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Identities in the Greek Diaspora

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Introduction

On the basis of their history, the Greeks can be termed a Diaspora people. The thriving trading communities they maintained on the fringes of the Ottoman Empire continued to operate after the foundation of the modern Greek state in 1830. The closing decade of the 19th century saw the beginning of labour migration from Greece to the USA, thus adding a "migrant" Diaspora to the pre-existing "historical" one. Over time the former became the larger of the two, and to this day is distributed over all continents of the globe. These two forms of Diaspora were brought to the fore following the collapse of "actually existing socialism" (the Communist bloc) and ensuing post-Cold War developments. Within the terms of this new state of affairs, the author of the present article has studied the construction of ethno-cultural identity in the Greek Diaspora over several years, and has documented the results of his research in a recent monograph entitled *Identities and Education in the Diaspora* (Damanakis 2007). Based on that study, this article is written in honour of Michael John Osborne, a great Hellenist, Philhellene and friend.

1. *The Modern Greek Diaspora*

The Modern Greek Diaspora extends in time from the Fall of Constantinople (1453) and Ottoman domination to the present day. Upon the creation of the Greek kingdom in 1830, Hellenism was divided into that within the Greek state (Greek Hellenism) and that beyond it (regional/peripheral Hellenism). According to Svoronos, as the economically more robust of the two, the latter supported the former, lending it prestige and significance.[1]

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1. Svoronos 1981: 91; see also Chasiotis 1993: 28 ff. and Tsoukalas 1977. On the Modern Greek Diaspora in the 20th century, see Clogg 1999.

Looking in greater detail, we see that between the fall of Constantinople and the foundation of the Modern Greek state, Greek merchant communities were established on the shores of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea and in the Balkans. Yet beyond trade, this period also saw the movement of Greek populations on account of persecution and repression, or the political stance adopted by Orthodox Russia. For instance, in 1768 Metropolitan Ignatios led Greeks in the Crimea to the Sea of Azov – to present-day Mariupol – and established 34 Greek villages. In addition to Ottoman repression, the decision to resettle was prompted by the privileges Catherine the Great granted to Greeks moving to the area (Photiadis 1997: 128).

With the advent of nationalism and the creation of the Turkish nation state, sizeable Greek populations moved from the south shores of the Black Sea to areas further north. It is estimated that between 1917 and 1920, over 100 000 Pontic Greeks moved to the Transcaucasus, mainly to Georgia (Kitroeff 2002b: 383). Such populations either amalgamated with existing communities or created new ones.

In contrast to the merchant communities, which gradually waned or disappeared altogether, the other Greek communities around the Black Sea and the Transcaucasus survived, despite the adverse circumstances they were to face in the 20th century. The remains of those historical communities are to be found in the present-day Greek enclaves in Southern Russia, the Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan. As a rule they are bearers of traumatic historical experiences, not only on account of original displacement from their ancestral homelands, but also due to the repression and persecution suffered mainly during the Stalinist era.

In contrast to the historical Diaspora, the *migrant Diaspora* owes its existence to the "voluntary" movement of Greek populations from the newly-founded Greek state or from outlying communities to migrant host countries such as the USA, Canada, Australia and later Germany, as well as to colonized countries such as those in Africa and to South America. This was in the terms of the more recent phenomenon known as *labour migration*, which took place over two stages from the late 1800s to the early 1970s.[2]

Labour migration in both the first period (from 1890 to 1922) and the second (over the two decades from 1952 to 1972) differs from movements seen in the

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2. A further distinct category of forcibly displaced populations consists of those political refugees displaced to Eastern bloc countries in the aftermath of the Greek Civil War in 1949; reference to them is not made in the present article.

previous periods in various respects: historical circumstances; the presence or absence of a "national centre"; causes; motivation; intentions; future orientation; and geographical dispersal. Labour migrants moved from the national centre to host countries in the western world, settled and in the initial stages established migrant communities.

The outcome of the Second World War and the ensuing Cold War combined with the disappearance of the merchant communities, ending with those in Egypt. These developments resulted in the formation of two groups: the *historical* Diaspora and the *migrant* Diaspora. The former includes those communities that arose primarily in the time of Ottoman domination, and which continued to be replenished up until the first quarter of the 20th century, and even on into the 1940s if one bears in mind that a number of political refugees were absorbed into them. The latter includes communities arising from migration, primarily after 1950.

It is worth noting here that following the collapse of "actually existing socialism", the historical Greek communities in the former Soviet Union and Albania were seen by the average Greek in Greece and the migrant Diaspora as the "long-lost" relations, poor in terms of material goods but rich in historical baggage.

On comparing the two kinds of Diaspora, one observes that the main differences between them lie in: a) the historical circumstances leading to the movement and settlement of Greek populations in the various host countries; b) the causes and aims behind their removal; c) their situation and organization in the host countries; d) their relationship with Greece; e) their collective memory; f) the formation of identity resulting from the above.

2. Construction and manifestation of ethno-cultural identity (Greekness) in the Modern Greek Diaspora.

2.1 CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

In the case of the Greek Diaspora, the term *ethno-cultural identity* refers to that part of identity linked to or composed of synchronic and diachronic features relating to the Greek language, culture, manners and customs, institutions and traditions - the term *Greekness* is used as its synonym. The term *ethnicity* is also similarly synonymous, though used in a general sense rather than limited to Greekness.

Ethno-cultural identity is a part or dimension of cultural identity, which in turn is a component part of *social identity*. The latter is broader in scope, covering

all socio-cultural, economic, political and other features relating to the country of residence, community and country of origin internalized by the individual. What this means is that ethno-cultural identity alone is not sufficient for individuals and groups in the Diaspora to forge cultural identity, let alone social identity. The first component of the term ethno-cultural identity refers to ethnic descent consisting on the one hand of distinct, demonstrable synchronic traits such as language, history, tradition, manners and customs, and on the other of diachronic, symbolic traits differentiating it from other ethnic identities.

The term identity is to be understood and discussed on both the individual and collective level. *Collective identity* refers to the sum total of cultural traits on which the sense of "belonging" to group or community rests, containing a value system that guarantees group unity. On the other hand, *individuality* is one of the main features of modern society. Individuality means that each individual has the potential, and at least theoretically the opportunity, to participate as an individual in social development (Wieviorka 2003: 163 ff.). The individual is not of course limited to individual acts, but also participates in collective ones. This means that there is a link between *collective identity* and *individuality*, and that the one does not preclude the other.

In contrast to individuality, which is a feature typifying every individual in modern society, *subjectivity* is directly linked to each individual's personal or subjective perception, and to subjective perception of the self and the world. Though collective identity provides the framework for the process of "subjectivisation", the subject is formed through the projection of difference from others. What this means is that "subjectivity is an existential, integral part of difference" (Wieviorka 2003: 168). And if we accept that *ethno-cultural identity* as defined above marks out the difference of those bearing it, then it is clear that ethno-cultural identity is linked to *subjectivity*.

Collective identity is a prerequisite for the formation of subjectivity. Yet on the other hand, subjects must have the potential to differentiate themselves from collective identity and distance themselves from it. In short, subjects must have the *potential to choose*; subjectivity must be dialogical (Zima 2000). *Dialogical subjectivity* means that "the individual subject appears as a dialogical and open unity, which on the one hand lives through dissimilarity, and on the other is threatened by it" (Zima 2000: 376). The subject is a constantly "changing semantic-narrative and dialogical unity, nourished by preoccupation with the Other, with what is foreign." (Zima 2000: 88).

"Memories" have an important role to play in identity formation, particularly

in the case of individual and collective "memory"; more than being a mere store of memories, this is a dynamic and developing selective function. In other words, it retains those elements of the past that have present meaning for the group. Though individual memory may be based on *experiential memories*, it may also rest on *loaned* ones, i.e. on historical memories pre-existing the subject and on the oral tradition concerned (Halbwachs 1967: 34 ff.).

Particularly among Diasporas in which the language of origin is no longer cultivated in writing, memory is directly related to "orality". In many cases, what was above defined as Greekness is constructed within the terms of everyday, family oral communication, which may not necessarily have Greek as its code. The means used to transmit the contents making up ethno-cultural identity is not as crucial as the contents themselves. A further factor of crucial importance is whether the means of transmission is the written or spoken word; while the written word may admit of interpretations, it is difficult to alter or corrupt. On the other hand, the spoken word allows plenty of room for alteration, addition, omission, idealization and distillation of the contents into symbols, as well as for adaptation of those contents to suit the needs of the present. Orality would appear to play a decisive role in the formation of "symbolic ethnicity", which we now move on to, based on G. Mary Waters' 1990 study *"Ethnic Options. Choosing Identities in America"*.

Waters uses the term *symbolic ethnicity* to describe the symbolic relationship developed by an individual of particular ethnic descent and tradition, and the selective adoption of certain features from that descent. In particular, Waters argues that the choice or non-choice of symbolic ethnicity is optional. The freedom and charm of symbolic ethnicity lies in the fact that it is not linked to personal commitments and obligations. Its content and meaning and the cultural practices of the individual are symbolic in nature and influence neither his or her life nor, above all, integration into the society lived in. On the other hand, the contents of symbolic ethnicity are the product of a subjective, selective process. As Waters stresses: "You can choose those aspects of being Irish that appeal you and discard those that do not" (1990: 115).

In the sense of *political identity*, American identity is common to all American citizens, linking them to social and political institutions. Symbolic ethnicity complements American identity, lending its bearers distinctiveness and individuality and serving to *complement* and *enrich*. It is for this reason that it should exist as an option for every American. "The choice to have a symbolic ethnicity is an attractive and widespread one despite its lack of demonstrable content, because having a symbolic ethnicity combines individuality with feelings both of commu-

nity and conformity through an exercise of personal choice" (Waters 1990: 151).

Free choice of ethnicity and positive recognition of it by the social environment is of course a privilege enjoyed on the whole by the American middle classes, which was the subject of Waters' study. It thus remains to be seen whether the above views are transferable and applicable to other societies and social groups, particularly as regards the Greek communities surrounding the Black Sea and in the Transcaucasus.

2.2 MULTIPLE IDENTITIES

When studying the Greek Diaspora, one rapidly comes to realize that it encompasses a wide range of biographies and that different manifestations of Greekness exist. On the descriptive level, the following types of biography can be sketched out as indicative:

a) A third generation school pupil from a mixed marriage lives in a small town in the western United States where there are few Greeks, thus offering him minimal opportunities to learn Greek. Though the home language is not Greek, the father is conscious of his descent and wants his son to be taught the language that he neglected so as to integrate into the American system, so he takes his English-speaking son to the Saturday Greek School in the neighboring town.

b) Another pupil of the same age is at the opposite extreme: he lives in New York, and both of his parents are Greece-born Greeks who migrated to America in their youth. The pupil attends a Greek Day School and regularly mixes with peers of Greek descent etc.

c) Even greater disparities are encountered on moving to a different host country, such as to one of the so called "Greek villages" near Mariupol in the Ukraine. People of Greek descent have been living there for over two centuries, but they speak Tatar and were completely cut off from Greece or anything Greek or Christian for lengthy periods. Lastly, one could cite the case of Turkic-speaking Greeks in the villages of Tsalka in Georgia.

d) On the other hand, in Germany there are pupils who were born in Greece, attended Primary School in Greece for some years and now, as "new arrivals", attend a Greek-only school in one of the

big cities in Germany (e.g. in Düsseldorf), where well-organised, Greece-oriented communities exist.[3]

The above descriptions enable us to argue that each of the above pupils has his or her own Diaspora (migrant) biography and cultural identity, which differs significantly from the others. In other words, we can see that it is heterogeneity rather than homogeneity that typifies the socio-cultural identity of Greeks in the Diaspora.

2.3 MANIFESTATIONS OF GREEKNESS IN THE DIASPORA

On investigating the socialization of individuals of Greek descent in the Diaspora, and more particularly their ethno-cultural identity or Greekness, one can easily conclude that many different manifestations of Greekness are encountered. These operate between two poles or extremes.

In the first case, Greekness is not merely oriented around Greece-based cultural norms, but is very close to the manifestation of Greekness encountered in Greece, in the sense that it displays synchronic, demonstrable traits such as language, religion, history, institutions, traditions, manners and customs – though lying outside Greece, it is a Greece-centred Greekness. This manifestation is mainly encountered among the migrant Diaspora, above all in Europe. This non-Greece based and yet intensely Greece-centred Greekness is most especially encountered in Germany, where the operation of Greek-only schools has led to the growth of "parallel communities" that are almost entirely cut off from the host society.[4]

At the opposite extreme lies another manifestation of Greekness, which simply emerges as a conviction or belief in descent: an ideological construct or sentimental link with all things Greek, unaccompanied by any pragmatic features. This manifestation, which is mainly encountered among the historical Diaspora, but may also be found in those migrant Diasporas with a long history, can be termed "symbolic Greekness".

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3. Greek-only Schools are those funded and supervised by the Greek state, applying Greece-based curricula and using the textbooks that correspond to them. Graduates of such schools enter Greek universities via special examinations, which is why some parents prefer them.

4. On the "parallel communities" phenomenon and its role in education, politics and socialization, see Damanakis 2003 and 2007.

In contrast to non-Greece based, Greece-centred Greekness, symbolic ethnicity manifests itself as loyalty to descent, a cluster of convictions and sentimental baggage. It is an ideological construct and myth, unaccompanied by any pragmatic features, or at best by some cultural or linguistic fragments of Greek origin, i.e. a "cultural minimum" on which symbolic Greekness is based and acquires content.

It goes without saying that intermediate manifestations of Greekness are interspersed between the above extremes. To elucidate these two poles of Greekness (the Greece-centred version on the one hand, and the symbolic one on the other), we shall now cite a few examples from the migrant and historical Diasporas.

2.3.1 GREECE-CENTRED GREEKNESS

A classic example of Greece-oriented and in many cases Greece-centred Greekness is provided by the Greeks living in central and north European states, above all in Germany. Their orientation to Greece and close ties with the country are enhanced both by geographical distance and by Greece's participation in the European Union. The opportunity that Greeks in Europe have to function simultaneously as Greeks and European citizens enables them both theoretically and practically to orientate themselves to Greece and refer directly to it. This dual orientation and accompanying dual identity does not present any problem as long as it is not coupled with isolation and marginalization. Quite on the contrary: dual identity is consistent with the European Union precept to achieve "unity through diversity", whereby unity refers to the political dimension, and diversity to the cultural one. Yet in its most extreme manifestation, this orientation ends up being ethnocentric and contradictory, as illustrated by Greek-only schools in Germany and the "parallel communities and networks growing up around them" (see Damanakis 2003).

The Greek members of the communities formed around Greek-only schools in Germany link Greekness to specific pragmatic features, such as: Greek passports; use and cultivation of the Greek language, close ties with Greece – which, in turn, attends to the needs of its citizens abroad; loyalty to tradition; and repatriation. In its most extreme form, this view regards the Greek communities in Germany as an extension of Greece, or as its "suburbs".

The above reasoning on Greekness amounts to "utilization" of "ethno-cultural difference" aiming at safeguarding specific interests and achieving specific aims.

2.3.2 SYMBOLIC GREEKNESS – THE "CULTURAL MINIMUM"

In contrast to Greece-centred Greekness, the symbolic manifestation based on the *cultural minimum* (or cultural residue) consists mainly of diachronic, symbolic elements. This is encountered above all in the historical Diaspora and in host countries with a long history of Greek migration. A number of examples will be cited so as to elucidate this form of Greekness.

On 26 May 1996 a sizeable Greek mission including the author visited one of the so-called "Greek villages" of Mariupol, where approximately 70% of the inhabitants are of Greek descent. These people are the descendents of Tatar-speaking populations who moved from the Crimea to the Ukraine in 1768, to the area around present-day Mariupol. The village's inhabitants accorded members of the mission an enthusiastic welcome; the "president" was so emotional that he was twice forced to interrupt his Russian-language address, breaking into tears and constantly referring to the members of mission as his brothers. The question thus arises as to how, after 200 years removed from the Greek language and at times without religion, a population can feel it is Greek. Why do these people want to be Greek, and why do they regard Greece-based Greeks as their brothers?

A cursory reading of the above example leads to the conclusion that the element most dominant among members of the group is their self-definition as Greeks, which is mainly legitimized by their faith in common Greek cultural descent.

On the basis of existing studies and his own personal experience, Vakalios has attempted to analyze the Greekness of Greek populations in the Soviet Union. Taking the "Pontic Greeks" as his example, he has recourse to history, historical memory, symbols and symbolisms, as well as to synchronic elements making up their cultural identity. One of Vakalios' main findings is that the Greek language "does not serve as a necessary condition of ethnic identity" and that those not speaking Greek are no less Greek (Vakalios 1997: 147).

"Their conscience is Greek, at least in the sense that they feel they are Greeks. They have an internal link to Greece or to what they feel Greece to be. These people can communicate with each other while feeling Greek, using the Russian language as their means of communication" (ibid.: 148). An important role in the formation of Pontic Greek cultural identity was also played by isolation from contemporary Greece, the persecution they suffered chiefly in the Stalinist era and their "historical cultural memory" as handed on mainly within the family environment (ibid.: 152).

In the case of the Greeks in the former Soviet Union, we consider that "collective memory" combined with actual living conditions played an important role in the formation of cultural identity in the past, and to some extent continues to do so even today. It should be stressed that collective historical memory is "traumatic", in the sense that Greek populations living in the countries surrounding the Black Sea and in the Transcaucasus over the past 250 years and more were as a rule victims of Ottoman persecution. They are thus bearers of traumatic historical experience, which they attribute to particular ethnic "Others". Similarly traumatic are the experiences from the Stalinist era, in which persecuted ethnic groups were in effect forced to acknowledge their ethno-cultural distinctiveness (on this, see Kessidis 1996, Photiadis 1990, 1997 and 1999, Chasiotis 1993 and 1997).

The view that synchronic features such as language are not necessary in the construction of symbolic ethnicity is confirmed by observations, experiences and research carried out among pupils of Greek descent in the Diaspora. For example, in comparative qualitative research involving 10 pupils from Germany, 10 from the USA and 10 from Georgia, Papalexopoulou (2004) established the following with regard to pragmatic, synchronic / demonstrable and diachronic / symbolic features of identity among young people, according to their own self-image and statements:

In contrast to the pupils from Germany, who had a sufficient command of Greek and regarded it as an integral feature of Greekness, those from Georgia typically had a very poor command of the language and did not regard it as a necessary condition of their Greekness. "I can't speak Greek, but that doesn't matter... no musician can play every single instrument, but that doesn't mean he isn't a good musician" (Papalexopoulou 2004: 126 ff.). Another student argued in an even more ingenious way, saying that "my grandmother, for example, knows Ancient Greek because she likes the Ancient Greeks... but she isn't an Ancient Greek... she's a Pontic Greek" (ibid.: 127).

The pupils from the USA lie somewhere between the above two extremes. Though they regard the Greek language as an important element of their identity, they do not see it as the sole decisive feature. "The Greek language is important to us Greeks, but it's not the only thing that makes us Greek. There are many more important things in our culture," as another member of the sample from the USA argued (Papalexopoulou 2004: 135).

The fact that some individuals do not regard language as an integral part of their ethno-cultural identity does not of course means that it is genuinely not a

component part of identity. On the contrary, for, as J. J. Smolicz argues, the Greeks are among those ethnic groups that see language as belonging to the core values of their cultural identity (on Smolicz's views, see Smolicz 1981 and Secombe & Zajda 1999). The fact that some individuals deny this nonetheless can be attributed to their attempt to manage their identity.

With regard to the historical/cultural dimension, Papalexopoulou (2004: 136) found that: "First and foremost, it should be stressed that in all three groups of pupils, it was established that Greekness rests on a narrative discourse on the past, in which depth of historical knowledge does not appear to play a decisive role in determining historical references." Particularly in the case of students of Greek descent from Georgia, history is not so much linked to the cognitive as to the affective dimension. Historical references are selective and are more of the psychological than of the cognitive order.

From the time of Stalin, mainly from 1937 onwards, up until the early 1990s - and for a variety of reasons even up to the present day - emerging generations of Greeks in the former Soviet Union did or do not have the opportunity to learn the Greek language, history and culture. It is thus plain that the maintenance of ethnocultural identity was secured – to the extent that it was secured – within the family and ethnic community via an *oral tradition*, in many cases in a language other than Greek. As the spoken word rather than recorded history, collective memory has served as the main factor in the acculturation of younger generations. And as mentioned above, collective memory acts selectively, so as to give the group a sense of continuity, and so that the elements selected lend meaning to the present and reinforce group self-feeling and self-respect.

In contrast to the communities in the Greek merchant Diaspora, those in the historical Diaspora on the shores of the Black Sea and in the Transcaucasus acted as *oral communities* with regard to the Greek language and culture. Oral communities (as far as the Greek language is concerned) are also encountered in the migrant Diaspora. And since the spoken word affords greater leeway than the written word for filtering out, alteration and the distillation of collective memory and the meanings of the past into symbols and symbolisms, we believe that *symbolic ethnicity* rests mainly on *orality*. In this sense, one could speak of the *orality of identity*.

In the case in hand, by *orality* we mean the continuous narration of the past by incorporating the narrative into group everyday life. In this manner, orality serves a dual function: on the one hand it serves as *a vehicle for tradition* and on the other, in linking up with everyday experiences of the younger generation (as

experienced orality), it serves to socialize that generation and mould identity, even if the contents of the narrative are made up of minimal cultural fragments, myths, constructs, symbols and symbolism: in short, by what we have termed the *cultural minimum*. In this sense, everyday, collective narration, even if myth-making, has real results as regards socialization, which constitute a *cultural minimum* and are expressed on the individual level as *symbolic ethnicity*.

And since as a rule a *linguistic minimum* is inherent in the *cultural minimum* – even if only in the form of isolated Greek words or phrases also transmitted and preserved via orality – there is a relationship between *orality* and Greek *language* in the Diaspora (on this relationship, see Damanakis 2007: section 12.1.2).

As for the *functions* of *ethno-cultural identity*, particularly in the case of Greek populations living by the Black Sea, we believe that on account of traumatic collective historical memory and repression, at least in some periods, ethno-cultural identity acted more to *compensate* than to *enrich*, i.e. the *compensatory function* of symbolic ethnicity. By *compensatory function* we mean the restoration of internal, psychological equilibrium.

In the form of the family or community, the group maintains its own distinct cultural particularity mainly via *oral tradition*, and in doing so achieves a dual aim: intra-group cohesion and the development of mechanisms capable of dealing with repression. In such cases, choice of ethnicity does not result from free choice, as Waters argues, but rather is to a greater or lesser extent imposed by external factors. Ethno-cultural difference is utilized, serving to counterbalance as a defence mechanism in a hostile socio-cultural environment. What this means is that symbolic ethnicity differs from its counterpart in the USA, where, according to Waters, it *complements* and *enriches* individual identity. If we accept that Waters' views are also applicable to populations of Greek descent in America, then we can argue that while in America one can speak of *the enrichment function of ethno-cultural identity*, in the case of the former Soviet Union one should speak more of its *compensatory function*.

2.4 ASPECTS AND FUNCTIONS OF ETHNICITY

To summarize, extend and generalize our analysis thus far as regards the formation of ethnicity in the Diaspora – in situations where individuals move between two or more cultures – we can argue or at least surmise the following: according to existing literature in the west, the choice of ethnicity in a multicultural environ-

ment is optional in nature, but is influenced by a range of factors both beyond the individual and endogenous to him or her, and above all by the subject's motivations and intentionality.

On the other hand, *ethnicity* may be composed either of pragmatic and symbolic features, or merely of symbolic ones. Nevertheless, in both cases it plays a significant role in group and individual self-definition, self-positioning, the molding of self-perception and self-sentiment, and in that sense does not only result from the process of socialization, but in turn plays a role in it.

In "western" literature, what is highlighted is the *optional, enriching function* of ethnic identity. Yet from our analysis, relating mainly to populations of Greek descent in the Black Sea area and the Transcaucasus, it emerged that depending on circumstances, ethnicity may perform a *compensatory function*, thus contributing to the restoration of psychological equilibrium on the individual or group level.

It would appear that in conditions where the individual or group enjoys freedom, equality, acceptance and recognition, and *social mobility* is not influenced by ethnic descent, *ethnicity adds* and *enriches*. This view is lent further support by the results of an investigation, concerning identity and academic and professional development among middle class individuals of Greek descent who hold academic qualifications in Montreal, Canada (Georgiou 2008). In contrast, under conditions of repression, persecution, discrimination and *social exclusion*, *ethnicity* appears to act as a *defense mechanism* serving to *compensate* the above.

Bearing in mind that in one and the same society there may be periods of repression, discrimination and marginalization, as well as periods of acceptance, recognition and social mobility vis-à-vis individuals whose ethnic descent differs from that of the mainstream group, the same individual or ethnic group may experience both the *compensatory* and *enriching* functions of ethnicity. Furthermore, depending on their social status, individuals in the same community may regard their ethnicity either as a feature enriching their identity or as a counterbalance and defence mechanism against repressive policies. And there may also be individuals or discrete groups which *utilize* their ethnicity either to achieve specific aims, or to confront the cultural identity of the mainstream group.

Although no linear relationship holds between the function of ethnicity and integration into the host society or withdrawal and entrenchment in the ethnic community, it would appear that the *enriching function* is commensurate with successful integration into the host society, whereas the *compensatory function* corresponds to entrenchment, marginalization and insistence on tradition. Evi-

dence as to the parallel existence of the *enriching*, *compensatory* and *utilitarian* functions of ethnicity can be drawn from the example of the Greeks in Germany. The Greeks in America also appear to provide fertile ground for studying the functions of ethnicity in the Diaspora. As is well known, there have been periods of discrimination, racism and repression in American history, even though it was a migrant host country and American society is the product of successive waves of migration. Particularly in the first three decades of the 20th century, migrants including Greeks experienced a period of intense discrimination, spearheaded by the activities of the Ku Klux Klan. At that particular juncture, Greek migrants reacted by founding two Pan-American organizations. The first of these was AHEPA (the American-Hellenic Progressive Association), founded in 1922 with the aim of "fostering and promoting pure, unadulterated Americanism among the Greeks of the United States" and encouraging the acquisition of American citizenship (Kitroeff 2002b: 375). In contrast, the second organization, GAPA (the Greek-American Progressive Association), was founded a year later and "placed greater emphasis on the need to maintain Greek heritage", though it did not disagree with naturalization (ibid.: 376). By means of these developments, the majority of Greeks remaining in America acquired a Greek-American dual identity, though we do not know what identity return migrants to Greece bore.

According to Kitroeff, in the 1990s a variety of different trends was observable with regard to the cultural identity of people of Greek descent in the USA. On the one hand, the first generation tends to continue to orient itself towards Greece as the core, and on the other there are "differing versions of the cultural minimum among American-born Greeks. Belief in Greek descent as experienced by embracing Ancient Greek heritage, Orthodoxy or issues of national importance to Greece, with or without maintenance of the Greek language, constitute the sum total of expressions of the cultural minimum in the case of Hellenism in the USA." (Kitroeff 2004: 94).

Manifestations of Greekness encompassed by the concept of the *cultural minimum* and the *symbolic ethnicity* resting upon it may in some cases focus on Ancient Greek culture, in others on Greek Orthodoxy and in others on Orthodoxy alone. In the final instance there is an observable tendency for the word "Greek" to be removed from the title "Greek Orthodox Community" (Kitroeff 2004: 92).

With regard to the Greeks in America, we can close by noting that whereas in the 1920s invocation of ethnic descent "was a reaction by second generation migrants against the general assimilatory climate" (Kitroeff 2004: 92), i.e. working

more in the direction of *compensation*, in the 1990s ethnicity functioned more in terms of *enrichment*. This finding lends further weight to the view expressed above that the *compensatory function* of ethnicity tallies with repression, discrimination and marginalization, whereas *enrichment* goes with successful integration into the host society and social ascent within it.

In bringing our analysis to a close, it is worth making one observation on the relationship between *ethnicity* and *assimilation*. All three functions of ethnicity (*enriching*, *compensatory* and *utilitarian*) point to the maintenance of a series of pragmatic or symbolic features that differentiate the bearer of any given ethnicity from ethno-cultural Others. This means that bearers of symbolic ethnicity have not assimilated into the mainstream group in the sense of losing their identity to the Other, but only in the sense that they have adopted *collective identity* and *individualism*, with the parallel development of *subjectivity*. In other words, such subjects have integrated into the economic, political, cultural and social system and do not differentiate themselves from other members of society in those respects. On the level of their cultural system, however, they maintain or cultivate collective memory, oral tradition and the distinctive cultural traits of their group, which differentiate them from ethno-cultural others.

Thus in this sense, the *cultural minimum* and *symbolic ethnicity* resting upon them are of dual significance: on the one hand they signify the subject's *distancing*, but not *estrangement*, from the cultural tradition of his or her own group, and on the other *integration*, but not *assimilation*, into the cultural system of the mainstream group.

On the basis of the above we can argue that cultural assimilation is the most composite aspect of any attempt at assimilation, since it amounts to loss of the self to the other, and annihilation of subjectivity, which activates defense mechanisms within the individual.

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