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ON THE “APPREHENSION” AND THE “ELABORATION” OF THE IDEAS OF THE SCOTTISH ENLIGHTENMENT IN GREECE

1. The occasion

Anniversary addresses are understandable as to their expedience, particularly now when they coincide with conditions of ‘financial crisis’ and of a multinational epidemic of flu. But the pre-eminent question is whether the work of a conference is articulated as a reproduction of the predominant forms of apprehension or whether it is offered as yet another opportunity of returning to the texts. This does not concern the *realia*, but what is first and foremost achieved by the thematic and methodological renewal of a specific field in the history of ideas.

2. Delimitation of the field

The term ‘enlightenment’, as it made its appearance and became established in the principal European languages, meant the process and the result of a certain verb activity. That is to say, ‘enlightening’ was already approached by those who introduced this line of thinking in an entirely clear way. It seems that Kant (1784) hit the mark in refusing to assent to the concept that an ‘enlightened age’ (“*aufgeklärter Zeitalter*”) was already in progress: simply, “we are living in an age of enlightenment” (“*Zeitalter der Aufklärung*”) (See Noutsos 2005: 17). In every case, what counts more is the process rather than its impacts - which, in their turn, of course, permit the ‘warming up’ in the new historical realities of the time - of enlightenment practice.

What precisely could such a practice be suggesting? Or, what could the ‘risk’ mean for those who have been called ‘enlighteners’? Is this the undetermined price paid for the transition to a different way of thinking and acting? And in what does this ‘difference’ which has to be expressed and experienced ‘differently’ consist? More particularly, do the ‘dangers’ concern what is becoming the past,

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what makes up the arena of the present, and, accordingly, what is opening up in the future? 'Danger' is for the enlighteners that which threatens the functioning of reason, by the subversion of the terms on which it unfolds and bears fruit. The dynamic of 'risk' is accomplished as a weaving together, within the outline of a historical 'wager' or a 'risk', of a desirable aim, and uncertainty as to its achievement. Nothing is conceded 'without peril', and of this the daring founders of an 'age of enlightenment', who had to deal with "many external obstacles", which "in part prohibit and in part render difficult" this undertaking, were well aware (Kant 1786; see Noutsos 2005: 16).

3. On the focuses of the enlightenment movement

It was within the Ottoman Empire, and beyond, that the men of letters who were to take the risk of ideas and their practices were formed and were active. Here we have clearly discernible focuses of education, with some elementary networking between them and with exogenous terms as to the final shaping of their physiognomy. That is, the 'microphysics' of their presence were constituted by a separate exponent, through the specific communications activity which was jointly determined by the individual conditions of their social incorporation. Ioannina, Kydonies, Chios, Bucharest, Vienna, and Paris were notable 'localisms' in the Modern Greek Enlightenment.

As to the newly-constituted Greek state, geographically limited and under the control of the 'Protecting Powers', the development of vigorous intellectual centres depended upon the slow pace of the internal differentiation of a formation of society whose political field had been put together by the exercise of a state policy which had as its aim the acceleration of economic development and national integration. The hydrocephaly of the capital presupposed central control of the ideological mechanisms of the state. In these the primary role was played by the country's sole ('national') university, with a professorial staff who up to 1882 were appointed under the absolute control of government authority (Lappas 1989; see Noutsos 2005: 40). This also explains the minimising of academic radicalism, which, in conjunction with the absence of intellectual centres of any note in the provinces, did not allow the revitalisation of the enlightenment movement at the turn of the nineteenth century. Related publishing activity, limited and with a focusing of interest on political, and, secondarily, on economic thought, made its appearance in Ermoupoli or in the Ionian Islands (before and immediately after 'Union').

4. The places of study and the relevant priorities in the movement of ideas

Where did those who developed into 'enlighteners' study? This question, over and above its factual value, involves the delineation of the 'geography' of the

Enlightenment, both in its diffusion in Europe and in its self-contained Greek part. The rough and ready approach to the connotations of this subject-matter is reminiscent of the formula of the ‘introduction’ of modernist ideas, approximately as Koumanoudis (1900: 916) explained the apprehension of socialism: “... introducing from France these names of *socialisme*, *socialiste* into our homeland, and along with these names, as they should not have done, the things themselves”. However, by means of these interpretative tactics, which have had and still have many admirers coming from a variety of historiographical and epistemological starting-points, the specific dynamic of communication, which is not confined to the ‘object’ alone, is not made apparent. That is, it is not traced back to a mechanical ‘pouring from one vessel to another’ of enlightenment ideas, but determines more precisely the significance of the ‘subject’: the individual entity of the receiver, his needs and capacities which shape the terms of apprehension and elaboration of these ideas. Nor, further, is there any provision for cases where some form of elaboration, as a supposedly ‘self-generated’ version of the ideas about a new society, the process of apprehension, is not presupposed. The corpus, whatever that is, of enlightenment ideas which made its appearance in the countries of Western Europe in the eighteenth century did not form an indissoluble unity of positions which in a textbook manner and in a single instant could simply then be made known in our own country also, whatever that was. Overall, from this line of thinking it is to be concluded that the twin process of apprehension and elaboration of enlightenment ideas had to reinstate the jurisdiction of the receiver, who probably also became a ‘transmitter’, and therefore had to give priority to an endogenous delimitation of the times when Greek enlightenment thought was represented as being *in statu nascendi*. Consequently, the manner in which intellectuals were formed into enlighteners, with a special weighting of the place and time of their studies, is subject to the need for historical understanding: that is, to integration into a totality of similar, parallel, or different expressions of the intellectual life of a given period, without lapsing into the traps which the twin complex of provincial underestimation and nouveau-riche overestimation has in store.

5. The intermediate channels

The limits of the jurisdiction of the ‘receiver’ are brought out more fully by the mapping of the levels of education which the Greek communities established, within and outside the Ottoman Empire. More particularly, the terms of the yoking together of the high-level educational institutions and the local community, given Ottoman rule or foreign state authority and the supervision of the Patriarchate, were established *ab initio*, in spite of certain fluctuations, in an obvious manner. I would here draw attention to the main points of this alignment:

particularly in the field of letters, the country's historical tradition, which the newly-constituted foundation re-composed, renewed, and enhanced; the chronological conjunction of its emergence and its first steps, which set the seal on the course it subsequently followed, if, obviously, we take into account its initial staffing and the spirit which held together its conception; and even geographical particularity, within and outside Ottoman territory.

6. British, and particularly Scottish, thought

Contact with British thought (in which Scottish is included; on the latter see Rendall 1978), in a primary way or through mediation, from Bacon and Locke to Hume and Bentham, was a function of the presence of Great Britain on the European stage, from as early as the destruction of the 'invincible' Spanish Armada, and particularly in the approach to the 'Eastern Question', always within the framework of its eastward colonial policy and the containment of Russia. From the time when the characterisation of 'perfidious Albion' became firmly established, the term 'interest' became 'naturalised' in the way in which its foreign policy was exercised, and the 'balance of trade' was linked with the 'balance of powers' on the chessboard of international relations (Noutsos 1979: 94), the thinking which undergirded and legitimated this policy acquired critics as well as champions. In any event, according to the 'national characteristics' codified by the *Encyclopédie*, the English are "malicious" (1765: 36), while on the part of the friends of France such as Koraes, they were treated as "selfish, with a penchant for trade, miserly" (1805: 7; cf. 1825: 68). There are in texts of the period plenty of hints about the means of acquaintance with the work of Bacon and Locke, while in a secondary way what concerns 'Ovvesios/Hovvios', 'Houmios/Oÿmos', and 'Venthamos' - the "most important of the present-day teachers of political science" according to Koraes (²1823: 75 - 79) - is noted.

6.1. The case of Adam Smith

One of the interesting familiarisations here concerns justice as 'grammar of ethics', which, according to Koraes (1820: 591 - 593) is taught "now by examples rather than by precepts" and has as its aim the consolidation of the "art of living". More generally, issues of political economy are already raised in a fairly indicative manner. Here, of course, we have a crucial thematisation of the enlighteners' risk, insofar as it is a function of the degree of understanding of their historical present. The first decisive boost was given by the commercial colonies, which understood the terms of development of trade as a "science" with "laws capable of being taught" (see Noutsos 2005). And if the occupation is called a '*technodrion*' ('*métier*'), with "its laws and customs", the whole line of thinking is set out on

the terms of the Enlightenment: “The acquisition of wealth is often the result of chance; but the preserving of it requires an enlightened mind” (Koraes 1805: 362). This last item, in conjunction with the “correction of the will” of man, explains why Economics, together with Ethics and Politics, forms a part of Philosophy (Koraes 1805: 178). Clearly the interest also lies in the manner of integrating agriculture into radically advanced economic thinking with capitalist thoughts on production as its cutting-edge. Koraes, in particular, makes an “increase” in the “arts” and of “trade” dependent upon an effective yoking of ethics with politics, adding that agricultural is not an end in itself in the Greek state then being composed, but only the necessary beginning of its economic and social upward evolution (1822: 355, 362; cf. ²1823: 133).

As to later estimations of Smith, I will mention only two. The first is that of Pavlos Arghyriadis (1893), who extolled his contribution to the way of understanding the ‘divisiveness’ of labour, with a reminder, at the same time - on the suggestion, in any event, of Marx - that Xenophon and Aristotle had “previously had a knowledge” of the issue (see Noutsos 1990: 313).

The second comes from Spyros Theodoropoulos (1912), who on the subject of the state’s concern for welfare derives the relevant “duties” from his thinking. That is to say: (a) protection from “violence or the invasion of other societies”; (b) protection of the members of society “from injustice or exploitation by another member”; (c) the obligation to set up and maintain “public works or institutions”, in which a single individual, or even a few, cannot or “do not have a direct interest” (see Noutsos 1991: 387).

7. Some conclusions

In the history of ideas, research into ‘apprehension and elaboration’ requires a strict delimitation of the space-time field, in a constant correlation of ‘text’ and ‘context’ which at the same time avoids underestimation and overestimation of a ‘transmitter’ and ‘receiver’, or in reverse order. Clearly, an acquaintance to the highest possible degree or at first hand with the relevant trends in ideas must be acquired, with an inspection of the texts as a self-evident prerequisite - so that in the year 2006 in Athens it is not stated in print that the “principal trend” in the “modern Greek Enlightenment”, which “was expressed by E. Voulgaris has been described as conservative” and that the *Alethes Evdaimonia* of Psalidas is a “bilingual edition in Latin and French”.

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ABSTRACT

Contact with British thought, in which Scottish Enlightenment is included in a primary way or through mediation, from Bacon and Locke to Hume and Bentham, was a function of the presence of Great Britain on the European stage, from as early as the destruction of the "invincible" Spanish Armada, and particularly in the approach to the "Eastern Question", always within the framework of its eastward colonial Policy and the containment of Russia. Concerning more specifically the philosophy of Adam Smith, there are later estimations of his work and impact by Pavlos Argyriadis (1893), who extolled his contribution to the way of understanding the "divisiveness" of labour, and Spyros Theodoropoulos (1912), who on the subject of the state's concern for welfare derives the relevant "duties" from his thinking."