Pseudo-Hegelian contrivances: the uses of German Idealism in the discourse of the post-Civil War Greek state

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...with twisted and distorted concepts inspired from Hegel.
Panayiotis Kanellopoulos, 1951

We all know it. But we fail to notice that most of the times when we speak about the Greekness of a work of art, what we are speaking about are the buildings of the Academy.
George Seferis, 1938

Among the most salient features of Greek anti-communist discourse from the Civil War of the 1940s to the Colonels' coup of 1967 has been its firm refusal to engage with the ideas of the Greek Marxists. This lofty approach, which overturned the tendency of interwar bourgeois writers to criticise their left-wing colleagues, became a typical attribute of the official discourse which developed after 1945 around the key notion of *ethniko-frosyni* (national mindedness). Thereafter, a growing volume of official and semi-official books, articles, pamphlets and speeches began to turn their attacks against an abstract version of communism without naming the particular individuals or arguments which they were targeting. This approach, of course, reflected the highly charged environment created by the Civil War and the aggressive type of politics which developed around it. From 1947 to 1974, the Communist Party of Greece was outlawed, while

thousands of its members and supporters were executed, imprisoned, or exiled, either in concentration camps inside Greece or in refugee settlements in Eastern Europe and the USSR. Once they had been labelled "traitors", "bandits" and "miasma" (Tsoucalas 1981: 330; Papadimitriou 2006: 216, 218-19), it would have been unthinkable for *ethnikofrosyni* to suddenly start acknowledging Marxist intellectuals as worthy opponents with whom it could engage in public dialogue. Instead, its leading politicians, like the professor of philosophy and twice prime minister Panayiotis Kanellopoulos, would publicly denounce them *en bloc* as "a crowd" of "malicious [...] mediocrities" whose "petty minds are ruled by cowardice and calculation" (Kanellopoulos 1951: 187-8).

Meanwhile, however, *ethnikofrosyni* could not perform the task for which it was primarily invented without frequently speaking about communism or, to be more precise, without making regular statements against it. According to the French philosopher Michel Foucault, discourse cannot exist without making continuous references to its object. As he explains in his seminal work, the *Archaeology of knowledge* (1969), discourse is "a group of relations" formed to "speak of this or that object". It is, he says, a "body of rules" by which "various objects [...] are named, described, analysed, appreciated or judged" (Foucault 2006: 51, 53, 36). In this respect, *ethnikofrosyni*, as a power discourse intended to discredit communism, was caught in a serious dilemma: How could it speak against Greek communism when it was so reluctant to publicly name its intellectuals and discuss their specific ideas? Writing in a different context, the sociologist Nicos Mouzelis has argued that in modern Greece political discourse tends to deal with similar "problems of disarticulation" through the use of what he calls practices of "political and cultural formalism". These, he maintains, operate as "displacement mechanisms" which shift attention away from substantive issues through the use of "verbalism" and "various abstractions and lofty ethical principles". The ultimate goal, he adds, is to enable the dominant groups to conceal an array of

"particularistic interests and personal ambitions" which they usually aspire to achieve (Mouzelis 1978: 134).

Ethnikofrosyni was steeped in the type of formalism aptly analysed by Mouzelis. As a result, its solution to the problem of how to speak against Greek communism without naming its thinkers and ideas was based on the following displacement mechanism: they claimed that their principal moral and strategic task was not to verbally attack the Greek communists, but Marxism itself as a materialist philosophy and global ideology because, allegedly, this was the main source on which Greek communism fed. Constantine Tsatsos, another philosophy professor and senior politician, outlined this particular strategy in 1952 in a book chapter entitled "Words dedicated to an *ethnikofron*":

> We must realise this very deeply. Without forgetting the ills of modern Greek communism, we, for the sake of Christianity, for the sake of the national idea, for the sake of the Greek idea, for the sake of Greek civilisation, are fighting against the idea of historical materialism, the principle, the theoretical and political principle of communism. In this direction we should cast our arrows. Therein lies the root cause of evil for anyone able to see beyond his nose (Tsatsos 1952: 33-4).

The expected outcome of such an approach was the development of an idiosyncratic anti-communism that appeared more concerned about exposing the theoretical failings of Marx and Engels a century after they wrote their works than about responding to the specific criticisms of the Greek left in the 1950s and 1960s. A mere glance at the titles of some the anti-communist books from that period reveals the near cosmic proportions which their verbalism began to acquire as a result of their quest for theoretical abstraction: *Between the two worlds* (1949) by Nicolaos Louvaris; *The twentieth century: The struggle between humanity and inhumanity* (1951) by Kanellopoulos; *The philosophical consideration of our time* (1961) by Ioannis Theodorakopoulos, and so on.

An interrelated trend, which emerged as a result of this verbalism, was the desire to construct a theoretical model that could be set against dialectical materialism as a rival and superior alternative. Of course, within the framework of a "nationally minded" discourse like *ethnikofrosyni*, such an alternative could not be disconnected from the immutable notion of "Hellenism", a term which refers to a certain view of Greek national history and culture, but not to a particular philosophy or theory that could be juxtaposed to Marxism. To overcome this obstacle, a group of *ethnikofron* intellectuals began to construct a theoretical frontage to the notion of "Hellenism" using concepts and ideas from a modern system of philosophical thought that was deemed capable of both rivalling Marxism and of appealing to the sensibilities of Greek nationalist feeling. For reasons that will become apparent further below, this system of thought was none other than the philosophy of German Idealism, while the main concepts and analytical categories which were imported from it were chiefly those developed by the last of its great philosophers, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel.

On a primary level, the present article seeks to expose the hitherto unexplored connections between the discourse of *ethnikofrosyni* and the crucial influence wielded upon it by a debased version of German Idealism. In so doing, the aim is not to produce a belated analysis of post-Civil War intellectual practices from the neo-Marxist perspective of the dependency school. Although there is an intrinsic value in exposing the non-Hellenic sources of a political discourse that based its authority on the claim that it – and it alone – epitomised the authentically Hellenic and nationally sound principles of post-war Greece, the aims of this inquiry stretch beyond this limited end. Of greater importance in this regard is to show how German Idealism and especially a number of key Hegelian concepts were systematically appropriated, distorted and domesticated in order to furnish Greek anti-communist discourse with the semblance of both intellectual rigour and national authenticity. In other words, inasmuch as the ensuing discussion is about recovering the German sources of *ethnikofrosyni*

it is also about the intellectual practices of manipulation and concealment which made Hegelian thought enter Greek public discourse in the post-war era as a set of debased concepts.

Setting the context: Why Hegel?

If we were to follow the contextualist approach proposed by the Cambridge historians of political thought, then the importing of Hegel to the discourse of *ethnikofrosyni* must be linked in part to the training of its main proponents in the philosophy of German Idealism. Kanellopoulos, Tsatsos and Theodorakopoulos, who have been aptly described as "the three musketeers of bourgeois thought" in post-Civil War Greece (Mathiopoulos 2000: 372-3), became friends as philosophy students at Heidelberg in the 1920s. Although the first two never met there, they were all nurtured by what their tutor and former minister, Gustav Radbruch, famously called the "Heidelberg Spirit" (Strassmann 2006: 97). All three were also taught by the same professors, including the neo-Kantians Heinrich Rickert, Ernst Hoffmann and Radbruch himself, the existentialist philosopher Karl Jaspers, the Nietzschean Friedrich Gundolf and the legal philosopher Alexander Graf zu Dohna (Tsatsos 2001: 127-30 Kanellopoulos 1985: 25-6; Theodorakopoulos 1980: 28-43, 73-187).

Although neo-Kantianism was the dominant school at the Faculty of Philosophy at the time, one of its members, Alfred Weber, believed that Hegel's philosophy was "the most comprehensive and complete synthesis ever attempted by the human mind" (Weber 1897: 532; Theodorakopoulos 1980: 47-8). Furthermore, in 1924, the future Nobel Laureate, Albert Schweitzer, gave a guest lecture at Heidelberg on the philosophy of history and this had such an impact on Theodorakopoulos that much later he recalled having been "unable to sleep" that night and sitting "for at least two hours to read Hegel's *Philosophy of history*" (Theodorakopoulos 1980: 45). In addition, Hegel's own brief stay in Heidelberg in 1816-18 carried both a symbolic and an intellectual influence among the University's philosophy students, who were apparently able to trace the lineage of professors who

occupied his chair all the way down to Rickert. According to Theodorakopoulos, "from 1862 to 1932, when Rickert died, Hegel's Bacchic figure shone among the University's youth" (Theodorakopoulos 1980: 27-8, 51; Tsatsos 1933: 361). Hegelian philosophy, moreover, was a *sine qua non* in the canon of neo-Kantian classics and was studied as part of the movement of German Idealism which starts with Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781 and progresses through Fichte, Schelling, Schleiermacher, Schlegel and others, before ending symbolically fifty years later with Hegel's death in 1831 (Kanellopoulos 1929: 183-9; Tsatsos 1931: 362).

Soon after their return to Greece, Kanellopoulos and Tsatsos joined the prestigious Law Faculty at the University of Athens and by 1933 had been appointed full professors, while in the same year Theodorakopoulos also became professor at Thessaloniki. Since 1929, the three had also begun to publish the quarterly journal *Archive of Philosophy and Theory of Science*, which became a famous forum of idealist thought until the outbreak of the Greco-Italian War in 1940. According to Theodorakopoulos, who acted as director, the journal's aim was to "juxtapose idealism and historical idealism to historical materialism", while Tsatsos remarked later that the journal was a forum for "idealist philosophy as founded by Plato and continued later by the great classical figures of German Idealism" (Theodorakopoulos 1940: 2; Tsatsos 2001: 226). Although the *Archive of Philosophy* projected a neo-Kantian bias (for instance, Rickert's name featured on the cover as the leading member of the editorial board), one of its earlier issues hosted an article by George Gratsianos entitled "Hegelians in Greece" (Gratsianos 1932: 227). A year earlier, Tsatsos himself had published an article entitled "The work of Karl Larens and Hegelianism in Law", which, for a declared neo-Kantian like him, was alarmingly close to some core Hegelian positions. In an attempt to resolve these tensions, Tsatsos advanced an interpretation of neo-Kantianism which claimed that this school now stood, not so much with Kant, as somewhere between Kant and Hegel. In particular he argued that:

> despite the severe attacks by Schelling and especially Hegel against Kant, the two [versions of idealism] must be considered as two necessary landmarks along the same intellectual path. Neither is Kant as opposed to metaphysics as the neo-Kantians believe nor does Hegel move that far from the "Critique of the Power of Judgement". From this deeper unity of Idealist thought one can explain the birth of Hegelianism from the womb of Kantianism (Tsatsos 1931: 364).

In this important, yet overlooked text, Tsatsos distinguishes between the "old"/"orthodox" neo-Kantians, among whom he places his teachers, and the "new" school, in which he places Theodorakopoulos and himself. The latter, he says, "have moved to a point that lies beyond neo-Kantianism" and implies that this "beyond" is essentially Hegelian. "In this way", he explained, "one hundred years later, the movement from Kant through to Fichte and Schelling and mainly Hegel is being repeated" (Tsatsos 1931: 363-4).

Later evidence suggests that the loosening of the connections with Kant and the growing proximity to Hegel was not a passing phase for this generation of unorthodox neo-Kantians. More than fifty years later, in his posthumously published autobiography, Tsatsos suggested in a startling revelation that he might have not been a neo-Kantian at all.

> In this country, if they happen to stick a tag on you, you can never get it off. Neo-Kantian. [...] Right-wing. In the funeral speeches that will be given as they bury me, with these slogans they will either praise or chastise me. Yet, how inappropriate these characterisations are for me; in themselves foolish (Tsatsos 2001: 308).

Elsewhere in the book, however, he states emphatically: "I am a descendant and disciple of Kant and a distant one of Plato. I combined, with the help of Theodorakopoulos, Kantianism and especially neo-Kantianism and Platonism" (Tsatsos 2001: 587, 602). What these statements show is that Tsatsos maintained a

highly equivocal position towards the competing strands of German Idealism and especially the tensions between Kantian and Hegelian philosophy. Moreover, on crucial questions of political philosophy, he distanced himself from the Kantian ideals of world government and sided with Hegel's theory of the state, which he credited for having "influenced, above every other, the political theory and praxis of the previous century" (Tsatsos 1931: 264-5). Finally, another aspect which his early articles illuminate is that the esoteric Theodorakopoulos did not object to being described in the journal which he directed as sharing a similar detachment from orthodox neo-Kantianism.

Around the same time, Kanellopoulos also displayed the same discreet sympathies towards Hegel. As early as 1928, in an essay entitled *Critique of Historical Materialism*, he defended Hegelian dialectics as both a more refined and a more consistent theory than that expounded by Engels (Kanellopoulos 1928: 21-4). In his article "German Idealism and the Historical Sciences", published in the *Archive of Philosophy* in 1929, he portrayed the controversy between Hegel and Friedrich Carl von Savigny as essentially unimportant (Pinkard 2000: 541) and stressed that both men rejected the doctrine of natural law championed by the Enlightenment philosophers, including Kant, and embraced a historicist view of jurisprudence. Kanellopoulos then praised Savigny for "turning the eyes of studious humanity towards history" and Hegel for endeavouring to "vindicate this turn with his grandiose post-rationalist assertion that only through history can the mind, reason and spirit be discovered" (Kanellopoulos 1929: 200). Again, in 1933, in a critical review of a book by the then Marxist Theofylaktos Papaconstantinou entitled *Introduction to Dialectics*, Kanellopoulos showed a complex understanding of Hegel's dialectics and an impressive familiarity with the philosopher's works which deal with different aspects of it (Kanellopoulos 1933a: 458). In 1935, however, he was dismissed from the University because he declared his republican views and in December of that year he formed the National Unionist Party on a platform that sought to reconcile the conflict between right-wing royalists and

liberal Venizelists. For the next fifty years Kanellopoulos would remain a professional politician and a prolific writer, but the scholarly rigour of his essays in the 1920s and 1930s soon gave way to a less disciplined style of writing that aspired towards grand syntheses and abstract theorisations.

An important ally of the editors of the *Archive of Philosophy*, and author of an important anti-communist book in 1949, was the professor of the history of religion at the University of Athens, Nicolaos Louvaris. In 1933, Louvaris published his two-volume *History of Philosophy* which exhibited his good knowledge of modern philosophical currents and especially German Idealism, which he came to know well during his studies at the University of Leipzig from 1911 to 1914. His Hegelian sympathies come across in the second volume of his otherwise dispassionate *History of Philosophy*, where Hegel is described as "the greatest philosopher of the idealist period" (Louvaris 1933: 166). For some months in 1936, Louvaris served as Education Minister under the government of Ioannis Metaxas, but when his prime minister proclaimed a dictatorship he resigned his post. Similar doubts, however, did not deter him from accepting the same post again, this time under the Nazi collaborationist government of Ioannis Rallis. When Tsatsos found himself expelled from the University for giving a patriotic speech in the first months of the Occupation, it was Louvaris as Education Minister who managed to reinstate him two years later. As Tsatsos recalled in his autobiography, "my friend Louvaris, this noble and tragic person, reappointed me at the end of 1943" (Tsatsos 2001: 286-93, 230). After Liberation, he was imprisoned for six years on charges of collaboration and was still serving his sentence when his book, *Between the two worlds*, appeared in the bookshops as a notable contribution to the canon of *ethnikofrosyni*. After his release from prison he was reinstated as professor at the University of Athens and in 1960, together with Theodorakopoulos and a year after Kanellopoulos, he was honoured with membership of the Academy of Athens.

Monopolising reason: the denigration of opponents as "romantics"

Already before the outbreak of the Civil War, the editors of the *Archive of Philosophy* sporadically strayed from their strictly scholarly pursuits in the texts of German Idealism in order to engage in debates about topical issues in Greek public life. A notable trend in some of their interventions was their penchant for introducing concepts from German idealist philosophy in order to analyse problems relating to literature and linguistics in the specific setting of twentieth-century Greece. Moreover, in contrast to their scholarly writings, their involvement in public debates outside the bounds of their main disciplines (which were philosophy, history, law and politics) was usually marked by a tendency to conceal their sources and use concepts in a simplistic and reductionist manner. In this context, a regular theme in their interventions was the deployment of the Hegelian categories of "classical" (rational) versus "romantic" (irrational), to prejudice the debate in a manner implying that their views always reflected the voice of Reason, moderation and tested knowledge, while those of their opponents represented the irrational, superficial and extremist. Although these categories were used by Hegel in the context of an aesthetic theory of art, as well as in connection to a forgotten third concept, that of "symbolic art", the editors of the *Archive of Philosophy* tended to apply them indiscriminately and always reduced them to a simple binary model.

An early intervention which deployed this schema was Kanellopoulos's 1933 article "The language question and intellectual currents in Greece", which dubbed the nationalist faction of demoticists led by Alexandros Delmouzos as "romantic" because it failed to organise an effective struggle to further its otherwise commendable cause (Mackridge 2009: 292-3; Tziovas 1989: 27). A noticeable feature of this unexceptional essay is Kanellopoulos's attempt to portray the Greek language question as in some way connected to a worldwide cultural phenomenon in order to justify the use of Hegelian concepts which were originally conceived as "universal" analytical categories. As he

explained in the opening paragraphs, the article's aim was "to attempt, on the basis of the criterion of the opposition between rationalism and romanticism, to place our linguistic currents under certain, almost globally exhibited categories and currents of spiritual life" (Kanellopoulos 1933b: 265-6). Although diglossia is indeed a worldwide phenomenon, the global currents which the article discusses are not sociolinguistic, but purely philosophical, and these relate chiefly to debates between rationalists and romantics in nineteenth-century Germany.

The same analytical categories were used a few years later, when Tsatsos became involved in the celebrated "Dialogue on Poetry" with the poet George Seferis, a duel that developed into a major cultural event in Greece in 1938-40 (Beaton 2003: 165-9). During this dialogue (whose name itself is derived from the title of a famous book by the philosopher Friedrich Schlegel), Tsatsos denounced the avant-garde poetry of the so-called "Generation of the 1930s" because it ostensibly removed the "rational" element from its compositions and embraced irrational, subjective forms. Instead, he called for a return to classical forms that are "objective", desirous of "the eternal in beauty" and, paraphrasing Hegel, a poetry that is directed towards "the inner essence of consciousness, the realisation of its initial point" (Seferis–Tsatsos 1988: 6, 7, 10, 11). Although he never revealed the source of his categories – at one point he mysteriously asked his readers to assume that these were devised "by a third person [...] someone who relied only on pure thought" – even the definition of poetry which he adopts during the debate is fundamentally Hegelian (Seferis–Tsatsos 1988: 39-40; Stace 1955: 477-8; Beiser 1993: 371). In his memoirs forty-seven years later, Tsatsos admitted that during this famous dialogue he had been "engrossed by the spirit of German Idealism", but always remained silent about the striking parallels between his own arguments and Hegel's views on poetry and classical art (Tsatsos 2001: 152, 193, 592-3).

Shortly after Greece's Liberation from the Axis Occupation, Theodorakopoulos produced two anti-communist pamphlets in which he used the same binary division of "classical/romantic" to

depict the post-War conflict between Hellenism and communism. Although the first publication, entitled *Greece as an Idea* (1945), suggested that "romanticism" is perhaps too mild an accusation for the "philistinism" and "criminality" of the communists, it still found a way of using the term against them. Communist intellectualism, it said, "is not at all romantic", but this was followed by a qualifying sentence in which Theodorakopoulos added: "unless one wishes to call romanticism the political sentimentalism which [...] organises crimes" (Theodorakopoulos 1945a: 16). In the second pamphlet, however, such indecisions were removed. In *The Spirit of modern Hellenism and the changing times* (1945) Theodorakopoulos called for an immediate response to the onslaught of ideologies by a Hellenic spirit that is rational and stressed that this should be also purified from "foreign elements and romanticism". Elsewhere he spoke about the importance of classical values and developed the core *ethnikofron* principle that in the post-war era the only answer to ideologies is to "go back to the classical texts and to know their beliefs" (Theodorakopoulos 1945b: 33-4; Kazamias 2013). In this context, the pamphlet goes on to recommend a textualist and literalist approach to reading the Greek classics, which he presents, again, as the method of the "modern Greek spirit and reason" that "reads things exactly as they are, without romanticism" (Theodorakopoulos 1945b: 49-50). So deep, in fact, is his distaste for all things romantic, that in the chapter on the Greek War of Independence Theodorakopoulos struggles to find a formula that would enable him to say a word of praise for the Philhellenes. His solution to the problem is to claim that, in contrast to Europe at that time, the Greek War of Independence "was free from the emotional burden and dark forces that accompanied romanticism" and this, he adds, enabled the Greeks to free the Philhellenes from their own romanticism! In a remarkable reversal of historical roles, this is the *ethnikofron* version of what happened in 1821:

> The Greeks [...] liberated their romantic friends who came here to help in the struggle. [...] The Greeks [...] turned the Philhellenes, solely with their classical experience [...], into

> true Hellenes; they liberated them from the romanticism of the North. This is how those who really loved the Greeks saw them, as teachers of the classical (Theodorakopoulos 1945b: 16).

A few years later, Tsatsos used the same categories again, although this time not in connection with avant-garde poetry, but in an effort to prop up the notion of *ethnikofrosyni* and vilify dialectical materialism. In his book *Nation and Communism* Tsatsos argued that the ontological principle espoused by "the classical world" holds that "in the beginning was the word", whilst materialist philosophy, which proclaims that "in the beginning was the deed", supposedly represents "the position of the romantic world" (Tsatsos 1952: 41-2). Of course, in assigning an ontological meaning to these cultural and aesthetic Hegelian concepts, Tsatsos ended up advancing two indefensible propositions. The first is that materialist philosophy is ostensibly alien to the classical Greek world; and the second is that materialism – rather than a certain strand of idealism – provides the philosophical basis of romanticism. Still, in another part of the book, we find the same categories used again, this time in connection to an argument about the better prospects for social justice in the Western world.

> The romantic method of extreme and staggering actions, the light-headedness of revolution, all these seductive things of course would be missing. [But] they would be replaced by the cold reason of classical European spirit, combined with the most socialist theory of the world, Christianity (Tsatsos 1952: 13).

Notwithstanding the "extreme" and "staggering" methods with which Tsatsos associates Marxism, later on in the book we find that, after all, he does not think they are so terribly "romantic"! At this point he accuses communism of representing a rather "pale romanticism" and labels its supporters "the rootless people" because they ostensibly lack knowledge that is based on classical Greek values (Tsatsos 1952: 60-1). After a certain point the manner in which the term is used is very difficult to follow, as we

can also find communism defined elsewhere a "romantic scientism" or as "a political organisation founded by romantic ideologues overexcited by Slavic passion" and so forth (Tsatsos 1952: 61, 13). At any rate, the relegation of this delicate and important concept to a convenient term of abuse was totally alien to the manner in which Hegel used it in his *Lectures on aesthetics*, that is as a type of art whose origins go back to early Christianity (Hegel 1994: xxvi, xxxii, 86-7; Beiser 1993: 370).

The eternal nature of the Hellenic Spirit

Since the middle of the 1940s, leading *ethnikofron* writers had begun to redefine the notion of Hellenism around the Hegelian notion of *Geist*. In making the concept of the Greek nation practically synonymous with that of the Hellenic Spirit (έθνος = ελληνικό πνεύμα), *ethnikofrosyni* was pursuing two fundamental objectives. The first was to divest the nation of its materiality (as an organised society of eight million people, with its state, institutions, etc.) and portray it instead as a pure idea in which the communists, by virtue of their materialist beliefs, could not participate. This aim was essential insofar as a core theme of Greek anti-communist propaganda was the claim that the nation never debarred the communists, but it was they who abandoned it. On this basis, concentration camps like Makronisos could be presented not as prisons and places of torture, but instead as "rehabilitation centres" aiming to reintegrate the communists into the body of the nation which they had left. The second key objective which the notion of the "Hellenic *Geist*" served was the construction of a less ethnocentric model of Greek nationhood compared to that of the Metaxas period in the late 1930s (Petrakis 2011: 133; Kazamias 2013). Insofar as Hegel's philosophy of history focused on the contribution of the National spirit (*Volksgeist*) to the historical development of the World-spirit (*Weltgeist*) (Hegel 1975: 52-3; Taylor 1975: 387), the notion of the "Hellenic *Geist*" could replace the older introverted conceptions of Greek nationalism with an extrovert concept that stressed its connections to a universal system of values. During

the Cold War, the much criticised influence of the United States in Greek affairs could therefore be confronted through a revised nationalism which presented the Greek nation as an integral part of Western civilisation and the ideological principles of the Atlantic Alliance.

In this context, leading anti-communist writers began to revise parts of the traditional narrative of Greek national history with the aim of recasting them from the perspective of the Hellenic spirit's contribution to the World-spirit. An early attempt in this direction was Theodorakopoulos's previously mentioned pamphlet *The Spirit of modern Hellenism and the changing times* (1945), which was written at the start of the Civil War. There, the former director of the *Archive of Philosophy* set out to defend the superiority of the Hellenic *Geist* over the "invading alien spirits who declare war" upon it, namely the political "ideologies" of the post-war era (Theodorakopoulos 1945b: 3, 60-4). Despite his earlier reserve towards Hegel's philosophy, Theodorakopoulos offered here an outline of modern Greek history based on the use of numerous Hegelian concepts. For example, the Hellenic spirit, like the Hegelian *Geist*, is shown as ultimately desiring "its freedom", which is the attainment of "self-consciousness" through a process of "objective development" (Theodorakopoulos 1945b: 5, 23, 17). Moreover, like its Hegelian counterpart, the Hellenic *Geist* of Theodorakopoulos follows the laws of "necessity", constantly "renews its spirituality", moves "dialectically" and "passes on [its] spirituality to other peoples" (Theodorakopoulos 1945b: 5, 63; 19, 22; 6; 11). The list is longer, but apart from one unreferenced quote from a "great historian", which is probably a misquotation from the *Lectures on the philosophy of history* (Theodorakopoulos 1945b: 15; Hegel 1975: 58), the pamphlet never acknowledges any Hegelian influences at all.

In later years, other *ethnikofron* writers used the notion of the Hellenic *Geist* in a similar fashion. For example, in *Hellenism and Communism* (1949), a manual for police officers by the professor of the Military Academy, Eleftherios Prokos, we find that since antiquity the Hellenic *Geist* "partakes in the character of the

absolute", a concept originally developed by Friedrich Schleiermacher and later, more famously, by Hegel himself (Prokos 1958: 55; Dorrien 2012: 191-2, 217-19). Similarly, in 1966 Kanellopoulos defined ancient Greek education as the moment when Hellenism acquired a "self-conscious spirit", another idea transplanted from Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Kanellopoulos 1980: 159; Taylor 1975: 148-70). As for Tsatsos, he sometimes managed to produce these concepts in pairs and triplets! Here is an interesting example of how the Hegelian concepts of "self-realisation", "*Momente*" and "dialectics" are all skilfully compressed in one tiny sentence: "Spirit realises itself through time 'in moments' which might even be dialectically connected with one another" (Tsatsos 1952: 49; Stace 1955: 109, 90). Like other *ethnikofron* writers, of course, Tsatsos is also referring here to a Hellenic *Volksgeist*. "Spirit", he remarks, "displays itself differently in every nation", and echoing Theodorakopoulos's pamphlet of 1945, he presents the Hellenic Geist as the antithesis of modern ideologies and especially of communism (Tsatsos 1952: 51).

Despite their substantial dependence on virtually every key concept that Hegel used in the *Lectures on the philosophy of history*, pamphlets like Theodorakopoulos's *The Spirit of modern Hellenism* or Tsatsos's *Nation and Communism* are evidently not Hegelian texts. This is the case mainly because, even when they use Hegelian concepts faithfully, their correlation in a "system of discursive meanings" (White 1990: x) leads to conclusions that do not accord with fundamental Hegelian positions. This deviation is nowhere more obvious than in the central *ethnikofron* argument that, in contrast to the ostensibly ephemeral nature of modern ideologies, the Greek *Volksgeist* is eternal and, thereby authentic, more enduring, glorious and intellectually indisputable. This central hypothesis is clearly supported by Theodorakopoulos when he refers to the "eternal youth" of the Hellenic spirit, its ability "to perpetually renew its spirituality" and the capacity of Greek freedom to remain "a spirit that stands outside the bias of epochs" (Theodorakopoulos 1945b: 12, 22). The same holds for

Tsatsos when he speaks, in the context of the Hellenic *Geist*, about "Greece, which exists [...] for the totalisation of the human race", or about the Greeks as being "immortal and beautiful" (Tsatsos 1952: 66). Similarly, the idea of the eternal nature of the Hellenic spirit is present in Kanellopoulos's confident assertion that the Greek nation, as the bearer of spirit since antiquity, will go on "for another three thousand years, until the end of the world" (Kanellopoulos 1980: 168).

Of course, the incompatibility between these metaphysical outbursts and Hegel's theory of the national spirit could not be more striking. As the philosopher Theodor Adorno remarked in the mid-1960s, the national spirits in Hegel's philosophy are entities predestined to die:

> Because of their limited nature, the national spirits are fallible and finite. They wither and die, deserving their ruin because of their limited nature. The world spirit – more precisely, the absolute – consists solely in their ruin. [...] Hegel speaks of the natural death of the national spirits as one might speak of the death of individuals (Adorno 2006: 102).

Indeed, when we turn to Hegel's *Lectures on the philosophy of history*, we find precisely this idea expressed in plain and unequivocal language. This is what Hegel says:

> The period in which the spirit is still active is that of the nation's youth, its finest stage of development [...]. When the spirit of the nation has fulfilled its function, its agility and interest flag; the nation lives on the borderline between manhood and old age. [...] It then lives on with the satisfaction of having achieved its end, falls into fixed habits which are now devoid of life, and thus moves gradually on towards its natural death. [...] Thus both individuals and nations die a natural death (Hegel 1975: 59).

Nevertheless, the *ethnikofron* intellectuals stringently maintained that from antiquity the Greek people is "a worthy bearer of the absolute because it has the fortune of being a creative people, a

people that can offer more than the others works of truth, beauty and virtue" (Tsatsos 1952: 44-5).

In 1980, in the candid memoir of his student years, Theodorakopoulos recalled a dramatic conversation with Constantine Tsatsos's brother, Themistocles, who was fascinated at the time by Hegel's philosophical system. Theodorakopoulos, who was older, shared these sentiments and revealed that he had gone through a similar phase himself a few years earlier, but was finally compelled to distance himself from Hegel because his views about the national spirit sharply contradicted his own feelings about the destiny of the modern Greek nation. His critique, he recalls,

> focused on one crucial point for us Greeks. This was Hegel's dictum that a people plays an important role in history only once and then hands over the torch of the spirit of history to another. In essence, history uses each people once as an instrument and then marginalises it. According to this principle of Hegel's, the struggle of modern Hellenism for freedom was something unimportant, because the Greeks had given what they had in antiquity. Hegel's theory removes from every people and every individual their absolute and irreplaceable value and turns them into a simple instrument for its goal. [...] The history of Hellenism itself falsifies Hegel's theory (Theodorakopoulos 1980: 262-3).

This is only to show how clear the *ethnikofron* philosophers were about what Hegel did and did not allow them to say and how they knowingly ignored this boundary in order to redeem his thought as they wished.

Perverting the Hegelian Dialectic

One of the earliest, and in many ways atypical, works of *ethnikofrosyni* was Nicolaos Louvaris's *Between the two worlds* (1949), written during his imprisonment after the War on charges of collaboration with the Nazi Occupation. The uncharacteristic element of the book in relation to other *ethnikofron* works is its detachment from the notion of Hellenism and emphasis on portraying the crisis of the post-war world from a Christian perspective as a

conflict between German Idealism and historical materialism. As Louvaris summed it up, the book's aim was to "make the Greek reader conscious of the dilemma" and of "the choice" between "the 'luminous' worldview of idealism and spiritocracy [...] in contrast to the 'dark', 'nocturnal' worldview of physiocracy and materialism" (Louvaris 1949: 331-2). Although the influence of Hegel on this work is both significant and diverse, the importance accorded to the German philosopher is certainly greater than that. Louvaris considers his death in 1831 and the break-up of German Idealism after him by the atheist young Hegelians, especially Ludwig Feuerbach and Karl Marx, as the real beginning of the crisis which troubled the post-war world in the late 1940s (Louvaris 1949: 25-6; Towes 1980: 327-55).

To account for the perceived decline of the World-spirit after Hegel's death, Louvaris turns, rather unimaginatively, to the theory of the great master himself. The cause of this crisis, he says, must be sought "first in the rhythm which the movement of spirit presents as a whole and which recalls the triple rhythm of Hegel, the thesis, antithesis and synthesis" (Louvaris 1949: 25). In the remaining three hundred pages of the book he tries to show how, from the 1840s, materialism, physiocracy, positivism and psychoanalysis emerged and posed an antithesis to the major advances of the spirit under German Idealism. Despite this gloomy narrative – from the viewpoint of Louvaris – the book nevertheless concludes with a perfectly happy ending. Its final part is entitled "The interest in religion" (meaning the revived post-war interest) and this triumphantly announces the impending victory of the World-spirit in a final synthesis. Nevertheless, what renders this analysis evidently pseudo-Hegelian is its reliance on an arbitrary use of Hegel's dialectic. To be exact, the historical synthesis which Louvaris envisages is not based, as Hegel's concept necessitates, on a certain fusion of elements from the thesis (German Idealism) and the antithesis (the materialist/physiocratic reaction) (Stace 1955: 106-7; White 1975: 409). Although at one point he acknowledges that "the removal of the opposition between spirit and nature [will occur] through the construction of

a wider unity", in the next sentence he proclaims that this essentially "means the total annihilation of materialism". In other words, what his analysis suggests is a one-sided resolution, not a Hegelian synthesis (Louvaris 1949: 251-2).

Many years later, Kanellopoulos also tried to implant the concept of the dialectic in a historical grand narrative developed from the perspective of *ethnikofrosyni*. On 27 September 1966, in Nicosia, he gave one of the most famous speeches of his career, a lecture entitled "The historical meaning of the Greek nation". At the time he was leader of the main opposition party ERE, and only six months away from his second premiership, which he clearly expected to last longer than eighteen days (Kanellopoulos 1985: 184-9). His visit to Cyprus was an attempt to reconcile president Makarios with his arch-rival George Grivas and, in so doing, Kanellopoulos also intended to project himself as a national leader capable of uniting all *ethnikofron* Greeks (*Kathimerini*, 27.9.1966: 1, 9; 28.9.1966: 1; *Eleftheria* 27.9.1966: 8; 28.9.1966: 8). In this context, his lecture on the subject of Greek history from Homer to EOKA was part of his wider effort to send a message of national unity in times of political crisis.

At the same time, however, Kanellopoulos's talk was not just another familiar reaffirmation of the standard narrative of Greek nationalism about the continuity, uniqueness and greatness of the Greek nation. Although on the one hand his 7,000-word lecture intended to do just that, on the other it was given to a select audience at the Pedagogical Academy of Cyprus, the island's most prestigious educational institution, and the speaker approached his subject using an academic style. From the outset Kanellopoulos explained that the aim of the talk was "to explore the meaning of the 'Hellenic' [...] to approach through Reason the great meaning of that [...] which was never defeated for at least three thousand years". Building on the body of rules established by earlier *ethnikofron* texts, the lecture assumed that "Hellenism" was understood by everyone as a Hegelian national spirit (Kanellopoulos 1980: 150, 153, 157), while near the end the audience discovered, rather predictably, that the historical

meaning of the Greek nation boils down to two interrelated elements. The first is that the Greeks are the first nation to convert "spirit into a source of education", especially into an "education of freedom"; and the second is that they always "obey the spirit and not material experience" (Kanellopoulos 1980: 167). By now it should be clear that the first conclusion reiterated the standard pseudo-Hegelian view about the eternal nature of the Hellenic *Geist* and its development as an advancement of "freedom" and "self-realisation". In other words, there was nothing new so far in relation to previous formulations of *ethnikofrosyni*.

Kanellopoulos's second conclusion, however, was certainly based on a novel conception of the Hegelian dialectic, a concept on which he had written competently as a scholar in the 1930s, but was now handling in a distinctly different manner. In an attempt to rewrite world history from the viewpoint of the conflict between *ethnikofrosyni* and communism, he reinvented the Hegelian dialectic as an eternal clash between a Greek-led world-spirit and barbaric matter. This is how he described it:

> With Greek Reason, with Greek Education, the violence of history was forced to inaugurate its great dialectical dispute with the spirit. In essence, only since then has there been true history. Everything else is prehistory. True history is the antagonism between Violence and Spirit, Matter and Reason. In this dialectical contest, the Greeks – a handful, weaker as matter against almost all other peoples – kept standing on the track (standing even when defeated) with their spirit, with their ethos, with the power of their soul (Kanellopoulos 1980: 160).

Although the number of arbitrary definitions and associations contained in this passage is staggering, to illustrate the point it would suffice to mention a couple. The first is the logically unsustainable equation between matter and violence, which is analogous to equating water with sinking or language with verbal abuse, that is to confuse an undesirable act with the material used to carry it out; the other is the naïve association of material power with the demographic size of a nation instead of relating it to a people's economic, technological and military capabilities.

Far more striking, however, is Kanellopoulos's idiosyncratic theory of the historical dialectic as an eternal struggle between spirit and matter. Even if we were to assume that a dialectical relationship between spirit and matter lies at the centre of human history, what Kanellopoulos proposed in this lecture was a conception of history that is more akin to a Manichaean than a Hegelian or Marxist viewpoint. To put it plainly, the concept of the dialectic, whether in Hegel or Marxism, is founded on a developmental view which requires a three-stage process in order to function: a thesis, an antithesis and a synthesis. The developmental element rests precisely on the dynamic generated by the third stage in the chain, the synthesis, which resolves the conflict between the thesis and antithesis – it "sublates it", according to the relevant jargon – and moves history forward to a new stage of development (Singer 2001: 102; Stace 1955: 106-9). In Kanellopoulos's dialectic, however, the notion of the synthesis is totally removed. The battle between the Hellenic Spirit and Matter is presented as a conflict that emerges at the beginning of time and is foretold to continue until "the end of the world" (Kanellopoulos 1980: 160, 168). In other words, the struggle is never resolved and history never moves to a higher stage of development. The philosophical basis of this dualist view of history is none other than the ontology of Manichaeism which conceives the cosmos as governed by a unending struggle between 'good' and 'evil'. Nonetheless, in positing as a dialectical interpretation of history with a sharp bias towards the ultimate triumph of spirit, Kanellopoulos's theory should probably still be described as predominantly pseudo-Hegelian.

Conclusion

In his posthumously published autobiography, Tsatsos repeatedly admitted that he had been "immersed in the German spirit" and specifically "the spirit of German Idealism" (Tsatsos 2001: 152, 193). At the same time, even after serving as president of the Third Greek Republic in 1975-80, with the Communist Party legalised for first time since the Civil War, he continued to speak

proudly about his "intransigent" anti-communism, which had led him in the past to accuse the Greek communists of "bringing us foreign idols, foreign to our historical conditions, to our spiritual traditions" (Tsatsos 1952: 60). Of course, in contrast to confident *ethnikofrones* like Tsatsos, the Greek communists could never easily confess, even when facing their torturers, that they were "immersed" in German Materialism or Soviet Marxism, despite the fact that this was true in the case of many of them. Such confessions, to begin with, would instantly incriminate them as foreign agents and dangerous enemies of the nation. As a result, those who disclosed their dependence on non-Greek influences were the same individuals who claimed to be articulating the only authentically Greek ideas; while those who refrained from making them, were blamed for "bringing foreign idols".

Of course, the main aim of the preceding analysis was not to demonstrate just how dependent the *ethnikofrones* were on a philosophical system whose influence on their writings they desperately tried to conceal. Criticisms of this kind have been made long ago by the proponents of the neo-Marxist dependency school, although, apart from a few exceptions (Tsoucalas 1981), these focused on the political rather than the intellectual practices of the post-Civil War state. However, because the approach adopted here is not imbued with the ethnocentric undertones of the dependency school, equal, if not greater, attention has been paid to the disfigured and mutilated manner in which Hegelian philosophy was brought to Greece, especially after 1945. In this regard, the article has tried to show that the primary reason for this problematic translation was the continuous adaptations and adulterations to which Hegelian philosophy was subjected in order to conform to the established doctrines of Greek nationalism. Indeed, it would seem almost impossible to understand why a tradition of pseudo-Hegelian thought developed in Greece around the Civil War, without grasping not only the dependence of Greek intellectual practices on European currents, but also the extent to which nationalist stereotypes and aspirations created resistances

that drained the vigour of the imported ideas in the process of their domestication.

In the end, the leading philosophers of *ethnikofrosyni* failed to introduce Hegel in an open and systematic manner that might have enabled the Greek centre-right to reinvent itself ideologically and develop in the direction of post-War Christian Democracy. At the same time, however, despite some affected claims to the contrary, neither Theodorakopoulos nor Tsatsos could simply bypass German Idealism in order to construct a purely Greek theory of Hellenism, directly drawn from Plato and the Neo-Platonists. Instead, what they produced, despite their intention, was a hotchpotch of disfigured Hegelian notions across a set of revised nationalist themes.

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