This article looks at the role of classical scholarship in early twentieth century Greece and its discursive role in discussions of national literature and culture; it focuses on the (German-trained) young scholar Ioannis Sykoutris, particularly his edition of Plato's Symposium; it is forthcoming in a volume on Classics and National Culture, ed. by Susan Stephens and Phiroze Vasunia for Oxford University Press.

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The Greek Library

In 1931, the Greek liberal government under Eleftherios Venizelos decreed an annual sum of 350,000 drachmas to the Academy of Athens for the translation of classical texts into Modern Greek. Although within two years, and under a new conservative government, this sum was quickly whittled down to about a third of its original amount, the Academy in 1933 embarked on a program to brand this series of classical texts with a facing translation as the new *Greek Library* (*Elliniki Vivliothiki*). The title was chosen to remind editors and readers alike of the *Greek Library* begun in the early 1800s as an educational project developed and directed from Paris by the Greek scholar Adamantios Korais (1748--1833). To paraphrase Korais, what Greece as a nation (though as yet without a nation state) was lacking most and most damagingly was familiarity with its ancient heritage, a fact that resulted either in ignoring that heritage, or in no less ignorant exaggerated reverence toward the ancients; a first remedy, therefore, was to make (already existing) text editions available to a Greek readership, a token and process of education that would in turn lead to Greece's acceptance as part of the congress of civilized nations. The first volume of the new *Greek Library* in 1933 was to coincide with the 100th anniversary of Korais’ death, and the task was given to one of the editors and architects of the program, Iannis Sykoutris (1901--1937), a young German-trained
classical scholar, and at the time a lecturer in the Faculty of Philology at the University of Athens.

Editorship is not something neutral in its extra-textual framework, and the case has been made recently for not forgetting the productive role of the editor as author, and for analyzing editing as a functional part of cultural nationalism, to name only a few examples.\textsuperscript{ii} The aim of this piece is to show with regard to a self-consciously modern Greek classical scholar how the role of classical scholarship is tied into discourses of the nation, and how the role of the classical scholar, with implications for national education, is in turn inscribed in the discussion, edition and interpretation of classical works. The aim is not to explore the exceptionality of the Greek case, even though of course nationalism is tied to classical antiquity in a particularly strong and complex way in Greece.\textsuperscript{iii} Instead, my aim is to use a particular and what looks like quite an unusual Greek example to show how strands of argument that underlie different national classical discourses in the early twentieth century (here, apart from Greece, mainly the German one) link philology, the individual and the nation in often similar, and trans-national, ways.

The series, which Sykoutris envisaged as a Greek parallel to the recent Loeb (1913) and Budé (1920) collections, was aimed at the general reader with a basic high school education. While this may seem an innocent enough undertaking, the project of translating classical Greek texts into a modern idiom was also inevitably part of a long-standing issue, the so-called "language question", over which form of Greek should be
adopted as the official written language of the nation state, faced with the historical experience of diglossia since late antiquity and the Byzantine period, when a written language closely modeled on ancient Greek coexisted above a demotic register, developed from the koine, that could be used both in spoken and written form. The debate had had currency, and political explosiveness, since the late eighteenth century (and so since before the establishment of the nation state proper in 1831), and opinion ranged widely, from a recovery of classical Attic Greek, through a purified, archaizing Greek free of loanwords, to a radical, phonetically written demotic. A project of classical text editions in Modern Greek therefore suggested that classical texts needed translation so as to be understood, which in itself was an officially sanctioned, yet still controversial, reform program, one of several in the early decades of the twentieth century. After an increasingly rigid focus in the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth on ancient Greek as the only language of literature and instruction in the Greek school system, this was a state of affairs that had made the linguistic nature of translations of classical texts a highly politicized, usually contentious, and often outright violent event, with national feelings running high on either side of the divide.\textsuperscript{iv}

Sykoutris, in 1935, also published a separate, detailed essay on the history of classical text editions in Greece, which to him is essentially a history of the relationship between education and authority, and by extension a question of Greece’s relationship vis-à-vis Europe.\textsuperscript{v} The various edition projects, from the time of Korais, he presents in this account as a series of mainly private initiatives, motivated and formulated in terms of patriotic endeavour but always trying to reach out internationally and enlisting international
contributions, which then usually founder on the dragging of feet, scholars’ other commitments, political and intellectual, in the new state, factionalism, and a misconceived philology that focuses on arid accounting of the language, rather than on the vitality of interpretation. Still, for Sykoutris those individual initiatives touch on what he identifies as an essential value of classical scholarship: that of educating the individual, whose process finds an ostensibly self-evident analogy in the life and development of the Greek nation.

The volume that eventually opens the Greek Library series in 1934 is an edition of Plato’s Symposium, with critical apparatus, facing translation, commentary and, prominently, a long introduction, which, at 254 pages, outruns text, translation and commentary together. Even though Sykoutris later, quite rightly, claimed that the choice arose from circumstance (among other factors the wish to honor Plato as the founder of the original Academy, and the call for a self-contained dialogue that was accessible to a wider readership), I want to suggest that his treatment of the Platonic dialogue is strongly connected with his understanding of (himself as) the classical scholar, of classical scholarship in general, and with his other programmatic writings on contemporary intellectual life on a national level. My argument is that Sykoutris gives an account of the discipline through a heavily Platonic lens, creating a new program for Greek, classical scholarship, as a way of the examined life, both personal and national. To that end, a European vision, where a European tradition is equated with method, and specifically a method of interpretation, is combined with what I would call a “hermeneutics of self-sufficiency”, in other words a mode and practice of interpretation that allows Greece to
claim a position for itself that guards it against an "Eastern" absence of method, while letting it assume a natural affinity (even if, importantly, not identity) with the West.

Initial reviews of the *Symposium* were very positive, including those in foreign academic journals. vi Two years later, though, with the book already out of print, and while Sykoutris was unsuccessfully applying for an advanced position at the linguistically conservative Faculty of Philology at the University of Athens, a battle ensued in the pages of mostly learned journals at home, that ended only with Sykoutris’ premature death in September 1937. Shortly after his return from a final trip to Germany (which had also left him somewhat disturbed at the turn of political events there), Sykoutris left for Corinth to climb the rock of the Acrocorinth fortress; there, if reconstruction and obituaries are to be believed, he continued work on his introduction to Aristotle’s *Poetics*, which he breaks off half-way through the section on the logic and force of the tragic myth. vii Although he died, by all accounts, from an overdose of sleeping pills later that night in a hotel in Corinth, it is the *mystikos aniforos*, the "secret ascent" up and on the Acrocorinth, that became a catch-phrase and almost immediately inspired two commemorative poems, one by Kostis Palamas and one by Angelos Sikelianos, which added to the subsequent apotheosis of Sykoutris --- often formulated in the Platonic language of the philosopher’s life directed at self-examination and a freely chosen death. viii

**Beyond the Language Question**
As mentioned before, the social-political ramifications and involvement of commentators beyond the pages of the discipline should not surprise us when it comes to the question of who owns and determines the language and language of interpretation of ancient texts. Just to give some examples, in 1908, a Girls' School in Volos, under the directorship of Alexandros Delmouzos, himself an advocate of educational reform and later one of the first professors (of Education) at the newly founded University of Thessaloniki, had experimentally introduced demotic Greek as the language of instruction and of text books, but had to close in 1911 under political pressure, followed three years later still by a prominent court case against Delmouzos and other city officials in Nafplio. In 1925, a "National Congress against the Enemies and Detractors of Religion, Language, Family, Property, Morality, National Consciousness, and the Fatherland" was called, which asked for the abolition of demotic text books and the re-instatement of katharevousa (the purified, archaizing Greek) in all primary school classes, and which included members of the Archaeological Society, the Association of Doctors and the Trade Association, the Society for Byzantine Studies, the Geographical Society, the Association of Professors of Theology, members of the Technical University, Schoolteachers' Associations, and the Association of Employers of the National Bank, among others. In this light, and even though Sykoutris did certainly not belong among the hard-line reformers or demoticists, the height and shapes of the waves caused by his edition of Plato might look a little less incomprehensible.

The crusade against Sykoutris was therefore a mixture of nationalistic frenzy, with a pre-history of conflict over the language question as political motivation and alleged national
or anti-national sentiment, not to forget internal university politics (Sykoutris was applying for a permanent position at Athens, in a Faculty that was well known for its archaizing and strongly conservative bent); and it reached proportions of such unevenness that the elements of tragedy and comedy seem, from our present point of view at least, at times indistinguishable. It began with a series of articles in the *Voice of Science (Epistimoniki Icho)*, a monthly journal of Applied Sciences and Industry. The articles and soon enough criticisms at first focused on charges of immorality (for Sykoutris’ historicizing discussion of pederastic love); in time various trade organizations joined in, signing petitions --- the *koulouropolai* most famously, that is the bread-ring sellers, as well as the associations of vintners, raisin-sellers, and butchers. Not to forget statements from the Orthodox Church, which, when pressed, did an about-turn and went back on earlier positive reviews which had come from Church circles, now claiming that the *Symposium* did in fact have a long tradition of being considered immoral and hence unacceptable to the Church. To the claims of immorality were added charges of impiety (*atheia*), for Sykoutris’ comparing the charismatic teacher figures of Socrates (and by extension Sykoutris) with Jesus, together with an all-out attack on his alleged anti-nationalism and certainly alleged leftist reformism of the most extreme kind.

The actual question of language is, unsurprisingly, not far: in the *Symposium*, Sykoutris mixes the registers to characterize individual speakers, ranging from a moderate, elegant *katharevousa* to a more demotic tone. Still, Sykoutris uses neither to the extreme, which seems to have been his most unforgivable choice as far as both his critics and his supporters were concerned, some of whom denounced him as a "linguistic
hermaphrodite”, xii thus unwittingly linking him back to Aristophanes’ myth of mankind in the *Symposium*, as originally made up of double creatures, all male, all female, or both male and female, before they were cut apart and started seeking the other half they had lost. The ferocity of the debate may seem less inscrutable (even though still perplexing) when viewed in the light of the language question and its ramifications; and yet, just as Aristophanes’ speech about the unruly creatures in the *Symposium* is the most readily quoted set piece of the dialogue, the language question, too, has been a greedy monster that tends to position itself centre-stage, and it has obscured some of Sykoutris’ larger, or at least less language-centered cultural agenda which, like the Aristophanic echo, is inscribed in his choice of text. I therefore suggest to look at Sykoutris not exclusively through the lens of the language question and its politics, but in terms of the wider program he himself tries to establish for a new, refocused national classical philology, and an attendant new role for the philologist, quite beyond the question of what linguistic register is chosen.

*Wissenschaft and Charisma*

Sykoutris, after a philologically rigorous school education in Smyrna, had received a first degree in philology (meaning classical philology) at Athens, had then accepted a school teaching position on Cyprus for almost two years, before returning to Athens to receive his doctorate there in 1925. Following that, Sykoutris left on a scholarship to spend two semesters in Leipzig, followed by six further semesters in Berlin. At Berlin, Wilamowitz had retired in 1921, but had kept his “Graeca” seminar, to which Sykoutris was admitted. He was also in contact with Wilamowitz’ successor to the chair, Werner Jaeger, on whom
he would later write an entry for the Greek National Encyclopedia. In Germany Sykoutris soon made a name for himself mainly for his work on ancient epistolography, and his numerous German publications include monographs on Demosthenes’ *Epitaphios* and on the Socratic letters, together with a substantial number of articles on classical and Byzantine topics. What is important is that Sykoutris received his postgraduate education in Germany at a time when, even by German standards, critical reflection in the field of philology was running high. The centrality of classical scholarship in secondary schools had been curtailed through official reforms from 1920 onwards: a clear separation into different tracks of higher education and vocational training meant a reduction of teaching hours even in those schools which continued with a full classical curriculum and acted as feeders to universities and, from there, the civil service. A similar reform of establishing a two-track system had been introduced in Greece in the late 1920s, albeit with only modest success. In Germany, Werner Jaeger, the successor to Wilamowitz’ chair in Berlin, had called for a new program in the name of a “Third Humanism”, in order to re-focus the “classical” as a fertile value; Jaeger’s key concept in that program was that of *paideia*, glossed as culture and education towards humanity, and thought to be the quintessential Greek phenomenon and its ideal value with an almost ontological authority, which has proven true throughout its later heritage and which can only be understood and studied through the very act of education it ostensibly promotes. Its history is a teleological one, but, set against such pessimistic philosophies of history as that of his contemporary Oswald Spengler, it counts the notion of decline with an affirmation of renaissances instead. This *Bildung*, in line with state ideal as well, takes Platonic *paideia* as a model that reflects its own values, the object of study reflecting the
subject studying it; in other words, the concerns of the discipline, and its teaching methodology, are found to be the very content of the discipline. Philology in this way reclaims cultural philosophy as its proper subject matter, and despite the ostensible universalism of his humanism, Jaeger follows a stronger elitism and intellectualism of the few than other educators in the early twentieth century had.xvii

As we will see, even though Sykoutris offers a slightly less “strong” reading of Plato than Jaeger, he combines this vision of a perpetuum mobile of Western education, a completely self-justifying and self-motivating (national) progressive pedagogy, with the figure of the charismatic teacher, as a symbol and an actual medium of the Platonic love of knowledge. His writings are essentially a plea against the unexamined “Spiritual Life of the Nation” (so one of his lecture titles), calling for a new philology, and for ‘interpretation’ as its object and method alike. If Greece, as a nation, needs to re-examine itself, nothing can assist better in this method of understanding than a re-invigorated classical teaching. For Greece is in crisis, and so is the state of scholarship. The need for re-examination was by the time of Sykoutris' writing not without a tangible historical context either. The so-called “catastrophe” of 1922, that is the results of the failed Greek military campaign in Asia Minor, and the conflagration of Smyrna, had resulted in the forced population exchange of Greek and Turkish minorities, about 2 million people altogether, after the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923; it had also spelled the end of Greek irredentist claims in the area and the end of a rhetoric that had been instrumental in Greek national discourse since prime minister Ioannis Kolettis in 1844 had coined the phrase of the Megali Idea, the ‘Great Idea’ of reclaiming unredeemed Greek territory in the East.
Whatever individual writers’ takes on those claims were, the challenge of rethinking national rhetoric, whether Greek or any other, affected all areas of intellectual production in one way or another, especially those that engaged directly with the building blocks of Greek history and, by extension, of claims to cultural (and territorial) continuity. It is regrettable but no coincidence, Sykoutris argues in 1928, that now, when the ‘Great Idea’ can be mentioned only ironically, the students of Homer or Demosthenes should be made fun of too, as merely ‘scholastic’, i.e. empty and impractical. xviii

After his return from Germany, Sykoutris continued to work on classical scholarship, but also published a number of essays on cultural politics in the larger sense, among them critical translations of Theodor Zielinski’s *Antiquity and Ourselves (Die Antike und Wir)* (from which the statement on the students of Homer and Demosthenes is taken), and of Max Weber’s *Science as Vocation (Wissenschaft als Beruf)*, as well as articles on Modern Greek literature, the spiritual life of the nation, and the role of scholarship in the present. Sykoutris believed firmly in the continuing value of classical antiquity and education as the unifying link between the varied nations, and the “centripetal force” of a European identity --- and with this he takes up a topos, or topoi, that had inter-national currency at the time. xix In the long introduction to his translation of *Antiquity and Ourselves* (as *Emis kai i Archaii*), an essay (originally 1905) on the state of classical education in Russia, xx Sykoutris argues that the argument has special resonance for Greece, in that it engages with a nation that, even though it does not have a long tradition of classical scholarship, has become a cultural nation, a *Kulturnation* only with the arrival of classical schools, even though the value of antiquity as part of formal education remains. And yet, Russian
culture rests also on Byzantium and hence the Greek tradition, wherefore in this case personal and national self-understanding blend, as much as the national and the European, making the study of antiquity seem even more inevitable. For that reason he decries the objections by Russian Nationalists and by ‘Europeanists’ (or ‘Westerners’) alike: whereas the first simply ignore what they would want to know otherwise (i.e. the history of themselves, their nation), the second saw off the branch on which they are sitting.\textsuperscript{xxi} Here is the motive of Socratic attitude to ignorance again: no one can not want to know the Good, True and Beautiful – turned into an argument against factionalism of any kind. (This is a motive in Greece as well, to which I will return below).

For Sykoutris, the position of the Modern Greek is similar, for whom the universal, at least European, value of antiquity is also part of a very specific national past. Hellenism is the Idea we want to come to understand and have access to. To do this well, further study of European standards of study and knowledge are necessary, drawing from all possible sources in the study of antiquity. In his accompanying essay to the translation, Sykoutris comments specifically on the Greek situation, and he ends up with a similar notion of scholarly inquiry that by nature ought to rise above factionalism: we are to “study the spiritual and social factors of the unmediated past and [thereby] of the conditions of the present\textsuperscript{xxii} --- a kind of study above and beyond the split into demotic-katharevousa, as it tries to understand that split, rather than solve it. Again, here we have the function of a higher, “ideal” level, a method of abstraction that trusts in the absolute match between the method and the content, without questioning it.
More importantly, this approach helps him to build a case for the scholar as a figure of national importance. Where Zielinski simply states that historians and philologists, who in turn are indispensable for their country, need Latin and Greek, Sykoutris is more specific. For him, the appeal to and of national consciousness around the revolutionary uprisings of 1821 was motivated by the study of Greek letters, which created a truly national feeling never achieved before. Even if Greece, for socio-political reasons, was not ready for Europe in 1821, opting for pastiche rather than true development, cases of classical schooling in the Ionian Islands and on Cyprus after 1821 seem to him promising with regard to the nation-building potential and the role of the teacher. What has been and is still amiss, so his argument continues, is the actual state of scholarship: he criticizes Greek philology for its neglect of cultural contextualization, and for its continuing focus on grammatical detail over philosophical thought, as much as for its aridity and low quality --- again, at the time of the language question and its championing of a normatively formalized language one way or another, in all likelihood not a commentary to earn him a friendly audience.xxiii

In his 1931 inaugural lecture, “Philology and Life” (Filologia kai Zoi), which Sykoutris apparently considered to be his most important piece, he adds to his program an outline of what the proper method of study, of true philological interpretation, ought to be. Philology is related to the spiritual life of a nation that, like that of an individual, is shaped by its context, which in turn produces values. Again, we find the argument from analogy, or extension, between individual and nation that gives philology its place as a nationally and socially functional pursuit. The values and their genesis from tradition,
which make up the spiritual life of a nation, are intelligible (notitos, another very Platonic term) only when seen from a distance (temporal or spatial). His aim is therefore to sensitize a generation of new philologists for the prime characteristic of “our discipline”, which he formulates as the acts of “giving account” (logon didonai) and “being happy leading a bright life” (phanon bion diagontas eudaimonein).

What follows is a familiar judgment of Asiatic, Eastern despotism, which had had a pedigree in classical texts as much as in classical scholarship, and which lets Sykoutris' reflections on method assume very immediate political overtones, against the background of Greece’s geo-political situation in the 1930s: To give in to the limitations of active understanding, he continues, would mean to give in to an Asiatic Barbarism, where direction of knowledge was shaped by sacred hierarchy: a fate from which Europe was saved by this very principle of logon didonai. An orientation towards Europe is hence necessary --- and he expresses it in strong contradistinction to a threatening East. A timelessly threatening East, paradoxically, can be approached only with the weapons of a historicizing hermeneutics, that is nonetheless out to unveil the continuity of cultural values. Sykoutris’ continuity is complex and only indirectly accessible, though. Contact with the spiritual (not the national) values of the ancient Greeks can occur for us, their natural descendants, only by way of the needs and problems and values of modern European culture, and “not in a straight way” (ochi kat' eytheian). He does this by insisting on a method that acknowledges the initial foreignness of that which it examines, while assuming that there is a method to access it (almost like Platonic anamnesis); the grounds for this access lie, again, in a shared European hermeneutic circle. What is foreign is really one's own, or so his conclusion runs.
Interpretation (*ermineia*), by extension, is a form of reliving the processes, technical, cultural, and emotional that go into the creation of artifacts, and it proceeds in three stages: scientific, artistic, and humanistic. The first corresponds to the technical stage of “edition and commentary”, which may give us a deeper understanding than even the writer had. (The fact, incidentally, that "edition and commentary" is a first step, does in no way hide its central importance to Sykoutris. Sykoutris, who at Berlin had also worked with Paul Maas, tried to import the standards of textual criticism into the editing of Modern Greek texts as well, as is apparent in an essay of 1935, "Critical Editions of Modern Greek Literature", which deals specifically with the Romantic (and demotic) poet Dionysios Solomos. Next, after establishing the textual corpus, comes the re-creation of the artistic process (*anadimiourgia*), a re-experiencing through immersion (*diisdysis*) and empathy (*sygkinisi*). Here, too, he borrows from German writings, especially from Dilthey’s notion of *Erlebnis*, or “lived experience”. This last stage, following Sykoutris, compares to what Nietzsche called “higher praxis”, or to the Platonic *paideia*: in this way Sykoutris blurs a Platonic model of intellectual, epistemological ascent towards the level of Ideas with a matching descent into the past, whose aim is the new creation of values from within the life of the mind, and the leading of a philosophical existence --- one that would be needed especially for “us Greeks”. Why that is he leaves unsaid, whether it is especially needed in answer to the consequences of 1923, to the post-war period, or to Greece’s relationship with Europe more generally.
With the task of philology cut out, Sykoutris turns to the attributes of the true philologist, and he finds them in, of all people, the German sociologist Max Weber. Weber’s *Science as Vocation* (1932), not unlike Zielinski’s essay, originated as a lecture held in front of a liberal student association in Munich in 1917, and, like most of Sykoutris’ published lectures too, it alludes to the immediacy of the speech act between teacher and pupil. Why this choice? Weber is not only of continuing influence in Germany, Sykoutris argues, but issues of educational development are discussed in Greece with total lack of reference to the framework of theoretical or ethical first causes, which is precisely Weber’s interest (a replay of the “unexamined life” theme here) --- and Sykoutris will manage to integrate Weber’s thought and personality in his outline of philology’s new remit. Sykoutris mentions that he himself had written on similar issues as Weber already in 1925, when he was railing against the unexamined life in the guise of journalistic, ‘pretty’ writing; Weber, superseding him, ought to be let heard directly instead --- almost as the speeches delivered at Agathon’s symposium, and Socrates’ in particular, are repeated verbatim by Aristodemus, one of his disciples, to Apollodorus, whose second repetition makes up the frame of the *Symposium*. This pattern of “authentication by disciple” appears also in Sykoutris’ own scholarly interests. In his (still often quoted) 1933 study of the Socratic letters, that is a collection of Greek letters from the Roman imperial period, written by later disciples in the name of Socrates, Sykoutris argues for the ‘authenticity’ of the Socratic letters at least to the extent that they represent the practical transformation of Socrates’ teaching by his pupils. An analogue for him are the Platonic letters: he also makes a strong case for the authenticity of at least some of the
Platonic letters, written under the impression of a fulfilled philosophical love in the case of Plato’s letter to Dion of Syracuse.

If only the examined life leads to a fulfilled character, it is Weber’s personality that makes him, in Sykoutris’ eyes, a philosopher in the classical sense, the Odyssean adventurer out “on the Seas of the Unknown”. xxx What characterizes him is the searching mind, the awareness of one’s own limitation, the seeking of dialogue, the risk of overstepping the boundaries, seeking to rein himself in --- again a notion that is reminiscent of the language of Plato’s *Phaedo* and the soul as a charioteer of ruly and unruly passions. Although Sykoutris tries to contextualize Weber’s philosophy of scholarship in some detail, his spotlight is firmly trained on the attributes of the charismatic teacher he exemplifies. Sykoutris traces Weber’s path as that of a political economist dissatisfied with the public expectations towards his discipline as a provider of recommendations and a teller of values, to the multi-faceted self-sufficient scholar, independent of the interference of expectation, who defines scholarship as a whole as the “intellectual perception of life”, and hence as the study of the foundations of the sciences.xxxi Weber indeed developed a sociological method with the aim to trace those values in history, which have been relevant for present society (which means the Western World as we know it); he does so by working with the notion of “ideal types”, as conceptual abstractions, i.e. not as relating to real human beings, abstractions which help to interpret cultural history (for example, famously, Protestant ethics) --- a use of ideal types that binds Weber even more closely into Sykoutris’ vision of a scholarship devoted to the Platonic path of ascent to the world of ideas.
Where does this leave the *Wissenschaftler* in relation to society? Sykoutris, with Weber, is aware that complete separation is neither desirable nor possible. Some value-judgments have to be made, and between the remote scholar and the demagogue comes to stand the True Teacher --- an in-between character, like those that are at the center of the *Symposium*. In fact, Sykoutris introduces Socrates right at the end of his introduction to Weber's essay, in a gesture that makes the link between the figure of scholar, teacher and philosopher seem inevitable: just as the antinomies of his chosen field are expressed in Weber’s personality, so every philosophy best expresses the tensions at its root, between the world of values and that of thought, by way of a personality, i.e. in the shape of a human figure. Plato presents with Socrates a *person*, not a dogma, a synthesis, which, in representation as in life, is the only way to do justice to the complexity, yet directionality, of the epistemological undertaking. If Weber’s sociology is called attractive (*thelgitron*) and didactic for the philologist as well, Sykoutris sets up his own Socratic ladder of the desire for Truth.

**The Symposium and the New Scholar**

With the edition of the *Symposium*, we finally arrive at the perfect exemplification of all the above. In "Philology and Life", Sykoutris had claimed that the task of the philologists is to prove the *eros* for the *logoi*, and his introduction to the *Greek Library* series as a whole had traced exactly that challenge in the past. The new series is therefore supposed to be in line both with the contemporary needs of the nation and the demands of modern science. What is more, his work is “an example how until now I have read and
understood and loved Plato”. The work is, in turn, an examination and an instance of the pedagogy of *eros*, exemplified in the life and teaching of Socrates, the true philosopher, whose character *is* that of Eros, as that which continually seeks.

While Sykoutris’ insistence on the foreignness of the past, as interpretive method, is a big step away from the simple comforts of the continuity thesis, it is still not a method that wouldn't claim for itself national or European privilege. If the interpretation and re-living of the "mental phenomena" (*psychika fenomena*) of antiquity is the task of the classical scholar, Sykoutris’ choice of the *Symposion* is nothing short of inspired, or shall we say calculated, since here the interpretation of such a crucial phenomenon, *eros*, is the theme of the dialogue itself: the method is conflated with the subject matter. Sykoutris’ chapter on boy-love is a test case of the technique of the new philology he envisages, calling for a careful contextualization of what must seem alien, but a European contextualization nonetheless.

Sykoutris rightly identifies *eros*, and paiderastic love as its most prominent social manifestation, as a crucial theme not only for Plato, but as a coded social practice, comparable, for example, to the code of medieval *Minne*, which at the time of writing was itself enjoying a revival among scholars as a quintessentially European way of loving. Still, there is a reductionism at work here that is similar to Jaeger’s equation of *paideia* with Greek culture *tout court*. What distinguishes the classical Greek version of boy-love from its cruder Asiatic forms and other forms of male bonding, Sykoutris claims, is its deliberate anchoring in society and culture as a valued institution, its higher
spiritual meaning and its pedagogical character --- a line of argument which he adapts from a well-known article by Erich Bethe, his teacher at Leipzig, even if he cuts short all references Bethe assiduously collects for the traces of such pedagogic love in Eastern cultures, from India to early modern Persia.xxxiv

In the case of the Symposium, too, the shoring up of a system of values against the East is retrojected into the classical period, and in that way it becomes part of a continuing method of interpreting this particular system of values. The West appears coextensive with a method that is especially appropriate for the case of Greece where it comes, so to speak, full (hermeneutic) circle. The East stands alone as the absence of development and hence without method. Where does the East start for Greece, though? For Sykoutris, Asia Minor signifies the national and personal homeland alike, ancient and modern, while Constantinople is, in his brief history of Greek text editions, one of the places credited with one of the more successful ventures in editing projects in the later nineteenth century.xxxv Asia Minor is, by implication, the place where method conquered environment, and it is a place that is now lost, due to national politics. Sykoutris, for all that he insist on his intention to turn away from political interference by building a strong argument from classical texts, still does so within a deeply politicized frame.

In his introduction to the Symposium, Sykoutris summarizes and orders the speeches in praise of Eros, which make up the dialogue; the culmination is that of Socrates, who, in order to define who or what eros properly is, first provides a genealogy of Eros the divinity, as the child of Penia (Poverty) and Poros (Resourcefulness), and then recounts
the teachings he himself received from Diotima, the “woman from Mantineia”, about the ladder of love that takes us from physical beauty, through desire for the Beautiful itself to the level of pure forms. What distinguishes Socrates’ speech from the others is his definition of Eros not as a god, but as a daimon, between divine and mortal, and between plenty and need, whence his dynamic, and his similarity to the philosopher, between wisdom and ignorance, constantly searching. What Sykoutris adds is a little excursus on the daimon as we perceive it today, when faced with the charismatic power of a thinker, teacher, artist or politician: “we may call it personality (prosopikotita) or talent (megalofyia); the ancients called it daimona”.xxxvi

Sykoutris, with Socrates and Diotima, identifies this notion of the in-between (metaxy) as crucial for Plato in general --- and no less crucial to Sykoutris’ own ideal pedagogy. It comes as no surprise, then, that in the introduction to Weber he includes “the eros of the ancients” among the examples of Weber’s ideal types, as a bridge between the individual and the general, between the specific and the abstract, as a factor shaping cultural history.xxxvii The clearest manifestation is of course Socrates himself, as proven by the arrival of Alcibiades, a figure on the brink of a shining and ultimately failed political career, who offers his own praise speech of Socrates as the desired, yet non-reciprocating lover and the active, valiant citizen, whose love for Truth exceeds all else; Alcibiades, in Sykoutris’ interpretation, is himself a tragic figure whose predicament is seen in analogy to Plato’s struggle between philosophy and politics, in favor of the former: here, too, a choice for a life independent of intervention from outside.
The question of the relative independence of such philosophical *eros* leads Sykoutris to the last section of his introduction: a comparison of Greek *eros* with Christian *agape*, for which again he would have found precedent in Wilamowitz' Plato book of 1919. Despite Sykoutris’ attempt to reconcile the two terms (beyond the Socrates–Jesus pairing), and beyond their obvious differences, it is the peculiar imbalance of *eros* that is of the utmost importance to him. While the love for God and fellow men is a response to God’s love for man, the Greek and especially the Socratic *eros* are markedly non-reciprocal. Sykoutris may well end his comparison, and his introduction, with the insight that “the way up and down is one and the same” (*odos ano kai kato mia*), but this conciliatory tone cannot hide the impression that the Platonic method, which is the basis of the new philology he envisages for Greece, is one of a single, self-sufficient path, which leads inexorably upwards.

Where does this plea for a newly reflective classical scholarship as a profitable and self-evident way of linking classical antiquity and the nation finally leave us regarding politics and cultural politics around 1930? How does it fit into other Greek attempts of the time to position Greece on the cultural map of Europe? A brief comparison with one other ‘manifesto’ of the period may be instructive. The novelist Georgios Theotokas, in his programmatic essay *Free Spirit (Elefthero Pnevma)* published in 1929, had clamored for regeneration and the shift from the Great Idea to new ideas, and for those ideas not to arise out of a fear of Europeanization, but from a firm stance against factionalism and petty party affiliations. In his words: “After the confluence of so many traumas and catastrophes, the exhaustion of values is natural and should not seem strange or
disillusioning to anyone. But we are completely lacking also in the virtues of the soul that will help the birth of new values and will nourish them --- the high and noble sentiments, the desire to surpass ourselves, the need for the Idea". xxxviii This desire is to manifest itself in a new creativity, rather than “watching the guardians being kept hostage” (that, surely, is a conflation of Platonic images!).

For Theotokas, this renewal of intellectual life, the drive to make an impact, is not meant to be understood as a call for institutional revival; quite on the contrary, the universities and state institutions, rather than lead, can only ever follow behind. Instead, his is a plea for artistic creation, that allows for what is peculiar to Greece, yet is only effective in exchange: “A literature acquires international importance only when it begins to exercise influence without, of course, ever ceasing to be influenced”. xxxix Compared to Theotokas, Sykoutris foresees a new, more positive role given to the scholar. In the humanities, the Geisteswissenschaften, where object and subject of study coincide, the scholar develops and works like an artist, creating (or re-creating) his object (thus Sykoutris in "Philology and Life). Likewise, he upgrades (formal) scholarship and its institutions, while insisting they be kept free from state intervention. As opposed to awakening the daimonic in the artist (incidentally one of the key terms recurring in Theotokas’ fiction as well), the Socratic daimonion, the faculty that is mediating like a daimon, becomes in Sykoutris' vision of a new philology the attribute of the true philosopher and scholar.
Finally, the difference between the two writers, the novelist and the scholar, is expressed through a conception of love as well: For Theotokas, it is the “neediness” of the artist that prompts creativity:

Art is an offering. It gives to others whatever is most valuable within the creator; it helps them get to know themselves more deeply, it makes them conscious of the value of life, it uplifts them. Perhaps this disposition of the poet to give of himself is basically nothing else than a need to be loved as fully and deeply as possible, a need for love incomparably more intense than the need of the average person. Because the poet gives of himself not only to one particular person but to the vast and unknown human mass and also to those yet unborn, the greatest desire of his life (this diabolical disposition called ambition) is to continue to give of himself even after his death.\textsuperscript{xii}

In contrast stands the philosopher, whose \textit{eros} drives him on, regardless of and beyond return. Sykoutris makes a plea for the scholarly life as the most fulfilled; for a self-sufficiency that does not need reciprocity; a renaissance rather than an avant-garde, which would render the relationship to Europe not one of neediness but of belated likeness. European history, for Sykoutris as much as for Jaeger, is best understood anyway as a series of renaissances, each in response to crisis. In that view, the role of antiquity today, likewise, is not that of a catalyst for the avant-garde, so to speak, but as a means of focusing and connecting fragments.\textsuperscript{xii} All in all, his is a program of self-
sufficiency, both national and on the level of the scholar within the nation, afforded by a Platonic ladder of cultural interpretation.

The "Life" of the Nation

Sykoutris, across his works, build (on) a structure in which the pursuit of classical education comes to seem the most natural and logical action for the modern Greek nation --- just as striving for wisdom is in the Socratic dialogues ---, as it is the attitude that reveals its place within Europe. The foundation in Greek antiquity is for him not so much a historical as a logical step. As to the question how the individual and the national relate in the Greek case, the ‘Platonic option’ makes a near-watertight case for their link as well: the education and formation of the individual, the act of self-understanding entails an understanding of the national, as the individual writ large, not as normative but as descriptive. Sykoutris combines Jaeger’s ‘hard’ Platonic pedagogy of a Greek universalism with a somewhat ‘softer’ (Weberian) reading of the task of science, to trace the construction of values in history. When it comes to Modern Greece, of course, these two strands of the universal and the historically particular seem to come together in this line of argument in all too tight a fit. The modern is understood only by way of historical interpretation of the classical, and it comes to equal the national. The national, in turn, relates to Europe as the individual does to the nation: in ever increasing circles of analogy and mutually reinforcing levels of interpretation, in which classical knowledge serves as its most fitting motor. The fact that these analogies owe strongly to an organic and biological model of history and of the nation, and operate with its imagery (including
that of family generations), strengthens yet more a link, natural as well as pedagogic, between the contemporary Greek nation and classical Greece.

More broadly speaking, however, the selectiveness with which Sykoutris combines tendencies not usually seen together, such as Jaeger and Weber, or usually seen as opposite, such as Jaeger and Wilamowitz, one insisting on a new Klassik, the other deeply historicizing in an ostensibly ‘un-classical’ way, can also bring out what they share. In the German tradition, for sure, historicism, that is to say historical relativism, on the one hand, and normativity beyond history on the other hand have more often been productive paradoxes rather than opposite categories, and they have been exercised together, especially with regard to the culture of classical, Greek antiquity, at least since Winckelmann’s account of Greek art, or Schiller’s categories of the naive and the sentimental. This, together with the strong notion of historiography as a reflexive act of interpretation that sets human reason in analogy to the object it studies, allows for a particularly easy route into reading the nation as a collective individual.

When Sykoutris invokes the “Spiritual Life of the Nation”, therefore, there is not only the backdrop of a European-wide rhetoric describing the nation in terms of biology and the philosophy of life, but there lingers also an older, never quite lost, paradigm of classical scholarship that claims as its objective a biography of antiquity, a paradigm well integrated into disciplinary history, it easily allows for extrapolation to a national discourse, for better or worse. In any case, as a dominant analogy and a paradigm it
should be interrogated anew every so often, not just within the critique of nationalism, but also within the self-reflection of classical scholarship.

In the case of classical philology in Greece, ca. 1930, the continuous back-loop of individual (including the individual scholar), nation and classical culture may seem to yield particularly extreme results. However, Sykoutris’ readings also suggest that reflection and direct or indirect claims about the role of the classical scholar in society are part of classical scholarship most elsewhere, too. The translation of such different attitudes as Jaeger’s and Weber’s into a different national context reveals some of the currents shared by both, not least about how to position the scholar in a national society.

The *Symposium*, in contrast to other (at least early) Socratic dialogues, takes place in a small select circle, and it forgoes the usual, slow picking on an interlocutor, the slow and painful drawing out of shared premises and assumptions leading to *aporia*, in favor of the abbreviated, highly articulate and much less uneven exchange between Agathon, the rhetorically highly skilled prize-winner at the Dramatic Festival, and Socrates on the one hand, and between Socrates and the mystical Diotima on the other. Sykoutris’ vision seems to have fallen prey to a debate that ended in an arena very different from the academy he envisaged, and with entirely different means. The *koulouropolai*, who objected to Sykoutris’ allegedly anti-national and immoral sentiment, certainly belong to the world of the marketplace, but the Socrates who was at home and at work there is certainly not the subject of Sykoutris’ Plato.
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* This paper has benefited much from the comments of audiences at Chicago, Thessaloniki, Oxford, and Vienna, particularly from Zeta Farinou-Malamatari, Peter Mackridge, Dimitris Papanikolaou, and Maria Stassinopoulou.

i The series was launched in 1804 with an edition of Heliodorus' *Aithiopica* --- maybe a nod to the then dominance of narrative fiction as a modern genre, tracing its ancient lineage and hence Greece's competitiveness among the reading nations.

ii For the editor as author Gumbrecht (2004); for editing as a feature of cultural nationalism Leerssen (2006).

iii The bibliography on this topic is large; some useful accounts, though differing in their focus, in Herzfeld (1982); Gourgouris (1996); Peckham (2001); Hamilakis (2007).

iv The examples over the controversy are numerous; a notorious high (or low) point was probably reached with the 'gospel riots' of 1901, when two demotic translations of the New Testament had aroused suspicions of foreign proselytism (one translation was
promoted by the Protestant Bible Society) and panslavist seditiousness (the other was initiated by Queen Olga of Greece, herself of Russian origin); similar rioting happened over demotic translations of Greek tragedy and of Homer's Iliad; see Carabott (1993). One of the most concise accounts of the language question in the modern period can be found in Hering (1995); on the national and cultural politics of demoticism and its ramifications further Tziovas (1986); on diglossia and katharevousa Mackridge (1990; 2004).


vi For a time-line of the controversy that followed, and specifically for academic review abroad, see Kokolakis (1994), 41.

vii The edition of Aristotle's Poetics, translated by Simos Menardos, introduced and critically annotated by Sykoutris, was published posthumously, in 1937, as volume 2 of the Greek Library.

viii The Platonic overtones of the indicted philosopher, charged with corrupting the young, are obvious. The justifiability of the philosopher’s death (especially as discussed in the Phaido) had also been the subject of a subsequently published lecture Sykoutris had given in 1932. On the evidence and narrative of Sykoutris' death, see Chartokollis (2004) 93--148; the two poems, initially published in newspapers, were reproduced in the standard edition of his essays in 1956.


x Sykoutris himself made the bread-ring sellers (in)famous in a very reasoned 40-page defense against his detractors, which he eventually published in 1937 under title ‘The crusade against the “Symposium”’ (The texts and the koulouropolai)’.
A detailed account is given in Kokolakis (1994). The comparison of the figures of Jesus and Socrates as two strong charismatic personalities became part of the charge of impiety against Sykoutris. In his defense, Sykoutris rightly referred to the Church Fathers as an early source for this pairing. The topos, however, is one with particular traction in the early twentieth century; see for example Said (1994), 5 on Julien Benda, who around 1928 uses the comparison to promote a similar intellectualism of the few, a clerisy of the gifted. Max Weber, likewise, on whom and Sykoutris more below, comments on the two figures in the context of his sociological treatment of the charismatic figure and prophet.

Epistimoniki Icho, 23.12.1936, p. 177f.

His collected German-language works have recently been republished in Greek translation (Sykoutris 2001).

On the reforms in Germany see Cancik (1999); for Greece, Kyprianos (2004), 183--233; Vidali (2005).


Follak (2005) has a good overview of the different approaches to Plato and Plato’s role for German pedagogy since Schleiermacher. The early twentieth century had seen a flurry of new scholarship on Plato as a political thinker and the relationship between individual and state.

For all the appropriate criticism of Jaeger’s reductive pedagogy of an ostensibly absolute fit between method, subject and object of study (for example by Snell 1966), his outlook remained influential. In his edition of the Symposium, Sykoutris made sure to include Jaeger's work in the general bibliography on Plato; and in the entry on Jaeger for
the national encyclopedia, he singles out the concept of *paideia*, which he glosses as *Kultur*.

**xviii** Sykoutris (1956), 104. Sykoutris himself was from Smyrna (modern Izmir), to which, after its conflagration in 1922, he could not return when he graduated from the University of Athens in 1922.

**xix** The examples are plenty. A representative case of the same category is a lecture by the American classicist (and Plato scholar) Paul Shorey, delivered in Vienna in 1915, on classical knowledge as a shared intellectual bond and mediator between Europe and America, with reflection of the national as a precondition for an inter-national cultural identity.

**xx** Zielinski was a classical scholar of Polish-German origins who at the time taught in St. Petersburg. His collection *Die Antike und Wir* was based on a series of lectures delivered before school-leavers in St. Petersburg in 1903, published in German in 1905; Sykoutris translated them in 1923, while still on Cyprus, but did not publish them before 1928, together with a substantial essay of his own.

**xxi** Zielinski (1905), 68.

**xxii** Sykoutris (1956), 95.

**xxiii** The bibliography on the history of classical scholarship in Greece is still painfully thin; apart from Sykoutris’ account, the most detailed is Kalitzounakis (1958), as well as Dimaras (1974) more generally on the history of the Greek educational system and its (failed) reforms.

**xxiv** The last is an almost direct quotation from Plato’s *Phaedrus* 256d, underscoring again his Platonic fashioning of the modern scholar’s life.
“Greek Antiquity and Post-War Spiritual Life” (1936), in Sykoutris (1956), 516--533; 516 n.1).

Sykoutris (1956) 220ff.

Sykoutris (1956), 420--435. The classical philologist Paul Maas was the author of a standard account of textual criticism, Textkritik (1927).

On Sykoutris’ readings of Dilthey and his development of a literary theory, see Niftanidou (2005). Dilthey’s hermeneutics, in turn, had been the basis for the method known as Geistesgeschichte, especially developed in German philology: in this approach, the spirit of an age is thought to be manifest in representative personalities, which accounts for the strong interest in biography, too (for example, that of Goethe or Caesar). Dainat comments on this method of selecting representative personalities as a form of historical interpretative scholarship thus: "the interested audience has a choice made for them . . . by the scholar of literature, who by way of interpretation becomes servant and master of poetry alike" ((1993), 235). Again, the philologist’s and editor’s authority in this approach hints at the relative self-sufficiency and power attributed to the national scholar.

Sykoutris (1956), 508.

Sykoutris (1956), 280. This may also echo the stage of the philosopher “watching (theoron) the great sea of Beauty”, one of the higher steps on the Socratic ladder in Symposium 210d. What is more, Sykoutris uses this passage as the closing line of "Philology and Life".

Sykoutris (1956), 290f.
This echoes almost verbatim Wilamowitz' opening passage of his study of Plato, who also reclaims a new understanding of Plato for the benefit of the German nation: "The task of this book is to allow readers to approach [Plato's] personality and works, as fully as possible, and nothing else. This book wants to allow readers to love him as I do, so that when it comes to what is Eternal and what is Life, he may become for them what he has been for many others since his own days, but is now for only too few, especially amongst us Germans", Wilamowitz (1919), 1.

See Passerini (1999).

The alien-ness of the practice is for Sykoutris somewhat tempered by the exceptionality of the Greeks: while boy-love is allegedly of Doric origin, it is in classical Athens endowed with a higher spiritual meaning, even if Plato appears suspicious of it in some passages. Sykoutris comments on male-male bonding in war, bestowing honor, which he compares with Rilke’s character the Cornet Rilke von Langenau; he also refers to Stefan George in the notes to his introduction; still, he tries to distance himself from educational experiments such “as they were promoted by some in Germany” (‘The Crusade against the Symposium’; Sykoutris (1997), 442). Giving his own abbreviated cultural history of the value of love, Sykoutris quotes Hegel and most of the European canon to define love as the consciousness of unity with an Other.

This is the Zografeios Elliniki Vivliothiki; so in his account of the prehistory of the Greek Library, Sykoutris (1956), 376--382. Incidentally, this venture is presented to have arisen as the private initiative of a small circle of intellectuals and professionals reading Plato together.

Sykoutris (1934), 196.
Sykoutris (1934), 184. Other examples in his, i.e. Sykoutris’, rather eclectic list of ideal types are the fifth-century Greek, the contemporary lawyer, the Renaissance man, capitalism, the *klefts*, the Protestant ethic, German Romanticism and Medieval philosophy.

Theotokas (1986), 199.

Theotokas (1986), 175.

Theotokas (1986), 173.

Thus in “Greek Antiquity and Post-War Spiritual Life”, Sykoutris (1956), 529f.

He also combines the two in yet another interesting way. For Jaeger, education is impersonal, with no great attention to individual teachers or parents. The community (Gemeinschaft) and the state, as they are already present, impress the young instead. He seems to assume that a system based on Greek values and ideas is almost parthenogenic, as it becomes state education; see Follak (2005), 143. Sykoutris, in contrast, takes pains to carve a structurally much more relevant for the teacher and scholar.

From Humboldt’s claim, just for example, that the objective of classical scholarship is to write the biography of the Greek nation (Humboldt (1968), 257) to Wilamowitz’ insistence that the interpretation of a work, by way of textual criticism, gradually builds up a whole, a biography; Wilamowitz (1919), 6.