

The weak life of the nation: Spyridon Zambelios' philosophical history and its Hegelian roots

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This paper examines the concept of life in the historiographical work of Spyridon Zambelios. Through a comparative reading with Hegel, it argues that the organicist philosophical background of Zambelios' national narrative is double-edged: on the one hand, life is linked to infinity in ways that lead to a redefinition of Zambelios' central notion of national 'όλομέλεια'. On the other, Spirit's immersion in natural life creates complications, which, as in Hegel, place the 'transition' from one historical period to the next under the auspices of death, and, in the final analysis, yield a notion, not of infinite, but of a 'weak' life which undermines the national narrative from within.

Keywords: Greek national historiography; philosophy of history; organicist theory; historical transition; Heptanesian Hegelianism

Linked for ever to the names of Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos and Spyridon Zambelios, the emergence of 'Greek national historiography' in the mid-nineteenth century gave expression to the need for a cultural reinterpretation of the past in the frame of ongoing debates on Neohellenic identity. At the centre of what has come to be known as the tripartite pattern of Greek culture, Zambelios placed 'a Greek philosophy of history', which he called 'historionomy' (ιστοριονομία). Like contemporary French Romantic historians, with whose work he was familiar, Zambelios drew the broad assumptions that inform his philosophical history from a background shaped by Hegelianism and nineteenth-century historicism alike.¹ His work is inscribed in an

1 Y. Koubourlis, 'Οι οφειλές του Σπυρίδωνος Ζαμπέλιου στη γαλλική ρομαντική ιστορική σχολή', *Η' Διεθνές Πανιώνιο Συνέδριο. Πρακτικά, Χώρα Κυθήρων 21–25 Μαΐου 2006*, IVα: *Επτανησιακός πολιτισμός* (Athens 2009) 431–456 (431).

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‘organicist’ approach to history which, in the broad tradition of Herder, subjects the meaning of past events to that of greater wholes,² while historical time is seen, in line with post-Kantian ‘absolute idealism’, as the very realm of Spirit’s realization,³ the plane where Reason will ultimately have manifested itself, aided, to one degree or another, by providential economy. Out of this general pattern of understanding historical time, this paper focuses on a comparative reading between Zambelios and Hegel in particular.

Hegel has consistently been recognized as a major influence on Zambelios at key points of the latter’s reception.⁴ However, closer readings of this influence are absent, with the exception of a series of articles by Dimitris Polychronakis, on which the present paper builds.⁵ Recent research has confined Zambelios to the margins of ‘Heptanesian Hegelianism’, on the grounds that he distorted Hegel in employing his theses in a nationalist spirit.⁶ Although any layers of assimilated philosophical thinking are indeed subordinate to Zambelios’ dominant national preoccupation, there is arguably an unexplored genealogy of notions such as life, the historical unconscious, and desire, which points beyond the final nationalist crystallization of the Hegelian influence. This paper argues that besides grand-scale affinities regarding their understanding of historical time, Zambelios shares with Hegel a rhetoric in which the teleological implications of ‘organicist’ philosophical history are at once invoked and disrupted. More specifically, the discussion that follows is organized around the concept of ‘life’, whose vulnerabilities do not leave the organism of the nation unaffected, and which proves more productive than worn-out connotations of ‘wholeness’ in the organicist tradition, in order to reread Zambelios’ central notions of national *ὀλομέλεια* and historical transition, and to analyse his methodology.

2 H. White, *Metahistory: the historical imagination in nineteenth-century Europe* (Baltimore 1975) 27.

3 D. Polychronakis, *Ο κριτικός ιδεαλισμός του Ιάκωβου Πολυλά. Ερμηνευτική προσέγγιση του αισθητικού και του γλωσσικού του συστήματος* (Herakleion 2002) 173.

4 See D.K. Zakythinis, ‘Σπυρίδων Ζαμπέλιος. Ο θεωρητικός της ιστοριονομίας. Ο Ιστορικός του Βυζαντινού Ελληνισμού’ (Athens 1975) 325–6; N. G. Svoronos, ‘Ο Σπυρίδων Ζαμπέλιος’, *Μνήμων* 14 (1992) 16–17; Y. Koubourlis, *Οι ιστοριογραφικές οφειλές των Σπ. Ζαμπέλιου και Κ. Παπαρρηγόπουλου. Η συμβολή Ελλήνων και ξένων λογίων στη διαμόρφωση του τρίσημου σχήματος του ελληνικού ιστορισμού (1782–1846)* (Athens 2012) 35, T. Sklavenitis, ‘Λογοτεχνία και Λογοτέχνες της Λευκάδας (19ος–20ός αιώνας): γενική σκιαγραφή’, in *Λογοτεχνία και Λογοτέχνες της Λευκάδας, 19ος - 20ός αι.: Πρακτικά ΚΒ΄ Συμποσίου, Πνευματικό Κέντρο Δήμου Λευκάδας, Γιορτές Λόγου και Τέχνης, Λευκάδα 9–10 Αυγούστου 2017* (Athens 2018) 23–36 (29).

5 D. Polychronakis, *Ο κριτικός ιδεαλισμός του Ιάκωβου Πολυλά. Ερμηνευτική προσέγγιση του αισθητικού και του γλωσσικού του συστήματος* (Herakleion 2002) 167–208; ‘Τα ιστορικά Σκηνογραφήματα του Σπυρίδωνος Ζαμπέλιου’, *Μνήμη Αλκη Αγγέλου: Τα άφθονα σχήματα του παρελθόντος, Ζητήσεις της Πολιτισμικής Ιστορίας και της θεωρίας της Λογοτεχνίας* (Thessaloniki 2004) 229–41; ‘Το μεγάλο όνειρο του Ιουλιανού: η συνάντηση του επαναστατικού ιδεαλισμού με τον πρόιμο ελληνικό ντισεϊσμό’, in A. Kastriaki and A. Politis (eds.), *Για μια ιστορία της ελληνικής λογοτεχνίας του 20ου αιώνα* (Herakleion 2012) 29–42.

6 M. Livadiotis, *Οι μεταφράσεις του Ν. Λούντζη για τον Δ. Σολωμό. Ποιητική και πολιτισμικές μεταφορές* (Berlin 2018) 239–40.

Rereading Zambelios' philosophical history in the light of the concept of 'life'

The topos of political organicism in its German idealist version has in recent years been the subject of a reappraisal, with new emphasis on the concept of life it implies. What enables the conception of the body politic in terms of an organism is philosophy's admittance of rationality as a feature of organic life itself. Contemporary scientific theories of epigenesis, linked mainly to the name of Johann Friedrich Blumenbach – who redefined life as a 'dynamic process of self-formation and self-generation, a spontaneous, rational-purposive and autocausal becoming' – were a key influence on idealist concepts of individual and political freedom.⁷ Alluding to the importance of life as a mediating concept in the post-Kantian project of bridging the absolute and the material world, Karen Ng argues:

Hegel's most sustained and original contribution to the post-Kantian context was to suggest that the idealist project cannot be completely and coherently articulated without a systematic accounting of life's essential and constitutive role in the processes and activities of absolute knowing, that idealism itself as a philosophical program stands or falls depending on whether or not it can successfully integrate a concept of life into its core philosophical ideas.⁸

Although Zambelios is certainly far from providing any 'systematic accounting' of life, the obsession with the 'living' that punctuates his rhetoric should be placed in this context; and life should be read as a uniting link between the Idea and reality, the historical time where the Idea is actualized. References to life, embodiment, actuality, and biology run throughout Zambelios' treatment of the nation, its history, its language, and its literature – often as a criterion of truth. The following are just some of many examples. We need history that is 'animate, living, palpitating, true' ('ἔμψυχον, ἔμβιον, πάλλουσαν, ἀληθινήν')⁹; Christianity gave 'flesh, soul, and movement' ('σάρκα, ψυχήν, καὶ κίνησιν') to what was an 'abstract historical reminiscence' (BM, 30), it installed the truth in the 'living and palpitating heart of the people' ('ζῶσαν καὶ πάλλουσαν καρδίαν τῶν λαῶν', BM, 601); by the end of the Byzantine period, the people ('λαός') was the only 'actual, animate, active' and 'living' ('ζῶντος') being (BM, 693; 684); the reality of the national rebirth is 'living and palpitating' ('ζῶσα καὶ πάλλουσα');¹⁰ the Greek language should (but has failed to) develop 'vitality and liveliness drawing on the present' ('ικμάδα καὶ ζωτικότητα

7 P. Cheah, *Spectral Nationality: passages of freedom from Kant to postcolonial literatures of liberation* (New York 2003) 20, 25.

8 K. Ng, *Hegel's Concept of Life: self-consciousness, freedom, logic* (Oxford 2020) 4.

9 S. Zambelios, *Βυζαντινὰ Μελέται: Περὶ πηγῶν νεοελληνικῆς ἐθνότητος* (Athens 1857) 17. Hereafter BM in text, followed by page number.

10 S. Zambelios, 'Πόθεν ἡ κοινὴ λέξις "τραγουδοῦ";' *Τα κριτικά κείμενα*, ed. G. Alisandratos (Athens 1999) 69–98 (219).

ἀρυομένη ἐκ τοῦ παρόντος’);¹¹ and language in general is to a people ‘expression of its physical organism, [...] inseparable from its bodily qualities’ (‘ἀπόρροια τοῦ φυσικοῦ ὀργανισμοῦ του [...] ἀχώριστος τῶν σωματικῶν ιδιοτήτων’).¹² Greek poetry had been until recently nonexistent because it was ‘fleshless’ (‘ἄσαρκος’), ‘not imprinted on the palpitating and palpable truth’ (‘μηδὲως ἀποτυπωθεῖσα πρὸς τὴν πάλλουσαν καὶ ψηλαφητὴν ἀλήθειαν’).¹³ The poet should instead turn into an ‘anatomist’ (‘ἀνατόμος’), describing the ‘arteries’ of the nation’s ‘vital organs’ his duty is to study ‘the specific ethical and physical biology of the nation in its entirety’ (‘σύνολον καὶ συγκεκριμένην τὴν ἠθικοφυσικὴν τοῦ ἔθνους βιολογίαν’).¹⁴

The living organism is also invoked in Zambelios’ central notion of the nation’s ‘wholeness’ (‘ὄλομέλεια’), famously foregrounded in the statement of his project in the opening pages of *Ἄσματα*: antiquity must lose some of its shining glory and Byzantium rise from its ashes, for the wholeness and unity of the nation to be reconstructed: ‘πρὸς ἐπισκευὴν ὄλομελείας καὶ ἐνότητος’ (*Ἄσματα*, 16). Essential for the ‘homogenization’ of time (ancient, Byzantine and modern) that sustains the national narrative,¹⁵ ‘ὄλομέλεια’ raises problems as an object of historiographical exposition. This is because in the case of Greek history at least, whose origin ‘is sunk in the mists of the infancy of humanity, ‘ὄλομέλεια’ is not offered to observation (‘ὁ νοῦς τοῦ παρατηρητοῦ, εἴπερ καὶ μεγαλοφυῆς, ἀδυνατεῖ νὰ καταμετρήσῃ τὰς ἀναλογίας τῆς’) but escapes the measure of science (‘ἐκφεύγει τὸ μέτρον τῆς ἐπιστήμης’ (*Ἄσματα*, 12). As a result, writes Zambelios, various historical schools have resorted to the division of the ‘vital principles’ (‘τὴν διαίρεσιν τῶν ζωτικῶν ἀρχῶν’), the ‘dismemberment of the single idea’ (‘τὴν διαμέλησιν τῆς μιᾶς ιδέας’) of Greek history (12–13). The persistent drawing on the vocabulary of natural sciences, together with the critique of their dissecting methods and observation, leads us to Hegelian ground. In particular, it alludes to Hegel’s argument in ‘Observing Reason’ – the section in the *Phenomenology* where the notion of the organic being is more fully developed – that the essence of the organism, and thus of life as such, is beyond observation and remains irreducible to the laws adopted by the scientific consciousness.¹⁶

11 S. Zambelios, ‘Ο κ. Ιούλιος Τυπάλδος’, *Τα κριτικά κείμενα*, ed. G. Alisandratos (Athens 1999) 99–114 (259).

12 S. Zambelios, *Ἄσματα Δημοτικά τῆς Ἑλλάδος, ἐκδοθέντα μετὰ μελέτης στορικῆς περὶ Μεσαιωνικοῦ Ἑλληνισμοῦ, ὑπὸ Σπυρίδωνος Ζαμπελίου* (Corfu 1852) 120. Hereafter *Ἄσματα* in text, followed by page number.

13 Zambelios, ‘Ο κ. Ιούλιος Τυπάλδος’, 261.

14 *Ibid.*, 267

15 A. Liakos, ‘Hellenism and the Making of Modern Greece: Time, language, space’, in K. Zacharia (ed.), *Hellenisms. Culture, identity and ethnicity from antiquity to modernity* (Aldershot 2008) 204.

16 For a helpful commentary on ‘Observing Reason’, see R. Stern, *Hegel and the Phenomenology of Spirit* (London 2002) 102–9. For the influence of Xavier Bichat’s *Recherches physiologiques sur la vie et la mort*, and of Bichat’s view that the nature of life is beyond observation on Hegel’s argument in ‘Observing Reason’, see H.S. Harris, *Hegel’s Ladder I* (Indianapolis 1997) 547.

In opposition to the dissecting methods of science – and yet with clear affinities to contemporary scientific developments on epigenesis – Hegel defines the organism through the Kantian term for the internal teleology, *Selbstzweck* ('self-purposeful activity'):

the organic is in fact the real purpose itself [...]. As a consequence, something comes on the scene here not only as the result of necessity, but, because it has returned into itself, it is a finality, or the result is just as much the first which starts the movement and is, to itself, the purpose which it realizes.¹⁷

As already mentioned, the concept of life is all important in post-Kantian idealism's efforts to bridge the gap between Idea and reality – a concern which was also Zambelios' own. Indeed, the self-purposeful organism as defined by Hegel gives objective, natural existence to the concept of the End, and, in fact, to the structure of the Concept tout court.¹⁸ The latter is defined as a 'necessary unity of identity and distinction' – between subject and object, appearance and the supersensible world, being-for-consciousness and being-in-itself etc. – and this 'difference as inner difference, or the difference in itself' is also for Hegel 'the difference as infinity' (*Phen.* 97).¹⁹ This is what allows Hegel to bring together life and infinity ('This simple infinity, or the absolute concept, is to be called the simple essence of life', *Phen.* 98), and to claim that it is only because of the limits of observing reason, because of its lack of understanding of internal teleology, that it fails to recognize that in the organism it has indeed found infinity, its own concept (*Phen.* 142).

Strikingly, Zambelios further specifies as 'infinite wholeness' ('ἀπείρου ολότητος') (*Ἄσματα*, 19) his own understanding of the nation's organic life, its 'ὀλομέλεια'. In this light, the equation of ὀλομέλεια to some general notion of 'unity' – readily related to a nationalist ideology of continuity, to which Zambelios' work is stereotypically identified – should be at least qualified.²⁰ The various elements that come together in

17 G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, tr. T. Pinkard (Cambridge 2017) 152. Hereafter *Phen.* in text, followed by page number.

18 In the living organism, he writes, 'the difference between what it is and what it seeks is present, but this is only the mere semblance of a difference, and thereby it is the concept in its own self' (*Phen.* 153). As a striking formulation in the *Philosophy of Nature* reads: 'Life is external existence that conforms to the concept and the concept is the source of all vitality ('Lebendigkeit')'. G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature*, Part 2 of *The Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, tr. A. V. Miller (London 1970) 25.

19 Harris, *Hegel's Ladder*, 301 and 310. For a detailed account of Hegel's speculative identity thesis and its connections to life as central in Hegel's philosophical project, see Ng, *Hegel's Concept of Life*, 95–119. For the definition of infinity as the self-identical that contains inner difference, the 'self-equal' that 'estranges itself', see *Phen.* 99.

20 For the assimilation of the 'continuity of the national essence' in Zambelios to the 'ideological manipulation of history', see for instance P. S. Vallianos, 'The ways of the nation: messianic and universalist nationalism in Renieris, Zambelios and Paparrigopoulos', *The Historical Review/La Revue Historique* 15 (2018) 163–194 (178). For a productive reformulation of 'unity' in Zambelios in terms of Reinhart Koselleck's 'simultaneity of the nonsimultaneous', see Y. Papatheodorou, "Η ολομελής κτήσις

the self-purposeful organism of the nation ('γενικός τοῦ Πανελληνίου σκοπός') (*Ἄσματα*, 15) – are not perceived as homogeneous or continuous, but stand in a vertiginous dialectic of identity and distinction, mediation and immediacy, negation and preservation. This, it is implied, will resist objective historiographical exposition and proof, in the same way the organism's life resists scientific observation for Hegel. Other developments of 'infinite wholeness' in Zambelios' work give even stronger support to the view that Zambelios' ideas have a Hegelian background. Hegel frequently describes the relation between the world we perceive and the supersensible world in terms of 'rest' (*Ruhe*) and movement (*Bewegung*), which stand in a 'necessary unity of identity and distinction':

The supersensible world is thus a motionless realm of laws. It is to be sure, beyond the perceived world, for this perceived world exhibits the law only through constant change. However, those laws are just as much current in the perceived world and are its immediately motionless likeness, *Phen.* 89.

And it is in terms of rest and movement that Zambelios renders the contrast between the supra-historical life of the nation and its vicissitudes in time. After the Roman conquest, he writes:

ἡ πολιτικὴ Ἑλλάς δύναται νὰ παρομοιασθῆ μὲ θάλασσαν, ἣς ἡ μὲν ἐπιφάνεια, εὐκίνητος καὶ ἀειμετάβολος ὑπὸ τὰς πνοὰς τῶν ἀνέμων, ὑπακούει εἰς τὰς ἐλαχίστας ἀτμοσφαιρικὰς ἀλλαγὰς, τὸ δὲ βάθος αὐτῆς διαμένει πάντοτε ἀκίνητον, ἀπρόσβλητον, ἡρεμαῖον, συντηροῦν πληρέστατα τὴν τε ἀρχικὴν θερμότητα καὶ φυτικὴν δυνάμιν τοῦ (*Ἄσματα*, 75).²¹

Awkwardly formulated, the passage does not immediately allude to the dialectics of the unity of identity and distinction, which Zambelios does however echo more explicitly elsewhere (in relation to Orthodox mystagogy): 'ἐν αὐτῇ δὲ τὰ πάντα μυστιπολεῦνται ἠνωμένα τῇ διακρίσει, καὶ τῇ ἐνώσει διακεκριμένα' (*Ἄσματα*, 136).

The basic tenet of organic teleology ('the necessity, which lies in what happens, is hidden, and it first shows itself at the end, but in such a way that this end shows that it was also to have been what was first', *Phen.* 153) also informs Zambelios' methodology, summed up in his 'retrospective' ('ὀπισθόρμητος') reading of history (on which more below).²² In post-Hegelian discourses, retrospective interpretation had

της πατρίου ιστορίας": Ιστοριονομία καὶ "εθνικὴ ποίηση" στον κριτικὸ λόγον τοῦ Σπ. Ζαμπέλιου', *Νέα Ἐστία* 1888 (2021) 727–48 (741).

21 There are further Hegelian echoes in this passage, the most prominent being the allusion of the word 'φυτικὴ' to the 'latent germ of being', which, 'entirely unmoved by contingencies', is involved in the development both of Spirit and of organized natural objects: 'an internal unchangeable principle' that lives through 'a continuous process of changes' (*Phen.* 70-1).

22 "Ἐπειδὴ, λοιπὸν, πᾶν ἕκαστον γινόμενον ἐμπεριέχει ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὰ γεννητικὰ τοῦ αἵτιος, προσέτι δὲ τοὺς λόγους τοὺς συμβαλόντας εἰς τὴν πραγματοποιήσιν καὶ ἐπιτυχίαν του, ἔπεται ὅτι ἡ ἀληθὴς ἐπιστήμη τῆς ιστορίας τὴν ὁποίαν, ἀντὶ φιλοσοφίας τῆς ιστορίας, ἡμεῖς, ἐπὶ τὸ ἑλληνικότερον, ΙΣΤΟΡΙΟΝΟΜΙΑΝ ἐπονομάζομεν,

certainly gained autonomy from organicism.²³ Yet the preoccupation with life remains dominant in the methodological tenets Zambelios lays out in the prefatory pages of his *Άσματα* more generally. It even renders the value of the folk songs he is publishing conditional: without the six hundred ‘introductory’ pages on the history of the Greeks that precede them, the folk songs would be lifeless ‘remains’ (‘ἀπλὰ φιλολογίας λείψανα’, 6). In Hegel’s ‘Preface’ to the *Phenomenology*, and part of his resistance to writing a Preface at all, it is also claimed that the work’s aim as such is ‘the lifeless universal’, and that the results of a science are inseparable from its method, its process, and its execution (*Ausführung*), defined as the ‘science of the experience (*Ehrfahrung*) of consciousness’ (*Phen.* 5, 22).²⁴ Zambelios subscribes to this view too: ‘Ὅια δὲ ἡ μέθοδος [...] τοιαῦτα καὶ τὰ ἀποτελέσματα τῆς μελέτης’ (BM, 38). For Hegel, in order to count as an object of science at all, any end product must be mediated by the whole cyclical process of its life’s development.²⁵

Not only the folk songs, but national ideology itself leaves Zambelios cold if it comes without life. He seeks to make a distinction between his own project and certain words that could be taken as saying the same thing as he does, and which abound, he writes, in the newspapers of the time, and are on everyone’s lips: ‘ἀποστολή, προορισμός, φυλή, παλιγγενεσία, πανελλήνιον’ (‘mission, historical destiny, race, national renaissance, Panhellenic’). The problem with these words, for Zambelios, is that they lack ‘historical sanction’ (‘ἱστορικῆς πιστώσεως’, 8) and thus ‘scientific value’ (‘ἐπιστημονικῆς ἀξίας’, 8): they do not bear the traces of the history of their development. If simply posited at the outset, they are ‘coins without authentic value’ (‘νομίσματα ἐλλείποντα τῆς ἀuthεντικῆς τιμῆς’, 8) – and ‘truth’, writes Hegel, quoting Lessing, ‘is not a stamped coin issued directly from the mint and ready for one’s pocket’ (*Phen.* 24). Life turns here into a claim to originality, the originality of one’s *Ehrfahrung* as a process ‘through which self-consciousness, in distinction from and in relation to its objects, is continually enriched and transformed’.²⁶ Zambelios gestures against the equation of his work with the ideological content of contemporary nationalism. The implication is that even if he used the exact same words, these would still be different, because at the end of his account they would no longer be abstractions, but would have come to life with his own subjective, non-observable

σύνισταται εἰς τὸ νὰ διερευνῶμεν, ἐν παντὶ χώρῳ καὶ χρόνῳ, τὰς ἀπορρήτους αἰτίας, αἵτινες ἐγέννησαν τὰς μεταβολὰς, καὶ τὰς σπουδαίας περιπτώσεις, ὅσαι συνέτρεξαν εἰς τὴν γένεσιν τῶν συμβεβηκότων’ (*Άσματα*, 19).

23 For the same method in French romantic historiography and for the historian as Oedipus who will resolve on behalf of the dead the enigma of their own acts and words, see Koubourlis, *Οἱ Ἱστοριογραφικὲς Ὁφειλές*, 81–4.

24 On the ‘process’ of experience as suggestive of the ‘antipositivist’ character of Hegel’s philosophy of reason, where the forms of knowledge depend on the content of knowledge, and vice versa, see T.W. Adorno, *Hegel: three studies*, tr. S. W. Nichol森 (Cambridge, MA 1993), 65.

25 Harris, *Hegel’s Ladder* 58. Essential here is an understanding of Hegel’s notorious phrase ‘The true is the whole’, with its crucial supplement: ‘However, the whole is only the essence completing itself through its own development’ (*Phen.* 13).

26 For this definition of the Hegelian ‘experience’, see Ng, *Hegel’s Concept of Life*, 98.

‘experience’, an experience jealously set apart from the many, the national ideology of the layman.

‘The concept of transition’

In the framework of his critique of the Enlightenment prejudice against Byzantium, Zambelios opposes himself to the pattern of ‘ἀκμὴ, παρακμὴ, πτώσις’ established in the understanding of historical time by Montesquieu and Gibbon (*Ἔσματα*, 17), and claims that ‘fall’ is an ‘abstract’ word, and that what it actually means, is ‘transition’ (‘μετάβασις’) (*Ἔσματα*, 17). Zambelios does not object to the decline and fall model as such – in his own *Byzantine Studies*, Byzantium is not quite rehabilitated in its own right, only scrutinized, in a not particularly hopeful spirit, for ‘imprints’ (‘ὑποτυπώσεις’) of the rebirth of Greece in modern times (BM, 577).²⁷ The problem is rather that Gibbon’s writing smells of death (‘ὄζει γαιῶδές τι καὶ νεκρῶμαῖον καὶ ἐπιτύμβιον’, BM, 36), and that Enlightenment historians have only described the surface, what is easily discernible (‘εὐδιαγνώστου’, BM, 37): this stands in stark contrast with Zambelios’ Hegelian understanding of life’s teleology, which is not observable but ‘hidden’ (*Phen.* 153). The same is true for the ‘general aim’, namely ‘the realization of the Idea of Spirit’, that drives the World History: this aim is initially ‘only in an implicit form that is, as Nature; a hidden, most profoundly hidden, unconscious instinct’ (‘der innere, der innerste bewußtlose Trieb’), which the whole process of History is directed to rendering conscious.²⁸ For Zambelios, too, it is out of something hidden, implicit and internal to the nation’s organism (‘μύχιον τῆς Νεοελληνικῆς ὑπάρξεως ὀργανισμὸν’) that the spirit of the nation is ‘gradually incarnated in the biology of the middle ages’, and this is what Gibbon appears, in his view, to have missed (BM, 36-37).

Yet, the very fact that the aim of History is implicated in natural life (‘only in an implicit form that is, as Nature’), imposes delays on the Spirit’s manifestation, and calls on the historian to follow the grades of its incarnation at a deliberate pace.²⁹ As

27 As Koubourlis observes, Zambelios even has a word of praise for Claude Dennis Raffanel, whose *Histoire des Grecs modernes* (1825) describes Byzantium as a ‘night of horrors’, because Raffanel at least recognizes the period as a transition, an ‘intermédiaire’ between ancient and modern Greece (Koubourlis, *Οἱ Ιστοριογραφικὲς Οφειλές*, 158–9).

28 G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, tr. J. Sibree (New York 1956) 39. Hereafter PhH in text, followed by page numbers. For a full-length study that focuses on the notion of the ‘unconscious’ (*bewußtlos*) in Hegel, and convincingly discusses it in terms of a Freudian unconscious (*unbewußt*) *avant-la-lettre*, see J. Mills, *The Unconscious Abyss: Hegel’s anticipation of psychoanalysis* (Albany, NY 2002). Mills is interested mainly in the unconscious in the domain of subjective spirit, but the unconscious aspect of world spirit as it develops in history is equally important and more relevant to our discussion here.

29 On the ‘pre-rational unconscious ground or abyss’ (*Schacht*, *Abgrund*, or *Ungrund*) that serves as the foundation for all forms of spirit to manifest themselves’ in Hegel, see Mills, *The Unconscious Abyss*, 3. For spiritual subjectivity as ‘a splitting off from the substantial objectivity of nature’, as well as the resulting redefinition of the natural substance as itself ‘pervaded and perturbed by the differentiating,

Hegel observes, the philosophical discourse whose object is ‘the actual, [...] what is alive within itself’, must create its own moments and pass through them all, it must laboriously travel ‘down a long path (*Weg*)’, which Hegel even calls the ‘science of [a] path’ (*Phen.* 17, 22). The ‘long path’ becomes an insistent figure in Zambelios’ own writing: the historian must necessarily follow a ‘thorny’ and ‘rough’ (‘ἀκανθώδης καὶ δύσβατος’) road (‘ὁδός’) (*Ἄσματα*, 23). The sublimations of human spirit do not take place ‘all at once and suddenly’ (‘διὰ μιᾶς καὶ αἰφνιδίως’), but slowly and by degrees (‘βραδέως καὶ κατὰ βαθμοὺς’, *BM*, 136). This is for Zambelios especially true of the Greek nation, whose history is ‘protracted’ and interrupted (‘διακεκομμένον’), as opposed to Western nations, whose life is ‘short’ (‘βραχύς’, *Ἄσματα*, 11). Ironically, Zambelios blames the impatient access to truth on none other than Hegel, when it comes to the latter’s negative account of Byzantium. In the *Ἄσματα* he condenses very accurately Hegel’s contempt for Byzantium in the *Philosophy of History*: a ‘millennial series of cries’, a ‘disgusting spectacle of baseness’, where Christianity remained abstract and ‘separate from the organism of society’ (*Ἄσματα*, 140–141).³⁰ Once again, the problem with Hegel’s view is not so much the prejudice against Byzantium as its underlying cause: the expectation that Christian Revelation could be absorbed by contemporary society ‘immediately and unpreparedly’ (‘ἐν τῷ ἅμα καὶ ἀπροπαρασκευάστως’, *Ἄσματα*, 140). Zambelios attributes to Hegel the most anti-Hegelian expectation of an immediate, time-abolishing access to truth. At the same time, he appropriates the Hegelian insight on the inseparability of truth and the ‘path’ for his own interpretation of a number of intellectual and historical cases. One of Zambelios’ favourite examples is provided by fourth-century theology, built on the dialectic of the absolute and its gradual unravelling in historical consciousness: fourth-century theologians covered the newly revealed religion with an ‘artful mystery’ (‘μυστήριον [...] πανέντεχνον’), sensing that ‘the application of universality’ must be ‘difficult and slow’. God having revealed himself once, they turned him into God again for the economy of the future (‘πάλιν ἐποίησαν αὐτὸν Θεὸν πρὸς οἰκονομίαν τοῦ μέλλοντος’) (*Ἄσματα*, 139). What makes God God is the mystery that calls for the long and slow labour of interpretation.

Most importantly, the way Zambelios elaborates on the notion of transition itself in the ‘biology of the middle ages’ is indebted to Hegel. We will here focus on the transition on which his entire historionomical project depends, the transition from the Byzantine to the modern Greek era – a transition charged with redeeming Byzantium’s death. The death of Byzantium, on Zambelios’ account, came about when the three dominant principles sustaining Byzantine political life – Roman monarchy, religious authority and the Attic language – were no longer part of the ‘living flesh’ (‘ζωντανὴ σάρκα’) of

splitting powers of the negative’, see A. Johnston, ‘The voiding of weak nature: the transcendental materialist kernels of Hegel’s Naturphilosophie’, *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 33.1 (2012) 103–57. For this dialectic between human nature and the natural material plane in which it is embedded, see also G. Lebrun’s foundational *La patience du concept: Essai sur le discours hégélien* (Paris 1972) 145–6.

³⁰ See Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 355–6.

the ‘living people’ (‘τοῦ ζῶντος λαοῦ’) and had turned into mere ‘reminiscences’ (‘ἀναμνήσεις’) ‘enshrined’ (‘ἐγκεκτισμένα’) in the past (BM, 684). It is then – at a moment that in *Ἄσματα* is identified as a transition from one political stage to the next (‘μετάβασις ἀπὸ ἐνὸς σταδίου πολιτεύσεως πρὸς ἄλλο’, 501) – that a fourth principle emerges: the nameless people (‘ἀκατανόμαστος λαός’), who already wear their Neohellenic garb (BM, 684). The fall of Constantinople in 1453 is presented by Zambelios as the result of a providential economy synonymous with the historical law that determines progress, but also as the result of a certain election (‘ψήφω’), a certain will (‘θέλημα’) of the people themselves:

Ἡ μοναρχία τοῦ Κωνσταντίνου πίπτει κατὰ νόμον ἱστορικὸν καὶ Πρόνοιαν, πίπτει προτροπῇ τοῦ νεωτέρου κόσμου, καὶ ψήφω τοῦ Νεοελληνικοῦ λαοῦ, οὗ τὸ θέλημα ὑπερισχύει τῶν τε σφαιρῶν τοῦ Τουρκικοῦ πυροβόλου, καὶ τῶν τοῦ Κωνσταντίνου ἀειμνήστων ἀνδραγαθημάτων. Καὶ γὰρ [...] ὑπεράνω καὶ Τούρκων πολιορκητῶν, καὶ Ῥωμαίων πολιορκουμένων ἐρίπταται, καὶ τὸ στερέωμα ἐν εἶδει φλογερᾶς ῥομφαίας περιανιάζει, τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἐπαγγελλομένης Ἀναγεννήσεως (BM, 694).

The monarchy of Constantine falls, following the law of history and providence, it falls at the behest of the new world, and by the vote of the people of Greece, whose will prevails over Turkish cannon-balls, and the ever-memorable bravery of Constantine. And [...] above both the Turkish besiegers and the Roman besieged, hovers the spirit of the promised rebirth and brightens the firmament like a fiery sword.

As Koubourlis notes, Zambelios’ interpretation of the fall of Constantinople is among the aspects of which Paparrigopoulos took a favourable view in his unsigned review of *Ἄσματα* in the journal *Πανδώρα* in 1852. There the people’s involvement in the Fall is understood as a ‘decision’: the Greek people ‘decided’ (ἀπεφάσισε) to give up the empire, in order to save the integrity of Orthodoxy and nationality.³¹ And it is quite true that in *Ἄσματα*, this is the rhetoric Zambelios himself uses, in a context which juxtaposes the fall of 1453 to the alternative of having capitulated to the Western Papacy (*Ἄσματα*, 494-504). More specifically, in the *Ἄσματα* the fall is presented as the result of intense thought: the Byzantine people, after having ‘maturely’ (ὠρίμως) and ‘rationally’ (νουνεχῶς) ‘examined’ the stakes, after having for three entire centuries pondered on (‘συνεσκέφθη’) the best way to die, finally ‘preferred’ (προετίμησε) to surrender to the Ottomans, in order to save the religion that for Zambelios lies at the heart of national identity, their ‘ethnotherapeutic’ (*Ἄσματα*, 500).

However forced this argument may seem, the idea of a nation’s death by its own accord can be illuminated by the remarks on the transition from the old to a new

31 ‘Βιβλιογραφία’, *Πανδώρα* 65 (1/12/1852) 399; Y. Koubourlis, *La formation de l’histoire nationale grecque: L’apport de Spyridon Zambelios (1815–1881)* (Athens 2005) 287.

national spirit that Hegel formulates in his *Philosophy of History*, a work that Zambelios seems to have known well. For Hegel, ‘the very essence of Spirit is activity’ and the activity displayed by a certain National Spirit is sustained as long as it fights against external violence and obstacles (PhH, 90). But once a nation has achieved ‘full reality’, activity is no longer needed, because it has been satisfied (‘it has its desires’ [‘er hat was er will’], PhH, 91). It is then that a nation enters the dull period of senility which Hegel identifies with ‘customary life’ (*Gewohnheit*). The temporality of *Gewohnheit* is that of ‘formal duration’, without the ‘fulness and zest that originally characterized the aim of life’, ‘the watch wound up and going on of itself’ (PhH, 91). For Zambelios too, as we saw, Byzantium’s existence by its end is lifeless, ossified; the three main principles that sustained it have become dead reminiscences. And in *Ἄσματα* he identifies the last two centuries of Byzantium as indeed empty time, when nothing important is achieved (‘οὐδὲν σπουδαῖον κατορθοῦται’), nothing great is planned (‘οὐδὲν μέγα σχεδιάζεται’), the nation running its course in a way that resembles the mechanical walking of a pilgrim whose only concern now is arrival (*Ἄσματα*, 494).

Although a life outliving its own vitality would bring on ‘natural death’, continues Hegel, this is not in fact what happens with the National Spirit if it is indeed world-historical, if that is, it belongs to Universal History. On the contrary, in the case of such a National Spirit ‘natural death appears to imply destruction through its own agency’ (‘an ihm erscheint vielmehr der natürliche Tod als Tötung seiner durch sich selbst’) (PhH, 92). This is because the nation, being not an individual life, but ‘spiritual’, ‘generic life’, does not die in time – only in thought (PhH, 94). For Hegel, that National Spirit makes itself ‘the object of thought’, means that it ‘comprehends the universal element which it involves [as part of the Universal Spirit]. Zambelios does not of course reproduce the entire problematic, but his own insistence on thought and thinking on the eve of 1453 in the *Ἄσματα*, is likely yet another echo of his many unacknowledged Hegelian debts. Even more so, that thought involves in both Hegel and Zambelios a double movement, that of the annihilation of the nation’s determinate previous life, *and* that of an elevation to ‘another, and in fact a higher principle’ (PhH, 95). The thought involved in the transition from the old to the new National Spirit, writes Hegel, is of ‘the highest importance in apprehending and comprehending history’. And it is precisely the notion of transition that bears all the weight in Zambelios’ philosophical historiography, if he is to integrate Byzantium as a stage in the history of the Greeks.

The higher principle is for Hegel the ‘something new’ that the National Spirit comes to desire (‘etwas Neues zu wollen’), after all old wants have been satisfied (PhH, 92). It is worth insisting on the nature of this ‘desire’, which looms large in Zambelios’ own account of transition. Hegel writes that if nations had only desires [‘Begierden’] compelling them to activity – desires that is, exclusively referring to life – their deeds, and the nations themselves, would simply vanish without trace [‘spurlos’] into all-devouring time (PhH, 92). But we have seen that it is not only such desires that

govern them: there can also be a desire that brings about the self-imposed death of the nation. That death is for Hegel not an external event, but an internal drive of life itself, is attested by a number of other passages in his work, of which it suffices to mention here the twin passage to the pages on transition in the *Philosophy of History* and the last section of the *Philosophy of Nature*, which is characteristically entitled ‘The Self-induced destruction of the Individual’ (‘Der Tod des Individuums von sich selbst’). There the inner purpose of natural life appears linked not to self-maintenance but to death.³² In Zambelios too, the desire of the people that presides over the transition from the Byzantium to modern Greece inscribes an impulse that is towards life and death indistinguishably. It is out of the urge for annihilation that there emerges, like the phoenix, the fiery sword of a rebirth (‘ή φλογερά ρομφαία της έπαγγελλομένης Αναγεννήσεως’). If we bear in mind that for Hegel historical agents produce results ‘beyond that which they aim and obtain’ (PhH, 42), beyond their conscious will and intentions, and that the aim of History is hidden and implicit, then we can better understand the choice (ψηφω’) of the people that determined the transition from the Byzantine to the modern era: for both Hegel and Zambelios, it is an unconscious desire for life and death at once that drives history.³³

At the end of the *Byzantine Studies*, Zambelios returns to the idea of the ‘slower’ (‘βραδυτέρα’) development of ‘our’ nation in comparison to occidental nations, and rewrites it in terms, precisely, of desire: Western nations progress because they ‘want to’ (‘θέλοντες’) and seek to’ (687). The Greeks’ progress, on the contrary, is ‘passive’ (‘παθητική’), motivated by external obstacles (Persians, Saracens, Papacy, Iconoclasm, Francocracy, Crusaders, Venetians, Ottomans). In a word – so runs Zambelios’ surprising conclusion – the Greeks progress ‘unwillingly’ (‘άκοντες’) (687). In seeming contradiction to the ‘decision’ for the fall as a means of progress, ‘άκοντες’ rather reveals what was there all along, desire’s unconscious striving against ήitself towards an unknown aim. Crucially, the vicissitudes of desire suggest a breach in the conception of the nation as a living organism. Hegel’s often overlooked insistence on the differences between natural and spiritual teleology sheds light on the complication. Although the teleological connotations of organicism suggest otherwise, Hegel remarks that growth in the realm of nature differs from growth in the realm of Spirit: ‘[Spirit’s] expansion, therefore, does not present the harmless tranquility of mere

32 ‘The goal [‘Ziel’] of Nature is to destroy itself [‘sich selbst zu töten’] and to break through its husk of immediate, sensuous existence, to consume itself like the phoenix [‘sich als Phönix zu verbrennen’] in order to come forth from this externality rejuvenated as spirit’, G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel’s Philosophy of Nature: Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830), Part II*, tr. A.V. Miller (Oxford 2004) 441. Interestingly, death is in this section too, like in the *Philosophy of History*, linked to the ‘inertia of habit’. For the discussion of this section in terms of the often-overlooked differences between natural and spiritual teleology in Hegel, see G. Moder, ‘The germ of death: purposive causality in Hegel’, *Crisis and Critique* 4.1 (2017) 257–92.

33 On historical agents as unconscious vehicles of Reason in Schelling, Hegel, and Zambelios, see Polychronakis, Ο κριτικός ιδεαλισμός του Ιάκωβου Πολυλά, 172–3.

growth, as does that of organic life, but a stern reluctant working against itself ('die harte unwillige Arbeit gegen sich selbst') (PhH, 71). It is plausible that Zambelios' 'ἄκοντες' appropriates Hegel's 'unwillige Arbeit' as an attribute of Spirit that 'hides [its] goal from its own vision, and is proud and well satisfied in this alienation from it' (PhH, 71), and contrasts it to the 'automatic' ('αὐτόματος', BM, 687) progress he attributes to the Westerns, the progress one encounters in nature.

Spirit's conflictual manifestation is however to be understood not in isolation from, but in the very terms of, the organicist philosophical frame. It is precisely because Spirit is, as we have seen, embedded in material substance, precisely because the very faculties that mediate the realization of Spirit's Idea, consciousness and will, are initially sunk in a hidden, unconscious, natural substratum – and because the separation of Spirit from natural life always remains 'imperfect and partial' (PhH, 73) – that Spirit's development is hindered, that Spirit 'is at war with itself' and 'has to overcome itself as its most formidable obstacle' (PhH, 71). The following section will further explore this inherent tension of the organicist conception of Spirit, national or otherwise, and follow its traces in Zambelios' rhetoric.

The weak life of the nation

In Hegel's *Philosophy of History* the organicist conception of Spirit is proposed as the philosophical frame in which to grasp the workings of the transition: 'We may compare [Spirit] with the seed; for with this the plant begins, yet it is also the result of the plant's entire life.' What follows, however, is a remarkable twist, which makes even more clear what was implicit in the entire discussion on the transition: that the 'thirst' for life is at the same time the 'thirst' for death:

But the weak side of life ['Ohnmacht des Lebens'] is exhibited in the fact that the commencement and the result are disjoined from each other. So is it with the life of individuals and peoples alike. The life of a people ripens a certain fruit; its activity aims at the complete manifestation of the principle which it embodies. But this fruit does not fall back into the womb of the people that gave birth to it and ripened it; on the contrary, it becomes a bitter drink ['sie wird ihm ein bitterer Trank']. It cannot leave it alone, for it has an infinite thirst for it ['es hat den unendlichen Durst nach demselben']; the taste of the drink is its annihilation ['Vernichtung'], though at the same time the rise of a new principle (PhH, 95).

The organic model for spiritual teleology is here not abandoned but turned on its head, in a way that reveals the radical, structural contamination of all political organicisms by death: death is not only the condition for new life, but is life's inescapable shadow.³⁴ The life of spirit is weak, as is the life of the plant: they both produce something that

34 On this idea, see further Cheah, *Spectral Nationality*, 9.

falls in the gap between beginning and end, even though conceptually the end mirrors itself in the beginning. The other side of Zambelios' 'ὀπισθόρμητος' method – modelled, as we saw, on an organicist concept of the national spirit – is precisely this dislocation, what Rebecca Comay in a brilliant work on Hegel and the French Revolution has called a 'grinding nonsynchronicity' at the heart of historical experience.³⁵ The meaning of each and every historical present is not to be found in the present itself: it always depends on a future moment for its appearance. The idealist reading *après-coup* already inscribes the traumatic structure of the Freudian *Nachträglichkeit*: historical experience is the 'belated and vicarious experience of the missed experience of the other'.³⁶

Such a structure surfaces often in Zambelios' rhetoric. If, from today's point of view – he writes – and especially after 1821, the Fall of Constantinople makes sense as a stage in the providential economy of history, people at the time had no access to this meaning: they only experienced the 'despair' ('ἀπελπισία') of the hope for mercy till the last moment (*Ἔσματα*, 512). And he devotes some eloquent pages to the despair of the last Byzantine emperors as they wandered miserably from court to court in the West, mumbling dogmas and promises against themselves, half deceiving and half self-deceived (*Ἔσματα*, 512–535). It is a story that repeats itself. From the point of view of 1453, where the people are said to have preferred annihilation over accommodation with the Papacy, the sack of Constantinople in 1204 makes sense, because it contributed to the preservation of the 'indigenous religious spirit'. By contrast, the sack of Constantinople in 1204 was a time of 'confusion' and 'disorder', of total lack of coordination of the elements of the 'Byzantine organism', a period therefore of sickness for the nation ('ἀσθενούσης ἐθνικότητος', *Ἔσματα*, 434–5). Afterwards, Zambelios comments, God provided the 'convalescent' ('ἀναρρωνύων') with the remedy of the disaster's historical benefits ('ιστορικὰ εὐεργετήματα') (*Ἔσματα*, 434). But, like the Hegelian fruit, this *pharmakon* is a fatal poison for the people who become History's mere instruments. No less than for Hegel, history is for Zambelios this 'slaughter bench' (PhH, 35), where the World-Spirit uses individuals for its own purposes and discards them once it has finished with them.

Despite appearances, the Greek War of Independence in 1821 is also affected by the same pattern of the deferral of meaning from one generation to the next. In Zambelios' 'ὀπισθόρμητος' method, 1821 seems to be the ultimate landmark, conferring meaning on all previous history: not only does the significance of the Byzantine period depend on the national rebirth, but without 1821 the entire European history, the universal history of the Middle Ages, would 'wither' and 'dry up' ('μαρανθῆ, και ξηρανθῆ', *Ἔσματα*, 502). And yet, at the end of the *Byzantine Studies* we read that 1821 is only an inadequate first token ('πρῶτον δοκίμιον') of national rebirth (*BM*, 694): at the time of Independence, as in Zambelios' present moment, the people have not yet assumed full

35 R. Comay, *Mourning Sickness: Hegel and the French Revolution* (Stanford 2011) 5.

36 Comay, *Mourning Sickness*, 86.

agency in their historical drama, have not raised to the full consciousness of their historic destination (BM, 395). Like all previous summits, the War of Independence has its stability as a source of meaning destabilized in the name of a future which at the time Zambelios writes is still to come. For Zambelios, this future takes on geopolitical and irredentist aspects, at the intersection of orthodox providentialism, Rigas' vision of a 'Hellenic Republic', and Kolettis' 'Great Idea' (BM, 696).³⁷ Yet it inscribes itself in a broader structure or 'plane of historicity'. As Reinhart Koselleck puts it, modern Revolution 'appears to unchain a yearned-for future while the nature of this future robs the present of materiality and actuality'. The need for repetition is inbuilt in Revolution, which reproduces Reaction by fixing an end-point, an 'ultimate paradise' in a future that is not one: a 'futureless future', an 'evil endlessness'.³⁸

The deferral of meaning from one generation to the next yields glimpses of an unredeemed present. It is arguably symptomatic that the very first chapter of *Byzantine Studies* opens with a scene that alludes not to 'infinite', but to finite, mortal life – a scene of anatomy. By contrast with philosophy, whose object is the living, self-purposeful activity of an organism, anatomy, writes Hegel, considers parts and organic systems 'according to the abstract side of dead existence' (*Phen.* 158). And yet, it is to a doctor that Zambelios compares the historian-philosopher, ready to attempt the 'anatomical diagnosis' of Byzantine society, to investigate the 'vital organs of the body' ('τὰ ζωτικά τοῦ σώματος ὄργανα'), so as better to evaluate the 'psychological internal arrangement of the dead' ('τὴν ψυχολογικὴν τοῦ ἀποβιώσαντος διοργάνωσιν') (BM, 65). Certainly, if Zambelios wishes to open up Byzantium's corpse, it is to see how it could be organicized once again within national teleology. Yet no indication of a redemption accompanies this inaugural anatomical scene, which can itself be read as the repetition of a failure. In the 'Προθεωρία' to the *Byzantine Studies*, Byzantium's severed parts – heart, hands, and legs – are said to lie scattered in the 'viscera' of the fatherland, while only abstractions and empty reminiscences – the head alone – have survived in the Byzantine chronicles (BM, 25-26). Given Zambelios' interest in reintegrating the scattered limbs into the nation's living organism, the change brought about by the archaeological 'earthquake' of 1821 seems rather disappointing: what then emerged from the sands of the desert, revealing Byzantium's entire hidden pattern, was nothing but a 'statue, perfect, complete, well-made' ('ἄγαλμα τέλειον, ὀλομελές, ἀρτίως κατεσκευασμένον', BM, 26). The passage is revealing of the persistent intrusion of *techne*, a remnant of eighteenth-century, mechanical organic models, in idealist political organicisms as well.³⁹ But the recourse to the rhetoric of the statue might also speak of a slackening of Zambelios' own interest in idealist reversals. In fact, in the later text 'Ὁ κ. Ιούλιος Τυπάλδος' (1860), it is in the body parts and the organs themselves in which he seems interested. In this text, the duties of the

37 Koubourlis, *La formation de l'histoire nationale*, 315–318.

38 R. Koselleck, *Futures Past: on the semantics of historical time* (New York 2004) 23.

39 Cheah, *Spectral Nationality*, 177.

‘anatomist’ are expanded from the historian of the Byzantium to the national poet in general, who should lean with a ‘microscope’ over the ‘innermost mechanism of the organism of our heart’, not in order to celebrate the nation’s achievements and previous glories, but in order to feel its ‘weaknesses’ (‘ἀδυναμίας). In the same text, he opposes Greek poetry’s floating in idealist clouds (‘μετεωρισμὸς τῆς ἰδέας’) with a call for a ‘philosophy of the present’, a study of the world and man as they are and not as they ought to be in future – a turn, in the final analysis, to ‘experimental science’ (‘ἐπιστήμη πειραματική’) and ‘positive knowledge’ (‘θετική γνώση’). Here, life separates from infinity and bends to the finite, the concrete and palpable,⁴⁰ tinged with the melancholy Zambelios recognizes as a perennial feature of the Greek people.⁴¹ Accordingly, the romantic dialectic of the ‘ὀπισθόρμητος’ method has been significantly modified: Providence humiliated (‘ἐταπείνωσε’) the Greek people through successive losses and foreign enslavements not in view of some future redemption, but in order to teach patience, and mitigate ‘vanity’ through shame (“ἵνα διὰ κατασχύνης καταβάλῃ τὸν τύφον μας”).⁴²

Conclusion

Zambelios famously reproached Dionysios Solomos for his ‘apostasy’ to an essentially foreign ‘Germanicism’ (‘ἀλλοτύπων γερμανισμὸν’), linked to a mania for the metaphysical (‘μεταφυσικομανία’).⁴³ However, the comparison with Hegel, which this paper has only started to unfold, reveals in Zambelios too a palimpsest of ‘Germanicism’, under the surface of national historiography. It can indeed be argued that for him the point of attraction to Hegel was not abstract thinking but the Hegelian emphasis on actuality and life. It is therefore possible to see in Zambelios a version of Ionian ‘Germanicism’ that resists the connection to abstraction and μεταφυσικομανία, a connection Zambelios’ own criticism of Solomos made notorious.⁴⁴ This would allow us to rethink the presence of German thought in Greek letters beyond the perspective of abstract idealism, and to reread Zambelios beyond the perspective of a national narrative that became dominant. Like Hegel, Zambelios lays a wager on life for the internally differentiated unity of reality and infinity, and, again like Hegel, he lays a wager on death for the reversal of life to a higher principle. But, between the gestures of this double move, life often appears as unredeemed finitude, haunted by sickness and death: weak life.

40 Zambelios, “Ο κ. Ιούλιος Τυπάλδος”, 255–56.

41 Zambelios, “Πόθεν ἡ κοινὴ λέξις “τραγουδοῦ””, 203.

42 Zambelios, “Ο κ. Ιούλιος Τυπάλδος”, 267.

43 Zambelios, “Πόθεν ἡ κοινὴ λέξις “τραγουδοῦ””, 219 and 232.

44 For the resistance to ‘germanicism’ because of its connection to abstraction, philosophy, and metaphysics in Zambelios, Palamas and Varnalis, see Angela Yioti, “Λογοτεχνικὴ κριτικὴ στον ἰόνιο χῶρο: ερωτήματα, βεβαιότητες καὶ υποθέσεις εργασίας στη βάση του ‘γερμανισμού’”, *Νέα Ἐστία* 1888 (2021) 749–761 (754).

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