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Iosipos Moisioudax, John Locke and the post-European enlightenment quest for modernity in Greece

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Iosipos Moisioudax (c.1725 - 1800) a highly controversial figure was the first eighteenth-century Greco-Bulgarian-Romanian intellectual in the Balkans to voice the ideas of the enlightenment in public forums, justifying his efforts with philosophical theorizing and using many of the ideas of John Locke. He made various wide-ranging pronouncements in favour of cultural change leading to Greek modernity which could only come about through a reformed education process. Like many other contemporary figures, Moisioudax naturally assimilated into the Hellenism that had permeated throughout the Balkan region. He was of the opinion that education was the basis of both individual and social reform and favoured the independence of rationalist secular education, which emphasized a striving for virtue in a process of lifelong learning. He expressed the idea that knowledge was the means by which virtue could be attained. As Moisioudax's contemporaries in Greece were the heirs of the founders of Western civilization, they were in essence Europeans and as such should be in tune with the European enlightenment. The aim of this paper, which is a literature review meta-analysis, is two-fold: firstly, to examine the role played by Iosipos Moisioudax, in education and nation-building in Greece and secondly to explain his ideas for cultural change in Greece. In essence, what did Moisioudax advocate and to what extent did he echo the sentiments of John Locke, and ultimately, what were the results of his efforts?

Key words: Modernity, enlightenment, education, culture.

INTRODUCTION

The Greeks, in an attempt to bring modernity to their country so that it would be in line with the enlightenment in Europe, engaged with culture and education as means of attaining revival. As they had lived in servitude under the Ottoman Turks for four hundred years, the Greeks were ill-prepared to face the myriad of challenges arising from the emerging nation states of Western Europe. Greece was part of the Ottoman Empire from about 1354 until its declaration of independence in 1821. Generally speaking, most Greeks of the period were ignorant on educational matters and somewhat complacent about how to educate their children. There was no sound philosophy which could provide direction for Greek education in terms of either social or personal improvement. There was no assimilation of modern knowledge and no development of needed intellectual skills in Greece and this was antithetical to what was occurring in most of Europe. In such a landscape, the attitude and view of the Greek Orthodox Church, which was to a large extent, and today remains essentially an ethno-religious institution,

came to dominate Greek life and assumed omnipotence in Greek society? The Church helped Greeks from all over Greece to conserve their ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and racial heritage while Greece languished in serfdom under the Ottoman Empire. There were a few privileged and educated Greeks in the Ottoman Empire during 17th and 18th centuries. As the Ottoman Empire became more established it began to understand that it was relatively backward in especially educational issues in relation to the European powers who were thriving in modernity. Consequently, the Ottomans began to recruit Greeks whom they believed had the requisite administrative and technical skills which were sorely needed. Greeks thus gradually began assume important offices within the Ottoman state. An example of such a group of Greeks was the 'Phanariots'. This was a class of wealthy merchants who resided in the Phanar district of Constantinople, and who became highly influential. Their business ventures into Western Europe had brought them into direct contact with the highly advanced notions

of liberalism and nationalism. The Phanariots were however a minority and could not adequately influence a Greek enlightenment that was desperately needed. However, once scholars began to come into contact with the ideas on culture, education and philosophy, as espoused in the modern cities of Western Europe, it became clear to them that Greece was inferior from especially an intellectual standpoint. Greece also lagged behind socio-economically and politically. Her education system was out of tune with modernity and hence outmoded. Greece was in urgent need of a revamp both educationally and philosophically. Her enlightenment occurred between the 1770s and 1820s but the comparisons drawn between Greece and Western Europe showed the inferiority of the former and aroused resentment in Greece against reformers such as Moisioudax (Kitromilides, 1983).

For any polemic to develop against any singular train of thought on the issues at hand was very difficult especially because the paradigms of transformation and cultural integration in Greece which were usually dependent on consensus, did not make provision for domestic resistance. Greece had to be rebuilt intellectually but failed. Culture was the arena in which the struggle for modernity would be undertaken. To put it succinctly, "culture constituted identity (language, customs, myths and symbols) as well as the mechanism for constituting that identity (interpretation, imagination, fiction, poetry and language)" (Greenfield, 1992).

Numerous intellectual elites of the Greek enlightenment such as Moisioudax, Voulgaris and Korydaleus, endeavoured to take hold of education and refine language in an attempt to redefine identity and bring about modernity along Western European lines and as such gave great emphasis to culture. The intellectual played a vital role as Greece was a very late developer, culturally speaking. The intellectuals, one of whom was Moisioudax, were supported by the Greek Phanariot merchants of the diaspora who lived in the main areas in which Balkan Enlightenment was taking place (Camariano-Cioran, 1974).

Referring to German culture being late in developing, Madame de Stael the French writer and literary critic who had a cosmopolitan outlook and interesting theories about the distinct cultures of North and South Europe, wrote: "A literature that develops later than that of neighboring nations is at a real disadvantage; for the imitation of already existing literatures often takes the place of national genius." (de Stael, 1959). The anxiety of the Greeks coupled with their general distrust of Europe, borne out of ignorance, and their general social and cultural primordiality flung them into reassessing their culture and drove them inexorably towards reconstruction as they began to critically evaluate their situation in an enlightened Europe. As the enlightenment spread into the Balkans, there was a surge in critical thinking and a spirit of secularization began to flourish. Consequently, tradition was not simply followed blindly anymore and the Orthodox

Orthodox Church hold on society was loosened somewhat. Moisioudax and others such as Adamantios Koraïs urged the Greeks to embrace Western enlightened reason. Only by doing this could they be worthily called Hellenes and do justice to their heritage and future existence as enlightened people.

ENTER MOISIODAX

Moisioudax, a Vlach, was born in 1725 in Cernavoda in Northern Bulgaria (considered to be Romanian in certain circles), but assimilated Greek culture and language. He was a product of the science based culture of the eighteenth century and was all too aware of Greece's educational backwardness in a Europe that was culturally, socially and politically far ahead of Greece. It is not surprising that Greeks lagged behind in the surge to modernity and that her people had very limited knowledge of Western societies before the 1750s as very few books pertaining to developments in Europe, for example, had been translated into Greek. He interpreted Greek or Hellenism as something based on language, culture and religion and these were the criteria by which a person of the Orthodox faith was considered to be Greek. He believed that Greeks had to orient themselves towards two disparate ideas, namely, their proud classical heritage and the newly emerged modernity as demonstrated by most of the rest of Europe (Kitromilides, 1992). Unfortunately for Moisioudax, Greece was primordially attached to and profoundly influenced by the Orthodox 'Weltanschauung' (world-view), which pervaded Hellenic society and this made his task very difficult. Greece was highly intolerant to 'alien' Western ideas and profoundly introverted. Moisioudax saw great value for Greece in modern science and philosophy and stated that only someone who had never traveled to Europe could ignore the immense practical benefits of Newtonian philosophy on Europe (Apologia, 24). Thoughts on culture and language permeate the entire philosophical corpus of Moisioudax and his main contribution was in his clear definition two spheres of influence which had emerged for Greeks, namely the modern Europe in which they found themselves and the Greece of antiquity. He believed that the Hellenes had to direct themselves towards their ancient heritage and the emerging modernity which was a product of the enlightenment (Kitromilides, 1992). He believed that two major problems existed within Greek Orthodox culture that hampered Greece's progress on the path to modern enlightenment. On the one hand, knowledge of classical Greek texts was fragmentary, due to the fact that the texts were unavailable to most; on the other hand, the ancient Greeks were respected without questioning them in any sense. To solve this problem, Moisioudax promoted the enlightenment of the West as in his mind, only this could provide the needed new knowledge for Greece. His main value lay in his stressing of pragmatism and in his strong

support for the promotion of the natural side of philosophy. He advocated a new science and a new theory on knowledge. This new knowledge would exclude Aristotelian logic per se, and make space for modern science, and especially for their vital tool, mathematics. Moisioudax thus believed that the study of all philosophy should begin with the study of mathematics. He attacked certain educators who promoted the Neohellenic Enlightenment in 1780 in his book *Apology*. One such educator was Eugenios Voulgaris who promoted mathematics (Iosepos Moisioudax, *Apology* 1 Vienna, 1780). He said that Eugenios gave too much attention to providing a variety of proofs for various theorems and felt that these should be supplemented with "corollaries which were all very well in themselves but mostly far beyond the powers we possessed at the time (Vienna, 1780, p. 16). Unlike these educators, Moisioudax stressed the importance of mathematics and philosophy and called for a simple Greek style. However, while at the University of Padua and later as head of the Greek school in Iasi, he encountered considerable resistance to his educational programs and methodology, predominantly by the very conservative Greeks in the community (Henderson, 1970). His primary philosophical concerns were epistemological in character and he viewed Locke as the role-model worthy of emulation, in the quest to promote Greek education, and vehemently contended that Greek education operated within an outdated reality based on archaic ideas. Indeed, for Moisioudax as it was also for Schopenhauer the German philosopher, the world as perceived by the intellect, is moulded culturally, linguistically and educationally according to its usefulness in bringing about necessary change.

THE ROLE OF LOCKE IN MOISIODAX'S PHILOSOPHY

The English philosopher John Locke (c.1632 - 1704, examined the scope and nature of human understanding and developed a theory of knowledge which focused in its entirety on an investigation of the source of ideas in human experience and how thoughts are processed. He was very dissatisfied with the Mediaeval Aristotelian philosophy which he taught at Oxford and his ideas greatly influenced the development of the British empiricist tradition. Moisioudax based much of his ideas on the philosophy of John Locke who he viewed as an appropriate role-model. Locke said that the mind of mediaeval man was preoccupied with religious and mystical thoughts and that man in general, should rather concern themselves with practical and empirical things. Moisioudax, an Orthodox adherent, similarly viewed the role of the Orthodox Churches as too controlling in terms of human liberty and wanted people to think more practically about their lives free from the control of others. This is not to suggest that neither Moisioudax nor Locke were against Christianity. Locke believed in God and

accepted the cosmological argument, viz., God as a first cause. The fact that people actually existed proved to Locke that God existed. Only an all-powerful creator could have been responsible for the existence of man whose very existence was in any case an intuitive fact. Locke wanted people to study the world and not simply think about it and was not interested in those who merely converse with only one sort of man and read only one sort of book and do not dare to venture out into the great sea of available knowledge. Locke was concerned with mainly knowledge and liberty and had interesting ideas concerning education: "Good and evil, reward and punishment, are the only motives to a rational creature: these are the spur and reins whereby all mankind are set on work, and guided" (Some thoughts concerning education, 1693, sec. 54). Moisioudax, echoing these sentiments, also wanted the Greeks to seek the knowledge of the enlightenment so that they could be truly free, but felt they could not achieve this unless they were able to read about modern ideas in a simple way and intelligible to all language.

For Locke the word "idea" referred to the contents of consciousness or human perceptions, thoughts or memories (Stray, 1991), and was quite distinct from the context in which Plato had placed it. Locke classified the sciences into natural philosophy which analyses the intellectual world, the material world and practical philosophy, including logic (Pansegrouw, 1994). Moisioudax believed that before learning and teaching material could be made available in Greece for classroom instruction, it first needed to epitomize what was happening in the rest of Western Europe so that the Neo-Hellenic enlightenment could be on a more solid or tried-and-tested foundation. The Greeks found themselves, according to Moisioudax, in a pitiful state because of their general ignorance and contempt for modern thinkers whom they distrusted. They also neglected to give serious attention and thought to the ancients who were wise. Moisioudax was thus a reformer who was well versed about the on-goings in both European and Greek education. In 1761 he published *Moral Philosophy*, translated from the Italian by Iosepos Moisioudax, Deacon (Legrand XVIII, 1762). In this work, Moisioudax made use of the work of Muratori entitled 'La filosofia morale esposta e proposta a I giovani' (Verona, 1765) (Legrand XVIII, 1762, p. 22). Moisioudax was of the opinion that Muratori was accessible and easy for everyone to understand and also because he philosophizes. Moisioudax believed that schools were increasing in number especially those teaching the humanities mathematics and humanities. The number of teachers was increasing and it was up to them to restore to Greece the nobility of classical antiquity. The Hellenism of the time was ignorant due to its complacency and Greeks were their own worst enemy as they prevented themselves from providing suitable educational establishments. It may be deduced especially from the apology that Moisioudax was a radical thinker who 'sought the root of

the tree of all knowledge' (Kriaras, 1954), which he believed was to be found in a 'sound philosophy'. The sound philosophy which he sought was humanistic in nature and rejected all rationalist assumptions and he strove to seek the origin of all ideas. He also sought to analyze the function of the intellect and its effect in knowledge construction based on human experience. Locke stated that: "The only fence against the world is a thorough knowledge of it" (Some Thoughts Concerning Education, sec. 88.). Moisioudax was likewise convinced that people needed to learn as much as possible and by investigating the nature of things with the objective of attaining true happiness, believed that they would be able to advance themselves. Moisioudax wanted his 'sound philosophy' to have five main parts in terms of disciplines, these included ethics, mathematics, critical logic, metaphysics and physics (Henderson, 1970). He believed that mathematics was more important for a sound education than logic and accused Aristotle or putting mathematics into a lesser value for human development. To Moisioudax, Physics encompassed astronomy, meteorology, zoology and even oceanography. As he had been a monk, he divided his metaphysics into theology, pneumatology, cosmology and ontology. He focused especially on pneumatology - the study of the Holy Spirit. Ultimately to him good philosophy was one in which mathematics played a prominent part and in which ethics could regulate human life and improve individuals, socially and personally. Ethics was important to him in that it comforts individuals against the power that could be metered out by jealousy and fear. Knowledge is ultimately a liberating force when linked to knowledge of theology. Like Locke, he called for critical logic to pervade all learning and was adamant that without it education would be futile (Aldridge, 1994). People should be aware of truth and untruth and use their senses to validate their methods of identifying and interpreting Holy Books (Henderson, 1970). It is clear from his apology and later a treatise on the education of the youth, or pedagogy that he was a radical thinker for his time, it is also evident that much of his writings to a large extent were based on the work of John Locke particularly some thoughts concerning education which was published in 1693. Locke stressed that since the mind in its thoughts and reasoning has no immediate object but its very own ideas, it is clear that our knowledge is on conversant about these ideas (Yolton, 1998). Intuition was seen as an insight into the agreement or disagreement or ideas. Moisioudax relied heavily on Locke and often translated him verbatim, especially on ideas concerning art, teaching principles and how parents should bring up their offspring.

MOISIODAX ON THE UPBRINGING OF THE YOUTH

Moisioudax believed that servants in a household could be

a threat and negative influence morally and educationally to children. It is clear from the work of Moisioudax that the children he alludes to in his writings are the children of the nobility. To Moisioudax obedience, self-respect, a serious disposition and the mode of dress are considered important issues. Linked to these important aspects is where one sends children for education and the relationship and partnership between parents and teachers. Moisioudax went out of his way to stress the importance of lessons being made interesting and in their ability to instill respect in their scholars and especially virtue, which is clearly a Lockian conception (Brady, 2005). For Moisioudax virtue was an essential aspect of a human character that needed to be inculcated into the youth and he espoused the Lockian sentiment that "virtue is harder to be got than knowledge of the world; and, if lost in a young man, is seldom recovered" (some thoughts concerning education, sec. 64.). Children who were considered rebellious need to be dealt with in a specific manner while those who were juvenile below their ages should be made to see the error of their ways. Moisioudax expressed concern about misguided children. These children needed to see the error of their ways and be guided to truth although this would not be an easy task. Locke expressed a similar viewpoint in his essay concerning human understanding, bk. IV, ch. 7, sec. 11: "It is one thing to show a man that he is in error, and another to put him in possession of truth." Such Lockian sentiments permeated the work of Moisioudax and serve to emphasize the undeniable fact that John Locke was highly respected by Moisioudax. There are however numerous portions that appear to be purely based on the ideas of Moisioudax alone (Camariano-Cioran, 1966).

For example Moisioudax stresses that children should not attend marriage functions and other special feasts and emphasizes the importance of children eating at the same table as their parents. Moisioudax admonishes especially fathers who play cards and gamble in the presence of their children and went to great pains to warn children to be wary of flatters and corrupt people. Moisioudax also presents an in depth discussion of how grammar and essay writing should be taught to children (Kriaras, 1954).

If educational transformation was not of paramount importance, ignorance would prevail in Greece which would lead to intolerance and irrationality and ultimately a disregard for the truth. When ignorance and depravity merge with power, virtue is transformed into vice. Modern science and philosophy had to take hold in Greece and could not be ignored as the practical benefits would be immense (Moisioudax, 1780). Nations which were regarded as barbaric by the Greeks of antiquity had surpassed Greece in terms of cultural advancement (Kitromilides, 1975). This was due mainly to the undervaluation of education by the wealthy classes and their inability to see the benefits of the European enlightenment (Moisioudax, 1780).

GREEK EDUCATION AND CULTURE

By the 18th century, many nations that were considered to be barbarians by the ancient Greeks, had advanced their levels of civilization, and many even surpassed the glories of classical Greece (Kitromilides, 1983). By way of contrast, Greece was relatively backward as modern initiatives emanating from Europe were regarded with suspicion. Matters were exacerbated by a lack of books from which children could learn. For Moisiodax, education was the only means by which social and individual reforms could be brought into being. Education thus need to be rationalistic in nature and secularly situated so that a spirit of knowledge-seeking could be engendered in the youth. Greek society was in a very sad way and education was at the mercy of a scholasticism that was highly distrusting of modern developments. Essentially, education was minimized by the ruling elites, with the exception of a few Phanariots and schools did not have the necessary books (Moisiodax, 1780). Moisiodax believed that Greece was backward due to its poor general education. Greece had no choice but to make the necessary changes leading to modernity. She had no option but to imitate Europe. In any event, Europe would obligingly help Greece to recapture her glory as Europe had soared to new heights because of classical Greek ideas. Europe would be only happy to help Greece to arrive at modernity if only to repay her for bringing the light of civilization to Europe during the period of classical antiquity (Kedourie, 1970).

LANGUAGE AS A VEHICLE FOR ENLIGHTENMENT

Greece was culturally backward and needed an urgent revamp of her pedagogy in which language was an essential component. If Greek culture was to be rediscovered and further cultivated, language as a medium of instruction had to be addressed. Language thus became the centre of attention in the drive for modernity as it was essential in the creation of cultural identities and would promote reconstruction. There were however elements in society who viewed the primary aim of education as being to train priests and create Orthodox adherents who were well versed in the language of the liturgy. Consequently, according to them, education should be the preserve of the church and the only language that was required to be taught was liturgical Hellenistic Greek. Conversely, there were others in society, such as the Phanariots, who viewed the primary role of education as being to create good Hellenes and a strong educated merchant class who could study a wide variety of subjects as was the case in most post-enlightenment European countries. In 1766, Evgenios Voulgaris published a book entitled 'Logic'. This book marks the turning point of the Greek enlightenment which gave birth to the Greek language controversy. The

language one used in Greece would determine the extent to which people were true Hellenes. This provoked vigorous debate as Voulgaris believed that if one was to study philosophy it was vital to know ancient Greek. He stated that he was opposed to vulgar language such as that espoused by Moisiodax who was a pupil of his. For Moisiodax, 'the simple style' was necessary. He believed that the more simply an idea is set out, the more lucid it becomes. Furthermore, if simply articulated and set out, ideas are more likely to be comprehended by all, even the uneducated in society. It was equally important for him that one should write about things in a simplistic everyday common language. Language had become the focal point of debates during the enlightenment and it was central in education as it allowed for the formation of cultural identity. The strong emphasis on language tended to highlight the idea that the only way culture could be reconstructed was by the development of language. Sadly, Moisiodax and Voulgaris his ex-teacher became embroiled in the debate which became somewhat vitriolic in nature. Moisiodax defended his stance on the language issue and promoted the use of Modern Greek because it was only in this way that knowledge could be imparted to the masses. The restoring of ancient language had to be secondary as subject matter had to be simple if it was to be comprehensible (Moisiodax: Theory of geography, X). It therefore had to be in everyday common language.

Moisiodax stated thus: "Three principal reasons have led me to prefer the simple style to the Hellenic (that is, to any restoration of the ancient language). The first is that the more simply a subject matter is set out, the more is it made clear. The second is that a subject matter, when set out simply, becomes comprehensible even to those who have had no contact with "letters". The third is that it would be a very good thing for Greeks themselves to write about the sciences or about anything else and to do so by employing their everyday, common language" (Kedourie, 1970).

Scholars had to prove that Modern Greek could and should be the channel for all education, literature, and even state development. Traditionalists were opposed to the idea of bringing the vernacular into the education equation as they felt Greek heritage would take a back seat should this happen. A Modern Greek language, understood by all, would become a vital tool in teaching, literature, and eventually the Greek state. The choice for Greeks was either archaic Attic Greek, the vernacular (demotic) or katharevousa which was a combination of both (Alexiou, 1982). Language was a critical factor as culture is interpreted in language and this could and would be the vehicle through which the nation could be regenerated after four hundred years of servitude under Turkish domination. There were certain vernacularists such as Dimitrios Katartzis and Athansios Psalidas who believed that the written Greek language should be based primarily on the morphological system of the

modern language as spoken by Greeks. This should include the modern declensional and conjugational forms - and the vocabulary of spoken Greek (Mackridge, 2009). This was antithetical to the idea of Moisioudax. Although he wanted Modern Greek to dominate education, he wanted it to be based on the morphological system of Ancient Greek.

Conclusion

Greece was lagging behind in development and had to catch up with the rapidly modernizing Europe of which it was part and parcel. Moisioudax and others offered an alternative and broader conceptualization of culture for a Greece that was lagging far behind the ideas of the European enlightenment. He made numerous suggestions as to how Greek culture could be reconstructed as he was aware that Greece was culturally backward. He thus proposed the modernization of pedagogy as a way of catching up and the most important aspect to lead this revival was language which first and foremost had to be purified. The creation of schools teaching in a medium that was intelligible to children was the only way in which national autonomy could be achieved and Greece could escape its inferiority. To help Greece arrive at its desired 'enlightenment' destination of modernity, Moisioudax, who was very secular minded, borrowed certain ideas from John Locke. Sadly his efforts failed in his own lifetime. His vision of how the European enlightenment could modernize Greece nevertheless had a profound effect after his death. His modern scientific ideas, also based to an extent on those of Locke, gradually permeated Greek society and he was a highly significant pragmatic champion of the "natural side of philosophy" (Henderson, 1970) in the ideological tradition of modern Greece. The ideas proposed by Moisioudax are representative of a movement which was not in any sense unified in objectives as to how to reconstruct Greek society so as to make Greece modern. This meta-analysis suggests that because of the efforts of Moisioudax, Greek scholars sought an appropriate path, between reorganizing an older, classical Greek community and the development of an entirely modern one based to a large extent on Lockian ideas and the European models. He thus played a pivotal role in promoting the rebirth of the ethnos (nation) after a four hundred year period under Ottoman rule. Despite opposition from certain quarters, his ideas were internalized more and more by the ruling elites, and Greek society aspired to become modern and cosmopolitan while to a large extent it also remained traditional.

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