

Unpaid Debts and Duties: Hegemony, Reciprocity and Resistance in Greek- European Cultural Exchange¹

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Abstract

The paper comprises an analysis of the Great Idea as a dialogical product. Focusing on Anglo-Greek cultural exchange, it suggests that the Greeks and British of 1864-1881 failed to establish a relationship of mutual recognition, because they focused their dialogue upon who “owes” what to whom: the belief of the late British philhellenes that the Neohellenes owed them for Navarino, justified their demand from Greeks to respect British philhellenic kindness. Greeks sought in philhellenic sentiments justification of their mission to “civilize the East” by means of territorial expansion, an idea British politics firmly opposed. In their attempt to present themselves as successors of the Ottoman Empire and to chastise Britons, Greeks invoked the religious image of “the chosen people,” whose task should not be questioned. By whom were the Greeks “chosen” to perform the agents of civilization? The study attempts to (1)

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explain why Greeks restructured their “nation” as elected simultaneously by God and philhellenes, and (2) to analyze the politics of the shift from notions of Anglo-Greek reciprocity to those of one-sided “debt.”

Introduction

This article is concerned with the way Greek nationalism was articulated in the Anglo-Greek relationship. The process of articulation may be historically specific, but it is also structurally determined by a past whose parameters exceed the specificity of the paper’s subject. In other words, the paper may be concerned with the political circumstances of the 1860s and the 1870s, but the way Greeks debated their identity was determined by the past of their relationship not only with Britain, but also with Europe in general.

When we talk about Greek nationalism, the term that comes to mind is the *Megáli Idéa*, or “Great Idea”. On a practical level, the Great Idea was the modern Greeks’ obdurate pursuit of an anti-Ottoman expansionist policy during the nineteenth and in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Genealogically, historians associated the term with the speech a Greek politician, Ioánnis Koléttis, delivered on autochthonism in 14 January 1844, when the first constitution was granted to Greece by its first King, Otto of Bavaria (Zakythinos, 1976: 193; Augustinos, 1977: 14; Woothouse, 1968: 165). Koléttis reminded his audience of the Greek Revolution (1821), in which all Greeks, regardless of their status and origin, fought for the creation of a great state. It is not fully recorded what he actually meant, but his reference to a unified state and to national unity was embodied in the abstract term *Megáli Idéa*. Koléttis used “Great Idea” to support the naturalization of the non-natives (*eteróchthones*), a thorny issue at a time that Greece aspired to expand so as to embrace other Ottoman territories, presumably populated by Greeks. Nevertheless, the way his speech was received should make us suspect that we

are before a watershed in which a collective body that calls itself “nation” “utilizes historical material in a way that can serve the needs of its conscience” (Dimaras, 1988: 476-49; Skopetea, 1988: 257-264). Soon after Koléttis’s speech, unity, emancipation from foreign patronage and the Great Idea merged into a single vision that infatuated the “nation.” The secret chord Koléttis’s suggestion struck had to do with the decision of the Great Powers (Britain, France, Russia) in the 1830s to create an insignificant state at the edge of the Greek peninsula. In contrast, the realization of a “Great Idea” would permit all the so-called Greeks to live united in a single state.

This genealogy hooks a term rich and multi-dimensional to a single episode. The Great Idea outlived nineteenth-century nationalism and assumed different meanings in specific historical moments. To mention a few episodes: in 1866, when the Cretans (who were still under Ottoman rule) led an insurrection against their masters, the Greek Kingdom secretly supported their cause; in the 1870s Greeks imitated other Balkan revolutions, introducing Greek demands in Macedonia into the European politics; in 1897, when the Cretan Question became an issue again, the Greek nationalist government of Deligiánnis declared a war upon the Ottomans that ended in economic disaster; in the 1910s Greece participated in two Balkan Wars, doubling its dominions; and finally, in 1919-1922, a Greek-Turkish war resulted in the uprooting of the Greek communities of Turkey and terminated any “Great Ideas” in a tragic way.¹ In all these moments the Great Idea as an expansionist plan focused on different territories, populations and needs: Crete, Macedonia, Thrace, Asia Minor and Istanbul, the historic center of the Byzantine empire.

My paper is not concerned with the expansionist agenda of the Great Idea as such. I chose the 1860s and the 1870s as my period of study, because within this period the relationship of Greece with Britain is rather turbulent. With the exception of the British cession of the Ionian Islands to Greece in 1864, Britain appears to be very critical

of Greeks. Since this paper investigates the impact of such criticisms on Greek self-definition, it is only reasonable to take advantage of the political circumstances. My main intention is to examine the notion of Great Idea in relation to philhellenism. For this purpose I will address a number of different questions: What was philhellenism for the Greeks? How was it mobilized by them and their British interlocutors in the third quarter of the nineteenth century? How far did late philhellenism contribute to the shaping of the Greek self-image?

It is difficult, but necessary, to define philhellenism, especially since I used the term “late philhellenes.” Literally, the term means the love of things Hellenic, but not *Neohellenic* (modern Greek) – a significant element of this trend of ideas, that only recently received due attention. Philhellenism was indeed a tangled thread of ideas that developed alongside classicism, the multi-discipline that comprised the study of ancient Greek, Hellenic history, archaeological remains, philosophy and much more. Its relationship with classicism is what makes philhellenism so complicated to analyze. The philhellenes aspired to liberate modern Greeks from Ottoman ‘yoke’, but expected this act to signify the resurrection of Hellenic civilization. This dichotomy is crucial in my analysis, as my premise is that the philhellenes expected some kind of Greek reciprocation for their kindness. The expectation existed before Greek liberation, but became poignantly obvious during the period on which I focus. This defines my periodology of philhellenism: the love of things Hellenic was coupled in the post-Greek liberation period with a fully articulated dislike for things *Neohellenic* (See also Todorova, 1997: 69). This was aggravated by a rigid Greek nationalism, especially when the former acquired meaning as a Great Idea.

Unfortunately, the “dead Greeks” Britons aspired to resurrect with their political support, remained after the end of the Greek Revolution (1821-1828) in every sense dead. The glorious lifeless Hellenes had been replaced by living Greeks, who called

themselves *Neohellenes*, or “modern Hellenes.” This new ‘debased race’ could not philosophize like Aristotle or orate like Demosthenes, but definitely could produce first-class brigands and the best political agitators in Europe. This, together with empirical research conducted in Greece, convinced British observers that the “Muses have fled from Greece to hyperborean countries, where they could fulfill their educational mission;” the gap left in Greek culture from this loss had been filled by the “filth” and prejudice of the Ottomans. The idea that the Greeks were, after all, a “race” that had spent four centuries under the rule of an Oriental empire, and was therefore more Oriental than European, was popular. Classicism had elevated Hellenic civilization to the status of a European “cultural progenitor” and a signifier of order, democracy and stability. How could modern Greeks, whose newly founded state was characterized by endemic political instability, brigandage, and expansionist aspirations, be the heirs of this precious heritage? Especially Greek irredentism, which sought the acquisition of territories from the Ottoman Empire, was regarded by British governments as a “nuisance” the uncivilized Greeks caused in Europe when they should have been content with what they had. We have the luxury to analyze British frustration in retrospect, but we often disregard the implications of this constant accusation in the formation of Greek nationalism. The Great Idea, which occupied so much space in Greek-European relations, is being regarded as a historical issue that philhellenism never affected.

My starting-point is fundamentally theoretical, yet grounded on common sense: as renowned scholar Alvin Gouldner (1976, 1973) has pointed out, relationships of equality are based on mutual recognition and reciprocation. The Anglo-Greek relationship was, from the outset, a “power relationship,” as the Greek Kingdom was economically dependent on its European protectors, and not recognized as their equal. The love for things Hellenic (but not *Neohellenic*) could not be fully reciprocated by Greeks with an unconditional love for things British, from the moment Britons were not

prepared to express respect for modern Greece. It is my contention that here we can place the articulation of a version of the Great Idea as a counter-hegemonic product. Hence, the Great Idea should not be seen as the product of an internal, nationalist, monologue, but as a dialogical construct. This happened because Greeks, feeling constantly surveyed by their foreign patrons, conducted an imaginary “dialogue” with them. Henceforth I will maintain that late British philhellenism and Greek anglophilia (as gratitude for the British contribution to Greek liberation) were movements intertwined, and as such, they should have been based on mutual respect. Instead, British demand from Greece to discharge the financial and moral debt of Navarino (1827) in which the united European fleet defeated the Ottoman and Egyptian forces and made Greek liberation possible, generated the preconditions for an asymmetrical relationship of complementarity (Gouldner, 1960: 162), in which Britain had rights and Greece had only debts. Unfortunately, Greeks had read in philhellenism an unconditional support of their irredentist dream, which was nevertheless denied by Britons. In their attempt to secure a reciprocal relationship Greeks created a different genealogy of debt, in which they appeared to be the first donors of Europe.

Gourgouris’s observations on the subject (1996) also have a place here. Gourgouris presented the ‘Great Idea’ as an internal, imaginary function of nationalism, despite its implication in international politics. For Gourgouris, who borrowed Etienne Balibar’s speculations on nationalism, to be God’s elected – an important aspect of the Great Idea - means for the nation to be able to constantly select its participants (1996: 18). The process of self-selection is important for my hypothesis. However, one has to bear in mind that no culture can make itself understood unless it succeeds in translating itself. Indeed, as the hermeneutic argument goes “it is always through this process of interpretation” that cultures “are kept alive.” (Kearney, 1984: 38) The Great Idea would always have a surplus of meanings that allowed “the continuing production of new

statements” (Bleicher, 1980: 225) in different milieus. The audience of the Greeks was split between external and internal interlocutors, imagined or real. Though valid in its own right, Gourgouris’s brief theorization of the Greek “chosen people” dismisses the fact that imaginary constructs have important symbolic functions to perform in political relationships.

Examining reactions to philhellenism, I found it useful to draw on Michael Herzfeld’s conception of *poniriá*. Greeks applied this “attitude of insubordination [...] furnishing an appropriate response to oppression,” (1985: 25) to Britons to secure their support and “love.” Herzfeld’s argument that classicist Orientalism did not go unanswered by Greeks, who contrived ways to secure the intimate space of their identity (1987; 1997), is therefore central to my hypothesis. I will, however, try to re-work Herzfeld’s thesis. The symbolic meaning of Greece’s “fall from grace,” its “orientalization” and denigration in post-liberation European discourses, does not allow space for an analysis of Greek resistance. It is the nature of Greek resistance that I am mostly concerned with.

The counter-Saidian overtones of my thesis led me to Martin Bernal’s controversial Black Athena. I re-visit Bernal’s point that generations of historians cherished the idea that Hellenic civilization owed nothing to non-European cultures (Bernal, 1995: 3-11). I feel that the most important issue pending from Bernal’s analysis was abandoned when scholars rushed to support or contest his work. This is the changing, contextual, nature of debt in the modern European and Greek imagination. In the Anglo-Greek relationship, the idea that each side was a debtor to the other may cast light on the role of philhellenism in the construction of a Greek counter-hegemonic nationalism. The Greek impression that European philhellenes were, at the time of the War of Independence, discharging a debt to Hellenic civilization, appeared in a few classical works in the field of modern Greek Studies as a metaphor (St Clair, 1977: 273;

Dimaras, 1973: 201), but none drew attention to it. I will try to deconstruct the notion of debt using reflections on the nature of giving, reciprocity and recognition.

Treacherous Partnerships: Moral and Financial Debts

I will begin by analyzing the British side for two reasons: firstly, because the British reaction was directed specifically against the Greeks, as opposed to its Greek counterpart, which was often addressed to “Europe” in general, even though the Greek sources that I use are concerned with Anglo-Greek relations. Secondly (and importantly), I believe that British reactions nicely illustrate an attitude more akin to contemporary capitalist milieus. British observers preached to Greeks in a telling way, when they indicated that moral political partners ought to discharge their financial debts.

I will begin with the “Roving Englishman,” an intelligent observer of the Greek affairs. An introduction to a new edition of his work in 1877 by the famous Victorian publisher, John Murray, attracted attention. Rumors from political circles that the “Roving Englishman” was an authority on Eastern affairs, granted the work great status. “Roving Englishman” makes interesting comments on the Greek character. He noted that the Greek Christians in Turkey had suffered so many wrongs, “that they began to have something of the pride of sorrow: they were not averse to displaying their woes as a sort of marketable commodity. They had a very good assortment, and they sold very well” (1877: 367). “Roving Englishman” accuses Greeks of using their situation as “a form of capital” (Bourdieu, 1984) which they can exchange with money, aid and respect.

This is by no means an isolated comment. For example, a suspicion was expressed in an editorial to The Times in 1867, that the Cretan Insurrection was sustained by a shadowy organization that will assail the Turkish government and force the Great Powers of Europe to accept a territorial re-arrangement in the East. According to the

editor, the Greek instigators of the insurrection “remembering the history of Greek Independence, rely on the repugnance which the Christendom feels on hearing that a Christian people, seeking their freedom, are perishing by the sword of the Turk” (The Times, 8 April 1867). Again, the journalist was convinced that the Greek state tried to take advantage of philhellenic Christian sentiments.

In fact, many Britons found Greek attempts to take advantage of philhellenic resources and sentiments hurtful. The question of the British philhellenic loans became central in the aversion that Britons expressed towards Greek behavior. The extent to which Greek attitudes offended British politicians became obvious in an episode that took place in the autumn of 1868. In September of that year, the Greek government passed a Bill for appropriating a million drachmas annually towards payment of the interest on the loans of 1824-1825. By doing so, it used the money British philhellenes contributed to bring the Greek Revolution to a happy end on equality with the loan of the Protecting Powers to the Bavarian dynasty, the first royal house of Greece. British disapproval of Othonian policy was well known in Greece. There were rumors in the 1860s, when King Otho was dethroned, that the British had an active involvement in the bloodless Greek constitutional “revolution” that led to the change of dynasty. Moreover, to use philhellenic money for any purpose other than the resurrection of Hellas was deemed by the British government to be so outrageous, that they immediately instructed the British Minister at the Court of Athens to deliver a note of protest, which compelled the Greeks to withdraw the Bill (The Times, 16 September 1868).

Such reactions were the rule, rather than the exception. In 1870, a group of upper class Britons and an Italian aristocrat were kidnapped and murdered by Greek brigands near Athens. This instigated a diplomatic episode that could have resulted in war, had the Franco-Prussian War not diverted the British government’s attention. When in the aftermath of the “Dilessi Murders,” as the episode is known, the MP Sir Henry Bulwer

delivered a speech, asking the liberal Gladstone cabinet to restore Britain's honor with an occupation of Greece, the Greek politician Deligiannis sent him a letter in which he asked him to apologize. Bulwer replied in an even harsher tone, accusing the Greek government of dishonesty in its dealings with Britain. The following quote shows where Bulwer's bitterness originated:

I, myself, in early years, carried out and gave into the hands of those who, by universal assent, then represented the Greek people the first installment of a loan confided to Greek honour, and without which it would have been impossible for the Greek nation to maintain the struggle for its independence; and when I am told that national independence has produced such great results for the national resources, and know that not one farthing of the loan which so opportunely aided the achievement of such independence has been paid, I can only, I am sorry to say, feel confirmed in my conviction of the injustice and the incapacity of the successive Administrations which have paid so little attention to so sacred an obligation (The Times, 30 June 1870).

The quote alludes to an abused reciprocal relation in which credit and *credo*, belief in someone's moral credit, are intertwined. *Credo's* function could be included amongst economic obligations; in *credo* there is an Aristotelian sequence linking a donation to remuneration (Aristotle, 1976: Book V, 1133a13-b19). This means that the one who credits abandons a present advantage in their relationship with the debtor, because only thus they are in a position to credit the receiver. Belief in the "honesty" of the receiver fills up the gap left by the loan (de Certeau, 1985: 193). All we have to do is to see how British *credo* in Greek honor and payment of the actual financial *credit* granted to the Greek nation fail to come to an agreement. The cause of Bulwer's disillusionment is that British investment in Greek *credo* bore no fruits: the Greek government's inability to impose order within Greek borders only justified his suspicion.

We are also provided with the opportunity to elaborate on the interactive dimension of this point. The Times correspondent in Athens, distinguished philhellene and

permanent resident in Athens, George Finlay, repeated Bulwer's argument in an article over the same period. This infuriated an apologist for the Greek side, John Gennadios. Gennadios is a significant figure in Greek politics: at the time of the Dilessi episode he was the sole Greek whose writings were read and discussed in Britain and provided the Greek government with powerful defensive arguments. Interestingly, after the Dilessi Murders he embarked upon a long and successful career as a diplomat. In his Notes on the Recent Murders by Brigands in Greece (1870), Gennadios claimed that Finlay and all those who utter such calumnies are motivated by anti-philhellenic sentiments.

Let [Britons] tell us honestly – Our policy and our interests in the East are such as to make it imperative for us to uphold Turkey at all costs [...] We do not wish a progressive people who would soon mark out their own destiny and would break loose from our tutelage. We want a people who are indolent and extravagant in their barbarous habits. [...] We want them to contract periodically, and at usurious rates, loans, the major part of which will remain in our hands, in return for material and moral support. [...] We were once feeble enough to allow ourselves to be carried away partly by the entreaties of some really generous and noble men, and partly by a jealousy of other powers and to aid you in your endeavours for liberty; but we have since deplored the event (1870: 170-173).

In a parliamentary debate on the compensation of Mrs. Lloyd, widow of a victim at Dilessi, the Greek MP for Ermionís, Milísis, repeated Gennadios's argument. Milísis also reminded his audience that any compensation from the Greek state to a British subject is not philanthropy, because it is imposed by Britain as a "debt" (1871: 71). For Gennadios and Milísis the British government directed accusations against Greece because they wanted to keep her in a subordinate position; the loans that they constantly invoked were a means to this end.

Of course, there are also different opinions. As early as in 1864 the fear was expressed that the British did not want to lend to Greece any more. When the Ionian Islands were ceded to the Greek Kingdom, a Greek journalist acknowledged the

gratitude Greece must feel toward England (*Palingenesía*, 25 April 1864). “Those who do not recognize their debts are called *χρεωκόποι*, men with bad faith, commercially speaking, untrustworthy” (*Palingenesía*, 21 March 1864),² claimed another journalist of the same newspaper. In such confessions, there are also references to the moral debt of the Greek Revolution, which modern Greece has to repay. Even the ex-anglophile journalist Odisséas Iálemos, whose articles on the Balkan crisis entered French and Greek newspapers in the late 1870s, had to admit that:

England had good reasons to keep bad feelings for the Greek nation because of Greece’s negligence to respond to the demands of the British government; the Greek nation owes to the homeland of Byron and Canning, to that great island on which the first philhellenic organizations were born... (1877: 51, translation mine).

We note that even though we look at the two ends of the period of study, the guilt complex remains the same in Greek journalism. This is no minor detail: the cession of the Ionian Islands, the sole act of British recognition of Greece in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, may conveniently explain the Greek attitude of deference. But in 1877 we are already well into a cyclone of Balkan revolutions and a revival of Greek nationalism in the northern part of the peninsula, which Britain does not endorse. One would expect a change in Greek attitudes. The very oscillation between Greek self-assertion and defensiveness, and submissiveness and guilt, is striking.

Throughout this period, British travelers noticed an inclination the Greeks had to try to make converts to philhellenic views.³ “They are particularly prone to ‘try it on’ with Englishmen, whose influence on the affairs of Europe, they, as a commercial people, are disposed to overrate” (Farrer, 1880: 52; see also Campbell, 1877: 107-108) said a British traveler in 1880, implying that Greek “cunningness” had a commercial character. Attempts at “proselytism” tested the limits of British patience. Knowledge that the Greeks were endeavoring “to gain the ear of Europe by a constant repetition of

boasts about themselves and their achievements, addressed to men who are prepared by education to sympathies with the name of Greece” (Anonymous, 1867: 5) began to annoy Britons. “The Protecting Powers are urged to employ the money of their subjects to deliver Crete, and Philhellenes are invited to pour out their blood and die gloriously [so] that the Greek Government may annex the island,” stated George Finlay during the Cretan Insurrection (The Times, 6 October 1866). British suspicion that the Greeks were taking advantage of philhellenic sentiments in the Cretan Cause did not prevent Greek journalists from using the past as a means of exploitation. In August 1866, the Athenian press invented a scenario of a battle in Crete, in which unspeakable Turkish atrocities took place. “It would require an Epimenides, one of themselves, even a prophet of their own, to separate the truth from the falsehood” exclaimed Finlay and proceeded to explain that,

This horrid massacre occurred in the year 1822, and a description of it, with an engraving from a sketch of the grotto, will be found in *Pashley's Travels in Crete*. Greek writers, talkers, and politicians [...] appear to consider the massacre of 1822 a means of rousing the sympathy of Europe against the Sultan's government as effectual in 1866 as they were in 1822 (The Times, 20 October 1866).⁴

This is a striking example of Greek ‘low cunningness’ and a proof that the Greeks could not be loved unconditionally by the British, to recall the most important component of philhellenism, the *philia*, or friendship. On the contrary, one could say that gradually, in British culture the battle of Navarino - the finest expression of European philhellenism – became incorporated in an imperialist rhetoric whose role was to feed the Greek guilt-mechanism every time irredentist Greece allegedly disturbed the peace of Europe. It is intriguing that the Navarino episode was exhumed during the Dilessi Murders. British journalists, trying to blackmail the Greek government, concluded that Britain should regret her past philhellenic kindness (The

Times, 26 April 1870; The Daily Telegraph, 25 April 1870). The Greek response was immediate and unanticipated: “Navarino ... justified many of our activities in the East” (Aión, 27 April 1870). It is important to know that philhellenism was accommodated in British imperial logic as a moral debt that “bankrupt” Greece cannot pay, as the Morning Post, a pro-Turkish newspaper was writing shortly after the suppression of the Cretan Insurrection (8 March 1869).

The British “condemnation” of Navarino has received attention by one of the most acute analysts of Greek culture, Michael Herzfeld. He notes that for the philhellenes Greek self-interest was the “very hallmark of their otherness,” a characteristic that came in a striking contrast to the patriotic self-sacrifice of the philhellenes. However, Greek self-interestedness originated in European accusations of uncivilized behavior. “The very ideology that condemned [the Greeks] for their un-European behavior create[d] the conditions under which they [were] most likely to go on exhibiting it” (1987: 161). Herzfeld emphasizes here Greek resistance – but to what? Let us then have a look at British complaints: In 1867, a year after the outbreak of the Cretan Revolution, the Morning Post, admittedly the most anti-Greek newspaper, raged over Greek ‘imperialist greed.’ The Navarino was cursed, once again, and the modern Greeks were confronted with the following allegations:

Well, the harsh fact, since it must be written, is that for several centuries the countries which were inhabited in ancient times by the Hellenic race have produced no person whatever of more than average ability. The old excuse that they were kept down by Turkey, and not allowed to educate themselves, is no longer valid [...] Day and night in newspaper and lecture-rooms, all day, and every day, and everywhere, the sympathies and the subscription of the Christian world are begged for. We are not modestly entreated for moderate aid and countenance towards a people with a grievance. Our hearts, our arms, our money are confidently and persistently demanded on a very different plea. We are told in language so arrogant so as to be almost disdainful, that it is a scandal and a shame for Europe to stand by

and see a people to whom we owe alike the birth and perfection of poetry and art, whose language was the only one through which the Word of GOD itself, in the New Testament, could be transmitted to us, to be down-trodden and outraged by savages and heathens. This is eloquent oration compiled out of some of the finest speeches of Mr. CANNING and some of the most beautiful poetry of Lord BYRON, to which we have been obliged by tradition or politeness to listen ever since the great orator and the greater poet suffered their brighter fancies to mislead them. [...] It is well known to a very large class of logical reasoners that the modern Greeks are not descendants of the contemporaries of SOCRATES and HOMER (The Morning Post, 11 November 1867).

For the journalist, Greek “low cunningness” borders on scandal and self-disgrace; its specific connotations are dismissed. One, looking at these accusations, wonders how it was possible for Greeks to ask for the aid of the Great Powers, when their investors thought that the only Greek great idea ought to have been good roads and competent administration. Britons had begun to develop a bitter language, in which Greece was always found administratively and morally deficient. Seen this way, the Greek “debtors” had no choice, but to pay loan interests and be docile. This was not to be: as I will explain in the next part, the Greeks were determined to convince their creditors that they had paid their debts centuries ago.

You Can Always Pay in Blood: Guilt, Sacrifice, Power

We are accustomed to think that capital comes in the form of money. But, as Pierre Bourdieu has repeatedly pointed out, there are many forms of symbolic capital, which are often seen as, indeed become, interchangeable. The Greeks of the 1860s and the 1870s certainly thought so, as they applied interesting formulas of transaction to their relationship with Britons.

The first form of this formula encompassed what British commentators we examined called “lamentation” – a ritual mourning for Greece’s “sufferings” that is as

anthropologically complex as Britons found it perplexing. The feeling that the Greek state was constantly assessed was intensified in 1870. The Dilessi Murders inspired Paráschos, a Greek *poeta minor*, to send to Athenian newspapers a poem. The poem is a historical “survey” from the Greek struggle for emancipation to Dilessi. A feeling of guilt towards the veterans of 1821 becomes prominent in references to the battle of Psará and the massacre of Chíos; even more poignant are the memories from the Cretan Insurrection. Then Paráschos supplicates British philhellenes and foreign officials to support Greece in this ‘Week of Passion.’ He juxtaposes Christ’s passion and the Greek ‘nation’s’ sufferings, calling upon God and asking Him to “save the pride of Hellas” (*Aión* and *Palingenesía*, 15 April 1870). For Paráschos the pride of Hellas is mortified because of an alien interference: an “evil eye” was cast upon Greece. Undefined forces cursed Greece and provide an explanation for what went wrong. Note for example the role of the invisible enemy in a letter written by a Greek of Diaspora after the massacre:

The sufferings of our Saviour and of Hellas have concurred to make the Holy Week sorrowful. While in England the reception given to our Archbishop conferred the highest degree of honour upon the Hellenic Church and name, a drama was acted at Athens, which sunk the whole nation in disgrace. What evil eye envied the momentarily smiling fortune of Hellas? (*The Times*, 20 May 1870)⁵

The “observer” in this passage possesses metaphysical powers: (s)he is an evil eye that bewitches Greece and brings about its ruin. The “evil eye” resembles a devilish source which is constantly undoing God’s work. However, one should also pay attention to the similes constructed round the theme of the Week of Passion, which are also present in Paráschos’s poem. In both sources the nation is reflected in the image of Christ and endures his sufferings. The idea of “sacrifice” seems to be an important *topos* in other cultural contexts, such as the Polish and the Irish. Gilley Sheridan’s (1987) study of Irish culture reveals that the Greek case is not unique: the identification of the Irish people with Jesus as the suffering Christ of the nations martyred by the British ran deep into

nineteenth-century Irish Catholic culture. One should be careful here, because the secret of mourning lies only partially with the specific observer: the performance is not just for British philhellenes who question Greece's suitability for autonomy; it is addressed to Europe.

The crucified Greece can also be turned into a philhellenic martyr. The anonymous Greek of the following passage responds to British patronizing behavior by appropriating the shade of the pro-Hellenic Byron, the commodity and soul of philhellenism, to chastise his fellow Britons:

Oh, Great Briton, the lament on your unfairness echoes in the fifth sky. Hebrew of the sea, you buy and sell nations as if they were flocks. You [...] behaved to your noblest poet Byron worse than the Hebrews treated Jesus; because Byron's love for Greece was strong. Is there something good for humanity you did not fight against? (P, 1878: 17).

Although the pamphlet from which this passage comes explored the political dimensions of the Great Idea, its greatest part consisted of direct and indirect accusations of the Great Powers of Europe for their lack of belief in modern Greece's ability to assume a leading spiritual role in Europe. Several times does the author stress that Hellenic civilization as Neohellenic heritage can revive the culture of the Old Continent. It is significant then that Byron, a signifier of philhellenism, takes the place of the Greek nation on the cross. His love for Greece is so powerful that it makes him one with Greece. Nevertheless, if we invert this image, it is the Greek "nation" that is identified with the philhellenic Byron. A powerful Freudian transference takes place: the Greek of the passage sees his love for British philhellenes in them, and asks them to love his nation. If they do not, they cannot be loved. The anglophilia of the anonymous Greek depends on reciprocity.

The reciprocal relationship that the Greeks tried to establish was also accompanied by the practice of chastisement. Whenever Britain was opposing Greek demands, Greek commentators counter-blasted by offering a reminder of the "revenge"

history takes when the powerful attack the weak. Note for example how the ex-anglophile journalist Odisséas Iálemos criticizes conservative Disraelian “anti-Greek” policy, when Bulgarian nationalism threatened the Great Idea:

No matter what form this European anomaly takes [...] it does not have the right to [...] extend its hallucination to the space of Neohellenic history. The stones [Europe] tried to throw recently at this blood-covered place, in which rest the bones of laureate men that contributed to human purification, in which the last five decades brother souls rest together [...] [souls] that [...] managed to destroy the grave of liberty and [...] [with the Greek Revolution] to give the life of hope and happiness to the consumed Lazarus [Greece]!. (Journal des Débats, 5/17 November 1876).

Intriguingly, Iálemos addresses his message to an imaginary “Europe” when he examines British policy. A collective interlocutor or observer, “Europe,” makes more sense to the Greeks than “Britain” in particular; it is this “Europe”, the “Eden of Hellenic civilization” that Greeks try to re-enter, after all. The biblical language of resurrection that Iálemos uses is the vocabulary of nationalism. Resurrection marks off the end of the nation’s supposedly dormant condition and presents it as a perennial entity in the sphere of history (Gellner, 1989: 5-9). At the same time, however, Iálemos clearly rejects the idea that Greece experienced what Herzfeld (1987: 37) called a “fall” from the European paradise after the Ottoman conquest. For Iálemos, Greece is being redeemed thanks to the contribution of some mysterious “laureate men” to the “purification” of humanity. Again redemption does not take place without suffering: like Jesus Christ, Greece is being tortured by an evil that is often identified with Jewishness. The aforementioned Greek analyst argued the same about British bulgarophilia:

Hellenism could be shattered and but not deceived, because it has many advocates both in the earth and in the sky. Briton, if you do not repent and espouse for Greece the politics of Byron Divine Retribution will shatter you. Do you not see what happened to the Jewish Tyre? Where is the seafaring Venice? Where is she? Like her you will become a province of a state smaller

and more insignificant than you are. America will beat you. China and Russia will divide your Indies! (P, 1878: 18).

Putting aside the fact that Tyre was Phoenician and not Jewish, three ideas appear in the quote: Jewish duplicity, God's punishment inflicted upon the British transgressors, and Byron's omnipresence. The negative use of Jewishness though has to be examined.

To understand this language one has to put under the microscope the idea of the Greek nation as God's elected. For the nineteenth-century Greeks there were only two chosen people on earth. The first were the Jews, who were once chosen by God to carry out a religious mission, but betrayed Him and lost His protection. The second people were the Greeks, who, as representatives of the "true Christian religion," were destined to become the intellectual beacon of humanity. The Greeks had already "suffered" as much as the Jews, because of the sinful iconoclastic rivalry and because the Byzantine Constantinople abandoned by the "West" to the hands of the infidel Muslims in 1453 and all the Byzantine scholars migrated to Italy. Thus, the four centuries of Ottoman rule gained a special place in the Greek imagination as signifiers of (a) atonement of the Greeks for their sins so that God would restore them to their supremacy (b) repentance by Westerners of the indifference their ancestors had shown during Constantinople's siege. Consequently, the Greek nation became a new "Jesus," sacrificed in order to wash away someone else's sins, and the Greek Revolution the new resurrection, which would allow the new chosen to fulfill its mission on earth. It is significant then that in the aforementioned passage and other Greek texts nineteenth-century Britain is likened to the ancient Jewish people (Pékios, 1880: 18-19). The identification of the British with the old chosen is the dialectical product of two conflicting narratives. The first narrative was originally European and presented the Neohellenes as distrustful Orientals (now it was the European Britons who resumed the identity of duplicity). The second narrative was Greek and presented the Orthodox Neohellenes as God's agents. Here we detect the

development of a Greek counter-discourse in which Greek spiritual power wins over British economic and political power. The old chosen's image in the face of the British becomes a serious obstacle in the regeneration of the East through the new chosen, the Greeks. This is how the notion of "debt" was appropriated in Greek culture: the British, as Westerners, bore the stigma of the sinner, because their ancestors did not help Constantinople to survive the siege in 1453. (See for example Palingenesía, 9 and 31 March 1878). The importance of the role of Byzantine culture in civilization is the response to philhellenic accusations of Neohellenic bankruptcy.

While the prosperous populations of Europe that the Muslim peril never reached [...] were developing their moral and material power and were studying the lessons of our own ancestors to construct their own legislature and their own literature; when these populations had as a starting point of their regeneration and as an impulse for their technological advance the emigration of all the Greek [Byzantine] scholars [to the West], [...] the Ottomans who conquered the Byzantine empire found the tortured Greeks residing only in Thessaly and Epirus. The regenerators and creators of Europe, who decided to flee to Europe, came from these provinces. There was concentrated the whole medieval civilization of the East, which for ten centuries was the only representative civilization of the living and progressing humanity. Eastern civilization, despite its many drawbacks – which could be explained because of the total absence of any competition with other, more, or equally developed civilizations – had managed to combine in a splendid material and intellectual superiority ancient Greek life-style and sublimity, and power emanating from the new religion of Jerusalem (Journal des Débats, 5/17 November 1876).⁶

Undoubtedly, we deal with a diachronic system of values, *idées fixes*, which pre-existed the period of study. The way they were re-inscribed on the palimpsest of Anglo-Greek violence becomes even clearer in the response a Greek journalist of Clió (a Diasporic Greek newspaper) gave to the author of a British article on the Eastern Question. For the English author of the article "Greek policy of revolution and plundering" that

disgraces Britain should be attributed to influences from the Turkish and the Byzantine periods. The *Clío* journalist retorted:

When [did the name of the Greek become the object of European derision] Mr. Journalist?
Perhaps, when after the conquest of Constantinople, the Greeks spread Greek letters and
Byzantine civilization to the uneducated peoples of Europe? (1/13 June, 1868).

The sacrificial suffering of Greece is, in effect, synonymous with sacrificial offering of its inherited Hellenic culture, and resembles what Georges Bataille termed “general economy of exchange” (1988, I: 97, 120), an economy of excessive giving that translates the donor’s generosity into autonomy and power. Greek “loss” is not definite, however: because Greek commentators constantly remind their financial “donors” of this “other debt” that the latter have forgotten to discharge (and which they can always pay back in money), they implicitly try to equate British economic aid (scarcely and tightly offered to anyone), with Greek cultural offering (which was presumably given in plenty to Europe by their Hellenic forefathers). Needless to point out that sacrificial giving belongs to the moral economy of exchange. If economy is part of culture, as Stephen Gudeman (1986) pointed out, then, with some Greek calculation, culture could be turned into a valuable commodity. The Greek commentators mobilized the sacrificial model of the Christian Orthodox cosmology, in order to present the British, or their European protectors, with a counter-hegemonic rationale of debt. As it stood, the Greek argument lacked legitimacy as much as the Greeks lacked actual political power to “legitimize” their demands. *Poniriá* stepped in once again to help them.

Choosing to be the Chosen

The genealogical shift in the economy of giving (“Greeks gave first”) and the Greeks’ equation of different kinds of capital does not simply point to an understanding of the

roles of market economy (see Douglas and Isherwood, 1978: 58-59). Taking into account the religious nature of castigation that Greeks used to neutralize British economic and political demands over Greece, we also note a cunning use of the discourse of “demoralization” (Berking, 1999: 130) of British conduct. We note here that the initial call for the restoration of a lost pre-capitalist norm of giving is turned by its very advocates, the Greeks, into a manipulative tool. Under such circumstances, the norm of reciprocity is not functional, as it simply reverses the pattern of power. The Greeks cared little for this consequence, and they proceeded to assert their superiority vis-à-vis their patrons. This passage by an anonymous Greek pedagogue and writer eloquently articulates their argument:

Despite her weakness [Greece] released herself from the heavy shackles, shattered her Turkish tyrant[...], gathered many tokens of victory and managed with her heroic and noble polity to gain the love of the civilized world and to transform her political enemies, the liberal Great Powers into beneficent friends. [...] This new Israel, the black sheep of the European family, which [...] is [...] weary of its long and painful struggles for regeneration, is now accepted in the Christian world’s arms and declared [...] as the saturation of the gap which was left behind by its ancestor, the glorious and civilized Hellenic antiquity (Anónimos, 1867: 41; see also Palingenesía, 5 April 1875).

The statement cannot be understood if one does not know what “the saturation of the ancient gap” meant for the Greek author of the quote: the “completion” of the Great Idea, which British politics so stubbornly opposed. The passage is predicated upon a notion of “lack:” (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 48-54, 128; Žižek, 1988: 112) the Greeks become the new “necessary” element that makes the European structure complete and represents European civilization. We should not dismiss the fact that the commentator addresses his argument to the “Europeans” in general. When the addressee was “Britain,” history in the form of long-standing heritage would demand retribution on behalf of the Greeks. It is history-heritage, the ultimate juror of nations, that returns in

the writings of Gennadios to defend the Greeks. For Gennadios, Greece, that “unfortunate land, that Prometheus of nations [...] (who) benefited so nobly all the peoples of Europe,” can look “upon its ugly shores” and say to the British “nation” without fear:

There is not one of you who may take up a stone and throw it at us. You began from worse, you are thoroughly sickly and immoral now; it is only your rich attire that hides your gaping wounds, and the vantage ground you occupy that lends respectability to your hypocrisy. We, therefore, who are no worse, but whose sin is poverty and weakness, will not despair, for, with the help of our God, we will accomplish our great task (1870: 145).⁷

This is the “symptom” of British accusations: the modern Greeks are chosen by God to perform the role of the civilizer. The “task” Greece had to accomplish, was the nodal point of the Great Idea dream, the Hellenic civilizing mission in the East. The strong influence of Herder’s teaching, according to which every nation had its own, unique *Geist* and its special mission (Bhatt, 2000: 30), had crept into the Neohellenic imagination that was so strongly affected by German romanticism (Dimaras, 1983: 419-425; de Zengotita, 1989: 86-89). The main components of the Greek civilizing mission, religion, education and ancient Greek spirit appear in one form or another entangled in Greek writings on the Great Idea.

But the archaeology of this rationale may point at abyssal waters. Universalism in Byzantium was only another version of ancient Greek cosmopolitanism, which wanted the Greek to be the *πολίτης* of the *κόσμος*, the citizen of the world, since his culture was the culture of the (known) world. In other words, if one wanted to be civilized, one had to speak Greek and live like a Greek. Later, in the atmosphere of Byzantine humanism of the ninth century, Greek language ceased to be as important as Greek Christian spirit (Arístarchos Bey, IV, 1876: 154). Cyril’s admission to the Slavonic tribes by Patriarch Phótios in 861 was arranged for their conversion to Christianity, but was deemed to be a civilizing mission, described by contemporary authors as “dissemination of the good

word.” The rhetoric of dissemination of the Christian spirit reappeared in nineteenth-century Greek nationalism; initially it was addressed to Balkan peoples that the Greeks wanted to incorporate in their new empire. All Balkan transgressors were described with the vocabulary of intimacy: they were represented as “unfaithful children” who wanted to stab their Greek “mother” in her back. Nationalist Greece appeared to “help” her “children” to grow up and become “good Greeks,” that is, participate in Greek culture (Askipiádis, 1872: 9, 13). The idea that the Greek “nation” had to accomplish a “mission” had already been expressed by C.D. Schinás, the first rector of the University of Athens, in the inaugural ceremony (3 May 1837) (Kitromilidis, 1989: 166-167). It also reminds one of Paparrigópoulos’s three-stage development of the Greek nation in the History of the Hellenic Nation (Clogg, 1992, 2; Kitromilidis, 1998: 11). According to Konstantínos Paparrigópoulos, the first to write a Greek national history, the political and intellectual expression of the ancient Hellenes had become in the Byzantine era the preservation of the “Holy Word of God.” Synecdochically, the modern Greek nation, the worthy inheritor of Byzantine culture, “would be the instigator of ethical and political progress in the East” (Augustinos, 1977: 16). Again, this practice was deeply embedded in the reception of classicist education in Greece. To invoke the famous ancient saying of Isocrátes: “a Hellene is the one who participates in Greek παιδεία (culture and education).” Those who did not were not Hellenes – therefore, they were barbarians (Hall, 2002: 179).

And yet, the “Holy Word” that the Greeks promoted as a vehicle of their mission, was not simply a language. It was a combination of the “logos in the flesh and the Logos of God” as the anonymous pamphleteer informs us (P. 1878: 6). At times this logos would be identified with the ancient Greek language, which the “Byzantine Greeks” (a projection of Greekness back to its primordial past) preserved and disseminated to the Western world – the contribution of Byzantium to European civilization. It is argued in

an article on Byzantine Renaissance in the West that “this is the language of Homer and Hesiod, Herodotus and Thucydides, Plato and Aristotle, Hippocrates and Theophrastus [...] The Logos of the Bible, of Saint Paul and the Fathers of the Church [...] the language of letters, theology and legal codes of Byzantine era”(C*lió*, 31/12 August 1864).

The terms *Logos* and *logos* have to be clarified, because they are central to Neohellenic thought. In Aristotelian vocabulary, *λόγος* is reason articulated in the act of speaking (P*olitics*, 1946: Book A, ch. II). In Christian Orthodox vocabulary, *Λόγος* with capital lamda is God, the *demiurge* or creator of the world. Despite its Aristotelian pretensions, the passage is also Platonic in that it identifies the Greek *logos* with the sacred *Logos*, as if the first was reflection (the Platonic *εἰδωλον* or *εἰκόνα*) of its Idea (*Ἰδέα*). We saw a similar identification with regards to Byron, the “Idea” of philhellenism. Neohellenic thought bore the stamp of Aristotelianism, because the idea of a Greek civilizing mission alluded to a *teleology* that underscored Aristotle’s metaphysics. Like all “things,” the Greek nation carried within it a *telos*, a purpose and an end, which was its very essence (the Aristotelian *ουσία*) that justified its existence (M*etaphysics*, 1924, I: Book B, ch. VIII, 198b-199b). It was this unexpected meeting of Herderic mission and Aristotle’s *teleology* that triggered Greek nationalist thought. For Herder, only community language made men human – a conviction we find in Aristotle’s notion of human as *ζῶον πολιτικόν* (political animal, social being). Herder’s argument was that each community had its own language and every language was the manifestation of unique values and ideas. From this argument derived that every community was unique; hence, there was no measure for comparison among communities.

It would have been incorrect, however, to say that Aristotelianism was the sole influence over modern Greek self-narration. It would be more precise to follow Douglas Dakin’s observation that Aristotelian ideas came in clash with the Byzantine Neoplatonist apparatus of thought (1972: 5). The co-existence of these two trends in the

second half of the nineteenth century may, in fact, point to an intricate case of *disemía* (Herzfeld, 1997: 14), a problematic pairing of the practicalities of an Aristotelian end that the Greek nation must achieve to be fulfilled, and the morality of a Neoplatonist Christian ideal that questioned the means to this end. It is worth recalling that in Platonism there was a rigid segregation of the world into Ideas, the absolute and unchangeable entities, and reflections, their representations. There was only one mediator between the two levels of being: the human psyche. Psyche lived among idols, but she herself was not an idol; her essence was similar to that of the Ideas. Her temporary entrapment into the world of reflections had one purpose: it was through them that she would begin to remember the Ideas they represented; hence, for Plato, psyche's knowledge is inherent. The attraction (*Ἔρωσ*) the psyche feels for her alike, the Ideas, through reflections, recalls memories (*ἀναμνήσεις*); and through *ανάμνησις* she manages to join her long-forgotten alike.⁸ But in the Neoplatonist Christian context, psyche's enforced stay into the earthly world of representations was explained on the basis of the original sin. Interestingly, the post-Byzantine narrative (Mango, 1998: 151-155) for the empire's fall was explained on the basis of the sinful iconoclastic conflict, which began from a heated debate on idols and God's representation.⁹ An almost identical narrative of fall survived throughout the centuries of Turkish rule but, intriguingly, it was handed down to the modern Greeks as a narrative of redemption. Greeks under the Ottoman "yoke" believed that they were God's elected who would be forgiven for their Byzantine sins. The consoling role of the legend of "the chosen" in Greek psychology during the period of Ottoman rule became something like the morality of the Nietzschean slaves (Nietzsche, 1996: 4-5, 111). To imagine themselves as God's elected was for Greeks the only way to escape from the harsh reality of everyday life, in which Constantinople was Istanbul and the last Emperor Constantine a distant memory of tragic resistance to the inevitable (Chassiotis, 1981: 63-65; Herzfeld, 1987: 37-39).

Evidently, during the nineteenth century the Greeks still presented themselves as the chosen people, and they believed that they were the new mediators between earth and heaven. But if we place the narrative within the history of European-Greek adversarial relations we realize that its function changes. In the Neohellenic-European symbolic domain the Greek nation was never truly chosen by God; for Greeks, the philhellenes had chosen their “nation” to perform a civilizing mission retroactively (Žižek, 1999: 19; 330-333). Yet, ultimately, Greeks had chosen themselves to educate the East.

The investigation of the process by which this narrative of the chosen re-emerged is useful only in so far as it sheds light on its history (Kearney, 1984: 20). But the reasons of its re-emergence are still obscure. What was the logic of Greek behavior? Why did the Greeks defy the risk of losing their British and other European investors when they needed them?

My transition here from history to metaphysics and then back may offend historians, but it is necessary. The Greeks themselves attempted this transition when they represented themselves as the “new chosen” people. Their shift from the politics to metaphysics is not to be dismissed. It can be understood if we examine the ethical extensions of the idea of the chosen and how these are intertwined with the political and the religious connotations of the concept. Inevitably, this introduces in my analysis the question of metaphysics.

In post-war theory the “chosen” came to represent a radical form of otherness, what philosophers termed alterity.¹⁰ But this form of ‘Otherness’ is identified with God, whose essence cannot be revealed to the believer, because faith is based on believing without questioning. It does not take much to protest that this does a great disservice to relationships of equality. Moreover, presenting oneself as an “Other” can become a clever strategy to avoid questioning and critique. I believe that to reach the very core of the Greek logic, one has to see the idea of the chosen Other as a symbolic, if not

strategic action. The conception of the chosen is the narrative of philhellenism on ancient Greece's cultural uniqueness, which was transformed by the Neohellenes into radical difference. Such an alterity could present those who opposed Greek imperialism as sinners against humanity's good; for, if the Greeks were God's chosen, their choices and their plans were also part of the ineffable and should remain unchallenged. Ultimately, Greek counter-conspiracy with heaven allowed the Greeks to restructure themselves as a form of "Othering" in their relationship with Britain, a performative action, with a strong pedagogical element in it: a civilizing mission (Bhabha, 1994).

When Ioánnis Pantazídis, Professor in the School of Philosophy at Athens, delivered a speech in 1876 on Hellas's "national mission" that should be rendered "historically necessary" (1876: 26-27) he echoed British academia's belief in ancient Greece's contribution to the making of modern Europe. When, however, Dimítris Ainián (1800-1881), ex-secretary of Geórgios Karaískákis and self-appointed "pedagogue of the nation," suggested that the new Byzantium should "become the center of all political meetings and ...[Constantinople] the holy and inviolable base" (1876: 19-20) of Europe he was, in effect, giving voice to the more mundane aspect of the Great Idea that Greeks and Britons shared. The Greek Kingdom's defenders knew that national fulfillment was impossible without the Great Powers' consent. Unfortunately, by presenting themselves as the chosen who should be preserved in mystery, they fell into the trap of cutting-off the lines of communication between themselves and Europe: a dialogue, or any kind of exchange, is impossible with someone marked out by divine exteriority. In fact, here we can point out that as opposed to British conceptions of philia and exchange, which were consistent throughout this period, the Greek ones were characterized by a constant slippage. The ego-based, almost Aristotelian, attitude towards philia (love and appreciation of the British other presupposes love of the self)¹¹ was constantly subverted by a pseudo-platonic éros (the identification of the Greek nation with God). The Greek

aim was quite straightforward: a transcending of *philia* and *eros* had to lead the British to an understanding of Christian *agápe* (the love of man for God and vice versa, as well as the brotherly love for humanity). The universal norm of *agápe* however (exemplified in the biblical doctrine of “good to give first, don’t expect returns”) has to be summoned by the morally superior, who, in our case were the Greeks. This of course was based on the Neohellenic narrative that presented Greeks as the first intellectual and moral benefactors of humanity, because of their Byzantine contribution to European civilization. This cunning reversal of the genealogy angered British observers, who condemned Greeks for their ungrateful attitude.

Otherness and History: Vengeful Invocations of a Past

In conclusion, we note a serious discrepancy in the way the Greeks and the British behave in the Anglo-Greek relationship. British demanded a discharge of a financial and political debt as proof of Greek gratitude, whereas Greeks expected from Britain reciprocation for a supposed Western cultural debt. The British attitude is akin to rationalized exchange that does not neglect the laws of moral economy nevertheless. Greek attitude is much more complex: it cunningly equates the laws of reciprocity (as recognition) with those of rationalized exchange. For example, when Greeks asked Britain to renounce the Greek economic debt because of a supposed duty towards their Hellenic forefathers, they appealed to the laws of reciprocity. Even when Greeks mourned their “poor country’s” inability to pay back the philhellenic loans, they were, in fact, equating guilt with compensation (Nietzsche, 1996: 44). The ritual suffering of “Christian Greece” was nothing other than the idea that there is an equivalent for damage and pain, that debts can be settled this way. Putting this alongside British

understanding of the rules of economy, we can conclude that, indeed, cross-cultural conflict was inevitable.

We could put the blame for this confusion on a striking difference between the Greek and the British cosmology, as they operate on two different forms of belief, the religious and the secular respectively. On the one hand, in the course of history, “the Mediterranean believed object was cut-off from the action that posited it, becoming thus the other of knowledge”: faith. In contrast, the Anglo-Saxon tradition was closely “linked to the philosophical rigour of individualism” (Chambers, 1993: 145-164). Individualism “distinguishes the act from its object,” and as a consequence belief appears as “the positive formality of an act of uttering related to a (willing) to do of the subject and to a contract entered into between the social and/or symbolic partners.” (de Certeau, 1985: 198). In other words, putting aside the British capitalist’s demand to receive back his money (an aspect, which is entwined with the notion of belief-debt) the British wanted to see action from the Greeks. Action (for the improvement of the Kingdom’s socio-economic condition) other than irredentism was the only way the Greeks could express their appreciation of Navarino. The Greeks expected that the British would be faithful adherents of their irredentist cause; when they found out that they were not, they tried to make them believe, by presenting themselves as the other of knowledge (the “new chosen people”). This clash of cosmologies became a constitutive element of the Anglo-Greek symbolic order and indeed of the relationship between Greece and Europe. It certainly helped Greeks to articulate a “Great Idea,” their nationalist project, as counter-hegemony. On a performative level, not only were Greeks chosen by God to become a great civilising nation, but they also had to be revered by Britons for their ancestors’ unconditional generosity. This serious discrepancy in the conception of debt and discharge made reconciliation impossible; both sides held back with their hands in their empty “pockets,” waiting for the “other” side to pull out the treasures of gratitude.

NOTES

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¹ It is impossible to list all the works that look into the politics of the Great Idea here, so I refer to a few influential and well-researched ones, which will not figure in this paper elsewhere: Koliopoulos, 1987; Tatsios, 1984; Woodhouse, 1968: 165 passim; Clogg, 1979: 76; Papastratis, 1990: 153-180.

² The newspaper kept recording developments concerning the loans of 1824-1825 (see for example 14 October 1878).

³ For comparison see Palingenesía, 3 December 1876 and Αἰὼν, 14 March 1866.

⁴ Note that Epimenides was the ancient philosopher who spoke of the Cretans as liars.

⁵ The Times, 20 May 1870. A reader mentioned that Clío, a Greek newspaper published in Trieste, produced a still more remarkable wail on the wounded national honour (see Clío, 30/11 July 1870).

⁶ This quote is one of many similar ones (Oriental Rayah, 1868: 18-20; Pékios, 1880: 16-17; Anónimos, 1866: 4; Palingenesía, 15 July 1867).

⁷ For more British commentary see also The Morning Post, 15 September 1866. The date of The Morning Post issue proves that Gennadios drew on past journalism and political commentary to address the argument.

⁸ The existence of two different levels of being and thinking was inscribed in the humanist anthropocentric vocabulary. For the notion of “human,” “man,” there are two words: one is ἀνθρώπος (from άνω=up and θρώσσω=stare at), which denotes the being that aspires to reach the upper level of “truth,” and the other is βροτός (βιβρώσκομαι=being consumed, perish), which denotes the perishable, malleable side of human nature.

⁹ Iconoclasm / iconomachy, was the infamous mid-Byzantine rivalry on the way Christian icons should be used in practices of worship: should the believers worship the image of God or God himself? This debate led to bloodshed in Byzantium, because the empire was divided into iconomachs or icon-defenders, and iconoclasts, or icon-destroyers.

¹⁰ On *alterity* see Levinas, 1969 and Derrida, 1997: 112.

¹¹ Interestingly, the connection between friendship and self-interest is a prominent feature of traditional Greek society. According to Juliet du Boulay, “friendships [...] occur as a compromise between the necessity for the family to look after itself by concentrating on its own material advantage, and the need of its members to create around themselves little nuclei of supporters and confidants. [...] Because the central element in such relationships is not the deep personal significance of the one or the other but [...] a fortuitous union of self-interests, it follows that when self-interest fails, friendship must also fail” (1994: 85).

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