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“Tracing the contours of the dialogue about Religious Education in Greece”

***(“Περιγράφοντας τις βασικές διαστάσεις του διαλόγου
για το Μάθημα των Θρησκευτικών στην Ελλάδα”)***

Paper given (=Ανακοίνωση Άρθρου σε Διεθνές Συνέδριο)

by

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1. Studying the perspective of previous School Curriculum: Across-Thematic Single Framework of Curriculum (ATSFC) (ΦΕΚ 303B/13-03-2003)

The 2003 School Curriculum of the Religious Course was designed to promote the moral and intellectual cultivation of the pupils, focusing to their smooth social integration. It is part of the general educational framework that aims at creating free and responsible citizens. It is also very important to give to the schoolchildren the opportunity to be informed and to understand the meaning of the Christian message and especially the Orthodox tradition through the living tradition of the Church and the Holy Scripture. It aims to the creation of religious consciousness to the pupils by giving them to understand that it is very important to respect and live peacefully among people with different religious beliefs and traditions (Rerakis, 2006). It is important for the pupils to realize that the true message of Christianity is oecumenical and that modern societies are multi-cultural (Dabray, 2004). The teaching method is focusing on giving schoolchildren incentives to exercise their critical thinking. It also gives the opportunity for group working methods that promote an interdisciplinary approach (Kousoulas, 2001). Specifically, the 2003 Curriculum is contributing to:

- “Gaining knowledge about the Christian faith and the Orthodox Christian tradition.
- The development of religious consciousness.
- The promotion of Orthodox spirituality as an individual and collective experience.
- The understanding of Christian faith as a mean of understanding the world and life.
- By providing pupils the opportunity for religious questioning and reflection.
- The critical processing of religious assumptions, values and attitudes.
- The investigation of the role and the influence that Christianity had and still has to Greece’s and Europe’s history.
- Understanding religion as a factor that contributes to the development of culture and spiritual life.
- Awareness of the existence of different expressions of religiousness.
- Treatment of social problems and of major modern dilemmas.
- The development of independent thinking and free expression.
- Evaluation of Christianity as a factor that can improve people's lives” (translation in english) (ΦΕΚ 303B/13-03-2003, p. 3867).

The fundamental meanings that Religious Course is dealing with are: tradition, culture, individuality, community-based society, organization, system, interaction, similarity-difference, collectivity, evolution-development, equality, space-time, equality-law, conflict-change, migration. The 2003 Curriculum, when it comes to the Religious Course, is much more modernized than the previous Curriculum because is focused mainly on the contribution of Christianity to the concerns and challenges of modern society, and its character is less catechetical and more cognitive and educative (Institute of Educational Policy – Curriculum of Religious Course of Primary Education and of High School Education, 2014).

Compared with the 2016 new Curriculum the previous one of 2003 has some similarities and differences. Both Curricula aim to the peaceful cohabitation of people and focus on the fact of today’s multi-cultural societies that demand respect and understanding (Baynham, 2000). They both want the pupils to accept and realize that they must cohabitate peacefully with people of different religious beliefs and cultures. In both Curricula the religious subject deals with religious diversity but the one of 2016 does this mostly by using the common European principles of human rights and freedom of expression than using principles of Christian Orthodoxy such as love, forgiveness etc. (Ispiridis, 2018). The new Curriculum also focuses more on other religions and tries to give a quite open perspective by giving further information

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about history of religions. On the contrary the previous Curriculum of 2003 emphasizes mostly on the deeper meaning of religious consciousness by focusing on the Christian Orthodox tradition and by explaining to pupils that God can motivate people by giving them the true meaning of life.

More specifically, according to 2003 Curriculum the Religious Course at the primary school aims:

- “That the pupils get familiar with understand the most important principles of Orthodox faith.
- To realize the love of God for humanity.
- To discover the importance and timeliness of the Gospel for personal and social life and culture.
- To cultivate a spirit of practical solidarity, peace and justice, respect for religious peculiarity and coexistence with the "different".
- To appreciate and value the necessity to respect and protect the environment and the cultural heritage of our country and of humanity in general.
- To understand what it means to be an active member of the Church community” (translation in english) (ΦΕΚ 303B/13-03-2003).

High school pupils are starting to examine more complex religious concepts. The target is for them to:

- “Be aware of the quality of the religious phenomenon.
- Learn about Christianity, especially Orthodoxy, through the Holy Bible, the Church Fathers and the living tradition of the Church and to be placed responsibly.
- Realize that Christianity gives original suggestions for the modern society about its cohesion and the quality of life.
- Make use of the course’s perspective to realize the power of the Gospel’s message and cultivate their morality and personality, to sensitize themselves to contemporary social reflection and finally for them to be able to get all these into practice.
- Comprehend that the original Christian message is beyond tribes, is supranational and undoubtedly oecumenical.
- Conceive the multicultural, multi-racial and multi-religious structure of modern societies.
- Realize the necessity for inter-Christian and inter-religious communication” (translation in english) (ΦΕΚ 303B/13-03-2003).

2. A brief comparative presentation of the positions of the two Greek Associations of Theologians *PETH* and *KAIROS* about Religion as a school subject

2.1 History

On the one side, there is the *Panhellenic Association of Theologians* (PETH) which was founded in 1950, immediately after the traumatic decade of 40’s (World War II, Nazis Regime and our Civil War). For 26 consecutive years (1973-1999) the Professor of Canonical Law late Constantinos Mouratidis served as the President of this association. Nowadays, the priority of the new elected council of PETH (President Prof. Dr. Rerakis) is “*the existence of a course at school with an orthodox theological character, orientation, purpose and content*”.

On the other side, there is the *Panhellenic Theological Association ‘Kairos’ - for the Upgrading of Religious Education*, which announced its founding proclamation (December 2009) precisely when the deepest and multilevel crisis of the Modern Greek State were launched. The main reason for the establishment of *Kairos* was the fact that in the summer of 2008 three circulars by the Minister of Education Mr. Stylianidis were issued for the potentiality of exemption from the religious course at school. The main argument of *Kairos* until nowadays is that if Religious Education (RE) does not change its confessional character, then its mandatory character will be lost. Therefore, the course must not have a confessional approach and must be open to other confessions and religions even at the young age of the

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primary school. This will lead to a complete abolition of the right to discharge. We should note that the teaching of RE in Greece begins at the third class of the primary school by teachers and not by theologians. Moreover, according to *Kairos* the subject must be taught by teachers who have received a University's Degree of Theology and not by representatives of religious communities.¹

2.2 Actions of the *Panhellenic Association of Theologians* (PETH)

PETH appealed to the courts with the following argument: *"it is not fair that the pupils of the non-Orthodox religious communities (Catholics, Jews) are taught by their own religious teachers and the Orthodox parents, representing the majority in the country, not to have the right to ensure that their children receive education according to their religious beliefs, based on the Constitution (Article 16 (2)), the National Law 1566/1985 1, paragraph 1) and the European Convention on Human Rights, ratified by Greece. Orthodoxy is the main identity marker of Greece and must not be ignored at the School Curricula... new Curricula are altering and abolishing the Orthodox character of the religious course by mixing, in a special way, the Orthodox Christian teaching with lectures about other religions, aiming at the dissemination of an individualistic religion that will be the product of syncretism and confusion through the cultivated relativism that results from all this polytheistic patchwork"*.² As an act of protest, PETH proposed to the parents to return the teaching material at school (Pupil's Files), which were formed according to the new Curricula.

2.3 Main Positions

Kairos is claiming that *"the subject according to the new Curricula is giving absolute priority to the tradition of Orthodox Christianity. The course must not be catechetical, since catechism is an affair of the Church and the family, not of the school. At the same time, as in previous Curricula, it also informs about the world of religions. The perception that there are 'a lot of multireligion' or 'neutral religion topics' is not accurate. Nor is the case that the course promotes religious syncretism. The new Curricula is not a pupil's book but a teacher's book-tool. In relation to the proposed material that is supportive, each instructor is free to choose or create. The limit and the term of this freedom are the service of all the goals and expectations of the Curricula. The freedom that the teacher will have is unprecedented at the Greek school"*.³

The *Panhellenic Association of Theologians* (PETH) is not opposed to the teaching of religions at Greek school at an age and intellectual stage that can be understood by the pupils without the risk of confusion. However, it argues that there should be a clear distinction, on the one hand, between the experiential teaching of Christian faith and on the other hand of the information about the religious phenomenon and the history of religions in general. Another necessary and inviolable prerequisite for the teaching about religions is the methodical examination and investigation of each religion separately and not all of them together at every hour of teaching, in the form of religious syncretism, from whose funnel, as these Curricula are aiming, pupils can choose the religious truths that are expressing them better to create their own individual perception of God⁴.

¹<http://www.kairosnet.gr/news/general/730-ekselikseis-gyro-apo-to-mathima-ton-thriskoftikon-anapotelesmatikes-apeiles-kai-alithinoi-kindynoi>

²<http://www.petheol.gr/nea/epistemonikeemeridatespethoiapophaseistousymboulouteseipikrateiasgiatathreskeutikaneadedomenaprooptikes>. Short Communications of this conference were videotaped and uploaded on <http://thriskeftika.blogspot.com/search/label/%CE%A3%CE%A5%CE%9D%CE%95%CE%94%CE%A1%CE%99%CE%91%20%CE%97%CE%9C%CE%95%CE%A1%CE%99%CE%94%CE%95%CE%A3>

³<http://www.kairosnet.gr/discussion/religion-class/530-oi-epitropes-empeirognomonon-gia-ta-nea-programmata-spoudon-sta-thriskoftika>

⁴ Η ΠΕΘ προς τον Αρχιεπίσκοπο και άπαντες τους Ιεράρχες για τον χαρακτήρα και το περιεχόμενο του μαθήματος των Θρησκευτικών, Αθήνα, 7 Οκτωβρίου 2015.

The latest announcement by Kairos highlights the following: *“The substitution of theological and pedagogical criteria with a peculiar ‘legalism’, which has been systematically engaging in various aspects in recent years, is a serious diversion. The legal framework is necessary to define the basic limits and principles governing the organization and operation of our course, but it cannot substitute the pedagogical and theological principles and functions. We are opposed to any attempt to criminalize pedagogical ideas and visions. Pedagogical ideas are judged in the teaching process in the classroom and through scientific dialogue, not in the courts”⁵.*

From the aforementioned, we see that *syncretism* is the key-word of the polemic of PETH against the new Curricula, possibly as an answer to the opposite criticism that this Association promoted catechism and apologetics for decades. Both Associations argue *for* the compulsory character of RE at the Educational system of Greece. In conclusion, beyond the ideological differences due to the tension, that is the consistency of the multifaceted crisis in the Greek society which is driving the ‘partners’ at the ends, the statements of both Associations show, at first, a confusion of terminology. Terms such as *Religious Literacy*, *Confessional RE* (as it is practiced in the majority of Central European countries) and *confessional approach* are not used with their common accepted meaning, but at will. A meaningful - in ‘good faith’ dialogue between the two Associations demands at first a common terminology with deep knowledge of its primary context and of the reality it is called now upon to transform because Greece and East in general have shaped their own profile comparing with Anglo-Saxon and German-speaking countries. In order for teachers, who have been experiencing the crisis for decades, to adopt and implement new teaching methods, a specific training strategy is needed for all involved (teachers-parents-pupils), which is rather absent due also to financial reasons. However, both Associations should be represented equally in the decision-making bodies. The most important element in my opinion is that both sides must take seriously into account the psychological data of the pupils to whom the course is addressed. These schoolchildren living a new Revolution in the History of Mankind certainly need a “mother tongue” but also a guide to discover in their own ‘language’ their identity in a *networked* world with completely new features and challenges.

3. Positions of the Church of Greece based on texts

Although the relationship of the Orthodox Church with Education had been for many centuries long, since the establishment of the Greek State, the State has assumed all relevant authority. At that time, the modernization of Education began and Religious Education (RE) was introduced based on the German model. The orientations, purposes and contents of this course never stopped changing and have been influenced in various ways until nowadays⁶.

The Church of Greece monitors the dialogue that has been going on over the years for the RE and has, in fact, intervened many times. Such an intervention was also the num. 4896/2016 document sent to the Prime Minister and the Heads of the Parties of the Parliament, in order to declare for the School Curricula that “these Programs are unacceptable and dangerous”, by the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, his Beatitude Hieronymus II, during his suggestion to the Holy Synod. Therefore, on October 5th 2016, a deliberation was convened by the Prime Minister Mr. Tsipras, where the appointment of dialogue

<http://www.petheol.gr/nea/epethprostonarchiepiskopokaiapantestouierarchesgiatocharakterakaitoperiechomenotoumathematos tonthreskeutikon>

⁵<http://www.kairosnet.gr/news/general/730-ekselikseis-gyro-apo-to-mathima-ton-thriskeftikon-anapotelesmatikes-apeiles-kai-alithinoi-kindynoi>

⁶ Στ. Γιαγκάζογλου, “Η φυσιογνωμία και ο χαρακτήρας του θρησκευτικού μαθήματος. Η θρησκευτική αγωγή στις σύγχρονες πολυπολιτισμικές κοινωνίες”. In *Τα θρησκευτικά ως μάθημα ταυτότητας και πολιτισμού*, Εκδόσεις Διακοινοβουλευτικής Συνέλευσης της Ορθοδοξίας – Βουλής των Ελλήνων, Αθήνα 2005, pp. 126-144 & *Σύναξη* 93 (2005), pp. 39-52.

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committees on both sides was agreed, as well as the opening of the discussions on a zero basis, that RE should have an Orthodox character and be taught mandatory, that there would be a dialogue on the additions and corrections by the ecclesiastical committee and finally, to have a “dogmatic monitoring” in the teaching material of the school manuals of 2018 before they were printed. However, the publication by the Ministry of Education, in the middle of the month prior to the meeting (13/09/2016), of the OGG (Official Government Gazette) with the Curricula without prior briefing of the Church, led the Archbishop to call it “falsified”.⁷

Within this framework and in order for the Church to converse for the first time with the State for the teaching material of the RE, a Three-Member Committee from the High Commission was established under the Hierarchy and each bishop held a suggestion on the matter. On March 9th 2017, the Hierarchy in an extraordinary session, decided that the Three-Member Committee, consisting of the Metropolitan of Hydra, Spetses and Aegina, His Eminence Ephraim, Mesogaia and Lavrentios, His Eminence Nikolaos and Messenias, His Eminence Chrysostomos, as well as a bishop of the Church of Crete, His Eminence Metropolitan of Arkalochori, Kastelli and Viannos, Prof. Dr. Andreas Nanakis to continue the dialogue with the sectors of the Ministry of Education and with the IEP (Institute of Educational Policy) on the teaching of RE, on the basis of three fundamental principles. These principles were: a) the mandatory character of the RE, b) the teaching hours to be remained as they were and c) to ensure its Orthodox orientation.⁸

The following conditions were also set for the conduct of the dialogue:

- a) The Church should avoid engaging in any ideological conflict with anyone,
- b) To insist on maintaining the existing legal and institutional framework of the RE,
- c) To maintain that the Religious Course plays a first-place role in Education,
- d) Changes should be done to the subject, since the Church also agrees that it is necessary, but not allowing the understatement of its value, the degradation of faith, not by creating confusion or its identification with fanaticism, conservatism, obscurantism or irrational liberalism,
- e) Recognition that purely religious societies and nations are elapsing,
- f) RE to indicate its value and its timeliness, convincingly expressing the truth, in a bold, free and smart way, not to be boring but to be reliable and to demonstrate the great contribution of Orthodox faith to the spirit, art and the civilization,
- g) The dialogue between the Hierarchy and the State is the result of the Constitution, the Charter of the Church of Greece and the Laws of the State and that
- h) RE will be presenting the Orthodox cosmology and anthropology.⁹

It would be an omission not to mention that a criticism of the Church, also, came by the Hierarchs of the Three-Member Committee. For that reason, we will mention from the suggestion of the Metropolitan of Hydra, Spetses and Aegina His Eminence Ephraim his remarks that *since 1980 RE has been constantly questioned and that it has emerged as a "flagship" problem that highlights pathogens and skepticism around our strategies*, and also that *RE is now a graded "information" unrelated to human's thirst for palpable truth and palpable joy of life*. In his commentary, he also estimates that *the Church has failed to convince that the course has a significant overall value in educating children*, and ultimately, *the reason that*

⁷ Ιω. Λιάπης (Archbishop of Athens Ιερώνυμος Β'), «Εισήγησης του Μακαριωτάτου Αρχιεπισκόπου Αθηνών και πάσης Ελλάδος κ. κ. Ιερωνύμου Β' εις την Ιεράν Σύνοδον της Ιεραρχίας», 27/06/2017.

⁸ Ευ. Στενάκης (Metropolitan of Hydra Εφραίμ), «Εισήγησή του Σεβ. Μητροπολίτου Ύδρας, Σπετσών και Αιγίνης κ. Εφραίμ ενώπιον της έκτατης Συνόδου Ιεραρχίας της 27^{ης} Ιουνίου 2017».

⁹ Ιερά Σύνοδος της Εκκλησίας της Ελλάδος, «Απόφασις τῆς ἐκτάκτου Ἱεράς Συνόδου τῆς Ἱεραρχίας τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ἑλλάδος, περί τοῦ μαθήματος τῶν Ὀρθοσκευτικῶν εἰς ἀπάσας τάς βαθμίδας τῆς Ἐκπαιδεύσεως», Απόφασις της Ιεράς Συνόδου της Εκτάκτου Ιεραρχίας (Συνεδρία Β', 9.3.2017).

*the Greek society does not accept the spiritual value of the subject indicates a deeper crisis, in which the Church also plays a part.*¹⁰

It is also worth considering another suggestion, that of the Metropolitan of Nafpaktos and Hagios Vlasios, His Eminence Ierotheos. Among the issues he raised, he pointed out that the RE has by definition an epistemic character and is not related to the catechism of the Church. He also emphasizes that Religion and Church are not identical terms because they have different purposes, interests and methodology. He considers that the terms *catechetical-confessional* or *religious* for RE as well as for the School Curricula are disorienting and that they are not derived from the contents but from the theological tendencies expressed by the proposers, namely conservative or liberal. In addition, he states that the term *confessional* does not express the Orthodox Tradition, but refers to the religious tradition of the West, namely that it is a term that prevailed after the confrontations of Roman Catholics and Protestants in Western and Northern Europe, where confessions of faith constituted a public admission of teaching of the winners, so our RE does not have these features. School textbooks also have no apologetic character in favor of Orthodoxy against other confessions nor advocate fundamentalist tendencies towards science. He does not agree with the Curricula (2016) being characterized as catechetical-confessional and he believes that they are informing about Greek historical reality while at the same time orienting themselves towards religious science, and in particular that it has the character of conservative religion, which creates ideological confusion among pupils.¹¹

Finally, from the proposals of the extraordinary session of the Holy Synod we will mention, among others:

- The necessity of RE staying as a compulsory course in both Primary and Secondary Education.
- RE staying as a core subject in the last two grades of the Lyceum.
- That it maintains its name.
- That it maintains its Orthodox orientation.
- The need for training seminars and infrastructure and, finally.
- That only a theologian should teach the course, even in Primary schools.¹²

4. Public dialogue on religious education in Greece, after the new Curriculum and the relevant Court Decisions against it.

In Greece, on the levels of primary and secondary education Religion Subject remains compulsory even today. However, as long as it tends to remain ‘mono-confessional’, it cannot be compulsory for all pupils because of the unquestionable civil right of any atheist or depending on any religious minority to be exempt. In this case, both the 13th Article of the Constitution of Greece and the 2nd Article of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) fully protect religious liberty¹³. This is obviously one of the major reasons why the renewed curriculum of religious education, aiming at a “school community open to everyone”, in order to avoid phenomena of exclusion and separation, insists on being ‘non-confessional’, despite its dominant Orthodox social and cultural environment.

¹⁰ Ευ. Στενάκης, «Εισήγηση του Σεβ. Μητροπολίτου Ύδρας, Σπετσών και Αιγίνης κ. Εφραίμ ενώπιον της έκτατης Συνόδου Ιεραρχίας της 27^{ης} Ιουνίου 2017».

¹¹ Γ. Βλάχος (Metropolitan of Nafpaktos Ιερόθεος), «Εισήγηση - Πρόταση του Μητροπολίτου Ναυπάκτου και Αγίου Βλασίου Ιεροθέου ενώπιον της Διαρκούς Ιεράς Συνόδου της Εκκλησίας της Ελλάδος και των εκπροσώπων των Θεολογικών Σχολών και των Συλλόγων Θεολόγων», 12/01/2016.

¹² Ιερά Σύνοδος της Εκκλησίας της Ελλάδος, «Απόφασις τῆς ἐκτάκτου Ἱεράς Συνόδου τῆς Ἱεραρχίας τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ἑλλάδος, περί τοῦ μαθήματος τῶν Ὁρησκειτικῶν εἰς ἀπάσας τάς βαθμίδας τῆς Ἐκπαιδεύσεως».

¹³ See *The Constitution of Greece*, (transl. by X. Paparrigopoulos & St. Vassilouni), Hellenic Parliament 2004, p. 26. *European Convention on Human Rights*, European Court of Human Rights – Council of Europe, p. 6.

Especially in Greece, public dialogue on religious education is always centered on the 16th Article of Greek Constitution, particularly on the term ‘religious consciousness’ (‘θρησκευτική συνείδηση’) and its compulsory ‘development’ (‘ανάπτυξη’) for all pupils¹⁴. On this constitutional provision is based any legal framework for the structure and content of Religion Subject. The issue is what kind of ‘religious consciousness’ is implied. Does it mean studies in all religions, studies in a single religion, catechism, with the risk of blind faith in a religious doctrine, or something else? Certainly, the ‘religious consciousness’ is not synonym to the ‘religious prejudice’.

Recent case-law of Hellenic Council of State (=Συμβούλιο της Επικρατείας (ΣτΕ)) –which is the Supreme Administrative Court of Greece, something like the Federal Constitutional Court in Germany (=Bundesverfassungsgericht (BverfG))– explicitly equates the concept of the ‘religious consciousness’ with that of the ‘orthodox consciousness’¹⁵. From this point on, Orthodox Church, with the advice of the scientific research, is responsible for explaining more specifically the nature of itself, how the ‘orthodox consciousness’ and generally the whole Christian Church from its beginning after Christ, is bequeathed to us today as life and faith, in the sense of experience and proof of ‘Triune God’. Is it a blind religion opposite to the Reason and the free critical thought, for example at the level of Islam, or does it have wider cultural dimensions, social, political, scientific and anything else, since Christianity has developed over time not only as ‘theologia mythica’ and ‘theologia civilis’, but before all as ‘theologia naturalis’¹⁶?

In Greek education, new curriculum of Religion Subject together with the relevant textbooks was changed radically, both in content and in teaching method. This reform was firstly introduced by two Ministerial Decisions, dated on 7 September 2016¹⁷, and then by two Laws, dated on 19-6-2017¹⁸. However, the first two Decisions was annulled by two corresponding Court Decisions of the Hellenic Council of State (‘Ολ.ΣτΕ 660/2018’ and ‘Ολ.ΣτΕ 926/2018’), while similar trials against the virtually identical Laws of 19-6-2017 are still pending. The vast majority of more than twenty senior judges, who constituted the plenary Court of the Hellenic Council of State, rejected as unconstitutional the new curriculum of Religion Subject, on the grounds that it does not clearly aim at ‘developing’ the ‘orthodox consciousness’ of pupils in the Greek primary and secondary education¹⁹. On the contrary, a minority of the plenary Court accepted it, though they agreed that the phrase ‘religious consciousness’ of the Greek Constitution means the ‘orthodox consciousness’. For them, it prevails the reasoning that the free critical ‘development’ of this consciousness differs from its ‘enforcement’²⁰, which directly results in the ‘mono-confessional’ model of the Religion Subject. Moreover, such a model would truly correspond to the Orthodox tradition, since in its ‘Ecumenical Synodicity’ it already contains the values of freedom, theological reasoning and reconciliation, uniting in its body languages, nations, ideologies, etc.?

¹⁴ *The Constitution of Greece*, p. 30.

¹⁵ In this fundamental legal viewpoint, all the Plenary Court of the Hellenic Council of State (See *Decisions No 660/2018* and *No 926/2018*) agreed unanimously, regardless of whether a minority of Judges interpreted in its own way the term “orthodox consciousness”.

¹⁶ On this issue, see K. Γεωργιάδης, “Αριστοτέλης και Γρηγόριος Παλαμάς: Θεός και Θεολογία στα όρια του Λόγου”, *ΘΕΟΛΟΓΙΑ* 87/3 (2016), pp. 32-33.

¹⁷ *Decisions of the Hellenic Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs No 143579/Δ2/7.9 and No 143579/Δ2/7.9.2016*.

¹⁸ *ΦΕΚ 2104/Β/19-6-2017*, pp. 21047-21154: *Decisions of the Hellenic Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs No 101470/Δ2/2017* (Πρόγραμμα Σπουδών του μαθήματος των Θρησκευτικών στο Δημοτικό και στο Γυμνάσιο). *ΦΕΚ 2105/Β/19-6-2017*, pp. 21155-21226: *Decisions of the Hellenic Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs No 99058/Δ2/2017* (Πρόγραμμα Σπουδών του μαθήματος Θρησκευτικά Γενικού και Επαγγελματικού Λυκείου).

¹⁹ See *Decisions of the Hellenic Council of State No 660/2018* and *No 926/2018*.

²⁰ See *Decisions of the Hellenic Council of State No 660/2018*, p. 20 and *No 926/2018*, p. 18.

New curriculum of Religion Subject never seems to express an explicit positive or negative view on the 'orthodox consciousness' as legal doctrine and pedagogical principle. Furthermore, sometimes it promotes the practice 'from legal to oecumenical'²¹, clearly indicating that Orthodoxy should be the interpretive basis of examining any other religion or culture, and sometimes it contradicts with it, by proposing a 'multi-faith' model or be stating "learning any religion by this religion"²². However, the whole debate possibly dues to mistaken legal impressions, since the new curriculum states that the teacher has the discretion to use the textbook and any other material, conducting a dialogue not only between the Orthodox Christianity and other religions, but also among all areas of life and civilization, and therefore with the human being. Actually, we are talking about 'Theology', rather than 'Religion' or 'Religious Studies'²³.

At this moment, public dialogue on Religion Subject's purpose and content seems to be evolving into a conflict, which is still ongoing in courtrooms. This situation shows the inability of all social and political institutions even to communicate with each other, in order to exceed the impasse before the area of justice. The mentioned issue seems to be part of a more general problem of modern Greek society, that is its confusion about a commonly accepted civilization model. This is the reason for society's separation into 'left-wing' and 'right-wing' ideological factions as well as under other false ideological dilemmas, like that between the supporters of ancient Greek or Byzantine tradition and the modernists. All of them coexist as the modern Greek community, in reality as unbridgeable worlds, without having a common collective consciousness.

In this case, the most impressive chapter of the beforementioned Court Decisions ('Ολ.ΣτΕ 660/2018' and 'Ολ.ΣτΕ 926/2018') on Religion Subject is the one referring extensively to the preamble of the Hellenic Constitution: "In the name of the Holy and Consubstantial and Indivisible Trinity"²⁴. This is direct invocation of a specific divine reality in the broad sense of 'the absolute'. However, what matters is the following Decisions of the Hellenic Council of State. Although the relevant legal theory used to remain silent in the past, implying that the preamble of the Greek Constitution expresses only a historic symbolism after the era of Greek Revolution, recent case-law recognises it not only as 'Symbol of the (Greek) Nation', but also as legal wording with "limited enforceability"²⁵. Hence, it is revealed a 'political theology', in its classical sense given by Carl Schmidt, which for modern Greece draws its origin from Oecumenical Councils of Christianity. In other words, the Orthodox cultural heritage, either with its metaphysical dimension or only with its moral, social and political symbolism, is recognised as principle that gives birth and shapes the Greek Constitution. At this point, Hellenic Council of State make us to rethink of what the theory of 'positioneller Religionsunterricht' (= 'specific interpretative perspective') defines²⁶. First and foremost, we need the starting point of any dialogue on the State and the Education, that is a pre-existing collective consciousness, whatever this could be.

²¹ ΦΕΚ 2104/Β/19-6-2017, p. 21048.

²² ΦΕΚ 2104/Β/19-6-2017, p. 21049.

²³ For this perspective, see Κ. Γεωργιάδης, "Θρησκευτικά ή Θεολογία ως 'πρώτη φιλοσοφία' στη σύγχρονη δημόσια εκπαίδευση;", ΘΕΟΛΟΓΙΑ 89/2 (2018), pp. 215-279.

²⁴ The Constitution of Greece, p. 17.

²⁵ See Decisions of the Hellenic Council of State No 660/2018, pg. 11; No 926/2018, p. 15.

²⁶ Αθ. Στογιαννίδης, "Το Μάθημα των Θρησκευτικών στη Δημόσια Εκπαίδευση: ένα Μάθημα Θέσεων, Στοχασμού και Ερμηνείας", ΣΥΝΘΕΣΙΣ 5/1 (2016), pp. 41-67. Μ. Schambeck, "Για ποιον λόγο οι μετανεωτερικές κοινωνίες δεν μπορούν να αρνηθούν το Μάθημα των Θρησκευτικών με συγκεκριμένη ερμηνευτική προοπτική – Θρησκευοπαιδαγωγική θεώρηση και παραδείγματα (μτφρ. Αθ. Στογιαννίδη)", ΣΥΝΘΕΣΙΣ 5/1 (2016), pp. 1-19.