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# From the ‘Nobleman’s Sword’ to the ‘Flag of the Fascist Ideals’

*The Formation and Development of Ioannis Metaxas’s Intellectual Weltanschauung (1897–1941)*

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## Abstract

This article examines the ideological trajectory of Ioannis Metaxas and his intellectual *Weltanschauung*. It argues that he was strongly influenced by several German developments, including the *Kultur vs. Zivilisation* debate. Furthermore, from the 1920s he explicitly transformed key fascist ideas and drew on those of the ‘Conservative Revolution’. It shows that Metaxas addressed all key historical developments, from the turn of the century, to the establishment of his dictatorship, to the Second World War, through his ideological and intellectual prism: national reconstruction and palingenesis and a new cultural orientation for the Greek nation. Metaxas’s thinking is examined from its formative period in Germany (1899–1903) to his dictatorship (1936–1941). The methodological framework draws on the work of Peter Wagner, who conceives the period from 1870 to 1940 as the heyday of the ‘first crisis of modernity’; the work of Roger Griffin, Aristotle Kallis, and António Costa Pinto centred around the palingenetic, modernist dynamic of fascism; and finally, the notion of ‘intellectual appropriation of technology’ developed by Mikael Hård and Andrew Jamison.

## Keywords

Greece – *Kultur vs. Zivilization* – palingenesis – modernism – Ioannis Metaxas (1871–1941)

## Historical and Methodological Observations

Following Peter Wagner's suggestion, we can consider the early twentieth century and especially the interwar period, with its two crucial turning points the First World War and the Depression, as the culmination of the protracted first crisis of modernity. This saw the transition from 'restricted' liberal modernity to an 'organised' one. We may also conclude that the Greek case fits well in this conceptual frame. According to Wagner, it was not only economic liberalism that came under attack during this period, but also the ideas of democracy and science in a context of formidable ideological anxiety.<sup>1</sup> As Roger Griffin observes, during the same period there was a widespread

conviction that the upheavals of contemporary history were the death throes of the modern world under the aegis of Enlightenment reason and liberal capitalism. But this was not exclusively and only 'cultural despair'. In the immediate aftermath of the First World War not just the avant-garde, but millions of 'ordinary people' felt they were witnessing the birth pangs of a new world under an ideological and political regime whose nature was yet to be decided.<sup>2</sup>

The experience of breakdown was depressive, and at the same time the need for radical transformation was particularly acute. The social, political, and artistic movements of the time sought to bring collective redemption and rebirth, a palingenesis, a new community (national or other), a strong sense of rootedness and health against decadence. Their goal was the creation of a 'new society' and a 'new man'. It is exactly this sense of *Aufbruch* that Griffin identifies at the core of the modernist ethos. This ethos was diffused in all programmatic movements of either the left or the right, or of the various 'third-way' ideologies that emerged seeking for a new order, among which a prominent position was held by the Conservative Revolution movement.<sup>3</sup>

1 Peter Wagner, *A Sociology of Modernity, Liberty and Discipline* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Mikael Hård and Andrew Jamison, eds., *The Intellectual Appropriation of Technology: Discourses on Modernity* (London: The MIT Press, 1998), 7.

2 Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 8.

3 Hans Sluga, *Heidegger's Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); Dick Pels, 'Fascism and the Primacy of the Political,' *Telos* 3 (1998): 39–70; Dick Pels, *The Intellectual as Stranger: Studies in Spokespersonship* (London: Routledge, 2000), 110–130; James A. Gregor, *Mussolini's Intellectuals: Fascist Social and Political Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); James Martin, 'Italian Liberal

Moreover, this ethos prevailed in the distinctive palingenetic, modernist dynamic of fascism and its driving force for a new, post-liberal, fiercely nationalist and anti-communist order.<sup>4</sup> Fascism was drawing from this wider modernist matrix. In the ultra-nationalist and fascist palingenetic projects the programmatic and futural impulse to change history and to transcend the all-consuming decadence after the cataclysm of the First World War, related to a mythicised and 'healthy' past as the source of the inspiration needed to inaugurate a new, revitalised, nomic society.<sup>5</sup> It is in this perspective that we should interpret, according to Griffin, Moeller van den Bruck's call for a 'reconnection forwards', for a need to go back to the future, to the lost sources of spirituality in order to cure the *malaise* of modernity;<sup>6</sup> and, of course, the disastrous dreams of a 'Third Reich' or a 'Third Rome'.<sup>7</sup> This approach would also provide both an understanding of why fascism could attract the allegiance of some avant-garde artists, intellectuals, technocrats and engineers, and an interpretation of fascism as modernism in its own right.<sup>8</sup>

In the case of Greece, the abortive war against the Ottoman Empire in 1897 in which Ioannis Metaxas fought—known thereafter as 'the Misfortune War'—signalled the entry of Greece in the maelstrom of the first crisis of modernity. It provoked a widespread sentiment of national humiliation, which in turn fed a strong longing for palingenetic political and cultural solutions. These desires were mixed with much agonising over whether Greece could be able to fulfil its historical destiny by realising the Hellenic 'Great Idea'; namely, the liberation of the Greek populations who lived under the Ottoman rule in the East and the annexation of these territories to the Greek state, constituted for almost a

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Socialism: Anti-Fascism and the Third Way,' *Journal of Political Ideologies* 3 (2002): 333–350. Mike Hawkins, 'Corporatism and Third Way Discourses in Inter-War France,' *Journal of Political Ideologies* 3 (2002): 301–314; Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, 54–58, 68–69, 114–117, 130, 163, 321.

4 Indicatively: Aristotle Kallis, *Fascist Ideology: Territory and Expansionism in Italy and Germany, 1922–1945* (London: Routledge, 2000); António Costa Pinto, *The Nature of Fascism Revisited* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); Roger Griffin and Constantin Iordachi, 'Fascism,' in *The SAGE Handbook of Political Sociology*, eds. William Outhwaite and Stephen Turner (London [etc.]: Sage Publications, 2018): 548–571; Constantin Iordachi and Aristotle Kallis, eds., *Beyond the Fascist Century: Essays in Honour of Roger Griffin* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

5 Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, 70–117, 178–179; Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde* (London: Verso, 1995), 113–196.

6 Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, 132.

7 Aristotle Kallis, *The Third Rome, 1922–1943: The Making of the Fascist Capital* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

8 Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, 68–69.

century after the War of Independence (1821–1830) the core ideal of the modern Greek state.<sup>9</sup> The one person who benefited from these messianic longings was Eleftherios Venizelos, the main enemy of Ioannis Metaxas. The Greater Greece that Venizelos had dreamed of was to be realised under his charismatic and messianic leadership, the most enduring feature of his legacy in Greek political culture according to Mark Mazower.<sup>10</sup> He was the Prime Minister during the glories of the Balkan Wars—while Metaxas was in the HQ of the Greek Army—and the final years of the First World War, when it seemed that the ‘Great Idea’ had reached ultimate fulfilment. But the price was heavy. Greece came out from the period from 1912 until 1920 deeply divided due to the ‘National Schism’. This refers to the cleavage which originated from the bitter confrontation between King Constantine I (who Metaxas supported) and his Prime Minister, Eleftherios Venizelos. It was triggered by their conflicting visions about how to get through the First World War and realise Greek national ambitions, and which expanded into civil discord.<sup>11</sup>

The failure of the Greek military campaign in Asia Minor, which Metaxas had accurately predicted, and the crushing defeat that ensued, resulted in the tragic exodus of almost 1.5 million Greek people from Asia Minor, to the de facto bankruptcy of the Hellenic ‘Great Idea’, and to an acute ideological anxiety. The temper of the times was well-captured in a text by George Theotokas characteristically entitled ‘There is something rotten in Greece’. His words disclose the nexus which, between apocalyptic fears and chiliastic projects for a ‘new beginning’, prevailed for the greater part of the Greek interwar era:

A world ended in the port of Smyrna, in the Great Catastrophe, a world of legends, dreams, beliefs, noble struggles, and crazy ambitions. The ideological impulses of the Nation were suddenly exhausted, the symbols lost their meaning, while at the same time the institutions lost the spirit that had inspired them. Since then, all our national forces, spiritual and material, have suffered, bravely, a heavy fall, and an entire people, an enthusiastic people, but also an endangered one, has surrendered to helplessness, to fatalism, to defeatism. No brave Will anywhere around us, no concen-

9 Antonis Klapsis, *Πολιτική και διπλωματία της ελληνικής εθνικής ολοκλήρωσης, 1821–1923* [Policy and diplomacy of the Greek national integration, 1821–1923] (Athens: Pedio, 2019).

10 Mark Mazower, ‘The Messiah and the Bourgeoisie: Venizelos and Politics in Greece, 1909–1912,’ *The Historical Journal* 35 (1995): 885–904.

11 Mogens Pelt, ‘The Establishment and Development of the Metaxas Dictatorship in the Context of Fascism and Nazism, 1936–1941,’ in *International Fascism, 1919–1945*, eds. Gert Sørensen and Robert Mallet (London: Routledge, 2002), 143–172.

tration of forces to prepare for a better future. Only the populists rage in this general rut; Black, Yellow, Red exploiters of frustration, they increase the confusion of the spirits, they are about to drain the hearts completely. So, there is no hope for Greece?<sup>12</sup>

The interwar years in Greece was a period of economic development and saw the formulation of a modernistic vision based on technological development promoted by engineers and industrialists.<sup>13</sup> A general optimistic feeling was diffused at the end of the 1920s despite profound difficulties. The interwar period in Greece was also an era of political and social disturbance.<sup>14</sup> The deterioration of social conditions following the Depression despite the fast economic recovery led to the sharpening of the social conflicts and to the collapse of parliamentarism in the mid-thirties.<sup>15</sup> Certainly, interwar Greek society can be described as 'a stressed society', as Roger Griffin characterises Weimar Germany and other Europeanised societies of the period.<sup>16</sup> It was a society in a *liminoid* condition. In this context, various modernists projects and discourses arose, promising a new beginning. Ioannis Metaxas's ideas were amongst them.

### From the Formative Imperial Germany Years to the End of the First World War

Soon after the 1897 'Misfortune War' from 1899 to 1903 Metaxas went to Germany thanks to a scholarship provided by the Greek Royal House for studies in the Berlin Military Academy. There, Metaxas crystallised his previous, somewhat diffuse beliefs against liberal modernity by forming a cohesive *Weltan-*

12 Giorgos Theotokas, 'Υπάρχει κάτι σάπιο στην Ελλάδα,' [There is something rotten in Greece] in *Στοχασμοί και θέσεις: πολιτικά κείμενα 1925–1966* [Thoughts and views: political texts, 1925–1966], eds. Nikos Alivizatos and Michael Tsapogas (Athens: Hestia Publications, 1996), vol. 1: [1933], 249–251.

13 Mark Mazower, *Greece and the Inter-War Economic Crisis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Yiannis Antoniou, *Οι Έλληνες μηχανικοί: θεσμοί και ιδέες 1900–1940* [The Greek engineers: Institutions and ideas 1900–1940] (Athens: Vivliorama, 2006).

14 George Th. Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic: Social Coalitions and Party Strategies in Greece, 1922–1936* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Gunar Hering, *Τα πολιτικά κόμματα στην Ελλάδα, 1821–1936* [The political parties in Greece, 1821–1936] (Athens: Cultural Foundation of National Bank, 2004), vol. 2, 1005–1287.

15 Despina Papadimitriou, *Από τον Λαό των νομιμοφρόνων στο Έθνος των εθνικοφρόνων: η συντηρητική σκέψη στην Ελλάδα, 1922–1967* [From the law-abiding people to the nationalist nation: Conservative thought in Greece 1922–1967] (Athens: Savvalas, 2006).

16 Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, 268–270.

*schauung* strongly determined by, in Karl Mannheim's terms, 'Historicist Conservatism'.<sup>17</sup> He contrasted the leader's instinct and the powers of will, faith, resoluteness, morality, and charisma to rationality, disorder, immorality, and unwholesome individualism; he also contrasted an 'organic' form of imperial state with 'soulless' rational liberal institutions.<sup>18</sup> Metaxas was impressed by Prussian efficiency, a hallmark of Germany at the beginning of the century, according to Eksteins.<sup>19</sup> Observing the ordered way in which people embarked on train platforms of Berlin railway stations, he thought of 'the invisible, but always sensed hand of the state which controls everything'.<sup>20</sup> In Berlin, where Richard Wagner's symphonies were performed and attended with great passion and interest,<sup>21</sup> Metaxas discovered in an apocalyptic way his destiny to do great things. Having attended the *Faust Overture*, he wrote in his diary: *Faust* became my *Gospel*.<sup>22</sup>

Being in Berlin in a period when certain circles reworked the *Kultur* vs. *Zivilisation* debate in an aggressive nationalist, authoritarian, and militarist direction,<sup>23</sup> Metaxas wholeheartedly embraced this thinking. Obsessed with a personal mission to instil morality in Greek society and to secure it from the perceived degeneration connected with its bourgeois modernisation,<sup>24</sup> he emphasised the connection of ethics with the feeling of duty and respect, and, with the cultivation of the personality so that it could become exceptional. He accused liberalism of dissolving the sacred values of the pre-French Revolution social order. Furthermore, he considered equality, justice, freedom, democracy, and peace as a simple masquerade of power claims. Only 'love', the cultivated personality, and the personal 'grandeur' could offer a deeper and steadier foundation to some of these ideals. Metaxas drew two conclusions from this Ger-

17 Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (London: Routledge, 1936), 146–149, 273–283.

18 Christos Christides, ed., *Ιωάννης Μεταξάς, Το προσωπικό του Ημερολόγιο* [Ioannis Metaxas, His diary] (Athens: Govostis, 2006), vol. 2, *passim*.

19 Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Boston: Mariner, 1989), 70–73.

20 Metaxas, [His diary], vol. 1, 467–468.

21 Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*, 76–80.

22 Metaxas, [His diary], vol. 1, 490, 587–589, 648. For Richard Wagner and 'Wagnerism', see Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, 268–269, 298–300.

23 Fritz Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890–1933* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1983); Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations* (Oxford: Wiley/Blackwell, 2000), 71–106.

24 Metaxas, [His diary], vol. 1, 96–99, vol. 2, 316, 325, 371–372; Panayiotis Vatikiotis, *Popular Autocracy in Greece, 1936–1941: A Political Biography of General Ioannis Metaxas* (London: Routledge, 1998), 25.

man experience. On the one hand, as a 'nobleman', his unswerving support for the then Successor and later King Constantine, led him to declare 'I put my sword in the service of my King, and I dedicate my life and my intellect to him'. On the other hand, he recognised the necessity for undermining parliamentarism, stating 'As far as I am concerned, I will do something to drink some parliamentary blood'.<sup>25</sup>

Metaxas viewed all the crucial developments of the period through this conservative and antiliberal standpoint. He constantly contrasted 'the determined and ambitious leader' Constantine to the 'small man' Eleftherios Venizelos.<sup>26</sup> During 'National Schism', he organised a massive, proto-fascist, paramilitary body named *Epistratoi* [The Recruited] who inflicted brutal violence against its pro-Venizelos opponents.<sup>27</sup> Being exiled in Corsica, after the Entente's open pro-Venizelos intervention in 1917, Metaxas interpreted the First World War as, in Ekstein's terminology, as 'a veritable war of cultures',<sup>28</sup> expressing his views in a manner quite similar to that of the German 'Orthodox Mandarins', as represented by Fritz Ringer.<sup>29</sup> Germany's defeat was interpreted by Metaxas as moral collapse and decadence, echoing Ekstein's observations about the diffused German fears of conspiracy at the end of the war.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, he adopted the same stance concerning the Greek territorial expansion in Asia Minor. The result of the War and the 'Catastrophe' led Metaxas to conclude that he should be ready for the acute political and ideological struggles of the years to come.<sup>31</sup>

### The 1920s: A Pro-Parliamentary Interlude?

During the 1920s, Metaxas came to prominence as a politician, founding a new political party, the *Eleftherofrones* [Freethinkers Party]. He attempted to become the leader of the anti-Venizelist camp, and he was the only leading figure of this camp who acknowledged the declaration of the Second Greek

25 Metaxas, [His diary], vol. 1, 500, 526–529, 587–588; vol. 2, 456–462.

26 Ibid., vol. 2, 25–26, 42, 48–49, 89, 94–96, 116.

27 Pelt, 'The Establishment and Development of the Metaxas Dictatorship,' 148; George Th. Mavrogordatos, *Εθνικός Διχασμός και μαζική οργάνωση: οι Επίστρατοι του 1916* [National Schism and mass organisation: The recruited of 1916] (Athens: Alexandria, 1996).

28 Ekstein, *Rites of Spring*, xv, 76, 80, 155.

29 Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins*, 183.

30 Ekstein, *Rites of Spring*, 87.

31 Metaxas, [His diary], vol. 2, 316, 325, 360–367, 453–454, 507, 533; Ioannis Metaxas, *Λόγοι και Σκέψεις*, 1936–1941 [Speeches and thoughts] (Athens: Govostis, 1969), vol. 2: 1939–1941, 348, 360, 361–362, 366–367.

Democracy in 1924. His electoral success in the 1926 elections resulted in his participation in the Unity Government of 1926–1928 where he served as Minister of Transport. Due to this, some scholars tend to believe that, especially during these years, Metaxas was absolutely devoted to parliamentary democracy,<sup>32</sup> which he strategically endorsed in 1926. However, it was during this period that the conservative elements of his thinking were supplemented and reinforced by new fascist influences.

The ideological foundation of his open political activity of the years to come could be traced in some of his thoughts in 1920. Metaxas was in clear opposition to the views on postwar Greek society of Venizelos and Dimitros Gounaris, the executed leader of the anti-Venizelist faction.<sup>33</sup> He stressed the fundamentally uniform character of Greek society, its organic unity and his desire to be its leader. In this perspective, the Free-Minded Party was coming to express and restore such unity that had been wounded by the ‘National Schism’ and the ‘Catastrophe’. It also moved beyond the Venizelist and anti-Venizelist factions which, in his opinion, were unable to grasp the current situation. It sought the regeneration of Greek society as a whole by reinforcing its rural and petty-bourgeois character and by caring for the Greek worker in order for the social revolution to be avoided. Finally, it sought to reinforce the executive power and to achieve technological reconstruction of the nation-state.<sup>34</sup> The conservative ideals that he had clearly declared during the previous years would be materialised by parliamentary and organised, means, unless conditions changed.

The combination of conservative and fascist features was reflected not only in his diary entries but also in his public discourse. Taking a stand against a constitutional provision for the protection of democracy, he explicitly declared the fundamental irrationality of the political field: ‘The transformation of political regimes is a dynamic act which expresses intensive popular energy, and there is not a legal or formal restriction which can either contain it or subject it to rules.’<sup>35</sup> In 1927, while he participated in the Unity Government, he wrote in his diary: ‘I am convinced that our progress is impossible in the context of parliamentary regime’.<sup>36</sup> Also, the fascist cult of action and its supremacy over rational knowledge gained prominence in his thinking: it was ‘action’ that ren-

32 Thanasis Diamantopoulos, *Η Ελληνική Πολιτική Ζωή: Εικοστός Αιώνας, από την προβενιζελική στη μεταπαπανδρεϊκή εποχή* [The Greek political life: From ante-Venizelos's to post-Papandreou's era] (Athens: Papazisi, 1997); Vatikiotis, *Popular Autocracy in Greece, passim*.

33 Mazower, ‘The Messiah and the Bourgeoise,’ 893–900.

34 Metaxas, [His diary], vol. 2, 637–638; vol. 3, 778–780, 802–814.

35 *Ibid.*, vol. 3, 515.

36 Vatikiotis, *Popular Autocracy in Greece*, 243.



dered knowledge valuable by making the latter the genuine expression of the ego; a leader should create 'myths' in order to mobilise the 'blind' masses who were in need of guidance. The primacy of action, the cult of leader's personality, and the creation of mobilising myths would certainly be bound to the national 'rebirth', or palingenesis, and launch a movement against democracy. Furthermore, it was during the same period that Metaxas expressed his outspoken technophilia, considering technology as a crucial factor for Greek social progress.<sup>37</sup>

The signal that times had changed was given by Venizelos himself who in the midst of the Depression triggered a passionate debate concerning who was responsible for the 'National Schism'. The resurgence of the ardent 'National Schism' rhetoric and the two abortive military *coups d'état* (1933 and 1935) that came from the Venizelist camp were welcomed, in a sense, by the radical and authoritarian wing of the anti-Venizelist camp, of which Metaxas was a prominent leader. Venizelos's divisive actions did not provoke Metaxas to abandon democracy and follow his authoritarian inclinations. However, they functioned as the necessary pretext for uncovering their manifestation.

### From the Search for an Authoritarian Exodus from the 'Parliamentary Regime' to the 4th of August Dictatorship

The clear rejection of parliamentarism came as a natural consequence of the growing paralysis of the democratic system. Liberal parliamentarism represented, in Metaxas's thinking, the absence of powerful will, the dissolution of moral values, the masking of vested interest, and the pacifist, unheroic spirit. Moreover, its Greek version was accused of being outlandish, perverse, and corrupted. It undermined the natural unity of the Greek people and substituted them with 'soulless' forms of representation and powerless governments.<sup>38</sup> Still, Metaxas was not alone in his repugnance for parliamentary democracy. The 'Geist' of the era clearly benefited him: at Panteion University in 1932 in a symposium with the title 'Parliamentarism or Dictatorship?' the pro-dictatorship support was vociferous.<sup>39</sup> Newspapers of wide circulation, such as *I Kathimerini* [The Daily] and *Eleftheros Anthropos* [The Free Man],

37 Metaxas, [His diary], vol. 3, 515, 615, 666, 694–696, 841.

38 Metaxas, [His diary], vol. 4, 92–93, 592–595.

39 Spyros Vlachopoulos, *Η κρίση του κοινοβουλευτισμού στον μεσοπόλεμο και το τέλος της Β' Ελληνικής Δημοκρατίας το 1935* [The crisis of parliamentarism during the interwar period and the end of the Second Greek Republic in 1935] (Athens: Eurasia, 2012), 120–122.

which posed the same question in 1933–1934 to prominent politicians, Metaxas included, received similar answers.<sup>40</sup> Venizelos himself did not a priori preclude dictatorship in his search for ways of enforcing the executive power,<sup>41</sup> while his admiration for ‘vital leadership’ was explicit.<sup>42</sup> The prominent liberal intellectual Giorgos Theotokas in 1932 sought political solutions beyond the horizon of ‘rusty’ parliamentarism.<sup>43</sup> The radical conservative intellectual Panayiotis Kanellopoulos argued a powerful, organic state was the correct solution to the interwar crisis.<sup>44</sup> The conservative liberal intellectual Constantinos Tsatsos found liberal ideas on the state’s organisation insufficient, maintaining that they should be replaced by ‘creative’ and palingenetic elements.<sup>45</sup> On the opposing side, the leading communist intellectual Dimitrios Glinos, in a genuinely modernist spirit, hailed the Soviet Union as the embodiment of a ‘new civilisation’ created through ‘the vitality of the proletariat’.<sup>46</sup>

Thus, in a period when the *locus communis* of the Greek political and intellectual spectrum was the quest for dictatorship, Metaxas sought salvation to come ‘by exiting from parliamentarism and the entrance in a new situation of more permanent, stable, and vigorous executive power’. The elections of January 1936, ‘the most fair elections during the Greek interwar period’ according to Gunnar Hering, led to a stalemate. The two coalitions, the Venizelist and anti-Venizelist one, had almost the same electoral percentage and were in need of the Communist Party of Greece in order to gain the parliamentary majority.

40 Metaxas, [His diary], vol. 4, 592–597.

41 Constantinos Polychroniades, *Αι γνώμαι του Ελευθερίου Βενιζέλου περί μεταρρυθμίσεων του πολιτεύματος* [Eleftherios Venizelos’ thoughts with regards to the Constitutional Reforms] (Athens: Papazisis, 1943); Eleftherios Venizelos, *Ανέκδοτοι σκέψεις περί συντάξεως της πολιτείας* [Unpublished thoughts regarding the constitution], ed. Nikolaos V. Tomadakis (Athens: Eleftheria, 1948).

42 Eleftherios Venizelos, *Πολιτικά υποθήκαι* [Political heritage] (Athens: Liberal Club Publications, 1971), vol. 1, 96.

43 Giorgos Theotokas, ‘Εμπρός στο κοινωνικό πρόβλημα,’ [Facing the social question], in *Στοχασμοί και θέσεις: πολιτικά κείμενα 1925–1966* [Thoughts and views: political texts, 1925–1966], eds. Nikos Alivizatos and Michael Tsapogas (Athens: Hestia Publications, 1996), vol. 1 [1932]: 170–197.

44 Panayiotis Kanellopoulos, ‘Το γλωσσικόν ζήτημα και οι εν Ελλάδι πνευματικές κατευθύνσεις,’ [The Language Question and the current Greek ideological trends] *Αρχείον της Φιλοσοφίας και Θεωρίας των Επιστημών* 3 (1933): 265–276.

45 Constantinos Tsatsos, ‘Η αποστολή της φιλοσοφίας του δικαίου εν τω συγχρόνω πολιτισμώ,’ [The mission of philosophy of law within modern civilisation] *Αρχείον της Φιλοσοφίας και Θεωρίας των Επιστημών* [Archive of philosophy and theory of ideas] 4 (1933): 387–421.

46 Dimitrios Glinos, ‘Η σοσιαλιστική επανάσταση στον πολιτισμό,’ [The socialist revolution in culture] in *Δημήτριος Γληνός, Εκλεκτές σελίδες* [D. Glinos, Selected papers], ed. Loukas Axelos (Athens: Stoxastis, 1971–1975), [1932] 39–48.

Two parties with electoral gains, the Communist Party and the Radical Party of General Kondylis, were explicitly against parliamentary democracy, orientating either to Soviet Union or to fascist Italy, respectively. The main parties of each coalition, the Liberal Party and the Popular Party, had been involved during the previous years in attempting to undermine the constitutional order, and also in overt coups. When the Parliament seemed to be immobilised, Metaxas, despite his electoral failure, seized the opportunity to realise his vision. Nobody could argue that Metaxas had not given warning of his intentions. He had already declared that 'it is known as a historical lesson that during a political crisis it is the most extreme ideas that prevail. That is why people correctly feel that the solution should be found beyond parliamentarism.'<sup>47</sup> In sum, liberal parliamentarism, Metaxas argued, was incompatible with the emerging new political era. It was a product of the previous century that had been thoroughly undermined by the First World War and the workers' movement, even leading to its supporters to demand the state's intervention in order to be protected from social revolution. Thus, parliamentarism had become meaningless. In this sense, the 4th of August regime, according to him, was the logical evolution of the tendencies intensified during the interwar years. However, it constituted a 'revolution' too, due to its decisive break with liberal spirit and its 'spurious' Greek version as well as with communism, aiming at the palingenetic renewal of the Greek nation.<sup>48</sup>

Of course, as Aristotle Kallis observes, the ideological nucleus of the 4th of August regime's vision of epoch-defining national regeneration was by no means a particularly innovative ideological platform. The promise of national 'regeneration' had underpinned the political discourse of every Greek government since the mid-nineteenth century, particularly in relation to the pursuit of the Great Idea. Yet, as Kallis argues, Metaxas fully subscribed to the notion that developments in Greece reflected a wider political and social transformation already underway across the continent, especially the undermining of parliamentary democracy. Kallis points out that by identifying parliamentary democracy as the primary cause of alleged national decadence, Metaxas used the establishment of the dictatorship as the first critical stage of a wholesale 'revolt against decadence' and a new beginning in the history of modern Greece. Even though this sense of a new beginning in Metaxas's worldview may have been far more modest in its pace and ambition than the more 'revolutionary' sense of rupture with the (recent) past put forward by the two major fascist regimes of the time, it nonetheless had a 'futurist' orientation seeking

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47 Metaxas, [His diary], vol. 4, 592–593.

48 Metaxas, [Speeches and thoughts], vol. 1, 27–23, 134–135, 248–249; vol. 2, 102–103.

to overcome the paralysing ideological void after the Catastrophe and to move beyond parliamentary order and communist revolution. To this end, Metaxas was ready to use all the resources that he had at his disposal.<sup>49</sup> Obviously, he intended the regime to be a permanent one. His efforts were in line with Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin who sought to create a 'new man', had a lot in common with German Nazism and Italian Fascism, and attempted to reorient Greece to align it with the planned Axis 'New Order' in Europe.<sup>50</sup>

What was also required for such a palingenetic vision was a spiritual version of the 'Great Idea', a new myth. Already in 1935, during his debate with the ex-Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos about who was responsible for the 'National Schism', Metaxas deployed a conservative revolutionary agenda with a striking futural orientation. In the closing article of the debate, entitled 'The Greek New Generation is Able to Restore the Ideals Being Shattered by Venizelian Visitation', echoing Spengler, Metaxas accused Venizelos of destroying the ideal of the 'Great Idea'. According to Metaxas, Venizelos was an authentic representative of the liberal, cosmopolitan, decadent, and deracinated European spirit. Venizelos's emphasis after the Asia Minor Catastrophe on 'materialist' goals was incapable, according to Metaxas, of inspiring people and respond to their vital need for new ideals. This, Metaxas believed, provoked the intellectual crisis of the period and explained the widespread appeal of communist ideas. A new state order based on a spiritual version of the 'Great Idea' which stemmed from the depths of the Greek tradition, history, and language, and which should have a futural orientation, was the 'appropriate' ideal able to provide to the Greek nation and its youth with a sense of mission.<sup>51</sup> In this, Metaxas was not alone: Nazis and fascists had followed the same path in order to mobilize young people in particular. Thus, Metaxas can be included in the 'new conservatism' of the period that, according to Modris Eksteins, realised that it had to do more than merely conserve: in order to rebuild it had to engage in radical reform.<sup>52</sup>

49 Aristotle Kallis, 'Neither Fascist nor Authoritarian: The 4th of August Regime in Greece (1936–1941) and the Dynamics of Fascistisation in 1930s Europe,' *East Central Europe* 37, no. 2–3 (2010): 303–330.

50 Pelt, 'The Establishment and Development of the Metaxas Dictatorship,' 157–167.

51 Ioannis Metaxas, 'Η νέα ελληνική γενεά δύναται να αναστηλώσει τα ιδεώδη που συνέτριψε η θεομηνία του Βενιζέλου,' [Greek youth is able to restore the ideals that Venizelian visitation damaged] in *Η ιστορία του Εθνικού Διχασμού κατά την αρθρογραφία των Ιωάννου Μεταξά και Ελευθερίου Βενιζέλου* [The History of National Schism based on the correspondence between Ioannis Metaxas and Eleftherios Venizelos] (Thessaloniki: Kyromanos, 2003), [1935] 523–529.

52 Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*, 194–196, 255, 311–331.

Inevitably, Metaxas's ideological claims were most uncompromisingly formulated during the 4th of August dictatorship. Expressing a palingenetic, aesthetic conception of political action, Metaxas identified imagination, faith, enthusiasm, soul, spirit and resolute will as the powers to which knowledge and rationality should be subjected.<sup>53</sup> The greatness of any personality, including those of the period such as Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin, was based on them.<sup>54</sup> In his view, the new state of the 4th of August constituted, or was expected to constitute, a collective, organic representation of a unified society. This was because it inaugurated new and direct form of people's representation, challenged the left through its national values and social welfare measures, and created a new kind of civilisation, the 'Third Hellenic Civilisation'.<sup>55</sup>

This renewed ideal for the nation was based on the belief in the linear continuity from ancient Greece to Byzantine Empire, and then to the modern Greek nation-state. Ancient Sparta and Macedonia (Athens was explicitly excluded) would provide the ideal of military discipline; the Byzantine Empire religious belief; and finally, the 4th of August regime itself the idea of Unity. The culmination of this evolution would be the cultural mission of the Greek people to create its indigenous civilisation, avoiding the degenerating influences of the ageing West.<sup>56</sup> The 'Third Hellenic Civilisation', which implicitly recalled the contemporaries 'Third Reich' and 'Third Rome', was determined to function as a new *Weltanschauung*, a new sacred canopy, and a new *nomos*, to use the terminology of Roger Griffin.<sup>57</sup> It had a modernist, futural orientation, and the means of its construction would be modernist too. Addressing the representatives of artists associations, Metaxas urged them:

Instead of being divided into three or four artistic associations, become one. I perceive this unification only as a professional union and not as an artistic uniformity. Within this association there will be an absolute difference in terms of directions, ways of painting, expressive perception, in other words absolute freedom to make one impressionism, the other academism, the third futurism, and the fourth dadaism if you will. There will be no artistic commitment in the New State for the artist.<sup>58</sup>

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53 Metaxas, [Speeches and thoughts], vol. 1, 438–440.

54 Ibid., vol. 1, 18–19; vol. 2, 207.

55 Ibid., vol. 1, *passim*.

56 Ibid.

57 Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, 70–117, 178–179.

58 *Η Καθημερινή* [The Daily], 23 February 1937.

The massive fascist-like *Ethnikí Orgánosis Neolaías* [ΕΟΝ; National Youth Organisation], an institution according to Metaxas with optimistic ideals, robust body, and great stature, would pioneer the modernist attempt to create a 'new Hellenic man'.<sup>59</sup>

Metaxas remained a fervent admirer of modern technology and science. Some requirements were needed for the fulfillment of the progressive mission of technology and science. The first was their integration into the structures of an authoritarian state and to its ideals: fatherland, loyalty to the king, and family and the state. This would facilitate their development by liberating them from the shackles of parliamentarism. The second, was their foundation in faith as opposed to reason and the underlining of their spiritual character. And the third was the clear rejection of scientific neutrality, academic freedom and narrow professionalism.<sup>60</sup> This ideological framework enabled Metaxas to appropriate modern technologies, such as radio and cinema, for the propaganda needs of the regime. It was obvious, as in other 'futural reactionary' movements of the period, that *Kultur* had to impregnate *Zivilization*.

The same framework formed the basis for the alliance of the pro-autocracy engineers with the regime. From the early 1930s, engineers had declared that democratic rule was incompatible with the 'machine age'. The Technical Chamber of Greece under the leadership of Nikolaos Kitsikis elaborated an ideology that grew out of a modest corporatism in 1931 that gradually developed, by 1935, into a version of a technocratic totalitarianism strongly resembling the orthodoxy of the technocracy movement. Kitsikis was a leading figure of interwar Greek engineers, senator of the Venizelist Liberal Party at the end of the 1920s, vice-rector and rector of the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA) during the Metaxas regime, and prominent member of the communist-led resistance organisation the National Liberation Front during the Nazi Occupation when he introduced the NTUA reform along the lines resembling the Stalinist five-years industrial plans. The means for achieving this utopia was the real world of the state bureaucracy and public works, and the approximately two thousand engineers who worked there. As the uncertainties of liberal modernity became more and more unbearable, they exerted ever more fascination over the social *imaginaire*. Moreover, as an emancipated ideal of economic and technological progress was deemed as dangerous as communism, the subordination of the technocrats to the power of the national

59 Metaxas, [Speeches and thoughts], vol. 1, 72–75; Kallis, 'Neither Fascist nor Authoritarian,' 317–320.

60 Metaxas, [Speeches and thoughts], vol. 1, 144, 186–187, 216–217, 238–239, 351–352.

ideals and values was considered particularly desirable. The official journal of the Technical Chamber, *Techniká Chroniká* [Technical Chronicles], published articles that praised the Fritz Todt's highways, Albert Speer's stadiums, Julius Dörmüllers's trains, and Mussolini's foundries. Technocratic totalitarianism was expressed as techno-nationalism: the German-educated Greek engineers were ready to replace Nibelungen's swords with the Parthenon's ancient glory and subject technology to the 'Great Essences' of the Nation.<sup>61</sup>

Metaxas took over what the industrial mania of some entrepreneurs' groups and the rational technocratic utopia of Kitsikis could not accomplish.<sup>62</sup> The so-called 'productive public works', which had been stopped after the crisis in the early 1930s, restarted. The big projects of road construction and land reclamation, as well as the construction of the bunkers at the northern borders of the country in the late 1930s, were largely accomplished during this period. Due to the efforts of the Technical Chamber, the projects were assigned to Greek companies and engineers. At the same time, Greek industry was developed under the protection of the strong authoritarian state. The abrogation of political and trade union liberties made the accumulation of capital much easier, whereas the dictatorship adopted social insurance measures that previous governments had legislated.<sup>63</sup> During the dictatorship engineers stressed the need to belong to a coherent national community, and Metaxas underlined their fruitful association with the regime.<sup>64</sup> Nazi officials showed particular interest in many of these developments, as shown by the visits of Joseph Goebbels and Robert Ley, the leader of the *Deutsche Arbeitsfront* [DAF; German Labour Front].<sup>65</sup> This interest was confirmed through rituals of both great symbolic and practical importance. On the celebrations of the Centennial of NTUA, German Ambassador Prince Victor zu Erbach-Schönberg, after praising the further strengthening of the already close ties between NTUA and 'German science', called for the further deepening of relations and named Constantinos Georgikopoulos and Nikos Kitsikis, rector and vice-rector respectively of the NTUA in 1938, and honorary doctors of the Technical Universities of Munich and Berlin. The German

61 Antoniou, [The Greek engineers], 245, 391–394, 401–402.

62 Pelt, 'The Establishment and Development of the Metaxas Dictatorship,' 152–156.

63 Antonis Liakos, *Εργασία και πολιτική στην Ελλάδα του Μεσοπολέμου: το Διεθνές Γραφείο Εργασίας και η ανάδυση των κοινωνικών θεσμών* [Labor and politics in interwar Greece: International Labor Office and the emergence of the social policy institutions] (Athens: Trade Bank of Greece, 1993), 529–539.

64 Antoniou, [The Greek engineers], 402–403.

65 Pelt, 'The Establishment and Development of the Metaxas Dictatorship,' 161; Kallis, 'Neither Fascist nor Authoritarian,' 320–324.

ambassador, in the presence of Metaxas, was awarded the diploma on which the swastika was prominent.<sup>66</sup>

Metaxas's cultural vision syncretised impulses of technocracy and classical history, traditionalism and modernisation, with a will to bring about national regeneration based on renewed communitarian values. While Metaxas accepted and promoted the modernist dynamic of technology, he exhorted artists to turn to the 'national soul', to be inspired by it and to create 'national art'.<sup>67</sup> Modernists, such as the distinguished cubist painter Chatzikyriakos-Gkikas, were in absolute agreement with such exhortations, while traditionalists, such as Stilpon Kyriakides, found in Metaxas's argumentation evidence for how national and traditional values could contain European influences, cosmopolitanism, and communism.<sup>68</sup> In this case too, with the emphasis being on the 'popular', 'national' soul as the healthy element of the past on which a 'reconnection forwards' should be based, Metaxas drew from a wider cultural matrix.

Even though the relevant elaborations of the period recall Pierre Bourdieu's observation that, in the mythology of intellectuals and artists the 'people' often play a role akin the peasantry in the conservative ideologies of declining aristocracies,<sup>69</sup> the appropriation of the 'people' to provide a new sense of rootedness on which a new beginning should be based became a real battlefield. Here, various actors fought each other in search for the modernist transcendence of what was, according to the 'organicist' models that even some liberal intellectuals had started to apply, now an 'exhausted' and 'decadent' liberal civilisation. Kanellopoulos hailed 'even the rather silent little steps of the popular spirit, steps which leave their traces in the mountains and even in the plains cultivated by the personality of the people of the country'.<sup>70</sup> The so-called Thirties Generation, an artistic movement with aesthetic in addition to political claims, attempted to approach the Greek tradition in a modernist way in order to form a 'Hellenic Hellenism'.<sup>71</sup> Glinos appropriated the folk tradition based

66 *Τεχνικά Χρονικά*, 181 (1939): *Η Εκατονταετηρίς του Εθνικού Μετσοβίου Πολυτεχνείου, 1837–1937* [The Centennial of NTUA, 1837–1937].

67 Metaxas, [His diary], vol. 4, 841–842.

68 Nikolaos Chatzikyriakos-Gkikas, 'Περί ελληνικής τέχνης,' [Concerning Greek art] *Το Νέον Κράτος* [The New State], no. 4 (1937): 126–132; Stilpon Kyriakides, 'Η σημασία του λαογραφικού έργου για την εθνικήν ενότητα και τον εθνικόν πολιτισμόν,' [The significance of the national laography for the national unity and the national culture] *Το Νέον Κράτος*, no. 34 (1940): 645–656.

69 Cited in Zygmunt Bauman, *Legislators and Interpreters* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), 160–161.

70 Kanellopoulos, '[The Language Question and the current Greek ideological trends],' 265–276.

71 Constantinos A. Dimadis, *Δικτατορία, πόλεμος και πεζογραφία, 1936–1944: Γ. Θεοτοκάς, Μ.*



on the Stalinist solution to the national issue as being 'national in the form, socialist in the content'.<sup>72</sup> These modernist and palingenetic reformulations of Hellenic(ity) and Greekness implicitly or explicitly excluded more controversial cultural creations such as 'rebetiko' music, and other Greek identities such as the famous Jewish Greek singer Rosa Eskanazi.<sup>73</sup>

Taken together with the proliferation of initiatives of political and cultural renewal, the modest, albeit genuine and sincere, palingenetic impulse of Metaxas and the regime, explains why a wide range of conservative and liberal intellectuals expressed either their full support for the regime and closely cooperated with it, or aligned with it as far as major issues are concerned. These included Kostis Bastias, Pantelis Prevelakis, I.M. Panagiotopoulos, Miltiades Malakasis, Aggelos Terzakis among others. There were also organic intellectuals of the regime who were already supporters of Metaxas himself. Moreover, various intellectuals who subscribed to the regime's ideological dogmas were outspoken representatives of its fascist orientation. Prominent among them were the leader of security services Constantinos Maniadaakis, who offered seminars on anti-communist action; and Constantinos Kotzias, mayor of Athens and Hitler's acquaintance.<sup>74</sup> They did so either by placing emphasis on the totalitarian principles of the regime,<sup>75</sup> or by naming its ideological enemies as Marxism, liberalism, aestheticism, Freudianism, and feminism,<sup>76</sup> or by stat-

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Καραγάτσης, Σ. Μυριβήλης, Θ. Πετσάλης-Διομήδης, Π. Πρεβελάκης, Α. Τερζάκης [Dictatorship, war, and literature, 1936–1944: G. Theotokas, M. Karagatsis, S. Mirivilis, Th. Petsalis-Diomides, P. Prevelakis, A. Terzakis] (Athens: Gnosis, 1993); Takis Kayalis, *Η επιθυμία για το μοντέρνο, δεσμεύσεις και αξιώσεις της λογοτεχνικής διανόησης στις δεκαετίες του 1930* [The desire for the modern: Commitments and claims of literature intelligentsia during the 1930's decade] (Athens, Vivliorama, 2007); Dimitris Tziouvas, *Ο μύθος της Γενιάς του Τριάντα: νεωτερικότητα, ελληνικότητα και πολιτισμική ιδεολογία* [The myth of the thirties' generation: Modernity, greekness, and cultural ideology] (Athens: Polis, 2011).

72 Άρθρα και μελέτες του Δημήτρη Γληνού στην παράνομη Κομμουνιστική Επιθεώρηση' της γερμανικής κατοχής [Dimtris Glinos' articles and treatises in out-law 'Communist Review' during the German occupation] (Athens: Collectivity for the Educational Research, 2008).

73 Katherine E. Flemming, *Greece: A Jewish History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 93.

74 Mogens Pelt, *Tobacco, Arms, and Politics: Greece and Germany from World Crisis to World War, 1929–1941* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 1998), 185, 189, 191, 208, 230.

75 Dimitrios Vezanis, 'Δικαιώματα και καθήκοντα της νεολαίας υπό το Νέον Κράτος,' [Rights and duties of the youth under the rule of 'The New State'] *Το Νέον Κράτος*, no. 1 (1937): 22–27; Evangelos Kyriakis, 'Οι περί πολιτισμού φιλοσοφικές απόψεις του Ιωάννου Μεταξά,' [Ioannis Metaxas's philosophical views concerning the *Kultur-Zivilisation* debate] *Το Νέον Κράτος*, no. 11 (1938): 824–828.

76 Aristos Campanis, 'Χθες και σήμερα,' [Yesterday and today] *Το Νέον Κράτος*, no. 7 (1938): 259–265.

ing the 4th of August regime was entirely compatible with an antiliberal era and the expectations connected with the 'New Spirit', the 'New Regimes', and the 'New Ideals' of the period.<sup>77</sup> Another expression of the alignment of the Metaxas regime with fascism was the publication in semi-official journal of articles focusing on the 'achievements' of the 'reborn' and 'regenerated' Nazi Germany and Salazar's Portugal.<sup>78</sup>

With the outbreak of the Second World War and the division of Poland, Metaxas identified two poles in modern politics. On the one hand, there were organised, collective orders where the individual succumbed to the community, Germany, Italy, and USSR; and on the other hand, there were countries where capitalism prevailed, England, France, and USA. His diary stated, 'Jews as capitalists and internationalists will support the latter'. And what about Greece? For Metaxas, 'The other countries have not yet decided or cannot go where their ideals push them, or it is not in their interest to go there for special reasons'.<sup>79</sup> In any case, and beyond the regime's ambivalence as far as its foreign policy was concerned, the 4th of August regime became in his view an 'antiparliamentarian, anticommunist, and antiplutocratic state'. As Fascist Italy attacked Greece, and Nazi Germany kept its distance despite the persistent calls for the Third Reich to intervene,<sup>80</sup> Metaxas reflected on the nature of the fascist movement in general, writing:

It does not matter if Hitler and Mussolini started out with a pure and honest ideology. That is possible. The question is whether they retained this ideology in the evolution of the struggle. If they remained faithful to it, if they remained true to their flag at every step, then their struggle was and remained great. If they did not keep to it, if their flag did not stay upright, then their cause was false from the beginning, only useful as a sideshow for their people. Since Greece, on 4th of August, became an anti-communist, anti-parliamentary state, a totalitarian state, a state based on agriculture and labour, and therefore anti-plutocratic, Hitler and Mussolini had to support it, although the 'necessity' brought it closer to

77 Achilles Kyrou, 'Το νόημα της εποχής μας,' [The true meaning of our era] *Το Νέον Κράτος*, no. 1 (1937): 6–12.

78 Vassilios Bogiatzis, 'Από τη "Συντηρητική Επανάσταση" στο Νέον Κράτος: Ξένοι φασίστες και συντηρητικοί διανοούμενοι στα περιοδικά της μεταξικής δικτατορίας,' [From 'Conservative Revolution' to the New State: Non-Greek conservative and fascists intellectuals in Metaxas's dictatorship journals] *Τα Ιστορικά* 60 (2014): 83–106.

79 Metaxas, [His diary], vol. 4, 446–448.

80 Pelt, *Tobacco, Arms, and Politics*, 185–263.

England . . . The decision of both Mussolini and Hitler to turn against Greece was not driven by any ideals symbolised in the flag of their struggle. On the contrary, by beating Greece, they were beating what their flag stood for . . . Only their thirst for imperialism is true. The very thing for whom the English are being blamed.<sup>81</sup>

By beating Greece, Hitler and Mussolini had not only beaten their flag, but they also had attacked the only true fascist loyal to the cause: Ioannis Metaxas himself. In the light of both this quotation, and the previous analysis it may be useful to mention a short reappraisal of the so-called 'Πνευματική Επιστράτευσις' [Intellectual mobilisation] during Fascist Italy's attack on Greece on 28 October 1940. Metaxas's refusal to accept the Italian ultimatum, the declaration of war that followed as well as the victories of the Greek army which were the result of earlier preparations for war, unleashed waves of national pride and honour which the regime attempted to capitalise on. However, it was not certain whether the regime could control this, given the political fermentations that took place during the dictatorship. Even the leader of imprisoned communists, Nikos Zahariadis, declared that all the people should stand by Metaxas against the invasion of Fascist Italy, in an open letter from jail published in the press under regime censorship. As far as intellectuals were concerned, Metaxas followed his ideological principle by reaching out for their commitment to the cause. The vast majority of those already mentioned in this paper (except Glinos who was in exile, and Theotokas who retained his reservations towards dictatorship) responded. At the Supreme Conciliatory Board of Intellectual Mobilisation, those who participated included: Nikolaos Kitsikis, then rector of NTUA; Giorgos Vlachos, editor of *I Kathimerini* newspaper and who, during the bitter 1930s debate, called the Venizelists 'Untermenschen'; and finally Achilles Kyrou, editor of the pro-fascist *Estia* [The Hestia] newspaper and prominent member of pro-fascist, national-socialist, and pro-Franco circles. Members of the Executive Committee as leaders of certain departments were the journalist Dimitrios Svolopoulos, the ex-Venizelist and pro-corporatist Leon Makkas, the prominent university professors Constantinos Tsoukalas and Ioannis Tournakis, the modernist writer Pantelis Prevelakis, and the shipping tycoon and major economic magnate in postwar Greece who energetically supported the Colonels' dictatorship, Stratis Andreadis. George Seferis who was responsible for the supervision of the foreign press,<sup>82</sup> wrote in his *Χειρόγραφο*

81 Metaxas, [His diary], vol. 4, 552–554.

82 *Δελτίον Πνευματικής Επιστρατεύσεως* [Bulletin of Intellectual Mobilisation], Library of the Greek Parliament (Lenorman Street, Peristeri, Athens), 2102Δ', 1, 8–9.

Σεπ '41 [Manuscript September '41] that handpicked members of the what he referred to as the 'fascist regime' did not even refer to a war against the Axis, but against either 'Italy' or 'the Italian military forces'.<sup>83</sup>

In doing their patriotic 'duty', these intellectuals expressed their concern for national rebirth in terms which reflected themes in the worldview of Metaxas and the regime's rhetoric. Tsatsos, Kanellopoulos and others searched for the 'true meaning' of the Greek 'idea' and 'freedom'. A poet whose work shows a deep preoccupation with the theme of palingenesis, Aggelos Sikelianos, husband of Eva Palmer-Sikelianos who was one of the closest partners of modernist dancer Isadora Duncan, stressed the importance of rebirth as 'The true meaning of the Intellectual Mobilisation'.<sup>84</sup> Others expressed their support for the national cause in the opposition to the Italian invasion. In the first verses of a poem entitled '28th of October 1940', written by Rita Boumi-Pappa who later committed to the left, read:

'No!' the Leader loudly shouts like an ancient Athenian  
and the 'No' from his mouth ripped through the streets  
the winds the Greeks everywhere to proclaim it  
and immediately whole Greece loudly shouted 'No!'<sup>85</sup>

Markos Avgeris, literary pseudonym of the doctor and health inspector Giorgos Papadopoulos who during the Occupation and postwar Greece was a central orthodox Marxist literary critic, wrote a poem with analogous content.<sup>86</sup> Other participants in 'Intellectual Mobilisation', such as the German-educated biologist Thrasylvoulos Vlissidis and theologian-philosopher Nikolaos Louvaris, served the quisling governments during the Occupation. Thus, 'Intellectual Mobilisation' raises questions of how the modernist palingenetic impulse was channelled, whether different projects—either fascists, or nationalist, or communist—were served by the same persons with the same modernist zeal, and what would have happened if, as Mogens Pelt and Aristotle Kallis underlined, the Italian attack had not taken place and the Axis powers had prevailed in

83 Giorgos Seferis, *Χειρόγραφο Σεπ. '41* [Manuscript September '41] (Athens: Ikaros, 1980), 51–52.

84 [Bulletin of Intellectual Mobilisation], 10–15.

85 Ioannis Metaxas Archive, Greek State Archives (Daphnis 61, Psihiko, Athens), Κο61Α/paper 13.

86 Markos Avgeris, 'Εσωτερικός διάλογος: "Να ο λαός σου"', [Internal dialogue: 'Behold your people'] *Η Νεολαία* [The Youth], no. 115 (1940): 315.

Europe. This was a possibility that Metaxas personally took very seriously, to the point of preparing his regime to accommodate the fascist New Order.<sup>87</sup>

In this perspective, the reconstruction of Metaxas's ideological journey from reactionary to a moderniser, even revolutionary, blending conservatism and fascism in a way that allowed Greece to align itself with the fascist era dominated after 1936 by the Axis Powers, has more to do with his political ideas and intentions than actual political outcomes. In this sense, the self-description of the 4th of August regime by Metaxas himself as an 'antiplutocratic, antiparliamentary, and anticommunist' one, his repeated declarations for national rebirth and palingenesis, and his claims for a radical, even revolutionary, departure from the decadent 'parliamentary past', should be taken seriously. Even if these intentions were not fully actualised, such declarations and ideas show the direction in which Metaxas moved or wanted to move. Moreover, it could be argued that the fascist elements of his regime were found not so much in its 'external' characteristics—such as the fascist, 'Roman' or 'Ancient Greek' salute—but in the rhetoric of rebirth and the sense of irreversible transformation, and in the repressive, cultural, and institutional means for their implementation. In this light, and given the syncretic nature of fascism as Roger Griffin has so powerfully pointed out, the argument that Metaxas and his regime was 'not *really* a fascist' sounds somewhat essentialist. The 4th of August regime included fascist, authoritarian and conservative elements, combining anti-communism with anti-liberalism and anti-parliamentarism and nationalism. It signalled the decision of some members of conservative and liberal elites to cancel parliamentarism and tried to formulate a solution to acute social and ideological problems of the period within a cohesive national context.

On the other hand, what disqualifies Metaxas's regime as fully 'fascist' is, mainly, its lack of ultranationalism of a genuine populist, mass mobilising dimension. Here, as far as the taxonomy of Greece in fascist studies is concerned, the inclusion of Metaxas's regime by Roger Griffin in what he calls 'parafascist regimes', along with the regimes of Franco, Salazar, Vargas, and Dollfuss, provokes crucial insights. According to Griffin, these regimes were ultimately authoritarian but modernising and conservative but not 'conservative revolutionary' in the spirit of Moeller van den Bruck. They were committed to being aligned with, and belonging to, the fascist era and its alternative modernity in a period where liberal democracy appeared spiritually bankrupt and incapable of resolving the acute material and ideological problems of liberal democratic civilisation.<sup>88</sup>

87 Kallis, 'Neither Fascist nor Authoritarian,' 320–327; Pelt, 'The Establishment and Development of the Metaxas Dictatorship,' 162–167.

88 Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Routledge, 1993), 116–145.

Based on these premises, somebody could stress the antinomies, or better, the 'hybridisation' as Kallis pointed out, of Metaxas's ideology and regime to outline a more complex and dynamic image beyond either their simplistic characterisation as 'fascist' or the total rejection of such a characterisation. Although Metaxas wanted to fascistise the ethos of Greece from above in a manner paralleled in some ways by 'progressive' conservative elements in inter-war Spain associated with the *Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas* [CEDA; Spanish Confederation of Autonomous Rights] and the regime of the first Primo de Rivera,<sup>89</sup> he attempted during his dictatorship to launch state-run organisations—central among them, the EON—to produce the 'new Greek man'. The explicit or implicit references to 'the totalitarian states of the period' from Metaxas and the regime's ideologues clearly showed what was deemed the correct exemplar for the youth organisation. Despite the fact that Metaxas supported the monarchy (King George II had appointed him as Prime Minister and had given his permission for the declaration of dictatorship) and the Orthodox Church (which contrasts sharply with Mussolini's and Hitler's domination and subordination of them in their regimes and drive for fascist autarchy) especially from 1938, Metaxas felt more self-confident to claim independence from these institutions and subordinate them to the state-run organisations, such as the National Youth Organisation. Moreover, while Metaxas had not sought actively to support Franco in the Spanish Civil War, unlike the fascist regimes (Greek war preparation had the absolute priority), like Herman Goering he was not opposed to arms sales, from Bodosakis Powder and Cartridge Company, to the warring factions of the Civil War. Ten per cent of the value of German arms trade to Greece went to Metaxas for the establishment of Metaxas's party machinery and for the propaganda purposes of the regime.<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, while he did not seek to make Greece a member of the Axis Powers, due to traditional and geopolitical reasons which connected Greece to Britain, he made strenuous effort not to estrange Nazi Germany and to follow a neutral foreign policy. It is also useful to remember his diary entrance at the outbreak of the Second World War: 'the other countries have not yet decided or cannot go where their ideals push them, or it is not in their interest to go there for special reasons'. Prominent German officials showed their understanding for such a policy, at least for some time, while at the same time they did not question the sincerity of Metaxas's worldview and beliefs. Finally, fear of Fascist

89 For Primo de Rivera's attempt, see Shlomo Ben-Ami, *Fascism from Above: The Dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in Spain, 1923–1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

90 Pelt, 'The Establishment and Development of the Metaxas Dictatorship,' 158; Pelt, *Tobacco, Arms and Politics*, 159–171, 259–263.

Italy's expansionist goals, which included the Italian bombardment and occupation of the Greek island of Corfu in the summer of 1923 that Adam Tooze and Zara Steiner claim was the first demonstration of fascist aggression,<sup>91</sup> as well as the Italian invasion to Abyssinia in 1935 and Italian engagement in the Balkans, did not lead Metaxas and his regime to reject fascism *in toto*. Apart from his appeals to Britain to guarantee the integrity of the Greek territory, the same appeals were directed to Nazi Germany, and the Germans responded positively to them during 1940 by intervening to order an Italian attack to be avoided.<sup>92</sup> To conclude, Metaxas's regime could be described as a para-fascist regime, but at the same time its strong fascist inclination and dynamic should be properly stressed.

### Conclusions

Ioannis Metaxas formed his *Weltanschauung* and attempted to intervene in Greek politics at the highest level at the peak of the first crisis of modernity. His conservative revolutionary ideals and the German-inspired nationalist standpoint he adopted significantly influenced both his views on future European developments and the mission of the Greek people. During the interwar period, when the whole situation did not only cause cultural despair but also triggered intense longings for new 'sacred springs' of renewal,<sup>93</sup> Metaxas tried to formulate his own 'sacred canopy', a new *nomos* which would solve not just practical issues, but also the problems of modernity as faced by his own country. In his vision for the national rebirth and palingenesis, authoritarian, radically conservative, and fascist elements coexisted. He regarded his dictatorship, which was allegedly based on the spiritual and yet living version of the 'Megali Idea', as a revolutionary answer to both 'illegitimate' Greek parliamentary democracy and the fear of communism. Although he drew from a general modernist matrix in which the aspirations of liberals, conservatives, and even leftists converged, he attempted to formulate a political and cultural solution that was more radical, stable, modernist and futural in orientation. In doing so, a number of modernist and fascist features prevailed, which can explain Metaxas's appeal to intellectuals searching for radical solutions to the crisis of liberal democratic civilisation.

91 Zara Steiner, *The Lights That Failed: European International History, 1919–1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 329–340, 357–358; Adam Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War, America and the Remaking of the Global Order, 1916–1931* (New York: Viking, 2014), 456–457.

92 Pelt, *Tobacco, Arms and Politics*, 203–240.

93 Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*, 300–331.