

The Transition from ‘Mythos’ to ‘Logos’: The Case of Heraclitus

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In its origin and early formation, philosophy was closely related with mythical disclosure of the world and the transcendent. During this early period of Greek history (sixth century B.C.) poets and sages filled the shoes of the theologians. With the arrival of the new thinkers, the poets lost their monopoly in all areas. Thus, their poetic narration about the gods and their teachings about conventional values were placed under heavy pressure and criticism. As a result, mythical meaning, with its revered symbols and rituals gradually began to lose its validity as an authentic cultural force. To be sure, despite their differences, one should not overlook the fact that the boundaries between the poets and philosopher were not clearly differentiated. In this paper, I shall first show the continuity and discontinuity between the old and the new traditions and will point out how philosophy originated against the background of mythic culture. Second, I shall try to show Heraclitus’s role in the process of this transition. Third, I shall explore Heraclitus’s doctrine of the logos and demonstrate that his teachings constitute both a critique and an appropriation of mythical culture. I am convinced that his work is best approached if studied in the context of the struggle between the old and the new “scientific” tradition. In this connection, I shall advance the thesis that Heraclitus was one of the chief architects of the new school and yet, at the same time its strongest critic. Thus, we find in his work, mythic/ scientific “ways” sometimes clash and at times form unity. Heraclitus resembles Jean-Jacques Rousseau in one respect: on the one hand, he was one of the leading champions of the new age; and on the other hand, he was pretty much a child of the old culture. Thus, some of his teachings evolved from and were directed against both the old and new traditions. Heraclitus advocated rationalism and was the first one to warn against it.

Keywords: *Logos, I – It, I -- Thou, transcendent, immanent, flux, the one, ordained, identity of opposites*

Introduction

The main object of this article is to illustrate Heraclitus’s role in the triumph of philosophical speculation over the old mythopoeic traditions. To be sure, the speculative and rational enterprise was not confined to the work of one or two thinkers since the mythical elements could not be overthrown all at once. In this respect, the challenge is to show how the various Greek philosophers relate to the mythical tradition and demonstrate their specific contribution in overcoming that tradition.

The central account of this paper is divided into two parts. In the first part, I deal with the phenomenon of myth in its connection with early philosophy. Here,

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my analysis is informed with the contention that the relationship between myth and philosophy is far simpler, and myth should not be characterized as merely “irrational” and devoid of “reason” and “logic”.

In the second part, I move directly to Heraclitus and deal with his work under the following interconnected headings: A) The obscure B) The logos C) Political and ethical teachings. In this connection, I advance the following interrelated claims by relying mainly on his available fragments.

First, Heraclitus was an important element in the new movement. He was chief among the pre-Socratics who protested Homeric and Hesiodic theology. Following Xenophanes, he replaced the Olympian gods with a more powerful one. Second, Heraclitus was hesitant to follow the implications of the doctrines of the new school to the end. Two examples can be cited in this respect: a) he refused to accept the *nomos/physis* distinction that later gained acceptance in the scientific tradition. B), unlike his contemporaries (e.g., Hecataeus), who showed great interest in research (history) that involved the assimilation of large quantities of data, Heraclitus dismissed such efforts by declaring that: “A lot of learning does not teach (a person the possession of) understanding; (could it do so,) it would have so taught Hesiod and Pythagoras, or for that matter(?) Xenophanes and Heraclitus”. (Frag. 40).

Third, some of the teachings of the Milesians have served Heraclitus as a basis for his philosophy. His work can be understood as a response to the worldview of the Milesians viz. the coming-to-be and passing away of the physical world, the notion of first principle, and the cyclical movement of nature. But this does not make him a physicist and his doctrine that sees fire as the origin of all things should not be confused with the *arche* of the Milesians.

(I)

The literature on ‘myth’ is vast and hence, there is no way of handling the issue in a few pages. What I’ve chosen to do instead is select three outstanding scholars who have written seminal works on Greek mythology in connection with the rise and development of philosophy. They are respectively H and H. A Frankfurt (Before philosophy) and Lawrence J. Hatab (Myth and philosophy).

The Mythical World as a ‘Thou’

In order to understand the ‘mythopoeic’ world, we need to open our minds to the way in which ancient man perceive and experience its surroundings without imposing our perspective and habit of looking at things. This obviously means that there is a stage in the development of human thought that is qualitatively different from our modern perception and comprehension of reality. For sure, we do not find concepts like ‘philosophy’, ‘science’, ‘universal law’ etc. in the structure of mythopoeic thought. Contrary to the conceptual accounts of modern man, ‘imagination’, ‘storytelling’, ‘fantasy’, ‘speculation’, ‘concrete experience’, ‘revelation of a thou’ and the like are tools that are closely associated with mythic disclosure.

For instance, when we pursue further and make a comparative analysis behind the following ‘pairs’ i.e., ‘speculation and science’, ‘personal and impersonal forces’ and ‘I and thou’ revelation we shall see clearly the distinction between modern abstract presentation from the experience of mythical taught.

Speculation and Science

Ancient teaching is engulfed with imagination, fantasy and above all filled with speculative yearnings. Speculation “is an intuitive, an almost visionary, mode of apprehension” (Frankfort et al. 1972, p. 11). We need to be cautious here in the sense that speculation is not a mere flight from reality. It’s a mental activity that creates a distance from what it seeks to comprehend in order to establish “order, coherence, and meaning” out of the “chaos of experience” (Frankfort et al. 1972, p. 11). With the advent of modern science, speculative thought is not only restricted but shunned as an appropriate tool for interpreting the world of experience. Science with its well-established method and modicum of objectivity have received a wide range of epistemic acclaim in our days.

When we turn to ancient man, we discover that its approach to nature is quite different from us. To begin with, in the mythical world, we do not find a distinction between ‘man’ and nature. They are perceived to be identical. The two entities were not seen in opposition to each other and hence there was no need to forge a means or (instrument) to understand nature.

‘I’ and ‘Thou’ Relations

The concept of I and Thou relations was first introduced by the Judaic theologian Martin Buber. In his groundbreaking work, (I and Thou) he advanced the thesis that human beings relate to each other in one or two fundamental ways: ‘I – It’ and ‘I – Thou relationship.’ The I – It – relation is closely associated with the phenomenon of objectification. In this modality, the ‘I’ perceives the other as an ‘object’ and consequently, the ‘I’ is active whereas the ‘It’ is passive. The ‘I’ refuses to give recognition of the other’s subjectivity. Thus, the ‘I – it’ is a relationship of domination whereas the ‘I’ manipulates the ‘it’ to promote its own end in much the same way we manipulate things.

On the other hand, In the I-Thou moment, we find a relation of ‘subject’ to ‘subject’ where two encountering ‘entities’ confer each other with mutual recognition and reciprocity. The ‘I’ and ‘Thou’ relations is highly important for many reasons. To begin with, all genuine transcendence and human authenticity is attained in the ‘Thou’ relations. It is so because we realize our deep humanity always in the mutual engagement and productive encounter with the other. To be sure, there is no self-fulfillment without the enriching presence of the other.

Taking their cue from Martin Buber, Henrie and A. Frankfurt divided early and modern men taught in the following important categories of apprehension. They claim that “the fundamental difference between the attitude of modern and ancient man as regards the surrounding world is for modern scientific man the

phenomenal word is primarily an 'It' for ancient - it is a 'Thou' (Frankfort et al. 1972, p. 12).

The modern perspective hinges on the division between subject and object. Let us for example take science which is representative of our modern view. 'Science' as we know it is based on the division between subject and object. The correlation between the two is virtually important. When scientific practice unfolds the scientist as a subject is active whereas the object, he/she studies is passive. Thus, for scientists, objects are manipulated and used. In addition, for scientists, objects are externally related to one another and hence, it is possible to predict the kind of behavior they display in advance.

"A myth is a narrative which discloses a scary world" (Hatab 1990, p. 19).

Myth as a form of Disclosure

Myth is an important and integral part of the world of culture which is closely associated with the existential life of a given society. Above all, myth underlies the origin of most cultural norms and pattern of life of the human world. As the etymology of the term implies, "culture" is derived from 'cult', in Latin Cultus means adoration of worship and comes from the verb – colere to cultivate" (Hatab 1990, p. 21). So, myth is not only about stories and narratives but involves communal activity and ritual practice as well. To begin with, any attempt at comprehending "myth" should strive at understanding "what it means to live a myth". Other than the existential revelation of mythical disclosure myth involves narratives, stories, songs that particularly focus on gods, heroes, and a whole host or imaginary entities as well.

To be sure, there is a distinction between living a myth from interpreting myth. We need not, as some claim, that we should live a myth in order to understand it. To be sure, living a myth is not the only venue that would lead us to the understanding of myth. I submit that in order to come to a proper understanding of myth, we need to follow two procedural methods, i.e., destructive and constructive aspect:

Destructive Aspect

The destructive aspect involves a critical examination of the conventional approach to the study of myth hitherto offered by some scholars in the field. This is done to attain a proper ground in understanding "mythology".

Error One

We should avoid construing myth "to be primitive form of science" (Hatab 1990, p. 29) that could be evaluated by the standard of scientific objectivity. We should on the contrary realize that myth is not a phenomenon that could be described in an objective manner. Myth by its very nature is not a subject of objectivity. It is rather a "narrative which discloses a sacred world" (Hatab 1990, p. 19). The other related and highly prevalent mistake involves the view that considers myth as something 'irrational' or 'non-reasonable.' Myth can't be judged by the standard of

“scientific rationality” since it has its own peculiar ontological reality that resists modern epistemic evaluations.

Error Two

The second difficulty we encounter in understanding myth is centered around the problem of Reductionism. This usually occurs in identifying the source and function of myth to a single factor. Indeed, when we do that, we would fall into the pitfalls of reductionism by identifying the source of myth to a single determinative factor.

Error Three

We should avoid imposing our categories and interpretation on the phenomenon of myth. If we want to understand myths, we need to orient ourselves to the way in which it is lived. Thus, the proper and correct interpretation would be to comprehend myth “on its own terms”.

Constructive Aspect

To begin with, we must come up with a hermeneutical approach that would enable us construe that myth evolves sincere beliefs and commitments. Indeed, we must follow a ‘method’ that would disclose or open the way in which myth shapes and influences human culture. In addition, a phenomenological approach is also needed that would give us access to the being of myth. Myth is inextricably connected with the lived world and hence it is quite difficult to make an ‘objective’ or ‘detached theoretical presentation about it. It is so because myth is developed within the spirit of speculative thought and action.

Finally, myth is also a religious expression which is closely associated with different and differing ritual practices. Here, the categorical division between ‘sacred and profane’ is important in understanding the transcendent aspect of myth. As far as the issue of ‘sacred’ goes, terms like ‘spiritual’, ‘transcendent’, ‘sublime’ etc. are associated closely with it. When it comes to the term profane, it is closely connected with the categories of ordinary and the common. Here, we should be careful not to draw a radical distinction between the two since the profane has the potential to attain the status of the sacred.

Conclusion

We want to sum up this section by drawing the identity and difference between the two traditions. **A. Similarity:** To begin with, we find in early man’s speculative adventure a quest for the origin and telos of being. Second, like early philosophy the mythopoeic world accepted the existence of some sort of power that provides justice in the universe. Third, we find in ‘myth’ just like ancient philosophy an attempt to connect ‘the visible with the invisible’ that led much later to the notion of cause and effect. Like the poet, the philosopher shares that there is a powerful force hidden beyond the realms of ordinary human experience but discernable through a special faculty. Both traditions see the appearance of being in some

beginning or 'origin' of things: thus, the search for origins "is not a new trend of thought; what was really new was their definition of the very term beginning" (Cassirer 1946, p. 54).

B. Difference: Unlike the mythopoeic tradition, Greek philosophy made two great discoveries i.e., the discovery of man and the discovery of nature and its laws. Early man saw man and nature to be identical. Their perception of nature was markedly different from the mythical understanding of natural phenomena. It is then in this respect that we could say that Greek philosophy created new 'physiology' and that the new thinkers were also scientists in the sense that they showed obvious propensity for observation and research. Thus, their zeal for inquiry and adoption of a new model (Geometry) put them in stark contrast to the mythic culture. Another decisive break we find between the mythopoeic tradition and philosophy rests on the rejection of the idea that God is found in nature. Both Hebrew religion and Ancient Greek philosophy advanced the claim that God is transcendent not immanent in nature.

The Greeks went further and claim that "universal law" not 'gods' govern the diverse nature of the cosmos. In sum, as far as the difference between the two traditions goes, I fully share Lawrence J. Hatab's judgment that myth is "retrogressive" whereas philosophy is 'introgressive'. This means myth shows a propensity to go back and practice the habit of "recollecting" and "repetitive telling". Philosophy on the other hand, employs inquiry, and interrogation to discover principles behind appearances.

(II) - The Obscure

"What he understood of it was excellent and what he did not understand he believed to be as good, but it requires a vigorous swimmer to make his way through it" (Guthrie 1980, p. 9).

"The obscurity of this philosophizing, however, chiefly consists in there being profound speculative thought contained in it" (Hegel 1974, p. 281).

Compared to other literature of his period, Heraclitus's Fragments are unique in terms of style, strength and mode of speech. He is known "for his obscure style, as will become evident when we get down to an analysis of his fragments, which are studded with paradox, aphorism, metaphor and symbolism" (Wilbur and Allen, 1979, p. 61). Indeed, not only are his metaphors, images, and figurations difficult to understand but his philosophical statements are covered with 'oracular and hieroglyphic garb' and for this reason, he was known, even in ancient times, as "Heraclitus the Dark."

Many reasons are given for his obscurity, of which the main ones are: (a) he wanted to hide the truth from the multitude for whom he had nothing but scorn; (b) that the Greek language failed him – "the nobility of his thought exceeded that of his contemporaries, as well as that of the language at his disposal" (Wilbur and Allen 1979, p. 62). (c) He took himself to be a sort of preacher or prophet.

I submit that two of the above reasons stand out in explaining his obscure language and the impenetrability of many of his fragments. First, he sounds as if

he is consciously adopting the Delphic mode of speech in that, like the Oracles, he speaks in a prophetic and oracular manner. Recall here what he says about Sibyl and Apollo: “(The) Sibyl, (according to Heraclitus,) uttering with raving mouth words mirthless, (unadorned, and again: unperturbed, reaches (us with her voice up to a thousand years later, thanks to the gods)” (Heraclitus, Frag. 92). and “The Lord whose is in oracle in Delphi neither indicates clearly nor conceal but gives a sign” (Heraclitus, Frag. 93).

Heraclitus here refers to the Delphic tradition which counsels those who seek advice in “indirect form” by hint, sign, riddle, and ambiguity. The Delphic Apollo is always ambiguous in its utterances. It neither reveals clearly nor conceals forever—it simply offers an indication of the truth, which is expressed in signs.

As indicated above, I am convinced that in his reference to the Delphic tradition, Heraclitus is also alluding to his own enigmatic and oracular style. As in the Oracles, he covers his philosophical (utterances) in ambiguities and riddles. To the question, “Why would he want to do that?” i.e., make his messages difficult to understand, the obvious answer is that he wants to provoke his readers to think. Just as the words of Oracles demand an ‘interpretation’, Heraclitus advises us that his utterances could have multiple meanings.

Second, he believes that nature is complex and on top of that “has a tendency to conceal itself”. Thus, Heraclitus warns his readers to prepare for the hard task. He argues that the logos (truth) is accessible only to those who have made the necessary preparations: “Those who seek gold dig up a great deal of earth and find little” (Heraclitus, Frag. 22). According to Heraclitus, “men who are lovers of wisdom ought very much to be enquirers into many things” (Heraclitus, Frag. 35).

For Heraclitus, the degree of our insight into the logos distinguishes the serious from the superficial student. He feels that we should draw the distinction between those who love the truth from those who simply “conjecture at random.” “Let us not make random conjectures about the most important matters” (Heraclitus, Frag. 47). “A lot of learning does not teach (a person the possession of) understanding (could it do so) it would have so taught Hesiod and Pythagoras, or for that matter (?) Xenophanes and Hecataeus” (Heraclitus, Frag. 40).

Heraclitus believes that his discovery on wisdom did not come about through research and investigation but through a combination of sudden flash of inspiration and reflection. His philosophy is intensely individual and personal in its features and, as Charles Kahn rightly observed, that Heraclitus had not learned from any of his contemporaries or his predecessors. For example, he was neither a historian nor a polymath (historia is most often associated with the name of Hecataeus and Herodotus). This practice involves traveling to far places and collecting all sorts of data, questioning, or in short, the study of the external world. The latter simply means learning from the poets.

Inquiring into the Logos

The idea of the logos is central to Heraclitus’s philosophy. What does he mean by the logos? And how does it relate to his thought? We know, for example, that

this term was used to describe a variety of subjects by the ancient Greeks. According to Kahn, "Heraclitus's logos is from one point of view the usual Ionian prose 'report.'" But "it is also something quite different" (Kahn 1983, p. 97) in that he used the term in a non-conventional sense.

Heraclitus's begins with the following statement about the logos:

"But of this account, which holds forever, people forever prove uncomprehending, both before they have heard it and when once they have heard it. For, although all things happen in accordance with this account, they are like people without experience when they experience words and deeds such as I set forth distinguishing <as I do> each thing according to <its> real constitution, i.e., pointing out how it is. The rest of mankind, however, fail to be aware of what they do after they wake up just as they forget what they do while asleep." (Heraclitus, Frag. 1).

From the above passage, we find at least three important statements about the logos. First, in the opening lines, Heraclitus draws a distinction between himself and the logos. The sentence "Hearing not to me but to the logos . . . men even fail to comprehend both, before hearing it and once they have heard it . . ." demonstrates that he saw the logos as something different from his narrative. What he is saying in essence is, it is not actually me that you should listen to but to the logos which are speaking through me. That is why I am pleading with you to pay more attention to the logos rather than to me.

From this point of view, he is also suggesting to them that they have already encountered the logos before they have heard his speech. In addition, since his speech and the logos are not identical, we could further surmise that it is accessible to us in ways other than by spoken or written word. It is on these grounds that we can understand his complaint against his readers for not understanding the logos before they have heard it from him.

The second crucial statement in Fragment 1 says: "For although all things happen in accordance with this account, they are like people without experience." Heraclitus here advances the view that the logos regulates everything "that comes to pass." It is an autonomous entity independent of our discourse. According to Kahn, "the tension between the two aspects for the logos - the actual words of Heraclitus and their everlasting content - is stretched still further" (Kahn 1983, pp. 98-99). Indeed, the gap between human speech (such as I set forth) and the logos (universal case) is presented in stark contrast.

The third and final statement that I want to deal with her concerns his observation that the rest of mankind fails to be aware of what they do after they wake up, just as they forget what they do while asleep." In this passage, Heraclitus again complains that men act as if they are asleep - they are like sleepwalkers. "We must not act and speak like men asleep." Guthrie has correctly suggested that there is a connection between this criticism and his advice to "follow the common." Here the link could be established from the following fragment:

[Heraclitus says that] "for those who are aware there is a single, common universe, whereas in sleep each person tucks away into (his) own, private <universe>." (Heraclitus, Frag. 89).

What Heraclitus means, in brief, is that in sleep we are in a private world, our dreams are not shared by anyone as in our waking experience. In the same vein, we live as if we have a 'private universe' that leads us to falsehood. Thus, we should never forget that "sleep takes us away from the 'public universe' by suppressing our rational elements. In view of this, we should transcend our private experience and participate in the universal experience of logos.

This point is emphasized again by Heraclitus: "That is why one must follow that which is (common) [i.e., universal, for 'Common' means 'universal']. Though the account is common, many live, however, as though they had a private understanding" (Heraclitus, Frag. 2). He complains against the multitude that fail to grasp that which is common and instead clings to a truth peculiar to themselves. Here we should ask how he can reconcile the conviction that he alone has grasped the common logos while others fail to do so (Guthrie). I believe Heraclitus would probably confirm that the issue has nothing to do with individual merit or demerit but is instead a question of recognizing what is out there for everyone to see. As he put it, "they are separated from that with which they are in most continuous contact." (Heraclitus, Frag. 72).

In the end, we should understand that even though his advice is to follow the common, we should not take it that it is readily available without any effort on our part. Obviously, it requires intelligence and insight to come to grips with it. That one needs to seek and probe deeply into the nature of things. For he says, "(things?) (worlds?) real constitution (according to Heraclitus) tends to conceal itself" (Heraclitus, Frag. 123).

How can we resolve this dilemma? How can we reach the summit of Heraclitus's truth-the logos which are supposedly around us and yet not easily accessible to us? It is, I believe, in the hope of tackling such questions that Heraclitus reviewed and criticized the power of the senses to apprehend and experience the logos.

To begin with, for Heraclitus the senses are necessary in our search for knowledge - it is through the senses that we first encounter the logos. But we must be skeptical about the ability of the senses to even achieve that since they do not give us more than simple impressions of the being of the logos. In this connection, in one of his fragments he says: "poor witnesses for people are eyes and ears, if they possess uncomprehending (literally, 'barbarian') souls." (Heraclitus, Frag. 107). Indeed, we should try to go beyond what our senses present to us. We need to investigate and research but should also know how to reach the right conclusion. In a sense, intellectual apprehension of the logos presupposes intuition and insight. In sum, even though Heraclitus finds the senses 'untrustworthy' in general, he does not reject sense perception as Parmenides does: "Whatsoever things <are> objects of sight, hearing, <and> experience these things I hold in higher esteem" (Heraclitus, Frag. 55). For sure, the senses are "bad witnesses" for those who lack the necessary insight and understanding such as those with barbarian souls.

Positive Content of the Logos

Heraclitus's concept of the logos runs the gamut from cosmology to theology (the two were inseparable at that period), from ethics/politics to the human soul or what we now call philosophical anthropology. Perhaps it would be advisable to follow the Stoics in this respect and divide his teaching into different (three) subjects. Given the scope and purpose of this paper, I will limit my analysis to two general topics, i.e., to his cosmological/ theological doctrine and his ethical (political) doctrine.

Cosmology and Theology

The logos, for Heraclitus, are part material and part spiritual. He did not draw a distinction between material and spiritual entities (principles). Unlike the pre-Socratics, he believed that the primal substance is endowed not only with life but with some sort of divine principle. We know that the physical attribute that embodies the logos is fire but before we develop this important Heraclitan insight, let us begin with some of his essential teachings that lead up to it. "Not after listening to me, but after listening to the account, one does wisely in agreeing that all things are <in future?> one <thing>. (Says Heraclitus) (Heraclitus, Frag. 50).

We have seen the message of the first part of this fragment—that one should focus one's attention on the logos rather than on him. The real challenge comes in understanding the second passage that counsels us that it would be wise to agree that "all things are one." In other words, what exactly does Heraclitus mean when he says everything is one?

It is my contention that Heraclitus specifically refers to the two cardinal teachings of the logo. First, against all levels of representation, he advances the claim viz, the fundamental identity of opposites. We can select three fragments that demonstrate this thesis:

"They do not understand how, while differing from (or: being at variance), <it> agrees with itself. <There is> a back - turning connection, like <that> of a bow or lye." (Heraclitus 2003, p. 37).

"A road up <and> down <is> one and the same <road> (Heraclitus 2003, p. 41).

For very many people Hesiod is <their> teacher. They are certain he knew a great number of things—he who continually failed to recognize <even> day and night <for what they are>! For they are one." (Heraclitus 2003, p. 39).

What appears to be disconnected and at variance with each other is deeply connected and in harmony with each other, i.e., all opposites are dialectically connected in the sense that one is the definition of the other. For instance, the concept of 'day' implies 'night', and the notion of 'hot' and 'cold' are mutually implicative concepts. Thus, the interchangeability of opposites shows that they are one manifestation of Being. Hegel credits Heraclitus with being the first philosopher to discover the unity of opposites and "to have understood how all things are in flux" and that truth is becoming.

Second, the connection with his doctrine of identity of opposites, his belief in the universality of change is one of his cardinal ontological teachings. For Heraclitus, everything is in constant flux—change is pervasive in that “nothing, not even the most stable-seeming and solid substance, is really at rest” (Freeman 1966, p. 115). Here, we should note that there is a connection between Heraclitus’s conflict of opposites and his doctrine of change. It is the constant clash of opposites that explains why things change as well. This river statement attests to this fact: “As they step into the same rivers, different and <still> different waters flow upon them” (Heraclitus, Frag. 12).

“We step and do not step into the same rivers; we are and are not.” (Heraclitus, Frag. 49a).

As it stands, while individual change (comes into being and perishes) takes place in a spontaneous and less orderly fashion, change on a universal or cosmic scale is more orderly and cyclical. Here, a few words about Heraclitus’s perception about order and the logos is in order—the key text is found in the following fragment:

“<The ordered?> world, the same for all, no god or manmade, but it always was, is, and will be, an ever-living fire, being kindled in measures and being put out in measures.” (Heraclitus, Frag. 30).

Two cosmological views are advanced in this fragment (30). First, as the term *cosmos* connotes, we have an ordered world, it is (not created) and will always be (eternal). Heraclitus describes this ordered world as ‘everlasting fire’ or composed of fire. Second, while it is described as ‘everlasting fire’, it is also said to be “kindled” and put out in “measures.” How do we reconcile these inconsistencies? Put another way, can we employ two contradictory concepts such as “ever-living” and “extinguished” to describe the same phenomenon? Is it not true that if it is perishable, we cannot claim that it is also everlasting or that “it always is”?

I believe that Heraclitus is talking about ‘change’, i.e., proposing the idea that everything evolves into something. For instance, fire is transformed into many things: “fire’s turnings: first, sea, and of sea half <is> earth, and half ‘burner’” (Heraclitus, Frag. 319). Thus, the first sense of Fragment 30, where he uses the two antithetical terms “ever-living” and “put out,” adumbrates the fact that the elements are always consuming and being consumed by one another. Heraclitus here refers to the ancient doctrine of a final conflagration. But he does not stop here, he also contends that this transformation takes place in an orderly fashion, “extinguished in due measure”: “The sun <God> will not overstep <his> measures. Otherwise <the> avenging Furies, ministers of justice, will find him out” (Heraclitus, Frag. 94).

This fragment underscores the fact that the world is an ordered entity, influenced by the logos, according to measure. According to Wilbur and Allen, Fragment 94 suggests that “Fire is not only a transcendent principle; it is imminent in all earthly processes. It exercises its control over them as a medium of exchange by regular measures” (Wilbur and Allen 1979, p. 69).

We shall see that the same principle applies to mankind as well. But before that, I want to say a few words about Heraclitus's theology which is inseparable from his cosmological views. We have said earlier that the logos is not only a material principle but a divine thou: "[He says that] the wise <thing> is a single <thing> (or, differently punctuated: one thing, the wise thing, <is> - knowing the plan + which steers+ all things through all things" (Heraclitus, Frag. 41).

"One thing, the only wise thing, is unwilling and willing to be called by the name Zeus." (Heraclitus, Frag. 32a).

"And thunderbolt steers the totality of things." (Heraclitus, Frag. 64).

The first of the three fragments allude to the fact that God is one, identical with the logos. The second statement refers to the fact that he wants to be called Zeus—and does not have the old anthropomorphic characteristics. The last text points to the view that the logos (the one) directs and dictates all cosmic events.

Summing up

In his celebrated Gifford lectures, James Adam summed up the positive content of the logos in the following words (points): 1. The logos does not have a beginning nor an end but is instead eternal and everlasting. 2. All beings in the cosmos live and thrive in accordance with the logos. Thus, the logos governs the cosmic as well as the human world. 3. Even though man has a duty to abide by the one universal logos, he/she tends to act as if they have a private (individual logos).

The logos permeate everything. Jaspers says that logos "is the encompassing undefined and endlessly definable terms of philosophy" (like all the great and basic terms of philosophy) (Jaspers 1966, p. 11). The meaning or the logos are not derived from sheer conceptual thinking. The logos embodies "action and speech" which make it difficult to grasp and apprehend in theory alone.

The logos are not accessible to ordinary observation. We need to put a lot of effort into coming up with an understanding of its essential features. It is so because, "Nature loves to hide". It is quite difficult to grasp her secrets unless we concentrate hard and open our eyes. Heraclitus takes it upon himself to awaken humanity from sleep.

[Heraclitus says that] "for those who are awake there is a single common universe, whereas in sleep each person turns away into (his) own, private (universe)." (Heraclitus, Frag. 89, p. 55)

On the positive side, *Heraclitus* suggests that we could attain a high degree of knowledge if we begin to contemplate the being of our inner world i.e., our soul.

"One would never discover the limits of soul, should one traverse every road – so deep a measure does it possess)" (Heraclitus, Frag. 45, p. 33).

1. *Heraclitus* underscores the depth of the soul and the logos. What is suggested here is that understanding of the soul leads to the understanding of the logos.
2. *Heraclitus* detects a tension between the universality of the logos and “private intelligence”. He warns that it is imperative to accept that there is only “one wisdom by which all things are steered”.

[He says that] “the wise (thing) is a single (thing) (or, differently punctuated: one thing, the wise thing, (is) knowing the plan which *steers* all things through all things.” (Heraclitus, Frag. 41).

If we shorten Heraclitus’s teaching into one sentence, he tried to explain the universe by invoking one universal principle: the principle of the logos.

Political/Ethical Teachings

One of Heraclitus’s most ethical doctrines rests on the assumption that the ordering of the human ‘universe’ is closely connected with the ordering of the universal logos. As part of the rational life of the logos, man’s law is also related with the natural law. Thus, the wisdom of the logos gives us insight and guidance to our social and practical life. According to Werner Jaeger, Heraclitus is “the first philosopher to introduce/ connect knowledge of being with insight into human values and conduct and made the former include the latter” (Jaeger 1948, p. 180).

The initial insight that we derive from the “knowledge of being” is that we should follow the universal law, that our ethical and practical behavior should follow the dictate of the universal spirit of the logos:

“Those who <would> speak with insight must base themselves firmly in that which is common to all, as a city does upon <its> law—and much more firmly: For all human laws are nourished by one <law>, the divine <law>. For it holds sway to the extent that it wishes, and suffices for all, and is still left over.” (Heraclitus, Frag. 114).

The logos are common -it is universal. We should obey and try to live in harmony with the universal (logos). Human law is not only subordinate to the divine law, but it is also nourished by it. Thus, with all its imperfections, human law “drew their life from the one divine law” (Freeman 1966, p. 127). For this reason, Heraclitus holds the law in high esteem. He says then: “[For he said,] the people should fight on behalf of the law as<they would> for <their> city-wall” (Heraclitus, Frag. 144). What he is saying here is that, as the wall protects the city from external enemies, the law, which is common to all, protects the citizens from itself, i.e., without the rule of law, internal conflict and social strife will plunge the city (community) into chaos and anarchy.

I want to add here that we should also remember that this universal law always operates according to measure. We have already seen how “fire” in the natural world is kindled and extinguished according to measure. So, for Heraclitus, the same principle follows in human affairs as well. In one of his memorable

fragments this connection is drawn: “[He used to say that] there is a greater need to extinguish hubris than there is a blazing fire” (Heraclitus, Frag. 43). The advice here is for moderation and law abidance whereas hubris is condemned as a violator of measure.

Following his criticism of those who act and behave in defiance of that which is common, he repeatedly calls upon his listeners to heed to the “counsel of the one”: “<It is> law (custom) also to obey (respect) counsel of <a single> one” (Heraclitus, Frag. 33). This fragment is consistent with Heraclitus’s teachings about the wisdom of ‘agreeing that everything is one.’ The relevant fragment that corresponds with his advice to follow the counsel of the one is: “[He says that] the wise <thing> is a <single> <thing> (or, differently punctuated: one thing, the wise thing, <is>—knowing the plan+ which steers+ all things through all things (Heraclitus, Frag. 41).

When it comes to the affairs of the polis, he defends the Aristocratic view (the wise are few) against the prevailing philosophy of his day that practiced a strange democracy - banish individuals (Hermodorus) for being better than them. Like a true aristocrat, he does not have confidence in the ability of many to run their own affairs. Many are not virtuous; they lack the necessary insight to be given the position of leadership. For him, “one man <is> <the equivalent of> ten thousand, provided he be very good (excellent)” (Heraclitus, Frag. 49).

One of the last points I want to examine here before ending this paper is Heraclitus’s provocative statement in Fragment 80, which reads: “One must realize that war is common, and justice strife, and that all things come to be through and are <so> + ordained +” (Heraclitus, Frag. 80). The question is: How does Heraclitus reconcile this passage (justice is strife) with his proposal to obey the law? Now, the first phrase “war is common” is taken by most commentators (Kahn, Robinson) as a reference to Homer’s statement that “Enyalios (i.e., Ares) is common (xynos), and the killer gets killed” (Kahn 1983, p. 205). Charles Kahn suggested that Heraclitus expounds this notion further and ‘takes xynos ‘common’ in his own sense of ‘universal,’ all-pervading, ‘unifying,’ and thus gives the words of the poets a deeper meaning” (Kahn 1983, p. 205).

The second statement: ‘justice is strife’ sums up the essence of Heraclitus’s philosophy. I think Hegel is right in stating that “In Heraclitus the moment of negativity is imminent” (Hegel 1974, p. 284). He is the first philosopher to have understood the truth of contradiction and opposition that underlies the dialectic of human existence.

Conclusion

“This work of which, one hundred and thirty fragments have come down to us, consists of incisively, powerfully formulated maxims. They did not form a systematic edifice, but there is a unity in their mode of thought. Their succinctness invites the reader to interpret endlessly.” (Karl Jaspers from *The Great philosopher’s* volume II., p. 11).

Heraclitus is a subtle and complex philosopher whose thought cannot be comprehended in a single narrative. His message is quite difficult to grasp easily because of his oracular style and partly because of the difficulty of his thought. On the other hand, one of the most important critical editors of Heraclitus fragments (Diels) is supposed to have said that “he who once hears the sayings of Heraclitus never forgets them for the rest of his life” (Adam 1965, p. 214).

Heraclitus was not only an instigator into the being of nature like the new generation of thinkers (The Milesians). He was also at the same time an initiator (instigator) who tirelessly summoned his fellow countrymen to follow the one and only correct path.

Heraclitus belongs to a generation of thinkers who tried to move away from the old mythopoeic tradition to a new perception of the universe. In his work we find two formidable points against the prevailing attitude of the old mythopoeic tradition: A) He rejected the notion that nature is governed by the gods and instead advanced the claim that the world is ruled by one cosmic law, i.e., the logos. B) Against mythical plurality he introduced the notion of one unifying principle that governs all ‘occurrences’. For Heraclitus, this principle is endowed with intelligence and thought. As he puts it: “the thunderbolt steers the totality of things” (Heraclitus, Frag. 64). He calls this entity ‘Fire’. For Heraclitus, ‘Fire’ is not the ordinary element like water, air etc. but something different involving life and soul.

We could sum up Heraclitus concepts of the logos in the following preliminary statements. (i) All things he says come to pass in accordance with the logos. (ii) The struggle and unity of opposites. (iii) The logos are the source of law and cosmic order. (iv) The logo is the being of the world and the soul. (v). Fire is the material side of the logos. (vi). Everything is in a state of flux.

His teaching about the logos the dialectic of opposites, and along with his belief that philosophical understanding should be able to offer guidance to human conduct remained highly influential in this day.

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