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Science, Gender and Atheism in the Greek Context

Evangelia Chordaki

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SCIENCE, GENDER AND ATHEISM IN THE GREEK CONTEXT

Evangelia Chordaki

ABSTRACT: This article explores the intersection of science, atheism and gender in Greek history from the interwar period to the period of the Μεταπολίτευση, or democratic transition (1936–1974). Engaging with science studies, gender studies and masculinity studies, it addresses the methodological and historiographical challenges of analysing gender in the absence of women from primary historical archives. By developing an interdisciplinary epistemological framework, the article explores how masculinity and gender power relations shaped and were shaped by the interactions between science, atheism and Orthodox Christianity. The study is divided into two sections: the first outlines the theoretical and methodological foundations, while the second applies this framework to the Greek journal *Πρωτοπόροι* (1930–1931), offering new insights into the gendered dimensions of scientific and religious discourses. This analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of the sociopolitical and epistemological structures that influenced the development of science in modern Greece.

As I am engaged as a historian of science at the confluence of science studies and gender studies, the invitation from Principal Investigator Kostas Tampakis to participate in the Project At.H.O.S. (Atheism, Hellenic Orthodoxy, and Science) presented both an exciting opportunity and a formidable challenge. This project is of profound historical, historiographical and epistemological significance. It delves into the complex interconnections among three pivotal sociopolitical spheres – science, religion and communism – situated within one of the most crucial epochs of Greek history, extending from the interwar period to the era of the Μεταπολίτευση, or democratic transition in 1974.

The invitation was undoubtedly a positive development, as it afforded me the chance to contribute to a research project of immense scholarly importance. The project's focus on the interplay between science, Hellenic Orthodoxy and atheism during a transformative period in Greek history is particularly compelling. However,

* This research was conducted as part of the “Atheism, Hellenic Orthodoxy and Science (1936–1974) (Project no. 3937) research project, which was funded through the 2nd Call for Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation (HFRI) Research Projects to support faculty members and researchers.



the invitation also posed significant challenges. While Dr Tampakis provided the necessary intellectual space, I faced the task of deciphering the intratwinment among the natural sciences, gender and atheism within the broader intertwinment of the perceptions and influences of the communist and left intelligentsia, the Greek Orthodox Church and the Greek scientific community on science.

To explore the gender aspect of the relationship between science and atheism in the Greek context, it became evident that the absence of women from primary historical archives cannot efficiently help us understand either the role of gender in those interactions between science and atheism or the gendered power relations of the given period. To that end, a novel epistemological approach was required: masculinity studies. In order to place masculinity studies at the centre of attention within the scope of the history of science, and as I am a feminist scholar of science studies, it is essential to create a framework demonstrating the multiple ways through which masculinity studies, gender studies and science studies interact. This interdisciplinary framework would enable a nuanced analysis of the relationships between atheism, religion and gender not only in the subject matter of the Greek context but also in differently situated relevant case studies.

In that regard, this article aims to open up a discussion that is both methodological and historiographical. It is methodological and it presents a theoretical scheme derived from feminist theory through which we can enter the gender discussion in science and, more specifically, the gender discussion on the peculiarities of the intersection of science and atheism. Nevertheless, it is also historiographical, while through the suggested methodology we can see that political and epistemological (dis)orders were shaped by and constructed gender power relations through the power relations between specific historical masculinities.

The article is divided into two sections. The first focuses on *how* – the methodology we need to organise a discussion like this. More specifically, the first part includes the presentation of critical theories, concepts and scholars from these intersecting disciplines (masculinity studies and gender/feminist studies) and the outline of the informed epistemological framework and methodology, through which I will analyse aspects of the role of gender in the interplay between Orthodox Christianity, atheism and the natural sciences in Greece from 1936 to 1974. The second part focuses on *what* – and includes the examination of the journal *Πρωτοπόροι* and its publications in 1930–1931, where I will apply the above-mentioned methodology to a specific set of primary archival material. This integration of insights from masculinity studies will help me to uncover how gender dynamics influenced and were influenced by scientific and religious discourses during this significant historical period. This comprehensive approach

promises to shed new light on the intricate interrelations of science, religion and gender in the context of Greek history, contributing to a deeper understanding of these interwoven narratives.

Masculinity Studies in/and Gender and Feminist Studies

Masculinity studies is a critical field closely related to feminist and gender studies that examines the construction, representation and implications of masculinities in society. This discipline emerged amid a spectrum of concerns and problematisations regarding the understanding and dismantling of gender inequalities, recognising that masculinity, like femininity, is a socially constructed and contested category. Here, of course, gender is not perceived as a binary but instead as a spectrum in which we can locate many different types of masculinities and femininities. This perspective underscores the concept of multiple masculinities, acknowledging the diversity of masculine identities shaped by intersecting factors such as race, class, sexuality and cultural context, thereby challenging the notion of a singular, monolithic male experience. Put differently, emphasising the diversity of masculine identities, this approach acknowledges that there is no single way to be a man or a single male experience. Instead, multiple masculinities exist, shaped by factors such as race, class and sexuality as well as the cultural, political, historical and social context.

Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity is crucial to this approach. Gender performativity posits that gender is not an innate, essential quality but rather a socially constructed performance that is repeatedly enacted through bodily gestures, movements and enactments. More specifically, they argue that there is no pre-existing gender identity that these performances express; instead, the repeated performance of gender creates the illusion of an underlying gender identity. Here, gender is not a stable identity but rather an identity in-the-making that is formed through the repetition of acts and a repeated performance. Thus, the concept of gender performativity challenges the notion of gender as an innate, biological quality and instead posits it as a socially constructed performance that creates the very categories of "man" and "woman" that it purports to express.¹

Central to the scope of masculinity studies is the theory of hegemonic masculinity, articulated by R.W. Connell. According to Connell, the concept of

¹ See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Abington: Routledge, 1990); Butler, "Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of Postmodernism," in *Feminist Theorize the Political*, ed. Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (Abington: Routledge, 1992), 3–21; Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*

hegemonic masculinity delineates the culturally dominant ideal of masculinity that subordinates not only femininities but also other marginalised masculinities. More specifically, it refers to the dominant form of masculinity that is culturally exalted, while it sets the standard by which other masculinities and femininities are judged and shaped as the other of the dominant one. Hegemonic masculinity is also associated with traits such as authority, control, heterosexuality and heteronormativity, while it creates a territory the boundaries of which marginalise other masculinities and femininities. Complementary to the notion of hegemonic masculinity is the concept of complicit masculinity, according to which Connell describes the phenomenon where some men who do not fully embody hegemonic masculinity still benefit from the patriarchal dividend. The patriarchal dividend, another concept that derives from Connell's theoretical scheme, refers to men's (perceived as a social group) benefit and advantages from the dominance of men over women, even if not all men hold power equally.²

Additionally, the exploration of toxic masculinity critiques the deleterious cultural norms that encourage men to engage in behaviours harmful to themselves and others, including aggression, emotional repression and dominance. It is often used to critique the negative impacts of conforming to hegemonic masculine ideals. By interrogating these constructs, masculinity studies endeavours to promote healthier, more equitable expressions of gender that benefit all individuals, thereby providing a comprehensive framework for understanding the complexities of gender dynamics and power relations in contemporary society. Moreover, subordinated masculinity is another crucial concept that refers to masculinities

(Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (Abington: Routledge, 1993); Butler, "From Interiority to Gender Performatives," in *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject: A Reader*, ed. Fabio Cleto (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 361–68.

² See R.W. Connell, *Ruling Class, Ruling Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Connell, "Class, Patriarchy, and Sartre's Theory of Practice," *Theory and Society* 11, no. 3 (1982): 305–20; Connell, *Which Way is Up? Essays on Sex, Class and Culture* (Abington: Routledge, 1983); Connell, *Gender and Power* (Abington: Routledge, 1987); Connell, "An Iron Man: The Body and Some Contradictions of Hegemonic Masculinity," in *Sport, Men and the Gender Order: Critical Feminist Perspectives*, ed. Michael A. Messner and Donald F. Sabo (Champaign: Human Kinetics Books, 1990), 83–97; Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995); Connell, "Masculinities and Globalization," *Men and Masculinities* 1, no. 1 (1998): 3–23; Connell, *Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002); Connell, "Masculinities, Change and Conflict in Global Society: Thinking about the Future of Men's Studies," *Journal of Men's Studies* 11, no. 3 (2003): 249–66; Connell, "Globalization, Imperialism, and Masculinities," in *Handbook of Studies on Men & Masculinities*, ed. Michael Kimmel, Jeff Hearn and R.W. Connell (Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2005), 71–89.

that are marginalised or subordinated within the hierarchy of masculinities, such as those of gay men, effeminate men or men of lower social status.

This field plays a pivotal role in challenging gender norms by deconstructing rigid expectations that harm both gendered subjects, revealing how societal expectations about masculinity contribute to gender inequality and oppression. Furthermore, it illuminates men's roles within patriarchal structures, emphasising how men perpetuate and benefit from these systems, while also acknowledging the pressures and constraints they impose on men. By addressing issues such as toxic masculinity and the pressures associated with hegemonic masculinity, feminist scholars within this field advocate for gender equity, promoting healthier and more equitable ways of being that benefit all genders.

Moreover, by integrating masculinity studies into feminist discourse, this field broadens the scope of feminist theory, creating a more comprehensive understanding of gender dynamics. This integration incorporates men's experiences into the analysis of gender relations, thereby enhancing the inclusivity and robustness of feminist theory. In that regard, within the scope of masculinity studies, we can create an essential framework for understanding the intricate complexities of gender and power relations in contemporary society, advancing the overarching goal of gender equality.

Undoubtedly, this framework cannot be understood outside patriarchy – the social system in which men hold primary power, dominance and privilege, and from which women are largely excluded. Nevertheless, in the framework of masculinity studies scholars often focus on how patriarchy shapes men's experiences and how men are both privileged by and complicit in maintaining patriarchal structures. However, while the concept of patriarchy is central to the analysis of masculinities, it is difficult to understand their (masculinities') complexity without the concept of intersectionality. Intersectionality here operates as the lens through which we analyse the complexity of masculinities. It is a critical concept in feminist theory that examines how different forms of social and political discrimination overlap and intersect, particularly with regard to gender, race and class. The theory was developed by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in the late 1980s to highlight how the experiences of women of colour could not be fully understood by looking at gender or race alone. Intersectional feminism argues that various forms of oppression, such as racism, sexism and classism, do not act independently but are interrelated, creating a complex system of discrimination and disadvantage.³ It emphasises that the oppression

³ Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University*

faced by women is shaped not only by gender but also by other factors like race, class, sexuality, disability status and immigration status.⁴ Feminist theory, using an intersectional lens, examines how gender stratification is reinforced through the intersection of gender with other systems of power and inequality. It centres the voices and experiences of those facing overlapping forms of discrimination to better understand the depths of inequality in a given context. More specifically, it serves as a framework for building more inclusive, nuanced movements for social justice that work to dismantle all forms of oppression simultaneously and recognises that the fight for gender equality must also confront racism, classism, heteronormativity and other systems of domination in order to achieve true liberation for all.⁵

Two other essential concepts for the exploration of masculinities and the mapping of masculinity studies come from Michael Kimmel and refer to gendered power structures and masculinity in crisis. More specifically, the former explores how gender and power are interconnected and how masculinity is constructed in relation to femininity, while the latter focuses on the idea that traditional forms of masculinity are in crisis due to social and economic changes. Kimmel's work analyses how masculinity is constructed within gendered power structures in society and argues that traditional notions of masculinity are often defined in opposition to femininity, with men expected to be strong, stoic and dominant over women. At the same time, he contends that masculinity is in crisis, as men feel their power and status are being threatened by social changes like feminism and women's increasing equality.⁶ This has led to a backlash and a reassertion of traditional masculine power by what Kimmel describes as

of Chicago Legal Forum, (1989): 139–67; Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–99; Anna Carastathis, "The Concept of Intersectionality in Feminist Theory," *Philosophy Compass* 9, no. 5 (2014): 304–14; Patricia Hill Collins, "Emerging Intersections: Building Knowledge and Transforming Institutions. Foreword," in *Emerging Intersections: Race, Class, and Gender in Theory, Policy and Practice*, ed. Bonnie Thornton Dill and Ruth Enid Zambrana (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2009), vii–xiv.

⁴ Collins, "Emerging Intersections"; Angela Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (New York: Random House, 1981); Kathy Davis, "Intersectionality as Buzzword: A Sociology of Science Perspective on What Makes a Feminist Theory Successful," *Feminist Theory* 9, no. 1 (2008): 67–85.

⁵ Kathryn T. Gines, "Black Feminism and Intersectional Analyses: A Defense of Intersectionality," *Philosophy Today* (suppl.) 55 (2011): 275–84; Jennifer Nash, "Home Truths on Intersectionality," *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism* 23, no. 2 (2011): 445–70.

⁶ Gines, "Black Feminism"; Nash, "Home Truths"; Michael Kimmel and Lisa Wade, "Ask a Feminist: Michael Kimmel and Lisa Wade Discuss Toxic Masculinity," *Signs*, <https://signsjournal.org/kimmel-wade-toxic-masculinity/>.

“angry white men”.⁷ Put differently, in his work, he explains that masculinity is not a fixed biological essence but rather a social construction that varies across cultures and changes over time and focuses on how masculine norms are used to maintain male power and privilege in society.⁸

The interactions of feminist studies and gender theory with masculinity studies or, even better, the multiple ways through which the feminist agenda has informed and shaped the scope of masculinity studies, provide critical insights for the exploration of the ways in which gender norms and power relations shape men’s lives and contribute to broader systems of gender inequality, while they can also be used to analyse the social production and embodiment of masculine identities. Here, as we have said, the plurality of the concept of masculinity is crucial. At the same time, it explores how dominant or hegemonic masculinity stands in a hierarchical relationship not just with femininity but also with other marginalised forms of masculinity, and it perceives masculinity as a relational and performative concept produced in contrast to both femininity and nonnormative expressions of masculinity. Hence, while masculinity emerges within and through the context of patriarchy, the former refers to the process through which certain men are produced as superior to both women and other men and the latter to the broader system that privileges men over women. To that end, masculinity studies represent an essential dialogue with feminist theory that seeks to understand how masculine identities and power structures are produced and maintained while rejecting fixed, biological notions of manhood.

Theoretical and Methodological Concerns: Science, Atheism and Masculinities in Greece

Having discussed some of the key concepts, scholars and research questions as they are formed within the scope of masculinity studies, this part of the article will try to situate this framework at the intersection of gender, science and atheism and suggest a methodology – angles and set of questions that can help us revisit the interactions between Greek Orthodox Christianity, atheism and the natural sciences and provide a tool that may be useful for future studies that examine the relationship between gender, science and religion.

Before suggesting such a situated methodology, a brief focus on the Ath.O.S. project and its overall agenda would be appropriate. The scope of this research

⁷ Kimmel, *Angry White Men*.

⁸ Ibid. Michael S. Kimmel and Tristan Bridges “Masculinity,” *Oxford Bibliographies*, 27 July 2011, <https://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780199756384-0033>; Michael S. Kimmel and Michael A. Messner, eds., *Men’s Lives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

programme includes the exploration of the natural sciences that operated under Western ideals as a battleground between the communist and leftist intelligentsia which expressed atheism, the conservative, politically engaged and culturally crucial Greek Orthodox Church, and the Greek scientific community. To that end, it brings to the forefront the importance of the spatial turn in the field of science and religion by focusing on specific cultural, social, political and historical peculiarities that the geographical dimension brings together when studying an Orthodox country that belonged to the West and hosted a powerful communist party.

The Greek twentieth century comprises a long and complex history that included, among others, wars and political conflicts, the emergence of ideologies such as nationalism and communism, the refugee crisis, Nazi Germany's invasion, a civil war between the state and the communist party, polity changes between democratic and totalitarian regimes, and efforts towards political integration with Western Europe while simultaneously trying to maintain the religious values of eastern Europe.⁹ Of course, such a brief presentation towards the historical context cannot provide a deep understanding of the social and political landscape of the period. However, for the purposes of this article, it allows us to feel the pulse of the turbulent decades in which military, political, social, ideological and cultural battles shaped Greece.

Such continuous battles can be understood as a conflict between conservative, military-friendly, fascistic or nationalistic regimes and communist, socialistic and progressive powers. Indicative of this conflict is the rise of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) and the continual persecution of communists and their ideas until the postdictatorship period (after 1974). If we were to approach science and religion – including atheism, nonreligiosity and secularity – as bodies of knowledge that aim to describe the world, we could locate specific aspects of those battles in the discourses on and around the natural sciences. However, this discussion could be even more prosperous and exciting if we approached those bodies of knowledge as systems that embody ideologies, power and authority that aim to produce certain types of social order, visions and social change. Then, the construction, communication and legitimisation of meanings regarding science

⁹ Indicatively, see Mark Mazower, *Η Ελλάδα και η οικονομική κρίση του μεσοπολέμου* (Athens: MIET, 2009); Richard Clogg, *Συνοπτική ιστορία της Ελλάδας, 1770–2013* (Athens: Katoptro, 2015); George Dertilis, *Ιστορία της νεότερης και σύγχρονης Ελλάδας, 1750–2015* (Heraklion: Crete University Press, 2018); Kostas Kostis, *“Τα κακομαθημένα παιδιά της ιστορίας”: Η διαμόρφωση του νεοελληνικού κράτους, 18ο–21ος αιώνας* (Athens: Patakis, 2018); Antonis Liakos, *Ο ελληνικός 20ος αιώνας* (Athens: Polis, 2018).

and religion not only represent the explanation of the existing world by often opposing groups but also the different social and political orders and normativity, the alternative worldviews (where the term “world” includes both the natural and the social world), visions, futures, etc. Even though such problematisations and the interplays between ideologies and scientific knowledge are well established in science studies, the focus on discourses on natural sciences as a battlefield between the church, communists and leftists, and the scientific community in specific geopolitical contexts is an understudied area.

Those issues become even more complex when one takes into consideration that those ideological, theoretical and cultural conflicts, also expressed by discourses on and around science, were happening in parallel to the persecution of communists – on which this study focuses. Such persecutions were not abstract and theoretical but were characterised by extreme acts of torture, imprisonment, exile and assassinations. Thus, the corporeal aspect is crucial for understanding the role of the body in the production of discourses and the construction of meanings. In other words, it is essential to emphasise the produced ideas, narratives and discourses about science, religion and atheism without being distracted by the bodies – and the depiction of the conflicts on the bodies – from which they were generated. In this way, such narratives and discourses become situated not only in the historical and political context but also in the social positions that bodies hold. To dig even deeper, subjectivities appear to be another crucial category if the broader context is connected to the bodies’ position in a given society. This is a point to which I will return later.

As explained earlier, my engagement in the Ath.O.S. project focuses on the communist/leftist aspect. Thus, a set of questions that can shape such a research agenda can be initiated by the following issues: How did specific groups of communists/leftists conceptualise science? What were those groups’ definitions of atheism? How did those definitions of atheism construct the relational idea of religion? What were the interplays between those meanings and narratives – or how were those relational concepts coproduced?

However, my particular research focus and background on gender and the history of science led me to start exploring the construction of those meanings, narratives, discourses and embodied ideologies in the context of the broader “battleground” as a gendered phenomenon. In other words, my contribution to the initial research question, How did natural sciences operate as a battleground between the communist/leftist intelligentsia, the Orthodox Church and the scientific community?, is to transform it into the following: Although gender as an analytical category has been studied separately in relation to religion/atheism and science, what is the role of gender at the intersection of those notions?

Keeping in mind that (white) males dominated science, religion and even atheism, a shared feature of these social activities is already present. Indeed, my initial experience with the archival material confirmed those arguments – almost all articles were signed by male authors and, consequently, they presented views and viewpoints of those actors who held a specific social and corporeal position in society. When one notices women’s exclusion from a dominant public sphere (that is, from magazines and newspapers of the period), a way to locate their voices and viewpoints is to look for other marginalised and subordinated public spheres; this is one of the many ways to discuss gender and/or women’s exclusion. However, a gender analysis can move even further from maleness and femaleness. It may include the study of gender in the performativity of those activities – science, atheism, religion, the performativity of gender within these activities and the construction of masculinity and femininity.

In that regard, masculinity studies can be a fruitful path that can help us approach the these issues – a discussion that aims to locate those research questions derived from the intersection of masculinity studies with the history of science that can enrich our understanding of the relationship between science, religion and atheism.

The background of such a discussion can be rooted in famous female scholars such as Evelyn Fox Keller,¹⁰ Donna Haraway¹¹ and Sandra Harding,¹² whose insightful works have explored the societal discourses and practices that align science with masculinity and have demonstrated male domination in specific fields by focusing on the distinction and hierarchical relationship between mind and rationality, body nature and emotion – divisions that accompany notions of masculinity. Moreover, they have shown how particular characteristics of

¹⁰ Indicatively, see, Evelyn Fox Keller, “Feminism and Science,” *Signs Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 7, no. 3 (1982); Keller, *Secrets of Life, Secrets of Death: Essays on Language, Gender and Science* (Abington: Routledge, 1992); Keller and Helen E. Longino, *Feminism and Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Keller, *Reflections of Gender and Science* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

¹¹ Donna Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,” *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1989): 575–99; Haraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (Abington: Routledge, 1989); Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (Abington: Routledge, 1991); Sarah Franklin, “Staying with the Manifesto: An Interview with Donna Haraway,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 34, no. 4 (2017): 49–63.

¹² Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986); Harding, *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking from Women’s Lives* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); Harding, *Sciences from Below: Feminisms, Postcolonialities and Modernities* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

masculinities move beyond women's exclusion to a more profound schism between feminine and masculine, subjective and objective, understanding and control, love and power. Such a problematisation led to numerous research and political questions, such as how the construction of men and women relates to the construction of scientific ideas, what are the origins of masculine science or what are the hidden gender assumptions in the understanding of science.

Similarly, Butler's work on gender performativity and masculinity greatly influences contemporary approaches to masculinity studies.¹³ Thus, in many theoretical schemes, gender as a product of discourse and bodily acts (gender as something that we do and redo and not something that we are), as a relational construct (the assumption that masculinity and femininity are relational constructs that cannot exist without the other), and as a set of acts, gestures and desires that are performed through gendered lenses, are common presumptions.

As I have shown, masculinity studies is situated in the gender and sexuality field and is constantly informed by feminist theory. The contemporary literature places emphasis on multiple masculinities and, consequently, the multiplicity of male roles. Here, masculinities and male experiences are perceived as social, historical and cultural formations that operate as a subject of politics. Hence, performances of masculinity/femininity appear as diverse and plural and intersect with social identities and inequalities such as ethnicity and social class. However, despite the acknowledgment of multiple masculinities, issues of power and authority remain at the centre of attention, revealing that not all performances of masculinity are equal and that power antagonisms exist between them.

Critical questions arise within masculinity studies. However, this article will try to present those that are helpful for the exploration of the relationship between science, religion and atheism as a gendered phenomenon. More specifically, if we insist on keeping gender as an analytical category for the examination of this battleground and enter the discussion through the framework of masculinity studies, then we can shape the following research questions: What is the relationship between power and the categories of masculinity that appear in the specific historical context? How do specific cultural and historical currents of the studied period shape certain masculinities? How do specific experiences of manhood – the communist, the atheist, the scientist, the exiled, etc. – shape the activities of men? What did those masculinities and men's identities mean, perceive and perform? What was codified as masculine at the intersection of atheism and science? How was masculinity expressed in the discourses and

¹³ Butler, *Gender Trouble*; Butler, "Contingent Foundations"; Butler, *Bodies That Matter*; Butler, "From Interiority to Gender Performatives."

narratives that appeared in communist and leftist magazines and newspapers? What masculinities were produced in this battleground, and what is the relationship between those and internal and external hegemonic masculinities? How were claims and meanings about science, religion and atheism associated with certain masculinities and vice versa? How were masculinities related to communism and anticommunism expressed through the discussion of science and atheism? How did specific masculinities operate in this battleground, and what were their social embodiments and disembodiments? How can we talk about, depict and conceptualise those masculinities? What were the boundaries, the negotiation of such boundaries and their legitimisation processes between the different masculinities?

One general hypothesis made here concerns the masculine signature of the relationship between science, atheism and religion. They are both social arenas and activities, as well as bodies of knowledge occupied by men that include, however, different masculinities. This male dominance, along with the parallel unequal or even conflicted relationship between the different masculinities produced, allows us to get a better picture of how those social activities and bodies of knowledge can provide a way of knowing and construct a social order. Put differently, is this battleground a conflict between hegemonic and subordinated/resistant masculinities? Moreover, as a conflict what new perspectives are opened in the discussion of religion in the history of science. The argument here is that the intersection of the history of science and masculinity studies can significantly enrich the fruitful discussion of science, religion and atheism. It allows us to grasp the abstract related notions and concepts and situate them in specific historical, political, social and geographical contexts by revealing their relationship to the social positions of the gendered bodies and their manifestations of masculinities. In this way, we can deeply understand the differences that knowledge-making practices construct and the consequences of those differences in the existing world and the envisioned futures.

Πρωτοπόροι: Communism, Science and Masculinities

As already mentioned, with my expertise at the intersection of gender and science studies, the discussion of atheism and communism inevitably led me to a set of questions that moved from the absence of women in the archival material relating to the three concepts – atheism, science, religion – to the ways in which this absence can be interpreted through masculinity. As there is no space to go into more depth about this theoretical and methodological quest, I would like to focus on some key points that may help redefine or recommend a new interpretation of the issues that will emerge from the empirical material.

Thus, I would like to turn the question of power and masculinities into an analytical lens and leave open for discussion questions about the historical codifications of masculinities at the intersections of science and atheism, the performativity of masculinities (the communist, the atheist, the scientist, the exile) in relation to particular practices of knowledge production and circulation, but also the tacit ways in which narratives of communism and anticommunism were thus imprinted in discussions of science and atheism. Here, such questions, in addition to outlining particular masculinities, serve more as a framework and reflection on which I hope to anchor specific historical and historiographical questions instead of explaining holistically a historical phenomenon.

My research in material and publications concerning the left and communism – always in relation to science and atheism – was conducted in the Contemporary Social History Archives (ASKI), Athens. This part of the article will focus on the case of *Πρωτοπόροι* and the issues relating to its circulation in 1930 and 1931, seeking themes that connect and conceptualise science, gender and atheism.

Πρωτοπόροι was a highly intellectual magazine published by left-wing writers and artists, comprising examples of Greek literature, poetry and the arts related to modernism and surrealism and various versions of Marxist socialism.¹⁴ *Πρωτοπόροι* and other related publications such as *Νέα Επιθεώρηση* focused their discussion of the social functions of literature, approaching the latter as “a reflection of the social, political and economic reality ... that has the duty to define itself as Marxist in context and form ... and aims at political mobilisation”.¹⁵ During the years under discussion, the magazine was edited by Petros Pikros and supported by the KKE. Pikros was “one of the most intriguing and shadowy literary figures of inter-war non-canonical literature ... As a disgraced communist [he is also] one of the most vilified characters in Greek literary history.”¹⁶ Having looked at a large number of publications, it is extremely interesting to note that in the second year of its publication, Galatea Kazantzaki, the communist, novelist, journalist, political activist and translator, took over as editor-in-chief and devoted a permanent column to women. It is not surprising that Kazantzaki held this position, as she was one of the most important representatives of Greek modernism. As Anna Fyta notes, she “embraces generic variants from classical dramatic and lyric poetry, but she also identifies and purposefully selects a variety of modes while

¹⁴ D.N. Maronitis, “Poetry and Politics: The First Postwar Generation of Greek Poets,” *Modern Hellenism* 3 (1986): 95.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Stathis Gauntlett, “The Subcanonical Meets the Non-canonical: Rebetika and Interwar Greek literature,” *Kampos: Cambridge Papers in Modern Greek* 13 (2005): 96.

working within the framework of contemporary literary, philosophical and sociopolitical cultures".¹⁷ A prominent figure both in literature and in politics during the interwar period, Kazantzaki "was actively engaged in the political life in Greece, especially in left-wing politics and social activism ... Her radical feminist and socialist output focused on workplace harassment, self-prostitution, compromise and the social marginalisation of women."¹⁸ Both Kazantzaki and Petros, and consequently *Πρωτοπόροι*, which focused on social realism, were related to the Generation of the Thirties, "a group of liberal intellectuals ... an intellectual movement ... which positioned itself in the modernist avant-garde and introduced cosmopolitanism to the literate Greek public".¹⁹

Before discussing the content of the magazine as it relates to the issues concerning this article, a brief presentation would be useful of the historical context of the development of anticommunism in Greece in the interwar period, aspects of which appear to be closely related to the discussion of the intersections of masculinity and gender studies with those of science. The complex role of anticommunism in the transformation of ideas and narratives (about science/religion/atheism) from abstract to grounded concepts was connected not only to the people – as biographies – who expressed them but also to their bodies and their state of being divine, bodies that were oppressed, expelled and often tortured. As Dimitris Psillas writes, anticommunism in Greece had three different dimensions – the legislative, the ideological and the material – while it was shaped both by internal conditions, such as the shift from the Μεγάλη Ιδέα to anticommunism and the changes in the economic and financial conditions, and external ones, such as the emergence of the different political regimes in the various geographical areas.²⁰ But what is crucial for this study is the direct correlation between anticommunism and violence and, more specifically, the target of this violence during the interwar period, as Psillas highlights: the KKE.²¹ This systematic violence between 1929 and 1940, as demonstrated in the 40 assassinations, 330 imprisonments, 1,174 exiles, 16,775 arrests and 47,000 statements of repentance, had also, as previously

¹⁷ Anna Fyta, "Galatea Kazantzaki (Alexiou) (1884–1962): A Modernist Greek Author's Decadent Poetics," *Feminist Modernist Studies* 4, no. 2 (2021): 272.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 276.

¹⁹ Angeliki Koufou, "The Discourse on Hellenicity, Historical Continuity and the Greek Left," in *A Singular Antiquity. Archeology and Hellenic Identity in Twentieth Century Greece*, ed. Dimitris Damaskos and Dimitris Platzos (Athens: Benaki Museum, 2008), 299.

²⁰ Dimitris Psillas, "Ο αντικομμουνισμός στον Μεσοπόλεμο (1922–1940)," *Το Βήμα των Κοινωνικών Επιστημών* 9, no. 32 (2002): 57.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 58.

stated, a legislative and ideological aspect²² – an aspect that is related to four specific legislative changes. The first one, a law known as the Κατοχυρωτικό, was passed by the government of Alexandros Papanastasiou to secure the regime from the “communist threat”; the second one, enacted during the Pangalos dictatorship of 1925–1926, outlawed the KKE and prosecuted its supporters; the third one was during the Second Hellenic Republic and the government of Alexandros Zaimis between 1926–1928 that characterised the KKE as subversive and antinational; lastly, there is the infamous Ιδιώνυμο of 25 July 1929, a law supported by the government of Eleftherios Venizelos, who told Parliament that his aim was to crack down on communist propaganda, which threatened the social order, accusing the KKE of serving anti-Greek interests and characterising it as a criminal organisation.²³ The texts that will be examined below discussed these legislative changes, the Ιδιώνυμο in particular, especially in introductions of the magazine, which reflected the tensions among the editorial board and its effort to counter the criminalisation of communist ideas.

Ριζοσπάστης, one of the most important communist newspapers and the organ of the KKE, provides a detailed description of the Ιδιώνυμο,²⁴ citing Venizelos’s speech in defending the law:

The bill does not seek to persecute communism as an idea, but the Third International and its Bolshevik principles, which are far from the ideal of communism. The bill seeks to persecute the followers of the Third International. We cannot persecute communism because Christ also preached this idea. Christ was the first to proclaim communism, but there is a difference between the high ideology of communism and the subversive actions of the people of Moscow.

The Ιδιώνυμο provided that

Whoever seeks to implement ideas having as their manifest purpose the overthrow of the existing social regime by violent means or the seizure of part of the whole of the State, or acts in favour of their implementation by proselytism, shall be punished by a term of imprisonment of not less than six months. However, the judge shall also impose a banishment of one month to two years to a place of exile. After these penalties, anyone taking advantage of a strike or lockout that causes disturbances or clashes shall also be punished. If the “offenses” described in this article were committed through the

²² Ibid., 66.

²³ Ibid., 62–63.

²⁴ “Το ‘Ιδιώνυμο,’” *Ριζοσπάστης*, 14 July 2002.

press, the journalist, editor, printer or publisher of the publication could be banned from exercising his profession for six months and, in the event of recidivism, for a maximum of three years.²⁵

Particularly severe penalties were foreseen for “offenders” of the law who were civil servants, police officers or military personnel. In fact, for teachers, the military and members of the security forces, the violation of the law was not required. If they were arrested as “propagandists ... of communist principles or [for] insulting the idea of the Fatherland or national symbols”, they could be fired from the civil service. Finally, if a trade union organisation was a “violateur” of the law, it was dissolved, while no public open or closed assembly was allowed, nor was the formation of a union or association if it was deemed to pursue subversive aims in relation to the social regime. The general anticommunist climate that was critically shaped by these legislative changes and the outlawing of the KKE resulted in assassinations, prosecutions, exile and the stigmatisation of citizens, leftists and communists. Under the *Ιδώνυμο*, there were 2,271 convictions, including 86 for high treason.²⁶

Thus, in its first issue in 1930, *Πρωτοπόροι* claimed to be responding to the “present needs of intellectual production” and it simultaneously set forth its right to continue publication.²⁷ A year later, in February 1931, it said the state had excluded it from being distributed via post offices and the railway and had prohibited private agencies from circulating it. For the editors, the magazine was “the instrument of the true avant-garde in art and intellect” at a time of “suffocation” and “barbarism”.²⁸ Thus, the ideas presented in *Πρωτοπόροι*, most often by anonymous or pseudonymous authors, can only be interpreted within this particular context. Furthermore, the context here is not just the frame but the thread connecting the ideas to the positionality of the bodies of the people who expressed them.

With this observation in mind, we will now move to the texts related to the intersection of the three concepts of concern and attempt to identify the issues and questions that arise from this intersection but which start from my particular field and regard the history of science and science studies. The discussion will involve, among others, issues of progress, objectivity, the hierarchy of knowledge and the ideological background of knowledge circulation practices in relation to gender.

²⁵ Cited in *ibid.*

²⁶ Psillas, “Ο αντικομμουνισμός στον Μεσοπόλεμο.”

²⁷ “Η πορεία μας,” *Πρωτοπόροι*, no. 2 (March 1930).

²⁸ “Η πορεία μας,” *Πρωτοπόροι*, no. 1 (March 1931).

In *Πρωτοπόροι*, the concepts of science, atheism and religion seem to intersect in texts concerning religion and science, and in various denunciations, news reports and advertisements. In the first case, the texts on religion either theorise religion or refute accusations stemming from the anticommunist narrative and originating from within the church. The responses to the accusations emanating from within the church illustrate the concepts of concern from both the authors' and the church's perspectives. For example, it becomes clear that from the communist point of view, there is no need to theorise atheism as the issue is approached as irrelevant (the existence or belief in God is something that communists are not concerned with). Moreover, there is criticism of the connection between Hellenism and religion and the transformation of the latter as a criterion of proof of the former.²⁹

In texts on science, the subject is directly linked to the concept of truth, especially the methods of seeking it. The magazine accused the church of anathematising, in various public pronouncements, science as satanic in issues relating to the creation of the world and life, physical experimentation, natural history and biology.³⁰ It made a connection between atheism and science through the criticism of religion on the basis of education and culture. Authors accused the church of condemning atheism for "teaching the people how fish are fertilised" and not allowing the "blind savage and uncivilised believe that they are fertilised through a blessing". For them, the primary language, the teaching of science, and first aid training are part of a collective effort by the left to fight "the ignorance and the terrible illiteracy of the people".³¹ In contrast to the church, the authors stress that they "care" about Greek people and their problematic or even absent relationship with science and education. Accordingly, many refer to books or texts concerning scientific theories (Darwinism, theory of relativity) as "efforts intended to provide the people and young children with the simple and universally unquestioned certified scientific knowledge".³²

There are two critical points related to our discussion. The first concerns the notion of objectivity/neutrality and truth, which recurs again and again

²⁹ See, indicatively, Petros Pikros, "Από την φάτνη της Βηθλεέμ ως τον σταυρό του Γολγοθά," *Πρωτοπόροι*, vol. 3 (April 1931).

³⁰ See, indicatively, A.I. Panselinos, "Η γέννηση του Χριστιανισμού και το κοινωνικό του περιεχόμενο," *Πρωτοπόροι*, no. 1 (December 1931); Paratiritis, "Δυσωδία τάφων κεκονιασμένων," *Πρωτοπόροι*, no. 1 (February 1930).

³¹ "Η πορεία μας," *Πρωτοπόροι*, no. 1 (March 1930).

³² Friedrich Engels, "Από τον πίθηκο στον άνθρωπο," *Πρωτοπόροι*, no. 1 (March 1931); Albert Einstein, "Η ειδική και γενική θεωρία της σχετικότητας εκλαϊκευμένη," *Πρωτοπόροι*, no. 2 (March 1931); Albert Einstein, "Η ειδική και γενική θεωρία της σχετικότητας εκλαϊκευμένη,"

in *Πρωτοπόροι* through references to “validation through experiments,” the “discovery” of phenomena and properties,” the “certainty of scientific beliefs” and “naturalness”. Thus, science is understood as a concept around the above ideas and notions. This is, of course, not a new finding. Both the history of science and science studies since the last decades of the twentieth century have discussed the question of the ideology of progress in relation to disembodied science or theory – ideas disconnected from the body – and the question of objectivity/neutrality as concepts that historically have been identified as a-historical and a-social. As such, the above political issue, which remains relevant and current today, should lead us to the historicity of the mechanisms of the Left’s appropriation of these ideas of science as a response to religion and anticommunism. Indeed, by combining the research agendas of both the history of science and masculinity studies around these issues, the relationship of left intellectuals to the narratives and ideologies concerning science as socially and historically informed processes offers new critical perspectives on concepts and ideologies such as the neutrality of science, which have preoccupied historians of science and the Marxist historiography of science for decades.

A second issue that emerges is the notion of “the people” – the public, *λαός* – as the recipient of scientific knowledge or the bearer of the lack of it, but also the expression by numerous subjects – the writers, the left, the communists – of their responsibility to educate “the people”. Here, a clearly paternalistic approach is evident. There is a vague subject that “cares and suffers” over the noncirculation of scientific knowledge and thus the lack of sophistication of the subject “people,” and it is this same subject that bears the responsibility to “educate” the “people.” This discussion is another way to revisit the dialogue around the concept of the popularisation of science. This term appears many times in the archival material and cannot be understood apart from the ideology it carries that results in its political uses (popularisation): the epistemological hierarchies it (re)produces – the expert and the nonexpert and the relationship between them, the boundary between science and society as a product of ongoing political and ideological negotiation, the processes and terms through which we approach issues of knowledge democratisation. Those concerns become even more interesting when linked to the hegemonic or regional masculinities that appear around them.

Πρωτοπόροι, no. 3 (April 1931); Einstein, “Η ειδική και γενική θεωρία της σχετικότητας εκλαϊκευμένη,” *Πρωτοπόροι*, no. 4 (May 1931); G.A. Gurev, “Αμοιβαίες σχέσεις μαρξισμού και δαρβινισμού,” *Πρωτοπόροι*, no. 11 (October 1932).

Instead of an Epilogue

This article has sought to open up a methodological discussion that can shed light on historiographical issues. More specifically, it has explored the intersections of science studies and masculinity studies within the scope of the history of science and gender studies. The first part of this article sought to map the intellectual space of masculinity studies and then suggest a methodology through which we can approach issues related to science, atheism and gender. Here, the gender aspect was not limited to the absence of women but the interpretation of it with the parallel analysis of complex male experiences and identities within a specific historical context. To that end, the second part focused on the journal *Πρωτοπόροι*, seeking to explore the conceptualisation of science on the left but within a specific gendered reality in which communist ideas were criminalised, creating multiple masculinities. Different masculinities were present at the intersection of atheism and the church or state, specifically in relation to science. Of course, the analysis of the archival material presented here did not explain sufficiently how those multiple masculinities were developed and performed. Instead, I wanted to emphasise the need to enrich the gender aspect in science studies in order to explain complex historical periods, evidence of which may not include the presence of women, but still they can say much about the gender power relations that were present in specific historical and sociopolitical contexts. Here, the focus was on the Left's embedment of the ideology of progress and neutrality and the popularisation of science, issues which are also highly relevant in the current political context – the continuous conditions of crises (within and in parallel to the hegemony of technoscience and technocracy), precarity, the rise of the far right, racism, gender discrimination and exclusion. Science is at the centre of political and ideological stakes, and public discourses about it ought to be reflective and emerge from our critical look at the racial, gender and class exclusions and inequalities associated with and (re)produced through the production and circulation of knowledge.

Princeton University

