

Theocharis Kessidis: Discovery of Man and Formation of Greek Philosophy

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Abstract

In the article, we discuss the views of Theocharis Kessidis, an eminent classical researcher and philosopher of the 20th century, on the origins of Greek philosophy (on the transition from myth to *logos*). We define the key stages of his life: studying philosophy at Moscow State University, the impact of political atmosphere on the formation of his outlook, reflection on the discussions about the history of Western philosophy and the origin of philosophical rationalism. According to Kessidis, Homer's mythopoetic works anteceded and prepared the substantiation of the role of reason in the comprehension of the world, which the ancient Greek philosophers (Milesian schools, Pythagoreans, Heraclitus, and the Eleatics) offered. Kessidis pays special attention to Homer's epic style and Homeric comparisons. The epic consciousness inherits myth when dealing with the gods, but it also diffuses myth, abandoning the original unity of the image and the thing. There can be found Kessidis's central thesis – about the “discovery of man,” self-understanding started by Homer and continued by the ancient Greek thinkers. The “discovery of man” by the Greeks made possible the development of democracy. *Polis* democracy is related to agonality, which is widespread among the Greeks type of social behavior and the main feature of their national character. Philosophy, as opposed to myth and religious belief, created a space for reasoning and rational self-assertion of the individual. But along the same path, abysses of the unconscious in man's psyche opened up, as the ill-fated Peloponnesian War showed, leading to the historical defeat of *logos* in its fight against irrational faith. Kessidis's ideas about the agonal, irrational that concomitant to the reason in its genesis and historical development allow us to take a new look at the transition from myth to *logos* and stay significant and relevant today.

Keywords: myth, religion, science, philosophy, culture, education, agonistics, mind, personality, man.

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Ф.Х. Кессиди: открытие человека и становление греческой философии

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Аннотация

В статье реконструируются взгляды крупного философа-антиковеда XX века Феохария Кессиди на становление греческой философии (переход от мифа к логосу). Характеризуются основные этапы его жизненного пути: обучение на философском факультете МГУ, влияние политической атмосферы на формирование его взглядов, рефлексии по поводу дискуссий об истории западноевропейской философии и начале философского рационализма. Обоснование роли разума в познании мира, предпринятое древнегреческими философами (милетцы, пифагорейцы, Гераклит, элеаты), предвосхищено и подготовлено, по мнению Кессиди, мифопоэтическим творчеством Гомера. Кессиди специально останавливается на вопросах об эпическом стиле Гомера и гомеровских сравнениях. Эпическое сознание наследует миф, имея дело с богами, и размыкает его, разрушая первоначальное тождество образа и вещи. Но здесь же, по мнению автора предлагаемой статьи, содержится центральное положение Кессиди – об «открытии человека», о его самоосмыслении, начатом Гомером и продолженном раннегреческими мыслителями. «Открытие человека», совершенное греками, сделало возможным развитие демократии, с этим же была связана агональность как характерный для греков тип социального поведения и основная черта их национального характера. Философия, противостоящая мифу и религиозной вере, создала пространство разума и рационального самоутверждения личности. Но на этом же пути открылись и бездны бессознательного в человеке, что показала злосчастная Пелопонесская война и что привело к историческому поражению логоса в борьбе с иррациональной верой. Идеи Кессиди об агональном, иррациональном «сопровождении» разума в его генезисе и истории позволяют по-новому взглянуть на проблему перехода от мифа к логосу и не теряют своего значения и для наших дней.

Ключевые слова: миф, религия, наука, философия, культура, просвещение, агонистика, разум, личность, человек.

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Evolution as a scholar and an individual

Theocharis Ch. Kessidis (in Russian: *Feokharyi Kharlampievich Kessidi*), the outstanding philosopher and scholar of classical antiquity, gained worldwide fame for original research works in the history of ancient philosophy that have been translated into 15 languages. He was my teacher, and throughout my life I maintained deep respect and friendly feelings toward him [Drach 1999, 5–11]. He graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy of Moscow State University, then completed a post-graduate program and worked in Moscow universities. But this account hides very significant events and facts: his scientific collaboration with the leading scientists of Soviet Russia: B.S. Chernyshev, V.F. Asmus, A.F. Losev, V.V. Sokolov, A.N. Chanyshv, and his involvement in complex philosophical, ideological, and political discussions. Much of this is contained in his description of the “phenomenon of Z.Ya. Beletsky” (when a researcher gained influence in the philosophical community not due to his scientific merits, but due to appeals to the official ideology and party leadership) [Kessidis 2006, 141–156]. It was in distant Moscow, where Kessidis came from Tbilisi, and then walked the thorny path of scholarship, as an enthusiast who never gave up his priority: ancient Greek philosophy – and who always was observing and penetrating into the surrounding life (his deep remarks about the fate of the Greek people, about the USSR, the causes of its disintegration and accomplished reforms are still worth admiring). And he took the deepest foundations of life from his birthplace, Santa, the small Georgian village with a compact population of Pontic Greeks, who had moved from Turkey to the highlands of Georgia and, thanks to this, preserved their language and religion. In Santa and Tsalka (where, on Kessidis’s initiative, since 1978, the “Aristotelian Readings” were

held) they never forgot their ancient culture, and we come across the names of Pericles, Achilles, Hector, Aristotle and Medea in every Greek family: these were popular names among the village's children. The past came alive, and in Kessidis it was transformed into the theoretical position of "classical antiquity and modernity."

In his postgraduate studies at the Department of History of Philosophy at Moscow State University, Kessidis began researching the philosophy of Heraclitus (the theme was suggested by B.S. Chernyshev, a scholar with deep knowledge of ancient philosophy). But Kessidis's completed dissertation did not correspond to the views of M.A. Dynnik, Chairman of the USSR Academy of Sciences Commission for Coordination of Scientific Research in the Field of Aesthetics, which caused bureaucratic delays and intrigues. Only after a letter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and "personally to Comrade Stalin." The dissertation was discussed at the department, received a recommendation for defense and was successfully defended. Still, Kessidis never had any illusions about Stalin. This is evidenced by his notes on collectivization and repressions against many people, which he witnessed back in his school years in Tbilisi. His descriptions of friends: classmates, ex-soldiers and other good people who dared to think and argue, like himself, about the fate of the country and about Communism are truly fascinating. He developed an interest in the area of myths, which never left him in all his life. Today the topic of participation and collective consciousness has entered scientific discourse, thanks to the works of F.M. Cornford, E. Durkheim, M. Mauss, L. Lévy-Bruhl. Kessidis brought up the same theme from life's facts and realities. His appeal to ancient philosophy was not mere academic research, but an ongoing dialogue with life, with like-minded friends and obvious opponents. These were very risky conversations for that period: about collectivization, arrests, repressions, about human decency and dishonesty ("flexibility"), about public discussions of genetics and linguistics, etc. In the field of philosophy, there was a discussion about G.F. Aleksandrov's book *History of Western European Philosophy*. And out of all this, the huge question emerged (previously formulated by E. Renan as the issue of the "Greek miracle"): how can one "explain the causes of the unusual flourishing of their theoretical thought" [Kessidis 2003]?

The research *Philosophical and Aesthetic Views of Heraclitus of Ephesus*, released in 1963 by the publishing house of the Academy of Arts [Kessidis 1963], became a significant scientific event, mark-

ing the scholar's ascent to the heights of classical studies. His range of issues and their structuring were already present there. The question of why philosophy acquired such importance in ancient Greek culture was already formulated in this work and never left Kessidis. He was also attracted by the relationship of ancient Greeks (emphasizing their "mobile way of life and active attitude to reality") with the Eastern world. Here he makes a fundamental conclusion: "New circumstances, sometimes unforeseen, risky and difficult, forced people to be proactive, resourceful, and decisive" [Kessidis 1963, 8]. Many prejudices and superstitions were discarded, the mind became free, and thinking became keen and observant. In this regard, it is impossible not to recall the works of M.K. Petrov, who moved in the same direction, emphasizing the role of navigation and piracy in the Homeric era and coming to the conclusion about a kind of "selection of human characters," which sifted people and left alive and free "only creative characters and oppressed or destroyed passive characters" [Petrov 1995, 223].

Kessidis, however, did not limit his analysis to the deck of a pirate ship, where, according to Petrov, the borderline lay between word and deed: he opened vistas for constructing an "epistemological space" with its categories and relying on grammatical rules and categorical thinking. He turns to Thucydides, the historian and thinker, and does not part with him throughout his life, dedicating to him his final book, *The Philosophy of the History of Thucydides* [Kessidis 2008]. In the above work on Heraclitus, he identifies two factors of ancient Greek culture: slavery and democracy. He considers the development of democracy to be the determining factor. Freedom and democracy were the core values of Greek culture. As for slavery, it was not internal slavery (for insolvent debtors), but external slavery that was widespread in Greece. The restrictions on the power of the Basileans and the struggle against the privileges of the clan aristocracy, the codification of law and transition to written laws were associated with these practices. In this regard, Kessidis, noting the differences between Greek *poleis* (city-states), formulated (this is still 1963!) this key position: "At the same time, all democratic *poleis* had something in common: the freedom of a citizen..." [Kessidis 1963, 15]. And although the city-states themselves were small, the ancient Greek world was not limited by its walls, as Spengler believed. The Greeks showed great dynamism and initiative, manifested in interaction with other peoples and in the

founding of colonies in previously unknown territories, they demonstrated determination and desire for novelty.

Kessidis revealed this special mobility and cultural interaction in a wide geographic context, relying on the impressions of his own life, rich in travel, communications, covering areas “from Moscow to the very outskirts.” As well as the fact that cultural identity, attachment to one’s native culture not only does not hinder, but on the contrary, contributes to fullness and versatility of communication and friendship, to mutual understanding. *Polis*-type democracy gave birth to the contemplative (“theoretical”) character of Greek philosophy. This is how the universe of ancient Greek thought was created, whose defining features were “a holistic view of the world and at the same time an artistic perception of the same” as well as “the confidence of Greek thinkers that the human mind can understand and cognize everything” [Kessidis 1963, 20]. But the main thing is those features of the Greek national character, to which Kessidis draws attention in this early work. At the same time, he refers to the opinion coming from the Hebrew historian Josephus Flavius: “The Greeks do not recognize any authorities, do not take into account the precepts of their ancestors and the prescriptions of antiquity” [Kessidis 1963, 23]. In this regard, Kessidis notes that he may “exaggerate the ‘nihilism’ of the Greeks as regards traditions and authorities, but it is true that... no area of life, not even religion, was protected from critical attacks” [Kessidis 1963, 23]. This is the crux of the matter. The Greeks would argue heatedly, following their own reason and defending the truth.

The clash of myth and *logos*

Of course, the central theme was the transition from myth to *logos*, the social transformation of Greek culture, which allowed Kessidis to see in a new light ancient Greek thinkers studied in the previous centuries, with their mythological prehistory, and the formation of Greek philosophy. These issues are specially considered in Th.Ch. Kessidis’s *Early Greek Philosophy and Its Relationship to Myth, Art, and Religion* (1968) the classic work *From Myth to Logos* [Kessidis 1972]. His subsequent works on Socrates and continued studies of the philosophy of Heraclitus, as well as the publication of a collective monograph on Plato, and his *Introduction* to the collection of Aristotle’s ethical writings characterize the scientist’s creative trajectory. Kessidis’s articles generalizing the Greek mentality, agonistics, understanding of history, time, and personality, collected in the book *On the Origins of*

Greek Thought [Kessidis 2001a], make possible to understand many features of Greek culture and philosophy. But the conceptual basis for understanding ancient philosophy was the formula contained in the very title of the work *From Myth to Logos*.

In the preface to the recent Russian translation of Karl Reinhardt's *Platons Mythen (The Myths of Plato)*, V.V. Prokopenko refers to the same formula and combines the theoretical positions of W. Nestle and Th. Kessidis, saying the following: "This formula expresses the conviction that the destruction of mythological consciousness occurred under the pressure of emerging rational thinking that formed Greek science and philosophy, that this process was natural and necessary, as an expression of the universal law of the intellectual development of mankind" [Prokopenko 2019, 91–92]. Prokopenko may have a good point in relation to Nestle (although this is a question that requires further consideration), but he is completely wrong in understanding Kessidis's position as evidenced, in particular, by his citation of the work *From Myth to Logos* [Kessidis 2003, 6]. Let us re-read the quoted statement: "The fact that Greek mythology itself is considered by many scientists as a primitive way of explaining phenomena of the surrounding world indicates that this mythology was originally (genetically) 'intellectual.' And the anthropomorphism (in contrast to the zoomorphism of the mythology of ancient Egyptians and other peoples of the Ancient East) of the religious and mythological ideas of ancient Hellenes is evidence of their natural inclination toward rational, logical thinking" [Kessidis 2003, 6].

But the fact is that the quoted position contains only preliminary remarks and is directed against absolutization of the role of social laws (as a person is not only a social but also a biological being), and not at justifying any "laws of intellectual development." If we return to the context (this is, in fact, the whole book), we will see something completely different. Kessidis is a staunch opponent of ideas about an intellectual or etiological function of myth. "If we recognize that the causal explanation of the myth is correct, that is, the cognitive function is the main thing, then the question arises: why did primitive humans choose such a strange way of explanation? Obviously, the mythological and causal interpretations of phenomena differ significantly, and this difference is not quantitative, but qualitative" [Kessidis 2003, 45]. The statements under discussion open only the visible part of the iceberg, the rationalistic nature of the Greek mentality, but do not exhaust their whole of it.

As a socio-cultural space in which intellectual life takes place and philosophical discourse unfolds, Kessidis considers the whole variety of social and historical life of the ancient Greek *polis*: the development of trade, the spread of writing, replacement of custom by laws, and the rule of impersonal legal norms. He begins with questioning the widespread ideas about the importance of slave labor in the development of ancient culture, due to its cheapness, about the slave-holding basis of ancient philosophy and culture (A.F. Losev). He specifically poses the question: "Was slave labor indeed the economic basis of Greek culture?" And his answer is negative. In his opinion, first of all, one must take into account that slave labor in Ancient Greece was not massive. Labor of free citizens prevailed, and in this case it was not despised. The fact that the ruling classes in Greece and Rome thought about physical labor with disdain is due to the forced nature of such labor. But a similar fate could befall any free person if he was defeated. In everyday life, not work but idleness was considered shameful [Kessidis 2003, 10–15]. In the space of *polis* life, the clash of myth and *logos* takes place. Unlike Nestle [Nestle 1940], Kessidis does not consider them as complementary to each other (*logos* in the service of myth or vice versa), since the interaction of their respective carriers took place not only and not so much in the space of thinking, but in the public space of the competitive city life, the struggle for victory, recognition, honor, and wealth. It is in this context that the question of the origin of philosophy is considered. The main existing approaches are taken into account. There are, in fact, but two of these. The first approach contrasts the emerging philosophy with myth and religion, substantiating its emergence from the rudiments of scientific knowledge. Thus, E. Zeller, T. Gompertz, J. Burnet, and W. Windelband consider the period of the emergence of philosophy as the formation of scientific knowledge and of conceptual thinking. Kessidis subtly notes that in this case the situation looks like philosophy, while still in its cradle, like Hercules, strangled the hydra of myth and religion. Therefore, he accepts with sympathy the words of F.M. Cornford that philosophy cannot be likened to Athena, who was born in full military armor from the forehead of father Zeus [Cornford 1912, ix; Cornford 1952, 188]. Undoubtedly, deeper ideological roots must be taken into account here (the key point of the second approach is exactly that philosophy derives from religious-mythological views), but, as Kessidis rightly objected, "why should this mean that philosophy and theogonic myth are the same type of worldview?" [Kessidis 2003, 124].

Thus, although religious-mythological (figurative) and rational thinking were intertwined in pre-philosophical consciousness, the emergence of philosophy was not a simple rationalization of both, but emergence of a completely new view of the world. According to Th. Kessidis, “myth and religion, on the one hand, and philosophy and science, on the other, are different types of consciousness and thinking. And the goals of their development, initially intertwined, subsequently turned out to be different” [Kessidis 2003, 41]. It is impossible to assimilate the myths of primitive philosophy, just because of their naive personification of providing causal explanation of natural phenomena of nature and of life events. “The myth objectifies the subjective (collective-unconscious) experiences and emotional-volitional aspirations of people in images of fantasy; it is a direct expression of a person’s feelings and experiences, of his aspirations and desires. In the myth, feelings prevail over intellect, emotions – over thought, impulses over cognition” [Kessidis 2003, 49].

At the same time, the early Greek philosophers (natural philosophers), as the first “speculative thinkers,” “combine rational thinking (speculation) with sensual contemplation (observation) of the world” [Kessidis 2003, 151]. The deification of natural and social phenomena, represented by the pantheon of the Olympic gods, made it possible to involve collective experience in personal cognition of the world, causing “contradictory simultaneity (which cannot be split or designated chronologically) of the generic community of the image and its particular specific feature” [Freudenberg 1936, 53]. Kessidis specially explores the figurative perception of the world as presented in its epic (metaphorical) form, referring to Homer. We will return to this issue later, for now we will just note the following: “Responding to the need arising in the political sphere, to find in the world something stable, something repeating, something that would ensure... the success of individual activities, philosophy expands the capabilities of the individual” [Drach 2018, 12].

Philosophy realizes the need to explain the world, destroying the integrity of collective ideas and relying on the norms of theoretical thought (discovered primarily through deduction and logical argumentation) that correspond to this need. Rejection of religious and mythological belief in the existence of gods and appeal to knowledge of the world were accompanied by posing the problem of the origin of all that exists. “The posing and formulation of problems, the appealing to the human mind as a means of cognition, focusing on search

for the causes of everything that happens in the world, and not outside it, – these features essentially distinguishes the philosophical approach to the world from religious and mythological views of reality” [Kessidis 2003, 127]. Thus, the search for the beginnings of the universe, *arche*, marks the birth of philosophy.

Here Kessidis draws on the testimony of Aristotle, which are today criticized, more than ever before. Although they contain Aristotle’s own terminology, they nevertheless make it possible to build a consistent history of pre-Socratic thought, which is part of a single domain of all Greek philosophy. “Aristotle was the first to start building a historical and philosophical series, proceeding from the understanding of philosophy, largely defined in his works,” [Drach 2020, 27]. Philosophy is born as natural philosophy (metaphysical naturalism). And Kessidis explains the essence of such an appeal: “The natural philosophical doctrines about the primary elements made it possible to build a general worldview and to explain, without resorting to the help of the gods, the general picture of the world” [Kessidis 2003, 153]. The diversity of objects relies on a hidden world order, and this can be revealed by the power of rational knowledge. But this rationalism combined a rational understanding of the world with intuitive and artistic comprehension, basing on a vision of the world as an ordered whole, as a *cosmos*.

Referring to the philosophy of Parmenides, Kessidis writes: true being can be cognized correctly on condition that “the thought and what it aspires to, are the same thing.” The distinction between the “realm of knowledge (*episteme*)” and the “realm of opinion (*doxa*)” had a deep historical and philosophical meaning. “The establishment of a qualitative distinction between reason and feelings, thinking and sensation, between logical and empirical was the greatest philosophical discovery... It was the discovery of reason in the history of European and world philosophy, in the history of theoretical thinking in general” [Kessidis 2003, 249–250]. At the same time, noting the rise of abstract thinking observed in Parmenides’ ideas, Kessidis shows that reason and feelings had the same world for their subject. The discovery of “pure reason” and the establishment of a qualitative distinction between these initiated a discussion of questions about the relationship of thought to reality, on the way to overcome the mythological thinking.

However, the cosmologist characteristic of Greek philosophy was based (as Kessidis emphasized) on *polis* analogies. “The *polis* and the relations of citizens in the *polis* make a model, by analogy with which, to a greater or lesser extent, the world and the world order of things were

accepted by Greek philosophers” [Kessidis 2003, 152]. Considering the origin of philosophy as a transition from the mythological identification of an image and the object to an artistic comparison, analogy, and further to a concept, Kessidis bases it on a cultural basis, which is “a person’s awareness of his freedom from gods and fate (*moira*) as an external necessity,” whose beginning can already be traced in the poems of Homer [Kessidis 2003, 111]. But why did Socrates declare that he could not learn anything if he turned to the doctrine of the elements?

Let us return to the original mythological matrix: “The dialectic of myth consists in the fact that in the myth a person ‘dissolves’ in nature, merges with it and takes possession of the forces of nature only in his imagination... The feasibility of the desired strengthens the will and unites the primitive collective, thus activating it” [Kessidis 2003, 49]. How was the domination of myth overcome, if it was connected with impersonality, dissolution of the individual in the primitive collective, in a generic community? The reference to Homer allows us to trace how the integrity of the image and reality, collective and individual, was destroyed. “In his scenes, nature is always tangible and material, and man is cosmic. He is cosmic, not in the sense of a mythological ‘fusion’ with nature, but in the sense of unity with the world, of a person’s ‘presence’ in it. In Homer, the sun ‘tirelessly’ makes its way through the sky, for this is the Sun’s nuptial ceremony with the stars... And the poet also feels seething elemental forces of nature and its phenomena: fires, storms, streams, and floods; the attack of a predator, the flight of a bird, the galloping horse; the noise, roar, buzzing, screaming, howling, and roaring of a lion, the barking dog, bleating sheep, the groaning victim” [Kessidis 1972, 91–92].

The world model included nature, gods and man. Homeric comparisons, from which scientific (natural philosophical) analogies arose, are based on ideas about man’s involvement in nature. But Homer’s nature loses its self-sufficient meaning, which it had in a myth, and, after serving as the arena of actions of gods and demonic forces, it turns into an area of human actions. “The pictures of nature are used by the poet for artistic purposes and at the same time for explaining human life” [Kessidis 2003, 92]. And although it took time to free oneself from religious and mythological concepts, as well as to pose ontological questions about the essence of being, the start was already made. The picture of the natural and social world order contained in the Homeric epics included issues that concerned gods and men as well as man’s inner world.

Greek society and human nature

In the archaic era, the *polis* also began to form. The transfer of the poems of Homer and Hesiod to writing destroyed the authority of traditions (customary law) and replaces them with the authority of *nomoi* – laws as human institutions. The *themistes* (θέμιστες), which were passed on to the Basileus together with the scepter, were not subject to discussion. But issues important in the *polis* life, turning from *themistes* to *nomoi*, were already subject to discussion. “The establishment of the principle of equality and public discussion of ‘deeds through speeches,’ the practice of elections and accountability (εὐθύναι) of officials, public control over state institutions, participation in judiciary proceedings and in performance of other public functions presupposed the involvement of wider layers of the *demos* in all spheres of socio-political and cultural life of the *polis*” [Kessidis 2003, 30].

The belief of the Greeks in the ability of a person to make an independent and free choice and to take reasonable decisions in state affairs led not only to political rationalism, but ultimately to rejection of the authority of tradition and to establishment of the authority of the human mind. “The discovery of a person – the idea of a citizen of the *polis* as an independent value, recognition of his right to initiative, the belief that a free person is able to make the right choice, trust in the human mind and his freedom – this was the most important achievement of Greek culture that determined its universal historical significance” [Kessidis 2003, 30–31]. However, Kessidis observed no domination of the “universal law of the intellectual development of mankind,” which V.V. Prokopenko discussed. Moreover, Kessidis specifically stipulates: “But since the rejection of faith in the gods was completely unthinkable for broad strata of the *demos*, then in the state (and in general cultural) life, political rationalism was combined with religious irrationalism” [Kessidis 2003, 31]. The combination of political rationalism with irrational religious faith in the Greek city-states of that period was the result of a conscious compromise between reason and traditional ideas about the world, which largely contributed to preservation of social stability. And this was not even a threat to the *polis*.

As mentioned above, the rationalistic character of Greek mentality was only the visible part of the iceberg. In the depths of this consciousness, there lurked features of the emotional and intellectual life of the ancient Greeks associated with their agonal way of life. Hence, the desire of Kessidis to get away from the absolutization of the social in man, given that agonality is born on the verge of the biological and the social,

and his turning to Thucydides, as well as his reflections on human nature. Agonality as a national character trait of the Greeks explains a lot in the social and personal behavior of the Greeks, in the Peloponnesian War, in the crisis of the *polis* and the trial of Socrates that took place five years after the defeat of Athens in this “unfortunate” war. In an atmosphere of widespread nihilistic sentiments, which resulted in the assertion of relativistic ideas of conventionality of law and moral norms, and the assertion of the “right of the strong,” which was perceived as a threat to public welfare; the main charges were directed at Socrates, as the teacher of Alcibiades and Critias [Kessidis 2001b, 20].

The initial striving for cognition of the fundamental principle of things did not alienate man from nature, meanwhile Socrates offered the Athenians something different: salvation, which he saw in God as the highest mind and the source of the world order [Kessidis 2001b, 264]. This did not destroy the idea of the relationship between man and the universe, but rather elevated it to the level of self-awareness. “Moreover, Socrates assumed that man, with all his imperfections as compared to the grand space and the all-pervading cosmic mind-god, unlike animals and other living beings, is in a special, close relationship to God and to the universal mind...” [Kessidis 2001b, 266]. Another thing is also important. Kessidis, noting that Socrates revealed to man the meaning of existence in the salvation of the soul and in self-improvement, poses the question: was Socrates sure that this was achievable? In any case, Socrates, acting as a supporter and promoter of rational knowledge and understanding it as a “great power,” according to Kessidis, “was convinced that this force could be used either to do man good or to harm him” [Kessidis 2001b, 316].

Of course, the idea of democracy presupposes supremacy of the human mind and a creative (intellectual, artistic, social, etc.) vocation for man. But reason and rational aspirations characterize to a greater extent what should be, and not what is. Yes, democracy does not recognize any higher authority except law, and provisions that are not taken for granted, but “based on facts and logic, on a reasonable (rational) understanding” [Kessidis 2008, 41]. And the Greeks achieved a lot in that direction. Pericles (in a speech transcribed by Thucydides), eulogized Athens, where a citizen was able to achieve perfection by engaging in social activities and determining his future. But Thucydides also left evidence of the irrational cruelty that the Greeks showed toward each other in the Peloponnesian War. The fact is that democracy gave rise to competitiveness (*agon* – ἀγών), which fueled ambition and

pushed people to risk, adventures and the desire to win “at any cost” [Kessidis 2008, 45]. In this case, Kessidis considers it possible to speak of the “agonal mentality” of the Greeks.

Ancient Greek democracy, and even modern democracy, are impossible without literacy and legal enlightenment, without a developed personal consciousness, which allow us to see in the “agonal mentality” “the inner spiritual and psychological mood of the individual and of the collective,” which, in turn, involves the “deeper level of consciousness and the unconscious” [Kessidis 2008, 110–111]. And here, Kessidis’s conclusions were unambiguous: “The spirit of competition, stimulating to activity and creative search, is not only a creative principle, but also destructive” [Kessidis 2001a, 15]¹.

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Greek culture, which proclaimed the victory of *logos* over myth, formed the possibility of a holistic view of the world and of search for the fundamental principles of all that exists, thereby making a way for formation and development of philosophy, science, and education. In this sense, the formation of Greek philosophy meant universal intellectual development and “self-expansion of the *logos*.” But only in the sense that this met the needs of personal orientation of a person who broke with traditional values and turned to reason as a universal way of solving problems. But the Greeks intuitively knew that in the depths of human consciousness there are abysses of the unconscious, so they also sent a warning from their remote past. And Kessidis, while defending man’s right to freedom and responsibility, understood the development of the human mind in Heraclitean terms: as a struggle, first of all, with oneself and as self-overcoming.

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¹ It is worth noting that the position of Th. Kessidis was progressive not only in the context of Soviet studies of classical antiquity. Kessidis’s ideas echo conclusions of a number of modern foreign researchers of ancient Greek culture. For example, Albert Henrichs, professor of Greek literature at Harvard University, cites as an example the story of the peripatetic Phaenias of Eresus, describing how the Greeks, in the heat of the struggle, “abandoned rationality (*ta euloga*) in favour of the irrational (*ta paralogia*),” and he concludes: “rationality is vulnerable, and that for the Greeks myth was the preferred vehicle for articulating the fragility of the rational and the lure of the irrational” [Henrichs 1999, 236–237].

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