
Modern Greek Culture: Some Critical Questions of Pedagogy and Research

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RESEARCH AND PEDAGOGY ARE more substantially related than it is commonly acknowledged in most disciplines. There is an often unrecognized feedback between the needs of enquiry and the requirements of teaching. This type of feedback is especially productive in the field of cultural studies. Specifically, while research activities and their outcomes obviously have a direct impact on pedagogical choices, a similar effect can also occur in the reverse direction. This reflects the extent to which particular modes of representation and reception of culture — as also activated in the classroom — are an integral part of what is being studied. As a result, the interactions involved in teaching can approximate a form of investigation. In practical terms, questions about what is to be taught, and how, can directly stimulate research questions.

In the case of modern Greek culture, when its study is undertaken within the American university or, more broadly, the English-language world, there are special conditions which encourage opportunities for analysis. They are conditions which reinforce the relation between pedagogy and research. Two of these conditions can be stressed from the outset. The first involves the recency of modern Greek cultural studies as they emerge at the intersection of three broad and evolving areas of work: studies of modern Greek society, history, and particular cultural achievements or, in general, modern Greek studies; studies of ethnicity and of ethnic or diaspora communities, including patterns of migration; and, theoretical and empirical studies of culture(s) from a variety of, especially, interdisciplinary perspectives which are converging toward a distinct mode of cultural analysis. The study of modern

Greek culture is in a formative stage as a self-defined project of investigation, that is, as distinct from related or even co-extensive and already established fields, such as literary and critical or anthropological studies focusing on the Greek experience. During this formative stage, teaching can provide a mechanism for analytical exploration.

There is, secondly, a significant condition of location. The study of modern Greek culture in the American university involves a trade-off of conceptual distance. What may be lost in terms of the immediacy of experience when moving away from a culture's breeding ground is compensated for by the possibility of new perspectives at a distance. Moreover, an important factor in this potentially enriching dislocation is the existence of a substantial Greek-American community. As natural participants in explorations into modern Greek culture, university students of Greek ancestry offer the challenge of views and practices of a U.S. ethnic subculture which shares Greek cultural claims.

Against this context, it becomes easier to appreciate a problem which has been the proximate stimulus for the questions being raised here. It is the problem of developing an introductory course on modern Greek culture which bypasses conventional accounts and attempts to formulate its agenda in relation to major debates within this area of enquiry. Conversely, this is the problem of a pedagogically useful summary of provisional results and hypotheses which stimulate further research.¹ Given the inexhaustibility of cultural materials and the wide range of possible teaching and research projects, this brief sketch can only introduce selected issues of general orientation. The dangers of schematism are obvious. Arguments in support of specific interpretations cannot be elaborated. This cost, however, is unavoidable if a dialogue must be encouraged on the critical questions being posed here.

The main issues to be addressed can be grouped into the following successive steps. There is, firstly, the issue of a starting point in the study of modern Greek culture. Rather than seeking definitions — which may be arbitrary — for the basic terms, analysis can proceed, it is argued, on the basis of the practical knowledge of modern Greek culture which is implicit in typical images of that culture. Five typical images of modern Greek culture which dominate U. S. academic discourse on

¹Reprinted as an appendix is an outline, from which topics for discussion were selected when a course on "Modern Greek Culture and Civilization" was taught by the author at Queens College in the spring of 1986. Also made available at that time was a draft of a selected bibliography, consisting of over three hundred relevant sources, most of them in English. A bibliography of this kind will have to be reconstructed according to thematic divisions before it is published. The type of resource that is, of course, missing in this area of pedagogy and work is a critical selection of primary materials translated from the Greek.

the subject are then identified. The dominance of these images can be broadly related to, on the one hand, questions about the theoretical adequacy of categories of cultural analysis. On the other hand, there are the particular empirical or historical questions which are relevant to the modern Greek experience. A fundamental question, around which other key themes can be organized, involves the relation between identity and culture in the Greek context. Finally, there is the question of significance of the study of modern Greek culture and of its comparative position as a "marginal" or a "paradigmatic" culture.

What is "Modern Greek Culture?"

If we could simply define what is "modern Greek" and what is "culture," we would seem to have guaranteed easy and secure entry into what is to be studied. However, definitions of this kind tend to be arbitrary, unless they are the result of study and not its presumed starting points. It is through the study, that is, of modern Greek culture that we may come to understand who and what is "modern Greek." Even "culture," although it is a general term, will have to be understood in its connection to the modern Greek experience. That is, despite the fact of an applied orientation, which is the case when focusing on a particular culture and which implies that relevant categories must be imported from a more general universe of discourse, it is inadequate for the purposes of cultural analysis to introduce the concept of culture as unproblematic and given. Moreover, conceptions of culture and usages of the term, being the product of particular histories, cannot be assumed to be identical in different cultural contexts.

Although understanding is the outcome and not the starting point of study, analysis does not proceed on the basis of absence of information, but on the basis of and in reaction to existing forms of practical knowledge. In other words, it is legitimate to presume that modern Greek culture is in some sense recognized or known, even if it may not be understood. There is a phenomenology of dominant images of modern Greek culture, the identification of which provides a starting point both in pedagogical and methodological terms.

Identifications of this type have a double significance. On the one hand, it is through criticism of the active preconceptions and passive bias implicit in typical images that a more adequate approach to the subject can be developed. Learning, in other words, especially when it comes to culture, also presupposes *unlearning*. On the other hand, however, these typical images reflect elements of a common ground, which must not only be cleared away, but also used to build. Criticism, that is, cannot exhaust itself in a process of demystification. It also involves discovery. Relevant images, including distorted ones, generated

in the sphere of culture can reveal dimensions or even become components of the particular culture being studied.

Images of Modern Greek Culture

The taxonomy and genealogy of images of modern Greek culture which have become accepted outside Greece, whether at popular or more specialized levels of reception, involves projects of extended scope. The implications of studies of this kind go beyond Greek culture and are especially significant for the host cultures which generate these images.² The more restricted purpose here is to identify a few typical images which are reflected in most conventional accounts of modern Greek culture current in the American academic context. It is understood that images of this type will commonly appear in combination or in mixed arrangements. Let it also be stressed that, although by themselves not infrequent, images of modern Greek culture are usually absent, if not repressed, from comparative accounts of, for example, European culture. This absence decontextualizes modern Greek culture and reinforces approaches which apprehend it as an exotic or *sui generis* phenomenon.

Five typical images will be identified critically. There is, firstly, a prominent literary-textual image which equates modern Greek culture with certain high achievements of literature and particularly poetry, the four crucial names in this respect being Seferis, Cavafy, Elytis, and Ritsos. Two Nobel prizes and other international distinctions are used as proofs of the "export" quality of Greek poetry. The unacknowledged impression here is almost that of a privileged offshore poetry-assembling zone, a kind of Hong Kong of the literary mind, with obscure connections to its cultural hinterland.

A second image could be identified as neo-antiquarian. It is generated through a pursuit of classical survivals, which expands beyond written documents to other cultural materials, to the extent they can become amenable to philological or archaeological treatment. Outside the enclaves of classics departments, this image is in relative retreat.

²Works to be considered include: E. M. Butler, *The Tyranny of Greece over Germany* (Cambridge, 1935); David Constantine, *Early Greek Travellers and the Hellenic Ideal* (Cambridge, 1984), as well as the several volumes in Greek by Kyriakos Simopoulos on foreign travelers to Greece; Richard Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, MA, 1980); S. Larrabee, *English Bards and Grecian Marbles* (New York, 1942); T. J. Spencer, *Fair Greece, Sad Relic. Literary Philhellenism from Shakespeare to Byron* (London, 1954); and T. Webb, *English Romantic Hellenism, 1700-1824* (Manchester, 1982). In relation to the American context, see also Alexander Karanikas, *Hellenes and Hellions. Modern Greek Characters in American Literature* (Urbana, IL, 1981).

Nevertheless, it will retain an implicit regulating role so long as contemporary Greek culture will continue to be recognized as *modern* Greek culture, i.e., as non-classical.

Largely in opposition to the preceding image, there is a folk-rural image of modern Greek culture which populates most relevant accounts by American and American-inspired anthropologists. This is a *philotimo* image which, in the hands of its less successful projectionists, simply celebrates honor and other presumably authentic and "essential" values of Greek peasant life. Urban phenomena generally cannot be accommodated within the extreme ruralism of this view.

The two additional typical images to be identified are semi-academic, in the sense that they hover between widespread popular perceptions and accounts current in the classroom. Their significance resides in the fact that they represent cross-over points for those coming freshly into contact with the analysis of modern Greek culture.

The recurring modern traveler's image of Greece — whether the trip has been undertaken or not — requires an appellation such as the *Zorba* version of modern Greek culture. In academic contexts, Kazantzakis, Durrell or Miller are names which may flesh out this literary-tourist reconstruction of Greece as a concrete utopia at the mid-point between mass tourism and spiritual journey. However, literary preoccupations and texts are only subsidiary in relation to performance-oriented activities, and particularly music and dance, as they are sometimes captured on film.

There is, finally, a strong "ethnic" image of modern Greek culture which equates it with a repertoire of practices and values and, especially, a basket of consummable goods, most of them alimentary. One is confronted by a set of commodities which display a "Greek" label as they compete in the cultural market associated with the urban peasantries that are regenerated by ethnic American cities.

No detailed discussion of these typical images, or of the conditions of their crystallization, is possible here. But, before moving on to relate omissions apparent in them to questions of conceptual adequacy, one further remark is in order. Regardless of the extent to which they are trivialized or not, there are three dimensions of the experience of Greek culture which strongly come across and which will be reconsidered in a different light later on. These three dimensions refer to a sense of, respectively: a heritage, and especially a heritage of texts but also practices; a place and, by implication, the conditions of life attendant to it; and, a complex of shared attitudes and attributes, which, even when indicated through the vulgarized reproduction of stereotypes and "ethnic commodities," point the way to a group identifiable through and identifying with persisting mentalities and behaviors.

Concepts of Culture

The typical images which have been identified represent idealizations of modern Greek culture. By itself this is not the problem with these images, to the extent that analysis always involves some type of idealization. Nor is it a matter of valuation, i.e., of the positive or negative implications associated with these images. The problem is one of stereotypes or, in other words, of the inadequacy of idealization. In this sense, critical questions, in terms of both pedagogy and research, are those which concentrate on how and why typical images of modern Greek culture are conceptually inappropriate, while at the same time suggesting more effective modes of approach. The point, of course, of these analytical considerations is to orient the way concrete questions are asked about the Greek experience.

There are three major sets of questions to consider in relation to categories of cultural analysis which are slighted or omitted in conventional accounts. These questions involve the displacement of general by particularized notions of culture and the relation of culture to, on the one hand, history, and on the other, society. Starting with the first set of questions, there is no doubt that projects focusing on particular dimensions of a cultural experience are indispensable. Insufficiencies arise when particularized notions of culture, which reflect disciplinary preference or bias — whether that of literature, anthropology or classics — are allowed to appear as general representations of the culture being considered. This is one of the conceptual problems that is evident in the typical images that have been identified.

In positive formulation, cultural analysis cannot proceed effectively if it does not attempt to take into account the complex and contradictory developments which have been associated with culture as a historical process and have become established conceptually through the linguistic usage of the term. Specifically, there are three active senses of the concept of culture in English. These three senses refer to: a general process of intellectual development; a particular way of life; and, intellectual, especially artistic, activities and outcomes.³ Culture in its three-fold incarnation may appear extremely ambiguous and in need of

³ An instructive summary of the linguistic/historical adventures of the term "culture" can be found in Raymond Williams, *Keywords. A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford, 1976). Williams is the preeminent exponent of a key trend in cultural analysis. To encourage Greek studies of this type, the relevant entry in this "vocabulary" has also appeared in a Greek translation, by Y. Chouliaras, in *Χάρτης* 14 (1985). Reference should also be made to Alfred L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, "Culture. A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions," *Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology* 47, 1 (1952).

terminological purification. However, the complexity of usage should not be misconstrued as a matter of linguistic untidiness. It is, rather, the result of complicated historical developments as they are reflected in analytical attempts to take them into account. It is not possible here to go into the contradictory impact, upon the concept of culture, of the movements of Enlightenment or of romanticism, or of their variable expression in the Greek case.⁴ Suffice it to say that there is both unity and separation among the three senses of culture as they have become established in English usage. It is, in fact, a major task of cultural analysis to pursue, in conceptual and historical terms, this relation among the three sectors of culture implicated, the sectors, that is, of everyday life in its cultural dimensions, of intellectual activities and ideas, and of the arts.

Turning to the relation of culture to history and society, a recurring observation is that conventional accounts tend to be ahistorical and asocial. It is not so much that historical or social considerations are omitted from these accounts. The problem mainly has to do with how questions are posed. History and society are relegated to background "noises," the volume of which may be turned on when it becomes necessary to refer to particular developments which otherwise appear inexplicable from within the framework adopted. As a result, major antinomies of cultural analysis, such as those between formalism and sociologism, elitism and populism, official culture and counter-cultures, or cultural production and reception, are ignored or trivialized.

This is not the place for a general discussion of these issues.⁵ One

⁴ Let it be indicated that it may be necessary to resurrect the contrast between culture and civilization, to the extent it is no longer very relevant in English. This has to do with the fact that "culture" has no identical equivalent in Greek. The non-identical equivalent word, *πολιτισμός*, although linguistically of ancient vintage, was introduced in its modern sense by Adamantios Korais in 1804 as an equivalent of the French *civilisation*, as it is used in Korais's 1803 *Mémoire sur l'état actuel de la civilisation dans la Grèce*. For neologisms introduced by representatives of the Greek Enlightenment, see C. Th. Dimaras, *Νεοελληνικός Διαφωτισμός* (3rd ed., Athens, 1983), pp. 10 and 74ff. For the French *civilisation*, see Lucien Febvre, "Civilisation: Evolution of a Word and a Group of Ideas," in Peter Burke (ed.), *A New Kind of History and Other Essays: from the Writings of Lucien Febvre* (New York, 1973). Febvre's essay was originally published in 1930. Culture transliterated as *κουλτούρα* is also used in Greek, along with *πολιτισμός*. At about 1783, Dimitrios Katarzis, a major figure in the Greek Enlightenment, writes that "χρειάζεται κουλτούρα ή γλώσσα μας," that is, "our language needs cultivation" in *Δοκίμια*, ed. C. Th. Dimaras (Athens, 1974) p. 3. The popularity of the disparaging *κουλτουριάρις* (= "arty") also attests to the wide currency of *κουλτούρα* in Greek today.

⁵ Some of these issues are addressed in relation to contemporary Greek literary and artistic production in Yiorgos Chouliaras, "Από τις περιπέτειες της μαγνητικής βελόνας" *Χάρτης* 10 (Feb. 1984) 490-500. It can be added that the Athens, Greece review of literature and the arts *Χάρτης*, the New York *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora*, and the Johns Hopkins

example of the pitfalls associated with the lack of attention to the social and historical dimensions, however, may be given. Mass tourism⁶ and the consolidation of an international popular culture of mainly Anglo-American inspiration are two phenomena of the postwar period which provide an immediate context for contemporary Greek culture. Accounts which run shy of historical and social connections either will ignore these phenomena or will treat them as external data which happen to impinge upon the Greek scene and, if there is any debate, it will be shifted toward an evaluation of their destructive or salutary effects. By contrast, the effort of cultural analysis should be directed to a grasp of that which is internal to Greece, as well as external, with respect to conditions of evolution of and forms of adaptation to these phenomena.

Implicit in these considerations is another set of questions which involve the requirement for comparative contexts in the analysis of cultural formations. This issue will be addressed after the question of the relation between culture and identity, which can be considered central to modern Greek experience, has been posed.

Culture and Identity: The Modern Greek Experience

The relation between culture and identity in the case of Greece is so strong and intimate — it will be argued — that it can be considered exemplary. Identity as a fundamental theme has penetrated practically all issues of cultural life, to the extent that modern Greek culture may appear incomprehensible unless grasped as a struggle for identity. However, in so far as the collective experience of human groups is established in general through self-reproducing cultural patterns linked to self-identity, the particular aspects of the modern Greek experience cannot be evaluated properly except when placed in the context of the general relation between culture and identity.

In terms of this general relation, the principal analytical issue involves the connections between culture, identity and ethnicity in relation to modernity, i.e., the historical era ushered in by transitions to

Journal of Modern Greek Studies (hereafter abbrev. as *JMGS*) have been major sites of debates on modern Greek culture and the arts. (The relation of the author of this essay to these three journals — as an editor of the first two and a member of the Modern Greek Studies Association which sponsors the third — should also be made clear.)

⁶On the cultural implications of tourism, see D. J. Greenwood, "Culture by the Pound: An Anthropological Perspective on Tourism as Cultural Commoditization" in V. Smith, ed., *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism* (Philadelphia, 1977) and Margaret E. Stott, "Property, Labor and Household Economy: The Transition to Tourism in Mykonos, Greece," *JMGS* 3, 2 (1985) 187-206.

capitalism, to the organization of Western European society into (modern) states, and to that type of post-medieval rationality on which the "civilizing process" has been centered.⁷ Recognizing the extra-biological character of culture, on the one hand, and the shattering of pre-modern social niches and identifications, especially religious ones, on the other, a majority tradition in social science considers the projection of national identity as a primary task of culture. Conversely, nation-building is seen as the dynamic process underlying the development of modern cultures.⁸ This dominant view comes in many variants, depending on the particular elaboration of elements of the romantic critique of Enlightenment rationalism. There is, however, also a significant minority view which identifies the cultural expression of ethnic identity as pre-modern or, more specifically, pre-national(ist) and as antedating the emergence of modern western European states and, later, peripheral states following that model.

The position adopted here is at variance with the historical schemes proposed by these two opposing traditions. First of all, the pre-modern character of culture as ethnic identity is recognized. It is stressed, however, that phenomena of this type occur at a popular level or involve what could be called an "unconscious history." There is, at the same time, a recognition of the relevant historical break associated with the modern era. Specifically, state-national identity becomes the regulating form of ethnic identity, as elaborated by intellectuals, embraced by popular movements (even without political prospects of nation-building) and promoted by the cultural institutions of newly emergent states. The adoption of this position helps clarify many obscure connections involving the location of different social groups and classes in relation to modern Greek culture (or other cultures). In particular, as it suggests a convergence from "below" and from "above," it helps explain explosive features of Greek national cultural identity while it was being shaped in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

To recap the argument, culture and identity appear as crucially interconnected and, at least, peculiarly so in the modern era. To this

⁷Consider, for example, the following statement by Ernest Gellner in *Thought and Change* (London, 1969) p. 157: "If a man is not firmly set in a social niche, . . . his 'culture' becomes his identity. And the classification of men by 'culture' is of course the classification by 'nationality.'" See also Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, (New York, 1973) and Norbert Elias, *Power and Civility*, vol. 2 of *The Civilizing Process* (New York, 1982).

⁸On "modern Greek nationalism," see Stephen G. Xydis' essay by that title in Peter E. Sugar and Ivo J. Lederer, eds., *Nationalism in Eastern Europe*, (Seattle, 1969).

should be added the countervailing and therefore especially violent expression of identity through culture associated with peripheral societies, those, that is, which were late comers, during the nineteenth century, into the process of nation-building. (This pattern is echoed by postcolonial societies in the different circumstances of this century.) The Greek experience can be expected to conform to the general case, as well as to follow the overall pattern of nineteenth-century peripheral societies. Identity as an exemplary theme in modern Greek culture is therefore to be sought over and above those more inclusive historical developments and in relation to particular dimensions of modern Greek society and history.

Particular Aspects of Modern Greek Cultural Identity

Four aspects of the Greek experience can be stressed as especially significant with respect to the exemplary potency of the relation between modern Greek culture and national identity. The first aspect involves the combined outcomes of the early, by European standards, ethnogenesis of the Greeks, the cultural preeminence of and creation of a classical civilization by the Greek city-states, the democratic-imperial expansion of hellenization throughout the Eastern Mediterranean and beyond, and the eventual radical contraction of the cultural significance of mainland Greek territories. The medieval Byzantine civilization was peripheral in relation to these territories, while during the long Ottoman domination the cultural opportunities of Greek and other Balkan cities were extremely restricted.⁹ Entering the modern era, in other words, while socially reorganized according to changing historical circumstances, there were elements of an ethnogeographic continuity of conditions of life in the Greek peninsula and islands, coupled with a largely "silent" cultural heritage which was to some extent undisturbed by prominent cultural interventions after the establishment of Christianity.¹⁰

⁹On the broad themes suggested here, see Margaret Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition* (Cambridge, 1974); Robert Browning, ed., *The Greek World: Classical, Byzantine and Modern* (London, 1986); G. P. Henderson, *The Revival of Greek Thought, 1620-1830* (Albany, 1970); Nikolai Todorov, *The Balkan City, 1400-1900* (Seattle, 1983); Arnold Toynbee, *The Greeks and their Heritages* (Oxford, 1981); and essays in Speros Vryonis, Jr., ed., *The "Past" in Medieval and Modern Greek Culture* (Malibu, CA, 1978), (hereafter abbrev. as Vryonis), including Peter Charanis, "The Formation of the Greek People" in Vryonis, pp. 87-101.

¹⁰By contrast, the preeminence of, say, Italian city-states poses limits to any cultural-identity "revivals" of Roman civilization. Particularly instructive in this respect would be a comparison between the cultural symbols appropriated from the past by Italian fascism, on the one hand, and by the Metaxas Greek fascist regime, on the other.

A second aspect involves the phenomenon of Greek diaspora communities, some of them with roots in the Hellenistic period or before and others of much more recent vintage, especially in southern Russia and western Europe. To understand the phenomenon of Greek diaspora, a distinction is proposed between a "historical" and a "modern" diaspora, a cut-off date being the years 1922-23, when there was an enforced exchange of populations between Turkey and Greece. "Modern" Greek diaspora, although at first ideologically continuous with the preceding phase, by and large, and definitely so in the postwar and postcolonial period, evolves according to patterns of contemporary socioeconomic emigration. Earlier diaspora patterns, however, have a different dynamic and scope. One formulation that can be offered very briefly is the following: A fundamental fact of Greek history is that what is called the Greek diaspora *precedes* Greece as an autonomous entity.

The reproduction of Greek ethnicity and culture was originally decentered. That is the significance of the Greek "historical" diaspora.¹¹ To an unprecedented extent up to that time, as can be seen very clearly in relation to the Greek war of independence, Greece does not simply "import" ideas and ideologies through returning foreign-educated students, as all peripheral societies necessarily do. It literally "imports" in a physical sense its intellectuals and even its bourgeoisie from diaspora communities. Much of the explosiveness of Greek cultural identity revolves around this issue of diaspora Greeks. It should be noted that there has been a continuing relevant intellectual tradition, although, after having been stimulated by the waves of Greek state-centered nationalism, it is now crucially dependent on the cultural evolution of Greek ethnic communities outside Greece.¹²

The third particular aspect of the Greek experience to be taken into account involves the outburst of the Greek revolutionary war of liberation at the height of European romanticism and its adoption by progressive romantics outside Greece as a war of liberation of their own. Being a movement expressed in cultural terms, Philhellenism could only accentuate, when it did not bring about, explosive fusions between

¹¹In terms of cultural significance, a superior moment of the Greek "historical" diaspora is embodied in Cavafy's modernist literary project. This is argued in Yiorgos Chouliaras, "Λογοτεχνία και έξορία: Σημειώσεις για τὸν Καβάφη" *Χάρτης* 5/6 (April, 1983) 562-73.

¹²In terms of explosive identification, and given the experience of the Jewish holocaust and an explicit religious matrix, the Greek experience has been surpassed in the postwar period by the relation between the Jewish diaspora and the state of Israel. On the "modern Greek state and the past," see John A. Petropoulos's essay by that title in Vryonis, pp. 163-76.

Greek national identity and cultural activities. It is in this context that we can appreciate a statement to the effect that "Greece is exceptionally one of those nations which . . . can be characterized as romantic."¹³ The romantic idea of a national and popular mission, coupled with earlier millenarian trends, permeates and continues to propel a nationalist cultural identity throughout the long period of Greek national aspirations and irredentist wars.

There is, finally, a fourth aspect, which is in an ideological sense the fundamental one, but which presupposes for its effect the historical agency of the other three aspects already discussed. What it involves is the crucial claim of modern Greek culture to a direct line of descent from classical Greek culture. All cultures lay claim to their past. What is unique in the case of modern Greek culture is that it could lay claim to what had already been appropriated as the root and fountainhead of modern European culture and thereby, according to the accepted assumptions, of all human civilization. There is an extreme advantage and burden, at the same time, as it continues to be experienced in modern Greek culture, in the claim of a direct descent from those who taught the world.

A potentially violent experience of national identity is pursued for its validation through modern Greek culture. The pursuit of identity through culture is a condition of the modern world, which becomes especially explosive when pressured by the relations of material and intellectual dependence which are associated with the status of a peripheral society. This already extremely potent mixture has been fueled in the Greek case by the fundamental claim of origin from the recognized source of European culture, a claim given substance by the facts of Greek history, popularly sustained by the circumstances of the entrance of Greeks as an ethnic group onto the proscenium of modernity, shaped and agitated about by Greek diaspora intellectuals, and provided with the direct support of the then dominant European romantic movement.

From this perspective, and considering the shock of comparing cultural claims to the humble facts of a mostly peasant nineteenth-century Greek society, expressions of defensiveness in modern Greek culture become comprehensible. Several other issues also open up, including the riddle of concurrent cultural nationalism and extensive adaptability to other cultures or cultural stimuli among Greeks in Greece or abroad. To be a "practicing Greek," if this term would be allowed, can be both exceptionally rewarding and taxing.

¹³C. Th. Dimaras, *Ἑλληνικὸς ρωμαντισμός* (Athens, 1982), p. 475. Dimaras is referring to Etienne Fournol's *Les nations romantiques* (Paris, 1931).

Since the preceding remarks only represent distillations of concrete enquiries, it is important to stress some necessary cautions and then to append a few examples of how a grasp of modern Greek culture as a culture of "identity" can be useful as an axis of interpretation. What especially needs to be stressed is the danger of teleological or rationalist approaches. The evolution of modern Greek culture is the unintended overall outcome of complex historical developments and of the resolutions of conflicts between social groups and individuals, each of whom had their own ideas and intentions. There could have been no "plan" that was followed. The theme of identity itself undergoes change and is posed differently in changing circumstances. Furthermore, the proper periodization of the history of the Greek cultural formation cannot be assumed to be identical with periodizations arrived at by focusing on other historical phenomena, whether in Greece or abroad.

Cultural Identity as an Axis of Interpretation

The double issue of diachronic continuity in Greek history and of synchronic unity in Greek society can be considered as a fundamental expression of the struggle for cultural identity in the conditions of nineteenth-century Greece. Although the problem of historical continuity is conventionally posed as an aggravated response to Fallmerayer's theories about the racial discontinuity of the Greeks, Gibbon is the more formidable intellectual opponent. The outcome is well-known. It was through the preeminent Greek romantic historian, Constantine Paparigopoulos, that the "missing link" in Greek history was brought forth: Byzantium. But this was an extremely complex cultural transaction and by no means generally adopted until later in that century.¹⁴ As far as the problem of unity was concerned, which often veered toward an elusive homogeneity sought through such agencies as comprehensive education, a solution was on one level achieved through the resettle-

¹⁴On the debate on continuity, see Speros Vryonis, Jr., "Recent Scholarship on Continuity and Discontinuity of Culture: Classical Greeks, Byzantines, Modern Greeks" in Vryonis, pp. 237-56, and Loring Danforth, "The Ideological Context of the Search for Continuities in Greek Culture," *JMGS* 2, 1 (1984) 53-85, as well as *Origins of the Greek Nation. The Byzantine Period, 1204-1461* and *The Greek Nation, 1453-1669*, both by Apostolos E. Vacalopoulos (New Brunswick, 1970 and 1976), and D. A. Zakythinos, *The Making of Modern Greece: From Byzantium to Independence* (Oxford, 1976). See also Georg Veloudis, "Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer und die Entstehung des neugriechischen Historismus," *Südost Forschungen* 29 (1970) 43-90 and J. M. Hussey, "Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer and George Finlay," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 4 (1978). It should also be made clear that, given the great complexity of the question of Greek Orthodoxy as a religious experience and as a Greek "cultural signature," relevant issues are not addressed explicitly here, but are bracketed until future discussion.

ment of refugee populations in our century, despite the new refugee-related cultural conflicts this engendered.

From the perspective of cultural identity, and in relation to this issue of ethnic unity, major ideological conjunctures usually conceived in simplified political or social terms can also be reinterpreted. In fact, the *Megali Idea* itself, as it was originally expounded in 1844, was not just an outward-looking slogan of national expansion. It was at the same time a cultural proposition attempting to resolve conflicts, which had acquired parliamentary expression, between nativists and those who, although residing in Greece, had their origins in extra-territorial communities.

The case of Greek folklore studies as a discipline dedicated to demonstrations of the diachronic and synchronic unity of the Greek people has attracted the attention it deserves. Detailed analysis of the projects undertaken by Greek folklorists reveals the extent to which the issue of Greek identity is fundamental in their investigations.¹⁵ It should also be noted, however, that social and historical sciences in Greece in general can be understood to emerge as essentially "identity disciplines." Not only anthropology, but also classics, philology, archaeology, history and the study of literature and ideas were socially legitimated as handmaidens to a national task of proving to the world the lineage of the Greeks. This was not just a state-inspired affair, but an intellectual service to which most academics, scholars and authors subscribed enthusiastically. Some remarkable achievements have come out of this kind of research. At the same time, success in this direction tended to confirm a particular intellectual agenda.

To take another example of a key debate in modern Greek culture and society, the depth of emotion and the extent of scholarship devoted to questions of language use are somewhat perplexing, unless related to a sense of Greek cultural mission and the varying roles assigned to popular classes by different conceptions of Greek identity. These were "language wars," almost literally, and they were invested with all aspects of the social and political problems confronting Greece.¹⁶

¹⁵On Greek folklore studies, see *Ours Once More: Folklore, Ideology, and the Making of Modern Greece* (Austin, 1982) and "'Law' and 'Custom': Ethnography of and in Greek National Identity," *JMGS* 3, 2, (1985) 167-85, both by Michael Herzfeld, as well as *Ἡ θεωρία τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Λαογραφίας* (Athens, 1978) and "Modern Ideology and Folklore," 1985 Paparrigopoulos Lecture, Center for Byzantine & Modern Greek Studies of Queens College (forthcoming in *Journal of Modern Hellenism*), both by Alki Kyriakidou-Nestoros. For a comparative perspective, see Richard M. Dorson, "The Question of Folklore in a New Nation," *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 3 (1966), 277-98 and William A. Wilson, *Folklore and Nationalism in Modern Finland*, (Bloomington, 1976).

¹⁶On language issues, see Robert Browning, *Medieval and Modern Greek*, (London, 1969); Brian Joseph, "European Hellenism and Greek Nationalism: Some Effects of Ethnocentrism on Greek Linguistic Scholarship," *JMGS* 3, 1, (1985) 85-96; Evangelos Petrounias, "The

Poetry as a principal expression of Greek cultural life captures many of the relevant dilemmas of identity. In fact, given conditions internal to its development, as well as external social conditions, including political limits to free debate, the role played in other societies by intellectuals has been in large part displaced to poets in Greece. In this sense, poetry has been a "regulating discipline." Thus, regardless of how conscious of it each poet may or may not have been, the evocation of, for example, the classical past in Greek poetry is rarely some isolated poetic datum.¹⁷

There is something additional to be considered. It involves the question of the comparative contexts of modern Greek culture. A comparative approach is, of course, indispensable in general. What, however, needs to be stressed in the Greek case is the very conscious or active relation to presumed cultural contexts that is developed by those who have been engaged in cultural debates. This is by no means a problem of geographical determination and of whether Greek culture is "closer" to the southern European, the Balkan or the Eastern Mediterranean experience.¹⁸ What, again, is involved is an issue of identity. The conflict between East and West is internal to Greek culture. Admiration of the West and de-orientalization campaigns, varying attitudes to Christianity or debates about tradition and "Greekness," whether of musical instruments such as the bouzouki or of works of art, are all elements in this complex matrix. Relevant debates are much more complicated than is suggested by an initially useful distinction between "Hellenic" and "Romeic" strands in Greek culture.

Debates about where Greece truly belongs, about its proper context and mission were explicit and heated already before independence. The cultural problem of identity has always been a political and social problem. There has been a recurring idea of Greece as a way-station, receiving its lights from the West and passing them on to the East. This was also an aspect of the *Megali Idea*, the "great idea," as propounded by Kolettis in Greek Parliament. It was thus an irresistible opportunity

Modern Greek Language and Diglossia" in Vryonis, pp. 193-220; and George Thomson, *The Greek Language* (Cambridge, 1960).

¹⁷Many cultural issues continue to be engaged in the way they were posed by Seferis in his poetry and essays. See George Seferis, *On the Greek Style. Selected Essays in Poetry and Hellenism* (New York, 1966).

¹⁸On comparative contexts, see Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, 2 vols. (New York, 1976) and L. S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans Since 1453* (New York, 1958). On orientalism and de-orientalization, see Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, (New York, 1978), as well as his "Orientalism Reconsidered" in *Cultural Critique*, 1985, and Dennis Skiotis, "The Nature of the Modern Greek Nation. The Romaic Strand" in Vryonis, pp. 155-67.

for an opposition paper in 1845 to express its ironic approval for a delegate going abroad, by the name of D. Christidis, who happened to be cross-eyed, since "seeing with one eye the East and with the other the West he expresses the great idea of Mr. Kolettis."¹⁹

Modern Greek Culture: Marginal or/and Paradigmatic?

Modern Greek culture is evidently not a dominant culture today. Although, at least in scholarly discourse, no culture is considered superior or inferior to any other, this refusal to become involved in ideologically suspect evaluations does not alter the facts of power or influence. There are, clearly, dominant cultures and they are the cultures of societies associated with states with a dominant role in the world. The only other cultures which can effectively contest this domination are those that are generated by populations which are significant in size and related parameters. As a culture supported by about ten million people in Greece and many fewer than that outside Greece, Greek culture is not in that league either. It is, therefore, in one sense, a marginalized culture, to the extent that the agencies for its projection are limited.

A marginal status is not an index of vitality and there are too many examples which can sustain this assertion. All cultures are, in fact, of potentially great interest to others beyond those who are their direct participants or students. Beyond, however, these general reasons, there are additional reasons which recommend the study of modern Greek culture abroad, and specifically within the American university. It can be argued, in fact, that contemporary Greek culture is of paradigmatic interest.

To summarize the argument in a single phrase, modern Greek culture may be considered paradigmatic, because its study can reveal with exceptional clarity that struggle for identity which, under varying conditions, represents the fundamental impulse of modern cultural life. What cultural identity stands for in the Greek context has already been suggested and there is no point in repeating it again. But there is an opportunity here to reformulate as basic conditions those three dimensions of cultural experience which were discerned when some typical images of modern Greek culture were scanned earlier on.

Modern Greek culture can be seen as paradigmatically expressive of, firstly, a heritage and of cultural claims upon the past, in fact, a past that continues to represent a classical source of values for the

¹⁹See C. Th. Dimaras, *Ἑλληνικὸς Ρωμαντισμός* (Athens, 1982) p. 362.

modern world and of such fundamental principles as democracy; secondly, a place and of the life people make out of it, a life that can be to some degree experienced, no matter in how distorted a form, through the possibility of travel; and, thirdly, a shared existence through culture of a group, which is widely dispersed in ethnic communities around the world, including an abundant presence in the United States.

"If you and I," says Buck Mulligan to Stephen Dedalus in Joyce's *Ulysses*, "could only work together we might do something for the island. Helenise it."²⁰

Well, that is just *not* the point. A non-dominant culture is also of paradigmatic value because it can lead us into closer appreciation of the culture in which we live without the threat of being dominated.

²⁰James Joyce, *Ulysses* (New York, 1934), p. 9.

APPENDIX

OUTLINE: "MODERN GREEK CULTURE AND CIVILIZATION"

I. INTRODUCTION

What is culture?

Who/what is Greek?

II. ANALYTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Concepts of culture and civilization

History, the social sciences, and the humanities

Words, concepts, social relations and practices

Ways of life, intellectual and artistic activities

Traditional and modern societies

Individuality and identity, subcultures

Civil society, the state, and cultural institutions

Social groups and classes, ideology and hegemony

Evolutionism, relativism, and interpretation

Conditions for the emergence and development of "national cultures"

III. HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE CONTEXTS

Modern Greece: An outline of social and political developments since independence

The classical, the Hellenistic, the Byzantine, & the Ottoman worlds

The Mediterranean & Europe

The Balkans & the Middle East

The Post-World War II Period

IV. PROBLEMS AND THEMES

1. Continuity and discontinuity: the fundamental issue and paradigmatic case of the relation of modern Greek culture to the ancient and medieval past. The sphere of culture as a sphere of articulation of political and social conflicts.
2. The struggle for a modern Greek identity. Modernity, culture, and nationalism. Strategies and role of intellectuals. The emergence of "identity disciplines": philology, archaeology, *laographia*, history of literature and ideas. "Language wars."
3. Similarity and difference: the search for contexts. The threat or promise of the "other." East and West. Orientalism and de-orientalization.
4. Indigenous and extrinsic elements in a national culture: from enlightenment and romanticism to rock and roll. Receptivity and influence, cultural imperialism and dependence. Importation and adaptation of methods and ideologies (e.g., Marxism, psychoanalysis, structuralism, natural sciences and technocracy).
5. Discourses of power: the state, education and other cultural apparatuses. Cultures of rulers and ruled. Official culture, sub-cultures and outlaws: the domestication of *rebetika*. Neohellenic ideology, Metaxas's "Third Hellenic Civilization" and the colonels' "Helleno-Christian Civilization."
6. Hetero- and homogeneity, regional cultures, refugees, minorities. Women and men. The countryside and the city: rural and urban culture.
7. Popular culture and the arts. The preeminence of literary pursuits. Poetry as a "regulating discipline." The generation of the '30s. The artist as ideologue of national identity. Greek modernism: Seferis's "King of Asine."
8. Diaspora Greek culture. "Historical" and "modern" (post-1922) diaspora. Greeks abroad, cultures of exile and the culture of ethnic communities. Cavafy's project. Bi-culturalism. Is there a "Greek-American" culture?
9. Projections and receptions: images abroad of modern Greece and Greeks, from the renaissance to "Zorba" and today. Pre-independence travelers. Romantic philhellenism. Foreign students of Greek culture. Modern tourism: the ideology of travel guides.
10. Production, reproduction, and representations of Greek culture: tradition, crisis and renewal. Contemporary mass culture in Greece. Cultural commodities and kitsch. Artists, intellectuals,

and cultural movements. Convergence and differentiation: (national) culture and society in the age of an 'international' culture.

V. OVERVIEW

Identity of cultures and cultures of identity: the modern Greek experience.