Ideological Forerunners of Metaxas's Regime

Conservative Intellectuals on Parliamentarianism's Ruptures in the Second Hellenic Republic

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Abstract

Constitutional change in interwar Greece was prepared for by political figures who, overwhelmed by ongoing political and social crisis and strongly involved in intense political debates on the crisis of parliamentarianism, endorsed the disestablishment of the Second Hellenic Republic. This article focuses on conservative intellectuals influenced by German sociologists, such as Max and Alfred Weber, Italian and Spanish scholars such as Vilfredo Pareto and José Ortega Y Gasset, and neo-Kantian and neo-Hegelian philosophers and constitutional lawyers. Claiming to stand above politics, they argued restored nationalism was the only doctrine that could promote the fulfilment of the nation's 'mission'. These intellectuals argued democracy and class-based parties, especially the left, undermined the concept of parliamentarianism, weakened the ideal of democracy, and would lead the country to chaos. As a counterbalance, they promoted political ideas that supposedly benefited the state and Hellenism in general. They advocated for charismatic leadership, discussed implementation of 'controlled democracy', and proclaimed an idealistic millennialism, a modern Platonic republic of the 'prime', led by the 'philosopher-king'.

Keywords

The Discourse of Crisis and Political Developments in 1930s Greece

The fascist phenomenon that emerged primarily in Europe in the early and mid-twentieth century remains a topic of contemporary analysis, as the works of distinguished historians worldwide prove. The sense of crisis in Europe that had already emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century escalated further after the First World War. For many, modern civilisation began to lose confidence in its pace, while the achievements of science promising progress and the hope of political systems to offer social development began to be strongly questioned. By the early 1920s, the ‘discourse of crisis’ had, as Piotr Sztompka argues, undermined the ‘discourse of progress’, and the use of the term in the 1930s became so widespread that it became one of the most ‘seductive catchwords’, as Charles Bambach argues. As a consequence, the demand for a redefinition of national identity, collective memory and the mission of the nation in the modern world emerged, especially in those cases of societies that fell into the fallacy of interpreting the crisis they were going through in apocalyptic terms, as Hans Sluga argues. In other words, interpreting the crisis in eschatological terms, as if their state or European civilisation in general were on the cusp of a historical shift and expressing the fear that historical time was culminating and sometimes also condensing at that instance, suggested an uncertain if not bleak future.

In Greece, during the two decades of the interwar period, developments were compacted and multifaceted, accelerating the political changes of the time. A sense of rupture with the past was triggered by the refutation of the great ideological expectations in 1922 and was sealed by the Treaty of Lausanne in July 1923. This saw the definitive delimitation of the borders of the Greek state and the irrevocable cancellation of any irredentist or imperialist

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The upheavals of the interwar reality for the next fourteen years were unprecedented in intensity. This period saw the revolutionary movement in 1922 and the ‘counter-revolution’ movement in 1923. Following this, the Second Greek Republic was established in 1924 which in its lifespan of only twelve years was shaken by successive governmental crises and the alternation of more than twenty governments, nine military coups, two referendums that raised a constitutional question, and three dictatorships. Greece eventually slid into the dissolution of parliament and the imposition of the Metaxas dictatorship, while in 1932 the country was rocked by the economic crisis leading to bankruptcy. These developments were indicative of the breakdown of order and political and social normality.

Moreover, as early as the 1920s, the map of the party system changed with the split of the two major parties in power. In 1924, the Liberal Party split, and in the early 1930s the People's Party split, after which it constituted, according to Gunnar Hering, the poles of multi-party factions. By the 1930s, social and economic problems, political turbulences, the resurgence of National Division (1915–1917) were just some of the factors that eroded the cohesion and identity of the dominant political parties, leading to an obvious and sometimes to an underlying crisis of legitimacy. Often, the military coups, which allowed the army to emerge as the regulator of politics, were reinforced by the political factions themselves to eliminate their political opponents, particularly in the period from 1933 to 1935, encouraging the army’s ambition to become the guardian of the established order. Political and social conflicts were intensified by the crisis of governance and the inability to manage economic and social problems. The overall deterioration in living standards of the broad social strata, the drastic reduction in wages, the increase in unemployment, the onerous working conditions and systematic violations of labour laws, the unprecedented scale of strikes and protests by workers and students and social struggles led Greece's political leadership to expand the mechanisms of repression and sup-

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5 The movement broke out in October 1923 and had been instigated by the Venizelist military officers G. Leonaropoulos, P. Gargalidis and G. Zira. The consequence of the movement was the intervention of the Military League in December 1923 for the immediate removal of George II.

6 These were the two referendums that took place in April 1924 for the proclamation of democracy and in November 1935 for the restoration of the monarchy.

7 These were the dictatorship of Pangalos in 1925–1926, the brief regime of Kondylis in 1935 (October-November) and then, in August 1936, the imposition of Metaxas's dictatorship.

pression. The resurgence of the split that undermined the political legitimacy of the hegemonic parties led to the emergence of anti-parliamentarianism, anti-liberalism and anti-communism as their unifying element.

In this situation of generalised and deepening crisis, intellectuals indisputably played a pivotal role to the undermining of the democratic institutions and the gradual turn towards fascism, confirming Robert Paxton’s assertion that ‘the fascist route to power has always passed through cooperation with conservative elites’. The growing distrust of parliamentary institutions as one of the consequences of the economic and social crisis at the political level soon became a lively topic of debate in the domestic public sphere, echoing debates in other European countries. From the early 1930s, the dilemma of parliamentarianism or dictatorship was very strongly reflected in the press. It was a debate that was not limited to the political staff, senators, deputies and ministers, and was one that also involved political scientists, lawyers, journalists, academics and intellectuals. Among the proposed institutional solutions, many voices warmly welcomed the introduction and implementation of the Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution. Specifically, on 21 May 1932, during a debate in Parliament on the country’s economic problems, a proposal was tabled for the adoption of Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution by the Liberal Party. The adoption of this article was tantamount to a declaration of war, or general conscription, in which case alone these constitutional freedoms would be suspended. The adherents of this proposal considered its adoption to be absolutely necessary, since they argued that the country was in a state of economic warfare, and


10 In the 1932 elections, the Greek Communist Party’s share of the vote was 4.97%, in 1933 it fell slightly to 4.64%, in 1935 it reached its highest percentage of 9.59% and in 1936 it fell to 5.76%. However, in 1935 even Alexandros Papanastasiou argued that the best method to protect the ‘welfare state’ included the exclusion of communists from the parliament. See G. Anastasiadis, G. Kontogiorgis, P. Petridis, Αλέξανδρος Παπαναστασίου: Θεσμοί, Ιδεολογία και Πολιτική στο Μεσοπόλεμο [Alexandros Papanastasiou: Institutions, ideology and politics in the interwar period] (Athens: Polytîpou, 1987), 118; Papari, [Greekness and the bourgeois intellectuals], 61.

11 Paxton, The Anatomy of Fascism, 98.

12 Papari, [Greekness and the bourgeois intellectuals], 63–64.
that it was therefore necessary to provide the State with all those extraordinary and exceptional ‘weapons’ in order to deal with the dangers that threatened it, namely, the risk of strikes and social anarchy, or any coup d’etat of the bourgeois or royalist type. Although the liberals and the Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos eventually abandoned their original plan, in May 1935 the extraordinary powers of Article 48 were institutionalised under the government of the People’s Party, with Panagis Tsaldaris as Prime Minister. This had catalytic consequences for the survival of the institutions of the Second Hellenic Republic and political freedoms, as soon it distorted the parliamentary system and facilitated the abolition of democratic institutions.\footnote{Nikos Alivizatos, Oi politikoi thesmei se krise, 1922–1974: ‘Ofies tis ellhnikhs empeirias [Political institutions in crisis, 1922–1974: Aspects of the Greek experience] (Athens: Themelio, 1995); Papari, [Greekness and the bourgeois intellectuals], 66.}

Nevertheless, the debate on the future of democracy was opened up by an increasing number of actors. In May 1932, the administration of the Panteion School organised a public debate on whether parliamentarianism was the best constitution for modern societies and especially for the Greek one, and whether dictatorships should replace the parliamentary constitution. The discussion was concluded by a vote among the students of the school through a questionnaire. Among 44 students, the majority agreed with the views of the Director of the school supporting ‘national dictatorship’.\footnote{Spyros Vlachopoulos, H krisi tou koinoboulentismou ston mesopotlemo kai to telos tis B’ Ellhnikhs Demokratias to 1935: Oi teumikies ‘ofies miais ekonomikhs krisis; [The crisis of parliamentarianism in the interwar period and the end of the Second Greek Republic in 1935: The institutional aspects of an economic crisis?] (Athens: Evrasia, 2012), 122; Papari, [Greekness and the bourgeois intellectuals], 67.}

With increasing regularity newspapers questioned the effectiveness and therefore the legitimacy of democratic institutions. In January 1934, in the newspaper I Kathimerini [The Daily], politicians, academics and other intellectuals were asked to answer the question: ‘Dictatorship or Parliamentarianism?’ General interest magazines and journals on more specific subjects, such as the magazines Ergasia [Work], Pitharchia [Discipline], Politismos [Civilisation], Nea Grammata [New Letters], Idea, also published numerous articles on the same question. In many cases their authors expressed positions of complete disparagement of democracy. The attitude of Dimitrios Vezanis, professor of political science at the University of Athens, was characteristic when he wrote in 1934 that the crisis of democratism does not concern a belief in the temporary inadequacy of democracy, but in its relatively permanent inadequacy. Democracy, he argued, had been shaken in its spiritual foundations and as a
constitution. Moreover, the faith of the world in it had been shaken, as it had led to the economic and moral degradation of humanity.\textsuperscript{15}

On the other hand, other intellectuals, such as Yannis Economides, from Idea magazine, distinguished parliamentarianism from democracy on the grounds that parliamentarianism was a means to the realisation of democracy, which as an ideal has not yet been achieved. As parliamentarianism did not effectively serve this ideal, fascism was thus proposed as a way out for peoples who had not known democracy or freedom and as the only force capable of imposing order. Wherever it was imposed, it was claimed, the state of imbalance between the disembodied social forces ceased and order began to be consolidated.\textsuperscript{16}

In this climate, the university was not unaffected, as there had been incidents of purging of students during this period, which intensified in the following years, occupying the attention of daily press.\textsuperscript{17} In 1935, numerous newspapers of the time commented on the controversial mass purge of about seventy left-wing students from the University of Athens, with the hegemonic political press mainly applauding.\textsuperscript{18} In an article in the magazine Ergasia, the radical purge of students was commented on positively so that no nuclei of national disintegration would remain among the academic youth. At the same time, it was stated that the reaction of university authorities was very late, as for several years they had been aware that among students an effort was being made to spread illusory ideals, alien to the traditions of the Greek nation, inspired mostly by the unscrupulous teaching of historical materialism.\textsuperscript{19}

Alongside these views circulating in the public sphere in 1935 and 1936, the press was overwhelmed by propagandistic articles about Hitler’s regime. In a series of articles of a fictional type, Greek newspaper correspondents in Germany described with awe the effectiveness of the regime, with the enviable order and prosperity it had secured for the people.\textsuperscript{20} On the contrary, publica-

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  \item \textsuperscript{15} Vlachopoulos, [The crisis of parliamentarianism], 123; Dimitris Vezanis, ‘Η κρίσις του δημοκρατισμού,’ [The crisis of demoticism] Ergasia, 25 March 1934.
  \item \textsuperscript{16} Yannis Economides, ‘Η κρίση της Δημοκρατίας,’ [The crisis of democracy] Idea 1, no. 2 (1933); Papari, [Greekness and the bourgeois intellectuals], 68–69.
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Dimitrios Sfaellos Archive. National Student Association, Greek Literature and Historical Archive (ELIA); see also Papari, [Greekness and the bourgeois intellectuals], 169–170.
  \item \textsuperscript{18} ‘Οι σατραπισμοί του πρώτου,’ [The dean’s satrapy] Rizospastis, 16 February 1935; ‘Ετοιμάζονται ομαδικές αποβολές από το πανεπιστήμιο,’ [Mass expulsions from the university are being prepared] Rizospastis, 23 February 1935; see also Ethnos, Athinaika Nea, Neolai, etc.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} ‘Οι φοιτητές και το Πανεπιστήμιο,’ [The students and the university] Ergasia, 3 March 1935.
  \item \textsuperscript{20} ‘Ο Χίτλερ κόρος της Γερμανίας οργανώνει την τρίτη αυτοκρατορία,’ [Hitler master of Germany organises the ‘third reich’] Ergasia, 19 March 1933; ‘Η εθνικιστική επανάστασις’ Εν Γερμανία, The ‘nationalist revolution’ in Germany] Ergasia, 2 April 1933; George Farmakidis, ‘Χιλτερισμός και Παγγερμανισμός,’ [Hitlerism and pangermanism] Ergasia, 1 June
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tions denouncing the violence, terrorism, persecution and killings of the Nazi regime, mainly but not exclusively from the left, were often viewed with suspicion or denied as a product of communist propaganda.

The result of these fermentations in the early 1930s was eloquently reflected in the national elections of 26 January 1936. The electoral parity of the two major parties, the People's Party and the Liberal Party, led to a governmental deadlock with Konstantinos Demertzis forming a government that was dissolved shortly afterwards, in April 1936, due to his sudden death. King George 11

had already appointed Ioannis Metaxas as Minister of Military Affairs and Vice President of the government, and after the death of Prime Minister Demertzis he also appointed Metaxas Prime Minister of the country. On the 25th of April 1933, the Parliament gave a vote of confidence to the government of Metaxas with 241 votes in favour, sixteen votes against and four abstentions.

The *Ethnikon Enotikon Komma* [NUP; National Unitary Party], founded in 1935 by the academic sociologist and intellectual, Panayotis Kanellopoulos, called for the appointment of Metaxas as the Prime Minister of the state, as he was deemed the only solution to the inability of the ruling and hegemonic political parties to govern. On the 2 May 1936, the NUP’s newspaper *Elliniki Foni* [Greek Voice] published an article titled ‘The government and the old parties’ that was more than clear on the crisis the dominant political parties were going through and expressed hopes for a less liberal and more authoritarian government:

> The vote given to the Metaxas government—a vote which certainly saves the situation today—is the official confession of the two factions that they are now incapable of governing Greece. The period of their lives has finally come to an end, and this—even if it causes anomalies today in the normal functioning of the parliamentary system—is of no importance, because it is the first step towards its proper functioning tomorrow. As far as Mr. Metaxas’s programme statements are concerned, they contain several points worthy of much attention. Let us hope that the Metaxas government succeeds in achieving something of what it has promised. If it were only possible for it to carry out what it has promised, we are sure that a large part of the proclaimed thoughts would be realised. But let us not forget that there are also the famous parties, which, though unable to govern, are on the other hand very capable of preventing others from governing. 

Soon afterwards, the growing crisis of governance ended with the political imposition of Metaxas’s regime. The dominant political powers, unable to overcome and manage the political crisis that the state was going through, preferred the self-abolition of its political and parliamentary expression. Unable themselves to respond to their political deadlocks, they turned to authoritarian government, which seemed to promise the guarantee of a fairer and more rational

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21 ‘Η κυβέρνησις και τα παλαιά κόμματα,’ [The government and the old parties] *Ελληνική Φωνή* [Greek voice], 2 May 1936; See also, Papari, [Greekness and the bourgeois intellectuals], 308.
government. Metaxas was seen as the guarantor and continuator of the bourgeois state against the ‘anarchy’ of the lower strata, and it was believed that the imposition of an authoritarian regime from above could ensure the maintenance of sovereign power.22

Conservative Intellectual’s Public Debate on Anti-Liberalism, Anti-Parliamentarianism and Democracy in Excess

The bourgeois intelligentsia initially attributed the political conflicts and the ideological crisis to endogenous causes. It considered that the absence of a common national feeling, which had been eroded by liberalism and the bourgeois ambition for wealth, had cut it off from the roots of Greek nationalism and Greek tradition. For intellectuals, the fundamental problem with liberalism was that it was intrinsically incapable of representing any more the interests of the Greek nation, a feature that Riley attributes to the fascist perspective of liberalism, as ‘the rule of the people, from the fascist perspective, had become, . . . incompatible with parliamentary government’.24 Often, Greek intellectuals adhered to an authoritarian democracy, so although the Metaxas regime was not framed by a mass fascist movement, the road to the enforcement of his dictatorship had been paved by the gradual fascistisation of society during the 1930s. In this context, Metaxas’s regime was in some way the result of the failure of the development of hegemonic politics and the product of a general crisis of politics rather than a consequence of elite resistance to democratic pressures from below.25

It was within this conjuncture that Greek intellectuals, philosophers, sociologists, and philosophers of law saw themselves as the mediators who would give shape and substance to the new political reality that was formed.26 From this standpoint, their support to an authoritarian democracy was seen as a chance for the true spirit of Hellenism to play a role in the critical caesura of the times, where the mission and the future of Hellenism in the modern world could emerge. Simultaneously, their idealistic and Platonic perception

23 Papari, [Greekness and the bourgeois intellectuals], 53–54.
25 Ibid., 203.
of Hellenism mobilised the idea of a spiritual regeneration of the nation (or its palingenesis) that would save the state from political division.\textsuperscript{27}

Among the many different groups of intellectuals and individuals at the time who undertook this role were the idealist intellectuals Ioannis Theodorakopoulos (1900–1981), Panayotis Kanellopoulos (1902–1986) and Konstantinos Tsatsos (1899–1987). This triad of intellectuals had studied in Heidelberg, which was often referred to in the Greek context as the ‘Heidelberg School’. They were influenced by German scholars such as Heinrich Rickert, Ferdinand Tönnies, Werner Sombart, Hans Freyer, Hans Kelsen, Julius Binder and Alfred and Max Weber other others. Some were adherents of National Socialism and intellectuals who aligned themselves with the goals of Conservative Revolution. Most asserted that a divided German society had to be transformed into a united nation, and in this sense nationalism was the answer both to liberalism and Marxism.\textsuperscript{28} Kanellopoulos, Tsatsos and Theodorakopoulos, who transferred these influences to the Greek public either through their academic courses or through their journal \textit{Archion Filosofias ke Theorias ton Ideon} [Archive of Philosophy and Theory of Ideas], which they published for eleven years between 1929 and 1940, were typical cases of Greek intellectuals who transferred ideas from philosophy to politics. They endorsed an idealistic, normative and of Platonic form of state which displayed common elements with the nationalist ideology of the fascist movements of the time, mainly because its theoretical premises responded to the fulfilment of a neo-Hegelian type of state. In the 1930s, they expressed systematically the conviction that excessive liberalism had led to the paralysis of the state machinery, rendering necessary ‘Caesarean interventions’,\textsuperscript{29} or perhaps an authoritative regime that would inaugurate a new historical ideal and restore the unity of the state. At the same time, the epoch projected the need of a charismatic leader who would personally mark historical developments and who would uphold the standards of mental and political life, aware of his higher mission. Against political and intellectual crisis, fascist regimes, according to Kanellopoulos, would mark the beginning of a new stage for humanity.\textsuperscript{30} Fascism, according to Kanellopoulos, had the advantage that it could lead to the neutralisation of the class struggle and the depoliti-

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\bibitem{27} Griffin, \textit{The Nature of Fascism}; see also Rabinbach, ‘The Aftermath,’ 398.
\bibitem{29} Panayotis Kanellopoulos, \textit{Ο άνθρωπος και αι κοινωνικαί αντιθέσεις [Man and social contradictions]} (Athens: K.S. Papadogiannis, 1934), 188.
\bibitem{30} Kanellopoulos, [Man and social contradictions], 150.
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cisation of the society. Class consciousness and class conflicts would then be set aside, and under the umbrella of fascism everyone would work for the nation.31

For these intellectuals, liberalism was identified with the principle of impunity, leading to mob rule and the dissolution of any kind of hierarchy and order.32 Kanellopoulos in particular believed that the bourgeoisie, carried away by the desire for enrichment and wealth, ceased to interpret national consciousness in the name of the lower social strata, isolated itself from the idea of the nation, and contributed to the dissolution of pan-Hellenic national feeling that united all social strata. The cause of this degeneration for Kanellopoulos was liberalism, which acted as the principle of all promiscuity.33 For him, both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat were offspring of liberalism, a predominantly materialist doctrine he claimed, and they undermined the national state because these were cosmopolitan and so not national entities. Therefore, as the interests of these classes were international, their enemy was the state. With the ‘unbridled’ freedom granted to individuals, a reference to the principle of formal equality and the notion of the majority, which he regarded as arbitrary criteria, he considered that the state had been led into a ‘democracy in excess’ which undermined its very existence. The state, now being an instrument in the hands of the bourgeoisie and the liberals, had turned against the nation, had suppressed values and had weakened national consciousness. In the absence of national ideals, the functioning of the dominant political parties for Kanellopoulos not only failed to promote national unity, but moreover had led to severe political turbulence, undermining the cohesion of the state.34

In this respect, liberal democracy had gradually evolved into the newer form of radical democracy of the masses or, as Ortega y Gasset claimed, ‘democracy in excess’, bringing about an organic change in the constitutional functions of liberal states. In the same spirit, both Kanellopoulos and Tsatsos commented on modern parliamentary democracy in terms of a decline of political morals that had led to the maximisation of unfreedom due to opportunism, corruption and nepotism. In this regard, the intellectual as a historical-political subject was rendered the ideal model of the political leader, as he combined the gifts of both the intellectual and the statesman. In support of his argument, he

31 Papari, [Greekness and the bourgeois intellectuals], 71.
32 Ibid, 268.
34 Panayotis Kanellopoulos, Η κοινωνία της εποχής μας: Κριτική των συστατικών αυτής στοιχείων [The society of our time: A critique of its constituent elements] (Athens: [Papadogiannis publications], 1932), 79.
referred to Vilfredo Pareto and his theory of the *circulations des elites*, according to which the only real law of social evolution is the circulation of the elites.\(^{35}\)

**The Charismatic Leadership: The ‘Philosopher-King’ and the ‘Prophet’ of the Nation**

Konstantinos Tsatsos in his university lectures published in 1938 under the title *The Social Philosophy of the Ancient Greeks*, stressed that the leadership of the state should be entrusted to the leadership of the intellect. These are the leaders of the Platonic state, the possessors of reason, the true philosophers, the ‘royal men’, solid intellectual figures, who see universally, objectively, beyond all passion, the multifaceted movement of spirit and history, and for this reason can fulfil the historical mission of society.\(^{36}\)

In Tsatsos’s work on the philosophy of law, influences from the ideocratic and neo-Kantian evaluative theory of law were evident. Soon, Tsatsos shifted from the neo-Kantian approach, and subjective idealism, to a neo-Hegelian approach, and to objective idealism, a shift that also took place at the same time in German legal theorists and often coincided with their political shift towards National Socialism. According to his theory of law, in the hierarchical scale of the sources of law, the absolute meaning of the idea of law occupied the highest point, which was transcendental, evaluative, normative, and emanated from the sphere of the idea. As the primary principle was considered the very concept of the State (the constitution), which functioned as a complement to the moral order, the body that undertook the realisation of its purposes was the rulers. For Tsatsos, this hierarchy of positive law was not typological but teleological, since the system of law was a system of ends, a set of values, a set of duties with an evaluative connotation that rose hierarchically up to the ultimate end of the primary rule, which was the ideal, Platonic-inspired, state. His was a theory of law that was evaluative and normative, immune from historical and social factors, and on the one hand defined as a science but on the other hand distinguished from the empirical sciences as the normative does not derive from natural-social-historical causes but from ideal principles. Law was thus universalised and self-founded as a value of state power, thus constituting an arbitrary mental construction, since it was neither anchored nor founded by historical-social reality. However, precisely because the state and

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\(^{36}\) Papari, [*Greekness and the bourgeois intellectuals*], 257.
its contemporary reality were disconnected from their historicity, the theory of law functioned as a transcendental principle and ultimately as an ideology that was transmuted into the precepts of the established constitutional power and with absolute authority anchored, served, legitimised and even idealised a specific state power or a specific type of political organisation of bourgeois society.

This idealistic view of political power reasonably raises questions about the kind of government that the philosopher/legislator advocated and the power that the popular will could have within it. Tsatsos argued that the principle of popular sovereignty as a concept proved to be problematic, as it was not clear by what criterion the will of the people produced law and validity as well. The fact that the people imposed what they wanted determined the reason for which law was made, but not the reason why something counted valid as law. But since the people were not always mature or cultivated to fulfil the ideals of the principle of popular sovereignty, that is, the ideals of their historical mission, the historical value of the principle of popular sovereignty ceased to be fulfilled, because in such cases the application of the principle of popular sovereignty proved disastrous both for the state and for the historical culture it expressed. The question then arose as to who would decide on the political act. Tsatsos was arguing that the people need not have reason themselves, as long as they want to be ruled by it, all they needed was submission, restraint, conformity and prudence. Reason belonged to the philosopher, the royal man, and because he himself incarnated reason, therefore he must be the leader of the state. However, Tsatsos recognised that his theory was in danger of excluding the people from political life, which would lead them to contradict his views on the educational mission of the state for moral freedom and intellectual creativity and so would deprive the community of the possibility of contributing responsibly and freely to the regulation of political life. This also deprived them of the only real condition for the creation of a unified national and political consciousness.

In order to remove this contradiction, he elevated personality to an absolute value, arguing that it was recognised by the Christian religion and ancient Greek thought, in which the great leader complemented the concept of the state. By avoiding recognising the essential political value of the social whole, he politically limited its existence to a passive state which served exclusively the emergence of the leading personality from the masses. In Tsatsos’s philosophy of law, the work and purpose of the state, namely the promotion and realisation of ideas and values, was undertaken as a mission by the philosopher and the royal man. The ideal would be that they should be identical; that is to say, the one who possessed reason, the spiritual ruler, the philosop-
pher, should also possess political power. Therefore, he attempted to incorporate the Platonic ideal of political power into the functioning of modern bourgeois democracy, proposing it as a remedy for its weaknesses. Wherever there were worthy leaders, those who were called upon to decide on controversies on behalf of an entire people, then necessarily proper political institutions would be established and the way to justice would be found. Those who had risen to the exercise of this supreme function according to the Platonic theory were for Tsatsos royal men. The duty of the royal man was to defend the state from all dangers of destruction or diminution and to determine the whole rhythm of the polity. For the sake of this end, he may exercise power as he saw fit and without limit, even if this meant violating legal obligations. Moreover, the royal man had to assume responsibility for decisions above the ideological tendencies of his time and choose as morally correct the course which most appropriately led to the realisation of the ultimate goal. These charismatic leaders, according to Tsatsos, legitimately monopolised the exercise of power for the additional reason that in assuming leadership they were not driven by any passion, any vanity, any self-interest, but by the duty and consciousness of a higher mission, the inner inexorable imperative for the realisation of the Idea. And when there were such rulers in the state then written laws have no place.37

In a democratic regime, then, the idea of law neither served nor was determined by positive law nor by the constitution, but by leaders deciding on behalf of the people. And since they were not bound by anything or accountable to anyone, they decided whatever course they themselves deemed to be the right one in the service of the final end, exercising unchecked power. As Yannis Drossos aptly observes, they were the ones who lead the people towards the service of the highest end.38 Tsatsos’s views, moving in the idealistic realm of absolute meanings and ends, explicitly declared the obligation of voluntary submission to the chosen one of history, and amount to a charter of normative conduct in the exercise of politics, while providing political power with the philosophical cover to arm itself against competing political forces, namely communism and the advocates of bourgeois liberalism.

Tsatsos’s positions on leadership were in perfect accord at the time with the Spanish philosopher Ortega Y Gasset’s preference for a select minority (minora


selecta) that should rule the mass of the many, so that democracy would not be endangered by the revolutionary tendencies of the masses. Furthermore, for Tsatsos the source of evil started from the European disease of democracy that prioritised the claims of the masses over the value of the nation, which for him was the Greek primacy. Thus, regarding the question of democratic government and the question of who would hold and administer political power, Tsatsos did not deviate from Ortega Y Gasset’s position, according to which ‘it is the people who elect their rulers from time to time, but from then on it is the elected, this élite, who run. It is not the “pavement” [the mob according to Ortega] that can run’.39

Similarly, for Kanellopoulos the moral cleansing of the parliamentary system could be achieved by a parliamentary aristocracy of leaders, a ‘Führerdemokratie’. This was a position borrowed from Alfred Weber, since ‘personal’ parties did not always ensure genuine, ‘charismatic’ leadership in the Weberian sense.40 He referred to charismatic leadership, stating that it was based on the principle of a personal gift of grace to a leading personality who expressed a personal devotion and personal faith in an apocalyptic character of governance. The leading personality, who appeared either as a crowned ruler or as the leader of a political party, governed in a manner analogous to a prophet. Certainly, Weber’s shift to an ‘unaccented democrat leader’ can be interpreted in light of the collapse of the German Reich and the intense problems of economic, social and political reconstruction that arose, which led him to set aside parliamentary institutions in the name of a ‘strong leadership’. This was not in his case a rejection of parliamentary democracy, but rather a redistribution of power within a parliamentary-constitutional framework. However, in Kanellopoulos’s thought, the idea of charismatic leadership was not simply treated as an imperative solution imposed by political necessity, but was fervently supported in principle, arguing that this luminous unfreedom with its fictional power was a means of education for the political and national consciousness of a people.41 The policy of the NUP, as a policy serving Measure, Humanism and Democracy, advocated a combination of freedom and discipline, which it put forward with the principle of the ‘disciplined freedom’.42

41 Kanellopoulos, ‘[The political modern Greek society].’
42 Kanellopoulos, ‘[The ideological bases].’ See also ‘Τα ελληνικά πολιτικά πράγματα και το
tained that freedom to be secured had to be freedom disciplined, that is, freedom regulated by the state. In this context, civil liberties and the principle of parliamentarianism, based on the criterion of number and quantity (i.e. a majority), did not correspond to the ideal of disciplined freedom, because they were ‘arbitrary’ criteria. What was correct, as Kanellopoulos argued, was not always what the many wanted, but rather what the worthy wanted. In this sense, it was morally imperative to replace the quantitative criterion of political freedoms with a qualitative criterion; that is, with the principle of equal suffrage, through which otherwise actual equality, in the Platonic sense, would be ensured, ensuring social and moral cohesion at the same time. Furthermore, Kanellopoulos’s work *Tha sas po tin althia: Mia ideologiki politiki omologia* [*I’ll tell you the truth (An ideological political confession)*], which he wrote in October 1940 during his exile in Karystos, argued that freedom was for the few and the many were the source of the few. Mass freedom, he wrote, was a concept that contradicts itself. Only personality is spiritually and morally free.

Consistent with these views, in the provisional Party Statute drawn up in 1936 was its position on the role and characteristics of the Party leadership (Article 2). Here, particular emphasis was placed on the ‘principle of One’, which was not far removed from the Weberian charismatic leadership and the Platonic philosopher-king: The Party will be led by ‘...the One who is the constituent of the individual forces,...the One who is the creative funnel in which the ideology of the Party takes its full and definitive form, ...the One who, thanks to his exceptional qualities, can communicate with the masses...the One who lives the life of the Ensemble’.

Moreover, in the formation of government he argued that the One, as legislator and governor, should emerge as the leader of a party and probably, but not necessarily, his party would have secured a majority in parliament. This One would be the constituent of the political

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43 Ένωτικόν Κόμμα; [*The Greek political cases and the Unifying Party*] 24 November 1950, Archive of Panayotis Kanellopoulos, f. 16.  
44 Η παλλαϊκή συγκέντρωσις του Εθνικού Ένωτικού Κόμματος εις το "Κεντρικόν": Ο κ. Κανελλόπουλος προ ενθουσιών τον πλήθος ανεπτύξε τον πολιτισμό του πρόγραμμα; [*The rally of the National Unifying Party at the ‘Central’: Mr Kanellopoulos developed his political programme before an enthusiastic crowd*] *Elliniki Foni*, 7 March 1936. See also, Panayotis Kanellopoulos, ‘Κοινοβουλευτισμός και Ελευθερία [B];’ [Parliamentarianism and Freedom, B] *Elliniki Foni*, 6 June 1936. The first edition of the book was published in 1944, with the alias Panayotis Karystinos. The second edition was published in 1945.

45 Οργανισμός (Προσωπικός) [*Organism (Temporary)*], Athens 1936; ‘Αι βασικαί αρχαι εφ ων στηρίζεται ο Οργανισμός του Κόμματος;’ [The basic principles of the party’s organism] Archive of Panayotis Kanellopoulos, Εταιρεία Φίλων Παναγιώτη Κανελλόπουλου, f. 6/938.74.
totality. In this context, the government would primarily undertake the exercise of legislative power, in the form of compulsory laws, because the imperative of the time was the need to secure more stable governments, to carry out long-term projects, and to limit the hitherto unbridled parliamentarianism.46

These intellectuals’ deep belief in megalomania was rooted in their romantic and idealistic conviction that great men, approaching the Nietzschean superman, the Christian saint, the Promethean hero, and the Platonic philosopher-king, embodied reason (Λόγος) and the evolution of the spirit in history, while the works of culture and the spirit were their own creations. These leaders were not accountable to anyone, since their sole purpose was the service of absolute ideas.

Epilogue: The Road to Dictatorship

The participation of intellectuals in the public sphere was highly significant in interwar era Greece’s public sphere, as various groups of intellectuals served as scientific think tanks and ‘pedagogues’ of the state. Intellectuals, as an autonomous group, represented one of the multifarious power relations which penetrate society. These power relations produced and circulated a type of discourse that operated effectively in politics as they acted as agents of specific ideological and political beliefs. Furthermore, the uniqueness of their social status lay in the fact that their role was closely related to the way mechanisms of power functioned and (re)produced ‘truth’ as an element of the discourse that led to and enforced power.

In the period considered here, such intellectuals, with their political stance and public discourse, favoured an authoritarian diversion from parliamentarianism rather than support its democratic expression, despite factional differences and conflicts between them. Metaxas’s authoritarian regime, like other fascist regimes at the time, could not be established without the consent and active acceptance of the traditional elites. It remains a fact that the domestic bourgeois intelligentsia, similar to other European countries in the 1930s, exerted considerable influence in creating the space and conditions for the establishment of the authoritarian regime, which, in addition to being enforced with the assistance of the army, police and senior civil servants, needed the cooperation and consensus of the elites and the intelligentsia. Where this was not secured, political figures, intellectuals and academics were removed from

46 Ibid.
the regime. Although a multitude of politicians and intellectuals in the 1930s prepared the authoritarian imposition as its ideological forerunners, in the early years of the Metaxas dictatorship, at least until the outbreak of the Second World War when there was a total shift of sentiment in favour of the person of the dictator, a large part of them chose not to identify with the regime. Maintaining equally authoritarian beliefs with the regime’s ideology, they chose either compromise, tacit reserve or, in some cases, outright opposition to it. The exile of politicians and intellectuals in the terms that were carried out, as in the case of Kanellopoulos and Tsatsos, did not have the punitive or penitentiary character that was the case with political dissidents; it was more a measure to marginalise or keep political opponents of the regime at a ‘safe distance’. Despite the deportation of these intellectuals, their good relations with Metaxas did not break down, as they themselves were called upon shortly afterwards to take over the organisation of the nation’s ‘Spiritual Conscription’ in the context of the Second World War.47

Finally, the action of intellectuals as precursors of authoritarianism reveals the way in which the reconstitution of the national imaginary ensures the continuity of the state and traditional power structures through the intellectuals and intellectual elites. As pillars of the traditional power structures, according to Fischer, they not only expressed the political ambitions of the ruling powers, but in addition they very much represented the historical continuity of the nation and the state. This continuity came to be validated by reality itself. From the role of the new political personnel that they claimed in the interwar period, in the postwar decades these intellectuals expressed the dominant formations of the new political establishment.48

47 Papari, [Greekness and the bourgeois intellectuals], 294–295.