Theodoros Karoussos’ Interpretation of Hellenism: A Case of National Philosophy

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THEODOROS KAROUSOS'S INTERPRETATION OF HELLENISM: A CASE OF NATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract: A native of Kefalonia, Theodoros Karoussos (1808–1876) is known as a classical scholar and a teacher, a political personality and a distinguished philosopher. Mostly an autodidact, he was part of the Argostoli intellectual circle of Ioannis Menayas, a follower of the Hegelian system. The perspective of Hegelian theories influenced Karoussos' opinions on the questions of Hellenism and its legacy. The particularity of his intellectual shift towards Hegelianism became apparent when he sought to use contemporary philosophical ideas in order to justify the term "Helleno-Christian", as developed by Spyridon Zambelios, and to revisit Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos' crucial theories.

The problem concerning national philosophy emerged in Europe mainly during the nineteenth century in the context of a larger problem: the one concerning the definition of national identities.1 Theodoros Karoussos was an important representative of the period that saw the establishment of the new Greek state within the Hellenic cultural tradition. An important figure of the Septinsular intellectual and political intelligentsia, he reinforced the argument of Hellenism's cultural continuity, providing some creative explanations.2 Nevertheless,


2 They are numerous articles on Karoussos' life and writings. See Pavlos Gratsiatos, Θεόδωρος Καρούσος [Theodoros Karoussos], Kefalonia: I Icho, 1876; P. Hiotis, "Θεόδωρος Καρούσος ο διδάσκαλος: Βιογραφία Β" [Theodoros Karoussos, the teacher: Biography 2],

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Karoussos’ case remains relatively unknown to most specialists and has been studied in a very partial and limited way.

Before proceeding further, it is worth reconsidering the complex social and ideological developments of mid-nineteenth century Septinsular culture, where history, to some extent, was inextricably linked to philosophical thought. Aware of the questions formulated by Western philosophy since the seventeenth century, the Septinsular scholars3 were able to understand the encounter between philosophical ideas and culture.4 The interesting amalgam of leading philosophical doctrines such as Cartesianism,5 French empiricism and Scottish eclecticism consequently shaped their philosophical and political trends and affected their intellectual and social development, making the Ionian Islands a cultural bridge with Western Europe. On the other hand, it would be wrong to assume that Septinsular culture manifested a provincial or peripheral phenomenon isolated in its contemporary cultural context. Thus, we may speak of a Septinsular philosophical school as well as a Septinsular historiography, firstly introduced by Spyridon Lambros6 and emphasised by Dionysios A. Zakythinos.7

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Despite the bilingualism of the cultural élite,\(^8\) the idea of an inherited cultural Hellenic tradition from which legitimacy was sought for the construction of the young nation’s ideology rapidly presented notable success in the fermentation of Septinsular culture. In fact, the intellectuals of the Ionian Islands recognised that the historical moment had come to express their patriotic ideas and to endow the process of Hellenic thought with new ideological elements. In order to give concrete shape to what was essentially an abstract ideal, a form of nationalism was chosen in which the nation-state derived its political legitimacy as an organic consequence of language,\(^9\) culture, religion and customs. A nation theory arose in the form of cultural identity nationalism,\(^10\) relying on the infrastructure which meets the romantic ideal of the people,\(^11\) a phenomenon easily understandable and inextricably connected with the constant preoccupation of self-definition of the newly constituted Greek state, and when one considers the political roles assumed by the Septinsular intellectuals in the course of national culture and institutions of the Greek kingdom, even before the union with the Heptanese.\(^12\)

Born in Argostoli to a distinguished family that had come from Messina at the beginning of the seventeenth century, Theodoros Karoussos was the son of Dimitrios N. Karoussos, a respected notary whose archives are now preserved

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\(^8\) The eminent scholar Niccolò Tommaseo continued to believe in the idea of an Adriatic civilisation that emanated from Venice to its Dalmatian and Septinsular possessions. It is quite interesting that in his *Dizionario estetico* (1867), he vigorously defended the positive effects of Italian culture on the leading figures of Greek Enlightenment. Cf. Roxane D. Argyropoulos, “Le dialogue de Niccolò Tommaseo avec les intellectuels Grecs: Ses réflexions sur la culture heptanésienne”, *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* 53 (2015), pp. 197–212.


in the Local Historical Archives of Kefalonia. Among his contemporaries, he became known as a classical scholar and a teacher, a political personality and a distinguished philosopher. As a notable orator, his reputation rested on his political dedication to the nationalist aspirations of the Ionian Radical Party, whereas his outstanding articles devoted to ancient Greek philosophy and the ideological meaning of Hellenism remain quite understudied. Classical literature and philosophy became a lifelong interest. Historian Panayotis Hiotis presents him in such a way in a series of articles devoted to his biography and published in the magazine Ζακύνθιος Ἀνθών. Mostly a self-made scholar, the young Theodoros never received a university education. In his early years, he was raised in the intellectual and dogmatic tradition of the Orthodox Church by a monk, Gerassimos Karoussos, and he had the advantage of attending classes given by Neophyts Vamvas (1776–1855), at the upper school of the Kastro (Saint George’s Castle) of Argostoli, with whom he later corresponded, sharing his interests in literature and philosophy. At that time of his life, Vamvas was still orientated towards Adamantios Korais’ linguistic views, while, as we well know, after the War of Independence he moved further away from his master’s...

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16 Hiotis, “Θεόδωρος Καρούσος” [Theodoros Karoussos], pp. 280–283.
17 Tsitselis, Κεφαλληνιακά Σύμμικτα [Kefalonian miscellanea], p. 203.
19 On Vamvas’ influence upon Karoussos, see Gratsiatos, Θεόδωρος Καρούσος [Theodoros Karoussos], pp. 5–7.
standpoint. Before being appointed to the Ionian Academy, Vamvas remained in Kefalonia from 1825 to 1828, where he also preached in churches. In his lectures, he combined the eclecticism of François Thurot (1768–1832), with the theories of the Scottish school, especially the common sense realism expounded by Dugald Stewart, predominant in early nineteenth-century Europe. In his Στοιχεῖα τῆς Φιλοσοφικῆς Ἠθικῆς [Elements of moral philosophy], Vamvas centred on religious toleration and the understanding of individual rights and duties.

An important feature of Karoussos’ multitalented character is the fact that he became a polyglot. He showed an early gift for languages, becoming fluent in French, German, Italian and English. He learned English from Colonel Charles Korais’ friendship with Vamvas has been studied by C. Th. Dimaras, “Δύο φίλοι: Κοραής καὶ Βάμβας” [Two friends: Korais and Vamvas], Ιστορικά Φροντίσματα Β’: Αδαμάντιος Κοραής [Historical essays 2: Adamantios Korais], Athens: Foreia, 1996, pp. 135–195. Also worth mentioning in regard to Vamvas is Panagiotis Michailaris, “Νεόφυτος Βάμβας” [Neophytos Vamvas], in Κληρικοί στὸν Ἀγῶνα [Clerics in the struggle], ed. Vassilis Panayotopoulos, Athens: Ta Nea, 2010, pp. 81–113.


Karoussos presented the Elements of Logic of the English logician and theologian Richard Whately (1787–1863), who served as archbishop of Dublin. He was perhaps the
James Napier, military resident of Kefalonia from 1822 to 1830, in exchange for teaching him modern Greek. The knowledge of these languages helped him remain in constant touch with Western thought, performing a mediating role between Greek culture and Western Europe. Later, his literary and philosophical attainments gained him the friendship of a group of intellectuals from the flourishing Greek community of Trieste, who were associated with the political and literary newspaper Κλειώ, whose co-editor, Dionysios Therianos, was a fervent admirer of Korais. For a short period, Karoussos lived in Trieste, where he was appointed headmaster of the Greek school. However, for health reasons, he felt the need to return to his homeland, spending the rest of his life in Argostoli as a teacher, in the high schools of Argostoli, Paxoi and Lixouri.

In Greece, the period from 1850 to 1885 was marked by intense intellectual activity. The various ideas concerning Hellenism were widely divergent. Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos’ scheme did not pass without debate and resistance as it mixed two historically different phenomena. In a series of articles, mostly

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27 Tsitselis, Κεφαλληνιακά Σύμμικτα [Kefalonian miscellanea], p. 217.
28 Karoussos translated an extract from Paul Janet’s Histoire de la science politique dans ses rapports avec la morale, in Εταιρία 1 (1876) pp. 355–357 and 374–378. Paul Janet (1823–1899) was a follower of Victor Cousin and Hegel.
published in the influential Athenian journal Πανδώρα, which was co-edited by Paparrigopoulos, Karoussos became the advocate of the former’s theories, which infused the term Hellenism with a strong sense of cultural and ideological identity. Above all, drawing attention to the history of philosophy, he maintained that Hellenic cultural continuity is to be found in the central encounter of philosophy, with religion, history and language being basic forms of national ideological identification. Some of his noteworthy ideas on national consciousness concern the role and the significance of language in giving expression to the people. According to Dionysios Linardatos’ testimony, Karoussos underlined that language influences national character and passionately expressed his firm belief in the power of language to unify Greeks of different regions. Interestingly, while belonging to the time of the emergence of romantic ideas, he trusted, on the one hand, Korais’ assertions on linguistic matters and, on the other, tried to conciliate them with the Ionian Islands’ vernacularists. From this point of view, he expressed confidence in the common spoken language of the educated people, the kathominoumeni, a kind of simple katharevousa that he defended as an essential element in the understanding of Hellenism’s gradual historical formation. He was aware that language change depends on the progressive development of the history and life of the people. For Karoussos, as for Korais, a middle way exists in the language question, a solution that obviously gained the approval of Πανδώρα’s editors. He was equally opposed to linguistic archaism and linguistic vulgarism, for they do not represent, as he assumes, the spirit of

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32 Apostolos Sachinis, Συμβολὴ στὴν ἱστορία τῆς Πανδώρας καὶ τῶν παλιῶν περιοδικῶν [Contribution to the history of Pandora and other old periodicals], Athens, s.n., 1964.

33 Theodoros Karoussos, Δοκίμιον τῆς ἱστορίας τῆς ἀρχαίας παρ’ Ἕλλην Φιλοσοφίας, ἐκδίδοται κατ’ εντολὴν τοῦ συγγραφέως ὑπὸ Διονυσίου Λιναρδάτου [Historical essay on ancient Greek philosophy published by Dionysios Linardatos], Athens: Anestis Konstantinidis, 1888, p. 1.


36 Theodoros Karoussos, “Νόεις εἰς τὸ περί νεοελληνικῆς γλώσσης ζήτημα” [Suggestions on the Neohellenic language question], Πανδώρα 7 (1857), p. 533.
the age. Disapproving their abuses, he had a rational linguistic view, and felt obliged to respect the common people’s language. In his eyes, what he calls the kathomiloumeni mirror the Hellenic linguistic tradition as well as the different phases of the koine’s long course. He was, therefore, closer to the actual outcome of standardised Greek. He expresses his views thus:

Language comprises the mirror of Greek civilisation, reflecting exactly its different phases, changing along with each of them and being in perfect harmony with the whole system of ideas and sentiments of each one of those periods; studying in a philosophical perspective the main changes of our forefathers’ language, we observe at the same time the history of the kathomiloumeni, we explore the reasons of its genesis in the past. Starting from this point, surveying and examining her trends and orientations, we are persuaded about the worth and the convenience of the actual form of our language to the content of contemporary national sentiment, consisting the fusion of ancient and modern civilisation, of classicism and Orthodoxy, of ancestral patriotism and Christian love.

Karoussos’ writings remained substantially influenced by Western thought. Almost all the assumptions and ideas that went into his writings came directly from Western sources. Though his philosophical training kept him within the

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37 Ibid., p. 530.
40 Karoussos, “Σκέψεις περὶ τῆς σπουδῆς τοῦ Ἑλληνισμοῦ” [Thoughts on the study of Hellenism], p. 353.
41 His major work Δοκίμιον τῆς ἱστορίας τῆς ἀρχαίας παρ’ Ἑλλησ φιλοσοφίας [Historical essay on ancient Greek philosophy] – printed posthumously by Dionysios Linardatos in 1888 – is based on G.W.F. Hegel, Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie (1837), Eduard
orbit of the Greek Enlightenment, he developed quite independently. Clear liberal threads remain in his thought, connecting liberty and perfectibility as the basic characteristics of human nature. His liberalism was closely tied to the belief that progress presents a cumulative constant tendency in history, echoing on that point Condorcet’s theory on human perfectibility. As Ilias Tsitselis relates, Karoussos attempted to distance himself from both Scottish common sense realism and French eclecticism that tried to reconcile empiricism with rationalism. He turned his acumen to the dominant philosophy of the time represented by German idealism, which proved to be an intellectual awakening for him. He strongly shared G.W. F. Hegel’s fascination, praising him for having transformed contemporary philosophy in a new way.

Karoussos developed a close relationship with Ioannis Menayas (1811–1870), a key figure of Kefalonian intellectual life and also a pupil of Vamvas at the upper school at the Kastro. During his studies in philosophy at the universities of Berlin, Munich and Leipzig, Menayas had made the acquaintance of Schelling and became a follower of German idealism, in particular the Hegelian system. He is known for popularising Hegel, and his lectures from the 1850s at the lyceum of Argostoli were disseminated by his students. Argostoli was, in fact,
a noteworthy centre of nineteenth-century Hegelianism, which some leading
figures of the Radical movement identified with. Notable personalities such as
Panayotis Panas, Iosif Monferratos and Ilias Zervos arrived at the formulation
of their political movement as a part of a universal historical progression of the
spirit towards freedom. The truth is that they loaded Hegelianism with their
national aspirations. As for Karoussos, who was sympathetic to Albert Schweger
and Eduard Zeller, he may be regarded as a conservative neo-Hegelian. Yet, he
echoes the idealistic historicism of Johann Wilhelm Zinkeisen (1803–1863),
a German follower of Hegel and a historian whose impact also prevailed on
Spyridon Zambelios and Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, claiming that what
constitutes Greek history as a whole is the spirit (Geist) of the Greek people.

Hegel’s idealism decisively shaped Karoussos’ intellectual outlook, and
within the latter’s own opinions that were focused on Hellenism and the legacy of
ancient Greek philosophy, we observe an Hegelian reading of these questions.
The particularity of his intellectual shift towards Hegelian philosophy becomes
apparent when he attempts to interpret contemporary Greek ideology through the
appropriation of Hegelian concepts and terminology. It was only an appropriation
and not an interpretation of Hegelianism, simply because Hegel was not a
follower of the conception that the nation-state relies on national culture and
because, in Hegelian terms, philosophy is the universally self-consciousness of
culture. Aiming to systematise and clarify some admitted ideological confusions,
Karoussos expounded from a Hegelian philosophical angle the continuity and

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Gratsiotos also describes the ties between Menayas and the Radical Movement,
Θεόδωρος Καρούσος [Theodoros Karoussos], p. 20.

Ioannis Koubourlis, Οἱ ἱστοριογραφικὲς ὀφειλὲς τῶν Σπ. Ζαμπέλιου καὶ Κ.
Paparrigopouλου: Ἦ συμβολὴ Ἐλλήνων καὶ ξένων λογίων στὴ διαμόρφωση τοῦ τρίσημου
σχήματος τοῦ ἐλληνικοῦ ἱστορισμοῦ (1782–1846) [The intellectual debts of S. Zambelios and K.
Paparrigopoulos: Greek and foreign scholars’ contribution in shaping the tripartite scheme of
Greek historicism, 1782–1846], Athens: Institute for Neohellenic Research, National Hellenic

Gratsiotos, Θεόδωρος Καρούσος [Theodoros Karoussos], p. 2, and Tsitselis,
Κεφαληνιακά Σύμμικτα [Kefalonia miscellanea], p. 217.

Georgia Apostolopouli, “Ὁ Θεόδωρος Καρούσος ως ἱστορικός τῆς φιλοσοφίας”
[Theodoros Karoussos as a historian of philosophy], in Τὸ Ἰόνιο: Οἰκολογία–Οἰκονομία–
Ῥέματα Ἰδεῶν [The Ionian: Ecology–economy–currents of ideas], Athens: Centre for Ionian
Studies, 1990, pp. 130–140.

Shlomo Avineri, “Hegel and Nationalism”, in Debating the Political Philosophy of Hegel,
discontinuity debate generated by Zambelios and Paparrigopoulos. As we well know, Paparrigopoulos’ Ἱστορία τοῦ ἑλληνικοῦ ἔθνους [History of the Hellenic Nation] responded to profound needs in modern Greek society and collective consciousness, providing an outlet for the articulation of feelings and predispositions which were widespread but still inchoate in the collective mentality.

While setting the basis for the formation of national identity, Zambelios and Paparrigopoulos generated a vast debate concerning not only a closed and restricted circle of specialists and academics; it was addressed to the youthful modern Greek society of their time, deliberately to strengthen their national self-knowledge. As soon as Zambelios introduced the term Helleno-Christian, the difficulties raised by its interpretation were subject to various criticisms due to the ideological antithesis between the Hellenic spirit and Byzantine Christianity.

Conscious of the conceptual indeterminacies that it aroused, Karoussos belonged, however, to those who almost immediately accepted and supported the new ideology. Above all, through the development of his ideas on the formation of a national Greek history, he attempted to revisit Paparrigopoulos’ crucial theories and emphasised the need to use contemporary philosophical ideas in order to justify them. Clearly, he was the most profound exponent of the Helleno-Christian conception. He became vividly concerned in promoting a better understanding of this new notion, which became a canvas on which the new state’s ideology was shaped. He begun to develop an answer to the problem, trying to subject Zambelios’ and Paparrigopoulos’ theories to a new critical evaluation from a philosophical angle.

One year after the publication of Zambelios’ work Ἄσματα δημοτικά τῆς Ἑλλάδος, ἐκδοθέντα μετὰ Μελέτης ἱστορικῆς περὶ μεσαιωνικοῦ Ἑλληνισμοῦ...
Karoussos not only adopted the tripartite periodisation introduced by Zambelios (ancient, medieval and modern Hellenism), but extended into a fourth, succeeding period that included the Alexandrian philosophical school that had appropriated not only Neoplatonism but also the spirit of Christianity. Religion always played a considerable part in Karoussos’ thought and, as his pupil Pavlos Gratsiatos (1844–1917) observed, his faithfulness to Orthodoxy was associated with his patriotic commitment. Writing on the intellectual impetus towards national unity in Greece, Constantinos Th. Dimaras has stressed that we ought to recall Karoussos for associating Athens with Byzantium. In fact, in his article "Which are the Centres of National Unity", Karoussos linked Byzantium and Athens. For, according to him, in modern times the ideals of Orthodoxy combined with the classical Hellenic spirit as the nation’s unifying force.

Although, in 1846 Paparrigopoulos had expressed his conviction that Greece required a national historiographer more than a philosopher of history, nevertheless Karoussos responded, some years later, recognising how ambiguous the crucial theory of an Helleno-Christian civilisation still was. The vague and abstract term of Hellenism created a semantic confusion in all minds, and he felt the need to elaborate a rigorous inquiry into this problem. On this point,
his argumentation appears to have been motivated by the increased reaction of Greek intelligentsia. In order to diminish it, he firmly believed that his task, both as a classical philologist and a historian of philosophy, was to examine closely and clarify concepts whose meaning still remained too obscure.\textsuperscript{66} The method he chose was interdisciplinary; a combination of philosophy, literary criticism and linguistics shaped the character of his thought and constitutes, I think, his subtle contribution to the modern Greek history of ideas. According to Karoussos, philosophical thought as a central feature had been common to all phases of Hellenic culture and should be interpreted in the light of the prevailing contemporary philosophical system. On the other hand, he held Greek philosophical thought since antiquity as a cultural continuity, insisting on the gradual process in which Hellenism evolves as self-actualising. He points out that its study should contribute to the treatment and consolidation of the national character and convictions that led the Greeks to the path of liberty.\textsuperscript{67} In his approach, he highlights the fundamental problem of historicity in the progression of national consciousness and the fact that a continuity of ideas subsists in the course of philosophy, as shaped by earlier practices which survive into the present, although accompanied by changes corresponding to dominant currents. Karoussos claimed that ancient Greek culture had not faded away. At the same time, he endeavours to promote the Greek character of Byzantine philosophical thought, and he remarks that we owe to the Byzantine state the conservation of the language, religion and more generally of nationality of the Greeks.

What most interested him was the possibility to explain the dialectical combination between the two apparently antithetical legacies of pagan ancient Greece and Christian Byzantium, leading into a new synthesis expressed by the Helleno-Christian idea. Quite easily, he assimilated Hegelian conceptions into his interpretation. As is well known, Hegel argued that the meaning of Geist is the absolute mind or spirit that provoked through history a purification process, a conjunction that preserves the contradiction between thesis and its antithesis.\textsuperscript{68} In a similar way, Karoussos replaced the term of Geist with that of Hellenism, a multivariad historical phenomenon whose successive phases should be examined by modern Greeks for a better understanding of their national character. Consequently, Hegel’s philosophy shaped Karoussos’ intellectual development,

\textsuperscript{66} Argyropoulos, “Φιλοσοφικὲς ἀντιλήψεις τοῦ Θεόδωρου Καρούσου” [Theodoros Karoussos’ philosophical views], pp. 172–183.

\textsuperscript{67} Karoussos, “Σκέψεις περὶ τῆς σπουδῆς τοῦ Ἑλληνισμοῦ” [Thoughts on the study of Hellenism], p. 351.

\textsuperscript{68} The term Zeitgeist, often attributed to Hegel, was never actually used by him. In the Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte he used the expression “der Geist seiner Zeit”.

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providing him with an analysis of the phrase “die Geist seiner Zeit” (the spirit of his times), and, according to Karoussos’ translation in Greek, the global spirit of the time, “τὸ καθολικὸν τῆς ἐποχῆς πνεῦμα”. It is apparent that his method is a retrospective unfolding; in light of Hegel’s philosophy of history, he recognises the tendency to exhibit the unfolding of an inner spiritual principle progression which is represented by the spirit of Hellenism, whose historical fulfilment was not achieved through a series of smooth transitions but through a process of tensions and conflicts. Karoussos remarks that each period represents a phase of Hellenism’s evolution, a particular step in his long struggle to arrive at self-consciousness. In the following passage he reveals his main positions:

In unfolding Hellenism, we unfold our own nature, the origin and the genesis of our contemporary national spirit. The nutrition and the vivification of our spirit and heart with our literature’s juice and essence produces, as an immediate result, the preponderation and evolution of our principles, ideas or convictions. This is the only clear source with which the contemporary generation of the Greek race is able to flourish and gain force in order to realise the grand goal of national unity.

He came to accept the Hegelian contrast between the “internal” and the “external”, and throughout his own philosophical development emerge from Hegel’s *Science of Logic*. He uses the terms of *Innerlichkeit* (inwardness) and that of *Äusserlichkeit* (externality), indicating what is inessential in a variety of contexts, not always in contrast with each other. In Hellenism’s evolution, Karoussos argues that language corresponds to the exterior part, providing form to the thought, and adding that for this reason, its study must come first. Thus, he concludes:

For language, as far as we have seen, is the form (*εἶδος*). Therefore, as long as we are occupied with grammar and critique, our knowledge shall remain forever simply vacuous and superficial if we do not also penetrate the inner and real part of Hellenism. Of course, this mine is inexhaustible; it offers unceasingly new material to those wishing to exploit it.

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69 Karoussos, “Σκέψεις περὶ τῆς σπουδῆς τοῦ Ἑλληνισμοῦ” [Thoughts on the study of Hellenism], p. 354.
70 Ibid., p. 351.
72 Karoussos, “Σκέψεις περὶ τῆς σπουδῆς τοῦ Ἑλληνισμοῦ” [Thoughts on the study of Hellenism], p. 353.
In a way, Karoussos surpassed Paparrigopoulos’ pioneering project. Explaining the successive periods of Greek philosophy, he acknowledges that the fusion of Hellenism with Christianity can be studied in the case of Socrates,73 seen as a forerunner of Christ,74 and can also be discovered in the Hellenisation of the Alexandrian school of philosophy, through the union of Neoplatonism with the spirit of Christianity. Thereby, the dominant themes of his interests are drawn from Homer, Plato, Socrates and the Christian Platonist philosophers of Alexandria. Regarding Homer, he admits that his epic poems describe the “infancy of Greek nation” (ἡ πρώτη ἡλικία τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ ἔθνους)75 providing us the first elements of social and practical life in ancient Greece.76 As for Socrates, he compares him to the figure of Jesus Christ:

Therefore, Socratic teaching, in its goals as much as in its principles, reveals great similarities with Christian teaching; for as an exclusive object of its teachings, Christianity also takes man and as the centre of its studies, man’s moral regeneration and blessedness.77

Karoussos’ idealism can also be found in his immoderate fondness for Plato.78 Tsitselis relates that from his earliest years, Plato had been an object of worship for him;79 as for Spyridon K. Papageorgiou, he remarks that Plato was his inseparable friend, for one could seldom see Karoussos without a Platonic dialogue in his hands.80 His essays on Plato mark a turning point in his philosophical interests. He seems to have been mostly moved by the Symposium, Phaedrus, Euthydemus, Philebus, Protagoras and Gorgias. His comments provide useful information regarding his intellectual biography, for Plato’s philosophy is mostly understood through the lens of Hegel. In his exaltation of Hegelianism as the complete and

73 In 1876, Karoussos presented Alfred Fouillée’s work La philosophie de Socrate (Paris, 1874) in the journal Býrov.
74 In his critical review of Ernest Renan’s Vie de Jésus (Paris, 1863), Karoussos regarded religion as having equal value with the sciences of nature, Πανθώρα 15 (1864), pp. 73–82, 97–102.
75 The perception of Homer as the source for the knowledge of Greek nation’s infancy was expressed before Hegel by Giambattista Vico, Scienza nuova, in Opere, ed. Paolo Rossi, Milan: Rizzoli, 1959, p. 118.
77 Theodoros Karoussos, “Ὁ Σωκρατισμὸς καὶ ὁ Χριστιανισμός” [Socratism and Christianity], Πανθώρα 15 (1865), p. 495.
78 From 1866 to 1874, in a series of 13 articles that appeared in Πανθώρα, Κλειώ and Býrov under the general title Πλατωνικὰ Μελέται [Platonic studies], Karoussos focuses on the meaning of some Platonic dialogues.
79 Tsitselis, Κεφαλήηνικα Πάημκτα [Kefalonian miscellanea], p. 223.
80 Papageorgiou, “Θεόδωρος Καροῦσος” [Theodoros Karoussos], p. 247.
definitive revelation of the world of ideas, we can find Plato’s views; for the real is the ideal, the intelligible. He takes up the Platonic spiritualist tradition, claiming that Greek the spirit found its self-consciousness in Plato. He writes:

The ancient Greek spirit acquires its consciousness in Platonic philosophy, which upholds the different elements of our national life, has submitted to the torment of our mind, the metaphysic, political, national principles on which Greek civilisation is founded [...] although the realisation of this attempt has been reserved by Providence in another time, in another social structure based on the foundations of the Christian religion.

Having identified the aims of philosophy, his further concern consisted in providing a clear and coherent account of the interaction of philosophy and education. Inaugurating the academic year at the Petritseios School in Lixouri, he discussed the importance of education in shaping national philosophy. Philosophical theories become concrete in education, because philosophy sets up the ideals that are to be achieved. Education, therefore, may be seen as a means to realise the ideals of national philosophy. With insistence, he recognises that philosophy and education are closely linked together:

Philosophical and national education are notions connected to each other and inseparable; for among the main characteristics of the Greek spirit has always been a tendency towards philosophy.

In concluding this presentation of Karoussos’ thought, there can be no doubt about his contribution to the establishment of Greek ideological identity. The result of his reflections is a rather individual piece of work, placing him among the representative intellectuals of his time. He assigned a special emphasis to the term “Hellenism”, understanding it in the broader sense and exploring it both as a phenomenon in the trajectory of history and as a concept that had thoroughly insinuated itself in Greek reality. Claiming a gradual development of philosophical ideas in the process of national identity, he defended philosophy as a powerful factor. He explained the development of Hellenism not only in a

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81 The belief in a link between Platonic ideas and German idealism can also found in Pavlos Gratsiatos, who, in 1915, was the first to publish in Greek the translation of Hegel’s Shorter Logic.


83 Theodoros Karoussos, Λόγος εἰσαγωγικὸς εἰς τὴν σειρὰν τῆς φιλοσοφίας ἐκφωνηθεὶς κατὰ τὴν ἔναρξιν τῶν μαθημάτων τῆς ἐν Παλαιῷ Κεφαλληνίας Πετριτσείου Σχολῆς [Inauguration speech to the philosophy lectures delivered at the beginning of the academic year at the old Petritseios school in Kefalonia], Kefalonia: I Kefalonia, 1856, p. 10.
narrow sense, but as a wider manifestation of the universal spirit. On the other hand, his strong interest in Hegelianism led him to enlarge this current of ideas, associating it intellectually with modern Greek thought, pointing out the creative relationship of Christian doctrine with Hegelian ideas in a single grand scheme. As a deep thinker, Karoussos provides an example of the infiltration of the dominant contemporary philosophical theories in Greek national philosophy, understood here as a connection between theory and ideology.