

The Glow of the Ancient World under the Light of St. Photios. ‘Metacenosism’ and Metafunction of Classical Civilization in Christian Civilization*

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The Subject and its Research Approach

The Subject

The subject of the encounter between the ancient Greek spirit and the evangelical truth has often occupied the research and study circles of the humanistic, and particularly of the philosophical and theological studies, due to its indisputable historic consequences. It is a favorite as well as inexhaustible, pivotal topic for our civilization, that comes and returns to the forefront of the thought, attracting the interest of the general public. It touches on deep-rooted spiritual and existential issues, such as the formation of our social fabric of values, as also the confirmation of our identity as a genus and a people, not only of the Greek but above all of the Christian.

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The encounter and the dialogue of secular wisdom and Christian experience is recognized and studied as an essential encounter for the creation and existence of the Western civilization and as an important component for the formation of the universal spiritual achievements. However, often in our case the issue ends up –when it is not trivialized– to be polarized into two extremes, which distort its nature and image. On the one hand the ancient Greek influence on the Greek-Christian version of the encounter between Hellenism and Christianity is emphasized, and on the other hand, the Christian influence on the humanitarian version is diminished. In both cases, the Christian element is –either by “reflection” or not– “insensibly” damaged.

The Method

An approach to the subject through the modern tools of cultural examination of phenomena, such as theories of reception, since it is a matter of taking classical civilization from Christian, and comparative literature, since the means of reception –but also of our examination– are mainly products of literature and texts, it could, in our opinion, offer a safer understanding and a more perceptive distinction of our subject. And since theory is completed in practice, the approach with this interpretative analysis of a representative case, where the reception of classical civilization was applied in the field of Christianity, would determine to a large extent the parameters of the issue.

Saint Photios is offered as an ideal case for study in the light of the title of this paper: “The Glow of the Ancient World under the Light of St. Photios. ‘Metacenosia’ and Metafunction of Classical Civilization in Christian Civilization”¹.

1. At this point, I respectfully thank the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece for the honor of welcoming and I gratefully thank my academic family, the Department of Social Theology and Christian Civilization of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, for appointing me as a lecturer on this glorious occasion. I invite you, in turn and ask you to join me, in the short time of my speech, studying selectively certain aspects of the subject in order to honor the Saint recognizing his contribution but also to draw blessings from his legacies.

The Way of Dealing

In the first part of the presentation, according to our methodology, we will try to determine which reason led Photios to the reading and study of ancient Greek literature –and most importantly– to its inclusion in his ecclesiastical and Christian discourse. We will determine, that is, the principles of his choice.

In the second part we will examine Photios as reader and productive recipient, following the steps of the comparative analysis that we have chosen. In other words, we will try to follow the process of his acceptance of classical education, of its internalization and elaboration, but mainly the process of its interpretation and reinterpretation, with which he achieved the transition from classical to Christian civilization.

The profit to be expected from this approach is to obtain a clearer picture, not only of the result of this action of St. Photios, that gave him the title of the pioneer of the renaissance of letters on his century – this is known and indisputable. Our goal is to gain a clearer picture of the spiritual –and at the same time cultural– process of this action of the contribution of the Saint to the *metacenos* and *metafunction* of classical civilization to the Christian civilization. The terms are taken from the field of Comparative Literature, in which the modern methods of the reading theories and reception theory have been developed, and will be explained on the way². From the beginning we would like to explain that the terms *letters*, *education* and *civilization*, although they differ from each other, in our presentation are used more or less as synonyms or rather as employee concepts, where the wider concept is civilization, encompassing education, which includes letters. A concept that runs through the three circles is *tradition* part of which is ecclesiastical tradition. This parallel use of distinct but related concepts is legitimate, when it comes to the phenomenon of *Kulturtransfer*, the transfer of civilization, that concerns us³.

2. Especially for the methodology of Comparative Literature see G. Veloudis, *Γραμματολογία. Θεωρία Λογοτεχνίας*, Dodoni Publications, Athens ²1997, pp. 276-295. For the application of the method in the analysis of a biblical text see Kyriakoula Papademetriou, «Παύλεια μετάλλαξη αρχαίων ελληνικών ὄρων. Ἡ ἔννοια τῆς σοφίας στὸν ἀπόστολο Παῦλο», in: *Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference “Apostle Paul and the Ancient Greek Civilization”*, Veroia 2004, pp. 191-214.

3. The term *Kulturtransfer* was coined by Michel Espagne and Michael Werner in the

Principles of Photios on the Choice of Reading the Classical Texts

It is clear from his writings that Saint Photios had dwelt upon classical literature and had read all kinds of ancient Greek literature without exception. It is obvious that he had no problem in entering into the works of the heathens, regardless of their secular content, just as he had no hesitation in recommending them to his students for reading and study.

This independent and unreserved attitude of his towards heathen literature is in contrast with the attitude of a large number of theologians of his time, who were skeptical and defensive in dealing with the ancient Greek world. The Byzantine empire had barely managed to escape the storm of iconoclasm and the Church viewed with disbelief the classical philosophy that favored iconoclastic views⁴. Although the encounter between Christianity and Hellenism had already occurred and had yielded fruitful fruits, with most representatives the works of the Cappadocian Fathers, Chrysostom and others, the onslaught of Monophysitism pushed the insecure into introversion.

Consequently, the question arises: How is it explained that Photios devoted himself so zealously to the study of ancient Greek wisdom, and what were the reasons, why he chose to read with particular interest and to promote and recommend this wisdom with special emphasis? We could summarize the answer by pointing out the following important points:

a. *Personal Reasons*

The Saint was fond of learning par excellence and endowed by nature with exceptional intellectual gifts that were attracted and strengthened by the philosophical ancient Greek thought. Moreover, his immersion

1980s, to describe the Franco-German cultural relations, which developed not only from the influences of literature but also from a variety of other factors such as personal, geographical, historical. The rule that emerged is that the comparative grammatical analysis must take into account all parameters of cultural exchange and not just texts. See Anastasia Antonopoulou, Katerina Karakasi, Evi Petropoulou, *Συγκριτολογία*, Hellenic Academic Libraries Link, www.kallipos.gr, p. 50.

4. See V. Tatakis, *Η Βυζαντινή Φιλοσοφία*, transl. from French by Eva Kalpourtzi, Hetairia Spoudon Neoellinikou Politismou kai Genikis Paideias Publications, Athens 1977, p. 133.

in classical education was achieved and strengthened by his upbringing in a family of parents and relatives educated according to the classical standards, by his social and economic family situation, that allowed him easy access to the expensive manuscript codes of the time, but also by his rise to the highest public office of university teacher, politician, and patriarch, that required multilateral knowledge and board training. The description of Niketas the Paphlagonian, his opponent, is characteristic [in our translation]:

This Photios did not come from obscure and unknown people, but from aristocrats and very renowned families, and with regard to worldly wisdom and prudence he was considered the most successful of all those engaged in political affairs. Indeed, he possessed such excellence in Grammar and Poetry, in Rhetoric and Philosophy, and even in Medicine, and in almost every science, that one could say he surpassed all others not only of his own generation but that he was already rivaling even the ancients. Everything had come together in him: natural abilities, education, and wealth — and for this reason every book would find its way to him. Above all, however, there was his ambition, which made him spend sleepless nights reading diligently. Yet even when he had to govern the Church, though it was not fitting for him to do so, he did not neglect the reading of books as a secondary occupation, for the same reason⁵.

b. *Pastoral Reasons*

From the recommendations that Photios makes to his students, commenting on various texts, it seems that his criterion in the choice of reading was the utility and the usefulness of the readings. He writes e.g.

5. Nicetas the Paphlagonian, *Ἰγνατίου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως Βίος*, PG 105, 509A: «Ἦν δὲ οὗτος (ὁ Φώτιος) οὐ τῶν ἀγενῶν τε καὶ ἀνωνύμων, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν εὐγενῶν κατὰ σάρκα καὶ λίαν περιφανῶν σοφία τε κοσμικῆ καὶ συνέσει τῶν ἐν τῇ πολιτείᾳ στρεφομένων εὐδοκιμώτατος πάντων ἐνομίζετο. Γραμματικῆς μὲν γὰρ καὶ ποιήσεως, ῥητορικῆς τε καὶ φιλοσοφίας καὶ δὴ καὶ ἰατρικῆς, καὶ πάσης ὀλίγου δεῖν ἐπιστήμης τῶν θύραθεν τοσοῦτον αὐτῷ τὸ περιῖον ὡς μὴ μόνον σχεδὸν φάναι τῶν κατὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ γενεάν πάντων διενεγκεῖν, ἤδη δὲ καὶ πρὸς τοὺς παλαιοὺς αὐτὸν διαμιλλᾶσθαι. Πάντα συνέτρεχεν ἐπ' αὐτῷ, ἡ ἐπιτηδειότης τῆς φύσεως, ἡ σπουδὴ, ὁ πλοῦτος, δι' ὃ καὶ βίβλος ἐπ' αὐτὸν ἔρρει πᾶσα πλέον δὲ πάντων ὁ τῆς δόξης ἔρωσ, δι' ὃν αὐτῷ καὶ νύκτες ἄυπνοι περὶ τὴν ἀνάγκωσιν ἐμμελῶς ἐσχολακίτι. Ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ πρὸς τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν αὐτὴν, ὡς μὴ ὠφελεν, ἐπεισελθεῖν ἔδει, καὶ τῶν διὰ τοῦτο βιβλίων τῆς ἀναγνώσεως οὐ κατὰ πάρεργον ἐπεμελήθη».

in *Βιβλιοθήκη* about George of Alexandria, biographer of Chrysostom: «Ὁ δὲ συγγραφεὺς οὗτος οὐκ ὀλίγα φαίνεται παριστορῶν· ἀλλ’ οὐδὲν κωλύει τοὺς ἀναγινώσκοντας, ἐκλεγομένους τὰ χρήσιμα, τὰ λοιπὰ παρορᾶν»⁶. With the same reasoning, he notes about the pagan Helladius the lexicographer: «Χρήσιμον δὲ τὸ βιβλίον τοῖς τε συγγράφοις καὶ τοῖς ἄλλως πολυμαθίαν τιμῶσιν· ἔχει γὰρ καὶ μαρτυρίας ῥητόρων τε καὶ τῶν εἰς ποιητικὴν μέγα κλέος ἔχόντων»⁷. It should be noted that the characterization “useful” («χρήσιμον») or not, (i.e. “useless”), is one of the most frequent assessments in the text of *Βιβλιοθήκη*.

His criticism of two pagan erotic novels, that he included in the *Βιβλιοθήκη*, by Achilles Tatius *Περὶ Λευκίππην καὶ Κλειτοφῶντα*, and Heliodorus *Αἰθιοπικὸν* is characteristic. He rejects the first with the comment: «Ἀλλὰ τό γε λίαν ὑπέραισχρον καὶ ἀκάθαρτον τῶν ἐννοιῶν καὶ τὴν τοῦ γεγραφότος φαυλίζει καὶ γνώμην ἐν πᾶσι καὶ σπουδῆν, καὶ τοῖς ἀναγινώσκειν ἐθέλουσι κατάπτυστον τὴν ἀνάγνωσιν ποιεῖται καὶ φευκτὴν»⁸. On the contrary, he praises the second by saying: «Ἐρωτὰ μὲν ἀνδρὸς ὑφαίνει καὶ γυναικός, σωφροσύνης δὲ δείκνυσι πόθον καὶ φυλακὴν ἀκριβῆ. Καὶ ἔστιν αὐτῷ ἢ τοῦ δράματος ὑπόθεσις· Χαρίκλεια καὶ Θεαγένης σώφρονες ἀλλήλων ἔρασταί, καὶ πλάνη τούτων καὶ αἰχμηλωσία παντοδαπὴ καὶ φυλακὴ τῆς σωφροσύνης»⁹.

Apart from the explicit reasoning, for which the one is rejected, and the other is praised, there is another serious reason, for the usefulness, for which the Saint refers to these novels: These were popular readings, that had become religious legends. Their inclusion in the reading list of Photios served to clarify the confusion that had been created in relation to their content and to assess their quality.

6. Photios, *Βιβλιοθήκη*, cod. 96. The quotations from the text of Photios are from the edition R. Henry, Photios, *Bibliothèque*, 8 vols., Paris 1959-1977 and vol. 9, index by J. Schamp, Paris 1991.

7. Photios, *Βιβλιοθήκη*, cod. 145.

8. Photios, *Βιβλιοθήκη*, cod. 77.

9. Photios, *Βιβλιοθήκη*, cod. 73.

c. *Political Reasons*

In the time of Photios, it was considered a necessary qualification for a politician, a senior state official or a leader the formation of a personality on the basis of the standards of classical antiquity and the training in ancient Greek education. The Saint refers indirectly to the need for politicians to study ancient rhetoric, promoting as higher standard Basil the Great and his *Ἑξαήμερο*: «Καὶ τῷ πιθανῷ ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον ἦκεν ἀποκεχωρημένος, ὡς εἶ τις πολιτικοῦ λόγου τοῦς αὐτοῦ λόγους παράδειγμα ἑαυτῷ θείῃ, ἔπειτα τούτους ἐκμελετώη [μηδὲ τῶν εἰς τοῦτο συντελούντων δηλονότι νόμων ἀπειρος ὑπάρχων], οὐδενὸς αὐτὸν ἑτέρου δεήσεσθαι οἶμαι, οὔτε Πλάτωνος οὔτε Δημοσθένους, οἷς οἱ παλαιοὶ ἐνδιατρίβειν προτρέπονται, εἰς τὸ πολιτικὸν τε καὶ πανηγυρικὸν ῥήτορα γενέσθαι»¹⁰.

From biographical testimonies about Saint Photios¹¹ we are informed that he taught dialectic, philosophy, logic and mathematics at the royal University of Magnaura, where “the most intelligent young people” who were destined to exercise the highest political offices studied as well as in his home school. His students were Constantine the Philosopher (the illuminator of the Slavs Cyril), the protospatharios Thomas, ruler of Lykostomion (to whom he dedicated his *Λεξικό*) the emperor Michael III and others. In fact, it is said that the emperor Basil I, when he wanted to recall Patriarch Photios from his confinement in Skepi Monastery in 872 A.D. invoke as a convincing reason, the need to undertake the education of the royal children. Accordingly, we can reasonably assume that the choice of Photios to study and recommend the reading of ancient Greek literature aimed at this kind of “political” training which was one of the main tasks of his life, that he never abandoned.

d. *Theological Reasons*

The reasons for personal love of learning, pastoral care and political education, that moved Photios to the study of classical education, would

10. Photios, *Βιβλιοθήκη*, cod. 141.

11. See P. Christou, «Τὸ διδακτικὸ ἔργο τοῦ ἱεροῦ Φωτίου», *Πρακτικὰ ΙΕ΄ Θεολογικοῦ Συνεδρίου «Ὁ Μέγας Φώτιος»*, Holy Metropolis of Thessaloniki Publications, Thessaloniki 1995, pp. 537-556, where and a multitude of testimonies.

not be valid if the Saint was not based on theological reasons. His choice but also his dialogue with ancient Greek wisdom followed the rules set by the fathers and the teachers of the Church before him, who had studied classical literature. The positions of Basil the Great are representative in his speech *Πρὸς τοὺς νέους ὅπως ἂν ἐξ ἐλληνικῶν ὠφελοῖντο λόγων*: «Ἄλλ' ὅτι μὲν οὐκ ἄχρηστον ψυχαῖς μαθήματα τὰ ἐξώθεν δὴ, ταῦτα ἱκανῶς εἴρηται ὅπως γε μὴν αὐτῶν μεθεκτέον ὑμῖν ἐξῆς ἂν εἶη λέγειν». And: «Πρὸς ἑτέρου βίου παρασκευὴν ἅπαντα πράττομεν. Ἄ μὲν οὖν συντελεῖ πρὸς τοῦτο ἡμῖν, ἀγαπᾶν τε καὶ διώκειν παντὶ σθένει χρῆναι φαμέν· τὰ δ' οὐκ ἐξικνούμενα πρὸς ἐκείνον, ὡς οὐδενὸς ἄξια παρορᾶν»¹². And we all now the examples of the bee and the rose that he uses to show how to choose the good and avoid the harmful.

However, Saint Photios did not dwell only on the general patristic remarks, but went further, the more his preoccupation with ancient Greek literature was, which he incorporated in an admirable way into the Christian teaching. He was a constant and persistent reader of it who conversed with texts and transmitted and imparted their knowledge and culture, and made their word functional and creative in the Church. We will follow the steps of this process in the second part of the presentation.

Critical Process of Reception of Classical Civilization from Photios

Having identified even slightly, the reasons for the relationship that Saint Photios developed with the classical letters, education and their related civilization we will investigate the way they were received by the Saint and the way he inter-acted with them. We are talking about interaction, because in the reading relationship acts not only the reader or the text but also the reader and the text, and in fact the quality of the result of reading depends to a large extent on the action of the text.

12. Basil the Great, *Πρὸς τοὺς νέους ὅπως ἂν ἐξ ἐλληνικῶν ὠφελοῖντο λόγων*, PG 31, 568C and 565C, respectively.

According to Wolfgang Iser, one of the proponents of the theory, the meaning is based on text, which has an objective structure, but also on the reader, who completes it with his own interpretative prerequisites¹³.

The Texts

The texts of classical education have the ability to develop dialogical relations with the reader. They have all the necessary qualities that cause the creation of meaning, such as:

- The value codes, that organize their structure, express timeless and universal values. They are familiar to every reader and do not cause the so-called “aesthetic distance”.

- Their narratives pose questions and enigmas of a universal nature about the essence of things, that invite the reader to answer based on his own assumptions and “expectations”. They have the so-called “gaps” and the “indeterminacies” of narrative, which –it should be noted– do not concern logical gaps and ambiguities, but inclusive and polysemous expressions, that can be developed according to each reader in each reading.

- Moreover, the classical texts of culture are formulated with a wealth of expressive means and with a narrative skill, that attracts and fascinates. Clear words and lucid images evoke associations and connotations in the reader, through which he brings in the play, the elements of his personality, memories of the past, needs of the present and problems that determine his understanding.

The ancient Greek texts owe their cultural glow to these reasons and are recognized as classics. However, their meaning like any meaning, depends on the ability of those who perceive them to decipher the codes, which organize the structure of classical texts, to evaluate and compose their different levels (cultural, interpretative, semiotic, symbolic), to illuminate

13. See H. R. Jauss, *Η θεωρία της πρόσληψης. Τρία μελετήματα*, Hestia Publications, Athens 1995; W. Iser, *The Act of Reading. A Theory of the Aesthetic Response*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London 1978. Cf. R. Holub, *Θεωρία της πρόσληψης. Μια κριτική προσέγγιση*, transl. Konstantina Tsakopoulou, Metaichmio Publications, Athens 2004.

with the appropriate light their aspects, in order to successively meet the expectations of modern people.

The Adequate Reader

Saint Photios, as can be seen from his writings, was an able reader and enlightened interpreter of the ancient Greek literature and its civilization. He can be justly characterised in terms of the perceptual theory as an *adequate reader*¹⁴ of classical texts, because he has the prerequisites to read, that is, to walk through the text through its narrative formation, and to see all its aspects, to answer its questions, completing the polysemous gaps and giving meaning to its multi-power indeterminacies, with his own perceptions formed in Christ.

As an adequate reader, he is first of all identified with the intended reader of the classical works, who is latent in the texts and to whom the text is addressed from the time of its original writing and its edition within the cultural and ideological context of its time. Photios had the opportunity to identify himself, because the classical tradition was preserved prosperous till its time, being admired worthy of imitation, and on the other hand –the most important– because he himself spent time in it and indulged in it with knowledge. Consequently, he is in a position to understand the texts both linguistically and factually, as the educated public of their time understood them. Then, Photios as an adequate reader is able to identify the different perspectives of the text, and to move from perspective to perspective, to organize its elements based on his own criteria, excluding some and projecting others, and in this way to create a coherent meaning.

Photios himself clearly describes the dynamic process of learning and receiving that he has exercised during his “transaction” with classical wisdom, to use yet another theoretical term, that describes this non-linear act of reading, this “transactional” giving and receiving from the

14. See T. Eagleton, *Εἰσαγωγή στὴ Θεωρία τῆς Λογοτεχνίας*, transl. (Greek) M. Mavronas, Introd. – transl. revision Dim. Tziovas, Odisseas Publications, Athens 1989, pp. 121-126.

text to the reader and *vice versa*¹⁵. He writes in *Ἀμφιλόχεια*¹⁶, explaining how is it exercised and acts wisdom in the study of the “good things” [in our translation]:

I do not consider wisdom to be the one that imposes subtleties on words and pulls empty bubbles out of the throat, but the one that handles speech in a measured way, and makes the speech a methodical servant of meanings and seeks the true essence of beings, that which does not err in finding the truth, the one that goes deep into the nature of things by digging with the pickaxe of logical reasonings, because it does not tolerate being stuck in the obvious, but descends in the depth of the objects that it investigates, and from there, as if it were extracting nuggets and grains of gold, it is led to the complete theoretical supervision of beings [...]. With this wisdom the psychic senses are trained in order to safely distinguish good from evil. This wisdom prepares us to enter into dialogue with what is not necessary for us and through comparison with the inferior, to make sure of the higher. For this reason, we also deal with the secular texts in the following way: We throw away mythical references and fantasies, and adopt the cleverly and artfully formed terms, with the benefit of broadening and enlightening the thoughts.

It is indeed surprising in what detail the Saint expounds precisely on the method of reading theory centuries before the theory appeared¹⁷.

15. See Louise Rosenblatt, “Writing and Reading: The Transactional theory”, in: Jana M. Mason (ed.), *Reading-Writing Connections*, Allyn and Bacon, Boston 1988.

16. Photios, *Ἀμφιλόχεια*, epistul. 149 «Περὶ ὄρου ζωῆς», B. Laourdas – L. G. Westerink (eds.), *Photii patriarchae Constantinopolitani Epistulae et Amphilocheia*, vols. 1-6.2, Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana, Teubner, Leipzig 1983-1988: «Σοφία δὲ οὐχὶ κομψεῖαν ῥημάτων προσβαλλομένη καὶ πομφόλυγας διακένων λαρυγγισμάτων ἐξερευγομένη, ἀλλ’ ἢ τὸν λόγον εὐλόγως μετερχομένη, ἢ τῶν νοημάτων ὑπέρτερον τοῦτον φέρουσα εὐτακτον, καὶ τῶν ὄντων ἢ ὄντα ἐστὶν τὸν λόγον ἐπιζητοῦσα, καὶ τοῦ ἀληθοῦς οὐ σφαλλομένη τὴν εὔρεσιν, καὶ διασκάπτουσα μὲν τῶν πραγμάτων τὰς φύσεις τῇ δικέλλῃ τῶν λογισμῶν, ὡς τοῖς προφανέσιν ἐναπομένειν οὐκ ἀνερχομένη, πρὸς δὲ τὸ βάθος κατιοῦσα τῶν τῇ ἐρέυνῃ ὑποκειμένων, ἐκείθεν οἶά τινα ψήγματα χρυσίτιδος γῆς τὰς τῶν ὄντων ἀναλέγεται θεωρίας: [...] ἐντεῦθεν τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς γυμνάζεται αἰσθητήρια πρὸς διάκρισιν ἀσφαλῆ τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ τοῦ χείρονος. αὕτη καὶ τοῖς οὐκ ἀναγκαίως ἡμᾶς προσομιλεῖν παρασκευάζει, τὴν τῶν κρειττόνων βεβαίωσιν τῇ παραθέσει συνιστῶσα τῶν οὐ τοιούτων. ἐκ τούτου καὶ λόγοις τῶν ἔξωθεν συστρεφόμεθα, ὧν τὸ μυθῶδες καὶ πεπλασμένον διαπτύοντες τὸ τῆς λέξεως εὐστροφον καὶ τεχνικὸν ἀσπαζόμεθα πρὸς τὴν τῶν νοουμένων ἐξάπλωσιν καὶ φανέρωσιν».

17. On the prologue use of modern interpretative methods by the Church Fathers see

Productive Reception

Therefore, the reception of classical civilization from the Saint is not “passive”, as it is the case with those who read without processing the experience of their reception. It is not “reproductive” either, as is the case with those who mention, analyze, and even comment on their readings to the public, which in our case is often found in other Byzantine writers and fathers. Saint Photios differs, because he receives “productively” classic wisdom, as he approaches its texts with the light in Christ and perceives them as an occasion and an incentive for creating his own text and construct his own meaning. He does not look in the classical texts for arguments to confirm his Christian positions, but he wisely elaborates their useful points and redefines –innovatively– classical thought according to Christ, he reconstructs it anew.

In the case e.g. of Photios’ literary criticism of the works of antiquity the specialist on Photios, George Kustas, notes that the terminology of Photios is mainly based on the classical tradition, but “is adjusted so that the descriptive adjectives of the literary models are identified with those expressing the ideals of Christian behavior”. For example, the rhetorical term grace, that is attributed to the writing style of Apostle Paul, is associated with the divine grace that inspires his words¹⁸. The whole result of the treatment of Photios is a new work, which converses with the previous one, but deviates from it, it is possible to oppose it, to disapprove of it or even to reject it. In this way, the interest shifts from the radiance of the transmitter to the light of the receiver¹⁹.

Kyriakoula Papademetriou, *Πρὶν τὴ Θεωρία. Προδρομικὴ Πατερικὴ Ἑρμηνευτικὴ*, Ostrakon Publications, Thessaloniki 2017.

18. See G. L. Kustas, “History and Theology in Photios”, *GOTR* 10, 1 (1964), pp. 37-74, 65, note 88. See also G. L. Kustas, “The Literary Criticism of Photios: A Christian Definition of Style”, *Hellinika* 17 (1962), pp. 132-169. The ideal “ecclesiastical style” is according to Photios the clear and simple: «Ἀπλοῦς δὲ κατὰ τὴν φράσιν καὶ σαφής ἐστὶ καὶ ἐγγύς τοῦ ἐκκλησιαστικοῦ καὶ ἀπεριέργου χαρακτήρος» (Clement in his epistles *Πρὸς Κορινθίους. Βιβλιοθήκη*, cod. 126, 95α22). And: «Ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ δὲ βιβλιδαρίῳ ἀνεγνώσθη καὶ Πολυκάρπου ἐπιστολὴ πρὸς Φιλιππησίους, γέμουσα πολλῆς νοουθεσίας μετὰ σαφηνείας καὶ ἀπλότητος κατὰ τὸν ἐκκλησιαστικὸν τῆς ἑρμηνείας τύπον» (cod. 95α42). Cf. T. Hägg, “Photios as a Reader of Hagiography: Selection and Criticism”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 53 (1999), pp. 43-58, 55.

19. Cf. H. R. Jauss, *op.cit.*

The model of this creative transformation of the meanings of classical civilization into meanings of the life in Christ is found in the pioneer and founder of the encounter of the gospel with the nations, the Apostle Paul. Taking for example the concept of wisdom, which Saint Photios elaborates in his letter that we have just seen, we find this mechanism of the new signaling by Paul, and later by Photios:

It is initially acknowledged that there is the wisdom of the world but is disapproved by the Saints and is explained that it is not their main choice: «Κἀγὼ ἐλθὼν πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἀδελφοί», writes Apostle Paul to the Corinthians, «ἤλθον οὐ καθ' ὑπεροχὴν λόγου ἢ σοφίας καταγγέλλων ὑμῖν τὸ μαρτύριον τοῦ Θεοῦ»²⁰. And Saint Photios writes similarly: «σοφία δὲ οὐχὶ κομφεῖαν ῥημάτων προσβαλλομένη καὶ πομφόλυγας διακένων λαρυγγισμάτων ἐξερευγομένη».

Then, the Apostle, keeping the word and the name wisdom, empties the meaning and its ancient Greek content, empties the meaning, reveals its ephemeral side and demystifies it from its glamour: «ποῦ σοφός; ποῦ γραμματεὺς; ποῦ συζητητῆς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου; οὐχὶ ἐμώρανεν ὁ Θεὸς τὴν σοφίαν τοῦ κόσμου τούτου; ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ἐν τῇ σοφίᾳ τοῦ Θεοῦ οὐκ ἔγνω ὁ κόσμος διὰ τῆς σοφίας τὸν Θεόν, εὐδόκησεν ὁ Θεὸς διὰ τῆς μωρίας τοῦ κηρύγματος σῶσαι τοὺς πιστευόντας»²¹. In the same way, the Saint throws away the lie of the secular wisdom: «Ἐκ τούτου καὶ λόγοις τῶν ἔξωθεν συστρεφόμεθα, ὧν τὸ μυθῶδες καὶ πεπλασμένον διαπτύοντες».

Finally, the name of the wisdom is recharged with a new meaning, which proclaims a higher wisdom than the secular one. The Apostle says: «ἀλλὰ λαλοῦμεν σοφίαν Θεοῦ ἐν μυστηρίῳ, τὴν ἀποκεκρυμμένην, ἣν προώρισεν ὁ Θεὸς πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων εἰς δόξαν ἡμῶν, ἣν οὐδεὶς τῶν ἀρχόντων τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου ἔγνωκεν [...] ἃ καὶ λαλοῦμεν οὐκ ἐν διδακτοῖς ἀνθρωπίνους σοφίας λόγοις, ἀλλ' ἐν διδακτοῖς Πνεύματος Ἁγίου, πνευματικοῖς πνευματικᾶ συγκρίνοντες»²². And the Saint clarifies: «Οὐδὲ τὰ περὶ τῆς πρώτης σοφίας, φημὶ δὴ τῆς κατ' εὐσέβειαν, παρέργως ὑμῖν μεμελετᾶσθαι δείκνυτε, ἀλλὰ τῶν ταύτης

20. 1 Cor. 2, 1.

21. 1 Cor. 1, 20-21.

22. 1 Cor. 2, 7-8, 13.

δογμάτων καὶ τῶν πατρικῶν παραδόσεων τὰς ἀκριβεῖς ὑπολήψεις ἐπιζητοῦντες, τὰς μὲν πρὸς τὸ πιθανὸν ἀποκλίσεις ἐκκλίνετε, τὸ πρὸς συγκατάθεσιν δὲ τῆς ἀληθείας ἐν τοῖς τοιούτοις ἀναγκαῖον ἀσπάζεσθε».

In this way, a new concept of wisdom is revealed, characteristic feature of which is the Holy Spirit, that is precisely its distinctive difference from the secular wisdom. God's Spirit, with or without secular wisdom, makes man spiritual, that is wise in conceiving and understanding God's plan for the world. This kind of wisdom is not part of the secular wisdom, although it may be contained, but is a new dimension of a transcendental reality. Its object is not the science that man can know with his mind, but the relationship between God and man that transcends the human intellect. And its method is neither logic nor rhetoric nor philosophy, but communion with the Holy Spirit.

The new meaning of wisdom is given in two main expressive ways: on the one hand the new semantic features acquired by the meaning of the word are thoroughly analyzed, which are framed with a context Christian meaning, and on the other hand special linguistic definitions of quality are used that are conveyed with the word and inextricably govern it, such as: (σοφία) ἐν Χριστῷ "(wisdom) in Christ," ἐν χάριτι "(in grace)", πρώτη (σοφία) "first (wisdom)", ὑψίστη, ἄνω (σοφία), τοῦ Θεοῦ "supreme, upper (wisdom), of God". Other linguistic techniques are used in a similar way²³. The new meaning that is born, in order to serve the new meanings of the faith in Christ, is transmitted transferred, handed over to the fullness of the new reality of Spirit, that is of the Church, were it is metafunctioned, functions structurally and is valid in the new terms.

An Impressive Example

We can see an impressive representative example of *metacenos* and metafunction of classical civilization in Christian by Photios in his *Ἐπιστολὴ* to Boris/Michael the Christianised leader of Bulgaria. The

23. See Kyriakoula Papademetriou, *Τὰ Λεξιλόγια τοῦ ἀποστόλου Παύλου. Σημασιολογικὴ καὶ πολιτισμικὴ ἐρμηνευτικὴ ἀνάλυση εἰδικῶν λεξιλογικῶν ὄρων μέσα στὸ Παύλειο corpus*, Ostrakon Publications, Thessaloniki 2017.

Ἐπιστολή has rightly been characterized, in terms of its second part, as a text that belongs to the category of *speculum principis* (a mirror of princes), a grammatical genre that deals with the qualities of the ideal ruler; it has consultative style, didactic and advisory character and is represented by the speeches of Isokrates *Εὐαγόρας*, *Πρὸς Νικοκλέα* and the spurious speech *Πρὸς Δημόνικον*²⁴. The advises of Photios reflect exactly the classical ideal of the ruler, which in the Byzantine years of the Saint can be supported by an education of classical education.

However, in the text of Photios there is no specific and explicit reference to the ancient Greek model, while all his arguments have mutated to a Christian one. The scholars of the work distinguish the first from the second part, defining that the first part includes the “solid” elements of the Byzantine mission, that consist of the decisions of the seven Ecumenical Councils²⁵. This is a fact and is explained by the usual practice of composing a theoretical or theological part and a practical or moral part²⁶, it is particularly explained by the tactic of quoting of “fixed and variable elements of the preaching of the Byzantine mission during the 9th century”²⁷. However, from the perspective of the interpretative

24. See H. Hunger, *Βυζαντινὴ Λογοτεχνία. Ἡ λόγια κοσμικὴ γραμματεία τῶν Βυζαντινῶν*, transl. L. Benakis, Io. Anastasiou, G. Makris, vol. A', National Bank of Greece Cultural Foundation, Athens 1991, pp. 245-256; K. Paidas, *Ἡ θεματικὴ τῶν βυζαντινῶν «κατόπτρων ἡγεμόνος» τῆς πρώιμης καὶ μέσης περιόδου (398-1085)*, Grigoris Publications, Athens 2005. Byzantine Mirrors are delivered by Synesius of Cyrene, Agapetus Deacon of Hagia Sophia, Photios the Great, Basil I, Theophylact of Ohrid, Kekaumenos, Nicephorus Blemmydes, Thomas Magister, Theodore Metochites, Manuel II Palaeologus and Demetrios Chrysoloras (see Soultana Lambrou, «“Κάτοπτρον ἡγεμόνος” στὸ Ἱερῶν καὶ Φιλοσοφικῶν Λογίων Θησαύρισμα τοῦ ἁγίου Νεκταρίου Κεφαλά, μητροπολίτου Πενταπόλεως», in: An. Zachariou (ed.), *Μοναχισμός. Ἱστορικὲς καὶ θεολογικὲς προσεγγίσεις*, [Θεολογικὲς παρεμβάσεις 6], H. Metropolis of Trimithous, Idalio-Cyprus 2022, pp. 357-372.

25. See K. Kornarakis, «Τί ἔστιν ἔργον ἄρχοντος: Ἐπισημάνσεις διαχρονικῆς ἀξίας ἀπὸ τὸν ἱερὸ Φώτιο περὶ τῶν ὄρων καὶ προϋποθέσεων τοῦ ἄρχειν», *Ἡ προσωπικότητα καὶ ἡ θεολογία τοῦ Μεγάλου Φωτίου*, Holy Synod of the Church of Greece Publications, Athens 2011, pp. 649-666, 650.

26. See P. Christou, «Μ. Φωτίου, Ἐπιστολὴ πρὸς Βούλγαρον Ἠγεμόνα», introduction, text, translation and comments, *Ἐποπτεία/Εροπτεία* (February 1992); online: http://www.myriobiblos.gr/texts/greek/fofotios_eisagogi.html.

27. See V. Pheidias, «Ὁ Πατριάρχης Φώτιος καὶ τὸ κήρυγμα τῆς βυζαντινῆς ἱεραποστολῆς», *Πρακτικὰ ἐπιστημονικοῦ συμποσίου «Μνήμη Ἁγίων Γρηγορίου τοῦ Θεολόγου καὶ Μεγάλου Φωτίου, Ἀρχιεπισκόπων Κωνσταντινουπόλεως»*, Aristotle

metacensis and metafunction, an additional observation is proposed, that explains philologically and not only historically, the great thematic and stylistic difference that exists between the two parts.

This long quotation of the dogmatic principles functions as the catalytic transformer of the classical model of the “Mirror”, which immerses that ancient grammatical genre in the Christian rhetoric “way” and transmutes it. This quotation, that is, is not an autonomous element attached to the rest of the exhortatory part of the letter, but an essential part of the structure of its text that concerns its literature form as well as its semantic content. Professor Vlasios Pheidas has already noted as an important element of the organic connection of this part with the rest that in this way it is written down the authentic ecclesiastical tradition, which the ruler must keep in mind for the coordination of his local church with the principles of faith and life of Orthodoxy²⁸. From our point of view with regard to the grammatical mutation we are discussing, we point out that the proclamation of the correct teaching of the Church constitutes that dynamic framework of the context, that gives a full Christian texture to the classical isocratic origin of the “Mirror” and essentially differentiates it from the original. The exhortations that follow, although structurally and linguistically refer to the brilliant speeches of Isokrates, they have now been put in a different light and are “read” differently. Their substantiation and their power do not derive from the moral philosophy of the orator, who advocates that a humanistic teaching of general culture was the key to personal success on a political and private level²⁹, but from the Christ-centered teaching of Church. Moreover, this quotation functions as Photios’ answer to the question that is latent in such a text like: “What is the criterion of good leadership”? It is not practical but the orthodox ethos. In other words,

University of Thessaloniki/Centre for Byzantine Studies Publications, Thessaloniki 1994, pp. 475-482, 477.

28. Vl. Pheidas, «Ἡ εὐθύνη τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς ἡγεσίας κατὰ τὸν ἱερό Φῶτιο», *Ἡ προσωπικότητα καὶ ἡ θεολογία τοῦ Μεγάλου Φωτίου*, Holy Synod of the Church of Greece Publications, Athens 2011, pp. 449-463.

29. See Fr. Montanari, *Ἱστορία τῆς Ἀρχαίας Ἑλληνικῆς Λογοτεχνίας ἀπὸ τὸν 8ο αἰ. π.Χ. ἕως τὸν 6ο αἰ. μ.Χ.*, D. Iakov and Ant. Regkakos (eds. of the Greek edition), University Studio Press, Thessaloniki 2017, p. 591.

the first part is the intervention of Photios, with which he as a reader fills in the gap of the ancient text and solves its indeterminacy.

Evaluation of Photios' Contribution as Cultural Creator

Transformation

It is important to note that the process of *metacenos* and metafunction can be repeated in different cultural data and produce by analogy new results of understanding. After the Apostle Paul followed a series of educated Fathers of the Church, such as Basil the Great before Photios and Gregory Palamas later, who symmetrically accepted and utilized classical wisdom. Photios is among them but with a prominent difference: No one else has dealt with ancient Greek literature as a critical reader and philologist, as the Saint is characterized by modern research. For that reason, his work can rightly be considered programmatic for Christian but as well as for ecumenical human civilization.

Photios the Great was a distinct creative recipient of classical civilization in his own Byzantine civilization. He did not simply sum the good of the ancestral wisdom with the goods of the faith into a pile, even better. Nor did he conceive of ancient Greek literature as maidservant of theology, as it is called and practiced by others. He saw classical civilization as an autonomous entity³⁰, as a common treasure as a treasurer of humanity, which, through his own work, his endowed by the divine grace intellect, utilized and built-together with other Saints, but he thoroughly and prominently-a new civilization with new meanings and new conceptions of God, of the world and of man. We consider that the characterization that is appropriate for such an attempt of *metacenos* and metafunction is not exactly “coupling” or “synthesis”, “integration” or “configuration”, but literary “transformation” and “recreation”.

30. See V. Tatakis, *op.cit.*, p. 133: «Ἐνδιαφέρεται γιὰ τὴ φιλοσοφία καθαρὴ, ὅχι ὡς θεραπαινίδα».

New Creation

In simple words, Saint Photios stands before the glow of the ancient letters with the Light that lightened the world, the Sun of Justice and the true Wisdom. He does not come as a pure relative, who simply admires and cherishes the ancestors, but undertakes, as a rich heir, to manage with his own advanced means the legacy, he integrates it into his own plans, transforms and “reconstructs” it, builds it from the beginning. His purpose was not to add Christian letters to the classical letters, but to transcend them. Nor was his intension to become a Christian Julian, who would work in order to resurrect and revive the ancient Greek civilization, in Christian garment. He worked, as is evident from the result, on the grounds that as the “old” man becomes a member of Christ and is renewed, likewise the ancient civilization in so far as it can become a component of the civilization according to Christ, is transformed.

Within this context, the polarization, referred to at the beginning of our presentation –on the one hand, the emphasis on the ancient Greek influence with nationalistic overtones and on the other hand, the underestimation of Christian influence in modernist terms–, is placed out of space and time and becomes out of date and meaningless, because it obviously does not correspond to things. In the ecumenical space and in the universal time, which is the space and time of the evangelical revelation and ecclesiastical truth, there is no place for ethno-racial or intra-secular ideologies, because it is a recreation, in which everything that participates –whether Greek or humanitarian– is now transformed and therefore new.

The Metacenosia of Koraïs

Koraïs used the term *metacenosia* in modern times to describe the transmission of the lights of the culture of ancient Greece to the West, which lead to the civilization of the West, while Greece under the Ottoman occupation lost its culture and the need to restore it from the civilized West to Greece, “from the baskets of foreigners to the baskets of the Greeks”³¹. Konstantinos Economos focused his confrontation

31. Adamantios Koraïs, «Ἐπιστολὴ ἀπὸ 4.11.1811 (πρὸς τοὺς κατοίκους τῆς Χίου)», *Ἀλληλογραφία*, vol. Γ', OMED Publications, Athens 1979, p. 156: «Ἀλλὰ σήμερον τῶν

with Koraïs on this term of Koraïs, pointing out that in the process of *metacensis* Greeks do not come empty and alien to the classic civilization that is hosted in the West, seeking their rebirth, but come as familiar to a familiar good, repatriating their own goods and not the goods of foreigners, since the ancient Greek civilization originated from Greece and its bed is in Greece. The position of Economos, in other words specifies, that in Koraïs thought classical civilization had been alienated from the Greeks and had been absorbed and adopted by the Westerners from whom it would be received with integrated western characteristics, while in reality, classical civilization had for the time being left its cradle – and we could say in our own words– it had fled to the West, from where it would return with its flourishing Greek characteristics, to develop in its place³². These different assessments as subtle as they are, proved to be weighty, since in the absence of their introducers, they were violated, forced instead of conversing and determined the two powerful currents of the intellectual development of the modern Greek state: the love of antiquity and the xenomania on the one hand, and the Byzantinism and ethno-phyletism on the other hand.

Although in the title of the presentation the word *metacensis* is not borrowed from the terminology of Koraïs, but is used as *terminus technicus* for a broader cultural process, of comparative nature, as we have shown, we believe that its correlation with the theory of Koraïs on the occasion of the person of Saint Photios is appropriate, however in a reverse sense. Photios moves in a culturally unified space, which extends from classical antiquity to his time, with diverse borders in the East and West, but with a stable seat in Constantinople and cohesive fabric Greek education and language. There are not Koraïs' two baskets but a basket, that has been woven by the encounter of classical and Byzantine civilization. Photios receives, transmits and transforms classical civilization into

τελειωμένων τούτων ἐπιστημῶν ἢ μετάδοσις ὁμοιάζει ἀληθινὸν μετακένωμα [...]. Ἡ μετάδοσις τῶν ἐπιστημῶν εἰς τὴν Ἑλλάδα, ἂν ἀκολουθεῖτε τὴν ὀρθὴν μέθοδον, ἄλλο δὲν διαφέρει ἀπὸ τὸ μετακένωμα, πλὴν ὅτι γεμίζομεν τὰ κοφίνια τῶν Γραικῶν, χωρὶς νὰ εὐκαιρώσωμεν τὰ τῶν Εὐρωπαϊῶν».

32. See the PhD dissertation by Alexander Papaderos: Al. Papaderos, *Metakenosis: Griechenlands kulturelle Herausforderung durch die Aufklärung in der Sicht des Koraïs und des Oikonomos*, Verlag Anton Hain, Meisenheim am Glan 1970.

its cradle and regenerates it into a Christian one. He highlights the Church as the only space-time for the realization of a true –with what this word can mean– civilization. The cultural achievements of the 9th century in which he excelled, and of the following 14th century, which unfolded in its footsteps, demonstrates a renaissance, in front of which the renaissance of Korais pales.

Photios as a Model for Reading Modern Civilization

Of course, today the standards have changed. The ancient classical civilization is trivial and does not move modern man. The Byzantine Christian civilization is otherworldly and does not attract. Therefore, what remains is only the antiquary interest and our traditionalist inclination to motivates us to study them and push us to write speeches like the one that we hear today? I think not. Saint Photios is on a course of *metacenos* and metafunction of the entire world, starting from the Lord and the Apostles, to the point where there are Saints, and certainly until now. He is an authentic representative of the living tradition, that can serve as the model that we need today, when our civilization has already begun long ago and by many, to transition to an unknown “example” of human life, mentality, and biotheory, that causes us confusion.

Saint Photios offers us a spiritual way of reading modern civilization through the perspective of Christ and with the prerequisites according to Christ. Every time that we are called to confront modern philosophy, we can come in the way of the Saint, whom this presentation sought to present and make useful with the help of the modern interpretative tools: reception of the world without fear and inferiority, criticism on the basis of the correct interpretation of Christian truth, emptying of the unnecessary and toxic, *metacenos* with awareness of the modern human needs and metafunction in the pastoral way that the love of the Church for man and his salvation can develop. It is an arduous and difficult process, for which we need the enlightenment of the Spirit, to make up for our inadequacy and fill in the “gaps” and the “uncertainties” of our culture.