



HAVE YOU EVER
EXPECTED ADVENTURE IN
TRAVEL BUT INSTEAD
ENCOUNTERED
A NEW DIMENSION
OF YOUR OWN CENTER?

Thanksgiving, 2009

Dear

My first experience of Greece in a trip earlier this year re-introduced me to the power and value of *individuality* in a new and urgent way. I had been somewhat aware that I see any group (be it an organization, a team, a chorus, an orchestra, etc.) as a *collection* of individuals. As a mother, a grandmother, a friend, a colleague, a volunteer and an Executive Coach, I love to help individuals be as effective as they can be.



So I was awed to learn that—in addition to the significant influence in thought and art that the Greeks initiated through their seismic embrace of freedom—*they essentially invented individuality!*

How could that be? I wondered the same. I learned that no other advanced culture prior to circa. 550 BCE (think Egypt and China) had reached a state of enlightenment to conclude that freedom can be available to, and maximized by, those who are willing to balance it with responsibility for the greater good. They were the first. Imagine!

They also determined that freedom offered the privilege to develop one's individuality. Their word for this opportunity, *areté*, translates to becoming one's best in service to others. In applying this idea, businesses, lives and communities are served. Interestingly, the demonstration of *hubris* or the focus on

self-gratification alone in Grecian society was not tolerated because it detracted from the greater good. It limited the whole.

This Greek intellectual pursuit of excellence and truth, called the Golden Age, lasted a mere 200 years. Evidence of their achievements can still be experienced in plays, philosophy, sculpture, the Olympics, science, medicine, and architecture.

A singular image that serves as a model of their cultural importance is the Parthenon in Athens. While its simplicity and elegance reflect the Greek notion of beauty in form, they also meant for it to serve from its vantage point on the “acropolis”—*the highest hill of a town*—as the backdrop to the drama of individual human expression and interaction.



Socrates' statement that an unexamined life is not worth living has questioning power that we value.

The Socratic Method continues to reverberate through time helping advance individual pursuit of wisdom and truth—and that which reveals itself for the greater good.

May the critical choices of the Greeks that influenced the Founding Fathers in creating the American democracy serve to also inspire you and yours toward individual expressions of *areté*.

Happy Holidays,

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