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Ηθικά και πολιτικά κείμενα κατά την εποχή του νεοελληνικού διαφωτισμού: παράδοση και ανανέωση

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Moral and Political Texts in the Age of the Greek Enlightenment: Tradition and Innovation

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries —the formative period for modern moral philosophy— the topic of virtues and vices, and their relation to the good life, was extensively discussed by moral philosophers who set out virtue-centred and act-centred views, teaching either a morality of virtue or a morality of duty.¹ The Scottish common-sense philosopher Thomas Reid reminds us of the opposition between ‘virtue-ethics’ and ‘Christian ethics’ when he characteristically says that:

Morals have been methodised in different ways... The Ancients commonly arranged them under the four cardinal virtues of prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice. Christian writers, I think more properly, under the three heads of the duty we owe to God, to ourselves, and to our neighbour.²

Reid believed that Christianity teaches a morality of duty, not of virtue, and it understands duty in terms of acts complying with law; on the other hand the commonest position in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was that virtue is secondary to laws or rules. Nevertheless recent moral philosophy has seen a revival of interest in the concept of virtue, the role of which was central in the moral theories of the classical and modern moral traditions. In this paper, I will attempt to illustrate the ways by which the classical tradition of virtue-centred ethics, mixed with ‘Christian ethics’, was elaborated on modern Greek moral and political thought. Focusing on moral³ and political texts,⁴ translated into or written in Greek language, I will demonstrate that the aim of Greek intellectuals in the Neohellenic Enlightenment was to educate students into virtue by teaching them the role of virtue in the good life and by showing the importance of some general rules and principles, as well as of rights and duties. In this paper I also intend to examine the role of translation in the communication of ideas and the cultivation of men, dealing particularly with problems related to ethics and politics. As manuscript culture, developed in Middle Ages and until the end of the

sixteenth century, translations or interpretations, manuscripted or printed, proved to be in the following centuries an effective vehicle for the continuation of traditional philosophical schools and procedures and for the expression and dissemination of new ideas and their infusion into modern Greek thought. For that reason, I analyse, finally, the effects produced by philosophical and other writings upon some audiences living in particular social and historical settings, namely in Southeastern Europe and in the other European territories where the Greeks were living, after the fall of Constantinople (1453), in a wide geographical area, in captivity or expatriated in the Diaspora.

It is impossible to understand modern Greek 'virtue-ethics' without some prior understanding of the history of philosophy and the study of Aristotle in modern Greece. The two last centuries of Byzantium left a living tradition of studying the works of Aristotle, a tradition which continued after the fall of Constantinople either in Western Europe, where the Greek scholars found refuge, or in the enslaved Greek East. All these Greek scholars studied, taught and commented on the Aristotelian works using mostly Ancient and Byzantine commentators or made editions of his own works.⁵ At the beginning of the seventeenth century a new way of studying the Aristotelian works was introduced by Theophilos Korydaleas who brought in the Greek East the neo-aristotelianism spread out in Padova by the teaching of Cesare Cremonini.⁶ Korydaleas and other Greek scholars such as N. Koursoulas, G. Vlachos, I. Karafyllis, M. Syrigos, S. Kyminitis, Ioannikios Markouras, G. Sougdouris, G. Koressios and A. Mavrokordatos made a new start at revitalising Aristotle's pre-eminence in education and learning by interpreting and commenting his own texts or by using his theories in fields such as grammar, rhetoric and poetics as well as logic, physics, metaphysics and ethics. Their textbooks were used until the end of the eighteenth century and enjoyed an astonishing popularity in the Greek East, although at the turn of the century the Aristotelian reputation "in physics, manners and characters"⁷ was challenged by the Greek scholars, while some of them continued to use his *Poetics* in their literary theories until 1880.⁸

The so-called Neohellenic Enlightenment (c.1750-1821), a movement of teachers, preachers, aristocrats, merchants and men of letters, who were key players in changing the attitudes of a wide audience by a diversity of intellectual discussion, as well as the early Enlightenment period, which starts at the beginning of the eighteenth century, were centred on the nation's respect for its own educational values and traditions. Greek scholars recognised the authority of certain texts of the ancient philosophical traditions. Aristotle was fundamental to the school

curriculum and so remained until the middle of the century. His moral writings were much respected and used extensively for linguistic and pedagogical purposes. Stoic views on virtue were also discussed by the Greek scholars, especially toward the end of the century, and were infused into modern Greek culture through editions or translations in vernacular Greek. Actually moral and political concerns led the Greek scholars to a Christianised Stoicism. Adamantios Korais is a study case for illustrating the Greek interest both in Aristotelian and Stoic ‘virtue-ethics’, as his own editions of Aristotelian and Stoic works prove. Virtue, the pursuit of happiness, and the tranquillity of the Stoic sage as well as his role in society were also widely discussed by the Greek scholars.⁹ There were, in addition, other authoritative texts, mostly Byzantine, known as ‘specula principum’ (Fürstenspiegel, Mirrors of Princes)¹⁰, with a moral and political orientation, linking antiquity with the Byzantine cultural tradition. These were ancient Greek and Byzantine texts associated with ethical and political instruction, like the speeches of Isocrates, of Synesius, of Theophylactus of Bulgaria or of Agapitos Diakonos, translated into common greek for a wider circulation. At the same time European moral and political ideas were infused into the Greek cultural tradition and a virtue-centred morality was shaped in which “virtue-ethics” and Christian ethics were integrated. Translations such as the *Theatrum Politicum* of Ambrosio Marliano, the *Education of the Prince* of the French libertine La Mothe le Vayer or *La filosofia morale derivata dall’alto fonte del grande Aristotele* of Emanuele Tesauro, some still in manuscripts, express the intellectuals’ interest in moulding virtuous people and princes who would contribute to the common good.

Seventeenth and eighteenth century ‘virtue-ethics’ were directly connected to Aristotelian moral and political philosophy that has been transmitted through Byzantine learning. The Byzantine commentators of the Aristotelian moral texts have focused quite extensively on the question of virtue in monographs as well as in *Nicomachean Ethics* commentaries.¹¹ Their teaching preferences included the pseudo-Aristotelian treatise *On Virtues and Vices*, which was in fact used as a Greek language textbook as well as a moral textbook of educational value, until the end of seventeenth century. This can be derived from the unpublished seventeenth century ‘exegesis’ written by Sevastos Kyminetes of Trapezounta (1632-1702), a scholar of long educational activity in three centres of Hellenism: Constantinople, Trapezounta and Bucharest.¹² Kyminetes, expressing the spirit of a ‘virtue-ethics’ morality, which combines Ancient tradition with Christian, held that morality is tied to salvation and tranquillity of soul and ends his exegesis of *On Virtues and Vices* by advising the reader to be “prudent and reasonable, just, brave,

wise and to make himself, when in proximity to wise and prudent men, dear, alluring and praiseworthy".¹³ The problem of the distinction of virtues and vices is discussed in this work in the context of the passions and the pleasures of the soul, while *eudaimonia* is considered "to be not in the external goods, and useful and pleasurable..., but in the modest goods which belong to the virtues of the soul; the special human goods being the maximum perfection of the rational faith and the miraculous association of the divine". He also points out that the proper means of achieving and maintaining a good life is through morals.

Kyminetes' exegesis is dedicated to the Prince of Romania, Constantine Bassarava, and is associated with the educational renaissance of the Danubian Principalities and the productive Greek presence into them. Kyminetes had interpreted extensively Aristotle's ethical works, but his exegesis and other commentaries remain unpublished.¹⁴ Also unpublished remains his commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* as well as his exegeses of the 'Mirrors of Princes' which were actually texts of practical rhetoric that were advice to the Prince for a virtuous life and a fair leadership.

The introduction of "Aristoteles latinus" was also realised with the unpublished translation of Emanuele Tesauro's book entitled *La filosofia morale derivata dall'alto fonte del grande Aristotele Stagirita* by Demetrios Notaras of Peloponnessos,¹⁵ pupil of Kyminetes and nephew of Patriarch of Jerusalem Chrysanthos Notaras who, in the same way as his uncle Dossitheos, has influenced the intellectual life and the Church of Romania.

All these moral and political texts suggest ways which anyone and everyone can use to become virtuous; they aim at educating and suggesting ways in order to lead the happy life, to be *eudaimon*. In their discussions—that bear recognisable traces of the Aristotelian tradition—friendship, religious faith, reason and emotions play a significant role for the good life.

At the middle of the eighteenth century the Enlightenment's values and ideas were also introduced through translations of moral and political texts. From the literature translated I will discuss in this paper the cases of the Italian enlighteners Lodovico Antonio Muratori (1672-1750) and Francesco Soave (1743-1816).¹⁶ Muratori's *Filosofia Morale*¹⁷ was translated by Iossipos Moissiodax (c. 1730-1800)¹⁸ who became familiar with it during his stay in Padova where he studied at a time of reform of the administrative practices and educational curriculum of its University. Iossipos Moissiodax, a main figure of the Neohellenic Enlightenment, who proclaimed the value of 'healthy' philosophy, in the sense of 'sound' philosophising, by which he meant free inquiry and the rejection of prejudice and superstition, also attempted to support belief by

reference to authority. He himself was a believer, respecting religion, but also insisted on the autonomy vis a vis theology. He condemned the Church for favouring Aristotelianism and declared that the Europe of his day surpassed ancient Greece.

Moissiodax, who considered ethics to be the most important branch of philosophy and part of 'sound' philosophy, chose Muratori's ethics because it dealt with "the well meant man's interest who strives first of all for self-preservation, happiness and avoidance of sorrow". Also, because —according to his opinion— Muratori's ethics was simple and well-written and, mostly, because he was writing not as a theologian but as a philosopher.¹⁹

As we can see, the interest of the Greek scholars is directed in that period towards moral philosophy in the sense given to it by Enlightenment that recognised man's right to earthly happiness.²⁰ Nevertheless, Muratori's *Filosofia Morale* also takes into account that people are sensitive to the goods and ills to which they are exposed in particular situations, and proposes, at the same time, an act-centred morality which will render people rational and reasonable.²¹ Thinking of moral philosophy as "the science of ethos and the study of human moral acts", as "the science of moral and rational acting",²² he considers its teaching necessary in order to educate the youth to be "wise, prudent and happy" and to learn "the meaning of emotion (pathos) and appetite, virtue and vice".²³ Expressing the spirit of both an act-centred and virtue-centred morality, he argues that "one should solely choose the way of virtue" and he points out that man's knowledge is based to the acquisition of virtues, vices, emotions and duties that he should preserve in order "to discipline himself prudently, to participate in government with others praiseworthy" and "to perform his duty to God, to himself and to others".²⁴

Muratori defines virtue, following Aristotle, as "practical exes of the good"²⁵ and distinguishes between virtues and vices according to the Aristotelian conception of virtue as a mean; he also defines the four cardinal Aristotelian virtues of prudence, justice, wisdom and courage; he finally distinguishes between duties or 'orders' towards God, his fellow men, the state and himself on the basis of the four cardinal virtues. According to Muratori, if our duty towards God is love and obedience, our duty towards other men is love and justice, while mediocrity and courage are duties towards ourselves. Justice in particular is considered to be the "connecting bond of human polity" and is necessary in every community. It is worth noticing Muratori's special mention to Aristotle's definition of the Sovereign, according to which "Sovereign is he who rules not in favour of his own personal interest,

but he who puts forward the interest of his subjects first. This is what distinguishes him from the tyrant who does completely the opposite". It is also worth mentioning the inclusion of "political love" as well as of friendship, libertinage and gratitude among the duties we owe to our fellow men. Muratori distinguishes the Christian love which is a metaphysical virtue, from the political which is defined as a necessity derived from the social and political nature of men and deals extensively with prudence, a virtue that is considered by him as "the teacher and the queen of all virtues".²⁶ I should mention here that Muratori's translation was very popular among the Greeks as well as among the inhabitants of the other Balkan countries where the Greek translations of philosophical, scientific and literary works of the European Enlightenment contributed to their cultural and political renaissance. On the other hand, I would like to point out that Moissiodax —apart from being Muratori's translator— also had a real concern to reform the Greek education and had contributed to the 'enlightening' of his compatriots by writing a book *On Education*, influenced by Locke's ideas. He had also paraphrased *Isocrates' Discourse to Nicocles*, for political and educational purposes, that was published under the title *A Version of the Discourse to Nikokles on The Sovereignty or Political Chapters* [Venice, 1779]. Aiming at advancing a more liberal educational system, Moissiodax made the above mentioned 'paraphrasis' willing mostly to point out the role of virtues within society and the significance of an enlightened political system.

In more or less the same way Francesco Soave's ethics was incorporated into Greek culture with a translation of his four volume work entitled *Istituzioni di logica, metafisica ed etica*.²⁷ His works were widely accepted among the Greeks and his philosophical, linguistic and pedagogical ideas were infused into South-Eastern Europe through the Greek translations. G. Konstantas, a progressive teacher and an important man of letters translated Soave's four volume work, a translation published in Venice in 1804. The criteria for the selection were as stated by the Greek translator Soave's eclectic writing and his friendly treatment of religion.²⁸ Arguing for the significant role emotions and imagination play in the moulding of human personality, Soave combines the Aristotelian and Christian accounts of moral agency and advises the youth to be "prudent, moderate and pious". He also thinks that "eudaimonia is based on the simplicity and innocence of the soul as well as on its tranquillity".²⁹ In fact, he actually identifies eudaimonia with self knowledge". The Italian philosopher following the common practice of many eighteenth century philosophers was combining a virtue-centred morality within a Christian doctrine of duties. Distinguishing virtues and vices, he pointed out a moral doctrine according to which the moral

agent “has to be prudent, benevolent and piteous” towards himself, others and God.³⁰

With translations like the ones mentioned above the European dimension of the Greek cultural tradition became more apparent during the period under consideration. The relationship between Greek culture and contemporary cultural events elsewhere in Europe is also reflected in other selected European texts which were translated into the modern Greek language, and by which the moral and political ideas of many figures such as Montesquieu, Locke, Voltaire, R  al, Rousseau, Herder, Muratori, Soave, Beccaria etc. were spread out not only in the Greek territories but also in the main cities of Central and Eastern Europe where the Greek Diaspora flourished. Though the Greek intellectuals continued to be interested in a virtue-centred ethics, they were particularly interested in an act-centred morality. The doctrine of human and civil rights, that forms the spiritual centre at which all the various tendencies toward a moral renewal and a political and social reform meet, became at that time their main concern, as well as concepts as law, nature, state and society —although virtue was not neglected but still much discussed— and mandy as well as liberty which became a key concept in modern Greek thinking.

In this discussion I have attempted to bring together the views and interests of seventeenth and eighteenth century men of letters on morality which became efficacious via the discernment of the emotions and the distinction of virtues and vices and that of the duties and rights. These scholars were teachers rather than original thinkers who inherited their main concerns on virtue from ancient philosophy —especially through Aristotle— and from some important Enlightenment thinkers. Their concern was to offer a sound and liberal education and “an archetype of perfection”, according to Adam Smith’s saying, in promoting Ancient and Enlightenment values. I hope that I have successfully illustrated the importance of all these figures to the study of Greek intellectual history as it were for both the individuals and the communities they inhabited in making apparent the necessity of virtue in the moulding of society. It is not odd to say that during the early Enlightenment and the Enlightenment period the nation’s enlightening and its social and political awakening has taken place in a variety of moral and political contexts assimilating in an eclectic way different tendencies and philosophical theories.³¹

Notes

- ¹ See J.B. Schneewind, 'The Misfortunes of Virtue', *Ethics*, 101 (1990), pp. 42-63, where he lays out a set of differences between these two views. See also his *The Invention of Autonomy. A History of Modern Moral Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 287.
- ² Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Active Powers of Man*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 1788, bk. 5, ch. 2.
- ³ Tabaki A. - Sphini A., "Typologie des manuels d'éthique et de comportement en langue vers la fin du XVIII^e siècle: l'évolution du genre, reflet du processus de modernisation du sud-est", *Revue des Études sud-est Européennes, civilisations - mentalités*, t. XXX (1992), pp. 253-268.
- ⁴ Paschalis M. Kitromilides, *Tradition, Enlightenment and Revolution*, Harvard University PhD. Dissertation, 1978 (in Greek, M.I.E.T, 1996).
- ⁵ See N.K. Psimmenos, *The Greek Philosophy from 1453 until 1821. An Anthology of texts with Introduction and Commentary*, 2 vols, Gnessi Publications, Athens 1988-1989, v. A, pp. 27-50, 172-181, and v. B, pp. 13-27. See also Roxane D. Argyropoulos - Ioannis Caras, *Inventaire des manuscrits grecs d'Aristotle et de ses commentateurs. Contribution à l'histoire du texte d'Aristotle, Supplément*, Centre de Recherches Néohelléniques, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1980; Basilios Kyrkos, "The Study of Aristotle in Modern Greece and its Echoes in other Balkan Countries", *Proceedings of the Third Balkan Seminar of Philosophy*, ed. by M. Dragona-Monachou, Kardamitsas Publications, Athens 1994, pp. 133-147, and Linos Benakis, "Modern Critique of Post-Byzantine Aristotelianism in the Greek East during the 18th century", *Proceedings of the World Congress on Aristotle* (Thessaloniki, August 7-14, 1978), Athens 1981, v. II, pp. 408-413.
- ⁶ See Cl. Tsourkas, *Les débuts de l'enseignement philosophique et de la libre pensée dans les Balkans. Le vie et l'oeuvre de Theophile Corydalée (1570-1646)*, Institut d'Études et de Recherches Balkaniques, Serie Historique, No. 9, Bucarest, 1948.
- ⁷ See N.K. Psimmenos, *The Greek Philosophy from 1453 until 1821. An Anthology of texts with Introduction and Commentary*, v. B, op. cit., pp. 13-27.
- ⁸ See L. Chatzopoulou, "Aristotle's Poetics and the Literary Theory in Greece (1800-1880)", in K. Boudouris (ed.), in *Neohellenic Philosophy, Proceedings of the VIII Panhellenic Congress* (Athens 1998), Athens 2000, pp. 331-341.
- ⁹ See A. Glycofrydi-Leontsini, "The Presence of Stoic Philosophy in Modern Greek Thought", *Proceedings of the Third International Congress of Cypriot Studies*, Nicosia 2000, pp. 45-62.
- ¹⁰ See H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, 2 vols, München 1978; cf. *Byzantine Literature*, Greek translation, 2 vols, Athens, MIET, v. A, pp. 245-256.
- ¹¹ See L. Benakis, "Aristotelian Moral Philosophy in Byzantium" in D.N. Koutras (ed.), *Aristotelian Ethics and Its Influence, Proceedings of the First International Symposium for the Aristotelian Philosophy* (Athens 21-26 May 1995), Athens 1996, pp. 252-259.
- ¹² See A. Glycofrydi-Leontsini, "The On Virtues and Vices Exegesis of Sevastos Kyminetes and Neo-Hellenic

- Virtue-Ethics”, in K. Boudouris (ed.), *Neo-Hellenic Philosophy, Proceedings of the VIII Panhellenic Congress*, Ellinika Grammata Publications, Athens 2000, pp. 37-57. See also Charitonas Karanasios, *Sebastos Trapezuntios Kyminetes (1632-1702), Biographie, Werk heuristik und die editio principis der Exegese zu De virtute des pseudo-Aristoteles, Serta Graeca, Band 10*, Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, Wiesbaden 2001.
- ¹³ See Library of the Romanian Academy, BAR, 615, f. 65.
- ¹⁴ Cf. Papadopoulos-Kerameas, in the series *Hurmuzaki, Documente, XIII*, p. xδ', and code 19 Frontisteriou Trapezountos, f. 135; see now the Karanasios book mentioned in note 12.
- ¹⁵ Cf. D. Emanuele Tesauro, patritio Torinese, *La filosofia morale derivata dall' alto fonte del grande Aristotele Stagirita*, In Macerata, 1675. In relation to this book's manuscripted Greek traslation, see Library of the Romanian Academy, BAR, 59 (422).
- ¹⁶ See A. Glycofrydi-Leontsini, “Traduzione di testi filisofici italiani durante l'illuminismo neogreco (Genovesi, Muratori, Soave)”, in *Testi letterari italiani tradotti in Greco (dal '500 ad oggi)*, a cura di Mario Vitti, Rubbettino 1994, pp. 203-218.
- ¹⁷ L.A. Muratori, *La filosofia morale esposta e proposta ai giovani*, Verona 1735. See also *La filosofia morale esposta e proposta ai giovani* da Lodovico Antonio Muratori, Bibliotecario del Serenissimo Signor Duca di Modena, Napoli, MDCCLIV.
- ¹⁸ Cf. Psaschalis M. Kitromilides, *I. Moisiodax*, M.I.E.T., Athens 1985.
- ¹⁹ Cf. *Ηθική φιλοσοφία, μεταφρασθείσα εκ του ιταλικού ιδιώματος, παρά Ιωσήπου Ιεροδιακόνου του Μοισιόδακος*, Ενετία, 2 vols, 1761-1762; see vol. 1, introduction of the translator, pp. 84, 239, and vol. 2, pp. 15, 74, 241 ff.
- ²⁰ Cf. P. Kondylis, *Neohellenic Enlightenment. The Philosophical Ideas*, Themelio, Athens, p. 161.
- ²¹ *Ηθική φιλοσοφία*, ch. A, p. 9.
- ²² *Ibid.*, p. 13.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p. 15.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 120.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 204-205.
- ²⁷ *Istituzioni di logica, metafisica et etica*, 4 vols., Milano 1791. See also *Istituzioni di logica, metafisica et etica*, di Francesco Soave, 4 vols., Santini, Venezia 1808; 3rd ed. in Venezia, 1820.
- ²⁸ *Στοιχεία της λογικής, μεταφυσικής και ηθικής, νεωτέρα τινί μεθόδω συνταχθέντα εις την ιταλικήν διάλεκτον υπό Φραγγίσκου Σοαίου*, παρά Γρηγορίου ιεροδιακόνου Κωνσταντά του Μηλιώτου, επιστασία Σπυρίδωνος Βλαντή, Ενετία 1804; 2nd ed., Ενετία 1818, Introduction of the translator, vol. 1, pp. 12-24.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, t.IV, Introduction, pp. 7-12.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, passim.
- ³¹ See A. Glycofrydi-Leontsini, *Neohellenic Philosophy: Moral and Political Questions*, Athens 2001.

Περίληψη

Αθανασία ΓΛΥΚΟΦΡΥΔΗ-ΛΕΟΝΤΣΙΝΗ: *Ηθικά και πολιτικά κείμενα κατά την εποχή του Νεοελληνικού Διαφωτισμού: Παράδοση και Ανανέωση*

Στη μελέτη αυτή διερευνώ την αρετολογική και καθηκοντολογική ηθική του Νεοελληνικού Διαφωτισμού και τη σύνδεσή της με την πολιτική μέσα από κείμενα ηθικά και πολιτικά που αποδεικνύουν τις σχέσεις των Ελλήνων λογίων με την αρχαία ελληνική φιλοσοφική παράδοση και με τη δυτικοευρωπαϊκή, αντιστοίχως. Στις αρχές του 17ου αιώνα ο νεοαριστοτελισμός —τον οποίο ο Θεόφιλος Κορυδαλέας, ο σημαντικότερος Νεοέλληνας φιλόσοφος, διδάχθηκε στο Πανεπιστήμιο της Πάδοβας από τον Cesare Cremonini— κυριάρχησε στη φιλοσοφική παιδεία της ελληνικής Ανατολής και τα έργα του Αριστοτέλη, και όχι πλέον ή μόνον τα υπομνήματα των μεταγενέστερών του σχολιαστών και παραφραστών, σηματοδοτούν πλέον τη διδασκαλία των φιλοσοφικών μαθημάτων, κυρίως της λογικής, της ρητορικής και ποιητικής αλλά και της ηθικής, της φυσικής και της μεταφυσικής. Ερμηνευτικά υπομνήματα και «εξηγήσεις» των αριστοτελικών έργων, αλλά και βυζαντινών κειμένων της πρακτικής ρητορικής, των γνωστών «κατόπτρων ηγεμόνων», γράφονται για τις ανάγκες της διδασκαλίας και χρησιμοποιούνται σε όλο τον 17ο και 18ο αιώνα. Η αριστοτελική ηθική υπήρξε η πλέον σταθερή φιλοσοφική παράδοση, που κυριαρχούσε στη μεταβυζαντινή διδακτική πρακτική όπως αυτό είναι φανερό από την *Περί αρετών και κακιών* εξήγηση του Σεβαστού Κυμινήτη αλλά και από τα σχόλια αυτού στα *Ηθικά Νικομάχεια*. Παράλληλα, διαπιστώνεται η επίδραση της στωικής ηθικής, η οποία διδάσκεται στις Σχολές και τις Ακαδημίες του ελληνικού χώρου και της νοτιοανατολικής Ευρώπης. Ο εκλατινισμένος Αριστοτέλης προσελκύει επίσης την προσοχή των Ελλήνων λογίων του 17ου αιώνα, όπως αυτό είναι φανερό από τη μετάφραση του έργου του Conte Emanuele Tesaurο *La filosofia morale derivata dall' alto fonte del grande Aristotele*, μετάφραση που φανερώνει το ενδιαφέρον τους για την αριστοτελική ηθική, η οποία συνδέεται με τη χριστιανική. Ιδιαίτερη έμφαση δίνεται στη διάκριση των αρετών και κακιών και στη διατύπωση συνόλου καθηκόντων προς τον θεό, τον εαυτό και τους άλλους ανθρώπους. Κατά την περίοδο του Νεοελληνικού Διαφωτισμού παρατηρείται παράλληλα εισαγωγή της νεότερης φιλοσοφίας και στο πλαίσιο των νέων ενδιαφερόντων των Ελλήνων λογίων μεταφράζονται τα έργα των Montesquieu, Locke, Voltaire, Rousseau, Muratori, Soave, Beccaria κ.ά. με σκοπό την ηθική και πολιτική διαπαιδαγώγηση του Γένους. Έργα όπως του L. Muratori και του Fr. Soave, που σχολιάζω στην ανακοίνωση αυτή, φανερώνουν τον συμφυρμό της αρετολογικής ηθικής της αρχαιότητας και της καθηκοντολογικής χριστιανικής ηθικής, που έχει ενσωματωθεί σε έργα Δυτικοευρωπαίων φιλοσόφων, αλλά και το ενδιαφέρον για προβλήματα της πολιτικής φιλοσοφίας, όπως τα ανθρώπινα δικαιώματα, οι κοινωνικές αρετές, τα καθήκοντα και οι υποχρεώσεις του ανθρώπου προς το θεό, τον εαυτό του και τους άλλους ανθρώπους, ή η ελευθερία στην πολυμορφία της. Η καθηκοντολογική ηθική ανευρίσκεται παράλληλα και σε πρωτότυπα έργα των Ελλήνων στοχαστών. Όλες αυτές οι κοινωνικές ιδέες διαδίδονται στο ευρύτερο κοινό της νοτιοανατολικής Ευρώπης μέσω της «εξήγησης», μορφής

απλουστευτικής ερμηνείας του αρχαίου κειμένου, ή των σχολιασμένων αρχαίων κειμένων ή και μέσω των παραφράσεων και μεταφράσεων έργων δυτικοευρωπαϊκών. Ιδιαίτερα η μετάφραση αναδεικνύεται διάυλος επικοινωνίας και μετάδοσης των νέων ιδεών. Πολιτική και ηθική συνδέονται, για να καταστήσουν φανερή την αναγκαιότητα των αρετών για τη δάπλαση του ανθρώπινου χαρακτήρα και για την πρόοδο της κοινωνίας, καθώς και την αξία της κανονιστικής ηθικής τόσο για την επίγεια ευτυχία όσο και για τη μακαριότητα της ψυχής.

