# "A Luscious Anarchism in All of This": Revisiting the 1980s and 1990s Greek "Neo-Orthodox" Current of Ideas


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# "A Luscious Anarchism in All of This": Revisiting the 1980s and 1990s Greek "Neo-Orthodox" Current of Ideas

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Abstract

*Greece saw during the 1980s and 1990s what has been described as a "Neo-Orthodox movement," i.e. a significantly popular yet uncoordinated synthesis of Orthodox theology, traditionalism, and left-wing politics. Is it, however, indeed the case that Neo-Orthodoxy is a terminologically viable category? In this essay, Neo-Orthodoxy is examined and re-evaluated from a perspective that narrates its story and presents the ideas of its protagonists. Analyzing its premises as well as the social and historical context of the term while providing a sketch of important figures of the "movement," the commonly held assertion that the phenomenon under scrutiny can indeed be labelled a "movement" is challenged. The discussion identifies problems that such a label would entail and presents the core identifying characteristics of Neo-Orthodoxy, both in relation to and in contrast with the Communist-Orthodox Christian dialogue. This work sees itself as a corrective to earlier attempts at examining Greek Neo-Orthodoxy.*

The present paper offers a reevaluation of the Greek Neo-Orthodox movement or "current," examining the phenomenon from a perspective that both narrates the story and presents the ideas of its protagonists. I question whether "Neo-Orthodoxy" is a terminologically viable category and analyze its premises. I examine the social and historical context, I provide a sketch of important figures of the "movement" besides Christos Yannaras (namely, Kostis Moskoff, Kostas Zouraris, Dionysis Savvopoulos, the *Synaxi* journal and the non-Neo-Orthodox Stelios Ramfos) and I challenge the commonly held assertion that the phenomenon under scrutiny can indeed be labelled a "movement." I look into the problems that such a label would entail and I present

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the core identifying characteristics of the phenomenon, both in relation to and in contrast to the Communist-Orthodox Christian dialogue.[1]

While it would not be accurate to say that literature on Greece's Neo-Orthodox current [*Νεορθοδοξία/Neorthodoxia*] abounds, it is certainly the case that a number of works devoted to studying this politico-theological phenomenon that has marked the 1980s and 1990s in Greece have surfaced. These include, for example, Vasilios N. Makrides's paper (1998), Olivier Clément's note (1985), Dimitris Angelis's survey (2015), an early insider's view by Vassilis Xydias (1984), as far as certain of the protagonists are concerned, Efstathios Kessareas's recent paper (2015), and quite a few others—some of them accepting the characterization of this current as a movement, others explicitly rejecting the term, since Neo-Orthodoxy was a highly diffused phenomenon that lacked organization, structure, programmatic texts, and so on. What the present paper offers is (a) a reexamination of Neo-Orthodoxy that engages with the historical, social and theological context while also (b) examining the thought of individual intellectuals separately, without assuming a given affinity and homogeneity among them. Furthermore, the paper (c) questions whether the projection of the Neo-Orthodox label on developments during the 1990s is justifiable, (d) takes into account the fact that certain Neo-Orthodox protagonists have entered politics (for example, Zouraris) and/or have enjoyed a new wave of visibility and popularity (for example, Yannaras and Ramfos) during Greece's recent financial crisis (2010–), (e) points out the problems in including Stelios Ramfos in the Neo-Orthodox milieu and (f) sheds light on lesser-known Neo-Orthodox figures.

## *The context: before and after*

A few years after Greece's transition to democracy following the colonels' regime (1967–1974) and after entering a polity of parliamentary democracy, the people of Greece turned decisively to the Left, leading to the victory of Papandreou's Panhellenic Socialist Movement. During this transition and afterwards, the theretofore prevailing national ideology of "Helleno-Christianity" suffered an immense retreat, since it had been effectively identified with the colonels' regime and the ecclesiastical coup that came with it, illegally installing a hierarchy sympathetic to it at the head of the Church of Greece. This happened both as a reaction to the junta itself and to the earlier, pre-1967 right-wing-dominated political landscape of the country, coupled with a version of state-dictated Christianity invested in various forms of anti-communist struggle and rhetoric.[2] A broad renegotiation of left-wing identities would take place during the 1980s in

view of the social, political, and economic transfiguration of the country during PASOK's reign, leading to the brief interlude of a New Democracy conservative government (1990–1993). During the 1990s, along with the collapse of the Eastern Bloc in general and the effect this had on left-wing discourse, Greece would face more concrete challenges: the Macedonia naming dispute and the breakup of Yugoslavia, which entailed a full-fledged war in Greece's neighborhood. The wider ideological itineraries and shifts during this long period, from the 1960s up to the end of the 1990s, should be the object of a study of its own; the present article examines the wider picture within which Neo-Orthodoxy emerged and flourished.

## *"Neo-Orthodoxy": a term without a viable definition*

The journalistic, mostly uncritical use of the term Neo-Orthodox (employed from the 1980s to the present day) pertains generally to a person (previously secular, religiously indifferent, atheist, leftist, communist, and so forth) who unexpectedly shows a publicly discernible interest in Orthodoxy. This would come as a surprise during the late 1970s and early 1980s, since such a person would not normally show this kind of interest in and would not have been positively predisposed to Orthodoxy in the pre-1980 period, when anti-religiousness was generally a sign of being modern and progressive. Thus, all those who turned to Orthodoxy at a later stage of their lives during the 1980s were often uncritically labelled Neo-Orthodox in journalistic contexts. However, so far as references to a Neo-Orthodox movement or current are concerned, more particular phenomena lie at the core of the terminology. What is usually (journalistically) meant by the term Neo-Orthodox movement, is the dialogue between Communists and Orthodox Christians that took place in the 1980s: people, books, articles (many of them in the magazine *Anti/Άντί*), and conferences attempting a previously unthinkable exchange of ideas in search for commonalities.

This dialogue was made possible through the emergence of a number of public intellectuals who professed both a profound interest and/or faith in traditional Orthodox Christianity and left-wing political action or allegiance (for example, Kostis Moskoff, Kostas Zouraris, Dionysis Savvopoulos, among others). However, to claim that the term is exhausted in this limited circle of intellectuals, or indeed that there is (or that there could be) a definition accurately describing the phenomenon at large, would be problematic. A number of figures who have been central to what has been described as the Neo-Orthodox movement were never part of the Left and have never identified themselves as

politically left-wing. Christos Yannaras would be an obvious example,[3] but the fact that this is the case creates insurmountable terminological difficulties: it is hardly possible for a definition of a "movement" to be tenable if the chief representatives of this movement elude that very definition. Defining Neo-Orthodoxy as a new public theology uttered by theologians and people of the Church banishes certain key figures from the definition (Kostis Moskoff, Kostas Zouraris, Stelios Ramfos); defining it as a group of (former or current) communists turned Orthodoxy enthusiasts exiles other key figures (Christos Yannaras). In other words, no viable definition includes both groups.

In order to approach the the Neo-Orthodox current or movement with greater accuracy, some clarifications are in order. Firstly, the term emerged as a pejorative and derogatory one, chiefly from within the Left in order to suppress the then-unfolding tendency and dialogue among its ranks: it first appears in the magazines *Theseis* and *Scholiastis* (*Θέσεις, Σχολιαστής*) early in the 1980s.[4] The privilege of hindsight discloses the extremity of this hostility (with escalating charges such as obscurantism, triumphalist irrationalism, nationalism and even fascism abounding).[5] This may be explained as part of an attempt to banish the Neo-Orthodox discourse outside the limits of what can be tolerated as left-wing by the institutional Left, rather than accepting it as part of the Left's internal discourse.[6] At the time, both the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) and that of the Interior (ΚΚΕ ἐσωτερικοῦ, usually abbreviated ΚΚΕ ἐσ.)[7] would see themselves as having to safeguard their organizations and milieu from potentially centrifugal forces; it is with this in mind that this extensive name-calling should be examined.

In general, most representatives of what has been called the Neo-Orthodox movement not only reject this term[8] as devoid of a fitting semantic content, but have also never provided a label of their own for the movement. This, by definition undermines the certainty that we are here indeed dealing with a movement proper, for movements tend to desire to be identified as such, asserting the need for a name that distinguishes what this movement *is* (and who it is comprised of) and what it *is not*.[9]

Secondly, the fact that the term was coined in a polemical context and that these polemics do not lie in a distant past (since the same generation is still active, in academia and beyond) entails that much of current literature assumes this polemical stance in varying degrees of explicitness. Indeed, it would not be realistic to expect an absence of bias so soon after the events. Thus, an authoritative scholarly treatment of the subject has yet to appear. Attempts that are noteworthy, although not wholly devoid of either a polemical stance or an adoption of the conclusions of polemical literature without revisiting them

substantially, include Vasilios N. Makrides's studies[10] and Hercules Moskoff's respective chapter of his LSE doctoral thesis.[11] Thus, depending on secondary literature to arrive at an overview of Neo-Orthodoxy that successfully tackles the terminological problems inherent in it, has proven to be challenging.

Thirdly, three substantively different sets of events and figures can be identified as Neo-Orthodox, pointing to three different levels—three different yet intertwined developments: the theological, the political (left-wing to varying degrees)[12] and that of public figures and public intellectuals. Like the unseen part of the iceberg, perhaps the most important element of the current and the one that enabled the others was the theological element, considerably pre-dating the 1980s.

*Christos Yannaras: the protagonist who shall not be named*

Christos Yannaras (b. 1935) has been *the* protagonist of both the new wave in Greek Orthodox theology originating in the 1960s and of the formation of the ideas that lie at the intellectual heart of Neo-Orthodoxy. Yannaras is now a professor emeritus of philosophy at the Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences in Athens and a public figure of considerable influence in Greece due to his widely read weekly feuilleton in the newspaper "Kathimerini." He has published extensively on ontology (Yannaras 1985, 2011, 2016), epistemology (Yannaras 1999), cultural diplomacy (Yannaras 2003), theology (Yannaras 1991) and politics (Yannaras 1984b, 2006b). However, and while of course it is easy to name works by Yannaras that have been not merely influential but truly formative in the context of what is labeled as Neo-Orthodoxy—for example, the Greek editions of *Person and Eros* (Yannaras 2007a, first published in Greek in 1970), *Freedom of Morality* (Yannaras 1984a, first published in Greek in 1971), *Orthodoxy and the West* (Yannaras 2006a, first published in Greek in 1992 as *Orthodoxy and the West in Modern Greece*)—it is impossible to comprehensively present both Yannaras's multi-faceted presence and Neo-Orthodoxy within the limits of a short paper and do justice to both, avoiding superficiality and miscellany: an either/or approach would be the wiser choice. Thus, an elaborate presentation of Yannaras' thought per se will be avoided in this paper; this has been attempted elsewhere.[13]

*A new wave in theology?*

Neo-Orthodoxy, however one is to label it, presupposes the theological turn that preceded it. A theological shift emerged gradually in the 1960s, in the midst of turbulence in the Greek Christian movements, that is, pietistic lay organizations of theologians such as the Zoë Brotherhood[14] (and, later, the Sotir Brotherhood, which emerged as a splinter group from Zoë). This shift had a considerable impact on society at large (through publications, Sunday schools, affiliated professional organizations of Christians and so forth). During the 1970s, some of the most formative theological works—fruits of that shift—appeared in Greek: Christos Yannaras's *The Freedom of Morality* and *Person and Eros*, John Zizioulas's short but immensely influential essay "From the Mask to the Person" (Zizioulas 1985, published in English as the chapter "Personhood and Being" in *Being as Communion*). These were only two of many examples of that "theological spring." Furthermore, it is in 1970 that John Romanides started to teach at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. All this overlapped with a parallel and different development: up to the 1960s and the 1970s, the monastic communities of Mount Athos were in sharp decline, their numbers being rapidly extinguished (Mantzaridis 1980 offers disheartening statistics). The following decades saw a profound renaissance in Athonite monasticism, with young and educated Greek monks, often with experience abroad, along with several non-Greeks, assuming the monastic schema in centuries-old monastic communities: today, about 2000 monks reside on the peninsula. These would later prove to be valuable interlocutors for Greek youth with an interest in Orthodoxy kindled by the Communist/Orthodox Christian dialogue; Sorbonne-educated monks such as Vasileios Gondikakis of Stavronikita and, later, Iviron would be seen lecturing on "Christianity and Anarchism" to student-filled auditoriums (Yannaras 2007b). These developments, however, were not the chief and primary target of the coinage of "Neo-Orthodoxy." This was a political dialogue still to come.

*The Communist/Orthodox Christian dialogue and its context*

The second and, as far as the attempt to define Neo-Orthodox is concerned, core development, is the Communist/Orthodox Christian dialogue of the 1980s, a development unthinkable in the preceding decades, and the emergence of Christian communists in the public sphere. This dialogue assumed a public nature with conferences,[15] articles, responses and books (e.g. Makris 1983). Building upon the new wave in Orthodox theology that was in the works since the 1960s,

a reassessment of tradition, of Orthodoxy, and of the patristic heritage took place, as well as an inquiry into the proximity of elements of this tradition to the values of the Left (vis-à-vis, in the eyes of the Left, the capitalist West and its religio-historical past). A convergence of a number of events around 1983 contributed to the impression that a movement was emerging[16]:

(a) Intellectuals speaking enthusiastically about Orthodoxy's value and heritage and active in prominent political positions in both main parties of the Left acquired an unprecedented visibility in their public presence, spearheaded by Kostis Moskoff (1939–1998) from the Communist Party of Greece and Kostas Zouraris (1940–, a central committee member of ΚΚΕ ἐσ.). Kostis Moskoff, a historian, poet, essayist and journalist, came from a prominent upper-class family of Thessaloniki and soon joined the Communist Party of Greece. Moskoff was the director of the Center for Marxist Studies; he briefly served as the mayor of Thessaloniki (1981) and, from 1989 onwards, as the educational advisor of the Greek embassy in Egypt. His passionate and poetic writings on Orthodoxy as well as the fact that he never severed his ties with the Communist Party of Greece, speaking from the position of a prominent party member in spite of his counter-intuitive teachings in a party founded upon historical materialism, exerted a profound influence on the Communist/Orthodox Christian dialogue. Most conferences/public debates on the dialogue took place either in or shortly before 1983, in his presence.

(b) Dionysis Savvopoulos (b. 1944), a singer-songwriter of iconic status in Greece, then at the apogee of his career, released in 1983 his studio album *Τραπεζάκια Ἔξω* (*Outdoor Tables*). Tendencies that were latent in previous studio albums became much more pronounced here, with *Τραπεζάκια Ἔξω* becoming the soundtrack of Neo-Orthodoxy, as it were, full of both direct and indirect references to Orthodoxy, Byzantine and Ottoman communitarianism, Christian eschatology, and a host of other topics. A more explicit elaboration of his views at the time is to be found in his numerous interviews during and around 1983, while his Neo-Orthodox period continued with his subsequent albums and particularly his 1994 album entitled *Μὴν πετάξεις τίποτα!* (*Don't Throw Anything Away!*). To cite an example of his references to Mount Athos, recounting one of his pilgrimages there:

> These monks are really something else. They are the most extreme people I have ever met. I like to talk to them, I like to hear their stories. There is a luscious anarchism in all of this. Yes, they are anarchists who have come so far that they no longer need to be aggressive . . . I like their eyes, their bread, their wine (Makris 1983, 97).

Savvopoulos was (and is) neither a theologian nor a functionary of left-wing parties.[17] However, the influence of his enthusiastic public support for the core tenets of Neo-Orthodoxy—i.e., the importance of a lively tradition, the radical ideas that are to be found in Orthodoxy's patristic legacy, Greece's Byzantine and communitarian identity, Greece as a historical inheritor of a cultural counter-paradigm to that of the West, and so on—is difficult to evaluate. Arguably, Dionysis Savvopoulos's Neo-Orthodox turn is responsible for expanding the influence of these ideas far beyond the reach of the political and theological dialogue among intellectuals, down to the popular level.[18]

(c) Christos Yannaras's 1982 election to a philosophy chair at the Panteios School, which is today the Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences in Athens, sparked a two-year public debate that made it to the headlines and articles of numerous newspapers. Arguably, turning Panteios into the first purely left-wing and Marxist university of Greece was the aspiration of many in the Left at that time.[19] It is in this context that, due to his undergraduate degree and second doctorate in theology and in spite of holding a doctorate in philosophy from the Sorbonne and numerous publications and teaching posts in that field, Yannaras would be considered a theologian (and, by natural extension, a fanatic propagator of medieval obscurantism, etc.), and as such, unfit for the post.[20] Yannaras may not have been a member or supporter of left-wing parties (or right-wing parties, for that matter), thus this episode does not form part of any Communist/Orthodox Christian dialogue per se, but it sparked an intense public debate on Orthodoxy, the Left, and inquiries on identity: it propelled the discourse and its protagonists into the limelight.[21]

It is interesting that, in spite of the fact that the main definition of Neo-Orthodoxy is confined to the Communist/Orthodox Christian dialogue per se, the at least equal importance of Savvopoulos's Neo-Orthodox turn and of Yannaras' appointment to Panteios has been noted as early as 1984 (Xydias 1984, 69–70).

(d) The theological journal *Synaxi* (*Gathering/Fellowship*), considered the voice of the new wave of theologians, published its first issue in 1982 under Panayiotis Nellas's (1936–1986) leadership. Its contributors and the theologians participating in the Communist/Orthodox Christian dialogue overlapped to a considerable extent, though not fully. The fact that preexisting theological tendencies, that is, the new theological wave originating in the 1960s, and particular persons, effectively crystallized in a journal just before 1983, certainly played a role in the formation of the impression that a Neo-Orthodox movement was emerging.

(e) The context in the early 1980s is, as noted, of critical importance. The Left's search for identity during those years in particular, while not providing the main cause for the emergence of Neo-Orthodoxy per se, provided the context for its emergence and for its (problematic) identification as a movement. With 1981 seeing the Panhellenic Socialist Movement's ascendance to power in the name of socialism, and backed by a considerable part of the Left's spectrum, pressing questions emerged. Greece neither desired to be an enthusiastic part of the West (since exiting NATO was a core, albeit never realized, aim in the rhetoric of PASOK during its early years in government) nor to be in the Eastern Bloc. The question then emerged: *Where does Greece fit*? What is—or should be—its identity? What it meant to be Greek or to be left-wing emerged as open questions. Thus, while the media reception and representation of the Neo-Orthodox movement was mostly critical and negative, its influence on the Left should not be underestimated. After all, Neo-Orthodoxy constituted an identity proposal involving elements of uniqueness and exceptionalism on the basis of Greece's own past and tradition, albeit in a way that was compatible with left-wing ideas, as well as a cultural juxtaposition to the West without a corresponding alignment with the Eastern Bloc and the USSR.

Furthermore, in attempting to understand Neo-Orthodoxy it should be noted that it has been puzzlingly paralleled to radical left European developments such as May 1968 (for example, Zoumboulakis 2010, 64 dubbed it "the May 1968 moment in Orthodox theology and ethics"). May 1968 took place while Greece was under a military junta, and certain protagonists of what would later become Neo-Orthodoxy were present in Paris at that time, such as Yannaras, Ramfos, and Zouraris. It is not insignificant that Greece had undergone a rapid and, in many ways, violent mass urbanization during the preceding decades, with the pietistic Christian organizations such as those affiliated to the Zoë Brotherhood stepping in to provide a substitute for the sense of village community in the new context of the city. The Neo-Orthodox movement would later attack this substitute with the charge of Westernization in order to voice a penetrating nostalgia for the actual communities of Greece's immediate (and less immediate) past and their traditions—including their political traditions, that is, their communitarianism, and their Orthodox popular piety.

(f) An often overlooked element[22] is the 1983 publication, for the first time, of General Yannis Makriyannis's (1797–1864) *Ὁράματα καὶ Θάματα* (*Visions and Wonders*) (Makriyannis 1999) and its considerable impact. Makriyannis was an iconic general of the Greek War of Independence, whose memoirs *Ἀπομνημονεύματα* (Makriyannis 1966), were published in 1907. They received the praise of

many, including Nobel laureate, diplomat and poet Yorgos Seferis and the poet Kostis Palamas. Makriyannis was considered a master of Greek prose despite his lack of formal education and his writings exerted a considerable influence on the Left as he was a popular hero of humble origin. *Visions and Wonders* brought to the surface his deeply religious nature and the definitive intertwining of his popular Orthodox religiosity with other aspects of his personality as portrayed in his memoirs—which, of course, was celebrated by the protagonists of the Neo-Orthodox current. A public debate erupted, particularly among the Left, as this religiosity was deemed incompatible with his status as a hero for the Left and was even attributed to a purported madness during his last years. Xydias is one of the few to note this correlation of *Visions and Wonders*' 1983 publication with the notoriety of the Neo-Orthodox movement at the time:

> The fourth and least well-known event of the on-going debate on Neo-Orthodoxy was the publication of a manuscript belonging to General Makriyannis. The manuscript, published under the title *Όράματα καὶ Θάματα* (*Visions and Wonders*) in late 1983, reveals a not unknown but certainly ignored side of Makriyannis. Through the descriptions of the "meetings" and "discussions" between the general and the Virgin Mary and Saints of the Church there is a confirmation of Makriyannis' religiousness, not as a secondary side of his personality (which could be ignored and in fact has been in most readings of *Ἀπομνημονεύματα*), but as the kernel of an Orthodox ethos which determined Makriyannis' political life and, by extension, can be said to have been shared by the great part of the Greek people during the 1821 revolution. The publication of this manuscript puts an end to the misrepresentations of the Makriyannis of the *Ἀπομνημονεύματα*, which conveniently disregarded his religiousness and held him up as the popular version of the Greek Enlightenment. Now, Makriyannis, along with Orthodoxy, emerges as the awesome alternative to the Enlightenment. The result is that academics who view the prospect of Orthodox criticism of the Enlightenment as a form of new obscurantism have reacted by reintroducing an old theory, namely, that Makriyannis was insane and suffered from psychosomatic problems and traumatic experiences in his childhood. (Xydias 1984, 71).

### *Figures and protagonists*

It would be beneficial to offer here a summary of Neo-Orthodoxy's "Who's who." This, however, poses a methodological and terminological problem. More often than not, varying litanies of names are offered in attempts to identify the protagonists of the movement; a common mistake is to include names that indeed reflect an intertwining of left-wing (or, at the very least, not right-wing) political activity with a public Christian identity, which however would not properly

resonate with certain core ideas of what has been named Neo-Orthodoxy and cannot be properly characterized as Neo-Orthodox.[23] Terminological considerations aside, it would be quite safe to name the following figures as protagonists of Neo-Orthodoxy: as stated above, Christos Yannaras should be recognized as having spearheaded the new wave in theology while also contributing to the Communist/Orthodox Christian dialogue from the Christian side; Kostis Moskoff and Kostas Zouraris are identified as protagonists of Neo-Orthodoxy by virtue of being prominent members of communist parties professing the importance of Orthodoxy for Greece and for the Left; Panayiotis Nellas as the publisher of *Synaxi*; Dionysis Savvopoulos as the chief agent of the wider popularization of Neo-Orthodoxy's core ideas; and monk Vasileios Gondikakis (b. 1936), abbot of the Athonite monastery of Stavronikita (and later of Iviron), a key figure in Mount Athos' renaissance and in the newly ignited popular interest in Athonite monasticism.[24] Other figures such as Fr. Georgios Metallinos (b. 1940) and Theodoros I. Ziakas are certainly to be included in the Neo-Orthodox milieu, although not possessing a degree of influence comparable to that of, for example, Yannaras, Savvopoulos, Moskoff or Zouraris.[25]

Theodoros I. Ziakas (b. 1945), a mathematician and writer as well as holder of a managerial position within the Greek State Treasury until recently, has composed (among other treatises) a trilogy of books on what he describes as *social ontology*. Although ideologically affiliated to the Neo-Orthodox, Ziakas was not so visible in the 1980s. He made his individual contributions to this area from the 1990s onwards, which earned the open praise and support of others, as for example Yannaras and Zouraris. Beginning with the cultural background of the decomposition of the contemporary subject as a human being and citizen alike—*The Eclipse of the Subject: The Crisis of Modernity and Hellenic Tradition* (Ziakas 2001)—the author proceeds in his work to analyze the possibilities of transcending this decomposition (*Beyond the Individual:* Ziakas 2003) and examines the potential contribution of Greek (Orthodox) identity and tradition (*"I Have Become a Self-Idol,"* Ziakas 2005).[26] In the overall scheme of this undertaking, Ziakas attempts to ground the social and political event in the categories of ontology and to explain and analyze thereby the cultural frictions within Europe and the Western world. While he is not a figure recognizable by the general public, he certainly has exerted an indirect yet decisive impact on Neo-Orthodox thought through his writings, particularly during the latter phase of Neo-Orthodoxy or, properly speaking, its afterlife (late 1990s and 2000s).

While many have been tempted to include any public figure participating at the time in an Orthodox revival, such as Mikis Theodorakis and his interest at

the time in Orthodoxy or the novelist Nikos-Gabriel Pentzikis, "Neo-Orthodoxy cannot be reduced to some sort of an Orthodox revival alone, for the latter is a much wider phenomenon represented by such thinkers as John Romanides, Panagiotis Christou, Nikos Nisiotis, Savvas Agourides, John Zizioulas, Nikos Matsoukas, hagiographers Georgios Kordis and Fr. Stamatis Skliris, and several others" (Makrides 1998, 142). Stelios Ramfos (b. 1939) is frequently cited as one of the figureheads of Neo-Orthodoxy or listed along with Christos Yannaras as the movement's two most important thinkers; however, later in this paper I argue against the accuracy of this label. Alongside Ramfos I will introduce the basic tenets of Kostas Zouraris's thought and career, as part of the overview of figures and thinkers central to what has been named Neo-Orthodoxy. What should be apparent by now is that the 1980s saw many parallel events and initiatives entailing that many actors, including the Neo-Orthodox, shared comparable interests and quests, without necessarily being easily lumped into one broad category.[27]

*After the 1980s: A movement dissolved?*

A third development that is to be included in an attempt at defining the Neo-Orthodox movement would consist in the trajectory of the protagonists ever since—for Neo-Orthodoxy primarily consists of the actual persons comprising it. Given that there is no *stricto sensu* Neo-Orthodox movement, only individual trajectories are traced after the 1980s Neo-Orthodox eruption and up to the present day—something that is telling of whether we can indeed speak of a movement, with all the coherence that this claim would entail. In fact, while Neo-Orthodoxy was not an organized movement, but rather an intellectual experiment of individual quests and trajectories, a fluid current of ideas, proposals, orientations and methods, it would sometimes exhibit facets of convergence (for example, the rediscovery of a Christian tradition different than the state-sponsored one or the suspicion against the West). These convergences were perceived as such by their promoters, the media, and the wider public, thus the Neo-Orthodox label.

By definition, the dissolution of the USSR radically changed the context of the Neo-Orthodox movement as, primarily, an Orthodox Christian-Communist dialogue in Greece. As such, this is a phenomenon of the 1980s: after that decade, it is very difficult to speak of continuing convergences and much less of a coherent whole that could be named Neo-Orthodoxy under the same criteria that made the term usable in the press and public discourse of the 1980s. After the 1980s—if not during them as well—the protagonists of Neo-Orthodoxy are

only to be encountered as individual public figures and intellectuals: university professors, journalists, songwriters, theologians, and monks with distinct trajectories and, to a large extent, theories.

Precisely due to the dissolution of the USSR and the USA's "unipolar moment," as well as the engendering of the European Union through the 1992 Maastricht treaty, the 1990s found Greece in yet another juncture concerning its identity in a globalized world. Public intellectuals, including the Neo-Orthodox protagonists, would find themselves critically debating the narratives on the new global order expounded by books such as Francis Fukuyama's 1992 *The End of History and the Last Man* (Fukuyama 1992) or Samuel P. Huntington's 1996 book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (Huntington 1996), based on the 1993 *Foreign Affairs* article "The Clash of Civilizations?" (Huntington 1993). Other developments such as the Macedonia naming dispute played a significant role as well, and the question of "Hellenicity" (ἑλληνικότητα) and "Hellenocentrism" (ἑλληνοκεντρισμός) acquired renewed importance. Identity crises both within PASOK and the Left led to the formation of a now more distinctive pole of the "patriotic Left" (πατριωτικὴ Ἀριστερά) dispersed among a number of parties, that is, political personalities with an added sensitivity concerning "national issues" (ἐθνικὰ θέματα) such as Greece's relationship with Turkey or the Macedonia naming dispute, which however did not derive from right-wing parties, as was usually the case when such sensitivities were underscored. A development of seminal importance in the 1990s which led to this transformation of the Neo-Orthodoxy of the 1980s was the Yugoslav Wars, particularly the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999. This had a catalytic impact upon the formation of a new Greek patriotism that also influenced the political Left in view of the challenges of the more trigger-happy aspects of the "unipolar moment."

While many Neo-Orthodox found themselves in the "anti-globalization" camp, it would be erroneous to consider that camp as an evolution of Neo-Orthodoxy and to trace such a trajectory. The ideological shifts and regroupings during the 1990s reshaped and redefined the totality of the political spectrum, with new camps being syncretically formed out of the fragments of earlier categorizations. That is, the commonalities of the protagonists of Neo-Orthodoxy to one another are not especially significant and noteworthy vis-à-vis the commonalities of all the diverse tendencies and protagonists of the "anti-globalization" camp to one another. Thus, the Neo-Orthodox cannot be said to constitute a distinct group anymore, in the way that their misrepresentation during the 1980s would have it.

Thus, one additional problem of Neo-Orthodoxy as a terminology is that the purported movement does not extend in time: one might speak of a Neo-Orthodox moment in the 1980s, but its protagonists are not to be encountered as a group or movement in later decades. Given the heterogeneity of the protagonists and of their ideas even during the 1980s, this subsequent non-extension in time retrospectively raises additional questions as to the very validity of the term for the 1980s as well.

*From anti-Westernism to neo-Orientalism: the peculiar case of Stelios Ramfos*

A further example of terminological dead ends may be traced in the case of Stelios Ramfos, who is often credited as a leader (if not *the* leader) of the Neo-Orthodox, a title whose frequency intensifies after his 1996 turn against them, with Ramfos now being presented as their former leader who has denounced them.[28] Stelios Ramfos was born in 1939 in Athens,[29] where he studied law and became an avid Marxist. After moving to Paris, studying philosophy and coming in contact with Cornelius Castoriadis and his thought, he abandoned Marxism and became a fierce critic thereof. He taught philosophy at the University of Paris VIII–Vincennes from 1969 up to 1974, at which point he returned to Greece following the fall of the military junta. It is during his Paris years that, after the completion of a period of study immersed in the Platonic corpus, he became enchanted by the writings of the patristic era and the tradition of Eastern Christianity, which he approached through the lens of a Neoplatonic hermeneutic. During the peak of the Neo-Orthodox movement in the 1980s, he could be described as the most fierce hardliner of an anti-Western stance and, as far as the Communist/Orthodox Christian dialogue was concerned, the one refuting the possibility of that dialogue's basis; essentially, an opponent to Marxism—his interventions at a December 1983 conference provide a quite lucid testimony to this (Massali and Anagnostakis 1984, 31–50, 73–78, 144–64). Ramfos's change of orientations and interest in Orthodoxy, education, language issues and so on became known already in the late 1970s and thus some had classified him already during that era as a neo-traditionalist or nationalist, that is, before the Neo-Orthodox appeared on the scene. A number of books authored during the alleged Neo-Orthodox period, including his commentary on the *Gerondikon,* that is, the *Apopthegmata Patrum* (The Sayings of the Desert Fathers, Ward 2003), entitled *Πελεκάνοι Ἐρημικοί* (Ramfos 2000)*,* gifted him with a following and inscribed his presence into the "Neo-Orthodox current."

During the 1990s, Ramfos experiences a new abrupt and significant turn, dividing his trajectory as a thinker into the "old" (Neo-Orthodox, Hellenocentric) Ramfos and the "new" (Modernizer) Ramfos—the year 1996 and a brief stint in the United States (Princeton University, Stanley J. Seeger '52 Center for Hellenic Studies) is often cited as the decisive turning point. Eurocentricism and "Modernization" (*Εκσυγχρονισμός*) form Ramfos's new central axes, to which Ramfos ascribes philosophical depth. Now, the patristic/Byzantine legacy and the Orthodox tradition are precisely what hinders Greece from completing a process of individualization that would make it modern, that would allow it to progress: it is Orthodoxy that is inhibiting the westernization of Greece, a staple idea that begins to circulate in the public sphere with reference to Ramfos as far as its claims to philosophical coherence are concerned (for example, Doulgeridis 2012). Hesychasm, the theological controversy of the fourteenth century, is cited and analyzed as the very reason Greece eludes the progress of history; the *Philokalia*, an eighteenth century collection of patristic and hesychast writings spanning from the fourth to the fourteenth century, is charged with producing this effect in Greek society (Ramfos 2010)—in spite of the fact that these texts were hardly available at the time, acquiring such a status later in the twentieth century. The "Greek Sense of Time" (Ramfos 2012a) serves to prove that Greeks are profoundly regressive, that the deeper cause of their failure and discontent is ontological and anthropological rather than fiscal or political (as elaborated in Ramfos 2011).[30]

Ramfos's turn is often celebrated in press references to him: prominent Greek Neo-Orientalist Nikos Dimou hails Ramfos's purported departure from the Neo-Orthodox (for Dimou, the "Hellenocentrists") as "a bold, brave and confident" move emerging from his "progress and research" (Dimou 2010). A particularly opportune period for his public presence was the first phase (2010–2015) of the Greek crisis following the 2010 Memorandum of Understanding between Greece and its creditors: during those years, Ramfos would frequent Greek television panels as a staunch philosophical defender of the Memorandum's terms, as a public intellectual shedding light on the Memorandum as a means for Greeks to finally end their historical immaturity. In lieu of an example, one may highlight the fact that after the imposition of a new property tax (ENFIA) essentially leading, as it has been described by the press, "Greece's property owners to pay 'rent' for living in their own homes" (*Keep Talking Greece* 2012) Stelios Ramfos would analyze the correlation between the Greek's desire to own property[31] with a lamentable fixation on family and on regressive tribal tendencies that need to be abolished—whereas the mature

European predominantly rents rather than buys property, thus exhibiting his more mature relationship with time:

> Whence does property draw the allure it exerts on the *Romios* [Ρωμηό]? First of all, I would say, from the symbolism of family. Because in our country family is a kind of small tribe, a patriarchy with the house as its centre. The *locus* of the family is the cohesive roof over it: it has no time other than its reproductive duration. It therefore needs a privately owned home, both for stable habitation as for dowry. On the contrary, the average European—and more so in the North—does not buy a house but mainly rents, i.e. he incorporates his space in time. The Greek problem, as experienced since the very foundation of our state, will reach its solution only when the closed Greek family opens itself up to society and to its public sphere. [(Ramfos 2012a) excerpted in (Ramfos 2012b)].

In such a context, one would be excused to surmise that the new property tax is an emancipating measure aiding Greeks in exiting their historical, existential, ontological and anthropological dead ends. During Greece's Memorandum years, newspaper articles will often portray Ramfos as a precious and wise convert from Neo-Orthodoxy to, essentially, reality. An article hailing and celebrating his public role during the Greek crisis will describe him as follows: "How many images of the same person can fit into our televised democracy? There is the old Ramfos, the one once associated with the infamous Neo-Orthodoxy, [the intellectual who frequently appears on Greek television and] the interventionist pro-Memorandum thinker" who is "flexible," particularly after his "180 degree turn" in order to avoid the dead ends of his past comrades' ideological obsessions (Doulgeridis 2012). His public defense of the governmental handling of the Greek crisis and of the Memorandum as a whole is the fruit of his philosophical wisdom. Thus, Ramfos is projected on the public sphere as "a philosopher for our times of crisis" who boldly exclaims concerning the handling of the Greek crisis: "The dilemma is: Europe or Africa" (Doulgeridis 2012). Ramfos has risen to prominence as the philosophical voice of Neo-Orientalism[32] not only due to the content of his ideas, but also since his turn can be projected as a correlation of maturity: that is, Neo-Orientalists will often point to him as a thinker that has matured and, as such, has abandoned his obsessive earlier ideology for a pure and modernizing Neo-Orientalism[33]—in contrast to his lamentable ex-comrades, who remain in a state of childish immaturity and ignorance, as the narrative would have it, depoliticizing an essentially political dispute and redressing it as a quantitative difference in maturity, which cannot but lead one to the Neo-Orientalist milieu.

I mentioned earlier that the categorization of (the early) Stelios Ramfos under the Neo-Orthodox label is problematic: it must be stressed that this

would have nothing to do with his later turn itself. I elaborated previously on a problematic yet viable definition of Neo-Orthodoxy as the product of the encounter between a pre-existing new wave of Orthodox theology informed by the new theological language inaugurated by Europe's (and, later, the United States') Russian Orthodox diaspora and political figures of the Left interested in a rediscovery of Byzantine and Orthodox tradition. Thus, in order to partake in the "movement," one would have to either be a new wave theologian (for example, Yannaras) or an active figure of the Left enchanted by Orthodox tradition (for example, Moskoff, Zouraris, Savvopoulos).

Stelios Ramfos, however, would not fit in either camp. He was not a theologian, much less one already having received the formative influence (or even articulated) the Greek new wave theology of the 1960s, which in turn had been impregnated by the theological stance of the Russian diaspora. And he certainly wasn't a figure, active or otherwise, of the Left during the 1980s, as he had severed his ties to the political Left well before that and had now adopted an acutely critical stance. Ramfos may have contributed to the atmosphere, the spiritual climate of the time, but not in having advanced this current of ideas in a primary manner. Were one to accurately pinpoint Stelios Ramfos's precise relationship to Neo-Orthodoxy, one could say that he was essentially a passenger in the bus of Neo-Orthodoxy achieving a certain prominence along the way—with him being proclaimed a former leader of Neo-Orthodoxy by the media only after he had completed his turn and denounced the Neo-Orthodox.

To sum up Ramfos in a paragraph, there are essentially two Ramfoi: one before 1996, and another since then, each expressing diametrically opposed positions and ideas. Before 1996, Ramfos had discovered the Church and was fascinated with the Fathers and the Orthodox tradition—not the critical and reflective stance of other Neo-Orthodox thinkers, but a kind of hostile partisanship. However, even at this stage, Greece/Greekness/Hellenicity was a much bigger concern for Ramfos than was the Orthodox Church, and what he saw as the brilliance of the Church Fathers functioned as a "supporting act" to the wisdom of the Ancients, together glorifying "Greekness," of which the Church and its tradition is but an interesting part. Enchanted by how far today's technical civilization can go and what splendor it can materialize, 1996 saw Ramfos changing his views on everything except ancient Greece, becoming fiercely dismissive of his earlier views. According to the new Ramfos, it is due to Orthodoxy that individualization (now positively assessed) could not take place at a societal level in Greece, throwing Greeks into spiritual and historical insignificance. Orthodoxy and the Fathers are a hindrance to progress: due to them, Greeks cannot excel historically any more; they cannot make the

transition to becoming individuals proper, but remain in a primitive collectivistic state. Thus, in a prototypically Neo-Orientalist manner,[34] Orthodoxy and the parts of collective identity that are associated with it must be rejected in order for Greeks and generally the Orthodox to move forward. The problems in labeling Stelios Ramfos a Neo-Orthodox are to be encountered even if one solely focuses on his pre-1996 period, as neither of the already problematic possible definitions of the term are wide enough to incorporate him, much less so as a leading figure.

*Kostas Zouraris: entering politics by ceasing to be Neo-Orthodox*

Our survey of the Neo-Orthodox figures will conclude with Kostas Zouraris, who holds the unique privilege of being the only Neo-Orthodox figure after the 1980s to hold public office as an elected politician: Zouraris served as a Deputy Minister of Education, Research and Religions at the cabinet of the second Alexis Tsipras government (formed following the September 2015 national elections) up to January 2018, having been elected as an MP for Thessaloniki with the coalition partner *Ἀνεξάρτητοι Ἕλληνες* (Independent Greeks); at the time of writing, he serves as one of the currently 11 Deputy Speakers of the Hellenic Parliament. Arguably, however, Zouraris successfully embarked on this career after a number of unsuccessful attempts at being elected with various parties only to the extent that he ceased to be (visibly) Neo-Orthodox, instead stressing the political tradition of the Left and his family's political past. Indeed, one would be hard pressed to find traces of what could be described as Neo-Orthodox rhetoric in Zouraris's current public presence. While much of his initial orientation and interpretations about the Greek and the Western way of life have not changed since the 1980s and there is no visible discontinuity, his rather limited current public presence emphatically and almost exclusively centers on the necessity of retaining a tautologically defined "Government of the Left"—that is, a government that is not to be characterized thus due to the policies it implements, but due to the self-description of its protagonists and the historical claims of continuity this self-description raises.

Zouraris was born in 1940 in Thessaloniki, son of Greece's first sexologist, Doctor Georgios Zouraris. He studied law at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and political science at the University of Paris VII–Vincennes, where he would later teach political theory (1969–2005) (Hellenic Republic, Ministry of Education, Research and Religions, 2017). For a brief time (2006–2008) he served as the editor of the historic Thessaloniki-based newspaper *Macedonia (Μακεδονία)*. For most of his youth he was affiliated with the Greek Communist Party of the

Interior (ΚΚΕ ἐσ.), but he ran for office on the ticket of the Communist Party of Greece in 1999 and 2000. A dense volume appeared in 2013 constituting the first part (spanning from 1940 to 1990) of a projected two-part biography of Kostas Zouraris (Kaleadis 2013), where many more details about his life, political and otherwise, may be found; an edited volume appeared in 2015 studying his thought, based on the proceedings of a conference dedicated to him (Kourembeles, Avdelas and Polychronidis, 2015). His lively presence in Greece's public sphere earned him a following, during the 1980s (Neo-Orthodoxy) and particularly during the 1990s (Hellenocentricity and the patriotic Left), even hosting, for a brief time, a TV program on state television ET3, entitled *Πατρι-δογνωσία* (Getting to know the homeland).

Zouraris certainly rejoices in employing an arcane vocabulary. He writes in a purposefully convoluted manner, frequently employing words from classical texts that have not appeared in the vernacular for many centuries, and his work is by no means systematic; seeing that this is the case, summarizing the basic tenets of his thought is a particularly daunting task.[35]

In spite of the convoluted and non-systematic character of Zouraris' idio-syncratic and voluminous corpus, I shall here attempt to provide an overview of the main points of his thought.[36] Drawing from classical and Byzantine sources, Zouraris strives to explore and explain the cultural and political tradition of Greece, in continuity-through-ruptures starting from the Homeric age via the Byzantine Empire and up to today's nation-state, the ἰλιαδορωμέηκο, (non-)translatable as "Iliad-Romanity." His work comprises an exploration and explication of what he sees as Greek cultural Otherness and of the way in which this Otherness is reflected in political theory and practice as found in a three-thousand-year litany of Greek-language texts. According to Zouraris, the first differentiating feature of "Greek political theory" is that it does not merely constitute a proposal for the utilitarian management of common and social affairs, nor is it a detached scientific area, an autonomous discipline, but results naturally and spontaneously from the very metaphysical pillar around which Greek society revolves, its communal axis of ontological meaning—given that in pre-modern societies that axis is collective. Thus, one encounters in Zouraris's works a political theory which claims to derive from ontology and metaphysics as their practical, as it were, emanation. While this is in many ways a common trait of Neo-Orthodox thinkers, Zouraris's uniqueness lies in his persistence to locate this Otherness as a tendency and differentiating feature in a host of Greek original texts: from Homer and Thucydides to folk songs, to the poets Odysseas Elytis and Yorgos Seferis, to General Makriyannis's *Memoirs* (Makriyannis 1966) and to Greek patristic texts of the life (συναξάρι) of the "new martyr"

Iordanis (for the latter see Zouraris 2001). Zouraris thus describes politics, with the help of those texts, as an ontological communal exercise par excellence, as a collective *ascesis,* he defines the political arena, as well as human nature, as an "inferior godlikeness" (Zouraris 1993), a perpetual projection of the higher (ontology/metaphysics) to the lower (political coexistence).

For Zouraris, this distinction is not merely academic, but sweeps along with it every possible viewpoint on politics, as well as their analysis and theory: if the political event does not merely constitute a form of management of collective conditions—at best with an "ethical" prefix, though never with an existential one—but the *locus* of an applied metaphysics, then what changes is not just the content of the corresponding political theory, but along with that its very context, its values and its tools. Thus, for Zouraris, in what he sees as Greek political theory one can never speak of a detached discipline of "politics," but of a facet, interpretation, and perspective of a holistic and single quest of the collective political body. Zouraris applies this principle not only when composing a grand narrative, but also when commenting on particular events of recent Greek history, like the Greek civil war (1946–1949, Zouraris 1999).

Inevitably, such an interpretation of politics as a communal exercise with a particular content, as an "inferior godlikeness," is precisely the opposite of modern liberalism where, if one were to oversimplify, the objective is to preserve an almost unlimited capacity of the individual to distance herself from any communal definition thereof, from any normative ascription of meaning from the community to the individual: the individual is free to the extent that it can define itself and act accordingly. According to Zouraris's reading, society-community defines a space (for example, the polis, the community/κοινότητα, Greece or, as far as ecclesiastical monastic coexistence is concerned which is also taken as sublimely political, the monastery (Zouraris 2010)) reserved for the implementation and operation of a particular and ontologically determined political system. Thus, it is seen not as an ideology, but as a communal mode of realizing society and politics, either explicitly or implicitly—in which and for which the decisions are made by the collective (τὸ Κοινόν), provided that the necessary institutions and customs exist to render this possible. The reason for Modern Greece's discontent lies, then, in the absence of the preconditions allowing for such a polity to exist, as Greeks do not collectively and directly participate in decision-making, as would have been the case with pre-1821 Greek communities, but are limited by a representative system which they implicitly recognize as oligarchic. Thus, Greeks refuse to oblige and fail to function, with their modern political system and country ending up deeply dysfunctional due to a borrowed polity.

Two terms enjoy particular prominence in Zouraris' thought: *synamfoteron* and *peripou* (συναμφότερον and περίπου, meaning "both together/both at the same time" and "approximately" respectively). By *synamfoteron*, a word we can find in both classical Greek and Christian patristic literature (a word employed by Theognis, Demosthenes, Plato, Origen, Gregory Palamas,[37] to name a few), Zouraris refers to a union in which the constituent parts retain their otherness, while the parts united remain unconfused, undivided, and inseparable (following the Chalcedonian Christological formula), that is, a union that does not constitute a *synthesis,* in which the parts' otherness is lost and dissolved; *synamfoteron* signals that even contradictory realities may coexist, in spite of the paradoxical aspect of the claim. According to Zouraris, Greek political thought is open to this reality, while Western political thought insists in rationally systematizing reality in such a way that a vital aspect thereof, the predominance of the *synamfoteron*, is often overlooked, opting for an either/or type of logic. Zouraris asserts that understanding the inherent awkwardness of the *synamfoteron* is a fundamental prerequisite for understanding Greek culture in its *longue durée*. He takes the *synamfoteron* as the conclusive refutation of any essentialism, since the very notion of pure essences of any kind would be thus untenable. Everything is *mixed*, the complicated nature of reality (and social/political reality in particular) is to be affirmed as eluding the claims raised by abstract systematization, and Zouraris likes to cite Homer's *Iliad* 24.529 to that end, where the word ἀμμίξας ("having mingled") denotes that things are "mingled" *from the very beginning* and from their divine source: "For two urns are set upon the floor of Zeus of gifts that he giveth, the one of ills, the other of blessings. To whomsoever Zeus, that hurleth the thunderbolt, giveth a mingled lot, that man meeteth now with evil, now with good."[38] In the same breath, Zouraris will recall Maximus the Confessor, the seventh-century saint: "You must know that what is simply called 'evil' is not wholly evil, but partly evil and partly not-evil; in the same way, what is simply called 'good' is not wholly good, but partly good and partly not-good."[39]

Following this logic, dualistic formulations are to be discarded in the face of the fact that reality is a vast grey area (a περίπου, that is, both "not quite so" and "approximately") of distinctively different shades—shades of grey, beyond the mere contradistinction of black and white. At first glance, this might seem obvious, but Zouraris insists that the very notion of political theory as we encounter it in the West presupposes the antithetical contradistinction of concepts, every systematization (that is, "scientification") involving a violently arbitrary formulation, which is subsequently confused with reality itself. Asserting the *synamfoteron*, says Zouraris, does not result in relativism,

but in the recognition of the difference and distance that exists between interpretative schemata and actual reality. Ultimately, when applied to political theory, *synamfoteron* leads to the awareness that apophaticism is also valid on the level of political coexistence, that apophaticism becomes a precondition for political theory. Further, the convergence of συναμφότερον and περίπου leads Zouraris to assert multicausality (πολυαιτιοκρατία) as the dominant type of causality and to reject a linear cause-effect correlation demanding the reduction of the cause down to one cause. Of all the three millennia worth of texts he employs to compose his grand narrative, Thucydides stands apart as Zouraris's most oft-quoted thinker (Zouraris 2003), in whose writings Zouraris locates the basic premises of his reading: συναμφότερον, περίπου, multicausality, and a host of other key terms comprising the political theory of Zouraris's Iliad-Byzantine culture. His system is one of resisting systematizations: eventually, the resistance to schematizations—or, at the very least, the lack of overconfidence in schematizations—is what makes possible a more realistic schematization and, along with it, a viable political science, Zouraris claims. It should be noted, however, that none of the above ideas is represented in any way in his public presence after his entry into politics and the assumption of office, where the legacy of the Left, the Resistance during Greece's Nazi occupation and Greece's civil war figure much more prominently than any other ideas, in spite of the fact that he was elected as a candidate of the right-wing party *Independent Greeks* rather than the left-wing *Syriza*. One could claim that it became possible for him to enter politics when Zouraris ceased being Zouraris—or, for that matter, Neo-Orthodox. While it could be claimed that he has not abandoned these ideas altogether, since their traces are often evident in his public utterances, one would be hard-pressed to ascribe this change to the difference between holding provocative positions as an independent public intellectual and as a deputy minister, as he has either way proceeded in provocative utterances which earned him quite some criticism from many sides: these positions, however, were not identifiably Neo-Orthodox.

## *Coda*

In this paper, I provided an overview of the social, historical, and ideological context necessary for an inquiry into Neo-Orthodoxy. I have questioned whether Neo-Orthodoxy, with its elusive definition, is indeed a valid term and an actual movement or ideology, showing among other things the fundamental divergences between the thinkers usually listed as Neo-Orthodox in spite of their common traits, these being a positive re-evaluation of Byzantine

and Orthodox tradition, a left-leaning conceptualization of this tradition as a counter-paradigm to that of the "capitalist West," and a glorification of Greek pre-1821 communitarianism. If Neo-Orthodoxy as a whole was anything, then it constituted a reinterpretation of tradition and a hermeneutic proposal of Greek identity over and against that of the West. Neo-Orthodoxy had no institutional subsistence; it was mainly a network of friendships—and of the ruptures therein.[40]

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## NOTES

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[1] Some of the authors under discussion (e.g., Kostas Zouraris, Kostis Moskoff) had distinguished clearly between Communism and Marxism and they preferred the former term over the latter. Thus, even though a "Marxist-Christian dialogue" terminology has prevailed in the subsequent discussion by outsiders (e.g. Makris 1983), thereby blurring the terms, I will insist here on referring to the "Communist-Orthodox Christian dialogue."

[2] Essentially, this was a Christianity heavily influenced, if not dictated, by the pietistic intellectual climate characteristic of the Zoë Brotherhood and its offshoots and its proximity to political life, particularly during the colonels' regime, if not by the state itself.

[3] Yannaras was never part of the political Left nor active in any of its political parties and organizations, yet his attempt to reform Orthodox theology and his social critique, already evident in the 1960s, were not in line with Greece's enthusiastically pro-Western political Right, which dominated the country from the early 1950s until 1974. After the 1980s, Yannaras criticized harshly both the political Left and Right, and he does so until today, yet earlier eclectic affinities and potential rapprochement to the ideological Left should not be overlooked. What can be stated with confidence, however, is that the political Left as a whole would never think of Yannaras as one of its members and/or intellectuals.

[4] Both Vassilis Xydias and Vasilios Makrides (Makrides 1998, 141n2) identify *Scholiastis* 5 (Liveris, Othonaios & Panayiotou, 1983) as having coined the term *Neo-Orthodox*, although in numerous interviews with protagonists of the current I have been pointed to an earlier article by Yannis Milios in *Theseis* (Milios 1983). Xydias (1984, 69) notes that "the social and theological radicalism of the 'neo-Orthodox' led to their convergence with the Left, but this convergence has had its supporters and opponents on both sides. "Neo-Orthodoxy" began being discussed in radical journals such as *Anti* and *Scholiastis* over the summer months of 1983, but it was swiftly mediated to the broader public through the daily press and the weekly glossy magazines." Angelis chiefly explores the non-polemical spectrum of references to the "Neo-Orthodox" in Greek magazines during the 1980s (2015).

[5] Even as late as 2000, *Theseis* continued to publish condemnations of a phenomenon that scarcely existed any more: for example, a 2000 Editorial refers to the "extreme right and Neo-Orthodox obscurantism," to the "appalling national-communist face of KKE's alliances with the Neo-Orthodox and fascist-religious arc," etc. (*Theseis* 2000). Later still, in 2009, Yorgos Koropoulis published in the official newspaper of SYRIZA, *I Avgi*, an article illustrating Neo-Orthodoxy as "the 'left-wing' and at the same time 'sublime' side of neo-nationalism," a "black blackness" (μαύρη μαυρίλα) rejuvenating elements of "good old fascism" (Koropoulis 2009). Almost all references to Neo-Orthodoxy originating from left-wing, later *Eksynchronismos*-leaning or, today, right-wing liberal media follow a similar rubric.

[6] A limited yet impressive departure from this stance came much later, with KKE's inclusion of journalist Liana Kanelli (2000 onwards) and public intellectual Kostas Zouraris (1999 and 2000) in its electoral candidates lists: while Liana Kanelli continues to be an MP for KKE up to the present day, having since downplayed her Neo-Orthodox discourse and assuming a KKE-friendly one to an immense degree, the party's cooperation with Kostas Zouraris came to an end following his non-election. What is particularly noteworthy here is that KKE is usually credited as the ideologically and politically least flexible party of the Left, while the KKE ἐσ. whence Kostas Zouraris originally stemmed, albeit not sharing this reputation and taking pride in its professed openness, emerged as the protagonist of the condemnation of the Neo-Orthodox.

[7] Later becoming Συνασπισμός, the Coalition of the Left and of Progress/Coalition of the Left, of Movements and Ecology, 1991–2013, and eventually SYRIZA, the Coalition of the Radical Left.

[8] Cf. (Xydias 1984, 69): "By its presence, 'neo-Orthodoxy' has upset many accepted ideological forms through which Christianity is approached by both believers and non-believers . . . This is a theology which is the product of a belief in the continuing centrality of patristic teaching and the Orthodox ecclesiastical tradition. It should be pointed out that the supporters of 'Neo-Orthodoxy' in Greece do not accept this term as being accurate. They think of themselves simply as being Orthodox, and claim that 'Neo-Orthodoxy' is a term invented by their opponents." It should be noted that the critical stance against the Neo-Orthodox came not only from the Left, but from the church as well: "The suspicions of left-wing and orthodox hardliners were not allayed, however, and the debate floundered on external hostility" (Xydias 1984, 70).

[9] It needs to be remarked that the term has no connection whatsoever to Protestant Neo-Orthodoxy and Karl Barth.

[10] Including, but not limited to Makrides (1998).

[11] Chapter 5, "The Neo-Orthodox Movement" (Moskoff 2005, 199–245). The following peculiarity is to be observed in this thesis: while Kostis Moskoff was undoubtedly one of the most prominent figures of the Neo-Orthodox Movement, in whichever way one is to define it, his son and author of the thesis does not mention Kostis Moskoff's name at all in his treatment of the movement.

[12] This has to be underscored, as a "right-wing Neo-Orthodox" would be a contradiction in terms, at least in the eyes of the Neo-Orthodox themselves—in spite of such charges having appeared in the discourse of the Left for purposes more closely related to attempts at mutual exclusions than to a striving for a terminologically accurate political identification.

[13] On Yannaras's thought in general, see various works (Mitralexis 2012; Petrà 2015; Cole 2017; Mitralexis 2017; Mitralexis 2017c; Mitralexis 2018; Andreopoulos and Harper 2019).

[14] "Zoë, also called Brotherhood of Theologians, in Eastern Orthodoxy, a semimonastic Greek association patterned on Western religious orders. Founded in 1907 by Eusebius Matthopoulos,

Zoë (Greek: "Life") brought together groups of more than 100 unmarried and highly disciplined members, bound by the monastic vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience; approximately half of the brothers were ordained priests, and the rest were laymen. With the exception of one month spent yearly in a common retreat, they were engaged in various religious activities throughout Greece, including teaching, preaching, administration of schools and youth organizations, and publishing. In the years following World War II, Zoë publications numbered hundreds of thousands of copies a year, but its influence has since diminished, especially after several of its members left the brotherhood and created a competing association (Soter)" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* 2016).

[15] Examples would include the conference fittingly entitled "Dialogue between Orthodoxy and Marxism," 13–15 December 1983 at Athens' "Christian Theatre Association," with its proceedings published (Massali and Anagnostakis 1984).

[16] These developments also gave rise to a wider occurence, i.e. discovery of Orthodoxy by the Greek Left, with offshoots that cannot be described as Neo-Orthodox—e.g., the case of Dimitris Kitsikis and his theory of the "intermediary region" [Ἐνδιάμεση περιοχή], as well as Yorgos Karambelias and his periodical *Ardin* [Ἄρδην], still active today with *Ardin* and another journal, *Νέος Λόγιος Ἑρμής*. It would be impossible, however, to bundle these more discernibly nationalistic developments under "Neo-Orthodoxy," no less because in these developments the instrumentalization of Orthodoxy (as an important cultural trait rather than as an existential matter of life and death) for national or otherwise political purposes is made almost explicit—this being, in many ways, the precise opposite of Neo-Orthodoxy.

[17] He was engaged in left-wing activism since his student years and was clearly supporting and proclaiming relevant ideas at least until the end of the 1980s, thus being publicly categorized as an artist belonging to the Left; yet he was not officially attached to a particular party in the manner of Zouraris or Moskoff.

[18] To illustrate this by an example of convergences that would reach the popular level: Savvopoulos wrote the music for the film "Terirem" (1987) by Apostolos Doxiadis (a mathematician, director and public intellectual who also became enamored with Orthodoxy in the 1980s) which also thematizes the quest for the supernatural/Orthodoxy in a Greek village of the day and reflects the pro-religious fermentations going on in Greek society at that time (including, inter alia, a mild secularization process by the reigning Panhellenic Socialist Movement, PASOK).

[19] The newspaper *Kathimerini* identified as the motive behind the hindrances to the election and the installment of the elected professor "the wish that no non-Marxist candidate should be elected" to a professorship: *Kathimerini*, 11 July 1982.

[20] Yannaras recounts these events (Yannaras 1995, 160–173). *A contrario*, an article attacking his election was written by Milios (1983). It should be noted that Milios's *Theseis* article makes no mention of Yannaras's academic credentials in philosophy, allowing the unsuspecting reader to presume that Yannaras would possess only theological ones: for example, the only information given on his theretofore professional positions is "religious teacher in one of Athens' private schools" rather than, for example, visiting professor in philosophy in various universities in Greece (Crete) and abroad (Lausanne, Paris). Such misguiding discourse gained considerable traction in the 1980s.

[21] A further reason for this can be discerned in light of the intricacies and idiosyncrasies of recent Greek political history and culture. Not belonging, openly or implicitly yet firmly, to a political party is surprisingly rare among public intellectuals in early post-authoritarian Greece, and Yannaras's case confused many in the political spectrum due to the difficulty in categorizing

him: Christianity usually went hand in hand with right-wing political leanings, but Yannaras defied this pattern and emerged as an important figure in the dialogue between communists and Christians in the 1980s as a Christian participant; at the same time, one could not easily recognize him as a left-wing figure, particularly in view of his outlook on recent Greek history as this can be spotted in his feuilletons. His critique against literally all established political parties has been particularly harsh, winning him enemies rather than respect among the political executives during Greece's highly polarized recent decades. The election of a theologically-minded academic philosopher to a philosophy chair of a university recognized for its left-leaning pedigree alluded to here further complicated his reception.

[22] However, Makrides does make note of it as well (1998, 143).

[23] An example of this would be Stelios Papathemelis, who after joining PASOK was appointed Deputy Education Minister in 1982–1985, Minister for Macedonia and Thrace in 1987–1989 and Minister for Public Order in 1993–1995. The fact that Papathemelis would publicly profess his Orthodox faith while being politically active in PASOK caused his categorization under the label Neo-Orthodox in certain publications (such as Makris 1983) in spite of the fact that Papathemelis's public footprint is not characteristic of certain core ideas of what has been dubbed Neo-Orthodoxy and, as such, cannot be labelled "Neo-Orthodox."

[24] To illustrate the impact of Archimandrite Vasileios's thought and presence, it would suffice to point to the exceedingly influential yet also controversial 1984 text *The Holy Mountain and the Education of our Nation* (Monastic Community of the Holy Mountain 1984) published allegedly by the entire monastic Community of Mount Athos but in reality written by Gondikakis, as evidenced by the publication of an English translation under his name (Gondikakis 2001).

[25] It must be remarked at this point that there was a host of lesser known intellectuals affiliated with the Neo-Orthodox from the 1980s onwards. To name but one example, one could refer to the physicist Georgios Pavlos, currently a professor at the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering of Democritus University of Thrace, who also wrote on Modern Greek identity, Eastern and Western epistemology and philosophy etc. (Pavlos 1994). Pavlos briefly hosted a TV program at Thessaloniki's state-run television ERT3 during the 1990s.

[26] Recent books include Ziakas 2008, 2012. Before his main trilogy, Ziakas had published treatises on the relationship between the Left and the nation (1988, 1993; Ziakas and Korovinis 1998).

[27] Among "institutional" points of convergence, one could mention the private Goulandri-Horn Foundation in Athens, which hosted or organized lecture series, panels, and so on. Its publications went quite often in the direction of, broadly speaking, Neo-Orthodoxy; cf. for example (Drakopoulos 1983).

[28] For example, in a 2005 interview: "The 'Neo-Orthodox' current is attributed to him—he rejects its fatherhood" and the accompanying comments (Mitropoulos 2005). In this interview Ramfos is credited with exerting considerable influence on George A. Papandreou, who would become Greece's prime minister in 2009.

[29] A brief prosopography of Ramfos, with a biographical sketch and an analysis of the main tenets of his thought, can be found in Louth 2015 (259–62), where he is curiously listed as a "lay theologian" in spite of the absence of any theological credentials, academic, ecclesiastical, or otherwise.

[30] Ramfos will continue to take on subjects and texts from classical Greece after his turn, partly inscribing those, however, in his new individualization versus "hesychast" Hellenocentricism hermeneutics (Ramfos 2005).

[31] The problem with such analyses is not limited to their philosophical accuracy, if any, but extended to their factual one as well. Eurostat informs us that "Seven out of every ten (69.4 %) persons in the EU-28 lived in owner-occupied dwellings," with Greece scoring 75% (Eurostat 2017). Arguably, the difference does not easily lend itself as a basis for analyses of deep cultural divergences.

[32] Like Orientalism, Greek Neo-Orientalism "sees Western society as developed, rational, democratic, and thereby superior, while non-Western societies are undeveloped, irrational, inflexible, and implicitly inferior." However, the main traits of Greek Neo-orientalism are "that (a) it is voiced by Greeks, rather than by others, when they describe/criticize their own country, (b) it employs typical Orientalist/Balkanist stereotypes, albeit appropriated accordingly, taking into account Greece's historical background (and proposing a rather peculiar hermeneutical framework for its understanding), (c) it always proposes, explicitly or implicitly, a further and enhanced political, cultural, and economic alignment with 'the West' (in whichever way this is being defined by particular Greek Neo-Orientalists), while holding that such an alignment was never truly the case." Furthermore, "it is central to Greek Neo-Orientalism that its narratives, in the particular form and state in which they emerge as Neo-Orientalism, originate in Greece, or at least by Greeks abroad, and may then be exported and reiterated by non-Greeks—rather than coming to Greece 'from the outside' as it were, from external sources, and then becoming internalised" (Mitralexis 2018, 128–129).

[33] It is again to Nikos Dimou that the most lucid phrasing concerning this is attributed, in the context of an interview on liberalism/libertarianism (*φιλελευθερισμός* can refer to both ideologies in Greek according to the context, with a certain opacity accompanying the term's use): "We started from diametrically opposed positions with Ramfos (both during his leftist phase as well as during his Hellenocentric phase), but we are tracing parallel trajectories during the last 20 years. I deeply appreciate him for his bravery in doing a 180 degrees turn and in revisiting the basic premises of his thought. This is a rare combination of absolute honesty and originality of thought" (Dimou 2015, 177–178).

[34] On what I term "Greek Neo-Orientalism," see Mitralexis (2017b).

[35] Makrides has bravely attempted to do so (1998, 150).

[36] Precisely due to his work's nature, as he frequently returns to his main ideas, enriching them with more content with every repetition without having systematically expounded them somewhere first, it would be quite pointless to pinpoint particular page numbers in his works where a certain idea fleetingly appears. Rather than that, I have opted for presenting his ideas with wide brushes, citing some of his books where these ideas are expounded in more detail.

[37] Gregory Palamas employs the word in order to underscore the indivisible whole of soul and body: *Patrologia Graeca* 150:1361.

[38] Homer, *The Iliad, with an English Translation by A.T. Murray* (Cambridge, MA., Harvard University Press & London, William Heinemann, 1924), XXIV, 526–530.

[39] Maximus the Confessor, *Ad Thalassium,* Question 43, Patrologia Graeca 90:413B.

[40] Perhaps the testimony of one of the current's protagonists concerning the climate of the time serves to underscore the novelty of the actual events during the 1980s more than our accompanying theoretical analyses:

> Among the students of Thessaloniki and Athens, news like the following ones were heard in a casual way, without surprise, as nothing truly extraordinary: 'Do you remember the guy from the Greek Communist Party of the Interior's youth? He is now at the Athonite

> Simonometra monastery as a monk—our other friend, the anarchist, after a long phase into Buddhist Zen teachings, is now a novice monk at the Athonite monastery of Koutloumousiou.' Crowds visiting Mount Athos, friends would go there to meet friends, a restless youth filled the boats from Ouranoupoli.
>
> (Yannaras 2007b).

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