

Ideas for a Higher International Administrative and Educational Establishment in Delphi (Greece), in addition to the cultural events called Delphic Games.

A preliminary draft

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(What follows is a *draft* and is supposed to be worked out in the future in a more suitable way than is in the present one)

The idea of establishing an international university in Delphi goes back to Angelos Sikelianos in the 30s and 40s of the last century. In his view, the university would have been a focus for theatre, art, dance and culture, and would also have been a suitable place where East and West could meet. Unlike R. Tagore, with whom he is comparable as regards his work, Sikelianos was not successful. In our days, when organizing Delphic Games is a reality for more than a decade, there are new suggestions for establishing some sort of scholarly and cultural institutions that would serve as an administrative and research basis for such games, and also for their deeper motivation worldwide.

Logically, before a university is established, some minor institutions like a “Delphic Academy” or a “Delphic Institute” should exist. Since the idea of a university, independently from Delphi, has occupied me for some time now, I would expound my respective views, in a preliminary form, adding that, in my opinion, a Delphic Institute, too, should inevitably be a scholarly institution, recognized internationally, and also providing some kind of teaching that, too, would be recognized internationally. Its assumed teaching activity could be evaluated in ECTS e.g. If no such activity exists, than any establishment prior to a university will become just one in the endless row of non- or half-recognized at the best, poorly estimated tuition centers, literary and debating societies without importance; in Greece, most commonly, of the type “frondistirio” where teaching excellence and bad dilettantism go hand in hand and which are an excess of the underdeveloped educational system. In any case, it will not be recognized by either the Greek State or by serious international cultural factors like the Academy of Athens, the Greek universities, or by research centers housed in Athens like the German Archaeological School or the American School of Classical Studies in Athens. The culturally defined part of the activity of an institute if successfully launched should be of the kind which would be suitable to continue to develop in the future into a university, the ideal goal in my view.

There is one more reason I would argue in favor of a scholarly and recognized background: the dilettantism. Without the scholarly prerequisites, contacts with the Greek party may yield in meeting uncalled-for interested persons, motivated by wrongly interpreted patriotism or something else. Their knowledge is unimportant, in any case not systematic, and their contribution may lead to unwanted results. Several of these are e.g. the “lovers of antiquity”, the “arkhaiolatres” or “arkhaiophiloï” who may believe literally that the ancient gods still exist, and may want to build shrines to the gods’ cults transforming any message for the future into present fanaticism, and every ideal into intention. Such people cannot contribute anything to the Delphic Idea, or to any scholarly plan or activity.

To establish a university in Greece is rather difficult. For decades now, there are plans, not clearly defined, on establishing private universities but plans are vehemently opposed by different circles, often by the academics themselves, and, moreover, establishing is prohibited by the article 16 of the constitution that has not yet been abolished. Even if it were abolished I were not delighted with a purely Greek private university, exactly for the same reasons the state-owned universities in this country are not really competitive in international comparison. “Greece should be”, as a young German professor remarked me, “the chief place worldwide for classical studies including respected teaching and research excellence”. I cannot but agree with this but Greece’s modern history explains why this is not happening, and, I’m afraid, will never happen if Greece only were supposed to rise to such a level. Emigration is a constant problem. The best are leaving this country seeking a better future and they may never return. In my view, if Greece, then only a Byzantine State would be able to realize such an achievement. Indeed, in international comparison, smaller countries, like Finland (so that one takes an otherwise very positive example), do not count in this regard, and if yes, like Austria, then one immediately encounters their imperial past. The cases of Austria and Greece, though of similar sizes, are very different: the former avails itself of its previous being a great political and cultural centre, the latter emerged from a colonial state, subdued to an uncivilized, rather poor, physically and mentally, and in its origin completely alien conqueror. Upcoming or already great and important Eastern states (Japan, Korea, China, India etc.) – as far I can see, partly based on personal experience, – still do not meet the requirement to become leaders in humanities internationally. In India recently, as I have been informed, there was a negative turn on governmental level which suppresses the modest attempts that existed to introduce and to cultivate classical studies despite the fact that their cultural and linguistic past is comparable with the European classical heritage, and in prehistory, indeed, was part of it (I mean the Indo-European heritage). The negative change is true also also of South India where one is very proud of one’s independent non-Indo-European

culture, and would like the Tamil background to be equal with the Sanskrit heritage.

In our time, it is only the “big” countries that can afford and offer anything, and this indeed happens on the part of Germany, Great Britain, France, USA. They are present in Greece with their archaeological or classical schools, and these, without doubt, count among the most important internationally. The Americans also have an independent Modern Greek Language School. There are about 16 archaeological schools in Athens of this kind, but even the Canadian one is negligible if compared. The examples show that such an undertaking as establishing an archaeological school is possible. One should however never forget that a university is something else, and will be a more difficult case.

As an academic, I do not see other possibility for breakthrough in the Greek “3rd grade education” (i.e. the university level education) with its uncountable “ankyloses” (so that I take this word that is not a medical term in everyday Greek), than importing a whole complex (teaching staff, students, methods, course-books, and everything else, completely independently of any Greek institution, except for the operating license, of course) which would then be international. “International” meaning, naturally, that also Greek professors and students would contribute, if they wished, but would be liable to the university authorities only.

Such a university based in Delphi would give an international fame, first of all, to Delphi, one of the most important and impressing archaeological sites in Greece, where also good infrastructure exists. The place is *central*, which, as a facility, should be regarded important. It would also give a considerable fame to Greece that always struggles with its classical heritage and its actual everydayness. The place would provide excellent research, teaching and learning conditions to international and domestic scholarship, i.e. would promote classics and everything related.

An establishing procedure will be a long term issue. A preceding institute should anticipate much of its activity. There is one more important point to make clear: obviously, the old Sikelianian idea, that a Delphic University should be devoted to art, dance, theatre and the like, is too restricted; this cannot be the program of a university, not even of an institute. The presence of science (Naturwissenschaft) or other branches different from classics like medicine e.g., similarly cannot be comprised. Obvious as it may sound, the common academic thinking in Greece is unfortunately not this. In a project on interdisciplinarity issued by the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki a few years ago where also humanities were comprised, and against which I reacted very vigorously, classics and humanities were put in the end in the “rest”. The Department of Classical Studies – contrarily to what one would have expected – did not take part in the project! So, I would say that the interest and any useful contribution of anybody from other fields than classics is welcome but the profile must be

the humanities and specialists' opinion should be considered. Beyond humanities, I would plead in favor of cognitive science and environmental studies but perhaps nothing more.

The main points:

– Modern Greece should be comprised in the curricula: although we speak of classical heritage, we mustn't ignore the fact that the state we call Greece today is a modern European country for which freedom, and the conditions of its attainment 190 years ago are of major importance. Comprising modern Greek developments into the curricula would leave few Geeks indifferent either at home or abroad, moreover, if Greek heritage is conceived as a continuum, – the credo of the present writer –, but also of the linguist G.N. Hatzidakis e.g., one of the greatest scholars of modern Greece, then such an approach is also indispensable. Indeed, the modern country cannot be understood without its medieval, Byzantine roots. It is also important to know that the average Greek today thinks “in a reverse order”: first comes everything modern, then medieval–Byzantine issues, and lastly, ancient Greece and classical antiquity. I was witness to a campaign during which backing to a chair of Modern Greek history in a French university was needed. Almost the whole teaching staff of the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki signed. Such a uniformity with classical issues is, unfortunately, not to be expected. Modern Greek studies at a university like the one under discussion should be considered very carefully: what is indispensable and what furthers and to which extent the aims of the university. As one engaged in linguistic issues I would insist that teaching Modern Greek and the international recognition of the language teaching, should be an evidence.¹ It would be very poor if an institute or a university in Greece, though based on English as a teaching language, would lack or ignore Greek, either Modern or Ancient. It could also hardly be considered international without intensive language teaching programs.

Further issues to be comprised (in a preliminary way):

– Sikelianos' work (with regard to Greece, and to Delphi, “The Delphic Idea”). Indeed, Sikelianos could become, in many ways, a symbol for a Delphic activity.

– every important writer/thinker with their work and concern to their country and to the world, for two reasons:

1. The case of the Triantaphyllides Institute at the University of Thessaloniki, aiming at modern and medieval linguistic studies, is able – on this occasion – to cultivate even some Indo–European Studies. A reverse construction is neatly unthinkable.

- so that the international audience understands Greece's relationship and feeling to its past and present, which is often a highly complex phenomenon. I would underline that important thinkers, writers (like O. Elytis e.g.) express in a guiding way the frequently manifold feelings an educated Greek or an academic experiences for his country, its present past, and future. This is a useful contribution for everybody interested.

- so that the official Greece finds this project important and suitable for its national and international purposes, and also the Greeks living abroad feel motivated.

Such thinkers, writers, historians etc. would be – beside Sikelianos – e.g. Seferis, Elytis, Ritsos, Kanellopoulos, Paparigopoulos and many more; they often give workable answers to the question “what the past conveys to the present and to the future” (this problem is one of the components of the modern “Delphic Idea”, i.e. the philosophy which underlies to the Delphic Games that are now running regularly).²

- for the above reasons, and as well as for scholarly ones, teaching the Greek language in its integrity, Modern Greek comprised, cannot be dispensed with (on this, see more below in the philological section).

- Greek Studies (emphasis on the united view, ενότητα) – intersections with the classical studies, v. infra): the “unity” (ενότητα) or continuity is a central issue in Greek scholarly thinking. Such a continuity is most evidently present in the case of language, even if questions may be raised. In any case, one must prefer to reckon with unity and continuity where differences may appear rather than with differences that would be more difficult then to put together to something homogeneous. (The continuity question is even more manifest in linguistics, and I would underline that Greek, in all its facets and periods is ideal for linguistic investigation, and that unity is best seen exactly in the language).

- modern history: this is a relatively good and firm domain, well present either in Athens University or in Thessaloniki. Much more than to foreigners, this field, as well as Byzantine studies are felt familiar, and less the classical ones.

- Byzantine background: no Greek would deny the importance of this issue.

- classical studies: these are, of course, even if cultivated better by foreigners, a major attraction issue, and a reference point worldwide.

- Pindar, and everything else having to do with Delphi and the early history of the site, should enjoy an advantaged place in the curricula.

2. I am informed now that Sikelianos' Delphic Idea has its roots in Byzantine Greece – certainly an exciting issue to explore

- classics, classical philology, Greek and Latin studies: traditionally, these studies stand, still today, on a very high level and are cultivated by some important universities the curricula of which could provide information and ideas. *Latin* should not be left out: at least with regard to the classical antiquity, Greek and Latin are one and inseparable. Latin then, as it has been put, became “the most successful language in world history”. Latin was later, not only the most important language of Medieval Europe, it was important also in the Byzantine Empire (the popular form “Romios” for Greek comes, indeed, from the name of Rome). The Romans (and Latin) were familiar to India, Ceylon included; and the Indian word “Yāvana” (coming from an early form of “Iones”) meant not only Greeks but also Romans, the “Westerners”. One might remark that the Indians around the beginning of our era especially esteemed the Yāvanas as ones being educated and succesful.

- linguistics (see below, also the reasons why I list linguistics under “cognitive science”; also important both for classics and cognitive science).

- cognitive science: in a modern approach, in some English universities e.g., this branch comprises everything what is necessary to understanding human thinking, speech and languages, and working with them (theoretical and applied linguistics, and other). There are intersections with computer science, mathematics, etc.

- computer science (as something indispensable in our epoch): computer science and cognitive science could be the main “natural sciences” in an environment that would, otherwise, prefer classics and humanities, and would naturally help the practical needs of the Delphic Games.

- literature (to be subsumed either to classics or left independent)

- under literature special classes should be held on those who had to do with Delphi, so. e.g. to Pindar. These classes, as all the other, should be part of the international ETC system the university would provide.

- archaeology: the importance of it cannot be questioned; in Athens, everything exists to cultivate archaeology according to international standards.

- mythology: the importance of it for classical antiquity, for literature etc. cannot be questioned.

- sociology: the scientific study of social institutions and relationships, of organized human groups – a broad branch. I would argue that at least so much of it is necessary that one needs to understand modern Greece. This understanding is surprisingly one-sided. As I see, history, beyond classics, is not enough as an explanatory tool.

- ethnology: this is important either for modern Greece (folklore is more important than one would assume) or for understanding the world cultural heritage (cf. the aims of the Delphic games).

– environmental studies, ecology: something that is gaining ground in our epoch, Greece comprised, and that could be inspired by a place like Delphi, and could attract more students.

– Linguistic issues: there are several intersections with teaching activities, with philology, cognitive science, etc.

– linguistics proper: linguistics is usually considered both “difficult” and unnecessary. As one who graduated in Classical Philology and made his PhD in linguistics, I would argue that

1, language is one of the main tools that made Man to emerge from the animal kingdom; without this there is no real understanding of what Man is.

2, linguistics is the *ancilla philologiae*. It greatly helps the work of philology, and if ignored, philological understanding may be poor. This may sound exaggerated in the Western world but is more important in cultures that are heirs to great civilizations like the Italian, the Greek and the Indian one. There are everywhere so called dilettantes, usually aggressive, engaged mainly but not exclusively, in language issues. Their activity is especially hurting when it is about “understanding” great civilizations and the respective linguistic interpretations. To put it short, one encounters horrifying monstrosities in their “explanations”, even in the case of graduated philologists. At least in this country, but I think also elsewhere, linguistics can and must help philology (the interpretation of classical texts) decidedly. Minds in this respect, must be opened up.

– language teaching: the use of such an activity in helping mutual understanding need not be underlined. Since world languages can be studied anywhere I would think of teaching “minor” languages, such as Modern Greek, and what classics and classical philology, as well as other issues suggested imply.

– Indology: there was once such a thing in Athens University. To a minor extent, G.N. Hatzidakis was engaged in Sanskrit. There are several persons in Greece who know more or less Sanskrit and Hindi but there is no academic background to their efforts. This lack of a very important field only strengthens amateurish activities. Sikelianos was, in his way, aware of India and its importance.

- an “Indo–Graeco–Italica” program³, a cultural and linguistic “Continuity Package”, medieval times studies and language teaching included (language, culture, tradition, to which also interested Indian scholars could be invited):
 - Sanskrit – Hindi (Ancient India – Modern India)
 - Ancient Greek – Modern Greek (Greek and Greece in their “unity”, “ενότητα”)
 - Latin – Italian (Ancient Italy – Modern Italy)

As I have been informed, in Delphi, in the European Center of Culture, for years now, Summer Schools are held. The program of such classes could – with international participation – well be inserted into the activities of the centre in Delphi; i.e. the Summer School program thought for the Institute, if the centre agrees, could be inserted into that program.

The underlying concept in proposing a workshop for Indo–Graeco–Italica was that we face three cultured languages of high importance, with their equally important heritage that has influenced the world for many centuries, and which, still today, is operative in many respects. The successful Berlin paradigm, claiming Indo–European Studies, also called Comparative Philology, follows a classic and a quite old tradition. Since the genetic relationship of Sanskrit, Greek, Latin and other languages in India and in Europe was recognized more than two hundred years ago, not only a new branch of philology was born but also the scientific exploration of language; indeed, linguistics was born. This is a great challenge still offering many issues to understand. The studies, although linguistically based, do not comprise only linguistic issues. I would not like to linger over senseless objections and harmful and unmethodical dilettantism opposed. Like so often, for lack of scholarly depth, this most challenging, interesting and useful discipline is seen by non–linguist academics sometimes, and by non–professionals often, as something suspicious.⁴ So that I am more in accordance with the Greek reality I propose a three–sided workshop that could be both part of summer schools and regular curricula. Professors from India also could be invited. To the Berlin classes, beside Germans, professors from France, Great Britain, USA, Spain, Denmark etc. are invited. There is more indological knowledge in Greece than one would assume or

3. Cf. the paper with the same title by this author published in the *Journal of Indian Ocean Archaeology* (5, 2008: 122–126). The program, inspired by the current international *Indo–European Summer School* at the Freie Universität (Berlin, Dahlem, an initiative by Prof. Michael Meier–Brügger) was first proposed for the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki. Circumstances however do not favor there any workshop of the kind.

4. See an online review by the present writer in *Indika Online*, the online forum of the organization ELINEPA (http://www.elinepa.org/indika2010/sem_iess7.htm).

experiences in teaching establishments. Once again, serious knowledge and dilettantism appear in parallel accompanied by much less philology and linguistics than would be desirable. And most importantly, although Indological and/or Asian Studies were repeatedly considered to be introduced in one of the Greek universities, plans have failed. The question is open but the present crisis is a new drawback beside older ones.

– Asian Studies: in a not entirely consistent way, such studies exist in Corfu University where Indology was, however, unsuccessfully proposed. It would be much better if such studies, were carried on in some central educational institution. I remind of the fact that Sikelianos invited East and West to meet in Delphi. Asian studies, or at least the related Indology, could ideally be cultivated in Delphi. Delphi would, then, become literally the meeting point for East and West. There is respective interest in India where some sort of classics exist. They, though a big country, face similar problems. In recent times, there were positive changes. Korea, too, according to my personal experience, might like cooperate.

As noticed in the introductory part, these remarks refer to an ideally imagined Delphic university, but much of these suggestions could be realized also previously in a Delphic Institute the establishing of which is comprised in the statutes of the International Delphic Council.

The Delphic Games, already carried out regularly, could be an excellent accompanying activity helping but also influenced by an existing institute and/or university research activity.

Athens, August 2011.

Updated: July 2012.