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Heraclitus on Meaning and Knowledge Legitimation

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Abstract of the Dissertation

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This dissertation offers a new account of the context in which Heraclitus develops his views on meaning and knowledge. The frame of mythic thinking affords insight into important dimensions of Heraclitus's thought, particularly the simultaneous holism and fragmentation that characterized his ideas on the world and on wisdom. I suggest that Heraclitus' concept of the *xynos logos*, or shared thinking, captures the holistic-fragmented nature of the social bond perfectly. Because this *xynos logos* only happens where thought gathers, I show how four sites of this gathering—the *psyche*, the *polis*, the cosmos, and the Sacred—are intended in a number of pivotal fragments of Heraclitus. A close reading suggests we should not take the continuity of these sites of thinking as passive or stable; instead, each site is as arising only out of conflict. Thus, we discover that the signature Heraclitean concept of the *agon* is present in the fragments that describe the four sites of the *xynos logos*. In a concluding discussion, I argue that Heraclitus's unique aphoristic style also captures this fragmentation within the whole, which allows (and has allowed) future interpreters continually and fruitfully to re-interpret his fragments. The fragments cannot be exhausted of meaning because they capture the very essence of meaning, fragmentation, within. Thus, philosophy should not wish away conflict and competition in its definitions of the world, but see conflict as the basis of any world it might hope to define.

For Jill,
For her patience and love.

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Introduction

This project arises out of the hypothesis that the current condition of philosophy and humanities is very similar in form to the time of the very inception of philosophical and metaphysical thinking in the Western world. The “thinker” from this era who stands out as having most immediate influence on the subsequent discipline of philosophy, even if he was not a part of it, is Heraclitus. The purpose of this project is to suggest that in looking at the fragments of Heraclitus in a different way they can offer us insight into how to think in the current vacuum of the meaning of philosophy. This will be accomplished by resituating his thought in a context more appropriate to it namely, mythic thinking. Mythic thinking has two aspects: it provides itself with a unified narrative that covers over a fragmented existence. Heraclitus provides us an opportunity to see the importance of fragmentation and difference in thinking. This was especially important at a time when others interested in the workings of the world, Xenophanes, Pythagoras, Hecataeus among others, were making their own knowledges about the way the world “is.” These

“knowledges” were systems and accounts that pretended to explain history and cosmology in a permanent way. That is, there was no recognition of the possibility of their eventual failure. In pretending that the cosmos is definable and permanent people forget their own limits; they forget their own potential. Thus, it will be tentatively stated that for Heraclitus the job of philosophy is continually to remind people of their own limits and finitude—not only of their biological limits, but limits of their understanding as well.

We are much more likely to find something worthwhile in Heraclitus’s thought when he is seen in his own context. Much has been done in this way to contextualize, both philologically and philosophically, what Heraclitus was saying. But what has rarely been done is to understand Heraclitus from a holistic perspective of world that was only just then breaking apart, namely, the mythic world.

By understanding Heraclitus’s fragments as coming out of mythic thinking one can see that his aphoristic fragments discuss a realm between narrative unification and fragmentary existence. The unity characteristic of mythic intention can be seen as one side to Heraclitus’s fragments. The fragmentation characteristic of mythic existence can be seen as the other. But it is how we, as humans, approach this divide that is the most important challenge to appreciating Heraclitean thought. And here is the key: the “philosophy” that

Heraclitus offers is a bridge over that divide. What we can learn from Heraclitus is that the divide at the foundation of man's existence has not been erased by "science," nor could it be; it has merely been covered over. Heraclitus offers us not a doctrine that says "everything flows,"¹ but rather a text of thought-provoking invitations to flow with everything. This continual flow and growth can only happen with the immense awareness Heraclitus variously calls *noos*, *phronein*, and *sōphronein*. And what's more it can only happen through conflict and competition. We are combined in difference (rather than in indifference) and it is the awareness and recognition of difference and fragmentation that allows continual growth. One way we can make known and preserve difference is through narrative. But what Heraclitus sees in the authorities and the people of his time is disconcerting. The people blindly accept the same story of the world that had been told for centuries—it is for precisely that reason that at the same time they worship the gods in a way that is unholy. Worlds, and gods, change. They do not die, but they do disappear and reappear. How can they be heard at all if all we are listening to is what the authorities tell us to? When narratives stabilize in this way they become composed of facts, not practical knowledge.

The "how-to" of Heraclitus's discourse is passed on to us, much in the same way it was passed on to generations of early Greeks, through narrative.

¹ The doctrine of *panta rhei* is attributed to Heraclitus by Plato in the *Cratylus*. While this doctrine can in spirit be considered accurate, it should be seen more as a beginning point for understanding Heraclitus than the conclusion of his *logos*.

Heraclitus does not write a narrative. But insofar as Heraclitus's language is performative, instructive, and explicitly refers to characters as examples for what not to count as knowledge, Heraclitus is "telling a story."

My working hypothesis is that the structures of mythic thinking and the structure of the body and transmission of narrative knowledge can serve as highly effective interpretive tools for making sense of the fragments of Heraclitus. Heraclitus's style and message is unique amongst his contemporaries. It has been proposed in other explanations that Heraclitus is between myth and philosophy.² Heraclitus does not fall clearly within the side of thinking "philosophically" (unless we redefine that term) nor does he seem to advocate a "scientific" form of knowledge or transmission. In short, Heraclitus's thinking and "knowing" fall in a between realm which it is the job of this thesis to give definition to in a positive way. But Heraclitus posits the very between-realm from which he speaks; a between realm that still exists today.

The Program: From Unification to Fragmentation and Back

The contents of Heraclitus's fragments are quite varied. The only reason one can overlook this is because of the widely accepted presumption that

² See for example: Daniel Guerrière, "Physis, Sophia, Psyche" in *Heraclitean Fragments* (ed. J. Sallis, and K. Maly; University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1980), 86-134. And Lawrence Hatab, J. *Myth and Philosophy: A Contest of Truths*. La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1990.

Heraclitus is elaborating some specific principle or doctrine. This study argues the opposite; while Heraclitus has particular themes, he does not have a specific principle or doctrine. One would be wrong to overlook the fundamentally critical nature of his discourse. Roman Dilcher is right to point out the subject of Heraclitus's proem is not the cosmos, but that humans do not understand it properly.³ In short, Heraclitus tells a story about the awareness and recognition, or lack thereof, of human insight. He warns about the danger of forgetting our roots in unified and communal thinking; of forgetting the difficult work already done to establish the world as it is—politically, artistically, militarily; of forgetting that the essence of human being is struggle. Everything that he sees goes against this origin.⁴ In the establishment of individual disciplines even great minds are covering over the connected understanding of community in the polis and with respect to the gods. To take what seems familiar as correct is tantamount to taking what has been established by the art and thought of finite men as universal and eternal. In the context of this potential danger of universal

³ Roman Dilcher, *Studies in Heraclitus* (Spudsmata 65; New York: Georg Olms Verlag Hildesheim, 1995) Chapter 1.

⁴ Cf. K XXVII (D.K. 108): "Of all those whose *logoi* I have heard, none has gone as far as this: to recognize what is wise, set apart from all." See Charles Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979). This study will use the Charles Kahn edition for all of the fragments. Unfortunately, Kahn's method of numbering the fragments in Roman numerals is quite clumsy. For that reason and for the easy reference of the reader the more common numbering of the Diels edition is also given (H. Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 6th ed. by W. Kranz [Berlin, 1951]). The first number given corresponds to Kahn's numbering, the second number to the Diels-Kranz edition numbering. Furthermore, all translations will be Kahn's unless otherwise noted.

hubris and arrogance, the characteristics of mythic thinking itself—even if the contents of those fractured myths must change—are key ways of re-grounding humanity in something larger than itself, which it needs to remain true to itself.

In order to situate the argument a certain amount of groundwork needs to be done. One of the first assumptions that the reader will notice is that Heraclitus's discourse was in direct response to something. On the one hand, this is a trivial truth; all discourse is response to something. On the other hand, such an observation is not trivial in that shows one assumption this project will make: that discourse is a series of moves in a language game. Thus, any move Heraclitus makes is in response to a move previously made by one of his predecessors, contemporaries, or by "men" in general.

Heraclitus is reacting against a particular way of focusing on knowledge and the world that favors the permanence of things. He is not attempting to explain any particular thing in its abstract and universal or timeless form. In fact, it is precisely this tendency toward permanence that appears to displease Heraclitus. What he speaks to, instead, is of the recognition of the way that knowledge and world are established—namely, communally in joint thinking. For this reason, any private and thoughtless acceptance of the authority of others

is very problematic.⁵ Therefore, the possibility of a fluid interplay of communal knowledge that changes over time should be favored over the permanent knowledge of a specific authoritative doctrine. For instance, his critique of Homer and Hesiod is not a reaction against mythic knowledge, as it has often been characterized, but rather a reaction against taking *any* individual discourse as *authoritative*, in the sense that it has sole ownership over telling the story of being. What is preferable to the simple acceptance of what is handed down is the realization of what our own experience can add to the conversation or the story of being. If we merely accept the familiar we are wrongfully concurring too easily about the most important matters.⁶ Because the fire of being was not made by god or man, neither god nor man is the sole proprietor of accounting for its various configurations.⁷

It is our first job to show that Heraclitus is anti-dogmatic, anti-doctrinal, anti-foundational (at a time when such doctrines, dogmas, and foundations were just beginning to show themselves). His main assault is against those who try to

⁵ Cf. K. XII (D.K. A23): “In taking the poets as testimony for things unknown, they are citing authorities that cannot be trusted.”; See also K. LIX (D.K. 104): “What wit or understanding do have? They believe the poets of the people and take the mob as their teacher, not knowing that ‘the many worthless’, good men are few.”

⁶ Cf. K. XI (D.K. 47): “Let us not concur casually about the most important matters.” Or in an alternate translation from Brooks Haxton: “Yet let’s not make rash guesses our most lucid thoughts.” Brooks Haxton, *Fragments: The Collected Wisdom of Heraclitus* (New York: Viking, 2001)

⁷ Cf. K. XXXVII (D.K.30). “The ordering, the same for all, no god nor man has made, but it ever was and is and will be: fire everliving, kindled in measures and in measure going out.”

establish such doctrines. What's more, Heraclitus is not attempting to offer an alternative except for to say that one should use one's own experience in conjunction with the wakeful humans around him to understand his world. To put an artificial doctrine, schema, or overlay on top of one's experience is essentially to separate oneself from the world, i.e., to be asleep.⁸

The thinking of Heraclitus as it is set into work through the Greek fragments⁹ is extraordinarily concrete. This concreteness is not at all unusual to Greek thought. However, insofar as the concrete nature of Heraclitus's thought is symbolic, it narrates a story. Thus, Heraclitus's thought is parallel to myth on two levels: that it is essentially fragmentary, and second, that it uses concrete symbols to address invisible happenings (the intended Whole).

The general name given to thought-in-the-making that establishes and continuously reestablishes this Whole, that is, when we are not caught up in thinking about doctrines or authorities, is *logos*. Any *logos*, like any myth, is ventured as a risk, painfully and combatively. For Heraclitus too, struggle is at

⁸ B 89 (K. VI): "The world of the waking is one and shared, but the sleeping turn each aside into his private world."

⁹ As has often been noted, we have no original text of Heraclitus to refer to. What we do have is a collection of more or less accurate quotations, paraphrases, and statements in the spirit of Heraclitus passed down first by his followers, then Christian church fathers. For a full account of how the fragments are preserved see Charles Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 3-9.

the beginning of a history. In fact the idea of struggle is at both the beginning and end of his thought, for they are joined together.¹⁰

But the process of bringing any experience of the world into a work that sits still is also a process of struggle; this struggle is also ignored by the masses who take individuals as authorities on objective states. Of course, it is not even clear that poets intended their works to be taken as authoritative, but if they did they would have been wrong to do so. After all, it is only conflict, competition, and struggle that give birth to anything new, or, better yet, anything excellent. However, even the players involved in struggle, competition, and conflict must be recognized as essentially one. They are “united in the strife that divides them.”¹¹ The only way that the elements of struggle can be recognized as one is intentionally. That is, they can only be recognized symbolically, on the level of the divine.¹² Not much can be said on the level of divine knowledge, for now at least, other than it has insight where humans do not.¹³

To define who has knowledge, and where it comes from, is to understand the power of language and thinking itself. Mythic thinking understands power

¹⁰ Cf. K. XCIX (D.K. 103): “The end and beginning and end are shared in the circumference of the circle.” Haxton’s translation: “The beginning is the end.” (70)

¹¹ T.S. Eliott, as quoted by D.C. Schindler in “The Community of the One and the Many: Heraclitus on Reason,” (*Inquiry*, 46): 429.

¹² Cf. K. CXXIII (D. K. 108): “The god: day and night, winter and summer, war and peace, satiety and hunger. It alters, as when mingled with perfumes, it gets named according to the pleasure of each one.”

¹³ Cf. K. LV (D.K. 78): “Human nature has no set purpose (*gnōmai*), but the divine has.”

as outside of man. Whether or not one accepts the mystical elements of such thinking, its result is eminently pragmatic—one will never intentionally overstep one's boundaries. The "scientists"¹⁴ of Heraclitus's time are beginning to understand knowledge differently, as emerging from individual thought. When we invert this problem of the location of power, we see that another way of asking the question "Where is the power of discourse located?" is asking the question "Where is man comfortable, i.e., where does man make his thought at home?" In other words, in mythic thinking man finds his abode outside of himself—in his community, in the cosmos, in the sacred. In this shift away from mythic thinking man becomes comfortable inside of himself—this means all of the sudden the outside seems strange to him. Power is internalized and pushes against what is external. No matter what, man is at home in power;¹⁵ what changes is the way in which man understands this power.

Heraclitus is responding to this shift in how human beings understand themselves and what they know. The next question in that regard is: Whereto and wherefrom is this supposed shift in knowledge (or thinking on knowledge)?

¹⁴ By "science," "scientific," and "science" it mean to invoke the *polymathy* for which Heraclitus chastises his contemporaries, not science in the modern Cartesian sense, though the former may very well develop into the latter.

¹⁵ Cf. K. CXIV (D.K. 119): *Ethos-anthropos-daimon*. "At home, man, in power."

The general idea of such a shift is from *mythos* or “mythic thinking” to philosophy (*logos*) or “reason.”¹⁶ The description of this shift has many interpretations; they will not be elaborated here. This study will analyze what Heraclitus thinks this shift is a shift *away from*. The reason for this focus is that, according to the working hypothesis, this is what Heraclitus wants, at least in part, to retain. In short, the type of knowledge that has been gotten away from and Heraclitus nominally wants to return to will be examined.

To be clear, the idea of Heraclitus as a transitional thinker is not a new one. For instance, Lawrence Hatab sees Heraclitus as involved in unfolding the context of mythic thinking, and in so doing, “shaping the substructure of mythical sense.”¹⁷ Daniel Guerrière sees Heraclitus as thinking the transition in-itself.¹⁸ Heraclitus speculates on oneness that is in the background of “Being being beings” — the appearing of what is. Even Charles Kahn, in his Appendix discussing M.L. West, sees Heraclitus as between myth and philosophy.¹⁹ For Martin Heidegger, Heraclitus is the philosopher of lighting, the one who

¹⁶ For example see Eric Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), and Eric Voegelin, *Order and History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1957).

¹⁷ Hatab, 182.

¹⁸ Guerrière, “Physis, Sophia, Psyche,” 87.

¹⁹ Kahn, 297.

develops the idea of the hidden concealment behind the apparent being.²⁰ For Hans-Georg Gadamer, Heraclitus aims “‘to open up a confrontation’ of this being-one. . .”²¹; in other words, Heraclitus wants to create a positive tension in suggesting that things both are and are not as they appear, including mythical appearances. Here we could also refer to Hatab: “[Heraclitus] speaks to the sense of transparency in mythical presentations, namely the idea that mythical images are not substantial or factual but appearances in the midst of a mystery.”²² And it is in fact Heraclitus’s distancing of his own discourse from “substantial” statements that gives his logos its demonstrative force. This questioning opens a door not only in regard to new discourses, but also in respect to myth itself. Paul Ricoeur observes that

. . . when we lose the myth as immediate logos, we rediscover it as myth. Only at the price of a roundabout way of philosophical exegesis and understanding, can the myth create a new *peripeteia* of the logos.²³

And here is the key to Heraclitus discourse: he is turning back over mythic thinking, a first logos, to exhibit the structure of any logos as such. In setting free

²⁰ See Martin Heidegger, “Aletheia (B16),” in *Early Greek Thinking* (Trans. by David Farrell Krell and Frank A. Capuzzi; New York: Harper and Row, 1975). Henceforth, EGT.

²¹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Heraclitus Studies,” in *The Presocratics after Heidegger* (trans. by Peter Warnek; ed. by David C. Jacobs; Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1999), 221.

²² Hatab, 182.

²³ Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (Trans. by Emerson Buchanan; Boston: Harper and Row, 1967), 162.

the structure of myth from the content of myth, Heraclitus allows movement in the logos once again. However, his logos is such that it can easily be missed, because it is not spoken *with* words but rather *through* words. Dilcher captures this idea well:

The logos fully corresponds with the movement, transition, and balanced changeability of the world. It is at one with reality and in tune with what it pronounces. . . It escapes self-refutation by the very fact of its paradoxical and evasive nature, as it does not come to a deadly rest. The logos is thus to be seen in itself an instance of life. . .²⁴

So while mythic language does well enough in capturing certain immediate presentations of experience and appearance with Sacred names and words, it threatens to become stagnant. It threatens to preserve appearances without the lighting, background, or being from whence those emergences spring. While it attempts to recount and explain origins, it ultimately forgets the idea of origin as such. Here Hatab sums up the point well: "The logos is a process which entails a coincidence of the namable and the unnamable; sacred language presents an appearance of a world, but it can never capture the background which allows appearance."²⁵ Heraclitus's logos goes beyond this.

In sum, our working hypothesis is that "Heraclitus" as a text, as a thinking discourse, can best be interpreted as a creative reaction to a shift in how man

²⁴ Dilcher, 143-144.

²⁵ Hatab, 182.

understands his own knowing/thinking. This means that not only does such an interpretation open up and make whole Heraclitus's discourse, but also opens a new window, if not a door, in philosophy. Such a window can be seen in a philosophical thinking which is at the same time unified and fragmented, i.e. both compact and finite. This is where we will begin our analysis with chapter one.

In the first chapter the key features of mythic existence, mythic intention, and narrative knowledge are introduced. Only once the account has achieved the above steps can it venture a description of Heraclitus's *logos*.

In the second chapter, on *logos*, two tasks are completed. First, a gloss of other recent interpretations is offered. Then, by taking the interpretation that is most in tune with what has been theretofore laid out, an account is given of how Heraclitus's discourse fits into a new view toward the purpose of philosophy.

In the third chapter a look at the fragments of Heraclitus suggests the intentional unity of his thinking. This is shown mainly through one of the key features of mythic thinking, *compactness*. One part of compactness, vertical compactness will be shown to hold four key areas of concern to human understanding: the *psyche*, the *polis*, the cosmos, and the Sacred.

In the fourth chapter, the fragments that speak of conflict and struggle are examined; these indicate the real experience of human being. Here we see that

the four sites of understanding established in the chapter three are also seen to be fractured, and that this fracture is necessary for further growth of these sites.

The conclusion examines where Heraclitus attempts to show us how to interpret the difference between existence and intention appropriately, and the danger of not doing so. To interpret such a gap appropriately is to think well, and thus is called "the (one) wise." It is looking at unity and struggle, logos and wisdom, that will give an idea of what Heraclitus means by thinking, and what that reinterpretation could mean for the future of philosophy.

Myth and Struggle

There is no such thing as an isolated mythical event, just as there is no such thing as an isolated word. Myth, like language, gives all of itself in each of its fragments.

--Roberto Calasso

The grounding knowledge that serves as the context for Heraclitus's thought goes by several names, but for our purposes its process will be called "mythic thinking" and its result "narrative knowledge." Several aspects of each of these areas are examined below. In particular:

1. How does mythic thinking understand its world?
2. In what form of knowledge does mythic thinking result?
3. How is narrative knowledge transmitted?
4. How is narrative knowledge/mythic thinking legitimated?

In order to understand how such a discussion is in the background of Heraclitus's thought, some of the features of mythic knowledge are here elaborated prior to locating them within Heraclitus's discourse.

Mythic Thinking: The World as Whole

Mythic thinking is undifferentiated. Not only are individual "disciplines" contiguous with one another, but the human is also contiguous with the polis, the world, the Sacred. This contiguity should not suggest that one believed

oneself to have power over these other “forces”; if anything is the case, it is quite the opposite. But this way of thinking is quite different than our modern scientific thinking. “It remains different because its aim is to reach by the shortest possible means a general understanding of the universe and not only a general understanding but a *total* understanding.”¹ In contrast, “[a]s Descartes had already said, scientific thinking aimed to divide the difficulty into as many parts as were necessary in order to solve it.”² Thus, mythic thinking tends to unify the parts that it does not immediately see as parts, where as scientific thinking tends to partition and divide what it encounters as a nebulous whole (i.e., as an unsolved problem).

Furthermore, because they see the world as contiguous with themselves, mythic humans also experience “time” as they first encounters it, scilicet, according to the repetition of days, seasons, etc. In other words, the whole process of life and death is seen as without end or beginning except where they connect in the cycle. The name given to such multidimensional unity and contiguity is “compactness.”³

¹ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Myth and Meaning* (New York: Schocken Books, 1979), 17.

²Ibid., 17.

³ The sections on compactness are summaries of the ideas put forth by Daniel Guerrière in his article: Daniel Guerrière, “The Structure of Mythic Existence,” *The Personalist* 55 (1974): 262-73. As he says there in the first footnote, his ideas are themselves summaries of the work done by Cassirer, Voegelin, Ricoeur, and others.

Dimensional Compactness

Dimensional compactness unifies what for us would be compartments of experience. For example, for us farming is a matter for agriculture; rarely does one associate farming with religion or politics. Another example can be seen in how one understands war. For most Americans in the 21st century war is a purely political issue. Conversely, war and farming were more inclusive and extensive in their meaning for the mythic human: "For example, sowing seed or trapping bear is as much a religious and political praxis as an economic one. Sexuality is artistic, political, playful, economic, and religious at once. War is play and politics and religion."⁴ Thus, dimensional compactness shows the various dimensions of life as whole.

Vertical Compactness

Vertical compactness shows the continuity of action for mythic humanity in a hierarchy. Daniel Guerrière gives the name(s) of this hierarchy: "Sacred-cosmos-polis-individual."⁵ The hyphenation is there to remind the reader that these "agents" are thought of as continuous and whole. Today it is not uncommon to understand oneself as acting only on one's own behalf, and only from one's own

⁴ Daniel Guerrière, "The Structure of Mythic Existence," 263.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 266.

motivation; to fall victim to outside forces is usually considered “an accident.” Likewise, one understands the responsibility of each person’s life to be mostly under that individual’s control. Not so for people who exist compactly. Every action has its effects, and perhaps its causes, in the polis, the cosmos, and the Sacred. For instance, the cosmos, or world order, for the mythic Greek is not separate from the Sacred, i.e., Zeus, who is the ultimate divinity responsible for its ordering and direction. The cosmos and Zeus are one and the same and yet each is irreducible to the other. One cannot be seen without the other. For mythic humanity everything exists as the belonging-together (*harmonie*) of parts within the Whole.

What is important is that an individual actor is always moving within a realm of higher action; any action is a combination of one’s will with that of the cosmos and any result will affect the individual, the polis, and the cosmos. In fact, most extreme actions and emotions were seen to be purely the results of the gods.⁶ This is what makes the actions of tragic and epic heroes so significant: their destiny is the same as the destiny of one or more of the other higher elements (e.g., Achilles and Troy, Odysseus and Ithaca, Oedipus and Thebes).

⁶ Bruno Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind* (trans. T.G. Rosenmeyer; NY: Harper and Row, 1960), 30-1.

Furthermore, the ordering of the polis reflects the structure of the cosmos;⁷ each is grounded in order and outside of each is disorder. Likewise, the structure of the individual reflects the structure of the polis. In each site there is a set of internal laws and habits, even if such laws and habits are not always explicit. The interplay of “parts” in the line of vertical compactness—Sacred-cosmos-polis-individual—is a Whole.

Horizontal Compactness

Horizontal compactness is the way that dimensional and vertical compactness happen in process, namely, in a cycle. Rather than invoking a history and a future, compact thinking sees experience in recurring stages, such as seasons and generational cycles of living and dying. While a modern understanding of time and sequence of events is linear, mythic human beings understood the process as cyclical. Here it should be noted that whereas we speak of “time,” mythic humanity speaks only of process.⁸ “The Cycle is the

⁷ For example, Andrei Lebedev in his discussion on Heraclitus’ ordering of the cosmos points out that the Greek stadium was itself modeled after the original Greek understanding of cosmogony. See Andrei Lebedev, “The Cosmos as a Stadium: Agnostic Metaphors in Heraclitus’ Cosmology,” *Phronesis* 30 (1985): 131-150.

⁸ This is because “time” as such does become noticeable until it *breaks off* from the cycle, i.e. the process. The cycle happens in recurrence for eternity. Only when permanent change enters into the cycle does eternity break away from time in such a way that each of them can be individually. On this see Guerrière, “Mythic Existence,” 269-70.

Whole compactly in process, i.e. as turning back upon *itself*. For where *else* can the whole come from and go to? Other than the Whole 'is' only Nothing. The process of the *Whole* is the *Process* (of the Whole): the *Cycle*.⁹ "Time," conversely, for the mythic thinker usually refers to the appropriate "moment" in the cycle for this or that action: "Time is always for something: harvest time, war time, the time of worship, the time of death."¹⁰ Mythic existence therefore "lives the whole" as a continuous cycle of polar extremes of existence: birth and death, summer winter, famine and cornucopia, wherein each can be seen only in virtue of the other. The process itself constantly affects and brings about decay, followed by a renewal. One could say cyclical time is decay and renewal and nothing else. This cycle drives the seasons and the "annual" rituals that go along with them.

But the cycle of degeneration and regeneration can also be seen phenomenologically, that is, as a matter of disappearance and reappearance. The winter can be seen as the disappearance of fertility. In Greek mythology, winter is the result of Demeter's daughter Persephone *returning* to Hades for four

⁹ Ibid., 269.

¹⁰ Hatab, *Myth and Philosophy*, 38. For example, see Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 765ff. Heraclitus will explicitly attack this position (B 106) but not because days themselves lose their qualitative nature, but one cannot prescribe what that nature will be according to a calendar. On lucky and unlucky days see Martin Nilsson, *Greek Piety* (trans. H.J. Rose; N.Y.: Norton, 1969), 32-3.

months;¹¹ a length of stay she negotiated after doing as she was told not to do, namely eating a pomegranate seed in the Underworld. The literal disappearance of life is the result of the figurative disappearance of the Goddess of Fertility's daughter; in short, it is the result of Demeter's grief. Thus, the Sacred, in this case Demeter is always "there," but her fruits are withheld and to a certain extent "hidden" as a result of her grief. In the springtime Persephone again "appears" and the result is the regeneration of life. Of course, when one would speak of "seeing" Demeter the reference is not literal, but symbolic. One could "see" Demeter's grief in the dying vegetation of winter; the advent of winter is why such a story makes sense. On the one hand, Demeter's emotions can clearly be seen in the state of the vegetation; on the other hand Demeter herself cannot be seen at all. It is in "stories" like these that one can already begin to see importance of narrative for making sense of what to mythic humans must have been obvious symbols.

The Unified and the Fragmentary: Myth as it Relates to Narrative

One of the key features of mythic thinking is its unity; the world appears as continuous and whole. Yet in spite of this compact and continuous view of the world, the actual resultant myths are multiple. That is, even in a "time" of mythic

¹¹ Edith Hamilton, *Mythology* (New York: Warner Books, 1969): 51-55.

thinking, not every thinker of myth developed *the same* myth. Ricoeur explains this in virtue of the fact that the Whole disclosed by myth was *intended*, but not experienced.¹² Therefore, precisely because it was not experienced, it could only be signified through symbols. Of course, these symbols could be gathered only retrospectively; for the mythic human the world “is” whole.

Nonetheless, even within these accounts of the Whole, called myths, there was plenty of room for fragmentation. Because human life itself was a fragment in respect to the whole, one experienced oneself as part of a larger narrative, i.e. part of an ongoing story. The fragmentation of existence in its raw presentation also appears in the fact that the stories themselves were dramatic (e.g., think of the raw emotional response to trauma; the reaction formation itself would be, nonetheless, to turn that event into something explainable, intelligible, i.e. a coherent organization). The idea of drama, in the sense of struggle, fragmentation, competition, contest, and the *agon* will be seen time and time again in the discourse of Heraclitus. In fact, it is Heraclitus’s attunement to struggle as the ground of everything that sets him in opposition to the “knowledge” he hopes to critique. Nonetheless, the idea that Heraclitus understands struggle even where he speaks of unity will be taken up in a discussion of what he means by his key term *logos*.

¹²Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 169.

We have now begun to illuminate mythic thinking and narrative knowledge outlined according to the guiding questions above. Our next step is to illuminate in what way the Whole-structure of such a narrative knowledge is only intentional. Then we will show that the intentional structure of mythic thinking and knowledge displays at its core a fundamental struggle. This struggle is fundamental to society in general as an, nay, *the* arena of discourse; it is fundamental to Heraclitus's own discourse; and it is fundamental to thinking "in general."

Narrative as an Intentional Whole

Myth as a discourse is only the *expression* of the feeling of contiguity the human being has with the world. Myth and ritual, thus understood, are communal ways of participating in the Sacred as it appears in the world.¹³

Of course, this Sacred looks different to different tribes and different cultures. Each one has its own particular Whole. In the progress narrative of thinking, it is usually said that differentiation of such a thinking-whole happens only as the result of a clash with another culture. When multiple accounts of wholeness are put in confrontation with one another, evidently, the seamless

¹³ To say that this is a Whole experience is oversimplifying to a degree. For instance, Nilsson, Cassirer, and Eliade all point to the fact that originally, the divine was seen as multiple *daemons* intervening on human life. But the idea still holds that it is the divine, the Sacred, which orders and unifies the world.

absorption of each other's culture is not an option.¹⁴ But it is on the indubitable basis of the sheer existence of multiple accounts of wholeness that the wholeness of mythic thinking must be brought into question.

In other words, what is not accounted for in the description of mythic thinking as compact is the myriad number of myths. That is, if mythic thinking is compact, then why are there so many myths? Ricoeur answers this question. There are so many myths because the compactness above described is only virtual, not actual. That is to say, compactness—the unity of all that is—is only intended, not given.¹⁵ Therefore, the oneness that characterizes mythic thinking is only in intention. It is only in intending wholeness that a unity of discourse, an interplay of agents, and a cyclical process can take place.

Thus, it is not unity, but struggle that is at the base of unified experience. Again, myriad myths occur—each in its intended wholeness—precisely because that struggle with what is given takes on a different character in each case. But myth does not assemble and record the familiar, in the sense of taking stock of something. Rather, myth is the first grounding of anything so that it may become familiar. Such a grounding and establishing involves violence.

¹⁴ Guerrière, "Mythic Existence," 171-2. Eric Voegelin, *Order and History*, *passim*.

¹⁵ Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 167-9.

The grounding of an intended whole always takes the form of the narrative. It does so because the whole that it grounds itself in and with is itself a drama.¹⁶ For instance, the cosmogony of the Greeks is dramatic from the first: in giving birth to herself out of Chaos (*cháō*, “yawn, gap”), Gaia essentially begins-in-process the whole story of existence as such.¹⁷ And it is no coincidence that the cosmos begins out of Chaos, and not out of unified order. It is Chaos that describes best what the cosmos must have looked like were it possible to look at in its inception.

The entire cosmogony from Gaia to Zeus’s eventual rule on Olympus is wrought with struggle, combat, and strife. It is this same combat through which humanity affects a cohesive whole; it does this through the use of symbols. The cosmos, its origins, its deteriorations, and its restorations can only be rendered symbolically. “The chaotic and arbitrary aspect of the world of myths is the exact counterpart of the discrepancy between purely symbolic plenitude and the finiteness of the experience that furnishes man with ‘analogues’ of that which is signified.”¹⁸ Were the Whole experienced, in other words, such symbols would not be necessary. And such symbols are gained only through wresting them out

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 169.

¹⁷ For a recent and interesting interpretation of Greek cosmogony from a Heideggerian standpoint see Drew Hyland, “First of All Came Chaos” in *Heidegger and the Greeks* (ed. D. Hyland and J.P. Manoussakis; Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 9-22. There Hyland equates Hesiod’s primacy of Chaos with his implicit recognition of the ontological difference.

¹⁸ Ricoeur, *Symbolism*, 169.

of chaos and into language and art, which first means thinking, from the radical finiteness of surrounding being.

So first the mythic human experiences his world as compact and as unified. But, and more importantly, this compactness is a reaction formation to a fundamentally fragmented and finite world. Human being uses its thinking power to establish intentionally a significant whole, i.e. cosmos (order=world). Since the whole can only be seen in its symbols, its hints, the human must put these together—gather them—in the form of narration. The narrations always effects a drama because the initial ordering, one that can never be experienced as such, is signified through a combat, e.g. the seasons are a result of an ongoing battle (later a pact) between Demeter and Hades, as described above.

Narrative as Combat

The Sacred (the unseen but posited significant whole) is the power that has entered into the world through combat, and entered into the human scope of listening and understanding through combat as well. The combat of myth happens in both its *content*, i.e., the battles and action it describes, and its *form*, i.e. the way in which human beings wrest meaning from finite “things,” which are first and foremost symbols. Thus, the mythic human is involved in a combat

on two levels—the level of intention (i.e., the direction of his thinking), and the level of bringing such intention into being through language.

The content of myth is combative in the way described above; for, even order is seen as being wrestled out of chaos. The form of myth as narration, in particular a drama, is also combative in the sense that the human being must wrest meaning through whatever means available from a world that is given as fractured, partial, and flawed. As Ricoeur observes: “The plenitude that myth points to symbolically is established, lost, and reestablished dangerously, painfully. Thus it is not given, not only because it is signified and not experienced, but because it is signified through a combat.”¹⁹ It is this combative aspect of language that must now be fleshed out.

Heidegger’s work on language reminds us of two fundamental aspects of language in its relation to existence. The first is that language is a struggle that attempts to create and establish meaning in the world.²⁰ It is not a tool invented for the communication of facts, but rather language first establishes the world in which facts can even exist. The second important aspect of language is in its relation to being. This relation is such that language brings to appearance a being and does so in one of two ways. If the language refers to things, places, concepts,

¹⁹ Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 169-70.

²⁰ See, for example: Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics* (trans. R. Manheim; New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1959), 62-3, 150, 157. Henceforth, “IM.”

etc., as objects it refers to something familiar and already established, something present at hand. If, on the other hand, language refers to beings in their being, in the process of their emergence, and holds them in their appearance (wherein this holding requires work) then language can be ever new, and ever meaningful. It is inevitable that names, and with them the things they name, can become old, worn out, and familiar. However, it is these same names that can be opened anew through an examination of how they happen historically.

What this process amounts to is reestablishing meaning in a word/name through telling its story. On the one hand, in order for this process to be at all valuable one must turn one's ear to what the word has said, i.e., its history. On the other hand, and even more importantly, one must have an ear for what remains unsaid in the word—for what has a potential of being unfolded still.

What interests us here is this process of telling a story to (re)establish meaning. More importantly, who has the right/power/ordination to tell such a story? The right/power/ordination of such a narrator will be called authority. But a story not only needs an authority to tell it, but also a legitimate purpose for its being told. Telling someone a story always has a purpose—whether it is to beguile, to warn, or to disclose for the purpose of making a decision, to name just a few possible reasons. So then above and beyond the necessity of an authority

to tell it, a story also needs its legitimation. To question the legitimation of a new type of knowledge is one of Heraclitus's main goals.

Language Games, Legitimation, and Power

To clarify the shift in knowledge from myth to the *logoi* of the proto-scientists, one must look at the difference in the transmission of knowledge through language and how it gains its legitimacy. For the discussion of such a shift we turn to Jean-François Lyotard.

Lyotard begins his account of postmodern knowledge²¹ by illuminating the transmission of pre-modern knowledge, what he calls "narrative knowledge." It is in this account of narrative knowledge that one finds again some striking similarities to the thinking of Heraclitus. The reason for these similarities is relatively simple; to wit, because both Heraclitus and Lyotard are analyzing a shift in an understanding of knowledge. While Heraclitus's matter for thinking is the shift in knowledge from what might be called a pre-modern to a modern configuration (the latter being a metaphysics of presence, one based in objectivity), Lyotard is thinking on the shift from modern knowledge to postmodern knowledge. Ironically, the unifying characteristic of postmodern

²¹ Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi; Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

knowledge is its “incredulity toward metanarratives” — stories we tell ourselves to ground the basis of knowing and belief.

Let us make some things clear about mythic linguistic situation. The clarification will require a summary of the idea of language-games, as the idea occurs in Lyotard, who, of course, borrows it from Wittgenstein.²² Granted, I said above that language is not a matter of the mere communication of facts or information. Thus, it would seem counterintuitive to apply a method of analysis that treats language as a mere mode of communication. However, the tools provided by a language-game analysis allow us to understand the well-spring of language from the outside, as it were, and apply a dynamic method to the statements of Heraclitus. Here are the general guidelines to a language game analysis.

First, in any speaking situation, it is assumed that there is a sender and an addressee, both of whom agree to an implicit set of complicated rules. The sender is seen to be sending communication to the addressee. There can be any of several different language-games in which the addressee, the sender, and the referent each have different roles. In the example of a denotative utterance such as “Water is wet,” the sender is assumed to know that the water is wet, the addressee can either agree or disagree, and the referent in these statements must

²² Lyotard, 9.

be “correctly identified and expressed by the statement that refers to it.”²³ One will notice that almost all proto-scientific and scientific knowledge-oriented utterances are of this type.

Of course, there are other types of language-games. For instance, with the phrase “I now pronounce you man and wife,” an official actually changes the marital status of the referents (who are also the addressees). This is called a performative utterance because in its very uttering it performs what it utters. Furthermore, there can be questions, narrations, poetic descriptions. Each one is a distinct language-game that puts its players in a unique position. Here let’s again refer to Lyotard to sum up the three basic features of a language-game:

1. The first is that their rules do not carry within themselves their own legitimations, but are the object of a contract, explicit or not, between players (which is not to say players invent the rules).
2. The second is that if there are no rules, there is no game, that even an infinitesimal modification of one rule alters the nature of the game, that a ‘move’ or utterance that does not satisfy the rules does not belong to the game they define.
3. The third remark is suggested by what has just been said: every utterance should be thought of as a ‘move’ in a game.²⁴

Lyotard understands language as a (sometimes playful) struggle, or what he calls “an agonistics.”²⁵ That is to say, language puts and keeps in tension two or more

²³ Lyotard, 9.

²⁴ Lyotard, 10.

opposing forces, a key feature that will later become important in Heraclitus's discourse. Thus, agonistics is like playing a game and each utterance is a move in that game. As I will show in the next chapter, Heraclitus notion of *xynos logos* includes both the communal and competitive aspects of agonistics. Agonistics is one essential principle in the function of language in society; the other is that the social bond itself can be seen as made of various moves.²⁶

I will show that Heraclitus's main focus is the human understanding of knowledge rather than the cosmos or the metaphysical foundations of it. Rather the good majority of his fragments can be grounded in the critique of various moves of others within society and the nature of this fluid "pragmatic" approach in general. Heraclitus sees the world as being grounded in conflict. This vision is even leveled as a polemic against an "educator" who does not see the world this way, namely, Homer.²⁷ What's more, the key concept of logos will be shown to be the interchange of moves within this social bond.

This foray into language games was to set up a background for discussing mythic discourse in the realm of pragmatics. Now that the notion of struggle,

²⁵ Lyotard, 10.

²⁶ Cf. K. XIV (D.K. 52): "Lifetime (*Aion*) is a child at play, moving pieces in a game. Kingship belongs to the child."

²⁷ Cf. K. XXXIA (D,K, A22): "Homer was wrong when he said 'Would that Conflict might vanish from among gods and men!' (*Il.* 18.107). For there would be no attunement without high and low notes nor any animals without male and female, both which are opposites."

players, and different types of utterance are in play, I shall make a couple more introductory remarks.

Mythic discourse is oriented toward prescription and the dissemination of narrative knowledge. The pragmatics of narrative knowledge has four features that it apart from “developed” discourses.²⁸ After explaining each of the features I also suggest in what way and to what extent they can be found in Heraclitus’s discourse.

First, narrative knowledge sets up a model to be followed by way of the protagonist’s adventures. Where the hero of the narrative is rewarded, his action should be followed; where he’s punished, his action is to be avoided. In other words, narrative knowledge is not concerned with a body of knowledge but with “know-how.”²⁹

While Heraclitus is not telling a prolonged coherent tale, *contra* Homer, he does give guidelines of what the protagonist, for Heraclitus “the wise,” should do in order to be wise. We are told at various points that the greatest choose fame above all else (K. XCVII, D.K. 29), that those who seek wisdom must be good investigators (K. IX, D.K. 35), that one should listen to the logos (K. XXVI, D.K. 50), etc.

²⁸ Lyotard, 19-22.

²⁹ Lyotard, 19.

The second feature of narrative knowledge transmission is its use of multiple language-games. Whereas the dissemination of scientific knowledge uses denotation almost exclusively, the dissemination of narrative knowledge can make use of inquiry, suggestion, etc. It is more open to the playfulness of language in part because of its generosity of modes of transmission, but also because of its third feature, its legitimation in its transmission.

Heraclitus also uses multiple language games in his discourse. For instance, the proem (K. I, D.K.1) is a combination of denotative (Though this logos is forever men are. . .) and deontic statements; the latter is used in that it suggests the way men understand is deficient. Yet other statements are prayers in that they their addressee is apparently the gods. They witness a set of events in the polis: . . . Yet another fragment is clearly an inquiry: "How does one hide from that which does not set?" (K. CXXII, D.K. 16). It has also been argued that Heraclitus general style corresponds to that of an oracle or a riddler. To that extent, some of his statements also play the language game of riddle.³⁰

The third feature is that the pragmatics of the narration is innate to the narrative itself. The "truth" of the story is implied in its being spoken by so-and-so, who heard it spoken at such-and-such a place by so-and-so. Thus the listeners

³⁰ On Heraclitus and riddles see Uvo Hölscher, "Paradox, Simile, and Gnomie Utterance in Heraclitus" in *The Pre-Socratics* (ed. by Alexander Mourelatos. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1974), 219-238. See also David Gallop, "The Riddles of Heraclitus" in *Ionian Philosophy* (ed. K.J. Boudouris. Athens: International Association for Greek Philosophy), 123-135.

immediately become qualified to be senders. Lyotard sums up one narrative transmission “frame” thusly: “‘Here is the story of--, as I have always heard it told. I will tell it to you in my turn. Listen.’ And he brings it to a close with another, also invariable, formula: ‘Here ends the story of--. The man who told it to you is (Cashinahua name), or to the Whites—(Spanish or Portuguese name).’”³¹ Thus each story or transmission involves necessarily three types of knowledge or “competency” — “‘know-how,’ ‘knowing how to speak,’ and ‘knowing how to listen’ [*savoir-faire, savoir-dire, savoir-entendre*].”³² Narrative knowledge is, seen in this light, eminently practical. Its legitimation, i.e., the reason that we should believe what is being said, is imminent to the story that is told. “The knowledge transmitted by these narrations is in no way limited to the functions of enunciation; it determines in a single stroke what one must say in order to be heard, what one must listen to in order to speak, and what role one must play (on the scene of diegetic reality) to be the object of a narrative.”³³ In short, the bond formed between the speaker, the listener, and the object of the story itself constitute the social bond of narrative society.

³¹ Lyotard, 20.

³² Lyotard, 21.

³³ Lyotard, 21.

The three “know-hows” (how to speak, how to listen, general know-how) come up continuously in Heraclitus’s discourse. For instance one fragment reads:

Not knowing how to listen, neither can they speak. (K. XVII, D.K. 19)

The know-how of speaking is dependent upon the know-how of listening. For Heraclitus, however, the listening involved in proper listening does not listen to *a* narrative, but rather *the* narrative: the *logos*. In keeping in the anti-authoritarian narrative tradition Heraclitus advises:

Not to me, but to the logos listening, it is wise to agree that all is one. (K. XXXVI, D.K. 50)

While attempting to reign in the meaning of logos will be the object of the next chapter, one thing about Heraclitus’s claim is clear: proper listening is involved in wisdom. For there is distinguishable in Heraclitus a proper and an improper listening. Here are some other statements that speak to that idea:

We should not listen like children to their parents. (K. XIII, D.K. 74)

Eyes and ears are poor witnesses for men if their souls do not understand the language. (K. XVI, D.K. 107)

The fourth feature of narrative transmission is its effect on time. Lyotard has in mind here a very specific type of type of narrative form. “Narrative form follows a rhythm; it is the synthesis of a meter beating time in regular periods

and of accent modifying the length or amplitude of certain of those periods.”³⁴

This rhythm, which differs from usual speech, has the effect of burning the phrases into memory without much work on the part of the participant. Those of us who go or have gone to church for sometime can attest to the strange, almost bland, rhythm that the liturgy takes on in repetition. It undoubtedly takes on the same rhythm when we say it to ourselves, even absent the community with whom we may usually recite it. Or, as Lyotard points out: “Consider the form of popular sayings, proverbs, and maxims: they are like little splinters of potential narratives or molds of old ones, which continued to circulate on certain levels of the contemporary social edifice.”³⁵ Because the form embeds itself into our memories, we somehow retain the meaning of the absent “narrative” in the saying, despite not recalling the content of the larger narrative.

Heraclitus employs this feature in two ways. First, he uses common sayings on a few occasions to support his point. For instance, in B 34 (K II) Heraclitus employs the common proverb “absent while present” to allude to the comprehension of men. Elsewhere he quotes Bias’ proverb: “the many are worthless, good men are few.” The second way Heraclitus’s statements employ the temporality of narrative is that the statements themselves are like proverbs

³⁴ Lyotard, 21.

³⁵ Lyotard, 22.

and maxims that produce a strange temporal affect in their reader.³⁶ “All Heraclitean sayings are *discoveries*: insights that draw upon the thoughtful soul like the solution of a riddle. The Heraclitean saying mirrors not only the riddle form of his knowledge, but also the suddenness with which that knowledge presents itself.”³⁷ It as if the kernel of truth the sayings get to was behind them all along, and only through a slow process of meditating on the fragments does it hit the reader all at once. Schindler astutely connects this “suddenness” with the concreteness of Heraclitus’s style.³⁸ In the same way that beginning and end come together concretely in the circle, so do the fragments come together suddenly; we could even say that the beginning and end of Heraclitus’s message come together concretely and all at once. But like lightning, that message that appears as quickly as it disappears is impossible to capture, and its exact contours are difficult to hold in mind. All we have left is what we began with: that insight put into words, which, when thought together, offer renewed insight into the nature of our world. To help us keep this in mind, Heraclitus employs concrete images to which we can allude, most prominently fire.

³⁶ Cf. Jean Bollack and Heinz Wismann. *Héraclite, ou la séparation* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1972), 48. Henceforth, Bollack-Wismann.

³⁷ Hölscher, “Paradox,” 237.

³⁸ Schindler, 439.

Summary

Mythic thinking is singular and compact, and the new knowledge of the *physikoi* is differentiated and compartmentalized. Mythic thinking appears whole in three types. First, dimensional compactness denotes a singularity of experience with regard to different disciplines. Money is not yet a matter solely for economics, but a matter still wrapped up with religious and political significance. Sex is religious, artful, and political all at once. Second, vertical compactness names the experience humanity shares with other “agencies” namely the polis, cosmos, and the Sacred. The experience of the world is cut through with divine intervention, the destiny of the community, and the cycles of the cosmos. Third, horizontal compactness is precisely this cyclical element of experience. That is, the world is not experienced as historical or progressive but rather a recurring process of the same.

And yet, in spite of the appearance of continuity and singularity, even mythic thinking is fragmentary at its core; that is, while it appears to be whole, the existence that comprises it is fragmentary. What bridges this gap between the fractured given and the meaningful whole is the narrative. But the narrative is established only with a struggle and so such a struggle becomes the content of the narrative.

Narrative knowledge has a character of its own as well. It is self-legitimizing; one does not verify the story as it is told with one's experience of the world. The story about human genesis is true because humans exist. The cosmogony is true because there is the earth, there are day and night, etc. This whole and its corresponding narrative begin to break up when investigators and *physikoi* begin to separate the workings of the cosmos from its origin in the sacred. That is one threat to the unified experience of the world. The other threat is the stratification of the narrative of being. In being codified in Hesiod, the story of the cosmos is now open to interpretation and veto. In fact, the story loses its "life" precisely in being written down.³⁹

Let us now outline the relationship of Heraclitus's thought to narrative knowledge and its transmission. First, myth is a unified way of looking at the world. The fracturing of specific disciplines, and the holding onto conceptual universals, threatens this. It also threatens human being in that such "knowledge" does not recognize limits, and therefore levels potential. Heraclitus's *logos*, I will show, captures both the unity and fragmentation of discourse.

³⁹ The question of the effect of writing has been well examined elsewhere and is not a concern of ours. For excellent discussions on the topic of orality and literacy see Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, and David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996)

Second, even with myth both the narrated content and the narration itself (the form) are established through struggle. While the unified whole is intended it is never experienced. In the instance of myth the power of language is seen as *harnessed* by humans not *invented* by them. Thus language speaks through humans, not from them. Heraclitus sees this in opposing a private thinking to a shared thinking.

Third, Heraclitus encounters discourse/thinking/language right at the crossroads of where thinking and language are shifting to being seen as individual (*idian*) and objective. What is actually going on is that the thinkers of science are reacting against Homer and Hesiod as if they were attempting to establish universals. Heraclitus nuanced understanding sees both the poets and the inquirers as dangerous in the way they are received, namely, as authoritative.

With these three guidelines in mind, I next explore the concept of *logos*, particularly as it gets employed in the *xynos logos* as it relates to this interplay between fragmented existence and the meaningful communal whole.

The *logos* is central to any discussion of human knowledge and meaning in the world. Here I will show that Heraclitus's *logos* is the unifying meaning-making that is behind the narrative, which is itself behind any claim of purpose for knowledge itself. The *logos* incorporates both the unifying aspect of the intentional unity of thought and the agonistic actuality of the overreach of such intention. This chapter will look at the Heraclitus's notion of *logos*, what is meant by saying the *logos* is *xynos*, and how the *xynos logos* must include difference in its community.

While the *logos* itself is unifying, the interpretations of Heraclitus's *logos* have been multiple and often very different from one another. Some interpretations offer a picture of *logos* that is itself multiple, either in its essence or in its enactment. For example, one such interpretation understands *logos* as interaction, as the coming together of several thinking minds in one collective whole. Another understands it as a collection of linguistic and metalinguistic activities.

In the early interpretations of the Stoics, *logos* means the *Logos*, as divine Reason or a Universal law.¹ Opposed to this interpretation, M.L. West understands *logos* to be no special term or doctrine and is willing to translate it as, simply, “account.”²

A third interpretation offers that any instance of *logos* is a concrete unity; that is, it is a shared and intersubjective phenomenal appearance of parts as a whole. Schindler argues such a view, and it calls for *logos* as inter-action.³

A fourth interpretation understands *logos* in its connection with the root word *legein*, “to say” but also “to lay, to gather.” Such an interpretation suggests that *logos* is the gathering of thought and words into a coherent whole. Human gathering is the subjective side of *logos*. Heidegger, for one, goes further to suggest *logos* is also *the Logos*, that is, the disclosure of world to human being.⁴ Such a disclosure is necessary and proportionate to the thinking *logos* of humans.

The interpretation of *logos* that comes closest to mythic thinking is somewhere between the view of *logos* as gathering and the view of *logos* as a phenomenal property of a momentary concrete unity. Before such an

¹ Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicus*, VII.126-34 (DK 22. A16)

² M.L. West, *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

³ D.C. Schindler, “The Community of the One and the Many: Heraclitus on Reason,” *Inquiry* 46 (2003), 418-443.

⁴ See, for example, Heidegger’s discussion of *to sophon*, the “fateful,” in the essay “Logos (B50)” in *Early Greek Thinking*, trans. David Farrell Krell and Frank A. Capuzzi, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1975).

interpretation of the mythic view of Heraclitus's *logos* is attempted there are two considerations to be had; one, *logos* must be elaborated in terms of its historical usage. Such an etymology with a view toward Heraclitus's usage was first attempted W.K. Guthrie⁵ but more recently by Roman Dilcher; the second will be used here. Second, I will summarize and elucidate the interpretations listed above. First, for the historical usage of *logos*.

The Historical Usages of *Logos*

The purpose of this section is to gain some background in the historical uses of the word *logos* up to and including its usages in Heraclitus's time.⁶ While Heraclitus undoubtedly made the term his own, it must have come from a certain background of meaning, in the light of which he found the term useful.

For our historical analysis of the usage of the word "*logos*" we will take as our guide the work of Roman Dilcher, who did just such a historical analysis of usage to situate *logos'* meaning in the work of Heraclitus.

In Homer, *logos* basically means "a story, word, or tale." *Logoi* in the plural refers to "soothing speech" (32). As stories that distract someone from the current situation, *logoi* can also be used to persuade and deceive. *Logoi* "must

⁵ W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1962).

⁶ This section is a summary of Roman Dilcher, *Studies in Heraclitus* (*Spudasmata* bd 56. New York: Georg Olms Verlag Hildesheim, 1995), 25-39. All parenthetical notations give the specific page on which that usage or variation occurs.

display a clever arrangement and a deliberate shaping" (25). As late as the sixth century, *logoi* can refer to "stories" or "talk," wherein one self-contained story would be a *logos* (33). A *logos* can also be an old saying or an adage. Perhaps the implication here is that a saying can invoke a longer story; it is a "splinter" of it (35).⁷ Also if we shift emphasis more toward the non-fictional, *logos* can mean an account, report, a response from an oracle, even though these remain in their own way, stories. A story has its purpose in "conveying something, at expounding a given subject, in a way which can be understood" (35). One *logos* can be distinguished from other *logoi* by way of a change in topic. It also has the sense of expounding upon something in its entirety; thus, it is also the word that refers to the case in a trial. It presents the matter in a certain way and as it actually happened, and in a complete form (35).

Logos can also mean a financial account—a complete accounting for, or telling, of someone's finances. Knowledge of one's financial history, one's *logos*, could bring him or her "worth, esteem, importance," which then also becomes "*logos*" (34-5). That is, the larger someone's *logos*, in terms of what we might call "net worth," the larger their "importance."

Dilcher points to the fact that to have something in "one's account", to "count on it" means essentially to give to it value. Thus, we could understand

⁷ On this point also see Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 22.

how the notion of “deliberation, consideration” and the like could arise out of placing much value on something, taking it into account. In getting from this “account” to rational deliberation, we can see that

[t]o give a *logos* about something naturally involves some reflection. Whether it is an account of finances, of an event or a situation, one has to pay attention to it for finding out how things are, and for assessing them. A coherent argument has to be constructed through reasoning. So *logos* does not just mean that actual exposition of one’s account in speech, but also comprises the process of thinking by which it is achieved and which of course is displayed therein.⁸

So *logos* is both the subjective reflection and the result (in the form of an account, or a summary).⁹ But even though it may be a way of approaching the matter at hand, *logos* does not yet denote the human faculty of reason. Thus Dilcher urges not to translate Parmenides’ “*krine logoi*” as “decide by reason,” but rather “decide by reasoning,” i.e. by attempting to understand what happens by giving an account, or reasons (35). While this reflection, or accounting for some situation’s reasons, could be given in an argument, and thus the resultant argument may also be called a “*logos*,” we are still not speaking of either an objective faculty of reason or an objective structure of thinking called “logic.”

⁸ Dilcher, 35.

⁹ While many commentators have made note of this dual-aspect of *logos*, G.S. Kirk credits E.L. Minar, “The *logos* of Heraclitus” *Classical Philology* 34 (1939):323-41, as the first to mention it. Kirk, *Heraclitus: The Cosmic Fragments*, 38.

Furthermore, Dilcher points out the other side of the term's usage: the uses of *logos* that emphasize its objective use, that is, not as something to be done, i.e., reasoned thinking, but as something to be followed, i.e., the form of a sound argument. The importance in moving from the subjective side—in which a person has supplied an account that is complete to the best of that person's knowledge—and the objective side—in which the speaker must also conform to a pre-conceived set of implied rules or guides—cannot be over emphasized. To exemplify this shift, Dilcher points to the phrase *logon echei*, which means: "it makes sense, it is reasonable."¹⁰ As the "reflection" aspect of the individual *logos* becomes recognized, *proper* consideration also becomes *logos*. Now *logos* means: "according to proper consideration," or simply, "rational." This rationality, naturally, is generic. So we might say equally of reasoning about planetary movements and reasoning about athletic training that they have a *proper logos*.

A good reflection is called *eulogos*. The adverb *eulogos* means "sensibly, appropriately" (35). If our exposition is sensible and appropriate, one could imagine how a *logos* becomes a philosophical exposition. Insofar as a *logos* can reflect a matter either well or poorly, it can be said to be straight or crooked, similar to how we might contend that someone is "on the right track" in his

¹⁰ Dilcher, 38.

thinking (36). Then a shift in emphasis could produce the sense of *logos* as an objectively good or bad representation of a matter at hand.

More than being the things talked about or the speech of the speaker, *logos* is essentially the ground of both. "Belonging to both, it unites them as the disclosing realization of the matter in speech."¹¹ Thus the *logos* is both subjective and objective, but cannot be fully categorized as either. It always remains between what is talked about and the talk, speech, or language itself. Dilcher defines its individual usages at this stage:

If the emphasis shifts on to the mental process implied in giving a *λογος*, it will be translated by "deliberation, reflection"; if the particular rational element inherent in a *λογος* (in opposition to the other forms of speech) is stressed, by "argumentation, reasoning"; if it is the extant result, by "account, exposition, explanation"; if it is the rational content, that which is made visible by the *λογος*, by "argument, reason (=causa, Grund), sense."¹²

It is not until Democritus that *logos* is used to express a separate and abstract faculty of reason in human beings (39). Contrariwise, the Stoics understand reason as intelligence immanent in the world, one that can be "breathed" in by humans. In these interpretations, one has absolute objectifications of *logos*: either as a faculty either in all men or as a Universal Law

¹¹ Dilcher, 37.

¹² Dilcher, 37.

that governs the world. These interpretations are a long way from the softer “sensible reasoning” that is shown in speaking and thinking well.

Which one of these senses best exemplifies Heraclitus’s usage of the word *logos*? Well, according to Dilcher it contains elements of each of the pre-Stoic, therefore pre-“Reason,” determinations. Since Dilcher attempts to situate Heraclitus’s philosophy outside of a natural philosophy or a cosmology and firmly in the realm of a philosophy of human living, the *logos* of Heraclitus becomes translated as “sensible reasoning” in general, but a reasoning that is nonetheless inextricably tied to words and language.¹³ With the analyses to follow, I will show that the sense of *logos* that best describes Heraclitus usage is “gathering” with its many meanings and connotations.

The Logos Fragments and Logos as Object

The word *logos* appears in Heraclitus, in various forms, in eight key fragments. Here are Kahn’s translations of them, with the word in question, *logos*, left untranslated:

Although this *logos* holds forever, men ever fail to comprehend, both before hearing it and once they have heard. Although all things come to pass in accordance with this *logos*, men are like the untried when they try such words and works as I set forth, distinguishing each according to its nature and telling how it is. But other men are oblivious of what they do awake, just as they are forgetful of what they do asleep. (K. I, D.K. 1)

¹³ Dilcher, 47.

Although the *logos* is shared, most men live as though their thinking were a private possession. (K III, D.K 2)

Of all those *logoi* I have heard, none had gone so far as this: to recognize what is wise, set apart from all. (K XXVII, D.K. 108)

A fool loves to get excited on any *logos*. (K. LX, D.K. 87)

In Priene lived Bias son Teutamides, who is of more *logos* than the rest. (K. LXXII, D.K. 39)

You will not find the limits of the soul by going, even if you travel every other way, so deep is its *logos*. (K. XXXV, D.K. 45)

It is wise, listening not to me but to the *logos*, to agree (*homologeîn*) that all things are one. (K. XXXVI, D.K. 50)

To the soul belongs a *logos* that increases itself. (K. CI, D.K. 115)

Sea pours out from earth, and it measures up to the same *logos* it was before becoming earth. (K. XXXIX, D.K. 31 B)

There are three more which have some variation of the root of *logos*, *legeîn*:

Speaking (*legontas*) with understanding they must hold fast to what is shared by all, as a city holds to its law, and even more firmly. For all human laws are nourished by a divine one. It prevails as it will and suffices for all and is more than enough. (K. XXX, D. 114)

Thinking well is the greatest excellence and wisdom: to act and speak (*legeîn*) what is true, perceiving things according to their nature. (K. XXXII, D.K. 112)

They do not comprehend how a thing agrees (*homologeîn*) at variance with itself; it is an attunement turning back on itself, like that of the bow and the lyre. (K. LXXVIII, D.K. 51)

One of the oldest accounts of a full interpretation of the *logos* of Heraclitus comes from the Stoic Sextus Empiricus.¹⁴ The Stoic interpretation holds that the *Logos* is divine Reason (or Intelligence) and that humanity takes part in such Reason by breathing it into *psyche*. Thus, humans have reason only as far as they participate in divine Reason. This view has long since been debunked with scholars agreeing that there is much more “rethinking” here than just interpretation.¹⁵ Nonetheless, in spite of the near total denunciation of Sextus’ interpretation, some scholars have held similar views in that they understand the *logos* to be an universal object initially separate from a human’s thinking.

Such views understand the *logos* as a universal law, a ruling structure of the world, etc.¹⁶ Each one, then, interprets the *logos* as separate from humans, but accessible by them. Scholars who hold this objective view usually cite two pieces of evidence. One, they say, is that Heraclitus calls the *logos* “*xynos*,” “together,” “in common” (e.g., fr. D. K. 2, 89, 103, 114).¹⁷ One way of interpreting a *xynos logos* is that it is “in common” in its being available to all men, if they would only

¹⁴ For an excellent summary of this account see Kahn, Appendix III, 293-6.

¹⁵ Kahn, p. 295: “The procedure is to give meaning in advance and then cite the literal text as confirmation.”

¹⁶ For example see: Wener Jaeger, *The Theology of The Early Greek Philosophers*, 116: “The *logos* is divine law itself”; Kathleen Freeman, *The Ancilla to The Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, 24: “Law” or “Measure”; G.S. Kirk, *Heraclitus, The Cosmic Fragments*, 70: It is a “formula” and “nature, plan of each thing and all things”; Philip Wheelwright, *Heraclitus*, 23, “The Truth in its objective and trans-human character.” Even Kahn, who seems to want to be careful of the objective interpretation, at one point suggests it is “the cosmic *logos* as underlying unity” (124).

¹⁷ Kahn III, VI, XCIX, XXX, respectively.

recognize it, i.e., if they meet certain conditions. Similarly, we might say that in the United States Social Security is common, in that it is available to each member of society, given certain conditions. Each member pays in and cashes out, ideally, from a “common” fund. This understanding of the word “common” is distributive because the common is distributed among many individuals. The distributive interpretation of a *xynos logos* is best exemplified by Kirk.¹⁸

The other evidence cited for an objective *logos* is the use of the predicate *aei* in the first line of the proem (K. I, D.K. 1):

Toū de logou toūd’ eontos aei axynetoι ginotai anthrōpoi

Although this account is, always, men fail to comprehend. ...

The reading of this line has been in question since Aristotle.¹⁹ What is in question is whether the *aei* modifies the *logos* occurring prior or the lack of comprehension (*axynetoι*) of men that follows it.²⁰ The tendency, until recently, has been to take *aei* as modifying *logos*. In that reading, the *logos*, being *aei*, must be eternal or divine.²¹ Thus, even though it is recognized by such scholars that the first phrase

¹⁸ Kirk, *Heraclitus, The Cosmic Fragments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954), 63: common is “. . . in the reach of all.”

¹⁹ Ar. *Rhet.* III.5.

²⁰ For the latter reading, see Bollack-Wismann, 61.

²¹ Kahn, 94: “Now ‘being forever,’ *eontos aiei*, is a standard Homeric phrase for the immortal gods who are everlasting, or who live forever.”

of the proem, *tou de logou toude*, is self-referential (which is characteristic of writers at that time) it is also presumed to refer to “something more.”²²

Of course, one does not have to completely detach *aei* from *logos* (which would result in the *aei axynetoi*, “men are forever uncomprehending,” reading) to arrive at a different conclusion. For one, *aei* could be taken not as “forever” in the sense of “eternal,” or “divine,” but in the less literal sense of “enduring” — as a book endures. If this is the case, Heraclitus might be saying something about the nature of writing. However, Dilcher finds the evidence to show that Heraclitus is referring to something more than his own discourse by looking to fr. 50: “[w]hen Heraclitus at last proclaims that people should not listen to him, but to the *logos* (B 50), it becomes absurd to think of the present discourse still.”²³

Listening not to me, but to the *logos*, it is wise to agree that All is One. (K. XXXVI, D.K. 50)

However, some, M.L. West in particular, have argued that Heraclitus is only referring to his own discourse throughout.

²² Kahn, 97.

²³ Dilcher, 29.

No 'Logos Doctrine'

M.L. West²⁴ challenges the interpretation that the *logos* refers to something other than Heraclitus's own discourse, even while taking into account fr. 50. "Heraclitus is telling men that they should be persuaded not by his personal authority but by the autonomous authority of his argument."²⁵ Of these two interpretations—that Heraclitus's use of the term *logos* is self-referential and that it is not—West's self-referential interpretation makes the better case for two reasons. First, Heraclitus rails against the appeal to authority, both generally and specifically, in several other places (D.K. A23, B28, 40, 42, 56, 57, 74, 106, 129).²⁶ Second, the general presumption that Heraclitus is referring to something abstract and detached from his discussion lacks the concreteness one would expect from an early Greek thinker.²⁷ What's more, to understand Heraclitus's reference to "this" *logos* as a self-referential one would continue a pattern that begins in the proem to his book and one that is also found in many of his contemporaries.²⁸ The burden of proof, then, should be on those who read something metaphysical into the *logos* mentioned in B1 and B50 both of which, in

²⁴ The title of this section is the same as the one in West, which it aims to summarize: West, 124-9.

²⁵ West, 127. On this point see also Wheelwright, *Heraclitus*, 21; Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 133.

²⁶ Kahn XII, LXXXVII, XVIII, XXI, XXII, XIX, XIII, XX, XXV, respectively.

²⁷ D.C. Schindler, 422. Also on this point see Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind*. And Wheelwright, 14-6.

²⁸ Kahn, 96-97; West, 115.

the end, contain common rhetorical tropes. But this is not to suggest that the reference by Heraclitus to his own *logos* is not intentional. In saying that this “*logos*” lasts forever, and is separate from him, Heraclitus is showing that his argument should be understood on its own terms, that the *logos* of a speaker can be separate from the authority of that speaker, and that the *logos* is not some *thing* said, but rather a way of saying, which then can either be heard or not heard properly.

Logos as Action: Sensible Speaking and Reasoning

As Dilcher points out, a careful reading of the proem will show that Heraclitus is not interested in describing an objective order of the world so much as he is in describing a human’s relation to the world, i.e., not the cosmos as such, but rather human behavior.²⁹ By keeping human behavior in mind, one arrives at another school of interpretation, most recently championed by Dilcher. For Dilcher, the *logos* is mainly subjective: “it is the act of thinking and expressing the thought in words . . .”³⁰ In addition to working well with the proem, this “subjective” interpretation also works best with two other difficult fragments, 45 and 115, that discuss the psyche.

²⁹ Dilcher, 31.

³⁰ Dilcher, 47. Dilcher also admits this in line with Reinhardt (219) and Hölscher (141), and I would add, a recent interpretation by Gadamer.

You will not find the limits of the soul by going, even if you travel over every way, so deep is its *logos*. (K. XXXV, D.K. 45)

The soul has a *logos* that augments itself. (K. CI, D.K. 115)

In these two fragments the *logos* is called deep in one and said to augment itself in the other. Depth and self-augmentation are not usually qualities of a universal law, a world order, or an objective structure. As Dilcher points out, the connection between any interpretation of 45 and 115 and an objective view of *logos*, as a world law, for example, would be awkward at best because “[b]y any standard of understanding a law or measure increasing itself does not make sense.”³¹

Thus, while Dilcher makes a good case for rejecting any interpretation of *logos* as an object, as a world law, or a universal structure, he quickly replaces an abstract and universal *objective* law, with a *subjective* one: “Hence the *logos* is the absolutely *valid law*, we can now say, not of the universe and the physical cosmos, but of reasoning and reflection.”³² In other words the *logos* said here to be an order of good reasoning of the soul; this begins to sound too much like a stratified set of logical rules the rational soul must follow, and it is therefore anachronistic. Dilcher avoids this apparent inconsistency, between a dynamic *logos*, and a permanent universal one, by suggesting that the *logos* is both the

³¹ Dilcher, 48.

³² Dilcher, 51, emphasis mine.

process and product of an individual's thinking. In other words, *logos* is both subjective, in the sense of an individual's sensible reasoning/speaking, and objective in the sense of the result of that thinking. Of course, this sense of *logos* as objective is very different from the "universal" sense described above. He means by "object" the fruition of thinking or reasoning. Thus, the account is the fruition of individual thought, not a participation in some larger, omnipresent, divine Reason or universal structure.

The recognition of a double nature of *logos* allows Dilcher to see "a natural transition from 'this discourse' in the beginning to the more fundamental meaning of 'reasoned reflection' in the later fragments."³³ Such an explanation is certainly not wrong, but it does seem to pass over the important idea that the *logos* is shared (*xynon*).³⁴ Thus, one must aim for a more satisfactory account of *logos*; one that allows for the dynamism of the psyche's augmentation (per K. CIX, D.K. 115), while still being both "ever lasting" (*aei*, K. I, D.K. 1), and shared (*xynon*, fr. K. II, D.K. 2; K. VI, D.K. 89).

The two positions stated concerning the *logos*, the world law interpretation and the sensible reasoning interpretation, both fail for similar reasons. On the

³³ Dilcher, 47. Exactly how Dilcher determines which fragments come earlier and which later is unclear. However, virtually every commentator notes that fr. 1 most likely came first.

³⁴ He attempts a description of a shared *logos* in terms of the relation given in 114 between human laws and the divine one: "In a similar fashion, the *logos*, being itself *xynos*, focuses on *to xynon panton* and is strengthened by it." Thus it seems as though *logos* is a faculty that can be turned toward the common, rather than being necessarily *xynon*. How the *logos* is *xynos* he leaves unexplained. Dilcher, 51.

one hand, the “world law” interpretation is too objective to allow for the individual action of a soul increasing its own *logos*. On the other hand, the “sensible reasoning” interpretation is too subjective to account for how a *logos* is *xynos*. Two commentators resolve this disparity. The one’s solution is hermeneutic; the other’s is rhetorical.

Logos as Inter-action

The hermeneutical approach provided by D.C. Schindler to solving the “double bind” of the Heraclitean *logos* is the most convincing account yet. He approaches the interpretation of *logos* from the ancient problem of the One and the Many (or, as he approximates, unity and difference). For example, the “world law” interpretation would clearly favor the unity of everything in a divine law or universal structure. To get into the *logos* problem Schindler turns directly to fr 2:

Although the *logos* is *xynos*, the many live as if they possessed their own private (*idian*) thinking (*phronesin*).³⁵

What does *xynos* (“common”) mean here? Schindler rejects the explanation that “common” can mean some fact or knowledge that is in principle available to all.

This “view suggests that Heraclitus’s primary concern here is a disjunction between an ‘inner’ state of beliefs and an ‘outer’ state of facts.”³⁶ This observation

³⁵ Schindler, 416.

³⁶ Schindler, 417.

raises two concerns. One, the inner/outer dualism read into Heraclitus here is anachronistic.³⁷ The second problem with reading the *xynos* as the correspondence to an outside fact is that it does not pay close enough attention to the language of the fragment itself. Heraclitus is concerned with the *way* people think, not with the *content* of what they think. "They think *privately* when they ought to think *in common*."³⁸ Taking into account that *logos* is here in parallel to *phronesis*, "thinking," it should be clear that *xynos logos* is not an object for thought, but a type of thinking. Those who do not understand thinking as a fundamentally intersubjective enterprise are *idian*, or, in a descendant of that word that is familiar to us, *idiots*.

Schindler turns to Dilcher to emphasize two key points about *logos*: (1) that the original use of *logos* was verbal and not nominal, and (2) that the earliest use of *logos* in which it was completely objective (i.e., disconnected from an action) was not until Democritus. Until that time, "*logos*" means at best "the rational account which is uttered; it thus comprehends both the 'subjective' activity and the 'objective' result."³⁹ Schindler's recognition of the act-character of *logos* leads him to ask the eminently relevant question: "How is it possible to

³⁷ Schindler, 417. See n.24 where Schindler also references Onians, and Snell.

³⁸ Schindler, 417.

³⁹ Schindler, 418.

understand thinking as a common act, and what does this imply about the commonness Heraclitus is attributing to the *logos*?"⁴⁰

According to what I have said thus far, any answer to this question must meet two criteria. First, it must allow for the activity of *logos* to come through. Second, it must explain its relation to "what is common" in a way that is neither wholly individualistic, nor universal, in keeping with the concrete, both-and type thinking of the ancient mind.⁴¹

Schindler's explanation takes advantage of an ambiguity in Kahn's interpretation to get on the way of meeting these requirements. On this point, Kahn should be quoted at length:

I assume that *logos* means not simply language but rational discussion, calculation, and choice: rationality expressed in speech, in thought and in action. (All these ideas are connected with the classic use of *logos*, *logizesthai*, *epilegein*, etc., e.g., in Herodotus). This is rationality as a phenomenal property manifested in intelligent behavior, not Reason as some kind of theoretical entity posited "behind the phenomena" as the cause of rational behavior.⁴²

One could almost end any interpretation of *logos* there. Unfortunately for Kahn, what he writes elsewhere seems to contradict his proposition above, namely that "the *logos* is 'common' because it is (or expresses) a structure that characterizes

⁴⁰ Schindler, 418.

⁴¹ On this point see Snell, *On the Discovery of the Mind*, Chapter 9, and Wheelright, *Heraclitus*, 14.

⁴² Kahn, 102.

all things and is thereby a public possession in principle available to all men, since it is 'given' in the immanent structure of their shared experience."⁴³ It seems to me, as it does to Schindler, that the idea of *logos* being "in principle available to all men" is a stark contrast to *logos* as "a phenomenal property." If it is available "in principle" this means that it must be separable from any individual act of intelligent speaking or thinking. And again, this read is dangerously close to considering the *logos* an objective structure in the world, a view we have above rejected.

If *logos* is indeed a "phenomenal property manifested in intelligent behavior" then how does this relate to its being *xynos*? When one considers that *logos* is *xynos* two possible interpretations of *logos* are possible. The first interpretation is that *logos* is *xynos*, in its being universal, is accessible "in principle" to anyone. Such an interpretation sees *logos* as an "object of apprehension," not an activity.⁴⁴ In other words, the common (*xynos*) *logos* is here seen as a "common fact." Of course, as Schindler points out, "what could a 'common fact' be other than a 'commonly recognized fact?'"⁴⁵ That the *logos* could be a "commonly recognized fact" contradicts the lack of recognition of

⁴³ Kahn, 101. G.S. Kirk, J.E. Raven, and M. Schofield, *The Pre-Socratic Philosophers* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 188.

⁴⁴ The representative of such a view is G.S. Kirk. A summation of Kirk's view is given by Schindler, pp. 415-8.

⁴⁵ Schindler, 417.

humans mentioned in several of Heraclitus's statements.⁴⁶ In other words, according to Heraclitus, the nature of the *logos* is anything but commonly recognized.

What's more, the interpretation of *logos* as a "commonly recognized fact" would make it difficult to explain what is so deleterious about a private understanding of it. That is, there is no reason in principle why one could not privately think a commonly recognized fact. Yet Heraclitus directly opposes private thinking to the *logos* in K. II (D.K. 2). Therefore an interpretation of the *xynos logos* as a "common fact" or *object* of apprehension does not work.

The other possible interpretation of the *logos* as *xynos* must see *logos* as a concrete manifestation of an activity. Rather than the *logos* being *xynos* in its *potential* to be known by all, it is *xynos* in its *actual* manifestation in thinking. But what would it mean think in a shared, i.e., connected manner? We can answer this question better by juxtaposing two statements of Heraclitus.

The world of the waking is one and shared (*koinon* = *xynon*), but the sleeping turn aside each into his own private world. (K. VI, D.K. 89)

Although *logos* is connection (*xynos*), most men live their own lives as though their thinking (*phronēsin*) were in their own power. (K III, B2)

⁴⁶ Cf. K. I, III, XXX, etc.

Shared thinking is not a matter of several individuals turning away into their private worlds and then ruminating on one principle. In other words, thinking-in-common is not a matter of people thinking individually, but thinking together as a whole. Commentators have noticed the relation between several Heraclitean word plays with *xyn-* root words (*axynetoi*, *xyn noos legein*, *xynon*) e.g. fr. 1, 2, 114.⁴⁷ *Xyn-* simply means connection.⁴⁸ Thus when Heraclitus chastises his fellow men in B 1 for being *axynetoi*—“uncomprehending”—one could equally say that such men are “disconnected.”

Schindler then goes on to examine this translation/interpretation of *xynon* in another fragment in which it is used:

In the circumference of a circle the beginning and the end are joined together (*to xynon*). (K. XCIX, D.K. 103, Kurtz)

In B 103 Heraclitus takes two “opposites,” to wit, beginning and end, (which could, in fact, not be more opposed) and shows how they are thought together in one concrete structure: the circle. The circle is the representative shape of the mythic cycle, but it is also, as the section on vertical compactness and Heraclitus will show, part of the necessary structure of understanding. The cycle is the circle in movement. With the idea of a cycle, we arrive at an aspect of *logos* that

⁴⁷ Kahn, 101, fn.62. Schindler 420.

⁴⁸ Schindler 420. Schindler gets this from Ewald Kurtz, *Interpretationen zu den Logos-Fragmenten Heraklits* (Hildensheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1971).

Schindler only alludes to: *logos* is always in process. That is, one can only point to a *logos* in a concrete configuration, and never “in principle.” But that very configuration is only in virtue of the joining of its very parts (beginning and end).

To understand this “crystallization” we turn to the aforementioned fragment 89. It is assumed often that the “private world” referred to by Heraclitus (or Marcus Aurelius) is a dream world. But Dilcher points out that nowhere does Heraclitus speak of dreams.⁴⁹ Schindler suggests a more productive interpretation of this fragment given by Uvo Hölscher. Hölscher suggests that sleep is problematic for Heraclitus because it engenders disconnecting from a common order.⁵⁰ In other words sleep, used in B 89 as a metaphor, is a biological equivalent to being *axynetoi*—disconnected. The world of the waking is one because it is the product of thinking-together in the same way that the city is one in virtue of its citizens actively participating in its customs and laws. Schindler captures the idea of the one wakeful world well:

If it is through interaction that one ‘connects’ with the others, then the ‘in-action’ of sleep dissolves this connection, and, with it, the resultant concrete whole. What is at issue in the fragment (B89), then, is not the subjective content of experience that differs depending on whether one is awake or asleep, but precisely the objective whole that is formed in the interaction.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Dilcher, 19.

⁵⁰ Discussed by Schindler, 421.

⁵¹ Schindler, 421.

Furthermore, one could look to K. XCI (D.K. 73) to understand that the “dream world” interpretation would not make much sense.

Men asleep are laborers and co-workers in what takes place in the world.

If sleepers are still workers in the world, then they are not in their own “dream” worlds. Rather, in waking we interact with the world, in sleeping we do not.

Thus, what Schindler takes Heraclitus to mean by *kosmos* is the conventional “ordered arrangement,” but only in so far as this arrangement is also seen as an “objective totality of the ordered whole that is constituted out of the interaction of many members.”⁵² In sum, *xynon* in both fragments examined represents an objective state of being joined together in a concrete whole—a circle⁵³ formed by the joining together of the beginning and end, and a *kosmos*, formed by the interaction and joining together of each of its wakeful members.

For that reason Schindler compares the way the *logos* is “shared” to the way a conversation is shared: “. . . it is common because they jointly make up a conversation in the actual speaking together, just as the beginning and end of a

⁵² Schindler, 421.

⁵³ As I will suggest in the next chapter, there are certain problems with this straightforward of a translation of *archê* as “beginning” and *peripheras* as “end.” I will argue there, on the section on vertical compactness, with Peter Manchester, that the proper translation of these terms is “origin” and “periphery.” Thus, Heraclitus metaphor, if we may call it that, is geometric; he is speaking of the radius of the circle being formed by the origin and the point on the circle’s circumference.

line jointly form a circle.”⁵⁴ In short, the *xynos logos* is a “collectively-formed whole” that is formed in the interaction of members that it later contains. Thus, in Schindler’s view the *logos* is the objective concrete structure that is formed out of thinking interaction. This adequately bridges the gap between the subjective act of thinking and objective resultant structure. However, the collectively formed whole of the *logos* goes beyond just the discursive level. One can also understand the *logos* in a rhetorical way insofar as the interaction of the *logos* not only happens between people, but also between different levels of meaning within the term or the proposition itself.

Logos as Elenchus

Another way that the subjective/objective problem of the *logos* can be understood is in terms of an elenchus. The usual meaning of an elenchus, notes Albert Cook, is to move from an accepted, if ambiguous, premise (or premises) to an unacceptable conclusion; it was the trademark style of argument of none other than Socrates himself. But Heraclitus’s propositions, Cook claims, are not accidentally ambiguous but purposefully so. Heraclitus is not only practicing polysemy to be clever, but showing the very polysemy of language itself, thereby

⁵⁴ Schindler, 422.

practicing a “dialectical criticism on what he himself puts forth.”⁵⁵ Thus, every proposition is a “collectively-formed whole” in that it can have many meanings that play off one another and color each other in a new light.

Cook explains what makes Heraclitus’s *logos* so unique: “Heraclitus, who may very well possess a holistic doctrine like most of his contemporaries, is remarkable and unique for making the elenctic procedure itself becomes a sort of metalinguistic demonstration: *Logos* as proposition, *logos* as gathering-together, *logos* as affirmation, *logos* as utterance become one act.”⁵⁶ The act character of *logos* is complex; that is, it involves action, interaction, thinking, speaking, gathering, uttering, asserting, etc. In any regard, the word itself is a collection.

Each proposition of Heraclitus goes through the iteration of each of these configurations; ultimately, it leaves its own meaning relatively open. In fact, his interpreters’ inability to settle on an objective meaning of the fragments of Heraclitus could be seen as a reaction formation to the fundamental ambiguity of their meaning. Two observations can be made along these lines. One, that Heraclitus’s ambiguous meaning is fully intentional.⁵⁷ In other words, the polysemy of Heraclitus’s fragments is meant to add to the richness of their

⁵⁵ Albert Cook, *Myth and Language* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 82.

⁵⁶ Cook, *Myth and Language*, 85

⁵⁷ On deliberate polysemy in Heraclitus see Kahn, 91-5.

content. Indeed, this idea can be further supported by the fact that Heraclitus not only gives the reader riddles but also the answers to such riddles.⁵⁸ That is, in answering his own riddles, the reader is not forced to *solve* them but rather *interpret* them. Thus, the second observation: Heraclitus, on a few occasions, goes so far as to describe the relationship the reader must have to the material in such cases, and what's more, gives us clues or signs as to how to continue on.

For instance, in K. LXXVIII (D.K. 51) and K. LXXX (D.K. 54) Heraclitus's tells us that we should understand things, and this most certainly includes his own propositions, not as they first appear, but to see them in reflection:

They do not understand how in agreeing with itself, it differs from itself; it is an attunement turning back on itself, like that of the bow and the lyre.
(K. LXXVIII, D.K. 51)

The hidden attunement is better than the obvious one. (K. LXXX, D.K. 54)

It is in backward turning, i.e., reflection, that we gain insight into the hidden harmony. In other words, though a certain arrangement presents itself to us without much deep thinking required, this initial arrangement is only a representation of a deeper harmony. Thus, any *logos*, whether it seems simple or not, is a collection of its initial and then deeper interpretations.

⁵⁸ Cook, 79; Hölscher, 232; Gallop, 128-9.

Logos and Legein: Gathering and Composition

The final interpretation of *logos* here was first put forth by Martin Heidegger, but recently taken up by Daniel Hoffman.⁵⁹ A general name for this interpretation can be called “logos as gathering.” Below lies an extraordinary chart by Daniel Guerrière that shows in an exemplary way the root of gathering in the word *logos*.⁶⁰ What is of particular interest to these theorists is not how the word “*logos*” functions per se, nor is it the word’s particular usages, but rather its etymological roots. While both Heidegger and Hoffman show *logos* to be rooted in the verb *legein*, Hoffman gives a fuller account of the relationship between *logos* and *legein*, and of the meaning of *legein*.

⁵⁹ David Hoffman, “Logos as Composition,” *R S Q* 33.3 (Summer 2003): 27-53. See also Martin Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking*, 59-78; *Introduction to Metaphysics, passim*; *Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, 2-3.

⁶⁰ Guerrière gives the following schema in “Physis, Sophia, Psyche”:

1. gathering → ordering → measuring → measure, amount → due measure
2. gathering → ordering → organization → (a, b, c)
 - a. general principle → law
 - b. proportion → relation → correspondence
 - c. organizing → arguing, reason → reason as faculty
3. gathering → ordering → collecting → (a, b)
 - a. enumerating, counting → number
 - b. laying out → laying forth → letting be manifest → bringing to unconcealedness → calling forth → calling → naming → speaking or saying → (i, ii, iii, iv, v)
 - i. utterance → the saying, the said, word → account, discourse, explanation, definition (cf. general principle)
 - ii. mention, notice → reputation → fame → esteem → worth
 - iii. conversation → talk with oneself → thinking → considering → consideration → opinion
 - iv. argument → (α, β)
 1. α. reason, cause (cf. due measure)
 2. β. logical process → logic
 - v. language → capacity for language

To begin with, *legein* means “to gather.” Such uses can be found in Homer, where Nestor says: “*Meketi nun de th’auti legothema*”; “Let us not remain gathered here.”⁶¹ But both Homer and Hesiod also use *legein* to mean “to speak”; in speaking one gathers one’s thoughts and one’s words. Hoffman shows that in Homer every use where *legein* means “to speak” it can also have the sense of “to gather.”⁶² A *logos*, then, is the result of such a gathering, i.e. it is a gathering in the nominal sense, or a composition. Hoffman goes on to argue that *logos* and its root verb *legein* are connected as late as the 5th century B.C. and even in Plato’s *Gorgias* (449E).⁶³ In each case where a *logos* is seen as a single unit, it may be broken into parts. Thus, a *logos* as a proposition can be broken up further into words (*epea*). Hence, one can have a bunch of words jumbled together and not have a *logos*, but almost every *logos* (in this conventional sense) is made up of words. For this reason, the Sophists understood “the composition of discourses as being analogous to the composition of physical entities.”⁶⁴ Thus, one need not distinguish between the gathering that goes into *thinking* from that which goes into *speaking*; nor need one distinguish between that which goes into

⁶¹ *Il.* 2.435 as quoted in Hoffman, 30.

⁶² Hoffman, 31.

⁶³ Hoffman, 32.

⁶⁴ Hoffman, 36.

understanding the *composition of the world*, from that which goes into the *composition of discourse*.

When one looks at *logos* as statement itself as an object we see, “an *objective presence together* of several words.”⁶⁵ This is mainly how Plato looked at the possibility of judgment through word: a putting together of words. Incidentally, this is also how Homer looked at language: a putting together of words.⁶⁶ In her article “Psyche in Heraclitus,” Nussbaum shows that *logos* is a hidden unity that emerges from behind groups of parts, or pairs of opposites. This is similar to, argues Nussbaum, the structure of the *psyche* in Homer. For Homer the *psyche* was defined negatively; it was that which leaves the body in death. What’s more, the body itself was nothing more than an aggregate of limbs, the torso, and the head. Nevertheless, Nussbaum’s real insight lies in what will become if not the “answer” to the *logos* problem, then at least a big step in its continued discussion. She notes that like the way that the body was related to the *psyche* in Homer, language is related to the *logos*. Where the body is composed of parts unified (albeit in a negative way) by the *psyche*, language itself was considered to be an aggregate of parts, unified by the *logos*. Statements and stories, *logoi*, were considered to be made up of *epea*, words. What Heraclitus does then, is to

⁶⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (trans. Joan Satmbaugh: Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1996), 148.

⁶⁶ Cf. Martha Nussbaum, “PSYCHE in Heraclitus, I.” *Phronesis*. Vol. 17. (1972): 1-16.

positively charge both the concept of *psyche* and *logos*. For the first time the “soul” exists while a human is alive—it is the speaking and thinking faculty. Perhaps for this reason, language is no longer seen to be merely the aggregate of its parts. Instead, it is seen as related to the *logos*, which is the condition of possibility for speaking, the secret unity and the connectedness of all words, even “opposites.”

Heidegger, before Hoffman, Dilcher, or Nussbaum, understood *logos* in each of these capacities and saw their fundamental coherence. One particular passage, from his book on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* Book Theta, deserves to be presented in its entirety:

Legein: to glean, to harvest, to gather, to add one to the other, and so to place the one in relation to the other, and thus to posit this relationship itself. *Logos*: the relation, the relationship. The relationship is what holds together that which stands within it. The unity of this together prevails over and rules the relation of what holds itself in that relation. *Logos* means therefore rule, law, yet not as something which is suspended somewhere above what is ruled, but rather as that which is itself the relationship: the inner jointure and order of the being which stand in relation. *Logos* is the *ruling structure*, the gathering of those beings related among themselves.

Such a gathering, which now gathers up, makes accessible, and holds ready the relations of the related, and with this the related itself and thus individual beings, and so at the same time lets them be mastered, this is the structure we call “language,” speaking, but not understood as vocalizing, rather in the sense of a speaking that says something, means something: to talk of or about something to someone or for someone. *Logos* is *discourse*, the gathering laying open, *unifying making known* [*Kundmachen*]; and indeed above all in the broad sense which also includes pleading making a request, praying, questioning, wishing, commanding, and the like. One mode of discourse understood in such a broad sense is simple assertion [*Aus-sage*] about something whereby

discourse accomplishes this: It makes known in the emphatic sense that of which and about which the discourse is, and simply lets it be in itself. But questioning too is a sense of making known in the sense of exploring [*Erkunden*]; prayer is also a making known in the sense of witnessing and attesting to, and likewise with the wish, of the refusal when we decline, deny and so on. Public discourse is also an announcing [*Ankündigung*], proclaiming [*Verkünden*], and declaring [*Künden*]. *Logos* is thus discourse in the utterly broad sense of the manifold making known and giving notice [*kundgeben*]—‘*conversance*’ [*kundschaft*].⁶⁷

Even though this description, given by Heidegger, of the fundamental meanings of *logos* is itself a summary, one would still do well to sum up its main points here. *Logos* means (at least):

1. Gathering—making known—the relation in the *legein*—what has been gleaned or connected
2. The immanent “inner jointure” that holds in such a relation
3. Discourse/language/speaking—not merely vocalizing but a making known that means something. This can occur in various forms of discourse.
4. Conversance—the ability to make known and understood what has been made known

Points (1) and (2) have been discussed in relation to composition, and how that composition relates to its parts. So the focus now will be on (3) and (4).

If *logos* as discourse is gathering-making-known then it is *logos* that is at the basis of interpreting one’s world. In the chapter “Myth and Stuggle,” I suggested that the mythic narrative is the mythic human’s way of making meaning, unity, from a fragmentary and meaningless existence. Precisely

⁶⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Aristotle’s Metaphysics Bk. Θ 1-3* (trans. W. Brogan and P. Warnek; Bloomington, In.: Indiana University Press, 1995), 103.

because the pre-narrative encounter is nonsensical, it is a void. In this gathering-out-of-a-void (much like the initial gathering the Greeks codify in the cosmogony),⁶⁸ the world first becomes known and grants/is granted meaning. For Heidegger, all discourse (*logos*) is gathering;⁶⁹ in particular it is a gathering that is in tune with the Laying-that-gathers—the LOGOS. By the “Laying-that-gathers” Heidegger means the continual presencing of the world in a way that makes sense to us. It is telling that with respect to the Logos the human being is only passive and receptive, an opening in which it gathers and unfolds itself. Humans gather what is already in the process of the Gathering, and therefore the wise (*to sophon*) of us agree (*homologeîn*) with that Gathering.⁷⁰ At the base of the concept logos there is already a unified division of thought in which each side is reciprocally determined by the other. The LOGOS as Being, i.e., the Laying that gathers, needs (=lacks, opens a space for, is in need of, tends toward) *logos* as thinking-gathering that sets itself still in discourse. Human discourse is in virtue of its conversation with what appears to it.

Thinking is ultimately as passive as it is active; to a certain extent, one can only think what is granted to one to think, and what is granted to one to think is

⁶⁸ See Chp. 1, fn. 16.

⁶⁹ See for example Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics* (trans. R. Manheim; New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1987), 62-3.

⁷⁰ See for example, Heidegger, “Logos (B50),” in *Early Greek Thinking*.

only granted to one in that one is prepared for it. We think in so far as things address themselves to us. Thus, LOGOS is that pre-thought granting, but the human logos is that pre-thought preparation. Discourse as logos is a human thinking-gathering out of what has been pre-pared and gathered for thinking (i.e., food for thought . . . which is everything).

Because the restraint involved in this type of thinking is so difficult to achieve and sustain, it is no surprise that Heraclitus finds a complementary set of ruinous events: that men too readily accept what is handed to them,⁷¹ and that they don't think into that which has not already happened.⁷² All thinking is directional; but thinking out of the past can be dangerous without giving such thinking more context, that is, without thinking back toward the Whole.

The world can be tempered by the register in which the speech makes known, i.e. shows forth, that which it makes known. If speech makes known in the form of exploring, such speech is questioning; if speech makes known in the form of witnessing, such speech is prayer.

The sense of *logos* as making-known has a direct representation in Heraclitus's B93:⁷³

⁷¹ Cf. K XII (D.K. A23): "In taking the poets as testimony for things unknown they are citing authorities that cannot be trusted."

⁷² Cf. K. VII (D.K. 18): "He who does not expect will not find out the unexpected, for it is trackless and unexplored."

⁷³ Heidegger, *Aristotle's Metaphysics*, 3.

The Lord whose oracle is at Delphi neither speaks out (*legei*) nor conceals (*kryptesthai*), but signs (*semanei*).

Even though the Lord whose oracle is at Delphi, i.e., Apollo, does not *legei*, the opposition of *legei* to *kryptesthai* shows that the essence of *legein* is a making-known insofar as its opposite is hiding or concealing.

What's more, the different ways in which a *logos* can make something known correspond to the different types of language games. Though Heidegger does not explicitly address language games, his interpretation of *logos* as "conversance" certainly lends itself to such a reading. In this understanding, a performative utterance can be a making-known and making-into. A husband and wife are simultaneously made-known as and made-into husband and wife with their vows. Their vows are sanctified through the officiant as witness. This is why even though the sanctity of the ceremony is guaranteed by the vows of a couple, that couple does not retain the authority to officiate other such ceremonies just in virtue of having gone through the ceremony themselves. In other words, the implicit communal acceptance of the authority of preacher shows the preacher's conversance in the matter at hand. Even in this scenario there are prescribed utterances that the couple uses to make the marriage happen. Their words recognize the importance of convention. Still this convention has to be known by the preacher and it must be combined with a deeper knowledge for which the preacher is recognized. I could utter the same

words as the preacher, but since I do not have the corresponding knowledge and I am not recognized as an authoritative witness, they are not performative. Thus, the conversance of the performative utterance in this instance is threefold. One, there is an implicit conversance wherein the authority is recognized for his ability to perform a ceremony. Two, there is an implicit conversance, i.e., ability, in the area of specialty (which informs the first point). Three, there is an implicit conversance between the moment of the ceremony and the convention of the ceremony in which it is recognized that the couple reenacts a traditional institution. However, the performative utterance is only one of the many possible ways that *logos* makes something known. As Heidegger points out, prayer is also a making-known in the form of witnessing, questioning is a form of making known in the sense of exploring, etc.

If every speech act is a making-known then the connection between speech and knowledge is fundamental. As was seen in the case of the preacher performing a marriage ceremony, the preacher has a knowing how to speak, and a knowing how to listen (namely, to tradition) for which she is recognized. But any competence or conversance in listening is only proper hearing when it connects with the on-going presencing of world, when it is still willing to listen. Heidegger says, "Here [proper hearing] is not so much a matter for research, but rather paying attention to simple things. Thus, precisely this belongs to proper

hearing: that man can hear wrongly insofar as he does not catch what is essential [das Wesen]."⁷⁴ In such hearing one does not listen to something per se, but is guided by an openness toward communication, what we call in the next chapter *noos*.

When defined by language games the character of knowledge is determined by two factors: 1) the presupposition of some legitimation, insofar as inquiring into the legitimation is playing the game of inquiry and 2) the types of language game allowed in such a knowledge "set."

As was seen earlier, a unified, self-legitimated narrative knowledge allows for a multitude of language games. Conversely, differentiated, philosophically-legitimated, scientific knowledge only accepts the denotative language game, to the abandonment of all others. In letting *logos* obtain its original ground in making known, gathering and laying-out, one sees that the proposition, the denotative statement proper, is only one of its many possibilities.

Summary

Now I will gather what has been shown of *logos* in regard to recent interpretations and show how they bear on the project of illuminating Heraclitus's discourse through the frame of myth and narrative knowledge.

Logos is a derivative of *legein*. *Legein* means "saying, talking"; but as this review

⁷⁴ Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking*, 65.

has shown, it also means gathering. Hoffman emphasized that even through the 5th century B.C. there is not one use of *logos* that could not also been seen as a gathering. Dilcher showed that *logos* does not get its objective sense of a faculty until after Heraclitus, through Democritus.

So *logos* for Heraclitus must have to do with gathering. But it must also have to do with making-known.⁷⁵ In addition to this, and in virtue of Heraclitus's elenctic style, it must be kept in mind that a *logos* can register on many levels: as a proposition, gathering, a making known, etc. In this way Heraclitus's *logos* is itself parallel to what we outlined earlier as dimensional compactness. Therefore, it should not be understood merely in one of these senses, but all of them at once; it should be understood as a process or event that is parallel to thinking. In other words, even before *logos* could mean "account," it must have also been "gathered," and it is only in its "being made known." In this regard, it makes sense to understand a *logos*, as does Heidegger, as a gathering *and* a preserving. Insofar as *logos* must include inter-action, whether with the "world" or with other human beings, *logos* is always going to be brought about in a gathering itself; it is beyond the power of a single individual. As Schindler pointed out, the *logos* of Heraclitus is a phenomenon that occurs only in a joining together. The *logos* is *xynos*—connected, joined together.

⁷⁵ Cf. Heidegger, *Ari. Meta.*, 5; *Being and Time*, §7; "Logos (B50)," EGT; IM, passim. See also Dilcher, 36.

With this background illuminated it can be seen that *logos* has its fundamental ground in a gathering (event/process), one which opens up and establishes meaning. Thus *logos* is a process of connection and unification, but even more a making known of this gathering in a way others can agree with it and gather toward it. Gathering finds its way into meaningful making-known and preservation through language. *Logos* must gather and bring together and in a concrete objective structure (e.g. world, circle, law, community). For instance, the polis can be seen as a realm in which individuals are joined together by speech (which results in customs and laws).⁷⁶ The role of the connection between the polis, the cosmos, and the Sacred via a shared discourse is of key importance to what we will examine in the next chapter as vertical compactness. Cook thus points out that for Heraclitus: “Human life is properly seen as an increment of speech acts.”⁷⁷ This insight cements the import of understanding the *xynos logos* properly: namely that in shared and thoughtful meaning-making human beings make their own world. The circular relationship between the human being and their world will be examined in the next chapter under the structure of horizontal compactness. We will see that to deny the importance of discourse in

⁷⁶ Bouduris, “Heraclitus and the Dialectical Conception of Politics”: “*Logos* therefore is first and foremost the *common language of men in society*. . .”, 63.; Schindler, Sec. II ‘Social Thought’; Kahn, Commentary on III (B 2), p101-2

⁷⁷ Cook, 88, is referring to fr. 45 and 115. This idea will be discussed again below in terms of the “Unity of Thought.”

human life, to pretend that there is “a world” separate from a discourse about it, is to obfuscate how purpose is developed in human life as such.

Three points relate Heraclitus’s notion of *xynos logos* to his view of the coexistence of an intended whole and a fragmentary existence. First, Heraclitus’s *xynos logos* has the structure of an agonistics, a game. That is, there are implicit rules and when such rules are not followed either the speaker, or listener, or both, are disconnected. This game mimics a game that occurs in other realms of vertical compactness: the polis, the cosmos, the Sacred.

Second, the type of knowledge that Heraclitus’s contemporaries are shifting toward, as he sees it, does not allow for a *xynos logos*. Whereas narrative knowledge self-legitimizes and operates according to a set of practical rules, this new knowledge doesn’t require any particular set of communication skills and in general does not focus on “how to” but rather “what” something is.

Finally, Heraclitus recognizes the dual nature of understanding the world. On the one hand, there is the communal knowledge established through struggle and preserved through tradition. The thoughtless transmission of traditional narratives is dangerous in that it does not allow the “new” to register. On the other hand, there is the fragmentary existence that is behind (or below) the unified consciousness. To a certain extent, investigation attempts to coax out these fragments and reorganize them in universal categories. The danger here is

the loss of any *xynos logos*, and such a world looks similar to the legitimation crisis which faces us today. We now turn to the unified aspect of Heraclitus's discourse and show how it relates to the mythic category of *compactness*.

The Unity in Thought: Compactness in Heraclitus

According to Lyotard's analysis, language-games have two necessary but seemingly contrary factors. On the one hand, language games make up the social bond. On the other hand, the same games are a series of competing "moves." In short, they are agonistic. Thus, the social bond remains permanent only through its changing.

These two contrary but complementary notions are foundations of the next two chapters. First, it must be understood in what way Heraclitus advocates a unified social bond. In order to get such an understanding, I will use the idea of compactness. In the next chapter, this analysis will turn to the agonistic "side" of Heraclitus as it occurs in the contest, war, the drama of the cosmos, and the thinking of the human soul.

This chapter analyzes how the features of mythic thinking make sense of Heraclitus's thought. It has three sections: dimensional compactness, vertical compactness, and horizontal compactness. Now the analysis must turn to how Heraclitus's discourse shows the unity of thought with the concept of dimensional compactness as a compass of this unification.

Dimensional Compactness

Dimensional compactness is the understanding of the world in a unitary and continuous way, as characterized by the holistic thinking of mythic humans. Heraclitus urges the continuation of a thinking that is holistic in its understanding the cosmos. Dimensional compactness understands the world in terms of a united whole, in which each part relates, integrally, back to the whole. Its result is a narrative that attempts to weave fragments of existence into a story of being.

Heraclitus is attempting to critique certain new developments of naturalistic knowledge in an attempt save certain elements of mythic thinking. First, I will suggest that Heraclitus is in fact critical of his contemporaries for reasons that concern the type of knowledge to which they subscribe. Second, I show that Heraclitus is himself subscribing to the form of mythical thinking. Both of these characteristics will be shown through an analysis of several of Heraclitus's propositions.

Heraclitus is attempting to preserve an integrated whole against the ever increasing body of knowledge being developed by *physikoi* and historians. For Heraclitus, other thinkers of his time are not interested in a unitary understanding, but rather in the collection of random facts. Heraclitus's calls this random understanding "*polymathie*" and opposes it to a singular "*noos*":

Much learning (*polymathiē*) does not teach understanding (*noos*), or it would have taught Hesiod and Pythagoras, and also Xenophanes and Hecataeus (K. XVIII, D.K. 40).

In making his critique, Heraclitus refers to famous thinkers whom fellow Ephesians would have recognized. Hecataeus was famous for his writings in geography, Hesiod for his writings in history and myth, Pythagoras for his writings in miscellaneous sciences, and Xenophanes for his ballads on his travels.¹ “The ‘polymathy’ of which Heraclitus speaks is then obviously this factual knowledge in various specific fields.”² Thus the variegated nature of “much/many learning,” *polymathiē*, in particular fields of study is opposed to a unified and singular understanding, *noos*. The difference between *noos* and *polymathiē*—an insuperable difference—is indicative of the difference between compact thinking and the nascent differentiated “sciences” of Heraclitus’s time. *Noos*, understanding, goes deeper than *polymathiē*; discrete disciplines are ultimately missing the point. But the wise not only is *one*, it is also set apart from all. The idea of the one wise set apart from the many discourses also appears in K. XXVII (D.K. 108).

Of all those whose accounts (*logoi*) I have heard, none has gone so far as this: to recognize what is wise (*ho ti sophon esti*), set apart from all.

¹Kurt von Fritz, “NOOS, NOEIN, and Their Derivatives in Pre-Socratic Philosophy” in *The Pre-Socratics* (ed. Alexander P.D. Mourelatos; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), 37.

² *Ibid.*, 37.

At first glance, such a statement appears to go against the idea of compactness. However, one should keep in mind that what distinguishes the wise *logos* from all others is precisely its unity—its singular understanding that penetrates through any apparent discrepancy. If one understands an account (*logos*) as the result of a particular method of thinking, then this fragment is an explanation and an extension of K. XVIII (D.K. 40), cited above. Heraclitus is able to discern that *polymathiē* does not teach *noos* because he recognizes two simultaneous situations. On the one hand, Xenophanes, Hecataeus, etc., know many things; they know a lot of factual knowledge. On the other hand, they do not understand the one wise/wisdom that is set apart from all of these facts. And yet, as this interpretation will show, it is only in virtue of this one wisdom that knowing a set of “facts,” that *polymathiē* is even possible. For now it is necessary to clarify what is meant by *noos* and to show that such *noos* is compact.

The learning of “many” ideas or even “facts,” is here opposed to a singular *noos*. The opposition of *noos* to *polymathiē* will crystallize the difference between a compact insight and differentiated fact-knowledge; it will become evident that Heraclitus is in favor of this compact thinking over against the differentiated theoretical knowledge. While *noos* can be most easily translated as “understanding” it has a rich history of meaning. *Noos* and *noein* most likely

originally meant “to sniff” and “to smell.”³ Even in Heraclitus, the meanings of *noos* and *noein* do not get far from the focus on the senses.⁴ In fact, in a separate fragment Heraclitus uses the verb *osmōntai*, “to smell,” to suggest that souls smell things in Hades (*A-iden*= “the unseen”), which indicates that we can *sense* something beyond just our sight of it.⁵ What’s more, Sophocles uses this same verb to indicate “scenting (*osmasthai*) a Laconian way of talking.”⁶ Here *osmasthai* means both “to scent” and “to sense.” Regardless, the similarity in the smelling/understanding in *noos* and the scenting/sensing in another Heraclitean verb *osmōntai*, should not be overlooked. The deeper detection of something hidden is continuous with its sensible presentation. In other words, the penetration of *noos* into something deeper is by way of the same senses one uses to merely accept the straightforward presentation of something.⁷ In sum, the senses and “sensing” something, using *noos*, are compact.

In Homer, *noos* already means more than just to scent. The sense of *noein* that prevails amongst the many possible senses in Homer is to come to a

³ Kurt von Fritz, “*Nous, Noein*, and Their Derivatives in Pre-Socratic Philosophy,” 23.

⁴ K. XIV (D.K. 55): “Whatever comes from sight, hearing, learning from experience: this I prefer.”

⁵ K. CXI (D.K. 98): “Souls smell things in Hades.”

⁶ S.Fr. 176. Translated in Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Sophocles: Fragments* (Princeton, NJ: Loeb Classical Library, 1997), 70-71.

⁷ As von Fritz at one point writes that one penetrates to the deeper meaning of something “with his *noos* but through his eyes,” 40.

recognition or realization of something.⁸ *Noos* is able to penetrate to beyond a surface/initial/false presentation of something and get to matter at hand.⁹ At this point then, it does not mean active reasoning (nor will it for Heraclitus); rather it means to infer something by way of receptivity and epiphany. As Jacob Klein writes:

This state and manner of being is a state and manner of being in which we are not closed up but *open*. Wakefulness is openness—the very openness of a huge open door. It is not a state of activity, but rather a state of preparedness, of alertness. This state or manner of being is commonly called in Greek *NOUS* or *NOEIN*.¹⁰

In other words, to possess *noos* is not to reason through a situation or set of facts; rather, it is to allow oneself to be taken up by the process of revelation. It is receptivity. It is a state of awareness or wakefulness. It is prepared openness that a human may bring to any situation.

In contrast to this Heraclitus puts *polymathiē*, which Kahn has translated as “much-learning.”¹¹ In opposition to *noos*, i.e., attentive receptivity, *mathein* means a skill or a knowledge acquired by training—usually of a specific set of objects.

As von Fritz credits Snell for pointing out, this is not unlike how “mathematics”

⁸ von Fritz, 25.

⁹ Ibid, 25.

¹⁰ As quoted in Kenneth Maly, “Man and Disclosure,” in *Heraclitean Fragments* (ed. by John Sallis and Kenneth Maly; University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1985), 58.

¹¹ K. XVIII (D.K. 40): “Much learning does not teach understanding. For it would have taught Hesiod and Pythagoras, and also Xenophanes and Hecataeus.”

comes down to us;¹² that is, it is oriented toward a learning of specific objects rather than the open learning associate with taking it in (cf. *epaïontas*, B112).¹³ Thus, while mathematics is understood to be learned through experience, the first steps of learning mathematics have to do with learning a set of “unchanging” objects. Whether someone comes to learn mathematics, or any set of knowledge, with awareness or without awareness, the objects to be learned remain the same. Not so with *noos*. With *noos*, a person may see Aphrodite behind an old woman; without *noos*, one would just see an old woman.¹⁴

In being awake to the world one can genuinely learn differently than one who is not awake. For people who are asleep, much of the world passes them by and is forgotten.¹⁵ Heraclitus’s first point in the proposition on *noos* is that there is no set of objects of knowledge that, in learning such a set, could bring about a *state* of wakefulness.

¹² von Fritz, 36.

¹³ Put quite generally, Heraclitus idea of thinking is focused on receptivity. He mentions listening or some form of it in several fragments (B19, 34, 50, 55, 112). Listening is usually associated with a receptive waiting for something rather than a challenging forth inquiry of theory (“seeing”). It is also polymorphous and fluid in that it unites what comes to it in a narrative rather than a “system.” Obviously what we see and read inspires ideas in us, but it is usually in hearing something that something “clicks” and we come to a new realization.

¹⁴ Homer, *Il.* 3.386, as discussed in von Fritz, 25.

¹⁵BI: Cf. K VI (B89): “The world of the waking is one and shared, but the sleeping turn aside each into his private world.”

But what is the nature of what *noos* does/can “see”? To approach this question one must look at another fragment, one that indicates what speaking with *noos* means.

Xyn noōi legontas ischyristhai chrē tō xynō pantōn, hokosper nomōi polis kai polu ischyroterōs (K. XXX, D.K.114)

Together with wakefulness speaking, it is necessary they ground themselves in what connects everything, as a city is grounded in its law, but even more solidly.¹⁶

In order to speak with wakefulness one must be grounded in that which connects everything (*tō xynō pantōn*). Recall from chapter two that the essence of *xynos* is connection, being joined together: “not only does Heraclitus *say* that intelligent speech depends upon that which is common, but he *shows* it through the pun on *xunō*”;¹⁷ to wit, that *xyn noōi* is a homonym of *xynō*. But what connects everything relates to wakeful speech in the same way that a city relates to its law: by shared participation. A law only holds a city together when its citizens recognize and follow it. In following the law and customs its members are active participants in that city. Through following the law the citizens are connected to one another and to the city as a whole. However, it is the city that is also the goal of such activity. Therefore, the city is both the *interaction* of the shared participation of its

¹⁶ This is my translation. However, debts are owed to Schindler who, through Ewald Kurz, points out the “connection” aspect of *xynos*. D.C. Schindler, “The Community of the One and the Many: Heraclitus on Reason,” *Inquiry* 46 (2003): 419-43. Also see Maly for his translation of *noos* as “wakefulness”: Maly, 57-58.

¹⁷ Schindler, 427.

citizens, and *transcends* and *protects* such activity. In its being both the product and the guardian the law is the connection that holds the city together. And this connection is the same as the connection of those with *noos*. The characterization of thinking as connection can be verified through B2:

Although logos is connection (*xynos*), most men live their own lives as though their thinking (*phronēsin*) were a private possession.

In returning to the fragment originally in question, K. XXX (D.K. B114), one sees that the first line reads:

Together with wakefulness (*Xyn noōi legontas*) speaking, it is necessary they ground themselves in what connects everything (*tō xynō pantōn*), as a city is grounded in its law, but even more solidly.

What has now been realized is that the key to wakefulness is precisely its objectively shared nature; that in order to be a whole world it must be one in its concrete whole structure composed of many parts. What connects everything is precisely the way in which those with *noos* are open to each other. In other words, they are not interested in learning only factual-knowledge, which can be, in principle, learned by anybody. Rather, those with *noos* recognize the shared nature of the world, i.e., meaning-context, as such. World (cosmos), then, is interaction.¹⁸ Those who do not interact lack *noos* and remain asleep, i.e., *axynetoī*, disconnected.

¹⁸ Further support for this can be found in B30: “The ordering, the same for all, no god nor man has made . . .,” the emphasis being on the singular “god” and “man.” This is because, as will be argued below, the ordering (kosmos) is made through the interaction—*polemos*—of gods and men.

The inadequacy of *idian phronesin* is ultimately the same inadequacy of *polymathiē*; both private thinking and the learning of discrete fields pretend to separate off a part from a whole; a whole that can only *be* in the concrete formation of those recognize it in the first place. In terms of inquiry what is needed is integral thinking, not discrete thinking. There are two fragments that support this. The first is K. XXXII (D.K. 112):

The greatest excellence and wisdom is (*sōphronein*) to think integrally; namely, to speak and act the truth in perceiving (*epaïontas*) things according to their nature (*phusin*).¹⁹

While the translation of *sōphronein* as “to think integrally” is to be commended, there is one flaw with the above translation that must be pointed out. Though this mistake is made by several translations²⁰ the word translated as “things” appears nowhere in the Greek.²¹ For that reason, a better translation is as follows:

Thinking integrally (*sōphronein*) is the greatest excellence (*arête megiste*), and wisdom is gathering (*legein*) and bringing-forth

¹⁹ This is Schindler’s translation, 423. He explains his translation of *sōphronein* as “thinking integrally” in a footnote (n.48): “*Sophronein* is the combination of *sos*, ‘sound’, ‘integral’ or ‘whole’, with *phronein*, to think. The English phrase ‘to think integrally’ is thus meant to convey not only a thinking that is free from error (i.e., ‘sound thinking’), but more profoundly thinking that is in accord with the whole.”

²⁰ See Kahn, 43. See also G.S. Kirk, J.E. Raven, and M. Schofield, *The Pre-Socratic Philosophers* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983) fr. 194., 203, etc.

²¹ This is pointed out by Peter Manchester, 144. Manchester points to the translation of the poem as another example of where “things” is imported without reason. See “Heraclitus and the Need for Time,” Chapter Five in *The Syntax of Time. The Phenomenology of Time in Greek Physics and Speculative Logic from Iamblichus to Anaximander*. (Studies in Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the Platonic Tradition, 2. Leiden: Brill, 2005.), 143-144.

(*poiein*) unconcealment (*a-lethea*) by way of (*kata*) giving ear to (*epaiontas*) growing emergence (*phusin*).²²

For the first time the reader gets a glimpse of what Heraclitus offers as an alternative to individual disciplines. While *polymathiē* involves inquiry and the collection of facts, it does not go to the source of such information, namely its emergence as such. Inquiry looks at the world and sees “things.” It was the importation of “things” into the usual translation that blocks the reader from seeing what knowledge is for Heraclitus: knowledge is not of “things” per se, but of the experience of the emergence of things. It has already been shown that the origin of *legein* is in gathering. But thinking toward the whole, *sōphronein*, involves a gathering that includes both a view of the part and the whole. And wisdom is the continual reference back to the whole at its origin, namely the growth and emergence of all.

Heraclitus’s idea of knowledge goes against thinking in an objective way. We may be concerned that this idea of knowledge is not practical. But closer inspection shows that Heraclitus is being completely practical in his analysis. The practical emergence of all (things) happens in the connection experienced by

²² Here *epaiontas* is in a similar position to *noos* in that each was originally grounded in the senses. *Epaiōntas* was originally grounded in listening, and this translation takes advantage of that origin. (LSJ I.1) For a similar translation, see Kenneth Maly and Parvis Emad’s translation of Martin Heidegger’s translation in “Fragments and Translations,” in *Heidegger on Heraclitus: A New Reading* (ed. Kenneth Maly and Parvis Emad; Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Meller Press, 1986), 61: “The greatest thing of which a human being is capable is thoughtfulness [about the whole]; wisdom [thoughtfulness] is saying the unconcealed as disclosed and doing that in accordance with the sway of things, attentive to them.”

those who are open to such connection. The mere acceptance of facts does not mean a genuine connection, but a mere repetition.²³ Genuine connection happens in paying attention, in giving ear to what is being said. It allows one to gather and bring forth this emergence by listening to what is already there. This “already-there”, however is formed in the very way we bring it forth.

When one denies shared thinking and attempts to put forth wisdom and understanding as if it were his own, it is nothing more than *kakotechniē* (literally “bad art”), that is, “artful knavery.”

Pythagoras son of Mnesarchus pursued inquiry further than all other men and, choosing what he liked from these compositions, made a wisdom of his own: much learning (*polymathēien*), artful knavery (*kakotechniēn*) (K XXV, D.K. 129).

Dimensional compactness holds that any situation can produce the richness of meaning that for modern thinkers would be spread across several discrete realms (science, art, philosophy, religion). Connected to all, thinking and speaking with understanding extends beyond the private realm of the thinking of a particular discipline as it does in fragment 40: “. . . much learning does not teach understanding (*noein*).” But what’s more, *noein* not only means “understanding” but “to apprehend” and “to take notice of.”²⁴ Conversely, if something escapes our notice that means that it was there to be noticed in the first place. The failure

²³ Cf. K XI (D.K. 47): “Let us not concur casually about the most important matters.”

²⁴ LSJ I.2, see II 9.537.

is on the part of the apprehender, not the appearing being. At best we could say the appearance has made itself available to the perceiver in some fashion. Though the logos “is forever” *eontos aiei*, “ever-living” *aeizōon*, even great teachers miss it showing itself in its unity: of day and night; of good and bad days; of the two sides of conflict:

The teacher of most is Hesiod. It is him the know as knowing most, who did not recognize day and night: they are one. (K. XIX, D.K. 57)

Hesiod counted some days as good, others as bad, because he did not recognize the nature of every day is one and the same. (K. XX, D.K. 106)

Homer was wrong when he said ‘Would that Conflict might vanish from among gods and men!’ (*Iliad* XVIII.107). For there would be not attunement with out high and low notes nor any animals without male and female, both of which are opposites. (K. LXXXI, D.K. A 22)

Hesiod was able to pontificate about the difference between day and night, and good and bad days, only because he misunderstood the fundamental tension created by logos. Day and night, good and bad may appear as two, but this is to over look their hidden connection (*aphanes harmoniē*): the experience of their emergence. It would seem that Homer wishing that Conflict vanish would be to Heraclitus’s liking, but again that is to miss the point. It is the apparent Conflict that brings together opposites in a hidden tension. That tension produces thought, it produces beautiful music, it produces discussion, it produces life.

Dimensional compactness holds that the separation that we as moderns experience in our compartmental world was unified for the ancients. Heraclitus also seems to be holding out against this type of differentiation. Through all of these examples Heraclitus is not explicitly denouncing specific fields, or sciences. More than just having no occasion to do so, an outright denial of science and empirical experience is not what Heraclitus advocates. The logos, precisely in its commonality, in its ability to be noticed, is what *is experienced*. Heraclitus writes:

Whatever comes from sight, hearing, learning from experience: this I prefer. (K. XIV, D.K. 55)

Some fragments also suggest that it is the great teachers who are missing things: Homer misses the riddles of the lice (K. XXII, D.K. 56), Hesiod separates good and bad days (K. XX, D.K. 106) and day and night (K. XIX, D.K. 57), Pythagoras has attempted to split off his own understanding (K. XXV, D.K. 129). But perhaps the best example of the teachers missing the unified and obvious is in reference to astronomy. Heraclitus declares rather straightforwardly:

Homer was an astronomer. (K. XXIII, D.K. 105)

Thales practiced astronomy. (K. XXIV, D.K. 38)

What is left out of these rather simple fragments is the accompanying context. Homer could be an astronomer in spite of the fact that he was blind, or so it is rumored. Thales, while teaching to students about astronomy is purported to

have fallen in a well.²⁵ Each of these stories has its own way of relating the same thing: one can easily miss what is most obvious while attempting to theorize, and conversely one can theorize even in the most robust ways, while missing what is directly in one's face. While the development of discrete fields such as astronomy may not cause someone to be oblivious toward what is obvious, they certainly correlate.

From the analysis of the above fragments one may surmise that while Heraclitus is not *against the study of discrete* fields, he is certainly for the propagation of a unified understanding that should be at the base of such discrete fields. In that sense one cannot conclude that Heraclitus was actively involved in conserving the mythic form of knowledge. But what can be said is that even the most learned of Heraclitus's time were missing something: that singular and unified knowledge that is the product of *noos*. It is important to recall here that myth is the fundamental and primary mode of making sense (again not consciously and purposefully, but immediately) in the world. Perhaps Heraclitus sees a shift away from this fundamental meaning-making mode and is worried about the intense focus on minutiae and history that is beginning to emerge at his time.

²⁵ Diogenes Laertius. *The Lives of Eminent Philosophers*. I.VIII. (Trans. by C.D. Yonge; <http://www.classicpersuasion.org/pw/diogenes/index.htm> accessed on 2/29/08).

Heraclitus is worried about shift in respect to knowledge and authority and whether or not his fellow Ephesians (Greeks, maybe humans as such) realize such a shift. In closing this section of dimensional compactness our analysis must recapitulate what this shift is, what the danger is of allowing it to unfold unnoticed, and what Heraclitus prefers as an alternative.

Heraclitus sees knowledge shifting away from an interactive and communal enterprise to one of specialization and compartmentalization, in so far as Pythagoras, Hecataeus, Xenophanes, and Hesiod each develop what purports to be a “correct” interpretation of “world.” But anyone who follows them must be “imposters” in the sense that such an interpretation can not last.²⁶ It cannot last because rather it talks over and agrees too easily with matters that it should take in and listen too. The men who make such “bad knowledge” believe that, while the world may be stable, thinking is private and separate from the world; in reality, this is not the case. In fact, it is the *xynos logos* of thinking that establishes and preserves the order of “world” to begin with.

The danger of such bull-headedness is an axiological shift that would be very difficult to turn around. Heraclitus warns us that it takes contrast and conflict to create Justice and that all things come to pass with such conflict.²⁷

²⁶DK B 81; K. XXVI: “Pythagoras was the prince of imposters.”

²⁷K. LXXXII (DK B 80): “One must realize that war is shared and Conflict is Justice, and that all things come to pass (and are ordained) in accordance with conflict.”

Likewise, this fundamental conflict is the basis of our understanding. When we are awake, we can see that everything is death, i.e., that it is defined by its own finitude. If we stay asleep, “all we see is sleep.”²⁸

What’s worse is that such an imbalance of human hubris can throw off our most primordial relationship to the world: that of conflict and overcoming.

Heraclitus says of those polymaths who develop their own private knowledges and their followers: “Justice will catch up with those who invent lies and those who swear to them.”²⁹ In short, humans are overstepping their own limits in attempting to describe the world as it “is.” Such overstepping, naturally, results in injustice and threatens to throw our whole world into meaninglessness.³⁰ That Homer wishes for such a background of conflict to disappear is like wishing for his own continued ignorance; it is wishing to remain asleep.

²⁸K. LXXXIX, D.K. 21: “Death is all we see awake; all we see asleep is sleep.”

²⁹ Cf. K. LXXXVII, D.K. 28. The word for “lie” here is the usual *pseudōn*, but one cannot help but understand it in the broader context of knowledge, especially when take with K. LXXXVI (D.K. 86): “Incredibility (*apistiē*) escapes recognition.” The idea of a lie as false has a lot to do with how it is received as well, namely, without a doubt.

³⁰ Thus, Heraclitus shows the necessity of balance and limits in B 23 (K. LXIX); “If it were not for these things (namely, injustices), they would not have known the name of Justice.” On this see Kahn, *Commentary on LXIX*, in *Art and Thought*, 185.

Vertical Compactness

It has now been established that Heraclitus's discourse defends dimensional compactness through its evocation of the unity of thought, and the apparent denunciation or devaluation of discipline-oriented thinking. The next step in this analysis, then, is to prove that Heraclitus also holds to a vertical compactness, the second dimension of mythic thinking. The comparison of the discourse of Heraclitus to vertical compactness reveals that Heraclitus understands thinking as an interplay not only between individuals, but also between the individual, the polis, the common order, and the sacred power. It is my hope that in such an exercise there is more accomplished than proving that Heraclitus's discourse is vertically compact. The larger question was what, if any, light this sheds on the overall status of human knowledge and thinking. The larger question was asked specifically with the intention of illuminating possibilities for human knowing and thinking today.

What faces humanity today, as it did in the time of Heraclitus, is an utter loss of legitimation for knowledge. This is owed, in part, to the idea that such legitimation in some definite sense was available to us at the first. Of course, it has been said that in mythic thinking legitimation was intrinsic to narrative. But, unlike modern scientific knowing, it was not assumed that humans could possess certainty. That alone was reserved for the Sacred. Which brings us to the

task at hand, *videlicet*, to illuminate the connection between the Sacred origin of man's world, and how humanity sees itself constituted in such a world at the time of Heraclitus.

Vertical compactness is the name given to the interdependence of Sacred-cosmos-polis-individual. That is to say, the Sacred orders the cosmos, which then serves as a guide for the life of the polis, etc. The polis and the individual are, in turn, the sites of human order and the site of connection with the gods. Both can be seen as "openings" in which things happen. One characteristic of the *hybris* that Heraclitus critiques is the forgetting of this emptiness, this receptivity. But at the same time, Heraclitus does seem to take further steps to emphasize the individual site of receptivity, i.e., the *psychē*. The four sites have the following "names" in Heraclitus discourse: Zeus (also 'the god' and 'the gods', the thunderbolt), the cosmos as fire (which means also the sun, order, world), the polis and its nomos (at one point Heraclitus even remarks about his own polis, Ephesus), and the *psychē*. In so far as these sites connect, and in that way are in communication with one another, the mode of their connection is intervention.³¹

It can be said also that these "sites" share a *xynos logos*, i.e., a gathering

³¹ By intervention I mean the direct interference of gods in human affairs, either through human beings, or on their own. On intervention in Homer, see Bruno Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind* (trans. T.G. Rosenmeyer; New York: Harper and Row, 1960), 20-1. Also see Martin P. Nilsson, *Greek Piety* (trans. H.J. Rose; New York: Norton, 1969), 60-1.

connection. To be wise, it will be argued, is to be attuned to such a gathering connection.

Each of these four sites will now be elaborated, followed by a discussion of the way they are interrelated.

Zeus: Zēnos, keraunos, ho theos

A preparatory note: by the time Heraclitus is writing the terms “Zeus,” “the god,” *daemon*, as well as other terms that refer to divinity, are basically synonymous.³² Thus, the propositions that refer to any of these general terms will be treated as one and the same site of (divine) knowledge. We will begin with the most general statements Heraclitus makes about the divine.

Human nature (*ēthos*) has no set purpose (*gnōmai*), but the divine (*theion*) has. (K. LV, D.K. 78)

There are two terms in this statement that require attention. The first is *ēthos*, the second is *gnōmai*. While it is correct to translate *ēthos* as “nature,” its origin is in the idea of a dwelling place, an abode.³³ Thus, the idea of “nature” here must be understood as what is appropriate to man, or where he belongs. Likewise, *gnōmai* can have several senses: “insight, recognition; thought, opinion, judgment; plan,

³² Nilsson, *Greek Piety*, 60-1.

³³ Cf. Martin Heidegger’s analysis of D.K. 112 in “Letter on Humanism,” in *Basic Writings* (ed. David Farrell Krell; San Francisco, 1993), 257-258.

proposal.”³⁴ But its essence is to be found in *gno-* the root for having a means or ability to knowing something. It is the same root that occurs in *gignōskein*, “to recognize.” Recall that in other statements³⁵ of Heraclitus it is the lack of such recognition that causes one to be *axynetoi*, “uncomprehending” and “disconnected.” So we will now venture our own translation, keeping these word origins in mind:

Recognition does not hold in the human abode, but it does in the divine. That is to say, knowing for human being is fragile and fleeting. Some scholars have noticed that Heraclitus’s own propositions have precisely this character. The momentary insight they are wont to produce is but fleeting.³⁶ And, as history has shown, to translate them (once) into a permanent nugget of wisdom (in any language) has proven to be quite difficult. But then Heraclitus’s style only reiterates and performs³⁷ what we have already said about human knowledge of the world. That is, human knowledge must be unified and limited precisely

³⁴ Kahn, 55n.

³⁵ K. IV, D.K.17: “Most men do not think things in the way they encounter them, nor do they recognize what they experience, but believe their own opinions.” Cf. DK B 57, 106; K XIX-XX. Here Hesiod fails to recognize the unity of day and night, thus, in his own way he disconnects what Heraclitus proposes is unified.

³⁶ For instance: Hölscher compares such insight (both in Heraclitus and in what the Heraclitean statements produce) to Goethe’s *apperçu*, 238 . Likewise, Gadamer refers to Heraclitus “Knappheit”, quoted by Dilcher, 429. And, even more appropriate to Heraclitus, Dilcher compares such an epiphany to a lightning flash, 19.

³⁷ Manchester, 147. Cf. Schindler, 438. Dilcher, 142.

because it cannot be permanent. It is in the above fragment that we begin to gain a sense of how these limits are provided.

There are other fragments that confirm this difference, by way of relating human knowledge to divine knowledge.

A man has heard himself called childish by a god, as a child by a man.³⁸
(K. LVII, D.K. 79)

Heraclitus has set up a ratio: The relation of a child to a man is exactly that as the relation of a man to a god.³⁹ But here “to have heard” does not import a full recognition of the judgment made by a god. In other words, man may have heard what a god may have said (perhaps, on several occasions) but even “having heard” may not bring about a state of recognition in man. Human beings should heed the declaration, but they do not. They want to take their own path. According to Heraclitus, then, human genius is just a mirage imagined by humans, not a timeless certainty recognized by the gods. For instance:

dokeonta ho dokimōtatos ginōskei, phulassei

We will translate:

Even the most reputed knowing (*dokimōtatos ginōskei*), is the guarding (*phulassei*) of a reputation (*dokeonta*; i.e., the way things seems to others).
(K. LXXXV, D.K. 28 A)

³⁸ This is the simplest, most straightforward translation of the Greek; I selected some of the alternatives Kahn gives in his *Commentary: LVI-LVIII*, 173.

³⁹ Cf. Fränkel, “A Thought Pattern in Heraclitus,” 214-215.

This fragment reveals the fundamental Heraclitean insight: all human knowing is held in place by belief. It is “held in place” in spite of the movement of the cosmos. That is:

Most men do not think things in the way they encounter them, nor do they recognize what they experience, though they pretend to (*heōutoisi dokeousi*). (K. IV, D.K. 17)

The pretense of gaining knowledge drives men away from what is nearest to them and makes them believe that they are still “together with it.”⁴⁰ As human beings we can never “arrive” at knowledge but only step near (*anchibasie*)⁴¹ in our knowing. Thus:

hen to sophon mounon legesthai ouk ehtelei kai ethelei Zenōs onoma

The wise is one: it is not willing and yet willing to be called alone by the name of Zeus.⁴²

This fragment, no doubt, hints at the tentative relation between human knowing, human naming, and the movement of the Sacred. Here the divine is ambivalent about accepting the position of supreme deity. But in addition “it can be said that man’s attempts at understanding are in vain and yet rewarded, that the logos

⁴⁰ This concise phrase was offered by Peter Manchester in conversation.

⁴¹ DK B 129.

⁴² Dilcher, 126, following M. Kraus in *Name und Sache*, separates *hen to sophon* as an introductory clause. He also attaches *mounon* to the second clause. These two alterations solve the problem of the seeming “superfluous” doubling of *hen* and *mounon*.

cannot and can convey true understanding."⁴³ Thus, the thing named, and the naming itself, is only tentatively attached to the name. But here the divinity's ambivalence should not be read as a sign of his waning power or influence. Rather, what is of import is the mortal's ability to address the correct god at the correct moment for changing his or her fate. Heraclitus is playing with the appropriateness of a particular name to a god, which was an important issue for Greek religion.⁴⁴

In spite of the apparent ambivalence of the god, and the apparent hesitation of mortals, it is clear that Zeus, nevertheless, is still the supreme ruler of the cosmos, i.e., the order composed of *tade panta*, "the all."

Thunderbolt steers (*oikazein*) the all (*ta panta*). (K. CXIX, D.K. 64)

It is the lightning of Zeus that "forges the many divergent things into one harmonious whole."⁴⁵ Heraclitus uses the term *oikazein*, a term used in lyric poetry to denote the piloting of a ship, and not uncommon in reference to a cosmic force.⁴⁶ But what can "steering" mean here? Perhaps the key lies in the chosen symbol of the pilot: the thunderbolt. In place of a steady hand guiding the

⁴³ Dilcher, 127.

⁴⁴ On naming a god see Ernst Cassirer, discussing Usener, *Language and Myth* (trans. Susanne Langer; New York: Dover, 1946), 20-1.

⁴⁵ Guerrière, "Physis, Sophia, Psyche," 96.

⁴⁶ Kahn, *Commentary: CXIX-CXXII*, 272.

stability of all things we find instead a thunderbolt.⁴⁷ The thunderbolt is significant for two reasons. The first is mentioned above, to wit, that the thunderbolt is a weapon Zeus. But this imports that there is an unseen stability (the god) behind a seen instability (the lightning flash). Thus, the second significance: the thunderbolt is what it does.⁴⁸ It happens. It unfolds in an instant to great effect. There is no “thing” behind a light and sound of a thunderbolt: it is pure force. Thus the short fragment comes together to make quite a powerful constellation of decisions. On the one hand, the weapon of Zeus does not exist except for the effect it brings about, and it leaves no trace; this is how all things are piloted and directed (NOTE: They are not “created” this way, though they may be destroyed this way.) On the other hand, in its task of piloting all things there is an implied stability that remains unseen behind this flash-instant. The order of the cosmos is bound and measured by the threat of force. Its internal order is guarded by the very contingent threat of retributive justice. How does this internal order relate to (human) knowing?

The wise is one (*hen to sophon*): knowing the plan (*gnome*) by which it steers all things (i.e., the whole) through all. (K. LIV, D.K. 41)

The wise depends upon knowing the whole, and how the whole is steered through the all. In one statement Heraclitus names the entire relation between

⁴⁷Cf. Gadamer, “Heraclitus Studies,” 206.

⁴⁸ Cf. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, §13.

human and divine, knowledge and wisdom. Wisdom is penetrating to what happens behind the all, namely how the one wholes (gathers) itself. Wisdom is that which gathers into the oneness of the divine. As Heidegger points out in his lecture on B50 “Logos,” the essence of *to sophon* is found in skill and art.⁴⁹ Thus the wisdom gained in knowing how the one works itself out in the all is ultimately a practical wisdom. It is a knowing-how-to-live, a proper manner of living (*bios*).⁵⁰ But this is all such a knowing proclaims to be; it does not overstep its boundaries. A knowledge of how to live only includes a knowledge that is practice oriented, not one that is oriented to defining things or categories. The skillful one enters into a relationship with the divine that cannot be fully disclosed in language. That is precisely why such a skillful relationship is both willing and not willing to be *called* Zeus. Such a skillful art is delimited precisely in its fluidity, in its negativity. What demarcates the realm of wisdom is the general openness that is characteristic of preparedness; this is the *noos* described above.

The divine is tentative in that it is inaccessible to human knowing in a permanent way—it only intervenes, interrupts, sets off course and, in so doing,

⁴⁹ Heidegger, “Logos (B50),” in *Early Greek Thinking*, 70.

⁵⁰ As Manchester rightfully points out, BIOS at the time of Heraclitus still means “condition for life,” 138. It does not mean biological life or even “biological needs” per se, but rather the availability of sustenance and, what’s more, a continual frame of reference. Cf. LSJ (A.II).

establishes course. The human life is like the mixed drink that is only together when it is stirred up.⁵¹ In letting it be, it changes, and disintegrates.⁵² The movement of practical knowledge is the continual integration⁵³ of the uncertain. In fact, in looking at those who we may call wise even today, one sees a general pattern: the wise are able to gather and take into account this unknown element. That is, they do not count on anything remaining the way it is. But what's more, they do not pretend to be capable of exhausting such a fount of concealment; they expect the unexpected. They take a stand without closing the matter off in a permanent way. In such a way the wise establish and ground the meaning of a situation out of the gap, out of Chaos.

But such meaning is established in its precariousness. In returning, for one moment, to the discussion of dimensional compactness, it was realized that bad knowledge has to do with "choosing" what one likes and "making" out of them a wisdom (cf. KXXV, above). It seems the problem with such knowledge is precisely that Pythagoras is too active in the process of establishing his knowledge. Any real wisdom "recognizes" and "agrees" (*homologeîn*) it does not choose and fabricate its own "wisdom." In recognizing and agreeing real

⁵¹ K. LXXVII, D.K.125: "Even the *kykeôn* separates unless it is stirred."

⁵² K. LII, D.K. 84 A: "It rests by changing." Also see K LI, D.K. 91: "One cannot step twice into the same river, not can one grasp any mortal *ousia* in a stable condition, but it scatters again and gathers; it forms and dissolves, and approaches and departs."

⁵³ Recall Schindler's translation of *sōphroneîn* as "to think integrally." Above, p. (12 pgs.)

wisdom realizes its limits and its place, its finitude and its measure. The one site of knowledge where knowledge most certainly brushes up against the divine is in the realm of attempting to understand the cosmos.

Cosmos: Pȳr Aeizōon

It has been proposed that the relationship of man to the world has to do not only with what human beings know, but how they know it. For that reason the relationship between human and divine knowledge was just discussed. Now the question at hand is: How does human being's understanding of wisdom relate to a knowledge of the cosmos?

In so far as Heraclitus's thinking is compact, the relationship to the cosmos should also in some way be informed by the relationship between the human and the divine, and the human and the polis. The term cosmos appears in three fragments; each one alludes to either its relation to man or his knowledge of it. The first of these fragments is:

The ordering (*kosmos*), the same for all, no god nor man has made, but it was and is and ever will be: fire ever-living (*pȳr aeizōon*), kindled in measures and in measures going out. (K XXXVII, D.K. 30)

What is immediately clear is that Heraclitus holds to the mythic way of understanding cosmogony, to wit, that the cosmos is not *made* but *ordered* out of disorder. Neither god nor man has made it. The statement

highlights the criticism of Pythagoras. Whereas the cosmos is not made, Pythagoras makes his own wisdom. It seems as though if the cosmos is not made, neither should be our wisdom about it. Should not the human wisdom correspond to the nature of the cosmos?

The statement says more: the cosmos is and was and ever will be. The reference to fire kindling and extinguishing in the next phrase elucidates what is meant by this. The cosmos may *be* always, but it is not fixed. Rather, the cosmos is like a fire which kindles and goes out. But it also rekindles, reinvigorates itself—it never violates its own measure and goes out entirely. Thus, the kindling and extinguishing should be understood as momentary states of a more lasting order. The lasting order also appears in Plutarch’s report of Heraclitus:

The world (*kosmon*) is one and shared (*koinon=xynon*), but the sleeping turn aside each into his private world. (K. VI, D.K. B 89)

The nature of what it means to be *xynon* was discussed at length above. Recall that the logos was *xynos* in its being constituted jointly. When this fragment was approached above, it was said that the sleeper disconnects from a joint world order. But now the statement must be put in relation to the seemingly more “physical” description of fire as *p̄yr aeizōon*.

As much as the statement about ever-living fire may seem speculative, Heraclitus is not usually prone to pure speculation. In fact, this seems to violate the rule of compact concreteness we attributed to him

in the section on dimensional compactness. So in what way could such a statement be taken as an direct observation? It could be taken as such in so far as one is capable of understanding fire not as a “thing” or an “element” but rather as a condition for a realm of possibilities. Fire unites in its ability to bring the family around the hearth, in its ability to light up in the night (uniting man with what was previously hidden by darkness), in its ability to cook food (uniting man with sustenance). Fire sets up a world in its glowing and gathering. Fire symbolizes the *xynos logos* on the cosmic level because it broadens the human range of experience. For example, consider for a moment the first phrase K. XC (D.K. 26):

A man strikes a light (*haptetai*) for himself in the night, when his sight is extinguished (*apobetheis*).

The verbs for “striking” (*haptetai*) and “extinguish” (*apobetheis*) are the same as in the statement regarding the *p̄yr aeizōon*. But the fire involved in “striking” a light is not only in reference to a torch or lantern; it is also in reference to human ingenuity—the “fire” of thought applied to the surround of darkness. It would seem likely, then, that Heraclitus understood the fire of ingenuity and the fire of the initial ordering as related.

The relation of the cosmic fire to the human ability to strike a light hints at the depth of what Heraclitus is saying. It is not merely the case that the kindling and extinguishing of human thinking, and therefore of fire, are *in* the cosmos:

they *are the cosmos*.⁵⁴ Here then, the cosmos cannot possibly refer to “the whole universe,” in an abstract and stable form because there is no sensible evidence of the entire universe kindling or going out. Rather, cosmos refers to the order: to what is pervasive and what is evident in the world. Humans have continued access to the order, with the help of Prometheus’ gift, in the night. The cosmos is inextricably connected to the lighting of fire. Heidegger refers to this lighting (*der Lichtung*) as the coming to presence of what is. It is the disclosure of the world in the open area called “human being”; it is the worlding of world.⁵⁵

The cosmos is “ever-living fire” and is self-made. Thus, the cosmos, like fire, has an internal necessity, an internal order. That order can be seen in its external luminosity. In other words, the cosmos is symbolic of an orderer in the same way the ever-living fire is symbolic of the illumination that allows such an order to be seen. Essentially, Plato realizes this and uses the same metaphor in the allegory of the cave.⁵⁶ The “fire” of the cosmos is the sun.

Humans can be open only to the extent that they remain in firelight of thinking this disclosure. In favoring those things which appear *in* the lighting,

⁵⁴ This point, which a first glance at the fragment could miss, was pointed out by de Oliveira. Nythamar de Oliveira, “The Worldhood of the Kosmos in Heidegger’s Reading of Heraclitus.” *Manuscrito*. XIX, 1. (1996): 201-224.

⁵⁵ M. Heidegger, “Aletheia (B16),” *Early Greek Thinking*, (trans. D.F. Krell and F. Capuzzi, New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 117.

⁵⁶ Pl. *Rep.* 6.508a-c

over the *lighting process* as such, human beings lose touch (*haptetai*, “kindle” also means “to touch”) with the cosmos. Thus any proper thinking is a compact coincidence of cosmos and “fire”; this means the continuity of the ordering with that unique ability in man that is open to understanding it. I take fire to mean the opening-up of human thinking to the *appearing* of world.

This interpretation works with other “fire” statements. Heraclitus also writes about fire:

Fire coming on will discern and catch up with all things.⁵⁷ (K. CXXI, D.K. 66)

Here Heraclitus leaves it open as to which fire “catches up” and “discerns,” the cosmic fire, or its human counterpart, the “light” that humans strike. However, it should be noted that *panta* does not translate to “all things”, but merely “all.”⁵⁸

“All” is the counterpart to “one” as in the fragment:

Listening not to me but to the Logos, one is wise to agree all to be one. (K. XXXVI, D.K. 50)

What is important to note here is the relation of fire to “all” and the relation of Logos to “all.” “All” is the same word in both cases: *panta*. In

⁵⁷ Dilcher, 56n., doubts the authenticity of the fragment and believes that Hippolytus, who is the source of the fragment, was summarizing his own position, and not Heraclitus’. Nonetheless, he contends “there might yet be in it an echo a genuine saying, since the connection of *p̄yr* and *panta* sounds genuinely Heraclitean. . .”

⁵⁸ The continual insistence of Kahn to translate “panta” as “all things” shows his inability to fully separate himself from a material cosmological account of Heraclitus, despite his nuanced understanding of Heraclitus’s language.

B90, B26, and B30,⁵⁹ fire was the “One” that agrees with and was in exchange for all. And it also discerns and catches up (*katalepsetai*— “seizes”) with the all. Is this anything other than the coincidence of cosmic and human lighting? What Heraclitus has alluded to in the fire fragments is the first attempts at uttering a new discovery: the discovery of the one method of all human experience: fire, lighting, illumination.⁶⁰ He needs, however, to give this arrival a name, and he names it fire. Heraclitus encountered a new realm of thinking about human experience. Until him, thought had not yet happened upon the coincidence of cosmic presentation and human apprehension as the co-ordination of two reciprocal processes.

POLIS: The Few and The Many

Now that the relation between human and divine knowledge and human thinking and the cosmos has been examined, the analysis must show that Heraclitus imagines a holistic thinking relation between the individual and the polis in a similar way.

Speaking with understanding (*xyn nooi legontas*), they must hold fast to what is shared by all, as a city holds to its law, and even more firmly. For all human laws (*nomoi*) are nourished by a divine

⁵⁹ Kahn XL, XC, and XXXVII, respectively.

⁶⁰ Heidegger, “Logos (B50),” 117.

one (*henos tou theiou*). It prevails as it will and suffices for all and is more than enough. (K. XXX, D.K. 114)

In this statement, two relations are established: one relation is between the one who speaks with understanding (*xyn nooi legontas*) and that which connects all, and the other is the relation between the divine and the human (law). In order to speak with understanding, according to the fragment, there is an order, a structure, which one must heed. The structure of necessity that emerges is: individuals relate to the common as *polis* relates to the *nomos*, while all human *nomoi* are nourished by a *henos tou theiou*, a “divine one.” But here Heraclitus leaves ambiguous what is designated as *henos*. *Henos tou theiou* is declined grammatically to agree with *nomos*, yet, *nomos* is not repeated. Thus, it could refer to the divine in general, the sacred. Kahn points out this ambiguity in connection with a fragment addressing Zeus: “the single divine principle, ‘what is common to all,’ is and is not willing to be designated as *nomos*, ‘law’.”⁶¹ Guerrière understands *henos tou theiou* as referring to divine law, this is, the “law that forges all into a single realm.”⁶² And yet, this divine law *periginetai*, “superabounds” and “suffices” for all.

Here also it is important to remember that “with understanding” or *xyn nooi* is homologous with *xyno* or “shared.” As analysis has shown above, for

⁶¹ Kahn, 117.

⁶² Guerrière, “Physis, Sophia, Psyche,” 94.

Heraclitus any understanding will be shared, not only between individuals, but also shared with an understanding of the polis, the cosmos, and the sacred *nomos*. In other words, the adjective *xynon*, “shared,” is not to be taken as one principle that is available to all, but rather that such a “shared” understanding is literally constituted through the speaking and interaction of several “individuals.”⁶³ Law, custom, even the polis as such, do not exist if not in the shared behavior, speech, and ultimately thinking of the individuals who understand themselves in relation to such a law. It is precisely this element that is missed by those who pass over what is “shared,” i.e., what emerges in communal thought, for their own private worlds.

Although the *logos* is shared (*xynos*), most men live as though their thinking were a private possession. (K. III, D.K. 2)

If the very nature of the world is constituted by the concrete togetherness of several thinking as one, then knowledge of oneself must be knowledge of the whole. Heraclitus denounces private opinion and knowledge as private possession in favor of something else.⁶⁴ Above it was said that the relation of the individual to *xyn noo legontas* was analogous to the relation between a city and its law. Now this relation must be extended to include also the relation of the polis

⁶³ D.C. Schindler, 421-3.

⁶⁴ Kahn suggests that “[w]e can see the syntactic ambiguity between ‘all men’ and ‘all things’ in XXX (DK 114) as a formal expression of the view that an individual man, searching for his own self, will come to rest and to rely upon a deeper identity which is that of the universe as a whole.” Kahn, 118.

to the cosmos, and to the sacred. But in K. XXX (D.K. 114), as has been shown, Heraclitus does exactly that. That is, Heraclitus explicitly says that all human laws (those which hold the polis together) are nourished by a divine one (that which holds the cosmos together). What's more, the sign or blueprint for such a connection between individual and the whole is given in the cosmos itself; for the cosmos, says K. VI (D.K. 89), is one and shared. Thus the problem that confronts human beings according to Heraclitus is not that some one must reject his connection to the sacred, cosmos, and polis in order to find himself, as might be suggested by a traditional understanding of rationality,⁶⁵ but that one must remember it and hold fast to it.

In short, to reflect on the world (cosmos) and to reflect on oneself are the same.⁶⁶ But even reflection draws upon the divine. The divine source of reflection is *more than* any human law or habit,⁶⁷ in the same way that the *nomos* constitutes a *polis more than* the sum of its citizens, and even more than its physical city wall, as evidenced by the following fragment:⁶⁸

The people must fight for the law as for their city wall (K. LXV., D.K. 44).

⁶⁵ Cf. Descartes' starting point of methodological doubt in the *Meditations*.

⁶⁶ Dilcher, 46.

⁶⁷ Philip Wheelwright, *Heraclitus* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 87. See also Dilcher, 49. Kahn, 3. All note that *nomos* refers not only to written law but also to customs and the unwritten laws of the land.

⁶⁸ Dilcher, 50.

The “more-than” (*periginetai*) structure of K. XXX, which guarantees the human laws, is the same as the common (*xynon*) structure of law that holds together the people (*dēmon*). In its “being-more-than,” the divine law is said to *trephetai*: nourish. Thus the relationship between human laws and the divine—left ambiguous in K. XXX and can refer to either a being or a law—is not the later Platonic relationship between a thing and its form; the human does not *merely* participate (*metecho*; cf. Arist. *Met.* 990b.31) in the divine; rather, he is nourished (*trephontai*) by it. It is this particular human deference to the divine that is also characteristic of a phenomenological analysis of myth: “Myth is also an expression of man’s awareness that he is not the Lord of his own being.”⁶⁹ It is precisely this type of deference to the divine that is indicative of the interplay characteristic of vertical compactness. In the discussion of logos it was apparent that the logos, which at the same time constitutes and is constituted by the *nomos* and the *polis*, is also at work in and behind one’s understanding of the cosmos.⁷⁰

To be shared, i.e., to extend outside of oneself, is to be in tune with the divine. If one understands that the *nomos* is shared between people—that *this* is what makes the city—then what is shared among people is also what is common between individuals and divine: it is the same (one) shared.

⁶⁹ Joseph Kockelmans, “On Myth and Its Relationship to Hermeneutics.” *Cultural Hermeneutics* 1 (1973), 67.

⁷⁰ Cf. Chapter 2, “Myth and Struggle.”

It is important to know that for the Greeks of Heraclitus's time, city walls were not *merely* physical boundaries, but also divine boundaries that were established and guarded by the gods.⁷¹ So the fragment contains a certain parallelism: one should fight for their internal customs and laws, nourished by the divine, as they do for their external walls, guarded by the divine. The divinity is invoked in both the internal ordering and the external boundaries of human social organization. And both need to be fought for equally, in balance with one another.⁷² The problem comes when a citizen forgets about the importance of the law and custom—as something that is shared by all—due to her instance on the physical walls.

What emerges here is not only an intricate relationship but also a balance between the individual and the polis and between the polis and the divine. Here, as shown above, individual is to the polis (what is shared by all) as human laws are to the divine law. However, with the physical presence of the external city walls it is easy to forget the divine connection. For a city can fall apart by infighting as much as it can by warring with a different polis; and forgetting what is shared by all guarantees infighting to ensue.

⁷¹ Wheelwright, 87.

⁷² The same balance of internal and external “structure” is alluded to in the idea of *Aiōn* moving pieces in a game: “*Aiōn* is a child at play, moving pieces (*pesseuōn*) in a game.” (B 52; K. XCIV). *Pesseuon* has the same root as *metapesonta* in B88, meaning “transposition.” B88 reads: “The same . . . : living and dead, and the waking and sleeping, and young and old. For these transposed are those, and those transposed again are these.” This seems to imply the same internal/external balance that is reminiscent of B44 and 52.

The polis as a site of human understanding is established out of a joint understanding with each other (being-with). The joint understanding is established in and through a *xynos logos*. We have shown above that the *xynos logos* does not only include the law of the elite, but everybody. This idea will be revisited in the discussion of Heraclitus's fragment on Ephesus below. But what is important for now is the established relation between the individual who constitutes and is constituted by the *nomos* of the *polis*. For a forgetting of the sacred as being present in both the polis and individual will essentially be the ruin of both. It is now the task of this analysis to illuminate the relationship between the sacred, cosmos and polis, elaborated above, and the site of knowledge that seems most personal: the *psychē*.

PSYCHĒ: Folding in the logos

The individual level has its own place in the *xynos logos*. It is played out through the *psychē*, "soul." Like the cosmos and polis, the *psychē* is not a "thing" but a site for a mode of understanding. Heraclitus says:

You will not find the limits of the soul by going, even if you travel over every way, so deep is its logos. (K. XXXV, D.K. 45)

AND

The soul belongs to a logos which increases itself. (K. CI, D.K. 115)

Thus the soul can increase itself seemingly interminably, and it can do so by its involvement in the other three realms of vertical compactness. But what does this mean for the soul to increase itself?

It could mean that the soul “learns.” Where Heraclitus does claim to prefer learning (*mathesis*) in a separate statement (K. XIV, D.K. B 55), it is in association with sight and hearing. But how does one “learn”? By being acutely perceptive, for:

Not knowing how to listen, neither can they speak. (K. XVII, D.K. B 19)

It is in listening that we learn how to speak. Likewise, it is in paying attention to the language that we learn to how engage with what is common to all. It appears, then, that what at first glance seems to be an “individual” faculty is in fact no more than a reception, or a folding-in of the *xynos logos*. It is worth repeating Albert Cook’s concise formulation based on fragments B45 and B115: “Human life is properly seen is an increment of speech acts.”⁷³ It is also appropriate here to reiterate Kahn’s point that “We can see the syntactic ambiguity between ‘all men’ and ‘all things’ in XXX (D.K. 114) as a formal expression of the view that an individual man, searching for his own self, will come to rest and to rely upon a deeper identity which is that of the universe as a whole.”⁷⁴ On this continuum of “inner” self and “outer” world Heidegger is also very eloquent. According to

⁷³ Cook, 88

⁷⁴ Kahn, 118.

him the *psychē* is a “continuous ‘gearing up to reach out into openness while taking it back and in.’”⁷⁵ Such a description is especially insightful because it subsumes both the physical understanding of *psychē*, to wit, as “life-breath,” and the existential sense of *psychē* as that which understands by being open to a meaningful world.

Now we will look at an interpretation of *psychē*, offered by Konstantine Boudouris, that supports our hypothesis that vertical compactness (*xynos*) is central to the logos of Heraclitus. We can see this by exploring the meaning of the most “self”-centered fragment:

I went in search (*edizēsámēn*) of myself (*emeōtón*). (K. XXVII, D.K. 101)

Boudouris writes: “The use of the verb ‘dizemai’ in the above mentioned fragment denotes a search for something which is out there and which hides itself from us.”⁷⁶ According to the “logic” of vertically compact thinking, one searches for oneself outside of oneself—in the customs and laws of one’s community or in an understanding of the divine. The idea of *psychē* as “persona” or “identity” is different here than in its prior sense of “life-breath” common in

⁷⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Heraklit* (GA 55; Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1979), 303. Translated and quoted by Manfred Frings, “Heraclitus: Heidegger’s 1944 Lecture Held at Freiburg University,” *JBSP* 22 (1991): 64-82, at 73.

⁷⁶ K. Boudouris, “Heraclitus and the Dialectic of Politics,” *Ionian Philosophy* (Edited by K.J. Boudouris. Athens: International Association for Greek Philosophy, 1989), 58-79, at 61.

Homer. For Boudouris, the soul is not separate from the logos that appears in these other sites of understanding (law, Sacred, etc.). In the cosmos it appears a first principle. In the polis it appears not only as shared law, but as shared language as well. A language is the most common and shared thing of a polis.⁷⁷ In the individual the logos is the ability to speak and more importantly communicate (presumably with other *psychai*). All three level of *logoi* are instances which “gather” in the sense of *legein*: the cosmic *logos* gathers an initial order, the common language gathers the polis, the soul gathers the thoughts and words of the community, and thus increases itself.

But people can also turn their back on this common logos and Heraclitus cites several examples of this. The sleeper, the private thinker, the many, those who forget, and those prone to misrecognition have a different continuum of vertical compactness: their individual logos is the “they” or the “many,” mere hearsay (DK 1, 2, 12, 17, 20, 23, 34, 59, 71-73, 97, 104, 125, A 23).⁷⁸ The many lose themselves in their own private worlds, and therefore what they seek after becomes meaningless. This, of course, is a function of being amongst the many; one sees oneself as one of many. For these sleepers, the political logos is mere

⁷⁷ Ibid., 62.

⁷⁸ Cf. Bollack-Wismann, 11. Kahn numbers: I, III, L, IV, XCVIII, LXIX, II, LXXIV, V, LXI, LIX, LXXVII, XII, respectively.

custom without discussion (DK 56, 47, A23).⁷⁹ Their cosmic logos becomes the mysteries without recognition of what they are for and who they serve (DK 5, 14, 15).⁸⁰ And their Sacred power is seen not through the mysteries of nature, but through astrology and through the mysteries of men (DK 38, 81, 105, 107).⁸¹ These are all instances of groupthink for those who have lost control of themselves and have lost sight of their limits. Some of these sleepers doubt customary beliefs and then unflinchingly replace them with their own. Others just assume unquestioned beliefs without understanding how they connect to the ever-changing world. Little do they know that individuality is grounded in unity with the law, the changing cosmos (through first-hand experience), and the unrecognized divine.

The “they” is evoked, through conjugating the main subject verb in the third person plural, in thirteen fragments.⁸² Each one of these references describes a situation in which the individual has disconnected himself from the whole. Perhaps, then, the purpose of Heraclitus’s text was to reawaken in the people of Ephesus the spirit of thinking toward the whole (*sōphronein*). For everywhere he looked, he saw only compartmentalized, individualistic thinking.

⁷⁹ K. XI, XXII, XII, respectively.

⁸⁰ K. CXVII, CXV, CXVI, respectively.

⁸¹ K. XXIV, XXVI, XXIII, XVI, respectively.

⁸² Cf. Bollack-Wismann, 11.

Furthermore, Heraclitus was concerned with a common *experience* of such a common grounding. In other words, to merely concur with others who tell us “the way things are,” is not enough. In such a case one is just mimicking the language of authorities without engaging in the state of affairs to which they refer. Still, he is not afraid to apply rank to the citizens. Certain citizens do have priority when compared to the many worthless.

What wit or understanding do they have? They believe the poets of the people and take the mob as their teacher, not knowing that ‘the many are worthless’, good men are few. (K. LIX, D.K. 104)

Though this statement is not, strictly speaking, political, it does have import with regard to the political theory we have attributed to Heraclitus. Though the pronoun “they” is left ambiguous it most likely refers to the mob itself, since elsewhere Heraclitus calls Hesiod “the teacher of most” (K. XIX, D.K. 57), and here he says “they believe the poets of the people.”⁸³ So the proposition is circular: the mob takes the mob as its teacher. Furthermore, as the many they do not recognize that the many are worthless. Again we have the familiar situation of the many being trapped in their own shadows, stuck in their own private worlds, propagating their own shortsighted agendas. In another way, however, it does seem possible to distinguish between the ignorant “they,” and the

⁸³ Kahn, *Commentary on LIX*, 175.

worthless “many.” Granted, they may not possess *phren* or *noos* now, but that does not mean they will never attain it.

It belongs to all men to recognize (*ginōskein*) themselves and think integrally (*sōphronein*).⁸⁴ (K. XXIX., D.K. 116)

That is, although Heraclitus faults the many for being the many, the potential remains for each human being to have *noos* and to think integrally. It is for this reason that Heraclitus promotes the individual who excels as the model for the citizen, and, as such, makes the excellent individual a major concern of the polis.

This attitude is exemplified in three fragments:⁸⁵

It is also law to obey the council of one. (K. LXVI, D.K. 33)

One man is ten thousand if he is the best. (K. LXIII, D.K. 49)

What the Ephesians deserve is to be hanged to the last man, every one of them, and leave the city to boys, since they drove out their best man, Hemodorus, saying ‘Let no one be the best among us; if he is let him be so elsewhere and among others.’ (K. LXIV, D.K. 121)

According to Boudouris, it is the exiling of the greatest member of the polis that stops any possible change in the polis.⁸⁶ So to hold to the common, i.e., *xynon*, one need not be “common” in the sense of “simple” or “ordinary.” Rather, to hold to the common is precisely to allow interaction between the best (*aristoi*), the

⁸⁴ See note 44 on *sōphronein*.

⁸⁵ See Eric Voegelin, *Order and History* (Vol. II. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1957), 231-235. See also Boudouris, “Heraclitus and Politics,” 72.

⁸⁶ Boudouris, 72.

sleeper (*hupnodotes*), and the private thinker (*idian phronēstes*). And what is shared is also distinguished from mere convention, as was already seen in Heraclitus's admonishment of his intellectual predecessors. In the end then, while it is entirely possible to have a common understanding in the form of democracy, it can also be the job of the people to recognize who "is of more logos than the rest."⁸⁷ What Heraclitus aims for in terms of vertical compactness is an awareness of the excellence (*arête*), and thinking well (*sophronein*) of the individual who is equally interested in a united logos of the polis, and a unified understanding of the cosmos.

In sum, the statements interpreted above iterate a common theme in Heraclitus's thinking: connection. That is to say, for Heraclitus thinking happens not in an individual developing a unique approach to the world, but rather in the connection of that individual with others, in one's recognition of his continuity in the polis, cosmos, and sacred. Ultimately, as Schindler noted, thinking is this connection.⁸⁸ Only we, however, are in a unique position to experience this connection as a feature of mythic thinking. Thinking is connection means: thinking is compact—the world is a product of unified thinking, not a "wisdom of one's own." In this case, thinking has been shown to be vertically compact; that is, in unity and continuous with the polis, the cosmos, and the divine. Thus

⁸⁷ Kahn LXII, (DK 39).

⁸⁸ Schindler, 423.

the mythic characteristic of vertical compactness has been shown to be an essential characteristic of both “speaking with understanding” and what is shared by all for Heraclitus.

In this discussion of vertical compactness three points concerning human knowledge have been established. First, any real wisdom is passive and receptive; it recognizes some event as it emerges. Only bad knowledge, conversely, makes its “own” wisdom. From this one can infer the second point: wisdom is shared. That means that it is established out of a state of connection with the divine, the cosmos, and with fellow human beings. The third and final characteristic of vertically compact knowledge in Heraclitus is that it is impermanent because of the limits placed on it by what it is connected to. Such limits, we will see, are characterized further by horizontal compactness.

Horizontal Compactness

The last type of compactness that can be seen in Heraclitus is horizontal compactness. Horizontal compactness was characterized above as a compactness of process as a cycle. Thus, any activity, ritual, or even a story would be repeated according to the seasons, time of day, lifespan, etc. All temporal events were related to their place in the cycle and not seen as “changing history.” Such

cyclicalness can readily be seen in Heraclitus, the task at hand is to see how such cyclicalness is to be interpreted.

Of the cycle fragments generally considered to be authentic, there are four which have to do with the cosmic cycle:

The ordering, the same for all, no god nor man has made, but it ever was and is and will be: fire everliving, kindled in measures and in measures going out. (K. XXXVII, D.K. 30)

The reversals of fire: first sea; but of sea half is earth, half lightning storm. (K. XXXVIII, D.K. 31A)

Sea pours out <from earth>, and it measures up to the same amount it was before becoming earth. (K. XXXIX, D.K. 31B)

All things are requital for fire, and fire for all things, as goods for gold and gold for goods. (K. XL, D.K. 90)

In regard to a “general” interpretation of the cycle fragments, the contention that the movement is that of a diachronic cycle is no longer widely held.⁸⁹

“Diachronic” here means that the cycle happens as a sequence in “real” time, that is, as a series of changing events. It is assumed since the work of Karl Reinhardt that the fragments that may be read as signs of ecpyrosis, the theory that everything comes from fire and will someday return to it, had been corrupted by Stoic commentators.⁹⁰ What has since surfaced is a tendency to read the cycle

⁸⁹ Kahn, for instance, in his understanding of Heraclitus’s cosmic cycle goes against Zeller, Reinhardt, Burnet, and Kirk and Vlastos. Kahn, 147-153.

⁹⁰ Kahn, 151.

fragments as a continuation of the doctrine of unity in opposites, or more compact still, as the doctrine of strife as unity. Thus, the basic conflict of interpretation revolves around the issue of whether Heraclitus is actually admitting a cosmic cycle (including periods of degeneration and renewal) and therefore looking through a diachronic lens; or whether he is admitting a general notion of unity in opposites, in which case each change would be a double-occurrence in a single moment, and the “changes” would be synchronic.⁹¹ Both sides agree that Heraclitus’s reference to *metra*, that is *measure*, applies to these changes and gives them limits.⁹² However, it is debated whether this measure is a structure inherent in all things or the limits of a cycle. Either way, it is presumed that if these limits are transgressed, the cosmos will spin off back into chaos, which ensures that whether the constraints are internal or external, there are limits.

In addition to these two views of the cycle, the synchronic and the diachronic, a third view will be offered here. In brief, this view argues that while Heraclitus’s references to cycles and turnings (*tropai*) are synchronic, the entire

⁹¹ Kahn, 150.

⁹² For a good overview on how “measure” governs cycles in early Greek cosmology see Charles Kahn, “Anaximander’s Fragment: The Universe Governed by Law,” in *The Pre-Socratics*, (ed. by Alexander Mourelatos; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993): 99-117.

notion of understanding change is dependent upon a different cycle, the hermeneutic circle of human understanding.

Diachronic: The Sequence of Change

In his excursus on “[t]he cosmic cycle,” Kahn argues that a diachronic cycle is undeniable.⁹³ In discussions of birth and death, day and night, winter and summer, war and peace Heraclitus is not arguing that two opposites can occur *simultaneously*—to argue such would be to argue that human beings could never distinguish between two states—but rather that one opposite provides the measure for the other. “Here the terminology of birth and death makes clear that we are dealing with a cycle of successive stages, where equivalence is expressed as recurrence.”⁹⁴ So Kahn suggests Heraclitus’s cycle is sequential. However, others argue that measure was achieved not in a cycle of degeneration and renewal, but in a ‘structured pattern of change.’⁹⁵

⁹³ Ibid, 150.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 149. Kahn is here referencing Burnet’s *Early Greek Philosophy*, 143.

Synchronic: The Structure of Change

Most recently, Dilcher argues that the “cycle” is not a matter of changes of one thing to another and therefore of sequence, but a matter of the turning backward of the same agent. Thus, even while fire kindles and extinguishes itself, it is still unified as fire. In this regard, Dilcher takes up the following fragment, which expresses the constant background to changes:

The ordering (*kosmos*), the same for all, no god nor man has made,
but it ever was and will be: fire ever-living, kindled in measure and
in measures going out. (K. XXXVII, D.K. 30)

The fragment presents a problem: where does the ever-living fire go when, in measures, it goes out? Here is the key: the fire in its temporarily “extinguished” state is still fire. It is fire turning on itself, only to turn back in its kindling state. It has withdrawn into concealment, to arrive again at a later time (consider the sun when it “sets”). This, Dilcher argues, is also the proper sense of reversal (*tropai*) in K XXXVIII (D.K. 31 A):

The reversals (*tropai*) of fire: first sea; but of sea half is earth, half
lightning storm.

The fire is not a changing into something else, but a turning around of the same thing. This is because, as Dilcher points out, *kosmos* cannot denote various *kosmoi* in which these turnings occur, or else this larger more comprehensive

kosmos would have to be completely abstract and not visible in this world.⁹⁶ In other words, if each reversal of fire is an individual “state” or “arrangement,” the comprehensive “arrangement” which includes all the little ones (in which first its aspect as sea, then half earth, and then half lightning storm prevails) would have to be merely conjectured; to the human eye, then, all would appear disconnected, and the “world” could only be reached through abstract speculation. Therefore, it is the strife within one ever-living *kosmos* that orders it, not the changing into other *kosmoi*: “It is by turning round into its opposite and back into itself that it creates cosmos and harmony. In being extinguished, fire is both itself and its opposite. The internal strife is thus essential for the balance.”⁹⁷ Brooks Haxton gives a very eloquent translation that better relays the sense of internal strife:

Fire in its ways of changing
is a sea transfigured
between forks of lightning
and the solid earth.⁹⁸

With such a translation one can see that the fire is not “changing” in the sense of transforming into some other “thing,” but rather is a turning of the fire itself. As

⁹⁶ Dilcher 60, also fn. 19.

⁹⁷ Ibid. 61.

⁹⁸ Brooks Haxton, *Fragments: The Collected Wisdom of Heraclitus* (New York: Penguin, 2001), fr. 21, p. 15.

K. LXXVIII (D.K. 51) says, “a thing agrees at variance with itself.” Another fragment that supports this position is K. CIII (D.K. 60):

The way to and fro is the same.⁹⁹

With the turnings of fire, fire on its way forward and in its turning-back (*palintropos*) are one and the same.¹⁰⁰ So then the turning *into* of two opposites masks the turning *back* of one agent, and this tendency to turn back into its other is mimicked in the structure of thinking. In fact, this turning back can be said not only of the cosmos but also of the soul. The soul, in ruminating on the logos, turns back and reflects on itself:

You will not find the limits of the soul by going, even if you travel over every way, so deep is its *logos*. (K. XXXV, D.K. 45)

To reiterate, one can take one of two positions in regard to the cycle: it is either a cycle of sequence which begins and ends with fire, or day, or death, or what have you. Or it is a turning-around of one unnamable *physis*, emergence, or appearance, back on itself, and this way appears as its opposite: it appears to be at odds with itself. Is it possible that both interpretations could be reconciled?

⁹⁹ Here I have translated *anō katō* as “to and fro” as opposed to Kahn’s “up and down.”

¹⁰⁰ It is surprising that even in his analysis of this fragment Roman Dilcher does not directly relate it to what he earlier said about fire. To my knowledge, this connection with fire is a new one.

Origin and Periphery: The Hermeneutic Circle

In an eloquent but conceptually dense chapter of his book¹⁰¹ entitled “Heraclitus’s and the Need for Time,” Peter Manchester argues that “[t]ime is what reaches from eternity into time.”¹⁰² At first glance, such a definition is circular. But when one takes into account Manchester’s forgoing argument that for Husserl, as well as for Iamblichus and Plotinus, time is described as consciousness arriving into itself, and conversely that consciousness is time arriving into itself, the circularity invoked can be fruitful. Of course, he is not here referring to clock time, but to our most basic experience of time: as Heidegger translates *aiōn*, “world-time” (*Weltzeit*).¹⁰³ Even Kahn notes that *aiōn* is closer to Pindar’s “lifetime” than Plato’s “eternity,” which is how *aiōn* comes to be translated.¹⁰⁴ Both Heidegger and Kahn are here referring to K. XCIV (D.K. 52):

(*Aiōn*) Lifetime is a child at play, moving pieces in a game. Kingship belongs to the child.

¹⁰¹ Peter Manchester, *The Syntax of Time. The Phenomenology of Time in Greek Physics and Speculative Logic from Iamblichus to Anaximander*. (Studies in Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the Platonic Tradition, 2. Leiden: Brill, 2005.)

¹⁰² *Ibid*, 148.

¹⁰³ Kenneth Maly and John Sallis, “Fragments and Translations,” in *Heraclitean Fragments* (University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1980), 11.

¹⁰⁴ Kahn, *Commentary XCIV*, 228.

For Manchester *aiōn* refers to this notion of “lifetime” or “world-time,” in the sense of “world” discussed in the introduction. In addition, it also has an element of eternity in the sense of “ever-living,” which comes up in several fragments: “It is the Everliving Fire (Fr. 30), that which never sets (Fr. 16), the hidden harmony which prevails everywhere (Fr. 54), the ‘togetherness’ (*xynon*, Fr. 103) of the All One (*hen panta*, Fr. 50).”¹⁰⁵ *Aiōn* can also be seen as compact time, in the sense of the cycle; it is undifferentiated time-and-eternity.¹⁰⁶ In other words, *aiōn* means that the continuous event in which the moment meets the timeless (i.e., now is springtime—it is spring *in* time, though springtime itself happens *out of time* as something that happens again and again). As an example of this relation one could look at the role of fire in K. XXXVII (D. K. 30). That is, while fire extinguishes and kindles itself *in* time, it always was, is, and will be (timeless).¹⁰⁷ Consider how Kahn translates K. XCIX (D.K. 103):

The beginning and end are shared in the circumference of the circle.

Manchester translates the fragment quite differently:

For together: origin (*archê*) and boundary (*peras*) at the periphery of a circle.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Manchester, 148.

¹⁰⁶ Guerrière, “Physis, Sophia, Psyche,” 101-2.

¹⁰⁷ For a discussion of timed versus timeless eternity in early Greek thought see Manchester, p. 88ff.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 149.

With such different translations it is not surprising that Manchester and Kahn understand the fragment quite differently.¹⁰⁹ For Manchester, *peras* does not mean endpoint, but boundary, or limit, its “radial constraint.” Furthermore, the origin (*archê*) is not some random point on the circumference, but the center. While Kahn notes the importance of the fragment in reference to cycles and seasons,¹¹⁰ he misses what Manchester understands as the geometrical understanding of a circle: an origin and its compass setting.¹¹¹

Understanding a circle as Manchester does allows one to accomplish a new interpretation of Heraclitus’s fragment. A circle is defined by its *archê* reaching into the boundless to set its own boundary, what I take to mean as the radius radiating from the center. That is, the extension of the radius to its circumferential boundary is a continued comment on the nature of time. “Time is what reaches from eternity into time. Time is arrival into itself as the *disclosure space* of sensible motion, in the intellectual motion by which it produces itself from eternity.”¹¹² Additional interpretation revolves around this notion of “disclosure space.” If one understands this circle as one in which experience is

¹⁰⁹ Part of this is because, even though Kahn realizes that *peras* can mean “limit, boundary” as well as “endpoint” as seen in the commentary (p.236), he is not willing to alter the translation. This is in part because he sees DK 103 as fitting in with other fragments on the generational “ring” of living and dying (p.235-236). Cf. also Kahn n. 317.

¹¹⁰ Kahn, *Commentary: XCIX*, 235.

¹¹¹ Manchester, 149.

¹¹² *Ibid*, 148. My emphasis.

allowed to happen, then the origin is springing up out of nowhere, the margins are defined by the reach of experience (i.e. what is disclosed), and the origin and margin are ultimately the same: the limits of sensible experience.

Returning to our discussion of whether the fragments referencing change and cycle are in fact synchronic (i.e., they define structures of change) or diachronic (i.e., they take place over definite periodic cycles), our interpretation of Manchester's translation allows us to say they are both.¹¹³ That is to say, the fragments refer to cycles which are synchronic in their structure—like a circle whose origin sets its own boundaries—yet are diachronic in their actual occurrence; that is, in revealing winter or summer, light or dark, kindling or quenching. And the point holds that no matter what is revealed in this disclosure space, no two contradictory qualities can appear at once.

The interpretation of the circle fragment (K. XCIX, D.K. 103) as disclosure allows us to find one of the most important discoveries of phenomenology within Heraclitus's fragments. That discovery is the hermeneutic circle.¹¹⁴ The

¹¹³ Though strictly speaking Manchester would say that they are neither synchronic nor diachronic: "In its physical application the circle directs us not to the back-and-forth of enantiodromia nor to the cyclical phases through which elemental change progresses, but instead to what is cryptic, hidden, or unexpected about such process, namely, the composure, spontaneity, stability and *unity of its disclosure space*," 149.

¹¹⁴ This was arrived at independently of Hatab, but he seems to iterate the same point: "I find Heraclitus shaping something which was suggested as the implicit substructure of mythical sense, namely, an existential ontological circle; i.e., the 'lived' world and 'reality' interpenetrate each other, as opposed to being separable regions of 'human experience' and the 'objective world,'" 183. Hatab gives this explanation as an overall assessment of Heraclitus, not just of the "cycle" fragments. Hatab's position differs from ours in two ways. First, it is unclear in Hatab what presents this opposite position of "man" and "world." We have given an answer to such an opposition in the form of the nascent disciplinary thinking

hermeneutic circle refers to the structure of man's experience. In order for humans to understand the world, the world must first be meaningful; yet in order for something to have meaning one must in some way understand it. Heidegger points out that the task is not to unravel the circle, but to find a way into it.¹¹⁵

Thus, Heraclitus is attempting to give us a diagram of this circle of understanding. The circle of understanding that Heraclitus's puts forth is related to mythic thinking in two ways. For one, the circle is of course cyclical; fire, as thinking, will extinguish and rekindle itself again. But here thinking must again be understood in its joint way. That is to say, the *xynos logos* is a world-order constituted by thought itself—it is not thinking on something already existing, but establishing the world in its thinking. Of course, the thinking of human beings also ruminates on what is appears in its thinking. For that reason this *xynos logos* is also cyclical; it degenerates and renews itself just like the cosmos.¹¹⁶

Logos, as that which connects, is that which makes possible the unification of several moments into one singular continuous consciousness, be it of the

Heraclitus speaks against. Second, while the existential-ontological circle is most certainly present in Heraclitus, it is best elaborated in terms of the four sites of experience as protracted in vertical compactness: divinity, cosmos, polis, psychē.

¹¹⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Trans. Joan Stambaugh. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1996), 143.

¹¹⁶ Not to venture too large a claim, but there does appear to be an ebb in flow in thinking in general. The first large (historical) period of activity is the axial period, of which Heraclitus is a part, identified by Eric Voegelin, Karl Jaspers, and others.

Sacred, of the cosmos, of the polis, or of the individual. It is this common appearance as that which is laid-out and gathered before one which allows the recurrence of any event at all—and as we have seen mythical time is structured around the recurrence of events.

Summary

In closing our discussion on horizontal compactness, and compactness in general, a few conclusions are evident. As was seen in the discussion of dimensional compactness, Heraclitus is highly skeptical of any knowledge that is not founded in a unitary thinking. This unitary thinking is the unconscious gathering of what appears to human beings, and thus both its being established and its being preserved (in its appearance) are dangerous. But the danger, as we have seen in those fragments that castigate the many for following the poets, is not losing or forgetting the knowledge that is formed out of communal thinking, but rather not seeing outside of such knowledge in order to see for oneself.

One's self, is merely a negative space defined by one's encounter with the polis, the cosmos, and the Sacred. One cannot find the limits of it by going, but it does expand when one sees the *psychē* as part of a larger framework. Thus, in discovering our own limits we are actually increasing our knowledge of the world. Conversely, if we pretend that the individual knowledges we are wont to

make are the only knowledge one can have of the world we are essentially asleep to precisely what the world is: interaction. The world is a constant interaction of world-self and self-world to the extent that separating off either from the other would be to the detriment of both. Strictly speaking then, any psychology would at the same time be by a cosmology and vice versa. It is on this basis that the understanding of process and the cycle for Heraclitus is bound to the limits of human understanding.

So the circularity to which Heraclitus refers goes deeper than just seasons, and, after some analysis, one can conclude Heraclitus is actually referring to a more originary necessity of experience: the hermeneutic circle. But even this most elementary of cycles needs its encounters, needs its Other to become itself. It is in this function that Heraclitus places the role of opposites, and more accurately, the role of *agon* within his understanding of human knowledge. It is to this idea of *agon*, what was earlier called fragmentation, to which the discussion will now turn. It will be argued in that discussion of *agon* that Heraclitus offers philosophy a way to deal with fragmentary existence and at the same time warns against the establishment of universal conceptions of the world.

The *Agon*: Fragmentation in the Whole

In the last chapter it was shown that Heraclitus's discourse enacts and advocates a singular compact thinking. Such a compact thinking was placed over against individuals who think against the whole in several ways. First, there are those who attempt to divide up the world and situate beings in permanent universals. Second, there are those who think only in their own private worlds, and thus are asleep. Third, there are those who do this unity injustice by attempting to rid it of struggle, strife, and conflict.

Heraclitus understands everything as connected, particularly as such connection corresponds to the four sites for understanding the *xynos logos*: Zeus, fire, *nomos/polis*, and *psyche*. Each one is continuous and extending into the others. Thus, though individual statements can be seen as addressing one of these sites, in each the other three are implied. The connective tissue for these sites is the difficult "all: one."

This connected unity, however, is only one half of the reality Heraclitus shows us. Now the other half of this dynamic experience has to be examined. Heraclitus has much to say regarding the conflicted and fragmentary existence that lies behind the holistic narrative. It was suggested in the first chapter that

this fragmentariness springs up into holistic existence on multiple levels. One of these levels is the dramatic content narrated into the cosmological myths. On a meta-level, the form of narrative is itself indicative of the struggle of constituting meaning. Yet another outlet of this fragmentariness is the founding struggle of society as such, namely, the social bond constituted by the *xynos logos*, connected thinking. But how does society allow a *xynos logos* to exist without it becoming cemented into a dogmatic way of looking at the world? In other words, how does one save communal memory and feeling without it becoming a mere repetition of the same?

In attempting to answer this question I will now examine the way the intentional whole provided by the compact unity of thought is brought into being and preserved, namely, through struggle. One will recall Ricoeur's claim about establishing the mythic whole: "The plenitude that myth points to symbolically is established, lost, and reestablished dangerously, painfully. Thus it is not given, not only because it is signified and not experienced, but because it is signified through a combat."¹ It is this combat that opens up and sets into place what can loosely be called "opposites." Even though opposites set up categories, and, as such, work toward the side of incorporating the same, they do play an

¹ Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 169-70.

important role in the mythic man's understanding of the world. Levi-Strauss conceived of all of mythic thinking in terms of binary opposites.²

It would be natural, then, to understand the prolific reference to "opposites" in Heraclitus as a carry over from his tribal and poet ancestors. Perhaps Albert Cook puts it best: "Binary schemes without myths, parallelism without poetic lines—Heraclitus takes these over as a usable common denominator from the oral culture that preceded him and transposes them into a form of great simplicity and great power."³ Not only does Heraclitus "take" and "transpose" these rhetorical tools, but uses them to expose their common origin: a holistic understanding of world (cosmos).

Since Aristotle, it has been assumed that one of Heraclitus's main propositions is the unity of opposites, which is read by Aristotle as violating the law of non-contradiction (*Met.*, T3, 1005b24). However, as I suggested earlier, Heraclitus is not concerned with *opposites*, but rather with *conflict*—the movement and interaction of what we must categorize as opposites. In order to get a proper understanding of the way human beings experience

² Cf. Claude Levi-Strauss, *Raw and The Cooked* (Trans. by John and Doreen Weightman; Penguin, 1992). One example would be the stark opposition between raw vegetable and cooked meat; and yet, the opposition is held in place by the fact that each needs fire to come into being: the vegetable needs the sun, the cooked meat needs the campfire. Thus, even binaries can be isomorphic on a certain level.

fragmentariness, one needs to examine precisely the way in which this conflict occurs.

Against the Unity of “Opposites”

As Dilcher observes, what Heraclitus discusses in the so called “opposite” fragments are not immutable oppositions, but rather moments of stasis that are fully capable of transforming one into the other. For instance, hot can turn into cold, moist can become dry, and vice versa. Never does Heraclitus mention an immutable opposition, i.e., an opposition in which one thing is juxtaposed with something else it cannot become.⁴ The reference to the transformation itself (and not what is transformed) is further evinced by K. XIX (D.K. 57), and other fragments, wherein *hen* is feminine in gender; the end result is that the fragment should read “there is one,” rather than “there are one.”⁵

The teacher of most is Hesiod. It is him they know as knowing most, who did not recognize day and night: For there is one (*esti gar hen*).

However, this transformation is not “temporal” either. In other words, not only are day and night not separate beings crossing paths as Hesiod supposed, but they are part of the same narrative. So the problem is that the setup Heraclitus

⁴ There is one exception to this. In A22, supposedly Heraclitus mentions the opposition of male and female. However, Dilcher (p. 109) argues this is an addition to the fragment added by Aristotle to further explain the fragment, apparently wrongly.

⁵ Dilcher, 109.

puts forth is neither a “tension in a static arrangement,” nor is it a “cyclical change in periodic states.” Rather, according to Dilcher: “To express the essential contrariness by which it is held together we cannot fix and separate either side, but we have as it were to stretch our mind back to regard both the interplay of opposing forces and the adjustment [*harmonia*] so produced.”⁶ Thus, for Dilcher, the statements about “opposites” do not support the coincidence of opposites, but rather the iteration of the one unfolding in the immanent difference of the many. His rendering of B10 captures this idea well:

All things (*panta*) converge and sing in tune to make one whole, and the one diverges and sings out of tune to make all things (*panta*).

Perhaps Kahn’s staccato translation gives us more raw material to work with:

Graspings (*sullapsies*): wholes and not wholes, convergent divergent, consonant dissonant, from all things one and from one all things. (K. CXXIV, D.K. 10)

There is something we can take from each of these very different translations.

The first translation, provided by Dilcher, gives us a dynamic reading of Heraclitus’s point. Discordance is the “singing out” of many things from one. In the second translation, provided by Kahn, gives a static reading, which is essentially a snapshot of the concordant events (even if those events are themselves opposite). Furthermore, the word “things” in each translation of B 10 does not have a counterpart in the Greek. In K. LXXVIII (D.K. 51) as well as in K.

⁶ Dilcher, 110. “Adjustment” is Dilcher’s rendering of *harmonie*.

CXXIII (D.K. 67) what is not seen is things, but rather forces. At best, one can say that what happens in these statements is juxtaposition of forces.

They do not comprehend how a thing agrees at variance with itself; it is an attunement turning back on itself, like that of the bow and the lyre. (K. LXXVIII, D.K. B51)

The god: day night, winter summer, war peace, satiety hunger. It alters, as when mingled with perfume, it gets named according to the flavor of each one. (K. CXXIII, D.K. B67)

War is father and king of all; some he has shown as gods, others men; some he has made slaves, others free. (K LXXXIII, D.K. B53)

Here it is important to recognize the difference between conflict (*eris*), which we will also call contest (*agon*) and war (*polemos*), and violence (*hybris*) in Heraclitus. In short, one could say that violence (*hybris*) is the *absence* of the recognition of conflict. And, as Heraclitus says:

Violence (*hybris*) should be quenched more quickly than an inferno. (K. CIV, D.K. 43)

Violence, as we have seen, is the simple agreement and complacency with what has been handed down. It is, in short, the presumption of the capability of human knowledge, without any reference to a divine knowledge that both supports and limits it. Violence is stubbornness, shortsightedness, prejudice. It is

placing one self over-against change, death, and lack of understanding, even though such deficits are necessary “evils” of truly living, of being awake.⁷

So what needs to be seen in this notion of conflict is not violence, but contest. Contest denotes both concordance and discordance at once; the making of the story out of several disparate moves, attempts, and events. One can outline four places of contest in Heraclitus, corresponding to the four levels of vertical compactness outlined in chapter three:

1. The Struggle of Naming the Sacred
2. The Cosmological Contest
3. The Political Encounter
4. The Conflict of Ensoulment

The interpretation will now turn to the struggle of naming the sacred in Heraclitus.

The Struggle of Naming the Sacred

In his article “Wisdom in Heraclitus,” Kurt Pritzl explains that a name is only one side of an ever present duality. On the one side of this duality, one has her ongoing and continuous experience; an experience that is shown as continuous largely as a result of vision. On the other side of this duality, one has one’s need to describe and explain things, to make sense of them, which requires at the very least calling something out. In fragment 1, Heraclitus says he sets

⁷ For the relation of “evil” to a fundamental fault or rupture in understanding see the introduction to Part I on Ricoeur’s *The Symbolism of Evil*, 3-24.

forth "*epea kai ergon*," words and deeds. Pritzl explains that if we understand "words" as being connected to hearing (as would be the case in an oral culture) and "deeds" as being connected to sight, then Heraclitus is actually juxtaposing the naming of a thing with the perception of that thing. We need both the name and the sight of a thing to make complete sense of it. "Words, more specifically, names, which are heard, reveal the nature of a thing in one, partial, way; deeds, which are primarily seen, reveal that nature in another, partial way."⁸ In K. LXXIX (D.K. 48), for example, we have this exact distinction and eventual combination; the bow's name is life, but its deed (*ergon*, same as B1) is death. "The consequent combination which the inquirer is expected to make with regard to the bow is unspoken: life and death are one."⁹ We will look at this in more depth below.

Two of the key naming fragments have not to do with "things," per se, but the way in which human beings attempt to name the Sacred. The first "naming" fragment illuminates the combination of name and thing as well:

God is day night, winter summer, war peace, satiety hunger: and he alters himself precisely as does fire {or *elaion*, oil} which, when it is mixed with spices, is named according to the scent of each. (K. CXXIII, D. K. 67)¹⁰

⁸ Kurt Pritzl, "On the Way to Wisdom in Heraclitus," *Phoenix*, Vol. 39, No. 4. (Winter, 1985), 303-316 at 311.

⁹ Pritzl, 312.

When one uses a name she names not some thing but rather some appearance of power, i.e., appearance of the Sacred in a particular configuration. What's more, the difference between the continual changing of visual experiences and the audible permanence of their names betokens the working of fire itself: "The naming fastens on determinate phases of the fire's changing, but the changing in its continuing existence, made plain to us in sense perception, is a single thing whose various phases and aspects are not parts, features, or characteristics actually discreet from one another."¹¹ Names, these audible bookmarks, have a tendency to close out the idea of continuous experience when we are not present for visual concrete activity. However, were one to stand in a war zone long enough one would realize there is no *difference* between wartime and peacetime. One fades into the other. Even the marking of a particular date to call a truce is no more than a function of naming a date that all sides concede to. The same could be said of day and night. Were I to stand in my backyard for 24 hours, I could not tell you when day ends and night begins.

Pritzl and Kahn make the additional point that the pairs listed in B67 are all continuous experiences of each other. One cannot experience winter without

¹⁰ Kahn, CXXIII. Dilcher reads *elaion*, oil, instead of *pyr*, fire. This not only makes more sense (oil with spices instead of fire) but also helps the interpreter avoid the added baggage of explaining the changes of fire in this case.

¹¹ Pritzl, 313.

also experiencing a day or a night, wartime or peacetime, hunger or satiety. Though the relation between such diverse categories is not always ostensibly causal (I may not experience hunger because it is summer, etc.) I must always be experiencing some combination of these things. For whatever reason, human beings have a tendency to think in named way; we tend to pull out one aspect of our experience and call it out. However, Heraclitus sees that the way to real awareness is by the constant juxtaposition of a name with a thing. In other words, wisdom comes when one realizes the motion of experience received by the senses is the same as, though it might apparently contradict, the stability of the name.

While only a being can be named as such, one can be aware of the linguistic tension that is created between the background of an appearing-to-be-named, i.e., time, and the desired stasis that a name invokes. The name must always name one of the diverse,¹² while the act of naming itself is a single divine process. Here the issue of naming is one not of the correspondence of a name to a thing, but of a name to the one divine. Since God appears in many forms, no naming can “adequately express the comprehensive nature of the divine.” Names “are delusive in that they pretend to give a sufficient and adequate

¹² Dilcher, 124.

idea.”¹³ But the adequate idea of anything can only be given in combination with the continuous experience of what the name only partially invokes (e.g., the bow can only be named life with a mindfulness of death).

In this way, Heraclitus gives a clue about the rest of his fragments in these fragments on naming. That is to say, although each fragment can be read by itself and said by itself, the fragmentary reflexivity hints at an underlying unity of which each individual fragment is a part. Pritzl is willing to call these parts “opposites” and their tension a “unity.”¹⁴ However, this is, in the sense described above in the section arguing against the unity of opposites, to grant too much to the names themselves. The only way that continuous sensory experience produces opposites is *through* names. Then again, to favor too heavily the side of unity is to favor a world in which we cannot *make sense* of experience, as in a world without language reflection is impossible.

Once the inadequacy of the name of the appearance to the appearing itself is acknowledged, the name can be useful in playing with this hidden harmony. And because the “name belongs to diversity,” the name “will be of philosophical significance only if it is used in such a way as *not* to name *exclusively* single

¹³ Dilcher, 124.

¹⁴ Pritzl, 313.

things.”¹⁵ We can turn the name back on itself.¹⁶ So while Heraclitus holds the mythic proposition of the trueness of names in part, his willingness to reassess what truth could be also recognizes the fragility of such a proposition. The name in some sense must be used to denote certain areas of experience; on the other hand, it can never adequately express the uniqueness which pervades all experiences as emerging out of an entirely unnamable divinity (cf. B67). Enter Zeus.

The interplay of individual namable appearances with (an unnamable) divinity brings us to another naming fragment:

The wise is one alone, unwilling and willing to be spoken of by the name of Zeus. (K. CXVIII, D.K. 32)

Dilcher translates the fragment in a way which opens it up to a more productive interpretation:

One is the wise: it is unwilling and willing to be called alone by the name of Zeus.¹⁷

In this second translation, “‘Zeus’, the supreme, all-embracing god, is the only name that might *on its own* be able to denote adequately the deity whose

¹⁵ Dilcher, 125.

¹⁶This seems to be the method of Derrida’s deconstruction, and even Heidegger’s destruction.

¹⁷ Dilcher, 126. He translates differently by applying the predicate *mounon*, “alone” to the second clause. This then makes it reference the *honoma*, “name” rather than the *hen*, “one” which in his words would be “superfluous.”

wisdom rules the world."¹⁸ But then the One Wise (*hen to sophon*) has conditions for this naming. That is to say, seeing that the wise is not always willing to be called by the name of Zeus, there must be contingencies to man's naming him such. For no *divinity* can be indecisive. The conditions then are present in the one who calls the name. If when using the name of Zeus we are aware of its other names, as shown in K. CXXIII (D.K. 67), then it may be willingly called Zeus. Another way of putting this is to say that the One Wise will willingly be called Zeus only if the one using the name is simultaneously aware of two situations: 1) that no name can adequately capture the whole divinity in the name itself, and 2) that in naming Zeus one is naming many other beings, e.g., day and night, winter summer, etc., whose names are also necessarily inadequate.

There is one particular inadequacy. The version of the name of Zeus that Heraclitus himself uses, *Zēnos*, contains in it *zēn*, one name for "life."¹⁹ As Dilcher observes, one such inadequacy of the name of Zeus is that it names life and not death, living and not dying.²⁰ Any proper invocation of the name of Zeus would be mindful of the notion that "life" includes both life and death: one is only in

¹⁸ Ibid., 126.

¹⁹ Kahn, *Commentary on CXVIII*, 270. Dilcher, 128. Cf. also Bollack-Wismann, 21.

²⁰ Dilcher, 129.

virtue of the other.²¹ God, specifically Zeus, brings not merely life but also death. Thus to call him by the name of “life” without hinting at death would be not to call him at all. The name “works” only if one knows how to use it. Let us now turn to a different naming fragment, that includes a similar opposition.

The name of the bow (*toxon*) is life (*bios*), its work is death. (K. LXXVII, D.K. 125)

The fragment is based on a pun between the epic name for “bow,” *BIOS* and the name for “life,” *BIOS*.²² Carol Poster notes that the role of the name of the bow (*toxon*) is to comment on its alternate name (*bios*) in two ways. First, from Heraclitus’s perspective the alternate epic name for the bow, *bios*, is inaccurate because a bow does not, *prima facie*, cause life. In other words, the word’s (*BIOS*) alternate meaning contradicts its usage. Second, Heraclitus’s critique implies that because the name *BIOS* is “wrong” for a bow there is a disconnect between epic language and the things it names. Thus, one way of reading the fragment is as a critique of epic language.

Regarding the first point, that the name could be inappropriate to the thing, the pun between “bow” and “life” has occurred elsewhere, first in Homer and after Heraclitus in Sophocles’ *Philoctetes*:

²¹ cf. K. XCII, D.K. 62: “Immortals are mortal, mortals immortal, living the others’ death, dead in the others’ life.”

²² Carol Poster, “The Task of the Bow: Heraclitus’ Rhetorical Critique of Epic Language,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 38 (2006): 1-21, at 6.

You take away my life (*bios*), by seizing my bow (*toxon*).
Return it, I beg you, return it, I beg, O son.
By the ancestral gods, do not take my life/bow (*bios*) from me.²³

Sophocles detects another layer of meaning in Heraclitus's claim that the work of the bow is death. Here, Philoctetes needs his bow for sustenance, for his livelihood and living.²⁴ Thus, even though the work of the bow is death, its *work* is also *life*. Perhaps the name of "life" is not as far off as it first appears, especially for a hunter. One could draw the same conclusion about a fishing pole: it causes death (for the fish) but life (for the fishermen). Thus it is the case, as Poster points out, that the death of one thing is the life of another. What is most interesting is that the cycle of life and death can also be seen as a delicate but harmonious tension. If the hunter fails to kill, he dies; if he succeeds in making a living, the animal dies.

Poster's claim that the bow fragment is polemical can be questioned. But one thing is certain: Heraclitus was familiar with the pun usages of Homer and was playing off of them. Now, if in fact Heraclitus believed in a doctrine of true naming²⁵ then the underlying connection (*aphanes harmonie*) of the bow

²³ 931-933. As quoted in Poster, 7.

²⁴ Ibid, 7. Dilcher explicitly denies this connection because he thinks livelihood is connected with *ergon*, the work that the bow does. Dilcher, 131. But Poster's contention would be strengthened by Edward Hussey's call to see *bios* and *thanatos* as processes of living and dying, rather than states of Life or Death. Living, then could also mean surviving. See "Heraclitus on Living and Dying," *The Monist*, Oct 91, Vol. 74 Iss. 4, 517-531.

figuratively leading to life would be lost to Heraclitus; a possibility that is highly unlikely. One must pursue a position that mediates between BIOS being the wrong name for the bow and ultimately also the right one. This means that the connection between a name and the “thing” it names has to be deeper than any mere one-to-one correlation. The difference between continuous experience and divisive names shows us this. In other words, the correct use of name (BIOS) will take into account both the immediate reference (life) and its opposite (death). This is an experience that a hunter might be able to attest to in two ways; first, his bow brings about death of the hunted, and second, were someone to take away his bow, it being his livelihood, it may bring about his death.

When we look at the dynamic relation between names and experience, we can see why the logos is not *merely* language. Ironically, however, language is the only medium *through* which one can exhibit the logos. In other words, while we cannot articulate this revelatory structure *in* words, we can show it *through* words. For Heraclitus, “the names are no further field of inquiry, but the very medium through which understanding can be achieved, the medium through which the logos speaks and can be heard.”²⁶

²⁵ As Plato would have it in the *Cratylus*, in which Cratylus is a representative of the Heracliteans. Cite passage.

²⁶ Dilcher, 129.

The relationship between words as the “material” part of language, and logos, is similar to the relationship of the *soma* to the *psyche* in Greek thinking. In Homeric thinking, the *psyche* was seen to leave the body at death.²⁷ Nonetheless, it was the corpse that required proper ceremony, usually through burning the body. Heraclitus on the other hand says,

Corpses should be thrown out quicker than dung. (K. LXXXVIII, D.K. 96)

Whether or not this is a comment on the immortality of the *psyche* will not be discussed here. But, going against traditional poetic thought, Heraclitus sees the corpse as not much more than an instrument for the *psyche*. This means, the body is the external symbol for the existence of an animated psyche. This is very similar to his idea of the relation between the logos and words. Like the body, words are only the symbols of the logos. Words without logos should be thrown out quicker than dung. But just as there can be both an “awake” (*egerthentes*) or an “asleep” (*eudontes*) soul, so can there be an awake or asleep approach to words and names. Consider these two fragments:

The world of the waking is one and shared, but the sleeping turn aside each into his private world. (K. VI, D.K. 89)

Not knowing how to listen, neither can they speak. (K. XVII, D.K. 19)

²⁷ Bruno Snell. *The Discovery of the Mind*. Chapter 1.

The world of the waking is one because the world of the logos, as we have seen through several fragments in the chapter on the logos, is shared between those who are attuned to it. However, when one takes the meaning of words to be in the words themselves, then one is not listening correctly. The world of the waking is shared because it employs a common language. This means that one should be neither passive in accepting what the other says, nor should they be active in changing in its meaning just for the sake of forming one's own discourse. The sleeping do not know how to listen because they presume they know what is being talked about in the first place, without giving it any thought. One area whose understanding the many take for granted is the cosmos.

The Cosmological Contest

Let's look at the cosmological fragment that has the most "mythical" import:

eous kai hesperas termata he arktos kai antion tes arktou ouros aidriou dios

The limits (*termata*) of Dawn (*eous*) and Evening (*hesperas*) is the Bear;²⁸ and opposite the Bear, the Warder (*ouros*) of luminous Zeus (*aidriou Dios*). (K. XLV, D.K. 120)

Kahn lists among the possible senses for *termata* that it can designate the poles at the opposite ends of the stadium around which horses or chariots turn, but he

²⁸ The Great Bear (Ouros) and its opposite, Arktoros, are the vernal and summer equinoxes, respectively.

does not emphasize this point.²⁹ Andrei Lebedev completes the implication of

termata:

We must take the word [*termata*] in its most concrete, visual, and archaic meaning of “goal” or “turning post” in racing (Ψ 309; LSJ I, 1). The term *tropai* was applied not only to solstices, but also to equinoxes (LSJ, I): that is why the vernal and autumnal equinoxes are metaphorically conceived of as “turning posts.” It would be hazardous, however, to connect them to the chariot of the Sun, (I do not speak at present about fr. 52): we are explicitly told in fr. 62 (B120) that the runners (or racers) who have to turn the *termata* are Morning and Evening, not the Sun; and the *termata-tropai* of the sun would be rather the summer and winter solstices, not the equinoxes. It is only natural that Heraclitus makes the cosmic forces compete in an *agon*: the leitmotif of his philosophical Musa—the *palintropos harmonia*, the eternal pendulum of gain and loss—has already been played in different keys (military, die casting, lend/borrow, *pessieia*) and modulates now into the agonistic key.³⁰

Morning and Evening run across the sky as racers (facing in opposite directions) run from the center of the stadium around goal posts on opposing ends of the stadium and back. In this schema Morning and Evening are in the same competition, stadium, and they round the same goal posts. In the image of the runner extending from the center (*archê*) to the limit (*termata*) we are reminded of the extension of the radius that is integral to understanding the area of a circle. What’s more, in beginning at the center and running in opposite directions it becomes clear that for each runner the run up and the run down are one and the same:

²⁹ Kahn, *Commentary: XLV (D. 120)*, 161.

³⁰ Lebedev, 132.

The course *ano* . . . and the course *kato*. . . were technical racing-terms denoting two parallel stadium lengths of a single track: from the starting post to the turning post, and from the *terma* to the finish. . . or the next turn. Take two runners, set them back to back in the middle of the track and make them run with equal speed in opposite directions, one *ano* and another *kato*, and they will meet face to face in the middle of the stadium thus proving *hodos ano kato mia kai oute*.³¹

Of course, this appearance of “sameness” and “unity” hides the real nature of these statements, to wit, the primacy of competition. So then, how is one to reconcile this competitive aspect with unity of day and night, the overlooking of which caused Heraclitus to chastise Hesiod? The answer to this was given above by Dilcher. While the ultimate clause of B57 is usually translated “they are one,” *à la* Kahn, Dilcher rightly suggests that *esti gar hen* should be translated, “for there is one.” What is the one in the case of day and night? It is the shared competition, the shared stadium of the cosmos.

Lebedev argues that Heraclitus has done more than simply suggested the agonistic nature of the cosmos, he has unknowingly tapped in to the origin of stadium design itself. He indicates that stadiums were originally designed so that the *termata* would be located in the east and west so as to follow the path of the sun: “The competitors ran up and down the course of the Sun, and the

³¹ Lebedev, 133.

opposite *termata* were those of *nos kai hespera* not in a metaphorical sense but a literal one."³²

The cosmos as stadium/stadium as cosmos schema, in which the cosmic cycles of every day are modeled after an *agon*, reflects what we had earlier discovered about mythic thinking: that even in situations where an account unifies disparate or even opposite elements of experience, such an account has an implicit, or in this case explicit, recognition of the struggle involved in unification. The struggle that is wrapped up in unification also shows itself, according to Heraclitus, in the proper understanding of the polis.

The Political Encounter

At first glance, Heraclitus's admonishment of the mob and the many seems to indicate elitism. Take for example a statement about his fellow Ephesians:

What the Ephesians deserve is to be hanged to the last man, every one of them, and leave the city to the boys, since they drove out their best man, Hemodorus, saying 'Let no one be the best among us; if he is let him be so elsewhere and among others.' (K. LXIV, D.K. 121)

If the Ephesians explanation for exiling Hemodorus was indeed as Heraclitus describes it, and we have no reason to believe otherwise, then Heraclitus's call for their demise can be explained by way of a *reductio ab surdum*.³³

³² Lebedev, 149.

To begin at the end: the Ephesians drive out Hemodorus because he was “the best,” and in their search for equality, the Ephesians are obviously asserting the equity of character over a system of universal rights. The priority of concrete individuals over abstract agents seems appropriate to an archaic Greek society. The result is that the polis literally must purge those individuals who excel in order so that everyone who remains is equal. Fair enough. But does this in and of itself warrant that the individuals who call for such an exile are to be hanged? Obviously Heraclitus is exaggerating. However, even that idea has a certain logic to it. The logic is best exhibited by Hermann Fränkel’s notion of proportion in Heraclitus.³⁴ In this case,

the best man : the average man :: average man : to the child.

Thus, if equality is to be gained by retaining the lowest common denominator, it is really only the children who deserve to have the city, since according the above proportion the average adults excel in comparison to them. According to Boudouris, the argument would look like this:

- (a) There must not be any distinctions or values classifications in the city of Ephesos.
- (b) Hemodorus is one of the best and most useful men of Ephesos.

³³ Konstantine Boudouris, “Heraclitus and the Dialectical Conception of Politics,” *Ionian Philosophy* (ed. K. Boudouris; Athens: International Association for Greek Philosophy, 1989), 79 n.42.

³⁴ Hermann Fränkel, “A Thought Pattern in Heraclitus.,” in *The Pre-Socratics* (Ed. by Alexander Mourelatos; Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1974), 214-227.

(c) Therefore, Hemodorus must be exiled.

(d) But the adult Ephesians are also better and more able than their children.

(e) So, the adult Ephesians must be hanged to the last man (since there are so many and no city can accept them) and must leave Ephesos to be governed by boys.³⁵

While the qualification Boudouris gives in his conclusion, (e), seems a stretch, the overall argument seems sound. Thus, what first appears as elitism in the statement about the Ephesians, namely favoring the best *over* the average individuals, is not the case. What is the case is that the both the best and the many must exist in the polis in order for it to retain balance. In other words, not only is it not prudent to eliminate the best and most useful, but it is not possible to do so (particularly because of the many ways and the frequency with which Greeks applied rank). If the children were to exile the best child, then they should all leave the city to the slaves, and so on.

In dealing with what appears to be a natural rank, then, it is prudent to attempt to balance the counsel of the many with the counsel of the few. It is worth pointing out that while Heraclitus does not advocate the leveling of political discourse (if it were possible), neither does he believe in oligarchy or strict aristocracy (as does, say, Plato). Evidence for this balance appears in another statement:

³⁵ Boudouris, 79 n.42.

It is law also (*kai*) to obey the counsel of one. (K. LXVI, D.K. 33)

The key term here is the simple conjunction: *kai*, “also.” Heraclitus could have used, as he does elsewhere, the emphatic adjective *mounon*, “alone”; or he could have constructed a more taut statement such as the “The law is one alone,” or something of the sort. Instead, he tells us that it is law *also* to obey the counsel or advice of one. Of course, the “also” implies a reference something else. In this case the something else is the shared law of the common individuals of the polis. This is exhibited by fragment “The people must fight for the law as for their city wall,” which was discussed at length in chapter three.

What Heraclitus is concerned with is not the opposition or struggle that brings the world into its current being (stasis); rather, Heraclitus is concerned with the continual struggle that is necessary to keep the world unfolding in its continued being (happening). He sees the presumed authority of the poets and the *physikoi* as stifling the movement and growth of human thinking. Of course, the blame for such stagnation should not be placed solely on the poets and the *physikoi*, but also on the many who receive them:

Let us not concur casually about the most important matters. (K. XI, D.K. 47)³⁶

We should not act and speak like children to their parents. (K. XIII, D.K. 74)

³⁶ Brooks Haxton places more emphasis on shoddiness of mere concurrence: “Yet let’s not make rash guesses our most lucid thoughts,” fr. 48, p.31.

Heraclitus's concern with acting and speaking is not primarily the content of what is acted and spoken, but rather the way it is acted and spoken. Thus, it is clear in B 19 that one's ability to listen is connected to one's ability to speak:

Not knowing how to listen, neither can they speak. (K. XVII, D.K. 19)

Heraclitus wants the listener to confront what she hears from others. And yet it seems that our attention is always in competition with the interpretation that is easy, ready made, and handy. Thus, any proper engagement with the Sacred, or arrangement of the cosmos, or law of the polis must exhibit competition in order to remain alive. However, it is the soul where we most often compete with ourselves, one another, and the world.

The Conflict of Ensoulment

Just as the polis must struggle to find its best state, so too must a soul. In Ephesus the people were mistaken to exile someone of unequal (read: superior) character to achieve political equality. In operating on blind impulse, or perhaps even the passion that stems from the resentment of someone superior, the Ephesians made a bad decision. The best city, contrary to their belief, is in a constant struggle between the wise few and the stubborn and thoughtless many.

So too the soul is in a constant struggle. The way that the soul establishes meaning is through, as Edward Hussey puts it, “war.”³⁷ It is at war in two ways: internally and externally. The first way the soul is at war, here with itself, is in a struggle to strive for its “best state,” which certain fragments show us is similar to Homer’s warrior ideal.³⁸ We can arrive at this notion by looking at the following fragments:

It is difficult to fight against passion; whatever it wants, it buys at the expense of soul. (K. CV, D.K. 85)

A gleam of light is the dry soul, wisest and best. (K. CIX, D.K. 118)

Here Kahn points to the fact that what is meant by “passion” is really “anger” or “aggressive spirit,” as *thymos* is usually translated in Homer.³⁹ What’s more, anger and psyche share the same status as a type of *anathymiasis*, “exhalation.” “Anger is so difficult to resist precisely because its expression, the passionate act of self-affirmation in righteous rage or indignation, resembles so closely the principle of vitality as such, the fiery affirmation of one’s own life.”⁴⁰ The irony here is that even though anger and life are so similar in their form, they are

³⁷ Edward Hussey, “Epistemology and Meaning in Heraclitus,” 46.

³⁸ Hussey, 46.

³⁹ Kahn, *Commentary: CV (D. 85)*, 243.

⁴⁰ Kahn, 243.

opposite in their end. In other words, anger, *thymos*, the excess of which can be likened to *hybris*, violence, is precisely what is to be avoided:

Hybris should be extinguished more quickly than an inferno. Thus, Kahn rightly concludes: "Yielding to irrational anger may thus be seen as a kind of suicide by self-conflagration."⁴¹ Thus, the soul can be ruined in those who are too quick to anger, or in our still common turn of phrase, "hot-headed." But passion elsewhere is equated with having a wet soul.

A man when drunk is led by a beardless boy, stumbling, not perceiving where he is going, having his soul moist. (K. CVI, D.K. 117)

For souls it is death to become water, for water it is death to become earth; out of earth arises water, out of water soul. (K. CII, D.K. 36)

The internal struggle of the soul then, between wet and dryness, between heat and moisture (drink, sensuality), is the microcosm of a larger cosmic change seen above.⁴² "The psyche is 'ensoulment' (*beseelung*) of all life."⁴³ Or inversely, as Hussey suggests, the soul is externalized in the anthropomorphization of the cosmic order.⁴⁴ As Goethe says, "The god to whom a man proves devout, is his

⁴¹ Kahn, 243.

⁴² Dilcher, 77.

⁴³ Manfred Frings, "Heidegger's 1944 Lecture," 73. Here *beseelung* is Heidegger's term.

⁴⁴ Hussey, 46.

own soul turned inside out.”⁴⁵ In either case, we see that the internal struggle of the soul and the struggle of the cosmos, as well as the polis, are materialized in similar ways.⁴⁶

The soul also struggles with external forces and influences, the largest of which is apathy and complacency.

The best choose one thing in exchange for all, everflowing fame among mortals; but most men have sated themselves like cattle. (K. XCVII, D.K. 29)

Gods and men honor those whose fall in battle. (K. C, D.K. 24)

For the best, and those who seek honor and fame, being a warrior is the highest calling. Being honored by one’s fellow men is worth the life of struggle it takes to reach that death. But the warrior has not only to battle against his warrior opponents, but also the stupidity and faineance of his fellow men.

War is father of all and king of all; and some he has shown as gods, others men; some he has made slaves, others free. (K. LXXXIII, D.K. 53)

Ultimately, it is struggle and war that tests the soul of the individual, and shows it to be enslaved or free, divine or mortal. Struggle determines the “material” as

⁴⁵ As quoted in Bruno Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind*, 31.

⁴⁶ The following schema shows this redoubling:

	individual (psyche)	polis	Cosmos	Sacred
life/awake	dry (light)	few	Earth	Zeus/Helios
medium of change	phronesis	nomos	Fire	gnosis/gnome/ light(e)ning
death/asleep	wet (dark)	many	Water	Dionysus/Hades

well as the “intellectual” qualities as well: the free soul will be dry and wise; the enslaved soul will be wet and stumbling.

The soul, like law and like the cosmos, has its limits: if one gives way to passion too readily one can either be weighed down by moisture or consumed by fire (anger, rage). How might we avoid succumbing to anger, joy, in short anything that might overheat or dampen the dry light of our thinking?

It belongs to all men to know themselves and to think well. (K. XXIX, D.K. 116)

You will not find the limits of the soul by going, even if you travel every other way, so deep is its *logos*. (K. XXXV, D.K. 45)

To the soul belongs a *logos* which increases itself. (K. CI, D.K. 115)

In these three fragments, we see the other internal struggle of the *psyche*. There is an apparent contradiction between knowing oneself and the boundlessness of one’s own soul. But this contradiction is actually productive. One must know the nature of the soul, namely its boundlessness, in order to know oneself and to think well. We have already seen that *hybris* is to be avoided and that the struggling soul should know its own limits. In the previous chapter on compactness, these fragments about the depth and increase of the soul served to show the *logos* increases through connection. However, when we now observe the *psyche* as a site of conflict and struggle we see that “immeasurability” of the soul and the increase of its *logos* present a permanent conflict to adequately

knowing one's own limits. Perhaps this is why Heraclitus suggests that when we are truly awake, we see finitude, we see death.

Death is all we see awake; all we see asleep is sleep. (K. LXXXIX, D.K. 21)

Any struggle between two forces in the *psyche* can be said to be a struggle between life and death. In so far as life and death are also tied to how one understands one's world these are categories of how something is seen or shown. Herbert Boeder puts the connection between the life and death of the cosmos and the individual very poetically:

There is no cosmos but for the enforcement of the *sophon* through someone, who is himself involved in the All. But one is needed who is not only a part of it—like fire—but who understands the One that has departed from it and thus understands what it means to different from oneself—or rather: to be departed from oneself, apparently “dead.”⁴⁷

The wise soul is the one who gains distance from her particular field of understanding, and in so doing, commits to a position apart from herself. It is this distance that enables him to experience a connection with the other. Similar to a fire that can only consume with the proper admixture of air, the dry soul can only think on unity when it has space from the all—a space it must provide for itself by rising above the rest.

⁴⁷ Herbert Boeder, “Dissensions,” in *Heidegger on Heraclitus: A New Reading* (Ed. by Kenneth Maly and Parvis Emad; Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Meller Press, 1986): 167-177, at 171.

Summary

The summary remarks we can make about the soul mirror those that we can make about each of the sites of human understanding: the soul, the polis, the cosmos, and Sacred. Though these four form the Whole, each can be seen as a part, and each part can be said to have parts as well. The soul fights for its better part to prevail. The victory of the wise, dry soul over the wet, sated passions requires a shift in how we understand the world. We are not to wish away conflict, but to embrace it, and to see it as our origin. Anything prior to Conflict is mere chaos, which still subsists between our many "selves." We can only begin to gain traction when we employ names for the Sacred. But we must also be cautious to not overstep our bounds. When one begins to see oneself from the outside as part of a larger Whole, one struggles to become the best in order that one be held in honor; for this is a way to become part of that Whole. Thus, to gain wisdom is to understand the limitations of the connections between the soul, one's fellow men, the cosmic order, and the ever-withdrawing Sacred. The recognition and enforcement of these limitations provides for a constant struggle both within individual realms, and between the four realms as a Whole.

Conclusion: Heraclitus and the Retrieve of Original Thought

We are now in a position to draw some conclusions about Heraclitus's ideas of meaning and knowledge. For one, any knowledge must be dimensionally compact. Any differentiation of specific disciplines is a fundamental mistake, if it does not include an account of the whole.¹ This is why, according to Lyotard, any scientific discourse must be legitimated by a narrative that places it in the whole.² Science cannot ground science.³ Two, any knowledge must include in some way an account of vertical compactness. By this we mean that any logos must, implicitly or explicitly, take into account the interplay of the psyche, polis, cosmos and Sacred. But then, as we have seen, the human-cosmic-Sacred circle is perhaps most present in or identical with what we have called horizontal compactness. In fact, it is the cycle that best corresponds to the interplay of the circle of understanding.

When related to Heraclitus, the three types of compactness produce many insights into the nature of the logos. For one, with the focus on dimensional

¹ In some ways this is very similar to Heidegger's position about the relation of fundamental ontology to the rest of the sciences sketched out in the beginning of *Being and Time*, §11.

² Lyotard, 27-31.

³ See for example Lyotard's discussion of Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem, 42-3.

compactness, we can see that the logos is the process by which thinking moves back and forth (The road there and back is one and the same.) between the specific existential situation and a frame of reference, without the institution of a particular method or the frame of a particular discipline. In becoming too categorical and objective about our experience we lose the initial existential elements—we become polymaths condemned to never having wakeful experience. On the other hand, if we are purely existential in the determination of our environment, we lose the wholeness necessary to make sense of any new experience. Thus, the logos is the balance that can provide the measure for any understanding of one's environment.

What I have also suggested above is that, according to Heraclitus, being can only manifest itself in, or be understood in virtue of, the four sites of understanding offered by vertical compactness: the individual, the polis, the cosmic, and the Sacred. These are four appearances of the logos as gathering. What's more, these four phenomena have perforated boundaries; they often intersect with one another. Heraclitus admonishes any individual who attempts to establish her own permanent interpretation of any of these areas. Yet these realms of understanding are ever changing, and in so being, have been and always will be what they are.

The logos is the method of understanding that prevails in the balance between gods, the cosmos, the polis, and the individual. Each individual has the possibility of being divided, or cut-off, from the rest in his inability to make connections (*axynetoi*). One remains asleep and turned away from the world when one regards one's wisdom as emanating from his own soul. The relationship of the soul to the polis is a microcosm of the relation of the polis to the cosmos, and the cosmos (as that which is held in order) to the gods. The human-cosmic-Sacred circle can only create and sustain meaning as it runs through these various contexts: the soul in light of an area of shared discourse in the polis, and the cosmos and the gods; the polis in light of a group of shared laws (discourse) and the divine unity; and an understanding of the cosmos that only comes about in understanding the meeting of the soul and the divine.

Furthermore, vertical compactness gives us insight into Heraclitus's often paradoxical formulation of wisdom. Three fragments suggest that while wisdom is always one, the status of that one changes.

The wise is one: both not willing and willing to be called alone by the name of Zeus. (K. CXVIII, D.K. 32)

The wise is one: knowing the insight by which all is steered through all. (K. LIV, D.K. 41)

The wise is one: listening not to me, but to the logos, and to agree that all is one. (K. XXVI, D.K. 50)⁴

The wise is always univocally agreeing with one of the four sites of human understanding. Sometimes this is in the soul—as it can have a law of its own and it can embrace what is unexpected—sometimes in the cosmos when it is “on fire,” sometimes in the polis in the form the *nomos*, and sometimes by the name of Zeus. Albert Stuart puts the relationship between the cosmos and human beings quite well:

If the soul of man is an image of the everliving cosmos, it harbors within itself the cosmic dimensions of the logos. But man’s wisdom, though finite, gives expression to it, it seems, by *allowing* the opposites to register in their *transformation* and uniting them in right accord.⁵

The wise arises in different places and in different ways, but only where the logos gathers.

In addition to relating to what the wise is, the three fragments above also evoke features specific to the transmission of narrative knowledge. Chapter two showed that the transmission of narrative knowledge involves not knowing “things,” as propositions and scientific statements do, but around knowing how to speak and knowing how to listen. Both of these elements are relevant to

⁴ While I have come to the realization of the connection of the “wise” being “one” in these three fragments independent of other commentaries, it should be noted that Gadamer also comes to this conclusion in his “Heraclitus Studies,” published in English translation in *The Pre-Socratics after Heidegger*. I have here adapted Kahn’s translations to highlight the parity in their structure.

⁵ Albert Stuart, “Language in its Relation to the Logos in Heraclitus” (Ph.D. diss., De Paul University, 1982), 161. My emphasis.

Heraclitus's idea of wisdom in knowing whether to call the wise by the name of Zeus (which can also be the name of life), and in listening to the logos, to the gathered-tension of shared understanding. Thus, even the transmission of wisdom is grounded in the same focus of active communication involved in mythic transmission.

Lastly, the logos corresponds to a horizontal compactness. That is, it is part of an ever increasing cycle of understanding. Though any site of understanding is by default "unified," if only in that we "understand it," true growth of understanding, where "true" describes *aletheic* movement, requires tension. "*Aletheia* says above all something open ended."⁶ Thus, tension requires both the recognition of the continual unfolding (*aletheia*)⁷ of cosmos, but the active participation in creating a new that same cosmos by preserving (which means creating ever anew⁸) its concealed, mysterious aspect. Consider what Roberto Calasso says about light and concealment in regard to this tension:

But how can the writer conceal the obviousness of the word and its figures of speech? With the light. The anonymous author writes: "And how did the rhetorician conceal the trope he was using? It's clear that he hid it with light itself." To conceal with the light: the Greek specialty. Zeus never stopped using the light to conceal. Which is why the light that comes after the Greek light is of another

⁶ Kenneth Maly, "The Transformation of 'Logic' in Heraclitus," in *Heidegger on Heraclitus* (ed. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly; Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1986) 89-102, at 101.

⁷ Cf. the discussion of D.K. 112 in chapter 3, pp. 93-94.

⁸ Cf. Descartes' argument to this effect in the sixth *Meditation*.

kind, and much less intense. That other light aims to winkle out what has been hidden. While the Greek light protects it.⁹

Heraclitus also uses this “Greek” light to conceal what could become obvious, and thus protects it.¹⁰

If the one side of Heraclitus’s idea of knowledge is the unity of language with experience, the other side is the need for struggle and competition in experience. The best form of anything, including the polis, only comes by way of struggle and competition. Even discourse should include struggle and competition: “Let us not concur casually about the most important matters,”¹¹ he says, or “We should not act and speak like children to their parents.”¹²

Furthermore, Heraclitus reminds us that community is strife, and that without its best members to challenge the average members it might as well be run by children. Any successful and balanced community will include conflict.

It is in conflict that every thing holds in common, as War is the father and king of all. Why, then, do certain individuals wish conflict away? What’s more, why do most human beings presume and desire a knowable, stable world? If we were to act and speak truly we would see and say that we cannot even get to the

⁹ Roberto Calasso, *The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony* (Trans. by Tim Parks. New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 282.

¹⁰ I discuss the method he uses to do this in the closing pages of our discussion. See “Agreement to the Riddle of Life,” 184-92.

¹¹ K. XI, D.K. 47.

¹² K. XIII, D.K. 74.

bottom of ourselves, let alone the world, and that we do not know what to expect. Thus the story we tell ourselves about ourselves and our world is ever increasing. Contrary to this ever-growing narrative, the “lightning” moment, the one that can be called divine, “strikes root through everything.”¹³

Recall that in the rhetorical answer to the problem of defining *logos* it was said, *à la* Cook, that the form of a Heraclitean statement is the *elenchus*. That is, each self-contained proposition can be taken in several directions without having one reading that trumps all others. Thus, the reader of Heraclitus must always re-flect, turn back, only to continue “forward” once again. But: “The way there and back is one and the same”; in this case, that “way” (*hodos*) is the fragment before us at any given moment. The fact that one must give it different meanings at different readings is a function of the fact that we must travel along that way. What’s more, the polysemy and indeterminacy inherent to the statement indicates that each statement is also in a battle with its reader. There is no winner.

The most important aspect of *logos*—the gathering of thinking and world that brings forth a (new) context of meaning—is the activity of it, not its result. To revisit an example from Heraclitus, what is most informative about the circle is that it is formed by the extending of its radius—that is, the meeting of its origin

¹³ Haxton, 19, fr. 28.

with its periphery. The circle is the holding joint of the origin (*archē*) and its radius. It represents the activity of its formation in the concrete whole. Or put another way: the events of the origin and the periphery are drawn into the circle by the activity of its being drawn out. That activity of thinking, in this case in thinking the formation of a circle, is often pushed to the background of the resultant object.

So while the main function of the logos is gathering, this gathering should be neither permanent, nor homogeneous. That is, it includes tension within itself. Consider what Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said of the tension he was attempting to create in Birmingham through his civil disobedience: "But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word 'tension.' I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth."¹⁴ Constructive tension is the flipside of the holding together that is present in many of Heraclitus's fragments. What might happen if we do not allow for this constructive tension? What if we do not allow conflict in its sea of transformations to register?

¹⁴ Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham City Jail," n.p. [cited 26 February 2008]. Online: http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html.

Danger of Totalization and Terror

Heraclitus's epistemology offers us several insights for how to manage the current crisis of the legitimation of knowledge, most often called our "postmodern condition." According to Lyotard, the main hallmark of the postmodern era is its mistrust of metanarratives, or narratives that ground the purpose of knowledge. In our current state, knowledge is without a larger aim. Earlier versions of metanarratives, by contrast, gave the accumulation of knowledge aim, either through the belief in the completion of Spirit by way of absolute knowledge (offered by Hegel) or by the belief that increased knowledge brings increased emancipation from poverty, injustice, illness, etc. We no longer believe that Spirit will fully realize itself through absolute knowledge; nor do we believe that knowledge will ultimately liberate humanity of all injustice. In fact, and this is Lyotard's point, there does not seem to be a cohesive narrative as to the aim of knowledge at all. As our beliefs and methods of enjoyment become more and more eclectic and locally determined, the possibility of the establishment of metanarratives dwindles.

What is the fallout of the collapse of the metanarrative? This depends on who one asks, of course. For Lyotard, this collapse provides an opening to increase social justice by locally determining and inventing new micronarratives. The benefit of the growth of these micronarratives is in defending individuals

from the homogenization of the population. Unchecked, the totalization of metanarratives (Lyotard gives examples in Stalin and the Nazis) can lead to totalitarianism and “terror,” a term Lyotard borrows from Luhmann and defines as: “the efficiency gained by eliminating, or threatening to eliminate, a player from the language game one shares with him.”¹⁵ What concerns us here is the potential that we may overdetermine the world in one stable configuration. In doing so we may no longer listen to, and thus silence, the world as it unfolds. But if thinking is a game we play with the world, we lose if we silence our opponent. How do we allow the unfolding world to address us atop all of our clamor? Perhaps a hint is given in the form of the riddle.

Agreement to the Riddle of Life

In contrast to the long, meandering, account given of the relation between fragmentary existence and the intended whole given through myth, the short staccato stabs of Heraclitus’s fragments, whole in themselves, attempt to show that the fragmentary *is* the whole. Gadamer, Hölscher, and Dilcher have each noted the way in which the form of Heraclitus’s statements is in opposition to the density of what they “say.” Gadamer points to the difference between the steadiness usually associated with piloting a ship which begins fragment 64 and

¹⁵ Lyotard, 63.

the quick strike of the thunderbolt that ends it.¹⁶ This paradox, though, can be seen in the different ways that Heraclitus and the poets take up the same structures to be thought. On the one hand, there is the direction and intention of the poet, which extends over several plot twists, in some cases a plot that lasts decades or longer. On the other hand, there is Heraclitus who forges similarly complicated paradoxical twists into quick bursts of literary genius.

Each fragment, and the extant fragments as a whole, presents a riddle—not one that is meant to have *an* answer—that invites us to think.¹⁷ In fact, in some cases the answer is given for us.¹⁸ As Hölscher points out, the idea behind the riddle is to think on the *form* of the riddle. Thus, Heraclitus’s form has something to teach us as well:

The point conveyed by the riddle form is: Things too, present a paradoxical secret reality which, at the same time, is manifest. Things themselves are a riddle to be solved—one has to be able to read the cipher; that is, one must learn to understand the visible as a sign, as the self-proclaiming of the invisible.¹⁹

But, as Sartre observes, it is the riddle form itself that *forces* us to think:

It is well understood that these formulae only have the appearance of bad faith; they have been conceived in the paradoxical form explicitly to shock the mind and discountenance it by an enigma. But it is precisely this appearance which is of concern to us. What

¹⁶ Gadamer, 206

¹⁷ Heidegger, “*Logos* (B50),” *Early Greek Thinking*.

¹⁸ Gallop, 288. Hölscher, 231.

¹⁹ Hölscher, 231.

counts here is that formulae do not constitute new, solidly structured ideas; on the contrary, they are formed so as to remain in perpetual disintegration and so that we may slide at any time from the naturalistic present to transcendence and vice versa.²⁰

Even though several of Heraclitus's fragments have a riddle-like character to them, what Cook finds most compelling is how deceptively straightforward Heraclitus's statements are. If taken only as propositions, they could easily be affirmed or rejected. But it is the background from whence they come that makes them unique. Consider what Cook quotes from Andre Jolles: "Myth is an answer in which a question has been compromised; riddle is a question that postulates an answer."²¹ Here is Cook's response:

Heraclitus has not found a simple form but a simple trans-form of expression. The answer the aphorism offers comprises a question about what is really being said, and in such a way that the aphorism is also a question whose answer is given as well as postulated. The world of myth is demythologized, the world of riddle is deparicularized.²²

Jolles suggested that a myth is an answer to an ill-formed or forgotten question. We could certainly understand that forgotten question for which myth is an answer is a question of being, or of the lack, or of guilt, or of fear of death.²³ The inverse of this is the riddle—the entire statement is formulated toward the absent

²⁰ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Trans. by Hazel Barnes; Citadel, 2001), 57.

²¹ Quoted in Cook, 79.

²² Ibid. 79. Cf. Holscher, 231: "Nothing hinges on the *solution* of the riddle."

²³ See Ricoeur, the Introduction to Part I in *The Symbolism of Evil*.

answer. Metaphysically, the entire riddle of life is postulated toward death. Heraclitus employs the form he does as a prompt, as an open invite to thinking. He captures the possibility of thinking *within* his statements. Any definitive interpretation of his fragments as a whole that I could offer here would have to someday be overturned, and necessarily so. Here lies real difference between Heraclitus's form, the form of the myth that came before him, and the propositional form of philosophy that came after him—the *way* that it intends the whole. Myth intends the whole by attributing its experience of the world to the Sacred, to the necessarily unexplainable.²⁴ Philosophy intends the whole by using statements to aim toward the making-plain of all that is. Heraclitus offers a third way: he intends the whole by capturing the mystery of thinking within his plain statements, thereby deferring *indefinitely* the arrival of either the inexorable Sacred or the full glow of absolute knowledge.

Thinking is making connections, it is soul's fire which consumes and can be exchanged with all. Thinking is fire, conflict, war. Thinking allows one to expect the unexpected. We must recognize that we do not always think in this way. In contrast to this, we can see that sometimes we are alight, sometimes extinguished, sometimes hot, sometimes cold. But it is the *movement* of

²⁴ Cf. Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 5: "In short, myths describe the various and sometimes dramatic breakthroughs of the Sacred into the world."

thinking—the counter-tension of appearance, physis—that loves to conceal itself. It is the *movement* of thought between day and night, good days and bad, sleeping and waking that escapes our notice. Fire is that which was brought to mortals from the immortals—it came from beyond the mortal realm. In thinking the soul uses the more-than-mortal power to consume what confronts it. But so often we are presented with a pre-fabricated result of connections made in another time and place and that is merely held in place by our superficial “understanding” of certain words. Heidegger’s notion of small talk (*Gerede*) is reminiscent of this conundrum: one can speak a lot and say nothing at all; one can name many things and not say one thing.²⁵ As a result, the logos can be lost in language. This is a theme that recurs time and time again in Heraclitus. One can improperly speak, one can “hear like the deaf,” etc. It is entirely possible to make a statement, write a poem, or even develop a theory without reference to actual experience. If our everyday speech merely concurs with whatever available words are in use, it fails to reach the essence of language: to disclose experience. In fact, the relation of discourse proper (*Rede, logos*) to its derivative mode of small talk (*Gerede*) is the driving force of what makes for human beings who do not have an “awake” understanding. In short, one can understand language, without having any understanding of what the language is about.

²⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time* (BT), 157. See also Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language* (Trans. by Peter Hertz; San Francisco: Harper, 1971), 122.

Unfortunately, language can be (superficially) intelligible in its own right, without a need for discourse.²⁶

To the human being who is asleep, logos presents itself as solely linguistic, to the detriment of its connection to wakeful understanding (*noos, sophronein*). What we are left with in terms of discourse is a paradox: in wakeful logos one may have a difficult time finding words, in sleep-talking logos one merely takes one's word for it. Thus, ultimately two relations are involved: that of the words to the situation, and that of the words to the one who uses them. One who uses words to describe well an emerging situation (*physis*) is thinking well (*sophronein*), and this is the greatest excellence (*arête megistē*) (K. XXXII). But in our usual approach to the world, that of being entangled in it, human beings understand most things through the hearsay of small talk, and never attempt to get to the subject matter itself. And since language, in small talk, actually deters us from going back to the source what is talked about, it is "in further retelling sufficient to turn disclosing around into a closing off."²⁷ "Closing off" is the same event that occurs when we turn away to our private worlds, when we sleep. In

²⁶ Heidegger, BT, 157. For further explanation see Magda King, *A Guide to Heidegger's Being and Time* (Ed. By John Llewelyn; Albany, NY: SUNY press, 2001), 84: "Since, however, language itself already gives a certain explanation of the world, it is in itself understandable. In everyday talking-together, there is a strong tendency on the part of the listener, not so much to bring himself into a genuinely disclosing relation to the things talked of—that is, to understand them for himself from the things themselves—as rather to understand the talk itself. This is possible because both the talker and the listener already understand the language in the same average way."

²⁷ Heidegger, BT, 158.

his mention of sleeping and waking, Heraclitus also references living and dying twice.

A man strikes a light for himself in the night, when his sight is quenched. Living, he touches the dead in his sleep; waking he touches the sleeper. (K. XC, D.K. 26)

The same . . . : living and dead, and the waking and the sleeping, and young and old. For these transposed are those, those transposed are these. (K. XCIII, D.K. 88)

Death is all things we see awake; all we see asleep is sleep. (K LXXXIX, D.K. 21)

The first fragment says: a man is capable of seeing beyond what nature allows him, if he is awake and alive. One who is awake can see that the other is sleeping. Language, through an awareness toward a shared logos (*xynos logos*), can also wake up. Imagine the awake language that Heraclitus himself uses in his fragments. Surely, terms like “logos” and “psyche” are used elsewhere and prior to Heraclitus’s use of them. But he re-awakens something that is not *in* these words, but available to them. He strikes a light in the night of their being leveled into vapidness. It seems as though, in that context, waking and sleeping can be akin to a living understanding or a dying understanding of the potential of language and communication. They act as if they are sleep, and in so doing, they see sleep, and their understanding is better off dead. Conversely, those who are awake, have an understanding that is alive, and that increases itself in the

soul. It is not limited, but like the logos, ever-living. This does not mean living forever, but like the fire, kindling in measures and in measures going out.

It would seem necessary, then, that the one who opens up language to reclaim its hold on experience has a responsibility to that language. That responsibility comes in the form of preserving and protecting the richness of meaning accessed by those words. This premise is also reminiscent of Heidegger:

Still, in the end it is the business of philosophy to protect the *power of the most elemental words* in which Da-sein [human being] expresses itself from being flattened by the common understanding to the point of unintelligibility, which in turn functions as a source for illusory problems.²⁸

How does one protect the “power of the most elemental words [. . .] from being flattened by the common understanding”? One way of protecting these words is by turning them into a gnomic utterance, an aphorism, a riddle. The irony, then—and this irony is palpable in Heraclitus’s condemnation of the discourse of his peers—is that in any attempt to fully disclose some situation through powerful and elemental words, one is simultaneously opening those fundamental words to overexposure. One then risks the possibility of the meaning becoming *too* common, *too* available, and *too* “already understood.” When this overexposure happens, that which was once grounded in a certain open understanding of the world, namely discourse, becomes completely closed

²⁸ Heidegger, BT, 202.

through the everyday use of language. And as listeners we take such speech as acceptable and commonplace.²⁹ In an incomplete fragment from Suidas (D.K. 122) we encounter Heraclitus's word *anchibasie* "stepping near."³⁰ We are to step near to those matters that concern us, both in heart and mind. But before the distance is bridged, it must first be opened, be realized. Heraclitus wants to open up the space for tension and allow for new connections to be made.

It is our natural inclination as human beings to be complacent and accepting. In the momentum of this inclination we cement down a particular view of the world. But this is to do it injustice; it is to put a stratified topology on an ever-changing landscape. We must instead assert and protect difference.³¹ The idea of adjusting our natural tendency to sediment knowledge invokes the only question we have from Heraclitus: "How does one hide from that which never sets?"³² Perhaps the answer is by finding and preserving shadows. For where *we* have exposed them to a permanent light no more hiding is possible.

²⁹ Cf. K. XIII, D.K. 74 and K. XVII, D.K. 19.

³⁰ Kahn, 289.

³¹ Lyotard puts this idea well in relation to many themes discussed by Heraclitus in "What is Postmodernism?" in *The Postmodern Condition*, 82: "The answer is: Let us wage war on totality; let us be witness to the unrepresentable; let us activate the differences and save the honor of the name."

³² K. CXXII, D.K. 16.

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