AN ENLIGHTENMENT PERSPECTIVE ON BALKAN CULTURAL PLURALISM THE REPUBLICAN VISION OF RHIGAS VELESTINLIS[1]

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Abstract: Cultural pluralism in the Balkans has often been considered as the source of conflict in the region. Against this perspective it is suggested that Enlightenment political thought in southeastern Europe, as represented by the radical republicanism of Rhigas Velestinlis (1757–98), incorporated the idea of cultural pluralism in a project for a unitary democratic state, modelled on the 'Republic of Virtue', that was expected to replace despotism and to transform its subjects into free citizens. The political culture of this state would be provided by the principles of republican Hellenism while its ethnic pluralism would be located in its civil society. It is stressed that republican Hellenism was a political and moral, not an ethnic, project. This political project however, was preempted by the emergence of cultural nationalism that cancelled the Enlightenment vision of democratic citizenship, equality and recognition for individuals as well as ethnic groups in a unitary republic.

Recent developments in the Balkans, especially since the collapse of the communist regimes in 1989–91, appear to confirm earlier stereotypes and preconceptions about the southeastern corner of the European continent as a region of extremes, endemic disorder and recurring conflict. This impression has prevailed for a long time in European literature and scholarship and forms an integral part of the 'construction' or 'invention' of the Balkans in European thought since the period of the Enlightenment.[3] The observations of western European scholars and visitors who have had first-hand experience of the Balkans have reinforced the stereotype by adding the weight of empirical evidence to it. An important representative of and contributor to the intellectual

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[1] An early version of this paper was presented as a discourse before the Royal Irish Academy on 14 May 1998. I am grateful to Professor George L. Huxley for his commentary following the presentation. Other versions of the paper were presented at seminars at Wesleyan University on 22 November 1998, at the Center for European Studies, Harvard University, on 24 November 1998, at the University of Cambridge on 3 March 1999, and at the Department of Political Science, University of Chicago, on 3 April 2002. I am grateful to Nathanael Greene of Wesleyan University, David Holton of Cambridge University and Sthathis Kalyvas of the University of Chicago for their invitations and to the participants of all these seminars for their comments, which greatly stimulated my thinking on the subject. The reports of the two anonymous *HPT* referees were much appreciated.

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[3] Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, 1994), pp. 115–22; and, more generally, Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 62–115.

process of the elaboration of the image of the Balkans in European scholarship has been the British author Edith Durham, who took flight to the Balkans 'to forget home miseries for a time'.[4] A pioneer anthropologist of the Balkans, Miss Durham propounded with her writings and collections — which now can be seen at the Pitts-River Museum in Oxford — both an appreciation of Balkan folk art and primitive valour and an understanding of Balkan history and politics as an 'opera buffa written in blood'.[5] If one thinks how persistent this view has been and to what an extent it has coloured even presentday approaches, one will appreciate the tenacity of the outlook to which Miss Durham contributed with her writings and which she seems to have confirmed with her daring forays into the wildest regions of the Balkans in Northern Albania and Montenegro more than a century ago. To a considerable extent the Western outlook on the Balkans is still shaped by her views.

This resilient outlook has tended to obscure a whole history of Balkan social thought on the problems connected with the wide heterogeneity and the extensive multiplicity of the ethnic and cultural make-up of the society of the peninsula, a diversity which has often been invoked in order to explain the dynamic of conflict and the tendency to extremism associated with the politics of the area.[6] Yet, since the late eighteenth century, intellectuals and political thinkers in southeastern Europe have devoted considerable attention to the issues posed by the exigencies of collective definition, to the conceptualization of pluralism, and to the recognition of identities in their social environment. Interest in identity, ethnicity and recognition was one of the signs of a new secular social and political theory taking shape under the impact of the Enlightenment in southeastern Europe.[7] The recognition of distinct identities, connected primarily with language, represented an early instance of the emergence of a secular outlook, differentiating the Christian ethnic groups of the

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[4] Mary Edith Durham, *Twenty Years of Balkan Tangle* (London, 1920), p. 12.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 53. Durham's serious contribution to the ethnography of the Balkans came in *Some Tribal Origins, Laws and Customs of the Balkans* (London, 1928). For an appraisal see G.W. Shanafelt, 'An English Lady in High Albania: Edith Durham and the Balkans', *East European Quarterly*, Vol. XXX (1996), pp. 283–300.

[6] Hence the origin of the term 'balkanization' and its generally pejorative uses, especially in political science and journalism.

[7] For a survey of pertinent evidence see P.M. Kitromilides, 'Imagined Communities and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans', *European History Quarterly*, 19 (1989), esp. pp. 151–9, and P.M. Kitromilides, 'Orthodox Culture and Collective Identity in the Ottoman Balkans during the Eighteenth Century', *Oriente Moderno*, XVIII, n.s. (1999), pp. 131–45. Important perspectives on the question of identity in Balkan social thought can also be found in Traian Stoianovich, 'Society and the Reason of Language', and Keith Hitchins, 'The Romanian Enlightenment in Transylvania', *Balkan Studies*, 40 (1999), pp. 57–90 and 117–28, respectively.

Balkans from the community of Orthodox Christianity, which had formed the primary ingredient of their collective personality for centuries.[8] Ethnic differentiation and recognition on the basis of cultural characteristics posed the problem of the coexistence of these groups in a common society. It was to this problem that the political thought of the Balkan Enlightenment provided some interesting and creative responses. The political problem that confronted Enlightenment thought in the Balkans in the last decade of the eighteenth century might be phrased as follows: How could the multi-level pluralism of the broader Balkan society be organized in a free modern state, which was expected to replace Ottoman rule, in order to provide the basis for peaceful coexistence among the many groups that made up the population of southeastern Europe? The most important attempt at a theoretical answer to this question was also the earliest. It was articulated in connection with the impact of Enlightenment political classicism and of the ideas of Montesquieu and Jean Jacques Rousseau on Balkan political thought in the age of the French Revolution.

The response of the political thought of the radical Enlightenment to Balkan cultural pluralism came in the writings of Rhigas Velestinlis (1757–98), a Greek patriot and revolutionary leader, whose place in the history of Balkan political ideas is indeed of critical importance: his thought marks the transition from Enlightenment cosmopolitanism, of which his ideas constitute a distinct expression, to the age of nationalism in the Balkans.[9] The symbolism of his political thought and practice is connected with the quest for and elaboration of the moral principles and the political preconditions of the coexistence of the peoples of the Balkans and the Near East under the institutions and laws

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[8] Cf. Traian Stoianovich, *Balkan Worlds. The First and Last Europe* (Armonk, NY, 1994), pp. 137–47, and P.M. Kitromilides, 'Balkan Mentality: History, Legend, Imagination', *Nations and Nationalism*, II (1996), pp. 163–91, esp. pp. 172–84.

[9] The significance of Rhigas' presence in the broader history of southeastern Europe during the 'age of revolution' has been extensively recognized in pertinent historiography, although the treatment of the subject as a rule does not converse with primary sources. See e.g.: Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution* (London, 1962), p. 104; Jacques Godechot, *La Grande Nation: L'expansion révolutionnaire de la France dans le monde, 1789–1799* (Paris, 2nd edn., 1983), pp. 170–2; and more recently Stoianovich, *Balkan Worlds*, pp. 172–3; Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, p. 165; Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *A History of the Balkans 1804–1945* (London and New York, 1999), pp. 25–6; Mark Mazower, *The Balkans: A Short History* (New York, 2000), pp. xxvi–xxvii, p. 72; and Edgar Hösch, *Geschichte der Balkanländer* (Munich, 1999), pp. 145, 167, 211. More substantive are the references to Rhigas by L.S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453* (New York, 1958), pp. 148, 15,–3, 278–9. Of special interest regarding the analysis ,of Rhigas' political ideas is a passing mention by Ariane Chebel d'Appollonia situating Rhigas quite perceptively in the transitional moment 'from European cosmopolitanism to pro-national European nationalism' (Ariane Chebel d'Appollonia, 'European Nationalism and European Union', in *The Idea of Europe*, ed. Anthony Pagden (Cambridge, 2002), p. 181).

of a free republic. His vision involved the radical constitutional reconstruction of a vast geographical space, with the overthrow of Ottoman autocracy and the establishment of institutions of governance, representation and participation on the model of the Jacobin constitution of the French Republic of 1793.[10]

This proposal came as the culmination of a programme for the cultural, moral and intellectual regeneration of his compatriots. Over almost a decade of intense activity his project involved the publication of a textbook of modern physics;[11] translations of collections of sentimental prose by Restif de la Bretonne,[12] whereby he called for the liberation of feeling from the oppression

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[10] On Rhigas' political activities and revolutionary projects two collections of documents are of seminal importance: *Documents inédits concernant Rhigas Velestinlis et ses compagnons de martyre, tirés des archives de Vienne en Autriche*, ed. Emile Legrand (Paris, 1891), and C. Amantos, *Anekdota Eggrapha peri Rhiga Velestinli* (Athens, 1930). The study of Ap. Dascalakis, *Rhigas Velestinlis, La Révolution française et les préludes de l'indépendance hellénique* (Paris, 1937), contains a useful survey of sources, pp. 205–26, and has long been the established authority for students of Rhigas who do not have access to Greek sources, but it is by now outdated by newer research. Dascalakis' study constitutes the source of Rhigas' treatment by R.R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution*, Vol. II: *The Struggle* (Princeton, 1964), pp. 173–4, 334–5, and by Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism* (New York, 1944), pp. 537–9. The study of the subject has been placed on a new basis by the research of L.I. Vranousis, whose *Rhigas* (Athens, Vasiki Vivliothiki No. 10, 1953) has been an indispensable source since its appearance. New biographical evidence from Romanian sources has been published by Nestor Comariano, 'Rigas Velestinlis: Compléments et corrections concernant sa vie et son activité', *Revue des études Sud-Est européennes*, 18 (1980), pp. 687–719, while Cornelia Papacostea-Danielopolu reexamines Rhigas' œuvre in *Literatura in limba greaca din principatele române (1774–1830)* (Bucharest, 1982), pp. 61–4, 209–20. In English there is an excellent, balanced and well informed study by C.M. Woodhouse, *Rhigas Velestinlis: The Proto-Martyr of the Greek Revolution* (Evia, 1995), which supersedes the one earlier monograph available in English by Mrs Elizabeth M. Edmonds, *Rhigas Pheraios: The Protomartyr of Greek Independence* (London, 1890). A general appraisal of Rhigas' ideas and place in the Balkan ideological tradition is attempted by P.M. Kitromilides, *Rhigas Velestinlis: Theoria kai Praxi* (Athens, 1998), while his radicalism is stressed by N. Kaltchas, *Introduction to the Constitutional History of Modern Greece* (New York, 1940), pp. 18–22. His political and constitutional thought is examined in detail by A.J. Manessis, 'L'activité et les projets politiques d'un patriote grec dans les Balkans vers la fin du XVIIIe siècle', *Balkan Studies*, 3 (1962), pp. 75–118. A more recent appraisal of the character of Rhigas' revolutionary project is provided by Marco Dogo, 'Before and Outside the Nation', in *Disputing and Reshaping: Early Stages of Nation-Building in the Balkans*, ed. M. Dogo and G. Franzinetti (Ravenna, 2002), pp. 16–17.

[11] Rhigas, *Physikis Apanthisma* (Vienna, 1790). The latest edition of the text, ed. C.Th. Petsios, is in the recently published Rhigas' collected works, *Apanta ta sozomena*, General Editor P.M. Kitromilides, Vol. II (Athens, 2002).

[12] *Scholeion ton delikaton eraston* (Vienna, 1790) [= *Apanta ta sozomena*, Vol. I, ed. P.S. Pistas (Athens, 2001)].

of prevailing class relations; and adaptations of classicizing drama by Metastasio and of a 'moral tale' by Marmontel.[13] In addition, Rhigas' publishing programme included works of republican classicism, such as the translation of the fourth volume of Abbé Barthélemy's *Voyage of Young Anacharsis in Greece*,[14] and major cartographical projects, which comprised maps of the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia,[15] where Rhigas had spent his mature and politically active years, and a veritable historical and cultural atlas of the Hellenic world, in twelve large folios. This truly impressive monument of historical cartography was intended by Rhigas as a visual aid for understanding Anacharsis' travels, but it has been interpreted by many commentators as a pointer to the geographical basis of his projected republic.[16] His political ideas were stated explicitly in a revolutionary pamphlet, printed in Vienna in 1797 for distribution in Greece and elsewhere in the Balkans in order to incite a rising against Ottoman despotism. The pamphlet contained a declaration of independence, a bill of rights and a constitution for a new 'Hellenic Republic', and closed with a martial anthem, which called upon the subjects of the Ottoman Sultan, including the Turks, to rise against tyranny.[17] The revolutionary manifesto represented the culmination of Rhigas' political thought and put forward his vision for the transformation of the subjects of despotism into citizens of a free and unitary republic, modelled on the 'Republic of Virtue' of revolutionary France.

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[13] The two works, Marmontel's 'La Bergère des Alpes' and Metastasio's 'L'Olimpiade', in Rhigas' translation, were included in the collection *O Ithikos Tripous* (Vienna, 1797) [= *Apanta ta sozomena*, Vol. III, ed. Ines di Salvo, with an introduction by Anna Tabaki (Athens, 2000)]. The *Olimpiade* is also available in another recent critical edition, ed. with intro. Walter Puchner (Athens, 2000).

[14] Rhigas Velestinlis and G. Vendotis, *Neos Anacharsis* (Vienna, 1797) [= *Apanta ta sozomena*, Vol. IV, ed. Anna Tabaki (Athens, 2000)].

[15] Rhigas Velestinlis, *Nea Charta tis Vlachias* (Vienna, 1797), and *Geniki Charta tis Moldovias* (Vienna, 1797). On Rhigas' cartographical projects see G. Laïos, 'Oi chartes tou Riga', *Deltion tis Istorikis kai Ethnologikis Etaireias tis Ellados*, XIV (1960), pp. 231–312.

[16] Rhigas Velestinlis, *Charta tis Ellados* (Vienna, 1796–7). A reprint of the twelve folios, supplemented by an introductory study and detailed indices has been made available by the Society for the Study of Pherai-Velestino-Rhigas (Athens, 1998). On this important aspect of Rhigas' political work see Jean Yves Guiomar and Marie-Thérèse Lorain, 'La Carte de Rigas et le nom de la Grèce', *Annales Historiques de la Révolution française* (2000), no. 1, pp. 101–25, and G. Tolias, '*Totius Graecia*: Nicolaos Sophianos's Map of Greece and the Transformations of Hellenism', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 19 (2001), pp. 1–22, esp. pp. 8–12.

[17] *Nea Politiki Dioikisis ton katoikon tis Roumelis, tis Mikras Asias, ton Mesogeion Nison kai tis Vlachobogdanias* (Vienna, 1797) [= *Apanta ta sozomena*, Vol. V, ed. P.M. Kitromilides (Athens, 2000)]. A partial English translation of the contents of this revolutionary pamphlet can be found in *The Movement for Greek Independence 1770–1821*, ed. and trans. Richard Clogg (London and Basingstoke, 1976), pp. 149–63.

The special and particularly thorny problem that Rhigas' constitutional project had to come to terms with was the geographical extent and ethnic diversity of the new republic. As a careful student of Montesquieu, whose *Spirit of the Laws* he intended to publish in a Greek translation,[18] Rhigas knew that simple imitation of foreign models and crude transplantation of institutions could not be expected to work. Forms of government and institutional structures had to be organically adapted to the specific conditions and the social spirit of the lands for which a constitutional proposal was put forward. The problems of a particular society could not be resolved by appeals to abstract principles or, even worse, by Procrustean attempts to force upon all societies the same institutional forms. Montesquieu's great admirer and Rhigas' own indirect source of inspiration, Jean Jacques Rousseau, knew that he had to take into consideration every minute empirical detail pertinent to a particular country in order to make sound constitutional proposals for the real world, which would still be conformable to the requirements of his political principles. In drafting his projects for Corsica and Poland, he strove to carry out this difficult task, which sought to combine theory and actual historical reality.[19]

The specific challenge that Rhigas had to cope with in the context of late eighteenth-century Balkan society might be considered twofold, arising from the territorial basis and the ethnocultural pluralism of the new republic. How could radical republicanism, with all its stipulations for direct popular participation and initiative in the process of government, work across a territory stretching over southeastern Europe, the offshore islands of the Greek peninsula and most of Asia Minor? All geographical indications in the constitutional projects and more precisely the great map of Greece, which he published in Vienna in 1797, suggested that such would be the territorial basis of his Hellenic Republic. Rhigas had enough faith in the effectiveness of republican institutions and perhaps even more so in the moral and psychological power of the ethic of patriotism and free citizenship that he did not worry much about this problem. Theoretically, he had no reason to worry since neither Montesquieu nor Rousseau excluded the possibility of an extensive republic, although both of them stressed the difficulties and dangers that might jeopardize its survival. Montesquieu had felt that a solution to this problem might be a federation or confederation of republican communities,[20]

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[18] Rhigas, *Physikis Apanthisma* (Vienna, 1790), p. 176.

[19] Cf. Judith N. Shklar, *Men and Citizens: A Study of Rousseau's Social Theory* (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 27–8 and 14–16, respectively. On Poland in particular cf. Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, pp. 236–42.

[20] Cf. Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Book IX, chs. 2–3; and Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Book III, ch. XV. Montesquieu's discussion of England as a republic disguised under the institutions of a monarchy and Rousseau's project for Poland indicate that neither excluded the possibility of an extensive republican system. Cf. Eric Gojosso, *Le concept de république en France (XVIe–XVIIIe siècle)* (Aix-Marseille, 1998), pp. 326–8,

possible. Now the dilemma became what to do with all these secondary differences — should they be uprooted and stamped out or accommodated within the framework of the new community? Rhigas recognized the basic equality of all citizens as individuals regardless of ethnic affinities, but he also emphasized the equality of the nationalities that joined the social contract of the republic.[23] A variety of national identities was thus recognized as one of the dimensions of the political sociology of the new state. The constitution enshrined this principle of double equality by first acknowledging that the Hellenic Republic comprised diverse nationalities and religions and by stating unequivocally that such diversity in faiths and attachments was not regarded with any hostility or prejudice. Sovereignty in the state, however, was reserved *not* for these nationalities but to the people as a whole, comprised of individuals regardless of corporate identities based on language, religion or ethnic origin.[24] What Rhigas was groping for would appear to approximate a model of 'multicultural citizenship' in a unitary state.[25] The 'multicultural' dimension of Rhigas' political thought could certainly be claimed to represent its most original component. He was a Jacobin who sought to resolve the problem of how to retain cultural pluralism while creating a politically centralized democratic state extending over a vast geographical space. He thus provided for a multicultural civil society so long as the civil society did not invade the sphere of political society or threaten the democratic rights and loyalty of the sovereign people as a unitary community of equal individuals. Nevertheless, on account of the Jacobin framework of his thinking, the primary emphasis remained on the principle of unity. The sovereign people were one and indivisible. The institutions of the republic were framed in such a manner as to underline this unity. Political unity would become operative within the context of the spirit of patriotism expressed in the symbols of republican Hellenism and the ideals of revolutionary Enlightenment making their inroads into Balkan culture at the time. The political ideology of radical Enlightenment was expected to provide a civic culture that would animate the new political institutions. Such would be the moral basis of the new republic. The values of a revived republican Hellenism would provide the ethical content of its political life.

By putting his faith in these moral components of his scheme, Rhigas framed his solution to the ethnic problems of his polity in the historical terms of his contemporary culture.[26] At the end of the eighteenth century, Greek was

[23] Rhigas, 'Ta dikaia tou anthropou', Articles 3, 7 and especially 34, and [Constitution], Articles 2, 4, 7, 122, in *Apanta ta sozomena*, Vol. V, pp. 36, 37, 44, 45, 46, 48, 64.

[24] Rhigas [Constitution], Article 7, in *Apanta ta sozomena*, Vol. V, p. 48. Cf. Woodhouse, *Rhigas Velestinlis*, pp. 73–5.

[25] Cf. Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 174–81, 187–92.

[26] See L.S. Stavrianos, *Balkan Federation* (Northampton, MA, 1944), pp. 34–6, and more recently Victor Roudometof, *Nationalism, Globalization, and Orthodoxy: The*

the *lingua franca* of the Balkans and the Levant, and the spread of Greek education and culture in the area was the gauge of the progress of enlightenment and of the cultivation of national sentiment throughout southeastern Europe and the eastern Mediterranean. Through the network of Greek schools and the medium of the Greek language, the culture of the Enlightenment made itself felt in the consciousness of the modernizing social groups among southeastern European peoples. Greek intellectuals and Greek publications had been for decades the most conscious and outspoken exponents of the spirit of the new age in the area. Indeed, in the context of the inert and conservative society of the Balkans, the Greek-speaking intelligentsia, the Greek commercial bourgeoisie and the middle-level public functionaries in the Phanariot administrations of the Danubian principalities constituted the only conscious revolutionary element.[27] Rhigas had interconnecting ties with all these social groups, to which he belonged in successive stages of his career.[28] His own life experiences, his geographical and intellectual itinerary from his native village Velestino in the Thessalian plain and the Zagora school on neighbouring Mount Pelion and thence to the educational institutions of Constantinople, and to the great cultural centres of the Danubian principalities and the Greek diaspora in Central Europe, perhaps most decisively the example of his culturally Hellenized teacher Iosipos Moisiodax, a pioneering republican political thinker, social critic and partisan of the modern scientific outlook,[29] must have convinced him of the great potentialities of the culture of republican Hellenism as a unifying bond among enlightened individuals, liberated from traditional corporate attachments. He was, therefore, led to put too much faith in the progressive and unifying possibilities of the culture of the Enlightenment and to hope that the sheer moral force of republican patriotism would allay ethnic antagonisms, nurture inter-ethnic solidarity and cultivate loyalty to the unitary institutions of the new republic.

Republican Hellenism in Rhigas' political understanding was quite different from the varieties of cultural nationalism that in an incipient form were

Origins of Ethnic Conflict in the Balkans (Westport, CT, 2001), pp. 62–4. Cf. D.A. Zakythinos, *The Making of Modern Greece from Byzantium to Independence* (Oxford, 1976), pp. 157–67.

[27] See N. Iorga, *Histoire des relations entre la France et les Roumains* (Paris, 1918), pp. 120–35, and on the Greek cultural infrastructure of the Balkans, Peter F. Sugar, *Southeastern Europe Under Ottoman Rule 1354–1804* (Seattle and London, 1977), pp. 251–8. On the deep historical roots and on the cultural and political results of the Greek presence in the principalities see the valuable survey by D. Russo, *Studii istorice Greco-Române* (Bucharest, 1939), Vol. II, pp. 487–542, and for a more recent balanced appraisal of the role of Greek culture in the Danubian principalities see Keith Hitchins, *The Romanians 1774–1866* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 121–4.

[28] Stoianovich, *Balkan Worlds*, pp. 172–3.

[29] See P.M. Kitromilides, *The Enlightenment as Social Criticism: Iosipos Moisiodax and Greek Culture in the Eighteeenth Century* (Princeton, 1992), esp. pp. 143–52, 153–65, 167–82.

but Rhigas excluded this possibility for the Hellenic Republic, which had to be unitary and indivisible — clearly a comment on the state of anarchical disorganization and lawlessness to which the Ottoman Empire had been reduced by political decay and the consolidation of the power of local potentates at the end of the eighteenth century. Obviously, the example of the Jacobin constitution, which had been his main model, settled the problem in Rhigas' mind: France, for which the constitution of Year One of the Republic had been written, was territorially the largest country in western Europe, roughly equal to the extent of the projected Hellenic Republic in the southeast. Rhigas can, therefore, be counted among those radical heirs of Rousseau who, immersed in the revolutionary fervour of the epoch, aspired to expand the scope of republican radicalism from small nations to large states, hoping to attain their objective by cultivating the social sentiments of republican virtue among the masses of the population. Thus this last generation of the great tradition of European radicalism, which descended from the civic humanism of the Renaissance, expected to transcend the severe limits imposed on projects for virtuous republics by the enormous difficulties of applicability and workability inherent in their task.[21]

A much more difficult problem might be that posed by the ethnic diversity of the new state — all the more so in view of the silence of Rhigas' sources on the implications of such an issue for republican government. How could the descendants of the ancient Hellenes, as Rhigas described the modern Greeks, join with the multilingual Christian ethnic communities of the Balkans, the Serbs, Bulgarians and Vlachs as well as the Albanians, the Armenians and the Jews and even the Turks themselves in forming a viable political community? All of these linguistic and religious groups were clearly designated in Rhigas' revolutionary appeal and in his martial anthem as prospective constituents of the population of his republic. Perhaps the desperate indignation to which the shared plight of despotism had driven all these nationalities could bring them together in their 'appeal to heaven',[22] in the revolution that would overthrow tyranny. But how could they construct an integral and indivisible republic? This was the real challenge to Rhigas' political theory.

The first step towards the resolution of this problem took the form of Rhigas' emphasis on the artificial character of all distinctions based on language, religion and race. Such external differences could not be allowed to obscure the fundamental truth of the natural equality and fraternity of all human beings. Hence a community of diverse ethnic groups was in principle

370–4, 392–8. On this problem, see more generally Stanley Hoffmann, 'The Areal Division of Powers in the Writings of French Political Thinkers', in *Area and Power*, ed. Arthur Maass (Glencoe, IL, 1959), pp. 113–44, and on the issue of scale which in Montesquieu's political theory poses the question of limits and balance cf. Simone Goyard-Farbe, *Montesquieu: la Nature, les Lois, la Liberté* (Paris, 1993), pp. 166–9.

[21] Cf. Jürgen Habermas, *Theory and Practice* (Boston, 1973), p. 106.

[22] *Nea Politiki Dioikisis*, in *Apanta ta sozomena*, Vol. V, p. 34.

emerging in the region — as elsewhere in Europe — and which were eventually going to compete with his own republican project. Rhigas' republican Hellenism had its origins in Enlightenment classicism, which since the 1740s and especially since the 1760s had focused political reflection on the historical experience of the Greek city-republics and had ascribed to it an actuality and immediacy that it had never possessed in the Europe of absolutism.[30] As a consequence Greco-Roman republicanism came to exercise a significant influence on political debates over questions of institutions, the structure of society (questions of equality and inequality), economic development (debates over luxury and frugality) and culture (the role of the arts, sciences and letters in the evolution of humanity). Such had been the broader background of the resurrection of Sparta as a model of political morality, to which Rousseau and Mably had so decisively contributed.[31] The combined effect of the reading of Plutarch and of social criticism directed at their contemporary social mores and structures had allowed the radical republicans of the Enlightenment to elaborate the model constitution of Sparta and republican Rome — against 'Athenian anarchy' to be sure — as the prototypes of the republic of virtue.[32] It was precisely this model that had captivated the imagination of revolutionary Jacobinism[33] and through this channel provided the inspiration to Rhigas' republicanism, by means of which, in a way, it revived classical Hellenic symbolism in modern Greek political thought.

This background of Rhigas' republican thought makes it clear, I think, that his was a moral and political, not an ethnic, project. Republican Hellenism was not in the least conceived as a political project exclusively for ethnic Greeks, whose cultural identity was understood by Rhigas as defined by their descent from the ancient Hellenes. On the contrary, true to its Jacobin model, it was an inclusive project, open politically to all members of the cultural and ethnic groups in the Balkans so long as they espoused its political values. The 'Hellenic Republic' of Rhigas' constitution was not accordingly an ethnic state for Greeks, but a state whose Hellenic character was defined *par excellence* by its republican values. Republican Hellenism was a civic, not an ethnic, culture and was not conceived in terms of a nationalist ideology. The political character of Rhigas' project is reflected in his constitutional language: he talks of the sovereign people (*laos*) of citizens and of their rights

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[30] For a detailed and authoritative survey of the pertinent evidence see Chantal Grell, *Le dixhuitième siècle et l'antiquité en France 1680–1789* (Oxford, 1995) (*Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 330), pp. 449–53.

[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 460–8 and 469–78, respectively, on Rousseau and Mably.

[32] *Ibid.*, pp. 486–95.

[33] Claude Nicolet, *L'idée républicaine en France* (Paris, 1982), pp. 55–81, 83–114; Carol Blum, *Rousseau and the Republic of Virtue: The Language of Politics in the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY and London, 1986), and for critical insights Patrice Higonnet, *Goodness beyond Virtue: Jacobins during the French Revolution* (Cambridge, MA, 1998), pp. 132–7, 310–12.

and obligations, and uses the term nation (*ethnos*) only in order to refer to the political community and the institutional structure of the republic, not to the social collectivity (e.g. Articles 26–8 of the Declaration of Rights,[34] Articles 8, 29 and 42 of the Constitution).[35]

The antinomy in Rhigas' republican conception consisted in the inescapable fact that although republican Hellenism was neither conceived nor meant to be the exclusive patrimony of the ethnic Greeks among the citizens of the Hellenic Republic, it could be easily misconstrued as involving Greek ethnocultural hegemony over other groups in the population and as an attempt to foist the culture of one group onto the rest. Although this kind of cultural hegemony was far from Rhigas' intentions, it was understood as such in the context of subsquent nationalist confrontations and conflicts and this has coloured to a considerable extent the interpretations of his political theory. In contrast to collectivist cultural nationalism, however, Rhigas' republican Hellenism referred primarily to the political construction and moral character of individual citizenship and to the environment of symbols and intellectual values that shaped and informed it. Rhigas' great political bet was, as his Jacobin ideology led him to believe, that this form of political citizenship could in fact provide a vehicle for transcending the problems posed by cultural and ethnic pluralism in the Balkans.

In taking this view of the ethnic problem in Balkan society, Rhigas obviously gave too much weight to an optimistic appraisal of the potentialities of practical experiences strictly delimited and determined by a particular configuration of historical and cultural circumstances. He thus did not really confront the tensions and contradictions that formed the heart of the ethnic problem. In particular, he failed to anticipate the force of the new collective identities bred by modern nationalism that emerged from the very cosmopolitan culture of the Enlightenment and replaced, without wholly obliterating, traditional corporate attachments. Indeed, part of the legacy of primordial sentiments and loyalties was absorbed into the psychology of the new nationalisms, thus strengthening their appeal to the masses. Rhigas could not have foreseen that the impact of the Enlightenment and the example of the Greek national movement itself were bound to generate parallel, if somewhat delayed, developments among the other Balkan nationalities as well. The pressures of these other nationalisms — which were to a considerable degree stimulated by resentment against the prolonged Greek supremacy in the region — would inevitably disrupt any attempts modelled on Rhigas' scheme for a multicultural and multinational republic.[36] This historical criticism, however,

[34] Rhigas, *Nea Politiki Dioikisis*, in *Apanta ta sozomena*, Vol. V, pp. 42–3.

[35] *Ibid.*, pp. 48, 51, 54.

[36] Although Vlad Georgescu, *Political Ideas and the Enlightenment in the Romanian Principalities* (Boulder, CO, 1971), pp. 77, 169, denies that Rhigas' ideas had a serious impact on Romanian political thought, Iorga in his older work, *Histoire des relations entre la France et les Roumains*, pp. 75–80, 86–8, 141, acknowledges that it was through

is possible only with the benefit of hindsight, which of course Rhigas lacked. The tensions and strains in his approach to the ethnic problem should be appraised in the light of the fact that he was the first republican thinker who attempted to come to grips with an issue that proved so vexing both theoretically and politically to several subsequent generations.

Although Rhigas' scheme did not resolve the basic theoretical tensions posed by the question of nationalism, a final word of explanation is essential. His solution to the ethnic problem may appear, in the light of subsequent nationalist history and conflicts, as essentially amounting to an invitation to other Balkan nationalities to selectively Hellenize themselves. His purpose, however, was by no means to undermine the integrity of these other peoples. His insistence on cultural rights and ethnic recognition is, I think, an adequate pointer to his respect for the autonomy of different nationalities as a matter of principle. The assumption that potential political problems among different ethnic groups composing one unitary state might be preempted by the common espousal of a republican civic culture was not a byproduct of chauvinistic calculations, but rather was inspired by an optimistic faith in the possibilities of the Enlightenment to reconcile antagonisms, to promote common human purposes beyond sectional separatism, and thus to assure a rational and humane resolution of political problems. The logic of nationalism proved all of this to be merely a utopian aspiration, but the significance of Rhigas' vision should not be lightly dismissed. His faith in the primacy of basic human rights and democratic principles, over the claims of corporate identities and loyalties, and his belief that wider political and social purposes might reconcile ethnic and other forms of particularism were important lessons that were not lost on later generations of Balkan radicalism and his own ideological heirs in the tradition of Balkan understanding.[37] Seen in this perspective, Rhigas' scheme might appear to be the most radical solution possible to an explosive problem, put forward even before that problem itself became fully apparent in all its complexity.

Greek cultural channels that the influence of progressive European ideas was transmitted into Romanian thought. See also D. Popovici, *La littérature roumaine à l'époque des Lumières* (Sibiu, 1945), pp. 59–77.

[37] See N. Botzaris, *Visions Balkaniques dans la préparation de la Révolution grecque 1789–1821* (Geneva, 1962), pp. 17–33, and for a survey of the ideas of Balkan radicalism, P.M. Kitromilides, 'Le retentissement des idées de Jean-Jacques Rousseau au sein du radicalisme balkanique à l'époque de la Révolution française', *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 324 (1994), pp. 121–39. From the point of view of the transmission of Rhigas' image and ideas in the Balkan political tradition, it is quite interesting to note the invocation of his thought by one of the protagonists of the Balkan entente in the interwar period. See Alexander Papanastassiou, *Vers l'union balkanique: Les conferences balkaniques* (Paris, 1934), pp. 6, 56–7, and cf. Robert J. Kerner and Harry N. Howard, *The Balkan Conferences and the Balkan Entente 1930–1935* (Berkeley, 1936), p. 15, and especially Theodore I. Geshkoff, *Balkan Union: A Road to Peace in Southeastern Europe* (New York, 1940), pp. 18–19.

Rhigas' projects and visions represent the most eloquent expression of the ferment generated in Greek political thought and more generally in Balkan society by the reception of Enlightenment radicalism and the ideas of the French Revolution. His achievement consisted in capturing a diffuse social feeling of excitement and expectancy and recasting it in the concrete intellectual and political terms that could best articulate it: such was the language of republican patriotism. Theoretically, his accomplishment was remarkable in that he combined the aspiration of national redemption with the necessity of radical social transformation, profound moral reform and ethical reconstruction of personalities. Republican freedom and national independence were conceived as interdependent. This dialectic was extended to the practical dimension of Rhigas' work. His systematically conceived programme of enlightenment, with all its intellectual radicalism and lofty idealism, never lost sight of concrete practical purposes. This was what turned it into a call to revolution. The unity of theory and practice that Rhigas achieved in his work was best reflected in the reception which his revolutionary message found among those to whom it was primarily directed. Although his plans for a revolutionary effort in Greece itself were preempted by his martyrdom in June 1798,[38] Greek patriots everywhere were strengthened in their determination against tyranny by his sacrifice.

The intellectuals of the diaspora extolled Rhigas' work and sacrifice as the first contribution to the crusade of liberty. Both Adamantios Korais in his polemical pamphlet *Fraternal Instruction*[39] and the anonymous patriot who composed the republican treatise *Hellenic Nomarchy or a Discourse on Freedom*[40] paid tribute to Rhigas' memory and urged the nation to follow his heroic example. But, even more important, Rhigas' message spread among the masses in subjugated Greece and especially among the forces of primitive social protest, which would eventually be transformed into the Greek revolutionary resistance, the bands of *klephts*, the mountain warriors who in their social banditry and defiance of the authority of Ottoman and Christian lords alike provided an outlet for the social dissatisfaction simmering within the subject people. It was to them that Rhigas alluded when he entrusted the defence of his constitution to 'the vigilant protection of the virtuous and freedom-loving men who, refusing to submit to the yoke of tyranny, embraced the life of warriors and took up arms swearing eternal war against tyrants'.[41] It was for them that he composed the patriotic hymn 'Thourios', which closed the

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[38] For details see Woodhouse, *Rhigas Velestinlis*, pp. 127–49.

[39] [Adamantios Korais], *Adelphiki Didaskalia* (Rome, 1798), pp. iv–v. (In fact the pamphlet was printed in Paris, but Rome was given as the place of publication as a way of helping to preserve Korais' anonymity.)

[40] *Elliniki Nomarchia* by an Anonymous Hellene (Italy, 1806), pp. 5–6, 48–53.

[41] Rhigas [Constitution], Article 123, in *Apanta ta sozomena*, Vol. V, p. 70.

revolutionary pamphlet of 1797.[42] This martial anthem was addressed to those who had taken to the mountains and lived on the slopes and in caves like solitary lions on account of the bitter captivity of their homeland. They were urged to rise, inspired by the spirit of patriotism and guided alone by the laws, to join forces fraternally with the other subject nations, 'black and white', and driven by the impetus of liberty to assault tyranny, break the yoke of despotism and establish justice and freedom for all throughout the land that extended from Bosnia and Montenegro through Rumeli and Mani to Crete and Asia Minor and to Syria and Egypt.[43]

'Thourios' put the principles and aspirations of Rhigas' political theory into a language that could touch the emotions of the popular masses. In this, too, Rhigas followed the practically oriented political calculus that had guided his Enlightenment project from its original inception, about a decade earlier. According to available evidence, 'Thourios' had indeed great appeal among those whom intellectual Enlightenment could not reach, but who, nevertheless, shared the disaffection and sense of injustice that emerged from the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire.[44]

In concluding this necessarily schematic and rather summary presentation of what in fact is a quite important chapter in the history of political thought in southeastern Europe, I should try to make explicit some broader theoretical implications that emerge from the foregoing analysis. Rhigas' views on

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[42] *Ibid.*, pp. 73–7. The title, an ancient Greek word of Doric idiomatic provenance, was borrowed from the elegiac poet Tyrteus and was used in Modern Greek literature for the first time by Rhigas. Cf. the commentary, *ibid.*, pp. 105–7.

[43] *Ibid.*, pp. 75–7. Rhigas' vision of the klephts as a revolutionary force inspired by an indescribable love of freedom was shared by the republican author of *Hellenic Normandy*, see *Elliniki Nomarckia*, pp. 237–8. Rhigas' picture of the klephts was of course a highly idealized one and was based on considerable abstraction from actual historical realities and social practices. It was primarily informed by the rhetorical needs of his composition rather than by the actual workings of the phenomenon of social banditry. In fact, as the behaviour of those groups subsequently made clear, during the Greek war of independence, Rhigas' readiness to entrust the defence of the constitution of the Hellenic Republic to their 'vigilant protection' could have been a source of many disappointments if not an outright political error as far as the safeguard of public order and impartial state procedures were concerned. On the complexities of social banditry in the Balkans, cf. Eric Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (London, 1969), pp. 61–71, Dennis N. Skiotis, 'Mountain Warriors and the Greek Revolution', in *War, Technology and Society in the Middle East*, ed. V.J. Parry and M.E. Yapp (London, New York and Toronto, 1975), pp. 308–29, and John S. Koliopoulos, *Brigands with a Cause: Brigandage and Irredentism in Modern Greece 1821–1912* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 20–35.

[44] The wide dissemination of 'Thourios' is suggested by Claude Fauriel, who included it in his collection of Greek folk poetry. See *Chants populaires de la Grèce moderne*, Vol. II (Paris, 1825), pp. 18–19. The text is on pp. 20–8. On the intellectual context of Fauriel's project and on the significance of Rhigas' presence in it, see Charles Rearick, 'Local Colour in Post-Enlightenment Culture', *Balkan Studies*, Vol. 40 (1999), pp. 91–116, esp. pp. 100–1.

'multiculturalism' — well *avant le mot* to be sure — and his proposals for democratic citizenship and equality as the only appropriate response to the challenges posed by ethnic pluralism in the Balkans reflect the moral universalism and optimism of the Enlightenment, but they cannot be lightly dismissed as an ideological legacy of a bygone age, possessing only historical interest. The Enlightenment, its moral universalism and its faith in reason could of course be variously 'deconstructed' by fashionable cultural criticism and be shown with varying degrees of credibility to involve no more than naively disguised claims of power and interest. Yet a responsible and serious consideration of the substantive claims should insist that before these values are dismissed as mere rationalizations or slogans in an ideological battlefield, they should be shown by reasonable argument to be inimical to humanity and to our sense of human dignity. It was precisely in support of these values that the Enlightenment tradition unfolded and spread across Europe in the eighteenth century and this alone can explain its moral viability then — and now. From this point of view, Rhigas' proposed solution to the problem of ethnic pluralism represents a heritage of some relevance, which should invite reflection and respect. The history of the Balkans since his martyrdom more than two hundred years ago has been marked by many failures on the ethical scale of his own political and moral values and this — and not only Western prejudice and inability to understand — has earned the region its rather unenviable sombre reputation. Some reflection on what the values of democratic citizenship, equality and recognition[45] would have meant in practical terms for Balkan society would certainly also involve a serious rereading of Rhigas' political thought.

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[45] In the sense employed by Charles Taylor, 'The Politics of Recognition', *Multiculturalism*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton, 1994), pp. 25–73.