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_D. Glinos vs. “Archive of Philosophy” [Arxeion Filosofias]: Appropriating Technology and Science within Interwar Crisis_

_Introduction_

This paper, which is mainly based on an extensive archival work, is concerned with the intellectual appropriation of scientific ideology and technology by leading public figures during the Greek interwar period. Especially, it is focused on the controversy during the 1930s between the leading Marxist thinker Dimitrios Glinos and the idealist intellectuals Panayiotis Kanellopoulos and Constantinos Tsatsos, editors of the philosophical journal “Archive of Philosophy” [Arxeion Filosofias]. It basically argues two things: on the one hand, that even in countries, as Greece, where the industrial development was not widely seen as the steam-engine of socioeconomic progress, the technology issue was strongly involved in the political conflict and ideological struggle provoking tensions; on the other hand, that the debates on scientific ideology and technology stamp the Greek road to, with, and within modernity. I approach this debate using the following analytical tools: Peter Wagner’s (1994, 1998, 2008), Karl Mannheim’s (1997) and Science and Technology Studies’ theories, and especially the very notion of “intellectual appropriation of technology” which was recently developed by M. Hard and A. Jamison (Hard, Jamison eds, 1998). All these approaches provide the conceptual frame in order to treat the Greek debate within the comparative context of the interwar European developments. They focus, especially, on the discussions about technology during the period that Peter Wagner calls the “first crisis of modernity”, when the subject of debate was the project, rather than the products, of technological change. Not only did economic liberalism come under attack; so did the ideas of democracy and science. The growing power of the working class opened the way for far-reaching collective initiatives and ideas, and political instability opened up the possibility for radical authoritarian solutions (Hard, Jamison 1998: 7).

_Historical context and actors’ theoretical principles_

In the 1930s decade Greece faced complex problems, which were further magnified by the deterioration of social conditions following the Depression. The sharpening of the social conflicts came along with an expanded ideological crisis. The raising
ideological void and the increasing worry about the communist danger were combined with the extended distrust of the liberal values. Especially after the Depression, and in spite of the fast recovery (Mazower 2002), the obvious dissatisfaction against the parliamentarian rule provoked the intense quest for authoritarian political solutions (Kyrtiss 1996; Marketos 2006; Papadimitriou 2006).

The three coups d’ état between 1933 and 1936 are indicative of the political disturbance of the period (Mavrogordatos 1983; Alivizatos 1995; Dafnis 1997; Hering 2004). This period was also an era of economic development (Vergopoulos 1993; Veremis-Mazower 1993; Psiroukis 1994), and of the formulation of a modernistic vision based on technological development that was promoted by engineers and industrialists (Antoniou 2006). Thus, during the heyday of the interwar crisis, various modernizers attempt to formulate new ideals, to introduce organized institutions, and at the same time respond to the challenge which the –necessary– techno/scientific development provokes. Scientific ideology was a main theme of their arguments. According to Chalmers (2000: 267) the scientific ideology is based on the controversial notions of Science and Truth in order to establish political or/and ideological positions. In other words, the involved in the interwar ideological debate intellectuals evoked Science attempting to show the superiority of their opinions.

D. Glinos expressed his trust to Science conceiving it as cognitive authority and foundation of the necessary modernistic attempt. This optimistic view was based in his belief that the scientific theory of historical materialism could find the Laws of History, reveal the –socioeconomic– core of Reality and lead not only to the knowledge, but, also, to the –revolutionary– transformation of the social world (Glinos 1932a). Opposed to such an approach, the conservative thinker P. Kanellopoulos tended to underline the specific elements of History which were not subjected, in his view, to rationalization: the creative powers of an absolute Individual Spirit. Making the distinction between Kultur (the “internal” civilization of values, arts and inner powers) and Zivilisation (the “external”, mechanical, and technological/scientific one), he concluded that progress could only be observed in the second field: the ethical values which made possible the treatment of the social question remained uninfluenced by techno-economic progress and the correct conception of social conditions required in his opinion not the philosopher’s Reason, but the poet’s Wisdom (Kanellopoulos 1929, 1933). The neokantian philosopher and
conservative liberal thinker C. Tsatsos founded Science on the autonomous Mind which was independent from the empirical –natural or social– reality, and includes the preconditions of the objective knowledge. Scientific activity, Tsatsos argued, leaded by the freely posed ideas of the Mind: given that these ideas bore the scientific methods, they in essence shaped the –natural or social– world. Moreover, in Tsatsos’ thought the free position of ideas was showing that freedom and independence from empirical reality was the Mind’s essence. In this sense, Mind was able to immediately communicate with the unaltered and eternal ethical values, and appropriately shape the social world based on Its Purposes (Tsatsos 1934a, 1934b).

Two were the crucial elements of this debate: the problem of values and the nature of History. For Glinos, the motivating power of History was the class struggle. Social, ethical values and meanings, in this sense, were strongly connected with and determined by the transformations and outcomes of this struggle. So, socio-ethical values could be “scientifically” defined by the historical materialism experts who were able to conceive the historical laws. Believing so Glinos, Kyrtsis underlines (ibid: 153-154), showed thought as an immediate reflection of economic interests and reproduction of social conditions. On the other hand, Tsatsos and Kanellopoulos considered values and meanings as historical actors’ property; in this context History is viewed through the prism of Value (“Archive of Philosophy” 1933; Tsatsos 1933b): it constitutes the Man’s struggle in order to create Civilization. But, this creature requires the access in the field of eternal values. Declaring the power of the creative Individual –Kanellopoulos– or the independent Mind –Tsatsos– to approach this field they sought to justify, Kyrtsis observes (ibid: 61-66, 188-214), their autarchic and elitist will to transform the social reality based on transcendental values. Closing this unit it is worth saying that the already presented opinions determine the appropriation of science and technology by each of these leading figures, as also the political solutions that they proposed in transcending the acute interwar socio-political crisis.

**Appropriating Technology and Science, while Searching for a Way-out of the Crisis**

For D. Glinos, technological and scientific development was strongly connected with national progress and the revolutionary transfiguration of Greek society. This belief accompanied his thinking already from the 1920s, when he ideologically belonged to the social-democratic wing of Komma Fileleftheron [Liberal Party]. He argued that
acute interwar problems, as the new role of woman, the education problem or the question of nation’s destiny after the Great Idea’s collapse, could be solved by scientific means (Glinos 1922a, 1922b, 1923). Moreover, he considered that the treatment of the “Greek *malaise*”, as also the social, political and economic recovery would be achieved if there was a plan combining scientific regulation of productive procedure, technological advance and modern education (Glinos 1926). Science conceived through the prism of historical materialism could play another significant role according to Glinos: it could enlighten people about the “real” social conditions revealing the forms of false consciousness which obstructed the social emancipation (Glinos 1927, 1928). In this sense, science, in Glinos’ thinking, involved in social struggles playing a crucial role in the procedures of social transformations.

Indeed, Glinos during 1930s interpreted in such a way the scientific developments of the last three centuries. He explicitly correlated the social change with the new scientific discoveries. According to him, new science accompanied the social stratum that strove for liberty against the already established strata; for example, Newtonian physics constituted the ideological weapon of liberal/bourgeois class against monarchy and theocracy. On the other hand, in his epoch, he believed, it was the proletariat which accepted and turned the emancipating heads of the new –social and natural– scientific theories against the bourgeois oppression. This fact was suffice to interpret why the bourgeois intellectuals did not correlate ethical values with scientific knowledge, considered science as only a cognitive attempt without further –social– implications and turned in *instrumentalist* and not *realistic* explanations (Glinos 1932b). This turn was what Glinos called “Reaction”. He believed that, as the bourgeois class understood that the working classes were questioning its hegemony, it converted to reaction: it was appealed by fascism, it used violence against social unrest and, finally, it was oriented to autarchic political solutions. This situation was reflected in the intellectual field taking the form of questioning the inherently progressive character of scientific attempt. Glinos explicitly categorized Tsatsos and Kanellopoulos in “*the intellectual forms of Reaction*” (Glinos 1932c). A little later, during the most acute phase of the debate, Glinos will accuse Tsatsos and Kanellopoulos of representing the fascist idealism in Greece (Glinos 1933a, 1933b). The historicization of science and its involution in social debates acutely raised the problem of relativism. But, Glinos trying to avoid this difficulty which could
undermine his ambitions, attributed stable—and positivistic—characteristics in science: objective observation, systematic research, transcendence of preoccupations, creative and composing thinking (Glinos 1922b: 52-53). In doing so he did not worry whether the conclusions of new physics—relativity, quantum physics—posed into question the fundamental axioms of historical materialism or his positions concluded in a kind of “scientific mysticism”.

Based on these ideological foundations and given the historical availabilities of the period, Glinos considered the Soviet paradigm as the only appropriate solution in interwar—and in Greek form of—crisis. Glinos recognized the inherently progressive dynamic of modern technology and recalled the Marxist belief that the combination of revolutionary working class with technology advance sufficed for the social transformation (Wagner 1998). The scientific theory of historical materialism guaranteed, in his concept, the “correct” use of technology advance; this concept led him to the unreserved acceptance of Soviet planned and organized institutions, “a political form”, as he put it, “where science and life are not considered as separated” (Glinos 1932d). The Soviet paradigm represented in Glinos’ thinking the unity between science and technology, the improvement of life conditions of the big masses, the cancelling of working alienation and, finally, the creation of a New Civilization by “the vitality of proletariat” (ibid: 47-48).

Kanellopoulos, on the other hand, did not share Glinos’ enthusiasm for science. But, he did so not in order to totally reject the scientific methods. Rather, he cared about its subjection to the “excellent will” and its disconnection from the social research and the study of the relationship between values and social condition (Kyrtsis ibid: 194-218). In achieving this, Kanellopoulos widened the scientific field in various elements. He argued that the identification of knowledge with logical powers was deceptive. Scientific laboratory was not the only resource of knowledge (Kanellopoulos 1933b: 371-372), because “sky is not being understandable only by means of observatory, but also by Soul” (Kanellopoulos 1932: 30). Moreover, according to Kanellopoulos, the restriction of knowledge within the borders of Reason undermined the unity of the Self (1933: 372). The scientific development was strongly influenced by irrational elements. The “so-called positive sciences”, Kanellopoulos declared, were founded on alchemy, astrology, magic and fantasy, and not on scientific calculation. The same happened during the birth of social sciences
and especially, of sociology. The irrational element which played the crucial role in this case was the political will about the appropriate social organization (ibid: 374-385). He continued his reflections in such a way: if the political will was the main motive for the cognitive attempt, will as such constituted the crucial factor of social transformation. The speculative gaze that came from such a will would conceive the totality of social reality beyond parties’ competition and class struggle (Kanellopoulos 1934a). It is worth noting here that many of Kanellopoulos’ epistemological observations viewed through the prism of the conclusions of modern epistemology could be characterized as really accurate. Nevertheless, he did not make these observations in order to widen the scientific field, but to undermine every attempt of rational understanding of social reality. Furthermore, he attributed the social crisis to the overestimation of the scientific and technological civilization against the ethical and spiritual one (Kanellopoulos 1932: 14-29). Modern science, in contrast to poetry and religious faith which prevailed in classical antiquity and in Middle Ages respectively, was unable to offer a positive meaning (ibid: 60-63), a “sacred canopy”, as Griffin puts it (Griffin 2007).

Technology was also being included in the field of Zivilisation. Kanellopoulos recognized its inescapable influence on the formation of every part of social life. But, like the “reactionary modernists” (Herf 1984; Hard 1998), he conceived the technological advance as provocation. As for various intellectuals and modernizers in other western countries (Hard, Jamison 1998: 1-3), so for Kanellopoulos the main question was either to assimilate technology into existing values or to adjust culture to the intrinsic demands posed by technology; sometimes, these two options were combined. Kultur ought to imbue Zivilisation, so that Crisis could be transcended. Kanellopoulos pointed out that the adjustment of the societies to the technological progress was not mechanical but creative, because of the various factors which intervened. This adjustment constituted a new social reality; it was a product of social conflict and a result of controversial influences. Yet, these influences were not contrasted to the necessity of technological advance. Based on this concept, Kanellopoulos showed that such an appropriation of technology beyond the liberal ideal –identification of technology and progress– and the communistic “prophecy” – technology progress inexorably leads to the classless society– was possible (Kanellopoulos 1934b: 135-199). Moreover, he considered as the best evidence for
his arguments the fact that even within the stratum of engineers pre-modern – conservative– elements were surviving (Kanellopoulos 1932: 122-123).

The political solutions proposed by Kanellopoulos were intertwined with the already presented positions. Underlining the priority of –an elitist and “total”– will in the spheres of science and politics he turned against liberal parliamentarian institution and communism, because they deteriorated the social debates. The sociologist who, according to Kanellopoulos, represented the non-aligned to parties Individual ought to carry on his historical and political mission within the most crucial historical period, “the Time of the Times” (Kanellopoulos 1934a: 329-330). He believed that a lot of factors facilitated the success of this mission: the existence of absolute individual whose action was not subjected to rationalization precluded the deterministic historical explanations (Kanellopoulos 1931a). This was evident in the case of “class apostate”. On the other hand, History was not motivated by class struggle; the virtu of the leaders was the decisive historical factor for significant social changes. In this context he thought that “the historical mission of fascisms” should not be neglected (1934b: 99-190, 200-219). What is more, Kanellopoulos attacked all the aspects of liberal –restricted in terms of Wagner– modernity. He rejected the idea of liberal economy, because it detached economy from the political regulation, thus provoking crisis (Kanellopoulos 1931b); the society of his time because lacked poetry, religious faith and respect to the State in contrast to Antiquity, Middle Ages and Renaissance which respectively had these elements; the liberal nationalism because substituted the “organic soul” of the nation with rational ideas; the liberal individualism because substituted the “heroic and great individual” with the conciliatory man of everyday life; and finally, communism which pushed to an edge all the presented negatives of liberal modernity simply constituting its alternative aspect (Kanellopoulos 1932). In replacing the under attack liberal institutions and its alternatives, Kanellopoulos promoted the ideal of a Powerful and Organic State against the mechanical liberal one. It was a State which emphasized on social policy in order to calm the social unrest, clearly rejected the formal parliamentarian representation –which was more preferable than communism– and led by the charismatic leader whose will created laws (ibid: 48-57, 62-95, 142-182). The inclusive ideological scheme within which this solution would be placed was the notion of “organic Nation” against the –
Tsatsos, with other intellectuals like George Theotokas and George Economidis, argued in the editorial texts of journal *He Idea* [*The Idea*] that modern physics reinforced idealism against materialism and positivism. They clearly distinguished between science and philosophy of science; the second one was in their concept simply interpretation of scientific research without raising claims of truth. In this sense, historical materialism was not science. But, at the same time they declared that science had not a superior cognitive status: it was simply a method, a single cognitive attempt which was totally disconnected from the ethical values question (*He Idea* 1933a, 1933b, 1933c). Tsatsos followed this strategy in his debate with Glinos and under the pressure of his opponent he tried to formulate the appropriate political solution in the interwar no way-out. He undermined the claim of historical materialism to be considered as a science, while at the same time he accepted its political goals: political and economic equality. Yet, detaching them from the communist context, he transformed them in ethical postulata. In other words, political and economic equality were not concluded by the historical necessity and the class struggle, but constituted ethical demands based on eternal values. The accusation against communism was obvious; on the one hand, as it was not recognizing the consciousness’ autonomy, communism could not formulate ethical rules with universal validity. On the other hand, its dependence on a certain social stratum made itself unable to formulate universal and general accepted social purposes. It was only an alternative to capitalism, Tsatsos concluded (Tsatsos 1933a).

In such a way Tsatsos disconnected the ethical values question from its reduction to social question within certain place and time. In this concept, the appropriate political solutions would only come from the eternal and timeless values and their representatives. It is obvious that this unhistorical deontologism had autarchic and totalitarian dimensions. Indeed, Tsatsos believed that the liberal idea about the State’s organization was insufficient. The order of law as a simple complement of ethical order, the absolute social freedom and the self-restriction of the State had to be replaced by “creative” elements. This argument was based on the concept that State and Law were not only “means”, but “ultimate purposes, Ideas”. So, the State that Tsatsos dreamed of would not only be a regulator of the external human behavior; it
would be an educational institution which would moralized the citizens under its rule. It would compensate the human nothingness by transferring the spiritual and cultural heritage of the Past. Enrolling its citizens in a timeless and glorious Past it would secure their immortality offering them a “sky shelter”, “a new sacred canopy”, as Griffin puts it (Griffin: *ibid*). Material prosperity and violence were conceived as means and not as purposes of this ethical State. The main purpose of it would be the “*cultural creature*”. History, according to Tsatsos, indicated the necessity of the State and its priority over the single individual. So, since the State constituted an “*absolute Idea*”, the historical mission of idealism, Tsatsos declared, was to reinforce it in its struggle against communism and historical materialism. This ethical and creative State was expected to imbue the “neutral” technology with ethical values. The inclusive ideological scheme within which this solution would be placed was the notion of the “*Hellenic Idea*”, an essentialist definition of the Nation (Tsatsos 1933c), and resultant of Tsatsos’ German culture (Tziovas 1989). A recapitalization is here necessary: turn to social question; clear distance from fundamental aspects of liberal modernity; unhistorical consideration of social developments; conception of capitalism and communism as alternative aspects of the same phenomenon; formulation of political solution relative to the concept of “*the Nation*”: it is obvious that Tsatsos is found in the borders of fascism.

**Conclusions**

In the Greek ideological debate during the interwar crisis of modernity the questions of technology and scientific ideology played a major role provoking tensions. In this context, all the intellectuals who were involved in the controversy took seriously into account the notion of science and the “scientific foundation” of their argumentation. They connected it, in different between them ways, with plans of national rebirth, social transformation and paligenesis. Glinos historicized science enrolling it in the social struggles of each era. New science, in his concept, in every time connected with the claims of the stratum which struggle for freedom against the established order; he tried to justify in this way the claims of historical materialism to be conceived as a science and he proposed as a way-out of the crisis the unity of science and life under the communist hegemony. Kanellopoulos did not recognize the priority of rational factors in scientific field. He replaced them with fantasy, will, political ideology and
desire of involving in political conflicts. But, he made this in order to justify an elitist will which was superior to rationality and had totalitarian political claims. Tsatsos subjected science to the values which were sourced from Mind. This fact obligated, in his concept, philosophy and science to take part in the ideological debate having the mission to undermine the communist claims. It is worth noting that from the early 1930s the more the communist intellectuals were sliding towards an unquestioned “scientific mysticism”, the more the liberal and conservative intellectuals expressed their reserve against science. Yet, their anti-positivistic orientation did not purpose to the widening of the field, but to the overestimation of irrational factors.

Also, they did not reject technology. In spite of this they searched for the appropriate context of its reception. Kanellopoulos and Tsatsos appropriated technology through the distinction between Kultur and Zivilisation: the neutrality or the uncontrolled character of the second imposed its impregnation by the first. For Glinos, on the other hand, the distinction between Kultur and Zivilisation constituted an illusion; since the inherently progressive powers of technology would be led by the proletariat, the coincidence of the two spheres would be, as the Soviet paradigm indicated, inevitable. All of them were characterized by the modernist ethos of the revolt against decadence. Also, they explicitly connected the appropriation of science and technology with organized institutional nets which expected to transcend the long past parliamentarian order. They sought to establish “State-Gardeners”, as Baumann puts it, which took on major modernist plans and educated new and healthy men and women. Glinos dreamed of a State which would create the universal communist unity, while Kanellopoulos focused on the “poetic elites” that would lead the Nation to its destinies; Tsatsos from his part placed emphasis on the State which transcended Time and individual life, was prior of individual liberties and rights, moralized its citizens and established the real communism.

A closing remark is here necessary. Given that the discussion on science and technology in modern Greece takes place in the terms of the already presented debate, it is useful to reflect on the implications either of the distinction between Kultur and Zivilisation or the unquestioned acceptation of “science” and “technology”. Moreover, since the ideological positions of these intellectuals are evoked in the modern debates, some reminding is needed. The communist humanism of Glinos was strongly connected with new forms of mystification based on the conception of the
historical laws by the experts. The priority of ethical freedom, in which Tsatsos attributed major significance, over the social one, had autarchic dimensions, since a powerful ethical State was being conceived as superior to mere individuals. Finally, Kanellopoulos’ praising of prophetic and poetic element was identified with totalitarian political solutions which sourced from an elitist will.

References


