

The present and forward fate of the elgin marbles essay sample



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The Parthenon marbles are works of art taken from the Acropolis of Athens by Lord Elgin and brought to England while Greece was under the control of the Ottoman Empire.. Lord Elgin received permission from the Sultan to remove the statues at a price less than what it takes to transport them. Money was not the main motive for Elgin in acquiring them, there were wealthy bidders who attempted to buy them from him but he refused. Once in England many found a great interest in them as well as controversy. Elgin was tried for theft even though Greece's contemporary law had allowed him to remove them. The charges could not hold up in court and he was eventually and rightfully exonerated. After falling into dept Elgin had little choice in but to the British government. I firmly believe the statues should remain in Britain, the opposition might claim that the Greeks have a cultural right to them. But as Appiah argued in chapter 7, the Greeks of the 21st century are no culturally similar to the ancient Greeks than someone in the U. S. They are the descendents of the ancient Greeks after all, but that does not take history into account.

The people of Greece only exist today as a result of the past good or bad. Ancient Greece is known for its militant and philosophical way of life; they gained large amounts of wealth from war; should the current Greeks return whatever they can identify as having been gained from war? I don't think they should, instead of living with the consequences of yesterday they should focus on the yet to be determined tomorrow. We cannot just go around returning everything we see as a wrong in the past. The United States or many nations for that matter would not be able to exist with that policy. One of the reasons the statues should remain in England is due to the

fact they were lawfully taken out of Greece. Once your land has been conquered all the accessories on it go to the victor or victors as well. They have a full right to decide on the future of anything that is on the land. After Germany surrendered at the end of World War 2, the allies owned and took control of everything, they believed this because they split the country into two since not all of them agreed on how to govern the loser. When the Ottoman occupied Greece they did the same and by rules of war owned everything in Greece.

The law at the time allowed Elgin to take the Marbles to England at his request and even then he was still charged in England. Both laws maintained he did no wrong in removing them. The current standard of war rules is the Geneva Convention; it states "no personal property may be taken from civilian and if it is taken it will be confiscated until the rightful owner can be located". The marbles belong to no single person; they belong to a culture which lived by the laws that the conqueror gets the spoils. And under current law they have no right to them at all and if we were to make new laws it would be ex post facto, most would agree that is unethical. A second reason I am in favor of them remaining in England is the statute of limitation has passed on the return of the items. It has been way too long as I've said earlier. There would be no great reason for them to be returned now. Appia argued that the only reason that could trump over where something belongs is if it has more meaning such as religion.

Most people in Greece today are Catholic, Muslim or Christian. There are less than Three thousand members who practice the closest thing to the ancient religion, it's called Hellenism. The Hellenists who would have the best
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argument when arguing on Apia's terms have no more than a selfish reason for the statues. Certain things just should not be returned after enough time has passed, and to return would imply it was stolen and it was not. The Auschwitz sign was stolen in 2009 and found within two months. Had it been found two hundred years later, I could argue it should be returned because it is stolen under the current law and future laws could use this law as a basis for why it should have been returned or not.

Finally, the final reason I believe it should not be returned because aesthetically we are all equal. Since we all have an equal right aesthetically according to Apia, it is my full right to argue it remains in England. If all people have the same right to one thing, I'd use quantity to determine who gets it. Greece has a population of 11 million while England has a population of 63 million, if one fifth of the English population can enjoy it, it would equal to Greece as a whole enjoying it. As for those outside of the country, England has 28.1 million tourists per year, many of which might want to visit the British museum and Greece has about 19 million visitors. In the end if we go by individual equality, Britain would win in most categories because they grossly outnumber Greece in the case of people who have a chance to see the work. The other side might argue it is better for the set to be together, while that is true they are attempting to rewrite history.

Nature took its course and as a result the marbles are in England. If we return the pieces than we are rewriting history because we are shaping it in the way we want to and not the way it played itself out. Passive action would be the best course because we are not messing with things in which we have no control over how they got here. If we could rationally feel guilt over <https://assignbuster.com/the-present-and-forward-fate-of-the-elgin-marbles-essay-sample/>

having the statues than I would argue we return them. But any guilt feeling from the statues being in England are highly irrational because we had no control over how history before ourselves played out. And those in England might be descendents of the one's those whose actions led to the marbles; they should not have to live with the burden of a family member who is long dead. As an American, you can't stand for someone being punished because of their ancestors; the 8th amendment specifically prohibits that. In conclusion, I believe these reasons are enough to convince one that they should stay in Greece. The only defense they might have might be it feels wrong, if they are aware of mills they would know " That a feeling is bestowed on us by Nature, does not necessarily legitimate all its promptings." Feelings are not always the best way to make an argument and a rational mind is necessary in most cases.

Citations:

1. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8420053.stm>
- Autzwitz sign stolen Apia - Chapter 7
2. Wikipedia on history of Greece