Itineraries in the world of the Enlightenment.
Adamantios Korais from Smyrna via Montpellier to Paris

In today’s world of scholarship Adamantios Korais is a forgotten and rather marginalised figure. It is characteristic no space was found for an entry on Korais in such a comprehensive and all-encompassing work of reference as the Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment, which devotes considerable space to biographical entries not only on the major figures of the Enlightenment but also on personalities of secondary importance from the point of view of the movement as a whole but significant in the particular cultural or “national” contexts to which they transmitted the culture of lights. Korais was a significant figure for the transmission of the Enlightenment beyond its original context of inception and growth. His contribution was not limited to his role and intellectual impact in the Greek cultural tradition, but was felt throughout the much broader space of the “Orthodox Commonwealth”\(^1\). As Elie Kedourie remarked almost forty years ago, Korais’s significance extends far beyond the Greek cultural context on account of the precocity of his role in the transmission of the basic ideas and values of Western modernity into non-Western contexts\(^2\). Yet Korais was not accorded an entry in the Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment whereas even a casual perusal of the listing of 387 biographies will reveal a host of lesser known figures whose inclusion was deemed pertinent. Why this has been so is one of the questions which have motivated the present project.

Korais’ standing in the world of scholarship was quite different in the nineteenth century. The stature he gained on account both of his acclaimed editions of Greek classical texts and of his iconic position in the liberal galaxy is reflected in the extensive and substantial entry devoted to him in the Biographie Universelle in 1836\(^3\).

\(^1\) On the idea of the “Orthodox Commonwealth” as a way of defining the historical space of post-Byzantine South-east Europe see P. M. Kitromilides, An Orthodox Commonwealth. Symbolic Legacies and Cultural Encounters in Southeastern Europe (Aldershot: Variorum, 2007), esp. p. ix-xv.
To recover the significance of Korais’ ideas and his place in the world of the Enlightenment has been the motivation behind the studies in the present collection, which aspires, furthermore, to remind scholars of the Enlightenment of the multiplicity of contexts and of the density and pluralism of initiatives of cultural change that make up the historical texture of the movement. Only an understanding of the Enlightenment in terms of such an expanding horizon can restore the integrity of the controversial and critical moment that has germinated the dynamics of contemporary European culture.

I. The early years

Adamantios Korais was born in Smyrna on 27 April 1748. His father’s family origins were from the island of Chios, a beautiful and prosperous island on account of the commerce of mastic. On the basis of its commercial prosperity Chios had also developed into a society notable for its civility and openness to letters and culture. All this made Korais intensely proud, a feeling that transpired throughout his writings and his own definition of his identity as a Chiot, although he had never visited the island. On his mother’s side Korais came from an important family of learning and distinction in education. His maternal grandfather and namesake, Adamantios Rysios, was a highly respected teacher from the coastal town Arezou in Asia Minor. He bequeathed to Korais an important library of ecclesiastical and ancient Greek authors, which became the young man’s major outlet for reading and self-cultivation.

In his educational experience in his home town Korais was not so fortunate. Smyrna was renowned in the mid-eighteenth century for its high school, the Evangelical School, which attracted students from far afield. Its students included some remarkable representatives of the Enlightenment in the Balkans, including Dositeji Obradović and Iosipos Moisiodax. Korais did not enjoy a happy time there on account both of the teaching methods employed by the head teacher, Ierotheos Dendrinos and of the content of education, which was limited to grammatical drilling. If he was unhappy at school, the young Korais found very rewarding the

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acquaintance of the chaplain of the Dutch consulate in Smyrna, Bernard Keun, who agreed to teach him Latin. By his own account, his association with Keun, whom he recalls repeatedly with great respect and admiration in his extensive correspondence, was a major source of stimulation for him that motivated his desire for higher studies in the West.

His first contact with the West came as a compromise between his own desire for the pursuit of knowledge and his father’s expectation from his first-born son to join in his commercial enterprises. The compromise came in the form of a charge to young Adamantios, or Diamantis as he was still known, to go to Amsterdam as a representative of his father’s commercial house. So in 1772 he undertook the long voyage from Smyrna to Leghorn and thence overland via Vienna to Amsterdam. In the Dutch metropolis he lived for six years minding his father’s export trade in silk textiles but also, by his own admission forty years later, pursuing his heart’s desire for classical learning.

In Amsterdam he became closely attached to one of his mentor Keun’s friends, Adrien Buurt, who taught him geometry and logic. He also mingled in the circles of Amsterdam Hellenists who were associated with the city’s Atheneum. From the Atheneum classicists he learnt the methods of philological scholarship; he also considerably improved his command of Latin and learnt German. Beyond this, moving in the liberal environment of Amsterdam Korais imbibed the ideas nurtured by the religious culture of the city and came to appreciate not only the values of evangelical Christianity but also the principles of toleration. Besides the cultivation of his interest in the classics, it seems that the most important intellectual influence upon him during his Amsterdam years was exerted upon his religious thought. This can be concluded from the enthusiasm with which, thirty five years later, as he says himself, he recalls reading one of Buurt’s own works in Keun’s French translation, Traité de la morale de l’Eglise, which heavily criticized the Catholic Church. He felt that it was a book “most appropriate to clear people’s heads of many despicable prejudices”.

8. For details Therianos, I, p. 100-105. See also Allilographia, IV, p. 8. An exhaustive and penetrating study of Korais’ Amsterdam years is provided by Philippos Iliou in the introduction to his edition of the letters of Korais’ servant of those years. See Stamatis Petrou, Grammata apo to Amsterdam [Letters from Amsterdam], ed. by Ph. Iliou (Athens, 1976), p. xxx-x/viii.
Thus Korais arrived in Amsterdam in 1772, a devout Orthodox Christian, clad in the long dresses of oriental attire, frequenting the local Orthodox chapel every Sunday and six years later he departed a man of the Enlightenment, dressed in the latest European fashion, whole-heartedly given over to the reading of “French books”\(^{10}\). His transformation is recorded in detail by his scandalized commercial assistant and servant Stamatis Petrou in his letters to his master in Smyrna Eustathius Thoma, who was the commercial partner of Korais’ father. In Stamatis’ letters we witness Korais’ intellectual and moral conversion to the secular values and life-style of Western European society in the heyday of the Enlightenment. In this record we possess unequivocal evidence concerning the process whereby Korais shed the heritage of the traditional society and culture of the Orthodox East and espoused the values and cultural outlook of the West. On this evidence his years in Amsterdam can be seen to constitute the point of departure of his life-long voyage on the high seas of the Enlightenment.

By 1778 it became clear that Korais’ business venture in Amsterdam had failed. With great reluctance, as he himself confesses in his autobiography, he took the road of return. He broke his journey in Vienna, where he visited his father’s brother, the metropolitan of Belgrade Sophronios, who had been expelled from his see by the Turks. In the winter months of 1778-1779 he had an extended stay in Trieste and Venice, from where he embarked on the return voyage to Smyrna. He returned home in the spring of 1779 to find his home town, including his family house, destroyed by a recent fire, which had burnt down a large part of the city following an earthquake. The condition of the city and his family further distressed Korais, who was determined from the outset to leave again. His melancholy was nurtured by his hatred for his homeland’s Turkish tyrants, he tells us in his autobiography\(^{11}\), but most of all he found intolerable the imitation of their tyrannical behaviour by his coreligionists. All this strengthened his determination to take flight to the West to study medicine.

He stayed in Smyrna for four years. In this period he avoided the society of the city and stayed mostly in the countryside. He came down to Smyrna in order to meet his old friend and mentor Bernard Keun. At Keun’s suggestion Korais engaged in his first translation project. He undertook a translation of the *Orthodox Teaching* by the

\(^{10}\) Stamatis Petrou, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

\(^{11}\) *Prolegomena* I, p. xxi-xxii.
metropolitan of Moscow Plato. This was a famous work of Christian instruction in the eighteenth century by an author renowned as a preacher, whose learning and piety were greatly admired by contemporaries\textsuperscript{12}. The work had been translated into Latin, French and German. Korais probably worked from the French edition. He added his own long introduction and notes, which are quite suggestive of his motivation in undertaking the translation of a work, that was more a manual of Christian ethics than a treatise on Orthodox doctrine. Korais’ own notes on the text are revealing of his intentions: he counselled the faithful to give donations for the endowment of schools and hospitals and the relief of the poor rather than for the decoration of churches; he advised against gluttony on feast days but also against excessive devotion to the observance of fasting, which he judged a formality which was “not a virtue in itself but a means to virtue”. Most significantly he used his commentary as an argument for religious toleration: “Hatred against the faithful of other religions, especially against the poor Jews, is irrational […] it may be excusable to detest the wrong doctrines of others, but to hate your brother for not believing like yourself is the worst form of wickedness”\textsuperscript{13}.

Korais’ translation of Plato’s Orthodox Teaching was published in Leipzig in 1782. A Synopsis of Sacred History and Catechism for the Use of the Schools of the Greek Nation followed the next year\textsuperscript{14}. According to the translator this was a book designed to improve children’s moral sense and in thus designating the purpose of his book Korais revealed his overall conception of the role of religion in society that was to remain constant in his social theory: religion and religious education were important as means for the moral cultivation of individuals and thus as a force contributing to the taming of social relations and to the production of civil society. To this end religion needed to be purged of superstitions, prejudices and bigotry through appropriate instruction of the faithful. This was the purpose of his catechism. The work was completed on board ship while Korais was sailing from Smyrna to Leghorn.

\textsuperscript{12} Cf. the appraisal by the leading Russian Orthodox theologian George Florovsky, Aspects of Church History (Belmond, Mass., 1975), Vol. IV, p. 171, who notes that Plato “had much more interest in morals than in the doctrines of the faith”. In this Plato’s religious writings fit perfectly with Korais’ interests.


\textsuperscript{14} Synopsis tis ieras istorias kai katihiseos [A synopsis of sacred history and catechism], (Venice, 1783).
in the summer months of 1782 on his way to Montpellier to study medicine. This passage represented the fulfilment of his heart’s desire.

Ever since his return from Amsterdam in 1779 Korais had been planning his second venture to the West. His parents wanted to keep him in Smyrna, hoping for him and promising him the blessings of a conventional course of life: joining his father’s business and a successful marriage, for which they had proposed a beautiful young and very rich bride\textsuperscript{15}. Adamantios would have none of that and persisted in his plan to leave. Eventually he prevailed upon his parents and departed definitively from the East for the West in pursuit of freedom and learning. Thus began Korais’ life in the Enlightenment.

II. Montpellier

After a short sojourn in Leghorn, from where he sent the manuscript of his catechism to Venice to be printed, Korais left for Montpellier, where he arrived on 9 October 1782. Korais’ transposition from the metropolis of the Eastern Mediterranean to the venerable hearth of learning and science on the Western part of the ancient sea, was to prove a movement of great symbolic significance for the Enlightenment as living history on a European scale. This movement in space was much more than a geographical trajectory. It was a sea change which retrospectively would be interpreted as the origin of a systematic project of transferring of Western ideas to non-Western contexts. If in Amsterdam Korais had effected his own personal transformation by shedding his oriental identity and espousing the secular outlook of the Enlightenment, his arrival at Montpellier marked the beginning of a strategy in his mind for the collective transformation of his cultural community.

Korais enrolled in the School of Medicine of the \textit{inclyta Universitate Monspeliensi} and this course of studies provided his definitive incorporation into the culture of the Enlightenment\textsuperscript{16}. Through his medical training he was exposed to the theory of vitalism expounded by Paul-Joseph Barthez, who was greatly admired by D’Alembert\textsuperscript{17}. He was also taught by Grimaud, Chaptal and Broussonet. Grimaud was

\textsuperscript{15}. Prolegomena I, p. xxii. Korais notes that his love of freedom overrode every other form of love.

\textsuperscript{16}. On the Montpellier years see \textit{ibid}, p. xxii-xxiv. Also Therianos, I, p. 122-127.

probably the strongest intellectual influence upon him by introducing him to Neo-
Hippocratic medicine, to which the Montpellier school had made important
contributions. On the other hand Jean-Antoine Chaptal introduced him to the study of
Strabo and Strabonic scholarship and encouraged him to undertake the translation of
Strabo’s *Geography*. Among his fellow students at Montpellier Korais developed a
close friendship with Philippe Pinel, the future famous author of *Nosographie
philosophique*.

The intellectual climate within which Korais, now in his mid-thirties, attained
his scholarly maturity was defined by the encounter of medicine with philosophy.
This encounter was the clearest expression of the Enlightenment in the field of
medicine. The distinctive contribution of the Montpellier school to medical
Enlightenment took the theoretical form of vitalism, the deep respect for life and the
acknowledgement of the non-material element activating life, the soul, which was
vitalism’s rejoinder to materialism. Vitalism sought support for its arguments among
other sources in the Hippocratic corpus and this can explain the prestige enjoyed by
ancient medical authors in late eighteenth-century medicine, a kind of partial
resurgence of the Ancients in late Enlightenment after the defeat and extinction of
Aristotelianism by the rise of modern experimental science. One tangible effect of this
development in medical training was the requirement for the submission of a thesis on
Hippocrates’ *Aphorisms* in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a medical
doctorate. This explains Korais’ two theses at Montpellier. It also explains the
motivations of the early scholarly projects which established his fame in the world of
the Enlightenment in the closing years of the eighteenth century.

Korais completed his medical training on 11 July 1786. On that day he
defended his dissertation *Pyretologiae Synopsis*, a work bearing the profound imprint
of vitalism. The requirements for the doctorate in medicine were completed with the
submission in 1787 of his second dissertation, *Medicus Hippocraticus*, which
consisted of a commentary on the first Hippocratic Aphorism. Both works were
printed and copies are included in the library of medical dissertations in Montpellier’s
medical school. In the same period, obviously to earn his livelihood, Korais undertook

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new translation projects, this time translating from the German. The old linguistic skill he had acquired in Amsterdam proved doubly useful. He translated a famous work, a standard manual of medical practice at the time, Christian Gottlieb Selle’s *Clinical Medicine*, which was printed in Montpellier in 1787\(^{20}\).

After six years at Montpellier and with his medical training completed, Korais once again felt the urge for a change. His correspondence with his friend Dimitrios Lotos back home in Smyrna is quite revealing of his motivation. He needed a change, he felt the pressure for the use of bigger collections of manuscripts for his research, but most of all he wanted to learn more, to imbibe more deeply the culture of lights. The object of his desires now was “the new Athens” of the age, the Paris of the Enlightenment. He felt he had to get to know the “new Athens”, lest he succumbed to the “shame of those who had failed to know the Athens of old”\(^{21}\). Thus in May 1788 he left Montpellier for good and moved to Paris, where he was to spend the remaining forty five years of his life.

III. In revolutionary Paris

Korais arrived in Paris just in time to witness the coming of the Revolution. The decade 1788-1799 is among the best documented in his life on account of the detailed reports on his daily life and impressions that he included in his voluminous correspondence, primarily with his friend Dimitrios Lotos, chief cantor in Smyrna. Korais records his arrival in Paris with great precision: on 24 May 1788 he had reached the “most celebrated city of Paris, the residence of all arts and sciences, the new Athens”\(^{22}\). He writes with enthusiasm of what he saw and the contacts he made with men of letters, especially classicists who expressed great admiration for ancient Greece and lamented the modern condition of the country under Ottoman despotism\(^{23}\). Soon afterwards Korais appears deeply taken by the revolutionary explosion of the spring of 1789. For the rest of the decade his correspondence became a detailed personal record of the French Revolution. From May 1789 onward he appears to have been everywhere, as an eyewitness of the Revolution: in the National Assembly about whose proceedings he talks in great detail, in the streets of Paris describing demonstrations and parades, at the Bastille on 14 July 1789, at Mirabeau’s funeral in

\(^{20}\) *Prolegomena I*, p. xxiii.


\(^{22}\) *Allilographia I*, p. 100.

1791, at the trial and execution of the king in January 1792. His observation of the revolutionary drama and the works and days of the protagonists, but also his reflection and judgement on their words and flowery oratory turned out to be a veritable schooling in politics for him. He admired but also criticized Mirabeau for demagoguery, he singled out with admiration the bishop of Autun, the future Talleyrand, for having the courage to take the civil oath of the clergy, but most of all his admiration focused on Condorcet and Malesherbes. He pitied the king and his family for their tragic fate and when the Revolution took its radical turn in 1793 he followed with awe Jacobinism and its politics and developed a pronounced distaste and subsequently genuine hatred for Robespierre, whom he described as a monster.

Most of all he loathed Marat. Observing the Revolution and the Terror, he came to the conclusion that liberty ought to be always combined with justice, that equality could be a dangerous slogan if divorced from moderation and that hypocrisy was a plague of democratic politics from which communities could escape with difficulty. Thus Korais emerged from the vortex of the French Revolution a confirmed liberal in his political ideas, at several points foreshadowing in his letters the liberal critique of the Revolution that was to be articulated by liberal thinkers through most of the nineteenth century. He shared his views with his French liberal friends, especially Etienne Clavier and Chardon de la Rochette, both of them scholars of the classics and admirers of Korais’ skills as a classical philologist. To relieve him of the many anxieties and hardships he had to sustain in revolutionary Paris at the height of the Terror, Clavier invited him to spend the second half of 1793 (from early August to late December) in his country residence in Nozaye near Nemours in the neighbourhood of Fontainebleau. In this period Korais assisted Clavier in his philological projects, but his own sense of independence and personal dignity soon made him restless: he found it objectionable to depend for his livelihood on his friend’s hospitality and felt the need to return to Paris. He was already harbouring

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26. Ibid., p. 127 and 139.
27. Ibid., p. 267 and 306 respectively.
28. Ibid., p. 293-301, 303-305.
29. Ibid., p. 412-413.
30. Ibid., p. 307.
32. See Lettres inédites de Coray à Chardon de la Rochette (1790-1796), (Paris, 1877).
plans to return home, after a decade in France. He was making enquiries about travel arrangements to Naples, from where he was hoping to make the passage home to Smyrna.\footnote{Therianos, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 204-207.}

In January 1794 Korais was back in Paris, in a new apartment found for him by Chardon de la Rochette. For the moment he put aside his travel plans and gave himself over whole-heartedly to his scholarly work. He was already at work on three major editorial projects planning new editions of major texts by Hippocrates, Theophrastus and Strabo. The rest of the 1790s were devoted to these projects. In 1795 he rejoiced at the collapse of the Terror and felt that Robespierre and Saint-Just had received their well deserved reward.\footnote{\textit{Allilographia} I, p. 412-413.} He became a whole-hearted supporter of the Directoire and developed close ties with the new regime’s intellectual supporters, who formed the group of the \textit{Idéologues}, among whom Korais had some old acquaintances from his years in medical school at Montpellier.

IV. The early scholarly and political writings

The end of the last decade of the eighteenth century was marked by the crowning moment of Korais’ scholarly exertions until then, with the almost simultaneous appearance in the space of just one year of his two first major contributions to classical scholarship: the French translation of Theophrastus’ \textit{Characters} in 1799 and the two-volume edition of the Hippocratic classic \textit{Of Airs Waters Places} in 1800. Both works were preceded by extensive preliminary discourses which showed the breadth and depth of Korais’ scholarship not only in the fields of classics and philology but also in social and political theory. The two editions established Korais’ authority as a classical scholar and confirmed the reputation he had already gained in scholarly circles in the French capital and beyond. The two editions, especially that of Hippocrates which established the Greek text on the basis of extensive readings of new manuscript witnesses, were received with considerable acclaim and opened favourable prospects for Korais’ academic future.\footnote{\textit{Ιπποκράτους περί αέρων, υδάτων, τόπων. Traité d’Hippocrate des airs, des eaux et des lieux, par Coray (Paris 1800), Vols. I-II.}} His deeper interests, nevertheless, lay elsewhere, in the politics of the liberation of Greece. This
transpired in the dedication of Theophrastus “aux Grecs libres de la mer lonienne”\textsuperscript{36}, alluding to the occupation in 1797 of the former Venetian territory of the seven islands of Corfu, PAXI, Leukas, Cephalonia, Ithaca, Zante and Cythera by French revolutionary troops, an event which brought about an outburst of republican feeling in the islands\textsuperscript{37}.

Korais presented a copy of his edition of Theophrastus to the Directory’s minister of the interior, Nicolas François de Neufchateau, who was responsible for public education\textsuperscript{38}. The gift was accompanied by the following letter\textsuperscript{39}:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Citoyen Ministre,}

L’instruction publique faisant un des objets les plus importans de votre place, j’ai cru qu’il étoit de mon devoir de vous offrir un exemplaire du travail que je viens de publier dans le dessein d’instruire et d’attacher de plus en plus à la République la portion de mes compatriotes qui jouit déjà des bienfaits de la liberté. Ce seul motif ne suffisoit point à excuser la liberté que je prends, si je ne la regardeois en même temps comme un hommage rendu à vos talens littéraires comme à votre civisme.

\textit{Salut et respect}

\textit{Coray}

\textit{25 Ventôse an 7}

\textit{De la rue de Vaugirand No 1193}
\end{quote}

This is a very interesting document because it shows how integrally Korais was integrated into the political culture of revolutionary France, what he in fact calls civisme in his letter. The letter also openly declares the political motivation of his academic projects which was, as he says, to instruct his compatriots in the values of republican liberty.

\textsuperscript{36} Les caractères de Théophraste d’après un manuscrit du Vatican, traduction nouvelle par Coray (Paris 1799). The appeal is reprinted in Lettres inédites, p. 330-331. See also Prolegomena IV, p. 443-444.


\textsuperscript{39} Archives Nationales de France/F/17/1031 (dr. 4).
As the pressures of the French Revolution began to be felt in the Eastern Mediterranean with the French occupation of the Septinsular archipelago and especially the following year with General Bonaparte’s landing in Egypt, the prospects of liberation seemed to brighten up for the Greeks and the other subject peoples of the Balkans. The most important response to these momentous developments was the revolutionary initiative of the Greek Jacobin Rhigas Velestinlis. After a decade of feverish literary preparation throughout the 1790s with the publication of books, pamphlets and maps, including an engraved portrait of Alexander the Great in order to raise his compatriots’ awareness of their ties with the ancients, Rigas issued a revolutionary pamphlet proclaiming the independence of Greece and putting forward the constitution of a “Hellenic Republic”, modelled on the Jacobin constitution of 1793. The pamphlet was printed in Vienna but was meant for distribution in Greece in order to incite a rising against Ottoman despotism. Rigas’ plans, however, were betrayed to the Austrian police and he was arrested in Trieste in December 1798, interrogated in Vienna and eventually handed over to the Turks, who executed him along with seven other patriots in Belgrade in June 1798. Korais was aware of these developments and from Paris, through the communication networks in the circles of the Greek diaspora, he passionately followed the revolutionary fever in South-east Europe. From then on Korais’ major preoccupation became the political and intellectual preparation for the liberation of his compatriots. This motivation was reflected in his writings of this period and was profusely expressed in the introductory texts he prefixed in his translations and editions of ancient sources. With these literary projects Korais was responding to the challenge of the times. Despite his earlier critique of Jacobinism, the period from 1798 to 1803 turned out to be the most radical phase in the development of his political thought, which under the pressure of revolutionary politics in his homeland exemplified considerable openness and receptivity to radical ideas.

Responding to events in the East Korais inaugurated his explicitly political writing in 1798 by publishing the polemical pamphlet Fraternal Instruction. In this text he directly evoked Rigas’ arrest by the Austrians and paid tribute to his zeal for

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the enlightenment and freedom of his nation. The main thrust of the argument was an attack and a point-by-point refutation of a pamphlet entitled *Paternal Instruction*, which called upon the Orthodox faithful to submit to their legitimate Ottoman masters and seal their ears to the dangerous principles of liberty and equality advocated by godless and impious impostors like the French revolutionaries and Rigas.

Napoleon’s campaign in Egypt inspired Korais with great expectations, which he expressed in two more pamphlets entitled *Martial Trumpet Call* and *Martial Anthem*, the latter accompanied by a French translation (*Chant de guerre des Grecs qui combattent en Égypte pour la cause de la Liberté*). Both pamphlets called upon the Greeks to rally to the French forces and support in every possible way their struggle to bring liberty to the subjects of despotism.

Perceiving the star of freedom rising on his country’s horizon, Korais felt that his compatriots, soon to become free citizens, needed guidance in the duties of citizenship and in the great art of legislation. This was the motivation behind his most important political initiative of this early phase of his writing career, the Greek translation of Beccaria’s *Of Crimes and Punishments*, which appeared in 1800, addressed, along with Theophrastus’ *Characters*, to the free Greeks of the newly established Septinsular Republic. Korais worked from Abbé Morelet’s French translation of Beccaria and appended long prolegomena and an extensive commentary to his edition counselling his compatriots in the arts of liberty. It was characteristic of the radical turn in his political thought during this period that in the commentary to Beccaria he announces his intention to translate Rousseau’s *Social Contract* in order to further his compatriots’ education in civic virtue.

In 1800 Korais joined a group of other doctors of medicine, naturalists but also men of letters and other specialists in the ranks of the Société des Observateurs de

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44. *Salpisma polemistirion* [Martial trumpet call], (Alexandria 1801). The pamphlet was in fact printed anonymously in Paris. Authorship was acknowledged by Korais in his Autobiography. See *Prolegomena* I, p. xxx. It was reprinted, characteristically, in 1821.

45. *Asma polemistirion* [Martial anthem], [Egypt, 1800]. It was in fact printed in Paris. See Ph. Iliou, *Asma polemistirion. Anonymo ergo tou Korai* [Martial anthem, an anonymous work by Korais], (Athens, 1982).

l’Homme. In the list of the Society’s members he is included not in his medical capacity but as an “helléniste”\textsuperscript{47}. The Society, the ancestor of French anthropology, provided an outlet for research at the frontiers of the various disciplines, in a way creating an alternative forum to the institutions of the academic establishment\textsuperscript{48}. In this environment Korais could bring together his scholarly and political interests. The Society’s intellectual outlook supplied the conceptual framework he needed in order to organize his reflections on the sociology of cultural change in tracing the preconditions of liberty in Greece. This was the object of the famous \textit{Mémoire sur l’état actuel de la civilisation dans la Grèce}, which he read at a session of the Society on 6 January 1803\textsuperscript{49}.

Along with his “Discours préliminaire” to the edition of \textit{Airs Waters Places} in 1800, the \textit{Mémoire} supplies the clearest evidence concerning the extent to which Korais had assimilated in his thought the liberal teaching of the \textit{Idéologie}. In the \textit{Mémoire} he spoke of a “moral revolution” under way in Greek society, a revolution manifesting itself in a broad range of economic, social and cultural changes announcing the imminence of the liberation of Greece. Korais was suggesting that the preconditions of a free society had been achieved in Greece and that the political change that would transform the country from an oppressed collectivity into a free national community had been set in motion.

The \textit{Mémoire} was received with considerable acclaim and established Korais’ status as a social theorist of liberty besides his reputation as a great classicist. Many years later the British historian Charles Fyffe called this work one of the “most luminous and interesting historical sketches ever penned”\textsuperscript{50}. It was this text that was destined to gain for Korais a position of prominence among the prophets of nationalism in modern scholarship thanks to the perceptiveness of Elie Kedourie\textsuperscript{51}.

Korais’ feverish involvement in the politics of Greek liberation did not slow down his philological projects. Following the success of his editions of Theophrastus


\textsuperscript{48} Chappey, \textit{op. cit.}, esp. p. 161-224.


\textsuperscript{51} See above note (2).
and Hippocrates, in 1802 he edited Longus’ *Daphnis and Chloe*, which appeared in a sumptuous edition published by the famous publishing house of Didot. The book was illustrated with engravings by well-known artists of the period. Two years later, in May 1804, responding to the urgings of his friend and supporter Alexandros Vasileiou, Korais published his first entirely Greek edition of an ancient author, Heliodorus’ *Ethiopics*. This was a major critical accomplishment and gave Korais the occasion in his prolegomena to express at length his literary views and his theory of the novel. The significance of this edition in the context of Korais’ broader esthetic and literary views is considered by Anna Tabaki in our collection.

The fruitful and multifaceted early phase of Korais’ intellectual development could be seen to conclude in 1805 with the publication of yet another political pamphlet entitled *A Dialogue of two Greeks Resident in Venice when they Heard of the Splendid Victories of Emperor Napoleon*. This pamphlet carries on Korais’ earlier radical pro-French political argument and reiterates the hope that the only power that could help the liberation of the Greeks was France under Napoleon. This was the last time that Korais expressed this hope that was to be bitterly disappointed after Napoleon’s rapprochement with Russia at Tilsit in 1807. The 1805 *Dialogue* still reflects a glimmer of the impact of the French Revolution on Greek political thought. From then on Greek political reflection under the lead of Korais would become much more complex and cognizant of the antinomies of politics and of the dilemmas immanent in the struggle for freedom.

V. The Hellenic Library

Korais’ life was never easy from the point of view of earning his livelihood. In his correspondence he frequently takes his close friends into his confidence concerning his financial difficulties, which also included the problem of funding of his publications. A partial relief of his difficulties came in 1805 upon the publication of the first volume of the French translation of Strabo’s *Geography*, which secured him a life-long annual pension of 2000 francs – an expression of the pleasure of Napoleon himself at the appearance of the work. Another significant source of income had been procured through his expert services in manuscript collation for the

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Oxford classicist Professor Holmes. Considerable new information on this aspect of Korais’ professional life is made available thanks to Vivi Perraky’s research published in this collection. In fact in her contribution Perraky identifies a “British phase” in Korais’ professional activity between 1789 and 1803, during which he developed productive working ties with British scholars. The new evidence discussed by Perraky suggests a considerably revised picture of Korais’ financial status and puts the image of his poverty in a new light. At the same time the new evidence confirms the reputation secured for Korais by his philological skills, a reputation that had even led his Oxonian patrons to consider him for an appointment in the University of Oxford.

A decisive turning point in Korais’ scholarly activity came in 1805. By then his reputation as a scholar of the classics had gained him recognition in the broad world of the Greek diaspora not only in Western and Central Europe but as far afield as Russia and the Black Sea region. The Greek magnates of Russian foreign commerce, the brothers Zosima, originally from the village of Grammeno, near Ioannina in Epirus, had acted as benefactors of Greek culture for decades. Appreciating the significance of Korais’ contribution to Greek letters, they decided to fund his major editorial project designed to make available the Greek classics to the Modern Greeks. This is how Korais’ Hellenic Library (Ελληνική Βιβλιοθήκη) came into being. It was indeed a major project which over a period of twenty two years (1805-1827) made available sixteen main volumes and another nine supplementary editions (Parerga) of Greek classical authors to Greek readers and to scholars of the classics around Europe. The ancient texts were preceded by extensive prolegomena in which Korais expounded his cultural criticism and his advice to his compatriots. The prolegomena provide an inexhaustible source for Korais’ ideas and arguments on the broadest possible range of cultural, political, religious and moral issues preoccupying a changing society.

These are the famous “Improvised reflections on Greek education and language”. As it is evident from the scholarly apparatus of the contributions comprising this collection, they provide the foremost source for reconstructing of Korais’ thought. In the clearest possible way the “Improvised reflections” illustrate the extent and depth of Korais’ integration of the basic tenets of Enlightenment

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thought into his broad theory of Greek revival. It is significant and quite true to the Enlightenment reading of the Greek classics that the major emphasis of Korais’ selections of texts for inclusion in the *Hellenic Library*, at least up to 1821, was on later Greek sources which, however, possessed a strong moralistic and didactic element. This was what was needed, in Korais’ judgement, for the re-education of the Greeks.

The entire project was inaugurated in 1805 with the appearance of the “Precursor to the Hellenic Library”, which in an introductory essay set out the philosophy of Korais’ programme for the publication of Greek classics. The subject is examined by I. D. Evrigenis in his contribution to our collection. The main body of the book comprised Aelian’s *History* and the surviving works of Heracleides and Nicholas of Damascus. The corpus of the Hellenic Library opened with two volumes of Isocrates’ orations; there followed six volumes of Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives* and four volumes of Strabo. Besides the consecutively numbered volumes of the *Hellenic Library*, Korais made available other editions of classical texts as well, including four volumes each presenting the first four books of the *Iliad* 55. The place of the *Iliad* in Korais’ publication programme is considered in detail in this collection by Michael Paschalidis, who through this case study brings into focus important aspects of Korais’ classical scholarship.

In the prolegomena, especially in the “Improvised reflections” of the first decade of the nineteenth century, Korais expressed in no uncertain terms his views on what he judged to be the most urgent problem in the re-education of the Greeks and the most fundamental precondition of the cultural and ultimately the political revival of the country as well, the language question. He argued that the vernacular Greek language should be reformed and cultivated but especially it ought to be purified of the extensive loans from other languages that obscured its connections with Ancient Greek. However he opposed the return to Attic Greek or other forms of archaism advocated by other intellectual leaders as the appropriate language of a revived and modernized Greek culture. He also considered inappropriate the variety of learned Greek based on the language of the Bible which was used by the Church as its official

55. On Korais as “the first effective neo-classist amongst modern Greeks” see G. P. Henderson, *The Revival of Greek Thought 1620-1830* (Albany, N. Y., 1970), p. 142-158 and on his scholarship and methods as an editor of classical texts see most recently the exhaustive study by N. Kalospyros, *Ω Αδαμαντίου Κοραίος ο οσ κριτικός πιθολόγος και έκδοτις [Adamantios Korais as philological critic and editor]* (Athens, 2006), Vols I-II.
medium of expression. Peter Mackridge in his contribution to this volume examines critically Korais’ theory of the Greek language and his involvement in the language question. What ought to be pointed out here is that the language question in pre-independence Greek culture, to a considerable extent because of Korais’ sharp views, became the battleground on which were fought the main ideological battles in Greek society during the first twenty years of the nineteenth century. Korais’ views found many supporters among the younger followers of the Enlightenment movement, including Neophytos Vamvas and Constantinos Koumas, but they also encountered strong opposition from many directions, from archaists Neophytos Doukas, Athanasios Stageritis and Stephanos Kommitas, conservative supporters of the prominence of the Church in culture and politics such as P. Kodrikas, but also demoticists, supporters of the unconditional adoption of the vernacular as the language of culture, such as Athanasios Psalidas and Ioannis Vilaras and the satirist Iacovakis Rizos-Neroulos.

The intensity and complexity of the language controversy was an indication of the extent to which Enlightenment ideas were transforming Greek culture, but it also pointed to the strong obstacles and forces of resistance to cultural change. In short, the stage of cultural politics on which Korais was a protagonist revealed a culture in the European periphery marked by considerable vitality and ready to claim its place in the society of nations composing the world of the Enlightenment. These claims were voiced unequivocally in the revolutionary struggle that erupted in 1821, despite the repression and authoritarianism sweeping Restoration Europe. This development, which Korais wished to see coming under more propitious circumstances from the point of view of the intellectual and moral preparation of the struggle for freedom, forced him to reformulate his programme of cultural change in significant ways. In fact in his Autobiography Korais states that he expected the revolution to come thirty years later. This would have secured better educated leaders and better planning of the

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57. These cultural debates and ideological conflicts, which to a considerable extent represented the impact of Korais’ ideas on the Greek culture of his time, were reflected in the lively periodical press that had emerged in Greek in the second decade of the nineteenth century, especially the Vienna based journal Ermis o Logios (Learned Mercury), 1810-1821.
course of revolutionary action he had hoped, but this appraisal of the prospects of political change were overtaken by events.

VI. The struggle for freedom and independence

In the winter months of 1821 the consuls and consular agents of the Levant Company in the port cities of Greece were busy reporting considerable movement and anxiety in the Christian population. A climate of excitement and expectancy was sensible in the air as the Sultan’s troops were putting down the ambitions of the rebel toparch of Southern Albania and Epirus Ali Pasha of Jannina. On 21 March 1821 Philip James Green, the Levant Company consul in Patras, wrote:

Affairs in Albania still continue in a very precariously state; Ali Pasha holds out against Sultanic Troops and a great part of the Albanians have risen in his favour it seems doubtful here this war may terminate. The determined resistance of the Veteran Chief may give rise to very serious changes in Greece.

What those “serious changes” in-the-making were became apparent a month later. On 24 April 1821 the Consul reported to His Majesty’s Government and their Worships, the governors of the Levant Company of a Revolt which had taken place on the part of the Greeks against the Turkish Government within Morea.

This is how the liberation of Greece, for which Korais had yearned for so long, was set in motion. The news of the revolutionary movement of his compatriots appear to have reached him in Paris toward the end of the winter 1821. There is evidence in his correspondence that already in late February 1821 he was aware that something was happening. He was formally informed of the Revolution and of the imminent coming of liberation in a letter dated 1 April 1821 addressed to him from Odessa by General Dimitrios Ypsilantis, the brother of the military leader who had initiated the

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58. The National Archives of the United Kingdom [=TNA] SP 105, 139, f. 347.
59. TNA/SP 105, 139, f. 351.
rising against the Ottomans in Moldavia in February 1821. Dimitrios Ypsilantis wrote characteristically:

we, inspired by Yourself, hurled ourselves against them [=the Ottomans] everywhere in Greece and from foreign lands, firmly determined to destroy them entirely […] Therefore rejoice, our good compatriot, and not doubting at all about our victory, prepare yourself, when we send you word, to come to Greece, so as to see the form and shape you have given her, and to feel proud…

This was an eloquent acknowledgement of Korais’ contribution to the ideological preparation of the revolution. The outbreak of the rising caused in Korais’ soul, as he himself confessed, a veritable “earthquake”62. John Bowring, the Utilitarian radical and future editor of Jeremy Bentham, met him in Paris shortly thereafter and recorded in detail the emotion experienced by Korais at the news of his compatriots’ supreme struggle and his rejoicing at their victories63. It was this deep emotion and commitment to the freedom of Greece that motivated and coloured all of Korais’ scholarly and political projects until the end of his life twelve years later. The new additions to the Hellenic Library were characteristically of a pronounced political purpose. Korais judged that under the new revolutionary conditions and with the prospect of statehood on the immediate horizon what his compatriots needed was an education in citizenship and instruction in the principles of justice. He therefore decided to offer them editions of Aristotle’s Politics and Nicomachean Ethics in 1821 and 1822 respectively. He prefixed important political discourses to both editions, teaching, counselling and warning about the necessity of civic virtue and the lethal danger incumbent upon its neglect. His prolegomena to the Politics is one of the classics of his political thought, widely known under its own independent title “Political exhortations to the Greeks”64.

In 1823 Korais reissued his translation of Beccaria as a supplement to the Aristotelian projects of the previous two years. The new edition included the

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61. Ibid., p. 283-284. See also ibid., p. 285 (23 May, 1821), Korais is referring to the good news of the revolutionary movement in Greece reaching him from Trieste, Leghorn and Marseille, using the language of the Revelation as “the imminent fall of the Beast”.


64. Ascribed to it by its German translator professor J. K. von Orelli: “Politische Ermahnungen an die Hellenen” (Zurich, 1823). A second German translation by Karl Iken appeared the same year under the title Korais’ Schrift von alten und neuen Hellenen (Leipzig, 1823).
prolegomena, text and commentary of the original edition of 1802 under a slightly adjusted title in order to make the secular meaning of the work clearer. Most significantly, the new edition included an extensive introductory essay in which Korais raises many of the critical issues facing the liberated Greeks in building their free state. This is also an important essay in political theory: the author discusses among many other subjects the independence of the judiciary as an essential constitutive element of a free state and stresses the need of “political science”, that is “politics united with ethics” as he defines it, in the construction of a state under the rule of law.

Editions of Xenophon’s Memorabilia and Plato’s Gorgias and Lycurgus’ Oration contra Leocrates followed in 1825 and 1826 respectively. The edition of Gorgias was significant in every respect: it was the only work by Plato in the Hellenic Library and with its publication Korais obviously wanted to warn his compatriots against the perils of political nihilism. In the prolegomena to Gorgias he painted an admirable portrait of Socrates as a model of virtue and called for the necessity of justice as the foundation of states in order to cure the vices bred by tyranny. These editions brought the number of volumes in the Hellenic Library up to seventeen.

To hearten the Greeks in their struggle and to uplift their fighting spirit in 1822 Korais published in the parallel series of Parerga of the Hellenic Library an edition of Onesander’s Tactics and Tyrtaeus’ first elegy. It is important to recall in this connection that in his relatively brief prolegomena to Onesander Korais introduces the idea of a just war, arguing that the only form of just war is a struggle for liberty.

In the Parerga Korais included what he considered minor works, which did not occupy the main thrust of his scholarly endeavour. He had inaugurated the series already in 1809 and it included editions of Polyaeus’ Strategems (1809) and Aesop’s Fables (1810), the medical texts on seafood by Xenocrates and Galen (1814) and Marcus Aurelius’ reflections (1816). In the 1820s Korais resumed the Parerga, publishing, after Onesander and Tyrtaeus, four more volumes of works by Plutarch

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66. Prolegomena IV, p. 77-79.
68. Prolegomena, III, p. 298-328.
70. Ibid, p. 95.
(Politics, 1824), Epictetus, Cleanthes and Cebe (1826) and Arrian’s Discourses of Epictetus in two volumes (1827).

In its integrity, comprising sixteen volumes in the Hellenic Library and nine in the Parerga Korais’ oeuvre in classical scholarship is by any standards an impressive monument of learning and philological skill. Most of all, however, it is a declaration of faith in the imperishable value of the classics as a source of the necessary education that every cultured person is required to possess. From this point of view Korais carries on the traditions of European humanism with unique authenticity and appears as a genuine successor of Erasmus in the bosom of the Enlightenment.

Nevertheless, despite the continuing commitment to humanism and scholarship and in spite of his advanced age and many ailments, from 1821 onward Korais’ main interests and preoccupations were political. From his diaspora bastion, fortified by an extensive network of international contacts, Korais became even from a distance a major factor in Greek politics. His politics in this period is recorded and documented by an extensive corpus of political writings, the most important of which, however, remained unpublished in Korais’ own lifetime. This was Korais’ commentary on the Provisional Constitution of Greece, voted at Epidaurus on 1 January 1822 by the First National Assembly of revolutionary Greece. The Provisional Constitution represented the first attempt to set up state institutions in the liberated territories of Greece and to establish the rule of law. It proclaimed the independence of Greece under a republican form of government. In a French translation included in Raffenel’s history of events in Greece71, the Provisional Constitution attracted the attention of Jeremy Bentham who addressed to it some of the criticisms of centralized authority, which eventually went into his Constitutional Code72. Writing independently, Korais presented a commentary which in spirit was very close to Bentham’s evaluation. Through detailed article-by-article criticisms of the Constitution Korais aimed to solidify the republican character of the regime proposed for Greece and to strengthen the liberal political culture which the Constitution aimed to cultivate in the newly-liberated country in order to make the republican political order viable. Obviously his commentary was written

simultaneously with his extensive prolegomena to the second edition of Beccaria: the two texts share a strong republican and egalitarian commitment.

It is impressive to note the radical liberal character of Korais’ commentary. Commenting on the very first article of the *Provisional Constitution* he expresses his strong objection to the recognition of a “predominant religion” in the new state and argues passionately in favour of complete religious toleration\(^{73}\). He goes on to stress the need to strengthen the predominance of the legislature over the executive\(^{74}\), echoing a well known principle of Utilitarian constitutionalism and throughout argues in favour of measures promoting equality not only on a political but also on a symbolic level\(^{75}\). His reserved attitude toward the dangers to liberty that may emanate from the consolidation of administrative structures is also obvious\(^{76}\), as it is in his concern to make the provisions guaranteeing individual freedoms and rights more affirmative\(^{77}\). Korais’ text is marked throughout by a strong anti-aristocratic and especially anti-monarchical tone\(^{78}\). This aspect of the text might explain why it remained unpublished throughout the nineteenth century, when Greece, against Korais’ wishes and advice, became a kingdom, and did not appear in print until 1933, after the proclamation of the second Greek republic.

Korais’ interest in the cultivation of a liberal political culture in Greece, is also reflected in his active encouragement in the mid-1820s towards the preparation of a Greek translation of a classic of liberal political theory, François Daunou’s *Essai sur les garanties individuelles*. The work finally appeared in Greek thanks to the exertions of one of Korais’ closest associates during his final years, Philippos Fournarakis\(^{79}\).

The overall liberal predisposition that shaped Korais’ political thought also determined his attitude toward the modernizing but centralizing policies of Greece’s first ruler, Governor Ioannis Capodistrias, who was charged by the Third National Assembly that convened at Troezen in 1827 to lay the foundations of the new state. The complex political but also personal story between the two men, who in their very different ways contributed decisively to the establishment of an independent Greek


\(^{75}\) *Ibid*, p. 20-30.


\(^{77}\) *Ibid*, p. 30-37, 118-126.


\(^{79}\) See below, chapter VII.
state in modern times, is touched upon in chapter seven of our collection. Korais’ objections to Capodistrias’ authoritarian methods motivated the publication of his last political pamphlets, which were inspired less by an objective evaluation of the Governor’s policies than by his fear of monarchical rule and his mistrust of a strong executive. Although, therefore, his extensive criticisms of Capodistrias do not reflect the best in Korais’ political judgement, they still constitute an integral part of his liberal political heritage.\(^{80}\)

Korais was growing old and tired. His intellectual fatigue was occasionally expressed as a form of desperation at the political prospects of Greece. Yet in his declining years he found the energy to compile four volumes of his scattered studies and collections of source materials on the Greek language through the centuries, which he published in the four volumes of \textit{Atakta} between 1828 and 1832.\(^{81}\)

His final major project was a work in the domain of religion, the \textit{Vademecum} for clergymen which appeared in 1831. In this work, which could be considered his true intellectual and moral legacy, Korais published St. Paul’s pastoral epistles to Timothy and Titus. In the prolegomena he put forward a model of purified Orthodoxy, which aimed to cure the many pathologies bequeathed to the Eastern Church by the lack of education, “caused by the yoke of the Graeco-roman [=Byzantine] emperors and then by that of the Turks.”\(^{82}\) Korais’ religious criticism in this work provoked widespread reaction in ecclesiastical circles\(^{83}\) with the consequence that his views on religion, politics and culture became widely suspect in official ecclesiastical and conservative milieus. The \textit{Vademecum} was never adopted for use by the Greek clergy and a new edition attempted in the 1880s was extensively censored by the editor, who simply omitted Korais’ prolegomena to make it innocuous. Korais’ views, have remained suspect in Orthodox ecclesiastical circles to this day.\(^{84}\)

\(^{80}\) For details see below, chapter VII.

\(^{81}\) See \textit{Prolegomena IV}, p. 143-358. \textit{Atakta} Vol. III, besides the material on language, includes a very important and courageous text of religious criticism discussing the question of the “holy light” lit in Jerusalem every Easter at the Holy Sepulchre.


\(^{83}\) Kyriaki Mamoni, “To Oikoumeniko Patriarcheio kai o Koraïsmos” [The Ecumenical Patriarchate and Korais’ ideas], \textit{Korais kai Chios II}, p. 185-197.

\(^{84}\) See Ph. Iliou, “Ideologikes chriseis tou koraismou ton eikostot aiona” [Ideological uses of Korais’ ideas in the twentieth century], \textit{Diimero Korai}, p. 85-206. One of the most balanced, yet critical, approaches from an Orthodox point of view is Alexander Papaderos, \textit{Metakenosis. Griechenlands Kulturelle Herausforderung durch die Aufklärung in der Sicht des Korais und des Oikonomos} (Meisenheim am Glan, 1970).
VII. The end and the legacy

Despite his repeatedly expressed nostalgia for his homeland and his equally strong sense of living the life of an exile, Korais never returned to his native Smyrna or visited the liberated Greece that emerged from the Greek struggle for freedom. To the end of his life he remained in Paris, working untiringly for the twin causes of Greece’s freedom and reeducation in liberty. In the 1820s Korais activated his wide-ranging network of acquaintances and international contacts on behalf of the Greek struggle. Through these initiatives and thanks to his remarkable scholarly reputation he was recognized as the foremost spokesman for the Greek cause in Western Europe. In April 1827 the representatives of the fighting nation, assembled at the Third National Assembly at Troezen, made an important symbolic gesture. The Assembly issued a “declaration of gratitude” addressed to Korais, recognizing his great services to the cause of Greek freedom. It also declared that his ideas and counsels were the source of the nation’s enlightenment and the moral models of its civic culture. This gesture could be seen by the ageing Korais not only as a recognition of his life-long engagement with the enlightenment of his compatriots but also as a vindication of his unwavering commitment to the foundation of the new nation upon the principles of liberalism.

During his declining years Korais was surrounded in Paris by a group of young Greek liberals, devoted to his ideas and principles. They included Philippos Fournarakis, the translator of Daunou and Korais’ literary executor; Spyridon Valetas and Gregorios Zalikis, translators of Rousseau; the book collector Constantinos Nicolopoulos, who donated his remarkable library to his family’s village in the Peloponnese; and Fragkiskos Pylarinos, the earliest known exponent of utopian socialism in Greek.

On 18 March 1833 Korais fell in his apartment in Paris and broke his hip. While bedridden during the following two weeks he devoted his remaining time to reading the reflections of Marcus Aurelius and to enquiring about the latest news from Greece. A litany of his young Greek associates and French friends passed through his

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86. Allilographia VI, p. 24-25.
room in this period, enquiring about his health and expressing their devotion to his ideas. It was this group that assembled at Montparnasse cemetery to accompany Korais to his final resting place on 8 April 1833, following his death two days earlier. The funeral orations pronounced on that day provide a good record of how Korais’ intellectual legacy was perceived by the younger generation of his associates. Of the five speeches pronounced on that day, perhaps the most epigrammatic characterization of Korais’ ideas came from Fragkiskos Pylarinos when he noted that Korais had been a revolutionary in questions of religion, philosophy and politics, had proclaimed the independence of reason as the true basis of philosophy and had cultivated the “science of freedom”, by introducing all the progressive seeds of politics in the common motherland.

His associates’ impressions and judgements represented a true reflection of the intentions and character of Korais’ thought and of his life-long commitment to the project to make liberal values and the principles of reason the foundation of the regeneration of Greece. His genuine engagement with these ideas determined also Korais’ iconic position as a liberal sage in nineteenth-century European thought.

This image, however, did not determine the eventual form taken by his legacy in the Greek state he had helped even from a distance in founding. His intellectual heritage in nineteenth-century Greek culture was understood primarily in terms of his views on the language question. In this context his arguments for the purification and correction of the Greek vernacular were interpreted as favouring the version of learned purist Greek that was eventually adopted as the official language of state and education. Thus despite his original liberal and even radical views on the broad question of cultural reform, Korais came eventually to be identified with a conservative position on the most important cultural issue in Greek society. This identification remained of course oblivious to Korais’ disagreements and battles with the archaists and linguistic conservatives in Enlightenment cultural debates, and eventually turned him into a prime target of attacks by the demoticists in subsequent debates on the language question.

This was only one of the “ideological uses” of Korais’ views in Greek cultural history. Another area in which Korais’ views were faced with considerable

89. See chapter VII in this collection.
90. Iliou, [Uses], p. 155-174.
reservation and suspicion was theology and religion. This attitude was of course inspired by Korais’ religious criticism but also by his precocious argument for the separation of the Church of liberated Greece from the Patriarchate of Constantinople, a position voiced already in the first year of the Greek struggle for independence\textsuperscript{91}. This view was put to practice under the Bavarian regency in the Greek kingdom, the theological protagonist of this initiative being Theoklitos Pharmakides, one of Korais’ younger disciples\textsuperscript{92}. The passions and arguments over Greek autocephaly eventually intensified the suspicions and hostility of conservative religious circles toward Korais, who since the early nineteenth century has been invariably blamed by all shades of theological opinion for the adulteration of the Orthodox heritage of Greek society. Even in the exceptional cases when scholars of theology studied Korais’ writings seriously, a sense of embarrassment is invariably detectable in what they wrote. Characteristically when a professor of theology in the late nineteenth century undertook to put together an edition of his surviving letters he saw fit to censor passages or omit entire letters that might be offensive to the Church\textsuperscript{93}.

In a way the reception of Korais’ thought in Greek culture could be seen to represent a classic case of the discomfort caused in non-liberal societies by the principles and values of liberalism. Reflecting the iconographic tradition of Saint Sebastian, the liberal thinker as a rule is struck by arrows from both sides, not only from conservatives but also from those who judge that the liberal position does not go far enough in changing the world. In Korais’ case this second set of arrows came first from the demoticists in the language question and next from Marxists and populists, who took over the demoticists’ arguments and ascribed to him – unfairly – many of the ills brought upon Greek education and culture by the extremes of purism and archaism in Greek educational and academic practice.

Despite criticism, Korais along with other intellectual leaders of the Enlightenment found a prominent place in state-sponsored Greek ideology as one of the founders of the Greek nation-state. Nothing typifies better the position reserved for Korais than the transposition of his image in the visual arts in nineteenth-century Greece. In a painting by Theodore Vryzakis entitled “Grateful Greece”, the ethereal

\textsuperscript{91}. In the prolegomena to Aristotle’s \textit{Politics}. See \textit{Prolegomena II}, p. 724.
\textsuperscript{92}. Charles Frazee, \textit{The Orthodox Church and Independent Greece 1821-1852} (Cambridge, 1969), p. 89-170.
female figure of liberated Greece appears surrounded on all sides by those who had struggled for her regeneration. Among them on the side of the personified motherland we can discern Korais, who is thus incorporated in the national pantheon. The position attained by Korais in Greek ideology was confirmed when in the 1870s his statue was placed next to that of Capodistria, whom he had so severely criticized, outside the University of Athens. In the same period Korais’ remains were transferred from Paris to a monumental tomb in the First Cemetery of Athens. Thus Korais finally returned to Greece, not for what he had been, that is the social and cultural critic and republican prophet of civil liberty, but as a canonized figure of Greek nationalism. The canonization of course was attained at the cost of levelling out the sharp edges of Korais’ thought and relegating to oblivion his critical attitude. When the centennial of Korais’ death was marked in 1933 with manifestations of remembrance and anniversary publications it was this stiffened and pasteurized figure that was celebrated.

It was not until after the Second World War that gradually through the opening up and conceptualization of a new research field in Greek intellectual history that was labelled the Neohellenic Enlightenment, that Korais’ thought was recast in an entirely new light and was reinterpreted on the basis of new readings and editions of sources for what it had actually been, a convinced attempt to inculcate the Enlightenment into the Greek cultural tradition. The papers making up the present collection illustrate very well this tradition of Enlightenment scholarship in Greek academic culture and make abundantly clear how we can understand Korais through the Enlightenment. Roxani Argyropoulou writes on the connections of Korais with the medical enlightenment of the late eighteenth century that definitively shaped his intellectual outlook and provided the threshold for his subsequent close ties with the Idéologues and the philosophy of the late Enlightenment. Anna Tabaki outlines Korais’ dialogue with the esthetic and literary currents of the Enlightenment and shows how this context of literary theory influenced the views he expresses in his own philological reflections in dealing with the heritage of the Greek classics. The touch tone for determining the extent of Korais’ integration into the intellectual world of the

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Enlightenment is supplied by the theory of progress, one of the main hallmarks of the philosophy of the “science of freedom”. This dimension of Korais’ thought is reconstructed through a detailed exploration of his texts by Vassilis Mourdoukoutas, who indeed documents the extent of Korais’ use of the idea of progress in building his arguments for cultural change.

The significance of Korais’ thought, however, from the broader perspective of the intellectual history of the Enlightenment is not limited to the way his writings illustrate perhaps better than most other sources of evidence how the principles of the Enlightenment could be applied to the consideration and critical understanding of a specific cultural context. There is a reverse aspect to the subject as well. This has to do with the question how far the Enlightenment could be understood in novel ways through Korais. This rather ambitious question has not been frequently raised in the relevant scholarship and it would be useful, I would suggest, to briefly consider it here. On this level of analysis one could point to three subjects worthy of consideration: the question of contextualizing the Enlightenment; the Enlightenment’s handling of religion; and the dialogue with a society’s cultural heritage from an Enlightenment perspective. In all these areas of research and reflection on the broad field of Enlightenment studies the critical examination of Korais and his ideas could be an instructive lesson, suggestive of a more nuanced and complex understanding.

A consideration of Korais’ ideas and his strategy of cultural change could prove very suggestive in enriching the “national context” approach to Enlightenment studies. This approach, when originally introduced in 1981, represented an important methodological departure pointing to a more complex and pluralist understanding of the Enlightenment. As put in to practice, however, the national context approach also exemplified serious weaknesses, which derived primarily from an inadequate appreciation of the historicity of the idea of national context itself. In many cases it represented a backward projection of late twentieth-century state boundaries, imposing this on cultural phenomena pre-dating the nation state. The study of Korais and the broader Greek movement of cultural change which culminated in his thought could show the Enlightenment to be a much more open-ended and pluralist phenomenon by comparison with the phenomena connected with the cultural agendas of national states. First of all Korais’ case illustrates the importance of diasporas in the

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inception and promotion of the Enlightenment. The interplay of diaspora and Enlightenment is a critical factor in cultural change, especially in the multiple contexts of so called “peripheries”. Korais’ angle of vision as reflected in the structure of his arguments does provide concrete evidence, textual but also “experiential” as it were, of such more specific embodiments of the Enlightenment’s agenda. The “diasporic” Enlightenment represented by Korais suggests that the contextualization of pertinent intellectual phenomena requires more plasticity and inclusiveness than that denoted by the notion of the “national”, which is marked *ipso facto* by exclusiveness: diaspora involves osmosis and encounters, whereas national definitions denote boundaries and hence exclusions. The logic of contextualization therefore could be revised and expanded on the basis of evidence supplied by Korais’ oeuvre and other parallel cases.

Moving from methodological considerations to substantive issues, a salient subject of reflection appears to be Korais’ attitude on religion. Religion remained a central concern among his intellectual preoccupations. His earliest writings were on religion and it was to religious questions that he returned at the close of his long and fecund writing career with the *Vademecum*. It would not, therefore, be inaccurate to consider him as a religious thinker and more precisely as an authentic exponent of an Enlightenment perspective on religion. Although in his criticism he never spared either the Catholic or the Orthodox Church and he remained to the end quite caustic on the failures of their ministers, Korais is consistently careful not to appear to be espousing an anti-religious position.

The way he handles this question constitutes, I think, his subtle contribution to Enlightenment religious thought. In a typical Enlightenment manner Korais considered religion important as a source of moral and spiritual cultivation for people and societies, but he never adopted Machiavellian instrumentalism on this issue. He rather followed Rousseau’s Savoyard vicar in recognizing the substantive moral value of religious attitudes. Although Korais did not express any form of bigotry against other religions and, on the contrary, he explicitly attacked antisemitism as unjust and irrational, he ascribed this substantive value primarily to Christian moral teaching as it emerged from the New Testament. But Korais’ attitude to religion was more than

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that. He never appears to question the metaphysical and transcendental component of religious teaching: for him religion, and more specifically Christianity, was not just a moral code but also a source of metaphysical faith in a personal God deeply concerned for humanity, a source of love and hope for human beings. This faith he managed to combine with his deep and uncompromising commitment to the Enlightenment and to the principles of rationalism. Despite his repeated criticisms of the Church and his arguments against superstitious beliefs and practices and against excessive respect to formalities and outward expressions of piety, he considered himself a member of the Orthodox Church to the end of his life. In publishing one of his daring works of religious criticism, *The Three Bishops’ Counsel* in 1820, in which he relentlessly castigated the practices of the medieval Church, Korais stated that one of his motives in this project was to contribute through the exposure of abuses to the rectification but also to the vindication of the Eastern Church, by contrast to the Papists’ practices.98

It is this quite complex attitude in questions of religion that adds interest to Korais’ Enlightenment. He presents an Enlightenment which is neither atheist nor religiously indifferent or agnostic; on the contrary, he shows it to possess a sophisticated, complex and sensitive awareness of the importance of Christianity, which, contra Voltaire, is recognized not as an unconditional enemy but as a potential ally in the project of reason, social reform and the amelioration of humanity. What Korais appears to appeal for in his religious thought is a recovery of an original radical Christianity, which had been lost through the Church’s secular involvements in the course of history. I believe it is this aspect of his thought rather than his explicit and generally well-reasoned religious criticism that makes both theologians and believers but also secular commentators uncomfortable vis-à-vis his reflection on religion.

A final area of criticism and reflection that shows Korais to be an important contributor to a more nuanced Enlightenment outlook has to do with the handling of tradition and the overall heritage of a society as an integral whole. In this regard too Korais remained uncompromising in his commitment to Enlightenment rationalism in enunciating his criticism of the baggage of folly, prejudice and superstition that had been inherited from the past. Yet he did not reject this past wholesale. First of all he

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98. This is explicitly acknowledged in his Autobiography. See Prolegomena I, p. xxxi-xxxii.
studied it and through his researches he built up an authoritative knowledge of it, looking especially at its expression in the successive stages of the evolution of language. It was on the basis of knowledge produced by research in the sources that composed a long and extremely rich tradition, that he developed both his criticism and his remedies for the reform of this heritage. Never for a moment, however, did he believe that societies should shed their ties with their past, but he did believe that the heritage of the past needed to be corrected and reformed so as to meet the requirements of the present and future. In this attitude he was closer to Montesquieu’s historically sensitive thought than to other, more abstract attitudes toward tradition harboured by Enlightenment thinkers. In fact Korais remained true to Montesquieu’s spirit in his overall attitude to Greek history. He considered the period of Macedonian assendancy in the Greek world and the Medieval Byzantine mellennium as periods of unfreedom and decline, that preceded the much worse period of enslavement by the Turks. The rejection of Byzantium was a characteristic expression of the Enlightenment code of values and as such it reflected a historical attitude that preceded the doctrine of the “continuity of Hellenism” from antiquity to modern times via Byzantium, a distinctly romantic outlook, which was foreign to Korais’ intellectual and moral make-up. What Korais represents in this as in so many other respects could be understood as constituting a form of the multiple gradations that shaped the character of the Enlightenment. His own understanding of tradition and a society’s connection to its past was marked by such a sense of gradations, which at critical points appeared as the interplay of “action” and “reaction” that pushed civilisation forward.

On all these levels of analysis research and reflection on Korais’ ideas could provide new angles of vision on the Enlightenment’s intellectual, political and moral concerns and their specific manifestations in historical experience. As such, the heritage of his ideas, if accorded a place in the Enlightenment canon, could be instructive for a more inclusive and pluralist understanding of the movement as an integral transcultural stage in European intellectual history.

I. A presence in classical scholarship