"We" and the "others" as anthropological dimension and the modern idea of "national belonging". Concluding thoughts

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«Εμείς» και οι «Άλλοι» ως ανθρωπολογική διάσταση και η σύγχρονη ιδέα του εθνικού ανήκειν. Συμπερασματικές Σκέψεις

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ABSTRACT

The main goal of this essay is to examine the concept of nation as the identity phenomenon par excellence in forming the image of oneself and, consequently, the image of the "other". Hence, I will explore the political stake raised by this phenomenon in as much as it is at the origins of the emergence of a project for a cultural polysemy of collective identities with regards to the former monoculturalism and the emerging doctrine of multiculturalism.

KEY WORDS: Anthropological dimensions, national belonging, others.

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Βασικός σκοπός αυτού του άρθρου είναι να ερευνήσει την έννοια του έθνους ως κατ' εξοχήν φαινομένου ταύτισης στην δημιουργία της εικόνας του εαυτού και επομένως και στην εικόνα του «άλλου». Γίνεται αναφορά στον πολιτικό λόγο που προσπαθεί να αναλύσει αυτό το φαινόμενο τόσο γενικά όσο και ειδικότερα στην σύγχρονη εποχή και ως θεμέλιο μιας πολιτιστικής πολυσημίας συλλογικών ταυτοτήτων (σε αντίθεση με παλιότερες μονοπολιτισμικές εκφράσεις).

ΛΕΞΕΙΣ-ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ: Ανθρωπολογική διάσταση, εθνικό ανήκειν, "οι άλλοι".

1. The idea of "nation" and its meanings in modernity

The concept of nation defines the cultural community upon the foundation of which societies politically organize themselves as States. From this perspective, for the "nation" to exist, the following are necessary:

(a) the cultural fact, a sense of belonging to a community whose members share the same values and sense they have a parental relationship (ethnicity); and (b) the political project, the will of the cultural community to coagulate itself, in terms of freedom, into an autonomous political entity, as the State. The main school of thought teaches us today that the nation represents a previously unseen phenomenon, a phenomenon invented/built by the modern State, and not an original social phenomenon.

These two assumptions of modernity are wrong because the idea of belonging is a social phenomenon inherent for the anthropocentric societies, namely for the free people who recognize themselves through their own autonomous identity. One could even argue that as a historical phenomenon, the "nation" appears in the Hellenic era of the city-states. So then, it should be noted that the concept of the "other" is to great depths different both in anthropocentric and despotic societies. In despotic cosmos the (collective) identity refers to the affiliation to a third, owner or holder of autocratic power. This means that the "nation" (in the sense of belonging) is neither a modern phenomenon, nor a specific construction of the modern State.

In this sense, in modern times the nation has emerged within anthropocentric cells that were developed under the despotic/absolutist State, in a deep relationship with the Hellenic literature. Compared to the nation at a small scale, the nation at a large scale of "anthropocentric cosmosystem" is profoundly different. Hellenism, that embodied the "anthropocentric cosmosystem" at a small-scale, built its collective (and political) identity on the fundamental society of the city-state or, later, on the cosmopolis. On the opposite, because the modern world, has been founded on a large scale, the modern idea of nation has served as a collective project for the foundation of the society of the State.

This difference for the national political project is fundamental in terms of the image of the construction of the other and, at the same time, for the relationship to be established between the cultural community and freedom. In the ancient Greek world, at national level, it is the other who is in charge with the global political project. In the statocentric phase the national freedom of Greeks goes through the freedom of the city-states, and later, within the ecumenical phase, through the freedom of both the city- states and the metropolis located within the cosmopolis. For the moderns the political project of the nation was assumed by the unitary State and, more precisely, by the political power of the State. In modernity the argument of nation was used, in the first instance, to remove the old regime and to deliver the political sovereignty to the legal personality of the State. In the second instance, it was used so that the doctrine of cultural homogeneity put a stop to other cultural communities to formulate their own political project. And, finally, it was used to dispose of the old regime and restore the unity of society in terms of anthropocentric parameters. It can be "translated" as the doctrine: "one State, one nation, one language" etc. As political liberalism and socialism are required to impose cultural uniformity, the monoculturalism calls for social culture. The "other" is considered as an enemy of the nation and, basically, of the unitary State. Hence, in the best conditions the "other" is submitted to a cultural minority status, if it is not erased on behalf of the "national purity".

This political option can be explained by the fact that, starting with Europe, the transition from despotism to anthropocentrism considered as a priority the creation of a collective identity built on freedom, as well as the elementary anthropocentric presupposition, the individual freedom. Both the national and individual freedoms are, of course, compatible with a political system embodied in the State, or identified by this one, as in the old regime. In fact, in the nation State that succeeded the absolutist regime the relation between the social and the political levels does not change its nature, the society being limited outside the system, in the private space. Thus the nation, considered as a construction of the State, has served as an argument for the property of the State on the system in order to legitimize its political sovereignty upon the society. Outside of an asserted awareness, the will of the society is far away from being the purpose of politics; but, this is the nation of the State, a distinct or even opposed to the society concept. Henceforth, the nation of the State allows the holders of the State / system to define its will by proclaim-

ing itself both mandatory and mandate/principal and representative. However, the ideological development of the concepts (as for example the vote, the citizenship, the alternation of parties in power, the liberty) or the supremacy of adjectives over the concepts (i.e. the so called direct or indirect, participatory and non- participatory democracy) allowed the categorization of an elective monarchy system with an oligarchic basis in the typology of democratic systems.

Arguing that the modern political system is both democratic and representative, provided that the two systems are incompatible with each other and that, in any case, the modern political system is none of the above, is as talking about a miracle. However, this assertion is not without consequences, first of all because it teaches that the modern world has no alternative choice except authoritarian system, and its future is present time. Therefore, it escapes to the consideration of moderns that as part of this system, the global society, including any individual who could be considered as a citizen, takes the place of the "other" vis-à-vis to the holder of the economic and political system. They are excluded from the political system, with which the relationship, under the tutelage of the State, is one of affiliation and not of a partnership. The difference between the citizen of the state and the citizen of political system is only typological.

The above remarks show that the question of the "other" is more synthetic than it is usually thought. The fact that modernity considered the other in terms of his uniqueness, prevents, in reality, the awareness of the proto- anthropocentric nature of his biology.

2. How "exclusion" has become an essential topic of modern thought

Our approach on the notion of the other exudes from the cosmo-systemic epistemology, from a cosmosystemic restoration of cosmohistory, which is based on its own nature, the freedom. A freedom that is defined as autonomy, related to individual, social and political levels. I emphasize this specification, because modernity, with the exception of individual liberty, defines social and political freedom in terms of "rights". However, "rights" define the area of individual freedom, where one is not free, that is to say autonomous. It happens in this way in the modern socio-economic and political space where the system belongs to a "third" as an autonomous power.

Having the right to protest by demonstration or strike proves that the other is excluded from the economic and political system, he does not participate in the decision-making process, and, finally, he is not free/autonomous. Unawareness of this phenomenon shows that the system of values of our time prefers a socio-economic and political system that limits the social "other" to the situation of a simple minority. Thus, in the present state, collective / national freedom stands against the "other" national and, at the same time, it does not accept that the nation is a plural phenomenon, composed of several groups / identities. At the same time, it ignores the issue of the responsibility of the nation raised by political freedom Just the opposite, the concept of plural nation, such as the responsibility of the nation, refers to another type of State: in a politically plural State and beyond to a disconnection of the political system to the legal personality of the State. From the unitary State we get to the plural/polysemous state, from the State / system we get to a State / servant of the society, which henceforth embodies the political system. This new perspective of the nation and state ends by removing the status of the minority / the excluded

"other". Hence, the "other" cultural group becomes a political partner, while the social / people accessing to the political category of the society of citizens, and the individual citizen acquires partnership status in the political system.

In the past the nation of the State served as a given sense of progress, but it has already become a valuable argument to prevent the enlargement of the social and political space of freedom. We have even gone so far as to prevent (Hobsbawm among others) the opponents of the sovereignty of the State over society (namely the State's one-dimensional property of the political system) that their questioning will lead to the disappearance of the nation. It is clear that the possibility of a transition from the nation of the State to the nation of society terrifies (even the oligarchic intelligentsia).

We have considered the problem of the "other" as part of the fundamental society of the modern State, not being influenced by external factors. Nevertheless, the developments of the last decades, as basis of transition to a later stage in proto-anthropocentrism, determined new phenomena, that have profoundly changed the internal framework of the States. We refer to the emancipation of some parameters, such as the economy and communication vis-à-vis the State, and to their profound effects in advanced societies and in the Third World. The State knew the weakening of its external sovereignty and, as a consequence, its connection with the political purpose of the society. From now on, the purpose of the State is primarily oriented towards the interests of the markets, the nation being considered as a potential provider in terms of cohesion of society against the power. Similarly, to the internal "other" joins the external "other", the emigrant, who claims a place in the common house of the national citizen.

The decision concerning the status reserved to the newcomers is related to some questions that we need to answer. First of all we need to search for the solution to the social problem not on the spot –in the original national framework – but by studying the relocation in the host country. This phenomenon completely overturns the certainties on which the traditional ideologies were based. Thus the substitution of the class struggle by a project of Christian philanthropy gradually deserved the interest of the market proponents to relieve the social tensions from the countries of origin. At the same time, the presence of the "other" (of the foreigner) puts the citizen in a multileveled uncomfortable position regarding the cultural cohesion, the working citizen, the framework of law and welfare, the redistribution of resources, the citizenship and even the connection between the political forces and the purpose of the State.

However, the remaining question is whether the economic migrants and citizens meet at the level of "metoikos" that transforms work in a simple commodity. There is an issue, amongst others, that shows that the actual approach is not able to answer to the new challenges. And by that I mean that modern approaches are unable to foresee a new balance between the social, economic and political levels depending on many significant factors, associated with the break with the static way of our times.

It is not a coincidence that the market forces stand against the cohesion of a social body based on the nation, emphasizing the idea of the old regime that makes it depend on its belonging to the state. They accuse the majority – namely the society of citizens – and especially freedom, of being an enemy that is opposed to the rights of minority / of the "other". We advance the so-called constitutional patriotism which, however, is identified with the State that exercises any perspective of a participation of society in the decision-making system.

This argument that boasts multiculturalism against the former monoculturalism hides a truth and a project: the truth is that it is power that mobilizes all coercive arsenals against the

excluded, including the society, on behalf of the nation of the State. The project belongs to the existent oligarchy that attempts to molecularize the society of citizens – its cultural foundations – in order to prevent it to redirect its values, to claim the sharing of the political system with the State. Because, on final analysis, the transition of the "other" from the status of minority to the status of autonomous "other" requires an establishment in the system in terms of partnership. This is the promise of transition of the political system from the current monarchical oligarchy to representation and, in the long term, to democracy. And, prior to that, it is the promise of transition from the nation of the State to the nation of society.

3. Conclusion

The concept of nation of society recommends the approach of collective identities as a phenomenon that expresses the conscience of society, and, on the other side, as a culturally polysemous phenomenon in the sense that it consists of various cultural subgroups. In spite of this, this plural nation asks for its own capability to accommodate the different, in a political framework going from the State as a unitary political system to a plural State.

This quality of the nation, which expresses the consciousness of a plural society, could not be satisfied either by the project of political/constitutional patriotism, or by the project of multiculturalism. The latter risks to lead to an explosion of the social, and as a consequence, of the State. The first has an incomplete character, being fed by several special factors (socio-economic and others), and, in the end, there is not a system that involves the unanimity. Now we can make the choice between the parliamentarian oligarchic system and its authoritarian deviation. In the future, citizens might have more choices between the various forms of representation or of democracy. Nonetheless, the system (socio-economic and political) determines the status of the social, its members included. This is a fundamental element that is able to induce the individual or a group to leave the country or to oppose to its followers. It weighs heavily with the consciousness of the society, but it cannot substitute it.

We consider that our generation, facing its deadlocks, will be quickly brought to choose between a state of many nations or societies (the society of citizens, the society of work, etc.), where the majority of its members will be submitted to the status of "metoikos", and the state of cultural polysemy of the collective identities in a politically plural State, which responsibility will belong in part (representation) or in all (democratic) to the society of citizens.

All things considered, the issue of the status of the "other" which opposes to the polysemy of the national, understood as a social phenomenon (a consciousness of society), to monoculturalism or multiculturalism, replies to the "biology" of the social and to an evolutionary typology which is inherent to the "anthropocentric cosmosystem". It answers both to the question of social cohesion and to the request of the "other" to be accepted in a plural political framework based on freedom and not on the rights of the excluded. It places itself, ultimately, in the perspective of a restoration of balance, which once again will transform the society into the purpose of the State policy.

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