Science and religion in the Modern Greek State- The description of a project

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Today I would like to talk about my part within the NARSES project. I will talk about the characteristics of the research as we move into the 19th and mid-20th century and as we focus on a specific region, that of the Greek State.

This presentation will not be about final or definite results. NARSES is still in its first year and there are still many things to do. I will rather describe a work in progress, focusing on the aim and structure of the research, not its findings. I will be talking about raw data and their problems, in a rather informal way.

Before going on, though, some brief explanations. Why Greece and why this specific period? Well, first of all Greece is a member of the small circle of countries that is predominantly Orthodox, alongside Russia, Bulgaria, Belarus, Romania, Cyprus, Serbia, Ukraine and a few others. It was also one of the first states to appear in the 19th century (more on that later). We thus believe on it makes for an excellent example of how science and religion interrelate in the period that the terms itself start to take on their contemporary meaning. It was for that reason that we opted to center this part of the project on the period after the recognition of Greece as a sovereign state in 1832 and until the end of WW2 in 1946.

My presentation will follow this schema. Firstly, I will talk briefly about the Greek context in this specific period, which rather dubiously, I name the long Greek 19th century. It goes without saying that I will not be providing a full exposition, nor a complete account. This is not only impossible within 30 minutes but is also outside the scope of this study. I will rather be presenting some key points of the history of the Greek state, points relevant for a more in depth discussion of our findings. I will also focus a bit more on the emergence of the scientific community in Greece at the time and at the evolution and role of the Greek Orthodox Church. My aim is to facilitate the discussion of the project, and be able to then present the characteristics of the research more accurately. Then, I will talk about the research questions that this specific part of the project tackles and I will discuss the problematic they bring forward. I will then describe the archives and sources used and I will talk about their characteristics. And finally I will present the first, preliminary results of the project and discuss some possible directions the project can take later on.

The Greek context

Greece during the 19th century was a new state, the first to appear during what Hobsbawm has called the Age of Revolution. However, even before the recognition of Greece as a

sovereign Greek state, there was a Greek speaking, Orthodox population dispersed all over Europe. First and foremost, there was the Ottoman Rum *milliet*, with its own recognized existence within the Ottoman Empire. Alongside it, there was a great number of Greek speaking, Orthodox communities all around Europe, collectively known as the Greek Diaspora, situated in important centers ranging from Marseilles to Vienna and from Odessa to London. These places were home to the different social strata that would emerge from the Greek revolution as the Greeks. Phanariots, for example, were high ranking officials of the Ottoman Empire, mostly hailing from the Phanari precinct of Constantinople, from where their nickname comes. Far more numerous, on the other hand, were the Greek mercantile populations, who lived mostly in the Greek Diaspora, and who lived more or less in a comfortable middle level social strata. Finally, in mainland Greece, the large Greek populations were being governed by local councils of powerful elders, known as the the *proestoi*.

As is to be expected, these divisions persisted throughout the Greek revolution, were another powerful faction emerged, that of the warlords that actually supplied the military acumen necessary. The many divisions led to intra-revolutionary conflict more than once and in the end, it was the intervention of the Grand Powers of the era, namely Russia, France and England, that ensured the success of the Greek revolution. However, even before the official recognition of Greece from the Great Powers, Ioannis Kapodistrias, an internationally known diplomat serving the Russian Czar, had been elected the first Governor of Greece in 1828. After his assassination and another short civil war, Otto of Bavaria was crowned as the first king Greek king. Meanwhile, a battle for political supremacy was raging between the cosmopolitan Phanariots and the local warlords, which was superseded by the political realities of the new political polity brought by the Bavarian regency.

The climactic changes brought about a national question: Who were the Greeks? During the time of independence, large populations of Greek speaking, Orthodox populations that had fought in the Revolution of 1821 remained outside the borders of Greece. The new state was half its current size, and Crete and the Ionian Islands were not a part of it. Fierce debates erupted on who was a Greek citizen, especially in relation to who was Greek. Eventually, national ideology coalesced around the classical Greek heritage, Christian Orthodoxy and the glory of the 1821 Revolution. From the 1840s onwards, the Greek state also adopted an ideology of expansion, labeled the Grand Idea, which aimed at encompassing all Greek speaking populations under its auspices. This led to the expansion of its borders. The last expansion Greece would see would be in the aftermath of the two World Wars. In its expansion, the new nationalisms of the Balkan Slavs and the Young Turks would be the constant opponents, creating frictions and military engagements.

Greece, in any case, was organized as a centralized state. That was intentionally done, in order to break the local authority of the proestoi and other political factions. Education also followed that tract, as did every other institution of the State. The political parties were initially organized around the Great Powers and vied for control under the Crown. Politics was dominated not by political platforms, but by leaders who often jumped parties as it suited them and their voters. A new political composition emerged only after the

dethronement of king Otto in the early 1860s and the crowning of King George the 1st, who became a potent political force until his death in the 1920s. In any case, Greek society remained stratified, with the bulk of the population remaining in their ancestral lands, while a new class of middle level civil servants and merchants appeared. The higher echelon consisted of the few educated intellectuals and high ranking government officials and military men. The public sphere followed the latter class' dispositions, being expressed in the artificial language of the Katharevoussa, and mostly involving the minority of literate men and more rarely, women.

The economy of Greece remained agricultural until well into the middle of the 20th century. However, it would be a mistake to see an essentialist underdevelopment at work. Greece boasted early on an extended telegraph system, early efforts at industrialization, and late 19th century railway system. Alongside those, the start of the 20th century saw large scale civil works in effect, which propelled the engineers into the role of the avatars of modernity.

Thus, Greece early on embarked into the road to modernization. Factories appeared, liberal politics and economics were instituted and railroads and telegraphs appeared quite early. However, modernity remains a nebulous historiographic term. Greece, a textbook case of under-development in traditional historiography, has been shown to not conform with the assumptions usually made. Newer investigations have shown how the question of modernity itself is laden with hegemonic assumptions, which act more as a straight-jacket than categories of analysis. Since, the relations between science and religion are often casted in the language of modernistic aspirations, it is worth mentioning both the problematics around the term, as well as the peculiarities of the Greek case.

Finally, it must be noted that the early Modern Greek State had a vibrant print culture. Once again contrary to the assumptions linking modernity with a specific structure of the public sphere, Greece had an abnormally large number of newspapers and journals, which were politically and intellectually dominant among the educated elite. The press was the most widespread mean of political engagement and factions founded newspapers and journals, some short-lived, others spanning the decades. This effect was even recognized in the 1912 *Brittanica* article on Greece, which accurately described the Greek obsession with the press. Alongside it, literature and especially poetry rose to prominence. The poetical competitions were important national events, which sparked controversies and fierce debates. Intellectuals of all stripes took part in them, transgressing the disciplinary boundaries usually taken for granted in relevant literature.

Scientists and scientific practice

The Greek state, in its drive to appear as a modern European state, founded a series of institutions that acted as the locus for the creation of the Greek scientific community. First and foremost was the University of Athens, founded in 1838, which was proudly inaugurated as the only University in the East and as the harbinger of a new national consciousness. Its more mundane goal is to create men capable of assuming mid and higher echelon places within the Greek State. The University of Athens was founded as a direct imitation of

German Universities, following their four School structure: Medicine, Theology, Law and Philosophy. However, it soon operated under an amalgamation of French and German archetypes. Scientific courses were only taught under the aegis of the School of Philosophy until 1904, when an autonomous School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics was instituted. Even before, however, a semiautonomous division of the Natural Sciences was in existence in the School of Philosophy, despite the fact that the latter had as its implicit purpose the training of prospective secondary education teachers.

The founding of the University of Athens was soon followed by the creation of a Polytechnic School, which initially appeared as a Sunday School for the Technical Arts. In the decades of 1850 and 1860, it was reorganized after the French and German military engineering schools. Initially, it shared the same science professors with the University, and it is only in the early 20th century that it was considered as superior to the University. It was also during the early to mid-19th century that an Observatory was founded it the Hill of the Muses in Athens, which was followed by A Botanic Garden. Both institutions were nominally under the control of the University, but operated more or less autonomously.

The Greek men of science that were called to staff these institutions were by no means the peripheral actors that an underdevelopment theory would have us expect. They were consistently highly trained in the best Universities and Schools of the era, in Paris, Berlin, Heidelberg and elsewhere. The first generation of science professors were content to teach many subjects, but the main focus for the duration of the 19th century was in Natural History, especially Botanology and Geology. It was after 1860 that more Chairs in more modern disciplines like Chemistry appeared in force. The creation of an autonomous school created more Chairs, but no serious disciplinary changes occurred. More or less, changes after 1904 were gradual and did not disturb the established scientific *modus operandi*.

Greek men of science, for the whole of 19th century, worked for the University or, more generally, education. Greek economy remained agricultural and did not support large scale industrialization. On the other hand, the number of certified Greek scientists was small, and thus, population pressure did not occur until the end of 19th century. It was only in the first decades of the 10th century that Greek scientists multiplied, and thus demand a specific role in public education. It took several decades for their exclusive right to teach the sciences was recognized, providing a vocational outlet.

The Greek Orthodox Church

The Greek Orthodox Church was a central political and social agent even before the Greek revolution of 1821. Since the Fall of Constantinople, and following the general political structure of the Ottoman Empire, the Greek speaking populations of the empire formed a political unit called the *milliet*, under the jurisdiction and guidance of the Church, which was itself under the power of the Sultan. During the Revolution, the Patriarchate sided with the Sultan, but many of the lay priests and the topical clergy men took part at the armed hostilities. The declaration of Greece as an autonomous state was soon followed by a declaration of the Greek Church that it would also become autocephalous. This was the

result of the complex political situation at the time. The structure of the crumpling Ottoman Empire, as well as the tentative alliance would be threatened, if the citizens of the Greek state owned allegiance to a Patriarchate in Constantinople. Moreover, Russia would have a stronger presence in Greece that way. In any case, after several decades of diplomacy, the Patriarchate recognized the Greek Church as autonomous in 1850. From then on, the Greek Church would follow the Patriarchate dogmatically, but it would be free to pursue its course in most other matters.

The influence of the Church waned during the first decade of the new state, partly because the new king, Otto, was not himself an Orthodox Christian. However, it soon reclaimed its cultural importance. Many of its land holdings were repossessed by the Greek state and the Church accepted the role of a state instrument, at least nominally. In reality, the relationship was much more complex, and the church managed to get many of uts concessions back gradually.

Moreover, the Church developed very strong ties with the Theological School of the new University. Little theological evolution took place, especially during the first decades of the Greek state, were everything was in a flux and a political and social reorganization was taking place. However, the Church spawned a number of powerful para-religious organizations. The latter published journals and gave shelter to several of the most vocal and militant religious intellectuals in Greece for over a century. While official church hierarchy was mostly reserved in its public actions, religious discourse most often emerged from this kinds of organizations, under the quiet approval of the Church. In the end, the Greek Church regained its cultural sovereignty by the end of the 19th century, and was recognized as one of the 'pillars of Hellenism", historically and culturally, alongside classical Greece and the Greek Revolution of 1821.

Research questions and problematics

My involvement with the NARSES project concerns the creation of an electronic archive, in the form of an online, searchable database, where all primary sources relevant to the dialogue between science and religion in Greece would be catalogued, for the period 1832 to 1946. The inaugural date coincided with the establishment of a definite polity in the neophyte Greek nation while the end date was chosen to coincide with the end of the Second World War, which was marked cataclysmic changes in Greek political, social and intellectual life.

Such an archive aims at enabling research into a number of possible research questions. I will present some of them here, but the following list in not meant to be exhaustive. Rather, it includes a set of representative research directions, which we expect will be enriched, as we delve deeper into the archive.

A first such question concerns the issues involved. When a dialogue between Science and Religion occurred in Greece, what were the issues its protagonists chose to engage? Such inquires have been at the forefront of Science and Religion studies from the inauguration of

the field and remain even today central. In many ways, they have defined the field. Darwinian and Haeckelian evolution, the end and beginning of the universe and the inherent materialistic character of science are some of the issues that come to mind. In NARSES, we aim to study what kind of debates appeared in Greek space.

Secondly, it is our aim to see who were the actors that engaged in such debates and dialogues. The nineteenth century was the era of disciplinarity, while the twentieth heralded the creation of the modern scientific and religious institutions. Thus, who was qualified- and who was seen and acknowledged as qualified- to speak and write about science and religion in the early Modern Greek State is an important facet of the dialogue between the two. Of the same importance is the relative frequency within the population of the actors involved. Were they mostly clergymen? Theologists? Scientists? And in what ratio and frequency? All these will be important indicators.

A third line of research will focus on how the dialogue was conducted. In other words, we will look into the rhetoric used by the actors involved. Greece at the time was a hotbed of nationalistic ideology, where language and history themselves were stakes in the intellectual arena. NARSES, by harnessing the archive it strived to create, will be able to answer how such matters affected and were reciprocally affected by the dialogue between science and religion. Such debates were not happening in vacuum, nor were they conducted by scholars and intellectuals living in separated, ivory towers. NARSES will be thus able to show how the rhetoric of the dialogue fitted with the general intellectual atmosphere.

Finally, and perhaps more importantly, NARSES will be able to show how the Greek public sphere was engaged in the dialogue between science and religion. Every lecture, every article and every book was given by someone to someone. The target audience was not, and still isn't, an homogenous population. Language barriers, as well as spatial and social barriers, create diverse audiences for different occasions. NARSES aims to highlight whether, and how, the protagonists of the dialogue and the debates address a specific subset of the Greek public sphere. Were scientists talking to the general public? Were they addressing only other intellectuals? Or did they talk only with antagonists or partners active within the religious sphere? And vice versa.

However, the creation of such an archive is not an unproblematic venture, even above and beyond the usual scholarly problems of accessibility. Even in its major historiographical specifications, such an archive faces a multidimensional problematic. To start, there is the general problem of all conjunctive history, such as "Science and Religion", "Science and Art" and "Science and Literature". Very few scholars are equally versed at both disciplines which form the conjunction. Their training will be in either History f Science or History of Religion, and their historiographical approach will mirror their training. Thus, since my training is in History of Science, it is a constant danger for project NARSES, to deal with Science in meticulous detail, while the History of Religion part suffers.

Beyond those considerations, there is also the holistic problem of what counts as a dialogue. Greek scholars were indeed scholars first and foremost. They may have been teaching Physics, Theology or Medicine, but they had no qualms in addressing their public in a variety of issues, ranging from poetry to history to politics. They did not see themselves as bound by

their modern disciplinary distinctions. Thus, it is not easy to pinpoint exactly what publication counts as part of the dialogue between science and religion. Certainly, when a theologian tackles the question of Darwinism, we feel we are in safe ground. Similarly, when a scientists gives a lecture titled "Astronomy and Religion', it is also of certain relevance. However, as one ventures away from such definite declarations, distinctions become fuzzier. Is a scientific lecture including rhetorical references to Divine Providence a source to be considered, for example? If we say no, then a whole dimension of scholarly narrative, mainly that religious phrases permeated current discourse, is lost. If we decide to say yes, then our archive will more or less contain every scientific and religious publication ever made in Greece, since such phrases are omnipresent. Such an archive would be unwieldy and overshoot its mark. In NARSES, we have tried to be as inclusive as possible in our archival work. Thus, we will include all primary sources that deal specifically with both science and religion, or that come from scientists addressing religious issues or vice versa. We will also be including issues which are usually at the periphery of such concerns, that is issues such as morality, materialism, idealism, communism and so forth. However, totally unrelated sources which just use rhetorical phrases will be excluded, with the note that, in our subsequent analysis, we will take into consideration the prevalence of such phrases.

But even the base categories of our analysis are not as secure as they would first seem. The problem, actually, appears twice. At the first level, I have so far been using the terms 'scientific' and 'religious' as if they were themselves unproblematic. This is definitely not the case. Disciplines, in the modern sense, solidified late into the 19th century, and it was only then that their institutional panoply appeared. The question thus remains, who would count as a science for our period? And even more troubling, what would count as 'religious' discourse? Again, we are dealing with shades of grey. Certified scientists were few in Greece, but general scholars and intellectuals were far more numerous. The proliferation of para-ecclesiastical organizations makes the discernment of who was religious even harder. Moreover, the Greek intellectual and ideological field was not neatly cleft in two, between science and religion. Far from it. Thus, a variety of sources come from scholars not easily identified. Once again, in NARSES, our goal is to be as extensive as possible, including primary sources and publications which may or may not correspond to the above division.

Finally, there is a possibility that the framing of the questions themselves may deprive NARSES of its biggest strength. Most scholarship on the subject of Science and Religion has had as its focus Western Europe and the US. Such studies inaugurated from western historiography. It is only very recently that other spaces were included in the discussion. That means that the categories of analysis themselves have been shaped by the history of social formation very different that 19th century Greece. In Victorian England, or 1860s Prussia, for example, there already existed a strong academic tradition with its own rights and privileges. Furthermore, the interplay between religion and polity had several centuries of precedence from which to draw. In Greece, all these factors were nonexistent, or had been transformed by the Revolution. For that reason, NARSES can hope to bring a new perspective to the relevant scholarship, but shedding light in a case quite different from those of standard historiography. By uncritically using the categories of analysis and the concepts of Western Europe, NARSES may lose the chance to make its most novel contribution.

But even without tackling the conceptual problems posed, NARSES requires a critical examination of its spatial and temporal boundaries. Greece was not an isolated island in the midst of an ocean. It was interconnected in various ways with Western Europe, the Middle East and America. Thus, the framework of the archive and its subsequent research may remain national, but the context should be trans-regional in scope.

Archives and sources

In creating the actual archive, two of the peculiarities of the Greek case are especially relevant. The first is the small number of Greek intellectuals. Despite a burgeoning literacy rate, Greece remained a small country, where very few had access to higher education. That means that the number of intellectuals who actively engaged the public sphere was small and that their work can be tracked to a large percent. However, Greece had a rather vibrant print culture. Many commentators from abroad noted again and again the prevalence of journals and newspapers in Greece, which bellied its small size. Public engagement through literature, poetry and journalism was a *sine qua non* of Greek intellectualism. Thus, despite the small number of possible actors, the actual printing output is both quite large and disseminated into a number of publications. Furthermore, the multifaceted role of Greek scholars and their tendency to ignore disciplinary boundaries, at least as we today would identify them, means that relevant to NARSES publications appear in a variety of venues. In the end, this makes their collection and archiving difficult.

A way to circumvent those problems, NARSES at first searched through existing bibliographies. However, this only very partially confronted the problem. Bibliographies about Science or Religion are very few and those that exist, contain either only books or only articles. Moreover, they were created several decades ago, and they follow rules of selection and categorization that do not conform to current historiographical standards. Thus, we decided to base our search in a 'bottom-up' approach: We would create lists with Theological, ecclesiastical and scientific journals and look through them one by one. After identifying the main actors, we would also look at newspapers and popular journals and at books, speeches given by noteworthy actors.

This is currently the stage this specific part of the program is. So far, a little more than 300 primary sources have been identified, and half of them have already been digitized. Their expected number, based on our projection, is that they will reach 450 books, articles and speeches.

Preliminary findings and possible directions

Preliminary analysis of the primary sources that have so far been digitized has yielded some interesting, I believe, results. The most striking is that NARSES hints at a possible way to reexamine the models used to describe the science-religion interrelation. So far, the most schematic presentations describe tripartite scheme. Science and religion are either in

conflict, in cooperation or in apathy towards each other. However, in the case of the early modern Greek State, none of these accurately describes the situation. Scientists took up conservative religious positions, conservative theologians used the language of science to address modern problems and debates occurred due to social reasons described under the veneer of science and religion. Moreover, the level of analysis appears to be an important consideration in looking through the material. If the description focuses on the level of individual actors, which is doable since there are actually not that many, then the dialogue between science and religion seems to happen among solitary actors engrossed in their private struggles. That way, the collective movements and responses of scholars fade from view. However, if the analysis assumes a bird's eye view, then the value of specific actors that are central in the debates is missed. Thus, a middle level viewpoint is to be assumed.

Another important finding concerns the interplay between nationalism, language and expertise. The science and religion dialogue was not happening in vacuum, among detached intellectuals. Far from it, it was immersed in the prevalent intellectual, social and intellectual currents of Greece at the time, and used the schemata and rhetoric of the period to great effect. This is obvious in every facet of our primary sources, from the way articles and responses were published to the style of language used. By making the discussion of nationalism and language part of our research, we bring to the fore the way the dialogue corresponds to the context of the era. By addressing the question of expertise, we bring to light the why and how of the debate.

Beyond debates, agreements and disagreements, there are some unspoken assumptions about how a dialogue should and can be conducted. This was especially true in Greece, where the cultural atmosphere was powerful and shaped decisively the way public debates were conducted. NARSES can help situate its findings within that context and narrate the importance of such assumptions, while bringing them to the fore. Furthermore, there is also a cultural dimension to the dialogue. Such intellectual discussions happened through the intermediation, and for the benefit of, the flourishing Greek public sphere. An important part of this research can focus on how such debates were perceived by the public which bought journals, newspapers and speeches which sheltered them. It is thus worthwhile to show, not only how a shaped scientific community confronted or debated an existing religious sphere, but how the debate between science and religion helped constitute both fields.

Finally, and in the metalevel of analysis, the project NARSES can perhaps serve as a fine case study on the use of the panoply of tools developed by Pierre Bourdieu. Despite the many different themes of analysis that Bourdieu himself undertook, his concepts of habitus, field and capital have not been harnessed historically often enough. It would perhaps be an important contribution to the relevant scholarship to open up a new filed of investigation by using novel and interesting tools.