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Greek National Identity in an Integrated Europe and a Changing
World Order.

1.

The survival of nations and nationalitarian discourses has
been considered as a anachronistic historical paradox. Yet, it is
becoming more and more obvious that national identitarian
syndromes are much more powerful and resilient than in-
stitutionalised forms of organised authority and more lasting
than economic rationalisations. This is not the place to examine
the reasons why nations are still the main if not the only topoi
where identitarian discourses are constantly produced and
reproduced. It can be taken for granted that communal identities,
cultural particularities and stereotyped features are, in
general, discursivly drystallised on the national scale. In this
sense, the problematic of "collective characters" as well as the
the issue of "collective identities" have been a product of
romantic nationalism.

However, once established, the question has acquired
autonomous connotations. Regardless of its enormous political im-
plications, the growingly global issue of "national identity" has
been instrumental in bringing about a relative homogenisation of
crystallised self images, values and symbols, within territorial
defined national States. Whether "national cultures" are direct
outcomes of evolving ethnic traditions, deliberate products of
ideological manipulation, or, rather, original blends of multiple
historical factors, it remains a fact that national cultural en-
tities constitute persistent and inescapable historical
realities.

The social effects of these cultural realities are obviously
far reaching. Indeed, it has often been pointed out that cultural

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factors can be "responsible" for the "incapacity" of many societies to conform to developmental norms. For all their ethnocentric arrogance, such statements are undoubtedly correct. However, it is certainly not cognitive difficulties that impede the generalisation of modern behavioural patterns. If people and collective entities seem refractory to Western practical and normative rationality and do not behave the way "they are supposed to", this is mainly due to cultural and normative factors pertaining to the prevalent self images that determine the current forms of identity. Indeed, national behavioural patterns are reproduced through processes of individual and collective rationalisations which belong much more to the symbolic than to the rational order. In this respect the question of national character becomes coterminous with the issue of national identity. People act in response to an internalised normative logic which not only cannot possibly change overnight, but which also provides the raison d etre for the reproduction of the national community.

This is even more true when the quest for a collective identity constitutes a major cultural issue: the fetichisation of national features seems inevitable, especially in societies where the dynamics of common destinies appear problematic. Thus if technological processes, institutional arrangements and everyday material processes are becoming more and more similar on a world scale, the beneficial effects of homogenisation are dubious. Rational individualism is perfectly compatible with the dominant productivist developmental systems. But it is less adaptable to societies where the socio-economic system seems fragile and where the past can be looked back upon as a golden age. In this sense, it is easy to understand why the processes of collective identification through common symbolic behaviours and normative crystallisations have been diverging. Identifiably particular phantasms are most apt to recur when positive collective action seems restricted.

The question is obviously not new and emerged as a necessary aspect of the legitimation of the national States. But if the process of nation building can be traced back to the 18th century or earlier, it is only in the 20th century that the "nation", consolidated as a national State, has been able to be invested with a universally valid symbolic value as the inescapable and "obvious" form of collective identity. The modern notion of a sovereign "people" demands the definition of the nation as a relatively homogeneous socio-cultural entity, where majorities can plausibly "represent" the entire social corps. In this sense, nationalism supposes an ideal community if not of interests, at least of symbolic values: nationalism could not possibly develop into an articulate massive movement without the previous edification of a sense of national identity. Both the decline of regionalism and the growingly important question of linguistic, religious or other national "minorities", are by-products of the axiomatic need for national homogenisation on a territorial defined scale.

Thus, when decolonisation and the collapse of all imperial systems led to the universalisation of the form of the national State, the question of diverging national identities acquired unheard of proportions. What in the 19th century had been the privilege of European nations was extended all around the world. Paradoxically, one of the long term results of Western domination was to universalise nationalism as a quest for allegedly homogeneous socio-cultural entities to be organised against the West. World modernisation pushed divergent, different but not necessarily self consciously particular cultures to lean upon self-centered and traditionalist ideologies. The introduction of liberal sociopolitical forms supposed the construction of solid communal foundations on a large, potentially "statist", scale. The values of sovereignty, independence and democracy could not acquire an universal status, were it not for the preliminary normative and positive status of the nation as the fundamental homogeneous social unit.

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Moreover, if it is through the creation of the national State's system that the forms of modern national antagonisms have been sealed, it is also true, though much less obvious, that intercultural ideological antagonisms have been permeated with equally binding features. Nations do not only differ between them, but they are also engaged in a constant and inescapable symbolic competition covering fields as various as the economy, the political system and cultural production. Respective rates of per capita income are supplemented by rates of literacy, per capita use of cars, television sets, or the number of medals in the Olympic Games, within a globally defined antagonism of all possible national signs. But if the enumeration of quantitative indices is doubtlessly a growingly significant technique of national valorisation, their ideological function remains ephemeral and volatile. Crystallised alterity is built on collective memory, and memory is both symbolic and selective. Thus, national identitarian features are structured as much through memory as through oblivion. Like individuals, collective entities survive by what they forget and omit.

This antagonistic conceptualisation of national "totalities" refers to the entire spectrum of valorised individual or collective practices. And, accordingly, it is bound to reflect the dominant value system. Within this context, a "normative" or "philosophical" competition between different national cultural and symbolic values and life styles is induced within a wider competition of antagonistically structured signs. The very process of construction of collective identities entails the creation of previously unsuspected forms of cultural and normative confrontation. In this sense, collective identities can not survive without the crystallisation of some kind of loaded normative "excellence", which serves to justify communal self-appreciation.

The world has thus become a symbolically integrated arena of antagonistic national states and of concomitally antagonistic national cultures or identities. Alterities, inequalities and differences between nations and between cultures have been codified by means of a new symbolic language whereby separate sociocultural entities can be valorised, partially measured and traced along a phantasmagoric international economic, political and cultural hierarchy: in this respect, the intercultural comparability of communal values, competences and performances has become an necessary ingredient of the process of edification of national identity and collective pride.

Obviously, the immediate and most visible matrix of comparability refers to differential economic and technological national "performances". International economic hierarchies are direct and measurable reflections of the all too real and tangible inequalities and imbalances. Inevitably, the dominant economistic language provides innumerable, serial organised criteria for what has become a loaded and inescapable symbolic competition of numbers and indices. But still, however exploited and poor, economic underdogs have to cling to their communal specificity. When necessary, measurable hierarchies are symbolically devalorised in order that other cultural elements might serve as foundations of communal imagery. Not surprisingly, national pride is thus often enhanced by economic or political frustration: if fetishised "numbers" appear to function as internalised menaces to established collective identities in their comparative prestige, equally idealised notions of moral, philosophical or cultural values may develop into idealised alibis. Happy and rich nations rarely need to fetishise their national cultural features otherwise than through their performative ascendancy. It is thus normal that loaded normative overtones of cultural particularities should be increasingly powerful in cases where organised communities are led to think themselves as "losers" in the competitive arena for power and goods.

Accordingly, growing international economic, political and technological integration and the universal visibility and measurability of its concomitant imbalances, have not only failed to dissipate the need to bolster national identities, but have, on the contrary, contributed to their intensification. It was probably inevitable that these "defensive" or "compensatory" forms of national identification should seek not only to recognise but to overvalorise their identitarian features. The reference points are obviously crystallised around the most important cultural vehicles reproducing identity: language, religion, tradition and history provide the main tenets for contracting national symbolic edifices. But especially in cases where the valorisation of national cultures assumes the role of a fetishised protection of a threatened community, the simple factual reproduction of cultural features is usually accompanied by a glorification of these features in deliberate contrast with all visible foreign models. Thus, the danger of "losing one's cultural identity" as a result of political and economic penetration of foreign social and ideological models is faced by means of producing and promoting the question of "antagonistic cultures" as a fundamental sociopolitical issue. And while the forms this question might assume obviously depend on the varying historical circumstances, the symbolic importance of cultural antagonism between the indigenous and the imported, the national and the alien, the traditional and the modern, the specific and the universal are common occurrences. Parochial and peripheral national cultures usually assume defensive and introspective forms.

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The questions one should ask oneself, at this point, are not only in what respect the "content" and thematic coherence of Greek national identity differ in comparison to similar national rationalisations in other countries, but also how this intangible specificity one refers to as "Greek cultural identity" is

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reproduced and modified in response to actual national preoccupations and compulsions and using "modern" ideological channels: in view of the country's painful, difficult and only moderately "successful" process of integration within the international community of developed nations, it is probably inevitable that Greek identity should have espoused the "defensive" forms proper to societies striving to restore their menaced dignity. Herein lies the first and most important aspect of modern Greek national rationalisations: indeed, the traditionalist overtones which seem to totally impregnate identitarian discourse, are in constant opposition to the inevitable influence of Western rational forms, norms and cultural patterns. The very essence of traditionalist Greekness is organised around the alleged need to safeguard an ideal cultural purity, despite the inevitable conformisation to most practical cultural norms. Attire, food, locomotion and housing, once the privileged symbolic topoi of national tradition, have been almost totally beam impregnated by western patterns.

However, the adoption of the universal practical codes has enhanced the autonomous symbolic significance of the idealised domains of self-images and self-understanding. If collective memories and symbolic patterns can be less and less derived from traditional everyday practices, customs and material activities, identity discourses shall be increasingly centred around transcendental conceptualisations. In a world of growing imposed material uniformity, tradition is crystallised around common "spiritualities", ideas, values, symbols and myths.

The quest for a new "resisting" spiritual traditionality is obviously not a Greek particularity. All traditional, primitive and menaced cultures are contaminated and falsified by the mere contact with the inevitable organisational and economic forms of Western rationalism. Oral and popular cultural forms cannot possibly survive untarnished in a universally mediatised and commercialised cultural environment. Furthermore, the social role of actual cultural actors is delimited by their functional modern-

ity. Material processes of cultural and ideological reproduction are growingly realised by professional "specialists" using the ubiquitous networks of formal education and mediatised messages. Thus, irrespective of the cultural messages' discursive and ideological "content", modern cultures can only conceive of tradition as a coherent ideological project aiming to produce or restore selectively idealised values and life patterns in a fiercely competitive cultural and ideological arena. Tradition is not propagated and rationalised by the daily material and symbolic actions of parents, elders, artisans and priests but by the specialised discourse of educators, writers, poets, artists, journalists and ideologists of all kinds who compete for recognition, following and fame in a totally mediatised cultural network. In this sense, the modern construction or "invention" of tradition is essentially discursive.

However, if all modern traditions are inevitably constructed by means of a systematic ideological incrustation of national signs, symbols, words and rituals, not all identitarian discourses attempt to build their symbolic cohesion in juxtaposition against the present universal cultural tenets. In most developed countries, collective memory freely flows into collective actuality. In this sense, tradition is conceptualised as a project extending both backwards and forwards, in ways that allow the traditionalist discourse to assume dynamic developmental forms.

In contrast, "underdeveloped" or "peripheral" traditionalist discourses often assume nostalgic forms. To the extent that a national identitarian features can not be sought by means of an idealisation of actual economic, political and cultural "performances", parochial cultures are led to the fetichisation of a traditional national cultural "uniqueness" as "something" privileged with which the nation is irrevocably, if statically, endowed. In this sense, "Hellenikotita" is not intrinsically different that "Hispanidad", "Mexicanidad", "Arabity" or "negritude". Nostalgia of a past original state is coterminous with discursive confrontation with an actuality which is iden-

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tified with alterity. It is natural that politically and economically "unsuccessful" nations should tend to blame their comparative plights not only on outright foreign intrusion and intervention but also on the side effects of "cultural imperialism", however labelled. Thus they are liable to crystallise their identities in whatever particular historical traditions they may plausibly call upon, discover or even resurrect. In brief the quest for tradition is coterminous with a more or less anachronistic "cultural resistance".

But this discursive particularity remains consciously embedded in a "symbolic of the spiritual". Unwilling and unable to oppose the current universal forms of productive and consumption activities, resistance is essentially defined on a purely ideological level. The notions of national culture and identity are accordingly "dematerialised". Thus, one of the most important features of peripheral identitarian discourses should be sought in a growingly articulate dichotomy between materiality and spirituality. In full contrast both to premodern and primitive identitarian forms where materiality and spirituality were inextricably integrated, and to modern "developed" forms where material performance and progress constitute the spearhead of nationalitarian crystallisations, the ideologisation of intangible and pure indigenous cultural particularities detached from vulgar imported materiality seem to be the common form adopted by national discourses in the modern "periphery".

4.

Nevertheless, however deliberate and ideologised, the quest for national identity can only be founded on a real, if selective, historical and cultural past. Though symbolic patterns of reproducible communal values and selfimages are constantly constructed and reconstructed, they can never be invented. The weighty edifices of collective memories can only be reshaped and reinterpreted. But the potential symbolic "material" is largely

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given in advance. In this sense, history has been extremely "kind" to modern Greece. The glorious ruins of Hellas were there for the taking, long before they could become an object of a "specialised" national cult. Indeed, few if any other nations could boast of a "possible" historic and cultural past so universally respected and idealised.

Inevitably, however, the very universality of classical heritage had its shortcomings. A common source for western spiritual inspiration, Hellas threatened to escape Greek symbolic monopoly. Indeed, the "westernisation" of classical heritage had been one of the ideological pillars of eurocentric romanticism trying to establish Europe's cultural and racist ascendancy. Within this context, nascent Greek nationalism was bound to vindicate Hellenism as their own privileged symbolic foundation. It is also natural that Greeks should have eventually felt robbed not only of the Elgin marbles but of their exclusive legitimate cultural use of antique glory as well. Neither the Mexicans nor the Turks have been obliged to insist on cultural arguments in order to recuperate what is, by unimpeachable and unchallenged historical "right" their own. Thus, at least to a point, the issue which nascent Greek nationalism had to face centred around the nations capacity to present its cultural present as the legitimate heir to hellenic glory, in ways that ensured that only Greeks should be capable of "really" and authentically representing the spirit of antiquity. Even if they would have to suffocate under the enormous symbolic weight of the "westernised" version of Hellenism, Greeks seemed to have no other choice than to proudly carry their inherited burden.

Thus, more than elsewhere, the question of continuity inevitably became an problem of crucial national importance. Throughout the 19th century the historical integrity of hellenism as an idealised continuity was a major intellectual and cultural issue: only thus could the necessary "objective" basis in the quest for an unimpeachable national identity be provided. A "dead" Hellenism was useless. Ruins had to be revivified and

reanimated in a vigorous national actuality. Consequently, hellenic essence would have to be ideologised as an uninterrupted process from the classic age down to the present. Thus, continuity appeared as a necessary ideological artefact both in order to build up further "positive" rationalisations of the collective images and to invest irredentist projects with a historical depth and aura. Indeed, the "essential continuity" argumentation was to provide Greece with a disproportional large international "audience". European romanticism had spared no efforts in order to discover and eventually resuscitate the descendants of the Hellenes. And although it became growingly difficult to identify the polis with the rabbles of oriental villages,- a fact which would eventually produce "mishellene" reactions,- it should be kept in mind that Greece largely owed her independence to an international military intervention, which was, if not motivated, at least facilitated by the everpresent european romantic cult of the Antiquity. Once again, Greece was seen and saw herself as the "geocultural" vanguard of a European civilisation fighting against the barbarians.

However, though symbolically fundamental, the antique endowment could hardly be resurrected in pure forms. Anyway a sociologically impossible venture, a process of integral cultural "hellenisation" or "rehellinisation" ex post facto, would have been totally incomprehensible for the vast majority of Greeks, embedded in a premodern culture consisting of an original melange of turkish and orthodox elements. The resurrection of the past could only take place on selective symbolic levels. The European "Urkultur" could obviously not be resurrected in its totality. It is no accident that this deliberate ideologisation should manifest itself in an increasing purification and hellenisation of the language, the only indubitable vestige of antique tradition. Revification of the "Ursprache" would have to serve as a symbolic foundation for the impossible reconstruction of "Urkultur" fantasies. But even the language purification process was a double edged cultural project. Indeed, it should be remem

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bered that if, 50 years after independence, the purified language had evolved into something increasingly closer to the attical dialect, the social effects of an imposed diglossia gradually led to the gravest Kulturkampf of modern Greek history. If the project of hellenisation of spoken and written Greek obviously reflects the overall hellenisation compulsion, it also set the outer limits for the advocates of pure unmitigated revivalism. Purifying the language as a means for "hellenising" the national culture, was a symbolic alibi for an impossible restitution of a dead culture.

Thus, it became growingly obvious that if the new Hellenism was to reach a wide national audience, it would need to integrate the Greek Orthodox cultural tradition, in its dominant living popular forms. But here again the venture was complex and double edged. Both as a temporal chain and as the foundation of a nationally defined cultural and spiritual essence, Greek continuity was of paramount importance in order that Hellas should still be and remain Greek. The "derivation" of the Greek present from the Hellenic past had to be founded by means of some kind of evolutionary rationalisation, whereby the one and only antiquity would be interpreted as leading to an equally "unique" socio-cultural present. The crystallisation of this "brotherless" cultural artefact was enhanced not only by the historic uniqueness of the Greek language and the Greek script, but also by the fact that Greeks are the only non Slavs of Orthodox faith. The "Hellenochristian" idea can thus be considered as a plausible synthetic answer to the conflicting parameters that set the limits for the new identitarian discourse.

However, the deliberate fabrication of a new cultural ideal type could only be pursued by setting its limits: if the composite edifice were to be internally coherent, symbolic ruptures with "un-greek" cultural elements were necessary. Within this context, if popular Greek culture would have to be "purified" of its obviously turkish elements, antique tenets should be saved from the corrosive impact of western universalisation. Independ-

ence, national integrity and national self respect could only be rationalised against the menace of Europe to universalise the validity of the Hellenic heritage. In a certain sense, the circumstances delimitating the quest for a Greek identity pushed towards adopting both anti-western and anti-oriental forms. But if the latter trend could be implemented by the deliberate elimination of ottoman remnants and symbols,- be it the mosques that were demolished, the coffee that was nominally hellenised until its substitution by the ubiquitous nescafe, or the landmarks which were to be rebaptised in Hellenism or Christianity,- the former would inevitably run into considerable difficulties. Everyday material, productive and consumption activities were necessarily westernised, and unlike coffee, clothes and artefacts closely followed imported patterns.

Eventually, the opposition between Greece and Europe was to develop into the main cultural issue of modern Greece: the distinction between Romioi and Hellenes reflects a profound dichotomy of the Greek identitarian discourse, a dichotomy superseding by far the "simple" opposition of tradition to modernity. Indeed, the particularity of Greece resides in the fact that both tradition and modernity can be ideally traced back to indigenous sources. If something, the scourge of an unidentified identity resides in the fact of its congenital bycephalic imaginary origins. In this respect, circumstances have led Greek identitarian discourses in an "impossible" direction. There can be no coherent national image, both forms of rationalisation being necessary and inevitable. The major price "Hellenochristian" identity discourses have had to pay for their historical antecedents, resides in their congenital incapacity to construct an internally coherent stereotype. The struggle between tradition and modernity is not reducible to an opposition between domestic an imported cultural tenets, but is seen as an inevitable function of the double "essence" of modern Hellenism.

Furthermore, the invention of a unique tradition leading to an equally unique if ambivalent present was absolutely necessary

in delimitating modern Greek modernity. And by dint of the fact that establishing the unicity of continuity was an obviously voluntarist cultural project, it became necessary to multiply its symbolic foundations. Not surprisingly, the interpretation of the notion of cultural continuity acquired overtly racist undertones. If the historical and cultural variations of what has been Greek in the past, precluded the interpretation of continuity as a self evident linearity, the uniqueness in diversity could only be axiomatically postulated. Racial purity as an explanation of the spiritual continuity within diverse cultural frameworks thus be-came an integral part of modern Greek fantasies. Even today, the name of Fallmereyer, the "mishellene" who had challenged the purity of modern -Greek's racial derivation, is anathema.

Indeed, the indubitable linguistic continuity within a given geographic frame is insufficient to counterbalance an equally in-dubitable cultural disparity. Thus, race, blood, land and climate have been idealised as supplementary vectors carrying the images and contents of a metaphysical and hypostasiated "totality". By concocting the notion of an eternal and immortal essence of Greekness, flowing through the ages despite all historical inter-ruptions and adventures, national ideologists provided the only possible foundation for a new "exclusive" modern Greek dignity. Its congenital ambivalence was seen as an asset, not a liability. The synthesis of East and West was to produce an culture refrac-tory both towards rigid and totalising forms of Western rationality and towards retrograde and superstitious forms of oriental irrationality. Greece's cultural originality and power was seen as residing in its indefinable eclectic wisdom.

It is certainly no accident that the living proof of this essentialism was, and still is provided by poets and artists who disdain argumentation and glorify insinuation. George Sepheris and Odysseus Elytis are both the most important literary symbols as well as the most articulate heralds of the eternity of this indefinable Greekness. And not surprisingly, the very non definability of this Greek essence permits it to be considered as

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an endowment only Greeks intrinsically possess, because of language, history and blood but also through even more impalpable privileges like the Aegean, the greek light or even a mysterious feeling, sensitivity, passion or sensuality which oozes from the landscape and the music in the air.

Here at least, if tautological, we can crystallise the uniqueness which permits the emergence of cultural particularities. Greek culture is untranslatable to the effect that non Greeks can only catch a glimpse of the divine essence. The deep if tolerant racism of Greeks towards those who are genetically or culturally incapable to gain access and to partake Greekness is characteristic. Hence the lure of an elusive and adaptable "authenticity", considered as a supreme cultural norm, which supposes an immutable essence which is offered by history and not conquered by cultural efforts. Hence also the self indulgence of a people who have been led to believe that, once discovered, their essence is inalienable and untransformable. Hence, finally, their proverbial adaptability to alien situations, norms and cultures one can freely accept, exploit and even submit to without losing an "identity" which is, by definition, irrational, transhistorical and given. Even if one lives, speaks, thinks and functions as a foreigner, one still suppose to be able to "feel" and to "act" as an embodiment of eternal "Greekness".

5.

This helps to explain why Greek cultural traits are presented as much less hierarchised than elsewhere. A culture based on an intangible communion of values and sensualities can not present itself as a class culture, nor can it prefentially glorify knowledge, effort, performance, achievement or labour as national values per se. Personal achievement is seen as an individual project not a normative compulsion. Thus, full participation in national cultural ideals is not considered as the product of a systematic and deliberate compliance to national

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cultural rules. Greekness is not presented as an ideal socio-cultural "project" or endeavour aiming at the development of collective national destinies, nor does it stem from the need to organise the national community in rational or moral ways. Greekness is mainly and explicitly an individual "quality" emanating not from a recognisable and conquerable system of thought or norms produced by man, but from "something" that is already there preceding and transcending him.

This notion of the individual is to be rigorously contrasted with its western liberal counterpart. The latter was formed within a global rational and normative tradition, as a result of which "individuality" was a the key to the rationality of an institutionalised collective social organisation. Hence, the emergence of a coherent normative system centred around the notions of individual "Rights" and "Duties" meticulously formulated within the putative communal social contract. Hence also, the development of "perfect markets" and "civil societies", as normative topoi of organised interactions among free individuals. Hence, the gradual crystallisation of "guilt cultures", where the individual is internally bound to submitting himself to prevalent social norms. Hence the cultural importance of individual achievement within the strict internalised limits defined by the collective organisational rationality. Hence finally the social importance of calvinist work ethics, honesty, virtue and abstract communal solidarity within a growingly depersonalised social setting.

The Greek cult of individuality has led to completely different behavioural forms. Like in almost all premodern societies, cultural traditions were centred around small group solidarity networks, largely refractory towards western rationalisation and depersonalisation. Obviously, the national identitarian discourse would have been anyway incapable of modifying the deeply embedded behavioural and normative structures. The imported cult of the individual was to adapt itself to domestic cultural realities. The idealisation of "Greekness" served only to enhance and

rationalise traditional attitudes and life styles. If nationa
"character" helps to define national identity, it is also true
that the particular forms adopted by the identitarian discourse
contribute to the crystallisation of national behavioural fea-
tures. Thus, it is natural that "Hellenochristianity" should
cover and account for traditional forms of behaviour. The
glorification of a non normative "anarchic" individualism, or
more accurately familialism or even "clanism", is only a remnant
of preliberal organisational social forms.

Much more important however is the fact that individualistic
Greekness evolved in complete opposition to any form of abstract
behavioural, institutional or organisational norms. Although the
modern vocation of Hellenism called for a precocious nominal in-
troduction of rational societal forms pertaining to Law, labour
forms, State organisation and democratic majority rule, the real
social function and significance of these forms was embedded in
traditional behavioural atavisms. Hence the persistence of per-
sonalised social relations and solidarities, the limited inter-
nalisation of abstract social norms and the limited social impor-
tance of "objective" values like honesty, virtue or civic
obedience. Hence also the reproduction of "shame" as opposed to
"guilt" forms, resulting more from a pragmatic and concrete in-
dividual strategy to achieve social distinction than from a com-
pliance to internalised legal, social and moral duties. Hence the
limited social sanctions for trespassing the limits of abstract
depesonalised "morality" as well as the marginal social sig-
nificance of socially determined specialisations and competences.
Hence finally the glorification of a peculiar Volksgeist which is
to be found in its purest form among in simple uneducated people,
who be it unwittingly, possess the wisdom and faith of their
forefathers in their capacity to achieve personal equilibria be-
tween what is socially "given" and what is to be sought after. It
is no accident that discourse does not fear contradictions and
often assumes populist and epigrammatic forms, mainly centred
around "psychic" or "spiritual" qualities refractory to both ex

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planation and analysis. And these qualities belong to th
"people", who are seen as the historic agents of eternal Greek
ness, and are free to continuously redefine their individua
rules and objectives. Thus emerge individual strategies whic
seem both "total" and freely adaptable to circumstances. Shrewd
ness in pragmatic equilibration of individual plans and needs
with the normative demands of multiple selected "referenc
groups" implies adaptability in selecting suitable normative sys-
tems. This individual normative flexibility which can freely an
selectively assimilate western patterns without bowing to them
is probably the most important aspect of modern Greek cultura
developments. Its main result is the emergence of a "civil
society" which is neither civil nor societal. It remains ar
bitrarily composed, fluid, fragmented, reversible and ultimately
normless and sanctionless.

Moreover, if only Greeks can "really" be Greek, all Greeks
are, or should be, intrinsically capable of it. This inherentl
"objectified" identitarian capacity is tendentially opposed not
to only to introspective "subjectivity" and to individual maxi-
misation within a given set of unalterable rules. It also runs
against rigid hierarchisations of knowledge, status, cultural
levels and behavioural norms, which suppose the acceptance of ar
abstract system of criteria. The very notion of "distinction", as
a codified set of differential and value loaded behavioural and
consumption signs, is incompatible with the levelling symbolic
function of authentic popular "Greekness". Hence the fact that,
as in most peripheral cultures, the national is largely iden-
tified with the popular, to the effect that class cultural dis-
tinctions are not conceived as differentiations across ar
idealised cultural continuum, but are more or less coterminous
with the difference in ones capacity to achieve a coherent in-
dividual synthesis between popular Greek and imported western
culture. Thus, "populists" claim to be able to fully assimilate
and use western products and norms, while "westernisers" continue
to lean on their popular origins. Regardless of emphasis, what i

mostly glorified and valorised is this original synthetic capacity, proper to Greeks. This is probably why the "identity" question is still an important ideological issue. Both "camps" seek to assimilate, and not to exterminate their ideological counterparts. For all its class connotations, the Kulturkampf never assumed the symbolic overtones of a class war.

Moreover, though class determined cultural differentiations are obviously inevitable within a class society, the specif development of Greek identitarian patterns have let the cultura dichotomy between authentic, popular, indigenous, national domestic and traditional tenets on the one hand, and imposed falsified, bourgeois, foreign, cosmopolitan, imported and moder values on the other, to assume purely ideological forms. While i reality the dichotomising opposition between East and West ha been reproduced on pure class lines, it seems to permeate the en tire social tissue. This is of course encouraged by the in herently levelling features of domestic cultural identity. It i however doubtless that the "problem" of cultural identity is a real and open question only among the educated ruling strata. The very ambivalence of the "Hellenochristian" identitarian discourse has masked the choice between a traditional national culture and a class culture behind the internalised ambiguity of "greekness". The Greek bourgeoisie goes on reproducing a kind of cultura schizophrenia, where themes, values and practices form an inextricable melange. The continuous reiteration of statements lik "we are both Greek and Westerners" betray much more than a conciliatory pragmatic statement of fact. Much more to the point they express a deep concern for an identity that can not possibl be pinned down because of the inevitable reproduction of the an tinomy between class and communal preoccupations, between reason and sensuality, between "attainment" and "real life".

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Inevitably, the themes around which modern Greek nationa
identity has been built have far reaching side effects on th
dominant forms of practical rationality. It has already been un
derlined that prevalent attitudes towards discipline, work an
production as well as towards institutional commitment and norm
are congruent with the dominant identitarian discourse. This i
not the place to discuss the social, economic and political fac
tors behind the continuing "underdevelopment" of the Greek socia
formation. Obviously, the problem of the Greek identity woul
have been totally different both in its overall symbolic impor
tance and in its thematology if "circumstances" had permitted
full and balanced development. However, considering the socio
economic situation as given, cultural parameters are instrumenta
in reproducing the ambivalent ideologisation of the particularis
tic and ethnocentric "Hellenochristian" Greekness.

In this respect, the contrast with other European countrie
is striking. Indeed, in most developed cultures, identities hav
been built in universalist terms. National cultures and nationa
pride are constantly produced and reproduced within the contex
of an internationally validated symbolic system, where each na
tional identity competes with its foreign counterparts in propos
ing new answers to the eternal questions. Excellence, knowledge
performance and skills are constantly sought after and validate
both in the national and international cultural arenas. In thi
sense, national culture is a value to be "conquered" by in
dividuals and groups seeking to convince of the "successful" im
plementation of their universal vocation and performance. Thenc
the hierarchised character of idealised national features, whic
are unequally distributed among nationals, and accessible b
aliens. Thence also, the capacity of these cultures to integrat
themselves around the transnational norms of "reason", "progress
and performance. Thence the analytical and argumentative forms of
the dominant discourse which if something, abhors contradiction
Thence, the internalised compulsion towards rationalising al
societal forms by means of coherent discursive constructions

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Thence, finally, the universal cultural compliance to a onedimen sional maximising productivist social model.

The particular hypostasiation of "Greekness", a notion os tensibly defying the Western postulates of discursive coherence operational reason and maximising progress and the quas metaphysical approach to identitarian themes result in a distin guishable ideological hiatus between tenets pertaining to cul tural identity and tenets referring to individual social an economic projects. Whether necessary or chosen, the internalisa tion of forms of personal participation in labour systems markets, organisational forms or economic networks is clearly no an element of communal or national valorisation. Metaphysical an censorial racial references emerge and flourish in realms of ac tivity where communion, pathos, honour, pleasure o "contradiction" are soaked and tasted, but not where rational in situtionalisation of communal or individual values is concerned Greeks think they are "Greek" when they sing, dance, dream laugh, feel, make love or fight, eventually when they are shrew and individually successful but never when they pursue one dimen sional collective rational goals. They are "Greek" by being wis or clever, but not by being operationally systematical, intel ligent or rational. They pride themselves in their aggressiv manlihood, both literally and metaphorically, in their capacit to live playing it by ear and in their indomitable will fo "freedom" from any oppression, but also from norms, respon sibilities and rationality. This is seen as their internalise "cultural advantage" in comparison both to Western "rationality and to Eastern "apathy", their cultural "uniqueness" they are ap to boast of, their vocation for enjoying life in ways aliens can not hope to understand. National continuity is rationalised i the form of an idealised blend of antique idle citizens and or thodox flexibility.

Thus western behavioural norms tend to be symbolicall relegated to a second and subsidiary level. Calvinist labou ethos, impersonal market honesty, dedication to collective ef

ficiency and performance, internalisation of societal norms ar
organisational scrupulousness have never been canonised as na
tional values or virtues. If these western norms are obvious]
not absent from the prevalent value system, their penetration ar
acceptance are systematically undermined by their ostensib]
western origin. Clearly dominant forms of Greek practical reaso
have not developed as results of the crystallised national ider
tity themes. In the long run, cultural patterns can not evolv
otherwise than very gradually, and it is obvious that present be
havioural forms have long antecedents. The traditional family ar
clan centred social organisation founded on informal reciprocit
could possibly engender a western rationalised system. However
one could reasonably speculate that while all these traditiona
patterns, in their original form, were refractory towards west
ernised norms, the overall national resistance against the mod
ernisation of practical reason must have been encouraged by th
particular forms of national identitarian pride. If a "Greek" i
especially proud of implementing his specific "Greekness", he i
not apt to experience either guilt or shame either for conformin
or for non conforming to un-Greek norms. In an apparently con
tradictory way, the eternal spiritual specificity of Greekness i
refractory to European norms only to the extent that they clai
to be universally valid. Like the Olympian Gods, Greeks are will
ing to accept or even to bow to imported or even "unknown" Gods
as long they are not threatened by totalitarian monotheism.

Thus, Greek behavioural patterns seem to differ fror
European patterns in all "regions" where individual rational ac
tivities are supposed to obey a generally accepted system of nor
mative constaints. Virtually all forms of social behaviour ar
normatively relativised and effectively supplemented b
"parallel" activities and projects of all sorts. The fundamenta
distinction between private and public is impossible to imple-
ment, the State being mainly seen as a "sphere" liable to produc
individual benefits. Institutional traditions are undermined eve
before they have been rooted. Long term planning is evaporated b

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the constant interference of short term alternatives. Eve
professional specialisation is impeded by the proliferation o
other income producing activities. In short, the proverbia
adaptability of Greeks leads them to be permanently "open" t
lucrative options inviting fundamental reorientations of thei
productive and organisational functions. Individual operationa
versatility is generally not only accepted but often venerated a
a living proof of "Greekness in action". Thus, the symboli
valorisation of being true to the Greek cultural identity help
to perpetuate behavioural patterns dating from premodern times
In a very circumspect way, the glorification of the stereotype
of national identity has contributed to reproducing the cultura
obstacles to both the benefits and the costs of modernisation.

It is by now clear why the internalised image of the free
authentic and impulsive individual can be totally opposed to th
development of an organised society of free individuals. Th
ruleless, unconstrained and relativist versatility which unde
certain circumstances, can be seen as a comparative advantage fo
individuals is obviously a comparative disadvantage for collec
tive entities. To the extent that rationality is restricted t
individual planning and is totally absent from the implementatio
of general social rules, its social presence becomes highl
selective. Rationality has become synonymous with calculate
Shrewdness, a tool to be used to promote private interests an
strategies. Thus, the question of collective efficiency and per
formance has never reached large audiences. Distrustful of al
institutional provisions, Greeks seem incapable to see the even
tual individual benefits they could have reaped from their in-
dividual commitment to collective rationalisation. If something
Greek individualism is a conscious free rider individualism
which is growingly defeating its own purposes.

7.

It remains to be seen how this identitarian discourse and its behavioural side effects might determine the forms of the country's integration within the wider European system. Obviously it is too early to detect any concrete evidence permitting to emit any kind of predictions concerning a complicated historical process which is by definition open. The widely advertised "challenge of 1992" is nothing but a rhetorical admonition reiterated by politicians in need of short term justification for any measures they might want to implement or to demand. However the problem is too serious to put aside. To a large extent, and given the inevitable universal dominance of the compulsively maximising and performative paradigm, the future of Greece will depend on the Greeks' cultural capacity to conform to western norms in ways enhancing their collective competitive position. There can be no doubt that, as things stand at the present moment, it is more than probable that the country will gradually be economically dominated by foreign capital and foreign organisational expertise. The implications of this eventual feudalisation of Greece on the internal division of labour and on the concomitant development of current rationalisations is another open question. It cannot be excluded that Greeks might forcibly adapt themselves to accepting a subsidiary role of dependent puppets essentially playing their Zorba roles before their own glorious ruins, to the tunes of the bouzouki, or if need be, of the bag pipe. A terrible perspective which would seal the fate of our national identitarian ambivalence once and for all.

The "optimistic" way out is obviously a full internalisation of the requirements of collective rationality. A growing consciousness of the country's impasse might well produce a consensus around the cultural necessity for abandoning the easy ride syndrome. But this is obviously a long term project the outcome of which depends on numerous imponderabilia.

A final scenario could be derived from the so called "decline of the West" mythology, heralded by a growing new generation of perspective Spenglers. Indeed, if Europeans tend to

abandon the traditional forms of normative collectiv
rationalities and to growingly adopt free rider behaviours
Greeks would probably thrive. In which case, of course, th
zealots of "Hellenochristianity" would be able to boast that his
tory is repeating herself in compliance to the eternal Helleni
spirit. When the Roman general Mommius conquered Greece in 14
b.c. Greeks prided themselves of the fact that, eventually, Hel
lenic civilisation was destined to conquer the barbarian in
vaders. If, almost twenty two centuries later, the Greek eclecti
behavioural model should once more prevail, we shall have to ad
mit that the world and history are ruled by metaphysics, or pos
sibly by some kind of meta-rationality.