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Fotis Aggoules (1911-1964): a Poet on whom the Works of Aristotle and Marx Made an Enormous Impact

Abstract. Aggoules' life testifies to his communist ideas. This conditions his poetry, which reflects Marx's ideas. It is the aim of this paper to analyse the artistic merit of his poetry. First, however, we need to examine a possible relationship between Marx and Aristotle, as traced in Aggoules' poetical output. To avoid confusion of the conceptual with the biographical, we shall concentrate rather on the state of his art than on demonstrating his theoretical background as rooted in the work of the two philosophers, Aristotle and Marx. Aggoules' melancholic tone when expressing the attainment of the ideals and values of Marx echoes Aristotle's idea as regards freeing society from the bonds of avarice. Art in Aggoules' poetry relates to the commonplace. His poetry demonstrates experiences and itineraries that literarily pass through hell, without, however, confusing the conceptual with the biographical. The great artistic merit of his poetry is that he enables us to glimpse the Absolute through the commonplace.

Keywords. History of Philosophy; Philosophy of History; Politics; Critical Theory; Theory of Knowledge

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1. Aggoules' Biography

The poet Aggoules¹ (b. Çeşme, 1911- Aegean Sea, 27 March 1964), a semi-literate individual, was certainly brave, as his nickname shows. He inherited this from his father, Anthony (Sideris=Iron) Chondroutakis from Çeşme, Asia Minor, a coastal town in the westernmost part of modern Turkey. In 1914, the family crossed the sea in a boat to Chios island, Greece, to avoid the impending danger of a massacre by the Turks. Being destitute, the family tried to make a living there. Aggoules managed to sleep at nights in the central public library in Chios, *The Koraes Library*, where he completed his paedeia and translated into verse Theocritus' *Idylls*. It was an attempt that Kostis Palamas (b. 1859-1943) the great Greek poet and the central figure of the Greek literary generation of the 1880s, highly approved of. Aggoules may have studied Aristotle and Marx, but this is by no means certain. However, he shared with them a range of ideals

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¹ Blanas 2008: 13-14, 18. Moutafis 1985: 31-39.

and values, which he attempted to realise within his specific own era. These ideals and values are made evident in his poetry. Mary Papaconstantinou, being greatly inspired by Aggoules' virtue and his intellectual and political values, had created, around 1973, the bust of Aggoules, which is at the Garden of Chios. A close relative of the author, Papaconstantinou, the great sculptress of distinction, born in Oinousses, Chios (1933-2020), winning medals, and creating Works around the globe, White House and EC included, had stressed Aggoules' steadfast commitment to proletarian ideals.²

We should not forget that nearly all his epic poems were written in wretched periods of his life when, for example, he was in the hospital in Asmera the capital of Eritrea.³ Because of his left-wing political views, he was in the Middle East during World War II in the service of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, working in their publishing house. He was then transferred to Cairo, to the Government Press Office, where his superior was the Nobel Prize winning Greek poet G. Seferis (b. 1900-1971).

During this period of political turbulence and unrest, Aggoules was arrested together with other like-minded comrades and put into jail. It was not until 1946 that he returned to Chios, miserable but long-suffering. In the turbulent times of The Greek Civil War, which was fought between the army of the Greek government, as supported by the United Kingdom and the United States on the one hand and the Democratic Army of Greece (DSE, the military branch of the Communist Party of Greece), supported by Bulgaria, Albania, Yugoslavia, and covertly by the Soviet Union via their Eastern European proxies, from 1946 to 1949,⁴ in Vrontados, Chios, Aggoules conducted his communist activities. Provided with all the publishing tools by the Party, in a miserable vault, in Vrontados, he edited two illegal journals, *Embros* and *Protoporos*. After four months of these illegal activities, he was again arrested and transferred to Athens to be court martialled. He was suffering from pneumonia and tuberculosis. Before the trial, he was held in a place of exile. Artists and intellectuals were mobilised to save him. He was convicted and sentenced to twelve years in jail,⁵ spending nine years in fifteen jails and places of exile, but he managed to keep up his spirits.⁶ We can imagine how he might have been helped by Plato's dictum on preparing ourselves for death (i.e. for the inexplicable), with the tools provided by philosophy.⁷

In a letter written to a friend in Paris by his wife E. Papadimitriou (a Greek teacher of French, whom he married in Cairo), we can see Aristotle's idea of melancholic black bile haunting his work and life.⁸ He answered in verse her ardent wish to return to his homeland in order to be with him. He mentioned the entire absence of dreams in Greece, as there was nothing further which could be done there. The heart, according to him, is like a fortification; and its only solace is to laugh at the "clownish" western civilisation with its false "cheerful" messages. Aggoules begged her to stay by the Nile, a river "widened" by the cries of the Fellahin. The Nile is considered the cradle of dreams. Again, we see Plato's and Heidegger's ideas: philosophy is the study of death and death is our only authentic possibility. Moreover, Aristotle would add that it is impossible, futile, vain to be given irrefutable propositions as regards truth and historical truth above all.⁹ If this answer to his wife's letter does not constitute an authentic value in

² Gaila 2020.

³ Kakavanis 2020: 42-47.

⁴ Marantzidis & Antoniou 2004.

⁵ Blanas 2008: 78-80.

⁶ Kakavanis 2020: 57-62.

⁷ Plato, *Phaedo*, 72 d.

⁸ Blanas 2008: 80-81.

⁹ Giouli 2023: 108-110.

Aggoules' philosophy of history, then what is it? He states that he has returned to his homeland to die there, leaving her to die in Cairo.

These are certainly futile poetical attempts to establish a definite form of what historical truth is, and this can also be seen in another poem of his, which was published in his satirical journal *Michalou*¹⁰. *Michalou* contains local and international events commented on from the angle of vision of those at the bottom of society in Chios. The bourgeois in the island never forgave him for so doing. At that time the poet was suffering persecution from those in power in Chios, while remaining in contact with The Communist Party of Greece.

Aggoules' funeral was extremely well attended.¹¹ Manolis Glezos (1922 – 2020), a Greek left-wing politician and intellectual who participated in the Resistance during World War II, paid tribute to him and laid wreaths on his tomb. Yiannis Ritsos (1909 – 1990), a great Greek poet and Communist and an active member of the Greek Resistance during World War II, called him “the great poet of the Greek left”, and dedicated his verses to Aggoules, especially referring to the seashore of Chios, where Aggoules used to go fishing.

2. Why the relationship between Aristotle and Marx can be traced in Aggoules' Poetry

All Marx's references to Aristotle simply attempt to examine the early foreshadowings of capitalism.¹² Marx states¹³ in his *Capital*, Part 1: Commodities and Money, Chapter 1: Commodities, Section 3: The Form of Value or Exchange-Value, that social labour and its products (which are non-abstract and non-private) result in a product directly exchangeable with other commodities. This is clarified, Marx himself adds, by Aristotle, a great thinker and the first to analyse diverse forms of thought, society and nature; and especially the meaning of value. Marx stresses at this point how Aristotle takes the value of one commodity as corresponding to some other randomly-chosen commodity. Thus, following Aristotle, Marx avers that five beds are equal in worth to one house and that five beds are worth the amount in money that would be given for them. These two propositions, Marx adds, are indistinguishable.

Aristotle further sees, Marx adds, that it is necessary that the house should qualitatively be made the equal of the bed, and that, without this, these two clearly different things could not be compared with each other as commensurable quantities.

Similarly, Aristotle states,¹⁴ the acting measure for this commensurability is money. Money makes goods commensurate and equates them. Marx repeats here Aristotle's dictum that exchange cannot take place without equality, and equality cannot exist without commensurability. Indeed, there would not have been association between exchange and commensurability if there were not exchange nor exchange if there were not equality; *nor equality if there were not commensurability*.

This latter proposition stressed by Marx is the stepping stone for a real communist theory of society. Indeed, Aristotle goes further to develop this main thesis adding that there must by necessity be a unit fixed by agreement and called money. This is that, he adds, which makes all things measurable, because all things are measured by money.

¹⁰ Kakavanis 2020: 19.

¹¹ “Aggoules' Funeral Attended by undreds of Mourners” 2011.

¹² Milios 2020: 64, n. 18.

¹³ Marx, 1887 [1867]:40-41.

¹⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1133 b15-22.

An epistemological account of Aristotle's ideas needs to include also his ideas on what money is, as we can thus refute Marx's remark that Aristotle comes to a full stop, giving up the further analysis of the form of a value. Marx avers that there is no concept of value in Aristotle's analysis. Why is that so? Marx' answer refers here to the meaning of human labour (instead of money) as constituting the unit and common substance for equally exchanging goods and values.

Marx, however, has not understood that Aristotle has not overlooked this factor of equality, which is the institutional character of labour. Marx avers that the peculiar conditions of the society in which Aristotle lived prevented Aristotle from seeing all labour as human labour of equal quality, due to the fact that the Greek society at the time was founded upon slavery. The brilliancy of Aristotle's genius is shown by this alone, that he discovered, in the expression of the value of commodities, a relation of equality, Marx concludes.

Is that, however, what Aristotle does? One proposition which he put forward has escaped Marx's attention: It is true that, as Marx avers, Aristotle claimed that it was impossible for exchanged goods differing so much to become commensurate. But Aristotle hastens to add that¹⁵ it is with reference to demand that they may become sufficiently commensurate. The conventional use of money simply constitutes a technical means which can only signify and thus control the above-mentioned procedure of exchange.

Human life and its products deprave, according to Aristotle. This is why money is considered a conventional unit by demand; not the lack of the idea of equality as regards the social character of labour, as Marx's critique of Aristotle suggests.

Aristotle alludes here to the notion of the insatiability of the avarice of mankind¹⁶ according to which human life and its products deprave. This is the main cause of social and political inequality, which conditions both the social character of labour and a faulty commensurability of the products of this labour. This malfunction of the society of the time is dependent on slavery, which determines Aristotle's contemporary life conditions. The healing of avarice is what is needed for Marx to develop his equality thesis, and thus complete Aristotle's claims while demanding truth as regards political issues and social needs. Marx's main mistake was to consider Aristotle as one of his contemporaries. In his *Capital*, Section 4: The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof, He nevertheless considers Aristotle a brilliant thinker, erring only in his appreciation of slave labour.¹⁷

Marx also claims¹⁸ in his *Capital*, part 2: Transformation of Money into Capital, chapter 5: Contradictions in the General Formula of Capital, that what appears in the course of history before the modern standard form of capital is due to Aristotle. Marx specifically refers to both merchants' capital and interest-bearing capital, which are derivative forms. He borrows this from Aristotle's¹⁹ assumption that money was intended to be used in exchange; not to increase interest on a product. The idea of interest, which means the birth of money from money, constitutes usury, which is the most unnatural mode of getting wealth.

If,²⁰ said in *Capital*, Part 4: Production of Relative Surplus-Values, Chapter 15: Machinery and Modern Industry, Section 3: The Proximate Effects of Machinery on

¹⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1133 b18-20.

¹⁶ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1267 b1.

¹⁷ Marx 1887 [1867]: 58.

¹⁸ Marx 1887 [1867]: 115.

¹⁹ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1258 b4-10.

²⁰ Marx 1887 [1867]: 278.

the Workman, dreamed Aristotle, every²¹ instrument could accomplish its own works, obeying or anticipating the will of others, like the statues of Daedalus, or the tripods of Hephaestus; if the shuttle in like manner would weave and the plectrum touch the lyre, then the chief workmen would not want servants, nor master slaves. Marx emphasises here the economic paradox: that the most powerful instrument for shortening labour-time becomes the most unfailing means for placing every moment of the labourer's time and that of his family at the disposal of the capitalist for the purpose of expanding the value of his capital. Aristotle does not understand, Marx adds, that machinery is the surest means of lengthening the working day; perhaps he excused the enslavement of one individual on the grounds that it was a means to the full development of another. Aristotle, however, is not one of Marx's contemporaries. Aristotle's statements on shortening the working day and thus buying time are of value. This is also the greatest good in Marx's model as regards the possibilities in time (i.e., how one can exploit time to fulfill Marx's aims and values). The attainment of this good is possible through the commonplace.

Aristotle's focus on the nature of self-motion statues (compared here with modern machinery) is valid despite Marx's critique, which concerns the function of modern machinery to benefit an individual capitalist. However, Marx's critique overlooks Aristotle's idea that possessing a slave is just possession of an instrument of action.²² This possession cannot be defined as an instrument of production.²³ Therefore, Aristotle adds, it (this possession) is separable from the possessor. Hence, there is no necessary connection between master and slave. And the same holds good for the self-moving statues of Daedalus, or the tripods of Hephaestus. Aristotle discusses the movements that Daedalus imparted to his wooden Aphrodite by pouring quicksilver into it.²⁴ The essential nature of the soul suggests that movement is a departure from this nature, Aristotle claims.²⁵ We assume that he considers at this point that body moved in this way and the moving soul are separate; something, however, which he regards as impossible. The example of the wooden Aphrodite, however, helps him to raise the question of how the ceaseless movement of atoms draws the whole body after them and so produces its movement.²⁶ This ingenious remark clearly suggests material reductionism of the soul to the body. But again, being reluctant to adhere to it, Aristotle hastens to state that how these atoms produce movement or rest –without intention or process of thinking– is inexplicable.²⁷ To sum up: the lack of connection between master and slave as regards tools suggests that machinery can never be a means to the full development of a master at the expense of the slave. This refutes Marx's claims as regards Aristotle's idea of self-moving statues functioning for the sake of masters. Aristotle on the contrary has provided the grounds of equality that determine the status of this non-necessary connection between master and slave. Hence, the value of social equality can be pursued simply by freeing society from the bonds of avarice.

At this point, Marx's account of Aristotle as regards the communist theory of society comes to a full stop. The reason is Aristotle's remark on the commensurability of dissimilar objects, which is meaningless unless used for practical purposes, as it is

²¹ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253 b34-1254 a1.

²² Aristotle, *Politics*, 1254 a15.

²³ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1254 a5.

²⁴ Aristotle, *On the Soul*, 406 b19-20.

²⁵ Aristotle, *On the Soul*, 406 b10-15.

²⁶ Aristotle, *On the Soul*, 406 b22-23.

²⁷ Aristotle, *On the Soul*, 406 b23-25.

foreign to the real nature of the objects. Indeed, Aristotle²⁸ stresses that the unit of money is used in relation to demand for an object, which holds all things together. Men must be on good terms with each other when in need of one another's goods, in order to make a fair exchange, he adds. That is why by convention currency represents demand. Money, according to him, exists by law, not by nature: we can change it and make it useless. Here we can once more see how his epistemology²⁹ determines his political theory and his "craftsmanship" model of the world. For this reason, it is necessary to trace Aristotle's ideas in Aggoules' poetry so as to understand the link between Aristotle and Marx.³⁰ This relationship between the two thinkers constitutes the only way to grasp Aggoules' poetry as a commitment to realising and artistically 'crafting' Marx's values and ideals. Aggoules thus spurs on our attempts to try to grasp not what is actually happening but what could possibly happen. We should mention that Merrifield conceives of a 21st century Marxism, thus, escaping the formalist straitjacket of typical Marxist critique, and reconsidering its potential.

3. Interpreting Aggoules' Poetry: Some Problems

These problems regard inherent dynamics of transformation of the past into the future, i.e., of the material into the social in his Poetry, as seen from a Marxist angle. How is this connected with Aristotle's idea of the *craftsmanship* model regarding his traditional categories? The 'natural', in fact, mingles with the idea of expansion by using the tools proper to such expansion, which takes place materially, i.e., in places that spring from mass-energy. This holds good for Marx, Aristotle and Aggoules. As no English translation, of which the writer is aware of, exists, all Aggoules' ideas that serve this piece are those of the present writer.

We look forward with anxiety to the outcome of our historical models. Will this be positive or negative? If we abolish determinism, we are left only with indeterminacy. This is especially evident in Aggoules' ideas on Marx's model. Indeterminacy means the absence of freedom to accompany our experience of the world. Thus indeterminacy will accompany our sense of exhaustion, if we are confronted with an ever-mounting international crisis. No feasible alternative is left but life at animal level or no life at all, we may conclude together with Aristotle. And unless we decide to wait to discover the effects just mentioned in Aristotle's ideas on anxiety and melancholy which determine our ways of thinking, we shall encounter this sense of exhaustion. Hence, we must only consider the historical models on offer that might possibly demonstrate alternatives to this exhaustion. This can be done through interpreting Aggoules' use of the link between Marx and Aristotle. The examples offered below clarify impasses in the interpretation of Aggoules' work without employing that link.

Certainly, no prosaic empiricism exists in Aggoules' idea of the world despite the pessimistic quality of his Work.³¹ This is shown in his poem 37.3,³² which concerns a low fever indicating his weak physical constitution. He admits to being a lover of this weakness. This attitude mirrors his constitution, reflected in a dying world which is full of human pain. Death here shows the very truth of the world. We can also observe how Aggoules' thought foreshadows Marx's dynamic idea of the transformation of the

²⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1133 a26-31.

²⁹ Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 72 a18-24. Charles 2000, 72-75.

³⁰ Giouli 2012b: 135-261. Giouli 2012a: 81-90. Merrifield 2011: 56-58; 62-63; 152-153, 158.

³¹ Sideris 1961 : 68, 70, 72.

³² Aggoules 2011 [1944a] : 92.

material into the social. There is, here, ample evidence as to how Aristotle's idea of black-bile affects Aggoules' account of the world. In this poem, we encounter Aggoules' discontent with an unjust world: why does he suffer from this low-grade fever? and why is life reduced to a sanatorium bed, he wonders. We see here the personal becoming the public and *vice-versa*.³³ This relationship does not exist in Aristotle's objective view of the world. What contradicts this view, however, is his black-bile idea entering his attempts to find the truth.

Unfortunate circumstances also determine Aggoules' ideas expressed in the following poem, which echoes Aristotle's idea of the impasse of time, which qualifies cause in history.³⁴ This is a very tender³⁵ poem, which shows how important it is to pursue the absolute through the commonplace. This poem also shows how important the dynamic relationship is between the sublime aim of history on the one hand and the gracious quality of everyday life, on the other. It is through this quality that we attempt to attain the absolute. Chios³⁶ is regarded by Aggoules as the pride of the Aegean Sea, crowned by erotic, pale, moonlight. In the poem, the personification of Chios holds in its arms Psichari, the great man from Chios, a philologist and linguist, promoter of the Demotic Greek language, the 'language of the people', i.e., a colloquial vernacular form of Modern Greek, in common use from the founding of the Greek state in 1821 until the resolution of the Greek language question in 1976, to be established as the formal language of the Greek State. A man of great literary achievements, having taught linguistics in the University of Paris, Psichari was an active participant in the movement for establishing Demotic Greek.³⁷ He was born in 1854 in Odessa (in modern-day Ukraine, then part of the Russian Empire), into a merchant family of Chiot descent, and was raised by his grandmother in Marseille. He had visited Constantinople with his father and later moved to Paris. He died 1929. In the poem, Chios holds him tightly in her arms, as she is afraid that time will steal him from her. The nature of time is incomprehensible, beyond understanding, omnipotent. We can never reduce the unknown to the known; it has to remain unexplained. The bottom line here is clearly that Aggoules chooses the idea of melancholy as a possible answer to this question instead of lapsing towards material reductionism.

Aggoules' image of Chios holding in her arms Psichari recalls vividly Michelangelo's *Pietà*. However, it is not death that will cause Chios the loss of Psichari; it is time, Aggoules states. Drawing Psichari outside time in order to a-temporalise him is impossible. In human genealogy³⁸ the diversity of causes makes little or no change regarding the attainment of the unknown; or even the assigning of any meaning to it. The same causes are always at work. It is only within time that a variety of causes occurs. Hence, despite our efforts, this nature will always remain elusive.

The poet Ritsos wishes that he and Aggoules could stroll along beloved shores singing with incantatory verses. Thus, they would both manage to heal the great evils of their time. This healing attempt resembles the way Chios, in the image of an ancient³⁹ androgynous figure, 'weaves' (i.e., structures, transforms) the light of the Good for her imprisoned grandchildren, under the menorah-like light of the stars. This transformation repels evil. The knitting-needles she uses for socks are taken as

³³ Giouli 2012c : 24-28.

³⁴ Giouli 2020 : 12.

³⁵ Giouli 1988.

³⁶ Aggoules 2014 [1932].

³⁷ Patéridou 2015.

³⁸ Giouli 2020: 11-13.

³⁹ Ritsos 2014 [1953]. Ritsos 2011 [1964].

implying this apotropaic function. Ritsos uses the Greek word *καρτσοβελόνες*, a popular word much used in Chian dialect, to depict the energy of the place in which an incantation for the healing of political evils can be woven.

Ritsos' ingenious image of Aggoules' Work indicates how Aggoules attempts to draw time's 'thread' through peoples' lives; men, however, are unable to 'knot' it through the spindle or form it using knitting needles. This image shows Aristotelian "craftsmanship" attempts towards the transformation of the material into the social; towards the attainment of values and ideals that Ritsos himself, Marx and Aggoules aim to realise. The way the material was formed is a main element in the models in question: for Aristotle it is by desire alone that Man can receive and absorb the Absolute.⁴⁰ Marx revises Feuerbach's statement that Man is what he eats.⁴¹ In the *Preface* of the Second Edition (1843) of his book *The Essence of Christianity*, Feuerbach refers to the *summa summarum* of his work. Bathing, eating and drinking are the positive result of this work. It is malignity, however, Feuerbach adds, that has drawn this conclusion. Accepting this conclusion, Feuerbach refers to its presupposition: if the whole of religion is contained in the Sacraments, and there are no other religious acts than those which are performed in Baptism and the Lord's Supper, then the character of his work, according to him, is nothing more than a faithful, rigid, historico-philosophical analysis of religion. Feuerbach, in fact, does nothing more than stress the sublime element which religion ought to possess but rarely does.

Man eats, says Aggoules, say, fish caught by his labour. Man is a part of nature,⁴² as regards his attempts to humanise it.⁴³ Man is the total of his social relationships, according to Marx.⁴⁴ These relationships⁴⁵ serve Marx's ideas on changing the world.⁴⁶ Change taken as a value constitutes for Marx an order inherent in the spatio-temporal order of events. Change is not considered as a law given *ab extra* to this order. Once, however, the aim of history is attained with the tools of Marx's model, change is replaced by stability and rest.⁴⁷ Marx is unable, however, to answer the question of what society will be like when it is free⁴⁸ from its materialistic bonds,⁴⁹ from hunger, for example. Does Marx adhere to Aristotle's and Aggoules' "craftsmanship" model of the world? If so, this would certainly not imply that Marx's ideas lack a rationalistic element, especially as regards the value of change, which is inherent in the world order. The world state of stability and rest follows change. In fact, it is in the light of eternity, of that unchanging realm, that we must attempt to do justice to one another and to live justly in this world. This stability might just possibly be attained. And *if* we believe that equality and change can be attained, a positive outcome would stem from this stability. From this point on, Marx sees history as God, i.e. as an absolute guide in the transformation of the material to the social, which thus comes to be considered as the spiritual in our lives.⁵⁰ This being so marks a different realm as regards the humanisation of our lives; a realm whose existence it is impossible either to confirm or to reject. It is solely in Descartes' ideas that we see a coming together of these two

⁴⁰ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 980a.

⁴¹ Giouli 2007: 13 and n. 1.

⁴² Marx 1988 [1844]: 47. Giouli 2007: 14 and n. 8.

⁴³ Marx 1988 [1844]: 47. Giouli 2007: 15 and n. 9.

⁴⁴ Giouli 2007: 14 n. 6.

⁴⁵ Marx 1988 [1844]: 58-59. Giouli 2007: 15 and n. 10.

⁴⁶ Giouli 2007: 16, n. 11.

⁴⁷ Giouli 2007: 15-16.

⁴⁸ Marx 1988 [1844]: 71. Giouli 2007: 24 and n. 36.

⁴⁹ Marx 1988 [1844]: 70. Giouli 2007: 16 and n. 12.

⁵⁰ Marx 1988 [1844]: 71. Giouli 2007: 16 and n. 13

sharply differing realms: change and rest, on the one hand and the absolute on the other. This coming together refers to the realm of the Deity, where Descartes equates Aristotle's idea of a virtual being with the real one. What is shared between Aristotle and Marx regarding this unvarying order, which is to be established out of disorder, is the following: men, who establish their social pattern, Marx claims, in conformity with their material productivity, can also produce principles, ideas and categories in conformity with their social pattern. These ideas, Marx adds, are as little eternal as the relationships which they express. They are historical and transitory products.⁵¹ Aggoules' poetry expresses this precariousness of ideas lying within the realm of the known; but once elevated into the sacred vision of Marx they are vested with the values of his ideal: change and political equality. It is clear that the attainment of values is pursued through the commonplace in Aristotle's and Marx's Works and also in those of Aggoules'. Aggoules shows in his poem *Christ-like Figures* ⁵² this vision of attainment.

In Aggoules' poem "Lullaby" ⁵³ we see the limits of his language, as expressed by the limits of reason, showing man's inability to understand the unknown. Language explodes when it comes into contact with the 'other', the strange, the novel, which our conceptual equipment is unable to understand. Myth and poetry hence, unlike truth, adopt an unstable and inconsistent type of language. Its essence lies outside time, outside reality, reposing in the realm of the unknown.⁵⁴ It is improbable here that communicative signs can be transformed into symbols of a poetical content which stabilize communication. They are only signs. His poetry, however, is conditioned⁵⁵ by attempts, both dangerous and unusual, to realise the Good.

Let us see how Aggoules conducts such an attempt. Beyond the riches of words in use (for example: "dawn is vested in nebulae, in shock pain and in a child innocence"), Aggoules makes the Greek word 'lullaby' rhyme with the Greek word 'dwarfs', as an allusion to the dwarf stature of the those in power in his time.

It is in his poem *Tower*⁵⁶ that one can see, together with his melancholic tone, nostalgia⁵⁷ which causes him to attempt the revival of a lost paradise. The tower here has been constructed of human bones. The dead are presented as the silent ones. This fits with the idea of communication-signs that de-stabilise the structure of reality: silence accompanies extreme human weakness in Aggoules' Works. The poet refuses to integrate the unusual into the realm of the explicable. Aristotle himself, one remembers, refers to the dead, those silent ones, as the only happy beings.⁵⁸ Bizarre as this may seem, we may state together with Aristotle that the dead are happy and blessed, because the Good is thought to exist for a dead man, as well as for one who is alive. Aristotle further refers to the dead, surprisingly, as able to enjoy music.

It is only because of the Simoon, Aggoules in the same poem states, that we can understand the language of the dead as what Aristotle describes as a harmony of inert matter; a harmony conducted as a musical mode.⁵⁹ Even in things, Aristotle states, which *have no life* there is a ruling principle as in a musical mode. Here the soul does not exist in a certain part of the body; because it is the lifeless which serves as principle

⁵¹ Giouli 2012b: 215-216.

⁵² Aggoules 2011 [1943b]: 39.

⁵³ Aggoules 2011 [1943a]: 42-43.

⁵⁴ Giouli 2023.

⁵⁵ Choreanthis 1976: 40.

⁵⁶ Aggoules 2011 [1944b]: 55-57

⁵⁷ Choreanthis 1976: 53.

⁵⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1100 a10-20.

⁵⁹ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1254 a25 ff.

of harmony, as in a musical mode. It is bodiless soul that enjoys music. What does this opaque statement mean? We can find an answer in Aggoules' poetry. Here, indeed, we see communication symbolising the attempts to attain political ideals and values. However, this does not imply attempts to explain the inexplicable; it only shows Aggoules' dedication to the realisation of political and social values, as unknown. In Aggoules' imagination, bones have become flutes that transform signs into musical language. All symbols of sensory experience are thus hidden within the universe determined by the *Tower*. The destruction of all communication between the consciousness of Man and the world follows the shock caused by the phenomenon of death.

The poem ends on a tragic note. Aggoules hopes that no trains will pass, so that the 'veil' of silence will remain intact. Again, here we are offered Aristotle's vision of the dead as the only happy beings, as the human condition remains tragic, i.e., fatally unsuccessful. The models of history and time cannot provide us with irrefutable propositions regarding historical truth and hence our pursuit of social and political values will remain vain. Does Marx share this vision with Aggoules? He is considered *not* to do so.

We shall cite one more poem to clarify Aggoules' melancholic vision as regards the successful realisation of values and ideals. In his poem⁶⁰ *Rababa* (the name of an old Egyptian string instrument), the same pessimistic tone is to be found. Signs and noise here harmonise with rababas and tam-tams. The attainment of the good is, for him, just within the bounds of possibility. However, he warns the wise not to take the light of the lamp to be the light of the Good. The only thing that the wise can attain is the dim vision of this harmony as expressed in musical language through signs and symbols. It might well be an illusory vision, a sweet error, as he calls it. It takes a life-long journey to understand that what is outside Plato's cave makes no difference to the work inside. Dust in the beard of the wise expresses this futile, life-long journey, in Aggoules' images. These are only shadows of knowledge; not the real objects of it. These objects will always haunt the wise, either inside Plato's cave or outside it, in the woods, according to Aggoules. However, Aggoules' work expresses a wish, no more. This plea can only be considered a call or an invitation to explore the field of the logically impossible. Such an invitation offers no justification in the sense of guarantees as to what we will find, or even as to whether we will find anything at all. Those who have gone into the same field before us assure us that they did not find the realm of values empty. Aristotle himself has been assured by Plato that this realm is not empty.⁶¹

4. The Conceptual in Aggoules' Poetry

Future gain belongs to youth, Marx adds as he further explains this idea,⁶² while old ways of productivity are replaced with the use of machine tools. The labourers are immediately made redundant by the use of machinery. The usual function of an old basic form of trade guarantees this absorption of a contingent additional value. Capital, Marx states,⁶³ should no longer be allowed to attempt to check its inconvenient action by forcible means and State interference, which calls for an industrial reserve army and, with it, the absolute dependence of the working class upon the capitalist class.

⁶⁰ Aggoules 2011 [1944c]: 72.

⁶¹ Choreanthis 1976: 58.

⁶² Marx 1887 [1867]: 448.

⁶³ Marx 1887 [1867]: 448.

Marx wishes to underline at this point how easy it is to lose sight of the greater image of his model, by showcasing unimportant trivialities that can very easily deceive; and which might lead to reversion to an unjust state. He refers⁶⁴ to the lamentable case, when, notwithstanding all that is evident with regard to the quality of the present accommodation available, it is the common conclusion of competent observers that even the general badness of dwellings *is an evil infinitely less* urgent than their mere numerical insufficiency. Angles and viewpoints depend on the social character of labour.

These ideas of the commonplace allow one to better understand how Marx unfolds his argument on the problems and shortcomings of the capitalistic future, as opposed to the communist one: In his example, a vendor selling any commodity, obliges the purchaser to buy it as being a representative of future money. The use of a given commodity, of a house, for instance, is, he adds,⁶⁵ for a definite period. The buyer has bought it before he has paid for it. Hence, it is only at the end of the term that the buyer has actually received the use-value of the commodity. As money gives birth to money, such everyday routine dealings, we understand from his critique of history, can easily suggest the attainment of his ideals and values.

In Marx's model we must never forget the idea of a common future shared equally by all. He states⁶⁶ that any country that is more developed industrially only shows to the less developed the image of its own future. This means that such a projection guarantees the image of the future of the novel to be shared by all, indiscriminately.

A comment on the itinerary through hell is evident in Marx's reference⁶⁷ to the fanatical opposition of the masters to those clauses which imposed upon them minimal expenditure on appliances for protecting the limbs of their workpeople. This is an opposition that throws a fresh and glaring light on the Free-trade dogma, he adds, according to which, in a society with conflicting interests, each individual necessarily furthers the common weal by seeking nothing but his own personal advantage! (The exclamation mark is Marx's own). Marx himself made an ironic comment on differences concerning the concept of State, which does not mean concerning individuals, thus allowing these to exploit the social structure of the State.

Aggoules' poetry is worth examining as regards Marx's values and ideals if we wish to revalorise Marx and, hence, to stress the social character of human labour. Studies on modern Marxism suggest that we can step beyond the classical questions which Marx himself has raised and thus revalorise the challenge of the social, common and institutional character of labour. Marx's ideas of historical development as regards the equal sharing of the values of freedom from exploitation and ignorance have also been renewed.

Marx clarifies further his image of hell and of the cannibalism of one another in the capitalist state.⁶⁸ One more destroyed cottage would render territories uninhabitable even by the lowest of serfs. Future poor-rates, then, would be somewhat lightened, he states. But while great owners can escape from paying poor-rates through the depopulation of lands over which they have control, the nearest town or open village would receive the evicted labourers. This example of Marx's can be used to further clarify a modern paradigm as regards the refugee crisis: by stating the 'nearest', Marx

⁶⁴ Marx 1887 [1867]: 475.

⁶⁵ Marx 1887 [1867]: 87.

⁶⁶ Marx 1887 [1867]: 6-7.

⁶⁷ Marx 1887 [1867]: 315-316.

⁶⁸ Marx 1887 [1867]: 475.

explains further, he means three or four miles distant from the farm where the labourer plies his daily toil.

Sharing Aristotle's ideas as regards our inability to ever provide irrefutable propositions with models and algorithms of social and historical development, Aggoules' Works shows inherent dynamics in the spatio-temporal order of historical events. This is suggested by the Aristotelian concept of black-bile. Our melancholy, stemming out from our vulnerability, in fact determines our strength to continue in our search for what Marx considered the aim of history.

5. The Commonplace State of Art in his Poetry Allows the Glimpse of the Absolute

Aggoules now projects⁶⁹ his image of injustice onto concrete facts.⁷⁰ This image guides his attempts to interpret them:⁷¹ an unjust State caused him great suffering and destitution, paying him a poor pension. As his fever grows, he forms a wish for it to kindle a spark in the brains of all who suffer injustice. Again here, we see how human weakness transforms the material into the social in the ideas of both thinkers.

Aggoules, in his poem *At the Seashore*,⁷² raises the question of reality existing in the way that a language exists. He urges us to decipher the signs of such a language –what these symbolise. However, it is impossible to explain such an image of reality (a language line of vision= “οπτική γλώσσα”, he calls it). If we did, he adds, we could overcome the pessimistic thought in that we live in order to die. He⁷³ also claims that he has used rigorous philosophical tools, his “epistemology”, in composing his Works. This shows how his methodology determines the ideals and the values which he pursues. And this very term ‘epistemology’, uttered spontaneously by him, echoes Marx's methodological method (also Plato's and Hegel's), as they compiled their models of history.

In his Collection of poems *Cries to the Sun*,⁷⁴ Aggoules manifests Marx's ideas of a common realm to be shared as regards the pursuit of values and realisation of ideals. The light of the Good will shine equally for all people. There is a long and painful journey, however, towards the fulfillment of such an end, Aggoules declares, as it takes place through hell and darkness.⁷⁵

Aggoules here uses a poetic image as regards the tragical, agonising itinerary of mind and body, due precisely to the lack of light in a cursed night. It is solely the novel which forms the Sun, the light of the Good. It is only this light which can rescue the castaways in the dark. All individual dreams and attempts to realise them have to be put away once this new sun rises. This quality of ‘new’ in the poem under consideration expresses the quality of Marx's model in historical theory. This ideal is not of our own making, it is there to be discovered, as it is that towards which the progress of history irresistibly carries existing societies. These societies should aspire to it and should be measured against it.⁷⁶ Here we can see a strictly *a priori* rationalistic element in Aggoules' poem: it is a flawless mirror that reflects the structure of reality; it must be

⁶⁹ Kakavanis 2020: 46.

⁷⁰ Choreanthis 1976: 49.

⁷¹ Giouli 2012b: 90-93.

⁷² Aggoules 1958 [1934].

⁷³ Choreanthis 1976: 67.

⁷⁴ Aggoules 1938.

⁷⁵ Choreanthis 1976: 27-28.

⁷⁶ Burke 1983: 165.

through a glass necessarily murky and distorted that we can discern some part of reality.⁷⁷ Aggoules is here metaphorically referring to the crack of such “a crystal jacket” that hinders the light from pouring down to earth as in a waterfall. The way through hell, however, is as important as is the realisation of the values of this experience of the novel.

Aggoules, however, does not explore such ideas on State Structure for their inherent interest. He is interested in connecting them to actual history and in putting them into practice. The conditions in which Marx’s idea of the restructuring of reality will take place, are, Aggoules believes, those of the start of the Second World War by Fascists who were slaughtering the human race.⁷⁸

Another point of extreme importance is the way in which Aggoules refers to Marx’s idea of the progress of history, which irresistibly carries us to the light of the Good. We have seen how our prejudices and dreams of Utopias have to be modified, as they will prove fatal to the successful outcome of this procedure. Indeed, Aggoules suggests here a sacrifice of body and soul. The itinerary towards the light may burn his wings, in the way in which Daedalus’ wings were burnt. But he does not heed this. His soul is contorting itself with joy and relief. In this collection, *Cries in the Sun*, the poet uses a much-loved word in Chian dialect (the noun *σπαρτάρα* from the verb *σπαρταράω*=writhe with joy), which a loving mother addresses to a child to express deep feelings of love and joy and deep concern for it. Aggoules’ words echo the Arab philosopher Al-Ghazâlî’s comment on the metaphor of the butterfly attracted to the source of light. A profound mystery accompanies the death of the butterfly. In that crucial moment, mysteriously, fire and butterfly transform their roles. The butterfly is no more the lover of fire; it becomes a lover of itself.⁷⁹

The link between Aggoules’ ideas and Al-Ghazâlî’s is more than evident. This profound existential conviction determines the conditions of the realisation of Marx’s model⁸⁰ in Aggoules’ Works. Aristotle’s idea of human vulnerability, however, qualifies such weakness in Marx’s model.⁸¹ In his poem *An Ascetic’s Sin*⁸², Aggoules assigns a feminine viewpoint to the world, in order to offer an account from this viewpoint. In Aggoules’ work, a man may even turn into a woman.⁸³ We see here the feminine angle of view on the world as a way in which to receive and understand the strange, the ‘other’, the novel.

Aggoules deals painstakingly with the humanisation of everyday life as regards his response to the epistemological demands of Marx’s ideas in modern times. We have seen above, examining the Greek words ‘lullaby’ and ‘dwarfs’ that a sound can be by nature a noun, as Aristotle states. It becomes a specific noun by becoming a symbol. Inarticulate noises mean something, he continues, for instance those made by brute beasts. But no noises of that kind are nouns. Now this painstaking procedure reminds one of Kristeva’s idea of signs: the babbling of sound can suggest symbols. These establish and stabilize the conventions which Aristotle speaks of. Statements about subjects are assigned certain functions and certain properties symbolically. Those properties mark the subject symbolically, but indefinitely, as they qualify the existentially quantified variable, the noun. These symbolic acquisitions, according to

⁷⁷ Cottingham 1984: 152.

⁷⁸ Choreanthis 1976: 28.

⁷⁹ Guthrie 1975: 20.

⁸⁰ Marx 1988 [1844]: 58-59. Giouli 2007: 43-44 and n.22.

⁸¹ Marx 1988 [1844]: 71, 46. Giouli 2007: 42 and n. 19; 43 n.21.

⁸² Aggoules 2011 [1958]: 20.

⁸³ Vlisidou 2011: 7.

Kristeva, are preconditioned by conventional experiences, which constrain us to utter statements according to the rules found or imposed in the process above; before these rules are refuted, and changed *ad infinitum*. This determines her feminine vision of the world as painstakingly being absorbed and conceived with the tools of the 'other', the 'strange', the menacing novel.

In this futile order of ideas, we reconsider here something over and above nature and ourselves. Over and above all the explanation which science and common knowledge can offer, there is more to the world. The necessity of laws of nature and of social science depends on what we are prepared to accept.⁸⁴

Aggoules in diverse verses is prepared to accept the novel, the unknown as that which is born with the tools offered by a vulnerable 'feminine' vision. Platonic eros⁸⁵ here takes the form of a mistress of witchcraft, a beautiful feminine form; and this form can allude to the idea of the Good. Once more we understand from this poem that it is through the commonplace that the Absolute may possibly be attained.

In the poem *Worries*,⁸⁶ this attainment of the end of the exploitation is possible through the commonplace, which usually depicts the idea of problems and shortcomings that connect with this procedure. What we see here is a feminine vision that accompanies worries and loneliness⁸⁷ preceding attempts to unveil the unknown. These worries relate to the dictatorship initiated on 4th August⁸⁸ 1936. The then Prime Minister John Metaxas, collaborating with King George, abolished the parliament and imposed a dictatorship, which lasted until the German occupation in April 1941.

In the poem *Christ-like Figures*⁸⁹ we are made to see how a fascist Pilate took the cross to be the stepping stone for any Unjust State. The cross symbolises the martyrdom of Christ as reflected in all the new-born children sacrificed at the time and also *ad infinitum* by those arbitrarily in power.⁹⁰

On the subject of exploitation, we can see the motto, written in the front page of Aggoules' poetical collection *Fires in Wood*, which refers to the Greek example of the purification of history. Aggoules dedicates this motto-model of historical progress to those battling for the freedom of slaves internationally. His poem, *Stigma*,⁹¹ refers to the Parthenon, which cannot stand the disgrace of such an arbitrary exploitation of the power of the people; it is against the very idea conveyed by the monument of the Parthenon that resistance to arbitrariness implies sacrifices. This can easily be seen in the values of Marx's model.

6. Concluding Remarks

Aristotle's idea of melancholic black bile is mirrored in Aggoules' melancholic nostalgia as regards the attainment of Marx's ideals and values. His idea of silence fits with the idea of communication-signs which de-stabilise the structure of reality: silence accompanies that extreme condition of human weakness in the works of Aggoules', who refuses to integrate the unusual into the realm of the explicable. History also

⁸⁴ Giouli 2012b, 90.

⁸⁵ Plato, *Symposium*, 203e.

⁸⁶ Aggoules 2011 [1938]: 25.

⁸⁷ Giouli 2012a: 18-19 and n. 13.

⁸⁸ Choreanthis 1976: 31.

⁸⁹ Aggoules 2011 [1943b]: 39.

⁹⁰ Choreanthis 1976: 39.

⁹¹ Aggoules 2011 [1943c]: 46.

implies an inherent vulnerability in the spatio-temporal order of events that will always prevent us from uttering irrefutable propositions as regards the attainment of historical truth. This is the lesson taught by Aggoules, following Aristotle: human reason is frail. The historical procedure, for these thinkers, is not of our own making (i.e. for Marx, history is clearly a God). We understand that in both Marx's and Aggoules' ideas, the meaningful realisation of their ideals relates with the commonplace. It is Aristotle's notion of painstakingly attempting to change the world that first and foremost enhances their models. Hence, change as poetically stressed by Aggoules is an inherent value in the spatio-temporal order of historical events. Change, thus, can be collectively realised in pursuit of, and in desiring, the Absolute naturally and through the commonplace.

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