistic sensibility, not by any strict and credible historical methodology. To his design proposal he discretely introduced mnemonic references to familiar and cherished forms of the long-standing Greek architectural tradition. His hellenocentrism was diachronic in nature. Both his writings and his built works are demonstrative of this point. This was the basis of his philosophy which he stressed through all possible means. I think that he was not concerned at all with the purposefulness, or even the necessity, of the systematic archaeological research that normally precedes any architectural and landscaping intervention. The times, of course, were unpropitious. Karamanlis urged the exploitation of ancient monuments for tourist attraction. Carrying the project on for four to four-and-a-half years - that is, not too long a time for such a work - was already a miraculous feat on Pikionis's part. No issue was unfortunately raised about a methodical procedure that would include a gradual stripping of the forested hills from their greenery hectare by hectare to be followed by archaeological research, redesigning, and replanting. Such procedures require at least a thirty-year time-span for realisation, plus a strong will to go all along with the project. Still today, the presuppositions for such procedures are absent.

Pikionis definitely had no intent to assume the role of a new Ictinos. He very discretely tried to offer us a spatial access to the ancient heritage. Yet his attitude to antiquity was not awe-stricken. He was familiar with archeological research and its rigorous methodology, yet not personally interested in it. This is my personal assessment. In one of his articles, my friend and colleague, Professor Charalambos Bouras, made this succinct comment: *Pikionis approaches the ancients by deviating from history. He is to establish his personal relationship with the object.* I fully agree with this opinion. Thus, still today, Pikionis's approach remains inconceivable, not to say scandalous, to an archaeologist. This does not take away of the artistic quality of Pikionis's creative work. However, if the progressive archaeological research of the hills carries on, we will be inevitably faced with questions of compatibility of the future finds with Pikionis's design.

Now I turn to the question whether there was indeed a "School of Pikionis", that is, an issue brought under the label of "Pikionism".

For Pikionis, the nature of Greece - of Attica, in particular - was unique and sanctified in all of its aspects: climate, light, flora, ground relief. He had a firm belief in the inalienable nature of Greece, something we should not confuse with the nationalistic propaganda of those days that zealously centered on such trendy notions as "eternal Greece" and the "glorious past". His affection for the Byzantine, post-Byzantine and folk art and tradition is well known. I think that this interpretative approach, involving elements of imitation and conforming to the forms of the Greek tradition, seemed to be lacking in viability. However, Pikionis himself would have never accepted the term "imitation" applied to his work. Instead he would call it the only lawful and compliant approach.

I immensely admired him for a number of things: the aesthetic quality and the compositional novelty of his design solutions; the beautiful, the engaging, and the unique style of his drawing. I was also fascinated by his artful and inventive way of carrying out the design problem in the field. However, if you asked me whether he truly contributed a new way to the formation of a modern Greek architecture, or whether he paved a practicable way to it, my answer would be unreservedly "no". In my view, Pikionis never succeeded to show a certain and clear way either to the making of new manageable housing forms or to the development of Greek settlements.

Unfortunately, any opportunities for developing such propositions came to him quite late. As we know, his concepts did not bear any fruits. But even if his working conditions were more propitious and he were given the means to carry a whole housing project to completion, still the short-sighted, utilitarian, and profit-driven modern Greek social reality would have never accepted his elitist approach to architectural ethics, the one based on high moral and aesthetic standards. This is my opinion which I think I share with all who are familiar with his work.

I come to another aspect of his design which goes beyond its mere qualitative level. It relates to such issues as the selective appropriation of forms, the mixing of various influences, and - most importantly - the inventive, yet inconsistent, non-methodical, and repetitious manner of Pikionis both in his design process and in his field work. It is rather impossible to picture the ekistic development of any modern metropolis, such as Athens, or of any other smaller city, as being dependent upon Pikionis's visions and pace of work as far as design and realization are concerned. To put it firmly, his way was discordant with modern Greek building practice.

He was certainly fond of eclecticism, that was an offensive term at the peak of the modern movement some 50 years ago. This is why he was not understood and had so many enemies. Only 15-20 years later, with the advent of postmodernism and deconstructivism, that is, two trends whose visions are based on local tradition and comparative study of forms, Pikionis was suddenly recognized as a regionalist. In my view, an eclecticist is whoever openly accepts influences from different traditions. However, Pikionis was strict and selective in his formal preferences. His ways were completely foreign to such postmodernist procedures as arbitrary eclecticism and slavish mimicry. Yet - I must repeat - Pikionis's vision was incongruous with modern Greek reality: a visionary, on the one hand, and a whole people, on the other, moving on two divergent paths.

Pikionis did not hand down to us any school of thought, nor any school of architecture. By that I mean a commonly accepted approach to architectural practice. A school of thought is recognized by its capacity for passing on its fans and followers a certain attitude to both life and art. A school's impact becomes evident in two ways: on the one hand, in its propounding of certain principles of thinking and acting, and on the other hand, in the radiance of its master's personality. A "Pikionic" school never existed. There have been certainly colleagues and disciples of his who did receive his message. Due to his scholarship, his sensitivity, and his creativity, he offered a very distinctive and multifold perspective on things. The most artistically inclined of his students knew well that his solutions were personal and unique; also that any attempt at imitating them would end up in forgery. However, the cases of unfruitful mimicry of his style were quite frequent, leading to what is trendily called "Pikionism".

A few more words about his virtue, his moral example, and my debt to him. Although Pikionis left no school - as I dared to say - his influence left a permanent impression on the minds and on the hearts of those students who were determined to understand and follow him. His most precious gift to us was his example of introspective inquiry, that is, a form of self-knowing. We learned how to pose questions and search for the answers. On those of us who did not imitate him slavishly, he had a catalytic influence by showing ways which led each one to a different direction. This is the most priceless gift you might receive from a teacher. The repetitious approach to his dear subjects, combined with the endless scrutiny of his formal choices, constituted his very personal method that could not have been otherwise. This is how he enhanced his disciples' creativity.

How did he contribute to my career and to my personal life? I feel like a faithful disciple of his although I never imitated either his manners or his artistic orientation. I never drew as he did, I never painted as he did, I was never fascinated by folk art. Nevertheless, through his catalytic method, he aroused my interest in certain subjects that had been lying latent in me. There were two of these: first, the natural attributes and the landscape of Attica, that is, the place in which I was born and raised to manhood; and second, the urban development of modern Athens. I devoted myself to the study of both. I feel that my entire research endeavor was the product of this special inclination that my teacher helped me develop. I am indebted to him for having opened new directions for me, for having solidified my emotional ties with my place of origin despite my thirty years of living abroad. As a result, he definitively sustained both my career and my life. He is present for me.

There is one more thing that I discerned in Pikionis: a warm human radiation. Several of those who loved and respected him thought that there was a theatrical side of his. I never sensed that. He was immensely truthful to me. A human's conduct may vary. Each one has his/her own particularities and personality traits. But Pikionis, in particular, had a deeply good disposition, a benevolence, a true sensibility and fondness for both the physical and the human environment, that is, men, animals, and plants. He had the big charisma of empathy and sympathy. I received the radiation of his goodness, which I considered very important. He was fully devoted to his task. His personality traits were life-giving and inspiring, bearing to life that deep relationship between a teacher and a pupil, something so difficult to find. There is a certain phrase that comes to my mind, a quote of Menandros: 'Ως χαρίεν ἐστ' ἄνθρωπος, ἂν ἄνθρωπος ᾖ; that is, *"how dear it is for a human to be a real human"*. I feel that this fully applies to Pikionis.

Today I have a clear view of what my criteria are of developing a value system. Pikionis has a share in that. I dare to say that for those of us who knew him, our human contact with him weighs probably more than his work. For us, who apprenticed near him, a certain dictum by Epictetus holds true - a dictum that he also loved dearly: Χάριν ἔχω ὧν ἔδωκας· ἐφ' ὅσον ἐχρησάμην τοῖς σοῖς ἀρκεῖ μοι; that is, *"I am indebted to you for all that you offered me, and to the extent that I managed to put your gifts to use I am content and happy"*.

As my present tribute to Pikionis is coming to an end, I would like to stress some points for today's students. I am fully aware that today's conditions of their study and work are completely different. The change that happened within the last 50 years, that is, a time of two generations, is much bigger than the one of the preceding 150 years.

Which are the radical changes that took place? I shall briefly mention some that I see. First, the large number of students. We used to be 25, whereas today there are 300 students in each class. This certainly contributes to the democratization of society, it

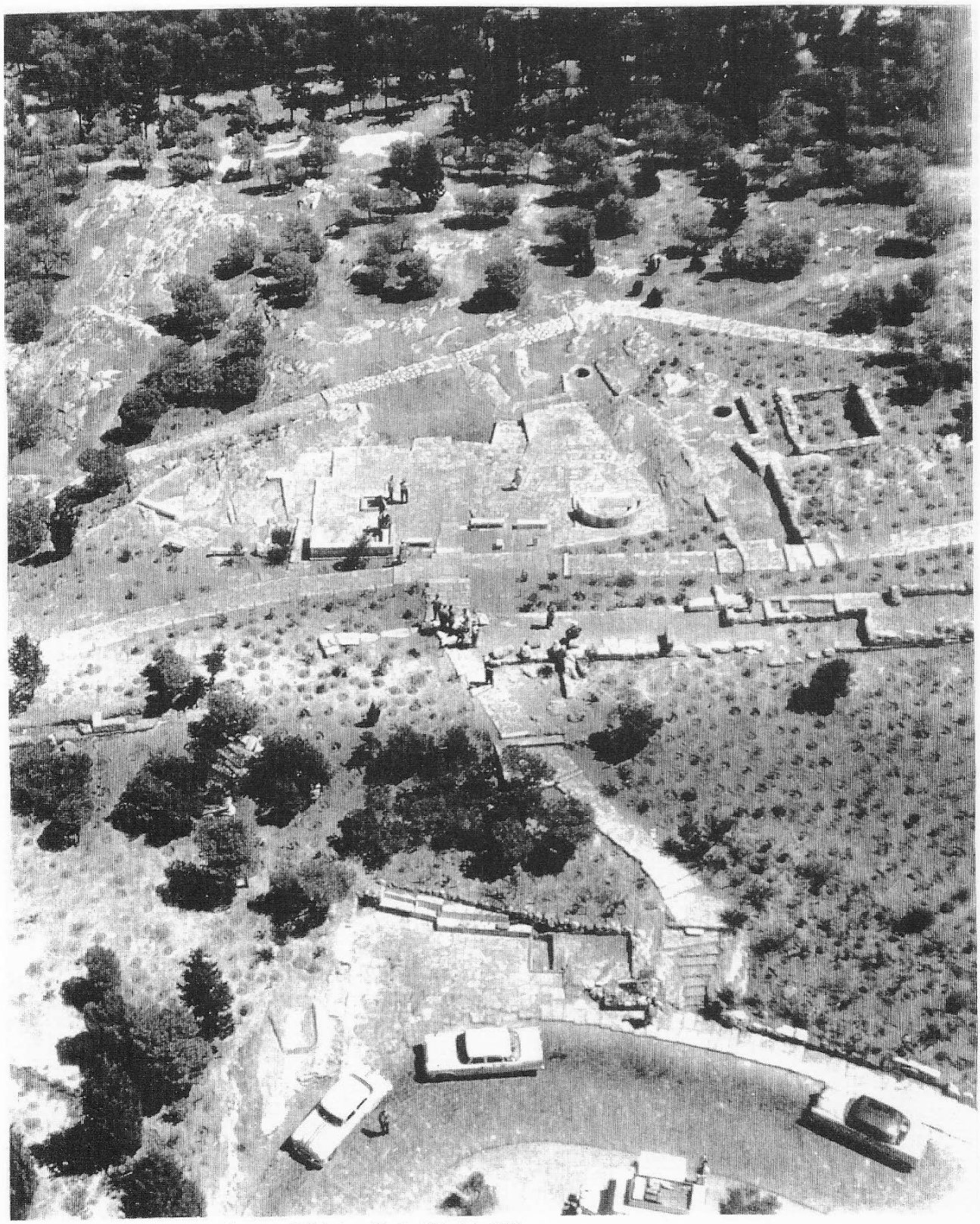

Fig. 5 The belvedere terrace on Mouseion Hill designed by D. Pikionis in 1956.

accords with social justice, it opens possibilities, but at the same time it creates serious obstacles to human relationships as it inhibits the personal contact between teachers and students.

A second change and difficulty: the considerable broadening of the field of knowledge. We used to have 20 courses. I took a glance in the course catalogue to count 50 classes which are offered through a flexible program of study today. Flexibility is a good thing, of course; but flexibility, combined with much fewer class-hours in the Polytechnic and the storm of uncritical side information, is problematic. This, therefore, produces difficulties to the students' orientation. Which are going to be their personal choices and preferences? How are they going to uncover their personal inclinations?

A third difficulty: the technical dependence upon computer aided design. Ten years ago its applicability was under question; in five years from now drawing by hand will be probably outdated, if

we do not act promptly. Computers are a great help, but a great risk, too. The risk lies not only in the loss of joy of the artistic creation - the architectural drawing by hand being one form of artistic creation in itself - but in the loss of the mental familiarity with the three-dimensional space. For two years we attended very rigorous classes in descriptive geometry, sciagraphy, and perspective drawing, through which we succeeded in mentally capturing three-dimensional reality. Of course, we researched various alternative solutions through sketching on layers of tracing paper; something similar is what the computer does more easily nowadays by scanning the entire range of possible alternatives. However, I seriously doubt whether these technical facilities are of any help to one's training for the three-dimensional conceptualization of the architectural work, which I consider the main prerequisite of an architect's skill. Because, whereas detailed solutions come through sketching, a spatial order is conceivable only through the mind.

All these are the big risks and the big promises of the future at the same time. Here is my suggestion - I dare to say - to my younger colleagues, who are still running their course of study but soon are going to be graduate architects: First, look for your personal talents and choices; do not abandon yourself to misinformation through the internet; make this medium your slave, not your master. Second, develop your ability to express yourself artistically through your hand along with the help you receive from technology; discover your personal language in drawing; this gives you a great joy. And last: keep up your dialogue with nature, your environment, and your fellows. Therefore, ignore those preachings about age gaps: *"Don't trust anybody beyond thirty"*, and such stupidities. Keep contact with people of all ages, younger, elder, and coeval with you. We have things to learn from all of them so that the human dialogue, which our teacher, Dimitris Pikionis, envisioned, won't dry up.