

10. Heraclitus on *Logos*

Language, Rationality and the Real

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Almost¹ all interpreters of Heraclitus have always had a ready answer to the question: “What was Heraclitus?”² The mainstream reply assumes as self-evident that he was a philosopher. In what follows I, too, will take for granted that he was a philosopher, but I shall start by pointing out that universal attribution of a philosophical character to Heraclitus’ thought does not really imply monolithic unanimity, since the term “philosophy” can be (and usually is) understood quite equivocally. And I would like to insist that Heraclitus (and, for that matter, all other Presocratics) probably did not use the words “philosophy,” “philosopher,” or “philosophize,” and so could not think of himself or of his own activity as a thinker in these terms.³ Thus the concept of φιλοσοφία,

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- 1 Agustín García Calvo’s views about the non-philosophical character of Heraclitus’s thought are among the few exceptions that I know of. See A. García Calvo, *Razón común. Edición crítica, ordenación, traducción y comentario de los restos del libro de Heraclito* [sic] (Madrid 1985). Although Giorgio Colli, in *La sapienza greca*, III. *Eraclito* (Milan 1980), sometimes seems to deny him implicitly philosophical status because he usually calls him a sage (“un sapiente”), one can find also in his valuable work statements like this: “La filosofia di Eraclito, per il fatto che esprime la verità assoluta, può dirsi senz’altro il λόγος” (172).
 - 2 The lucid treatment of M. L. West happily puts it in just these words. See M. L. West, *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient* (Oxford 1971). West certainly seems to credit Heraclitus with a philosophy, and I believe that he is right when he affirms that physical cosmology was “not central in Heraclitus’ thought.” As to what sort of philosophy, then, Heraclitus’ was, West interprets it (closely following K. Reinhardt, and perhaps not so far from Burnet) as having “a religious end-purpose.” My drift is that Heraclitus’ philosophy lies rather in his metaphysics, understood as a rational methodic and systematic concern with knowledge and the real. See E. Hülsz Piccone, *Lógos. Heráclito y los orígenes de la filosofía* (Mexico City 2011).
 - 3 The verb φιλοσοφῶ and words of this family are first attested in fifth-century authors (notably Herodotus) but are wholly absent from all genuine Presocratic fragments. The sole exception which could be pointed out is a fragment of Heraclitus’ (B 35), but in all likelihood, as Marcovich shows in his *H.*, the ref-

as a regulatory hermeneutical idea, is most of the time presupposed, and the validity of its attribution to Heraclitus is hardly ever fully acknowledged and argued for. In point of fact, and even if there are good grounds for doing so, when we call the Presocratics “philosophers,” we are projecting retrospectively a language that was shaped at a later time, mainly by Plato and Aristotle, from which everybody else took it. Although there is some continuity in the shaping of the idea of philosophy from Plato to Aristotle, there are also striking differences between their respective conceptions, including their historical approaches to the Presocratics, particularly to Heraclitus. In Aristotle, he appears as a self-contradictory thinker and writer, and as one of the φυσικοί, his peculiar monistic thesis about the ἀρχή being fire. The image of Heraclitus in Plato is more nuanced, less physicalistic, centered as it is on flux and the unity of opposites. I therefore want to emphasize the relevance of the question of the nature and the origins of philosophy for any interpretation that chooses to see Heraclitus precisely as a philosopher.

In this paper I shall try briefly to articulate a general view about who Heraclitus the philosopher is. My thesis is that he is both a metaphysician (an ontologist and epistemologist) *and* a moral philosopher. I shall take λόγος as the center of my sketch, and against semantically reductive interpretations I will argue that the full meaning of *logos*—a word best left untranslated in the texts—involves the notions of language, knowledge, reality and action, a complex unity pervaded by a common rationality. I will focus first on the metaphysical dimension of *logos*, and suggest that this is the ground on which Heraclitus builds his idea of man’s nature (which is centered in knowledge, itself essentially connected to both being and action, the ontological and the ethical dimensions). Attribution to Heraclitus of a theory on *logos* depends partly on whether one acknowledges its ontological status, and partly on whether one accepts that there is semantic unity and philosophical consistency throughout all documented instances of Heraclitean usage.

erence there to φιλοσόφους ἄνδρας is Clement’s, not Heraclitus’. Cf. P. Hadot, *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie antique?* (Paris 1995). All references to fragments of Heraclitus are made according to DK, ch. 22, although the Greek text assumed is mostly that of Marcovich’s edition. Translations into English are my own, unless otherwise noted.

Telling the *Logos*: Heraclitus as Metaphysician

It is remarkable that Heraclitus himself explicitly describes his own attitude and procedure in terms which amply justify the ancient opinion that the thinking he displays is philosophy indeed, even if he would not actually word it like that. In the opening of his book,⁴ after dealing with men's lack of understanding about a *logos* which is always the same (literally, "always this") and by which all things happen, he offers the earliest recorded description of what came to be called philosophy, when he goes on to characterize his own procedure as διήγησις, a "narrative explanation"⁵ dealing with "words and deeds," "according to nature" (κατὰ φύσιν⁶). Yet more precisely, he presents his own rational explanation as διαίρειν, a "dividing" of each thing and a "showing it forth" (verbally⁷) "as it truly is" (φράζειν ὅκως ἔχει). What we can call his philosophy and his method, he presents as the unfolding or telling of the true and universal *logos*, closely linked to knowledge (explanation, anal-

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- 4 For the Greek text, see below, note 12. That B 1 is the ἀρχή of the book relies on the authority of Aristotle and Sextus Empiricus, and is nowadays widely accepted. Not implausibly, many have proposed that it could have been preceded by a few words like "Heraclitus of Ephesos says as follows". It remains possible that other preserved fragment or fragments preceded B 1 (B 50 is a recurring candidate); cf. L. Tarán, "The first fragment of Heraclitus", *Illinois Classical Studies*, XI, 2; S. Mouraviev's recent reconstruction (*Heraclitea*, IV.A, 2011) conjectures a series of nine fragments before it. Some think that B 1 and at least B 114 and 2 (in that order) belong together here and form a neat proem.
- 5 The Greek noun διήγησις, meaning something like "narrative exposition" and/or "explanation," corresponds to the verb actually used, διηγέσθαι ("set out in detail," "describe"; LSJ *s.v.*).
- 6 Heraclitus' use of φύσις is arguably the oldest preserved within the philosophical tradition (since he probably wrote earlier than Parmenides, and the term is not documented in the scarce authentic fragments of Anaximander and Anaximenes). Φύσις is one of Heraclitus' main philosophical watchwords endowed with considerable "linguistic density," to use Kahn's words. Note in the passage quoted from B 1 the *apo koinou* construction of the adverbial phrase κατὰ φύσιν, affecting all three surrounding verbs. For the three other instances of the word in the fragments, see B 112, 123, and 106—the last probably not a full verbatim quotation. Put in direct style, φύσις ἡμέρης ἀπάσης μία ἔστι would be a minimalistic and reasonable version of the saying. See Mouraviev, *H.* III. 3. i-iii for his reconstruction of B 106.
- 7 This seems to be the best sense for φράζων in context, and one that is consistent with usage at Heraclitus' time. Cf. LSJ *s. v.* φράζω, 2, "show forth," "tell," "declare."

ysis and manifestation) of genuine being as φύσις.⁸ In fact, the formula περὶ φύσεως ἱστορία, an “investigation on the nature of things,” first documented in Plato,⁹ which became (through Aristotle) the basis of the standard generic characterization of “presocratic” philosophy, is likely based on Heraclitus’ actual language. Plato’s view differs from Aristotle’s significantly in that Heraclitus is treated as a metaphysician rather than as a “natural philosopher”¹⁰.

Heraclitus’ stance contrasts with the oblivious disposition of “other men,” who are likened to sleepers (thus projecting back the idea of awareness as a fundamental trait in Heraclitus’ own philosophical attitude). Because of this self-awareness, a certain self-reflexivity goes well with λόγος from the very start. In any case, λόγος is undeniably present as an explicit topic at the starting-point or ἀρχή of Heraclitus’ book, so it appears to be a true principle at least in a literary, and espe-

8 Pace H.-G. Gadamer’s opinion that φύσις carries no philosophical import yet in Heraclitus; cf. H.-G. Gadamer, *Der Anfang der Philosophie* (Stuttgart 1996) 41–42 = 34–35 of the English translation. The opposite view of the idea of φύσις as an early basic metaphysical concept was, of course, defended by M. Heidegger in his *Einführung in die Metaphysik* and essays “*Aletheia* (Heraklit, Fragment 16)” and “*Logos* (Heraklit, fr. 50 DK)” (all in the *Gesamtausgabe*, Frankfurt, various dates). Although Gadamer says he agrees with Kirk (in KRS), his claim misrepresents the latter’s own statements, which do not really back that φύσις has no philosophical weight whatsoever in Heraclitus. In the better and wider treatment of B 123, Kirk actually states that “the broad general sense of φύσις, from which all specialized senses are derived, is ‘essence’ or ‘nature,’ the way a thing is made, [...] the way it normally behaves,” and that “the most common early sense of φύσις is ‘being,’ though the idea of growth is not excluded and may be emphasized on particular occasions.” See Kirk, *H.* 227–231, esp. 229. This is a far cry from φύσις not being philosophically significant in Heraclitus, even if it does not mean “Nature,” as it allegedly does in Aristotle.

9 *Phaedo* 96a7. It is crucial for getting the right sense in context not to translate as “nature” *tout court*, but as “the nature of things.”

10 For Plato’s reception of Heraclitus, see T. Irwin, “Plato’s Heracliteanism,” *PQ* 27/106 (1977) 1–13; M. Adomenas (2002), “The fluctuating fortunes of Heraclitus in Plato” in A. Laks-C. Louguet (eds.), *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie présocratique* (Villeneuve-d’Ascq 2002) 419–447; See also E. Hülsz Piccone, “Sócrates y el oráculo de Delfos (una nota sobre Platón, *Apología de Sócrates* 20c4–23c1),” *Theoría* 14–15 (June 2003) 71–89, and “*Anámnēsis* en el *Menón* platónico,” *Apuntes filosóficos* 22 (2003) 61–79. See id., n. 2 above, as well as id., “La imagen de Heráclito en el *Cratilo* y el *Teeteto* de Platón,” in E. Hülsz (ed.), *Nuevos ensayos sobre Heráclito* (Mexico City 2010) 361–389; and id. “Plato’s Ionian Muses: *Sophist* 242 d-e,” in B. Bossi and T. M. Robinson (eds.), *Plato’s Sophist Revisited* (Berlin 2012).

cially in a narrative, sense. It can be seen as an ἀρχή in a fuller philosophical sense, too (although not as either a “material” or an “efficient” cause).

The Proem in Heraclitus’ book could have run something like this¹¹:

[B 1] Although the *logos* is this always men become uncomprehending both before hearing and once they have heard it. For about all things that happen in accordance to this *logos*, they are like the unexperienced experiencing words and deeds such as those I set out in detail according to nature distinguishing each thing and showing it as it truly is. But other men neglect all things they do awake just as all things they are oblivious of while asleep.

[B 114] Those who speak with sense must strengthen themselves with that which is common to all, just as the city with the law, and more strongly still. For all human laws are nurtured by a single one, the divine [law]. For it commands all as much as it wants to, and it suffices for all and is still left over.

[B 2] That is why one must follow what is common, but although the *logos* is common, most people live as if they had a private wisdom of their own.¹²

Much that concerns the purpose and nature of Heraclitus’ philosophy hangs on just what the word *logos* means here. That the meaning is a rather complex one is the view most widely held among modern schol-

11 I do not claim exhaustivity here, as there could be a few other fragments coming between B1 and B 114 (B 19 and 34 come to mind). As to the relationship between B 114 and 2, I follow Marcovich and others in treating it as a single, continuous whole. This would require more argument that I can give here, but it is *prima facie* likely, on grounds of style (i. e. narrative, “diegetic” form) and of content affinity (i. e., the *ξυνόν*), that the texts go together. It is worth noticing that Kahn’s insightful ordering does not follow this line, nor does Mouraviev’s reconstruction.

12 B 1: τοῦ δὲ λόγου τοῦδ’ ἐόντος αἰεὶ ἀξύνετοι γίνονται ἄνθρωποι καὶ πρόσθεν ἢ ἀκοῦσαι καὶ ἀκούσαντες τὸ πρῶτον· γινομένων γὰρ πάντων κατὰ τὸν λόγον τόνδε ἀπίροισιν εἰκόασι, πειρώμενοι καὶ ἐπέων καὶ ἔργων τοιούτων, ὁκοίων ἐγὼ διηγέυμαι κατὰ φύσιν διαιρέων ἕκαστον καὶ φράζων ὅκως ἔχει. τοὺς δὲ ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους λανθάνει ὁκόσα ἐγερθέντες ποιοῦσιν, ὅκωσπερ ὁκόσα εὐδοντες ἐπιλανθάνονται.

B 114: ξὺν νόφ λέγοντας ἰσχυρίζεσθαι χρῆ τῶ ξυνῶ πάντων, ὅκωσπερ νόμφ πόλις, καὶ πολὺ ἰσχυροτέρως. τρέφονται γὰρ πάντες οἱ ἀνθρώπειο νόμοι ὑπὸ ἐνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ· κρατεῖ γὰρ τοσοῦτον ὁκόσον ἐθέλει καὶ ἐξαρκεῖ πᾶσι καὶ περιγιγνεται.

B 2: διὸ δεῖ ἔπεσθαι τῶ <ξυνῶ>, τοῦ λόγου δ’ ἐόντος ξυνου ζώουσιν οἱ πολλοὶ ὡς ἰδίαν ἔχοντες φρόνησιν.

ars,¹³ though there are some exceptions. A line of interpretation going back to John Burnet keeps regularly reappearing. According to this view, we would be facing an expression that does not entail any particularly interesting philosophical overtones, the meaning of which would be fairly simple, even trivial and standard. A common element in different representatives of this view is the stress laid on the exclusiveness of the generic meaning of “language,” a move that usually turns out in translations of *logos* as “Word,” “discourse,” “account,” and the like.¹⁴ Oddly enough, this approach does not make that great a difference in the long run, for Heraclitus’ *logos* is not, on any interpretation, just any discourse, and soon becomes by sheer weight of its own contents and meaningful cross-references to other concepts and images, a (if not *the*) fundamental epistemological standard.

Now, without denying that the meaning of *logos* includes Heraclitus’ own account or discourse, reducing it to “his Word” (with a capital *w*, as Burnet would have had it) just will not do. It is not necessarily misleading to insist that one must translate *logos* as “discourse” or “account,” since it is expressly stated (here and elsewhere) that *logos* is something heard (and not understood) by “most men.” But to claim that this is all *logos* means is, again, something else. It seems much more likely that the texts themselves support quite the opposite claim, and that a purely linguistic reading¹⁵ of *logos* will not suffice to satisfy obvious contextual requirements.

The very first sentence is syntactically ambivalent, in a way that permits or even demands that both possible constructions are kept.¹⁶ If “forever” (αἰεί) is construed with the *logos* “being this,” or with the “existing

13 Starting with Diels, adherents to this general view include W. Jaeger, R. Mondolfo, M. Heidegger, O. Gigon, H. Fränkel, M. Marcovich, C. Eggers, and C. H. Kahn, all in the bibliography below.

14 Cf., besides Burnet, M. L. West, C. Diano, T. M. Robinson, J. Barnes, and M. Conche, all in the bibliography below.

15 Such as West’s (see above, n. 2, pp. 124 ff.) insistence that *logos* refers “to Heraclitus’ discourse and *nothing else*” (my italics).

16 As one can see, for example, in Kahn’s translation: “Although this account holds *forever*, men *ever* fail to comprehend” (97). That the syntax of the first sentence can work both ways (i. e. λόγου τοῦδ’ ἔόντος αἰεί or αἰεί ἀξύνετοι γίνονται ἄνθρωποι) is made clear by Aristotle’s famous complaint in the *Art of rhetoric* (III, 5, 1407b 11 ff.). See D. Sider, “Word order and sense in Heraclitus: Fragment One and the river fragment,” in K. Boudouris (ed.), *Ionian Philosophy* (Athens 1989) 363–368.

(or real) *logos*,”¹⁷ even if we take this to mean merely that “the discourse is always true” (taking the expression in the weaker “veritative” sense, rather than in the fuller and more natural predicative sense, or in the stronger “existential” one), this does not by itself exclude an intended deeper meaning¹⁸. In fact, the language that Heraclitus uses rather suggests the eternal existence of its objective contents: if he is saying, at the very least, that his own account holds true throughout, this could very well be due to his implicitly attributing unrestricted ontological permanence to its proper object¹⁹ (there could even be an intentional, yet subtle, play between the *logos* “being (this) forever” (ὄδε ὁ λόγος ἔων αἰεὶ) and all things *becoming* according to it). Burnet may have been right that *logos* should not be translated as “reason” (as a cognitive faculty), but his interpretation of it as “Word” misses the objective sense, which could be better conveyed by the French expression, *raison d’être*. *Logos* as objective rationality pertains to the formal aspect of the real, the way things are and happen, the structure in all change. Seen in this light, and without being named, *logos* is mirrored in the eternal *kosmos*, which is an ever-living fire (B 30), kindled and quenched “in measures” (μέτρα). More obliquely perhaps, *logos* is implied in the river statement (B 12), the quintessence of which is identification and opposition of “the same rivers” (ποταμοῖσι τοῖσιν αὐτοῖσιν) and ever different waters (ἕτερα καὶ ἕτερα ὕδατα). The common thought here is permanence in change, sameness in difference, unity in plurality. All these formulae are but variations that approach the same unitary and dynamic objective rationality.

If by *logos* Heraclitus meant *only* his own discourse, how is it, then, that men are expected to understand it “before having listened” to it?²⁰ How could he say, not only that it “is always the same” or that it “exists

17 Rather than with ἀξύνετοι γίνονται ἄνθρωποι, although this needs not to be excluded.

18 Especially since Heraclitus’ careful expression mimics one Homeric formula that refers to the blissful existence of the gods, θεοὶ αἰὲν ἔόντες, *Il.* 1.290, 494; 21.518; 24.99; *Od.* 1.263, 378; 2.143; 3.147; 4.583; 5.7; 8.306, etc.

19 As he does in B30, where *logos* is likely to be implied in the measures, which surely are as eternal as the world-order, the *kosmos* itself. As with φύσις, Heraclitus’ usage of κόσμος is the first one attested in the history of philosophical language.

20 So rightly argued by Kahn, *H.* 98.

forever”²¹ and that “all things happen” according to it, if he did not mean to point to some kind of objective cosmic principle, a single universal “law,” as suggested in B 114? And would not it be a bit unlikely that, by calling the *logos* “common” (ξυνόν, B 2), Heraclitus intended to express only the universality and the formal unity of his own account, but not the actual complex unity of its subject-matter? Questions like these are perhaps among the reasons why Diels corrected himself translating “Weltgesetz,” “Law of the world” (appending this latter meaning to the much simpler original “Wort”).²² In a different line, but likely moved by similar reasons, Marcovich translated it as “Truth,” while Kirk proposed “the formula of things.” Kahn, *H.* 22, interprets it as being “at once the discourse of Heraclitus, the nature of language itself, the structure of the *psukhē* and the universal principle in accordance with which all things come to pass.”

Logos must include the generic notion of language, and specifically Heraclitus’ own discursive account as part of its surface meaning, but it also must refer, as its proper object and the solid ground for true knowledge, to the nature of things themselves, to “being” or “reality” (as the text also suggest: cf. the parallel κατὰ τὸν λόγον, κατὰ φύσιν in B 1). It is no mere coincidence that he insists that “φύσις tends to be hidden,”²³ just as *logos* is said here to be, from the wits of most men. Ignorance of the rationale of things themselves, omission of the ontologically basic facts of *logos* and *phusis* lie behind his famous criticisms of venerable poets as Homer (B 42, 56), Hesiod (B 40, 57, 106) and Archilochus (B 42), and representatives of Ionic ἱστορίη as Xenophanes (B 40), Pythagoras (B 40, 129) and Hecataeus (B 40). Hiddenness dialectically refers precisely to what is manifest (φανερόν), and is best interpreted in an “epistemological” context (rather than a purely “ontological” one).

21 As it is plain that I take αἰεί with the participle ἐόντος, my reading tends to be a metaphysical one. If the minimalist view is preferred, the phrase would mean simply that the *logos* as discourse “is true” [Burnet], or that it “holds throughout” [West], with no ontological overtones.

22 Cf. Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*^{1,2} (Berlin 1903, 1906) 1, ch. 12: “Für dies Wort.” “Alles geschieht nach diesem Wort.” “Weltgesetz” was added in Diels’ second edition of *Herakleitos von Ephesos* (Berlin 1909).

23 DK 22 B 123: φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ. I owe to Daniel Graham the point that φιλεῖ does not mean here “loves,” but (in view of the infinitive) something like “it is usual for.” See his “Does nature love to hide? Heraclitus B 123 DK,” *CP* 98 (2003) 175–179. Compare with B 87, n. 29 below.

For Heraclitus, *logos* refers to the rational aspect of reality, to “objectivity” (in an ontological as well as in an epistemological sense), and it is thus fair to call it a principle of being. This strong objective sense is reinforced by semantic closeness of *logos* and *metron*, as shown by the expression μετρεῖται εἰς τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον, “is measured [*sc.* either “earth” or “sea”] in the same *proportion*,” in B 31b (a text in which the surface meaning seems to have pushed the notion of language to a remote background). *Metron* is a key notion in the cosmic order, which is “ever-living fire” (B 30). In fact, and even leaving aside the enlightening analogy with the single divine law in B 114,²⁴ a high ontological status of *logos* is also backed by B 2, which closes the Proem by calling the ever-real *logos* “common” or “shared” (surely by all things).²⁵ *Logos* is opposed to most men’s fancy, ironically referred to as a “wisdom” of sorts, which is “private” or “peculiar to each” (ἰδίῃ φρόνησις), an oxymoron which immediately recalls the analogical image of men as oblivious sleepers.²⁶ So the *logos* in the Proem presents the reader with a characterization of “human life in epistemic terms,” as Kahn, *H.* 100 aptly puts it. The background seems more metaphysical (ontological) than cosmological (in a narrow physicalistic sense), and the foreground could be perceived as epistemological and ethical at the same time.

By giving expression to the notion of the rationality of the real,²⁷ Heraclitus points at once to a vital unity of being and speech, word

24 An analogy clearly referred to and greatly appreciated by Cleanthes (perhaps so much that he not only took it over but considerably enriched it) in his *Hymn to Zeus*. Although analogy of *logos* and *nomos* is particularly visible, it is by no means the only significant point of affinity. It is worth recalling line 21 (ὦσθ’ ἕνα γίνεσθαι πάντων λόγον αἰὲν ἔόντα), which clearly takes on Heraclitus B 1, and supports the reading proposed here. *Logos* was fused with Fire and Zeus in the Stoic tradition from Cleanthes on. On these questions, see A. A. Long, “Heraclitus and Stoicism,” in id. (ed), *Stoic Studies* (Berkeley 1996) 35–57.

25 Note, besides the formula τῷ ξυνοῦ πάντων in B 114, the echoes of λόγου τοῦδ’ ἔόντος αἰεί (B1), and τοῦ λόγου δ’ ἔόντος ξυνοῦ (B 2) in B 80’s τὸν πόλεμον ἔόντα ξυνόν.

26 B 89 connects the sleepers with private worlds of their own. With Marcovich, I fear that Plutarch, the source here, could be freely paraphrasing B 1 and 30.

27 I submit that the Stoic view on Heraclitus’ *logos* is, on the essentials, correct. I believe that A. A. Long has got it right when he writes that “[i]t is thoroughly misleading to label Heraclitus’ *logos* “metaphysical” and that of the Stoics *moral*. In both systems *logos* is a principle of being *and* a principle of morality. [...] In calling their own active power in the universe *logos* the Stoics were expressing

and content, and includes the ontological structure or “nature” of the contents of language itself within the semantic range of *logos*. Heraclitus’ choice of words suggests that remedying men’s need for knowledge should begin with a fuller understanding of their own language. To say it again in Kahn’s words: “*logos* means not simply language but rational discussion, calculation, and choice: rationality as expressed in speech, in thought and in action” (H. 102). *Logos* is simultaneously a metaphysical *and* an anthropological principle. It is not just an accident that, in what looks like a rare praise, Bias of Priene is credited with a “greater” or “better” *logos*—usually translated as “esteem”—than “the rest.”²⁸ Nor is it trivial to state that “for a stupid man it is usual to be amazed at every *logos*,”²⁹ or, again, that *logoi* heard by Heraclitus are cut off from the wise.³⁰ Heraclitean explicit usage (in all nine fragments containing the term) reveals an awareness of the tension between speech and wisdom, since not every *logos* is in fact wise. At the same time, intelligent speech is endowed with the power of making *phusis* manifest. Heraclitean utterance is closely shaped after the oracular Delphic model: Apollo, who represents the highest standard, “says not, neither hides, but gives a sign.”³¹ The twin themes of speaking and hearing give *logos* a concrete texture, and develop into fuller ideas (involving much more than mere perception), rich in epistemic and moral nuances: “They [most men?] know not how to hear, nor to speak” (B 19), and like the deaf, “though present, they are absent” (B 34). Universal

the closest affinity with Heraclitus” (above, n. 24) 51. See also Long in this volume.

- 28 B 39: ἐν Πριήνῃ Βίαις ἐγένετο ὁ Τευτάμεω, οὗ πλέων λόγος ἢ τῶν ἄλλων. It is not at all clear who these “others” specifically are: the citizens of Priene, Greeks generally, perhaps the other six sages? Approval of at least one of Bias’ moral *gnōmai* is explicit in B 104, so it seems that, in spite of the usual meaning of the Ionic expression πλέων λόγος (= “higher esteem”), *logos* must include what Bias himself said, and he must have succeeded in showing things as they truly are.
- 29 B 87: βλάξ ἀνθρωπος ἐπὶ παντὶ λόγῳ ἐπτοῆσθαι φιλεῖ. This deals with the receptive aspect of the process of acquiring knowledge, implicitly contrasting hearing with the more creative abilities of speaking and acting.
- 30 B 108: ὀκόσων λόγους ἤκουσα, οὐδείς ἀφικνεῖται ἐς τοῦτο ὥστε γινώσκειν ὅτι σοφόν ἐστι πάντων κεχωρισμένον. I take πάντων as masculine and referring back to ὀκόσων. The targets would seem to naturally include some great figures named in other fragments, such as Homer, Hesiod, Archilochus, Hecateus, Xenophanes, and Pythagoras.
- 31 B 93: ὁ ἄναξ οὗ μαντεῖόν ἐστι τὸ ἐν Δελφοῖς οὔτε λέγει οὔτε κρύπτει ἀλλὰ σημαίνει.

presence of *logos* as a voice men constantly hear is implicitly paired with its absence from their conscious minds: “that with which they deal continuously, this they differ from, and things they encounter every day seem alien to them.”³²

The universal ontological dimension of *logos* becomes clearer still when we look at B 50:

Having listened, not to me, but to the *logos*, it is wise to say in agreement (ὁμολογεῖν): all things are one³³.

The first point of interest here is the distinction between Heraclitus’ own words and the *logos* men should heed. *Logos* is not reducible to speech, not even to that which is spoken of, but suggests a voice and a continuous presence, perceived but unrecognized by most men (B 72, 17). We have in B 50 a characterization of the attitude of the intelligent speakers (*legontes*) of B 114, which is opposite to that of the sleepers. Not surprisingly, here we find that (true) wisdom lies in men *speaking* together with one another and *saying* the same thing (ὁμολογεῖν) that *logos* utters once and again, the oneness of all things (ἐν πάντα). A couple of other fragments (B 41, 32) contain the expression ἐν τὸ σοφόν, which joins immediately unity and wisdom³⁴.

Heraclitus’ *logos* is not only a complex rational concept, but a powerful, yet simple image, almost a metaphor. So, instead of choosing between “language” and “the well-ordered nature of the real” as a single basic meaning, necessarily excluding one of the two, I propose we

32 B 72: ᾧ μάλιστα διηκενῶς ὁμιλοῦσι (λόγῳ τῷ τὰ ὅλα διοικοῦντι), τοῦτῳ διαφέρονται, καὶ οἷς καθ’ ἡμέραν ἐγκυροῦσι, ταῦτα αὐτοῖς ξένα φαίνεται. Probably not a verbatim quotation in its entirety (it is likely that the words in the parenthesis, as well as the final formula, are at best paraphrases).

33 B 50: οὐκ ἐμοῦ ἀλλὰ τοῦ λόγου ἀκούσαντας ὁμολογεῖν σοφόν ἐστὶν ἐν πάντα εἶναι.

34 B 41: ἐν τὸ σοφόν· ἐπίστασθαι γνώμην ἥδ’ ἐπὶ κυβερνήσαι ἅπαντα διὰ πάντων. B 32: ἐν, τὸ σοφόν μόνον, λέγεσθαι οὐκ ἐθέλει καὶ ἐθέλει Ζηνὸς ὄνομα. Both texts seem to allude to *logos*, though in a very elliptical manner: in the first case, through the universality and immanence of the *gnomē*, and through the passive form *legesthai*, which is the object of “wants not and wants,” in the second. The theme of unity is itself as intricate as that of *logos*. No fewer than ten fragments refer explicitly to τὸ ἐν: besides those already referred to, cf. B 10 (closely echoing B 50), and B 29, 33, 49, and 121, all of which exploit the political side of the idea of unity. Unity is typically viewed as synthesis in Heraclitus, and is expressed with the term *harmonīē*, used in B 51 and 54. See E. Hülsz Piccone, “La unidad de la filosofía de Heráclito” *Tópicos* 28 (2005) 13–46.

ought to keep both, and interpret Heraclitus' *logos* as the language of the real³⁵: the language of objective rationality and the rationality of language. *Logos* appears as a voice³⁶ coming from the real itself, the voice of meaningful and intelligent language, which coincides with the structural objective single form in things themselves and is mirrored in Heraclitus' own carefully articulated statements.

Unity of all things (ἐν πάντα), as B 50 puts it, is a proper characterization of the content of the same *logos* which is called in the Proem forever real and common or shared by all things, and which is itself a unity of opposites. Heraclitean *logos* is, first and foremost, the universal rationale of reality: it is a *permanent*, formal *principle*, a sort of *law* that pertains to reality itself, conceived of and presented as a rational language. The explicit notion of a community of all things through *logos* (and thus of all men, and of all they say and do) refers to the togetherness or integrity of being, in itself and as presented in true language. Communion of intelligent language with the intelligible nature of things is indeed the suggested basis for true knowledge on the level of human action, and the reason why *logos* is a prescriptive, and not merely a descriptive principle: being and action are connected through *logos* as the rational language of the real.

Heraclitus' criticism of men's epistemic negligence is based on his attributing them a universal and natural capacity to understand³⁷, which is nevertheless seldom achieved: even the senses can be deceptive, but only because the data they provide can be incorrectly interpreted by their souls—which in turn must be seen as seat of the faculty of understanding: "Eyes and ears are bad witnesses," he writes elsewhere, "for men who have barbarian souls."³⁸ A barbarian soul is, of course, one that does not speak the language of the real, and whose defective discourse or account is, because of its being irrational, thus "separated" from "the wise" (B 108). One important point Heraclitus is making here is that, for good or ill, the human soul is the natural seat for the

35 Cf. T. M. Robinson, *Heraclitus. Fragments* (Toronto 1991) and id., "Heraclitus and *logos*—again," in E. Hülsz (ed.), *Nuevos ensayos sobre Heráclito* (Mexico City 2009) 93–102.

36 Cf. E. Eggers Lan, "La doctrina heraclítica del *logos*," *Nova Tellus* 5 (1987) 11 ff.

37 With which he explicitly credits "all men" in B 113, echoed also in B 116. See below nn. 51–52.

38 B 107: κακοὶ μάρτυρες ἀνθρώποισιν ὀφθαλμοὶ καὶ ὤτα βαρβάρους ψυχᾶς ἔχόντων.

faculty of apprehending, understanding and expressing the rationality and true nature of things.

Heraclitus on *Logos* and Self: Some “Ethical” Fragments

An essential link between the human³⁹ soul and *logos* is focused in B 45:

He who travels every path would not find the boundaries of soul, [as he goes]: so deep a *logos* does it have.⁴⁰

Immediate connection between the soul and *logos* is apparent, a point that strengthens that rationality (and not just language) comes into play here. Many interpreters have been baffled by the curious paradox about the soul’s limits and its suggested virtual unlimitedness or immensity: if Heraclitus is saying that the soul is limited, then why is it that its boundaries could not be reached? And if he is saying that soul is, in some sense, infinite, how are we to understand the positive reference to its πείρατα? Puzzlement is probably induced, not just by Heraclitus’ unmistakable paradoxical style, but also by the reader’s (understandable) eagerness to find a sort of definition of the soul’s nature. But Heraclitus is perhaps not concerned here (is he ever?) with solving the definitional *aporai* that might trouble his readers or hearers, but with making a point about the presence of *logos* (again best interpreted as a rational principle), precisely *within* the soul of man. He is succeeding to set down, in a short string of words, the limits of the soul’s cognitive power. The soul’s nature is not exhausted here, but is displayed in a set of other fragments. In particular, B 36⁴¹ implies the soul’s mortality, and a primarily (though

39 Among the possible hermeneutic scenarios, I favor an anthropological one, which seems the most likely. This line of interpretation is compatible with more cosmological and physicalistic approaches of Heraclitus’ views on the soul.

40 B 45: ψυχῆς πείρατα [ἰών] οὐκ ἄν ἐξεύροι, ὃ πᾶσαν ἐπιπορευόμενος ὁδὸν οὕτω βαθύν λόγον ἔχει. I assume the alternative reading to Diogenes Laertius’ text, proposed by Gábor Betegh in “The limits of the soul: Heraclitus B 45 DK. Its text and interpretation”, in E. Hülsz (ed.), *Nuevos ensayos sobre Heráclito* (Mexico City 2009), 391–414. For yet another reading see J. Mansfeld, “Heraclitus Fr. 22 B 45 D.– K. A Conjecture,” *Elenchos* 31 (2010) 117–122, who, relying on B 18, proposes οὐκ ἐξευρήσει instead of οὐκ ἄν ἐξεύροιο.

41 B 36: ψυχῆσιν θάνατος ὕδαρ γενέσθαι, ὕδατι δὲ θάνατος γῆν γενέσθαι· ἐκ γῆς δὲ ὕδαρ γίνεται, ἐξ ὕδατος δὲ ψυχῆ. (“For souls it is death to become water, for

perhaps not exclusively) cosmological context seems likely there. Although I will not go into the matter, the allegedly Heraclitean doctrine of the soul as fire does not seem to be backed by the fragments themselves (and it would be hardly useful anyway for gaining new insight into the meaning of B 45). The connection with selfhood seems more promising.

The background image seems to be an alternative description of the personal experience Heraclitus alludes to in B 101: “I went in search for myself”⁴². If identity of soul and self is assumed,⁴³ this would then be a journey one takes within one’s soul. The whole territory to be traversed must be soul itself, and the imaging of the road and the unsuccessful search seems to unfold at first in a spatial, horizontal dimension. As the traveller surely must be the owner of a soul, the drift is that the journey within oneself is a cognitive reflexive experience, not to be ascribed to just any soul,⁴⁴ but to the intelligent one. Now, the point of this horizontal approach is that the limits are *not* to be found. Is there a moral lesson in here? If some prescriptive intention is present, it cannot be *not* to search, but quite the contrary. Comparison with other thematically akin texts on searching, as for instance B 18 (“He who does not expect, will not find the unexpected, for it is hard to find and to understand”⁴⁵) and B 22 (“Those who search for gold dig much earth and find little”),⁴⁶ suggest that Heraclitus’ point is the difficulty, not the radical impossibility, of the soul’s cognition. The ethical impact of the cogni-

water it is death to become earth. But water is born from earth, and from water, soul.”)

- 42 B 101: ἐδιζησάμην ἑμεωυτόν. This was sometimes interpreted in antiquity (e. g., Diogenes Laertius 10.5) as meaning that Heraclitus was self-taught. But more could be going on here: the traditional idea of self-knowledge is essentially linked to *sophrosune*, which is precisely the virtue praised in B 112. The sentence also mimics the delphic γνώθι σαυτόν. To know oneself is, of course, not just psychological self-awareness, but requires being able to understand what one is and is not, and so to know one’s proper place. See Julia Annas’ exploration of Heraclitean self-knowledge in *Alcibiades I, Lovers, and Charmides*: “Self-knowledge in Early Plato,” in D. O’Meara (ed.), *Platonic Investigations* (Washington 1985) 111–138.
- 43 A point denied by Marcovich, *H.* 57.: “[...] neither διζησθαι means the same as γινώσκειν, nor ἑμεωυτόν as ψυχή.”
- 44 The restrictive character of the interpretation was suggested to me by Conche’s text. Contrast with B 116, which I take to refer to self-knowledge as a universal faculty, not a universal accomplishment.
- 45 B 18: ἐὰν μὴ ἔλπηται ἀνέλπιστον οὐκ ἐξευρήσει, ἀνεξερεύνητον ἔδον καὶ ἄπορον.
- 46 B 22: χρυσὸν γὰρ οἱ διζήμενοι γῆν πολλήν ὀρύσσοσι καὶ εὐρίσκουσιν ὀλίγον.

tive search gains in clarity if the soul is to be thought of at once as the object being searched for, as well as the active searching subject.

The final point changes the reader's perspective once more: limits are out of reach, and at the same time, are determined precisely as such, *because of* "the deep *logos*" that the soul "has." Depth of *logos* suggests a "vertical"⁴⁷ dimension: and even if limits are, for every person, impossible to reach, *logos* must be at the beginning and at the end (B 103)⁴⁸ of every path one can take, whatever its direction (B 60: ἄνω κάτω, "up and down"),⁴⁹ just as it must be both within and without.⁵⁰ So the upshot of all this is that ψυχή, in spite of its limitedness, can in principle come to know of all things by virtue of the *logos* within (for *logos* is, as already we have seen, universal or common to all things—soul itself included). This line of interpretation is consistent with what we find in other relevant fragments, which together put ψυχή in an intensely anthropological scenario. It will be noticed that the picture I am presenting amounts to a basically optimistic view, both ethically and epistemologically, to which someone could object that it seems to flatly contradict Heraclitus' repeated condemnation of men's epistemic negligence. But this incoherence is merely apparent, and not real. For it is not all men, not always, and not fatally, who are so vigorously criticized by Heraclitus (but merely "most men"). When he explicitly refers to "all men," what he actually says is "thinking is common to all"⁵¹ and "all men partake in knowing themselves and being of a sound mind"⁵².

Now, from the viewpoint of this interpretive sketch of B 45, B 115 makes perfect sense:

47 I take the suggestion of focusing on the image of B 45 through a double viewpoint, consisting in a horizontal axis and a vertical one, mutually complementary, from Marcovich's commentary *ad loc* in *H*.

48 B 103: ξυνὸν γὰρ ἀρχὴ καὶ πέρασ ἐπὶ κύκλου.

49 B 60: ὁδὸς ἄνω κάτω μία καὶ ὡστὴ.

50 For other suggestive interpretations of B 45, see A. Lebedev, "Psychēs peirata (Il termine *psychē* nei frammenti cosmologici di Eraclito 66–67 M)" (17–26), M. Ghidini Tortorelli, "Limite e circolarità in Eraclito: fr. 45 e 103 D.-K." (27–46), and P. Rosati, "Eraclito, in 'cammino,' Intorno al fr. 60 D.-K." (47–62), all in M. Capasso, F. De Martino, P. Rosati (eds.), *Studi di filosofia preplatonica* (Naples 1985).

51 B 113: ξυνὸν ἔστι πᾶσι τὸ φρονεῖν.

52 B 116: ἀνθρώποισι πᾶσι μέτεστι γινώσκειν ἑαυτοῦς καὶ σωφρονεῖν.

To the soul belongs a *logos* which increases itself.⁵³

The limits of soul are out of reach, for they are unstable and changing. And how could it be otherwise, since the *logos* on which they depend is said to grow by itself? The metaphor of growth (affecting both *logos* and soul) must stand for the progress of an intelligent soul's self-knowledge but, at the same time, also for the soul's ontological structure, its distinctive nature, or φύσις. Marcovich's *philosophical* objection to the authenticity of B 115—that the notion of a changing measure is implausible in Heraclitus—is not convincing: although it is true that Heraclitus' theory implies that measure is something *constant*, it is a bit too much to reduce it to a “numerical ratio.”⁵⁴ And, besides that, would it not be an argument in favour of authenticity that the bold idea of a permanent standard of change that constantly changes by itself (ἐαυτὸν αὐξῶν) is the supreme paradox? It is tempting to connect the *logos* that increases itself of B 115 with the sentence in B 84a, which lacks an explicit grammatical subject: “it rests by changing.”⁵⁵

Thus, both B 45 and 115 would point to the specific presence of *logos* in the anthropological dimension: all things change according to *logos*, but natural (non-human) change, although analogous to human becoming, would not, after all, be identical with it. To derive again from the originary examples, Heraclitus says that “Ἡλιος, the Sun—itsself an important paradigm for the rationality of change, by its being fiery and “always new” (B 6⁵⁶)—“will not overstep his measures.”⁵⁷

53 B 115: ψυχῆς ἐστι λόγος ἐαυτὸν αὐξῶν. I cannot make the case for the authenticity of B 115 fully here. It may be summarily laid down, however, that the *onus probandi* falls rather on the side of those who deny it is genuine (the source here is Stobaeus, who also provides the whole series B 108–B 119). Explicit attribution to Socrates (by some unattentive scribe) is not an unsurmountable objection.

54 I set this apart from his other two objections, which are of a different nature. Cf. Marcovich, *H.* 569 ff.

55 B 84a: μεταβάλλον ἀναπαύεται, the first part of the only DK fragment transmitted by Plotinus.

56 I must say that I assume a different reading of B 6, one of the “solar” fragments. I propose that what Heraclitus wrote includes the expression “always new” (ὁ ἥλιος οὐ μόνον καθάπερ Ἡράκλειτός φησιν, νέος ἐφ’ ἡμέρη ἐστίν, ἀλλ’ αἰεὶ νέος). If one could follow A. García Calvo's suggestion (above, n. 1), perhaps the addition of [καὶ ὡς αὐτός] would be a fitting end. The result would be something like this: “the Sun (so Heraclitus says) is not only new every day, but new always [and the same].” On my view, Heraclitus could be criticizing a theory (if theory it could be called) attributed independently to Xenophanes, a known target in

Human conduct, on the other hand, is nothing like this: by his very nature, man is constantly overstepping *his* measures: “Υβρις is a recurring fact everywhere in human life, either in a political context, as “wanton violence,”⁵⁸ or in the individual’s everyday existence (as in the drunkard with a wet soul in B 117⁵⁹). Human unreasonableness has a place in the cosmic order of Heraclitus.

But again, so does the possibility of true excellence, even if this will be restricted to a few, the true ἄριστοι.⁶⁰ In my view, Heraclitus is an ethical optimist at heart, his harsh criticism of his fellow citizens⁶¹ and his well-known unflattering views on men in general notwithstanding. For, all things considered, those who speak with intelligence, the owners of non-barbarian souls with ever-changing limits are there too, side by side the unintelligent hearers. And perhaps even they can change, and learn to think well, see, hear, speak and act. B 112 wraps it up neatly:

Being of a sound mind is the greatest merit and wisdom: to say what is true and to act according to nature, as those who pay heed.⁶²

Supreme virtue and wisdom are equated with sound thinking, which consists of the unity of speech and action. As in B 1, the adverbial phrase κατὰ φύσιν is in *apo koinou* construction, and can be taken as modifying the three surrounding verbs (λέγειν, ποιεῖν and the participle ἐπαῖοντας), strongly evoking the language of the proem. Heraclitus’ moral ideal is thus quite philosophical, and it could be fairly characterized as an ethical intellectualistic theory: moral virtue is deeply rooted in knowledge and the nature of things themselves, including men. One important feature of this ideal is that it seems feasible, reasonable and earthly, as is befitting

another authentic fragment (B 40). See my “Heraclitus on the sun,” in R. Patterson, V. Karasmanis, and A. Hermann (eds.), *Presocratics and Plato. A Festschrift in honor of Charles H. Kahn* (Las Vegas 2012) 31–52.

57 B 94: “Ἥλιος γὰρ οὐχ ὑπερβήσεται μέτρα.

58 B 43, tr. after Kahn.

59 B 117: ἀνὴρ ὀκόταν μεθυσθῆ, ἄγεται ὑπὸ παιδὸς ἀνήβου σφαλλόμενος, οὐκ ἐπαῖων ὄκη βραίνει, ὑγρὴν τὴν ψυχὴν ἔχων.

60 That is, not the so-called “best” in B 29, but “the best” in terms of their wisdom, not their birth, the bearers of σωφρονεῖν, “being of a sound mind,” itself identified as supreme merit (ἀρετή) and wisdom (σοφίη) in B 112.

61 B 121, and implicitly, many others of which the clearest are B 29, 49 and 104. For a different reading of οἱ δὲ πολλοὶ in the second clause of B 29, see Sider in this volume.

62 B 112: σωφρονεῖν ἀρετὴ μεγίστη καὶ σοφίη· ἀληθέα λέγειν καὶ ποιεῖν κατὰ φύσιν ἐπαῖοντας.

to the author of the famous saying: “Man’s character is his fate” (B 119)⁶³. So, in symmetric contrast with the wet soul of the drunkard, temporarily devoid of the most elementary functions (such as being able to walk or just to stand up and having a sense of direction), Heraclitus points us to the virtues of just being sensible. In Heraclitus’ universe there’s also room, somewhere, for a dry soul (one endowed with a divine *ēthos*, B 78⁶⁴). This is the best, as it is the wisest. But Heraclitus does not stop there. He also calls this, the best and wise soul, “a beam of light.”⁶⁵

This last and very visual image might be somehow connected with the auditive image of *logos* through B 16:

How could someone be unaware of that which never sets?⁶⁶

Since this question illustrates so well the nature of *logos* itself, I suggest that it complements Heraclitus’ implicit imperative (I mean something like *ἄκουε λόγου*, “listen to *logos*”⁶⁷). “Do not”—he seems here to tell us—“turn a blind eye to that which is always present.” His intended point is here that we picture something like a hypersun that never sets, a source of light that never fails. And what, better than *logos*, could claim to be the ultimate foundation for intelligibility and enlightenment? The philosophical unity of Heraclitus’ *logos* presents, in addition to its diverse meanings, which we already touched upon earlier, an ethical (and perhaps also a political) dimension. And, inasmuch as *logos* includes the idea of measure and the rational and unifying relation-

63 B 119: ἦθος ἀνθρώπων δαίμων. I read into this Heraclitus’ recognition of moral autonomy and responsibility of the individual.

64 B 78: ἦθος γὰρ ἀνθρώπειον μὲν οὐκ ἔχει γνώμας, θεῖον δὲ ἔχει. This I take as a good example of *diairesis kata phusin*, which focuses on internal opposition within (human) *ēthos*.

65 B 118: ἀύγη ξηρὴ ψυχῆ σοφωτάτη καὶ ἀρίστη. The basic meaning of ἀύγη is “light of the sun” (LSJ *s. v.*). It could perhaps mean here just “a bright light.” I follow Kahn in keeping Stobaeus’ text. In all fairness, it should be said that there are alternative readings to that proposed here. Another possibility would be “A dry gleam of light is the wisest and best soul,” but then what might “a dry gleam of light” mean?

66 B 16: τὸ μὴ δύνον ποτε πῶς ἄν τις λάθοι; The sentence goes well with B 17: οὐ γὰρ φρονέουσι τοιαῦτα πολλοί, ὀκόσοι ἐγκυρεῦσιν, οὐδὲ μαθόντες γινώσκουσιν, ἔωυτοῖσι δὲ δοκέουσι. (“For many men does not think straight about such things as they come across, nor do they know after having learned them, but fancy themselves they do”).

67 This “implicit imperative” I’ve modelled after Hesiod’s formula *ἄκουε δίκης*, “heed justice” (*Erga* 213, cf. 275 *ἐπάκουε δίκης*).

ship between things, it operates also as a sort of poetic principle. All this has to do with the internal physiology of being, thought, language and action in Heraclitus' complex metaphysics. Not only is *logos* a fundamental metaphysical concept, but it is at the centre of Heraclitus' view of man as an ethical—and a political—being.

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