



Introduction to the Volume German-Greek Yearbook of Political Economy, Volume 1/2018

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Introduction to the Volume

We, the “founding editors”, have launched the German-Greek Yearbook of Political Economy (GGY-PE) with the aim to contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between political entities but also of the two peoples. In 2015–16, at the height of the Greek debt crisis and, to put it mildly, a time of tense exchanges between Germany and Greece, we turned to reflect on what the peoples of the two countries shared and united them rather than what divided them. Soon we realized that there have been so many political, economic, intellectual and cultural exchanges and connections over a very long period that it was only sensible to focus on mutual interests and symbiotic relationships. We have to admit that we were also motivated by intellectual curiosity: we wanted to understand the specificity of the German-Greek relationship which was obvious to us – and its roots and its consequences.

Noting that, instead of *Deutschland* and *Hellas*, both countries are referred to with their Roman names, brought us to Classical Greek Culture as the point of reference, and its paramount impact on the European Culture, in general, and the German culture, more specifically. The adoption of the values of the ancient Greek civilization was accompanied by a high degree of revision, redefinition, and reinterpretation especially in the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century. The resulting “romantic perspective” was highlighted with the installment of the second son of the Bavarian King Ludwig I, a philhellene and open supporter of the Greek independence war, as King Otto I of Greece in 1832. It was Ludwig I who notoriously said that he will not rest before Munich looks like Athens. But the German–Greek exchanges have been unequivocally bi-directional. To name but a few: over the last two centuries, the German legal tradition served as the basis of the Greek civil law; two more German Princesses became Queens of the Hellenes; during the 1950s to the 1970s West Germany acted as host of thousands of Greek “Gastarbeiter” migrants, while German Universities have educated generations of Greek students in

the entire spectrum of academic disciplines. Even in sports, in 2004 a German football manager led the Greek national team to winning the Euro in what has been the greatest sporting achievement of modern Greece. On the other hand, in Germany, the study of classical Greek language is still offered at some German highschools and, on a different level, at Universities, accompanied with the study of classical Greek culture and what came out of it.

Encouraged that this rich and variegated experience augurs well for our project, we held the Inaugural Conference of the Yearbook, in 13–14 October 2017 in Munich. We list below the ‘Call for Papers’ and the ‘Conference Program’ (see last pages of this volume). The present volume contains a collection of papers from the Conference.

The research papers cover a wide range of topics relating to ancient and modern times. The paper by George Tridimas examines the formal ignition of German–Greek relations in the modern era, the reign of King Otto, 1832–1862. It addresses the problems of setting up the governance of a new state: an underage Bavarian Prince arrives in a backwater country, newly liberated, ex–province of the decaying Ottoman Empire, and faces contradicting demands by the locals.

The changing relations between Greece and united Germany towards the end of the nineteenth century is the focus of Korrina Schönhärl’s paper. She raises the question of what, if any, attractions were there for the Prussian financier Bleichröder to lend money to Greece, an underdeveloped country. A possible answer was to support Bismarck’s policy for the Eastern Mediterranean field of tension.

Next, Konstantinos Pilpilides uses the cases of constitution writing in 1862 Greece and 1948 Germany to inquire how the motives of self–interested constitutional drafters and the constraints imposed to them by political and electoral considerations affect constitutional framing and especially the specificity and rigidity of constitutional provisions. Pursuing the line of the legacy of German law and legal theory to modern Greece, Athanasios Gromitsaris deals with the political economy of the beginnings of Greek administrative justice, set up during Otto’s reign, and examines the historical roots of the main problems of the system adopted.

Ancient Greece and its relation to Germany inspire the next four papers. Barbara Klose–Ullmann explores different interpretations of the myth of Medea from the ancient play of Euripides to Grillparzer’s play, Feuerbach’s painting (both in the nineteenth century), and Pasolini’s modern film. Love, revenge, parenthood, attitudes to foreigners and moral obligations coalesce in the myth and the various artistic representations of the Medea theme which made Medea one of the pivotal characters of the European culture next to Hamlet, Faust, and Helena. The paper reflects on the ethics and values of different societies at different eras.

The emergence of federal structures in ancient Greece is the focus of the work of Economou and Kyriazis, who describe the underlying principles and institutions of the Achaean proto-federation (a politically significant unit over the third and second century BCE) and then compare them with modern Federal Germany and the European Union.

Anja Pütz, the director of the AscheiMuseum, looks into the puzzle posed by the discovery of the “Athena of Dornach”, a figurine of the goddess with a Latin inscription, excavated at Dornach northeast of Munich in 1994. Unlike archaeological findings dated from the times when southern Germany was part of the Roman Empire, the “Athena of Dornach” dates to the Hellenistic period. So how did it get there? Most probably it was in the first century BCE, that is, at least a century before the Romans built their villas at Dornach (which is in the Aschheim community).

The influence of ancient Greek philosophers on German thinkers motivates the paper by Kurz. He first notes that Marx called Aristotle the “greatest thinker of antiquity”, and that he adopted Aristotle’s distinction between “use-value” and “exchange-value”. He proceeds by discussing Aristotle’s rejection of the idea of a “common third” and Marx’s rejection of the idea that a use-value could serve that purpose. Kurz then invokes Sraffa’s analysis and argues that both views are difficult to sustain.

The volume closes with the project of the Greek artist Konstantinos Koulaouzidis, established in Germany, who has embarked on a search for understanding and relating seemingly different ideas by tracing common patterns and analogies which may integrate arts and sciences. Using the canvass of numerical arrangements captured by “magic squares”, Koulaouzidis presents fascinating patterns of harmony between numbers, colours and sounds. However, the full paper of Koulaouzidis can only be reproduced in the second volume of the Yearbook, which is already under way. In addition to Koulaouzidis’ paper, it will contain a paper by George Bitros “Germany and Greece: A mapping of their great divide and its EU implications” with an extensive comment by Patrick McNutt.

We are actively seeking contributions for the second volume. We are especially, but not exclusively, interested in work on how modern Greeks see their recent and distant past, and its relation to Germany and encourage potential contributors to submit their work

December 2017
Manfred J Holler
George Tridimas