RECONCEPTUALIZING POLITICS:
CONCEPTS OF POLITICS IN MODERN GREEK POLITICAL CULTURE

Kostas A. Lavdas
School of Politics, U. W. E., Bristol, United Kingdom
Hellenic Centre for Political Research, Panteion University, Athens, Greece

Condillac said that words are signs of ideas, but of course it does not follow and it never entered his head to think that sharing the same words is ipso facto sharing the same thoughts.
Dionysios Solomos, Διαλόγος, 1824.

ABSTRACT  The paper explores three concepts of politics in modern Greek political thought and sketches the parameters for a new conceptual approach to Greek political culture. It identifies three concepts of politics which can be located in different discursive contexts: frustrated republicanism, conservative traditionalism and constructivist anti-necessitarianism. The examination of these discursive contexts presents us with a number of interesting questions of conceptual continuity and discontinuity and of the influence exerted on conceptual shifts by changing patterns of political support and legitimacy. The paper focuses mainly on the emergence of a modern Greek concept of politics in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century and then proceeds to sketch the development of two other concepts in the interactions between discursive contexts and the socio-cultural and political junctures which have marked the development of politics in the modern Greek state.
I. Introduction

The paper explores concepts of politics in Greek political culture. On a secondary but closely interrelated level, it also sketches an approach to conceptual change as a set of interlinked episodes in which conceptual frustration and suppressed meanings can account for aspects of subsequent developments.

The emergence of a modern concept of politics in Europe has its sources in the conceptual transformation which takes place in the Renaissance, but the approach to political questions in a manner that acknowledges their historicity presupposes a framework of understanding which does not develop before the eighteenth century. Koselleck has explored the emergence, after the end of the eighteenth century, of an approach to history which denotes “the discovery of a specific historical temporality”: in this context historical understanding detached itself from a naturalistic view of chronology (based either on astronomical data or the succession of rulers and dynasties) and progress became the main category in which a “transnatural” definition of time first found expression (Koselleck 1985: 33-35). The French Revolution can be identified as the key historical experience which triggers this development.

The examination of concepts of politics in the case of modern Greece also suggests that the French Revolution needs to be approached as a key historical experience. In what follows we will see that the combined influence of the French Revolution and the ideas of the Enlightenment contributed to the emergence of a modern concept of politics in Greek political culture. But we will also see that a number of republican elements played a key role in this process.

What strikes one in comparative studies of contemporary Greek political culture is the extent to which Greeks express an interest in politics and at the same time appear to possess a rather positive view of politics (in fact, much more positive than the view taken by respondents in the other Southern European states – Italy, Portugal, Spain). What makes this finding even more intriguing is that it is combined with comparatively low levels of overall citizen satisfaction (for excellent overviews see Charalambis & Demertzis 1993: 219-240 and Demertzis 1997: 107-121). One possible explanation can be sought in the prevalence in modern Greece of a certain “utilitarian approach that
subjugates the public sphere to the exigencies of the private’. Yet the centrality of conceptions of politics in Greek public life may also be approached in terms which consider the possibility that expressed interest in politics may be genuine (i.e., political) after all (cf. Contogeorgis 1998). It can be suggested, from this perspective, that the aforementioned ‘‘utilitarianism’’ is associated with a certain individualism which in fact is predicated on a historical sense of a frustrated valued alternative. It is an individualism which evolves in a cultural context which historically encouraged person-to-person contact in clientelistic relations and in which the Protestant and especially Puritan conceptions of self-control, duty and calling had been absent.

The interest in and the role played by politics in Greek society and in the discursive mechanisms through which events, institutions and even subjects become knowable in the Greek context has been noted by various writers. Research on interest in and concern with politics has usually been subsumed under studies aiming to explicate different aspects of modern Greek political culture in terms of a dualistic construction of the relations between traditionalism and Westernization (Diamandouros 1983; 1993). A different approach has aimed to avoid the neat juxtaposition of traditional and modern and has viewed the relations between the traditional and the modern elements in terms of a syncretism which evolves in asymmetric ways (Demertzis 1994; 1997). From a different – anthropological – perspective and one which aims to pursue the traditional – modern dualism a bit further, Faubion investigates the relations between ‘‘cultural classicism’’ and ‘‘historical constructivism’’ as regimes of signification. The former concerns the ethic of conviction which was associated with what Geertz has called nationalist essentialism. The latter refers to the specifically ‘‘Greek modernity’’, the multitude of structured

---

1 Charalambis & Demertzis (1993: 223). These authors argue that the underdeveloped conception of the public character of the political (what they call ‘‘the privatization of the public’’) can account for the fact that ‘‘Greek political culture is characterized by a merging of the public and the private […] That is why the Greek [interest in politics] is really not paradoxical. Provided that politics is regarded in private terms, there is no antithesis between high political interest and low political efficacy’’ (1993: 224).

2 The influence of Puritan conceptions of self-control on the development of political culture in the American case has been analyzed in Bercovich (1975) and Walzer (1965).

3 For different analyses which converge on this see Spourdalakis (1988); Diamandouros (1993); Demertzis (1994; 1997); Clogg (1993); Lyrintzis, Nicolacopoulos & Sotiropoulos (1996); Contogeorgis (1998: 12, 59).
dispositions and practices which signify the “way of being modern” in a particular country (Faubion 1993).4

The present paper aims to contribute to this debate with an examination of the ways in which concepts of politics are used in modern Greek political culture. In its present, preliminary form, it focuses on concepts in political thought, intellectual milieus and learned circles. I consider three concepts of politics which emerge and evolve in three distinct discursive contexts: frustrated republicanism, conservative traditionalism and constructivist anti-necessitarianism. These contexts are embedded in political developments which are shaped through socio-cultural junctures. Section II of the paper considers briefly certain conceptual and methodological issues. Section III explores the emergence of a modern concept of politics in Greek political culture, and constitutes the main focus of the paper. The remaining sections sketch the other concepts and discursive contexts and provide an introductory discussion of their interactions with the succession of socio-cultural and political turning points in the historical development of the modern Greek state.

II. Concepts of politics and reconceptualization

This paper looks at reconceptualization (rather than redefinition) of politics in three different but not incommensurable discursive contexts. The parameters of reconceptualization in the case of the first concept are defined by the use being made of classical conceptual material: given the presumed continuity with the “classical heritage”, and the extensive use of conceptual material drawn from classical sources, a certain reconceptualization of politics has to take place for the classic concepts to be recognizable and operational in the new context. The modern Greek sources we will be considering usually conceptualize politics in terms of continuity, and it is because of this that they then have to engage in processes of re-conceptualization – what would have otherwise been “new” formulation and conceptualization on the basis of

---

4 Faubion (1993), who locates his “historical constructivists” among the more cosmopolitan circles of Greece’s urban elites, aims to “supplement Weber’s hermeneutics of technical rationalism with the hermeneutics of another modernity, another way of being modern, which appears to come the more fully into its own the farther one moves away from the Occident’s core […] the attempt itself seems to me all the more urgent as more and more of the world’s peoples find themselves not simply at modernity’s threshold but too often pushed abruptly and unceremoniously beyond it, at best imperfectly aware of the diversity of alternatives they have available” (1993: 11).
interactions with the acknowledged or unacknowledged influences of the temporal and spatial context, was becoming a more complex process. The process of reconceptualization takes place in changing contexts which, in turn, are defined in interaction with a succession of “crises” / junctures in the development of the political system and its patterns of performance, support and legitimacy.5

My approach starts from an understanding of political concepts which acknowledges the significance of shifts and even fundamental discontinuities in the history of political thought. This view, essentially “that the history of thought should be viewed not as a series of attempts to answer a canonical set of questions, but as a sequence of episodes in which the questions as well as the answers have frequently changed” (Skinner 1988c: 234), gives us a general idea about what to expect in the historical analysis of concepts and ideas but it allows also for subtle views on meaning6 as well as considerable variation and nuances if approached in a non-dogmatic way.

My approach also considers, however, that contexts define concepts only to an extent; elements of continuity within a discursive tradition or (more controversially) in its reworking in a changed context can be crucial in analyzing conceptual appropriation. Because my notion of reconceptualization refers to a process whereby elements are transformed and absorbed in varying degrees by emerging conceptions but “never discarded or neatly replaced by others” (Parekh 1999: 413 n.27), I am considering continuities as well as discontinuities in conceptual development. Of course, appropriation is usually selective appropriation. But it does not always lead to a succession of disconnected episodes of redefinition.7 Redefinition is constrained by

5 On the analysis of “crises” of political development see Binder, Coleman, LaPalombara, Pye and Weiner (1971). “Crises” are prolonged junctures. Without accepting the evolutionary logic which underpins some of the political development literature, we can construct a notion of juncture which points to particular turning points in the development of relationships between the different parts of a political system, its patterns of performance, support and legitimacy and its linkages with the international environment (see Lavdas 1997: 8-9, 242-255).
6 For example, Skinner notes that “a term such as virtu gains its ‘meaning’ from its place within an extensive network of beliefs, the filiations of which must be fully traced if the place of any one element within the structure is to be properly understood” (Skinner 1988c: 253).
7 Because concepts as well as utterances acquire “meanings” in a number of different ways. To begin with, there are different dimensions involved in the understanding of an utterance, some of which do benefit from the adoption of the Austenian theory of speech acts: (a) the occurrence of the act of speech (in which case we need to know about the intentions of the actor, what s/he was doing in speaking, writing etc.) or (b) the character of the utterance (in which case the contextual emphasis – what counts as x in a specific context – is indispensable). See Skinner (1988c: 260-267) on the very interesting exchange between Skinner and ”his critics” over the question of intentional and unintentional illocutionary acts (using the example of the utterance “the ice over there is very thin”). But there are also legitimate reasons for looking at other dimensions of meaning taking into account the content of an utterance from the perspective of a correspondence theory of truth: neither (a) nor (b) necessarily tell us much about the possible correspondence between the content of an utterance and – in the case of the
the recognition of elements of continuity which appear meaningful from a new perspective. Turning to the question of authorial intent, still another possibility encourages us to look for continuities as well as discontinuities. It can be argued that it is part of our commitment to explicating authorial intent to disentangle what we may call the inherent from the subjectively contested (and possibly also acknowledged as such) aspects of the constraining function of the linguistic or other forms of expression. The acknowledgement of this possibility, which has been the focus of debate in other areas (such as the interpretation of a musical score), departs in some respects from the theory of language on which some of the contextualists draw and, accepting as a first step that the medium constrains, aims to inquire further whether we can trace in the structure or content of the final “product” elements which legitimize our suspicion that the attempt to transcend such constraints may have been an intention on the part of the author or that the final “product” manifests a constitutive anxiety over such constraints.  

Focusing on authors who themselves draw on classic conceptual material presents us with two issues with regard to the role of classic texts in this reconceptualization of politics. One issue is the intelligibility (for us) of what we may call the first level (the classical conceptual material) through the prism of the second level (modern and contemporary Greek texts), which is historically and substantively closer to us and to our concerns. This is what Bevir (1994) calls the “perennial B” sense of a perennial problem in political theory: when classic works “consider problems which other authors who have commented on their work also have considered and which we too can ponder” (Bevir 1994: 669). The other issue, however, is how and to what extent we can have a view of the first level which is not confined to the prisms example Skinner uses – the object it may refer to (in other words, if in fact “the ice over there” is not “very thin”, then a number of interpretive possibilities remain open, some of which still concern meaning and context, but will undoubtedly affect our views on (a) and (b) above).  

8 To use the same example, when dealing with a musical score which belongs to an earlier era characterized by partly different technical conventions, we are entitled to ask whether technical conventions constrain the intentions of the composer in ways which are internalized and become inseparable from the final “product” or in ways which distort what the composer intended to convey, and might have been easier for him or her to convey if they had access to technical capabilities which superceded the constraints they had to interact with. The implications which follow from the former view (for example, the preference for using period instruments in performances) tend to contradict at least some of the implications which follow from the latter (such as the preference for using modern instruments).
of the second level.\textsuperscript{9} The more historically sensitive classicists can be particularly useful here.\textsuperscript{10}

\textbf{III. The emergence of a modern concept of politics}

Historians of ideas have investigated the development from the early seventeenth century, two centuries before the establishment of the modern Greek state, of “a movement of thought, conducted by Greeks in Greek”, which culminates in the years immediately before the Greek war of independence in the early 1820s and subsequently “changes character and direction rather decisively” (Henderson 1971: 1). In an influential study, Henderson (1971) labeled this movement “the revival of Greek thought”.\textsuperscript{11}

Before considering this “revival”, we need to question the extent to which we can talk of modern Greek thought before the emergence of a modern Greek state. It can be argued that the historian is in a position to point to numerous references to Greek identity by writers as well as other social actors in a variety of sources in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In view of such evidence, two points can be made here. The first is simply that when it comes to questions of collective identity, people are who they think they are. The second point is, I hope, more subtle. In examining the emergence of a national identity in the context of the modern Greek national state it is difficult to resort to neat conceptualizations of the relations between the nation and political institutions. In a number of cases, a people or a nation had to be constructed, since the new state bore no relation to anything except the aspirations of particular factions within the political and intellectual elites or (in post-colonial states) the legacy of colonial divisions. In such cases, the state makes the nation rather than the other way round (cf. Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983; Anderson 1983). In other cases, there exist

\textsuperscript{9} This is roughly the same as Bevir’s (1994) “perennial A” problem, although my interest is in relating and in dissociating the two levels and less in what he calls “perennial A” as such.

\textsuperscript{10} I have in mind here the work of scholars such as Connor (1984), Hansen (1991), Farrar (1992), Fine (1983) and, of course, Vernant (1991). More generally, it is not difficult to find historically sensitive classical studies, which avoid both the inadequacies of the “orthodox” historians of political ideas and the exaggerations of some of the contextualists regarding the reading of ancient texts (on the latter see, e.g., the critical remarks in Femia 1988: 167-168).

\textsuperscript{11} There exists a substantial, if at times a little esoteric, literature on this in Greek. For an outstanding discussion of the Enlightenment in Greek-speaking circles and regions of Southeastern Europe in English see Kitromilides (1992; 1994).
significant elements of continuity before and after the inauguration of the statal period in the construction of national identity. For such cases, approaches which attempt to re-discover the continuities between modern nations and the pre-modern ethnic communities in the cultural frameworks of which nations are embedded may be more useful (see Smith 1986; for a balanced discussion of the Greek case in comparative perspective see, e.g., Eatwell 1997).

The dimensions of discontinuity were associated with both the Byzantine and the Ottoman systems of rule in the Greek peninsula. Although the role of Roman legal institutions and norms remained significant throughout the years between the inauguration of the Eastern capital in Constantinople and the fall of Byzantium in AD 1453, and – as we will see – survived even under Ottoman rule, the prevalent model of government in the Byzantine Empire combined elements of the deified king of the Hellenistic period and of Eastern theocratic traditions. The result was a model that stressed the sacred character of the person of the Emperor. Under Ottoman rule the Patriarch in Constantinople was granted the authority of the spiritual and political leader (Millet Basi) of the Christians. The role of the Orthodox Church was religious and supranational (ecumenical), that is, the Church guaranteed the distinction between Christians and Muslims and was responsible for both the religious and the administrative guidance of the former within the framework of Ottoman rule. But the actual organization of government was complex, varied from region to region and manifested a variable mix of influences by local notables, Roman legal tradition, the Orthodox Church and the Ottoman rulers. It must be stressed that Roman (Justinian) law remained significant in most of the regions which became the Greek state throughout the years of Ottoman rule, thereby providing an important normative thread alongside other elements of continuity, notably religious (but see below) and linguistic.

Greece was, in some respects, a certain version of a pre-statal “cultural nation”. The Greek language became the key signifier of a distinct identity. “Greekness” became intimately linked to the use of the Greek language (and the access it allowed to

---

various forms of capital – social, symbolic, often also material) already in the context of the Hellenistic period. “Hellhnizein” (to speak the common language of the Greeks) “gave Hellenism its name and identified the most significant of its governing principles in the vast spread of territory and time that the term covers” (Keeley 1996: 89).

Let us now turn to the “revival of Greek thought”. My interest in it consists in looking at three interrelated issues which I can only sketch here. First, it invites us to consider issues of continuity and discontinuity (such as the ones I merely touched on above) and it does so in a cultural context which claims to have established continuities with what is, after all, one of the main sources of the Western canon. Second, it calls attention to the gradual emergence of a modern concept of politics before the late eighteenth century and its changing influence in the decades after 1789 (the French Revolution) and 1821 (the Greek war of independence). Finally, it prompts us to consider the interactions between concepts, discursive contexts and particular junctures of wider socio-cultural and political transformations.

Juncture 1: The Europeanization of Greek-speaking contexts

The emergence of a concept of politics in Greek culture before the establishment of the modern Greek state was based on classical materials as well as the thought, first, of various European theorists and, later, of the European Enlightenment. Working with classical conceptual material became an everyday preoccupation in Greek letters with the revival of classic and particularly Aristotelian studies after 1600 and the establishment or expansion of various “schools of higher education”. This revival developed in parallel with the interest in and influence exercised by theorists such as Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes and Locke, whose works are discussed at length by various Greek texts in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

13 These were established in some of the regions which eventually became the Greek state (notably in Ioannina, Kozani, Chios, and the Ionian islands) as well as cities (such as Venice, Vienna, Bucharest, Iasi and Constantinople) which had substantial Greek-speaking minorities (for an overview in English of these institutions and their activities see Henderson 1971: 5-10, 43-50). The early phase (after 1600) was based on the new Aristotelianism which originated from Padua, was supported by the Church and flourished also in the context of the Patriarchal Academy in Constantinople. The dominant view within the Church was to support the revival of classical studies, up to the point where it became clear that various intellectuals, educational elites and local officials tended to “read” classical material in ways which encouraged the turn to “enlightened Europe”.

14 For example, on this influence in the case of E. Voulgaris’s massive Logic (published in 1766) see, e.g., the discussion in Henderson (1971: 53-63). Henderson notes the acknowledgment of Voulgaris’s work in Scottish sources in the 1770s and 1790s.
Contact with European polities became more intense after the end of
the seventeenth century\textsuperscript{15} and resulted in considerable admiration for “Europe” among the
learned circles, including even distinguished members of the Christian Orthodox
clergy.\textsuperscript{16} Learned westernized circles tended to see “Europe” as a model for Greece’s
future especially after the mid-eighteenth century, when the creation of an independent
Greek state was considered an attainable objective. For some, this meant that
arrangements had to be shaped or reshaped in order to approximate the relevant
European patterns. Others saw secular enlightenment as crucial but, for tactical reasons
(to avoid antagonizing the more conservative circles within the Church and the ruling
oligarchies), put forward more cautious strategies of reform. On the eve of the war of
independence, the conservative groups formed a loose coalition around a
“counter-enlightenment”, which was allegedly motivated by anxiety over the loss of
the Orthodox faith (Kitromilides 1995: 5-10) and was marked, as we will see, by a rigid
form of classicism.

In the course of the eighteenth century a number of Greek texts demonstrate the
combination of an emphatic affirmation of the presumed continuity with the classical
past\textsuperscript{17} and a certain ambivalence over the possible uses that can be made of that past. In
some texts, this combination takes particularly interesting forms against the background
of an intellectual outlook which reveals the influence of the ideas of the Enlightenment.
As the more critical intellectuals stressed, the adherence to the classics was often so
rigid that the “role” of classical materials in sustaining the turn to the Enlightenment
was jeopardized. A passage from a work by I. Moisiodax, published in 1761, is a good
example:

\textsuperscript{15} Increasing contact and more intense interactions took the form of closer commercial relations as well
as mobility of intellectuals and movement of ideas. On the ascendancy of the Greek, Slav and Illyrian
merchant classes in the context of the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires and their strengthened role in
European trade during the eighteenth century see the analysis by Stoianovich (1960: 234-313).
\textsuperscript{16} Thus Meletios, Bishop of Athens, in a treatise on “Geography, Old and New”, published
posthumously in 1728, notes that “Europe” possesses “advantages over all other parts of the world”,
suggests that Europeans have “prospered in social mores, in the sciences, in arms [sic] and in whatever
else is useful to humanity” and describes in glowing terms the political systems particularly of England
and Switzerland. Similarly, Greek textbooks (i.e., textbooks in Greek) on “Geography” in the 1760s
and the 1770s emphasize the “civil” elements in the English system and suggest that the English are
“tolerant, steadfast and most prone to freedom of thought” (quoted in Kitromilides 1995: 3). At the
same time, these authors are equally if not more attracted by what they view as the Swiss model.
\textsuperscript{17} Not surprisingly, this view became instrumental in the construction of a three-stage conception of
Greek historical continuity: ancient, Byzantine, modern. It took a definitive form in the nineteenth
century in K. Paparrigopoulos’s monumental, multi-volume \textit{History}, written between the 1850s and the
1870s (for an excellent account of this see Kitromilides 1995: 11-12).
“At the present day Greece nurtures and feeds two faults that are most unbecoming to her glorious reputation. She is dominated overwhelmingly by deference to and neglect of antiquity. The former has bred in her that powerful presumption that everything which was invented or cultivated by the ancients is noble, is accurate; and the latter has resulted in the scarcity [...] of ancient texts [...] Let the truth be proclaimed, however [...] Europe at the present day, partly through proper administration, and partly through the proclivity toward learning of the rulers of the various countries, surpasses in wisdom even ancient Greece.”

The uncritical use of the past remained a key issue for decades. A treatise published in 1834 highlights this anxiety over the implications of rigid classicism:

““Humanity is always accustomed to despise what belongs to the present, however great and admirable this may be: to admire, rather, what they hear of as being far distant from them, even though it be minor and less noteworthy. The further away things are in space or in time the more exaggeratedly they tend to praise them”.”

The gap begins to widen between those who insist on a rigid adherence to the classical legacy (including an emphasis on ancient Greek in education) and thinkers who draw on classical conceptual materials but also aim to promote contemporary ideas: the ideas of the Enlightenment, which became increasingly central to important strands in modern Greek political thought; also, as I note below, a series of republican themes. The writings of some of the latter authors contain passages with extensive and shrewd criticism of the social conventions and the power relationships which sustained society in eighteenth century Southeastern Europe (Kitromilides 1992: 86-92). Increasingly, enlightened absolutism was seen as a possible solution. In the late seventeenth and

19 N. Doukas, Tetractys, Aegina, 1834, quoted in Henderson (1971: 192). In fact, N. Doukas, the author of these remarks, was himself someone who has been seen as a romantic classicist in view of some of his views on education.
20 The European Enlightenment was for these intellectuals the epitome of reason, progress and humanity. Even when they embraced “enlightened despotism”, they argued – in most cases - from the perspectives of politically weak pockets within their respective social milieus. From the perspective of these intellectuals, the implications of the “darker side” of the Enlightenment were simply not visible. As the various critics of the Enlightenment have suggested, one aspect of the “enlightened reason” amounted to the drive to rationalize, systematize, order and dominate the real world and, according to such critical views, this aspect may help explain the Enlighteners’ interest in eighteenth century “enlightened despotism” in Prussia or Russia: the theorists of the Enlightenment “wished to believe that representatives of real social and political power could be instrumental in modifying the conditions of existence for individuals and nations” (Brewer 1993: 180).
early eighteenth centuries, the tradition of political literature known in the history of ideas as “mirror for princes” (*speculum principum*) was revived in Southeastern Europe by Greek and by Romanian speaking intellectuals. It gave birth to a number of interesting texts, addressed mainly to the Phanariot rulers in the Danubian principalities and Southeastern Europe more generally (see Kitromilides 1992: 167-71).

Even in this context, however, theorists like Moisiodax eventually take a view which is more sympathetic to the republican states of Europe, such as Switzerland and the Dutch United Provinces (Kitromilides 1992: 175-177). This is symptomatic of the development of a strand in modern Greek political though which, although it is at first difficult to distinguish from certain other currents, gradually establishes itself as a major strand. A number of different conceptions of politics emerged in Southeastern Europe after the French Revolution. They can be grouped into four more or less clearly distinguishable perspectives. First, there was a perspective in which the ecumenicity of the Orthodox religion and the cosmopolitan humanism of the Enlightenment were combined in a transitory historical constellation. This perspective remained rather vague on the polity, the reform of which it linked to the attainment of higher educational and cultural standards. Concerning the national question, its ambivalence was intimately linked to the fact that, while using the Greek language and constantly referring to “Hellas” and its cultural influence, its vision of the future polity was “still articulated primarily in [Orthodox Christian] religious terms within the framework of the Ottoman empire” (Kitromilides 1992: 185).

Second, there was a liberal current, preoccupied with concepts of rights, universalism and the rule of law. Third, elements of a republican view of freedom and the polity. I will focus on this view below; let me note at this point that it has often been difficult to distinguish between this strand and the liberal one, partly because liberalism in the modern Greek context operated on the basis of the blend of two sources: classic and Renaissance civic humanism, and the ideas of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. These ideas, as Kahan notes in his discussion of the sources of the intellectual and ideological tradition he calls “aristocratic liberalism”, “tempered the Aristotelian teleology of the humanist tradition and helped to create a new language that replaced virtue with education and cyclical views of history with historicism” (Kahan 1992: 5). Finally, there was a growing nationalist movement, which evolved in close
interaction with liberal and republican ideas, and which ultimately proved victorious – although the implications for liberalism and for republicanism proved complicated.

_Politics and the two facets of freedom_ 

By 1800 the influence of the Enlightenment on Greek thought was considerable. In their philosophy and their epistemology, Greek writers followed the school of “reason, progress and humanity”. Similarly their view of language in most cases followed closely the views of the French Enlightenment (language as representation), which was in turn influenced by the Cartesian theory of mind as the seat of reason. According to this view, thought definitely precedes language but, as in the relations between being and its representation, syntactical order makes manifest the logical relations which constitute rational thought: language was representing thought (see, e.g., Brewer 1993: 36-39).

But when we concentrate on _political_ thought, viewing the texts through the prism of enlightened reason alone will not be sufficient. To arrive at a concept of politics we need to consider the understudied republican theme in the “revival of Greek thought”. I consider republicanism to denote a form of government characterized by (a) the delegation of authority by a body of sovereign people, (b) certain conceptions of civic virtues and of the good polity and (c) the notion of mixed government. In classical republican theory (the work of Polybius and, later, Cicero), the analysis of mixed government manifests a concern with, first, exploring the different types of government and, second, identifying elements of these types which may co-exist in creative ways within a single polity. The concept of politics in “strong” republican theory (classical republicanism) is that of an activity in the context of the good polity, drawing on Greek political theory. Despite protestations to the effect that certain contemporary readings of classical republicanism confuse the issues by lumping together the Athenian participatory model and the Roman model of a mixed constitution (Brugger 1999: 13), in fact the Aristotelian concept of mixed government and the discussion of its different elements was the foundation for the analysis of mixed government in Polybius and Cicero (see, e.g., Morrow 1998: 151-153, 233-236).21 The overall emphasis on the rule of law also signifies a

---

21 Of course, the centrality of Plato and Aristotle for the future development of the theory of government cannot be readily gauged from an examination of the schools of political thought that immediately
characteristic republican concern with institutional aspects beyond democratic election and participation (cf. Pettit 1997 / 1999: 286). The combination of rule of law and mixed government was a key characteristic of Renaissance republican thought (Viroli 1998: 117). The “weak” form of contemporary republican theory centers on republican freedom as non-domination by others, which can be exercised fully in the context of a constitutional polity which guarantees the existence and exercise of such freedom (Pettit 1997 / 1999). The republican view of freedom as non-domination seems better equipped than the liberal one when it comes to addressing issues of greater relevance to many, fostering republican forms of politics which correspond to genuine citizen concerns in a democratic order.

After 1800 a number of new Greek editions of the classical texts started appearing. In 1821 a new edition of Aristotle’s Politics was published. The editor, A. Koraes, an influential figure in Greek-speaking intellectual circles, included a Prolegomenon: “Political Councels” (Politikai Paraineseis) (Koraes in Dimaras 1963). In his Prolegomenon Koraes sought to identify the conditions under which “freedom” in a political system can be preserved through internal harmony, and to highlight the significance of studying “the science of politics, this queen amongst the sciences”. Koraes argues as if Greek independence had been accomplished (in fact, the outcome of the war of independence was far from clear) and the issue on which he wanted to offer

---

followed the two thinkers. The schools of the Epicureans and the Cynics, which began some thirty years after Aristotle, followed new lines of thought, which centred respectively on the pursuit of happiness through avoidance of pain and anxiety and on the protest against social convention. These lines (which, despite their differences, converged in their withdrawal from the sphere of political activity) were to become influential at a later stage, more so in Western Europe than in Greece. In the latter the theory of government evolved in interaction with the kingdoms of the Hellenistic world beyond the Greek peninsula. The most important school of thought in the century that followed Aristotle's death, the Stoics, tolerated and occasionally defended the new Hellenistic monarchies, which were aiming at the integration of Greeks and Orientals. Accordingly, the theory of the deified king as a symbol of unity became influential throughout the Hellenistic world and was later partly adopted by the Romans. However, by the end of the 2nd century BC, Panaetius of Rhodes revised Stoicism. The revision was aiming to recultivate Stoicism's moral philosophical content and in the process began to look back to ideas drawn from Plato and Aristotle. Panaetius worked on a universalist version of Stoicism, according to which justice is the bond that keeps polities together. In so far as a polity becomes unjust, it loses that basis of harmony which makes it a polity. This approach exerted considerable influence on Cicero and Roman theory, but it also signified a degree of adaptation of Platonic and Aristotelian concerns in the new context of a Mediterranean world which was becoming increasingly integrated economically and culturally (Sabine and Thorson 1973: 151-152).

---

22 From a republican perspective, a person’s freedom requires “the non-existence, not just the non-exercise”, of the arbitrary power of others to interfere over him or her. But a person “is not made unfree in the same way by the power of the law, so far as that power is suitably checked and non-arbitrary” (Pettit, 1997 / 1999: 298).

23 On the range of concerns and grievances which a view based on negative freedom cannot register see Pettit (1997 / 1999: 130-147).
advice to his “fellow Greeks” was the consolidation (following independence) of a “free” polity worthy of the name. “Free” not only in the sense of being independent from the Ottoman Empire, but also in terms of the features of its own political institutions. He explicates a view shared by many Greek intellectuals at the time, namely that politics is fundamentally concerned with four concepts: civic virtue (arete: “love of and care for the common benefit”), happiness, law and freedom. Drawing in part on the Aristotelian notion of moderation, Koraes discusses the conditions under which these four can function in ways which converge towards the common good.

Moderation in the pursuit of happiness, regard for equality and public-spiritedness are necessary for harmony in the polity. Virtue is defined in terms of love of and care for the common good, and the good polity (eunomia) is a function of virtue and of moderation (Henderson 1971: 148). Freedom presupposes respect for the law, which in turn must be the enactment of the whole community. Crucial among the conditions which favor the consolidation of a free polity are (a) the avoidance of excessive poverty and excessive riches and (b) an education based on public-spiritedness and concern for “rational” methods based on the experiences of the Enlightenment.

The emphasis on virtue in the good polity is one republican theme which provides a strong normative thread for these debates, but there are other concepts which, in view of the self-professed interest in applying liberal themes and standards, are approached with some ambivalence. Analysts of the Greek enlightenment have noted that the concept of freedom in Koraes (freedom consists in “doing without hindrance not what one wants but what the law grants”) is restrictive and “would not have appealed to J. S. Mill” (Henderson 1971: 148). But the interesting point is not that Koraes lacks a concept of positive freedom. What is worth noting is his reluctance (which is symptomatic of a general trait in Greek enlightenment) to dissociate freedom from the mechanisms which encourage moderation and at the same time promote “love of and care for the common benefit”. First, the law in Koraes “must be the enactment of the whole community” and, second, the restrictive elements in the concept of freedom are meant to encourage moderation in the pursuit of happiness and an emphasis on common institutions.

Another republican theme, the hostility towards factions, is important here. The Prolegomenon is directed against “divided counceals” and factions, which are said to

---

24 In English see Henderson (1971: 147-150). Henderson’s account is based mainly on Dimaras (1963); cf. Dimaras (1953).
represent more serious threats for the new polity than the Ottomans.25 In the work of Koraes and other Greek writers of the period the concepts of politics and freedom manifest limited liberal influences. The main influence comes from the classical republican notion of freedom: a polity is free if it is ruled by its citizens and is independent of external control (see Skinner 1978: 157-158).26

A further important aspect of Koraes’s discussion of politics is the ambivalence when it comes to viewing political institutions as means to other ends (e.g., happiness or – in certain definitions – freedom) or as themselves constitutive of the good. We know that for classic (Roman) republicanism, the assessment of politics and the polity as intrinsically good means that these cannot be seen as means towards an end (instrumental means to the good life); they are themselves constitutive of the good life (consider, for example, the Dream of Scipio at the end of Cicero’s De re publica). From our perspective, the perspective of a quintessentially liberal era, a classical version of republicanism may function as a useful prism only if it can be robbed of some of its distinguishing characteristics, such as the notion of intrinsically good republican institutions. Our interest in civic virtues (exemplified, for example, in recent writing in the area of political culture) is not in terms of the constitutive ends of politics: we may consider one or another virtue as valuable because, as Morrow nicely summarizes it, we approach it as “a means of sustaining political systems that are valued for reasons other than their capacity to promote virtue” (Morrow 1998: 374).

From Koraes’s perspective, this instrumental view of virtue is not unthinkable (consider his discussion of happiness) but is considered a risky path (cf. his emphasis on “moderating” the pursuit of pleasure). Because politics is concerned, as we saw, with the four concepts of virtue, happiness, law and freedom, and because the role of freedom is considered of paramount importance (in the two-faceted republican sense sketched above), the conception of political activity in modern Greek political thought combines a fundamental republican thrust and a reluctant disengagement from some of the implications of classical republicanism.

25 Koraes’ views are symptomatic of a set of beliefs which exerted considerable influence in the early decades of the nineteenth century and which, it must be noted, contradict one of the main assumptions (concerning the extent to which “freedom” was uncritically confounded with and subsumed under “national independence”) of the highly schematic yet surprisingly influential conceptual analysis of modern Greek political culture by Pollis (see Pollis 1965: 37).

26 In the tradition of classical and Renaissance republicanism the basic claim that power is liable to corrupt is used to defend civic autonomy against foreign interference and at the same time to justify a particular form of political regime, the res publica in which the community retains the ultimate sovereign authority and officials are elected agents not “rulers in the full sense” (Skinner 1989).
IV. The transformation of the concept of politics: An outline

Juncture 2: The politics of the national state

While it is undeniable that European political liberalism exerted considerable ideological influence on nineteenth century Greek political developments (see Kitromilides 1988), and ideas of universalism, rights and rule of law became central to political discourse after 1800, we need to concentrate on factors which ultimately constrained and limited the impact of liberalism. As I noted above, on the eve of the war of independence a loose coalition around a “counter-enlightenment” proved successful and was able to influence the direction also of the nationalist movement. As Henderson put it in the conclusion of his study, “liberalism [was] not victorious” (1971: 199). But the stronger contender was, in fact, republicanism, and republicanism was also not victorious. Not republicanism but frustrated republicanism provides the discursive context for the new reconceptualization of politics after the 1840s. It was the frustration of republican ideas which gave birth to political as well as conceptual transformations and the interlinking of established, emerging and suppressed meanings in the development of Greek political culture.

The predominance of the “counter-enlightenment” coalition was facilitated by the emerging discourse of nationalism. The transition to national identities, which took place at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Southeastern Europe, constrained certain aspects of the liberal ideas while also evolving in interaction with some other aspects. It also marked the end of a shared “Balkan mentality”.27 As Kitromilides notes, the “European Janus”, wearing the two faces of Enlightenment and of power politics, brought with it the logic of nationalism, “impregnated Balkan politics with violence, suspicion and fear and destroyed the common world of Balkan Orthodoxy” (Kitromilides 1996: 186).

---

27 Elements of a “Balkan mentality”, made possible through a framework of communication (Orthodox religious culture) and a certain political context (Ottoman rule) shared by peoples across Southeastern Europe, can be said to have existed among the Orthodox Christians in pre-nationalist Balkan society of the eighteenth century (Kitromilides 1996).
The beginnings of exclusionary notions of politics and the political originate with the articulation of nationalist discourse in the nineteenth century. There is a shift from the approach to politics in terms of real or imagined continuities as an activity worthy of Hellenism, to politics as activity in the context of a polity based on the development of a statal-national consciousness.

The declaration of independence in 1821 (and subsequent declarations and provisional constitutional documents) placed the new state unequivocally in the European family of states (see, e.g., Varouxakis 1995: 16-19). At the same time, these declarations included strong republican elements. As it turned out, experience with republican government after the formal establishment of the modern Greek state in 1830 was considerable but interrupted. There were declarations by Greek National Assemblies in republican directions even before the establishment of the Greek state, during the war of independence. Despite manifestations of a strong (although by no means unanimous) preference for a republican constitution, geostrategic realities, foreign influences and domestic complications eventually led to the imposition of monarchy in 1832. The domestic conditions played a significant role: as I noted above, on the eve of the war of independence a loose coalition around a “counter-enlightenment” was able to influence the direction also of the nationalist movement. The idea of “founding” (Pocock 1988) implicit in the republican declarations was consequently defeated by a combination of geostrategic realities, foreign interference and domestic coalition politics.

After the 1830s, however, it became evident once again that different socio-political factions championed different models of government. Those who favored a stronger process of state-building pushed for a centralized state with strong executive and rationalized administrative structures. On the other hand, those who wished to retain the power of local notables had a preference for more decentralized governmental structures. Despite the influence of the Enlightenment and of aspects of liberalism, the power structure of the new state was based on a conservative coalition that proved inimical to the widespread acceptance of liberalism and human rights theories (see Kitromilides 1994). The establishment of the University of Athens, in 1837, contributed to the consolidation of a Westernized cultural environment, although

---

28 On the formative period of the modern Greek state see especially Petropulos (1968). On subsequent political development cf. Blinkhorn & Veremis (1989); Carabott (1995; 1997); Charalambis (1985);
The main objective of the new institution was the training of personnel for the state apparatus. This period is also marked by constant reference to ancient Greek texts and examples. A form of purified Greek (*katharevousa*) is officially adopted, expressing, on the one hand, a compromise between those who wished to adhere to ancient Greek and those who accepted the living common language (demotic) and, on the other, the pragmatic acceptance of the need for a degree of re-formalization aiming to discard foreign influences. In 1833 the Greek Orthodox Church broke away from the Patriarchate of Constantinople, and less than two decades later its status as a state church had become clear. The weakness of liberal ideas in combination with the establishment of Orthodoxy as a state church resulted in a persistent democratic deficit in the treatment of minority religions (see Pollis 1988).

The state apparatus soon became dominated from within by the so-called *tzakia*, influential families whose origins can be traced to those local notables (*proestoi*) who had played a critical role during the war of independence. The *tzakia* favoured a loose parliamentary model, since the latter, adapted to nineteenth century Greek conditions, would simultaneously constrain the capacities and the reach of central authority and assist these patrician families to strengthen their role in the state, based on their local power resources and their extensive presence in parliament. After 1844 parliamentarism became the focus of heated debates and occasional confrontations. In 1875 the king formally accepted the parliamentary principle in government formation. The balance thus achieved survived until 1909, when a coup set in motion developments that favoured the ascendancy of liberal statesmen and the prevalence of liberal institutions. The formation of a differentiated and operational political system, a rationalized bureaucracy and a professional army was a slow and difficult process, and it was not before the 1920s that the Greek state can be said to have acquired modern structures and capacities. A republican interlude with the regime of the Second Republic (between 1924-1935) represented a remarkable combination of a liberal institutional edifice and political uncertainty.


29 Strictly speaking, it is not a state church in *dogmatic* terms, because it maintains dogmatic unity with the Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople. On the Orthodox Church in Greek politics and society cf. Patrinelis (1974); Pollis (1988); Paparizos (1994); Georgiadou (1996); Makrides (1997).

30 The 1911 revision of the Constitution of 1864 had as a main objective the establishment of a modern constitutional state based on respect for parliamentary government and the rule of law. In brief, there were considerable liberal elements in the constitution of 1864/1911 and these were extended and acquired a republican form in the Constitution of 1927.
Conservative traditionalism and politics as guardianship

The second concept of politics developed in the context of conservative traditionalism after the 1850s. The conservative – traditionalist view which evolved in interaction with the institutions of the national state entailed a more reserved and occasionally hostile attitude towards Europe. In 1869, an influential and, on balance, scholarly political history of Ottoman rule in the areas which became the modern Greek state, declared at the outset (on p. 1) that the historical period under consideration commences in 1453 when the long-term strategy of “the West” was finally vindicated with the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans and the dissolution of the Byzantine empire. 31

Such views were strengthened as a result of the growth of an irredentist movement. The prevalence of irredentist policies after the 1850s were associated with a more ambivalent attitude towards “the West”. It became a standard feature of irredentist discourse to emphasize the role of Greece between “East” and “West” and the country’s mission to civilize the Oriental “East”, in a thinly veiled effort to legitimize Greek ambitions in Asia Minor (Varouxakis 1995: 24-25).

A concept of politics as guardianship develops in the context of conservative traditionalism. The latter views the past as a stable set of “eternal verities” (Herzfeld 1987). This approach to the past notwithstanding, when it comes to the articulation of particular conceptions, the way in which classic texts are used is indicative of the unavoidable process of selective appropriation and reconceptualization of historical conceptual material. The classical past is said to be stable and access to it guaranteed in view of alleged cultural and linguistic continuity, but the actual ways in which that past is used testifies to the roles of a shifting terrain of signification.

Modern Greek political thought has been marked by the recognition of and obsession with the fact that the classical Greek approach to politics was concerned both with the institutional features of political regimes and with the normative question of

31 “Finally on the 29th May 1453 the West witnessed the outcome, the attainment of which they had worked to achieve with such tenacity for six hundred years” (Sathas 1962[1869]: 1).
the relationship between philosophy and good government. In the context of the revival of Greek letters after the seventeenth century it was considered inadequate to study politics as it is; the analytical approach to politics should be part of a larger endeavour to reflect on the forms of the good polity and also to consider the possible links between politics as it is and as it should become. Liberal neutrality (justification or assessment of an idea or an institution without reference to conceptions of the good – see, e.g., Goodin & Reeve 1989) has been rather weak as a factor in the theoretical assessment of real and possible political institutions. Also, the particular aspect of liberal value agnosticism which is linked to the notion that each individual is the best judge of his /her own interests does not appear to have been influential in modern and contemporary Greek political thought. The exception to this outlook was provided much later by the gradual development in the context of the Greek state of a form of Staatslehre drawing on relevant German texts. But Greek state theory (Politieologia) was confined to the ideas of legal positivism, and it did not always support political liberalism. Apart from the influence of legal positivism, modern Greek political thought has continuously been dominated by an authoritarian strand and a republican-participatory strand, the liberal current remaining weak and underdeveloped.

The difficulty is that both republicans and conservative traditionalists were keen to explore the civic aspects in the classical texts, usually ignoring nuances which would point to other aspects. To use a much cited example, the idealized account of the Athenian regime presented by Thucydides (in the Periclean Funeral Oration) was read very much through Roman republican eyes. In fact, Thucydides’s account of the

32 The polis, the city-state which represented the context for the development of that approach, was of course in many respects unique. From the perspective of the theory of government, the institutions of the polis can nevertheless be illustrated by taking Athens as a model, since it was mainly Athens that provided the environment and the inspiration for political philosophy. The model, which was characteristic of Athens during the period of the city's greatest power, was based on the constitutional reforms of Cleisthenes (507 BC) and consisted of elements of both direct democracy (male citizens formed the Assembly (Ecclesia), the forum of direct democracy, which met regularly) and elected bodies (the Council of Five Hundred and the courts). But election did not reflect a notion of “representation” such as the one which evolved since the medieval years in Europe. The system of filling offices was a combination of election and lot: the townships (demoi) of Athens elected candidates and the holders of office were then chosen by lot from those elected. For the Athenians this system was democratic because it equalized the citizens' chances to hold office. The idea of citizenship was deeply participatory and left an unmistakable mark on the democratic strand within Greek theories of government.

33 Goodin’s “best-judge principle” (Goodin 1990: 181-95).

34 On constitutional, legal and administrative scholarship and development cf. Kaltchas (1940); Alivizatos (1979); Pantelis (1979); Makridimitris (1992). It must be noted that important constitutional theorists in the early decades of the twentieth century proved sensitive to the political and social dimensions of government (notably N.N. Saripolos and A. Svolos). But the theory of government in these approaches remained for the most part constrained by its subject matter, the structure and operation of the constitutional edifice.
Athenian regime emphasized both the civic commitment by the citizen and the confident and relaxed quality of life in Athens. The focus throughout was on the balance accomplished by Athenian political life (for free male citizens) between what we would call in modern terms participation and individual freedom, public-mindedness and respect for self-development: the civic greatness of the Periclean Age was exemplified in a civilized way of life, in culture and, characteristically, in the art of the 5th century BC (cf. Connor 1984; Farrar 1992).

The differences between republicans and conservative traditionalists can be gauged, however, from their respective readings of aspects of the works of Plato and Aristotle. While Aristotelian scholarship and a blend of Aristotelian and Christian ideas almost dominated philosophical discourse at the University of Athens and intellectual circles after the 1830s (e.g., the work of N. Vamvas), later decades witnessed a Platonic revival, which reached its apogee in the twentieth century (in the work of I. Theodorakopoulos and C. Tsatsos). In terms of general outlook and direction, the Platonic revival was not so much the result of a consideration of the fundamental questions asked and the issues raised in Plato’s political thought; what was particularly attractive was, on the one hand, the Platonic view of knowledge, and on the other hand, the Platonic view of guardianship. In the Republic, Plato sought to define justice and asked whether justice can be found or created in the world of the polis.35 But he also considered the quest for truth as an ascent from mere opinions to the light of reality (e.g., Republic 511d-e, 533-534). There was a hierarchy of forms of knowledge, eikasia (semblance) occupying “the lowest rung on the ladder” (Vernant 1991: 179), and doxa (opinion) was still far away from the truth. The significance of turning to Plato for an approach to knowledge was rather straightforward, especially since, in contrast to Plato, Aristotle takes as a starting point common opinions in the polis, aiming to explicate and eliminate the inner difficulties which arise from an analytical consideration of these opinions. The Platonic emphasis on the ability to resist the cognitive temptations of and raise oneself above the various doxai in the world of the polis as a precondition for the attainment of knowledge became an influential point of reference for the authoritarian current in Greek theory of government. Along such lines runs the theoretical

35 Plato’s exposition of his philosophical ideal in the Republic should be considered in conjunction with his account of “a half-way house between the actual and the ideal” (Barker 1918: 183) in the Laws, written almost thirty years after the Republic. In the Laws, an Athenian discusses with a Spartan and a Cretan the possible constitutional arrangements of government in a projected colony. Although
justification of a type of political reasoning which, as we will see below, forms the
background against which a distinct concept of politics is articulated.\textsuperscript{36}

The other aspect of Platonic political thought which acquired a new relevance
was guardianship. This particular aspect of the Platonic theory of government,
guardianship and the analysis of the attributes, profile, role and education of the class of
guardians in the ideal polity (e.g., \textit{Republic} 412-414), resurfaced in conservative
constitutional and state theory mainly in the work of C. Tsatsos, a distinguished
conservative legal scholar who later became President of the Republic. The reworking
of the ideas of guardianship can be interpreted, on the one hand, as an effort to anchor
in Greek political philosophy the semi-authoritarian post-war modernization drive and,
on the other hand, in terms of a more ambitious and far-reaching conservative view
concerning the future orientation of the post-war polity (see Lavdas 2000a). Politics in
this context becomes associated with the range of activities which are linked to the
exercise of guardianship by the most civic (\textit{politikotate})\textsuperscript{37} of classes and which aims at
what is best for the polity. An interesting feature in this context is the increasing use of
Sparta (rather than Athens) as an example. The use of Sparta as a version of the
humanist ideal has always signified the problem of dealing with change and the forced
preservation of “static virtue” (see Kahan 1992: 86-87).

Apart from certain leading statements (such as the work of C. Tsatsos), a
number of other sources of varied quality can also be found, reproducing the discourse
of conservative traditionalism and aspects of the concept of politics as guardianship.
The importance of the constraining features of a discourse takes a different dimension
in the politics of this period, even concerning intellectuals and politicians for whom
physical coercion was usually not an option for the regime. More generally, the
vocabulary available to an actor is one of the constraints on the actor’s conduct.\textsuperscript{38} But
in the case of politics as guardianship, we need to consider the extent to which linguistic
constraints are generated through mechanisms such as dissonance reduction. The
reduction of cognitive dissonance is one of the important factors which enable the
reproduction of unreasonable or unjust practices or institutions. We know that even

\textsuperscript{36} There exist, of course, various scholarly accounts of Plato’s political thought in Greek from other
perspectives. For a recent example, see Psychopedis (1999).

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Politikotate} is the expression Xenophon uses (\textit{Rep. Lac.} 4.5.) to describe particular aspects of the
Spartan system of education.
victims of injustice may participate in such strategies of dissonance-reduction, which include the lowering of their own self-esteem. In other words, aiming at dissonance reduction, people tend to bring what they mean into line with what they say (Sunstein 1991).\textsuperscript{39}

The emergence of the concept of politics as guardianship was facilitated by the fact that state theory and the prevalence of German \textit{Staatslehre} had resulted in an intellectual setting which, not unlike the one in Germany, encouraged the development of a negative view of the particularism of “factions”, interests and pressure groups (cf. Weber 1985; Lavdas 2000b). At the same time, it must be stressed that the concept of politics as guardianship had almost nothing to do with feudal conceptions of the relations of domination. Although there is not the space to pursue the point here, it is worth noting that romantic accounts of feudal local communities and their patterns of rule have been demolished by recent political science writing. A thorough study of the extraction of resources at the local level in the period of Ottoman rule has demonstrated the fiscal nature of the local oligarchies (Contogeorgis 1982). According to an influential view, taking this point further, the lack of feudal structures and the absence of a history of feudal rule have played crucial roles in modern Greek political tradition (cf. Contogeorgis 1998). Greek modernity presupposes a war of independence but not a series of transformations or even ruptures with feudal institutions (Paparizos 1994), and the central position of politics in both public life and public perception is indicative of a political culture in which a weighty role for popular participation\textsuperscript{40} leads to elements of genuine and persisting politicization of public life (cf. Contogeorgis 1985: 82-85; Contogeorgis 1998).

\textit{The end of the politics of guardianship}

If the decades following the establishment of the Greek national state resulted in the articulation and final predominance of a concept of politics as guardianship with an underlying exclusionary thrust, a different exclusionary dimension was added to the conservative traditionalist view of politics with the bloc mentality associated with the

\textsuperscript{38} See, e.g., Skinner (1988b: 132). Skinner also recognizes that, of course, “language constitutes a resource as well as a constraint” (Skinner 1988c: 276).

\textsuperscript{39} This may be the result of, among other things, practices which aim to maximize expectations of non-interference – what Pettit (1997 / 1999: 86-87) calls “strategic deference and anticipation”.

\textsuperscript{40} “Universal” (male) suffrage was established in the modern Greek state from the beginning.
civil war of the 1940s and its aftermath. The culmination of this period, the introduction of explicit authoritarianism with the military coup in 1967, can be seen as driving the view of politics as guardianship *ad absurdum*, thereby changing the parameters of the debate.\textsuperscript{41}

The restoration of the monarchy after the Second World War and the Civil War took place in a context of political turmoil and institutional uncertainty. It was only with the Constitution of 1952 that a new institutional equilibrium was reached, based on the consolidation of a political regime with several authoritarian aspects (Alivizatos 1979).\textsuperscript{42} The 1952 Constitution remained in place until 1967, when a military coup installed an authoritarian regime.\textsuperscript{43} Attempts by the latter to institutionalize itself proved unsuccessful. The main feature of the regime was its anticommunism and the attempt “to secure its political base by resuscitating the polarization of the civil war. Its dismal failure was due as much to its anachronistic message as to the inability to appreciate the enormous transformation that Greek society had undergone since the 1940s” (Diamandouros 1995: 287). The authoritarian regime collapsed in 1974 amidst foreign policy crisis and domestic upheaval. The authoritarian potential in conservative rule having exhausted itself, the new equilibrium was reflected in the 1975 republican constitution\textsuperscript{44} which encouraged the functioning of liberal institutions, lifted the ban on the communist left and sought to reorient the role of the army in the political system.

**Juncture 3: The break with guardianship after 1974**

The Third Republic (since 1974) represents the most successful period of sustained democratic government in the history of the modern Greek state.\textsuperscript{45} One of the first gestures of the democratic regime of 1974, the legalization of the Communist Party, proved a key development on the road to a stable political order. It was also the first

\textsuperscript{41} On the authoritarian regime and its politics see especially Charalambis (1985).

\textsuperscript{42} First, it was based on and confirmed a political regime which excluded the left, mainly through the extension of various measures and decrees from the period of the civil war into the post-war period. Second, it provided for a strong executive which was later used in another direction, namely the conservative modernization efforts of the late 1950s and early 1960s under C. Karamanlis.

\textsuperscript{43} The coup was apparently aiming to block the possibility of a centre-left government emerging from the planned elections of 1967.

\textsuperscript{44} A referendum after the breakdown of the authoritarian regime abolished the monarchy.

step in the recognition of the divisive ‘‘other’’ (the communists and the defeated bloc of the civil war).

Politics in constructivist anti-necessitarianism

The third concept of politics in my scheme emerges in the context of the break with conservative-authoritarian rule in 1974. The break in 1974 represented also a certain departure from routine politics: for a crucial historical moment, a number of different political outcomes appeared possible. This transitory emphasis on political possibilities left an unmistakable mark on conceptions of politics: the sense of political possibilities combined with the defiance of inherited structures and of the traits and constraints that shaped them tends to characterize the dominant post-1974 conceptions of politics.46

This particular form of anti-necessitarianism constructs its conception of politics in terms of (a) an apparently expanding horizon of political possibilities and (b) a selective appropriation of historical elements. In this context, the ancient world in its various aspects continues to preoccupy contemporary Greek thought, poetry and prose (cf. Faubion 1993: 196). The concept of politics in this context retains elements of the civic emphasis which the previous two concepts had endorsed in markedly different ways, but registers a heightened state of anticipation of new forms of substantive popular participation in the polity.

It is through this prism that we may begin to assess the wide-ranging debates on ‘‘populism’’ which have dominated scholarly and journalistic writing on Greek politics since 1974 (see, e.g., Clogg 1993). Two different issues are involved here. On the one hand, there are conditions specific to the particular historical context after 1974: the break with authoritarianism brought with it the recognition of the left as a different but legitimate political alternative. The second issue concerns long-term trends. Concern with the victims of frustrated historical paths or anticipated but non-materialized outcomes has preoccupied Greek sensibility for some time. As Keeley puts it in his major study of Cavafy, one of the greatest modern Greek poets, the historical game of nations interests the poet

---

46 In political and social theory, the anti-necessitarian emphasis on political possibilities and the view that ‘‘it’s all politics’’ distinguishes the radical theoretical work of Roberto Unger (see especially Unger 1987). As Unger himself stresses, this emphasis on politics should not be confused with Schmitt’s notion of the primacy of politics (Unger 1987: 237). For Schmitt (1976) the opposition between friend and foe is the distinguishing characteristic of the political and is an opposition which overrides all other disputes.
“primarily because of what it reveals about basic, perennial attitudes or emotions and only secondarily because of what it reveals about the historical process [...] And his sympathies are consistently with the underdogs, the victims of history rather than its manipulators” (Keeley 1996: 95).

The identification not so much with what is but with what could have been and with the “victims” of failed paths has influenced writing as well as everyday practice and habitual interactions. This is combined with the difficult and late emergence and consolidation in modern Greek culture of what Charles Taylor calls the affirmation of ordinary life: partly because of the prevalence for substantial periods in the life of the modern Greek state of conditions of warfare or internal strife or both, and partly because of a political culture conditioned at an early stage by what previous sections of the present paper called frustrated republicanism.

But populism is one form assumed by constructivist anti-necessitarianism. Conceptions of politics post-1974 also articulated views of participation in a free polity which can be reformed and re-constructed by its citizens against a background of real or imagined historical elements which help shape patterns and inform criteria. To the extent that republican and populist / communitarian themes can be disentangled, this second version of the third concept of politics can be approached as a republican constructivist concept.

An important aspect of political discourse after 1974 can serve as a sign of differences in views about politics more generally. It concerns the perceived role of foreign factors in domestic politics. On the one hand, there is the populist view of extensive foreign interference in and influence over domestic politics and arrangements. This view has taken various forms, ranging from conspiracy theories to certain versions of the dependency school. On the other hand, the foreign factor has been approached as one which influences developments in interaction with domestic forces. In its strong version, it takes the form of what Bayart calls “extraversion”: a process in which domestic actors seek to draw on support and resources available in the “external”, international political environment in order to enhance the possibilities of success in their “internal” conflicts and divisions (Bayart 1993). Extraversion is not the same as dependency; the room for maneuver available to domestic actors is more extensive and,47 For an attempt to achieve such a disentanglement see Pettit (1997 / 1999: 7-10, 179-80, 285-86).
of course, the direction of causality is often from the domestic outwards. In its weaker version, this view is concerned with various games of cooperation and conflict being played between domestic and international actors in a small state with an important geostrategic position.

V. Tentative conclusions on political constructivism

I have looked briefly at three concepts of politics (free and virtuous activity in a free polity, guardianship, populism or republican constructivism) which have been embedded in three distinct discursive contexts (frustrated republicanism, conservative traditionalism, constructivist anti-necessitarianism). Providing part of the resources for the articulation of a modern concept of politics and (for some authors) for a critique of contemporary systems of rule, the classic texts have played important roles in the development mainly of the first and the second concepts. The frustrated republican beginnings of the conceptualization of politics help explain the extent to which approaches to politics after the demise of the theory and practice of guardianship aimed at expanding opportunities to exercise political choice. I have suggested that populism and republican constructivism are two versions of the third concept of politics.

At the same time, issues which became salient in the Greek political system in the 1990s lead to the gradual transformation of the links between conceptions of politics and conceptions of citizenship. The substantial growth in immigration (mainly from Eastern and Southeastern Europe) has become one such issue. A notion of multiculturalist citizenship would represent, for the Greek political system, the second stage in the recognition of the “‘other’” (after the recognition in 1974 of the defeated bloc as a legitimate political force). At the theoretical level also, current debates on multiculturalism (Taylor 1994; Kymlicka 1995) and the relevant discussion in Greece (e.g., Lavdas 1999) represent interesting challenges for Greek political thought and for the republican constructivist concept of politics. 48 It would be premature at this point to

48 To the extent that it does not presuppose the homogenous political community of classical republicanism, republicanism as non-domination can accommodate and embrace multiculturalism and group rights (cf. Pettit 1997 / 1999: 143-46; Brugger 1999: 143-44). Especially the reading which associates the value of multiculturalism with its ability to enhance possibilities for meaningful choices (Kymlicka 1995: 83) enables a view which aims to combine the recognition of the pluralism of cultural possibilities for access to meaningful choice and a framework based on a minimal set of shared values. This set is minimal but is nonetheless relevant, to the extent that it is concerned with arrangements
try to assess the implications of emerging multiculturalism in Greek society for conceptions of politics and the political. Is the political seen from the perspective of the changing attributes of its public character? Or is the political perhaps conceptualized in terms of a directly “politicalized” approach? If so, does it signify division? It has been suggested that recent conservative thought in Greece owes much to Schmitt’s concept of the political (Georgiadou 1999).

Against the background of inherited “disjointed corporatism” in politics and policy (Lavdas 1997), politics since the mid-1970s has certainly acquired more pluralist forms (Lanza & Lavdas 2000, Lavdas 2000b) with the strengthening of the roles of various professional groups (Chiotakis 1994) and the ascendance of feminist politics (Varikas 1985). Aspects of conservative traditionalism remain significant and can be seen in a number of threads which maintain a strong presence in the medium to long term. The hostility towards the idea of European integration in various scholarly circles since the 1960s (see, e.g., Papanoutsos 1963) and the persisting pattern of hostility to European liberalism which can be found in contemporary Greek conservative thought (see, e.g., Kondylis 1991) constitute such threads. Still, although various “defensive” social and political attitudes surface from time to time (Katsoulis 1995), and Orthodox religious symbolism may gain in significance in an era of arid political economics (Georgiadou 1996), the patterns of political performance and political support in

which help citizens increase control over aspects of their own lives. Within this framework a multitude of commitments may enhance opportunities for meaningful choice. The latter point is important as it can help us achieve the re-politicization of public life not through the quest of a new homogeneity of the public but through the recognition of group differentiation of citizenship and the acceptance of a heterogeneous public. As Iris Young has argued, in a heterogenous public, some differences are publicly recognised to be “irreducible”: at least to an extent, people cannot be expected to fully understand let alone adopt other group-based views (Young 1989: 252-54). In Young’s notion, “differentiated citizenship” as group representation for a democratic public in a group differentiated society should provide mechanisms for the recognition and effective representation of the disadvantaged groups (Young 1989). The introduction of differentiation and particularity into political procedures leads to the distinction between universal rights and special rights, and the suggestion that disadvantaged groups be granted certain forms of special rights. But there are no ready models. As Young acknowledges, consociational political systems do not provide us with interesting models because (a) they are not successful outside the particular cultural contexts in which they evolved (as the experiences of Lebanon and Cyprus illustrate), and (b) even in these particular contexts they have not always been operating in a particularly democratic fashion.

Recent indications of relative decline in citizens interest in politics seem to represent fluctuations rather than emerging trends. The same, mutatis mutandis, can be said of indications of declining interest in politics in various aspects of Greek culture. This differs from the view of political disengagement which, as modern Greek authors have on various occasions been keen to point out, has its sources in classical political thought. For the Cynics, Epicureans and early Stoics political disengagement was associated with an attack on the customary ties and links that had defined the individual’s role in society. As Sheldon Wolin put it, “the formula read: a minimal commitment to an association of limited value” (Wolin 1960: 78). By contrast, for modern Greek writers political disengagement, on the occasions that was entertained as a possibility, was associated with a presently unfulfilled potentiality.
today’s Greece do not appear to move beyond the range of variation expected of consolidated democratic regimes. And this is reflected in writing about politics. Systematic political science writing has itself being on the increase, analyzing but also, to an extent, influencing public debate. Despite its dual - legal and philosophical - background, and the fact that that the study of government in modern Greek political science grew out of the study of constitutional law, Greek political science has been able since the 1970s to articulate worthwhile contributions to public debate in the country. The institutions of the Second (1924-1935) and the Third Republic (1974-) have been important as points of reference for the evolution of state and constitutional theory. The latter remains in interaction with the theory of government, even as the scope of inquiry widens and a number of factors, both domestic and external, are brought in. The development of political science and political theory has led also to various critical views on modern and “postmodern” politics. Such views include the critique of the modern national state as a form of political organization in which the political content of the political process is subsumed under the terms of domination which structure state – society relations; as a result, politics and domination become identical, an essentially pathological condition (Contogeorgis 1996). Critical views which characterize current writing in Greek political science and political theory include work on the politics of globalization approached from the perspective of a consistently universalist conception of man and humanity (Charalambis 1998).

Concepts of politics will increasingly be approached, used and reconceptualized through the prism of the interplay between domestic issues and issues which are generated through participation in the process of European integration. Perhaps this means that my third concept of politics will prove relatively short-lived. The process of Europeanization of domestic politics and policy opens the door for a debate on how to approach politics and good government in a multilevel decision-making framework in which European institutional building falls behind developments in economic and monetary unification. In the framework of the EU as an emerging political system which is based on states and other structures but lacks a European state (see, e.g., Quermonne 1994, Wessels 1999, Hix 1999). It is a framework, in fact, in which government and politics currently appear to follow and fall behind economics, thereby constraining the terrain of political constructivism.

References


Epistemwn, 23, pp. 7-64 (in Greek).


Oikonomia, January (in Greek).


