

“Enlightenment, Emancipation, and National Identity: Koraes and the Ancients”

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Attempting to demonstrate, towards the end of the seventeenth century, that the enslaved descendants of the original possessors of a country “*retain a Right to the Possession of their Ancestors*”, John Locke wondered, “Who doubts but the Grecian Christians descendants of the ancient possessors of that Country may justly cast off the Turkish yoke which they have so long groaned under when ever they have a power to do it?” Many, in fact, did. In his essay “Of National Characters”, published in 1748, David Hume expressed a widely held view when he remarked, “The ingenuity, industry, and activity of the ancient GREEKS have nothing in common with the stupidity and indolence of the present inhabitants of those regions”.

A Greek contemporary of Hume’s might well take offense to his description, and an impartial listener would not be entirely mistaken in considering his attitude towards modern Greece to be divergent from Locke’s. And yet, no less illustrious a modern Greek than Adamantios Koraes, born on April 27th of the year in which Hume’s essay was published, found the essence of these two positions simultaneously correct and inextricably intertwined. After all, by the middle of the eighteenth century, the Greek world had been under Ottoman domination for some 300 years, and liberation was still far off.

From the outset of his brief autobiography, Koraes makes it clear that the absence of education among his compatriots was the principal cause of their predicament. His father, he tells us, was not fortunate enough to receive an education, “not only because the entire nation was, at that time, uneducated (except for a few adorned with a fake education, rather than a true one), but also because he had been orphaned at a very tender age”. Slightly more fortunate on the other side, Koraes was born to a mother who could read, write, and “understand ably the writings of decaying Hellenism”, the daughter of Adamantios Rhysios, “the wisest man, at the time, in Greek philology”, whose library Koraes inherited. According to Koraes, between the two of them his parents supplied the principles that shaped his life in letters. Although incapable, on their own, of educating him and his only surviving sibling, his mother and father instilled in Koraes a love of learning and a sense of interest in and obligation to the common good.

Even though he lived in Smyrna, a metropolis of sorts, Koraes received a rudimentary education supplemented, he tells us, by “abundant caning”, and small though it was, his grandfather’s library was nevertheless more than enough to make him aware very quickly of the limits of his knowledge. This was a time, after all, in which one familiar with the declensions of nouns and conjugations of verbs was hailed as “Λογιώτατος ἢ και Σοφολογιώτατος” [which can be translated loosely as “most erudite or even wise and most erudite”].

Koraes reports his dismay at realizing his inability to read Greek authors properly, and describes the passion that consumed him to begin his education anew and properly. His complaint was, of course, twofold. On the one side was the matter of the language and its relationship to that of the ancients. On the other was the state of Greek education reflected in the inability of modern Greeks to access, evaluate, reclaim, and reproduce texts that were naturally their own. The best, in fact the only, commentaries on classical Greek authors were those of foreigners. Someone in Koraes’ position, therefore, needed not only good training in Ancient Greek, but also knowledge of Latin, so as to be able to understand centuries’ worth of editorial work on the texts, and thus be an intelligent participant in debates about their meaning and import.

For all its hustle and bustle, Smyrna could not supply a teacher of Latin, so Koraes had to confine himself to French and Italian lessons, available mainly for their utility in matters commercial. This new venture, however, was but a small remove from his Greek instruction; at least, he notes, his French and Italian teachers did not cane him.

One wishing to learn Latin could turn only to Western priests, in particular Jesuits, but prejudice against them ran high and, as a result, this was not an easy move to make. Nevertheless, make it he did. Bernhard Keun, a priest in the Dutch consulate was looking for someone to teach him Greek, and was pleased to hear that Koraes required no payment beyond Latin lessons. It turns out, however, that either Koraes had little to teach or that Keun was a very fast learner, for the student caught up with the master in a matter of weeks. Nevertheless, under pretence of need, but really out of benevolence, Keun continued to tutor Koraes for as long as the latter remained in Smyrna.

In fact, Keun’s contribution to Koraes’ education extended beyond Latin instruction. In his library, Koraes found the kinds of sources that took him a step beyond the collection of Rhysios, and was thus able to continue his study not only of his beloved Greek texts but also of Hebrew, a language he decided to take up in preparation for learning Arabic. You see, to learn Arabic, which would have been necessary to a serious scholar of Ancient Greek, he would have had to be taught by a Turk, yet the very name “Turk”, he claims, “caused [him] convulsions”. He thus opted for Hebrew, which he saw as a stepping stone, hoping for an opportunity to someday find a non-Turk who could teach him Arabic.

Naively, perhaps, from his exposure to these treasure troves of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew knowledge, Koraes concluded that the lights of the Hellenic, Roman, and Judaic

civilizations must have emigrated to Europe. How else could one explain that Greeks and Jews knew nothing of their languages, yet Western Europeans did?

Koraes' opportunity to go to Europe came once again through trade. His father wished to expand his business to Holland, and it was decided that Koraes would represent his interests there. He thus boarded a Dutch ship to Amsterdam, where he was received by Keun's friend Adrien Buurt, who became his new teacher. Koraes spent six years in Amsterdam, trying to balance trade and learning, feeling an increasing urge never to return to his enslaved fatherland. In his autobiography, he speaks of his experience in a law-governed society as having transformed his hatred for the Turks into a "maniacal revulsion".

After a brief tour of Europe and return to Smyrna, Koraes secured his parents' permission to study medicine in France, and, in 1782, left for Montpellier, where he remained for six years. In 1788, he went to Paris, just in time to witness first hand the momentous changes that were about to take place. In describing his first reaction to the French Revolution, Koraes notes his surprise at the fact that a nation appearing as light as Aristophanes' Athens could be concealing such a great number of philosophical men, "revealed unexpectedly by the abuse of the then absolute monarchy, and constituted as the legislators of the new state".

The political change in France was the last straw for Koraes who had by that time rejected completely the idea of returning home to live under tyranny. He resolved to devote his energy to furthering the education of his countrymen, a resolution strengthened by his realization that it was "the rise and spread of education that gave birth to the love of freedom in France". Koraes found the preparation and publication of Classical Greek authors to be the "only means" of such an education, and decided thus to devote the sum of his energies to perfecting his knowledge of Ancient Greek, so as to produce such critical editions as could be accessible to the common man. Thus was born the idea for what eventually became the "*Hellenic Library*".

Koraes' admiration for the Revolutionaries was followed by high hopes for the role that Napoleon could play in freeing the enslaved peoples of Europe. Both sentiments, however, quickly turned into disappointment, as the general did not fulfill his promise. For Koraes, the disappointment was all the more intense, as he had hoped that Napoleon's campaigns in Egypt would translate into the beginning of a more sustained war against the Ottoman Empire, and thus bring about the liberation of Greece. Indirectly, however, the First Consul of France contributed to the Greek cause by commissioning a translation of Strabo's *Geography*. As it happens, the man in charge of the project was Koraes' former teacher, Chaptal, who included Koraes in the three-man team charged with the edition. In 1805, the editors presented the first volume of the edition to Napoleon, who by that time had become Emperor. He, in turn, awarded them a life-long pension, and eventually sought to have Koraes appointed as censor for Greek and Greek-related books.

That same year, Koraes also published on his own a volume entitled *Precursor to the Hellenic Library*, launching the series and initiating a string of prefatory remarks,

entitled “Reflections, Extempore, regarding Hellenic Education and Language”, wherein he would address the major educational and political issues facing Modern Greece, which he saw as intimately connected.

The “Proclamation”

Between 1782 and 1805, Koraes had edited and published a series of texts, some of them critical editions of Ancient Greek authors. The Napoleonic commission is but the most visible sign of the fact that he had established himself as something of an authority in this line of work, and the judgment of the experts confirms the imperial favor. Although most of his output during this period consisted of medical and political treatises, he nevertheless published critical editions of Theophrastus and Heliodorus, as well as works on Hippocrates. The Proclamation of the Hellenic Library, however, marked the start of a new phase. This is apparent from Koraes’ opening statement, wherein he turns to those whom he had sought to understand and emulate in his formative years.

Though crucial to someone like him, the copious annotations with which classicists adorned their editions of Greek texts were ultimately useless to the readers he now sought to address. Clearly and unambiguously severing himself from his academic past, Koraes declares his intention to make use of all that he has learned from it in order to produce the best and most accessible editions of essential texts for those who wish to learn the Greek language. These would be unencumbered by the usual apparatus and come without the customary Latin translation, and thus be cheaper but also more useful, forcing Greek and foreigner alike to learn the language without the crutch of a parallel translation.

The customary formalities and clerical considerations that one would expect in this type of announcement are there too, but in this case they have a special significance. After all, this is not a series published for profit. It was to be a long and expensive enterprise, and even though Koraes had been fortunate enough to find donors willing and able to support him over an extended period of time, there was no guarantee that things would be so at the beginning. The long and tortuous story of the publication of his own collected works is but one example of the usual course of such projects. Thus, Koraes offers special praise to the generous Brothers Zosima, the financial backers of the project, and takes the opportunity to call on others, similarly fortunate, to emulate them. Cooperation among many would be required at several levels. Although the publication of the books would be covered by the Brothers Zosima, it would be necessary to establish networks of buyers who could disseminate the works to teachers and worthy students. To that end, Koraes encourages Greeks living abroad to buy copies from booksellers in Vienna, Trieste, Venice, and Livorno, who have been instructed to sell the books to Greeks 20% cheaper than to foreigners, provided they purchase at least ten copies and send them to those, in Greece, who cannot afford them on their own.

Koraes closes the Proclamation with an exhortation to his compatriots and brethren, “those honored with the illustrious name of Hellenes”, to support him by taking advantage of the fruits of his labor. Under Ottoman rule, he argues, those who have been fortunate enough to be born into wealth have only that wealth to separate them from others of their nation. Times are changing, however, and “the Hellenic race has begun to understand that whoever has eyes is superior to the blind, as is the educated to the uneducated, the well-disposed to the ill-disposed, in sum, that the true superiority is only superiority in education and virtue”. To the poor, he gives the same advice for a different reason: “education not only enlightens, but also frees one from poverty and the shame of poverty”. He thus urges all to escape the slavery of ignorance and seize the opportunity to emancipate themselves. Excuses there may have been many in the past, but as schools have been multiplying in Greece, the only remaining one is the absence of books, but that too has now been dealt with through the generosity of the Brothers Zosima.

Between the publication of the *Precursor*, in 1805, and 1827, Koraes published 16 volumes in the *Hellenic Library* and another 13 volumes of so-called “secondary” works by ancient authors, in a series entitled “*Πάρεργα Ελληνικής Βιβλιοθήκης*” [by-works of the *Hellenic Library*]. The former list included two volumes of Isocrates’ speeches, Plutarch’s *Lives* in six, Strabo’s *Geography* in four, Aristotle’s *Politics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*, Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* along with Plato’s *Gorgias*, and Lycurgus’s speech against Leocrates. The latter collection included parts of Homer’s *Iliad*, Onesander, collections of Aesop’s fables and Plutarch’s political writings, and various other works of Greek authors but also a volume of Marcus Aurelius.

This impressive output was not Koraes’ only work during this period, however. He is far better known as a political pamphleteer, a vigorous participant in the heated debate on the past, present, and future of the Greek language, and an active source of advice in the many pressing issues surrounding the liberation of a nation from three and a half centuries of oppression, as well as the founding of a state. Outside of Greece, Koraes is a little-known figure, and for Greeks it is usually the latter aspect of his work that holds the most interest.

For its part, the *Hellenic Library* justifies this view of Koraes, since the very first set of “Reflections, Extempore”, immediately following the proclamation of the series, runs for some 130 pages, most of which have to do with the state of the language and the problems that those who are seeking to educate the Greeks must address. To suggest that one could focus on the broader educational character of Koraes’ “Reflections” while bracketing the language debate, which tends to receive the most attention from commentators, would be to propose the absurd, but I nevertheless would like to err on the neglected side of his prolegomena and focus mainly on some of the educational implications of his proposals, as laid out in three installments: the first volume of the series (1805), the two volumes of Isocrates that followed immediately, in 1807, and the six volumes of Plutarch’s *Lives*, published between 1809 and 1814. Though spanning the entirety of his “Reflections”, this sample does not extend to the prefaces to later works, wherein Koraes addresses matters that pertain to statecraft more explicitly, and, as such, merit their own attention. Needless to say, therefore, the sample is incomplete,

but I think that it suffices to give a rudimentary picture of Koraes' educational principles as they developed in this crucial period. As such, I will not deal with the technical aspects of the language question, except insofar as the form of the language he proposes relates to the educational recommendations themselves and to the identity of the nation and fledgling state. I feel somewhat less apprehensive than I normally would of my choice, for, after all, in his own order, the "Reflections" regard education first and language second.

"Reflections, Extempore"

The bulk of the first set of "Reflections", then, is devoted to linguistic minutiae that address the relationship of the language of Ancient Greece and its Modern counterpart, but from the very outset Koraes makes it clear that there are other reasons why he is interested in these. As he had noted in the proclamation, the absence of books was the last serious obstacle to the education of the nation. He returns to this claim at the beginning of his "Reflections", in order to blame those who follow the general practice of the classicists, by making their books inaccessible to the common man. Texts are encumbered by notes that hinder rather than help the reader, and so-called aids are unhelpful. There are too many grammars, and those are too complex and with no apparent practical payoff. Koraes' principle here is the same that guided his transition from the classics proper to the *Hellenic Library*: the apparatus should be such as to help the reader progress through the text and understand it, and the grammar should be such as to teach the speaker the basic rules of the language. This relatively low threshold is necessitated by the state of the nation and the absence of uniform standards. In his own colorful way, he likens the situation of Greece in 1805 to a naked man: his first concern should be to cover himself; "luxurious Indian fabrics are for those who have numerous changes of clothes"!

In many ways, however, the obstacles erected by the multitude of grammarians are not as significant as those posed by the enemies of philosophy. Koraes anticipates that his reader might wonder why in the course of his discussion of grammar he has used the word "philosophy" as often as he has. There are two reasons.

First, it is impossible to impart any knowledge about any art without philosophy, just as it is impossible to bring any art to perfection without it. This is all the more true of grammar, an art that is inseparable from logic and central to any useful human activity. And, lest anyone be fooled, Koraes explains that this is no laughing matter, nor some abstract, vain concern. In terms reminiscent of the so-called "Socratic paradox", he notes that "wherever you see an ill-willed and twisted man, have no doubt that his malice is the result either of absolute lack of education, or of a poor and unmethodical one".

Second, philosophy has finally heard Greece's desperate cries for help, and has decided to return to its homeland, to cure its wounds, but there are Greeks who, standing on a so-called rock of religion, cast stones upon it, to prevent its entry into

Greece. It is for the sake of the country that Koraes has decided to address them and convince them that they must embrace philosophy rather than reject it. His task, of course, is not an easy one. On a general level, his claim that philosophy has nowhere damaged religion was bound to strike the pious as dubious, at best. Where Greece was concerned, his plea was all the more provocative, coming from a man whose first non-medical publication was a refutation of the religious pamphlet entitled *Paternal Teaching*. Nevertheless, to Koraes the religious reactionaries who resist the re-entry of philosophy into Greece are pseudo-Christians. The true follower of Christ, a religion whose leader is referred to as “Sophia” and “Logos” has nothing to fear from philosophy.

Among the nations of Western Europe, one will find many philosophers who are truly philanthropic and philhellenic, and who await the rebirth of Greece with eagerness. One will also find others for whom the rebirth of Greek glory amounts to death. Whose approval should a Greek strive for, the former or the latter? The opposition to philosophy is thus doubly damaging to the Greek cause, because by preventing its re-establishment it postpones the country’s educational independence, and, as we have seen, for Koraes educational independence is, itself, a prerequisite for freedom.

“Greece’s advantage of old”, argues Koraes, “was its enlightenment of others, not to be enlightened by others”. To stand up once more, the country therefore needs assistance from its own children, not from foreigners. “I call to witness”, he adds, “the whole of Greece, all those who desire her return to her ancient glory”. Absence of philosophy broadly conceived, then, has been the main reason for Greece’s condition, and this will be the main battleground on which the struggle for its revival will be fought. At the level of philosophy itself, what is required is the opening of the playing field, for it is only possible to philosophize properly by means of several doctrines and over a long period of time. Where grammar is concerned, this means introducing a practical, experimental philosophy as the guide on the path that many European nations have taken before Greece, nations that the ancestors of Koraes’ contemporaries had despised as barbarous.

Koraes’ assessment of the problem is not surprising given the lessons that he learned in France. His description of the situation and solution, however, are tricky. Having had, initially, to negotiate his way around the religious opposition, in the end he finds himself in a difficult balancing act between the religious Scylla and the European Charybdis, for he appears to wish to limit the assistance of the foreigners, at least at the cultural level, to whatever benefit can be gained from their temporary custodianship of the Greek classics. The services rendered by generations of classicists have been invaluable in forming the basis for a bridge between Ancient and Modern Greece, but it was now time for the inheritance to pass to the heirs.

It should be said immediately, in his defense, that his position is not a vulgar xenophobic one, and that he makes the best of what is always a difficult situation. He is, of course, more fortunate than others, since there was, after all, a geographical and linguistic connection between the Ancient and Modern Greeks that made his case easier than most. This brings me back to the question of language, which I have been trying

hard to avoid. Of these two claims to patrimony, it had to be the strongest for reasons that are more or less obvious. Geographical criteria, just like religious criteria, would be too broad to be meaningful. Racial criteria would be futile.

But one could argue that linguistic criteria, too, would be insufficient, since many inhabitants of Greece who would not be classified as Greek spoke the language, and many, including Koraes, extended the courtesy of informal Greek nationality to philhellene foreigners. Indeed, Koraes regarded a combination of language, geography, and religion as indicative of national membership, but it is clear that even in this case language holds a special, primary status. There is, of course, the obvious reason that language is the medium for many of the other criteria that one might employ, but in this case the specific language itself makes a world of difference, because it enables Koraes to maintain his balance between Greece and Europe. Even though the regeneration of Greece depended in crucial ways upon the cultural assistance of Europe—Koraes' own work would have been impossible without the generations of classicists that preceded him—the assistance itself was not really foreign, because the medium—the language—was Greek. To use a tired Enlightenment metaphor, this was a fire, discovered by the Greeks and preserved by the Europeans, but one from which Modern Greece could once again light its torch with an easy conscience, since all it was doing was reclaiming its identity.

Considering his *Hellenic Library* a step in the right direction, but nevertheless insufficient for this purpose, Koraes presents a series of proposals towards the establishment, dissemination, and preservation of a Hellenic identity. To return, briefly, to his metaphor of the naked man, the first of these is intended merely for cover. It is the compilation of a textbook that could be used in schools across Greece, to teach the students the proper use of their language, but also to acquaint them with their cultural heritage and show them their lineage. This textbook should be assembled with the practical philosophical principles that he had in mind, so as to serve the ignorant, young and old alike. It should include enough grammatical rules in the beginning to get students going, but should then become the kind of companion that one would turn to for leisure as well as instruction. It should include, in no particular order:

1. certain myths of Aesop,
2. sayings from Chrysoloras and other poets,
3. Isocrates' exhortation to Demonicus,
4. a collection of excerpts from Xenophon and Plato, especially on Socrates,
5. the jokes of Hierocles,
6. certain dialogues of Lucian,
7. 3-4 of Theophrastus' characters,
8. Aristophanes' *Wealth*, purged from its obscenities,
9. Pythagoras' golden deeds,
10. a selection of dicta from Plutarch that could be enriched by adding from Stobaeus,
11. a few moral commands from Epictetus,
12. Cebes' table,

13. the description of Hellenic glory contained in Herodotus's *History*, between chapter 201 of book VII and chapter 100 of book VIII,
14. a few moral proverbs, along with their explanations,
15. a synopsis of Greek mythology

Koraes identifies two obvious omissions from this list: a synopsis of Greek history, which should be published in a separate volume, and Homer, whose work should be represented, but by how much is a question he is not prepared to address. Strangely, he himself is unable to devote time to such an undertaking, but he urges others to consider it. While it is likely that he had his hands full with the *Hellenic Library* and his various other projects, it is less clear why he did not include this first and in many ways most fundamental step among his priorities. I believe, however, that his choice not to do so tells us something about his educational project as he saw it, and to this I will return.

The finer garments of Indian fabrics Koraes offers in the remaining "Reflections", which accompanied his editions of Isocrates and Plutarch. There, he discusses the importance of rhetoric, which he considers a counterpart to grammar, before he delves into a series of more sophisticated steps that would be necessary in order to cement the identity of the nation. In some ways these flow naturally from his interests and setting, but they are nevertheless remarkable. The first of these steps concerns the preservation of manuscripts. One would expect as much from a classicist, but what makes his proposal unusual is the fact that he addresses it to the Patriarchate, and calls upon the leadership of the Church to embrace this cause fully.

His list of specific suggestions to that end includes the designation of a place that will serve as repository for these manuscripts, a space to be called "ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΟΝ ΜΟΥΣΕΙΟΝ" [Hellenic Museum], and which, in addition, will house coins, urns, pillars, inscriptions, and any other remnant of Hellenic art or history that might be discovered. This was a timely and urgent suggestion, coming as it did at the height of the pillaging of Attic antiquities by Lord Elgin, and it may sound less impressive today than when he made it, but a proper assessment of its significance should take into account the state of the audience to which he made it, as well as the fact that the British Museum, for example, was, at the time, just over fifty years old. His own city, the envy of civilized Europe, had only had a public art gallery since 1750, and the Louvre had opened its doors to the public a mere fourteen years before Koraes' recommendations.

The second large step that needs to be taken is the compilation of a dictionary of the Greek language. The absence of a satisfactory dictionary is one of the reasons why there is confusion about the proper signification of terms. Thus, things that have names are treated as though they did not, and quite often the result is that they end up being referred to by foreign words. More importantly, however, a proper list of terms and their meanings will enable users of the dictionary to learn Ancient Greek. For Koraes, the factors that prevented the proper dissemination of the ancestral language to his countrymen are the source of "the race's misfortunes, and the reason why many of the nation's powerful men, being uneducated, do not take care to put an end to them". Throughout his "Reflections", but also in other writings, Koraes engages in juxtaposition

of ancient and modern terms, so as to show how the language has evolved, but also that the modern version is nevertheless firmly implanted in the ancient.

Koraes proposes other measures as well, such as that existing libraries be filled with as many books as possible, that new ones be opened, and that collections of proverbs and other sayings be compiled to supplement the material amassed in the dictionary. Perhaps the most important institutional recommendation that emerges from the “Reflections”, however, is that schools across the country be made uniform and that they conform to a universal standard.



In his autobiography, Koraes notes that the momentous events which he witnessed upon his arrival in Paris and during the first few years of his stay there impressed upon him the necessary and inextricable link between education and liberty. His “Reflections” reveal his consistent attachment to this principle as the starting point from which his various contributions to the national cause must commence. In this sense, he is a genuine child of his age, and yet at the same time his case is also a peculiar one. As a man of letters living in Paris at the end of the eighteenth century, Koraes would have been bombarded with the notion that the French Revolution was the product of the Age of Enlightenment, and that the liberation of the French nation would not be complete without its education. Beyond the pamphlets and essays, however, the actions of the revolutionaries, in their efforts to forge a French national identity under the new regime, would have reinforced that message. In a letter to Lotos, for example, Koraes gives “one of the fullest descriptions” available of the transfer of Voltaire’s remains to the Pantheon, the first of a series of such interments aimed at celebrating the alleged intellectual fathers of the Revolution, and which resulted in the paradoxical coexistence of Arouet and Rousseau, side-by-side, for eternity.

Organized attempts at the creation of continuity with the past are an inescapable part of nationalism, and, for all their similarities, different manifestations bring with them peculiarities that render the study of the evolution of nationalism as interesting and perplexing as it is. Obviously, the character of the nation under construction determines the flavor that an attempt to connect it to the past will take. Thus, for example, militaristic, aggressive nationalist regimes will most likely focus on some aspect of a glorious martial past. It is not surprising, therefore, that leading figures of the Enlightenment across Europe, who described their project as a political transformation originating in the intellect, would turn to the ancient world for inspiration. As their various goals included emancipation—through reason—from tyrannical regimes and oppressive clergymen, the secular political ideals of the ancients became an appealing point of reference.

The universalistic principles of the Enlightenment thinkers, however, also contained the seeds of a political paradox. While reason freed the individual from the yoke of tyranny and exposed him to the possibilities of the brotherhood of man, the demolition of the Old Regime had to be followed by the construction of a new political order, itself as local and confined as the one that had preceded it. Seen in the context of

this constant interplay between the particular and the universal, the various references to the ancient world in Germany, France, and England seem somewhat strange and out of place.

A sign of the genius of Koraes the leader is his realization, from early on, that it was important that Greece reclaim its share of this heritage. What in other cases seemed a somewhat peculiar intellectual, if antiquarian, interest, in the case of Modern Greece was a simultaneous commitment to the universal principles that best encapsulated the move from oppression to freedom, from the old world to the new, but also a return to her roots, her point of departure.

It is easy to dismiss Koraes as a sympathetic if somewhat naïve intellectual, reluctant to become embroiled in the dirty business of national liberation. Such a dismissal, however, does him an injustice, because it overlooks his realist side. His willingness to gamble on a project like the *Hellenic Library* and persevere is the first sign of that side. The decision to move away from cutting edge work on the ancients and focus instead on popular editions for a Greek audience must have been painful and costly to Koraes the classicist. Yet, it was one that he showed no signs of having regretted, even though it cost him the scholarly recognition that he might have otherwise secured among European classicists, as well as the broader recognition and gratitude that he was to receive later, from generations of Greeks to come.

Koraes' reluctance to take on the relatively simple project of the textbook that he proposed for the education of the nation corroborates this interpretation. Quite frequently, he cites his poor health to explain various postponements and changes of plan, as well as why he cannot afford to take on this project, simple though it may be; his "Reflections" are sprinkled with statements of purpose reminding his readers that he must persist and finish what he started. One might argue that given the educational and linguistic debates that Koraes was engaged in at the time, the textbook might have been a better investment of his time than the editions of the ancients. I, for one, dislike hypotheses of this kind, and in any case, it seems that Koraes' work has had an effect on Greek national identity that no textbook, however successful, could match. Besides, the *Hellenic Library* contains the material that would make not only that textbook, but many others besides, possible.

None of this explains, however, *why* he accorded the editions of the ancients the importance that he did. The explanation of his choice lies, I think, in political considerations, and once again we must resist the temptation to think of the scholar as naïve. True, Koraes was one of those who harbored hopes of a Napoleonic liberation of Greece, but he was quite realistic when it came to assessing the state of the Greek nation. It was clear to him that the chaos which characterized the realm of ideas and education at the dawn of the nineteenth century was only one of many signs of weakness. But even under the best of circumstances, what kind of status and influence could Greece hope for upon liberation? It was clear, then, that no advantage, however small, could be wasted, and that this most precious source of attention for Greece, its ties to its forebears, should be seized upon and cultivated with every diligence. To those who might counter that he had no choice in the matter, one has only to point to the

alternative, represented by Kapodistrias: pursuing the protection of and affiliation with Russia, on grounds of religious affinity. By opting for the ancients over the Byzantines, Koraes made a wise choice in more ways than one.

After the start of the Greek Revolution, when anxious to use all his powers to the advantage of Greece, he wrote to Thomas Jefferson for advice on statecraft, the latter responded with a kind letter encapsulating his wisdom from decades of experience in the other great experiment of the age. Clearly moved by his classical education and humanist roots, Jefferson concludes his letter as follows:

I have thus, dear sir, according to your request, given you some thoughts, on the subject of national government. they are the result of the observations and reflections of an Octogenary who has past fifty years of trial and trouble in the various grades of his country's service. they are but the outlines which you will better fill up, and accomodate to the habits and circumstances of your countrymen. should they furnish a single idea which may be useful to them, I shall fancy it a tribute rendered to the Manes of your Homer, your Demosthenes, and the splendid constellation of Sages and Heroes, whose blood is still flowing in your veins, and whose merits are still resting, as a heavy debt, on the shoulders of the living and the future races of men. While we offer to heaven the warmest supplications for the restoration of your countrymen to the freedom and science of their ancestors, permit me to assure yourself of the cordial esteem and high respect which I bear and cherish towards yourself personally.

Th. Jefferson

Koraes' project is largely responsible for the extent to which Jefferson's association of Ancient with Modern Greece seems better founded than Locke's. As Jefferson predicted in his letter, Koraes' countrymen would come to see him as the intellectual father of the nation, and the classics would come to occupy a central, if peculiar, role in the identity of Modern Greece.

Currency tends to encapsulate nationalism in ways that nothing else can, and in this sense it is fitting that following decades of depictions of deities, heroes, and artifacts from Ancient Greece on the various paper bills, in 1978, Adamantios Koraes replaced Democritus on the one side of the one hundred Drachmae bill. On the other side, behind him, was the goddess of wisdom, Athena.