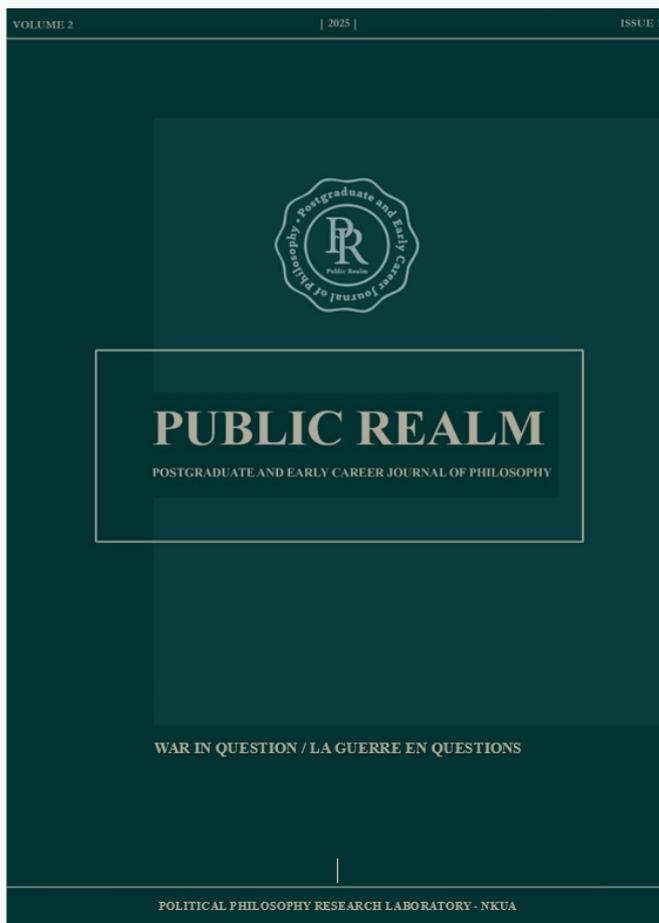


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Ideas in trenches: Power and Polemics in Panagiotis Kondylis

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Abstract

The author of the article attempts to examine the positions of Panagiotis Kondylis on the intellectual history and ideas' polemical nature that is the basic feature for understanding the configuration and development of an idea-theory in history. In order to achieve a full understanding of the specific concept of the intellectual history, first of all we have to analyze the Greek thinker's positions on the power and the way in which the search for power as a basic and irrevocable anthropological condition leads to a polemic condition within the social field. This polemic condition is also evident in the field of ideas, as ideas can be seen as the attempt to form worldviews by the respective subject or group of subjects that have the purpose of self-preservation and expanding their power. Therefore, in this article the emphasis is placed on two different areas of Kondylis' thought, the philosophy of man and then on the description of the ideas' formulation.

Keywords

Panagiotis Kondylis, Carl von Clausewitz, intellectual history, ideas, power, decision

The "genealogy" of the power of Panagiotis Kondylis

Extensive observation of Panagiotis Kondylis' life and writings very often leads the scholar to the conclusion that Kondylis has a fairly secure position regarding the philosophical, and in general the research interests of the Greek thinker. Kondylis had developed a considerable interest in power and war from the early phase of his writing activity. By "war" is meant not only violent conflict, or to put it in Clausewitz's terms, any act of violence aimed at forcing our opponent to follow our will¹, but the more general warlike elements that are evident in the socio-political field. His systematic engagement with Niccolò Machiavelli indicates from the beginning of his career, the direction that Kondylis' thinking would take in the years to come around power, war and the correlation between morality and politics. This becomes apparent if we carefully observe his main theoretical influences throughout his career. Machiavelli, as already mentioned, Thucydides, Carl Schmitt and Carl von Clausewitz are some of the names which the Greek thinker was theoretically associated with. In particular, his preoccupation with the latter writer, who could not fit into the narrow framework of the typical status of a philosopher -as most people have him in mind-, as well as his late study and presentation of geopolitical issues, clearly shows Kondylis' immediate interest in the conflict.

The decision of the Greek historian to deal with geopolitical issues however, is not some kind of inexplicable preference. Despite his initial association with Marxism, Kondylis is led to formulate a philosophy of man that breaks directly with the moral-normative approaches that prevailed, especially in political thought after the writing of John Rawls' Theory of Justice. The Greek thinker understood, after his break with Marxism, that rejecting the moral-normative approaches of contemporary political thought and dealing with power would be a rather strange project for the world of philosophers, as power has always been a complex issue. In particular, since the Greek thinker rejected the moral-normative character of the socio-political field, he supported the idea that power plays a much more essential role in the formation of values and normative principles. These positions lead to the rejection of ethics as an "objective" investigation of the issues of the axiological problem and the rejection of reason as a tool for finding "objective" truth. In conclusion, for many readers of him, Kondylis can be described as a modern skeptic. An initial view of the subject leads to this conclusion, but the Greek thinker does not emphasize so much on issues of the possibility of knowledge, but denies the objectivity of values. This observation, possibly, cannot support the characterization of Kondylis as a skeptic.

According to Kondylis, the problem of power was posed very early in the early stages of philosophical thought about man and society. The philosophical conflict between the Sophists and Plato is perhaps the most characteristic example in the intellectual history where the problem of power is posed as a polemic between two rival positions. The sophistic inquiry into the antithetical relationship between Nature and Law is essentially the first systematic investigation of the opposition between force and morality from

¹ Panagiotis Kondylis, *War and politics-war, economy and society; war and revolution- the hot war after the cold war- the Greek-Turkish war*, (Athens: Theme Lio, 1997), p. 22.

which an anti-metaphysical and relativistic philosophy is formed². The Sophists represented in a fairly early form in antiquity what Kondylis tries to establish in more detail in the field of socio-political thought in the 20th century. The Sophists, contrary to the popular view of their work, did not simply teach techniques for the acquisition of power, but provided the philosophical discourse of the time with a radical view of the understanding of human affairs³. According to Kondylis, Thucydides - a key influence - was the most brilliant representative of sophistry. The main achievement that the ancient historian achieved through his work is that he described the driving forces of people and history in general. According to Thucydides, war is not an exceptional event, but a frequent occurrence that can reveal the forces that drive human action. This possibly led Kondylis to his engagement with the Clausewitz's anthropology and philosophy of culture, as through the German military man's thought, Kondylis sees another tool to affirm the existential tension for the acquisition of power, which is at the core of the war phenomenon⁴.

Returning to the controversy between the Sophists and Plato, the basic positions of Kondylis on the axiological and moral-normative problem can be discerned. The modern Greek thinker stands on the theoretical dichotomy that Plato makes between Good and Pleasure, i.e., between Reason and Power. At this point, Kondylis observes the hidden polemical dimensions of the issue from the perspective of Plato's conception, and his critique of the ancient philosopher leads Kondylis' readers to understand why he rejects Reason as a tool for investigating "objective" morality. Plato thinks that a will is motivated by force is not a true will, because a true will must be oriented by the Idea of the Good⁵. The Greek historian of ideas points out that the Good in Plato is defined axiomatically by moral-normative criteria, as is the case with its speculated, according to Kondylis, objective character, but also with the rejection of all other reasonable conceptions of the definition of the Good⁶. These axiomatic judgments clearly contain claims of power, as do all axiological judgments in general. Plato entrusts the definition of the Good to an expert, which it is readily understood that this expert is himself. The invocation of the Reason and the theoretical separation from power is another trick of the pursuit of power, since the subject who then invokes the Reason can posit himself as free from the suspicion of pursuing power⁷. Kondylis considers Plato's greatest contribution to be the formulation of an impeccable strategy for gaining power, rejecting the pursuit of power and the use of force⁸.

The contemporary Greek thinker observes that the problem of power within the socio-political field is an issue that pervades the entire history of political thought. Typical, according to Kondylis, is the attempt by Christians, such as Augustine of Hippo, to critique the ideals of pagan culture and sophisticated notions of the unsatisfying pursuit of power. According to the

² Panagiotis Kondylis, *Power, Pleasure, Utopia*, (Athens: Stigmi, 2000), p. 55.

³ Ibid, p. 57.

⁴ Panagiotis Kondylis, *War and politics-war, economy and society; war and revolution- the hot war after the cold war- the Greek-Turkish war*, Ibid, p. 26.

⁵ Panagiotis Kondylis, *Power, Pleasure, Utopia*, Ibid, p. 61.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid, p. 62.

⁸ Ibid.

Greek historian of ideas, however, even this attempt to demolish theories of the pursuit of power as a basic anthropological condition in defense of an ascetic conception embodies within it clear pursuits of power that lead to the combating of pagan concepts⁹. Thus, the Christian of the Middle Ages denies that he desires the acquisition of power and presents God as the sole source of power and authority, and subsequently God and power become a purely political affair when he undertakes to distribute power and authority to people. For Kondylis, even the medieval worship of God concealed issues of power in political terms.

In modern times the question of power acquires an anti-metaphysical dimension with the center of the philosophical search shifting from theology to anthropology. Hobbes is the most prominent example of a thinker who reconstructs questions about power and places them on a mechanistic basis. Power can be understood as the natural movement of human beings and its limitation can only be achieved by a more intense power, which is what is presented in the Leviathan state. Spinoza, who is influenced by similar positions, refers to the effort of everything to adhere to its Being¹⁰. This effort is referred to as *Conatus* and is a force inherent in the being, without having received external intervention¹¹. According to Kondylis, Spinoza is led to similar political conclusions as Hobbes¹² and they are one trend in the debate on power in modern times. The other direction is that of Rousseau, which is the main attitude of the Enlightenment, as Hobbes' anthropological 'pessimism' and the idea that the human subject is motivated by the pursuit of power, clearly led to morally relativist positions, which is the main attitude of the Enlightenment opposed, according to Kondylis,¹³. Rousseau questions the native and biological origin of the will to pursue power and traces it to causes arising from social symbiosis¹⁴.

The debate on power was of great interest in the 20th century as well, since Kondylis belongs to the circle of philosophers of the previous century who not only extensively analyzed the issue of power in the socio-political field, but also this issue became the core of his own original thinking. His critique of two great thinkers of the 20th century on their positions on power indirectly reveals part of his own theoretical positions. The Greek thinker, first of all, attacks Arendt's notion of the separation between power and violence. Power, for the German-Jewish political scientist, has to do with prestige, and for this reason she generally reproaches the tradition of political thought for its arbitrary identification of power and violence. According to Kondylis, Arendt wrongly assumes that this identification in modern thought comes from Weber and at the same time does not accept that historically the

⁹ Ibid, p. 67.

¹⁰ Vasiliki Grigoropoulou, *Knowledge, passions and politics in Spinoza's philosophy*, (Athens: Alexandria 1999), p. 90.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² This thesis of Kondylis is possibly a very simplistic statement, as the development of Spinoza's thinking on politics and the social contract is not the same as that of Hobbes

¹³ Kondylis does not directly explain why the Enlightenment rejected moral relativism, but it is understood that moral relativism is characterised by two features that Enlightenment thought abhorred. The first is the denial of the universality and universality of values and the second is the suspicion of nihilism with which relativism is associated. Nihilism is the other great opponent of the Enlightenment along with ascetic ethics and theological metaphysics [Panagiotis Kondylis, *The European Enlightenment (Volume A)*, (Athens: Themelio 1987), pp. 33-34].

¹⁴ Panagiotis Kondylis, *Power, Pleasure, Utopia*, Ibid, p. 74.

identification of power and violence has a Platonic origin¹⁵. In addition, the contemporary Greek thinker notes that Arendt is wrong when she fails to see the necessary condition for the existence of the political community, which is the threat of the use of violence¹⁶. Kondylis, secondly, reproaches Michel Foucault on his way of approaching power and authority. Foucault is right when he observes the diffusion of power throughout the micro-points of society and that it is also formatted by a complex network of relations. However, this Foucauldian approach may indeed lead to reliable anthropological and psychological concepts, but it fails to give scientific interest to the historical and political philosopher. Power should take form and be institutionally established¹⁷. The above critique reveals Kondylis' ambition to construct a social ontology.

The power through the decision: The formation of world images

From the very first pages of *Power and Decision*, i.e., his basic philosophical work, the Greek thinker sets out the definition of decision (de-cisio). Decision is a process of detachment through which a world image suitable for ensuring the capacity of orientation for self-preservation emerges¹⁸. It is a withdrawal of the subject of the decision from the preliminary anarchic world to a world that is meaningful and contains a direction. The subject of decision, according to Kondylis, is unable to grasp the Whole and form a complete worldview because of its finite character¹⁹. The subject of decision, therefore, relies on a known and elaborated part of the existing world. These subjects have the feature to know that there are other possible decisions and world images, however, these world images constructs are considered to be fictitious and part of the constituents of the preliminary heterogeneous world²⁰.

These positions of Kondylis are not only parts of a philosophy of man, but are a reflection on the formation of the subject as identity and developed more generally into a philosophy of existence, as the Greek thinker often clarifies the strong existential tension that characterizes the whole process of de-cisio. The subject's decision shapes an ordered world and at the same time its identity is formed. Without the insert of the subject into an ordered world the identity of the subject cannot exist²¹. This process reveals the importance of decision and the necessary fusion of the subject with it. The bond between decision and subject is strengthened as long as the subject of the decision has practical successes within its ordered world. To summarize, the subject is initially confronted with an anarchic, disparate and chaotic world with no inherent meaning²² or direction. At this stage, there can be no reference to a subject with an identity, but to a bare existence. Then, the subject through the decision can act in an ordered world having acquired its

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 95.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 97

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Panagiotis Kondylis, *Power and Decision: The Formation of World Images and the Question of Values*, (Athens: Stigma 2001), p. 23

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 25.

²⁰ Ibid, pp. 26-27.

²¹ Ibid, p. 29.

²² The absence of inherent meaning is so important for understanding Kondylis' philosophy of man.

identity. The decision is the inaugural event of the subject with identity and the description of its complex and complicated 'prehistory' cannot be accurately described because the subject understands this 'prehistory' in terms of the decision, its worldview and its present identity²³. This subject's 'prehistory' has to do with his biopsychological traits and the various inclinations of existence and the justification of his decision, in fact, cannot be rationally justified and, as Kondylis points out, is ultra rationem. This is a point that emphasizes existential tension and clarifies the unbreakable relation between existence and decision. The Greek thinker believes that decision shows the primacy of the existential element and is a universal phenomenon that has to do with every subject regardless of historical and cultural conditions.

It is apparent in the Greek thinker's thought that the existential element cannot be approached logically and at the same time motivates the subject of the decision to turn to an ultra rationem withdrawal from the preliminary world, to a distinction between interest and of no interest. As Kondylis points out, it is obvious that the subject's exploration of the world and all its constituent elements is not done with any rational approach and thorough investigation, because this would go against the subject's everyday demands of achieving self-preservation. From all of the above, the importance of the decision for existence itself becomes clear.

However, the correlation between the decision and the pursuit of power has not been explained. This correlation does not seem to be taken axiomatically by Kondylis, but is derived through his analyses of the necessity of the decision for self-preservation. As noted, decision is the way for a subject to be able to live in the world. For the Greek thinker, self-preservation inherently cannot be static, but must have a dynamic character²⁴. By necessity, self-preservation in order to be achieved must have as its long-term consequence the increase of power²⁵, as the subject is in an environment and faces physical deficiencies that endanger his self-preservation. The deprivation, i.e. the physical lack is directly linked to the struggle for self-preservation and reveals that it can only be dealt with when the available equipment, i.e. the means the subject has to cope with the deprivation, grows and expands²⁶. This is essentially an increase in the power of the subject. Man, therefore, in order to cope with the constant crises of unsatisfied needs, have to seek to increase his power. On the basis of above positions, Kondylis justifies the relationship between decision and the pursuit of power and thinks that the latter is a basic anthropological fact. From Kondylis' philosophy of man, the relation of man with power becomes evident, which can manifest itself as violence, but also as warfare in the political sphere.

Kondylis' criticism of Hannah Arendt on the relation of power to violence and therefore of politics to violence reveals the Greek philosopher's basic thoughts on the political. In particular, in his work on the theory of war, the presentation of Clausewitz's anthropology, philosophy of culture and

²³ Panagiotis Kondylis, *Power and Decision: The Formation of World Images and the Question of Values*, *Ibid*, pp. 38-39.

²⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 59-60.

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 60.

²⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 60-61.

theory of war further clarifies his positions on the relationship between politics and violence and, more specifically, politics and war. These points in his thought are directly related to his conception of power. Clausewitz's positions on the nature of war and its relation to politics are very much in line with those of the Greek thinker, so any reference to Clausewitz's positions also highlights Kondylis's positions on the question of the relationship between political power and violent war.

Clausewitz, according to Kondylis, observes in the phenomenon of war an existential core that is located at the level of the individual human subject²⁷. The existential core of war is revealed through Clausewitz's ideotypical abstraction who tries to isolate pure war from real war, and he achieves that by leaving out of the definition of its defining features those characteristics that prevent the full perpetuation of enmity and violence²⁸. Human nature remains constant regardless of circumstances and the course of war has to do with the ambivalent nature of the human subject who on the one hand is a carrier of pure enmity and on the other hand is possessed by emotions, for example, ambition for the future, which mitigate his aggressive tendencies²⁹. At this point, the connection with Kondylis' thought on man becomes evident, who believes that man by nature seeks self-preservation and the acquisition of power.

Power and violence, politics and war are directly related and this is because man cannot break away from his relation to violence. He cannot remove himself from it, but at the same time, he cannot live with it all the time. His intellect and the mitigation of the violence that results from these mental processes, always in the context of the pursuit of power, lead him to a mitigation of violent practices. It could be stated that war is the opposite of politics, that is a product of civilization and civilization is a product of the recession of savage pre-political instincts. This objection, however, cannot be convincing, because the role of the intellect and reason in the phenomenon of war is not understood. Any war that takes place in the context of civilization is necessarily political, precisely because it veers away from the direction of pure war and blind violence and takes place in the context of the calculation and study of the means and ends, but also of the particular traits and situations that characterize each state³⁰.

The answer as to whether politics and war, and therefore power and violence, are related creates another question, which has to do with identifying this relationship. It has to do with the content of the relationship between them. According to Clausewitz and Kondylis, war is born through politics and is essentially the continuation of 'political communication' by other means. Politics is about conflict and the separation of friend and enemy and war essentially continues this conflict (of interests) simply by bloody means³¹. Conflict, however, is not the cause of the initiation of bloody violence within the context of culture and politics, as violence and war are a possible development within conflict situations, but not necessary. The

²⁷ Panagiotis Kondylis, *War and politics-war, economy and society; war and revolution- the hot war after the cold war- the Greek-Turkish war*, Ibid, p. 24.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 31.

³⁰ Ibid, pp. 41-42.

³¹ Ibid, p. 44.

general concept of conflict in the political realm and violent war should have a common cause and that is the pursuit of power³². The above theses highlight the wide gap between Kondylis and Arendt and the reason why he radically disagrees with her thinking about power. Arendt emphasizes in her work "On revolution" the profoundly anti-political character of violence³³ and the fact that violence is a marginal phenomenon in the political sphere for the human subject as a political being who possesses the capacity of discourse³⁴.

In his study of Clausewitz, the Greek thinker shows from the first pages that the development of civilization in no way means the minimization of the existential source of war³⁵. The development of the intellect, in fact, does not reduce the chances of war conflict, but on the contrary can make war violence more effective, since it is put in the service of the pursuit of power and functions in such a way as to make violence in a war conflict more effective. This «exhibition» of the intellect of its pacifist masks is also clearly evident in *Power and Decision*, where Kondylis analyses the relationship between 'spirit' and the pursuit of power. These positions form the basis for understanding the polemical nature of ideas.

The Greek thinker dealt with the question of 'spirit' in his introductory remarks in his work about European Enlightenment. There, he claims that there is an ambiguity that characterizes the concept of "spirit", since, although the main meaning concerns the mental functions as opposed to the organs and bodily needs, there is also the meaning that identifies the spirit with the mental functions that are in opposition to the body³⁶. On the issue of the "spirit"³⁷ that he develops in the last part of *Power and Decision*, Kondylis seems to accept the first interpretation of the identification of spirit with intellect. As the Greek philosopher points out, 'spirit' is associated with the pursuit of power to the extent that it elevates man from the purely animal condition³⁸. The "spirit" is that mechanism which is not limited to the achievement of self-preservation, but is able to detect the state of deprivation and motivates the subject in the pursuit of power. As the philosopher says in his text:

This causes a chain reaction of power claims, never to stop. Precisely because the "spirit" is that human element, which eminently thirsts for power...³⁹

The instinct of the purely animal element is subordinated to the superiority of the "spirit", not because the spirit is something superior from a moral and normative point of view, i.e., that the intellect is a more value mechanism than psychological urges, but because the "spirit" is better suited

³² Ibid, p. 48.

³³ Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, trans. Angeliki Stoupaki, (Athens: Alexandria 2006), p. 24.

³⁴ Ibid, pp. 23-24.

³⁵ Panagiotis Kondylis, *War and politics-war, economy and society; war and revolution- the hot war after the cold war- the Greek-Turkish war*, Ibid, pp. 35-36.

³⁶ Panagiotis Kondylis, *The European Enlightenment (Volume A)*, (Athens: Themelio 1987), Ibid, p. 23.

³⁷ With this term Kondylis means «the intellect».

³⁸ Panagiotis Kondylis, *Power and Decision: The Formation of World Images and the Question of Values*, Ibid, p. 144.

³⁹ Ibid, p. 145.

to act to obtain power in many cases where the instinct is unable to do so⁴⁰. Under Kondylis's concept of the pursuit of self-preservation as a basic anthropological element leading successively to the pursuit of power, it essentially follows that the "spirit" is born as a product of the functional failures of the instinct to resolve those problems that affected its self-preservation and the acquisition of power⁴¹. The conclusion of the above considerations leads Kondylis to a central position for understanding the intellectual history. 'Intellectual' life, that is, the process by which ideas are formed and distributed, affected by the same laws⁴² as all other phenomena of social life and is directly linked to the effort for self-preservation and the acquisition of power⁴³.

The role of ideas and people in the historical process, for Kondylis, is obvious and, perhaps, should be obvious to all scholars of the intellectual history, if they understood the way they themselves operate when they study ideas as political subjects and thoroughly engaged with the details of various theories. The intellectual history cannot be understood if ideas are understood as sterile sets of beliefs applied to the world directly and precisely as they are found in written texts. The application of ideas takes place through struggling individuals engaged in a struggle, which has its own logic that must transcend the logic⁴⁴ of texts if it is indeed to play a significant role in a specific historical period⁴⁵. Ideas are tools and means to achieve an end for a plurality of subjects in a situation of existential tension⁴⁶. Kondylis in *Power and Decision* points out the same lightness and insignificance of ideas as such in the field of history. Ideas "do not exist", there are only human entities that are confronted with specific situations and act with a view to self-preservation and enhancement of its power in various ways, one of which is the production and embodiment of ideas⁴⁷. People act in the name of various ideas⁴⁸.

The importance of the ideas as such, according to Kondylis, is underestimated and this results from his basic positions. The insignificance of ideas detached from the subject of the decision made is observed, equally, for the Greek philosopher, in the gap between the ideology of the subject and his behavior. The statement of support for an idea in no way means a

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 146.

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 147.

⁴² Kondylis uses the term law without quotation marks in this passage. The author's assessment, however, is that the use of this word without quotation marks may create misunderstandings about Kondylis' understanding of the historical act.

⁴³ Panagiotis Kondylis, *Power and Decision: The Formation of World Images and the Question of Values*, Ibid, p. 149.

⁴⁴ This transgression also concerns the "ethics" developed in a text, or rather the "moralistic" positions, to be more compatible with Kondylis' language.

⁴⁵ Panagiotis Kondylis, *The European Enlightenment (Volume A)*, (Athens: Themelio 1987), Ibid, pp. 42-43.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 43.

⁴⁷ Panagiotis Kondylis, *Power and Decision: The Formation of World Images and the Question of Values*, Ibid, p. 153.

⁴⁸ The astute reader might ask the question why subjects would embrace ideas and not create their own, since this would make it easier for them to tailor their own ideas perfectly to their biopsychological traits and it has everything to do with self-preservation and the pursuit of power. The answer is simple, since the acceptance of an admitted idea may be free from theoretical errors which in the observation of opponents could be a blow to the subject who adopts an idea which he himself formulates, without, however, having the intellectual capacity and theoretical training for such an undertaking.

determination of the behavior of the bearer of the idea⁴⁹. Ideology determines behavior only indirectly and symbolically. This situation, in essence, reveals the importance of polemic consistency over logic and that the support of an idea is simply the public statement, from the subject's point of view, of his identity, his friends and his enemies⁵⁰. In this case the ideas as tools fulfill their role and as symbols used for some future activity in which a partial or total recruitment will be necessary⁵¹.

The polemical nature of ideas is a clear fact for the Greek thinker, and this nature of ideas is observed in a variety of ideas that initially seem quite different from each other, but all of them are characterized by the polemical spirit that possesses their bearers and the fact that they are means, tools and public declarations of enemy and friend. For example, the dispute between rationalists and irrationalists, which has preoccupied intellectuals throughout modern times, is a classic example of this. The identification of rationalism with a specific content of ideas was from the outset one of the main instruments of polemic of the Enlightenment philosophers against their enemies and especially against medieval scholasticism, as Kondylis points out in his treatise on the European Enlightenment⁵². The war project of the rationalists, then, since the rise of the Enlightenment, has been to monopolize thought and proper argumentation as a whole⁵³. This is clearly an arbitrary identification of form and content, at a time when, for the Greek philosopher, rationalism as the correct use of the tools of formal logic can only be formal. On the other side of the ideological war, irrationalists (in the logical sense of the term)⁵⁴ act in an equally polemic manner, as they "pretend" to oppose the Reason since they already use arguments to support their positions. Reason is demeaned on their part because their fundamental positions are called into question when they are subjected to acute criticism through Reason. In particular, this polemic between rationalists and irrationalists and the way in which it takes place reveals that deliberation in search of 'objective truth' is nothing more than a covert pursuit of power on the part of a collective subject.

Conclusions

If one conclusion can be drawn that is not explicitly stated in the main body of the article, but is implied throughout, it is that Kondylis was a philosopher who did not recognize the formative role of ideas as such. The Greek thinker, in essence, underestimated ideas, and particularly in the way most philosophers understood and treated them. His turn in the later years of

⁴⁹ Panagiotis Kondylis, *Power and Decision: The Formation of World Images and the Question of Values*, Ibid, p. 159.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 163,

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 162.

⁵² Panagiotis Kondylis, *The European Enlightenment (Volume A)*, (Athens: Themelio 1987), Ibid, p. 59.

⁵³ Panagiotis Kondylis, *Power and Decision: The Formation of World Images and the Question of Values*, Ibid, p. 167.

⁵⁴ Kondylis refers to two kinds of "irrationalism", irrationalism in the mystical sense of the term and irrationalism in the logical sense of the term. The first kind refers to the acceptance of a fundamental position which is made without the use of reason, but which arises through a decision and is itself ultra rationem. The second kind is that attitude in which irrationalists refuse to argue by logical means because they consider that some of their fundamental positions are in danger of being undermined through the use of reason. This results in the denial of reason in the name of will or the complexity and movement of life that cannot be determined by reason.

his writing career to geopolitical and planetary thought, perhaps reveals to some extent his opposition to the philosophers' 'abstractions' on issues concerning the international socio-political realm. Even in this field of engagement, however, Kondylis did not cease to address phenomena through the prism of self-preservation, the pursuit of power, and the polemical nature of ideas. International politics is a great example of the polemical texture of politics and ideas. This is an excellent way of explaining why, for example, the 'anti-Western' states⁵⁵ have not ceased to make extensive use of technological innovations in the military and political spheres, which are the result of the 'Western spirit'⁵⁶. At the same time, Kondylis raises the issue of human rights on an international scale. Even on this issue, the Greek philosopher perceives the rhetoric around human rights as a tool of war and a means of pressure⁵⁷. As he himself mentions, the universalism of "human rights" was a theoretical "weapon" of the West against the communism of the Cold War period⁵⁸.

In addition, the presentation of the philosophy of man and the genealogy of power on the part of Kondylis is intended to highlight a whole methodological attitude towards social phenomena. The Greek thinker's philosophy of man reveals the reason why he himself is a classic example of a Weberian socio-political analyst. German thinker's methodological individualism is clearly revealed in Kondylis' philosophical thought where the causes of the formation of the socio-political field and its various tendencies are located in the field of the biopsychological traits of the subject of decision.

The article emphasized the issue of moral-normative evaluation which conceals power relations. This was the central concern of Kondylis. The Greek thinker as a descriptive thinker did not wish to make moral-normative evaluations, yet he believed that it was possible to know human affairs. According to the Greek thinker, the epistemological and the ethical question have no necessary connection. Therefore, the characterization of Kondylis as a "skeptic" may be unfortunate. Kondylis was an example of a nihilistic philosopher, where his nihilism was a product of his understanding of the polemical nature of ideas and power relations.

Finally, it should be noted that Kondylis' preoccupation with conflict and war and his belief in the inherent polemical element of man is a pattern that can be observed generally in thinkers who refer to the inability of human reason to settle the conflict of absolute values. This is precisely what Leo Strauss mentions in his critique of Max Weber, who based his rejection of natural law on what Strauss refers to as the politics of power⁵⁹. German sociologist, Kondylis and thinkers in general who question the possibility of objective value judgments perceive peace as an impossible social situation and war as an inevitable event.

⁵⁵ Panagiotis Kondylis, *From the 20th century to the 21st century: Intersections in Planetary Politics around the Year 2000*, (Athens, Themelio 1998), p. 90

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 65.

⁵⁷ Panagiotis Kondylis, *Planetary politics after the cold war*, (Athens, Themelio 2011), p. 125.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Leo Strauss, *Natural Law and History*, Trans. Stefanos Rozanis, Gerasimos Likiardopoulos, (Athens Gnosis 1988), p. 88.

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