Modern Greek Studies in Present-day Germany

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RÉSUMÉ

L'auteur de cet article tente dans un premier temps de corriger les assertions de l'existence de certaines chaires d'études néohelléniques à travers le monde et l'image embellie présentée par la «Grèce officielle». Par la suite il se focalise sur l'Allemagne et évoque les problèmes rencontrés dans ce pays par les études néohelléniques, résultant de changements qui s'opèrent au sein des universités allemandes dans un nouveau contexte européen et mondial défavorable. Il propose un nouveau départ pour les études néohelléniques après la crise actuelle qui les frappe, sans être certain d'en assurer le succès mais aussi sans pouvoir en prévoir l' échec.

ABSTRACT

This article initially strives to correct claims about the existence of certain chairs of modern Greek studies around the world and the rosy image presented by "official Greece". The author then focuses on Germany, where modern Greek studies face problems caused by changes not only in the German university but also within the broader new European and international context now less favourable. The author proposes a new start after the current crisis in modern Greek studies. He is not sure of a successful outcome but does not foresee failure either.

"The total number of university chairs in Greek studies across all continents runs to 344. Most of these (179) are in European countries.(…) The last three years have seen an upsurge in Greek studies (…). And this interest is not only in Ancient Greek culture and its representatives. It is also in Modern Greece."

The above quotation comes from a recent issue of *Kathimerini* newspaper (April 30, 2006), drawing on data from the Greek Ministry of Education, in this particular instance from the "Special Secretariat for the Education of Greeks Abroad and Intercultural Education". Our first, fundamental objection - expressed numerous times in the past – is this: within the statistics, a distinction must be drawn between the age-old chairs in Classical Philology, dating back almost to the Middle Ages, and chairs in "Modern Greek Studies". Most of the former were established before Modern Greece had become a state. How, for example, can we include the Martinus Crusius (1526-1607)

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professor utrius linguae Chair in Tübingen in statistics the Greek Ministry of Education takes prides in? Though lectureships in modern Greek language genuinely do exist in several European universities, we cannot call them "chairs" and include them in statistics relating to university "Modern Greek Studies"; the teachers, not all of whom are philologists, are tenured staff specially commissioned by the university for the purpose, or are Secondary School teachers seconded from Greece and paid by the Greek government.

On an official level, Greece paints a rosy picture of modern Greek studies flourishing outside Greece, including Germany in this optimistic, idealized image, without showing the least concern over future developments. Yet the harsh reality is either this picture of university modern Greek studies never existed, or even if it once did, things have altered dramatically over the last few years[1].

Despite the passage of time, the views long ago expressed by Antonis Liakos in *To Vima* (October 31, 1993) contribute to a discussion on these matters. Liakos stated that "modern Greek studies in Europe are in crisis. In the changing academic landscape of the Old World, they find themselves isolated not only on account of the international division and prioritization of academic disciplines, but also on account of their introversion and Helleno-centrism".

If we want to be candid, or even somewhat cynical, we have long passed that crisis point. Yet before offering an explanation for this critique of the crisis, let us take a brief look at the downward trend.

In 1993 we were still wondering about the following:

«Does modern Greek have the strength to survive as an independent "small language", or will it have to remain incorporated in the wider perimeter zone of Institutes of Classics, at a time when classical studies are in dramatic decline?

An alternative solution would be for geographical and historical factors to step into the limelight: on the one hand, as the southernmost Balkan country, there is Greece's proximity to neighbours speaking Slavic languages or Albanian to the north, and on the other there are its dynamic relations with countries in the east, in the Arab and Jewish world of the Eastern Mediterranean.

Would modern Greek studies be in a position to collaborate with other contiguous disciplines on various academic levels? Or rather, is it in a position to do so? And would a potential contribution on the part of the Greek state be seen as assistance or as interference?"

To answer difficult questions and sub questions such as these, we have to broaden the scope of the discussion somewhat and refer to the particularities of Germany. Here I will limit myself to the marked philhellenism typical of

the Germans and to the intense relations between Greece and Germany in the sphere of Greek migration, above all in the second half of the 20th century.

German Tradition

The first self-professed modern Greek scholar in Europe was the aforementioned Martinus Crusius from Tübingen in Wurttemberg, at a time when Greece was for the most part under Turkish rule, and Greeks were still called *Romioi*, or partly also *Graeci*. Crusius called himself a *philhellene*, making use of an age-old term still in the 'pre-philhellenic' sense of his time. He was a staunch Protestant at the University of Tübingen. The first "Humanists", as they are known today, had wonderful Hellenized names - *Kapnion* (Reuchlin), *Melanchthon* (Schwarzerd) and so on. Moreover, as true supporters of Luther they included the New Testament in their studies of ancient authors. They thus went down in literary scholarship as observers of the historical development of the Greek language, which began with Homer but did not end with the New Testament, since they themselves often wondered what had become of Saint Paul's Christian Greeks.

In other words, it is no mere coincidence that after the Italian Renaissance scholars working on ancient Greek and Latin broadened their interests to more recent forms of Greek, given that they lived in Protestant states suffused with Luther's teachings. It is no coincidence that it was in precisely those states that "philhellenism" eventually took hold. Nevertheless, it was a philhellenism which left Modern Greeks beyond the bounds of intellectual life in central Europe.

The Enlightenment rivalled Romanticism, and Goethe marvelled at the "noble" figures and aristocratic dress of the Leipzig Greeks. Of course, while he may have been enthused by their songs in the form rendered in von Haxthausen's collection, he drew comparisons between them and other folk songs by exotic bards.

Furthermore, rather than bringing the living, surviving Greeks closer to other Europeans, 1821 served as the cornerstone and crystallization of Romantic philhellenism among Europeans.

Perhaps the most decisive role of all was played by the Churches. On the one hand, there was the age-old Catholic propaganda against the Orthodox "brethren" and, on the other, fear of the conservative official Church in Greece in the face of any foreign, new element. After all, the Patriarch lived in Constantinople, which in time would be "ours once more".

Save the large number of Cypriot migrants in Great Britain, Germany is currently the only European country outside Greece that can boast a significant

share of Greeks within its population. One in every five northern Greek has spent at least one lengthy period in Germany or is still living there. In fact, what took place in Germany from the 1960s to the 1990s was the greatest wave of migration in modern Greek history. Ten percent of the current Greek population nationwide has lived in Germany for several years or even decades. Of the 1.2 million Greeks involved, approximately one million have returned to Greece. This means that return migration has stood at up to 86%[2]. The Greek population in Germany now ranges from 300,000 to 360,000. In proportion to that population we should also consider the high percentage of school-age children.

In the meanwhile, migrants arriving between the 1960s and the 1990s have led to the emergence of a European citizenry. Greeks who were born in Germany have received a German education study alongside Germans and other foreign students. Some of them discover a fondness for literature, using it as a route to search for their ancestral country and culture. The percentage of second-generation Greeks in Byzantine and modern Greek literature departments ranges from 50% to 60%. It should be stressed that on account of the fact that they have successfully completed their school career in Germany, these students are not equipped to study modern Greek language and literature in Greece, nor do they show any interest in doing so. They study in Germany, in most cases majoring in modern Greek language and literature (rather than Byzantine Studies). At least until recently, they were afforded the opportunity to obtain a *Magister* degree and in some cases a doctorate. Yet to this day it is not possible for them to obtain a degree allowing them to teach modern Greek at the secondary and tertiary level in Germany, despite the fact that this should be provided for by school policy, at least in the federal states with a significant Greek population. Although initiatives along these lines have been taken in Nordrhein-Westphalen, these have proved ineffective on account of the fact that universities are hesitant when it comes to introducing new courses.

The study of modern Greek language and literature in Germany is thus in a situation all of its own. It benefits from Greek-German concurrent education but has little in common with its counterpart in Greece. Furthermore, the gaps that emerge in Germany are difficult to bridge, and have less to do with academic issues than with knowledge of the country itself. Greek students in Germany often know the country whose culture they are studying less well than German travellers enamoured of Greece.

Yet what stance do we, as teachers, take towards the particular role modern Greek studies has to play on account of the Greek presence?

Two Proposals for the German Situation

Two main proposals have been discussed and are worth entertaining here. On the one hand there is "modern Greek for classicists", and on the other "modern Greek in German Humanities High Schools".

I shall only comment briefly on the first issue ("modern Greek for Classicists"). I see no reason why students of ancient Greek should not be able to acquire at least the rudiments of modern Greek from a brief, intensive course. This would enable them to come into contact with contemporary Greece and its people as well as with modern Greek literature, which is not only excellent but also in part derives its sources from ancient Greek. Similar measures in Italian universities should act as the paradigm on this score.

The second issue contains both a thesis and an antithesis. First the thesis: as a subject in German schools, modern Greek could be included in the curriculum at high schools for the humanities (*Humanistische Gymnasien*), where ancient Greek is still taught. As well as being positive from the point of view of a general grounding in culture, this would offer additional motivation for studying ancient Greek. If measures to this effect were taken, such high schools would or rather should become the fertile ground on which the small tree of Europe could thrive and bear fruit, nurtured by the tradition for the humanities in Central European culture and by the living culture of a present-day European Union partner.

What is more, such hothouses would be better suited to assuming responsibility for the schooling of Greek students than Greek-only schools or the Greek classes operating in most federal states. The primary and secondary school teachers working in such schools or classes run into the hundreds, and all of them are paid an extra relocation allowance by the Ministry of Education in Athens - a tremendous drain on the Greek economy!

That is all well and good on paper but would such an idea be realistic in Germany? Would it even have any meaning? I say this because there are two weighty arguments against it, which lie on both sides of the same coin: the technical realities of school life, and the ideological non-acceptance of modern Greek in humanities high schools in Germany.

As a subject, ancient Greek is incorporated into inflexible teaching timetables without any margin for extension to Modern Greek. For all their impressive names, German humanities high schools[3] have seen the number of students doing ancient Greek slide towards zero. This has led to the point of stagnation, where new ideas are seen as competing against ancient Greek. Just as they have always done, the principals of humanities high schools,

which are prestigious on account of their ancient Greek past, must first take pains to satisfy the minimal interest of their few remaining pupils. For Germany, the time for experiments of the type seen at schools and universities in Italy and Great Britain has past. The idea of setting in motion a final attempt at saving ancient Greek at humanities high schools by calling on third-generation Greek children, who show a lively interest in Greek, has even lost its potential among the Greeks.

Unfortunately, the situation at universities is much the same. In a timely, dispiriting article entitled "The Descent from Olympus", which appeared in the Hamburg weekly *Die Zeit* in March 1994, we read the following: "In 1972, university statistics still included the sector of ancient Greek as a separate branch. The number of students enrolled shrank from 286 in the 1963/4 academic year to 186. In our statistics ancient Greek is now given under the general heading "Classics and Modern Greek".

Yet the ideological side of the problem should be taken more seriously than the quantitative one: any association made between the modern Greeks and the ancient forbears has long proved a double-edged sword. Now as in the past, the Philhellenes tend to appreciate the Greeks in terms of classical Greek criteria. And though the role of an Odysseus or a Socrates in his dealings with his legitimate wife may still be bearable with a cheeky wink, the majority of great ancient heroes, poets and wise men have created such stringent moral standards that the demand to live up to them lies well beyond the powers of today's Yiorgos, Takis, Dimitra or Eleni.

Once again we touch upon the problem caused by the internationalization of the concept of Greek. If the term *Hellenism* is not perceived as a cultural notion, in the sense Isocrates conceived it, as "participation in Greek education"[4], then the Greeks of today will not succeed in catching the interest of contemporary Philhellenes.

The more the concept of "Greek" within Greece is identified with what is strictly national, the more Greeks the world over feel spurned and wronged. In Greece itself, the root of the problem seems to lie in whether or not there is the capacity to formulate an innovative way of teaching ancient Greek that is Greek-centred in nature. Only a few insubstantial attempts have been made to date; the well-worn route to ancient Greek literature *via* modern Greek translation does at any rate appear to be any sort of solution.

What then is to be done outside Greece? Given that we are teaching the continuity of Greek language and culture from Homer to the present day, how can we cut ourselves off from periods in that culture? How much

academic responsibility can the field of Byzantine and modern Greek bear when it tries to make do with a superficial knowledge of ancient Greek? Yet can it bear responsibility for the fact that by necessity it comes into contact with the foundations of that culture, which are expressed in ancient Greek *via* German translation? Here one could point out that both Goethe and Hölderlin were forced to turn to translations. Yet are those studying Byzantine and modern Greek literature not in need of a comprehensive history of the language itself, and thus of the ancient one?

At this point, I shall leave such ponderings aside. I dare say the time will come when literary studies as an academic discipline will be limited to comparative literature and synchronic linguistics, as seen in the USA. It would be more to the point to reflect on the immediate future of Modern Greek. So here I shall draw a distinction between modern Greek studies and modern Greek language as a subject in its own right.

Modern Greek Studies and the Modern Greek Language

There is not much point in harping on the threatened survival or expansion of so called small languages. Of course, these small languages are not in any sudden danger of disappearing. Rather their expansion into neighbouring European countries remains as limited as it has always been. No unassailable arguments for a more dynamic expansion are to be found in an era in which we are all witnessing the domination of one European language, or of a global *Koine*. In broader political and cultural unions the establishment of one administrative hyper-language (*lingua franca*) is inevitable from an economic perspective. Extra-European reasons mainly dictated by economic factors have imposed English as the common language of the Europeans. The most prominent victim of linguistic assimilation in Europe is not of course Greek or German, but rather French, the relegation of which to a second common language is only a matter of time[5].

A child only grows up to be bi- or multilingual when there are specific reasons for this to happen. By the same token, in terms of linguistic economy it would be illogical to demand that the majority of the population become multilingual at a time when even the bilingualism demanded in Europe cannot be secured. Ideals such as establishing Greek as an international language within Europe, or better still worldwide, will remain wishful thinking for as long as there are no serious economic reasons for the Greek language to become predominant.

As for the non-Greek who may happen to be interested in learning

modern Greek, we should ask ourselves what reason there could be for a French, English, Dutch, Italian, Spanish or German student to learn Greek. It is perhaps self-evident that we, as specialists, know the reasons. But how will it become possible for us to explain them to others? Vogues, trends and fashions exist in the cultural arena, and there is no reason why they should not exist especially when it comes to such language choices.

The military dictatorship in Greece from 1967-74 led to two phenomena. First, the ideas expressed in Paris in 1968 were late in arriving in the country. Secondly, figures from the world of literature, such as George Seferis and most especially Yiannis Ritsos, or from the world of music, such as Mikis Theodorakis, became ubiquitous outside Greece during the same period. European intellectuals and the youth in particular stood by their downtrodden friends in their fate, and for obvious reasons came into contact with the cultural output of Greece. After the fall of the dictatorship this led to a flourishing interest in the aforementioned figures, in the shade of whom other less well-known people made some impact.

This trend was subsequently bolstered to a significant degree by Greece's accession to the then EEC, but waned from the mid 1980's onwards, particularly after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union post-1989, to the point where it is now in utter decline.

Added to the above is the increased social integration of Greeks living in Germany. If they themselves show interest in culture and can be stirred into action, one notices that they are more oriented towards German paradigms. On the Greek side there have of course been a number of attempts to offer the Greeks added cultural value of various kinds to their language. These have often met with resounding success, but are almost exclusively limited to the field of music and are totally dependent on dominant trends in Greece.

Cooperation as Key

Thus far we have presented a number of thoughts relating not only to the past, but also the future of modern Greek Studies in Germany. In sum, the following conclusions may be reached:

In the face of the ever-dwindling presence of the humanities, modern Greek Language and Literature will only survive outside Greece if isolationism is transformed into co-operation. This does not mean that national traits should be obliterated, or that historical structures developed over time should be neglected. What it does mean is closer adjustment to Europe as a space, together with mobilization in favour of a field of study

that has not yet found the recognition it deserves.

There would be absolutely no sense in sealing the national borders and moving to a division between national and international modern Greek studies. This would be of no help whatsoever nor would it befit Greek culture. Within and beyond Greece, Greeks in the broader sense of the word do not simply have need of one another – they must form a community of mutual support for the common goal. There is no denying that in Greece, modern Greek studies must also serve national interests. Yet at the very least, the fact that the same branch of studies cannot play the same role outside Greece should be seen by students from the country as an opportunity for further training abroad, under the watchword "another perspective". Quite apart from this, outside Greece there are Greek scholars who are of comparable international standing in their specialization, and it would be well worth anyone's while to become acquainted with the method they adopt in approaching texts derived from Greek culture.

For example, Karl Krumbacher was the founder of both Byzantine and modern Greek studies in Germany; it is no coincidence that as a rule, modern Greek in Germany goes hand in hand with Byzantine Studies. Could that very fact not be seen as a contribution made by German scholarship, and one that could, within a European framework, have an influence on Greece and the field of modern Greek there?

In any case, the special emphasis placed on the autonomy of modern Greek literature *vis-à-vis* classics or even *vis-à-vis* Byzantine studies has no basis in scholarship, given that a modern Greece without its elder brother Byzantium and its kindly grandfather from ancient times is both historically and intellectually handicapped.

In the introductory remarks to this article we mentioned a critique of the crisis in the field of modern Greek studies which would lead us to final damnation. This critique calls for an explanation. In the 1980s it was possible to acquire a degree in Byzantine and modern Greek Literature at several German universities. There has never been a separate first rank chair in modern Greek studies anywhere. But a *Magister* degree and a *D.Phil.* title majoring in modern Greek literature could be earned at the universities of Berlin, Bochum, Hamburg, Cologne and Mainz-Germersheim (without Byzantine Studies, as a secondary subject with a major in other languages), as well as at Munich, and since 1994 at Leipzig (again as a secondary subject without Byzantine Studies).

Modern Greek is taught as a language at the universities of Bamberg, Bayreuth, Berlin, Bielefeld, Bochum, Bonn, Braunschweig, Bremen,

Cologne, Dortmund, Düsseldorf, Duisburg, Erfurt, Erlangen-Nürnberg, Essen, Frankfurt a. M., Freiburg, Germersheim, Giessen, Göttingen, Hamburg, Hannover, Heidelberg, Jena, Kassel, Kiel, Konstanz, Leipzig, Mainz, Marburg, Munich, Münster, Paderborn, Passau, Regensburg, Stuttgart-Hohenheim, Trier, Tübingen, Würzburg and Wuppertal.

As we said, the tutors either hold tenured lectureships and are paid by the university or they hold positions as instructors and are also paid by the university, or – ever more frequently – they are on secondment from Greek secondary schools and are paid by the Greek Ministry of Education, without the university where they are seconded selecting them or bearing responsibility for them. Yet recent years have seen a radical contraction in German universities across the board, above all in Schools of Arts. Thus in addition to the aforementioned teaching posts, positions have been abolished at the universities of Bochum, Cologne (where students in modern Greek language and literature are no longer accepted) and Leipzig. The position at Mainz-Germersheim was not re-advertised when the incumbent retired, while the Greek Ministry of Education has undertaken to fund the post of Stiftungsprofessor at Berlin.

There now only remain two tenured professorships (not chairs) in Germany, a country of 82 million people with approximately 350,000 Greeks and over 340 universities and institutes of higher education.

Yet this is not the most desperate news. The most desperate news is the radical restructuring of German universities being executed within the Bologna framework. In this case, Germany, just as Greece, signed legislation the consequences of which are still only dimly in sight. The Bologna decisions force universities to draw up and implement curricula for Bachelor (BA) courses, a move unprecedented in the history of German universities. German accordance with this new system must be completed by 2010 (just as in Greece!). Students must be able to acquire the BA in three years or six semesters. For the BA in modern Greek language and literature (as a major), they must have successfully completed one semester at a university in Greece or Cyprus. Studies are organized around points and modules, on the basis of a timetable of at least forty hours per week. In other words, in addition to totally abolishing the famed "Humboldt University" and consequently leading to the absolute "schoolification" of "university", this system has repercussions in practical terms: in the last twenty years, I have not had a single student who did not also hold a job in order to survive. This work in parallel with studies often assisted students in forging a career. However, the

very nature of the new Bologna BA system makes it impossible for students to have such a job. In addition, the launch of the new system goes hand in hand with the introduction of fees, to start at 500 Euros per semester.

The Bachelor's degree is directly linked to some profession and is required to assist graduates in establishing a career faster. Yet what career path could modern Greek specialists follow? Should they not be educated or rather have been educated as "literary scholars", so that by using the methods involved in a literary scholar's treatment of texts, they are in a position to approach an exalted culture, which in our case is the oldest in Europe? In that way they would also secure the professional grounding for a wider field of employment. In any case, are literature, linguistics or comparative literary disciplines not a multicultural affair?

Here we are only talking of BA programs. At present, such a program only exists at the University of Hamburg; there is none at Munich, the capital of Bavaria, which has a tenured position, and none at Berlin, where the position is at least guaranteed by funds from the Greek Ministry of Education.

In terms of "higher" studies such as the Master or the D. Phil., no program exists for students now wishing to commence studies in modern Greek language and literature, nor is anyone in a rush to draw it up, for students will first have to have received a BA.

Conclusion

The main conclusion to be drawn is this: there is no point in fighting for chairs or positions in modern Greek language and literature in Germany, because from now on the struggle will be to find students in a position to study the discipline under such conditions, even at the remaining university places.

However idealistic such merits may have been, it would appear that the time has come to bid them farewell. They were merits we inherited from the time of Wilhelm von Humboldt, and which we preserved down to the present day. In the case of Schools of Arts this was even done as a dogma, i.e. as representing the unity of research and teaching. Thus far we believed that the knowledge teachers were in a position to transmit was only that which they themselves had acquired as the outcome of the creative process involved in their own research. We believed that education should activate creative faculties, contribute to character formation and be conducive to overall individual growth; rather than being a means to an end, it should be an end in itself.

All of the above were aims of the educated European bourgeoisie, mainly

laid down in non-Catholic countries during the 19th century. It would appear that in the wake of historical events in the 20th century, and above all "after Auschwitz", this model of the educated citizen was so radically undermined that it is being irretrievably consigned to extinction.

The fundamental shift from the ideology of a *School of Arts* to the "schoolification" of university studies to which it has given way is even betrayed by the word *Ausbildung* (training), in place of the former *Bildung* (education). Of course, it was impossible for modern Greek studies to resist this radical change. There was and is no room for teaching the "end in itself". When talking of the "schoolification" of universities, we include the development of modern Greek language and literature in the two directions the field has taken both in Greek universities and in other literatures in Germany: towards Comparative Literature and Theoretical Linguistics. These two particular fields may have some future. However, we not only require academic posts (there are two in Germany), but also broad-ranging institutes to teach them. One academic alone cannot master both disciplines, particularly when he or she should probably also be teaching Byzantine Studies. This broad range of related fields can thus only be offered at universities in Greece and Cyprus. In practice we are mainly referring to basic studies that must now end in a BA degree. Yet if we wish to salvage some final remainder of the "research and teaching"combination, we could imagine the following model: having acquired the BA at Greek universities, Greek and German students could come to German universities for postgraduate study, where they would be introduced to academic research, for which the new system has made absolutely no provision.

In the introduction we referred to the "crisis" which is currently facing Modern Greek, and which we have experienced right to the core. So let us make a new beginning, the beginning after the crisis. Whether we will succeed under the conditions currently prevailing in Europe can neither be predicted nor ruled out in advance.

NOTES

1. There is of course one separate chair in "Neogräzistik" in the German-speaking countries, at the University of Vienna.

2. Figures as per Diether Hopf and Chryse Hatzichristou, "Rückkehr in die Heimat. Zur schulischen und sozialpsychologischen Situation griechischer Schüler nach der

Remigration", *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik* 40 (1994) Nr. 1, 147-170, plus Diether Hopf (oral communication).

3. The evolution of the percentages of students of Greek (by the term Greek we mean only Ancien Greek) from 27 837 students in 1982 (representing a percentage of 3,34%) to 18 441 in 1989 (a percentage of 0,29%), do come from the volume «Sprachen im Europa von morgen» edited by Thomas Finkenstaed and Konrad Schröder, Berlin 1992. The more recent numbers for 2006 are 14 650 students for Ancient Greek.

4.Isocrates, Leipzig edition 1902, 4,50: τους της παιδεύσεως της ημετέρας μετέχοντες.

5. The current legislative act aimed at "Gallicisation of the French" bears striking witness to the path of national entrenchment. Yet national entrenchment has always been a sign of cultural decline.

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