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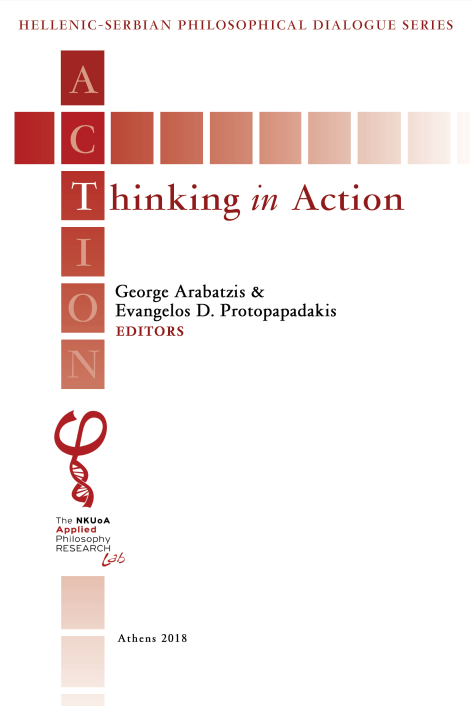

Chapter

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George Arabatzis

Thinking in Action

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BYZANTINISM AND ACTION

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Abstract: *The paper examines the relations between Byzantinism and action on the limits of philosophical constructivism with a special emphasis on the normativities that were established in the Greek and European culture in the long term (longue durée). Byzantinism is thus seen as a recurring notion and bearing that was developed beyond the dominion of the Byzantine commonwealth; one can clearly perceive it as the expression of the ambiguity inherent to political concepts while its special dynamics surfaces in relation to the original Byzantine concepts of eusebeia (piety) and economia (the management of both the regularity and irregularity of social life) and in comparison to political realism. The complete understanding of the term cannot be achieved without a special care for the martial practices that it encompasses which are clearly visible in the implementation of acculturation techniques, destined to the locales where Byzantinism became originally noticeable.*

Keywords: *Byzantinism, Byzantium, philosophical constructivism, political realism, philosophy of history.*

What is Byzantinism?

What will follow is an introduction to the notion of Byzantinism; the reason for this interpretative effort lies in the idea of removing the notion from the realm of the history of ideas in order to place it amidst an archaeology of knowledge.[1] It follows that the notion of Byzantinism is seen both at the margins of the modern ethical/aesthetical/political vocabulary and at the center of the critical analysis of the phenomena related to it.

"Byzantinism" is part of the modern political and aesthetic vocabulary. This latter aspect of the notion can be seen in the French thinker and essayist Julien Benda who perceived the early 20th Century French literary modernism as a kind of Byzantinist way of thinking.[2] Antonio Gramsci also used the term to designate

[1] See M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, translated by A.M. Sheridan Smirth (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), esp. the chapters "The historical *a priori* and the archive", 126-131, and "Archaeology and the History of Ideas", 135-140.

[2] J. Benda, *La France byzantine ou le triomphe de la littérature pure. Mallarmé, Gide, Valéry, Alain, Giraudoux, Suarès, les Surréalistes. Essai d'une psychologie originelle du littérateur* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945). See G. Arabatzis, *Βυζαντινή Φιλοσοφία και Εικονολογία* (Athens: Kardamitsa, 2012), 36-41, and Idem, "Byzantine Thinking and Iconicity: Post-structural Optics", in *The Ways of Byzantine Philosophy*, ed. M. Knezevic (Alhambra Ca: Sebastian Press, 2015), 429-448, esp. 429-430.

the Jacobin politics that was seen by him as a Byzantinist trend.[3] One should not forget the close ties of the Russian imperial thought with Byzantinist politics which in a sense was transcended by Russian populism and although this last was hostile to Russian monarchy yet it was still seeing Russian people as a holy people.[4] In modern Greece, one cannot emphasize the cultural and intellectual echoes of the notion; Constantine Cavafy spoke of "our glorious Byzantinism"[5] and the Greek national historiography insisted on the importance of the byzantine moment for the continuity of the Greek nation.[6]

Byzantinism has, actually, a rather pejorative meaning. On the political level it signifies a political stand without normative legitimacy and even when norms exist, they lack applicability to particular contexts; the notion is reminiscent of the Byzantine Empire's form of government.[7] Yet, one should not think that Byzantinism suffers more than any other political concept. In fact, political language is characterized by the essential contestability of its concepts; Nietzsche famously said that "only something which has no history can be defined"[8]. But if the political concepts on the whole are contestable how one is to formulate a civic lexicon? For Hobbes, this effort lies beyond language. The idea of the general war of everybody against everybody can mean nothing else than that the individuals possess only the private language of their desires, untranslatable to the language of the others and only the subjugation to one higher authority can achieve general consent. In other terms, the political concepts are in need of translation that cannot be effective without either conversion or coercion. The political concept in itself is an act of solipsism; yet, there are forms of surpassing the conceptual *aporia* by understanding that the political concepts are always contextualized and in this way they produce the action that is characteristic to them. Reinhart Koselleck focused on the work of the interpretation of political concepts that should be accompanied by the search

[3] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Q. Hoare, and G. Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), the chapter "Against Byzantinism", 200-201.

[4] Fr.-X. Coquin, *Des pères du peuple au père des peuples. La Russie de 1825 à 1929* (Paris: SEDES, 1991), esp. 1-24 and 143-176.

[5] "I love the Church – its hexapteriga, / the silver of its sacred vessels, its candlesticks, / the lights, its icons, its pulpit. / When I enter a church of the Greeks, / with its fragrances of incense, / with its voices and liturgical choirs, / the stately presence of the priests / and the solemn rhythm of each of their movements - / most resplendent in the adornment of their vestments / my mind goes to the high honors of our race / to the glory of our Byzantine tradition", C. Cavafy, "In Church", *The Complete Poems of Cavafy*, trans. Rae Dalven, intr. W. H. Auden (New York: Harvest, 1976), 43. The translation of "Byzantinism" as "Byzantine Tradition" misses the ambiguity of the original term. See Dominique Grandmont, *La victoire des vaincus. Essai sur Constantin Cavafis* (Saint-Benoît-du-Sault: Tarabuste, 2015).

[6] The two most prominent historians are Spyridon Zampelios (1815-1881) and Constantine Paparrigopoulos (1815-1891); see Y. Koumbourlis, *Οι ιστοριογραφικές οφειλές των Σπ. Ζαμπέλιου και Κ. Παπαρρηγόπουλου* (1815-1891). *Η συμβολή Ελλήνων και ξένων στη διαμόρφωση του τρίσημου σχήματος του ελληνικού ιστορισμού (1782-1846)* (Athens: ΙΙΕ/ΕΙΕ, Τομέας Νεοελληνικών Ερευνών 128, 2012) and K. Th. Dimaras, *Κωνσταντίνος Παπαρρηγόπουλος. Η εποχή του, η ζωή του, το έργο του* (Athens: MIET, 2006).

[7] See Dimiter Angelov, "Byzantinism: The Real and the Imaginary Influence of a Medieval Civilization on the Modern Balkans", *New Approaches to Balkan Studies*, eds. D. Keridis, E. Elias-Bursaq, and N. Yatromanolakis (Dulles, Brassey's, 2003), 2-23.

[8] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, II, 13, ed. K. Ansell-Pearson, trans. C. Diethe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 53-54.

for the practical, politically effective, middle term.[9] Thus, every political concept is as much particular as it is precarious.

What is meant here by the term "action"? It does not refer to some theory of deliberation and movement. It rather belongs to philosophical constructivism and involves culture, language, discourse, knowledge. Action as construction is the formation and critique of normativities, quite distinct from any objectivist ontology and distinctively afar from phenomenological intentionality. Constructivist action cannot be put in the frame of either essentialism or empiricism and it comprises causality solely as power.[10]

Byzantinism and the production of concepts

How does all the above influence the understanding and use of the notion of Byzantinism? One should make here the distinction between political genealogies and political categories. The historicization of concepts does not make easier the task of producing their genealogy since this last cannot be integrated in a coherent, or coherently looking, history of ideas. Any history of ideas is a narrative that cannot deal with the totality of the factual empiricism of historical action. In other words, the political concepts as particular and precarious beings are dissociated from historicity or else they would be part of the logic of a predetermined action. There is here another remark to be made: many researchers believe that the contestability of concepts is the result of the clash between different and opposing worldviews. The reasoned concept of worldview originates in the hermeneutical philosophy of Wilhelm Dilthey;[11] a worldview means the mode on the basis of which a precise cultural space-time represents the world that surrounds it, the human relations, the feelings, the artistic productions but also the world of action; action is thus always the action according to a certain worldview. In this way, Dilthey introduces a cultural relativism that is subject only to understanding and not to causal explanation. Hegel even though had himself produced a historicist account never concluded on a relativist view since in him the different worldviews are articulated inside an evolutionary picture that culminates in the Absolute Spirit.

Dilthey's relativism has certain consequences that remind us strongly of the postmodern moment in philosophy. Thus, since worldviews exist, no one is ever in direct contact with reality, but only in contact with the world-viewed reality. Reality can never be understood without the mediation of a network of concepts. In fact, anyone that partakes in a worldview lacks the words to describe what is evident

[9] See Reinahrt Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, trans. Todd Samuel Presner (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).
[10] See Dave Elder-Vass, *The Reality of Social Construction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), esp. 15-34.
[11] See Rudolf A. Makkreel, *Dilthey. Philosopher of the Human Studies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 345-355.

for another worldview. A second consequence is that the question of power becomes clearly prominent. The first and original power is that of translation that brings forth the question of the compatibility of worldviews. For example, as to distinct worldviews, can one translate Descartes's *Treatise of Passions* into SMS messages? Is the relativism of worldviews a radical one or can it be surpassed? The incompatibility of worldviews shows that translation always misses or, as the Italians say, "*traduttore tradittore*". Yet, the description itself of the variety of worldviews demonstrates that the relativism here is not a radical one or, in other terms, the description of a given variety marks the limits of absolute relativism. Next, from questions of ontology, one passes to questions of common action: do we share the same worldview? Do we see the same world? Those are questions that become crucial with globalization, massive migration or even, simple tourism while emerges the need for new epistemic fields of cultural observation. There is still a major problem: the communication technologies can obscure or cover the differences in worldviews. The new media are the manifestation of the coexistence of relativism and communication, despite the informational noise and the bad faith that characterize them.[12]

Back to Byzantinism, the concept as any other may refer to a conflict of worldviews since this is a possible approach to the problem of the contestability of concepts. The cultural Byzantinism thus may refer to a primal symbolic incompatibility between Athens and Jerusalem as historians of ideas supported for a long time. Another probable idea is that a concept results from and stands for a void; in other terms, the contestability of a concept comes not from a lack of referential power but is in itself the origin of all political concepts; concepts are contestable and the concept of Byzantinism as well, because political concepts are semantically void. This is the position of Ernesto Laclau in his treatise on populist reason[13] and his views are in the same line with French theory for which concepts are *aporetic* and not part of formalistically articulated wholes. Politics in itself, or civic life, or culture, are precisely the products of the *aporetic* character of concepts. This does not prevent them from being operative, quite the contrary. Instead of perceiving the difficulty as to concepts in the difference between theory and action, one, as a good Kantian, must acknowledge here the real outcome of constitutive antinomies.

As to the genealogy of Byzantinism, the term has been seen as part of the worldviews that arise from the antithesis between traditionalism and modernism. The discourse of emancipation comprised the idea of freeing oneself from the Byzantinist tradition; this is a common view about the progress from retrograde

[12] On "Weltanschauung" in relation to Byzantine thought, see G. Arabatzis, "Ο I.N. Θεοδωρακόπουλος απέναντι στη Βυζαντινή Φιλοσοφία. Οι πηγές της κριτικής του", *Εκκλησιαστικός Φάρος* ΟΘ' (2008): 49-62.
[13] Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005).

culture to progressive politics.[14] Rupture was the external context of this modernist passage or of this kind of response to the modernist appeal. The context is seen rather as a frame, as a stage for the abandonment of some ideas and the progression of others. Yet, one could also view the context as inherent to ideas and the contextualization as the proper of a constantly dilemmatic ethics and politics. For example, the view that the emancipation of Modern Greece was part of an age of democratic revolutions cannot be challenged, but the observation of the actual transformations can lead us to the conclusion that not all forms of political modernity oppose the tradition. For example, the Byzantinism of the national historiography is the result of a superimposition of both modernity and tradition. This is also evident in the narratives of the travelers who were journeying through the Balkans in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The cultural superimposition is not only a kind of representation but also a type of action, one that clearly demonstrates how the opposition of delimited homogeneous wholes is erroneous and that one should rather speak of an *apophatic* modernism. The initial fallacy consists in turning a logical opposition into a historical one; this manifests how the concepts are twisted due to latent normative desires, which are responsible for the historical lapsus that cannot be solely attributed to the persistence of traditionalist surviving patterns. Thus, the context of concepts is shown to be the structure of their production.

The modernist progressive worldviews are considered to be the outcome of the Machiavellian project of a stable republic in spite of the abandonment of transcendental sources of authority and against the relapsing of modern politics into irrationality; Max Weber is also in this line of thought. To the image of historical decline embodied in Byzantium, as the historian Edward Gibbon[15] has supported, retorts the Machiavellian idea that corruption is part of a historical recurrence in human affairs.[16] In Gibbon, the critique of the regional political ontology of Byzantium is seen as part of a broader operation of legitimacy; it would be wiser to perceive of Byzantinism as part of a plurality of political languages. The search for legitimacy can be witnessed clearly in Gibbon's naïve realism about names as naming operators, for example in his aforementioned statement about the decline of Rome due to religion and barbarism. Only later, in Nietzsche for example, legitimacy came to be thought as corresponding to the will – the will of power in particular. The names instead of being operators of naming are in Nietzsche the

[14] For a critique of naïve oppositions see André Guillou, "Le monde de Byzance dans la pensée historique de l'Europe: le siècle des Lumières", *Culture et société en Italie Byzantine - VIe-XIe s.* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1978), 27-39.

[15] Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. D. Womersley (London: Lane/ Penguin, 1994, 1068).

[16] Of course, in Byzantine Orthodoxy, Machiavellianism would be intolerable; see John Climacus, *Scala Paradisi*, *PG* 88, 884, where complotting against another person is inacceptable since it contributes to a second fall, which is accompanied this time with pleasure. As we will see, the concept of economia may in extremis concern the actual shortcomings of a person's implication with power.

signs of impasses in reference; here irrationality or rather contingency is the proper foundation of the concepts.

One must not miss the fact that in many traditional commonwealths like the Byzantine one, the right to insurgency in some instances was a legitimate element of political action and only partially was contained by the instrumental use of intolerance.[17] This right was constantly introducing the element of contingency into the normativity of public life. The Machiavellian project, on the other hand, may be still seen as a Platonic political programme where the idea (the republic in Machiavelli's language) is opposed to the world of sensations (the political irrationality in his view); in Machiavellian terms, it is the opposition between the *virtù* and the *fortuna*. A *prima facie* civil right is the constitutive other of the law and its premise; it is not absolute and yet is always presupposed. The general illegitimacy of any concept is the sign of its radical contingent character. This is what can be described as the fallacy of the speculative leap from the empirical to the normative sphere.

One cannot understand the semantics of Byzantinism without the argumentative practices that support it. The concept is not the outcome of a definitional practice – of course, it can also be that – but what challenges definition. Byzantinism, maybe more than other political concepts, makes evident the above observation. The political-ethical refutation of Byzantinism coexists with its aesthetic persistence and relevance over time. The Byzantinism in its aesthetic relevance transcends the critique of ideology towards the understanding of what is and how does function a political archetype. The Byzantinism is the concept that properly corresponds to the context of the Byzantinist debate; in other terms, Byzantinism, as it happens with other political concepts, transcends the distinction between text and context.

Eusebeia as anti-Byzantinism

If Byzantinism is a form of alienation of the Byzantine spirit or mind one should ponder the definition of this latter. The main notion here from a value-neutral point of view is the idea of "*eusebeia*" (= piety).[18] In this notion are comprised the divine revelation, the tradition (especially the Patristic one), morals and the happiness proper to the Orthodox ethics.[19] The defense of these parts of *eusebeia* is the mission of Basileus and the clergy while their conservation is the task of the faith and the care that pertains to the Orthodox people. By definition, people exterior to the above system of convictions is dealt with skepticism and groups

[17] See D. N. Karayannopoulos, *Η πολιτική θεωρία των Βυζαντινών* (Thessaloniki: Vanias, 1992), 35-37.

[18] On *eusebeia*, see André Guillou, "La vie quotidienne à la haute époque byzantine, Eusébeia: piété. Une réflexion lexicographique", *The 17th International Byzantine Congress, Major Papers* (New Rochelle-New York: Ar. D. Karatzas Publishers, 1986), 189-209 and Idem, "Piété filiale, piété impériale", *Collection de l'Institut des Sciences et Techniques de l'Antiquité* 367 (1988): 143-153, Mélanges P. Lévêque, I. Religion.

[19] In Isaiah, 33, 6, *eusebeia* has the aspect of a dynamic cognition.

not affiliated to it are named in such manner that the common perception of them remains unchanged for eternity.[20] The cultural conflict of the Byzantines with the Arabs and the Westerners, after the one between Christians and pagans, lead to the examination of the idea of cultural superiority and thus to the indecision about universal values. In particular, the encounter with the West created a new challenge and divided the Byzantine intellectuals. The Latinophile party of Constantinople proposed a form of Occidentalization while the opposants, i.e. the Anti-Latin party, promoted, in essence, the possibility to ignore the Western rise to prominence. This denial by the Anti-Latin party of the new power presented different levels of intensity while the central idea, maybe for the Latinophiles also, was the preservation of the greater part of Byzantine tradition. In this perspective, the tradition was characterized by immutability, contrary to the idea of the expansive science that was proper to the early Byzantine thought. Resistance as immutability could not escape the issue of the inferiority of Byzantine science as improper for the understanding of movement. The resistance thus to the Western intellectual acculturation was at the same time a dispute about intellectual progress. The fields affected in the first place by the encounter with the West were the realm of the Ego and the universality of meaning.[21]

Eusebeia has been without doubt an individual affair, the measure of a personal behavior. *Eusebeia* by itself presupposes a personalist view of the individual destiny. During the relative prime of the Byzantine state of mind, it possessed clear essentialist properties and subsequently became a first order quality of the Byzantine person as the treatise of Kekaumenos reveals.[22] In order to understand the realm proper to *eusebeia*, one must distinguish it from morals and religion; *eusebeia* is the quality of human existence after the fall that cannot ambition the comfort of the moral or religious universality. Actions are always actions-in-the-world and the liberation surpasses the immanent world. Birth has a completely defining meaning because it determines one's nature and the Ego cannot thus quite intent the status of a subject.

Beyond personal *eusebeia*, there is the communal one that possesses normative value and is common to all Byzantines, i.e. to all proper human beings. *Eusebeia* is a quality of humanity, a spiritual if not a transcendent universal. What makes its strength is the expansiveness and the power to comprehend the Other and

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[20] See Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*, Proem 15 Moravcsik. The notion of "Εθνη"/ Nations refer to the "gentiles", foreign to the chosen people, as in Ps. 2, 1 and Matth. 10, 5; the foreigners are either spiritually or politically alien or both; see Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio. A Commentary*, ed. J. Romilly and H. Jenkins, commentary R. J. H. Jenkins (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1962), 11.

[21] As to the distinction between Latinophiles and Anti-Latinophiles in Constantinople, see Stylianos Papadopoulos, *Ορθόδοξη και Σχολαστική θεολογία* (Athens: 1970). See, from a historical point of view, Steven Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity: A Study of the Patriarchate of Constantinople from the Eve of the Turkish Conquest to the Greek War of Independence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), esp. the initial parts of the study.

[22] See Kekaumenos, *Στρατηγικόν*, ed. D. Tsougarakis (Athens: Agrostis, 1993), 245, § 77.

thus *eusebeia* acquires meta-religious characteristics as to comprehension and transcendence. It forms the supra-categorical monism of the Byzantine anthropology in face of God and human community. It is a monistic metaphysics that can be confused with mysticism but is not mystical in itself; it is only epistemologically warranted by mysticism. The motivation for it is the salvation and survival of the Byzantine Christian and so its monism is secondary and heterogeneous. The all-comprehensive idea of "everything-in-everything"[23] of the Greek philosophy is now considered as a consequence of the evangelic love, as an equivalent of the statement: You is I. As such, it is the foundation of what can be considered as Byzantine immanence, the vacillation between the universal and the communal as a kind of conceptual solidarity. Hence, in what degree the conservation of tradition is effectively accomplished, is a question that cannot escape the dialectical survey of the above subjective as well as objective statements. Yet, the same feature makes very difficult the ratiocinating approach to the Byzantine phenomenon.

Stillness

The famous Byzantinist Paul Lemerle[24] attempted an overview of Byzantine art, placing the concept of style in the center of his analysis. The notion of style allows for the abandonment of the aesthetic-metaphysical dualities that dictate aesthetic considerations, the most important being the one between form and content. The concept of style, precisely, allows the possibility to refer to elemental iconological units without involving aesthetic categories that are dually opposed, metaphysically polarizing the iconological material and, in effect, negating it. Lemerle emphasizes that the Byzantine art is a religious art and clarifies that, in more correct terms, Byzantine art is a theological art. The French Byzantinist points out that the Byzantine artist searches to avoid any personal interpretation, in addressing solely the spiritual element. The Byzantine artist, says Lemerle, does not aspire to any kind of personal work but rather tries to perform, as far as his forces allow, a sacred task, quite like the priest in church. His ambition is not the innovation but the humble reproduction of a type that has already been decreed to confer the divine spirit.[25]

The constant reference to faith and to the relationship between the created and the uncreated signifies the total overcome of the artistic ego by the supreme truths of creation. This description of Byzantine art requires, at least, an account of the experience that supports it, i.e. the religious experience; yet, such an effort would not be in position to exhaust the interpretative possibilities. The religious

[23] Anaxagoras B 11 D-K.
[24] Paul Lemerle, *Le style byzantin* (Paris: Larousse, 1943). See G. Arabatzis, *Byzantine Philosophy and Iconology*, op. cit., 109-111.
[25] The question of innovation and originality is a debatable question in Byzantium; see André Guillou, *La civilisation byzantine* (Paris: Arthaud, 1990), the chapter "Originalités", 220-224.

experience is certainly present, but as Lemerle has already pointed out, art does not concern the "religious" but the "theological" sphere, which he even combined with the invocation of the concept of spirituality; art, therefore, refers to a spiritual-theological experience. However, this observation does not give way to further analysis, as one would expect from the description in Lemerle's work; instead, one sees here a significant regression to ideological language.

Thus, for Lemerle, Byzantine art is a theocratic one, i.e. subject to authority, alien to progress (what in fact does artistic progress mean?), transpiring an air of monotony, habit, and copying. The idea of copying is particularly relevant, Lemerle says, in the Byzantine iconology of sacred forms. This is not, he supports, a kind of artistic weakness, but the process of copying signifies the power of the archetype that has been miraculously revealed and which now requires utter faithfulness in reproduction. This attitude, however, he notes, serves high dogma as well as superstitious iconography, thereby forming an aesthetic duality; it is an art at the same time impersonal and paradoxical, though this latter description contradicts the spiritual tone which Lemerle himself had pointed out in the beginning of his analysis. Which art more in search of the novel, the original, the unusual, the *recherché*, the different would be, by logical consequence, more spiritual than the Byzantine art? It is obvious that Lemerle appears still a captive of the metaphysical dualities that he previously negated.

One should plainly distinguish between metaphysical immobility, one of the more prominent features of the Greek metaphysics about the Real Being, and Byzantine stillness. The work of Evagrios Pontikos may be of great help here. Evagrios is more or less contemporary to what it was historically initiated as the Eastern Roman Empire. A member of the ecclesiastical hierarchy in Constantinople, he allegedly gave in to temptation, he repented and chose to move to Jerusalem and follow the ascetic vocation. He subsequently promoted the practice of the ascetic stillness quite in opposition to the previous familiar to him sociability of the imperial court.[26] He promoted a series of practices, suitable to induce to calmness and silence the passions. The discourse of hesychia is in that way both a discursive practice to tame passions and the explanation of the ontological state of things, which, if one conforms to the first caution, is as good as the outcome of creation permits. Evagrios' *Treatise to Eulogios* is an account of the gnosis that is suitable for the above two objectives. The ascites' intentionality is turned not to the interested sociability with others but to a life of virtue that is only visible to God. Worldly esteem is a regression to the life of passions. The Ego thus must always be neutral as to the things of this world, giving neither to irascibility nor to pleasure. Irascibility can be turned solely against the demons while pleasure

[26] Later in Michael Psellos, sociability becomes a main characteristic of political life; see Michel Psellos, *Chronographie*, II, 391 r, ed. Émile Renauld (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1967), 74-75; see also E. de Vries-van der Velden, "Les amitiés dangereuses: Psellos et Léon Paraspondylos", *Byzantinoslavica* 60 (1999): 315–350.

must always relate to Christian salvation, humility and charity. The search of pleasure is before anything else a regulation of one's interiority and the repulsion of vainglory. The worldly pleasure is constantly related to the world of forms and figuration and a Christian's intellect must make a great effort to resist them both. True understanding, in this sense, is an "understanding of thanksgiving" which "bears the way of the truth upon the tongue"; if we have truly acquired love, we have "extinguished the passions and have let our light shine into the heavens"[27]. Maximus the Confessor, commenting upon Dionysius Areopagite, underscores that God is the agent of love, the One who pushes love towards the exterior of the subject, i.e. the other created beings; God is the true mediator towards the authentic union in Spirit and the work of mediation is what provokes the union. This last, the Christian union in spirit, is the highest and superior to all other unions.[28] Already, for Leontius of Byzantium, division is essentially incompatible to the dogmatic concise condensation.[29] Yet, besides the dogmatic condensing effort there is the need for spiritual compensation which, according to Dorotheus of Gaza, is due to one's pious proximity to spirituality.[30]

Byzantinism and Understanding

This idea of the Byzantine practical state of mind may give way to some serious misunderstandings as to the ways of relating Good and Action. One can very schematically situate the incompatibility thus produced at the breach separating the Christian ethics of St Paul, who states about good actions that "I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing"[31] and the claim of Euripides' Medea: "I am overcome by evil, and I realize what evil I am about to do, but my passion controls my plans."[32] The possible or impossible compromise between these attitudes and the ways to differentiate them exemplify the emergence of Byzantinism. A clear presentation of Byzantinism is given by G.W.F. Hegel who writes in *The Philosophy of History on Byzantium*[33] (I am giving an extensive part of the text due to its importance):

"The history of the highly civilized Eastern Empire — where as we might suppose, the Spirit of Christianity could be taken up in its truth and purity — exhibits to us a millennial series of uninterrupted crimes, weaknesses, basenesses and want of principle; a most repulsive and consequently a most uninteresting picture. It is evident here, how Christianity may be abstract, and how as such it is

[27] Evagrios Pontikos, *Eulogios*, in Robert E. Sinkewicz, *Evagrius of Pontus. The Greek Ascetic Corpus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), the Greek text 331, 30 (1136 D).
[28] Maximus the Confessor, Sch. D.N. IV 14, PG 4, 265 D.
[29] Leontius of Byzantium, *PG*, 86/1, 1297 B.
[30] Dorotheus of Gaza, *Œuvres spirituelles*, rds. L. Régnault, and J. de Préville (Paris: Cerf, 1963), SC 92, 486; see A. Guillou, *La vie quotidienne*, op. cit., 203.
[31] Romans 7, 19.
[32] Euripides, *Medea*, 1078-79.
[33] G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (Kitchener: Batoche Books, 2001), 355-358.

powerless, on account of its very purity and intrinsic spirituality. It may even be entirely separated from the World, as e.g. in Monasticism —which originated in Egypt. It is a common notion and saying, in reference to the power of Religion, abstractly considered, over the hearts of men, that if Christian love were universal, private and political life would both be perfect, and the state of mankind would be thoroughly righteous and moral. Such representations may be a pious wish, but do not possess truth; for religion is something internal, having to do with conscience alone. To it all the passions and desires are opposed, and in order that heart, will, intelligence may become true, they must be thoroughly educated; Right must become Custom — Habit; practical activity must be elevated to rational action; the State must have a rational organization, and then at length does the will of individuals become a truly righteous one. Light shining in darkness may perhaps give color, but not a picture animated by Spirit. The Byzantine Empire is a grand example of how the Christian religion may maintain an abstract character among a cultivated people, if the whole organization of the State and of the Laws is not reconstructed in harmony with its principle. At Byzantium Christianity had fallen into the hands of the dregs of the population — the lawless mob. Popular license on the one side and courtly baseness on the other side, take refuge under the sanction of religion, and degrade the latter to a disgusting object. In regard to religion, two interests obtained prominence: first, the settlement of doctrine; and secondly, the appointment to ecclesiastical offices. The settlement of doctrine pertained to the Councils and Church authorities; but the principle of Christianity is Freedom — subjective insight. These matters therefore, were special subjects of contention for the populace; violent civil wars arose, and everywhere might be witnessed scenes of murder, conflagration and pillage, perpetrated in the cause of Christian dogmas. (…) Especially notorious are the contentions about Images, in which it often happened, that the Emperor declared for the images and the Patriarch against, or conversely. Streams of blood flowed as the result. Gregory Nazianzen says somewhere: "This city (Constantinople) is full of handicraftsmen and slaves, who are all profound theologians, and preach in their workshops and in the streets. If you want a man to change a piece of silver, he instructs you in what consists the distinction between the Father and the Son: if you ask the price of a loaf of bread, you receive for answer — that the Son is inferior to the Father; and if you ask, whether the bread is ready, the rejoinder is that the genesis of the Son was from Nothing." The Idea of Spirit contained in this doctrine was thus treated in an utterly unspiritual manner. The appointment to the Patriarchate at Constantinople, Antioch and Alexandria, and the jealousy and ambition of the Patriarchs likewise occasioned many intestine struggles. To all these religious contentions was added the interest in the gladiators and their combats, and in the parties of the blue and green color, which likewise occasioned the bloodiest encounters; a sign of the most fearful degradation, as proving that all feeling for what is serious and elevated is lost, and that the delirium of religious passion is quite consistent with an appetite

for gross and barbarous spectacles.

"The chief points in the Christian religion were at last, by degrees, established by the Councils. The Christians of the Byzantine Empire remained sunk in the dream of superstition - persisting in blind obedience to the Patriarchs and the priesthood. Image-Worship, to which we alluded above, occasioned the most violent struggles and storms. The brave Emperor Leo the Isaurian in particular, persecuted images with the greatest obstinacy, and in the year 754, Image-Worship was declared by a Council to be an invention of the devil. Nevertheless, in the year 787 the Empress Irene had it restored under the authority of a Nicene Council, and the Empress Theodora definitively established it - proceeding against its enemies with energetic rigor. The iconoclastic Patriarch received two hundred blows, the bishops trembled, the monks exulted, and the memory of this orthodox proceeding was celebrated by an a nnual ecclesiastical festival. The West, on the contrary, repudiated Image-Worship as late as the year 794, in the Council held at Frankfort; and though retaining the images, blamed most severely the superstition of the Greeks. Not till the later Middle Ages did Image-Worship meet with universal adoption as the result of quiet and slow advances.

"The Byzantine Empire was thus distracted by passions of all kinds within, and pressed by the barbarians — to whom the Emperors could offer but feeble resistance — without. The realm was in a condition of perpetual insecurity. Its general aspect presents a disgusting picture of imbecility; wretched, nay, insane passions, stifle the growth of all that is noble in thoughts, deeds, and persons. Rebellion on the part of generals, depositions of the Emperors by their means or through the intrigues of the courtiers, assassination or poisoning of the Emperors by their own wives and sons, women surrendering themselves to lusts and abominations of all kinds — such are the scenes which History here brings before us; till at last — about the middle of the fifteenth century (A.D.1453) — the rotten edifice of the Eastern Empire crumbled in pieces before the might of the vigorous Turks."[34]

The end of history, eschatology, is one of the main constituents of the Judaeo-Christian culture that vows to the annihilation of the evil and spiritual emancipation. A new approach to the question is made by Alexandre Kojève's reading of the *Phenomenology of the Spirit*.[35] Eschatology makes the world history a necessary and mandatory science and, through the idea of world history, is further introduced the notion of the science of war or Polemology. Before a general, disastrous war, the idea of conservation appears as the real antithesis to eschatology. This line

[34] On this text, see G. Arabatzis, "Ο Χέγκελ και το Βυζάντιο, κατά τις παραδόσεις του Γερμανού φιλοσόφου, Μαθήματα φιλοσοφίας της Ιστορίας" (Βερολίνο 1830-1831), *Κ' Πανελλήνιο Ιστορικό Συνέδριο 28-30 Μαΐου 1999* (Thessaloniki: Ελληνική Ιστορική Εταιρεία, 2000), 61-69; Idem, "Hegel and Byzantium (With a Notice on Alexandre Kojève and Scepticism)", *Philosophical Inquiry* 25, no. 1-2 (2003): 31-39; Idem, "Le Byzance de Hegel et la question du néoplatonisme hégélien", *Peitho* 1, no. 5 (2014): 337-350.

[35] Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1969).

of thought is not difficult to follow in the history of the post-Westphalian state (after 1648) and in the philosophy of liberalism, i.e. in Thomas Hobbes. World history thus relates war to eschatology. The notion of cosmopolitanism in Kant is idealistic since it appears as the regulative idea of an a priori contradiction. The Machiavellian Prince can incarnate as an individual in a better way this coincidence of the opposites. Rousseau, for his part, identified decline with civilized society itself. Before the end of history, the balance of conflicting great powers was seen as a model of political management as early as the times of Byzantium. This realism of "check and balances" is manifest in Kojève (but also in Hobbes and Carl Schmitt) and it has a lot to do with competing against an exemplary enemy. The antithesis between friendship and hostility is once more presented as the latent cause of movement in world history and thus war is the only real reason for the creation of the state. By the same, neutrality must be placed out of history, i.e. as an exception. According to Schmitt, the essence of politics is the management of exception and here the relevant logic is that of the vicious circle.[36]

In any case, the above description is in many points telling as to the evolution from Byzantium to Europe and as to the creation of the modern state in the form of a synthesis of ideology and war (to which neither the Ancient cities nor the Roman Empire may conform completely). How, before such a ruthless logic, can the idea of the end of history be re-evoked? The formalization of conflict as the proper essence of politics underscores the permanence of the eschatological hope. Therefore is introduced the idea of a dual history, i.e. a political and an occult history and, subsequently, the idea of a multiple and alternative history. The idea of universal collaboration (peace), on the other hand, is principled in the manner of the eschatological view since it puts forward an indeterminate suspension of the politics of war. Everyone in this perspective is present in multiple worlds and we cannot avoid the idea of the apocalyptic disaster in one or more of them. The old humanity is fractured into what one can call different commonwealths.

The situation is not strange to the idea of the development of modern science, which must have initiated in an imperial or hegemonic logic according to the Hegelian analysis; science does not stand apart from war and power. At first, science does not appear to be related to any warlike sentiment. In Hobbes, the genealogical inheritance is of prime importance: the contractual science is born out of the refutation of the consequences of the generalized war. The Hobbesian contract is together with Kant's cosmopolitan ideal the two great horizons of world history. In other words, the regulative duality of the reflection over world history is made of the difference between Hobbes and Kant. Hobbes appears as a major realist

[36] Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology. Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. G. Schwab (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), 5 ff. See the critique of Schmitt (and Heidegger) as national-socialist thinkers in Nikos Psarros, "Ο *φιλοσοφικός εθνικοσοσιαλισμός στη σκέψη του* Martin Heidegger *και του* Carl Schmitt", communication to the University of Ioannina.

in relation to Kant's epistemological idealism or, in more psychoanalytic terms, Hobbes demonstrates the priority of fetishist realism (i.e. the political contract). This realism has been part of the common vocabulary for so long that there is a discourse about it ignoring the fact that this is often nothing more than a fetishism of thought. The political realism is nothing else than the repulsion of ethics and justice as simple epiphenomena of the political interest. Yet, the eschatological hope is never eliminated and constitutes the other face of realism; eschatology in other words possesses here a latent normative value. Realism is in a way a form of eschatology that has temporarily ceased to exercise pressure on history. The virtuous intentionality or, else, the return of morals is never, in practice, alien to the exercise of the realist politics of nations. Hobbes' as well as Machiavelli's political philosophies are deficient as to the understanding of the politics of hope[37] while Kant appears as the true heir of the Machiavellian ambition for the autonomy of comprehending political action.[38] The foundationalism of the good is never fully abandoned just as the nominalist view on evil cannot be avoided. Max Weber's distinction between politics of conviction and politics of responsibility is at this point wanting.[39] Political action in other words neither abandons the movement of the commonsense nor cease to confront the determinism of bad faith.

Byzantinism and History

Some believe that the introduction of the concept of ideology can be illuminating at this point. The globalization of the message of Enlightenment is largely responsible for the broad diffusion of the concept of ideology. However, it is a concept that cannot always be proved useful for the understanding of Byzantium and only some neglect of the lessons of Byzantine history would preserve the concept of ideology in its totality.[40] On the other hand, as it is said, eschatology is still part of the modern employ of political power. The notion of ideology as a kind of fixation of the mental life is often responsible for the modernist perception

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[37] On the politics of hope, see Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, trans. N. Plaice, St. Plaice, P. Knight (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1995).

[38] I am inspired here and in what follows by Pierre Manent's distinction between the 'Empire', the 'Church' and 'Monarchy', where this last is a form of transcending the incompatibility of the first two; in Manent's view Monarchy is the source of the consequent political philosophy of liberalism developed by Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, etc.; see P. Manent, *Histoire intellectuelle du libéralisme* (Paris: Hachette/Pluriel, 1987), esp. 17-30. For a different view, see Max Horkheimer, "The Begginings of the Bourgeois Philosophy of History", in *Between Philosophy and Social Science*, trans. G. Frederick Hunter, M. Kramer, and J. Torpey (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1995), 318-388.

[39] See M. Weber, "Politics as a Vocation", in *The Vocation Lectures*, trans. R. Livingstone, ed. D. Owen and T. B. Strong (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2004), 32-94; see also, G. Arabatzis, *Éthique du bonheur et orthodoxie à Byzance (IVe-XIIe s.)*, avec une préface de André Guillou (Paris: Éd. P. Belon/Diffusion De Boccard, 1998, coll. "Textes. Documents. Études" No. 4), 27-36.

[40] The limits of the relevant ideological reading can be seen in Hans-Georg Beck, *Das byzantinische Jahrtausend* (München: C. H. Beck, 1978), esp. the chapters II.8 and IV.4.

of science as a dialectic of power and war. The idea of cooperation is frequently a question about the type of ideology that can lead to an action for the good. Thus, cooperation appears now as a real and present eschatology, although incomplete as to the primal and authentic form of eschatology. Ethics, supposedly without political power, is the eschatology of realism, and thus it takes a normative form. This means that the mechanism of power appears to involve eschatological-ethical considerations. The fundamental Hobbesian principle of a primal general war can be abandoned in favor of an expanding virtue, as in the Byzantine thinker Plethon; his system of virtues must be interpreted beyond the context of ancient philosophical influences.[41]

A modern system of virtues can lead to a form of solidarity beyond tradition that requires multiculturalism, like the Greek and Christian elements in Byzantium, which would set goals far superior to those of simple political realism. The discourse about realism and the rational choices it implies is thus replaced by a multiplicity of values and at least a duality of cultural forms. In fact, however, there is no direct confrontation between the two cultures, except in the early Christian times[42], and the resultant pluralism may also aspire to some realism, that of the political project, as opposed to the realism of the appeal to authority that was the traditional Byzantine courtly behavior and persists as part of the politics of Byzantinism. World history is thus transformed into a pattern of cultural politics that, as in Plethon, renounces to Byzantinism for simultaneously a kind of proto-nationalism and cosmopolitanism. The spirituality of orthodoxy had already supported the universality of the Byzantine patriotism.[43] In fact, the Orthodox spirituality had, long ago, abandoned the naïve realism described above. The inclusion of new ethnicities in the Byzantine Commonwealth[44] was an important turning point in official knowledge, in the culture of communication, in the perception of space in terms of more "objective" criteria, for example those of diffusing the Byzantine model of agriculture.[45] This shift remodeled the traditional expanding geopolitics of the Byzantine court. The cultural influence cannot be reduced to the war of all against all, or to the idea that man is a wolf for man. The eschatology here joins rather the co-operation than the self-securing Hobbesian contract and the Orthodox spirituality had already, very early on, rejected the Roman morals of the

[41] See G. Arabatzis, "Plethon's Philosophy of the Concept", in *Georgios Gemistos Plethon. The Byzantine and Latin Renaissance*, eds. J. Matula and R. Blum (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackeho v Olomouci, 2014), 73-111.
[42] See Dionysius Areopagita, "Letters to Sopatros and to Polycarpus", in Günther Heil, Adolf M. Ritter, *Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita. de Coelesti Hierarchia, de Ecclesiastica Hierarchia, de Mystica Theologia, Epistulae* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 164-170; see, in contrast, C. N. Sathas, *Έλληνες στρατιώται εν τη Δύσει* (Athens: Karavia, 1986).
[43] See H. A. Ahrweiler, *L'idéologie politique de l'empire byzantin* (Paris: PUF, 1975).
[44] See D. Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe, 500-1453* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971).
[45] See G. Arabatzis, *Éthique du bonheur et orthodoxie à Byzance* (IVe-XIIe s.), op. cit., 92-97 and 109-117.
[46] André Guillou, *La civilisation byzantine* (Paris: Arthaud, 1990), 374; see Constantin A. Bozinis, *Ο Ιωάννης ο Χρυσόστομος για το Imperium Romanum. Μελέτη πάνω στην πολιτική σκέψη της Αρχαίας Εκκλησίας* (Athens: Kardamitsa, 2003), esp. 105-107.

arena.[46] Byzantium as the empire of wisdom rejects the extortionist universality towards an idea of the Biblical *economia* as openness to the less fortunate, a form of social welfare and care for the needy[47], which in some degree contradicts any fixed representation about medievalism.

The violent introduction of the West into the Byzantine world could not but engender the same skepticism about the destiny of the divine kingdom as the Arabian invasion had already done at the beginning of the Byzantine dark centuries.[48] This meant, despite the widespread legend about Byzantine political formalism, a very real debate for the subjects of Byzantine rule. This concern about the limits of Byzantine rule was contemporary to an ontological topology that became particularly visible in the phenomenon of Byzantine *iconoclasm* [=the Byzantine war of the images] rather than in official lawmaking or political tactics. The Arabian factor has marked the iconicity of Byzantine rule and the rise of a renewed anxiety about the meaning of change while the Byzantine state was acquiring new potential in order to face the menace. Addressing the Western challenge required other processes at the level of governmentality[49] but at the end it only demonstrated the shortcomings of the Byzantine *economia* while the Ottoman aggressiveness became a new threat.

The above examples demonstrate that violence without cultural confrontation is not a real threat to an organized state-run community such as the Byzantine one that had successfully defeated the invasions of the "Barbarians". Thus, Gibbon's phrase about religion and barbarity as the cause of the decline of Roman supremacy is doubly lacking. Hegemony and science (*episteme*) constitute the necessary and sufficient conditions for a true resistance to enemy forces as this is evidenced by the Byzantine example, and both lead to a new image of political confrontation opposed to the realist's view about power. The hierarchy of power in this way is to be distinguished from society as simple mental construction and, in any case, what comes out triumphant is not political realism.

The conclusions drawn from the above image of Byzantine resistance are multiple: (1) the case of realism is simplistic or naïve; (2) the science of power is linked to the science of communal procedures; (3) realism essentially goes back to the question of action. The Byzantine *economia* thus emerges as the practice

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[47] See D. J. Constantellos, *Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1968), esp. 67–110.

[48] See Paul Lemerle, *Byzantine Humanism. the First Phase: Notes and Remarks on Education and Culture in Byzantium from Its Origins to the 10th Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1986).

[49] See M. Foucault, "Governmentality", in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, eds. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 87–104.

[50] See H. A. Ahrweiler, *L'idéologie politique de l'empire byzantin*, op. cit., 141-147, where the economia is seen as a progressive adaptation to new realities. C. Cupane sees the economia as a form of social compromise ("Appunti per uno studio dell'oikonomia ecclesiastica in Bizancio", JÖB 38 (1988): 53-73) while G. Dagron considers economia as a normalization of social conduct through moral principles and charisma ("La règle et l'exception. Analyse de la notion d'économie", *Religiöse Devianz. Untersuchungen zu sozialen, rechtlichen und theologischen Reaktionen auf religiöse Abweichung im westlichen und östlichen Mittelalter*, ed. D. Simon. Studien zur europäischen Rechtsgeschichte 48 (Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 1990), 1-18.

of creating the *topos* of universality.[50] The eschatological dialectics is more or less abandoned, and the natural law is maintained in practice, if not in theory.[51] The military factor is constantly praised, i.e. the military intervention, even within the limits of a sufficiently eschatological perspective.[52] Thus, by virtue of the conscious perception of the balance of power, Byzantine governmentality acquires a multiple status, defends the law of the Orthodox communities, does not abandon the right of intervention, is conservative and emancipatory if necessary. The Byzantine *economia* is thus an instrumental concept that can be considered realist, though not properly one[53], although the idea of a sole Christian nation, in the confrontation with the West, must be abandoned. The Byzantine relevant concepts become, following the emergence of Western supremacy, aural or thematic, and by no means imperial. Theory is distinguished from the instrumentality of political themes; the first is worldwide, while the second is economical. The abandonment of a general worldview takes place in the interest for rational choice or what can be considered as such. Byzantine governmentality is an image of political voluntarism in an expanded way; anthropology, solidarity, community, history are at its disposal. Political will does not differ from solidarity, which means the communal self-consciousness. This is the deepest reason for the alienation of the modern political sensitivity from the Byzantine government, i.e. the proper form of its adaptive structures. The rupture here, before being realistic, is rather paradigmatic. The peace of Byzantine governmentality is not normative, although it signifies the being together of people inside prolonged time spans. But this long duration of Byzantine rule cannot be reconciled with the modern ideas about the state and the people. The statement "nothing human is alien to me" (*nihil humanum a me alienum*) must give way to the institution of warfare, otherwise it would stand for a partial retreat of the Byzantine project. The Byzantine challenge is nothing less than the creation of a universal right opinion and of a common consciousness.

The question is that there actually can exist only relative and local *epistemae*, determined by epistemic limits, in this case those of the Byzantine studies field. The relevant ideas on Byzantine commonwealth life must be completely *ad hoc* and not refer to other governments or forms of rule. This is not a political point of view but a political science perspective in the sense of Hobbes, i.e. anti-Aristotelian, a kind of an a priori rupture with tradition following the breakthrough of modern

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[51] Basil the Great proposes in case of doubt the Patristic tradition as criterion, *PG*, 32, 669 B.
[52] The Bible though praises mildness and quietness of character; see Is., 68, 2-3.
[53] On the relation between *eusebeia* and *economia*, see Photius, *Bibliothèque*, IV, 227, ed. R. Henry (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1965), 112-113.
[54] See Paolo Rossi, *I filosofi e le machine, 1400-1700* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2002); see also *The Dynamics of Aristotelian Natural Philosophy from Antiquity to the Seventeenth Century*, eds. C. Leijenhorst, Chr. Lüthy, Hans Thijssen (Leiden: Brill, 2002), esp. the article Edith Sylla, "Space and Spirit in the Transition from Aristotelian to Newtonian Science", ibid., 249-287. On Hobbes' dependence on the "resolutif-compositif" method of Paduan Aristotelianism, see François Rangeon, *Hobbes, état et droit*, préface de Victor Goldschmidt (Paris: Albin Michel, 1982), esp. 50-63.

mechanics[54] in the dawn of Modernism. Liberalism may criticize the social engineering, but not the idea of a rupture with the so-called traditional hegemony. The problem of European mechanization[55] is directly related to the evolution of law and history. The relationship between states, for example, is emerging as a matter of international mechanics and this can be seen as the sublimation of what the Hobbesian theory pushes down to the political unconscious. Mechanics is the other face of the traditional relationship of hegemony and violence as this latter is revealed to Hobbes (more scientifically than in Machiavelli) as well as to Max Weber's critique. This hegemony/violence balance is not situated far from Kantian cosmopolitan peace in the form of a direct critical project about peace and war. Thus, the critique of Byzantine formalism as political Byzantinism grows parallel to the development of modern epistemic fields.

However, the division of labor in *epistemae* does not dispute the question of the mentalities or behaviors in Aristotle's politics of tyranny[56], not completely unrelated to the Machiavellian project. The dangers of tyranny in Byzantium[57] initiated a reflection on political motivation and decision-making. The former was determined in a number of ways, including economical considerations, while the latter was not strange to the mundane behavior or, otherwise, the structure of imperial court. The rational choice should incorporate here the social pressures in play and the resulting states of mind and for that reason state theory in Byzantium took distances from the Neo-Platonic illumination model of the deployment of cosmos. This detachment signifies the awareness of the distance that separates the leadership behavior from the simple rational choice – if one considers Neo-Platonism as the then principal frame of rationality. Decision makers appeared to move away from the confusion of the psychological sphere with the cultural one and decision making was not totally subordinated to government or was not part of the constructivism that is considered peculiar to government and produces a unifying history (historicism). This extraordinary neutrality of decision making as dilemmatology seems to bring us back to the question of the philosophical-political *theoria*. The ensuing bad faith of rule makes it necessary for the political expert to behave as a secret counselor. One can thus return to a political realism that does not stand the test of historical duration - what was realistic before, is not realistic anymore because the time-span in which it was effective has just elapsed. Realism is thus extra-temporal inasmuch as it defines contemporaneity as its main dimension and may leave aside any attempt of conceptual valuation, maintaining only the ultimate criterion of political history, i.e. military power. Any other realistic concept

[55] See Paolo Rossi, op. cit., esp. "Appendice terza. La nuova scienza e il simbolo di Prometeo", 177-188.
[56] *Politics*, V, xi, 1313 a 18 – 1315 b 10.
[57] See G. Arabatzis, "Nicephoros Blemmydes' Imperial Statue: Aristotelian Politics as Kingship Morality", *Mediaevistik* 27 (2014): 99-118.

is nothing but the fetishism of the military and military predominance is a fetish concept that itself departs from any other concept of government. However, the idea of governmentality[58] is not in position to upset the Realist.

If the idea of the ruler as decision maker fades away, the concept of state action, the balance of power, the legitimation of acts of power are equally dissolved. Here lies a real epistemological rupture: the confrontation (within the sublime of warfare) escapes the duality of the conflicting powers, the functionality of the cooperation is abandoned, while the regulating principle of hegemony and the eschatological idea re-emerge. The disappearance of the conceptual importance of war and cooperation leads in essence to the development of a theory of mediation and discontinuity and the philosophy of history dissolves in a vigilance about mediation. The other is not the warrior-enemy but its survival and strength as well as its weakness are simple regulatory ideas of *economical* government. The political thing is always the other's power and weakness, continuity and rupture. In this sense, the cultural policy of the Machiavellian ruler has no praxeological value. The ruler is the beneficiary of the hegemonic status in the midst of an unknown and forbidding territory. Strong hegemony in itself is the colonization of the other. This is the misery of the modernist rule, there is never a historical time while it is weakness that regulates the power failures[59] and the realistic logical coherence loses the ground under its feet; in structural terms, naïve realism cannot exceed the certainty of the signifier. Rational cooperation is not an alternative to power but what exceeds this last's struggle with error. Governmentality can now prevail over classical political science. The enemy/friend relation is constructivist and not realistic. The management of hostility renounces the policy of dialectical mastery in front of the impossible unification. The discovery of structured concepts, the reflection of the outside as attraction and oblivion[60], replaces the pervasive confrontation, while the war is excluded from this operation of replacement. The fundamental problem of Byzantium is the loss of its world, the departure from its stronghold position over the seas. The diplomatic relations with the West highlights the mutual interaction of profit and loss in status and the limits of European solidarity. With the Ottoman conquest, and with the loss of Byzantine statehood, a new cycle of hostility begins. Post-Byzantine Greece, later Modern Greece, are progressively inscribed in a modern adventure, that of liberation from the unjust yoke. Political realism is installed with the progressive loss of confidence to a savior West but with the need for a new idealism of emancipation. From the Byzantine

[58] This implies that the notion is primarily a critical one since Foucault, in the first place, is primarily a constructivist; see M. Foucault, *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings*, 1972-1977 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980) for an illustration of Foucauldian constructivism.

[59] See Nietzsche, who profoundly comprehended the reactional force of weakness, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, op. cit. I.13, III.9, 18.*Mediaevistik* 27 (2014): 99-118.

[60] See M. Foucault, "Maurice Blanchot: The Thought from Outside", in *Foucault/Blanchot* (New York: Zone Books, 1987), 7-58.

economia the subject of action moves toward the figures of the heroes of hegemony and science. Governmentality changes the political polarity and the new popular legitimacy requires new regulatory ideas. The fall of rule arrives through the post-political, the mobilization of new actors while hegemony now passes through the exercise of deviation, the successive failures before the not-yet ultimate success. The hegemonic exercise cannot be seen here otherwise than as a government of hegemonic deviation. There remains the state ratification of Greece that will take four centuries to prevail over the Ottoman rule.

Aftermath: Modernity's Eye of the Dragon

In the following lines, there will be a brief presentation of a symptomatic short story by the Greek author Yannis Kambysis that sums up the themes we have previously presented in relation to Byzantinism and modernity. Yannis Kambysis (1872-1901) was a writer of rupture that departed from Greek *ethographia*, i.e. the depiction of provincial morals and habitudes combined often with a patriotic or nostalgic flair. Kambysis was influenced first by socialism and then by Nietzscheism, and his writings carry the weight of cultural despair and perspectivism that Nietzsche inspired to many writers since the end of the 19*th* century. The short story that will be presented here is entitled "The eye of the dragon" and was first published in 1898.[61]

The story plot is as follows: in a small village of Peloponnesus, up on a mountain with a view to the sea that extends far to the Barbary Coast, two middle aged women married to two brothers are chatting in the tender night. They speak of a strange thing, pagan-demonic, occurring in a Christian setting: a fox after having killed some chicken and a rooster had sat on and brood the eggs. About to take their leaf to sleep, one of the women notices faraway in the sea a light like a star that goes off slowly and beams again. The two women who witness the continuous on and off of the light are taken by terror like in front of a demonic power: the light was like the eye of the dragon of fairy tales. They wake their husbands who witness by themselves the event and soon the whole village observes the strange phenomenon with awe. A young man of the village, in love with the daughter of the priest, thinks of traveling to catch the dragon. A whole legend is formed in his mind about confined princesses and kings and he, like a savior knight, offering to liberate the noble daughter from the monstrous hold and if so, the king giving her to him as wife. The young man would ride the winter horse to take him to the glass tower where the princess is held captive. But as he is climbing down the mountain

[61] Yannis Kambysis, "Το μάτι του δράκοντα", in *Διηγήματα* (Athens: Nefeli, 1989), 49-56. 1898 is precisely the year that Kambysis turned from socialism to Nietzscheanism; see Pantelis Voutouris, *Ιδέες της σκληρότητας και της καλοσύνης. Εθνικισμός, σοσιαλισμός, ρατσισμός (1897-1922)* (Athens: Kastaniotis, 2017), 167-169.

to his courageous mission, his mother, his aunt and other villagers find him and take him back to the village where the priest in front of the men and women is exorcising the distant dragon; in daylight, the beam of the eye of the dragon is gone. But the night, the light is still there and the next night and all the following ones and every night the villagers' fear diminishes and at the end, even the dreamy young man forgets about it. After a few months, a politician candidate passes by the village, sees the light and hears the story about the eye of the dragon. Soon enough he realizes that it is the lighthouse of Porto Longo, lately constructed. This explication makes no impression to the villagers since they are not concerned anymore and neither the lighthouse nor the eye of the dragon can trouble them, since the epoch of the dragon has completely evolved.

The short story summarizes the themes that we have discussed earlier, the pagan-Christian clash, the formation of the Christian conscience, the intrusion of modernism in the exemplifying person of the politician and its psephology as well as the persistence of an autonomous Christian orthodox time with its own rhythm that mollifies the returns of the pagan as well as the modernist intrusion.[62]

The modernist politics of intervention and acculturation in regions that have been locales of imagination - like Greece - has been captured intellectually by a multitude of different philosophies that perceive through a range of epistemic fields - geography, architecture, philology, morals and law - related to the genealogy of human sciences. The process of intervention signifies the simultaneous use of many jargons, especially as to the traditions of the localities where it takes place, as well as the relevant language of modernity. It is a narrative of the intervention itself but also the very real result of it, and perception here joins invention. The intervention generates or expands the cultural wars and the interventional iconology forms a "basic training" for this particular struggle. Thus, the iconography of intervention is a bio-power[63] that distributes and normalizes the martial art of intervention and also institutionalizes it. The interventional iconology illustrates the embrace of the priority of violent action. The iconology of intervention is, thus, an open window to the Polemology of intervention; it is the establishment of a cultural imaginary. "Just war" and "eternal enemy" are two dimensions of intervention, antithetical to the imperial ethics of responsibility. It is an imaginary ritual that dominates the formal as well as the extra-categorical features of this last.

The intervention generates anxiety and in this way is placed in a position of mental supervision by the use of abstract opponents like "modernity" and "tradition" and in likeness to virtual war games. Intervention uses abstract enemies to conceal the true enemy, which is none other than autonomy and its formal

[62] The mention of a dragon is clearly a reference to foundational myths; see J. Trumpf, "Stadtgründung und Drachenkampf", *Hermes* 86 (1958): 129-157. Yet, here, in Kambysis's story, the disposition is clearly anti-foundationalist.
[63] See G. Arabatzis, "Φιλοξενία και Εικονολογία", Ένεκεν 42 (2016): 258-272, thematic issue: «Η φιλοξενία».
[64] See supra, n. 5.

abstractions are assisted here by images. Byzantinism, then, in the Cavafyan sense[64], appears as the opposite to intervention, enforced by the romantic reminiscence of legendary battles. Like ancient wars, the new ones of the intervention are virtuous and fair. The intervention abolishes a kind of realism and creates a new one through the production of an idealizing picture of the conflict; it is nostalgic, and equally shaping for the native. Establishing a crucial distance here is a critical affair. The geopolitics of intervention *is* and *is not* at the same time, it is real *and* imaginary. Naming is equally a very critical process. The above-described structure persists even when the tensions produced because of it are forgotten and replaced by other ones. While the original similarity has been overcome by recent events, the overall structure of similarity remains and, in the form of psephology, evokes a commercial enterprise, part of a worldwide financial conduct (the politician candidate is touring the villages like a travelling salesman).

Similarity as structure produces also alterity, and more specifically, the iconographic one. Thus, the similarity of the intervention scenario is based on some imagist accuracy and narrative difference and this gives birth to a sense of uncanny. The whole narrative action is part of a cycle of intervention-production through some rather realistic representational entities, mainly "mythical hostile beings" of an essentialist texture, and thanks to the simulation that ultimately this is not a game of power and domination. Byzantium thus acquires a strange or, at least, uncanny aura. It is an entity, at the same time, abstract and viscerally alien. Sailing away from Byzantium generates feelings of relief as a form of disaffection from the uncanny and acquisition of control in a kind of modernist dream of grandeur.

Psephologists are defined as technocrats, but of what *tekhne*? One may guess that it is the art of affronting cultural counter-resistance.[65] The theory thus makes another shift towards the paradigm of war. The dominant strategy is to shape minds and hearts in order to achieve the confidence and cooperation of the people. It is a strategic populism in spite of all other dead ends in governmental rule. The reform of societies is achieved due to a theology of determination for social engineering. It is a form of expeditionary intelligence, a strategic development of civilization in two phases: (1) the cultural preparation of the relevant forces towards productive interaction with the natives; (2) the specialization in situations of crisis through a detailed knowledge of the theory of local societies and a mapping of them, a task of preparing for the hazardous, identifying key individuals and networks, using predictive methods for forecasting and computing, developing the sciences of the community and a calculating fantasy through relevant formulations. On the limits of *epistemae*, there is a preference for cultural knowledge and ethnographic

[65] Byzantinism as counter-resistance can be diagnosed in C. Sokolis, *Αυτοκρατορία*, ed. G. Arabatzis (Athens: Roes, 1993).

understanding over philosophical anthropology. The religious, political, psychological studies, etc. are undesirable in a condition of travesty for any science with moral anxieties. The overall effort consists in the collection of anthropological information by non-specialists in philosophical anthropology. It is a modernist effort that pretends being un-interested in the production of the anthropological element of modernity, from the local up to the supranational level. The pertinent interest is focused on micro-anthropology, i.e. the gathering of basic information about the kinds and the characters of local groups; this is also Byzantinism.

The general idea is that domination over a region requires specialization in the localities. Concepts and traditions are not of interest to the cultural strategic designers who aim to improve the intercultural dynamics of intervention. Interventional anthropology goes beyond the limits of social or cultural anthropology as a science. The interventional groundwork replaces the oldest European travel literature. The science of research on the field is a science of modernity that links the analysis with the participation in decision-taking groups; modern science in this sense is a surface covering specialization. The content of this particular science is a martial anthropology evolving in the context of an academic-military *mathesis* (conquest of the field). The critical element is inversely proportional to the accounting capacities of this science, which is rather trans-scientific or rather an applied anthropology. Due to this, it is possible to normalize "acculturation" with an emphasis on ethnography. The knowledge of cultural mechanisms is always evolving on the limits of applied anthropology, like an analysis of dreams with utilitarian goals. The "anthropological field" is considered here in terms of normalization; the applied anthropology advances towards an integration of the cultural architecture of regional knowledge.

The normal interferes here with what is culturally important (values). The epistemic simulation of extra-normality avoids the real penetration into the anthropological field. The world of applied anthropology is an artificial world, a modernist artificial paradise. Normalization is achieved through the adoption of a "first person" perspective and the distribution of others in "places"; there is a steady obsession with classificatory methods of achieving normalization. The classificatory approach is a predictive, well-established culture and technology about human groups. The classificatory approach allows the creation of a second modeled world, a molding of others in classification tribes and the visualization of their future. From the geo-spatial coordinates we proceed to the mapping of the human groups from a martial power position.

The aesthetics of assimilation is a role-play, the identification of a set of actions in a particular geosphere through scenarios of visualized action. The prognosis of the future as applied anthropology produces social engineering and lessens empathy with others. This tendency is governed by a strong epistemology

of confidence in the ability to classify things; it is a hyper-positivism of the power techniques. The prognosis ultimately comes to exercise control and science meets magic inside a kind of positivist Machiavellianism.

It would be more appropriate to say that knowledge was the agent of activation of the power instances of the community, in order to protect itself from the possibility of change. If we take a closer look at this tradition of continued violent conflict with the concepts of different lifestyles and the establishment of different knowledge, we come to see that our contemporary understanding of the difference as an enriching feature is nothing but an attempt of amortization of the long-term tendency of the community to interpret otherness as a threat. The social reality of the culture of difference is per se a battleground.

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