

On the Social Construction of Hellenism: Cold War Narratives of Modernity, Development and Democracy for Greece

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The U.S. intervention in Greece during the 1940s and the subsequent close relationship of the two states has had a dramatic effect in the Greek political, social and economic life. While the particular circumstances of postwar Greece initially gave the American polity a strong military turn, the objective, however, as in the rest of Europe was social and political reform as well as economic development. In many respects, and despite the highhanded and imperious form of the American administration, in the second half of the past century Greece did indeed take a radical turn toward modernizing its institutions and practices.

Many good studies have dealt with the above issues. An aspect often missing in our evaluations of the postwar history of Greece and this latest phase of modernization, however, is that of culture. I suggest that the images and stories of the past, especially those of classical antiquity, on which the nation draws since its inception already, have had an effect not merely on the people's cultural identities but also on the turn that their political and economic lives took after the war. Furthermore, I argue that this same cultural heritage, subject to the structural postwar transformations it was inadvertently changed and re-articulated to meet the demands of a new age. The analysis that follows then presents a sociological examination of these rather recent transformations in the meaning and uses of what we call 'Hellenism.' At the same time I take a closer look at the ways in which 'Hellenism' alluded to the social, political and economic future of Greece. I suggest that these transformations happened in the intersection of two distinct cultural programs: an American one, which viewed Hellenism as a mirror of the American postwar modernization project emphasizing democratic tutelage, economic liberalism and individual humanism. And a Greek cultural program which capitalized on the idea of 'Hellas' as a way of national affirmation and in many occasions as a bulwark against foreign hegemony and control. Provided the limited time we have I will mostly focus here on the American postwar vision of 'Hellas' opening a small window in time and observing events that took place roughly during the decade that followed the war. I will outline one of the Marshall Plan programs which provided for the revival and development of the tourist industry in Greece while making a special provision for the rehabilitation of museums and archaeological sites which would cater to the interests and comfort of the foreign visitors. One project in particular receives special attention: the reconstruction of the Attalos Stoa and the discussions in which it was enveloped.

Methodologically I observe the three main principles of what has been known as the 'strong program' in cultural sociology, an approach which is broadly understood as structural hermeneutics: I argue for the centrality of culture in social action and its relative autonomy from social structure, I attempt to hermeneutically analyze my subject tracing the codes, narratives and symbols that create the webs of social meaning and I try to explain just how culture interferes with and directs our social lives by anchoring causality in proximate actors and agencies. More specifically I account for the centrality of the Hellenic tradition in the collective imaginary of Greece. Through a 'thick

description' of texts (and I mean 'texts' here not in the strictest sense of the word) such as newspaper or magazine articles, speeches, exhibition catalogues, television programs, photographs, books and private communication, which I have accessed primarily through archival research, I try to reconstruct and interpret the significance and meaning of Hellenism and its influence on contemporary social life. I particularly focus on the archaeologists, as scientists, intellectuals and public actors embedded on various social, political and economic networks. I argue that archaeologists have had a very important role to play in cultural production and myth-making. I follow them, therefore, in their work within and outside the boundaries of their discipline, and I try to explain the processes through which they contributed in the transformation of the idea of 'Hellas.' I maintain that today 'Hellenism' is perceived as concomitant with American ideas of political and social organization and as a major economic force in the world markets for cultural heritage.

Hellenism is a rather baggy and questionable idea that eludes definition. It has a very long history the beginnings of which we can probably trace back to Herodotus who perceived it as an expression of the cultural and ethnic identity of Greekness, alluding to "common bloodlines, common language, altars to the gods and sacrifices shared in common, and common mores and habits." Centuries and even millennia of various receptions have overlaid Hellenism with multiple meanings. Democracy, enlightenment, the doctrine of critique, aesthetic and political movements, among which the Greek national project, have been informed by classical antiquity while in the process have altered it beyond historical recognition. In the wake of the Cold War era, Hellenism was employed once more to shape new ontological and epistemological distinctions between the Democratic West and the Communist East while today is synonymous with economic development if not economic survival.

The project of the reconstruction of the Attalos Stoa to function as the museum of the Ancient Agora of Athens in the early 1950's may provide us with a good insight into the processes of these cultural transformations. The Stoa was first built in 159 B.C. by Attalos II, king of Pergamon, an ancient Greek city located in modern-day Turkey. Like the scions of several other royal families of the Mediterranean world in the Hellenistic period he had studied in the schools of Athens and the Stoa was essentially a gift of appreciation to his alma mater. The two storey building with a two-aisled colonnade in each floor backed by a row of 42 rooms, which served chiefly as shops, provided a sheltered promenade and income to the city which rented out the stores to individual merchants. It further adorned the Agora, the place where the political, cultural and economic heart of the city beat. While the building had a long life, it finally met the fate of many others when in 267 A.D. the Herulians, a nomadic Germanic people invaded Athens and largely destroyed it.

The Stoa would receive attention again in the 1940s along with a renewed interest on the part of the U.S. in all-things-Greek: in Greek politics and the subversive fight of the communist National Liberation Front (EAM), in the Greek economy that lied in rumbles, in the cultural legacy of classical antiquity. One may say that a new kind of Philhellenism was on the rise which was concomitant with the growing anxiety over the political fate of Greece and its neighboring countries which were increasingly coming under the communist influence. In the midst of this growing fear and anxiety, which

would take various forms and expressions during the coming years of the Cold War, classical antiquity had a role to play. Most importantly it provided a narrative and a moral framework for the first post-war systematic involvement of the U.S. in the internal affairs of another state.

The Marshall Plan in Greece gave the greatest priority to the development of agriculture, industry and infrastructure. Tourism was initially planned to absorb the smallest part out of the economic aid package. Nevertheless, tourism was recognized for its potential to evolve into the most fertile source of foreign exchange. Greece offered a number of attractions among which a rich history of world reputation and monuments “whose names are not simply reminders of extinct civilizations but are also household words in every language as comparisons to majesty and beauty.” The first agreement between the Economic Cooperation Administration and the Greek government for the development of tourism did not make any special provisions for the preservation or promotion of cultural heritage. However, after a recommendation by Oscar Broneer, the Acting Director of the ASCSA at the time and a memorandum to the American ambassador by Carl Blegen, eminent archaeologist and Cultural Attaché with the Embassy for a brief year in 1946-7 the ECA and the Greek government entered a second agreement providing for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of some of the most prominent museums and monuments of the country. The emphasis was largely placed on museums and sites of the classical age. The ASCSA would also work hard to have the project of the reconstruction of the Attalos Stoa included in this program and ultimately secure the lion’s share from a rather shrinking budget.

The importance of the antiquity for the future of Greece and the American reconstruction efforts was framed in at least a couple of different ways. In Broneer’s words: “It is recognized that Greece holds a peculiar position in the battle for democracy because of its geographical situation. For this reason Greece was the chief country to benefit from the Truman Doctrine which constitutes the first step toward the rehabilitation of Europe. In one other respect Greece differs from the rest of the European countries. The often repeated phrase ‘Greece is the cradle of democracy’ is more than a hackneyed slogan for orators on the 25th of March. Anyone acquainted with the early history of the United States knows that our own democracy and the constitution of the United States is based upon the principles established by the Athenian democracy two and a half millennia ago. The relics of that age, its architecture, sculpture, ceramic art, and other priceless remains constitute a joint heritage of the western civilization... While we are straining our efforts to save the western democracies it would be a travesty of our intentions should these irreplaceable treasures be allowed to disappear.” Furthermore, he suggested that, “the antiquities of Greece constitute a productive source of revenue capable of adding to the national treasury some thirty million dollars in the course of three years. This income should be balanced against the expenditure of a little over one million dollars during the same period. No investment in the economy of Greece can match this for returns.” Blegen on the other side developed his argument in these terms: “the project should be examined and judged purely on a business basis, as a measure directly and profitably promoting economic recovery” (Series 800, Box 804/6, Folder 11).

Broneer’s and Blegen’s lines of argument would be reproduced time and again. Strategic and political considerations, which had to do with the threat that the communist

National Liberation Front (EAM) posed for the American interests in the area, made Greece a priority for Truman. It was firmly believed that if Greece would come under the Soviet influence then, according to a very popular theory at the time, the whole Middle East would follow. This sense of urgency was further accentuated by what Broneer recognized as the 'Greek exceptionalism,' the qualitative difference of Greece from the other European nations by way of her rich cultural heritage and her symbolic importance first for American history and identity and second for the civilized western world. Consequently, these strong symbolic dimensions of the 'idea of Hellas,' of 'Hellenism' exercised a powerful influence on the political direction that the country would take following its exit from the world war and the subsequent civil war. It was certainly not the first time that the ancestors' legacy had dictated the political and cultural identity of the country. Late in 18th and early in 19th century the Greek intellectuals' choice of classical antiquity as the proper cultural origin of the modern Greek nation placed squarely the new state among the other European nations. In that sense, the new nation of Greece was swiftly purified from its Ottoman influences and local traditions, which carried the signs of multiple cultures and histories, and dictated a political and social organization which in many respects was entirely foreign to the people of Greece.

But it wasn't merely idealism, as understood through the prism of Hellenism, and political considerations that dictated the future of Greece. Economic recovery, like for the rest of Europe, was of vital importance if political stability, democratization and development were the ultimate goals. Greece, along the long agricultural and maritime traditions, on which for centuries she was surviving and periodically thriving, had one more source to financially draw from; Hellenism. This rich cultural tradition that had informed various aesthetic, philosophical and political movements around the world it would be now introduced as a powerful economic force. Marx, who had suggested that capitalism was incompatible with classical antiquity, was wrong. In *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* he would write: "What chance has Vulcan against Roberts & Co., Jupiter against the lightning-rod and Hermes against the Credit Mobilier? All mythology overcomes and dominates and shapes the forces of nature in the imagination and by the imagination; it therefore vanishes with the advent of real mastery over them" (p. 110). Mythology did not only not crash under the burden of capitalism and modernity but, at least in the case in discussion, it enabled it and promised to propel Greece into the future.

This was certainly an argument that a few at least of the trustees of the ASCSA who pushed hard for the completion of the restoration project of the Attalos Stoa understood very clearly. For instance, Ward Canaday, Chairman of the Board of Trustees at the time and President of Willys-Overland Motor Company, one of the biggest contractors of jeeps for the American army during the war or Arthur V. Davis, one of the wealthiest individuals in the 1950s and President of Alcoa, the world's leading aluminum company which held the monopoly in the field until the government had to intervene after the end of the war, understood social reality and even culture mostly in economic terms. Canaday would feverishly work and network in order to raise the two million dollars which was the total cost of the reconstruction, half of which was covered by John D. Rockefeller, always arguing for the economic benefits of the project as a tourist attraction.

The Attalos Stoa would be completed within a three-year period, from 1953 to 1956. The inauguration that was planned to coincide with the celebration of the American School's 75th anniversary and the subsequent celebrations were closely followed by the Greek and the international press. The Greek press conveyed the great pride of the people who saw themselves as the direct descendants of the ancients, praised the American generosity and Philhellenism and alluded to the highest of the ideals which were born in the Athenian Agora. The potential material benefits of the project were only cursorily mentioned. The American press would stress the indebtedness of the world and capitalize upon the democratic legacy of ancient Greece.

Myths enable and constrain imagination and in the process, always being subject to interpretation, they change. In different contexts their meanings might differ (Sahlins 1981; Schudson 1989; Swidler 2001) and transvaluation is always in progress in order to capture or to craft the moral frameworks of our societies. For, as Jeffrey Alexander suggests:

Human beings are story-telling animals. We tell stories about our triumphs. We tell stories about tragedies. We like to believe in the verisimilitude of our accounts, but it is the moral frameworks themselves that are real and constant, not the factual material that we employ them to describe (2003, p. 84).

In this era of globalization, of economic interdependence and constant inter- and trans-culturation our myths, our stories, our values are not ours alone. Blegen, refereeing the American intervention in Greece in the late 1940s, expressed it very succinctly: "we believe our own vital interests are bound up with the situation in Greece, and ... we are determined to defend our own social order and ideals of government and to safeguard the way of life in which we have faith."

Today, more than sixty years later, few would argue against the dependence of Greek life, or for that matter most of the world's, on American politics and practices. "We could even say that everyone in the world today has two nationalities—the one they were born with and American," Robert Bellah argues (2004, p.xii). Yet again, what most often remain unnoticed are the stories, the narratives that shape our social unconscious and make this interconnectedness possible.

In the aftermath of World War II, the United States, having emerged victorious from its struggle with ultimate evil, had to grapple with its sense of destiny. The myth of the Chosen Nation, a myth which sure enough has fueled the national imagination of other nations as well, was coming back to haunt if not to dictate the sense of the U.S.'s responsibility in the opening world arena: "America had a mission—we thought it was a divine mission—to spread freedom, and freedom meant democracy, and democracy meant capitalism, and all that meant the American way of life."

Landing on Greece in 1947 to combat communism, the U.S. was acting upon its own values of freedom, individualism and democracy, and safeguarding democracy for the country which has been charged as its first progenitor was the ultimate mission and one which could resonate with anyone who shared this old story. Based on what Hughes calls "the myth of the innocent nation" (2003), the U.S. would be thrust upon the world to save it from evil, a battle which continues in our time structured on the same dichotomy, albeit with a different foe. Hence to save Greece was to save the American soul.

Historical “ifs” are not very popular, and it would be hard to speculate on what would have happened with the “ideal of Hellas” had the communists won the fight. Following the KKE’s defeat, the prospect of being rehabilitated into the national body gave a new impetus to the intellectuals of the Left to openly subscribe to the logic of historical continuity with classical antiquity (Koufou 2008), a path which might not have been taken had the civil war ended differently.

One may talk about another instance of “colonization of the ideal,” as Neni Panourgia has succinctly described the European identity formulation process against the cultural prototype of Classical Greece (2004), a process which bears many similarities to subsequent appropriations by the Greek state in its own efforts to articulate an official national narrative (Kotsakis 1998; Plantzos 2008). The Americans had wrestled with the ancients as well in their aesthetic and philosophical quests and in their efforts to find the most virtuous political system appropriate for their nation of states (Richard 1994; Winterer 2002), or, as Bernard Bailyn suggests (1992), employed them to window-dress their political thought. However profound or superficial, reflective or opportunistic, insightful or cursory, the American post-war engagement with Hellenism drew from and capitalized upon the undisputable prestige of the ideal and propelled it into the future, providing the subtext for Greece’s place within the post-war world system and further introducing its cultural heritage into the world of free markets as a vehicle for economic development, political stabilization and modernization. Ultimately, purified in the springs of antiquity, both victorious America and civil-war-wrecked Greece re-affirmed their democratic legacies and pledged to combat communism with tourism and Doric columns.

The Megali Idea : an empty signifier

My thesis argues that the 'Megali Idea' continues to be present in today's Greek society. The thesis will further argue that the 'Megali Idea' has never disappeared (despite arguments to the contrary elsewhere). This is of importance because I believe that the 'Megali Idea' continues to shape politics and culture in Greece despite the fact that the concept seems to have disappeared in the public sphere. What my thesis will try and explore is how this is possible and how this works. The academic significance of the project is highlighted through what is to my knowledge a unique use of a critical perspective of the Megali Idea through a theoretical model. The analytical structure of the project will delve into the concept of 'form' in parallel with a debate on the Megali Idea as a 'floating empty signifier'.

Man according to Michel Foucault can only be revealed when bound to a previously existing historicity and the Greeks of 1835 began to live life through the ancients even though many of them saw themselves as heirs of the Christianised Roman Empire (i.e Byzantium)¹, nevertheless this continued to provide them with the necessary historicity that was needed for their birth. When the Greek tries to define himself as a living being, he can uncover his own beginning only against the background of a life which itself began long before him.² Thus the well known theory by Fallmerayer was met with much hostility at this stage when the Greek nation was in the midst of composing a 'being' and forming a historicity based on the ancient Greek heritage which previously occupied the space of the Nation. There is an obvious need for an origin that does not have behind it a 'nothingness'. The origin has to already be filled with images and events it is not enough to come from 'stones and trees' as Stephanos Koumanoudis found himself saying a couple of decades later when he tried to justify the fact that there was a Greek nation throughout the middle ages³. The need to form a nation is no different for the Greek.

The newly formed Greek nation/state was forming its history by threading its past to the past of its space. "The scraps, patches, and rags of daily life must be repeatedly turned into the signs of a national culture, while the very act of the narrative performance interpellates a growing circle of national subjects."⁴ Greece's national culture continued on a daily basis to acquire these scraps, patches and rags and after the declaration made by Fallmerayer these signs became more important for the construction of a national conscience. The growing

¹ E.J.Hobsbawm – Nations and Nationalism since 1780, Programme, myth, reality Cambridge University press, 2010 p77

² Michel Foucault – The Order of Things, Routledge 2002

³ Στ.Κουμανούδης, Λόγος εκφωνηθείς τη 20 Μαΐου 1853 κατά την επετειον εορτήν της ιδρύσεως του πανεπιστημίου Όθωνος, Αθήνα 1853

⁴ Homi K. Bhabha - Nation and Narration, Routledge, 2005, pp297

circle of national subjects combined with the signs of national culture played a directional role to the formation and continuity of the Greek kingdom; in the case of the kingdom control needed to be gained of 'historical borders', these 'historical borders' of the past 'overlap' in the present. The creation of the Megali Idea was a follow up from this. What the *Megali idea* sought to do was to create clear and distinct territorial but also spiritual boundaries between people, which inevitably also lead to an internal restructuring of society that was important for the enlargement of the kingdom.

It is in 1835 that Ioannis Kolettis⁵ will make the first reference to the Megali Idea,⁶ the concept which will later become a vision for the 'new' Greek nation. Despite this first mention by Kolettis, the Megali Idea does not become relevant until his speech at the General Assembly for the national constitution of 1844.

The following is the most famous excerpt of the speech at the General Assembly:

“On this occasion for which we have gathered here, for the composition of the Constitution, the bible of our political existence, I wonder, how much we need to feel this oaths' significance, so that we finally have two bibles, one for religion and another for our political existence. With the geographical position that Greece holds, it is the centre of Europe, for on its right is the East and on its left is the West; and it seems like it is her mission to enlighten the West with its fall and the East through its rebirth. The first has been taken care of by our ancestors whilst the latter left to us. In the spirit of this oath and of this *Great idea*, I watched the nations legal representatives assemble to decide not for Greece's future, but for the future of the Greek race itself. I wish that Paleon Patron Germanos, Zaimis, Kolokotronis, and other representatives of the former National Assembly were present today as well as those who took to their guns for this cause, agreeing with me that we have distanced ourselves from that Great Idea of the country, which we initially saw in Rhigas' song. Then, united in one spirit, all who were called Greek won a big part of this cause of ours. But, of course, having the same opinion you also wish for the same thing, for each one of us is conditioned by the idea of his brilliant Greek origin and each one of you feels that this Assembly took place in Athens, a city whose splendor, greatness and unique masterpieces continue to be admired

⁵ Ioannis Kolettis (1774-1847) was the first 'constitutional' Prime-Minister of Greece. Founder of the French Party, fought in the revolution of 1821 and 'father' of the *Great idea*.

⁶ It is in a reply to the King concerning national days of remembrance and public sports events, that Ioannis Kolettis specifically mentions '...des grandes idees...'. It is already clear in 1835 that Kolettis believes that the link between public sports events in the new Greek state and ancient Greek history is important for the development of culture.

through the centuries. Athens, but also the whole of Greece divided then into different states, was defeated, but her fall enlightened the world. Thus in this day and age what hope can this reborn Greece carry, united with one religion and one Constitution that we are now evaluating?..⁷

The moment that Kolettis took to the stand the actual debate concerned the matter of the heterochthons (those born outside the kingdom of Greece) and the autochthones (those born within). The general assembly dealt with a petition signed by around 2600 people asking those who came to Greece after the revolution to give up their positions in the civil service, as it was believed that through their action they were depriving fighters of the revolution and their children from every available means of income. The report on this matter proposed that they who settled in Greece before 1827 would have the same rights as the autochthones and those to arrive after would be deprived of these rights. The final outcome to this was a compromise and was deemed appropriate that 'Citizens would be those who acquired the characteristics of a citizen according to the law of the state'.⁸ Ioannis Kolettis was a heterochthon who embraced a greater vision of the nation and Kolettis used the term Megali Idea to show the direction which Hellenism would take. For Kolettis this direction was to enlighten the East or to carry the light from West to East. The use of the term by Kolettis on January 14th 1844 at the General Assembly for the National Constitution can in this instance be seen as a contribution to the achievement of the uniform duration of the Greek race, the realization of this historical duration and the transference of knowledge.⁹

In his speech Kolettis makes it clear that Greece is that country which all other countries should be grateful to and there is no distinction between ancient and modern but instead an emphasis is placed on the duration of the nation which is why in this case he places religion and politics side by side. It becomes clear now that the concern is not about Greece but in fact about the Greek race, the continuity of the Greek race, its homogeneity within a historical duration. Furthermore it is evident from this text that Kolettis is also concerned with what the Greek people will give to future peoples, not only to Greeks in fact but to the world. On a more practical point of view the term Megali Idea is mentioned once in the text but he refers to the 'idea' or an 'idea' twice more. Kolettis' combination of these two words created an

⁷ Ioannis Kolettis' speech at the General Assembly for the National Constitution in *K.T. Dimaras, 1982, pp405-406 ORIGINAL?*

⁸ Ιωαννης Δημακης – Η πολιτειακη μεταβολη του 1843 και το ζητημα των αυτοχθονων και ετεροχθονων, Ιστορικη Βιβλιοθηκη,Θεμελιο,1991 p18

⁹K.T.Dimaras – Ellinikos Romantismos, Neoellinika Meletimata,1982 pp361

intense outcome and for this reason it was Kolettis' speech which was 'chosen' as the one to mark the Idea of the nation and the consequent vision for Hellenism.

There were two other speeches which took place during the General Assembly before Kolettis and they also spoke of 'the general idea of the Greek race' and 'the national idea of the constitution'¹⁰ and either of these could have lead the nation but within the larger matrix of given cultural elements Kolettis' Megali Idea was the *how* which embraced the metaphor of the nation. Kolettis, perhaps without his own knowledge allowed for a recognition of an identity which was already there. It became a recreative as opposed to a transformative speech and in conjunction with the larger political climate it made a difference to how the Megali Idea he used signified the changing role of his society.¹¹ In saying this it becomes evident through a multiple array of sources that despite the passion Kolettis used during his speech, "Of course the Megali Idea of the prime-minister was in his heart and on his lips all of his life"¹², what played a significant role to its future development was pure chance. It was not entirely clear from the beginning if in fact his speech was pre-prepared or even if Kolettis actually meant high opinion (*haute idée*) instead of great idea (*grande idée*).¹³

It is clear however that Kolettis was not looking to decipher ideological puzzles what he was looking for was a positive result for his career. He was only interested in making people see his point of view and it was through the continuous shift of that point into obscurity that the Megali Idea was placed on the political map, a development which Kolettis could never have predicted.¹⁴ When Kolettis mentions Rhigas in his speech at the Assembly it has been seen by many as a proposal towards expansionism and one of the first traces of irredentism however as argued by V. Kremmidas it is not a proposal for irredentism and at no point does Kolettis imply that the Megali Idea (in his speech) is irredentist¹⁵ but instead this must be seen as an example which emphasises that a great nation does not have any barriers and that all Greeks can be united despite their location, whether they are within or without the state, autochthons or heterochthons. The Megali Idea signified the meaning of unity and stability to the people and the need for this Megali Idea becomes apparent much later through the effect

¹⁰ Alexandros I. Despotopoulou – *Meletes Politikis Istorias, Ekdotike Athinon*, 1989, pp102

¹¹ David Lloyd – *The Oxford Literary Review, Neocolonialism* ed. Robert Young vol 13 pp72

¹² Skopetea Elli – *To protypo Vasilio kai I Megali Idea*, 1988 pp257

¹³ I use the French because one of the hypotheses is that Kolletis who was a member of the French political party was influenced by Balzac during his stay in France, who in his *Monograph of the Paris Press* uses similar terminology.

¹⁴ Skopetea Elli – *To protypo Vasilio kai I Megali Idea*, 1988 pp259

¹⁵ Vasilis Kremmidas – *Megali Idea, Transformations of a national ideology*, 2010, p28

which Kolettis' invention of the term has on the people of Greece. In the words of Ion Dragoumis in 1908 "Is there a need for the existence of a Megali Idea? This is like someone asking if there is a need for the existence of the Greek Nation and the free Greek state, which will not survive, they will not let it survive, when the nation disappears"¹⁶

The true dimensions of the terminology first thought of by Ioannis Kolettis do not take form until the 1850s where the first generation of Greeks show that they are not wholly satisfied with previous realities comprised of the achievements of the Greek Revolution, it seems that this generation had reached the point where it almost demanded deeper and wider change.

The Megali Idea is based upon the notion of the Nation, born from the politics of the period and brought into existence from surrounding intellectuals. This brings us back to the original problem that of the duration of the Megali Idea, the identity of the essence is, I believe, the key to the long lasting life of the Megali Idea and its pre-determined destiny. The identity of this essence corresponds to the different time periods it floats through. This brings us to the point of essence where Essence according to Hegel and as Žižek frames it remains an empty determination whose adequacy can be tested only by verifying the extent to which it is expressed, rendered manifest, in the external form.

In this instance the Megali Idea formed by the intellectuals of the period can only be carried through as an Idea which is in itself 'furnished with its own content' but has one abstract, universal form. It is this form which concerns us. The Idea, as form, contained the creation of the Neo-Hellenic state (of course under the influence of the Enlightenment). Within the abstract form of the Idea the outsiders – the Phanariots, tradesmen, intellectuals – added sufficient content for the construction of a new narrative.

In conclusion, today because this narrative was never a solid form of signification but instead it was an ideological tool which transformed itself according to the surrounding political situation it continues, in my opinion, to exist as an important tool for hegemony. It is worth noting at this point that it was when the Greek economy started to grow that the Megali Idea started to fade. Currently during the present economic crisis, the people of Greece are desperately seeking a unifying force and it becomes clearer as time progresses that the key for national unification is a regression towards nationalism. The spectral presence of the Megali Idea without a doubt continues to haunt the idea of the Nation as form, clearly seen in a recent statement by the political leader of the right wing party Antonis Samaras: "We are Greek. We are the Seed that does not die".

¹⁶ Ion Dragoumis, I Megali Idea, 1908 p4



Sign seen in the Northern Greek city of Kavala

The Foucaultian Securitisation of Contemporary Greek Politics

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Ἅπαντα τε επιστήμη, χωριζομένη δικαιοσύνης και της άλλης αρετής, πανουργία, ου σοφία φαίνεται'

['And all knowledge (science), when separated from justice and the other virtues is seen to be cunning, and not wisdom'.] Plato, *Μενέξενος*, 246e7, 247a.

Introduction

The current socio-economic crisis which Greece is undergoing does not simply signify, nor is it merely the upshot of, the serious disintegration occurring at the level of the basic tangible pillars defining its political structure. Such an explanation could have perhaps seemed satisfactory were it that this multi-level breakdown currently experienced by the Greek people was simply economic or financial in nature. However, in reality, this crisis does not only consist of an economic impoverishment but the severe deformation and turmoil in all other aspects of community life too: tense social relations, intensified and violent internal social strife, immigration problems, and general institutional collapse. Indeed, the current political situation even bears serious impact on the bodily and psychological health of its subjects, which is not more than merely owed to the lack of a satisfactory welfare system to support the natural distress of shock and uncertainty. More importantly, what is at stake in contemporary Greek political life, as this paper will suggest and discuss, is a threatening epidemic of normative nihilism, stemming from the transition to a new mode of governance that fails to provide citizens with the necessary ideational pillars and normative structures which make political life intelligible and which are thus imperative to a healthy social existence. Amongst the costs of this development what is

included (which however are never really counted in governmental spreadsheets) is loss of identity, loss of social and political coherence but also loss of meaningfulness. Loss of normative and moral meaningfulness is entropy, which not only effectively means disorder, but which also signals the warning sign of a de-humanisation of political life¹.

Much empirically simplistic discussion ascribes this chaotic turmoil merely to an effect of wrong choices of the past, rigid structures and governmental as well as extra-governmental chronic immorality - formally termed and classified as 'corruption'. More courageous commentators, who often come from within the government's chambers, have even gone as far as to point the finger of blame to some arbitrarily projected kind of socio-psycho-pathology that most modern Greeks are thought to undergo. This is indeed a curious and interesting thought, especially when it comes from within the government. For, if psycho-pathology is the new suspect to appropriately transfer responsibility upon, then what seems even more curious is that no policy has thus far been instituted to address this collective psychological dimension, which although ranked by some at the top of the list of causes of the current crisis, paradoxically has not been met by any willingness to conduct appropriate research on it or develop any policy to confront it.

However, all that is needed to bypass the mere infertile blaming games is a simple deepening move in our critical sight below and beyond the surface of chaos or disorder, which, because of its concealing function, often acts as a potent impediment to the clarity of our critical scrutiny. If we pierce through its confused, plastic and complicated façade, it is soon revealed that disorder is not but a surface reflection of key information regarding the nature of contemporary Greek society, the character of its political power and the quality of its power relations. Turmoil is not the problem *per se*: it is merely the active expression, the ongoing effect, the symbolic representation if you like, of a series of profound changes Greece is undergoing at the moment in its very modes of governance, its political mentality, its political self-perception as well as the strength, content and configuration of its normative structures. National identity is being transformed in a manner that shakes the core of Hellenic identity, as well as in a direction that fails to effectively articulate –let alone satisfy- the basic human need for a substantial normative framework. Nevertheless, in its counterpart revealing function, disorder also comes to speak for itself, by means of public discourse, often through the same means that society, agents of power and citizens have in order to converse and express public thinking: that is, the media. Disorder thus

¹ For more on the idea of humanism as a crucial feature for healthy individual and social existence see the introduction in John Anton, 'Eros Politikos: The Return of the Hellenes', (Athens: Miletus Publishers, 2010).

becomes an epiphenomenon serving to indicate the failure of modern technologies and tactics of government to fill the vacuum of meaningfulness and the erosion of the basic cohesive ideational substratum of society caused by the transition to a new system of power.

Hypothesis: The Securitisation of Greek Politics

In this paper, I present the argument that contemporary Greek politics is experiencing a transition to a new mode of governmentality. This transition is at once both the cause of the shifting character of its political structure as well as the result of the changing mentalities exhibited by officials and popular ways of thinking about politics. The change in the mode of governance gravitates towards the securitisation of Greek politics in the Foucaultian sense –that is, towards the application and domination of a new way of practicing and understanding what politics is, what counts as politically significant, as well as how political performance is assessed.

‘Governmentality’ and ‘securitisation’ are two key notions introduced by the political philosophy of Michel Foucault. The former describes the different sets of methods, ways, mentalities, rationalities and techniques (in short, the different political ‘logics’) through which subjects are governed, and which can be said to define different modes of political regimes (other than the traditional taxonomies of regimes). On the other hand, the notion of ‘apparatuses of security’, or ‘securitisation’, refers to a specific mode of governmentality typical of modern western liberal societies, which is characterised by the numericalisation of political and economic practices, the prominence of statistics as both an appropriate heuristic and an authoritative indicator of governmental decision-making, as well as a bandwidth (instead of a binary) of optimality defining the acceptable and the desirable in political terms.

Using this Foucaultian conceptual framework as my theoretical apparatus, in combination with the method of critical discourse analysis, I examine certain examples from Greek media discourse in order to demonstrate the reality and particular form of Greek political securitization; as well as in order to show the media’s conducive role to this development, through its purporting a public perception of political events and subjects which are conceived, understood and calculated in terms of economical language, quantitative indicators, proportions, numerical representations and a favouring of statistics over other, perhaps equally legitimate, modes of political expressivity.

Media information and dissemination, both television and newspapers, have been quintessential in the formation of a securitized discourse in Greece. And as it is now commonly and widely recognized by social scientists, media-generated discourses are more than simple projections of narrative: they are both descriptions and reflections of social reality in as much as they are active factors which mould, shape, create and disseminate collective states of consciousness, patterns of perceptions, correlations between concepts and events, as well as they ‘radiate’ feelings – functional as those states are in the carrying out of particular social, economic and political processes. In light of its reflective but also productive dimensions, observing and critically examining media representations is one of the most basic but indeed effective ways of grasping the trends of public discourse. And public discourse is important for it is a primary locus of ideology and power relations as well as a functional vehicle of public modes of perception - thus inextricably linked to governmentality, in the Foucaultian sense.

First, the paper starts by briefly and succinctly presenting what is meant by securitization in Foucault’s political theory. Secondly, it is demonstrated how this notion applies to the Greek case with the helpful use of media examples; and thirdly, the paper discusses the implications that securitisation as a new form of governance bears for the particular kind of subjectivity and self-perception that Greek citizens, either forcefully or organically, have come to assume in the context of a securitized society.

I. Foucaultian Security

According to Foucault, security is a term which refers to a mode or ‘apparatus’ of government, to a set of techniques, technologies and mechanisms of social controls underpinned by a particular mentality of governance; hence, defining a particular govern-mentality. Security as a governmentality arose in Europe around the 18th century having political economy as its major form of knowledge and influenced by the physiocratic mentality and the technological advancements of the time, which provided new dimensions of interpretation and managing of social affairs, closely related to the birth of biopolitics².

As a mode of governance, security is at once both a particular set of governing techniques, as well as a ‘logic of practice’ that sustains them, which is no longer based on clear normative distinctions, values, or traditional

² Michel Foucault, ‘Security, territory, population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-78’, (ed) Michel Senellart, (transl.) Graham Burchell, (Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

political principles such as ‘sovereignty’, ‘common good’, ‘the peoples’ that have generally acted as the guiding principles of political organization, and which have pretty much comprehensively shaped the political experience of the West since the 15th century. Government, in its securitized version, becomes a *management*, rather than strictly ‘ruling’, and specifically a management of ‘averages’, ‘proportions’ and estimates of probabilities pertaining to *certain* aspects and facts about the life and the functioning of society. In general, security is thus a highly economized, numericalised, quasi-scientific technology of governance which focuses on costs and benefits, reductions and increases, averages, optimal limits and bandwidths.

To bring out the distinctiveness of security, Foucault juxtaposes it to the two other major types of governance techniques identified in his work: the juridico-legal and the disciplinary modes. In the first case, the juridico-legal modality, predominant from archaic times until roughly the middle ages, is a system of legal penal codes characterized by definite normative prescriptions/prohibitions, of the form of ‘*you must not steal*’. Under this modality, there exists a clear binary distinction between the permitted and the prohibited, the right and the wrong, the guilty and the innocent.

The second modality is disciplinary governance: what is here added is a corrective-preventive-normalising dimension, involving a series of ‘supervisions, checks, inspections, and varied controls that even before the thief has stolen makes it possible to identify whether or not he is going to steal’³. Thus, beyond the binary ‘innocent’ or ‘guilty’ distinction, what further appears is a new category of subjectivity, that of ‘the culprit’, following along with the instituting of a series of processes and procedures targeting the effective transformation and molding of the person, either preventively in the form of education or reparatively in the form of obligatory work, moralization, correction etc.

In the case of security, however, there no longer is a binary division between the permitted and the prohibited, no outright acceptance or rejection of certain social phenomena that in the past had been deemed as either undesirable or entirely intolerable. Rather, the regulative principle now consists in, on the one hand, an average of optimality, and on the other, a bandwidth of acceptance that must not be exceeded⁴. Questions of what constitutes the socially right or wrong give way to a logic which asks, for example: what is the socially and economically optimal level of criminality in society? What are the relevant costs and benefits of granting equal opportunities to the disabled, and what is the economically affordable rate at

³ Ibid., p.4.

⁴ Ibid., p.6.

which to do so? On the whole, as Foucault notes, the fundamental question for security is ‘economics and the economic relation between the cost of x and the cost of y’ (such as repression/delinquency, exclusion/inclusion, etc.)⁵.

Therefore, the first key dimension of security (out of the three which will be discussed in this paper), is that it consists of no integral, solid or coherent set of normative principles around which social life is clearly oriented. Consequently, in a securitized polity, the concept, status and function of law takes on a completely different meaning: for the securitized polity effectively accepts variations and deviations from its laws and principles, so long as those conform to a statistical model that has calculated and predicted them.

Note, however, that security as an edifice of government does not replace nor is it completely detached from the legal and disciplinary mechanisms. Rather, it works in conjunction with or superimposed upon them: it uses and employs them, inflates them if you like and redeploys them with a new tactic that conductively turns them towards the attainment of the economised goals that have come to dominate the political agenda. For, ‘in order to actually guarantee this security, one has to appeal (...) to a whole series of techniques of surveillance of individuals, the diagnosis of what they are, the classification of their mental structure, of their specific pathology, and so one has to appeal to a whole disciplinary series that proliferates under mechanisms of security is necessary to make them work’⁶.

Recent changes in Greece exemplify precisely a kind of securitized governance gradually gaining ground and prevailing as the most dominant form of government. Without aiming to present here a comprehensive historical genealogy of security in Greece (a task which is certainly outside the scope of this presentation and which constitutes a whole project in itself), I would still like to suggest that the first palpable indications of security in Greece can be traced around the 1980’s, when the prevalence of socialism and the institutionalization of various socialist mechanisms and policies – which were effectively of an economized kind, given the essential economic nature, orientation and ideological focus of socialism- established the mentality and reality of the ‘numerical indicator’, the quantifiable and the proportional measure, as both desirable and eventually the authoritative coordinates of public policy. But what I would rather like to specifically call our attention upon is the much starker, bolder and dramatised prevalence that security has assumed over the past two years in Greece, in light of the financial crisis and its ongoing effects. It is argued that the central role that has been ascribed to the financial crisis, and the economised public discourse that this naturally induced, is not just the natural repercussion nor an

⁵ Ibid., p.9.

⁶ Ibid., p.8.

exceptional emergency which acts as a disruption to normal political life; on the contrary, it signifies that natural evolution of a regime or dominant technique of government reaching its stage of maturity: namely, security.

II. First Dimension of Security: The Numericalisation of Political Life

The implications of the securitisation of Greek politics can be felt at three fundamental levels: its effects on the people and the dominant popular perceptions about the nature of political life; the understanding of what government is about, what governmental performance consists of and how its evaluation and legitimacy is derived; and lastly, how questions of social justice and morality are conceptualized and approached in a securitized state.

Since 2009, political life in Greece has been unprecedentedly and utterly taken over by numbers and economic indicators which have since monopolised public discourse. The general state of affairs has been that political life gradually became overly dominated by financial preoccupations, as well as it was postulated as critically determined by, and by principle reduced to certain key economic indicators which are represented in a numerical form. This has accordingly been reflected in – at the same time as it has been disseminated through- public discourse, which in the past years is revolving excessively around economic concepts, measures as well as the changes and fluctuations in those. The amount and percentage of debt, the fluctuations of national and international interest rates, GDP and GNP proportions, tax rates, unemployment rates, price ratios, pension cuts, selling bids: newspaper front pages and television screens have been literally -and constantly throughout these past two years- flooded with images of numbers and percentages, which were suddenly turned into the central premises of public discussion. The state of social life was progressively reduced to a discussion of debt. Public discourse was turned into a confused survey of economic indicators while the assessment of the performance of the political system was left entirely to be judged by the behavior of particular economic ratios.

The most striking but also characteristic example of this discursive securitization -perhaps a demarcating turning point in this development, was the discussion regarding the spreads. For a considerable number of months, public attention and government focus was almost exclusively devoted to the legendary spreads: millions of Greeks were hung up on television, newspaper and internet news waiting with almost a messianic anticipation the great conclusion of the unknown forces of speculation which were expected to determine the future of the country. For certain months at least, the

percentage of the spread had been idolized and turned into the central axis and determinant factor that was to conclude the fate of the nation, lay down the next policy measures, directly or indirectly prescribe the content and goals of the government, shape the future of the economy and the polity as a whole, down to the most microscopic individual reality of the labor worker. This remarkable, in its intensity, phenomenon in fact embodied some form of 'neo-superstition' or a kind of post-modern tribalism, highly messianic in its mentality and even primitive in its archetypal form. For the way the spread was treated, along of course with the very meaning and functioning principles of what a spread is in the first place, was homologous to the awe-struck way that ancient tribes used to treat the unpredictable, whimsical advent of the notorious cataclysmic rainfall, which was seen as depended upon the unknown, mysterious, uncontrollable natural forces of the sky-seated Great Spirit; something quite similar was at work in this example, only that in our case, and some thousands of years of evolution later, that was the unpredictable, uncontrollable market forces of the all-powerful earthly-seated 'speculative spirit'.

Similarly, a further tacit discursive projection slowly, yet increasingly, began to form: namely, that the performance of the government was to be entirely evaluated based on and derived from the performance and variation of certain economic indicators, whether or not – and this is an important point- these were indicators that the government had actually access to influence or not, such as, for example, spreads and international interest rates. It therefore came to be a standard feature of popular public discourse that the government was to be judged based on economic criteria and critical threshold values of indicators deemed as crucial, which either it would achieve or prevent, or not. As such, legitimacy and the standard legitimation model – essentially Lockean in its origin and logic- which held legitimacy as obtaining and stemming from the consent of the people to the authority and its policies, and which model had hitherto been the prevalent mentality of governance in Greece, was also fundamentally transformed and to a great extent nullified. For the unprecedented amount and intensity of public renouncement of governmental policy, in the form of protests, demonstrations and even revolutionary activity, which was essentially a clear expression of public dissent or, to be more precise, of the withdrawal of consent was neither accepted nor presented as such by public media; at least it was not that much discussed as a clear sign of a legitimacy deficit. The reason for this was partly that media-generated discourse appeared to be putting forward a new kind of version of legitimacy –a securitised version perhaps?- which purported legitimacy as no longer depending on actual political activity, civic action, civic presence, people coming out in the streets and shouting their message, writing banners, and blocking the parliament (all those absolutely stunning revolutionary events that Greece witnessed in the

past year or so); no, all these events and public expressions no longer served as adequate indicators, not even as indicators at all. Action and practical mechanical physical presence was no longer seen to be counting as a message; and no longer was it taken or allowed to be received as one, at least not to the proportion which it deserved or it would have been the case a few years back. Rather, legitimacy was now somehow presented as grounded and accounted for based on the following two considerations: one, as mentioned above, political performance given and derived by economic indicators; and secondly, the polls: i.e. the numerical representation of the average number of public acceptance of either specific policies or governing officials in general. Or, rather, to be more precise, a weighted average of the percentile of acceptance from the part of that small proportion of the population which had happened to participate in those poll measurements in the first place. Public opinion and the new version of consent was also effectively securitised: consent was no longer (if at all) to be derived from actual individuals performing real actions, but by a 'number' which represented those surveyed civilians, and to which one has access through the mathematical pie-charts and virtual representations of proportions acquiring their form in the parallel, virtual reality of the media.

But I would like to engage a bit more critically with this notion of security and with the standing of current political affairs in Greece, especially with regards to the dimension of social justice.

As it was mentioned above, one of security's main characteristics consists in its lack of a substantial or coherent set of normative principles. One of the repercussions of idealizing 'the number' (meaning all those numericalised expressions that operate as the dominant, authoritative and ultimately prescriptive heuristics of political governance) is that it entails the tendency to marginalize normative questions and silence or neutralize the question of morality of governmental measures. It thereby displaces questions of social justice to a secondary position vis-à-vis the postulated objectivity of the statistical indicators as therefore better and more appropriate judges and guides of social reality than moral principles or widespread public opinion.

However, as much as it may seem so in the first place, security is not devoid of normativity. In the first instance, as it was previously noted, security is not a political technology which functions independently of legal-judicial or disciplinary substrata, and these modes by definition entail a normative dimension (regardless of whether the commitment to them is genuine or merely functional to certain power relations). Furthermore, in some sense, security is itself a form of normative ideal, or a capsule of certain axioms and ideas bearing an evaluative dimension. This 'capsule of axiomatic meanings' in fact contains a number of onto-epistemological assumptions,

essentially ideological in kind, such as the unquestionable authority and hence the unbiased overarching objectivity of ‘the number’; the omnipresent applicability and absolute validity of the scientific paradigm of the post-Enlightenment period, from which the version of positive science we know today is essentially derived; the naturalness and indisputable primacy of the economy, and so forth. After all, as it was noted, security is itself a form of govern-mentality - i.e. a form of *mentality*, and therefore a function both of conceptual categories and patterns of intelligible thought, which are rarely free of an evaluative dimension.

But the problem with security qua a govern-mentality is that effectively it is a mentality which is self-defeating. This occurs because, in the first place, security tends to divert the scope of the mental-acts of its subjects away from contemplation of the intelligible aspects of social activity that distinguish human life and the very nature of those subjects-agents *qua* intelligible individuals; at the same time it thus conduces the reification of its subjects, turning them into calculating machines or tracing their role as merely instrumental in the working of the social whole – an issue which will be discussed at the last part of this paper. Security uses intelligible action to carry out a mode of governance and policies that actually serve to diminish, reduce, ignore and often even annihilate the dimension of intelligibility that characterises human social forms. It therefore impacts adversely on the structures of meaning which it uses in order to ideologically ground its otherwise normatively wanting prerequisites. Furthermore, although security seems to operate beyond normative binaries, in reality it hardly manages to escape the. This is because the number is deemed as a wiser and more appropriate judge of public policy than the people who form its subjects- say a simple civilian, because the number both commands the reality of society *as well as* it better knows what the right or the wrong, the optimal or not is for society. The number alone suffices to decide what is to be done, because what is to be done, that is - what is economically desirable- is regarded as an unquestionably objective, scientific, reality; and this objectivity is, in turn, obtained from the supposed objectivity of the number so that no subjective opinion of a simple ‘ignorant’ or ‘partial’ member of society can ‘rationally’ outweigh the postulated impartiality of the number. Further to the explicit signals of paternalism, what effectively emerges within security *is* in fact a dichotomic distinction between a form of ‘fact-based’ good or wrong, in the form of the ‘optimal/non-optimal’ (which perhaps Foucault did not really explore), which is strict, rigid and mandatory. What is therefore instituted under security is, effectively, tyranny of the number.

It would therefore be more accurate to say that in as much as it risks being ethically deficient. Something seems to be fundamentally absent when, for example, discussions regarding the treatment and access to equal

opportunities of disabled members of society are weighted against considerations of economic cost; and, what is worse, is that such discussions are in the first place raised within a discursive framework that already presupposes that it is acceptable and appropriate to talk about matters of moral significance in a securitized- numericalised way – i.e. in terms of percentages of social desirability, ratios of economic profit and loss, relative economic gains and so forth. However, the employment of these methods eventually come to overshadow until they end up completely overweighing the moral dimension involved in the situation under discussion. There is a discord and thus a clear rupture between the nature or quality of the method and the nature or quality of the content which it is employed to discuss. For how much ethics can there be in a percentage alone, and how much ethics can there be in the absence of a meaningful dichotomy, or in the absence of a unitary univocal principle of goodness, to define what is good or bad, permissible or impermissible, go or non-go, especially since its alternative ‘bandwidth of optimality’ refers to a range of multiple values beyond polarity but also beyond the stability of a single principle which is traditionally required for a moral definition. The only stability entailed in the number is not owed to any principle other than the belief that the number and its universe is endowed with unquestionable stability; a statement which is tautological to such a degree that it becomes self-defeating.

The problem is not about the use of numbers, and not just about the numericalisation, the arithmetic representation of certain socially important variables which. This perhaps in itself signifies a positive technological evolution in our science of politics. It is about the numbers not sufficing as eventually the *only* working and indicative principles commanding, describing and prescribing a complex social reality made up of structures far more composite and intangible than quantitative indicators can sufficiently grasp. The problem of positing numerical expressions as infallible arguments, or arguments endowed with such symbolic objectivity that end up operating as ‘the truth’, is that at some point those turn to displace and replace the phenomena that they initially purport to describe. They thus become themselves the overarching ends of social life, instead of the values which they were set up to ‘serve’.

With this function and capacity, numbers thus come to stand in between political subjects and political reality, thereby blocking the direct relationship between social agents and social objectives. This takes place in the following way: Having (a) defined certain social outcomes that are deemed at a particular point in time and through a particular ideological spectrum as desirable – for example, low unemployment, high-level of material prosperity; (b) attached those with a particular indicator that is supposed to correctly measure and accurately express them, and which acts as their ‘symbol’ –e.g.,

the unemployment ratio, GNP figure; and then, (c) set the particular numerical value, or appropriate bandwidth of values, that this indicator must acquire, or range between, in order for the initial social objective to be considered as achieved; thenceforth, a securitized society proceeds with steadily substituting normatively meaningful discourse regarding issues of the '(a)'-kind – i.e. issues regarding the appropriate social goals and principles consist in, with a discourse that focuses on '(c)'s' – i.e. the 'optimal' numericalised values that indicators of '(a)'s' are given, and the fluctuations in those. The effect that this conceptual substitution entails, further to eroding social meaningfulness, is that society is slowly diverted, until it becomes precluded, from original normative reflection regarding the primary questions of social organization (that is, '(a)'s'), meaning that it eventually fails to evolve in a manner which corresponds to and reflects actual civic perceptions, events and feelings. For should the appropriate goals of society naturally come to evolve or for any reason change, number-centered policy and discourse neglecting to pay the appropriate attention to those initial fundamental theoretical questions, will inevitably continue to pursue and produce situations related to already set 'stand-ins', the '(c)'s', which, however, will no longer be representative of actual social reality and its new orientation. Social reality thus becomes eroded as it is not allowed to express and play itself out in a responsive and effectual manner.

However, in becoming themselves the ends and ultimate monitors and assessors of political life, indicators come to monopolise political considerations in a way that precludes meaningful normative existence. This leads to the creation of a vacuum of meaning or a whirlpool of depoliticisation right at the core of political society because human collectivities are not founded upon soulless indicators of technocratic corporative performance, but principles bearing their origin in, and acquiring their significance from, the domain of human understanding, human meaningfulness and the human soul, which the technocratic discourse neglects beyond exoneration.

III. Second Dimension Security: 'The Event'

The two further dimensions of securitisation which I would like to discuss in this paper concern the unit of political analysis but also the unit of political praxis in general under a regime of security. There are two key considerations pertaining to this issue: the first is the notion of 'the event' and the second is the notion of 'the population'.

Under a securitized polity, the unit of analysis is no longer the individual or the collective community bearing a concrete national-political identity, nor even the market: it is, rather, an event. Or, more precisely, the probability of an event which is subject to fluctuation and whose prevention becomes the central axis around which political organization comes to be structured⁷. Foucault offers the example of 18th century French political society (where he traces the first bold roots and indications of security), where the main political problem becomes the scarcity of grains, a scarcity owed to the fluctuations involved in the production processes, climatological factors, and demand and supply conditions of a volatile international trade. The whole of governance thus becomes built around the crucial problem of scarcity, which is exactly the event to be avoided⁸. The key characteristic of the technology and techniques of security is thus identified in the ‘arriving at an apparatus – *dispositif*’ for arranging things so that, by connecting up with the very reality of these fluctuations, and by establishing a series of connections with other elements of reality, the phenomenon is gradually compensated for, checked, finally limited and, in the final degree, cancelled out, without it being prevented or losing any of its reality⁹. Security is therefore founded upon the possibility and probability of the happening or not of that event which is deemed as the crucial determining factor for social life.

The current state of affairs in Greece is precisely centered around one major event, which in this case is not scarcity but rather poverty, bankruptcy, or ‘the debt’. The fluctuations of the possibility of the event of poverty and debt are to a great extent captured by the fluctuations of ‘the spreads’, of international financial factors, and the international banking system in general. Furthermore, the cause of these fluctuations is no longer the unpredictability of nature, as it was in the case of scarcity, but rather the nature of the financial environment, which is postulated as equally unpredictable, uncertain and erratic as nature might have been for the 18th century. By working within the reality of fluctuations between abundance/ scarcity - in our case, between pay-off and debt - an apparatus is installed, which is precisely, according to Foucault, an apparatus of security.

Popular media discourse amply reveal that the key event of contemporary Greek politics is ‘the debt’ or the possibility of national bankruptcy. Equally, the prevention of this event has in effect been turned into the central axis of political action and the omnipresent theme of public discussion. For almost

⁷ Ibid., p.36.

⁸ Ibid., p.30.

⁹ Ibid., p.37.

two years now, the media has literally everyday been obsessively preoccupied with the debt. In fact, the present government as a whole has been built on the concept and phenomenon of the debt: as soon as and ever since it came to power, the main problem has been the debt, whose fluctuation has been contingent upon the changeable trends of international financial markets and the apparatus of a series of foreign inter and supranational institutions. Accordingly, its main end has consisted almost exclusively the prevention -or in this case, curbing- of 'the event' – without however never really eliminating neither actually installing the hardcore institutional reforms necessary for its prevention. Furthermore, every policy in the last two years has been basically framed and considered around probability: the probability of the debt not being curbed, the probability of the country going bankrupt, the probability of being removed from the eurozone, the probability of returning to the drachma. Governance has taken the form of security over and against the event of these probabilities materializing, while the event of debt and the prevention of bankruptcy have become the core, central and outermost principles around which governance is structured. Therefore, from a systemic point of view, one could perhaps even say that the debt has even been functional to transiting to this mature stage of securitisation.

On a philosophical note, however, sacrificing with no remorse every other important social objective (such as wellbeing, equality, social happiness etc.) to the altar of 'the event' – in our case, the debt, involves two serious ramifications. The first follows from the fact that debt is essentially a negative concept: it signifies the absence of something, or, more precisely, the absence of something which should have nonetheless been there; it is non-existence found in a deficient mode. Debt is thus an empty signifier: for instead of signifying a quality, it signifies the lack of one, in our case the lack of money which is lost and which no longer exists: a dynamic 'without'. Therefore, and this is the point where the philosophical ramification of positing debt as the event upon which governance is constructed becomes evident, Greek society is also found entangled in a very problematic paradox. On the one hand, building a whole system of social functioning upon a negative concept, a concept which signifies the lack, dynamic absence or taking away of something, is like attempting to build a universe upon a black hole: one establishes a social core that effectively and actively empties the structure which is built on it, like a hole that sucks up everything found in its periphery. It thus becomes highly likely that no positive structures of meaning could emerge from a social system whose core consists of a diminishing content. On the other hand, the catch-22 involved is that because its new mode of governance qua security has been effectively based upon the event of debt/bankruptcy, what is at stake is that in working to preserve its being in power and perpetuate its existence, the system will tend to reproduce the operative principles and justifications upon which its existence has been

based: which means that the system might work in a way that prolongs the debt, exactly because its existence and quality have been acquired through, and are therefore, depended upon this event.

IV. Third Dimension of Security: 'The Population'

In a regime of security, the subject of political action is also differentiated in one further crucial respect. Security introduces a new political personage, a new category of collective subjectivity which no longer corresponds to the double phenomenon of 'the individual' vs the 'collective'. The political subject is now distinguished both from the notion of 'the individuals' and 'the peoples': it rather becomes a category objectifying those previous notions into the technical and instrumental notion of 'the population'. Therefore the subject and final objective of security is the 'population', which is distinguished from the juridical-legal subject of political rule known as 'the people', as well as 'the fine grain of individual behaviours'¹⁰.

As Foucault notes, under security there is 'an absolutely fundamental caesura between a level that is pertinent for the government's economic-political action (...) the level of the population, and a different level, which be that of the series, the multiplicity of individuals, who will not be pertinent, or rather who will only be pertinent to the extent that, properly managed, maintained, and encouraged (...) can obtain something at the level of the population'¹¹. The multiplicity of individuals, however is no longer pertinent to governance, and the people are now simply rendered instrumental to the final objective, which is the population¹².

The population, as the corresponding subject of the statistics which dominate over and re-institute governance as a managerial task, represents the complete reification, fetishisation and thus subordination of the set of individuals making up the 'people' to their very own simplifying, modeling persona that made them into the appropriate subject of scientific exploration. They come to be subjugated in a rather twisted manner, as their fetishised personification, their numericalised mirror is now turned against them. Those who are not captured by the projections of statistics, those who do not conform to the mentality and behaviour of '*homo oeconomicus*'¹³ or who anyhow put themselves outside its scope, are consequently regarded as 'the people' – i.e. those who, 'in refusing to be the population are treated as a disruption in the

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 66.

¹¹ Ibid., p 40-43.

¹² Ibid., p 42.

¹³ Ibid. p.41.

system'¹⁴. We could thus say that the population is the equivalent economized version of the subject.

In Greece the reification of the political subject of the people into the managerial category of the population is quite evident in public discussions that, firstly, have anthropomorphized the economy into an independent political personage that constitutes the ultimate objective of policy, one which the society must indisputably we treat and take unconditional care of (which includes the 'people' but only in their numericalised dimension). Secondly, following up on this, a discourse which has raised the primacy of the economy over and above the actual happiness or wellbeing of the people comprising it, whose harm is seen as necessary –i.e. instrumental- to the 'salvation' of 'the economy'. The good of the economy has become a synonym for the 'common good'; however, strange implications regarding the 'whole-to-part' relations stem from this: for how can the collective good be one that requires all the constituent individual goods to be annihilated for it to obtain?

People, as noted above, serve only instrumentally to the self-perpetuation of a system that no longer represents them, but on the contrary even regards them as obstacles or impediments to political functioning when those attempt to assert or exercise their individual nature. Furthermore, the system can no longer provide people, obviously neither with the material nor with those intellectual goods conducive to their wellbeing. The, not undemocratic but in fact, anti-democratic implications flowing from this are more than evident. Nevertheless, it is still presented as a self-evident truth in contemporary Greek discourse that the country – i.e. the individual citizens- *must* absolutely necessarily endure a period of austerity and effectively poverty so that the population can (perhaps though, not surely) be led again to a luminous plateau of economic affluence. This exhibits, once again, a genuinely messianic mentality: people are called upon to tolerate a period of suffering in the name of an economic 'afterlife' that will give them back the lost paradise of economic prosperity.

The normative repercussions of the above serve to strengthen the thesis that modern Greek securitisation is ethically deficient. In the first place, whereas the necessity of the austere economic measures is postulated as indispensable, nevertheless the ethics of this whole issue is not discussed, not even distinctly raised in popular media. The length of the transition period is not discussed; the morality of that transition period never discussed. An implicit, yet unclarified and unaccounted for consequentialism prevails beyond public debate. This mutes the crucial question which asks: even if something good were to come out of these measures in the future, still is it moral for people to go through that pain that those measures required of them? What is

¹⁴ Ibid., p.44-45.

more, are they responsible for the situation which the measures are employed to tackle, in order to bear the burden of its compensation? Public policy regarding the measures assumes it appropriate to sacrifice the 'short term distress' for the 'long term benefits'. However, the short-term and the long-term are neither conceptualized nor measured in terms of 'peoples' time', but in terms of 'system-time'; the short-term that the system might require for reconstruction might in fact refer to a whole good generation and its good life. On a second note, the repercussion of the population-centered tactics that security entails in Greece is also explicitly anti-individualistic. In fact the whole notion of the population is essentially a rejection of individualism. This serves to reveal another paradox in the current governmental framework in Greece, namely that although it rhetorically endorses a Europeanized version neo-liberalism to guide its economic – political policy, practically it defeats neo-liberalism's most basic ideological pillar, which is individualism.

The consequences of forgetting that the ruled are not simple blocks of matter bearing needs, costs and benefits measured in quantifiable indicators, commodities and attached with a numerical figure (whether that is national insurance number, their tax band or income rank), and that the rulers are not simply the technical managerial implementers nor the extended executive hands of some overarching objective bureaucratic machine, are therefore that society becomes emptied of significant moral life and thus essentially de-humanised.

Conclusions

This paper presented and explored the argument that contemporary governance in Greece has become securitized in a Foucaultian sense. After introducing and critically examining the three main dimensions involved in Foucaultian security *qua* governmentality – namely, the dimensions of numericalisation, 'the event' and 'the population', the analysis demonstrated how each of those dimensions manifest in contemporary Greek discourse as well as what particular form they acquire within the Greek socio-political context.

The conclusions which follow from our critical examination pertain to three key theoretical, but also very practical, issues that this paper has critically touched upon.

Firstly, at the level of governance, the modality of security in Greece has been shown to have subjugated human values under numerical considerations of statistics as well as to have tacitly, yet significantly, suppressed the necessity

of imputing normative signification to policy. As the analysis demonstrated, the normatively meaningful elements of Greek public discourse have been steadily turned into economised factors, and explanations have been reduced to an argumentation which is based upon numerical averages rather than meaningful ethical values. This serves to indicate that Greek political society is currently failing to provide its citizens with the necessary structures of meaningfulness that fulfill men's intelligible nature and which make human life worth living.

Secondly, at the level of people, Greek security governance has eventually ceased being anthropocentric. As it was extensively elaborated, security is highly number-centered and techno-centric, becoming technocratic to the point that its numero-economical specialisation dominates over and upon the human element. Therefore the orientation and goal of political life is no longer the prosperity and the good of individuals - which has been after all traditionally regarded as the goal of formation and functioning of political societies, whether we start from the classical or the enlightenment tradition. As it was shown, not only is the good of individuals not found at the centre of political praxis, but also human individuals have stopped being the subject of policy altogether: the goal is the population, or the system itself working to perpetuate it self by means of the technical notion of the population.

Finally, the whole issue bears important implications for social justice, and the ideal of social justice currently at work in Greece. Through its transformation into security, Greek governance has eroded the reality of public ethics, intellectual meaningfulness, individualism, human prosperity, spiritual eudemonia and the very notion of 'the good life' that had whenforth structured its political system. In abandoning those basic yet core goals, values and operative principles of collective life, Greek politics has at the same time, intentionally or not, repudiated the very ideal of humanism that had once sprung from its beautiful territory and which has constituted the cornerstone not only of its own spiritual identity but the political identity of Europe altogether.

However Plato, even from thousands of years ago, had warned us about this danger. The danger of over-technicalising our human societies to the degree that we empty them of ethical values, Virtue and Reason. This is the warning of a cyclopic science that despite all its strength and divine origin threatens to swallow up the subjects whom it is supposed to host in the expanse of its gifted gulfs: a science which is no longer wisdom but cunning. Will a fair Odysseus save us again this time?

Let us wish so.

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Between mourning and *ressentiment*: a critical approach to the 2006 history textbook controversy in Greece

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Abstract

The period between 2006 and 2007 saw an outbreak of revived nationalist rhetoric in Greece. The event that triggered this was an educational reform, namely the renewal of school history textbooks. This attempt to reform education was met with a lot of hostility and the accusation that it tries to de-Hellenize education. Namely, the book was accused for underplaying the Greek trauma inflicted by the Turks, especially during the Ottoman Empire, something that is a central aspect of contemporary Greek national identity. The reaction against the book managed to bring together a variety of diverse actors and build a new nationalist camp that produced an affective and intense discourse and achieved the withdrawal of the book. This event demonstrates the common critical view that national identity is often built and sustained through attachments to victimhood and reproduced through relevant selfrepresentations based on trauma. This paper on a first level attempts to re-evaluate this scenario through the use of discourse analysis and examine how this kind of selfrepresentations became manifest in the specific case. Moving then to the main area of focus, it tries to account for the hegemony of this form of nationalist discourse and especially the intensity and salience of such attachments, something that is often absent from the scope of modernist (Anderson), structuralist (Gellner) and ethno-symbolist (Smith) approaches to nationalism. This is discussed through the use of the categories of fantasy, trauma and enjoyment drawn from a Lacanian psychoanalytic framework and the work of psychoanalytic thinkers on ideology (Stavrakakis). Lastly, the paper focuses on a critical evaluation of the textbook controversy and its ethical implications. This examination takes place through the discussion of different possible ways to cope with loss, mainly ethical mourning (Butler) and *ressentiment* (Nietzsche, Brown) and shows how resentful discourses have concealed the possibilities for alternative confrontations with the precarious character of identity.