

# Modernization and Its Discontents

CONSTANTINE TSOUKALAS

1

Greece in the 90's: an ailing country in need of immediate and drastic treatment, a preferential field of scientific or para-scientific queries, a living inspiration for essentialist quests and ironical side statements. At least so it would seem: for even if nothing can ever be really "wrong" with a collective entity which seems to exist and to survive in ways that are hardly less ambivalent than the ways of most other countries embedded in the disillusionments of our times, it is a fact that recent discursive attitudes towards Hellas have reached a stage of paroxysm. More than ever, spirits are disillusioned. More than ever, prospective healers, if always ubiquitous and vociferous, remain cautious. More than ever, politicians are hesitant to promise immediate and spectacular recoveries. And although there is no unanimity in terms of diagnosis, the shock therapy that seems to be admonished from all quarters can be summed up in a single word – modernization – now, in all urgency and at all costs.

Hardly an original recipe, to be sure. All countries, rich or poor, have been led to adopt modernization schemes and resolutions; and, to this effect, modernizing structural reforms and adjustments are by now integral components of the universal political and economic landscape. Greece could obviously be no exception in adopting a language which is becoming an imposed discursive banality. Indeed, at least since the end of the 60s, no well thinking country could afford to dispense with this new socio-cultural externality: modernization is universally seen as the only possible way out of all real and conceivable social and economic bottlenecks. Universal progress seems to be invested in a new concrete language, all the more convincing that it remains austere and incontrovertible. Literally a verbal panacea that

may, however, be more an expression of profound disarray than of real hope.

Surprisingly, the issue is relatively recent in Greece, a country which always tended to disrespect and transubstantiate imported truths. Truly, post war "reconstruction" inevitably paved the way towards the new keyword of "development." And, in due course, the new and more sophisticated word of "modernization" stepped in: indeed, as elsewhere, growing considerations for social and cultural "obstacles" towards economic growth imposed the formulation of the same general idea in more elaborate terms. To the extent that development could no more be ensured on the basis of simple linear projections of a given economic reality, the heaven of growing mass consumption seemed to demand more radical interventions. Social, political and ideological recalcitrance would have to be dealt with within a general plan of social transformations on all levels. Even in Greece, development was beginning to be envisaged as an holistic process.

For a long time however, these novel rhetoric exhortations had little impact on bringing about concrete and systematic innovations in Greece. Until very recently, the discursive emulation of current wisdom did not result in a reorientation of policies towards applicable reforms. If, together with the proliferating Cassandras, modernizing addicts have always been there, their oracles were seldom taken seriously and never obeyed. In this sense, the explosion of the modernization issue in the last 10 years has totally disrupted the established socio-economic quiescence of the traditional political arena. Suddenly, the country at large seems convinced that what had been generally considered as a harmless ideological luxury is an inescapable practical necessity. Despite their reticences, Greeks were led into reluctantly admitting that, in some respects at least, they are becoming like all other peoples. And even if this may still be occasionally resented as an insufferable national affront, it imposes a new urgent need to upraise an inexorable reality.

The main questions I shall try to answer pertain to some of the how's, the why's and the wherefore's underlying this unforeseen sense of overwhelming national urgency. These are difficult questions, ideologically loaded and normatively ambivalent. They call for answers that must remain tentative, hesitant and inconclusive. And precisely herein lies the challenge and limitation of this paper, which aims neither to point to solutions, nor to lament because of the lack of them. As usual, turning points entail normative contradictions and factual incertitude. The future

will not necessarily be “better” or “worse” than the past. But it is certainly unpredictable.

The argument runs in four parts. A brief discussion on some of the inherent contradictions of the notion of modernization will serve to announce my colors. I shall then give some indications on the reasons why the issue did not really arise with social acuity until the end of the last decade. The argument will be further pursued through a brief analysis of the factors leading to the rapid modification of the social and political landscape in recent years. I shall submit that this rapid transformation can be summed up in terms of an acute crisis in the reproduction of an established, widely rationalized and largely functional system of social relations, a crisis with far reaching symbolical undertones. Finally I shall conclude, in terms that must remain essentially ambiguous. The tension between what seems possible and what may have been desirable was never before so unendurable.

## 2

First, some general considerations. I submit that if modernization is an obvious offspring of modernity, it is a posthumous child of doubtful legitimacy. Indeed, from a normative point of view, it may be seen as a flat negation of its venerated parent. Modernity was a global implementation of a normatively open and intrinsically debatable idea of human progress. A pure product of the Enlightenment and a result of incessant philosophical investigations, the rational collective project of mankind tried to give tentative, provisional and reversible answers to the eternal normative quest for liberation and emancipation. But modernization, in its current form, is something totally different. Though always formulated in rational terms, both its foundations and its legitimization derive from a given axiomatic statement: there can only be one overriding social value – utility. And thus, the crystallization of all common societal projects can afford to skip over the debate on the problem of intrinsic and eventually contradictory values. In this sense, the slogan of modernization is nothing but an accepted social method aiming to achieve the single overriding urge to maximize. And this imposes a purely instrumental approach to the generally acknowledged social goal of developing utilities. The alleged semantic neutrality of the word alludes to an equally neutral conception of an unambiguous history. Henceforward, there can be no strategical

issues: all conflicts are reduced to tactical divergences over the implementation of a given aim.

In this sense, the new era appears as the product of a characteristically unproblematic and denormativized quest: if modern philosophy and critical thought had long been centered around the question of the moral and normative quintessence of modernity, giving birth to interminable debates on its triumphs and its discontents, modernization can afford to appear as the emanation of a given and incontrovertible normative necessity. There can be no historical responsibility other than the one imposed by the unassailable verdict of history. There can be no other reality than the one we know. And even if we do not choose to venerate this reality, we are to bow to it.

Indeed, henceforward, politics is represented as a totally and unequivocally pragmatic practice. And thus, *stricto sensu*, there is no room left for indulging in critical political philosophy. In full contrast to the debatable norms of modernity, modernization is seen as a technically given necessity. The quest for values, truth and possible social alternatives has withered away. Utopias have degenerated into science fiction, or even worse into technological fiction. Within our present context, the objectives, aims and methods of social organization are seen as synonymous with a systematic quest for expedient collective material utilities. Innocently or not, we have embarked in a era priding itself on its "no nonsense" approach.

Yet, there is no point in further discussing the enormous historical, philosophical and normative issues involved. Whatever its foundations and limitations, modernization is neither a debatable ideal nor a free collective option, to be pondered, debated and decided upon. Collective projects appear as rationalized exogenous necessities. However irrational or even destructive it may be, maximizing modernization provides the only possible collective course. Within the context of the international competitive capitalist system, the overall desirability of modernization can be seriously questioned only by unemployed poets, despairing marginals or obstinate prophets: political dilemmas are thus generally circumscribed by the need for an inexorable and unconditional adaptation to modernizing growth. Any other alternative course and even any attempt of critical distantiation in respect to the dominant model are seen as consubstantial with the threat of imminent collapse. Any normative discussion is therefore bound to be discarded even before it has begun. If under other historical circumstances, the collective option to withdraw

from the international game may have been debatable, it is by now unthinkable. Next to a total reorganization of the world system which seems practically impossible, or to a general revolution which is even more improbable, not even the largest and richest of countries can conceive of playing the game otherwise than by strictly obeying rules no one can unilaterally hope to modify. If, in the words of Michel Foucault, the modern State of the Enlightenment had appeared as "the first philosophical State, the first State thinking of itself, organizing itself and defining its fundamental competences and choices on the basis of abstract philosophical propositions," our compulsively "post modern" social organizations seem to have outgrown the need to ask themselves the fundamental questions that had obsessed their fore-runners. Philosophical queries may even be considered as symptoms of an obsolescent infantile disease: in their allegedly adult age, rational social systems declare themselves proud to have successfully passed through their "rites of passage," once and for all. Thus, in a sense, the pains of a pregnant rationality have been supplanted by the sufficiency of a sterile rationalization. This is certainly not the end of history. But in some respects it seems to be announcing the end of the history of sovereign political entities which may still have felt free to decide on the course of their fundamental sociopolitical collective projects. And consequently, it seems to have brought about the demise of all debates on liberation, emancipation, justice and the rationality of primary values. For the better or for the worse, we seem to be entering an era which is openly suspicious and distasteful of superfluous and unanswerable questions. Indeed, it must be admitted that normative debates have always remained historically inconclusive. To conclude that they are also unanswerable is only one step ahead. What is unanswerable is also superfluous and, therefore, wasteful. Consequently, the principle of the least effort seems to be prevailing even in regard to the question of what is worth discussing. Humanity may see itself as rid of the source of most of its recurrently tiresome ideological strifes. Normative simplification is thus *de rigueur*. Within an overall strategy which emulates the ways of the happy ostrich, even if civilization may be seen as still lying in the midst of a normative crossroads, modernization is certainly the most economical and easy way out.



## 3

I shall now enter the main point of my argument. As mentioned, the modernization issue did not dominate the Greek social and political discourse until the end of the 80s and the beginning of the 90s. Ever since, and within very few years, the main *topoi* of political rhetorics have undergone radical transmutation. The reasons must be multiple. It is certainly true that full integration into the European Union provided the objective external stimulation for introducing the modernization debate. Allegedly convergent structures impose convergent discursive crystalizations and thence invariable vocabularies. But this is not all: it can be surmised that some deeper overall changes in the social structure must be responsible for both the suddenness and the omnipresence of the modernization issue. Creeping discontent and lurking antinomies translated themselves into a new and articulate political language, which had long been kept underground. It is this new sense of urgency that calls for explanations. Both its past suppression and its newly defined phantasmatic domination must be rooted in what is by definition a complex and contradictory reality. Indeed, it is my contention that the explosion of the modernization debate is nothing but a belated response to the realisation that a functional and coherent system which had managed to survive for more than forty years had suddenly reached its outer limits. And, in this sense, it implies a crisis in the reproduction of the collective crystalizations of social identity.

Obviously, I cannot possibly mention all the components leading to what seems to be a turning point, if not a crisis, in the current representations of the relations of individuals to their social environment. Nor can I enter into the discussion of some of their important side effects, including the accentuation of the everlurking "identity crisis" of a nation still in quest of its eternal inimitable essence. Even more to the point, I shall largely be obliged to ignore the macroeconomic aspects of the question, despite their fundamental importance. Indeed, if anything, the foundations of the crisis are economic. Growth oriented polities depend on their economic momentum. Thus, more than obviously, if inflation rates are not dramatically reduced, if the budget is not balanced, if productivity is not enhanced and if the economy is not rationalized, no modernization policy can be implemented. But I shall not talk of well known and generally acknowledged economic priorities and bottlenecks. I shall prefer to

concentrate on some aspects underlying the material tissue of social relations, the dominant behavioral patterns and the current forms of socialization. I shall insist on the ways Greeks have been accustomed to survive, earn their incomes and work. I shall try to pin down the ideological and representational structures that are being challenged and the new contradictions emerging from the current crisis. And I shall mention some of the ensuing symbolical and normative antinomies that are already visible within a rapidly changing social landscape. These are crucial, if sometimes neglected, aspects of the so called modernization process, especially in respect to the representation of labor and income as coextensive and articulated social forms. Indeed, if productivity and competitiveness are to be enhanced, and if aggregate wealth is to be maximized, this ultimately depends on the maximizing organization of labor forms. But optimal organization is never ensured on paper. And in this sense, the individual representations of labor are as important as the objective organizational structures they find themselves embedded in.

Indeed, labor forms are historically determined not only in their real but also in their semantic structures. And it is most probable that the latter may ultimately be more difficult to change than the former. It should therefore be taken into consideration that the modern notion of labor is not only original but also highly loaded. Never before has work begun to be uniquely considered as a function of its "objectively" itemizable contribution to overall productive maximization. In this sense, the prevailing collective instrumental rationality is being extended to what has, previously, been universally considered as one of the most inalienable semantic attributes of the individual. By now, work is not evaluated in terms of what it implies for the workers, not even in terms of what they earn. Gradually, the modernization bias is led to cover and to totally circumscribe the overall social meaning of work. Labor force is not only the marketable commodity it has been for the last two centuries. It is also an integral component of the collective productive process leading to development and growth. The process of "modernizing" labor forms is consequently seen as a process which is functionally and normatively equivalent to all other forms of cultural, economic and political reforms necessary for bringing about modernizing effects.

And thus, inevitably, the social and normative content of this most elementary of human condition is undergoing a fundamental semantic

modification. Work is not seen in terms of an individual strategic option and necessity, but in terms of a deindividualized and neutral process, the normative content of which is exclusively defined by its overall maximizing effect. Henceforward, all labor forms tend to be described, analyzed and evaluated in view of their "objective" propensity to enhance collective productivity and competitiveness. Gone are the days when philosophers, from Aristotle to Hannah Arendt, would proceed to fine normative distinctions between "work" and "labor," between "*ponein*" and "*ergazesthai*." And even more outdated seem the tergiversations over the political, normative and ideological implications of waged labor. After twenty-five centuries of unending debate on the potentially liberating function of human effort and labor, history seems to have provided its sadly one-dimensional answer. There is only one kind of "good" labor: that which obeys the productively maximizing forms that are seen as congenitally equivalent to an imagined collective social optimization. Work is thus uniquely evaluated from the standpoint of its overall social efficiency. And consequently, the philosophically monstrous proposition that can accommodate all normative social statements as instrumental derivations of an overriding principle of least effort is considered as self evident. Work can no more be considered in respect to the pleasure and self-fulfillment it might engender. Nor does it make sense to speak of the social side effects of unemployment, insecurity, let alone of exploitation. Labor is uniquely seen as a neutral component of the productive process, and within this conceptual framework, its social function and utility remain determined by its overall economic effects. And conversely, the utility deriving from any kind of "real" pleasure is a synonym for the utility of leisure. Man is thus represented as an inherently performative animal: even his creativity is circumscribed by his inherent capacity to contribute to growth.

In this sense, the discursive and analytical bias imposed by modernization is inevitably expressed by means of implicit normative assumptions. Desirably modern patterns of labor are seen as "naturally" coextensive with:

(a) Total salarification of labor, i.e. total domination of dependent labor forms. In fact, this can be readily assumed to correspond to the reality imposed by capitalist social relations. In most developed countries, independent labor forms have become so marginal that they are



hardly considered as important components of the working population. Work has become tantamount to "employment," to the effect that, with the notable exception of an eternally "residual" peasantry, the labor force is seen and classified either as "employed" or as "unemployed." And to the extent that autonomous "work" forms are generally shrinking if not altogether vanishing, dependent labor can be easily considered as the only "natural" form of human toil.

(b) Growing specialization and qualification of the labor force at large. The notion of exclusive and identifying individual professions is not only descriptive; it also corresponds to an ubiquitous normative development in a world where increasing knowledge, expertise and professionalism are seen as prerequisites of enhancing productivity. And thus, to the extent that individuals are seen as agents of a specialized productive capacity, they are simultaneously bereft of their inherent "general" creative potential.

(c) The same is true in respect of the scale of productive activities. Firms should be "naturally" organized in units large enough to permit an optimal internal division of labor and tasks, and flexible enough to adapt to changing market conditions. Organization is assumed to be clearly output oriented. And consequently, all itemized and personalized labor tend to be seen as "abnormal" survivals of a pre-organizational and pre-productivist era. Even if they can, individuals should not even consider trying to cling to their socio-professional autonomy. Petty scales are as unproductive as petty ambitions.

(d) In a similar vein, the labor force is represented and defined as an impersonal, fragmented and mobile labor mass, where workers do and should stand in constant competition with each other, not as producers but as prospective job holders. Thus, labor force flexibility entailing the minimization of job security is an integral feature of a modernized system of work relations. Once more this is seen as an overall desirable characteristic of a labor market geared towards the maximization of output. The freer and less securing the labor market, the more adaptable the labor force. In this respect at least, the conception of labor relations is rapidly reverting to its 19th century prototypes.

(e) Finally, within this context, once more as was the case in early liberal conceptions, material rewards for labor are universally considered as "naturally" differentiated and hierarchized in function not only of the individual contributions of dependent workers to the maximized performative goals, but also, and mainly, of their overall effects on

collective growth. But if this is hardly new, its presumed logical and moral foundations have been radically transformed. Whereas the traditional libertarian legitimization attributed inequality of rewards to individual rights emanating from differential capacities and talents, modernizing rationality tends to center its arguments around the evident instrumental value of maximizing productivity. Social and economic inequality is mainly justified because of its performative utility. The denormalization of the rules governing labor forms is by now complete.

Even if this new modernizing representation of labor may be represented by the working class as a whole, the domination of instrumental forms is by now a universal fact that is only partially counterbalanced by the tottering provisions of the welfare state. Moreover this new universal condition is growingly being accepted as inevitable. Social representations, discursive crystallizations, normative evaluations and internalized expectations are circumscribed by these modernizing labor conditions, which are the very opposite of the liberating dreams of traditional modern utopias. This is a result of a long ideological process and incessant struggles and debates. Clearly, however, what seems to us as the "natural habitus" of human work is the product of systematic political intervention and manipulation. The free liberal labor market could never have been implemented with free and liberal methods.

Keeping this in mind, it is my contention that the main social pattern which opposes the rationalizing ambitions of Greek modernizers is the prevailing system of labor relations. Indeed, it is precisely in this respect that Greece seems to present the most spectacular deviations from the accepted norms of modernity. My main point can be succinctly summed up in the following general propositions. Up to very recently, Greece is conspicuous through the lack, or at least the relative weakness, both of the typical features of a modern system of division of labor, and of the equivalent representations of work. Indeed, widely surviving traditional forms correspond, very naturally, to "premodern" patterns of behavior, personal attitudes and strategies. Indeed, resistance towards all forms of performative labor "ethos" was and still is ubiquitous. This however, and this is the second point, does not seem to have impeded spectacular economic achievements. The overall economic performance between 1950 and 1985 was all the more remarkable in that the underlying labor structures remained

largely unmodified. This "wonderland" can be summed up to what seems to be a contradiction in terms: growth without development, or in other terms, a relative achievement of some of the ultimate aims of modernization in spite of the conspicuous lack of what is normally considered as their necessary condition. But the situation reached its limits by the middle or end of the 80's. Henceforward, the prophets have been at last proved right in their ominous predictions. The wonder pattern can not continue. The prevailing system of social relations is called upon to suffer profound transformations. And what is more, this is considered a question of utmost urgency: processes which could and did, in other countries, afford to follow slow and "peaceful" rhythms must change immediately and, if possible, overnight. The situation is generally represented in terms of an unprecedented temporal condensation. Inspired and invigorated by a relentlessly pressing European calendar, the propagators of modernizing cultural modernism are veritably frantic. Like T. S. Eliot's "unidentified guest," they seem to be exclaiming that "the moment of freedom was yesterday."

## 4

At this point, some quantitative data specifying the particularities of the traditional labor structure in Greece are called for. Indeed, the originality of the problem faced by Greek modernizers can not be properly appreciated other than in comparative terms. In this sense, despite the methodological difficulties inherent in all quantitative comparisons, I shall present some statistical evidence substantiating the spectacular deviation of the country's structures from all accepted "norms." For once, those who believe in the country's transhistorical uniqueness seem to be right.

A. I shall begin by asking the elementary question: who works, or, better, who appears to be working. It should be immediately underlined that the ratio of active population seems to be constantly very low, compared to all countries. (See table A.) The conclusions are inevitable. If, in relative terms, very few people appeared to participate in the labor force, an equivalently large number must be considered as non-active. But this is sociologically absurd. Given the fact that the demographic structure is not spectacularly different from other countries, it must be asked how and why a significant segment of active age population can survive – as they obviously do – consume –

Table A  
Percentage of active population  
1981

	Total	Males
<i>Greece</i>	46	69
Holland	58	78
Spain	60	86
Italy	60	81
Turkey	64	82
Germany	65	81
Japan	72	89
U.K.	74	89
U.S.A.	75	87
Sweden	83	85

*(Statistics compiled from official sources by author)*

as they certainly must – and function as full fledged citizens – as they vociferously pretend to – with no visible incomes and without appearing as unemployed, marginal or homeless. The living social tissue seems to disappear behind statistical smokescreens. Thus, if one realistically excludes the possibility of a country that, though deprived of an empire, can follow the example of Victorian England in producing an enormous stratum of rentiers, survival without official work leads to a first question mark. The fact that a significant part of labor, income and survival generating activities remains unregistered is remarkable in itself. Moreover it is doubtlessly and archetypically “unmodern:” it can be surmised that whatever the survival strategies underlying these undetectable segments, they cannot correspond to the prerequisites set by maximizing modernizers. One of the main features of modern labor patterns is that they cannot possibly be hidden away from registration and categorization. Probably even more than human beings, modern structures are growingly subjected to the control and supervision of an imaginary organizational panopticum.

B. But even amongst those who did declare themselves active, registered activities remained spectacularly deviant in respect to all modern norms. Indeed, the traditional and notoriously unproductive forms subsumed under the self-contradictory term of “self-employment” – a term which, if nothing else, is revelatory of the universal semantic bias we have already referred to – seem, in Greece, if not to

Table B  
Percentage of dependent employment  
in total non-agricultural active population

	1957	1981
<i>Greece</i>	63	65
Italy	74	77
Spain	76	79
Japan	68	78
France	81	89
Germany	86	91
U.S.A.	--	93
Canada	89	93
U.K.	93	93
Sweden	90	95

Table C  
Percentage of Salaries and Wages as a Percentage of GNP

	1977	1982
<i>Greece</i>	36	39
Spain	57	52
Japan	54	56
Germany	56	56
Italy	57	56
U.K.	61	57
U.S.A.	62	61

prevail at least to resist the onslaught of modernity. Even if one disregards the peasantry, where the incidence of self-employment is a function of various historical factors that obviously predate the problematique of modernization, it is clear that urban self-employment forms are still extremely pronounced. (See tables B & C.) The reasons for this spectacular feature of the official labor structure must be complex and multiple. For even if these forms proved to be relatively resilient, they finally succumbed to the onslaught of concentration. In most developed countries, self-employment is disappearing. But Greece seems to be the obvious exception to the rule. More than a third of its urban labor force seems to be surviving on its



own. Indeed, the real incidence of self-employment must be even greater than the apparent one: obviously the former can not include the significant part of "hidden" forms and activities that one may presume to be dominated by various forms of self-employment or family employment. It is commonly established that the reticence towards accepting stable dependent labor is still prevalent.

Very characteristically, very few among the emigrant workers who were repatriated to Greece in the 70s and 80s reintegrated into the domestic labor force as dependent wage earners. It can be concluded that the overall "resistance" of the Greek labor force to dependent forms of employment seems to be an integral feature of the labor structure. Once more, one should ask about the conditions of possibility of this feature.

C. Moreover, it should be underlined that not all forms of dependent labor are equally compatible with modernizing norms and prerequisites. And this compatibility is not a function of the formal designation of employment as "dependent," but depends on the real social incidences resulting from this dependency. In this respect, the main criterion is centered around the possibility of imposing total conformization to maximizing productivity norms. And consequently, the autonomy and security may be considered as generally counterproductive. Moreover, considering that security tends to breed autonomy, it is the former aspect that should be mainly taken into consideration. Indeed, the current recipes for enhancing productivity differ from their predecessors in that the new optimal organizational forms, calling for fluid adaptability to the market, lead to the exacerbation of structural job insecurity. In this sense, the overall modernization of the organization of labor is, among other things, tantamount to a systematic reduction of structurally secure forms of employment.

It is thus interesting to note that if Greeks seem to be generally reticent towards adopting dependent forms of labor, this overall reticence mainly concerns those particular forms that may be considered as "modern" *par excellence*. And conversely, to underline that some eminently "premodern" forms of dependent labor seem not only to be surviving but also to be thriving. In brief Greeks do not seem to scorn dependent labor forms in general, but avoid precisely those forms where formal dependency is accompanied by pronounced insecurity and heteronomy.

In this respect, three forms of formally dependent employment should be brought to attention. First, the so called family aids, mainly employed in the agricultural sector, still very important in Greece.

Table D1

	1920	1951	1969	1984
Number of industrial firms	33,000	81,000	122,000	144,000
Number of employed persons per firm	4	3	4.3	4.8

Table D2

Small firms\* as percentage of industrial firms

1975	1978	1984
93.3	93.3	93.8

(\*) Fewer than 9 persons

Table D3

Percentage of industrial workers employed in firms  
with less than 50 workers (1984)

<i>Greece</i>	62.6%
<i>Italy</i>	37.6%
<i>Germany</i>	22.0%
<i>France</i>	17.0%
<i>U.K</i>	11.0%

Second, forms of dependent labor in mini entrepreneurial units, which in most cases are family run. And third, and most important, public employment. Even if these forms seem to have few things in common, they may be seen as exemplifying, albeit in a negative way, employment structures that seem to be refractory towards a constant quest for maximizing productivity. And in this sense, their social, economic and ideological impact can be clearly distinguished from the general and productively oriented forms of labor organization.

Disregarding the particular and residual question of family aids in agriculture, which is a pure function of the survival of small family farms, it is thus important to underline that both secondary and tertiary private activities are still dominated by very small enterprises. Concentration and rationalization have evolved much more slowly than in other countries. Even in industry, where new organizational and labor forms are called for on a universal scale, Greece features a remarkable resistance of petty activities. Even if compared to Italy, which is "nearest" in this respect, Greece employs, in relative terms, twice as many industrial workers in petty units. (See table D.)

Moreover, considering that over 60% of persons working in firms employing less than 5 persons are members of the family, it is obvious that a very significant fraction among workers officially labeled as *prima facie* dependent – and an even greater one if one includes unregistered “underground” activities – is in reality if not totally independent, at least involved in a collectively organized enterprise, wherein labor relations cannot possibly be defined in purely maximizing ways. The survival of family firms is never uniquely a function of quantified profitability. Tradition, pride and probably even more so the desire to control one’s time and energy are important considerations which are invariably accounted for in strategic decisions. Like the soil, family enterprises are often the object of fetishized cults.

D. However, the most important particularity of the Greek socio-professional structure must be seen in the prevalence of public employment. The question should be considered both in quantitative and qualitative terms. Indeed, the quantitative aspect means nothing in itself, considering that some countries have even more public employees than Greece. And in any case, we dispose of no accurate figures covering the entire public sector. Indeed, we can only proceed to estimations of the order of magnitude of a heterogeneous mass of persons employed under various legal terms within the innumerable institutions and agencies of manifold formal status that are directly or indirectly controlled by the State. The half million threshold seems to have been reached in the early 80s, the estimates for the 90s being of the order of 6-700,000. Indeed, the preponderance of publicly controlled employment seems to be overwhelming, especially in big towns. (See table E.) Obviously, these numbers include persons extending from occasional manual workers to university professors. And therefore, the accuracy of the aggregate number of these naturally diversified labor forms is relevant only to the extent that all forms of public employment present a common sociological denominator. And herein lies the particular qualitative aspect of public employment. Indeed, whatever the numbers involved, and regardless of reasons, public employment in Greece is generally organized in particular ways. The pace is lax, absenteeism frequent, working hours short. Even among untenured personnel, pronounced situational security is accompanied by a minimal consumption of time and effort. Moreover, generally promoted by seniority, civil servants are not particularly motivated to maximize their output. Little energy is consumed in dependent forms

Table E  
(1983)

Percentage of active persons depending on the State:

in some Mediterranean capitals

<i>Athens</i>	39%
Lisbon	27%
Belgrade	21%
Rome	19%

in other industrial cities

<i>Thessaloniki</i>	12%
Zagreb	17%
Naples	9%
Milan	4%

that allow for individual planning of labor commitment. In consequence, even if illegal, second activities are not only objectively possible but are not even looked down on with scorn. Finally, petty corruption, which still seems to be endemic at least in lower echelons, provides ample possibilities for various fringe benefits. Clearly, within what may be seen, in Alvin Gouldner's terms, as a typical "mock-bureaucracy" it is indulgence rules that seem to generally prevail. Conspicuous incorruptibility, stern labor discipline and explicit dedication to efficiency and productivity are more often than not considered as "anti-social" behavior, and therefore strongly resisted. In this sense, the acknowledged "rights" of civil servants have developed in full contradiction to those of private wage and salary earners. Job security, relative situational autonomy and a minimum of social protection combine in circumscribing the enormous social advantages and symbolic pride attributed to most forms of public employment. Public labor relations may thus be seen as being organized within a separate social subsystem which has produced its own norms, prohibitions and patterns, and probably even more important, has engendered its proper symbolic aura.

E. In view of the above, the prevalent structure of labor forms can be seen in a new light. If officially self-employed persons still represent almost a third of the urban labor force, if moreover family firms still employ a significant part among those occupied as dependent wage and salary earners in secondary and tertiary productive units,

and if finally public employment can be seen as dominating the rest of the labor market, the real social and ideological incidence of competitive and modern labor forms is even more restricted. Indeed, it can be maintained that self-employment, family employment and state employment may be seen as sharing a fundamental common feature: for various reasons and in different ways, these forms exemplify labor forms that are not organized on the basis of externally imposed disciplinarian rules, present a certain degree of security and are therefore not geared towards the norms and criteria promulgated under the auspices of maximizing modernization. In other words, if the quintessence of the modern labor market is seen in the fluidity and structural insecurity of dependent workers, neither family employment nor public employment can be seen as compatible with these norms.

The overall ideological and behavioral incompatibility between these atypical forms of labor organization and modernization can be reflected on many levels. Symbolically, like self- and family-employment, public employment is organized along lines of hierarchies and authorities that do not insist on strong and output oriented disciplinarian performance. Furthermore, to the extent that jobs are more or less secure, that substantial fringe benefits may arise from the fact of a certain autonomy in energy and time consumption, and that therefore life strategies can be organized on more or less solid foundations, the insecurity syndrome underlying modern labor ethos can be considered as impaired and in some cases as neutralized. Within what may be seen as a universal structural tension between the need for security and the urge for advancement, individual and family strategic options have significantly more leverage space than elsewhere: self- and family-employed persons along with civil servants can freely indulge in fantasies of autonomous planning of their effort and toil.

## 5

Obviously, all these features are well known and mostly resented. However, if inefficiency, petty corruption and premodern forms of job security are universally condemned by modernizers, their social significance is much more ambivalent. Indeed, one is entitled to speculate on a number of reverse effects these same features may have had on behavioral patterns and ideological structures. The stabilization of "mock rules" may be considered as having contributed positively both



in enhancing social cohesion and homogeneity and in reducing antagonisms and frictions. If a significant fraction of the population feels relatively secure in respect to its job situation, then, even though ensured incomes may remain low, or even grossly inadequate, structural and ideological integration of workers may be facilitated.

Within this context, it is tempting to underline that up to very recently Greece seemed to be relatively immune to most of the "diseases" of western civilization. Remarkably, the country presented, and still presents, some of the lowest rates of divorce, delinquency, homelessness, drug addiction, AIDS and suicide. And though the incidence of these phenomena has been recently growing, Greece still remains much less affected by at least some of the scourges of modernity than most other countries, developed or underdeveloped. Of course, it is impossible to establish direct meaningful correlations between labor structures and socio-cultural epiphenomena. And it is equally meaningless to recur to tautological statements centered around the so called national character. Indeed, to the extent that such behavioral particularities are factually ascertainable, they must be explained through history and not in spite of it. Moreover, in general, the complexity of the overall factors leading to social disarticulation and behavioral pathology is such, that any general interpretative matrix is bound to suffer both in its reductionist assumptions and its conceptual naivety. However, even if the question of overall social causalities must be left unanswered, it is not unreasonable to speculate on the possible homology between a remarkable behavioral resistance to the generalization of impersonal instrumental rationality and the continuing low incidence of some basic symptoms of social disarticulation. The prevalence of a relative job security and the ensuing fantasies of autonomy may well be one of the most crucial factors having permitted the perpetuation of some of the premodern forms of human relations usually seen as "traditional." In all logic, reciprocity and solidarity are more apt to survive within stable social networks that are not seen as constantly menaced by the irruption of the complete and unmitigated impersonality of fundamental survival forms. And in any case, it should be underlined that the flagrant "deviance" from the norms of labor organization is accompanied by equally flagrant forms of "deviance" in respect to many of the negative incidences of labor modernization. If corruption, clientelism and personalized reciprocities constitute severe obstacles in the implementation of

modernizing reforms, these same phenomena may also be important in preserving solid networks of personalized relationships. If anything, the fact of simply imposing modernizing normative criteria on complex and relatively coherent social realities is an ambivalent conceptual and normative process. If Greeks are definitely not "noble savages," neither are modernizers the conscientious missionaries they think themselves of being. Throughout history, moral judgments of externally imposed social and cultural transformations are entangled in an insoluble normative "double bind."

## 6

Moreover, the atypical structures sketched above should be considered in their wider ideological implications. Employment outlets and opportunities are clearly reflected in the dominant forms of individual aspirations and perspectives. Thus, the relative importance of self-employment and public employment as current forms of social integration and securisation have been instrumental in defining the dominant directions of imaginary social mobility. The living example of an "open" and potentially accommodating public sector coupled with the fetishism of an imaginary socio-professional "independence" still impregnates popular dreams. In this sense, reality breeds desire as much as desire shapes reality. For long decades, the system was being reproduced as if public securisation could and should be awarded to large segments of the population. True, this pattern was inaugurated in the past century, and re-organized and strengthened during and after the civil war. The urgent necessity to stabilize and patronize a stable middle class was doubtlessly the main reason behind the rapid extension of bureaucratic mechanisms. Political patronage provided both the ideological cement for these new semi-privileged strata and the material means for their successful stabilization. However, after the establishment of the Republic in 1974, the traditional "State of the Right" was gradually transformed into a "State of the People," thus enhancing the populist statolatry that still dominates the country. Democratic alternation of party patronage resulted in a democratization of clientelist dependence. Heretofore, no one could see himself as preliminarily excluded from the *prebendial manna*. Thus, in a certain sense, eminently particularistic practices may have had aggregate universalistic effects. In some of its implications, a generalized

competition for political protection and patronage can be as “democratic” as a generalized market competition. And if it is most certainly less productive, it may also be less disarticulating and more consensual. All the more so that all social strata and classes could participate in what was seen as an open game. It is remarkable that among the offspring of the first postwar generation of peasants who did not emigrate, more than two thirds aspired, and finally managed to end up either in urban self-employment or in public employment. The dreams of individual mobility and social advancement were thus circumscribed by projects combining independent versatility with a secure public job. Both were deemed possible, and for long decades, both represented realistic options.

This explains the spectacular particularities of the Greek educational system, which was rapidly extended and democratized. It has been repeatedly underlined that the spectacular educational mobility is mainly motivated by the hope of public employment. This is particularly true of higher education, which largely functioned in view of the end product it catered to. Indeed, if the public sector generally dominated the labor market, its preponderance in educated sectors was almost complete. All through the 70s and 80s, the State, in its wider sense, seems to have employed anything between one half and two thirds of the total number of graduates. And in some branches, public employment provided literally the only professional outlet and ended up by employing over 90% among them. It is therefore natural that cutthroat competition for entering promising tertiary institutions should be immediately followed by quiescence and indifference to knowledge and scholarly excellence. An employment structure that was not founded on antagonistic competencies but on antagonistic protective networks was naturally reflected in an educational system organized on the basis of a mechanistically evolving linear progression towards uncontrolled graduation. Public employment being the ultimate aim of most educational contenders, and this aim being seen as generally achievable by means of a combination of organized patronage and realistic patience, formal educational credentials tended to be considered as an adequate passport towards eventual job security. Enrollment generally led to graduation, and thence, hopefully, to public employment, advancement by seniority and finally to pensioning. Public job security was thus tantamount to a “quasi-rent” which however was generally represented as feasible enough in order that

Table F1  
Enrollment rates in tertiary education

	1965	1985
<i>Greece</i>	9.9	25.8
Italy	11.6	26.3
France	16.8	26.8
U.K.	11.9	20.3
Germany	10.1	29.1

Table F2  
Number of graduate degrees per post-graduate degree

	(1982)
<i>Greece</i>	37.9
Turkey	10.8
France	9.2
Germany	9.1
U.K.	3.7
U.S.A.	2.4

Table F3  
Ratios of differential access to higher education:  
"most favoured"/"least favoured" social groups

	(1965)
<i>Greece</i>	1 : 7.7
Yugoslavia	1 : 9.6
Sweden	1 : 14
Italy	1 : 27
Germany	1 : 36
Spain	1 : 57
Portugal	1 : 171

all imaginations should be titillated. Most credential holders saw themselves as the perspective rent holders they were finally to become.

One can easily conclude. In its essentials, the educational system served to reproduce a social structure dominated by self employment and non antagonistic state employment. In this sense, the pivotal ideological function of education in Greece developed in ways highly

Table FA  
 Responses to Question:  
 Which of the following items would annoy you  
 "Very Much" or "Much" if abolished?  
 (1990)

	Very Much	Much	Total
<i>Social Rights</i>			
Social Security	90.6%	6.5%	97.1%
Free Education	85.5%	9.4%	94.9%
<i>Political Rights</i>			
Freedom of the Press	73.0%	14.0%	87.0%
Voting Right	71.9%	10.6%	82.5%
Political Parties	58.8%	14.8%	73.6%
Right to Strike	52.5%	16.8%	69.3%
Right to Demonstrate	36.7%	16.2%	52.9%

atypical of developed countries. If educational credentials provided the main vehicle for social mobility and job security, they also served to reproduce a general reluctance towards conforming to the productivist constraints of antagonistic private dependent employment. For most Greeks, education, and higher education in particular, was considered as an inalienable right not only in itself but also in view of the public employment it promised to lead to. The symbolical power of the social presence of education was thus enormous. Up to very recently, the list of those who succeeded to enter the university, a list running to almost a hundred thousand names, was presented on TV, while local papers swarmed with warm congratulatory announcements in honor of successful candidates. Characteristically, this was not repeated upon graduation. Getting into the system was the crucial issue, and the rest was dealt with almost automatically. It is no accident that the maintenance of the system of free public education is universally seen as the most cherished of social conquests. (See table FA) Thus, clearly, one of the most important ideological components of social consensus resided in the access to the initial political competition for public jobs. In this sense, the overall reproduction of the system may be seen as internally coherent, functionally adequate and symbolically ubiquitous.



## 7

What precedes refers to the official picture offered by the registered labor structure. But this picture is only a schematization of a reality, which is inevitably classified according to severely circumscribed and precoded categories. And in this sense, it functions as a nominal reduction of what remains by definition irreducible. Thus, the official division of labor that emerges from accepted statistical data may be doubly misleading: on the one hand, it can not possibly include all forms of lucrative activities, work and employment that escape official registration. Consequently, whatever their social importance, all underground, black, illegal or simply unregistered forms are statistically inexistent. On the other hand, all official categorizations of laboring human beings must assume that every single person can enter the overall classification scheme on the basis of an hypothetically defined labor "essence" which is taken for granted: as a working individual, one is assumed to "be" what one has once been declared to have been active in: the social fact of an ad hoc declaration is thus tantamount to an integral semantic designation of an immutable labor identity. And this designation is presumed to be both exclusive and permanent, at least until the next survey.

Even if all this is more than obvious, it can not impair the general validity of labor statistics. Indeed, both unregistered labor forms and registered activities that "cover" a "second" and presumably secondary part of individual labor activities and identities are generally considered as statistically insignificant. But their importance may become visible if, and this is the case in Greece, these anomalies seem to confirm, to modify or to exacerbate the picture emerging from conventionally designed patterns. Thus, it is revealing that if one takes account of these unregistrable parameters, the "eccentric" labor pattern which has already been brought to attention seems to appear even more spectacularly untypical of developed modernizing societies. Indeed, both underground activities and unregistered multi-activities seem to point to an even more spectacular preponderance of independent labor forms. If anything, the resistance of premodern behavioral patterns, attitudes and strategies seems to be even more pronounced.

It is indeed logical to assume that both underground activities and multiple and overlapping employment forms can only enforce the prevalence of an imaginary autonomy of labor. If the former are more

Table G  
Estimates of the underground economy  
as percentage of GNP  
(1970s)

Italy	10.0%
France	8.7%
U.S.A.	8.2%
Spain	6.0%
Japan	4.0%
Greece (1970)	20.0%
Greece (1988)	31.0%
<i>other estimates</i>	
Greece (1985)	40.0%

often than not factually organized in the context of self-centered practices or family units, the latter enhance alternative income bearing strategies within a constant individual reevaluation of the costs and benefits of expending personal time and effort. And despite the fact that such eccentric forms are, more often than not the result of circumstance and not the object of choice, their ideological implications are clear. Multi-activity may well be extenuating and insufficiently paid, but may also enhance a simulacrum of personal mobility and control. In this sense, it can be thought that the prevalence of such forms can only indicate the existence of even greater social and ideological resistance to the norms of modernizing instrumental rationality.

Very few additional words are needed in this respect. It is a notorious fact that the underground economy thrives in all economic branches. According to estimates, currently reiterated but nonetheless unreliable, the underground economy in the early 80s accounted for anything between 30-40% of the GNP. Moreover, throughout the 80s, underground activities are considered to have grown at a rate five times higher than the official rate of growth. (See table G.) In some branches, like construction, housing, education and health, unregistered activities are literally dominating. Even from the moment when the official economy started to stagnate, the underground economy was "mounting its own economic miracle." A fact that must have added not only to individual incomes, aggregate consumption and tax evasion, but also to exacerbated categorical confusions.

Table H  
Heads of agricultural exploitations  
declaring agriculture as secondary activity

1950	23.0%
1961	30.0%
1971	33.0%
1981	41.0%

The same can be said in regard to multi-activity. Notoriously extended among civil employees, second activities thrive in all branches of the economy. For obvious reasons they are seldom if ever declared, except among peasants, where at least some of the growing non agricultural labor forms can be statistically traced. (See table H.) But untraceable multi-activities are even more important than ascertainable ones. Civil servants, manual workers, students and housewives, and even members of the liberal professions indulge in a multiplicity of lucrative activities. It can be considered as given that the majority of Greek household units not only obtain income from different sources, but moreover are tempted to conceive their overall survival strategies in a versatile and eclectic spirit. The high incidence of social and educational mobility, the objective possibility to combine agricultural activities, public employment, occasional services and underground jobs within a single coherent strategy can be interpreted as a process of spectacular resistance to "class" and professional fixation. Space and time are not external vectors of preordained life stories, but are widely considered as objects of deliberate strategic manipulation. In a certain sense, collective modernizing rationality seems to run against a deeply felt historical experience that indicates that the possibility of a free and eclectic allocation of time and energy may occasionally be more profitable than clinging to the norms of specialization and qualification, especially in cases when the quasi-rent offered by State employment ensures a minimum of long-term security, all perspectives seem to open up. On the level of collective imagination, Greeks have been generally led to trust a combination of personal inventiveness, political patronage and luck. And until recently, it seems to have worked.

## 8

Let me provisionally conclude: the unusually high incidence of totally undeclared activities, urban self employment, small family firms, underground jobs, multi-activity and public employment can be combined in producing a coherent, yet highly unorthodox, pattern of labor forms and income strategies. The main question that inevitably arises concerns the fundamental organizing cellular tissue that renders the reproduction of this pattern possible, rational and desirable. It is in this respect that the central role of the family should be brought to attention. Innumerable anthropological reports have underlined the importance of the family and often of the extended family in providing the agency lying behind the coherence of individual strategies. Multi-activity, overt or covert family firms and the conservation of agrarian interests of absentee farmers are only a few among the reciprocity and solidarity patterns that have successfully resisted the onslaught of depersonalizing market relations. The concentric patterns of clan solidarity are still alive. Either in spite or because of the new challenges traditional family networks seem to have survived. Within the new technological world, ancient forms have adapted to modern contents. Premodern networks seem even to have been strengthened by inventing new collective strategies. The family has been growingly functioning as a quasi-firm, seeking optimal combinations of all opportunities emerging in the market, in the power structure and within the family itself. It is within this framework that one should interpret the prevalence of coherent self-ensuring practices that explain the spectacularly low development of both public and private insurance schemes, (See table I) the continuing resurgence of family based patronage and clientelistic networks and, most important, the widespread family based educational planning which explains the enormous contribution of private funds in the financing of education. This is clear both in Greece and abroad, where throughout the 70s and 80s the Greek student corps was, in relation to its population, by far the most important among all European countries. In brief, much more than elsewhere, the family appears to fully assume its primordial role of a closed and hopefully self-sufficient agency geared towards reciprocal support and welfare. As long as the economy was growing, family strategies seemed to be paying concerns.

Table I  
Social security transfers (a)  
and private insurance (b)  
as percentage of GNP

	(1982)		
	(a)	(b)	(a + b)
Netherlands	28.3	5.4	33.7
France	25.8	3.9	29.7
Germany	17.6	5.8	23.4
Italy	18.1	2.2	20.3
U.K.	13.9	6.3	20.2
U.S.A.	12.1	7.2	19.3
Spain	16.2	1.8	18.0
Japan	11.3	5.8	17.1
Portugal	11.7	3.0	14.7
<i>Greece</i>	11.6	1.0	12.6
South Africa	?	5.6	
Venezuela	?	2.1	
Maroco	?	1.8	
India	?	1.2	

Within this context, one is entitled to speak of the production and conservation of a number of social and semantic continua that have been generally eradicated in developed industrial nations. Within the family the distinction between agricultural and urban activities, the differentiation between dependent and independent labor, the opposition between legal, illegal and para-legal lucrative enterprises, the separation between the public and the public realm are bereft of their clear cut social meaning. Composite and versatile strategies correspond to composite and versatile world images and engender composite and versatile taxonomic systems. And thus, even more to the point, they give birth to composite, self and family centered and categorically loose identity patterns that tend to transcend the limits of local socio-professional codes. Within such a context, the internalization of the strict, puritanical norms of external discipline, other-directedness, one-mindedness and work ethos are difficult to establish. The wily and unpredictable Greek is an image labeled by the stabilized and highly diversified Eurocentric normative system



but constantly reproduced within a favorable conjuncture. The well known French phrase "tricher comme un grec," meaning "cheating like a Greek," implies that the preordained and highly classified rules of survival that should be implicitly followed, is still conspicuously absent. Indeed, the culture of guilt has not yet managed to impose itself upon a culture still run by shame. Both market ethos and work ethos are rational only to the extent that they seem to facilitate individual strategies. And consequently, the notions of consistency and honesty suppose a perfect liberal market: then the agents are set to play the game in view of a continuing series of successive shots or ploys within a given arena where the roles of players are supposed to implicitly remain identifiable and nominally stable. This is precisely the modern condition adulated by modernizers. But there are also other ways, where despite the prevalence of cheating and free riders, social costs can be less repellent. Or so it might have seemed, up to now.

## 9

All these features are typically premodern. They do not enhance productivity on a large scale, they are synonymous with disjointed and short term ventures, they encourage self-centered and undisciplined behavior, and they are far from leading to a dynamic transformation of behavioral structures and organizational reforms. Economic actors are induced to one shot games within which free riding activities are obviously rewarding. It is a typical case where individual rationality seems to run against all collective projects of overall rationalization. And within the framework of generally accepted wisdom, it should have immediately led to catastrophe. And yet, it worked.

In spite of predictions and to the dismay of the growing cohorts of modernizers, Greece developed dramatically between the 50s and the middle 80s. Per capita consumption went on growing at rapid rates (see table J) and within a single generation the country was literally transformed into a mass consumer society. (See table K.) And this took place despite the conservation of a premodern division of labor, the insistence of traditional behavioral and normative rules and the general survival of most social features generally considered as incompatible with growth. If the reasons for this remarkable achievement are easy to establish, its long term effects are much more compli-

Table J  
Per capita growth of private consumption  
(1961-1977)  
(Constant 1975 prices)

<i>Greece</i>	142%
Spain	114%
France	98%
Italy	89%
Germany	79%
U.S.A.	65%
U.K.	34%

Table K  
Per capita annual growth of private consumption

1951-1960	4.5%
1961-1970	6.7%
1971-1980	4.4%
1981-1987	1.4%

cated. Indeed, mass emigration in the 50s and 60s provided an important security valve for relieving social pressure, while the combination of emigrant remittances, shipping and tourism provided the cash necessary both for maintaining the engine of growth and for providing new individual opportunities on a massive scale. Thus, poor, agricultural, underdeveloped and under-employed Greece was miraculously transformed into a country which, if not really prosperous, had low levels of unemployment, high consumption and growing incomes. Indeed, the importance of underground income implies that the continuing economic gap between Greece and the other European countries was even smaller than it appeared. By the end of the 80s, Greece was certainly not a poor country any more. And when democracy was reestablished, civil strife was institutionally overcome and, since the beginning of the 80s, the rudiments of a welfare state were being gradually implemented – especially a national health system – the unorthodox wonderland seemed to be advancing towards the desirable institutional solutions it had long been deprived of forty years after the end of the Second World War, Greeks were encouraged in believing in their own inimitable and indomitable future. Unconsciously, they felt that they were getting the best

of two irreconcilable worlds. Despite extended pockets of misery, especially among the minorities, the elderly and some isolated regions, the country seemed to be avoiding both the squalor of underdevelopment and the misery of development. Greeks were led to believing that they could simultaneously maintain their cultural identity, indulge in free riding individualism, ensure a growing level of uncontrolled consumption and pay only lip service to modernizing schemes they privately laughed at. The integration into the European community was generally considered as a symbolic ratification of the country's access to the club of developed countries which could be ensured without any further cost.

## 10

But it was too good to be true. Suddenly, in the middle and late 80s everything seemed to collapse. The macroeconomic factors involved, including the belated results of the oil crisis, the standstill of growth rates and the growing fiscal crisis of the State, are well known. The spectacular rise of social expenses only exacerbated a situation that was critical anyway. It is ironical to point out that in full contrast to most European countries where welfare states were built in times of rapid economic expansion, the particular political development of Greece had impeded similar ventures until it was too late: the decision to put forward a rational system of universal social protection and public welfare was taken at precisely the moment when the fiscal capacities of the public sector were beginning to crumble. Thus, within a very short period of time it became obvious that:

(a) the significant reinforcement of social costs and protection would have to be if not interrupted at least reduced,

(b) unemployment rates, which had been spectacularly low, could not be contained within sufferable limits. By now, unemployed are anything between 10 and 15% of the labor force, and constantly rising. The problems are enhanced by the immigration following the collapse of ex-socialist countries: more than 600,000, or over 10% of the domestic labor force, immigrants, legal and illegal, have been taking over a significant part of the low level underground activities.

(c) the trend towards a relative reduction of social and economic inequality which took place during the late 70s and the 80s, is being rapidly reversed. Indeed it can be surmised that the relative equalization had been largely due to reequilibrating effects of the thriving

informal activities. Thus, the first and most obvious effect of the new situation is the reappearance of misery, squalor and deprivation on a massive scale.

(d) public employment can no more be considered as a realistically accessible goal. New appointments are becoming rarer and rarer, and gradually all parties have felt obliged to refrain from liberally patronizing their real or presumed supporters. Very characteristically, the orientation of public aspirations are undergoing a change: recent surveys indicate that the general optimism in eventually securing some kind of public employment is withering away.

(e) after 40 years of uninterrupted growth in private consumption the rates are becoming negative. Wages and salaries, practically at a standstill since 1985, have started to decline, in some cases as much as by 30% in five or six years. Relative deprivation is once more a permanent source of social unrest.

(f) even the thriving underground economy seems to be suffering. The crisis situation has generally reduced opportunities and exacerbated competition from immigrants has reduced the market price of occasional manual labor.

In brief, the country seems to be facing an acute crisis in social reproduction. The illusion that the miracle could continue is rapidly fading away. The challenge of modernization seems thus to be unadjoinable, even at the expense of its numerous present and future victims. It remains to be seen whether and how reforms can be fruitfully imposed, as political and social consensus as to the overall goal hardly implies accordance as to the methods to be adopted. All the more so that the prevailing labor forms have proved to be much more humane and gratifying than those promised by even the most optimistic of modernizers. It also remains to be seen how the traditional norms of family solidarity and reciprocity will be affected within the new world of inexorably competitive individual competencies, qualifications and insecurizations. The signs are far from being auspicious: within the last five years, we have been registering enormous rises in the rates of delinquency, violence, homelessness, drug addiction and most of the side effects of modernizing austerity. Much before the country could have reached a stage of "sustained growth" it must have to face the discontents of violent modernization. The painful dilemmas between clinging to what has been the real cornerstone of modern Greek culture and obeying externally imposed instrumental

necessities have never been as present, as ominous and as inescapable. And what is more, developments are imminent. The demise of what was only an imaginary solution renders all forms of readjustment harder, and potentially even explosive.

This brings us back to our normative starting point. Indeed, whether it is rational and just to have the poor and helpless of today pay for the promotion of an idealized but hardly convincing imperative is a question that must be asked if not answered. For it is obvious that if all Greeks must become productive and efficient for their own sake, this imaginary efficiency will profit only a few among them. The oncoming bias is however inevitable. Impersonal market relations, fetishized performative maximization, cutthroat competition combined with the destruction of traditional solidarity networks and social marginalization of the unlucky, the disabled and the incompetent seem unavoidable, at least *prima facie*. The costs of modernization will be high. Demolishing ancient solidarities may be even more disrupting than elsewhere if one considers that these forms were long considered not only as compatible but even as perfectly adaptable to the prerequisites of growth. We may well be facing a mutation of a country spared the ills of both development and underdevelopment into a country where these ills may be combined, in new and original ways. One can therefore have nothing but mixed feelings when facing a process the effects of which cannot possibly be depicted as rosy. Not for the first time in Greece's long history, the situation seems desperate. One can only hope that it will nevertheless ultimately prove not to have been serious. Modernizers are as fallible as traditionalists. And sociologists tend to be even more fallible than economists. The lives and ways of historical ironies are inexhaustible.