

## **GREEK LITERATURE – POETRY**

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As part of the team which was formed in our school so as to apply the idea of “working together» in the class, I decided to use this way of teaching not in the current tasks of the class but as a tool to proceed and approach a subject that is not usual and not easy for the students and requires a deeper understanding. The subject had to do with the relation between poetry and philosophy. More specifically the idea was to let the students see how the philosophy sometimes can resolve and lighten {φωτίζει} the dark points of a poem and how the understanding of a poem requires sometimes an alteration of our way of thinking. Philosophy puts our understanding in a higher level from which the problems of understanding obtain a totally new content. A challenge indeed for this age of students who usually are getting bored with the poetry AND the philosophy.

The poem that I decided to teach was “The King of Assini” of Giorgos Seferis and the relation of this poem with the philosophy of an ancient greek philosopher, Heraclitus. As Heraclitus has a powerful but very special way of seeing the world, I decided to choose some students to whom I explained parts of this philosophy. Then, these students would have to guide their colleagues to resolve the problems of the poem through the philosophy of Heraclitus.

In our first approach of the poem the students moved on the first level of understanding and they had to describe the kind of experience they were thinking that the poem was about. They found the experience of the loss, loss of the memory, loss of the past, loss of the hope. This idea, in the first level, would be justified from the moto of the poem, a phrase that the poet repeats “the poet is a void”. My intent was to reverse this idea at the end of our class by giving a totally new content in relation to the ancient greek philosophy and the philosophy of Heraclitus. On this first level of understanding, the void is the emptiness but some students remarked that the emptiness is useful sometimes. And this was the inspiration to our work. The problem/question that I put to them was “Is it possible that Seferis, who had a big

trust on the power of poetry and, in addition was working on that poem for two years, wrote this poem just to tell us that the poet is trapped in an experience of emptiness?''.

I had prepared two working sheets centered on two sub-questions:

1. What is the content of the notion of the void in the greek ancient philosophy and what has to do with the Creation, the Cosmogonia,
2. How can we explain certain images of the poem in relation to the philosophy of Heraclitus, his Cosmogonia.

The working sheets contained questions which could guide the students as well as small texts that they could use in their conclusions. At his task they should accept the help or the guidance of their colleagues that I had selected as their guides.

The students were separated in 6 groups of 4 students each. In every group, one of the 4 students was the one that was selected as their guide. 3 of the groups had to work on the one and the other 3 on the other working sheet. During their work I was assisting them passing through their groups to support, clarify or suggest.

I think that the work was successful, as the students who usually don't pay attention, considered that this work, as they were working in small groups, concerned them personally. And as the same work was given to 3 different groups, they did their best for the distinction of their own group. From the other side, the fact that they had to work with their colleagues and not with their professor offered them an additional freedom degree and made them express themselves more comfortably.

At the end of the class, the conclusions reversed the first impression. As to the first questions the students found that for the greek philosophy the void does not exist. And as Seferis was aware of the ancient greek philosophy, the experience of the void could not be about the emptiness or the loss. In contrary and in relation to the greek philosophy, it is the return in the primary Chaos where all the sperms of the Creation exist. As to the second question, they found that certain images of the poem correspond of the philosophy of Heraclitus. And the light of this philosophy there is no loss: the world is an eternal change which is supported by the antithesis. As the images of the poem reveal the movement of the Cosmos between its elements and the antithesis that govern the Cosmos according to Heraclitus, the poem obtains a

cosmologic content, it looks like an experience of the Universe in its eternal movement.

The second part of the class was more pleasant. The students had to find the correspondances between the poems of the poem and some phrases from Heraclitus or images I had given to them. The results of this work (with some additional work from me) gave the video “The King of Assini: a dialogue between Seferis and Heraclitus”.