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LISTENING TO *LOGOS*: A PROSE POETICS IN HERACLITUS

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## ABSTRACT

I argue here for a poetics in prose at work in Heraclitus, one that makes the text an occasion for an exemplary experience of the *kosmos* as a form of active and intelligible organization. This project works in two directions. First, I contextualize Heraclitus' unique form of expression by showing how it breaks from existing practices – common to both poetry and prose – of personal authority and narrativity. Second, I engage closely with Heraclitus' writing to show how it makes the intelligible activity of the *kosmos* available in the local encounter with the text, partly through an analogy between the *kosmos* and the meaningful operations of human language. Ultimately, this poetics in the text is part and parcel of seeing philosophical understanding itself as a form of activity. Little has been made of Heraclitus' several references to the role of the witness in archaic Greek law, but I show how these illuminate his ethical ideal of perceptive participation in the intelligible activity of the *kosmos*. The texts of Heraclitus thus turn out to be an important corpus for both the development of Greek philosophy and the history of Greek literature.

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## INTRODUCTION

The poetics of early Greek philosophy is as thorny and belabored a problem as any in the study of antiquity. The sheer diversity of figures and texts, the near-universal troubles in our knowledge of both, and our relatively new appreciation for the complexity of the contemporary shift from oral to literary culture all present significant factual hurdles to our understanding of the issue. Conceptual problems arise when we recognize first that exactly none of these figures understood themselves to be working at the inauguration of what would become a unified intellectual tradition, and secondly that they got on just fine without anything like the notions of ‘philosophy’ and ‘poetics’ that the modern scholar retrojects onto them in an effort to understand the thought and form of their texts.

Heraclitus only compounds the difficulties here: among early Greek philosophers, his prose form is as idiosyncratic as it is enigmatic. In antiquity, many found his dense pronouncements compelling and profound. Others condemned them as viciously ambiguous and verging on self-contradiction: a flawed effort to *seem* profound. Heraclitus’ composition found influence and imitators, spawned extensive commentaries, and came to be seen by fans and detractors alike as bedrock for the Greek philosophical tradition. One of the detractors, Lucretius, offers a poetic epithet that neatly expresses the paradox in the tradition around Heraclitus: “*clarus ob obscuram linguam.*” (*De Rerum Natura*, 1.639). He was and remains “famous for obscure utterance,” with modern readers taking up positions of enthusiast, interpreter, and reviler not unlike those among his ancient audience.

Like all of the texts written by the earliest figures we locate in the tradition of Greek philosophy, Heraclitus' composition is lost to us in its original format. Quotations, paraphrases, and discussions of his text by later authors do survive, so that now we speak about "texts" of Heraclitus rather than the single "text" that probably circulated in antiquity. Over the last two centuries especially, these texts have been compiled repeatedly and in different configurations so that modern readers might gain access to Heraclitus, even as the authenticity of certain texts and the best strategies for presenting them all are still debated. Even so, about 125 "texts" probably originate with Heraclitus. Many are just a handful of words, as in DK B54/LM D50:<sup>1</sup> ἀρμονίη ἀφανῆς φανερώης κρείττων, "Unapparent fitting-together is stronger than the apparent." Others approach what we would call paragraphs. Aristotle and Sextus Empiricus both tell us that the following comes from the beginning of the original text, probably after an initial sentence in which Heraclitus identifies himself as the author:<sup>2</sup>

τοῦ δὲ λόγου τοῦδ' ἐόντος αἰεὶ ἀξύνετοι γίνονται ἄνθρωποι καὶ πρόσθεν ἢ ἀκοῦσαι καὶ ἀκούσαντες τὸ πρῶτον· γινομένων γὰρ πάντων κατὰ τὸν λόγον τόνδε ἀπίροισιν εἰκόασι, πειρώμενοι καὶ ἐπέων καὶ ἔργων τοιούτων, ὁκοίων ἐγὼ διηγέυμαι κατὰ φύσιν διαιρέων ἕκαστον καὶ φράζων ὅπως ἔχει. τοὺς δὲ ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους λανθάνει ὁκόσα ἐγερθέντες ποιοῦσιν, ὅκωσπερ ὁκόσα εὐδοντες ἐπιλανθάνονται. (B1/D1)

Of this account that is always humans are uncomprehending, both before they hear and after they hear the first time. For though all things come to be according to this account, they are like the untried when they try words and works of the sort that I set out, dividing up each according to its nature and indicating how it is. And other people do not notice what they do awake, just as what they do asleep escapes them.

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<sup>1</sup> Texts of Heraclitus are cited according to the recent Loeb edition of Laks and Most (2016) as well as the longstanding edition of Diels-Kranz. Here "LM D#" references the texts deemed authentic in the former; "DK B#" those in the latter. "DK A#" refers to texts those editors classified as testimonia rather than citations, while "LM P#" and "LM R#" refer to texts in Laks-Most on the "Person" and "Reception" of the author. Texts will be cited hereafter as, e.g., B1/D1. All translations are my own, unless otherwise noted, but are often informed in particular by those in Kahn 1979 and in the 2016 Loeb edition of Laks and Most.

<sup>2</sup> Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Logicians*, 7.132; Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1407b14, *apud* Laks and Most 2016 Vol III, 137.

Together these two texts of Heraclitus, B1/D1 and B54/D50, begin to show us the character of his prose. Though they differ in length and grammatical complexity, both statements are striking for their repetition of sounds and syllables, as in the “nonapparent apparent” (ἀφανῆς φανεροῆς) wordplay of B54/D50, or the repetitions in B1/D1: “... both before they hear and after they hear the first time ... they are like the untried when they try...” (πρόσθεν ἢ ἀκούσαι καὶ ἀκούσαντες τὸ πρῶτον . . . ἀπείροισιν εἰόκασι, πειρώμενοι...). This sensory impact of such language is all the more immediate for one reading aloud, as the contemporaries of Heraclitus probably did, and this in order to discover word breaks and punctuation in a text that presented itself with neither. For Heraclitus’ audience, in the midst of a relatively recent turn towards widespread writing and literacy in Greek culture, pronunciation was essential to the process of recognizing words and constructing sentences in a thicket of letters.<sup>3</sup> In this context, Heraclitus’ attention to the sensory aspects of language – as we see in his emphasis on *hearing* – draws on the persisting paradigm of oral communication, but perhaps also on the novel set of relationships between vision, sound, and sense in reading.

Rich language and wordplay might focus attention on the sonic aspects of language, but these texts also show us Heraclitus’ interest in the “nonapparent” relations that, though often unnoticed, allow complex meanings to emerge. B54/D50 makes a general point about powerful connections at work behind or beyond apparent ones, and in Chapter Three I will show how the statement actually models “unapparent fitting-together” in its own language. B1/D1 deploys challenging syntax with significant effects.

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<sup>3</sup> Svenbro 1993 describes early reading practices in Greek culture and their place in making meaning, emphasizing in particular the role of reading aloud.

Aristotle, explaining in the *Rhetoric* that what is written ought to be easy to read, offers Heraclitus as a negative example, since in the first sentence of B1/D1 it is impossible to decide whether “always” (ἀεὶ) goes with what precedes or what follows it.<sup>4</sup> Is Heraclitus claiming that the ‘account’ “always is,” using a formulaic expression for immortality and divinity, or is he saying that humans “always become uncomprehending,” in which case the verb “to be” has no predicate?<sup>5</sup> The ambiguity forces a reader to acknowledge what at first seems impossible, and what Aristotle seems unwilling to concede: one word must be understood in two ways at the same time. The competing meanings are not mutually exclusive, but it is hard to hold them together in the moment of reading. The tension, moreover, reaches beyond the specific linguistic meanings to register metaphysical significance: ἀεὶ could be taken as a link, albeit an opaque one, between the “being” associated with the “account” and the “becoming” of humans.

The sensory impact of Heraclitus’ language works together with his semantic gymnastics: sounds and syllables often resonate as meanings are multiplied, overturned, or exploded, both in single words and in syntactic patterns. But why does Heraclitus do this, especially when it makes it difficult for his readers just to comprehend what he wrote, let alone what it might aim to communicate? B1/D1 shows us what is at stake for Heraclitus in his writing. In this opening to his composition, Heraclitus is articulating the gap between an “account” essential to everything – the immediacy of which is emphasized with repeated demonstrative pronouns (τοῦ δὲ λόγου **τοῦδ'** ... τὸν λόγον **τόνδε**) – and the ignorance of humans, who are in a state of absurd self-contradiction in

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<sup>4</sup> Aristotle, *Rhet.* 3.5 1407b11-18.

<sup>5</sup> Many have noted the formula ἀεὶ ὄν resonates here, and for Leonardo Tarán (1985) it is even a reason to resist any persistent ambiguity in ἀεὶ, though it has won few converts. See also Kahn 1979, pp. 93-4.

their relation to this “account” (λόγος). They must have experience of this account, at least indirectly, insofar as everything comes to be in accordance with it. It is as if they had no experience at all, though, when they encounter the “words and works” (καὶ ἐπέων καὶ ἔργων) that Heraclitus presents. The “account” must initially strike one as that of Heraclitus, and its immediacy simply that of the text itself, but its “being always” and expansive significance suggest something more than this, even before it turns out that Heraclitus describes his own work differently: as “words and works” rather than a *logos* of his own. Moreover, if the first humans are in a sorry epistemic state, their predicament pales in comparison to the others who, in the final sentence of B1/D1, are simply oblivious to their own activities in waking life, just like people who are asleep.

Heraclitus, himself renowned for obscure expression, opens his work by presenting a situation of profound communicative dysfunction: what people are failing to comprehend ultimately extends to their own activities in the world, even as the truth is announced to them in everything that comes to pass.

The challenges of Heraclitus’ writings, then, are freighted with his insistence that a uniquely important and comprehensive understanding is at stake. My aim here is to describe how Heraclitus’ texts communicate that understanding, along with something of what it involves. We have begun discussing just a few of the features that make Heraclitus’ prose remarkable in its expressiveness, and I will argue that we should consider such features together as a particular “poetics” practiced by Heraclitus in these texts. In a general sense, the study of poetics aims at describing the form and function of literary discourse in verse or in prose.<sup>6</sup> I mean the term “poetics” here to capture two

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<sup>6</sup> In thinking here about a specifically prose poetics, I am drawing on the work of Tzvetan Todorov and in particular his essay “How to Read?” in *The Poetics of Prose* (trans. Richard Howard, 1977). There, in

interrelated facts. First, Heraclitus is using language artistically, and in surprising and unconventional ways at that: his texts are, as his earliest readers recognized, by no means transparent in what they signify. Second, he constructs a literary discourse that is particular in both its mode and aim of communication, especially in the idiosyncrasies of authorial voice and discursive form that I will discuss. I have already mentioned the ambiguity of ἀεὶ in B1/D1, both in the kinds of significance that it opens up and its disruption of habitual expectations around how we find significance in language. And, as we have seen, B1/D1 imagines a particular communicative situation with high stakes: Heraclitus' expressive form is part of a broader strategy addressing this situation. Considering a poetics at work here can help us discuss these several facets of his writing in their unity, both in their local instances and in the texts as they collectively advance a unique form of discourse.

As I will argue here, the effects of Heraclitus' prose are at least as important as any significance we might attribute to them through interpretation. I mean "interpretation" in the most general sense: explicating meaning, in this case of texts. Scholars note the arresting quality of the texts and the significant demands they make on an audience, and a rough consensus has emerged that the challenging nature of Heraclitus' texts parallels the challenges he sees in exercising perceptive understanding

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working through various forms of critical engagement with literary texts, Todorov claims that "reading presupposes poetics; in poetics it finds its concepts, its instruments," and goes on to distinguish reading as an "asymptotic activity" that approaches the text without reaching it. In this reading differs from interpretation, which "seeks to discover, through the apparent textual fabric, a second more authentic text." (1977, pp. 237-8). In articulating a prose poetics for Heraclitus, I mean to do the work that can enable us to better *read* his texts, without pursuing the kind of complete interpretation that Todorov describes and which has often characterized previous approaches to Heraclitus, as I discuss below.

of the world itself.<sup>7</sup> Still, the significance of this point has often been left to one side of an interpretative project that aims to explicate what Heraclitus thought, a common approach that goes back to the ancient doxographical tradition.<sup>8</sup> The goals and expectations of interpretation have tended to focus on the content of his theoretical views and cosmology, as will be discussed at greater length in Chapter Two. This paradigm has slowly shifted in recent decades, but no one has undertaken a systematic study aimed at Heraclitus' poetics.

In investigating Heraclitus' poetics, I start from the sense that he is not writing out what he thinks, however artistically, but undertaking a particular communicative project, one that addresses the situation we saw in B1/D1. In investigating this project, we will see an important sense in which Heraclitus' expressive form is itself energetic: it is significant in what it *does* in conjunction with what it *means*, and particularly in what it aims to enable its audience to do. This is why it is valuable to think in terms of poetics here: we want to understand the *how* in these texts as well as the *what*, especially since their very operations trouble the idea that these could be understood independently of one another. Still, this kind of inquiry can speak to our desire to know more about what Heraclitus thought: like the central role of activity, I will suggest that the energetic form we find in Heraclitus dovetails with ideas about cosmology and reality in the texts. At the same time, however, I would argue that understanding Heraclitus' poetics – the aims

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<sup>7</sup> I find the earliest formulation of this view in Hölscher 1974, but see also: Kahn 1979, 87-95; Hussey 1999; Most 1999. A similar view of language itself is proposed, via Aeschylus, for this period in Greek thought generally in Walsh 1984, 62-80.

<sup>8</sup> It could be said that this begins, if not with the polemics of (perhaps) Parmenides and (definitely) Plato, with Aristotle's presentation of Heraclitus in his history of philosophy as a partisan of fire as primary cause: *Metaphysics* 984a4-10. For a useful analysis of the ancient doxography of early Greek philosophers in the Aristotelian and Theophrastean tradition, see Kahn 1960, esp. 3-28. Rowett (formerly Osborne) 1987 examines the source contexts for much of the extant texts in the polemics of the early Christian authors, Hippolytus in particular.

and methods of his discourse – should be prior to the effort to determine theoretical views that could be attributed to Heraclitus. Insofar as form is integral to the communicative project in the first place, we risk misunderstanding that project at the outset if we assume that form can and should be reduced to this kind of interpretation.

I will argue that the texts do not encode some descriptive content so much as they seek to enable a form of activity: the kinds of thinking, recognition, and interaction with the world that comprise an understanding of how it is. This understanding is, Heraclitus suggests, inseparable from what we do and whether we do it well. We are not disinterested observers of the world but active participants in it; our ability to participate well depends upon our understanding. In this connection, it is significant that in B1/D1 Heraclitus describes what he writes as “both words and works” (...πειρώμενοι **καὶ ἔπεων καὶ ἔργων** τοιούτων, ὁμοίων ἐγὼ διηγεῦμαι... when they make trial of both words and works of the sort that I set out...). This formula from epic poetry comprehends ‘word and deed’ in a way often meant to dismiss *mere* speech, or to praise the rare conjunction of excellence in both.<sup>9</sup> I have already noted Aristotle’s point that it is hard work (ἔργον) to read the words of Heraclitus, and it turns out that the author himself envisions the encounter between text and audience as a kind of trial: the verb here (πειρώμενοι) means “to make trial of” some person or thing. In Homer it frequently denotes a consequential undertaking, as it does in two important trials of Odysseus: with Ajax in the funeral games for Patroclus, and with his own bow on

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<sup>9</sup> The formula typically ends a line, as Athena praises Odysseus’ excellences at *Od.* 2.272, and as Zeus pledges to Apollo that he will render aid to the Achaeans in ‘speech and deed’ once they have retreated to the ships at *Il.* 15.234. Just what this phrase means here has been debated: Kirk takes it to mean the speech that explains and the “deeds” that are explained in it (1954, p. 41); Tarán follows Reinhardt and Marcovich in reading this as a polar expression meant to encompass all human experience. I meant to emphasize simply that the expression clearly extends beyond the text.

Ithaca.<sup>10</sup> Heraclitus may be drawing on this Homeric background here, as he often does, but does not make clear what kind of effort and encounter he envisions, even as his frequent use of epic language and repetition lend gravity to the work involved in reading the text.

Indeed, the very notion of some work or activity will prove important throughout my treatment of Heraclitus, from the active intelligence that organizes his *kosmos* to the process undertaken by a reader in recognizing how it works, both in and through the text. Since Heraclitus makes a striking claim that all things are one (B50/D46) – just after he drives a wedge between his own voice and the *logos* as distinct objects of attention – we have reason to think that these activities will cohere in important ways. This aspect of his writings should figure in recent consideration of ancient philosophy as an activity and form of life, as I discuss further below. As we shall see, knowledge for Heraclitus just is ethical in character: there is no ethically neutral stance to be taken with respect to the objects of knowledge. This link between philosophical and ethical activity in Heraclitus' texts will come out especially in treating his use of 'bearing witness' in Chapter Four. I want to emphasize first, however, that this activity becomes available to Heraclitus' audience in and through the poetics of the texts: they communicate the possibility and availability of this activity. As Chapter One will discuss, Heraclitus deflects attention from his own voice in order to privilege engagement with the texts themselves.

In articulating a poetics for Heraclitus' surviving texts, I aim to show that these show us a distinctive project in literary prose, one that is as comprehensive as it is significant for our understanding of early Greek philosophy and literature. One

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<sup>10</sup> Il. 23.707; Od. 21.159,180.

noteworthy feature of this project, and a reason to consider it as such, is that Heraclitus thematizes the role of language and discourse in the human relationship to reality. Archaic and Classical Greeks were often interested in the source and significance of words, but Heraclitus reflects on language as a system, as work by Martha Nussbaum and others has elaborated.<sup>11</sup> We see this in his manipulations of grammar and sense, and especially in the long-running debate around what Heraclitus means by *logos* in B1/D1, an issue I treat in detail in Chapter Three.<sup>12</sup> Heraclitus' role as author is another significant issue. B50/D46, as was just mentioned, makes a remarkable renunciation of authorial voice as the central point of contact with knowledge: οὐκ ἐμοῦ, ἀλλὰ τοῦ λόγου ἀκούσαντας ὁμολογεῖν σοφόν ἐστὶν ἐν πάντα εἶναι. "After listening not to me but to the account, it is wise to speak in agreement that all things are one." This prefigures the gesture that Plato's Socrates makes towards the authority of *logos*, but it is all the more noteworthy because authorial voice has been identified as the central for the communication of knowledge in early Greek prose.<sup>13</sup> Heraclitus' renunciation of personal authority is crucial for the status of *logos* in his texts: how are we meant to hear an authored "account" without hearing its author? This puzzle is only deepened by the

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<sup>11</sup> This idea goes back to Nussbaum 1972a and 1972b, and has been developed considerably by Charles Kahn (1979), James Lesher (1983), and Thomas Robinson (1991).

<sup>12</sup> Early Christian authors in particular took an interest in the status and significance of *logos* in Heraclitus, and one of our best sources for Heraclitus' writings is the third century *Refutation of all heresies*, possibly but not certainly composed by Hippolytus of Rome. Modern scholars have long debated and commented on the significance of *logos*, with most accepting some broader double resonance of the term, though some have maintained that we can restrict the sense of *logos* to Heraclitus' own text and account (e.g., Tarán 1985). A recent article by Mark Johnstone (2014) provides an overview of the debate down to the present, and claims to resolve the matter by finding evidence for a reading of *logos* as a "total account," such that in Heraclitus' usage it may take in the whole of reality without stretching the contemporary semantics to the breaking point. Most helpfully, Johnstone acknowledges that the basic aim of Heraclitus writings is not to expound his own account, but to draw attention to the expression of *logos* in the world itself.

<sup>13</sup> In the words of Simon Goldhill, "This prose does not unfurl like a divinely inspired poem poured through the lips of the bard; it is organized and produced by a self-consciously analytical and persuasive subject who proclaims his mastery of knowledge." Goldhill 2002, 8-9.

radical claim for unity that emerges in the content of wise agreement, so that the statement finally fuses into a more comprehensive unity what it initially surprises us by separating. Moreover, this unity is meant to be jointly enunciated by *logos* and audience alike as they “speak in agreement” (ὁμολογεῖν), a verb that at once echoes *logos* and suggests that the audience cannot remain auditors only, but must participate in speech themselves. Heraclitus is dismantling expectations around authorial voice in order to suggest a novel configuration of author, text, and the communication of understanding.

Perhaps the most notable feature of Heraclitus’ poetics is that, in contrast to Xenophanes, Parmenides, and Empedocles’ adaptations of existing verse forms, he did not simply adapt an existing form but created a new one. This is, in and of itself, sufficient reason to consider the poetics of his texts: we must ask ourselves what kind of discourse Heraclitus creates, and why. That said, scholars have noted several affiliations in the form and genre of the texts as we find them: oracular expression, riddles, aphorism, and *gnomai* or practical maxims have been held up as parallels for the terse and sometimes opaque statements we find in Heraclitus.<sup>14</sup> Oracular speech in particular has been seen as a model for Heraclitus own form of expression, but I will argue in Chapter Four that this is at odds with his insistence that insight, and intelligent speech, are only available in what is “common” (*xunos*) to all things. There is also the then-novel genre of prose *logoi*, in which treatises claim to present authoritative knowledge on one of a wide range of topics. Many take B1/D1 to work with existing conventions around the opening of such a *logos*, with some even arguing that it suggests Heraclitus must have

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<sup>14</sup> On oracular expression, see, e.g., Kahn 1979, 123-126, 130; Maurizio 2012. Kevin Robb (1983) has argued that Heraclitus’ texts bear an affinity with near eastern aphoristic wisdom, and David Gallop (1989) has pointed out the similarity between Heraclitean statements and riddle games, on which Heraclitus expressly draws in B 56.

composed a more conventional prose treatise, despite his obvious penchant for playing with language.<sup>15</sup> We have already seen how Heraclitus manipulates habitual operations of sense-making at the level of grammar and reflects on language as a system of signification, and this extends to an acute sense for the generic expectations of his audience. I hope to show here, then, that we need to consider a poetics in Heraclitus if we are to think through the nexus of issues that he raises around discursive form and the communication of knowledge. And we must think through these issues first if we want to understand what Heraclitus was trying to communicate when he wrote.

### **Methods & Aims**

By making “poetics” the object of inquiry here, I hope to avoid a particular bind around the question of form that arises in the habitual treatment of these texts as “philosophical.” Early Greek philosophy, owing at least partly to the poetic forms in play, differs immensely from the kind of argumentation and theory-building that comes to be associated with and expected of those practicing philosophy later. Here again, Heraclitus is a special case: largely because of his difficult prose, Heraclitus stands in an interesting but uncomfortable relation to the philosophical tradition. He continues to be identified as one of its foundational figures, and rightly so. In his incorporation of Ionian cosmology into a comprehensive worldview and his connected treatments of soul, self-knowledge, and human behavior, Heraclitus erects what will become pillars of later

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<sup>15</sup> Charles Kahn (1979, pp. 96-100) identifies B1/D1 as employing several conventions of contemporary prose *logoi*, which he claims must have developed a sophisticated stylistic format rather quickly. Leonardo Tarán (1985) relies on the language of B1/D1, in particular the sense of *διηγέσθαι*, to support his claim that Heraclitus wrote a continuous prose treatise, also advanced in Walzer 1939.

Greek philosophy.<sup>16</sup> The form of expression in the texts, however, cuts against our identification of Heraclitus as a philosopher, and this has hindered efforts to understand both him and them. As a result, the question of form tends to remain posterior or is reduced to the task of identifying theories and arguments that texts are expected to communicate.

As I mentioned at the outset, Heraclitus writes in a period when ‘philosophy’ hardly exists as a term, let alone a specialized field and mode of inquiry with a well-defined discursive form. Still, it is remarkably difficult to separate his texts from the expectations and assumptions that come with his incorporation into the philosophical tradition. This is not simply a consequence of the historical accident that most of the scholarship on Heraclitus over the last century has been carried out by professional philosophers, but it has meant that the project of philosophical interpretation has tended to dominate approaches to these texts. For some time, scholars took a somewhat disdainful attitude towards the form and features of the texts. Since they did not align with philosophical discourse, Heraclitus was frequently read as either defective or a moment in a teleological movement towards the more properly prosaic exposition and argumentation that prevails in later Greek philosophical texts.<sup>17</sup> Charles Kahn’s 1979 commentary – aptly titled “The Art and Thought of Heraclitus” – has proved seminal for its effort to take seriously “the intimate connection between the linguistic form and the

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<sup>16</sup> Kahn 1979; Long 1992. Other early Greek philosophers are commonly recognized as engineers, statesmen, and sages rather than simple theoreticians (e.g., Nightengale 2007), so Heraclitus’ philosophical ethics, if one may call it that, is novel.

<sup>17</sup> Although Snell (1926) offered a critique of this tendency as it manifests itself in Aristotle’s history of philosophy, the commentary by Marcovich (1967) frequently supposes some limitations natural to Heraclitus as an “archaic” thinker. Work by Jonathan Barnes (1979, p. 63; 1983) has argued that Heraclitus’ gnomic utterance cannot perform genuinely philosophical argumentation, and that his paradoxical statements amount to self-contradiction. His views, even where they are rejected, have often shaped discussion of Heraclitus’ form, as in McCabe 1988 and Granger 2004.

intellectual content of his discourse.”<sup>18</sup> Kahn’s frequently astute readings of individual texts and of Heraclitus as a whole have borne fruit in myriad and lasting contributions to the philosophical and philological study of Heraclitus (as my footnotes here will frequently relate) and his work seeded new appreciation for the literary art in Heraclitus’ writing. Kahn’s goal, as he described it, was to enrich the discussion of Heraclitus by showing how the literary features of the texts – what he termed the “linguistic density” of meaning in individual texts, and the “resonance” of language, tropes, and ideas between them – made several layers of meaning available, often in tension with one another. Effective interpretation, in his view, should elicit and retain as much of this meaning as is reasonable from a hermeneutical and philosophical perspective, in order to bring the full complexity of Heraclitus’ thought into view.<sup>19</sup>

Kahn, trained as a classicist, drew on new approaches to classical Greek literature and detailed knowledge of Heraclitus’ literary and cultural milieu. For all his sensitivity in reading, however, his hermeneutical efforts are explicitly directed towards a certain kind of philosophical interpretation, one that aims to ‘reconstruct’ what and how Heraclitus himself thought about the world:

“One might reasonably claim that *all* of Heraclitus’ fragments have only one single meaning, which is in fact the full semantic structure of his thought as a whole, of which any given phrase is but an incomplete fragment. Our piecemeal ‘readings’ of particular phrases or sentences are best regarded as workmanlike tools for apprehending and reconstructing this global meaning, as a kind of ladder or crutch to be abandoned once the goal of understanding has been achieved.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Kahn 1979, p. 89. This and much of the discussion of Kahn’s approach that follows draws on the methodological essay, “On Reading Heraclitus,” that Kahn’s volume offers before the commentary proper.

<sup>19</sup> See esp. Kahn 1979, pp. 90-92.

<sup>20</sup> Kahn 1979, p. 95.

My quarrel with this approach is that it treats the form and features of discourse – the things that make the texts what they are – as so much material to be translated into the “global meaning” Kahn is after. The work of reading itself becomes simply a means to this end, and one that can be “abandoned” once the end is achieved. Despite the integrity of form and content that Kahn works successfully to establish, he suggests that ultimately the former is, in the ideal case, reducible to the latter. Now I do not mean to suggest that those who read with a view to this kind of interpretation are wrong in thinking that there is a set or even a system of connected ideas about the world to describe there. This need not be the default approach, however: as I have argued, we might think that grasping the poetics of Heraclitus’ unique discourse should be prior to any attempt to describe or reconstruct such “global meaning.” Moreover, it may well be inappropriate to read Heraclitus for the kind of theoretical systems that later and modern philosophers elaborate.<sup>21</sup> Even setting aside this debate, though, it would be difficult to surpass the efforts of Kahn and others on that front, especially given the limitations of the textual evidence. Still, some significant points of disagreement will emerge in the course of this study. My more fundamental difference is one of approach, even as this is indebted to such work on Heraclitus and will, I hope, have something to contribute to it.

By focusing on a prose poetics in the texts of Heraclitus, I aim to give an account of how the literary form of the surviving texts effects a particular discourse and communication. Especially important to me here is the way in which these may elicit work and activity on the part of their audience. I will focus on particular expressive

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<sup>21</sup> Schofield 1991 argues that, for all of Heraclitus’ comments on soul, it is mistaken to assume that there is a systematic theoretical view that we can impute to him. Kahn, on the other hand, agrees with Kirk on the need to reconstruct for Heraclitus an “identity theory of body and mind” or a “psychophysical theory.” Kahn 1979, p. 249.

features in the texts, but also on larger aspects of Heraclitus' discourse like his exercise of authority and the general shape and character of his prose. In general, I work from the texts themselves, striving to articulate the work of reading along with some of its interpretative upshots. To the extent that it is possible, I will also touch on reading and textual practices contemporary to Heraclitus and how these might play out in his texts.<sup>22</sup>

On the whole, I hope to bring to the fore the relationship between Heraclitus' writing and its effects. This is not entirely novel. A major strength of Kahn's readings comes in his attention to process: the way in which Heraclitus' texts, as I have tried to show above, offer multiple readings and deploy features of language that force their audience to puzzle through various possibilities, often to open up alternative patterns of meaning and with them some new conceptual space. Moreover, Kahn and others have noted that this lends an experiential component to Heraclitus' texts, and that there are significant points of contact between the process of engaging with Heraclitus' texts and the kind of thinking that Heraclitus seems to be encouraging.<sup>23</sup> This is what I mean to investigate more thoroughly by attending to a poetics in the texts, even as the descriptive project that I undertake here cannot claim to fully explicate what it is that these texts do: that may only be done by the texts themselves. My work here is intended as a supplement to and not, as Kahn suggests, a replacement for the texts, even in the ideal case. Part of the lasting value in Heraclitus' work lies in its reminder that form is never

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<sup>22</sup> Evidence on these practices is spotty and imperfect, to be sure, but significant work has been: I have already mentioned Svenbro (1993) and, though his focus is epigraphical texts, much of that work is applicable here.

<sup>23</sup> This is especially pronounced in readings of Heraclitus' famous river statement, B12/D, where the bathers step into the ever-changing waters in a stream and many see a parallel between the recognition of stable patterns in a world of flux and the achievement of human personality on the basis of such a recognition. See esp. Snell 1926; Kahn 1979, pp. 166-168; Graham 2009.

dispensable to discourse, and the relationship between discourse and its objects is rarely straightforward. Heraclitus' texts continue to show that understanding is an activity rather than some comprehensive content that discourse fixes for us.

The experiential aspect of reading Heraclitus, insofar as it encourages a form of philosophical thinking, is important for new reflection on how we conceptualize the ancient philosophical tradition. Recent work has shown that ancient schools of thought were at least as concerned with commitment to a particular way of living as they were with their theoretical positions and the arguments that supported them. Pierre Hadot has famously described ancient philosophy as a “way of life,” treating the commitment made to a philosophical worldview along the lines of a religious conversion, and arguing that philosophical argumentation took place in support of this commitment and its implications for living rather than the other way around.<sup>24</sup> Largely in response to Hadot, John Cooper has recently argued that the activity of reason – exercised in philosophical discourse, theoretical commitments, and in the conduct of life – is nevertheless the core of philosophy common to the various schools and life practices that comprise the ancient philosophical tradition.<sup>25</sup>

As I have already mentioned, Heraclitus has been seen as the first to put forward a philosophical view of human life in which knowledge and ethics are inseparable. Yet both Hadot and Cooper begin their accounts with Socrates, albeit in different ways. Hadot uses the Socrates of Plato's dialogues to show that Plato valued philosophical discourse insofar as it produced a “conversion” and ongoing commitment to a

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<sup>24</sup> Hadot 1995. The French title of the original publication, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique?*, shows the kind of radical reimagination Hadot took himself to be carrying out.

<sup>25</sup> Cooper 2012.

philosophical form of life.<sup>26</sup> Cooper, skeptical about what we can impute to Plato from his literary compositions, prefers instead to treat the literary representation of Socrates as definitive for the history of philosophy, even as he admits that this cannot give us a genuinely historical Socrates.<sup>27</sup> Both approaches are in keeping with a well-worn view that early Greek philosophy, often termed “pre-Socratic,” concerned itself mainly with natural scientific and, to some extent, metaphysical and epistemological questions until Socrates, in Cicero’s famous formulation, “brought philosophy into the city” by inquiring into ethical and political ideas, alongside psychological issues that bear on human behavior and the conduct of life both individually and socially.<sup>28</sup> One difficulty for this narrative is that it relies precisely on the literary representation of Socrates, especially in Plato but also in Xenophon and elsewhere, to construct a history of philosophy. It just so happens that this narrative about “pre-Socratic” philosophy is very much in line with the one that Plato has his character Socrates recite in the *Phaedo* as a kind of philosophical autobiography.<sup>29</sup>

My goal is not to put forward an alternative history of Greek philosophy, but simply to show that Heraclitus and the poetics of his texts should matter for our thinking about the tradition. Hadot does not mention Heraclitus. Cooper acknowledges that Heraclitus could be taken to offer a philosophical way of life to his readers, but dismisses him on the basis of his “notorious obscurity,” another indicator of modern philosophers’

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<sup>26</sup> Hadot 1995, pp.93-4.

<sup>27</sup> Cooper 2012, pp. 28-30. Cooper’s “notional” Socrates makes sense as a strategy for assessing the impact that literary representations of Socrates had on later philosophical schools, but it is less promising as an avenue to constructing a genuine history of philosophy. As Cooper acknowledges, Plato looms large here.

<sup>28</sup> Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* V.10.

<sup>29</sup> Plato, *Phaedo* 99d3 – 101b3. See also Laks (trans. Most) 2018, reviewing the history of “presocratic philosophy” as a concept.

frequent discomfort with his form of expression.<sup>30</sup> Curiously enough, the challenge of reading literary texts clearly shaped by a particular poetics also keeps Cooper from considering Plato himself. Cooper may wish to forgo the kind of literary analysis that might let him assess a Heraclitean way of life or a Platonic one, but excising either figure, let alone Plato, is quite a bit to give up for anyone aiming to grasp the character of ancient philosophy.<sup>31</sup> Here we see the importance of considering the poetics that inform particular texts, especially in foundational and highly particular cases like those of Heraclitus and Plato.

Making poetics a primary object of inquiry for texts in the philosophical tradition is an important asset to new perspectives on philosophy as a distinctive kind of activity. In fact, it could be argued that in what we recognize as early philosophical texts much of their literary aspects have to do with the drive to find expression and new discursive forms for a way of thinking that was entirely novel, and at least in some cases thought to be at once foundational and revolutionary for human life. This seems especially true of Heraclitus, even as his idiosyncratic writings have proved so difficult to understand. Cooper, concerned to show that a thoroughgoing rationalism and argumentative discourse lay at the heart of any philosophical way of life in antiquity, might object that it will be difficult to attribute these things to Heraclitus. Yet M.M. McCabe has argued that Heraclitus' most paradoxical statements are designed to point up a distinctly rational problem, and thereby elicit a person's commitment to the Law of Non-Contradiction.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Cooper 2012, p.31.

<sup>31</sup> Cooper 2012, pp. 25-32. He demurs from considering Plato on the grounds that the dialogues' form restricts from imputing any particular views to their author, except by an extended and contentious process of literary analysis.

<sup>32</sup> McCabe 1988. She has also argued for an integral connection between literary form and philosophical method in Plato, defined in large part against the work of his predecessors: Heraclitus and Heracliteans are,

And Heraclitus in B1/D1 seems to work from the assumption that recognizing the truth about things plays a normative and a motivational role in human behavior, which Cooper makes essential to the practical orientation of ancient philosophy.<sup>33</sup> Difficult though it may be, we must be good readers of Heraclitus if we want to do justice to the full scope of ancient philosophy.

In Heraclitus we encounter a complex and idiosyncratic literary form, and this in the largest body of authored prose before Herodotus. Besides the meta-discursive elements implicit in Heraclitus' use of language, he also touches explicitly on the intellectual authority of epic poetry, the popular sayings of sage figures, oracular utterance, mystery ritual, and Ionian science and *historie* as it expresses itself in poetry and in prose. In this sense, we could read Heraclitus as keenly attuned to different forms of discourse that communicated the various, and often competing, forms of knowledge around him. For this reason, much of the discussion in the first two chapters focuses on situating Heraclitus among the poetics of what he saw as discourses rival to his own. Though Homeric and Hesiodic poetry antedate Heraclitus, I often draw on those epic traditions in particular, especially because they receive so much attention from Heraclitus' himself. Other figures have been similarly sensitive to his own poetics, as we see in the rich tradition of imitating or otherwise drawing on Heraclitus' discourse. The Hippocratic author of the treatise *On Regimen*, the atomist philosopher Democritus, and, in modernity, Friedrich Nietzsche and the poets René Char and Charles Olson are just a

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on her reading of Plato, unable to participate in philosophical dialectic, and with it the right relationship between reason and personhood. McCabe 2001, esp. pp. 104-138.

<sup>33</sup> Cooper describes three interconnected assumptions that he takes as definitive for the relationship between philosophy and the conduct of life: 1) Human reason is a motivating force for action; 2) Philosophy is the intellectual accomplishment whereby reason is perfected; 3) The power of the truth: recognition of the truth will motivate action. Cooper 2012, pp. 11-15.

few examples from a diverse set of figures that found inspiration in Heraclitus for their own written form. Heraclitus' writings clearly offer themselves as a compelling and highly particular practice of textual communication. More so than any other figure in early Greek philosophy, Heraclitus engages with the significance, place, and possibilities of language and discourse.

In striving to articulate a prose poetics for Heraclitus, then, I hope to reevaluate and substantiate his role in both the philosophical and literary culture of ancient Greece. I have touched on philosophical approaches in modern scholarship on Heraclitus, but he is often left out of scholarship on Greek literature altogether. Studies on early Greek prose barely reckon with his texts, perhaps because they disrupt scholarly narratives that tend to emphasize the medium's continuities with modern scientific prose.<sup>34</sup> Work focused on Heraclitus' style itself has been isolated and sporadic, and only rarely looks beyond the texts of Heraclitus themselves to consider their intersections with the poetic and literary culture of their time.<sup>35</sup> Even where it does so, the emphasis tends to be on one generic affiliation rather than the wide-ranging engagement with existing discourses that we find in these texts. This is surprising in part because Heraclitus writes during a particularly interesting period in literary history: literacy is only just gaining currency in Greek culture, and writing is still negotiating its relationship to oral communication, both in general and in the culturally authoritative forms of epic poetry. In studying the prose poetics of these texts, then, I hope to show that they occupy a significant place in the

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<sup>34</sup> E.g., Goldhill 2002, Humphreys 2007. These narratives persist even as some point out that, as far as our evidence goes, prose in Greece seems to have been highly stylized from the beginning Kahn 1979, 96-97.

<sup>35</sup> A host of studies look at possible generic affiliations individually. Robb 1983 compares Heraclitean utterance with the near eastern proverbial tradition; Gallop 1989 studies the similarity to riddles; the connection between Heraclitus and oracles has already been mentioned. I am aiming here at a more comprehensive consideration of Heraclitus' relationship to other forms of discourse.

study of Greek literature, both for their engagement with other literary modes and for their own distinctive project.

Finally, one must acknowledge the several difficulties in working with Heraclitus' texts that come with the loss of the original composition: questions of authenticity, completeness, presentation, and publication cannot be answered unless much more evidence should appear. The difficulties in working with Heraclitus' texts are real, but despite these we cannot afford to ignore them. As artifacts of early Greek prose, these texts are remarkable for their artfulness as well as their uniqueness. Although they are remnants of a lost composition, Heraclitus' texts come to us with a formal completeness not available for any other early Greek philosopher. We have good reasons for thinking that the surviving texts are not fragments of a continuous prose treatise, but rather individual components, largely complete in themselves, of a composition that made extensive use of individual aphorisms or gnomic statements. Even if the original organization of that composition is lost to us, what we have nevertheless offers insight into the form and character of Heraclitus' prose, as most scholars agree.<sup>36</sup> We can have confidence, then, that the extant remains of Heraclitus' work offer us a set of texts on which we can base a robust study of their poetics.

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<sup>36</sup> Theophrastus is said to have written that Heraclitus text was 'unfinished,' and the text "On Style" attributes Heraclitus' obscurity primarily to the absence of connecting particles (see Laks and Most 2016, Vol. III, 205-211). Both of these testimonia suggest that the text was aphoristic. Among modern scholars, Charles Kahn is unique in insisting that Heraclitus' text must have exhibited some highly significant arrangement as a whole. He bases this view on a general impression of archaic Greeks' commitment to form, citing architecture and sculpture in particular, rather than on any evidence or views concerning Heraclitus or even ancient texts more generally. Glenn Most (1999), situating the texts of early Greek philosophy within contemporary Greek literature, argues the opposite: that we can see a widespread emphasis on "microscopic" form versus "macroscopic" form. Even Kahn admits that, ultimately, the independence of individual statements suggests that a key aim of Heraclitus' style is to let readers interpret statements in isolation or through connections present in the ideas and language of the statements rather than any arrangement in which they were presented. Kahn 1979, 90-91.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Heraclitus' Rejection of Personal Authority

οὐκ ἐμοῦ, ἀλλὰ τοῦ λόγου ἀκούσαντας ὁμολογεῖν σοφόν ἐστὶν ἐν πάντα εἶναι.  
“After listening not to me but to the account (*logos*), it is wise to speak in agreement that all things are one.” Heraclitus DK B50/LM D46

...ὡς ἐγὼ οὐ νῦν πρῶτον ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀεὶ τοιοῦτος οἶος τῶν ἐμῶν μηδενὶ ἄλλῳ  
πείθεσθαι ἢ τῷ λόγῳ ὅς ἄν μοι λογιζομένῳ βέλτιστος φαίνεται.  
Socrates: “... since I am – not just now for the first time but always – the sort of man who is persuaded only by that account (*logos*) which, by my own accounting (*logizomenōi*), appears best to me.” Plato *Crito* 46b

οὐ γὰρ δὴ ἔγωγέ πω οἶδα, ἀλλ’ ὅπη ἂν ὁ λόγος ὥσπερ πνεῦμα φέρη, ταύτη ἰτέον.  
Socrates: “For I myself sure don’t know just yet, but wherever the discussion (*logos*), like wind, should carry us, there we must go.” Plato *Republic* 394d

Much has been made of Heraclitus’ idiosyncratic form of expression, but little attention has been given to situating this among the discursive forms that were most influential among his contemporaries. This is surprising for two reasons. First, because Heraclitus wrote during a period of revolutionary shifts in knowledge and its discourses, in which new forms of knowledge are advanced through both adaptations of traditional poetic forms and the novel medium of prose. Second, Heraclitus’ texts show tremendous sensitivity to the particularities of knowledge discourses both traditional and novel: his critique of existing authorities ranges across freely both, even as his texts adapt their language and tropes. These points have not been ignored, but they have never been taken offer a frame for our approach to Heraclitus’ discourse. The rejection of authority in B50/D46 is often registered as I have framed it above: a curiosity of “pre-socratic” thought that finds mature expression in later philosophy. It is more important, though, that we appreciate the radical break it marks with existing practices around authorial voice and the communication of knowledge.

This chapter focuses on the role of personal authority and presence in the transmission of knowledge, an analysis that I hope will show how contextualizing Heraclitus' poetics sheds light both on it and on Greek literature at large. I mean personal authority to express the way in which a writer, claiming to offer knowledge or wisdom, creates an authoritative voice in text, one that aims to communicate its own skill, expertise, and experience in such a way that itself becomes justification for an audience to accept what it claims as true. Discussion here will show how the implicit presence of the person (or persona) in the text is essential to this personal authority, a pattern that persists across both epic and early prose. Heraclitus is, as we shall see, keen to tear down the authority of such voices, from Homer and Hesiod to Pythagoras and Xenophanes.<sup>1</sup> Here I argue that Heraclitus' critique of existing authorities partly tracks this pattern in existing discourses, while his own writing distinguishes itself from it. Heraclitus' texts thus resist offering their author as the source and site of knowledge transmission, instead suggesting the text itself as the proper avenue for acquiring knowledge.

My analysis here means mainly to shed light on Heraclitus, but I think it also has consequences for the way that we view early Greek prose. For, as we shall see momentarily, the voice and personal presence of the author in the text is central to

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<sup>1</sup> Contemporary philosophers treat a similar phenomenon in debates on what they call 'epistemic authority.' See esp. DeGeorge 1976; Zagzebski 2013. Zagzebski focuses on the relational aspect of epistemic authority, but Stephen Darwall insists that "it depends fundamentally on a person's relation to facts as they are anyways, not on one's relation to other rational cognizers." (2006, 12). Darwall's view may be appropriate to the modern conceptions of scientific knowledge but the Greek case should be seen as a contrast. In that context, traditional accounts explained Darwall's "facts as they are" in terms of relations between persons: Holmes 2010, for example, points out that Greeks seem to have imagined bodily symptoms in terms of "social agents" at work there and in the world at large. In what follows here I hope to show that literary knowledge transmission is similarly conceived and practiced as a relation between persons.

claiming authority in early Greek poetry and prose both. Studies of early prose have emphasized the centrality of an authoritative personal voice, but paint this in terms of a contrast with poetry.<sup>2</sup> Such studies typically marginalize or flat out ignore Heraclitus, despite the fact that he offers us the largest body of authored prose before Herodotus. His challenging form and famously obscure conception of *logos* disrupt the prose/poetry dichotomy, as well as an existing scholarly narrative that emphasizes the clarity of prose and its suitability for communicating scientific discourse.<sup>3</sup> In pointing out how personal presence in knowledge transmission persists across both poetry and prose, as well as Heraclitus' radical critique of and departure from this pattern, I hope to similarly disrupt some settled ideas about the emergence and significance of early Greek prose.

## **I. Personal Authority and Authorial Presence in Epic**

### **a. Homer and Hesiod**

It is practically beyond dispute that Homer and Hesiod were, as Heraclitus' engagement with them attests, so authoritative for the Greeks that merely attributing a statement to either might suffice in winning assent to it.<sup>4</sup> We will see Heraclitus call Hesiod the "teacher of most men," and his predecessor Xenophanes saw Homer shaping

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<sup>2</sup> Goldhill 2002, 8-9: "This prose does not unfurl like a divinely inspired poem poured through the lips of the bard; it is organized and produced by a self-consciously analytical and persuasive subject who proclaims his mastery of knowledge."

<sup>3</sup> Goldhill 2002, esp. 4ff; Humphreys 1997. Goldhill simply bypasses Heraclitus and his Ionian predecessors to make Herodotus the landmark text for his titular "invention of prose." Leslie Kurke (2011) uses that same phrase in her title and, though she is eager to show how the figure of Aesop challenges the narrative that prose develops as a medium for the intellectual pursuits of high culture, she follows Goldhill's emphasis on Herodotus as the definitive text and similarly ignores Heraclitus.

<sup>4</sup> Homer is exemplary for vividness, *enargeia*, in the discussion of Ps-Demetrius' *On Style*, which cites *Il.* 21.257 and 23.379, and is praised for the same by Longinus (*On the Sublime*, 15, 26). Zanker 1981, n. 29 discusses occurrences in the *Scholia* and a possible reference to Homer as "autoptic" in *Pap. Ox.* 1086. See also Ford 1992, 54; Fränkel 1975, 15; Walsh 1984, 13.

the worldview of *all*.<sup>5</sup> This is personal authority in the most complete sense. Even as poets' names came to carry such weight, however, the poetry itself locates the source of what it knows in contact with persons, though sometimes divine ones: the Muses guarantee the knowledge that enables epic poetry by making it superior to other forms of discourse. Andrew Ford examines the treatment of human discourse internal to Homeric poetry and finds that "the fiction of the Muses serves to distinguish heroic poetry from other oral traditions: it elevates such poetry above mere "report" into a contact, mediated to be sure, with an actual witness to events."<sup>6</sup> As Ford points out, the value of what epic claims to know lies in access to the account of one who may claim to have been present at the scene of the event in question. Ford's use of the term "witness" is telling: as we will see in Chapter Four, Heraclitus places similar emphasis upon the importance of being present, for which he makes witnessing paradigmatic, though in a specific sense I will discuss there. One crucial difference will be that Heraclitus is concerned not with events of the heroic or even recent past, but proper cognition of the objects and phenomena of everyday experience. And, as we shall see here, Heraclitus dismantles the way in which epic mediates access to its witnesses through the person of the poet.

Ford's account focuses in particular on the invocation to the Muse at *Il.* 2.484-6:

Ἔσπετε νῦν μοι Μοῦσαι Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχουσαι·  
ὕμεις γὰρ θεαὶ ἐστε πάρεστε τε ἴστε τε πάντα,  
ἡμεῖς δὲ κλέος οἶον ἀκούομεν οὐδέ τι ἴδμεν·

Tell me now you Muses who have homes on Olympus  
For you are goddesses, you are present, and you know everything,  
But we hear only fame and we do not know anything...

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<sup>5</sup> DK 21 B13/LM D11: ἐξ ἀρχῆς καθ' Ὅμηρον ἐπεὶ μεμαθήκασι πάντες. "From the beginning all have learned according to Homer."

<sup>6</sup> Ford 1992, 62. Goldhill 1991 similarly notes the importance of presence for knowledge, and thus of the role of the Muses as providing witness.

Ford notes the “nearly incantatory assonance” in 2.485 (ἐστε πάρεστέ τε ἴστέ), and the triplex guarantee of epic’s discursive preeminence: divinity, presence, and knowledge.<sup>7</sup> I would add that “presence” (πάρεστέ) in particular is front and center in that pattern of assonance as well as the poetic line itself. It is the assurance of such presence, as a function of divine power and immortality, that guarantees the privileged stature of what Greeks imagined the gods can and do know. This privilege, transmitted through the poet, enables the compelling vividness of epic poetry, the feature Ford and others consistently treat as its hallmark.<sup>8</sup> The success of epic is thus a function of the Muses’ personal presence: the poet’s success in performance is both a consequence and a confirmation of this presence.

Over and above providing a guarantee for epic’s poetic power, Claude Calame points out that the Muses also serve as the origin of its practice in the vocation and instruction of the poet:

“As early as Homer, poetry represents a practice that is the object of instruction received within a privileged relationship with the Muses and their mother, Memory. If Demodocus is particularly honored by Odysseus, it is because the “race of *aoidoi*” enjoys the love of the Muse, if not Apollo, who taught (*edidaxe*) them the ways of song. While appearing to the poet in a famous inspirational vision, the Muses perform this same didactic function for Hesiod. Knowing how to articulate discourse (*artiepeiai*), they both taught (*edidaxan*) the poet his Theogony and breathed it into him (*enepneusan*).”<sup>9</sup>

In Calame’s view, the Muses provide an original instructive relationship, while their continued presence for the poet confirms his own authority. That authority persists in the tradition as another kind of personal presence, and in this way may perpetuate the original divine presence thought to enable the production of the poem.

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<sup>7</sup> Ford 1992, 60-61.

<sup>8</sup> Ford 1992, e.g., De Jong (ed.) 1999.

<sup>9</sup> Calamé 2005, 92.

Hesiod, on the other hand, is notable for constructing his own presence in the poem, and grounding knowledge there.<sup>10</sup> The narrative voice of the *Theogony* stages its vocation to poetry in a famous visit from the Muses, albeit one that is much more abusive than Calame’s “love” relationship imagines:<sup>11</sup>

ποιμένες ἄγραυλοι, κάκ’ ἐλέγχεα, γαστέρες οἶον,  
ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα,  
ἴδμεν δ’, εὖτ’ ἐθέλωμεν, ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι.

Hillbilly shepherds, disgraceful wretches, simply stomachs,  
We know how to speak many falsehoods seeming correct,  
We know, too, when we wish, how to sing out the truth.

Here Hesiod conjures up the Muses as a speaking presence within his poem, bringing them even closer to his audience than the Homeric invocation that we just examined.

Hesiod thus assures us that he has made contact with the Muses, even if their address to him raises doubts that such contact inevitably provides access to truth. These few lines, which may cast a pall of doubt over even Hesiod’s poetry, have been a hotbed of interpretive conflict among modern commentators.<sup>12</sup> Even so, I take the scene of

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<sup>10</sup> Hesiod’s poems become the model for instructive relations in later didactic poetry, and for the poet in his culture. Yet the relationship between poetry and instruction is not so straightforward from the standpoint of modern criticism. James Redfield claims the emphasis on poetry as teaching is a shift original to the fifth century, and one attributable to the environment of the sophistic revolution. Redfield 1975, 42, [apud Ford 1987, 61]. On the second point, the very idea of didactic poetry is contested, above all because it is not recognized in ancient criticism, which Joseph Farrell (2003) attributes to the notion that all poetry was taken to have instructive value. Malcolm Heath (1985) has especially resisted the application of the term to Hesiod’s poetry, arguing that, despite his later place as “teacher” of the Greeks and a model for poems offering instruction in some body of knowledge, our inability to know the immediate reception of the poem must forestall the inference that instruction is the *telos* of the text. More recently, Rana Liebert (2017) has argued that critics have tended to ignore pleasure as the express purpose of such poetry, preferring to focus on knowledge, instruction, and the space for social critique that go with them.

<sup>11</sup> Compton 2006 explores both the punitive character of some poet-muse encounters, as well as the abuse and scape-goating of poets by the societies to which they claimed to offer the inspiration and knowledge won from such encounters with the Muses. A third-century B.C.E. inscription from Paros describes Archilochus’ encounter with the Muses: while leading his father’s cow to market in the countryside, he meets a group of women who belittle him before offering a fair price for the cow. They and the cow both disappear, leaving behind a lyre. (*Inscr. Mnesiep.* E II 20-57 = Lasserre and Bonnard 1958 fr. A 11a.)

<sup>12</sup> For a survey of the persistent conflicts around the interpretation of this passage, see Stoddard 2004, ch. 3.

instruction that he goes on to describe – not to mention the elaborate hymning of the Muses that, conspicuously similar to their own hymns to Zeus and the gods, surrounds this arresting encounter – to be meant in part as proof that *he* is a favorite of the Muses and an auditor of their truth, even as their speech states unambiguously that they do not always tell the truth. The very fact that Hesiod presents this personal encounter with the Muses points to the importance of interpersonal contact for the transmission of knowledge in poetry. Moreover, in showing that such contact is not itself sufficient to ensure the transmission of the truth, Hesiod only raises the stakes of this encounter: however much this passage problematizes contact with the Muses as a source of truth, he hardly suggests that poets may arrive at it independently of them. The effect is to focus attention all the more on the particulars of the interpersonal encounter.

Similar “autobiographical” statements across the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days* secure the continuing authority of the poetic voice and may also serve as a “protreptic” that illuminates the movement from error to understanding. Hesiod’s description of two kinds of strife near the beginning of the *Works and Days* (12ff) has been seen as evincing both the biographical extension and intellectual evolution of the author.<sup>13</sup> In this Hesiod seems keen to model an especially human form of knowledge, even if this must accept certain limitations. In doing so, Hesiod affirms the all important epistemic link between personal presence or experience and knowledge, as we see when he must admit that naming three thousand rivers is beyond his abilities at *Theogony* 367-370:

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<sup>13</sup> Most 1991; As Diskin Clay has written, “It is obvious from even the most cursory study of the comments on ancient poets that most ancient readers regarded poetry as autobiographical and – to use the word Goethe made famous – confessional.” (1998, 10)

τόσσοι δ' αὖθ' ἕτεροι ποταμοὶ καναχηδὰ ῥέοντες,  
υἱέες Ὠκεανοῦ, τοὺς γείνατο πότνια Τηθύς·  
τῶν ὄνομ' ἀργαλέον πάντων βροτὸν ἀνέρ' ἐνισπεῖν,  
οἱ δὲ ἕκαστοι ἴσασιν, ὅσοι περὶναιετάωσιν.

But so many other sounding streams flow on,  
sons of Okeanos, those Queen Tethys bore:  
All their names are hard for a mortal man to relate,  
but they each know, however many dwell nearby.

The rivers and those who live near them are similarly described: a series of masculine nominative plurals that occupy more than half of the line. This link, which emphasizes the quantity of rivers and their neighbors both, may at once mark the absence of names or substantive descriptions for either – a poignant lack of *kleos* – while also emphasizing their interrelatedness: the people who live near each river do so because of the river and, since they depend on it, they more than likely have a name for it that is familiar to them. Hesiod, in marking the limits of his own knowledge, nevertheless confirms the connection between knowledge and personal presence. Hesiod may, through contact with the truth-telling Muses and his own self-instruction, be exceptional in what humans can know, but he remains human nonetheless.

In all of this, Hesiod is filling out his own personality as it appears to the audience of his poetry. The poet has privileged access to knowledge but is, nonetheless, human like the rest of us. Hesiod also manages to deploy the limits of his knowledge in ways that elaborate his own presence as both privileged and human, all the while affirming the link between knowledge and personal presence. In the *Works and Days*, Hesiod makes the admission of lacking knowledge about sailing an opportunity for narrating the poet's only voyage, a trip to Euboea from Aulis for a poetic contest in which our singer naturally carries off first prize:

...δείξω δὴ τοι μέτρα πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης,  
 οὔτε τι ναυτιλίας σεσοφισμένος οὔτε τι νηῶν.  
 οὐ γὰρ πῶ ποτε νηὶ [γ'] ἐπέπλων εὐρέα πόντον,  
 εἰ μὴ ἐς Εὐβοίαν ἐξ Αὐλίδος, ἧ ποτ' Ἀχαιοὶ  
 μείναντες χειμῶνα πολὺν σὺν λαὸν ἄγειραν  
 Ἑλλάδος ἐξ ἱερῆς Τροίην ἐς καλλιγύναικα.  
 ἔνθα δ' ἐγὼν ἐπ' ἄεθλα δαΐφρονος Ἀμφιδάμαντος  
 Χαλκίδα [τ'] εἰσεπέρησα· τὰ δὲ προπεφραδμένα πολλὰ  
 ἄεθλ' ἔθεσαν παῖδες μεγαλήτορες· ἔνθα μέ φημι  
 ὕμῳ νικήσαντα φέρειν τρίποδ' ὠτώεντα.  
 τὸν μὲν ἐγὼ Μούσησ' Ἑλικωνιάδεσσ' ἀνέθηκα  
 ἔνθα με τὸ πρῶτον λιγυρῆς ἐπέβησαν ἀοιδῆς.  
 τόσσον τοι νηῶν γε πεπεῖρημαι πολυγόμφων·  
 ἀλλὰ καὶ ὡς ἐρέω Ζηνὸς νόον αἰγιόχοιο·  
 Μοῦσαι γὰρ μ' ἐδίδαξαν ἀθέσφατον ὕμνον ἀείδειν. (WD, 648-62)

I will show you the measures of the much-roaring sea,  
 though not at all skilled in either sailing or ships.  
 For I never sailed the broad sea in a ship,  
 except to Euboea from Aulis, where once the Achaeans,  
 waiting out winter, gathered a great force  
 from sacred Hellas, bound for Troy with its fine women.  
 There I passed over to Chalcis for the games of wise Amphidamas,  
 and his greathearted sons set out many prizes as advertised.  
 I declare that there I, winning in song, took the winged tripod.  
 This I then dedicated to the Heliconian Muses  
 there where I first went on the way of clear song.  
 So much experience I have of many-nailed ships:  
 but even so I will speak the mind of aegis-bearing Zeus,  
 for the Muses taught me to sing inexpressible song.

Hesiod focuses our attention on place and presence in the process of building up his own authority. The repeated ἔνθα δ' ἐγὼν/ ἔνθα μέ/ ἔνθα μέ (654, 56, 59) emphatically locates the poet's person just where his voice demonstrates its preeminence, first in the journey, then the victory, then the dedication at Helicon. It marks too that this occurs on Homeric territory: the first “ἔνθα” takes the trip that Hesiod makes to compete in Amphidamas' games and maps it onto the Homeric world and the Achaeans' journey to Troy. Later Greeks, at least, certainly read it this way, and so much so that this anecdote spawned an entire tradition imagining that the competition at Chalcis was between

Hesiod and Homer himself.<sup>14</sup> That Greeks and later antiquity were keen to imagine a personal and competitive encounter between these two pillars of cultural authority shows just how central the person of the poet was to the authoritativeness of the text, and the extent to which this framework for authority persists in the cultural imagination.

Returning to Hesiod's own text, his victory and dedication of the tripod prize to the Muses at Helicon takes us deeper into his own biography: he takes us back to the scene of instruction discussed above, reinforcing our confidence in an ongoing and mutually beneficent relationship between poet and Muses. At the same time, in contrast to Homer's Book 2 invocation and even his own earlier address to them, Hesiod explicitly locates the Muses' role as instructors and mediators in the past. This, along with the profusion of first-personal verbs and pronouns throughout the passage, impress upon us that it is Hesiod himself who 'speaks the mind of aegis-bearing Zeus.'

Hesiod, then, makes the success of his poem depend on his own voice, one that assiduously constructs its own authoritativeness through repeated reference to the connection of knowledge with personal presence, and also indicates its full personhood in biography.<sup>15</sup> That Heraclitus calls Hesiod the teacher of most Greeks (DK B57/LM D25) testifies to his success in doing so. Hesiod persists in Greek consciousness as the preeminent place for an encounter with privileged knowledge, an encounter to which the personal presence of Hesiod in his text is indispensable.

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<sup>14</sup> Extant manuscripts describing the contest have been traced to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, but more than one scholar, beginning with Friedrich Nietzsche (1870), has shown that the story may be traced back to at least the fifth century. See, e.g., West 1967, Richardson 1981.

<sup>15</sup> Theognis similarly establishes his own authority, though divine knowledge is not at stake: σοὶ δ' ἐγὼ εὖ φρονέων ὑποθήσομαι, οἷά περ ἀντός, / Κύρν', ἀπὸ τῶν ἀγαθῶν παῖς ἔτ' ἐὼν ἔμαθον. "And I meaning you well offer such things, Kymus, as I myself from good men learned while yet a boy." 1.27-28 (Teubner ed. Young 1971)

### **b. Persistence of personal authority in Parmenides' Proem**

Parmenides offers, for my purposes, a valuable comparand to Homer and Hesiod: here is an author who is working in proximity, perhaps even in direct response, to Heraclitus' thought, though he has opted to adapt the traditional medium of epic to his discourse. There is ample reason to think that Parmenides understood himself to be offering a novel world view in contention with all other views: he suggests contact with a truth that not only departs from traditional ideas but even from empirical phenomena. It is not clear why Parmenides preferred epic poetry over any other medium, and scholars have debated whether and how Parmenides might merit respect for his poetic gifts and resourcefulness, or lack thereof.<sup>16</sup> Irrespective of these questions, though, Parmenides turns out to similarly depend upon the role of personal presence in transmitting understanding, showing that such presence remains central to the transmission of knowledge even in the case of adaptations like Parmenides.

It is natural to look first at the proem to his work, the beginning and perhaps most complete piece of his work that comes down to us. There has been significant debate over whether the proem offers an allegorical treatment of the journey into knowledge, a traditional proem programmatic for the work, or a 'true' account of mystical experience.<sup>17</sup> None of these are mutually exclusive, of course, and that debate is not

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<sup>16</sup> See, e.g., Havelock 1958; Dolin 1962; Hershbell 1968, 1970; See esp. Wright 1998 and response from C. Osborne in the same volume.

<sup>17</sup> Bowra 1937 insists on an allegorical reading of the proem, and indeed on allegory as its defining feature and contribution to the tradition, despite the apparent anachronism of allegory during the time Parmenides composed his poetry. More recently, and due in part to the very novelty of allegory claimed by Bowra, scholars have backed away from the view. Miller 2006 argues for a functional view of the proem that does not diminish its literary value; it is an orientation, Miller claims, for a reader steeped in Hesiod and aware of Anaximander, to the radical claim for "what-is." McKirahan 1994 and Coxon 1986 have been more willing to consider the communication of an experience of conviction arising from logical proof, something they claim begins with Parmenides. Peter Kingsley (1999) argues that the proem is an account of mystical experience.

central to my analysis here. In my view, Parmenides notably reconfigures the relation between the divine ground of knowledge and the production of the poem, while preserving the emphasis on personal presence and relations that, as I am arguing, grounds knowledge and its transmission in epic. Parmenides inverts the Hesiodic visitation: rather than being accosted by the Muses in a rural setting, as Hesiod and Archilochus are, he takes a chariot ride beyond the gates of the paths of Night and Day to the gllas of the goddess. The reception he receives on the other side exhibits none of the mockery or abuse characteristic of encounters with the Muses in earlier poetry, instead offering assurances that both truth and falsehood will be laid bare:

καί με θεὰ πρόφρων ὑπεδέξατο, χεῖρα δὲ χειρὶ  
 δεξιτερῆν ἔλεν, ὧδε δ' ἔπος φάτο καί με προσηύδα·  
 ὦ κοῦρ' ἀθανάτοισι συνάρορος ἠνιόχοισιν,  
 ἵπποις ταί σε φέρουσιν ἰκάνων ἡμέτερον δῶ,  
 χαίρ', ἐπεὶ οὔτι σε μοῖρα κακῆ προὔπεμπε νέεσθαι  
 τήνδ' ὁδόν (ἦ γὰρ ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων ἐκτὸς πάτου ἐστίν),  
 ἀλλὰ θέμις τε δίκη τε. χρεὼ δέ σε πάντα πυθέσθαι  
 ἡμὲν Ἀληθείης εὐπείθεος<sup>18</sup> ἀτρεμὲς ἦτορ  
 ἡδὲ βροτῶν δόξας, ταῖς οὐκ ἔνι πίστις ἀληθῆς.  
 ἀλλ' ἔμπης καὶ ταῦτα μαθήσῃ, ὡς τὰ δοκοῦντα  
 χρῆν δοκίμως εἶναι διὰ παντὸς πάντα περῶντα. (DK 28 B1/LM D4)

And the goddess received me kindly, my right hand in hers,  
 she took, speaking and addressing me with these words: '  
 Young man, accompanied by immortal charioteers,  
 who reach my house by the horses which bring you,  
 welcome - since it was not an evil destiny that sent you forth to travel  
 this road (for indeed it is far from the beaten path of humans),  
 but Right and justice. There is need for you to learn all things –  
 both the unshaken heart of persuasive Truth  
 and the opinions of mortals, in which there is no true confidence (*pistis*)  
 But nevertheless you will learn these too, how the things that seem to be  
 must be most seemly, being in every way all things.  
 (trans. McKirahan 1994, modified)

<sup>18</sup> Following the reading of Coxon and McKirahan 2009 for εὐκυκλέος, as Laks and Most also do.

We are a long way from the track of mortals, as the goddess points out, but also from the disdainful and ambiguous address of the Muses to Hesiod. Though nothing in Parmenides' text explicitly invites this particular comparison, his journey does take place on Hesiodic terrain and adapts his topographical descriptions (much as we saw Hesiod's trip from Aulis covering Homeric ground).<sup>19</sup> The place is far in relation to the human world, but it is the goddess's home (ἡμέτερον δῶ) and she is eminently hospitable: she expects him, offers a kind welcome, and will leave no ambiguity in her account, treating both the truth and deceptive views as such. Each of these features – goodwill, completeness, and the lack of ambiguity – are important, especially since the goddess will say that all mortal opinions are in error. If for this reason the *kouros* in the poem must be totally alienated from any human community, the goddess offers him a new, divine community in which social and epistemic relations are perfected.

The sense of an immediate community with the divine is also developed through the voice of the poem, since it goes on to proceed from the goddess herself. We might read this situation as a claim to an even greater immediacy of divine knowledge than Homer or Hesiod: the 'presence' of the divine witness that we saw behind Homeric performance in Il. 2.484-6 is here built into the poem, so that it seems to speak directly to us and without the troubling ambiguity announced by Hesiod's Muses. However much this achieves, we should see too that the presence of the goddess in the poem displaces the voice of the poet. The *kouros* (or Parmenides, if we identify him with the first

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<sup>19</sup> For Parmenides' use of Hesiod's topography of the Underworld, see Tor 2017, 254-257. Tor takes the point here to be the divinization of the *kouros*, and I have been surprised that the contrast I draw here hasn't received much discussion. Tor offers an excellent account of the difficulties posed for epistemology in the Muses' disclosure of their ambiguous influence to Hesiod, but only compares this with Parmenides briefly (*ibid.* 61-103; 313-314). Though he takes a more pessimistic reading of Hesiod's epistemology than I have above, he sees a loose contrast that I believe is consistent with my argument here.

personal voice of the proem) is present not as an authority but as a student, and the poem turns out to stage for us the scene of his own instruction. In this way the poet occupies the position that we take up as listeners, and his place in the poem suggests the possibility of our own persuasion. The achievement of knowledge that Hesiod claims might be *ipso facto* possible for his audience, but he maintains an authoritative distance from that audience: he is clearly the instructor. In Parmenides, however, the voice of the poet functions as an exemplary student rather than the voice of authority. This also helps to foster audience identification, especially if we feel likewise alienated by the goddess' thoroughgoing dismissal of human thought.

As far as authority itself goes, we might think that the poem mobilizes all the vividness and authority of divine revelation to advance its message. Still, this kind of authority, critics have debated, is hard to harmonize with the argumentative persuasion to come.<sup>20</sup> The goddess, in any case, emphasizes persuasion as separate from her speech, and gives “*pistis*” or “conviction,” an agential role. Parmenides is to learn “the unshaken heart of persuasive truth” (... Ἀληθείης εὐπειθέος ἀτρεμῆς ἦτορ). Coxon's commentary points out that this is a strange expression: ἦτορ is used exclusively of persons, both divine and human. While a personified “Truth” may be meant here, it would be a novelty. And we might read a personified *aletheia* as then undercut by the use of an adjectival *alethes* with *pistis* in the following line. In fragment B8/D8, it is *pistis* that does the heavy lifting: the “strength of conviction” (πίστιος ἰσχύς) will not bring anything into being out of non-being, and “real conviction” (πίστις ἀληθείης) has

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<sup>20</sup> McKirahan notes that these two modes create a kind of dissonance that complicates the persuasion of the poem rather than enhancing it: “Revealed truth tends to be truth we would disbelieve except for its unimpeachable source (i.e., authority), whereas The Way of Truth is not what we would expect a goddess to reveal to a mortal...” (1994, 159).

thrust away generation and destruction.<sup>21</sup> Both appear at line endings, immediately following the verbs describing their action. In the use of ἦτορ and the agency of *pistis*, Parmenides seems to be pointing both toward and away from the idea that knowledge transmission must involve contact between persons. Even as he aims to move us towards thinking a rather abstract “what-is,” his communication of this thought is still patterned on the relations between persons that undergird claims to knowledge in epic poetics.

### c. A social aspect of personal authority

I have just mentioned how, in Parmenides’ poem, the goddess raises the issue of social relations in two different but related ways. The first is her relation to the *kouros*, whom we may or may not identify with Parmenides himself, and in this her extremely hospitable reception and transparency of intention stands in contrast to Hesiod’s and Archilochus’ (mentioned above, note 11) encounter with Muses who speak with mockery and announce that they do not always speak the truth. The second comes in the goddess’s disparagement of mortal opinions, a pronouncement that must alienate the *kouros* from the human world he has just left behind. The goodwill and transparency of the goddess compensate for that alienation in creating a community of those who know, as discussed above. At the same time, this is a stark reminder that claims to knowledge frequently go hand in hand with diminishing or dismissing rivals. In discussing this below, I aim show that this fills out the sense in which the transmission of knowledge is imagined as an encounter between persons: it adds a social dimension that gives a broader and real-world context to the interpersonal encounter that takes place in the text.

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<sup>21</sup> Parmenides DK B 8.12, 28/LM D8

The exercise of personal authority frequently establishes itself in terms of superiority to some others, and often involves the awareness of a wider community in which such contests take place. Hesiod’s *Works and Days* is direct in imagining the wider social context. His reproving attitude towards Perses, and, though with less direct disparagement, the kings, furthers the claim that heeding the poet’s authority leads to ethical improvement:

... ἐγὼ δέ κε Πέρση ἐτήτυμα μυθησαίμην

...

ἽΩ Πέρση, σὺ δὲ ταῦτα τεῶ ἐνικάθθεο θυμῶ,  
μηδέ σ' Ἔρις κακόχαρτος ἀπ' ἔργου θυμὸν ἐρύκοι  
νείκε' ὀπιτεύοντ' ἀγορῆς ἐπακουδὸν ἔοντα. (*Works and Days*, 10, 27-29)

... and I would tell true things to Perses . . .

O Perses, you put these things into your heart,  
and do not let Eris who delights in evil hold your heart back from work,  
while you peep and listen in on the courthouse disputes.

Hesiod’s disparaging address to Perses, who functions as a proxy addressee, encourages the audience to shun that blame.<sup>22</sup> The poem can also invite the formation of certain intimate groups, bonded in part by a shared interpretation of features like the poet’s use of fable (αἶνος), and Hesiod even directs these to the attention of different audiences within his poem.<sup>23</sup> This makes his personal authority persuasive on grounds that are not epistemic or based solely on the authoritativeness of the poet’s person and voice: the

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<sup>22</sup> Clay 1993. The elegiac poetry of Theognis evokes a relation between his own poetic persona and his advisee Cyrnus similar to that of Hesiod and Perses. While Theognis does express himself as more kindly-minded (εὖ φρονέων, 1.27-8) towards Cyrnus, the latter is also reproached as failing to recognize his authority: αὐτὰρ ἐγὼν ὀλίγησ παρὰ σεῦ οὐ τυγχάνω αἰδοῦς/ ἀλλ' ὥσπερ μικρὸν παῖδα λόγοις μ' ἀπατᾷς. 1.253-4. If Heraclitus has precisely this poetic text in mind in using ‘εὐφρόνην’ in B31/D25, it is noteworthy that he shifts the “kind teacher” role onto the phenomena themselves.

<sup>23</sup> νῦν δ' αἶνον βασιλεῦσιν ἐρέω φρονέουσι καὶ αὐτοῖς: “And now I will speak a fable to the kings who understand even on their own.” (*WD*, 202). The ensuing story of the hawk and the nightingale first implies the irresistibility of force, but 75 lines later (277) Hesiod, speaking now to Perses and enjoining him to ‘listen to Justice’, reframes the interaction of hawk and nightingale in terms of the violence of animal life versus the civilizing effect of justice in human life.

audience's social identity and esteem are also at stake. We see this distinctly at *WD* 294-8:

οὗτος μὲν πανάριστος, ὃς αὐτὸς πάντα νοήσῃ  
φρασσάμενος, τὰ κ' ἔπειτα καὶ ἐς τέλος ἦσιν ἀμείνω·  
ἐσθλὸς δ' αὖ κακείνος, ὃς εὖ εἰπόντι πίθηται·  
ὃς δέ κε μήτ' αὐτὸς νοέῃ μήτ' ἄλλου ἀκούων  
ἐν θυμῷ βάλληται, ὃ δ' αὖτ' ἀχρήσιος ἀνήρ.

This man is best of all, who himself understands everything,  
showing what then and in the end is better;  
good too is that man who obeys one speaking rightly,  
but the one who neither understands on his own or, listening to another,  
takes it to heart, he is a useless man.

The progression of pronouns (οὗτος... κακείνος... ὃς) shows increasing distance from the poet. Despite the absence of proper nouns, this pattern might suggest that the first indicates the poet himself, the second a good auditor, and the third an indefinite – but definitely “useless” – one who fails to heed a knowledgeable speaker out of ignorance or malice. It is clear which position Perses, and through him the wider audience of the poem, ought to prefer. If the initial reference to one who himself understands everything is self-referential, Hesiod is nevertheless speaking directly, through Perses, to his audience. He clearly articulates the stakes for paying attention to the knowledge that his poem communicates, and in doing so he makes clear that this communication proceeds from a voice conscious of its embeddedness in the social world.

I have dwelt on these epic poets because their discourse clearly matters in relation to Heraclitus: his critique of existing authorities engages most relentlessly with Homer and Hesiod, while Parmenides is adapting their discursive mode to a domain of knowledge similar to that of Heraclitus and perhaps even responding directly to him. Other poetic comparanda also merit attention: I have mentioned the Theognidean corpus

briefly, but Pindar might also be seen as an especially salient point of comparison. This is certainly true for the social aspect of personal authority discussed here, as is clear from the social consciousness at work in his poems and the public dimension of their performance. Moreover, their roughly contemporaneous texts and similar position astride the eras and thought worlds of archaic and classical Greece would invite comparison, though Pindar's modern reputation for obscurity, unlike that of Heraclitus, has no basis in the ancient sources.<sup>24</sup> When it comes to the issue of authority, however, I find that the nature of epinician, in its focus on praise and relation to a patron – not to mention the uncertainty around the reference in its use of the first-person – mean that Pindar could only be discussed here in a highly qualified way.<sup>25</sup> For these reasons I pass over Pindar here, though I hope in future study to return to his connections and comparison with Heraclitus.

## II. Personal Authority and Authorial Presence in early Prose

Thus far I have only examined poetic texts, arguing that the knowledge they claim shows a systematic dependence on personal presence and interpersonal interaction. In Homer, as we saw, knowledge of the events his epic relates is predicated on the Muses having been actual witnesses to the event. The Muses impart their knowledge, or testimony, to the poet. Hesiod is similarly concerned to demonstrate his own relationship

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<sup>24</sup> As argued in Most 1984, esp. 11-25, which shows that the modern reading of Pindar as obscure has more to do with the hermeneutic framework through which they have been approached than with any inherent difficulties of the texts themselves.

<sup>25</sup> For discussion of the complex presence of the poet in the performance of epinician, see Mullen 1982, 3-45; Stehle 2017 argues that authority, at least in the case of *Isthmian 2*, rests with the moral purity of the aristocratic youths that comprise the chorus, while, in the same volume, Harden 2017 identifies the speaking voice of *Nemean 5* with Pindar himself and not the chorus. I take no particular position here, since I mean mainly to point out that the nature and reference of poetic authority in Pindar is as contested as it is complicated. On uses of the first-person in Pindar, see Anzai 1994.

to the Muse, going so far as to dramatize their original encounter for his audience. If Hesiod goes on to claim that he speaks in his own voice, it is all the more notable that he is at pains to flesh out that voice with biographical elements that bolster his claim to authority. That authority is established through repeated demonstrations of a mutually beneficent relationship with the Muses, but also through establishing superiority over others. Parmenides only confirms this sense that epic conceives of the transmission of knowledge in terms of unmediated contact between persons, contact that takes place within a social world even where it is far removed from everyday life. His proem is an account of just this kind of contact, and the goddess who demolishes the veracity of human opinions also takes care to welcome her visitor and communicate her transparency and benevolence.

In turning now to examine prose texts, I aim to show that access to knowledge continues to be conceived in terms of contact between persons. While we might think that the emergence of prose, understood as a novel and specifically textual mode of communication, might bring with it a conception of knowledge transmission separate from interpersonal interaction, studies of prose focus instead on the central role of authorial persona and voice, as I emphasized earlier.<sup>26</sup> And, just as in poetry, knowledge is still thought to be most secure where it derives from first-personal experience: recall Ford's emphasis above on access to the account of a "witness" to events. Simon Goldhill uses the same term to describe "the authority of presence" that he attributes to both Herodotus and Thucydides, parsing this as "the eyewitness who sees."<sup>27</sup> In prose, authority and authorship converge: the nature, and novelty, of the medium is that the

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<sup>26</sup> See Goldhill 2002, 8-9, and Humphreys 1997, discussed in footnotes 2 and 3 above.

<sup>27</sup> Goldhill 2002, 80.

author offers his account of some phenomena directly, an account that may draw on the author's own experiences. There is no scenario of interpersonal communication explicitly constructed *within* a prose discourse, like the address of Hesiod to Perses or that of the goddess to Parmenides, though this will change with the development of dialogue, Socratic or otherwise. The sense of a communication that takes place both within and about the world the audience inhabits is part and parcel of the vaunted "immediacy" of thought in prose, which is understood to suit it to scientific discourse.<sup>28</sup> In looking at a few significant examples, we shall see that these texts construct authority in terms of the speaker's own knowledge, but also define his access to knowledge in terms of its superiority over some others. So, though prose texts may seem to have dispensed with the apparatus of personal presence and social relations that we saw at work in epic, this apparatus nonetheless remains integral to the communication of knowledge in prose. Yet Heraclitus does not present himself as, following Hesiod's schema in *WD* 294ff, the knowing subject to which others would do well to listen. Instead, as I will argue, Heraclitus rejects personal authority in order to make the encounter with the text an instance of gaining knowledge through one's own experience, especially in the way that the texts require their audience to undertake interpretive work.

The question of comparanda here is a tricky one, since there is no significant corpus of authored prose that predates Heraclitus. This is precisely why the elision of Heraclitus from studies on the emergence of prose is so problematic. I think it will be

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<sup>28</sup> E.g., Humphreys 1997. Studies like Humphreys' also show the dangers of retrojecting our own conception of scientific discourse onto antiquity. This, I think, has led us to miss how the author persists as a personal presence in Greek scientific prose. Foucault, for example, notes that in the enlightenment "Scientific discourses began to be received for themselves, in the anonymity of an established or always redemonstrable truth; their membership in a systematic ensemble, and not the reference to the individual who produced them, stood as their guarantee." (Foucault 1984, 109).

helpful to contrast Heraclitus with later texts, especially since the narrative of prose as a transparent medium for persuasive scientific reasoning depends mainly on these. For this reason, I adduce examples from Herodotus and from the Hippocratic corpus, demonstrating how the text constructs the author as a person present in the text, an authoritative voice to which an audience must attend if it is to gain the understanding promised by the text and its author.

Before turning to later examples, however, we may consider Hecataeus of Miletus, who is close to Heraclitus in both temporality and geography. It has been claimed that the preambles of early prose *logoi* quickly establish and follow a set of conventions, given the patterns in what evidence we do have.<sup>29</sup> Whether or not that is the case, Hecataeus of Miletus seems to have begun his work with a similar pronouncement of his own authority and a jab at competing accounts he considers inferior:

Ἐκαταίος Μιλήσιος ὧδε μυθεῖται· τάδε γράφω, ὡς μοι δοκεῖ ἀληθέα εἶναι· οἱ γὰρ Ἑλλήνων λόγοι πολλοὶ τε καὶ γελοῖοι, ὡς ἐμοὶ φαίνονται, εἰσίν.

“Hecataeus the Milesian speaks the following: I write these things, as they seem to me to be true: for the accounts among the Greeks are, it appears to me, many and ridiculous.”<sup>30</sup>

Note the number of first-personal expressions, which are remarkably dense for such a short text: (γράφω . . ὡς μοι δοκεῖ . . ὡς ἐμοὶ φαίνονται). There is, moreover, a slippage between speech (μυθεῖται) and writing (γράφω): Hecataeus’ account straddles the divide. Yet just where it would seem that we move from speech into the mediated text with γράφω, third-person suddenly becomes first-person, and Hecataeus’ own voice

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<sup>29</sup> See esp. Kahn 1979, 101ff.

<sup>30</sup> FGrH #1, (DEMETR. DE ELOC. 12 (GREGOR. CORINTH. VII 1215, 26 W)). Note also fr. 19 (Schol. Eurip. Or. 872): ὁ δὲ Αἴγυπτος αὐτὸς μὲν οὐκ ἦλθεν εἰς Ἄργος, παῖδες δέ, <έόντες>, ὡς μὲν Ἡσίοδος ἐποίησε, πεντήκοντα, ὡς ἐγὼ δέ, οὐδὲ εἴκοσι. “But the Egyptian himself did not come to Argos, but his children did, fifty of them as Hesiod enumerates, but I say not even twenty.”

emerges and is highly marked grammatically. It also shows a self-consciously polemical orientation to other accounts. Hecataeus presents himself as one confident of his own grasp of the truth and the ridiculous failure of existing accounts to do so. Even in a presentation that seems more self-consciously textual, then, we see in this brief text how forcefully personal presence may still assert itself.

The dating of the Hippocratic Corpus is as incurably vexed as questions of its authorship, and matters are only complicated further by the variety of styles and subjects. Still, these texts' claims to special knowledge and general location near the end and just after the Classical period makes them pertinent to my analysis, especially since they figure prominently in discussions of authority in early prose.<sup>31</sup> Though Herodotus is earlier and almost certainly our best prose comparand for Heraclitus, I treat one example briefly before turning to the historian from Halicarnassus.

Claude Calame treats one case of authorial self-presentation in the opening of *On the Art* (ΠΕΡΙ ΤΕΧΝΗΣ), but he ultimately notes the convergence of prose and poetic strategies for doing so. In that text, the author begins by disparaging those who attack the art of medicine: instead of seeking what is not yet known, they attack existing knowledge in order to make a display of their own intelligence (ἱστορίας οικείης ἐπίδειξιν ποιεύμενοι). This amounts to the recognition that the disparagement of a competing account may be sufficient for cultivating epistemic authority. The passage is too long to quote at length, but here is its very beginning:

Εἰσὶ τινες οἱ τέχνην πεποίηγται τὸ τὰς τέχνας αἰσχροεπεῖν, ὡς μὲν οἴονται οὐ τοῦτο διαπρησσόμενοι ὃ ἐγὼ λέγω, ἀλλ' ἱστορίας οικείης ἐπίδειξιν ποιεύμενοι.

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<sup>31</sup> For a recent overview, see Craik 2014, esp. xx-xxix.

There are some who make a craft of disparaging crafts, because they think they are not doing just what I say, but making a display of their own learning.

Calame marks what he calls the “prominent enunciative intervention” (ἐγὼ λέγω) of the author, even as authorship by name is not established. He notes as well the demarcation of the author’s own discursive technique against others. In Calame’s view, “carrying out both an inquiry and a display addressed to a broad audience entails making use of a rhetoric capable of creating the same persuasive effects as didactic poetry.”<sup>32</sup> Here our author uses a technique familiar from Hesiod and Theognis, not to mention Parmenides: drawing us into his own discourse by highlighting some group of *kakoi* whom we ought to shun. To Calame’s points I would add that the author marks the group he disparages as not just mistaken but themselves objects of his own knowledge (ὃ ἐγὼ λέγω). The authorial presence emerges as not just differentiated from these non-knowers, but so comprehensive in his knowledge that he understands them better than they do themselves. In this way the author of *On the Art* is present in the text as a master of his topic, and with a comprehensive perspective on the social conditions surrounding it.

Herodotus is, as we saw earlier, frequently made foundational for Greek prose. He is also, as an Ionian whose early life may have overlapped with that of Heraclitus, our best source for the sense and common usages in Heraclitus’ Greek. In any case, his text fits the pattern of authorial presence that I have been describing. Readers will recall his frequent mentions of his own experience and observations as they relate to facts or events he describes; in one notable case, he criticizes Hecataeus’ interpretation of a genealogical exercise that he himself also witnessed.<sup>33</sup> A later mention of Hecataeus, with similarly

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<sup>32</sup> Calame 2005, 136.

<sup>33</sup> *Histories*, 2.143.

derogatory implications, points out that his account of certain events in Athenian history differs markedly from that of the Athenians themselves.<sup>34</sup> In both cases, then, Herodotus goes out of his way to show how his own experience undermines the veracity of his predecessor, in the first case taking care to mark that he stood on the same spot and witnessed the same process.

The opening to Herodotus' *Histories* similarly marks both the first-personal voice of the author and the shortcomings of existing accounts, albeit more subtly. His text begins with a third-person reference like that of Hecataeus, but immediately takes up the competing accounts of the Persians and of the Phoenicians concerning the history of disputes between Europe and Asia (*Histories* 1.1-5). Herodotus does not yet speak in the first-person, but his command of existing accounts in their confluence and lacunae suggests his magisterial knowledge. He marks the agreement of Persians and Greeks concerning the name of Io (1.1.13-14) and conjectures the Cretan identity of a Greek contingent whom the Persians are unable to name (1.2.6). More importantly, Herodotus chooses to make his own voice heard not on questions of "historical" minutiae but on larger questions of the history's significance and its value for human life. He first portrays as ignorant (ἀνοήτων) the blame of opposing parties and the resulting wars. The prudent (σωφρόνων), he says, pay no mind to such matters, for the women would not have been taken without some degree of complicity (1.4.4-8). After a brief account of Phoenician views, his own voice intervenes concretely:

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<sup>34</sup> *Histories*, 6.137

Ταῦτα μὲν νῦν Πέρσαι τε καὶ Φοῖνικες λέγουσι. Ἐγὼ δὲ περὶ μὲν τούτων οὐκ ἔρχομαι ἐρέων ὡς οὕτως ἢ ἄλλως κως ταῦτα ἐγένετο, τὸν δὲ οἶδα αὐτὸς πρῶτον ὑπάξαντα ἀδίκων ἔργων ἐς τοὺς Ἕλληνας, τοῦτον σημήνας προβήσομαι ἐς τὸ πρόσω τοῦ λόγου, ὁμοίως μικρὰ καὶ μεγάλα ἄστεα ἀνθρώπων ἐπεξιῶν. Τὰ γὰρ τὸ πάλαι μεγάλα ἦν, τὰ πολλὰ αὐτῶν σμικρὰ γέγονε· τὰ δὲ ἐπ' ἐμέο ἦν μεγάλα, πρότερον ἦν σμικρὰ. Τὴν ἀνθρωπήην ὧν ἐπιστάμενος εὐδαιμονίην οὐδαμὰ ἐν τῷ τῷ μένουσαν, ἐπιμνήσομαι ἀμφοτέρων ὁμοίως. (1.5.9-18).

These things, then, the Persians and Phoenicians say now. I, though, am not going to speak about them as to whether they happened thus or in some other way, but I myself know the first beginning of unjust deeds against the Greeks: after indicating this I will go forward with my account, going through the minor and greater cities of mankind equally. For those that were great long ago, most of them have become minor, and those that were great in my time were minor before. Since I know that human happiness never remains in the same place, I will make mention of both equally.

Herodotus distinguishes himself from the Persians and Phoenicians not as a greater authority on history (using our narrower definition of the term), but from the very things they say (Ταῦτα μὲν ... Ἐγὼ δὲ...). He forgoes an intervention in those matters to present what he himself knows (τὸν δὲ οἶδα αὐτὸς...), suggesting, by its complete distinction from the preceding disputes, that his own account is utterly unique and obviates the disputations he has just recounted. Moreover, he presents his account not in terms of its factual preeminence over others, but its mindfulness of a basic truth about human happiness (Τὴν ἀνθρωπήην ὧν ἐπιστάμενος εὐδαιμονίην οὐδαμὰ ἐν τῷ τῷ). Herodotus, then, appears in the beginning of his text not merely as one with a more correct knowledge of history, but as one uniquely positioned to chart his own knowledge in relation to some fundamental truths about human life, truths that he will use his historical researches to demonstrate for us. Rather than deride his competitors, he suggests that he simply excels them: προβήσομαι may mean both a literal forward step and, metaphorically, superiority. Herodotus introduces his own demonstration so that we

first glimpse the competition of historical accounts, but then he himself steps forward with his uniquely privileged set of experiences, his cross-cultural command of the facts, and his trans-historical knowledge of human happiness. Herodotus quite literally leaves behind his competing accounts, and invites his audience to come along with him if they would partake of the knowledge he has gained and offers through his *logos*.

Each of these examples from early prose present a strong first-personal voice, and constructs its epistemic authority using similar tropes: the disparagement of other accounts and practitioners, and the claim to a superior knowledge that excels any competitors, and may even comprehend them as objects of knowledge. The agonistic strain, with its attendant effects on an audience's sense of social identification, is familiar from the poetic examples seen above. More importantly, it is impossible to deny that the personal presence of the author is an essential mediator in the discursive practice. A *logos* is a function of its author or expositor, whose demonstration is equally an assertion of self and an argument for a certain view or set of facts. Even as these prose texts offer new forms of discourse and emphasize the correct relation between their *logoi* and the world, the author emerges both as a distinctly personal presence, and the focus for the audience's attention and their acquisition of knowledge.

### **III. Heraclitus and the rejection of personal authority**

The texts of Heraclitus represent the largest body of authored prose extant before Herodotus, though they have rarely figured in scholarly narratives around the emergence of Greek prose. His text was read widely and assiduously both immediately and throughout antiquity, with his style making a tremendous impact that ranged from

emulation in the Hippocratic Corpus (*On Regimen*) to denigration by Aristotle and others who put Heraclitus on the wrong side of their standards for clarity in prose.<sup>35</sup> As I discussed in the introduction, B1/ D1 – an important text and almost certainly the beginning of his work, following a short phrase in which Heraclitus must have identified himself as author – deploys connected prose that might appear similar to the other examples we have seen. Heraclitus’ prose, though, quickly arrests any reader or auditor in the difficulties it presents around the status of the ‘account’, not least in the way that it separates it from author:

τοῦ δὲ λόγου τοῦδ' ἐόντος αἰεὶ ἀξύνετοι γίνονται ἄνθρωποι καὶ πρόσθεν ἢ ἀκοῦσαι καὶ ἀκούσαντες τὸ πρῶτον· γινομένων γὰρ πάντων κατὰ τὸν λόγον τόνδε ἀπίροισιν εἰκόασι, πειρώμενοι καὶ ἐπέων καὶ ἔργων τοιούτων, ὁκοίων ἐγὼ διηγέυμαι κατὰ φύσιν διαιρέων ἕκαστον καὶ φράζων ὅπως ἔχει. τοὺς δὲ ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους λανθάνει ὁκόσα ἐγερθέντες ποιῶσιν, ὄκωσπερ ὁκόσα εὔδοντες ἐπιλανθάνονται.

Although this account is always people are uncomprehending, both before they hear and once they hear the first time. For though all things come to be according to this account, they are like the untried when they try words and works such as I set forth, distinguishing each according to nature and showing how it is. And other people don’t notice what they do awake, just as what they do asleep escapes them.

Most recognize that Heraclitus here follows what may have been a standard preamble to prose texts: the author announces himself and situates the topic of his *logos*, as well as its claim to a reader’s attention.<sup>36</sup> Yet Heraclitus’ *logos* must mean, as is well recognized, something more significant than his own written work: it is eternal, making a claim on

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<sup>35</sup> Aristotle, *Rhet.* 3.5 1407b11-18. Theophrastus is said to have written that Heraclitus text was ‘unfinished,’ and the text “On Style” attributes Heraclitus’ obscurity primarily to the absence of connecting particles. Laks and Most 2016, Vol. III, 205-211.

<sup>36</sup> Kahn 1979 notes self-reference is a traditional feature of prose proems (97); see also Tarán 1986, which argues, in part, that this opening is more conventional than most have taken it to be and that Heraclitus’ must have written a more conventional treatise, as Walzer 1939 has also argued.

people even before they have heard it.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the claim of this *logos* is not contrasted with other speakers or accounts. Heraclitus sets up instead an opposition between *logos* and the humans who erroneously ignore its message and import. Where Heraclitus does appear, it is not as the author or expositor of this *logos* but of “words and works (ἑπέων καὶ ἔργων).” These terms, imported from epic diction, make a strange description for a prose account: they suggest comprehensiveness, but the comprehensiveness of verbal and non-verbal activity. Immediately the relation between the *logos* and the author is unclear, even though establishing authorship and authorial presence is typically a priority in such proems.

We can press the question further in the relation of Heraclitus’ ‘words and works’ to the *logos* DK B 1/LM D1 announces. The implication of the preceding genitive absolute (γινομένων γὰρ πάντων κατὰ τὸν λόγον τόνδε, “though all things come into being in accordance with this *logos* here”) is that these, at a minimum, come into being according to the *logos*. Yet the deictic forms (τοῦδ’... τόνδε) are given with *logos* itself. This would seem to make *logos* the focus of our attention, together with the broad failure of cognition among humans, rather than the person of Heraclitus and his “words and works.” The fact that the paradigm of listening appears only with *logos* reinforces this sense that Heraclitus and his activity are sidelined in terms of presence and attention.

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<sup>37</sup> This has been the subject of some debate: though the text seems clearly to signal something like a “cosmic law or structure” for the reasons mentioned, some resistance to this view (e.g., Mondolfo and Tarán 1972) has been raised first of all on the grounds that the contemporary semantics of *logos* can hardly accommodate such a reading, and the text remains intelligible even if *logos* is restricted to merely the account and text of Heraclitus. Most scholars, though, remain convinced of double resonance of *logos* in B 1, and a recent article by Mark Johnstone (2014) shifts the reading of *logos* from “law” or “structure” towards the term’s contemporary connection with discourse, ultimately claiming that *logos* in Heraclitus signals the self-expression of the *kosmos*.

The relation between the immediate text and the *logos* it announces thus emerges as irreducibly complex, and more than a little ambiguous.

We also run into difficulties if we try to make the text just Heraclitus' immediate utterance of his "words and works." Like the *logos*, the "words and works" are defined against the failure of people to comprehend them, despite their thorough exposition (διηγεῖμαι), distinction "according to their nature" (κατὰ φύσιν διαιρέων), and display of how things really are (φράζων ὅπως ἔχει). The profusion of first-person (and nominative) verb forms implies an especial activity in Heraclitus' setting out his "words and works." The present tense verbs διηγεῖμαι and φράζων may suggest speech, but the latter verb in its earlier uses rarely does; διηγεῖμαι comes to be connected with narration, but Heraclitus' expressive form veers away from narrative, as we shall see in the next chapter.<sup>38</sup> Hesiod uses the verb φράζω to describe how the one who 'understands everything' exhibits it in directing his efforts towards what is better.<sup>39</sup> Hesiod presents this activity with a middle participle (φρασσάμενος) and without a direct object, suggesting that the one who knows simply demonstrates his knowledge and assumes the context of interpersonal contact: the best one understands everything, and anyone who pays attention to that one's demonstration benefits from it. Heraclitus uses the verb, on the other hand, in the active (φράζων), giving "each thing" (ἕκαστον) as its object. Heraclitus thus distances himself from the "words and works" that his audience encounters: he does not suggest, directly or otherwise, that anyone might listen to *him*.

Moreover, any sense of an immediate scenario of speech is undercut by the mode in which the ignorant encounter his 'words.' The verb πειράομαι (to attempt, try) may

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<sup>38</sup> LSJ cites Aristarchus in recording that φράζω never means "say, tell" in Homer (LSJ, *loc. cit.*).

<sup>39</sup> οὗτος μὲν πανάριστος, ὃς αὐτὸς πάντα νοήσῃ / φρασσάμενος... (WD, 294-5)

appear with either a person (examined, persuaded) or a thing (endeavored, proved) in the genitive. Where it is a person, though, it is typically the agent of the verb that does the examining or persuading; if this were meant here, we would expect Heraclitus to be the subject. Instead, the sense of the verb seems to follow some notable uses in Homer: attempting a deed or an athletic contest, it also refers twice to the *Odyssey*'s ultimate trial of the bow.<sup>40</sup> The statement emphasizes this "trial," while the activity of Heraclitus as author is confined to a relative clause, though it is an extensive one that commands attention in its multiplicity of verbs and verbal forms. Heraclitus' authorial presence is nevertheless subordinated, grammatically and semantically, to the omnipresence of both *logos* and the human ignorance dramatized throughout the statement. All of the main clauses in B1/D1 express human subjects in states of epistemic failure, though the final sentence reverses the relation: there *anthropoi* are the objects of the verbal action, which is their own waking life escaping their notice, as if they were asleep.

The other prose texts we have examined tend to construct an assertive authorial presence almost immediately. Hecataeus, as we saw earlier, is emphatically textual (τάδε γράφω), but emerges precisely at that moment as a strong personal voice. Yet Heraclitus' work as author stands in an ambiguous relation to the *logos* that opens it. Herodotus, in his text, steps forward (προβήσομαι) in his text as he appears (in the first-person) to lead the reader on to his own *logos*. We might say that the authorial work of Heraclitus, on the other hand, takes place on some uncertain ground within the scenario of the omnipresent *logos* and the failure of humans to understand it. This, like Heraclitus' consignment of his own work to a relative clause, leaves a gap between what

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<sup>40</sup> ἔργου *Il.* 18.369; ἀέθλου, ἀέθλων, *Il.* 23.707, *Od.* 8.100, τόξου 21.159, 180. Heraclitus draws on the figure of the bow in B 48/D and B 51.

Heraclitus wrote and those ones who encounter the “words and works” that he set forth. On the whole, B1/D1 sets up a persistent gap between the truth of the *logos* and the human failure to comprehend, and Heraclitus’ authorial activity complicates rather than closes this gap. While the implication is that Heraclitus himself must be getting right what other humans cannot, a reader is not invited to identify with him. His speech does not offer itself as inaugurating the kind of epistemic community that our other prose authors and poets put forward when they define their discourse against others.

If B1/D1 presents a complex relation between *logos*, text, and author, the situation moves even further away from expectations in B50/D46: οὐκ ἐμοῦ, ἀλλὰ τοῦ λόγου ἀκούσαντας ὁμολογεῖν σοφόν ἐστὶν ἐν πάντα εἶναι. “Listening not to me but to the account (*logos*) it is wise to agree that all is one.” It is hard to imagine a more straightforward rejection of personal authority, and it is one that still has dramatic force when Plato has his Socrates make nearly identical gestures more than a century later, as is cited in the epigraphs to this chapter.<sup>41</sup> In the context of the present discussion, B50/D46 is remarkable for its positive expression of ‘listening to the λόγος’ and of what is wise. B1/D1, as we have seen, treats attention to the λόγος in terms of failure. There Heraclitus’ work as author does not intervene to correct this failure, and in B 0/D46 his authority is positively set aside. Here we see a condition of successful attention (it directs itself not at an author or speaker but at the *logos*) and a consequence: after (or by) apprehending *logos* one “speaks in agreement” (ὁμολογεῖν) that all things are one. The verb for this speaking in agreement (ὁμολογεῖν) funnels the text towards its final claim

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<sup>41</sup> Cf. *Euthyphro* 14c, where the “lover of inquiry must follow his beloved wherever it leads.”; *Crito* 46b, where Socrates describes himself as one who only obeys whatever argument (*logos*) seems best to him upon reflection; and his more famous injunction to “follow the *logos* wherever it leads” at *Republic* 394d.

for the unity of all things. At the same time, the wordplay between *logos* and the verb (λόγος-ὁμολογεῖν) keeps *logos* at the center of coming into agreement. *Logos* is not ultimately dispensable to understanding, the wordplay suggests, but only intensifies there: *logos* is still present in the agreement, the verb for which suggests even that more than one *logos* is being harmonized with one or many others. Again, the final claim for unity overturns our initial sense of a strict disjunction between ‘ἐμοῦ,’ and ‘τοῦ λόγου’ as objects of attention. This implicit tension prompts us to ask how the words of the author and the λόγος might coincide, but that is only one element of the radical community B50/D46 asserts. B1/D1 establishes a persisting gap between humans and *logos*, humans and Heraclitus’ work, alongside an opaque relationship between Heraclitus’ text and the *logos* it announces. B50/D46, on the other hand, claims that correct understanding – itself a form of attention to *logos* that never dispenses with it – involves the recognition of a total unity of these and all other things.

In this way Heraclitus’ prose, implicitly in B1/D1 and explicitly in B50/D46, diverts attention from the voice or person of its author, going so far as to displace these altogether in the latter text. His audience likely expected that ‘this account,’ especially with its deictic articles in B1/D1, just referred to his account as they encountered in the text. Chapter Three will consider in detail just what Heraclitus means with his use of *logos*. Here I am only concerned to show just how different a communicative situation is imagined in his text: even Heraclitus’ explicit description of his “words and works” evokes a scenario that seems, at least at first glance, entirely separate from the current encounter with the text. This, together with the way in which he focuses our attention on the failed (and continually failing) interaction of humans with this mysterious but all-

important *logos*, could hardly be more different from the way in which other, and even later, prose and poetic writers construct their texts as an encounter between persons, one that takes place within a broader world of social relations.

Of course, the emphasis in B1/D1 is on the way in which people fail to understand even their own experience. In this regard, then, we should see Heraclitus as focused above all on turning people towards hearing, and listening to, the *logos* that his poem asserts as independent of the text's author. The predominant model of knowledge transmission in this period puts outstanding emphasis on the authorial persona as the source of knowledge that a text claims to convey. Heraclitus, on the other hand, separates himself from the source of knowledge: he emphasizes instead the total failure of humans to understand their own experience, and confronts them with a conundrum in the experience of the text itself.

#### **IV. Heraclitus' critique of rival authorities**

There is one major difficulty for my argument that Heraclitus breaks with an epistemology and a poetics – common to poetry and prose – that conceives of knowledge and its transmission in terms of personal presence and interaction. That difficulty is this: ancient and modern readers have regularly responded to Heraclitus' texts by imagining a voice and person in the text. Perhaps the best example is in Diogenes Laertius' late antique biography, which to some degree represents an amalgamation of biographical anecdotes circulating in previous texts.<sup>42</sup> His "Life" of Heraclitus begins, after a sentence

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<sup>42</sup> For treatments of Diogenes Laertius' text, sources, and methods, see Hope 1938, Mejer 1978, and the recent edition by Torandi (2013). Mejer makes Diogenes' life of Heraclitus exemplary for his loose excerpting and organization. On ancient biography

of the most basic biographical points, “μεγαλόφρων δὲ γέγονε παρ’ ὄντιναοῦν καὶ ὑπερόπτης, ὡς καὶ ἐκ τοῦ συγγράμματος αὐτοῦ δῆλον ἐν ᾧ φησι “πολυμαθίη νόον οὐ διδάσκει...<sup>43</sup>” (He was exceptionally arrogant and disdainful, as is clear from his text where he says: “Much learning does not teach understanding... (B 40/D20).” After quoting B40/D20 to explain his contempt for *polumathia*, he also quotes B42/D21, in which Homer and Archilochus are to be taken from poetic contests and beaten. Diogenes’ sense of Heraclitus’ arrogance also extends beyond his biography of Heraclitus. In the “Life” of Pythagoras, Diogenes writes that Heraclitus “croaks” (κέκραγε) a reproach against Pythagoras, and quotes B129/D26.<sup>44</sup> The verb he uses (κράζω) can describe any shout or shriek, but the reduplicated form fits its onomatopoeic usage for the non-linguistic cries of ravens, frogs, and humans, as it is commonly used in Aristophanes.<sup>45</sup> Diogenes thus conjures up for his audience a grating and even inhuman Heraclitus: he clearly responds to an authorial persona that he perceives in Heraclitus’ writings.<sup>46</sup>

Plato’s texts have a complex relation to those of Heraclitus, but a similar theme of dehumanization turns up in the *Theaetetus*’s caricature of Heracliteans. There, his character Theodorus presents the notion that it is impossible even to associate, let alone

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more generally, Momigliano 1971 and Haåg 2012. There is little debate that such biography is typically built on the literary texts rather than independent historical evidence.

<sup>43</sup> B40/D20: ... Ἡσίοδον γὰρ ἂν ἐδίδαξε καὶ Πυθαγόρην, αὐτὶς τε Ξενοφάνεά τε καὶ Ἑκαταίον.” ... For it would have taught Hesiod and Pythagoras and then also Xenophanes and Hecataeus. D.L. 9.1.3

<sup>44</sup> Ἡράκλειτος γοῦν ὁ φυσικὸς μονονουχὶ κέκραγε καὶ φησι: ‘Πυθαγόρης Μνησάρχου ἱστορίην ἤσκησεν ἀνθρώπων μάλιστα πάντων καὶ ἐκλεξάμενος ταύτας τὰς συγγραφὰς ἐποιήσατο ἑαυτοῦ σοφίην, πολυμαθείην, κακοτεχνίην.’ – Thus Heraclitus the natural philosopher practically screamed when he said: ‘Pythagoras the son of Mnesarchus dedicated himself to inquiry beyond all men then, choosing from among their compositions, he made his own wisdom, much-learning, evil artifice.’ D.L. 8.6.2-5

<sup>45</sup> e.g., κέκραχθι Ar.Ach.335, V.198, κέκραγετε Ar.V.415

<sup>46</sup> Ava Chitwood (2004) traces Diogenes’ denigration of Heraclitus and other early Greek philosophers, but notes special antipathy towards Heraclitus, as will be discussed in the epilogue.

do philosophy, with these “students” of Heraclitus. (*Theaetetus* 179d-180c). They cannot even associate with one another since each thinks himself superior to all. So, Theodorus says, the term “students” is a misnomer (Ποίοις μαθηταίς, ὃ δαιμόνιε;), since they are not taught but “spring up on their own, from wherever each is inspired” (...ἀλλ’ αὐτόματοι ἀναφύονται ὁπόθεν ἂν τύχη ἕκαστος αὐτῶν ἐνθουσιάσας..., 180c1-2). Theodorus’ assimilation of their intellectual development to spontaneous plant growth (αὐτόματοι ἀναφύονται) is part and parcel of his point that with them all human relations fail. This is integral to his rejection of their philosophical claims.<sup>47</sup> If Plato is commenting here on the effects of Heraclitus’ texts, it is not hard to extend the critique to Heraclitus himself, especially since these “Heracliteans” are defined by their mimicking his utterance, such as we see in the Hippocratic “On Regimen.”

Such a response is motivated, as the above texts show, by Heraclitus’ obvious contempt for rival intellectual authorities. He presents his critiques in direct and personal terms, rather than the oblique disparagement more common in other articulations of poetic and literary rivalry. Heraclitus names names, and this shows us, I think, something important about his critique of existing authorities: it tracks the role of personal presence in knowledge transmission. The statement quoted by Diogenes as proof of his arrogance offers a catalogue of names far longer than the gnomic statement with which it begins: “πολυμαθίη νόον οὐ διδάσκει: Ἡσίοδον γὰρ ἂν ἐδίδαξε καὶ Πυθαγόρην, αὐτίς τε Ξενοφάνεά τε καὶ Ἑκαταίον.” (B 39). As many have noted, the list seems almost curated; it covers poetry and prose, as well as both traditional and novel views on what

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<sup>47</sup> As M.M. McCabe (2001) has argued, Plato’s dismissal of Heraclitus in the late dialogues turns on the supposed inability of the Heraclitean to use language in dialogical examination. This prevents reflection on their own knowledge claims and commitments, with the consequence that they thus fall short of full-blooded rational personhood.

we might deem cosmogony, theology, ethics, eschatology, or meteorology. Heraclitus is able to represent several domains of learning through these names, but also reduces them to a single erroneous form: πολυμαθίη.<sup>48</sup> He also inverts the didactic relation in order to negate it. The figures that we might accept as authorities on a variety of matters themselves failed to learn understanding (νόον) from all their learning. The question of what could teach understanding is left unarticulated, but it is, in any case, clear that it will not come from those voices that pass for knowledgeable authorities in contemporary Greek culture.

Hesiod bears the brunt of Heraclitus' critique of instruction: διδάσκαλος δὲ πλείστων Ἡσίοδος· τοῦτον ἐπίστανται πλείστα εἰδέναι, ὅστις ἡμέρην καὶ εὐφρόνην οὐκ ἐγίνωσκεν· ἔστι γὰρ ἓν. (B31/D25) "The teacher of most is Hesiod; him they know to know the most, who could not recognize day and night: for they are one." Hesiod's personal authority is so entrenched that the knowledge of "most" is just that they know Hesiod to be so knowledgeable. Heraclitus' criticism targets just this kind of authority, along with the quantification of knowledge that he challenges in his reproach of *polumathia*, which also aimed at Hesiod. The sequence of different verbs for 'knowing' (ἐπίστανται ... εἰδέναι ... οὐκ ἐγίνωσκεν) move from familiarity with a person to possessing a quantity, but he ultimately emphasizes recognizing just one pair of familiar natural phenomena. Such recognition proves hardly commonplace: what we might read at first as a very personal jab at Hesiod is complicated by the startling claim

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<sup>48</sup> Granger 2004 argues that Heraclitus attitude towards polymathy (a term he may have coined) is more radical than many have supposed (Snell 143-44; Burkert 1972: 210; Fränkel 125; Kahn 1979: 96-97,99-100,106; Leshner 1992:4, 154-55); Granger claims that, for Heraclitus, polymathy is not a necessary but insufficient condition for understanding, but that polymathy is an essential component of *Historiê* as such, and one that disqualifies it as a legitimate pursuit of understanding.

for unity that concludes the statement. Heraclitus' terms ("Day and Night") show the persistence of Hesiod in thinking even the most familiar of phenomena. Yet he replaces Hesiod's "νύξ", which gives birth to Day at *Theogony* 124, with εὐφρόνην. The new term, itself poetic, creates a rhythmic and phonic symmetry with ἡμέρην. It also builds in an allusion to 'thinking well' (εὖ φρονεῖν). That this term replaces Hesiod's personification and progenitor suggests how Heraclitus might modify the Hesiodic view: understanding the symmetrical interdependence of apparently opposite phenomena, rather than abstracting them into personal and genealogical relations. The overall thrust of B31/D25 rails against Hesiod's personal authority as teacher, and it goes even further in suggesting an understanding of the cosmos that does away with the imagination of natural phenomena in terms of personal agents.

Heraclitus similarly targets the ignorance of humans more generally in criticizing Homer, one that also emphasizes the person of the poet to make him exemplary of the way in which most human beings fail to understand the objects of their own experience:

ἐξηπάτηνται [φησίν] οἱ ἄνθρωποι πρὸς τὴν γνῶσιν τῶν φανερῶν  
 παραπλησίως Ὀμήρω, ὃς ἐγένετο τῶν Ἑλλήνων σοφώτερος πάντων·  
 ἐκείνόν τε γὰρ παῖδες φθείρας κατακτείνοντες ἐξηπάτησαν εἰπόντες· ὅσα  
 εἶδομεν καὶ ἐλάβομεν,<sup>4</sup> ταῦτα ἀπολείπομεν, ὅσα δὲ οὔτε εἶδομεν οὔτ'  
 ἐλάβομεν, ταῦτα φέρομεν. (B56/D22)

Human beings are deceived [he says] in their knowledge of obvious things, in the same way as Homer, who was wiser than all the Greeks. For that man kids killing lice deceived, when they said: "All those we could see and catch, these we leave behind, but all those we could neither see nor catch, these we carry."

The statement seems to allude to a biographical tradition around Homer, though our evidence for the fuller narrative is much later.<sup>49</sup> There, Homer dies of grief at not being

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<sup>49</sup> For a presentation of the different versions, see Kirk 1950.

able to answer the riddle. Though it is impossible to verify that Heraclitus' immediate audience would have assumed the same result, scholars have also seen a statement of life and death stakes in his formulation of 'killing lice:' φθειρας means 'lice' but, through its connection with φθείρω ("destroy, ruin, wear down"), suggests a sense of fatality.<sup>50</sup> In any case, Heraclitus' cribbed narrative focuses our attention on the riddle, relegating any real or imagined course of events to filling out the background and aftermath of the encounter that the statement dramatizes.

The encounter is a study in perspectives. The answer to the riddle is "obvious" to us because Heraclitus gives the answer to the riddle before he even relates it. It is obvious to the children, too, since they know what they have been doing, though riddle itself trades on the limits of their perceptive capacities. Even so, they can be credited with the knowledge that they have not seen or caught everything. Finally, though, we have the blind Homer, for whom success in this riddle-game seems cruelly hopeless. Insofar as his blindness is often understood in tandem with the epic "vision" and vistas he receives through the Muses, Heraclitus may be targeting just that dependence in portraying the helpless Homer playing a game he cannot win. Heraclitus has already marked Homer as someone who *was* (ἐγένετο) wiser than all the Greeks. The past tense may be an allusion to his ensuing death in the story, or to the fact that he has, in actuality, died. It could also suggest – none of these possibilities are mutually exclusive – that his failure in the riddle game has stripped him of the title that Heraclitus says he *used* to have.

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<sup>50</sup> Kahn 1979, 111ff. Dilcher 2013 offers a reading of this statement that makes it programmatic for the way in which Heraclitus' style challenges

The text as a whole, though, is not really about Homer: this blind and one-time wise man is simply exemplary of the ignorance common among all those whom he is supposed to have outstripped in wisdom. This is the perspective that Heraclitus himself provides, but his own voice is not explicitly signaled to us as such and, unless we insist on imagining the text as his voice, he is nowhere to be found. Given that Heraclitus' *own* expression has a great deal in common with riddles, however, it may be tempting to see the children as a proxy for Heraclitus.<sup>51</sup> Given the status of children elsewhere in Heraclitus and in Greek culture at large, though, there is good reason to think that this would be a rather unflattering identification from Heraclitus' perspective.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, there is nothing in what the children say that could help Homer see, and their intent seems more abusive than anything else.

Some would say that Heraclitus is similarly and unhelpfully abusive, as Diogenes' Laertius does. Heraclitus, though, is unambiguous that human beings have the capacity to understand: B116/D30 ἀνθρώποισι πάσι μέτεστι γινώσκειν ἑωυτοὺς καὶ σωφρονεῖν. "It belongs to all human beings to know themselves and to be of sound mind." So, they are not as badly off as Homer, even if they must adopt an entirely new perspective and try to see what they so far have not. Even then, they would still find themselves in the position of the children here: knowing that there are limits to what they can perceive and grasp, and that they will continue to be affected – even destroyed – by what they "neither see nor grasp."

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<sup>51</sup> As shown in Gallop (1989), and widely cited since.

<sup>52</sup> See Most 2011. Heraclitus frequently (D6/B70, D7/B74) makes children a proxy for the stupidity of most adult humans, as at D75 (B79): ἀνὴρ νήπιος ἤκουσε πρὸς δαίμονος ὄκωσπερ παῖς πρὸς ἀνδρός. "A man is called a fool by a god, just like a child by a man."

In B56/D22 there is no indication that *teaching* is what will help human beings come to recognize what should be apparent. Heraclitus happens to have given the audience for his text the answer to the riddle internal to it, but the drama lies in the spectacular failure and incapacity of one whom the Greeks celebrate for wisdom. This comes at least partially, as we already saw with Hesiod, from the tendency of most to simply follow popular authorities without using their own intelligence. Heraclitus reiterates this point, and its directness shows that Heraclitus resists offering himself as a simply a substitute authority that people should follow in the same way:

‘τίς γὰρ αὐτῶν νόος ἢ φρήν; δῆμων ἀοιδοῖσι πείθονται καὶ διδασκάλῳ χρεῖονται ὁμίλῳ οὐκ εἰδότες ὅτι ‘οἱ πολλοὶ κακοί, ὀλίγοι δὲ ἀγαθοί.’

What intelligence or thought do they have? They follow the popular singers and use the crowd as their teacher, not knowing that ‘most are bad, few are good.’ (B104/D10)

Heraclitus does not offer a view of his own on what ‘νόος ἢ φρήν’ could be here, but it is clear that it does not consist in obedience to and instruction in popular opinion. The structure of the statement, though, does suggest that substituting the crowd for Heraclitus may be an improvement but not a solution: he closes his complaint by surrendering his own speech to a proverbial quotation. The phrase ‘οἱ πολλοὶ κακοί’ is attributed to Bias of Priene; Heraclitus may be giving it a novel, if natural, extension by appending ‘ὀλίγοι δὲ ἀγαθοί.’ This statement is not directly attributed to Bias here, any more than the Delphic maxim in B116/D30 (γινώσκειν ἑωυτοῦς) comes with an explicit citation. It is ironic that Heraclitus should yield his own voice to a common saying just at the moment when, in B104/D10, he marks the knowledge that would prevent most people from simply going along with popular opinion. Still, such sayings are clearly an important source of inspiration for Heraclitus’ style, and one that cuts against both epic’s general

reliance on narrative, as we shall see in the next chapter. Even more importantly, the fact that Heraclitus draws on popular sayings, though these may often be cryptic themselves, speaks to his emphasis on what is common to all, as will be discussed in Chapter Four.

His favorable treatment of Bias in B39/D11 may have, if the two statements were close in context, lent a kind of citation to the quotation of his saying in B104/D10. In his praise of Bias, however, I take Heraclitus to be shifting attention away from his person.

The quotation comes from Diogenes' "Life" of Bias, which ends with the following:

καὶ ὁ δυσάρεστος Ἡράκλειτος μάλιστα αὐτὸν ἐπῆνεσε γράψας· ἐν Πριήνῃ Βίας ἐγένετο ὁ Τευτάμεω, οὗ πλέων λόγος ἢ τῶν ἄλλων. καὶ οἱ Πριηνεῖς δὲ αὐτῷ τέμενος καθιέρωσαν τὸ Τευτάμειον λεγόμενον. ἀπεφθέγγετο· οἱ πλείστοι κακοί. (D.L., 1.5.6)

Even the peevish Heraclitus praised him especially when he wrote: "In Priene lived Bias the son of Teutames, of whom the account (λόγος) is greater than the rest." And the people of Priene set up a sanctuary to him called the "Teutameion." He said: "Most people are bad."

Commentary on this statement from Heraclitus naturally focuses on the attribution of λόγος to Bias and queries its connection with the λόγος Heraclitus proclaims in B1/D1.<sup>53</sup> I think we must take this in conjunction with the suggestion in B39/D11 that we understand the persistence of Bias' wisdom without thinking the persistence of his person or even his name. B 39 emphasizes the particularities of Bias' life and especially its spatial and temporal limits: his birth and life in Priene is placed in the past (ἐγένετο); his patronymic emphasizes his finite place in the succession of generations, a thought

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<sup>53</sup> Kahn 1979, 177: "The opposition in LXII (B39/) between the single individual Bias, who by his justice and wisdom merited an esteem (*logos*) so much greater than the rest as to appear semi-divine, and the mass of mankind as characterized in his saying (*logos*) – this antithesis exemplifies in human terms that proportion (*logos*) between the one and the many, between fire and all the rest, that structures the order of the universe."

Heraclitus draws on elsewhere.<sup>54</sup> Kahn notes that the centrality of the patronymic seems to emphasize the connection to the ‘Teutameion,’ a connection that Diogenes also makes.<sup>55</sup> This link to the monument suggests the solidity of his enduring fame, but Heraclitus may be more interested in the fact that this site does not even bear Bias’ name: his wisdom and reputation persist without necessarily conjuring up a personal presence.

The survival or immortality of the name is the most basic form of *kleos*, but where Heraclitus mentions his name it is embedded in the features of its mortal finitude. He also replaces the idea of *kleos* with *logos*, substituting what is uttered (*legein*) for what is heard (*akouein*). It is precisely the utterance of Bias that survives, both at the end of Diogenes’ “Life” and in Heraclitus B104/D10. Heraclitus does not attach Bias’ name to the citation, but it was popular enough that the connection has come down to us, and so we can imagine that most readers would have recognized the phrase. The final irony in B 104, then, is that the people under critique are likely to have *heard* the saying of Bias, but still did not *know* it (οὐκ εἰδότες). They may know of Bias without understanding his *logos*. Heraclitus separates familiarity from knowledge, just as he does in claiming that Hesiod could not recognize Night and Day (B31/D25). In B104/D10, ‘knowing’ the saying of Bias might produce a skeptical posture towards received opinions and popular belief. Paradoxically, a good ‘reception’ of Bias might make us more skeptical of

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<sup>54</sup> B20/D118: γενόμενοι ζώειν ἐθέλουσι μέρους τ' ἔχειν, μᾶλλον δὲ ἀναπαύεσθαι, καὶ παῖδας καταλείπουσι μέρους γενέσθαι. “Having been born they wish to have their portions, rather than lay down, and children they leave behind B52/D76 αἰὼν παῖς ἐστὶ παίζων, πεσσεύων· παιδὸς ἢ βασιλῆϊ. “A lifetime is a kid playing, moving pieces: the kid has the kingship.” In B129/D26 Heraclitus’ critique of Pythagoras similarly emphasizes his mortal finitude with the patronymic and with secondary tense verbs: Πυθαγόρης Μνησάρχου ἱστορίην ἤσκησεν ἀνθρώπων μάλιστα πάντων καὶ ἐκλεξάμενος ταύτας τὰς συγγραφὰς ἐποίησατο ἑαυτοῦ σοφίην, πολυμαθίην, κακοτεχνίην. “Pythagoras the son of Mnesarchus pursued inquiry beyond all other men, and, picking from among their writings he made his own wisdom, learnedness, evil artifice.”

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 176.

authority in general. This virtue to his utterance gives Bias a *logos* beyond others and even his own person.

## V. Conclusions

We are beginning to see how Heraclitus makes the availability of *logos* central to any ‘authority,’ and divorces this availability from a personal presence. In this Heraclitus stands apart from existing modes of knowledge discourse: as we have seen above, epic poetics understands knowledge to be available only through the personal presence of one who does know, either the divine Muses or the knowing poet who is taken as a teacher. Heraclitus’ departure from this model is as remarkable as it is essential to understanding his own philosophical project. We have not yet delved into what Heraclitus means for his writing to do instead, but that is the main aim of considering a prose poetics at work in his writing.

B1/D1 and B50/D46 open up questions: What kind of attention to *logos* produces correct understanding? How do the texts of Heraclitus motivate such attention? And what can we say about the kind of understanding they provoke? Recent scholarship has come to appreciate that Heraclitus writes not to expound a particular view of the world – his own *logos* – but to “steer” his audience towards their own right engagement with the world.<sup>56</sup> Here I hope to have shown that Heraclitus’ complex effacement of his own personal authority works against the expectations of his audience, insofar as it represents a significant departure from the contemporary practice of knowledge discourse in both poetry and prose. Moreover, his strident critique of existing knowledge discourses partly tracks the way in which this model of knowledge transmission depends upon personal

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<sup>56</sup> Johnstone 2014. His treatment of *logos* and the consequences for this re-evaluation of Heraclitus’ writing are discussed at length in Chapter 3.

presence: the author constructs a persona that lends confidence to his claims, and suggests that the audience themselves may come to know through the authorial persona present in the text. Beyond B50/D46's positive but still puzzling articulation of what successful attention to the *logos* involves and entails, we have not yet gotten a clear look at what Heraclitus aims to achieve instead. I have already mentioned how his use of citation is part and parcel of the way in which he rejects personal authority: it points away from his own voice, just as he does in B50/B46, and it draws on a store of common knowledge that does not necessarily rely on attribution for authority and may be used, if not well, necessarily, by any member within a shared culture.

It is useful to remember that Heraclitus' texts are concerned with knowledge of the world as it presents itself to us in our everyday experience, and not with events of the heroic (Troy) or more broadly epic (cosmogony) past. In this sense Heraclitus may preserve the epistemological apparatus that emphasizes presence at the scene, so to speak. At the same time, however, he cannot claim, as Hesiod does, that such knowledge is, if one cannot figure it out for oneself, available simply by listening to someone else. In focusing on the failure of human beings to comprehend the *logos* in their own experience, Heraclitus does not leave room for his own *logos*, if we understand his text that way, to mediate an experience or perspective that would otherwise be unavailable to us. At the same time, Heraclitus points out that humans are, paradoxically, alienated from their own experience. Like Homer in B56/D22, people are not able to see what is right in front of them. Unlike Homer, however, they have the ability to see, even if it lies dormant. Heraclitus' prose poetics, by turning attention away from any privileged perspective of the author, aims to provoke rather than provide such insight.

CHAPTER TWO  
ΚΟΣΜΟΣ without Cosmogony: Heraclitus against Narrativity

It is not that  
there is no narrative  
here (each sentence is a narrative,  
each line moves) but that there is  
no hierarchy  
of narratives (not even  
the story of the  
poem), no sentence to which the others  
(all the others) defer and are ranked  
(the map is not built about the city)  
- Ron Silliman, *What* (1988)

The last chapter considered access to knowledge as Heraclitus and his audience might have conceived of it. There I showed that, across epic and early Greek prose, knowledge is frequently identified with personal presence. A text's poetic voice or authorial persona presents itself as a source for such knowledge, whether it involves inspiration or instruction by divine persons, as in epic verse, or the author's own researches, as in the prose practice of *historiê*. Heraclitus, however, stands apart from this pattern. He focuses attention on the text and the immediate experience of it rather than on his own persona, and posits the *logos* as the source of understanding. That source is independent of Heraclitus' actual textual account but also present in it: the *logos* introduced in B1/D1 is entirely comprehensive (all things come to be in accordance with it) and "common" (*xunos*) in its validity and accessibility for all.

This chapter considers the organization of knowledge as it was practiced among Heraclitus' predecessors and contemporaries. Here we see another persistent pattern shaping both epic verse and early Greek prose: as scholars often note, narrative

dominates both the content of knowledge and the way in which it is presented.<sup>1</sup> The knowledge in question might concern the heroic past, human customs and culture, or the origins of the cosmos, but in each case narrative temporality tends to organize both the form of texts, insofar as we can see these, and the mode of explanation they employ, as authors often look to past events and episodes to shed light on many different aspects of the present.

I argue here, though, that Heraclitus makes a conspicuous break with narrative, and in ways that shape both the content and the expression of his thought. Despite the long-running obsession over whether and how Heraclitus might have envisioned the origins of the cosmos, the fact remains that his texts hardly countenance the subject. Where they do touch on cosmogony or theogony, they may be best read as resisting the genealogical mode of explanation that informed both mythic accounts and those of his immediate predecessors in Ionian *historiê*, as I will show. Heraclitus' gnomic prose itself seems to resist narrative organization, as we see in the consternation of at least some of his ancient readers who seem to have expected, but not found, clear and sequential prose exposition. Those reactions are, as we shall see, instructive for determining the extent to which Heraclitus employed aphoristic statements rather than connected prose. Though the original format of his composition is irrecoverable, the evidence can tell us much about its general shape and significance.

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<sup>1</sup> Most 1999, Goldhill 2002. Most 1999 identifies "narrative temporality" as an important continuity between Greek epic poetics and early Greek philosophy more generally (345-6), and uses the term narrativity to describe the tendency towards origin stories in early philosophical explanations (349). In my use of the term here I am expanding on this and similar work stressing the importance of origin stories for the pattern of early Greek philosophical speculation.

It is difficult to grasp the upshot of Heraclitus' resistance to narrative. This is partly because, compared to narrative, short sayings in prose represent a poorly defined and rarely theorized genre. One advantage of considering this aspect of Heraclitus' texts, then, is that it can help us begin to study this mode of expression, partly through its contradistinction from narrative. Still, not all of the surviving texts fit into the vague category of aphorism or short saying: several show us multiple and connected sentences of complex prose construction, as in the proem of B1/D1. This reminds us, as does the epigram to this chapter, that Heraclitus does not, perhaps even cannot, dispense entirely with connected prose and narrative organization. It is only more urgent, though, to ask whether Heraclitus wrote and thought with a view to larger narrative organization, both of his text and of the world as he understands it. If, as I argue, he did not, then we should want to know why, especially since his era – in contrast to the post-modern distrust of master narratives – shows us a proliferation of different kinds of narratives competing for comprehensiveness, explanatory power, and cultural preeminence.

Heraclitus' resistance to narrative, then, suggests a re-organization of thought at the most fundamental level, in its contents as much as its expression. In endeavoring to mark and understand Heraclitus' departure from narrative, I am locating him within a history and understanding of archaic Greek culture that itself narrates the widespread significance and ongoing influence of narrative form. Though cultural conditions and attitudes towards narrative are certainly different now than they were in Heraclitus' milieu, the challenge of thinking and expressing ourselves apart from narrative is no less fresh, and no less daunting.

As I explained in the Introduction, the integrity of form and content in Heraclitus means that we should not expect that any interpretive or descriptive project will completely express its significance and thereby substitute itself for the text in its expressive form. The gap between Heraclitus' form and the linear development of my analysis is especially pointed here, making it more difficult to display the shift in the temporality of understanding that I take Heraclitus' texts to encourage. This is a difficult problem, since I am aiming to show that Heraclitus himself does not describe or discourse *about* the world, but makes discourse an opportunity for an exemplary experience of it. The texts themselves are the source of, and the occasion for, knowledge. I can only hope that my discussion helps others experience his texts in this way, rather than aim to fully explicate, let alone replicate, such experience in my account and its form of expression. Both in this chapter and the project as a whole, I hope mainly to convey the challenge that Heraclitus' texts present and elucidate the way in which his writing creates opportunities to enter into and develop, in the moment of their encounter with the text, the activity of comprehending and speaking in agreement with the *logos*.

### **Narrative and narrativity in archaic Greek thought**

Before turning to the way in which narrative shapes early Greek thought and cosmology, it will be helpful to expand on the notions of narrative and narrativity that I rely on here. The definition, analysis, and interpretation of narrative has received a tremendous amount of attention in modern theoretical circles, owing partly to narrative's widespread manifestations across human cultures and epochs. Roland Barthes, echoing a common sentiment, writes of narrative that, "like life itself, it is there, international,

transhistorical, transcultural.”<sup>2</sup> The theorization of narrative, though, also arises from the prominence of the novel in the literature of the modern west. This is a helpful reminder that narrative forms are highly particular, even if the barest definition of narrative itself as an account of connected events is “as good a candidate for an anthropological universal as any.”<sup>3</sup> The modern study of ancient Greek narratives has borne this out, as critics have often marveled at the structure and intricacy of techniques like ring-composition, while also puzzling over whether and how narrative unity manifests itself in even the most canonical texts.<sup>4</sup>

For these reasons I think it best to begin with the Greeks own thinking about narrative. Aristotle, a key reference point for the modern theorization of narrative, makes wholeness of plot (*muthos*) a function of having proper, and properly coordinated, parts: beginning, middle, and end.<sup>5</sup> He famously compares the relationship between the parts and whole of a plot to that of living things, claiming that both alike must be large enough to appreciate how the parts work together but not so large that one can only grasp the

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<sup>2</sup> Barthes 1975, 237. This sweeping universality claimed by Barthes and others is challenged by Medina 1980, in a response to the special issue on narrative that Barthes introduces.

<sup>3</sup> Most 1999, 345.

<sup>4</sup> As Most (*ibid.*) points out, the confusion is due in part to what he identifies as the precision of local narrative units or episodes combined with the relative (to us, anyway) “looseness of macroscopic form.” See also Cairns and Scodel 2014, esp. 1-12, 156-174.

<sup>5</sup> κείται δὴ ἡμῖν τὴν τραγωδίαν τελείας καὶ ὅλης πράξεως εἶναι μίμησιν ἐχούσης τιμέγεθος· ἔστιν γὰρ ὅλον καὶ μηδὲν ἔχον μέγεθος. ὅλον δὲ ἐστὶν τὸ ἔχον ἀρχὴν καὶ μέσον καὶ τελευτήν. ἀρχὴ δὲ ἐστὶν ὃ αὐτὸ μὲν μὴ ἐξ ἀνάγκης μετ’ ἄλλο ἐστίν, μετ’ ἐκεῖνο δ’ ἕτερον πέφυκεν εἶναι ἢ γίνεσθαι· τελευτὴ δὲ τοῦναντίον ὃ αὐτὸ μὲν μετ’ ἄλλο πέφυκεν εἶναι ἢ ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἢ ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ, μετὰ δὲ τοῦτο ἄλλο οὐδέν· μέσον δὲ ὃ καὶ αὐτὸ μετ’ ἄλλο καὶ μετ’ ἐκεῖνο ἕτερον. δεῖ ἄρα τοὺς συνεστῶτας εὐμύθους μὴθ’ ὀπόθεν ἔτυχεν ἀρχεσθαι μὴθ’ ὅπου ἔτυχε τελευτᾶν, ἀλλὰ κεχρησθαι ταῖς εἰρημέναις ἰδέας. (*Poetics* 1450b25-34).

It has been set down by us that tragedy is the imitation of an action whole and complete, one possessing a certain magnitude: for a thing may be whole and yet have no magnitude. A whole is something having a beginning, middle, and end. A beginning is what is not itself a necessary consequence of something else but that after which something else exists or comes about naturally. An end is the opposite: it is what exists after something else, whether out of necessity or probability, but nothing else comes after it. A middle is what itself both exists after something else and has another exist after it. It is necessary, then, that well-constructed plots neither begin nor end randomly, but make use of the forms that have been described.

parts and not the whole. Aristotle calls this balance “eusynoptic” (εὐσύνοπτον), and he uses the same term to describe what he sees as the ideal periodic sentence in the *Rhetoric*.<sup>6</sup> Barthes, following the emphasis in modern linguistics on the sentence as the basic unit of discourse, identifies a similar homology between the sentence and narrative discourse.<sup>7</sup> In a general sense, then, I take narrative here as the organization of discourse according to the temporal structure of beginning, middle, and end. It is through this organization that narrative creates meaning, above all by representing actions and events in time with the unity, cogency, and causal logic that Aristotle spends so much time discussing in his *Poetics*.

The term narrativity is often used to refer to the (much-contested) aspects of discourse that define narrative, and here I mean it to take in the broader sense in which narrative tends to structure thought and discourse.<sup>8</sup> Aristotle is focused on narrative in tragedy and in epic, but his discussion could also be applied to other genres. Narrative is a tremendously useful tool for organizing information and reflecting on the world as well as our own lives, so much so that it often proves normative for discourse on any number of topics, from history to selfhood. This remains true of our own culture even as it expresses serious doubts about narrative’s authority and fidelity to reality.<sup>9</sup> The cultural preeminence and influence of narrative epic in early classical Greece, then, let narrative

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<sup>6</sup> *Rhetoric* 1409a27-b1, *apud* Purves 2010, 26. Purves notes that the same vocabulary describes the number of citizens and geographic space of the ideal city in the *Politics*.

<sup>7</sup> “Discourse would then be a large “sentence” (whose units do not necessarily have to be sentences) in the same way that a sentence, allowing for certain specifications, is a small “discourse”... The general language of narrative is but one of many idioms within the scope of the linguistics of discourse, and consequently it comes under the homologous hypothesis.” Barthes 1975, 240-241.

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., Prince 1982 and 1999, Pier and Landa, eds. 2008.

<sup>9</sup> Galen Strawson (2004) argues that modern ethics simply assumes, and with normative force, a narrativized understanding of self, one that he is keen to resist. Hayden White (1987) interrogates the normative centrality of narrative for historiography, arguing that narrative not only distorts reality but typically serves as a vehicle for particular moral values and ideology.

exert even greater force on thought and discourse. It is Heraclitus' relationship and response to this prevalence of narrative that interest me here.

Aristotle's emphasis on the parts and comprehensibility of plot echo earlier reflections on shaping narrative, even as Aristotle's terms invite a contrast between the simultaneity of taking things in at a glance with tracking actions and events in time.<sup>10</sup> Alex Purves, borrowing from Aristotle, uses the term "eusynoptic" to describe the *Iliad*, and what she argues is the effort in that poem to approximate the way in which the Muses are imagined to see. They possess, as we saw in discussing Homer's invocation of their perfect presence in the last chapter, a perspective that takes in the entirety of events across space and time.<sup>11</sup> Such an aim presents, as Purves says, "an ideal that is also a paradox, since for Homer to see as they see would result in the narrative breaking out of form and time."<sup>12</sup> To the extent that Heraclitus similarly identifies the best and most complete knowledge with this perfect perspective of the Muses, we may be able to understand his rejection of narrative at least partly in terms of this paradox: if this "perfect perspective" is not structured according to narrative temporality, then the discourse of knowledge must indeed break out of narrative form and time.

Narrative takes place in time: its structure both follows and gives form to our lived experience of time. Invocations of the Muses often reflect on coordinating this sequence of parts and their relationships, especially as they mark the beginning. The

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<sup>10</sup> *Poetics* 1450b35-40.

<sup>11</sup> Purves 2010, 24-64, and, more briefly, at 13: "Yet the Muses, the perfect surveyors *par excellence* of the poem, present an ideal that is also a paradox, since for Homer to see as they see would result in the narrative breaking out of form and time. The impossible, infinite, and boundless nature of immortality can be co-opted for its synoptic possibilities by the poet only once it has been set in proportion through human mechanics and measurement." See also Ford 1992, 57-89.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

proem to the *Iliad*, in a single sentence stretched over seven hexameters, begins by marking its subject (μῆνιν ἄειδε θεὰ...). Yet, after expanding upon the consequences of that wrath, the poet returns to this main verb to mark the beginning of the narrative and close the proem: ἐξ οὗ δὴ τὰ πρῶτα διαστήτην ἐρίσαντε.<sup>13</sup> The proem of the *Odyssey* closes its invocation by asking the Muses to begin wherever they would like: as in the proem to the *Iliad*, it is apparently assumed that the Muses are perfectly capable of beginning at any point that they (or the poet’s audience) might prefer.<sup>14</sup> Demodocus, whom Odysseus praises for the good order (*kosmos*) of his song, is able to begin again with the episode, *per* the guest’s request, of the construction – itself described as a *kosmos* – of the Trojan horse; the poet of the *Odyssey* goes on to mark the starting point that Demodocus chooses (8.500).<sup>15</sup> When Odysseus himself recounts his journey to the Phaeacians, however, he struggles with just this question: τί πρῶτόν τοι ἔπειτα, τί δ’ ὑστάτιον καταλέξω; “What then shall I recount first, what last?” As Richard Hunter notes, this Odyssean problem of locating beginning and ending is echoed in Gorgias and throughout Hellenistic literature.<sup>16</sup> Hesiod’s *Theogony* begins with the Muses, twice, and relates that they taught him to sing of the immortals but to sing of the Muses themselves first and last.<sup>17</sup> This self-consciousness about the beginning and endpoints in epic speaks to the validity of Aristotle’s conception of plot for these earlier narratives.

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<sup>13</sup> *Iliad*, 1.1-7.

<sup>14</sup> τῶν ἀμόθεν γε, θεά, θύγατερ Διός, εἰπέ καὶ ἡμῖν. *Od.* 1.10

<sup>15</sup> *Od.* 8.482-499.

<sup>16</sup> Hunter 2014.

<sup>17</sup> 1.1, μουσάων Ἐλικωνιάδων ἀρχώμεθ’ αἰεῖδει; 1.36,... Μουσάων ἀρχώμεθα...

1.33-4: καὶ μ’ ἐκέλονθ’ ὑμνεῖν μακάρων γένος αἰὲν ἔόντων  
σφῶς δ’ αὐτὰς πρῶτόν τε καὶ ὑστάτον αἰὲν αἰεῖδεν.

Epic narratives are often more complex than the straightforward progression from beginning to middle to end would suggest. Odysseus' account, for example, takes us out of the "present" of the Odyssey's plot and into the past of his epic wanderings. Throughout Homeric epic, there are allusions to other narratives, and narrative episodes are often interwoven to parallel, contrast, and comment upon one another and the larger narrative of the poem as a whole. Hesiod's *Works and Days* deploys narrative episodes for the sake of etiology and exemplar, and takes the audience through the behaviors that will best serve humans through the cycles of seasons and years. The temporal structure of a narrative is, on the whole, rarely simple or linear: it may countenance different moments in time, suggest a cyclical temporality and repeated patterns of events, or aim at reflecting facts about the world that themselves do not have the temporal extension of narrative. In turning now to examine the influence of epic narratives on early Greek philosophy and history, however, we will see how narrativity dominates even as the objects and preoccupations of discourse undergo radical change. Narrative and narrativity continue to structure even the most novel knowledge discourses in Heraclitus' time, making it all the more important to register how and why Heraclitus may have resisted this way of thinking and speaking about the world.

### **Narrativity in early Greek cosmology**

When Hesiod set out to explain the structure of the world, he opted for a genealogical mode of explanation: we best understand the world, his poem suggests, by looking to its origins and the series of events that shaped it. Hesiod's *Theogony* is structured by the birth and relationships of divine persons, supplying him with both a

genealogical structure for his origin story and also with *dramatis personae*. The sexual and interpersonal relationships generate an increasingly complex world, one in which regimes succeed one another through violence and deceit, ultimately leading to a climactic and near-cataclysmic battle between Olympian and Titan deities, after which Zeus consolidates power and creates a stable regime by assigning roles and privileges to the other gods, and setting limits to divine reproduction. This establishment of stable order might even be read as enabling the conditions for narrative poetry itself: the Muses are born only after Zeus' order has been established. Moreover, the final threat to this establishment is monster Typhoeus, whose many animal heads and cacophony of voices may signal not just disorder but in particular the threat of unintelligibility.<sup>18</sup> The Muses are born of Zeus and Mnemosyne (Memory) only after this. Thus, most of the events that Hesiod narrates with their help occur, at least in narrative time, *before* their birth. This may be a conspicuous problem to us, but the poem itself does not register it as one, reminding us that the way in which the Muses know really does stand outside of narrative temporality.

In all of this we see narrativity at work, and perhaps even glance at its deep relationship to cosmic order. Hesiod not only makes narrative temporality the framework for his account, but hews to the most basic aspects of narrative itself: the representation of persons in action. Hesiod is emphatic, moreover, in stating that his poem takes us back to the *very* beginnings of the world:

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<sup>18</sup> Typhoeus, the final threat to Zeus' regime, is often taken as an incarnation of disorder in the multiplicity of animal parts his form incorporates. (Clay 2003, 26; Blaise 1992, 362). I read the threat of unintelligibility in particular in that his many heads each have the voice of a different animal (*Th.* 829-835), and the poem itself marks Typhoeus as 'unspeakable' (ἄθρόεσφατον, 830). It is, moreover, after the defeat of Typhoeus that Zeus perfects his own intelligence by ingesting the pregnant Metis and generating Athena; the episode immediately precedes his distribution of rights and honors.

ταῦτά μοι ἔσπετε Μοῦσαι, Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχουσαι  
ἔξ ἀρχῆς, καὶ εἶπαθ', ὅτι πρῶτον γένητ' αὐτῶν.  
ἦτοι μὲν πρῶτιστα Χάος γένητ' ... (*Theog.* 114-6)

Tell me this, you Muses who have homes on Olympus,  
from the beginning, and say who of them came to be first.  
Indeed, then, first of all Chaos came to be...

Though Hesiod begins by hymning the Muses as he goes on to tell us they taught him to do (μουσάων Ἐλικωνιάδων ἀρχόμεθ' αἰεῖδεν, *Theog.* 1), here he pivots to the proper subject of the poem. He has just asked the Muses to relate the tribe of the immortal gods, whom he identifies as the children of Ouranos and Gaia (106). As he sums up his request, however, he emphasizes that he wants the story *from the beginning* (ἔξ ἀρχῆς ... ὅτι πρῶτον), a request which is swiftly met by naming Chaos as the *very* first (πρῶτιστα). This certainly speaks to the importance of beginnings for early Greek thinking about narrative form, as we saw earlier. It does even more work here, as Hesiod suggests the preeminence of his account of the cosmos – perhaps over epic rivals on any subject – by assuring his audience that his account takes us back to the very beginning of everything.

Hesiod's genealogical approach, and his emphasis on going back to the beginning of everything, was formative for the natural philosophy that emerged in the western Greek world.<sup>19</sup> The Milesian philosophers Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes are all

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<sup>19</sup> This point has slowly come to the fore in studies of Milesian philosophy. Burnet saw continuity between Hesiod's *Theogony* and the cosmogonies attested for Epimenides, Pherecydes, Akousilaos, and the Orphics, but set the Ionians apart as cosmologists. (Burnet 1930, 7.) Kirk, following Burnet, treats the Milesians and Heraclitus as cosmologists (Kirk 1954, xii-xiii). Charles Kahn notes the influence of Hesiod's genealogical account on Anaximander and Anaximenes (Kahn 1960, 156-7), and one of his major interventions in the study of Heraclitus is his argument, *contra* Burnet and Reinhardt, for restoring cosmogony and *ekpyrosis* to his philosophy, partly on the grounds that no major figure before Aristotle denies cosmogony (Kahn 1979, 134-137; 147-152). More recently, Daniel Graham has seen cosmogony as fundamental to the thinking of Anaximander and Anaximenes, owing in large part to the influence of Hesiod (Graham 2006, 93-97).

said to have advanced accounts that identified the original substance out of which the world was generated (*archê*), as well as the processes that produced and still shape the world as we find it. Their accounts were novel and distinctive in that they dispensed with understanding the world in terms of divine persons and its genesis in terms of sexual reproduction: the engine and material for Hesiod's epic narrative. Instead, these early philosophers looked to naturally occurring substances and described different processes of generation and interaction, inaugurating a natural-scientific paradigm that distinguished them among the Greeks.

Though the terms of explanation may have changed, the formative power of narrativity persists. Despite the novelty of the Milesians' naturalizing accounts of the world and its order, both Hesiod and the Milesians understand the world as a complex, ordered whole that develops out of an earlier and more basic state of affairs. Moreover, both see a description of origins and development as essential to the task of accounting for the world as the kind of thing that it is. Indeed, the cosmic scope of Hesiod's *Theogony* and the emergence of the more stable Olympian order that it narrates have led many to see the poem as a major influence on early Greek philosophy, and proto-philosophical in its own right.<sup>20</sup>

As G.S. Kirk has suggested, the conditions of oral culture meant that for Hesiod the most natural way to describe a dynamic complex was in terms of historical sequence.<sup>21</sup> This point could of course be expanded to take in the role of narrative epic as

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<sup>20</sup> Most 1999 presents 'totality' as one among several points of continuity between epic poetics and the kind of account offered by early philosophical figures. The implicit cosmological thinking in Hesiod was frequently recognized as a prelude to early philosophical thought, as Heraclitus' sustained attack on him demonstrates. Aristotle's first systemization of the history of philosophy treats Hesiod as a kind of forerunner to the tradition. E.g., *Metaphysics* 984b23ff, 989a10ff.

<sup>21</sup> Kirk 1983, 86-87.

the preeminent mode of cultural discourse in this period. These conditions inform the way in which the Milesians and other early Greek philosophers go about building their accounts of the world.<sup>22</sup> In the words of Charles Kahn, “cosmogony is the heir to theogony,” and the importance of cosmogony for Milesian philosophy has been widely recognized along with its Hesiodic lineage.<sup>23</sup> In acknowledging this influence and “lineage,” of course, we see the importance of narrativity for our own organization of knowledge concerning early Greek philosophy.

We have little direct textual evidence even for Anaximander and Anaximenes, but it is clear from the testimonia that cosmogony figured prominently in their accounts. Anaximander identifies “the unlimited,” *to apeiron*, as the source from which the world grows, after some “seeds” or proto-elements undergo “separation” (*apokrisis*) and begin to build the complex and differentiated world we inhabit.<sup>24</sup> Kahn notes that this process seems to be an organic one, and there is evidence that Anaximander described several stages.<sup>25</sup> For Anaximenes, the origin lies with *aer*, and everything else comes about

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<sup>22</sup> Most 1999.

<sup>23</sup> Kahn 1960, 156-7. Graham 2006, 93-97. Most 1999. As I explain above (ftn. 5), scholars in the first half of the twentieth century tended to identify the Milesians as cosmologists, and so different in kind from the Hesiodic tradition of theogony and its innovators in Pherycydes of Skyros and the Orphics, among others.

<sup>24</sup> *Apeiron* has sometimes been identified with the temporally unbounded sequence of the world itself, and as an original material. e.g., Asmis 1979, Finkelberg 1993. A useful overview of the debate over the nature of the *apeiron* is given in Graham 2006, 29-31. On Anaximander’s cosmogony, see Kahn 1960, 156, 200, 236; Graham 2006, 95-97. For a treatment of the documentary evidence on Anaximander’s cosmogony, see Kahn 1960, 41-42 and 156ff.

<sup>25</sup> Kahn 1960, esp. 85-88. The Pseudo-Plutarchian *Stromata* offers the following account of Anaximander’s cosmogony: “He says that the seed of the warm and the cold, coming from the eternal, was detached at the birth of this world and that a certain sphere of fire coming from this grew around the air surrounding the earth like the bark around a tree. When this was torn away and enclosed within certain circles, the sun, the moon, and the stars were formed.” Ps.-Plut. *Strom.* 2, trans. Laks and Most (forthcoming). While the mention of seeds, detachment (*apokrisis*), and bark all resonate with other testimonia, no other account provides a similar description of Anaximander’s cosmogony.

through the rarefaction or condensation of it.<sup>26</sup> An eternal motion drives the initial production of the world and sustains all change.<sup>27</sup> Anaximander and Anaximenes share the same basic pattern in their cosmologies: the world arises from a single and basic origin, but becomes increasingly complex and internally differentiated as various elements and forces arise and interact. Anaximenes' chief innovation with respect to Anaximander's framework is to articulate a single mechanical process that accounts for the way in which the original stuff and state of the world can produce the range of materials and phenomena that eventually comprise it.<sup>28</sup> In a significant departure from the arc of Hesiod's *Theogony*, both Anaximander and Anaximenes may have envisaged a destruction of the world, or even a series of cosmogonies and world cataclysms.<sup>29</sup> Even this cyclical vision of world formation and destruction, however, maintains its narrative temporality: each cycle has its distinctive beginning, middle, and end.

In neither case, though, do we have any authentic text that describes cosmogony. If we have so little evidence for the Milesians' actual descriptions of cosmogony what justifies my emphasis on the continuity with Hesiod and the role of narrativity in their accounts? After all, there is ample evidence that Milesian theory ranged beyond the

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<sup>26</sup> Simplicius *Physics* 24.25-26.1 (DK A 5); Hippolytus (or Ps.-Hippolytus), *Refutation of all Heresies* I.7.1-8 (DK A7). Only the author of the *Refutation* identifies hot and cold as the "authoritative" (αυθιότατα) factors for generation, but this is also the most expansive description of Anaximenes' cosmology.

<sup>27</sup> These basic points are clear from several testimonia deriving from the lost doxography of Theophrastus. For a discussion of the influence of Theophrastus' text on all subsequent doxographers, see Kahn 1960, 10-17.

<sup>28</sup> Graham 2006, 45-48, 82-84.

<sup>29</sup> The possibility of an ultimate cataclysm for the world has been understood as a consequence of cosmogony and, in the potentially influential case of Anaximander, a symptom of his predilection for symmetry and geometrical proportion. Kahn 1960, 92-98; 185. The question about multiple or even infinite worlds appears only in later sources and remains contested. Kahn offers the plausible suggestion that this interpretation represents a misunderstanding of the several celestial rings or *ouranoi* in Anaximander's view of the world system. 1960, 46-53.

cosmogonic moment and process to offer explanations for common and extraordinary astronomical, meteorological, geological and biological phenomena. Why think that these theories were driven by narrativity?

We can see that the Milesian cosmologists focused on beginnings in much the same way that ancient narratives in general tended to do. This is evident above all in what both ancients and moderns have found to be characteristic of their theories: the postulation of some basic state or stuff (*archê*) from which the differentiated world develops.<sup>30</sup> Aristotle and later ancient commentators typically understood this as a substance that was both prior to other substances and constitutive of them. Despite criticisms of the ancient doxography, this view has persisted in many modern interpretations. Recently, however, Daniel Graham has argued that the *archê* must be seen as a “generating substance:” it is initially the only substance and the production of all others begins from it, but it in no way composes those other substances.<sup>31</sup> Though keen to show this theoretical approach as a kind of protoscientific paradigm in Kuhn’s sense, he admits that what he calls the “Generating Substance Theory” is not a theory in the proper sense, but a “schema for explaining the world.”<sup>32</sup> If we understand the original stuff posited by both Anaximander and Anaximenes as an original and generating substance for the world rather than its basic constituents, their accounts look

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<sup>30</sup> This already seems like a poor description of Anaximander’s *apeiron*, and Aristotle rightly omits Anaximander from his treatment of those often since described as “material monists.” *Metaphysics* I.2, 983b20-984a25.

<sup>31</sup> Graham 2006, esp. 85-112. Part of his argument against reading the Ionians as material monists is that this view is too metaphysical, and in fact relies on an Aristotelian conception of matter that Aristotle himself claims as his own innovation. As an explanation of the misreading of Anaximenes and others as material monists, Graham suggests (pp. 277-293) that it is a consequence of Diogenes of Apollonia’s claim that *aer* is both primary *and* the constituent material of all other substances. Diogenes’ avowed material monism is retrojected onto Anaximenes and others.

<sup>32</sup> Graham 2006, 86.

much more like genealogy. Moreover, once we acknowledge “generating substance theory” as a “schema” shaping their accounts, narrativity can be seen to exert an even more profound influence on their thinking. The genealogical approach is not a theory that motivates their inquiry by virtue of its previous scientific success, but something that informs their thinking in advance of any theory.

The meteorological and other explanations offered by the Milesians also prove dependent on cosmogony in ways that exhibit narrativity. In the case of Anaximander, the testimonia on his theory of winds gives their origins in a process of “separating off” or *apokrisis* very much like that of his cosmogony.<sup>33</sup> A similar analogy exists between the formation of the earth and the development of animal and human life.<sup>34</sup> In the case of Anaximenes, with “condensation” and “rarefaction” he offers a single mechanical explanation that can account for any material or phenomenon. The original process by which seven basic materials are produced (fire, aer, wind, cloud, water, earth, and stone) turns out to describe a range of meteorological phenomena.<sup>35</sup> Here in particular the dependence of Milesian cosmology on cosmogony is apparent: it is not just that they happen to offer an origin story in the course of explaining the ordered world and its phenomena, but that in almost every case their explanations exhibit a conceptual consonance with or dependence upon their cosmogony. These other explanations are not just origin stories themselves, but draw on patterns evident in their cosmogonies, so that their accounts of the world as a whole leans heavily on an account of its origins.

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<sup>33</sup> Kahn 1960, 100-102.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* 110-113.

<sup>35</sup> See esp. Ps-Plut. *Strom.* 3. In what is probably a reference to Anaximenes, there is a similar production of this set of materials at *Timaeus* 49b-d.

Beyond the emphasis on origins, narrativity manifests itself in the temporality of cosmic organization. For this we may look to Anaximander's own words and his view of how order is realized in the world once it has been generated. Earlier I emphasized how the emergence of the Olympian order was a key aspect of narrativity in Hesiod's *Theogony*, since that order was not itself given from the beginning but emerged at a moment in time and as a consequence of a preceding state of affairs. With the Milesians we again face problems of evidence: few fragments or testimonia offer anything like the fully articulated view of Olympian order we find in Hesiod. While, as I noted earlier, the notion of *kosmos* is held up as their key achievement and legacy, they may not have even used the term.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, the articulation of a stable order is on display in Anaximander's famous fragment: "The things from which birth comes for beings, into these too their destruction comes about, according to necessity: for they pay the penalty and retribution to one another for their injustice, according to the ordering of time."<sup>37</sup>

Aside from the metaphor of legal retribution at the heart of this statement, the authenticity of every clause has been challenged. Thus, it is difficult to hang too much on the precise expression here, despite Simplicius' comment on its poetizing style.<sup>38</sup> What is clear is the sequential and apparently cyclical pattern of "injustice" and "retribution." It is probably the elements that undergo this process, though the wording of the statement

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<sup>36</sup> Kahn finds it likely that Anaximander did, despite no solid evidence. Kahn 1960, 33-35, 188-93, 219-30. Anaximenes DK B 2 uses the term, but its authenticity has been subject to serious doubts. See esp. Finkelberg 1998.

<sup>37</sup> Anaximander DK 12 B 1 (Simplicius, *Physics* 24.13ff): [ἐξ ὧν (στοιχείων?) δὲ ἡ γένεσις ἐστὶ τοῖς οὐσί, καὶ τὴν φθορὰν εἰς ταῦτα γίνεσθαι κατὰ τὸ χρεών·] διδόναι γὰρ αὐτὰ δίκην καὶ τίσιν ἀλλήλοις τῆς ἀδικίας κατὰ τὴν τοῦ χρόνου τάξιν. There is some consensus that the clause beginning with 'διδόναι' is verbatim quotation; Kahn (1960, 166-78) argues persuasively that the first half of the sentence is nevertheless a close paraphrase.

<sup>38</sup> Simplicius' text continues: ...ποιητικωτέροις οὕτως ὀνόμασιν αὐτὰ λέγων, "...thus he speaks with more poetic expressions," probably referring to the legal metaphor. *Ibid.*

leaves this open too. Similarly, whether there is an agent or overseer for this quasi-legal process is also left open. As most interpreters note, the statement impresses us above all with the regular and symmetrical process of justice and injustice playing out in an ordered sequence.<sup>39</sup> In the absence of a regulatory power or causal mechanism, it is the fact and continuity of such an ordered sequence that maintains the world as it is.<sup>40</sup>

Anaximander's *cosmos*, then, is structured in and by time. Even if we cannot see whether Anaximander composed anything like Hesiod's dramatic narrative of cosmic development, we can nonetheless appreciate that narrativity is central to, and formative for, the way that both think about cosmology.

We can gain some insight into the role of narrative temporality among the Milesians and its connection with Heraclitus in the contestation of what could be the last clause of Anaximander's fragment or Simplicius' Peripatetic gloss. Anaximander's legalistic metaphor is said to play out "according to the order of time," (κατὰ τὴν τοῦ χρόνου τάξιν). As Kahn notes, the use of τάξιν to refer to a temporal sequence is common in Aristotle and among his students.<sup>41</sup> In fact one such instance occurs in Simplicius' report of Heraclitus' doctrine immediately preceding his description of Anaximander's, where he attributes to Heraclitus "a certain order and delimited time of an exchange for the *kosmos* (scil. with fire) according to some apportioned necessity."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Kahn 1960, 183ff; Graham 2006, 34-38.

<sup>40</sup> What motivates or "governs" change is a difficult question for both Anaximander and Anaximenes, and there are testimonia that suggest the *archê* plays this role: we are told that the *apeiron* "contains and steers (*kubernan*) all things" (DK A 15), and that the "air of Anaximenes that controls (*sungratei*) us also surrounds all things" (DK B 2). Graham includes this sense of 'governance' as one feature of the "Generating Substance Theory," though there is little beyond these testimonia that might explain this for us. Graham 2006, 86-7.

<sup>41</sup> Kahn 1960, 170-172.

<sup>42</sup> ποιεῖ δὲ καὶ τάξιν τινὰ καὶ χρόνον ὠρισμένον τῆς τοῦ κόσμου μεταβολῆς κατὰ τινὰ εἰμαρμένην ἀνάγκην. Simplicius, *Physics* 23.33ff. He also attributes to Heraclitus a view of fire as an original stuff that composes all things through rarefaction and condensation.

Kahn argues that this parallel should lead us to consider the possibility that “the order of time” is an authentic expression of Anaximander’s, with its repetition in treating Heraclitus attributable to the influence of the Milesian on the Ephesian rather than of Aristotelian terminology on the ancient historiography of philosophy.<sup>43</sup> This may be possible, but it is hardly the more likely of the two possibilities. Both, though, show us the tendency – ancient and modern – to assimilate Heraclitus’ cosmology to the generally narrative framework that we take the Milesians, following Hesiod, to have laid out. Fortunately, in Heraclitus’ case we may let his texts speak for themselves.

### **Heraclitus against Narrativity**

Heraclitus has usually been identified with this cosmological tradition, and the term “Ionian” philosophy is used partly for the sake of including the Ephesian among the Milesians. There is not, however, a clear understanding of what Heraclitus does with the discourse of his predecessors. He never mentions any of them by name, but some have seen implicit approval and acknowledgement of influence in their exemption from the harsh and personal critique he directs at so many others.<sup>44</sup> He is sometimes thought to make use of Milesian theory and discourse in the service of his own project, building in reflections on epistemology, ethics, and psychology while reinterpreting aspects of Milesian cosmology in terms of human life and death.<sup>45</sup> Others have seen Heraclitus as a

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<sup>43</sup> Kahn 1960, 172.

<sup>44</sup> Gregory Vlastos, arguing for the Milesians as the main historical influence on Heraclitus, puts the point this way: “To be known and not abused by a man of Heraclitus’ temperament is tantamount to the receipt of a certificate of merit.” (Vlastos 1995, 141). Kahn suggests that Heraclitus’ silence here cannot be so strongly interpreted, since they are not mentioned at all before Aristotle, and even later hardly ever mentioned outside of the technical doxographical tradition (1979, 108).

<sup>45</sup> Kahn take Heraclitus to be interested in using rather than propounding physical theories. (1979, pp. 99-100; 145-6.)

cosmologist fully engaged in the project of Milesian natural philosophy, debating only his views and his contribution to it.<sup>46</sup> Nearly all, however, have made cosmological thinking like that of the Milesians central to their interpretation of Heraclitus, even when they see a certain ironic stance in Heraclitus' use of that discourse.

My aim here is to demonstrate that Heraclitus breaks with the pattern of genealogical explanation and narrative exposition that operates in Hesiod as well as in the earlier Ionian philosophers. I hope that this analysis will also point out that cosmology is only one among many of the concerns in the extant texts, and is by no means more central or more fundamental than the others. Among the remains of his text, only a few statements offer a direct exposition of cosmology in the Milesian vein, and these are still thick with paradox and ambiguity. Even in these, as we shall see, Heraclitus offers a revolutionary and unambiguous claim that the *kosmos* is eternal.<sup>47</sup> Aside from this, the overwhelming majority of his statements concern epistemology, religion, politics, and ethics; the last three in particular have nothing to do with what Anaximander and Anaximenes seem to have thought and written about. Since Aristotle, however, Heraclitus has been identified with Milesian philosophy, and so the naturalistic cosmology developed in Ionia has played a disproportionately large role in the study of his texts, though there is evidence that some ancient commentators considered this a

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<sup>46</sup> This has been the dominant trend in studies of Heraclitus since Kirk, and one could cite most major treatments of Heraclitus in the last century and a half. Marcovich, however, separates Heraclitus from Ionian science and cosmology as a quasi-religious thinker (Marcovich 1967). Most recently, Daniel Graham has presented a Heraclitus who, from within the Milesian worldview, critiques one of its central assumptions: the priority of one substance to others and to the world they come to compose. (Graham 2006 ch. 5, 113-147.) Besides Marcovich, most studies restrict themselves to treating Heraclitus *qua* cosmologist, without considering the actual shape and prosecution of his own philosophical project.

<sup>47</sup> D85/B30: κόσμον τόνδε, τὸν αὐτὸν ἀπάντων, οὔτε τις θεῶν οὔτε ἀνθρώπων ἐποίησεν, ἀλλ' ἦν ἀεὶ καὶ ἔστιν καὶ ἔσται, πῦρ ἀείζων, ἀπτόμενον μέτρα καὶ ἀποσβεννύμενον μέτρα. "This present ordering, the same for all, not any of the gods nor humans made, but it was and is and will be: everliving fire, kindling in measures and in measures going out."

miscategorization.<sup>48</sup> The difficulty with this approach is that the evidence is so slim, especially once we set aside Heraclitus himself. Aristotle's reports of Thales' ideas are already working from hearsay, and there is no evidence in other authors of an authentic text circulating in antiquity.<sup>49</sup> Texts are attested for Anaximander and Anaximenes, but the remains of these are as paltry as they are contested, though the reports relied on above fill out the picture to a certain extent. Assuming that Heraclitus is working mainly within a theoretical paradigm and parameters inherited from the Milesians, then, is unnecessarily prejudicial to our understanding of Heraclitus along with that of early Greek philosophy and prose both.

As we have seen in discussing B1/ D1, and will see in the next chapter especially, Heraclitus' emphasis is on the *logos* and its significance for human comprehension of the world. He focuses mainly on the present incomprehension of human beings and the necessity of their doing so in (and for) their own lived experience. Rejecting his personal authority in B50/D46, Heraclitus is candid about what the comprehension of *logos* involves: speaking in agreement with it that all things are one (ὁμολογεῖν σοφόν ἔστιν ἔν πάντα εἶναι). On its face, at least, this understanding of what *logos* communicates is incompatible with a narrativized understanding of the world: what kind of narrative perpetually utters the same thing: 'all things are one'?

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<sup>48</sup> Diogenes Laertius (9.15) reports that one Diodotus, "said that his composition is not about nature but about political constitution, and the remarks about nature are there for the sake of example. (ὅς οὐ φησὶ περὶ φύσεως εἶναι τὸ σύγγραμμα, ἀλλὰ περὶ πολιτείας, τὰ δὲ περὶ φύσεως ἐν παραδείγματος εἶδει κείσθαι.) Sextus Empiricus (*Against the Logicians* 7.7) notes that, "it has also been investigated, concerning Heraclitus, whether he was not only a natural philosopher but also an ethical one." (ἐζητεῖτο δὲ καὶ περὶ Ἡρακλείτου, εἰ μὴ μόνον φυσικός ἐστιν ἀλλὰ καὶ ἠθικός φιλόσοφος.) LM R3b and R4, respectively: Most and Laks 2016 Vol. III, 205.

<sup>49</sup> See, e.g., *De Caelo* II.13 294a28-32; *De Anima* I.2 405a19-21. Heraclitus' own possible reference to Thales (DK B38; DK 11 A 1, Thales) is unclear, both on the fact of the reference and its authenticity.

As I hope to show here, Heraclitus simply dispenses with a genealogical and narrativized account of the world, and this is in keeping with his focus on the way in which humans encounter and comprehend the world in the present and in their own lived experience. His refusal of narrative operates in both the content and the form of the understanding he aims to communicate. In insisting on the eternity of the *kosmos*, Heraclitus is rejecting the idea that knowledge of the present depends upon knowledge of the past. Such knowledge, moreover, must break out of the narrative temporality that structures both Hesiodic and Milesian thinking about the world.

Though the point that Heraclitus turns away from cosmogony is not new, it has yet to be registered as significant for understanding Heraclitus' textual form. Once we understand that Heraclitus moves away from the reliance the past to account for and otherwise illuminate the present, we may appreciate his writing in terms of its resistance to the narrative model that informs accounts of cosmic origins from Hesiod to Pherecydes to Anaximenes. For the gnomic and oracular modes in which many of his statements operate – genres which themselves hardly concern the past – are part and parcel of his focus on drawing the attention of his audience to the cognition of the world in their own experience. Moreover, the semantic density and ambiguity in Heraclitus' statements disrupt the narrative sequence of beginning, middle, and end. The difficulty of proceeding easily through his text, whether at the level of syntax internal to the sentence or the coordination of statements and sentences on a larger scale, is central to ancient accounts of his obscurity: Aristotle points to the ambiguous syntax of D1/B1 to exemplify difficulty in reading, Demetrius singles out the lack of connecting particles in Heraclitus as the chief cause of their obscurity, and Diogenes Laertius reports that

Theophrastus called Heraclitus' text unfinished.<sup>50</sup> These testimonia give credence to the hypothesis that, whatever shape he gave to his composition as a whole, Heraclitus meant his individual statements to arrest his audience and require careful re-examination, working against the linear development typical for narratives in poetry and prose. Modern readers similarly recognize non-linear exposition as the signal achievement of Heraclitus' art, and so it is surprising that Heraclitus' relationship to narrative has not been explored in detail.<sup>51</sup> I examine this first in terms of his eternal *kosmos*, before closing by considering the significance of a form that so frequently resists and refuses narrative.

## **ΠΥΡΑΕΙΖΟΩΝ, Everliving Fire**

The texts we have from Heraclitus may be far from complete in relation to his book, but we seem to have all of the main texts that Theophrastus and the later doxographers, some of whom almost probably also had access to Heraclitus' text, relied upon in outlining his cosmology.<sup>52</sup> Despite this availability of evidence, views on whether Heraclitus presented any kind of cosmogony have vacillated wildly over the millennia. Ancient interpreters from Aristotle forward generally accepted the view that for Heraclitus the *kosmos* is generated from and later absorbed into primordial fire.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Laks and Most, R5c, R6 and R7: D.L. 9.6-7; Arist. Rhet. 3.5 1407b11-18; Demetr. Eloc. 191-92. Both Aristotle and Demetrius bring up Heraclitus as a counter-example to their principles of clear exposition.

<sup>51</sup> Kahn 1979, 90; Dilcher 1995, 140. Both see this in the pattern of resonance in imagery and vocabulary across statements. Curiously, however, they identify it with a more comprehensive view of archaic formal principles that they assume to have governed Heraclitus' composition as a whole.

<sup>52</sup> This point was first advanced by Reinhardt Kahn 1979, 3-9. Kahn specifically claims that commentators as late as Plutarch and Clement likely had access to a copy of Heraclitus' text.

<sup>53</sup> Diogenes Laertius 9.8; Simplicius (*in Cael.* 294.4-23, LM R13) has been seen to draw on the Theophrastean doxography here, offering evidence that the cosmogony and eventual destruction of the world in fire precede the Stoics in interpretations of Heraclitus. See Kirk 1954, 319-324.

Beginning with Burnet and later Reinhardt, modern scholars came to suspect that this doctrine had been perpetuated in part through Stoic distortion, a product of their avowed strategy to assimilate earlier thinkers, and Heraclitus in particular, to their own views.<sup>54</sup> Reinhardt noted that nothing in Heraclitus' texts obviously describes cosmogony, and there is little that may be interpreted that way.<sup>55</sup> He further showed that the ancient interpreters were not relying on any texts that have not come down to the present, and so the ancient view should not have any authority beyond its interpretation of the texts that we have. Kirk largely followed Reinhardt's reading, adducing further evidence in ancient suspicions of Stoic attribution of *ekpyrosis* to Heraclitus and the general importance of the unity of opposites through constant and simultaneous tension.<sup>56</sup>

Nevertheless, Charles Kahn has argued for the restoration of cosmogony and *ekpyrosis* to Heraclitus, basing his argument not so much on the description of such processes in the text, but on two more general points: (1) that Heraclitus' reinterpretation of technical cosmology in terms of human birth, life, and death suggests that he imagines, poetically if not dogmatically, a cycle of generation and destruction at the level of the world as a whole; (2) that no Greek thinker before Aristotle denies an origin and generation of the *kosmos*, and our interpretation of Heraclitus should keep this in mind

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<sup>54</sup> The Stoic strategy of *synoikeosis* as it pertains to Heraclitus is described by Kahn in his treatment of Sextus' stoicizing doxography of Heraclitus. Kahn 1979, 294-5.

<sup>55</sup> Reinhardt 1916, 1942.

<sup>56</sup> Kirk 1954, 335-8. He cites in particular Plutarch's *de def. or.* 12, 415f-416a, where the character Cleombrotus complains that Stoic *ekpyrosis* is 'encroaching upon the works of Hesiod as upon those of Heraclitus and Orpheus,' and *Sophist* 242d-e, where Socrates distinguishes between the simultaneous unity of one and many in Heraclitus ('the stricter Ionian muses') and the periodic succession of one and many in Empedocles.

alongside the general archaic tendency to explain things genealogically.<sup>57</sup> Since Kahn's book, most work on Heraclitus has avoided engaging directly with these issues.<sup>58</sup>

Kahn was right to argue that our reading of Heraclitus need not rule out cosmogony and *ekpyrosis* just because these happened to be Stoic views as well. Reinhardt dismissed the authenticity of B66/D84 (πάντα τὸ πῦρ ἐπέλθὼν κρινεῖ καὶ καταλήψεται), but admitted that, if accepted, this one text at least is powerful evidence for some kind of world conflagration. Most editors including and since Kahn have accepted this text as authentic, significantly altering the landscape of evidence on which the earlier rejection of cosmogony and *ekpyrosis* was based. Kahn's other arguments for restoring this cosmic cycle of fiery generation and destruction, however, rest on circumstantial and very general evidence. Heraclitus does focus on life and death but not solely the pattern of mortality; the *kosmos* as 'everliving fire' is one of the best examples of his paradoxical take on the subject. More importantly, assimilating Heraclitus to the contemporary prevalence of cosmogony and genealogical explanation is hardly a better interpretive strategy than taking doxography, Stoic or otherwise, at face value.

I am arguing here that Heraclitus makes a decisive break with his predecessors and contemporaries on precisely this point: he tells us that the ordering of the world does not emerge out of a simpler state of affairs but is, in some sense, an 'everliving fire.' As we shall see, Heraclitus' *kosmos* may be understood as an activity of ordering that is eternal and constant even if we allow into it a cyclical generation and destruction of the

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<sup>57</sup> Kahn 1979, 136-7; 1960, 225 n.2.

<sup>58</sup> Graham (2006) argues that Heraclitus rejects cosmogony in a critique of the Milesians' insistence on the primacy of one substance (what he calls the "problem of primacy" inherent in the Generating Substance Theory that characterizes Milesian thought), but he does not engage directly with the scholarly debates over cosmogony and *ekpyrosis* in Heraclitus.

world as we know it. That activity, properly understood, does not unfold according to narrative temporality but is both constant and common, maintaining the orderliness and unity of all things despite ceaseless and radical change.

Heraclitus has often been read as replacing an existing thought pattern of alternating opposites with a persistent and universal tension between opposites.<sup>59</sup> While I do not want to embrace this reading entirely, I do think it is helpful for underlining the way in which Heraclitus moves away from an idea of cosmic order that is, both in its emergence and its operations, structured by narrative temporality. Instead, Heraclitus insists, the patterns and relations that structure reality may and indeed must be grasped in the present moment: proper understanding of one's own experience depends upon active comprehension. In looking first at the two statements offering Heraclitus' most comprehensive look at the relation of opposites, we see a critique of the genealogy and of narrativized temporality.

B80/D63 responds directly to Greek epic and may also glance at Anaximander: εἰδέναι χρὴ τὸν πόλεμον ἐόντα ξυνόν, καὶ δίκην ἔρι, καὶ γινόμενα πάντα κατ' ἔρι καὶ χρεῶν. "One must know that war is common, and justice strife, and all things come about according to strife and necessity." This statement may be a direct challenge to Anaximander's conception of order preserved as opposed elements 'pay the penalty' to one another for injustice.<sup>60</sup> As Kahn notes, however, it also responds to an Homeric idea: Hector's statement that "Enyalios (Ares) is common (*xunos*), and the killer gets killed (*Il.*

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<sup>59</sup> e.g., Vlastos argues that Heraclitus must be understood both in its connection with Anaximander's extant statement and with its essential difference from that view: "Two of the fundamental ideas of Anaximander – that there is strife among the elements, and that a just order is *nevertheless* preserved – are reasserted in a form which universalizes both of them and thereby resolves the opposition between them: what is a "nevertheless" in Anaximander becomes a "because" in Heraclitus." (Vlastos 1955, 358).

<sup>60</sup> Vlastos (1955) insists that it must be, but Kirk and Kahn are more equivocal. Kirk 1954, 240-241; Kahn 1979, 206.

18.309).”<sup>61</sup> In the case of both war and justice Heraclitus refers to an existing conception of symmetrical retribution that takes place through a temporal pattern. Hector calls Ares “common” (*xunos*) after he has slain Patroclus, and the statement suggests his own impending death at the hands of Achilles (who at *Il.* 18.107, it should be noted, curses strife). Similarly, we saw that for Anaximander the “justice” of the cosmic order is preserved in the temporal pattern of offense and retribution. Both the Homeric and Milesian treatments of war and justice – two concepts that, as Kahn points out, are themselves diametrically opposed in archaic Greek thought – rely on temporal succession. Actions and events find meaning in their relation to those of the past and future, as in the pattern of death in combat that takes Patroclus, Hector, and Achilles in turn. Narrative, in building its plots out of actions and their consequences, is well suited to elucidating such a pattern.

Heraclitus may not explicitly disparage narrative in his critique of Homer and Anaximander, but there is much in this statement that cuts against it. The identification of war as common (*xunos*) parallels the statement in B2/D2 that *logos* is common. Moreover, the connection of what is common with constancy is given right off the bat in B1/D1. There the famously ambiguous position of *aei* (“always”) suggests the eternity of *logos* but also of human misunderstanding, which is expressed in their alienation from the common (*axunetoi*). B1/D1 also finds allusion in the language that closes B80/D63: here all things come to be in accordance with strife and necessity, as in B1/D1 all things come to be in accordance with the *logos*. The present tense is important here: it refers not to how things *have* come to be, but how they are actually happening. The statement, like

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<sup>61</sup> Kahn 1979, 205-6. Homer’s comment is also echoed in Archilochus (fr. 38 Diehl).

so many, has no particular temporal character: it announces a truth that seems to be meant as eternally valid. The authenticity of the closing *χρεών* has been subject to doubt, but if it is authentic then we have a nice symmetry in beginning and closing with the idea of necessity. In this the statement itself seems to instantiate coming into being according to strife and necessity: it is necessary to disagree with the likes of Homer and Anaximander if we want to understand what is really going on. If Heraclitus did use this language, he may have been inviting his audience to see his discourse itself as exemplary for the recognition of how things are, which we will see with greater force in the next chapter's discussion of the statements on *harmonia*.

The way in which B80/D63 interacts with other texts also shows us how Heraclitus' discourse differs from the narrativized accounts of war and justice that he takes down here. The absence of any connective particles (the manuscript reading *εἰ δέ* has been roundly rejected) make this statement standalone even in the context of others. We see this in the way that the language alludes to B1/D1 and B2/D2, since the constellation of concepts this creates – war, *logos*, strife, necessity – does not lend obvious priority to any of them. As with the *aei* in B1/D1, we are challenged to think together what seem to be mutually exclusive readings, specifically through the rejection of a clear and meaningful relationship of parts in sequence. Heraclitus refuses to coordinate his ideas and statements according to the narrative principles of beginning, middle, and end.

Heraclitus' other statement on war, B53/D64, offers a more complex critique of the genealogical schema common among his predecessors: Πόλεμος πάντων μὲν πατήρ ἐστι, πάντων δὲ βασιλεύς, καὶ τοὺς μὲν θεοὺς ἔδειξε τοὺς δὲ ἀνθρώπους, τοὺς μὲν

δούλους ἐποίησε τοὺς δὲ ἐλευθέρους. “War is father of all, and king of all: some it has showed as gods, others as humans; some it has made slaves, others free.” At first glance, this text seems to work within that genealogical schema. The traditional formula for Zeus as ‘father of gods and men’ is applied to war, and the aorist verbs here invoke the past.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, the marked use of connective particles here seems to work against the argument I have just made for the independence of Heraclitean statements from the kind coordination that narrative and its plots emphasize.

A tricolon of clauses structure this statement in repeated μὲν ... δὲ construction. The first pair of clauses are additive, setting out two aspects of War (Πόλεμος) in its relation to “all.” The second and third pair of clauses both contrast groups who have been put into opposing categories by the action of War. Notably, each pair of clauses in μὲν ... δὲ shifts the frame of reference one applies in making sense of Heraclitus’ claim about “War.” We have first the addition of epithets that reference the familial and political order among the gods, which in epic stands for the order of the world as a whole. As we shift from additive to contrastive clauses, though, we move into the opposition between divine and human, one that was typically considered fixed as well as formative for human life.<sup>63</sup> With ‘free’ and ‘slave’, however, the framework shifts into an opposition between social categories that are primarily internal to human life. Though the μὲν ... δὲ construction structures each of these clauses, the shift each makes in the

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<sup>62</sup> Though Zeus is born relatively late in Hesiod’s *Theogony*, he nevertheless receives the epithet “father of men and gods” in Homer: *Il.* 1.544, “...πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε.” As Kahn notes, the epithet “king of all” is not attested elsewhere except in the famous Pindaric formulation: “νόμος πάντων βασιλεύς,” (fr.169, Herodotus III.38). Kahn 1979, 208.

<sup>63</sup> As Jasper Griffin puts it, “Remember that you are not a god’ was the most regular and most typical of all expressions of Greek wisdom; it would not have been, if the Greeks had not been tempted to forget it, and to think that they were, or could be, gods.” 1980, 168.

conceptual frame, as well as the absence of a hierarchical organization among them, leaves these different ideas clustered around the alternately strange and familiar conception of war that Heraclitus offers here.

Πόλεμος, the first word of the statement as a whole already begins to undo any straightforward any reading of a straightforward genealogy here. It is unlikely that a contemporary reader would immediately recognize this as a personification: there are only a very few instances of Πόλεμος personified, and this would be the earliest of them.<sup>64</sup> Heraclitus is not just substituting War for Zeus as one divine person for another; rather, he seems to mean warfare itself, though in this initial pair of clauses that is difficult to reconcile with the claim for its patriarchal and political preeminence. The substitution of War for Zeus is particularly ironic in the political connection, since Zeus' monarchic regime first comes into existence as a resolution to, and a future prevention of, war between the gods. By putting War at the head of the political order, Heraclitus upends the telos of Hesiod's developmental account. This first pair of clauses not only imagines a different origin and power behind the existing order of things, but also challenges the shape of such an account: war is first characterized in the present tense, before the evocation of past action.

The second pair of clauses, τοὺς μὲν θεοὺς ἔδειξε τοὺς δὲ ἀνθρώπους, takes us from relations among the gods to relations between gods and humans. The language here is less obviously allusive, though some have seen in ἔδειξε a nod to Zeus' practice of giving signs to mortals.<sup>65</sup> That potential allusion would only make more concrete the

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<sup>64</sup> Besides this possible instance, LSJ only gives Pindar Fr.78 and Aristophanes *Pax* 205 as other instances in archaic and classical Greek literature.

<sup>65</sup> Kahn 1979, 208-9.

strangeness of the passage from Olympian political order to a power that “shows” gods *and* mortals in their difference from one another. That difference, though, runs deeper than a distinction indicated by some third party: how could this be a matter of mere showing? Such ‘showing’ makes more sense once we shift the frame from the paradoxical personified Πόλεμος of the first clauses to its work in figuring opposition more generally. Human and divine are categories that are made meaningful by the opposition intrinsic to them, which Heraclitus seems to be evoking here. The nature of human life, the limitations of which are driven home again and again in early Greek is revealed most fully in its difference from divine immortality.

Just as we get a grip on this abstract conceptualization of Πόλεμος, however, the last set of clauses shifts the framework into war as a condition of human life, and one with very real consequences within it. For it draws on a common effect of wars among humans: the enslavement of a conquered populace. The difficulty of seeing a literal state of war at work in the second phrase leads directly into a phrase that works with war at its most literal: conflict between human cities or societies. In its most familiar iteration, “war” may drastically alter the status and circumstances of the humans involved in such conflicts. Surprisingly, however, Heraclitus does not touch on war here as a matter of life and death for the combatants, but in its political and social ramifications for cities and states. The opposed categories of slave and free represent a basic distinction within the Greek social order, but in war these become fluid. It is tempting to map this fluidity of status and identity onto the distinction between gods and humans, and some have.<sup>66</sup> However, if we keep in mind the nod to Zeus’ hegemony in the opening of this statement,

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<sup>66</sup> Kahn 1979, 209. Marcovich 1963, 147.

one notable feature of this opposition is its suggestion of conflict between social orders, in which the outcome obliterates or overturns the distinctions internal to the society of the losing participants. Heraclitus chooses a stronger verb than just showing (ἐποίησε), suggesting that a concrete change has been effected; he uses the same verb in denying that a god or a human “made” the ordering of the world in B30/D85.<sup>67</sup> In this way the statement suggests the dependence of human social order(s) on broader forces and patterns in the world, a point that Heraclitus dwells on elsewhere.<sup>68</sup> Importantly, this relationship of dependence is illustrated not through a narrative account of how it came about, but through a schematic statement of the importance of “war” for the divine, the human, and their relation.

It is the shifting frame of reference for War in its relation to gods and humans that coordinates the three phrases of B53/D64. What begins with a statement of War as the primary genealogical and political agent, alluding to the history of divine persons in the *Theogony*, then opposes gods and humans, and finally arrives at the real consequences of war as it is acted out by and among humans themselves. If these are articulated in a sequence that evokes narrative plot, this sequence is lost in the challenge to arrive at what war means by fusing the separate frames of reference that each set of clauses employs: mythological, conceptual, and practical.

The syntax of the statement is most disruptive to the genealogical picture alluded to here. If Heraclitus means to offer a divinized *Polemos* as the “father” and “king” of

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<sup>67</sup> B30/D85: κόσμον τόνδε, τὸν αὐτὸν ἀπάντων, οὔτε τις θεῶν οὔτε ἀνθρώπων ἐποίησεν..., “This ordering, the same for all, neither did someone of the gods nor of humans make...”

<sup>68</sup> As B114/D105 relates: ...τρέφονται γὰρ πάντες οἱ ἀνθρώπειοι νόμοι ὑπὸ ἐνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ· κρατεῖ γὰρ τοσοῦτον ὁκόσον ἐθέλει καὶ ἐξαρκεῖ πᾶσι καὶ περιγίνεται. ... “all human laws are nourished by a divine one: for it has power to the degree that it wishes and suffices for all and is more than enough.”

all, we might expect him to give an alternative genealogy of the gods, as others like Pherecydes of Syros and Hecataeus of Miletus may have done. But Heraclitus offers instead a set of oppositions, conspicuously marked as such by the repeated  $\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu \dots \delta\grave{\epsilon}$  construction. To the extent that there is a kind of sequential development that occurs in the course of the statement, it is not a picture of development in time but of differing semantic registers for what “War” is: from a personalized or metaphorical place in a mythic account of the divine, to its actual effects in the human social order. It builds a conception of war that begins metaphorically and ends concretely: the wider sense of ‘war’ that Heraclitus identifies as essential to all things is ultimately not abstracted from the term’s most natural referent, conflict and combat among humans.<sup>69</sup> This fusion between the traditional mythological framework, a novel conceptual one, and the real phenomena of lived experience is central to the way that Heraclitus invites to think, and we will encounter it again in his identification of the cosmos with fire.

Heraclitus’ statements on war both work against narrativity: B80/D63 makes conceptions of war and strife universal and not dependent on any sequence of events, while B53/D64 disrupts the particular genealogy of Hesiod’s *Theogony* and the shape of genealogical explanation in general. In drawing on these ideas so central to epic and other forms of narrative, Heraclitus shifts the intellectual work from the imagination and analysis of action in narrative to the resolution of paradox of conflicting but overlapping conceptual schemes. The schematic structure of B53/D64, along with B80/D63’s allusion to B1/D1 and B2/D2, shows us how Heraclitus’ prose can embrace complex

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<sup>69</sup> Like other conceptual resources for Heraclitus, fire and language in particular, it draws on something familiar to human experience and gives it conceptual and universal application. The movement here from metaphorical from concrete should help us see that with these ideas Heraclitus is not offering metaphors that move in the direction of abstraction from the concrete, but this will be a topic for the next chapter.

syntax and coordination between statements but also refuse the sequencing of actions or ideas in plot that is so essential to Greek narrative.

#### IV. The *Kosmos* of Heraclitus

We have seen in these few statements, then, that Heraclitus engages with the genealogical form of mythic accounts in ways that signal his own break from their narrative pattern, a pattern that is continuous with the Milesian philosophy that is usually taken as formative for Heraclitus' philosophy. We turn now to his statements that speak more directly to cosmology in the terms employed by the Milesians themselves. Here, as in his statements on the "War" of opposites, Heraclitus engages with their emphasis on cosmic origins. Heraclitus does not deny that alternating states and cyclical patterns playing out through time are part and parcel of cosmic order. However, his statements on *kosmos*, the order of the world, unambiguously insist that it is ungenerated and eternal. The central texts for this view, B30/D85 and B31/D86, also further my point that Heraclitus' texts resist narrative at the level of form as well as content.

Clement tells us, in a rare glimpse of Heraclitus' text in antiquity, that B30/D85 and B31(a+b)/D86 occurred in close proximity to one another.<sup>70</sup> Both are central to ancient and some modern readings that Heraclitus posited fire as the original substance from which the world is generated and into which it is absorbed, with the other substances coming about through material transformations of fire.<sup>71</sup> B30/D85 is also our

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<sup>70</sup> Clement, *Stromateis* V, 104, 1; *apud* Kirk 1954, 307. Clement quotes B30/D85 and explains "that he opined (γενητὸν καὶ φθαρτὸν εἶναι ἐδογματίζεν, μηνύει τὰ ἐπιφερόμενα.) As Kirk notes, τὰ ἐπιφερόμενα must mean what came next in Heraclitus' next, not in Clement's own writing.

<sup>71</sup> I leave to one side the question about whether fire should be understood as the material constituent of all things or simply the "originating substance," to borrow Daniel Graham's view of *archai* in early Ionian cosmology. Against earlier commentators who took fire as a material constituent, Graham (2006) has

first instance of the term *kosmos* used in a way that accords with the sense commonly imputed to the Milesians: the ordering of all things in their generation, destruction, and interaction, such that they constitute an intelligible world.<sup>72</sup> These two texts, then, are as important to early Greek cosmology at large as they are to the thought of Heraclitus.

Notably, the emphasis in Heraclitus' declaration of cosmic order is on eternity: κόσμον τόνδε, τὸν αὐτὸν ἀπάντων, οὔτε τις θεῶν οὔτε ἀνθρώπων ἐποίησεν, ἀλλ' ἦν ἀεὶ καὶ ἔστιν καὶ ἔσται: πῦρ ἀεὶζῶν, ἀπτόμενον μέτρα καὶ ἀποσβεννύμενον μέτρα. "This ordering, the same for all, no one of the gods nor humans made, but it was and is and will be: everliving fire, kindling in measures and going out in measures." This statement, like B53/D64, begins with a pattern of consonance that lends added gravity to the leading term, a gravity that the rest of the statement goes on to heighten in a succession of clauses that fill out its meaning. As in B1/D1, the demonstrative pronoun (τόνδε) marks the 'order' in question as immediately present, so that the written text is able to enter into the moment and environment of the one encountering it. This statement of presence is immediately followed with the all-pervading nature of this *kosmos*: it is the single ordering of everything there is. With that 'everything' (ἀπάντων), the alliterative pattern makes a slight shift from omicron to omega, linking this 'everything' with the gods and men (θεῶν ... ἀνθρώπων) who are typically taken to live under separate (if overlapping) regimes and with very different privileges and

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argued persuasively that this would require an Aristotelian conception of matter that is not in evidence earlier, and so we should understand these *archai* as the substance out of which all else comes to be.

<sup>72</sup> Most commentators agree on the sense of *kosmos* in B30/D85, though Finkelberg 1998a takes a skeptical approach to that claims the technical philosophical sense becomes widespread only much later, with earlier instances admitting this meaning only when it is marked as such. His arguments are based mostly on later testimonia that suggest the terminology was foreign well into the 4<sup>th</sup> century, rather than a compelling reading of Heraclitus' own statement.

limitations. Perhaps the most surprising aspect of this opening is that it turns out to be a negative characterization of this *kosmos*: it has *not* been made or otherwise brought into being.

It would be difficult to deny that the use of *kosmos* here is completely innocent of the philosophical reference to the world order or the world itself.<sup>73</sup> However, it is useful to distinguish between the *ordering* of the world and the *ordered world* itself. I mean the former to refer to the arrangement of things rather than the things themselves in a substantial sense. The reading of *kosmos* as referring to the world as a substantial whole has led some to complain that the denial of divine or human agency in creating the world itself makes no sense, since the idea of a ‘creator’ divinity is hardly attested in Greek culture before Plato’s *Timaeus*. But humans and gods may be *orderers*: Zeus is clearly the agent of the political order that emerges in the *Theogony*, and the *Iliad* refers to the two Atreidae as the ‘orderers of the host,’ (Ἀτρεΐδα δὲ μάλιστα δύω, κοσμήτορε λαῶν, 1.16). Moreover, the sense of ‘make’ (ἐποίησεν) need not be ‘create.’ As we just saw in B53/D64, war ‘makes’ (ἐποίησε) some slaves and others free; the verb need not be read as – and certainly should not be restricted to – creation *ex nihilo*.<sup>74</sup>

Once we accept the points above, the sense of the statement becomes clear: Heraclitus is denying that any agency, divine or human, has put the world into its present arrangement, and he is asserting that this order ‘was and is and will be.’ Continuing my reading of this statement, this expression, in a new clause introduced by the contrastive conjunction ‘but,’ is poetic and hieratic. Its repetitions of the verb to be across past,

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<sup>73</sup> As Kahn notes, a reading ultimately cannot make sense of the statement without some reference to “world order.” Kahn 1979, 133.

<sup>74</sup> (τοὺς μὲν δούλους ἐποίησε τοὺς δὲ ἐλευθέρους)

present, and future tenses points to the totality of events, the knowledge of which is reserved for the gods and a few humans gifted with vision. As Kirk notes, the verbs are typically existential and never predicative, so that Heraclitus is in all probability not saying that the present ordering was and is and will be fire, but rather emphasizing its existence across past, present and future.<sup>75</sup> Significantly, this formula also expresses the elements of narrative: it is easy to parse “what was” as the beginning, “what is” as the middle, and “what will be” as the end and outcome of the whole chain of events.

Heraclitus, however, is using the formula to *deny* that the *kosmos* has a beginning, a middle, or an end. It offers a rather dramatic prelude to the climactic identification, effected through apposition rather than predication, of the *kosmos* as ‘everliving fire’ (πῦρ ἀείζων). This epithet ‘everliving’ is rare, and this is the earliest instance of it.<sup>76</sup> Characterizing the *logos* as “being always” in B1/D1 (τοῦ δὲ λόγου τοῦδ' ἐόντος ἀεὶ) linked the term to traditional conceptions of the gods by drawing on epic formulae. Here, however, the novel adjective ‘everliving’ may heighten the shock and strangeness in identifying the ordering of all things with fire. This strangeness is not ameliorated by the participial phrases that bring this text to a close: πῦρ ἀείζων, ἀπτόμενον μέτρα καὶ ἀποσβεσσόμενον μέτρα, “... fire everliving, being kindled in measures and in measures going out.” Here the ambiguity of middle/passive participles raise but do not resolve the question of whether fire is the agent or the patient of the kindling and extinguishing. How could a fire kindle – and even more so extinguish – itself? If we are to imagine some other agent doing so, why would it be left entirely unarticulated?

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<sup>75</sup> Kirk 1954, 311.

<sup>76</sup> LSJ, *loc. cit.*

Heraclitus' most important statement on cosmology, then, emphatically asserts that the *kosmos* is (a) not the product of personal agency, divine or human, and (b) eternal. Moreover, on my reading, Heraclitus directs our attention to the question about the agent or form of agency that orders the world, rather than any genesis or development of it. This reading is novel, but the emphatic assertion of cosmic eternity was sufficient to convince a generation of scholars, once the influence of the ancient doxography had been cast aside, that Heraclitus' *kosmos* was neither generated nor destroyed. Kahn's resistance to this view rests on a reading of the final part of B30/D85 as allowing for the periodic generation and destruction of the *kosmos*. He is right that such a reading cannot be ruled out, but that is hardly a good reason to adopt it. Because he makes a point of reading this statement through the lens of Milesian philosophy, he looks to accommodate the one to the other rather than highlighting the departure that Heraclitus is making from both novel and traditional forms of cosmic genealogy.

Most commentators, both for and against a Heraclitean cosmogony, focus on the *metra* in B30/D85 as the key to Heraclitus' cosmology here. The key question is what sort of 'measures' Heraclitus has in mind, since reading cosmogony here would require that we read *metra* as primarily temporal. That is how Clement reads them in the context of his quotation, but he does not tell us why he does so. Heraclitus may indeed have more than one sense in mind for *metra*, but we get a glimpse of the primary sense in B31/D86, which we are told followed closely upon B30/D85:

πυρὸς τροπαὶ πρῶτον θάλασσα, θαλάσσης δὲ τὸ μὲν ἥμισυ γῆ, τὸ δὲ ἥμισυ  
 πρηστήρ [... ] θάλασσα διαχέεται, καὶ μετρέεται εἰς τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον,  
 ὁκοῖος πρόσθεν ἦν ἢ γενέσθαι γῆ.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Clement quotes the latter half of the statement separately from the first, apparently interpolating some of his own comments on the cyclical *ekpyrosis* of the *kosmos*. Despite the separation, there is a rough consensus that these are parts of the same sentence concerning the *tropai* of fire. Between the two parts of

Turning points of fire: first sea, but of sea the one half is earth, the other storm [...] sea pours out, and measures up to the same account, such as it was before it became earth.

This statement has usually been taken to express a sequence of transformations, in which fire becomes sea and then storm.<sup>78</sup> Kahn does offer good reason for understanding the “turnings” as the extreme limits of a movement, since in Homer and Herodotus *tropê* refers primarily to the rout of an army in battle or to the change in the path of the rising and setting sun at the solstices.<sup>79</sup> The first sense accords well with Heraclitus’ willingness to understand the order of things in mythic terms of war and combat. The second resonates here as Heraclitus’ reference to the closely guarded “measures” of the sun in B94/D89c, the only other text to use this terminology besides B30/D85 and B31/D86.<sup>80</sup> There Heraclitus mentions the sun “overstepping” (ὑπερβήσεται) the measures, and so the thought seems to be primarily spatial. The position and motion of the sun are inextricably linked with time, of course, but Heraclitus invites us to imagine these “measures” first of all as spatial limits. B31/D86 does countenance temporal sequence explicitly: as Kahn notes, the “first” and “before” can hardly be stripped of any reference to diachronicity.<sup>81</sup>

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the citation some editors conjecture a short phrase or at least a “γῆ” in order to have a clear subject for διαχέεται, but we can make sense of the cited text with γῆ and/or πρηστήρ playing this role. (Kirk 1954, 325-35; Kahn 1979, 139.)

<sup>78</sup> The term πρηστήρ is obscure and notoriously difficult to translate, though its status as some sort of violent atmospheric phenomenon is secure: everything from water-spout to lightning storm has been suggested. See note in Laks and Most 2017 *ad loc.*, and a thorough discussion by Kahn 1979, 141-2.

<sup>79</sup> Kahn 1979, 140. Also argued in Snell 1926.

<sup>80</sup> B94/D89c: Ἥλιος γὰρ οὐχ ὑπερβήσεται μέτρα· εἰ δὲ μή, Ἐρινύες μιν Δίκης ἐπίκουροι ἐξευρήσουσιν. “The sun will not over step measures; otherwise, the Erinyes, guardians of justice, will find out.” The temporal orientation here is future, and, in contrast to Anaximander’s statement, the punitive action of corrective justice does not result in the regular maintenance of cosmic order, but intervenes only in the case of an extraordinary departure from regularity.

<sup>81</sup> Kahn 1979, 139ff.

On my reading, however, the statement acknowledges such diachronicity without focusing our attention on it. Whether “turning points of fire” (πυρὸς τροπαί) anticipates a graduated series of transformations or the end points of an oscillation, the text focuses on the schema of relationships rather than the cycles or periods themselves.<sup>82</sup> The feint towards cosmogony continues in the sequentially marked “first sea,” but as Kahn notes the idea of a direct transformation of fire into water would have been heresy for contemporary cosmology.<sup>83</sup> Against his own suggestion of the “first” as marking a moment in time, then, he tacitly concedes that it marks a point or moment in the cosmological scheme rather than a beginning. Moreover, this paradoxical, if not impossible, sequence of events immediately gives way to a syntactically symmetrical statement of a ratio that exists simultaneously: of earth half is sea, half is lightning storm (θαλάσσης δὲ τὸ μὲν ἥμισυ γῆ, τὸ δὲ ἥμισυ πρηστήρ). This is exactly the sort of schematic of conceptual opposites that structured B53/D64, as we might see each term in the series as another paired opposition: fire and sea (as water); sea (as body of water) and earth (as landmass); earth (relatively stable) and sky (relatively volatile). And, like B53/D64, the significance of each term changes slightly in each pairing, but in a way that takes in both the elemental qualities and physical geography of the world. This reading seems particularly appropriate since the “first” is never followed up with another marker of temporal sequence, which is also evidence for a reading that demotes the importance of temporal sequence here.

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<sup>82</sup> Kirk’s reading emphasizes this point strongly (esp. p. 332-3); Kahn, on the other hand, is keen to re-introduce the diachronic elements implicit in the cyclical view. The decision between these readings would rest on a much more fully articulated view of Heraclitus’ understanding of physical transformations.

<sup>83</sup> Kahn 1979, 139ff.

The second part of the statement offers insight into the *metra* of B30/D85. It culminates in the expression of a rational relationship that persists across the phases of change B31/D86 describes: after sea has changed to earth, earth changes back into sea, and it “measures up to the same account” (μετρέεται εἰς τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον) as it was before it became sea. I know of no reading that makes this ‘measuring’ temporal, and indeed there is no sensible way to do so. The entire point here is the preservation of measure, and of the ‘account,’ despite the changes wrought in time. These points about measure should figure more strongly in readings of the *metra* of B30/D84 than it has: ancients took these to refer to the periodic generation and destruction of the world, and even modern readers as acute as Kahn seem to slip back into that reading without arguing for it.

On the whole, then, B31/D86 begins by seeming to give us a cosmogonical picture, and to the end it does not contradict such a reading, as the ancient doxography attests: fire turns into sea, some sea turns into earth and some into air and its atmospheric phenomena, before the eventual return to total conflagration. To read the statement as saying just this, though, is to miss the relationships that its syntax and vocabulary hammer home: the μὲν ... δὲ expresses a ratio that is given without respect to any sequence of transformations; the second half emphasizes a proportional relationship that is preserved unaltered across the such a sequence. The latter in particular provides a principle of conservation in change that preserves the balance and symmetry in the whole system, so that change is lawlike.<sup>84</sup> Understanding that fact of proportionality and

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<sup>84</sup> Daniel Graham emphasizes this statement of what he deems “transformational equivalence” as Heraclitus’ main contribution to the dialectic of Ionian philosophy. On Graham’s view, this transformational equivalence is a consequence Heraclitus draws from the Generating Substance Theory Graham attributes to the Milesians. Yet Heraclitus uses this consequence as a weapon in a critique that

conservation – rather than the actual phases of change as they play out in time – is the key to understanding the order in things.<sup>85</sup> As is so often the case in Heraclitus, this statement sets up an expected pattern of meaning, here a quasi-narrative account of material transformations, only to disrupt that pattern in the service of suggesting a novel alternative.

B30/D85 and B31/D86 both emphasize the preservation of certain measures and the constancy of the *kosmos* despite material changes that occur in time. Some of those changes are certainly periodic and cyclical, but Heraclitus does not point towards this temporal structure of change as the *sine qua non* of cosmic order. In this he departs from Anaximander: cosmic order is as eternal as it is constant. Even if Heraclitus imagined the world as we know it emerging in some generative process, there is no reason to think that this is the *generation* of a cosmic order rather than an *expression* of it. I take B31/D86 to indicate the latter: in spite of material change and the passage of time, the *logos* nevertheless remains the same. In describing this preservation of measure as “τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον,” he links this statement on physical cosmology with the *logos* that B50/D46 tells us says “all things are one.” That there it would be wise to speak in agreement with it is echoes this notion of a *logos* that expresses the same thing, unity, despite a world that

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rejects the Milesian emphasis on the primacy of one substance to all others. If all substances are, at the level of the system, transformationally equivalent, then it makes no sense to think of one substance as primary to others. (2006, 137-147). Graham points out in passing that this is part and parcel of Heraclitus’ move away from cosmogony. To his general account I would add that the commitment of the Milesians to the primacy of one substance may be understood in part through their adoption of the genealogical mode of explanation.

<sup>85</sup> Kahn does not sufficiently distinguish between the order as it is realized in temporal sequence and the principle that that holds across it. He ultimately assimilates Heraclitus to Anaximander when he writes: “The principle of measure, mentioned enigmatically at the end of B. 30, is now clarified as a measure preserved over a sequence of stages, in a temporal progression that returns us to the *status quo ante*. The measures of equality are thus rigorously respected over the long run, no matter how dramatic the reversals may be at any moment.” (Kahn 1979, 144). While this is by no means wrong, I think we miss Heraclitus’ point if we are not careful to distinguish, as he does, the difference between the temporal progression and what is preserved throughout it: the same *account*.

seems to be shot through with change, generation, and destruction. As I noted earlier, this notion of what *logos* communicates is strikingly incompatible with narrative, which depends on plotting a temporal structure of action, consequence, and change. Heraclitus' eternal *kosmos* and the constant expression of unity in *logos* are both ideas that are fundamentally opposed to a narrativized account of the world.

I will speak more about the formal aspect of Heraclitus' resistance to narrative in a moment, but first it will be helpful to consider briefly the perennial questions around the *kosmos-as-fire*, questions that extend beyond whether we admit the doctrine of *ekpyrosis*. Modern interpreters, while often rejecting the assimilation to the Milesian conception of *archê*, generally acknowledge a material and otherwise primary role for fire, though some take it to be purely symbolic of cosmological process.<sup>86</sup> A few point out that viewing fire as either the basic material constituent or the stuff from which everything is generated seems to be vitiated by B90/D87: πυρός τε ἀνταμοιβή τὰ πάντα καὶ πῦρ ἀπάντων ὅκωσπερ χρυσοῦ χρήματα καὶ χρημάτων χρυσός. "All things are in exchange for fire, and fire for all things, as goods for gold and gold for goods."<sup>87</sup> Monetary value and exchange involves neither shared material composition, nor a process of transformation, and this statement similarly cuts against cosmogony and *ekpyrosis*: economic exchange between goods and gold is never total. Since B30/D85 treats a *kosmos* that is 'the same for all,' and so is unambiguously global, it is hard to reconcile a total exchange of fire for all things with Heraclitus' currency analogy.

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<sup>86</sup> Kirk, Marcovich, and Kahn all accommodate the materialist reading to some extent. Proponents of a symbolic reading include Zeller 1920, Burnet 1930, and Cherniss 1935.

<sup>87</sup>Wiggins 1982,14; Graham 2006, 123-7.

We might not expect to fully resolve the question of fire, since it is doubtlessly an identification that is itself meant to be paradoxical. Nevertheless, my own view of how we might best understand *kosmos*-as-fire, following an underappreciated suggestion by David Wiggins, is that we think of it not as a substance but along the lines of the modern conception of energy: undeniably physical, and continuous but not identical with ‘matter’ in the everyday sense of that term.<sup>88</sup> This can satisfy the need for a material role for fire in Heraclitus’ *kosmos* that many see in B31/D86, but it can also help us avoid the limitations that come with making this role the principle one that Heraclitus is communicating in B30/D85. Moreover, it helps us make better sense of what Heraclitus means by *kosmos*: not just the world in its physical totality, but more precisely in its *ordering*. Many readers acknowledge that the world as Heraclitus understands it is essentially dynamic, but still fail to appreciate that the material question should be subordinated to this fact.<sup>89</sup> If we can understand fire as both material and energetic activity without unduly privileging the former, it becomes easier to see how *kosmos* can stand for both the *ordering* of the world and the ordered thing itself.

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<sup>88</sup> Wiggins 1982, esp. 14-18. Jim Leshner seems to draw on this suggestion for his view of *kosmos* as process (1999, 98-101), and in an essay on Heraclitus made available on his personal website he offers fire-as-energy as one key sense in which it should be understood, citing in addition this quote from Werner Heisenberg, the founding figure for quantum mechanics: ““We may remark at this point that modern physics is in some way extremely near to the doctrines of Heraclitus. If we replace the word ‘fire’ by the word ‘energy’ we can almost repeat his statements word for word from our modern point of view. Energy is in fact the substance from which all elementary particles, all atoms and therefore all things are made, and energy is that which moves. Energy is a substance, since its total amount does not change, and the elementary particles can actually be made from this substance as is seen in many experiments on the creation of elementary particles. Energy can be changed into motion, into heat, into light and into tension. Energy may be called the fundamental cause for all change in the world.” Heisenberg 1958, 28-9.

<sup>89</sup> Kirk and Kahn agree in the necessity of some basically material account of fire, against the emphasis on dynamism by Vlastos 1955; Wiggins 1982; Leshner 1999; Wiggins cites Vlastos as a forerunner for his suggestion of fire as ‘energy,’ and sees the long debate over the Platonic objection to ‘radical flux’ in Heraclitus as irrelevant, since the stability of process should vitiate any concern about the absence of perfect persistence for a strictly material thing: even radical flux, in Heraclitus’ *kosmos*, is not chaos.

Fire also, finally, has symbolic significance, and along several axes. Perhaps the most prominent concerns the relation between humans and the divine: fire cooks food, setting humans apart from other animals, as well as for sacrifice, a ritual that expresses humans' distance from – but also special relationship to – the gods. This is expressed in Prometheus' mythic deception of Zeus and theft of fire, which Hesiod treats in both the *Theogony* (507-616) and the *Works and Days* (42-105) as etiological for the human condition. In the latter poem this is programmatic: it is Prometheus' theft of fire that led the gods to hide livelihood (βίον, *WD* 42) from men, necessitating a life of work. This mythic register makes fire ambivalent for human life: it marks both connection and separation from the gods, even without considering the funeral pyre as a marker of mortality. The symbolic value of fire is as dense and irresolvable as its material function in constituting the world as we know it. Just as in the case of War in B53/D64, we are confronted with several viable but (at least potentially) contradictory valences of the term, and challenged (by B50/D46's claim of radical unity) to reconcile them such that we can say they are one. Heraclitus' attention to the way in which fire bears significance along so many axes – physical, cultural, mythical – will also turn out to be important for understanding of the role in *logos* in his thought: as the next chapter will argue, with this idea Heraclitus calls attention to the complex way in which phenomena themselves signify (much like language) their own nature and the unity of the whole.

## **V. Narrativity and form in the texts of Heraclitus**

In treating Heraclitus' conception of *kosmos*, I have mostly been concerned to demonstrate his departure from narrativity at the level of content. His *kosmos* is not, as I

have tried to show, an order that emerges among things in their development over time out of some basic state of affairs. At the same time, however, I have pointed out the way in which the dense semantic and syntactic structure of the texts read above also depart from narrative at level of form, since they do not exhibit a sequential development of ideas or account of events. Instead, they point towards a complex synthesis of ideas that stands apart from the temporal dimension of events and experience: the nature and meaning of war, or the apparently self-sustaining agency of the *kosmos* as fire.

Whether and how the original composition of Heraclitus might have interacted with narrative models remains unavailable to us, unfortunately. Nevertheless, the texts that we do have and the testimonia of ancient readers suggest that it did resist their expectations of a *logos* that unfolds in a clear sequence of connected statements. I have already made much of Aristotle's comments about the beginning of Heraclitus' book, in which the obscure punctuation of the adverb "always" disrupts the ease of reading that Aristotle took to be normative for the written word.<sup>90</sup> This confusing syntactic ambiguity disrupts the sequence of reading comprehension, Aristotle complains, and he does not note the fitting irony of this occurring in a sentence that states the eternally recurring confusion of human beings despite the constant availability of truth in the *logos*.

I have also mentioned the complaint of Demetrius, that on the whole the account of Heraclitus is rendered obscure because of *asyndeton*, the absence of connective particles clarifying the relationship between statements.<sup>91</sup> As we have seen in B33/D64, this is not to say that Heraclitus did not make extensive use of connective particles to lend a logical structure *within* his statements, suggesting that Demetrius is complaining about

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<sup>90</sup> *Rhet.* 3.5 1407b11-18.

<sup>91</sup> See above, fn. 49.

the absence of such a structure in the work at large. The nature and significance of asyndeton in Greek literature remain uncertain and surprisingly uninvestigated, but Demetrius' comment nonetheless demonstrates that, at some level, Heraclitus' text denied his expectation of a connected and cohesive account alongside.<sup>92</sup> Much has been made of the extent to which the surviving quotations from Heraclitus' text impress modern readers as formal wholes unto themselves, and so Demetrius' testimony lends credence to the modern sense that Heraclitus' text may have read more like a series of such statements rather than a unified exposition in prose. Plato's caricature of Heracliteans in the *Theaetetus* presents them as speaking only in the kind of barbed and cryptic aphorisms characteristic of the extant texts; the actual mimicry of Heraclitus' style in the Hippocratic *On Regimen* reinforces the idea that Heraclitus himself employed that format. All of this further supports the notion that Heraclitus privileged a loosely connected assemblage of statements over a prose exposition organized by its beginning, middle, and end.

## VI. Conclusions

I hope to have shown here that cosmogony and narrativity thoroughly inform Heraclitus' predecessors in cosmology, from Hesiod to Anaximander and Anaximenes, and that Heraclitus' dispenses with both in his ideas about the *kosmos* and in the expressive form of his text. Where their conception of order in the world relies both on origins and on a sequence of events, Heraclitus' account of the world shows us a *kosmos* that is at once dynamic and constant. Understanding this *kosmos* is not a function of

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<sup>92</sup> See Wakker 2009, esp. 65ff. Wakker points out that there has been no systematic study that has defined asyndeton, its uses, or its significance in Greek literature.

knowing the story of its origins and emergence, since there is no such story to tell. What we need to appreciate instead is its constant unity, announced by the *logos* and achieved in the world's persistent self-organization despite constant and occasionally radical change. B30/D85 provokes, in the identification of *kosmos* with fire, a question about what sort of agency this is. In B31/D86's identification of *logos* with sameness across local change, we recognize that we gain access to this agency by, as Heraclitus urges from the beginning, listening to the *logos*. In this way, *logos* is not merely Heraclitus' account of the world, but a feature of the world that is significant for his and our understanding of the *kosmos*. While many have looked for the radical unity of Heraclitus' *kosmos* in its identification with fire, B50/D46 suggests that this unity is apprehended in the *logos* itself rather than in Heraclitus' account *simpliciter*. How we should understand this *logos*, both apart from the texts of Heraclitus and in its availability there, is the subject of the next chapter.

### CHAPTER 3 Language & *Logos*

There is no event or thing in either animate or inanimate nature that does not in some way partake of language, for it is in the nature of each one to communicate its mental contents. This use of the word 'language' is in no way metaphorical.

- Walter Benjamin, "On language as such and on the language of man"

But while we are confined to books, though the most select and classic, and read only particular written languages, which are themselves but dialects and provincial, we are in danger of forgetting the language which all things and events speak without metaphor, which alone is copious and standard.

- Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

So far, I have been examining Heraclitus' writings in light of other texts, in particular how those texts claim authoritative knowledge and communicate it in their discourse. In the previous chapter, we saw that Heraclitus' texts turn away from narrative, which is widely acknowledged as the preeminent mode of organizing knowledge in epic, early philosophy, and prose logography. As I argued there, this is evident in both their frequently aphoristic form and the cosmology they suggest, one in which the generation and development of the world is subordinated to the significance of its activity in lived human experience. Heraclitus emphasizes the need for each person to understand the activity of the κόσμος in one's immediate experience, rather than articulate his authorial perspective on a narrative trajectory of generation, development, direction, and destruction.

In the first chapter, we saw that authorial persona often emerges as the locus of knowledge transmission in texts roughly contemporary to Heraclitus: the text is a medium for an authorial voice articulating its privileged knowledge, and that knowledge becomes available to the audience of a text by attending to that voice. This is considered

especially true of early prose.<sup>1</sup> Heraclitus, on the other hand, famously advises his audience in B50/D46 not to listen to *him*, but to the “account,” the λόγος. This term would naturally refer to Heraclitus’ own discourse, but he famously freights it with a more complex significance that – beyond the surprising disjunction in B50/D46 – suggests that the λόγος extends beyond Heraclitus’ writing and voice.<sup>2</sup>

Contextualizing Heraclitus’ writing shows us the distinctiveness of his literary project, what I am calling his prose poetics. This project, through its poetics, aims to communicate understanding as a form of activity available to human beings. This activity is, Heraclitus insists, the best way for human beings to live. In turning now to give a positive account of Heraclitus’ prose poetics, I want to elucidate the unique way in which this kind of understanding becomes available in reading his texts. This is, in a sense, an explication of λόγος in Heraclitus; another in a long and inconclusive series. But rather than asking what λόγος represents, either as a key term or a principle in Heraclitus’ thought, I want to see how it *works*. This contrast is not meant as an either/or: Heraclitus’ texts, as I show here, communicate by doing something. It is for this reason that considering these texts in terms of their poetics is useful and long overdue.

Accepting that Heraclitus’ writings mean to do more than telegraph his thought raises distinctive questions. Namely, how do his texts make knowledge available in a

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<sup>1</sup>As Simon Goldhill puts it, “This prose does not unfurl like a divinely inspired poem poured through the lips of the bard; it is organized and produced by a self-consciously analytical and persuasive subject who proclaims his mastery of knowledge.” 2002, 8-9.

<sup>2</sup> The ambiguity of the term in B1/D1, near the opening of his composition, suggests that this λόγος is some real feature in the world beyond the text that Heraclitus himself puts forward, and the term is elsewhere applied to culture (Bias in B39/D11), cosmology (B31/D86), and, importantly, soul (B45/D98, B115/D99).

way that departs from his own voice and utterance? What kind of engagement with the texts might allow his audience to not only recognize the unity at work in the world, but actually participate by “speaking in agreement” (ὁμολογεῖν) with it? Generations of commentators have appreciated that Heraclitus’ writings are not simply offering a descriptive account. Still, as we saw in the last chapter, readings of Heraclitus have tended to focus on eliciting just such an account. In trying to articulate a prose poetics for these texts, then, I want to give an account of what they do, and how they do it.

Heraclitus’ texts are, of course, presenting ideas. Moreover, it is clear that he writes in order to make a comprehensive understanding of the world accessible to his audience, even if that project does not accord, strictly speaking, with the kind of systematic argumentation and construction of theories that modern philosophy takes as fundamental to such an understanding.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the notion of an idea becoming *present* in the text will be central to my argument here. I want to show that, and how, key ideas emerge in the first-personal experience of a reader rather than in the personal utterance of Heraclitus. That is, the primary function of the text lies not in indicating what Heraclitus thinks (though it certainly also does this) but in catalyzing the thinking of its audience. In my view, this is the beating heart of Heraclitus’ poetics: enabling one to recognize for oneself the way in which the world presents itself, and this through recognizing that its intelligible unity is already at work in the text. As I hope to show here, the global significance of λόγος and Heraclitus’ bizarre estrangement of his own voice from λόγος work towards the convergence of meaning accessed in the text and meaning as Heraclitus

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<sup>3</sup> Schofield 1991, for example, argues that it is mistaken to look for a systematic theory of soul in Heraclitus, even as his ideas show much of the complexity, coherence, and revolutionary significance that might lead us to expect such a theory.

thinks humans need to experience λόγος in the world: as a function of live activity proper to each person's engagement with their own experience.

I begin by examining the complex nature of λόγος in Heraclitus, especially as it renders the status of the text ambiguous. Does Heraclitus' literal "account" present a comprehensive understanding of the world, or is his admonition to hear the λόγος meant to turn his audience towards their own experience of the world, for which the text is merely preparatory, symbolic, or analogical? The latter reading in particular has been a popular way to understand Heraclitus' prose: its obscurities, complex significance, and challenges of perception and interpretation mimic what he takes his audience to encounter in their experience of the world. However, as the discussion of λόγος will show, language emerges as paradigmatic for the kind of meaning that Heraclitus values. Moreover, the modern assumption that meaning in language must differ from that of other things turns out to be anachronistic. In discussing his statements on ἁρμονίη or "fitting-together" – an idea essential to his claim for a unity in all things – we will see how Heraclitus models it in the syntax of each statement. In each case, "fitting-together" is not merely described but is already at work in one's experience of the text. We are intimately familiar with, and even shaped by, the way in which our own language carries meaning, even when we fail to notice or reflect on the particular relations and mechanisms of *how* it does so. Using language to present ἁρμονίη in this way dovetails with Heraclitus' thematic concern for the way in which humans are at once familiar with the world around them but fail to understand it. Ultimately, Heraclitus' general emphasis on language as paradigmatic for meaning, together with the way that he uses language, collapses the distinction between the encounter with the text and with the world at large.

In between λόγος as referring to the text and λόγος as it evokes the way in which the world presents itself to us.

I want to make one final methodological point before taking up the substance of my analysis and argument. I am acutely aware that my approach here stresses the significance of the encounter with a text that is, strictly speaking, lost to us. To make matters worse, there is little we can say concerning the original format, circulation, and private or public engagement with the text, though some have speculated on the subject.<sup>4</sup> Still, the very nature of Heraclitus' writing ameliorates concerns that we cannot access their emergence and initial audience. As I pointed out in the introduction, the surviving texts of Heraclitus offer us a formal completeness that is not available for any other early Greek philosopher: in his case we might say that the surviving texts are not fragments *per se* but parts whole unto themselves. Since Heraclitus' statements often seem to draw on the brief and quotable formulations of wisdom sayings, it is possible that his original composition imagined this mode of circulation, whether oral or literary, alongside that of a complete textual composition. If this is accurate, then even their piecemeal transmission remains faithful to Heraclitus' prose form in a way that is not true of fragments from treatises or poetic narratives, though those often employ gnomic utterance and may be eminently quotable.<sup>5</sup> As we have seen in the last chapter, narrative often shapes the emerging forms of thought and literature in Heraclitus' time, but his

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<sup>4</sup> In Plato's *Theaetetus* (179e-180c), Theodorus offers a memorable characterization of "Heracliteans:" incapable of conversation, even with one another, they shoot enigmatic statements like arrows. Robb 1983, however, posits a 'school' of oral teaching.

<sup>5</sup> Ancient audiences were certainly given to seizing on gnomic statements within poetic compositions and interpreting them as particular claims put forward by the author of that composition. Plato's *Protagoras* (339a-347a) memorably dramatizes just this in Socrates' and Protagoras' competing interpretations of a line from Simonides, one in which a monological versus a dialogical form of instruction is at stake.

writing resists this tendency. Though some have argued that Heraclitus must have put forward a composition structured as a formal whole, there is absolutely no contemporary evidence to support this.<sup>6</sup> To the contrary, others have noted that the earliest works of Greek literature and philosophy – even those driven by narrative or epic form – often privilege the structure of smaller units or episodes over a single, comprehensive one.<sup>7</sup> It is reasonable to think, on the basis of his surviving texts, that this would only be more true for Heraclitus.

My argument here concerns how we take Heraclitus' texts to elicit the comprehensive understanding of a unified world, one that he thinks nearly everyone lacks. I will make a case here for a core aim to Heraclitus' prose poetics, and in the process demonstrate different ways that we might read his texts. I will draw on the only reasonable reconstruction we can make, in which the pair of B1/D1 and B2/D2 stood together at or near the beginning of the work. I will also, as is common, bring together several statements on the basis of shared language or topics. At the same time, I will highlight the way in which individual statements simultaneously draw readers into the dense operations of their language, allude to other texts, and encourage inductive generalization. Throughout, close reading at the level of individual statements will be central to my approach, in keeping with the sense that many of these texts function as units even as they converse with others.

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<sup>6</sup> Kahn assumes a "formal ordering of the whole . . . on the analogy of the great choral odes," partly on the basis of his own sense that the archaic Greeks show a passion for formal wholes in everything from literature to sculpture. 1979, 6-8. I do not agree, but he does make non-linear expression of conceptual relations key to Heraclitus' art.

<sup>7</sup> Most 1999 points out that early Greek compositions frequently exhibit, much to the consternation of modern commentators, what he calls "looseness of macroscopic form" but "precision of microscopic form." See esp. 345-6.

## ΛΟΓΟΣ in Heraclitus

When Heraclitus began his composition by indicating “this λόγος,” his readers likely took the term to refer to his “account,” that is, a statement of his own views on whatever topic he would go on to discuss. The term is a common one, but complex in its significance. A noun derived from the verb λέγω, the root meaning of which is ‘gather,’ λόγος comes to be used for everything from reckonings of value to mathematical proportion to “reason” more broadly, though many of these senses develop after Heraclitus.<sup>8</sup> In archaic Greece, λόγος primarily refers to complex utterance – almost never to a single word – that is meant to be compelling, even if it may be intended to distract or deceive.<sup>9</sup> It is not common in epic, where the term μῦθος is preferred in denoting words or speech, but without obvious distinction in singular or plural between single words and complex speech.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, in Pindar we see a contrast between μῦθος as potentially deceptive legend about what mortals cannot know, and λόγος as the true statement of what they can.<sup>11</sup> When Heraclitus was writing, λόγος is associated with a genre of early prose texts emerging out of the eastern Greek world: ‘accounts’ claiming

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<sup>8</sup> Aall 1896 and Minar 1939, not to mention John Burnet’s several editions of *Early Greek Philosophy*, offer early treatments of the history of the λόγος in conjunction with its semantics in Heraclitus. Nearly every major commentator since, on Heraclitus and on early Greek philosophy, have addressed the matter in one form or another, as will be evident throughout the footnotes here. Besides Johnstone’s most recent discussion, see Dilcher 1999, 31-40.

<sup>9</sup> For the typically deceitful character of λόγοι in epic, see Johnstone 2014, p. 13 fn. 36. 37. As Johnstone notes, the term occurs only twice in Homer: Patroclus, treating the wounded Eurypylus, distracts him with λόγοι (ἦστό τε καὶ τὸν ἔτεροπε λόγοις.. *Il.* 15.393); Calypso, in Athena’s telling, ‘charms’ Odysseus with λόγοι (αἰεὶ δὲ μαλακοῖσι καὶ αἰμυλίοισι λόγοισιν / θέλγει, ὅπως Ἰθάκης ἐπιλήσεται . . . *Od.* 1.56-7), though Athena explicitly marks them as “wily.” The same term (αἰμυλίοισι) is paired with λόγοι in most of its appearances in Hesiod (*Th.* 890; *Op.* 79, 789).

<sup>10</sup> LSJ, *ad loc.*

<sup>11</sup> *Oi.* 1.28-29, ἦ θαυματὰ πολλὰ, καὶ πού τι καὶ βροτῶν φάτις ὑπὲρ τὸν ἀλαθῆ λόγον δεδαιδαλμένοι ψεύδεσι ποικίλοις ἐξαπατῶντι μῦθοι.

to offer compelling knowledge on one of a number subjects, typically the result of the author's own experience, research, and argumentation, rather than the claims to divine revelation characteristic of epic poetry. Putting forward a λόγος, then, is always meant to win attention and, especially in the context of early Greek prose, assent to its validity as an authoritative statement on its subject.<sup>12</sup>

We should also understand that λόγος, as discourse, implies an audience. It is communication directed at others, and means to effect some change in them, be it assent, persuasion, delight, distraction, or some combination of these and other effects.<sup>13</sup> This point is rarely emphasized, but I think it is important in its own right and especially for understanding λόγος as Heraclitus writes it. As we trace the increasing appreciation for the centrality of discourse in Heraclitus' unique use of the term, we should keep in mind that this not only increases the significance of language itself, but also emphasizes its essentially communicative function. I draw largely on existing ideas in stressing that the nature of meaning in discourse – emerging at once from sound, sense, and syntax – is paradigmatic for Heraclitus' views on how we might best understand the world. Yet I also want to emphasize this point, which is rarely acknowledged: the nature of meaning in discourse already includes the thought that this meaningfulness directs itself at other minds, makes common what would otherwise be one's own, and aims at shared understanding or, as B50/D46 puts it, 'speaking in agreement,' ὁμολογεῖν.

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<sup>12</sup> In opening his *Encomium to Helen*, Gorgias makes truth the "good order" (κόσμος) for speech: Κόσμος πόλει μὲν εὐανδρία, σώματι δὲ κάλλος, ψυχῇ δὲ σοφία, πράγματι δὲ ἀρετή, λόγῳ δὲ ἀλήθεια· τὰ δὲ ἐναντία τούτων ἄκοσμία. (I.1) Even if we read his opening claim as rhetorical, this strengthens the sense that his audience expects truth (ἀλήθεια) from a well-ordered λόγος.

<sup>13</sup> Poetry, on the other hand, may be produced and enjoyed entirely for oneself: Achilles sings epic for his own pleasure at *Il.* 9.186-192; though Patroclus is present, he is silent and described as waiting for his friend to finish singing.

## ΛΟΓΟΣ and Language

Modern scholars have discussed the meaning of λόγος more than perhaps any other term in the Greek language. This is especially true of its significance in Heraclitus, since from the beginning of his text the term is weighty but obscure. The ambiguity around λόγος that emerges in B1/D1, B2/D2, and B50/D46 suggests reference to something besides the discourse of the text: how could Heraclitus' account make a claim on one's understanding even before it is heard (B1/D1)? How could it be "common" (B2/D2)? And how do we attend not to Heraclitus but to λόγος (B50/D46)? This is only complicated by the wide-ranging use of λόγος in other statements: the term is applied to cultural reputation (B39/D11), something like the conservation of matter in cosmology (B31/D85), and is, somewhat mysteriously, attributed to soul (B45/98, B115/D99). Verbal echoes of the term are similarly confounding. In B50/D46 we are told that wisdom consists in 'speaking in agreement,' ὁμολογεῖν, that all things are one. B51/D49 uses the same verb – with language that also echoes B1/D1, B2, and B50/D46 – in stating that 'what differs with itself agrees,' a παλίντροπος ἄρμονίη, "backwards-turning fitting-together." A 'fitting-together' that somehow subverts fundamental difference would seem essential to B50/D46's claim that wisdom consists in apprehending, by listening to λόγος, unity in all things.

Some have argued that, even in the case of B1/D1, B2/D2, and B50/D46, λόγος merely refers to Heraclitus' own 'account' or argument, with the other usages falling within the contemporary semantic range of the term.<sup>14</sup> The overwhelming majority of

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<sup>14</sup> The most recent arguments that λόγος in Heraclitus refers simply and unproblematically to his own discourse - what I would call the "mundane" reading - are West 1971; Tarán 1972, 1985. Johnstone (2014,

commentators, however, have taken Heraclitus' use of λόγος to indicate, as B50/D46 suggests, a novel entity or concept independent of Heraclitus. The most common avenue of interpretation has taken λόγος as a cosmic law or structure, an ordering principle at work in all things. On this view, λόγος is – against contemporary research (ἱστορίη) focused on the facts of a particular topic – the proper object of knowledge, and the system through which we access the unity in all things.<sup>15</sup> G.S. Kirk, taking the sense of 'measure' as central for Heraclitus' use of the term, offered an influential interpretation of λόγος as the "formula of things," which he means to take in notions of 'organization', 'plan', and 'law,' even going on to suggest that it has a corporeal existence in Heraclitus' *kosmos*.<sup>16</sup>

Kirk's notion of cosmic structure or law continues to influence readings of Heraclitus, but some have resisted any attempt to define or reify what Heraclitus means by λόγος. Charles Kahn, in the introduction to his commentary, tells us: "The ignorance of men lies in their failure to comprehend ... the *logos* which is at once the discourse of Heraclitus, the nature of language itself, the structure of the psyche and the universal

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5 n. 10-1) describes the predominance of this reading in the first half of the twentieth century and interestingly details an apparent evolution away from it in successive editions of Burnet's fundamental *Early Greek Philosophy*.

<sup>15</sup> For Heraclitus' critique of ἱστορίη and specifically its tendency towards "much-learning," *polymathia*, rather than fundamental insight, see Huffman 2008.

<sup>16</sup> In the reliance on the sense of 'measure', Kirk follows the view expressed in Kathleen Freeman's 1946 companion to the edition of Diels-Kranz. (Kirk 1954, 39.) In attempting, and then abandoning, a single English term for the idea, Kirk goes on to write: "... what we are trying to summarize is an idea like 'the organized way in which (as Heraclitus had discovered) all things work'; 'plan' (in a non-teleological sense), 'rule', even 'law' (as in the laws of force) are possible summaries. 'Principle' is too vague; I suggest the less ambiguous if more cumbersome phrase 'formula of things' as a translation of λόγος in fr. 1, 2, 50. In this formula the idea of measure is implicit...". (Ibid.) On the corporeal existence of λόγος, see Kirk, 1954, 69-70; 402. Johnstone (2014, 8 n. 19) offers similar formulations in Marcovich, McKirahan, Curd, Graham, and Palmer; Robinson (1991, 428) offers a similar list: "'meaning' (Snell), 'law' (Marcovich), 'argument' (Verdenius), 'truth' (Gigon), 'measure' (Freeman), 'formula', 'plan' (Kirk); others, while not wholly divorced from such a sense, are nonetheless anachronistic in terms of contemporary usage (such as the Stoic interpretation of it as divine Reason); and others far removed from it and without contemporary linguistic parallel, such as 'structure' ..."

principle in accordance with which all things come to pass.”<sup>17</sup> As Kahn notes, there is genuine ambiguity and polysemy in Heraclitus’ use of the term, which we do well to avoid reducing to a monolithic idea.<sup>18</sup>

Kahn’s mention of “the nature of language itself” is part and parcel of a shift towards an interpretation of λόγος that stresses – against the emphasis on ‘measure’ – its connection with discourse and with language itself.<sup>19</sup> Martha Nussbaum and Jim Lesher have argued that Heraclitus is the first among the Greeks to locate linguistic meaning in syntactical relations rather than in individual words, so that he sees meaning as systematic rather than atomistic.<sup>20</sup> Roman Dilcher has argued – against Kirk’s emphasis on ‘measure’ as central to Heraclitus’ use λόγος – that discourse forms the core meaning

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<sup>17</sup> Kahn 1979, 22. Johnstone (2014, n. 19) acknowledges Kahn’s avoidance of a narrow definition for λόγος in Heraclitus, but he quotes the last clause of Kahn’s sentence out of context, obscuring his effort to articulate its basic multiplicity in significance. Aryeh Finkelberg (2017, 189), takes a similar tack in his description of λόγος: “Since the agent of the management of the all is ‘the *logos* managing all things’ (B 72), the *logos* stands for both the agent of the management of all things and the knowledge of how all things are managed and, since all things are the One, also of their unity.” I am sympathetic to their efforts to resist reducing λόγος to a singular object or concept, though my interpretation will follow Johnstone and Robinson in emphasizing the importance of linguistic meaning for how we think about λόγος in Heraclitus.  
<sup>18</sup> Moreover, Kahn is rightly suspicious of Stoic influence in the identification of λόγος as a rational force governing the world: that idea is a Stoic invention, and their interest in Heraclitus as a predecessor to their own thought means that both ancient and modern readers are liable to read him through Stoic lenses. Kahn attends to the influence and potential pitfalls of Stoic interpretation throughout his 1979 commentary: 134ff., 145ff., 154-7, 294ff.

<sup>19</sup> In an influential pair of articles on soul, cognition and language in Heraclitus, Nussbaum argued that Heraclitus, for the first time in Greek thought, makes soul or ψυχή the “central faculty” connecting life, consciousness, thought, and speech. Nussbaum 1972a, 5; 1972b. Her key text is B107/D33: κακοὶ μάρτυρες ἀνθρώποισιν ὀφθαλμοὶ καὶ ὄτα βαρβάρους ψυχὰς ἐχόντων, “Eyes and ears are bad witness for humans, if they have barbarian souls.” Commentators since Diels often understood the strange phrase βαρβάρους ψυχὰς to suggest an *analogy* between cognizing language and cognizing sensory experience. Nussbaum, on the other hand, pointed out that “barbarian” typically referred to someone who does not speak *Greek*: “Thus it seems that Heraclitus is not making the rather bland and vague statement that sense-data are deceptive if you have a crude and uncomprehending ψυχή, but the far more interesting statement that your senses will deceive you if you do not have an accurate understanding of your own language... Men are misled by their atomistic conception of language.” 1972a, 10-11.

<sup>20</sup> Lesher 1983. Lesher claims that Heraclitus uses this understanding of language as a proxy for the proper object of knowledge: recognizing the relations that hold between things, at least as much as the things themselves. In this he seems to follow the general analogical relationship between language and λόγος in Heraclitus.

of the term both when Heraclitus was writing and in his own usage.<sup>21</sup> Commentators have come to appreciate the general linkage between Heraclitus' account of the world as an 'articulated unity' and the interrelations between words in language.<sup>22</sup> This also, it is important to note, raises the stakes considerably for understanding Heraclitus' own use of language and his expressive form, as Kahn's commentary demonstrates so masterfully.

The analogy between language and the significance of λόγος in Heraclitus has been productive, but consensus on parsing it has proved elusive. Dilcher, arguing that λόγος generally encompasses the words spoken, the matter spoken about, and the process of reasoned reflection that a speaker undertakes, takes λόγος to designate "reasoned thinking," a way of understanding to which Heraclitus is trying to convert his audience. To my mind, this reading of λόγος ignores the fundamentally communicative sense of the term that I stressed earlier, and find so emphatic in B1/D1, B2/D2, and B50/D46. This is implicit in Dilcher's account – why else would one be giving an 'account' in speech? – but it obscures the way in which λόγος serves as the crucial object of attention in B50/D46.

In my view, commentators have been tripped up by their inability to appreciate that, for Heraclitus, meaning in language is not just a convenient analogy or symbol.

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<sup>21</sup> Dilcher 1995, 27-49, esp. 43-44. He traces the modern difficulty in grasping Heraclitus' λόγος to the unusually rich semantics of the term, which he helpfully surveys. (Ibid., 31-39) He ultimately argues that the term designates the presentation of a view in discourse, encompassing the words spoken, the matter spoken about, and the process of reasoned reflection that a speaker undertakes in developing her account. Understood in this way, λόγος occupies what Dilcher calls a "middle ground" between speaker and what is spoken about, a relation mediated by the process of reasoning that permits the expression of a λόγος in the first place. Dilcher thus understands Heraclitus' use of λόγος as "reasoned thinking," an interpretation that he takes to resolve the conundrum about the objective status of λόγος that B1/D1, B2/D2, and B50/D46 suggest, while also making better sense of the λόγος that Heraclitus attributes to the soul in B45/D98 and B115D/99.

<sup>22</sup> I borrow the phrase (translated) "unita articolata" from Laura Gianvittorio, whose 2010 monograph describes what she calls a "semantic model" of the *kosmos* in Heraclitus' use of language. For additional comments on this connection, see Kahn 1979, 131; Marcovich 1967, 47.

Rather, it is paradigmatic for the way in which things in the world offer their own meaningful appearance. This may seem like a distinction without a difference, but the crucial point is that Heraclitus and his contemporaries did not distinguish meaning in language from meaning in non-linguistic objects or phenomena. Once we appreciate this, we see that the relationship to language, and in particular Heraclitus' use of it, may instantiate the kind of meaningful appearing and comprehension that constitute 'listening to the λόγος.'

My view follows a line of thought first put forward in Bruno Snell's nearly century-old discussion of Heraclitus' use of language. Snell writes, "*Logos* is speech, insofar as it is meaningful; *legein* is: to mean something ... So, *logos* is not only meaningful speech in humans, but also the meaning which rests in things, which speaks to us and makes things meaningful."<sup>23</sup> Snell makes clear that, in his view, Heraclitus is trading on meaning in language and meaning in our experience of the world, and this without thinking that these are distinct categories connected only through metaphor or analogy. Thomas Robinson has, more recently, offered a similar thought, arguing that Heraclitus wants us to imagine, along the lines of a human speaker, the world uttering an account of itself.<sup>24</sup>

Both Snell and Robinson, in different ways, want a more direct reading of Heraclitus' conception of the relationship between language. Yet their ideas have not

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<sup>23</sup> Snell 1926, 365: "Logos ist das Wort, soweit es sinnvoll ist. λέγειν ist: etwas meinen . . . nicht nur die sinnvolle Menschliche Rede, sondern auch der Sinn, der in den Dingen ruht, der zu uns spricht und uns die Dinge bedeutungsvoll macht" Translation above is my own.

<sup>24</sup> Robinson 1991, 483: "That the real qua rational is conceived of by Heraclitus as eternally uttering an account of itself seems clear from his understanding of *logos* concerning the real as something to which one listens (fr. 50, where the reference may be to the logos of Heraclitus himself, to that of the real qua rational, or to both), and from his remarks about the inadequacy of sight and hearing if one's soul is *barbaros* (fr. 107)." Robinson goes on to argue that Plato (in the *Timaeus* in particular) takes a similar view and probably adopted it from Heraclitus. This account of Heraclitus is articulated more fully in Robinson 2009.

found wide acceptance. A recent treatment of λόγος in Heraclitus by Mark Johnstone disparages Robinson's literalism and search for the one who speaks his "language of the real." Johnstone dismisses Snell's reading on the grounds that words simply are not meaningful in the way that things are.<sup>25</sup> This is surprising since Johnstone's helpful re-evaluation of the debate around λόγος seems to track Robinson's own reading, as he himself acknowledges. Johnstone takes Heraclitus' use of λόγος to express "a kind of cosmic self-revelation" that can be understood as a single, comprehensive, and commonly accessible "account" of the world.<sup>26</sup> In rejecting the views of Snell and Robinson, however, we still want to know how Heraclitus' conceived of this.

The issue is important in part because Johnstone helpfully points out his interpretation leads to a crucial shift in the role of Heraclitus' own writing: rather than expounding a truth he thinks everyone ought to understand (despite their stupidity), Heraclitus writes in order to draw attention to the way in which the world presents itself to us. That is, we should read Heraclitus as "steering" his audience towards this cosmic self-presentation rather than offering his own account of it.<sup>27</sup> As I noted before, the connection between Heraclitus' views on language and his view of the world has only raised the stakes for understanding his own use of language. With Johnstone's view in mind, that is all the more urgent. The most pressing question becomes: how does Heraclitus' text enable successful attention to the way in which the world discloses itself

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<sup>25</sup> Johnstone 2014, footnotes 30, 61.

<sup>26</sup> Johnstone 2014, 21: "Stated simply, my suggestion is that the peculiarity of Heraclitus' use of the term *logos* in these three fragments is best explained, not by supposing that the *logos* is itself a law of change at work in the cosmos, but rather by taking Heraclitus to be denoting by this term the world's constant, common presentation of itself to us as an orderly and intelligible whole. In other words, Heraclitus denotes by the term '*logos*' neither his own discourse nor a cosmic law, but rather the world's orderly and intelligible presentation of its nature to us throughout our lives."

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

to us?

I want to argue against the dismissal of Snell's suggestion that Heraclitus means *logos* to capture, at least in part, the way in which things – and language especially, but not differently – present themselves to us. It is true that *we* see a difference between the significance of things and the significance of language, but why should we attribute the same view to Heraclitus? After all, as Leshner and others have shown, among archaic Greeks there was not an obvious (to us, anyway) ontological distinction between words and physical things: words pass the barrier of the teeth or are fenced in there, fly through the air, and penetrate the body of their audience.<sup>28</sup> Even after Heraclitus, the physicality of speech persists: Gorgias makes λόγος explicitly corporeal, even if it is an extraordinary case (λόγος δυνάστης μέγας ἐστίν, ὃς σμικροτάτῳ σώματι καὶ ἀφανεστάτῳ θειότατα ἔργα ἀποτελεῖ. “Discourse is a great lord, who with the smallest and most invisible body accomplishes the most divine works”).<sup>29</sup> Speech and other things may yet differ in their mode of appearing and significance, but we ought not to assume one, especially once we notice that Greeks contemporary with Heraclitus seem not to have marked speech as different in kind from other things.

It may be that we find it hard to see past our own gulf between language and things because of an ingrained distinction between sensible and intelligible, especially

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<sup>28</sup> Leshner 1983, 168: “For Homer, words were essentially atmospheric phenomena, likened to snowflakes on a winter's day (Il. III, 222), or birds in flight (the famous ἔπεα πτερόεντα), or, in the verbal sparring between the champions of the Iliad, aerial arrows. Words are contained in the φρήν or φρένας (Il. II, 213): “in whose φρήν were many ill-formed words” (ἔπεα ἄκοσμα). When they are released, they are shaped by the tongue (Il. XX, 248), let out through the mouth, escaping the barrier of the teeth (Il. IV, 350.), flying through the air to lodge in the φρήν of the hearer (Il. V, 493). Words can 'inspire', 'breathe courage into' someone (Il. XIII, 72; XVII, 425; VI, 72) or literally “sting the φρήν,” and a rousing speech can bowl over one's audience “like cornstalks hit by a blast of wind (Il. II, 147). These expressions all point to a distinctly physical conception of language and communication.” See also Vivante 1975, 2.

<sup>29</sup> Gorgias, *Encomium to Helen*, 8.2ff.

since this distinction goes hand in hand with notions of corporeal and incorporeal. Yet these categories are, as many have noted, inappropriate to Heraclitus and his context, both in early Greek philosophy and Greek culture at large.<sup>30</sup> For us post-Platonics, it is understandably difficult to recover this conceptual space, especially as it concerns language and thinking, or appearance and reality. Snell flags precisely this difficulty, but also points out that such simplicity in meaning “wins for the Greeks reality as a visible thing.”<sup>31</sup> So this is what makes the linguistic paradigm so powerful for Heraclitus: we cannot help but experience our own language as meaningful, and this meaning is simply given in our sensory experience of it. At the same time, Heraclitus sees that, in language as in experience, accessing meaning requires a certain cognitive capacity at work in the auditor. For meaning in language is not always immediately available in its plenitude, especially in more artistic manifestations like Heraclitus’ writing. In drawing on linguistic expression and discourse, then, Heraclitus’ *logos* captures the sense in which meaning is inherent in the way things present themselves to us, but also the difference between superficial impression and the deep intelligibility that becomes available in interpretation.

As I have often pointed out, Heraclitus’ own use of language impresses us with both its sensory characteristics and its many vectors for meaning. And, as I am stressing here, these two features of language are not neatly separable: sensible form is not a

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<sup>30</sup> As Aryeh Finkelberg (2017, 190) notes, the idea of nonsensibles simply was not available before Plato. See also, e.g., Renehan 1980. This notion is not without controversy, however: Curd 2010 argues for what she calls “unstuffy” notions of mind and thought in Heraclitus and Anaxagoras.

<sup>31</sup> Man muß sich in diese Eigenart gerade der frühen griechischen Worte, die so häufig Auffassendes und Aufgefaßtes umschließen, nur einmal hineinfinden, und man wird verstehen, wie Logos nicht nur das Wort, sondern auch den Sinn mitbegreift. Und dieser Sinn gewinnt für den Griechen Realität wie ein sichtbares Ding. Snell 1926, 365.

vehicle for, or a transparent window onto, intelligible content. Sound and sense are bound together in our experience of meaning in language, and for Heraclitus this is not different in kind from any other human experience. In filling out dimensions of meaning, then, one unpacks the significance that is already given in – and inseparable from – phenomena. This is true even if that significance is misunderstood or goes unnoticed, failures of comprehension that, following his critique of most people’s understanding, Heraclitus seems to understand as a function of human errors and limitations.

The linguistic paradigm, moreover, also lets Heraclitus reimagine the nature of understanding itself: in recognizing that meaning lies in the systematic interrelation of things, understanding any particular experience turns out to lie in one’s ability to be conversant with the system as a whole. Importantly for Heraclitus, genuine recognition and understanding only become available as a function of this systematic interrelation. So, we ought to understand that things are, in the first place, only meaningful at all because of their systematic interrelation – they come to be according to λόγος, as B1/D1 has it – and, secondly, their full and complete significance only becomes available through the activity of our own capacity for perceptively grasping that systematic interrelation: hence B50/D46’s emphasis on “speaking in agreement” (ὁμολογεῖν).

In a general sense, this view of Heraclitus has been appreciated for some time.<sup>32</sup> The ongoing debate about λόγος, however, shows how hard it is to access this revolutionary thought in Heraclitus. As noted above, Kirk and others have tended to reify λόγος in terms of structure; this and the idea of ‘cosmic law’ has remained an attractive

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<sup>32</sup> In particular, my argument here is in line with Alexander Mourelatos’ longstanding claim that Heraclitus (along with Parmenides) shifts Greek thought from what he calls a “Naïve Metaphysics of Things (NMT)” to a sense of the world as “*logos*-textured.” Mourelatos 1973.

enough reading that Johnstone is still obliged to refute it. What he rescues for us by doing so is Heraclitus' central concern for how things present themselves to us in experience, together with the exercise of our own capacity for accessing the significance latent in their doing so. In turning now to discuss Heraclitus' statements on λόγος, I hope to show the centrality of these concerns to his writing, and the way in which it endeavors to steer us towards exercising our own capacity for perceptive comprehension.

### **Listening to ΛΟΓΟΣ**

We only need to look at the beginning of Heraclitus' composition – that is, the only texts for which we have reliable evidence on where they fell in his writings as a whole – to see that his concern lies with the failure of human understanding rather than the exposition of his own account of the world. Though most commentators have, understandably, focused on the meaning of λόγος here, it is human beings that are the subject of every main clause in the three sentences that make up B1/D1. It and B2/D2 both treat this topic, and with these we have a rare opportunity to think through two statements as they might have worked together: their attested proximity encourages us to relate them even more strongly than do their resonances in topic and terminology.<sup>33</sup> The texts are all the more significant, in this regard, since they enjoyed pride of place near the beginning of the work. More importantly, they work together to characterize the “account” that emerges as the essential, but ambiguous, object of attention here.

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<sup>33</sup> Charles Kahn (1979, esp. 88-95) uses ‘resonance’ to denote the complex echoes of terms, tropes, and imagery across all the surviving texts, echoes that mean we might connect any set of statements regardless of their sequential relation or relative position in the composition as a whole. I agree whole-heartedly with Kahn on this point and would even say it ought to carry greater weight in how we think about Heraclitus' relationship with narrative sequence, as I discussed in Chapter 2. Of course, the fact remains that Heraclitus must have arranged his statements in some sort of sequence, however significant.

In analyzing these two texts together, a dynamic of presence and absence emerges around λόγος. This dynamic, as we will see, dramatizes the immediate and universal availability of the λόγος, alongside its separation from those who are ignorant of its presence. Most importantly for my argument here, much of this drama is enacted in the grammar and plays out in the act of reading itself, especially in the way that B2/D2 recalls B1/D1.

I have spoken at length about B1/D1 already, but because it is such an important text it will be helpful to revisit it here with a different set of concerns:

[Ἡράκλειτος τάδε λέγει:] τοῦ δὲ λόγου τοῦδ' ἐόντος ἀεὶ ἀξύνετοι γίνονται ἄνθρωποι καὶ πρόσθεν ἢ ἀκοῦσαι καὶ ἀκούσαντες τὸ πρῶτον· γινομένων γὰρ πάντων κατὰ τὸν λόγον τόνδε ἀπίροισιν εἰκόασι, πειρώμενοι καὶ ἐπέων καὶ ἔργων τοιούτων, ὁκοίων ἐγὼ διηγέυμαι κατὰ φύσιν διαιρέων ἕκαστον καὶ φράζων ὅπως ἔχει. τοὺς δὲ ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους λανθάνει ὁκόσα ἐγεροθέντες ποιούσιν, ὄκωσπερ ὁκόσα εὐδοντες ἐπιλανθάνονται.

[Heraclitus says the following:] Although this account is always people are uncomprehending, both before they hear and once they hear the first time. For though all things come to be according to this account, they are like the untried when they try words and works such as I set forth, distinguishing each according to nature and showing how it is. And other people don't notice what they do awake, just as what they do asleep escapes them.

B1/D1 is rightly called the opening to Heraclitus' book, but there must have been some introductory sentence that, at a minimum, gave Heraclitus' name. I use here the most basic sentence that Snell proposes, but there was likely a patronym (son of Blosson) or a demonym (the Ephesian). There may also have been a different verb, e.g., γράφει, "writes." The essential point is that B1/D1 must have followed closely upon Heraclitus' own name.

The first sentence of B1/D1 emphatically insists on the *presence* of this λόγος: in B1/D1, Heraclitus deploys the term twice, both times with demonstrative pronouns (τοῦ

δὲ λόγου τοῦδ' . . . κατὰ τὸν λόγον τόνδε). This is the only mention of λόγος among the texts that uses the demonstrative, and it effects a repeated insistence on its immediacy even as Heraclitus describes a broad and recurring failure of comprehension. That poses no difficulty when we take the term to refer to the textual account before us, and this would be natural since we would have just read Heraclitus' own name. As the statement unfolds, however, Heraclitus emerges in the first person and describes his own work in quite different terms.

The organization of the second sentence further develops the conundrum around λόγος in the way Heraclitus introduces his own work as author. We hear about this λόγος once more with the demonstrative (all things come to be in accordance with it), but now in an absolute clause separate from the main clause, which is once more devoted to the confusion of humans. Moreover, where we might expect the sentence to go on to treat their engagement with this λόγος, the sentence instead pivots to their engagement with 'words and works' of the sort that Heraclitus sets out, emphasizing an ordeal or test in encountering them: the verb *πειρώμενοι*, in the middle, connotes experience but also a test, as is the case in the *Odyssey*'s 'trial' of the bow.<sup>34</sup> With this shift in terminology, an implicit gap opens up between Heraclitus' writing – the real work of which he, surprisingly, confines to a relative clause – and this λόγος that one had probably assumed meant simply the text itself. The 'words and works' Heraclitus sets out are, importantly, plural: this may mean that he understood his work as more like a collection than a unified treatise. Moreover, 'words and works' are commonly contrasted in Greek epic, as they

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<sup>34</sup> 21.268, 282: τόξου *πειρώμεσθα* (spoken by Antinoos, advising that they postpone the contest since that day is the feast of Apollo)... *χειρῶν καὶ σθένεος *πειρήσομαι** (spoken by Odysseus-in-disguise when he asks that he be permitted an attempt).

continue to be in English: “actions speak louder than words.” Heraclitus’ conjunction, then, insists that he is not offering *mere* words, and it also emphasizes that, as I have argued, his words have meaning in the same way that actions or events in the world do.

Though it suggests a puzzle in the relationship between text and λόγος, the second sentence nevertheless offers some tantalizing links between the immediately present λόγος and the ‘words and works’ of Heraclitus: the latter have the same case ending as ‘everything’ coming to be according to this λόγος, so a sonic echo might help us hear the ‘words and works’ as exemplary of things coming to be in this way (γινομένων γὰρ πάντων κατὰ τὸν λόγον τόνδε ... καὶ ἐπέων καὶ ἔργων...). Heraclitus even picks up this verbal sound in the nominative participles that express his ‘distinguishing’ each thing according to its nature – which we might once again relate to ‘all things coming to be according to λόγος’ – and ‘showing how it is’ (διδασκόμενων ... καὶ φράζων...).

The ‘words and works,’ then, surprise us with their difference from the ‘account’ we are told we must hear and understand. At the same time, both they and the activity of Heraclitus as author quite literally echo all things coming to be in accordance with this ‘account.’ The sentence seems to turn away from human engagement with the λόγος, but ultimately suggests that Heraclitus’ writing exemplifies how all things come to pass through this λόγος. The humans facing the ordeal of this encounter – still the subject of the sentence proper – are, in the grammar, strung between this λόγος in all things and their actual trial by ‘words and works’ of the sort Heraclitus sets out. The final sentence shows us that, if we thought the humans mentioned in the first two sentences were badly off in their understanding, the rest are even worse. Moreover, what is at stake is no less

than the cognizance of what we do, even at the most basic level of whether our own consciousness is awake or asleep, a trope that turns up again and again.

Sextus Empiricus tells us that B2/D2 came ‘a little later’ on in Heraclitus’ composition, and it echoes the beginning of B1/D1:

τοῦ λόγου δ’ ἐόντος ξυνοῦ ζώουσιν οἱ πολλοὶ ὡς ἰδίαν ἔχοντες φρόνησιν.

Although the account is common, they live, the many, as though they had their own thinking.

This statement initially patterns itself after the opening to B1 by mentioning λόγος in a genitive phrase with a form of the verb “to be.” The demonstrative pronoun, however, has been dropped. This statement expands the presence of λόγος in the claim that the account is “common,” but it abandons the explicit insistence on its immediate presence for a statement of its ubiquitous and universal character, and this in contrast to the assumption by many that their thought is their own. Most importantly, the grammar demonstrates the separation of idiosyncratic thinking from the common λόγος. In Chapter 1 I discussed how the initial genitive phrase in B1/D1 may be read either as absolute or the object of hearing, but the genitives in B2/D2 can only be read as absolute. These many who are mistaken about the nature of thought are, grammatically and actually, set apart from the common ‘account.’

We also have the connection between the “uncomprehending humans” (ἀξύνετοι . . . ἄνθρωποι) in B1/D1 and the “common account” (τοῦ λόγου . . . ξυνοῦ) of B2/D2. The contrast put forward in the latter fills out the description in B1/D1: human beings are (always) becoming alienated from understanding because they cannot comprehend the ‘common account.’ It is likewise noteworthy that, with B2/D2 following somewhat closely on B1/D1, we are, in fact, hearing ‘λόγος’ again, if only in the simplest sense that

the term is repeated. B1/D1 puzzled us with the suggestion that at least some have already heard λόγος but still fail to grasp things like Heraclitus' writings: B2/D2 enacts that very situation with respect to his reader. The several echoes of B1/D1 in B2/D2 only further the sense that we are returned to the scene, so to speak, of B1/D1, but with the knowledge that the λόγος we are meant to hear is common: it as extensive as it is comprehensive. The sequence lets the significant attributes of the λόγος accrete, but the act of understanding does not develop in this linear fashion. The test of actually hearing returns us to the opening of B1/D1, where we heard that humans are *always* – that word that immediately disrupts the sequence of sense in B1/D1 – becoming uncomprehending. With B2/D2 in mind, we have a new grasp of the alienation from λόγος that becoming “uncomprehending” entails: a failure to recognize its universal presence, and to hear it as such.

B2/D2 also shifts the sense in which Heraclitus' discourse might prove alienating for his audience. In Chapter 1, I discussed how Heraclitus' broad disparagement of human beings leaves little room for his reader to enter into a community of those ‘in the know,’ so to speak, such as the other texts we examined set up. By painting human beings *simpliciter* as failing in their understanding, Heraclitus suggests that this failure extends to his own audience. B2/D2, on the other hand, leaves room for some, at least, to stand apart from the error it proclaims. Its contrast between what is common and what is one's own, along with the error of “the many,” suggest that there is a community of understanding available, even if humans are broadly ignorant of it.

One last point about B2/D2 has to do with the process of reading itself. Since the texts of Heraclitus must have originally appeared as a single block of letters, devoid of

word breaks or diacritics, the act of reading involved sounding out syllables to construct the words and the sense. It is difficult to reconstruct this process in any detail, but in a basic sense it is easy to see how, in its rough outlines, it might have meant something to Heraclitus. The archaic Greek reader met an undifferentiated and basically unintelligible mass of letters, but with the aid of their own eye, voice, and ear first found individual words there. Finally, perhaps after a few separate passes through the text (especially one like that of Heraclitus), they achieved a unified understanding of what that mass of letters *says*, or, as Snell's points out of the verb λέγειν, *means*. Reading involves this shift in perception from an unintelligible, undifferentiated unity, to discerning a multitude of individual words, to comprehending that multitude as unified in the expression of a singular but complex significance. The materiality of the text is also significant: it may be immediately recognizable as a text, but it requires the activity of one's literary and linguistic capacity to access the full meaning *of* the text. In archaic inscriptions, this activity was often itself a component of the meaning archaic texts communicated.<sup>35</sup>

B1/D1 and B2/D2, then, suggest some rather complex developments of meaning in their proximity and shared topic. Yet the way in which they work together also overturns, as I have said, any easy forward or cumulative movement to reading in sequence. B2/D2 does not just build on what we have already heard, but in a sense actually returns us to the opening of B1/D1 and the failure, as well as the ordeal, that it lays before us. The λόγος itself shifts from an immediate presence, made explicit by the demonstrative pronouns, to a more global one from which the ignorant remain alienated, yet the 'common' aspect of the λόγος that we find there also lets us turn back to B1/D1

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<sup>35</sup> Svenbro, 1993.

with a richer sense of what it means to be ‘uncomprehending.’ B2/D2 builds its own significance in part by repeating the language of B1/D1, but with a difference: dropping the demonstrative and making the syntax of the genitive phrase strictly absolute. At the same time, it does not move us forward in a progressive demonstration but recalls us to B1/D1’s description of failing to hear the λόγος even after hearing it once. There is much else in B2/D2 that turns our attention back to B1/D1, partly with the sense that we have not yet understood even this first statement. In this way, these two texts draw on the proximity of a linear arrangement but ultimately defy it in the way they work together to communicate something about the λόγος.

B50/D46, in stark contrast to B1/D1 and B2/D2, offers a portrait of successful attention to λόγος:

οὐκ ἐμοῦ ἀλλὰ τοῦ λόγου ἀκούσαντας ὁμολογεῖν σοφόν ἐστὶν ἐν πάντα εἶναι.

“After listening not to me but to the λόγος, it is wise to say in agreement that all is one.”

Heraclitus complicates his candor here with a striking puzzle: how can we succeed in hearing a λόγος by directing our attention away from the author we are reading? What is it that we are meant to hear, then? Moreover, an implicit tension emerges between the initial disjunction and the final claim for a radical unity in all things: λόγος is initially distinguished from Heraclitus’ voice, yet the result of directing our attention away from his voice to hear the λόγος erases, in some important sense, that distinction along with everything in our experience that suggests multiplicity. This final claim redoubles the significance of λόγος, since wisdom turns out to consist in “speaking in agreement” (ὁμολογεῖν) that all things are one. One may hear an echo of the ἐμοῦ in the verbal

prefix ὁμο-, so that the personal voice distinguished at the outset is sublimated into the λόγος. In an important shift, the wisdom that results from hearing the λόγος successfully consists in not just registering its significance but in speech, and speech of a kind that complicates the distinction of self from other. Achieving wisdom involves a movement from apprehension to active participation in this λόγος, from ‘listening’ to ‘speaking in agreement’ with what is common to all.

B50/D46, then, offers a positive description of comprehending λόγος that is notable for its dynamism. As most commentators note, the initial disjunction suggests that we ought to attend not merely to Heraclitus’ words but to what they mean for our understanding of the world. Few, however, have remarked that the final claim for unity here must prompt us to wonder how these two things initially distinguished – Heraclitus’ words and an understanding of the world – might participate together in what turns out to be a radically singular object of attention.<sup>36</sup> More importantly, the shift from apprehension to active speech that constitutes wisdom here suggests, together with the final claim for unity, that we must realize not only a novel synthesis of Heraclitus’ words with the λόγος they urge us to hear, but also our own capacity for participating in that λόγος with speech of our own. For if that final claim for unity implies an identity underlying the initial differentiation of the λόγος from authorial speech, it must also imply that the one who successfully hears likewise discovers her own participation in that unity, strikingly expressed in the notion of ‘saying the same.’

B50/D46 tells us exactly what the λόγος expresses: unity. That much is evident in the final “all things are one,” but I think the verbs in the statement impress upon us that

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<sup>36</sup> Kahn notices this, but it does not figure prominently in his comments on B50/D46. 1979, 130ff.

this is what the λόγος expresses everywhere, all the time. The aorist participle (ἀκούσαντας) differentiates subject, object, and tense: it is *after* hearing that the agent is in a position to do what is wise and speak in agreement. The text then expresses what is wise in an impersonal construction with a finite verb in the present tense. That this construction is also predicative muddles the subject-object relations apparent in the participle. Then tense, as well, evaporates entirely: both the wise action and its content are expressed in the infinitive, and so the final predication is neither time-bound nor explicit in marking the direction of the subject-predicate relation. The grammar of Heraclitus' statement moves us in the direction of impersonality and universality as it articulates a positive account of comprehending the λόγος, even if we still want to grasp the *how* in the unity it proclaims.

Speaking in agreement with the λόγος may entail the rather simple but dense assertion of unity at the end of B50/D46. Yet, as we have seen from B1/D1 and B2/D2, *hearing* the λόγος is fraught with error and entirely occasional. Even the positive instance of B50/D46 begins with a distinction that would seem to fly in the face of its final claim, and the simplicity of that claim belies what might be required to recognize it in our typically fluid and multitudinous experience. B50/D46 practically enacts this difficulty, and in general Heraclitus is far from denying difference, change, or depth in the phenomena we experience. So, even if the λόγος expresses the same thing everywhere and all the time, what is required to actually grasp this depends on our ability to perceive and interpret what is going on before us at any given moment, and all the more so when we experience Heraclitus' texts.

What does the exercise of such an ability look like? And, in keeping with the

question at the outset of this section, how does Heraclitus' writing enable this? As may be appropriate to Heraclitus' himself, I see a way into a response in another negative example of human understanding. B34/D4 develops the dynamic of B1/D1 and B2/D2 by echoing the language around λόγος. Modern efforts at reconstruction usually place it nearby, though there is no evidence that Heraclitus did so.<sup>37</sup> Wherever it may have occurred, its resonance with B1/D1 and B2/D2 encourage us to relate them, and it further develops the dynamic presence and absence of λόγος we found there:

ἀξύνετοι ἀκούσαντες κωφοῖσιν εἰκόασι: φάτις αὐτοῖσιν μαρτυρεῖ  
παρεόντας ἀπεῖναι.

Uncomprehending, when they have heard they resemble the deaf; the saying bears witness for them: "while present, absent." DK B34/LM D4

In contrast to B1/D1's flirtation with conventional prose, B34/D4 is characteristic of Heraclitus' briefer statements. Asyndeton obscures the semantic link to any preceding statement, a complaint of Heraclitus' ancient readers.<sup>38</sup> Paradoxical juxtapositions (hearing-deaf, present-absent) are jarring and make a memorable impression of the absurdity Heraclitus conveys here. Similarly, consonance and assonance bring the acoustic quality of language to the fore, and with special irony given the phrase 'hearing like the deaf.' If the relationship between B1/D1 and B2/D2 draws on the kinds of relationships that literary work creates through context and complex syntax, B34/D4 speaks to similar issues but in a distinctively gnomic mode.

In fact, B34/D4 seems to reference its own gnomic character in its marked use of

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<sup>37</sup> Charles Kahn, taking Sextus' comments on B2/D2 to mean proximity but not immediate sequence, even makes it the intervening text between B1/D1 and B2/D2 in his speculative reconstruction.

<sup>38</sup> Demetrius, *On Style*, 191-192.

a popular saying (φάτις).<sup>39</sup> That saying, at first glance, does not seem to add much: it is another memorable and paradoxical formulation that expresses the absurdity of humans' inability to actually hear the λόγος. It does, however, parallel Heraclitus' own form of expression, and so offers an exemplary instance of how that mode of expression might operate.<sup>40</sup>

The use of the popular saying here has important ramifications for how we see the λόγος in relation to Heraclitus' prose. First of all, its application calls to mind the availability of such sayings in a shared, public culture, and so connects with the characterization of the λόγος as common (ξυνοῦ) in B2/D2 and the ignorant as uncomprehending (ἀξύνετοι). The λόγος is, in a sense, present here: it is brought to mind by the echo of the terms that open B1/D1, even if the word itself is absent. This is more striking since the verb ἀκούσαντες has no direct object, and so a reader might well expect to hear λόγος again. Although it is literally absent, λόγος thus becomes present to mind. In this way B34/D4 further develops questions around the presence of λόγος that run through B1/D1 and B2, and now in relation to that of its audience: the latter, in not hearing, fail to be present, while the λόγος is, insofar as it is brought to mind, present even in its literal absence. Even the most ridiculous ignorance cannot suppress the way in which λόγος is consistently present and available to the mind, if not always the eye

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<sup>39</sup> This term φάτις, in its most basic connotation, means speech: it may refer to oracular utterance or divine voice, but also to popular sayings. LSJ.

<sup>40</sup> So much so, in fact, that Martha Nussbaum argued the phrasing belonged to Heraclitus rather than a common saying. Her argument rests on two points: that φάτις does not have another contemporary attestation for the meaning 'proverb,' and that there are no other examples of this saying extant before Aristophanes. Nussbaum 1972, 12. Those points are valid but not dispositive. Conche, moreover, points out that the term appears with this meaning in the Derveni papyrus (perhaps unavailable to Nussbaum at the time), and cites an additional instance of the formulation in a fragment of Euripides: ἄπεισι κἄν παρῶσ' ὄμως (fr. 519 Nauck = Stob., III.8.3). Conche 1986, 49. To this I would add that Heraclitus in B1/D104 cites a saying that we know was attributed to Bias of Priene, whom he also praises in B 39. This all lends credibility to his citation of popular saying here.

and ear.

Secondly, if Heraclitus' prose has struck his reader as obscure and idiosyncratic, citing a φάτις offers a link to a form of expression that is present in everyday conversation but also parallel to Heraclitus' own. This provides some familiarity in what might otherwise be an alienating form of expression. Even more importantly, such sayings express a wisdom that does not rely on attribution for authority: in a shared culture, these are available to anyone who recognizes their relevance to a particular situation. The sayings are common, and do not belong to any one voice in particular. This is a perfect parallel for an author who ultimately wants to efface the authority of his own personal voice, and Heraclitus even makes the φάτις the agent here. So, by appealing to a saying that exists in a common store of cultural knowledge, Heraclitus is developing a familiar sense for the commonality of the λόγος to which he wants to draw our attention.

On the whole, then, the crucial statements for an account of λόγος in Heraclitus all focus on human attention in relation to it rather than on a descriptive account of λόγος itself, or a descriptive account of what it is that λόγος communicates. B50/D46 gives us something like the latter in its claim for unity, but the framework of the statement centers on an account of what it is to hear it successfully, whereas B1/D1, B2/D2, and B34/D4 all portray the failure of human beings to apprehend an account that is common to all. B1/D1 insists on its presence in the text, but also shows us the struggles of humans encountering the words and works of Heraclitus. In my reading, that text offers us hints that Heraclitus' texts may be exemplary instances of the λόγος expressing itself in all things. In turning now to examine his statements on ἄρμονίη, I aim to show how

Heraclitus' use of language makes ideas present in the experience of the text, and in such a way that may become exemplary for comprehending that idea and so, perhaps, an instance of 'listening to λόγος' in the words and works of Heraclitus.

### **APMONIH and Syntax**

The concept of ἄρμονία is widely recognized as crucial for Heraclitus' central claim in B50/D46 that "all things are one," and B51/D49 and B54 are the only authentic quotations that treat it.<sup>41</sup> Though commentators are often quick to speak of a general conception of "fitting-together," as I have just done, it will be important for my argument that, in both statements, ἄρμονία is not treated generally but is specified by an adjective: "backward turning" (παλίντροπος) in B51/D49, and "unapparent" (ἀφανής) in B54/D50. In each case the adjective gives to ἄρμονία a certain formal attribute, and one that is central to the form and meaning of the statement. B54/D50, and in particular the notion of "unapparent fitting-together," offers us a succinct expression of Heraclitus' thought and art. The statement's formal ingenuity lies in the pair of opposing adjectives at the center of the statement, in which the privative form turns out to "master" the positive one, and so the particular attribute of ἄρμονία is key to the statement's significance. B51/D49, by contrast, is expansive in its potential meanings. Allusions to war and peace, Odysseus and Apollo, and the entire epic tradition put lots of ideas in play, and all this comes in the course of ostensibly offering some concrete examples of an idea that most people are unable to comprehend. Here too, the adjective attached to ἄρμονία is key to the statement's significance, and παλίντροπος has attracted a great

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<sup>41</sup> Kahn 1979, 202.

deal of attention. It is a rare instance in which the otherwise conservative Heraclitus has almost certainly introduced a novel term: its departure from *παλίντονος*, the common Homeric epithet for the bow, complicated the transmission and modern readings of this statement.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, the organization of the sentence focuses our attention on *παλίντροπος*. It follows a break in sense that most editors mark with a colon, and *παλίντροπος ἄρμονίη* serves as a gloss on the principle, agreement in difference, which most people do not understand. In both B51/D49 and B54/D50, then, our attention is drawn to the attribute of *ἄρμονίη* that each statement offers.

In each case, I argue, the adjective attached to *ἄρμονίη* also indicates an instance of syntactic “fitting-together” at work in the text. By ‘indicate’ I mean that these attributes both signal the kind of attention that can discover this instance, and prove descriptive of this “fitting-together” in syntax. Consider B51/D49:

οὐ ξυνιάσιν ὅκως διαφερόμενον ἑωυτῶι ὁμολογέει· παλίντροπος ἄρμονίη  
ὅκωσπερ τόξου καὶ λύρης.

They do not comprehend how in differing with itself it agrees: a backward-turning fitting-together (*παλίντροπος ἄρμονίη*), just as of bow and lyre.

Here the central thought is the inability of humans to comprehend agreement in difference, expressed in the contrasting verbal forms: *διαφερόμενον ἑωυτῶι ὁμολογέει*. The term *παλίντροπος ἄρμονίη* is typically taken as referring metaphorically to the idea of agreement in difference, and in a literal sense to the exemplary structure of the bow and the lyre, on which most interpretations focus. Kahn argued forcefully to secure the reading of *παλίντροπος*, but only understands its

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<sup>42</sup> Kirk 1964. It is only since Kahn’s 1979 edition and commentary that *παλίντροπος* has found wide acceptance as the correct reading for B51/D49.

significance against *παλίντονος* here in the connection it suggests with other instances of the term *τροπή* (“turn”) in Heraclitus. Those connections are meaningful, but we should nevertheless wonder why Heraclitus thought such a term would add meaning to this statement.

On my reading, we may take the adjective to indicate what has gone before. That is, *παλίντροπος* might suggest “turning back” to the preceding phrase, where it also turns out to describe a feature of syntax we find there. For the expression *παλίντροπος ἄρμονίη* could be taken to express the way in which the reflexive pronoun (*ἑωυτῶι*) may complement both verbal forms: *διαφερόμενον ἑωυτῶι ὁμολογέει*. A reader must, in essence, re-supply the reflexive pronoun with *ὁμολογέει*, so the sense involves a 'turning back' to the earlier word. If this seems to read too much significance into this reflexive pronoun (*ἑωυτῶι*), it is worth noting that Plato’s few paraphrases of this statement either use two separate pronouns or none at all.<sup>43</sup>

The term, *παλίντροπος ἄρμονίη*, then, draws attention to a feature of syntax in which we read an entity – *ἑωυτῶι* – both differing and agreeing with itself. In simply reading the statement we apprehend a relationship of agreement in difference, and thus perform the thought that most, we are told, cannot grasp. In this way the text provides an encounter with *ἄρμονίη* that is realized in the voice of the *reader* rather than that of Heraclitus, even if it is in his words and text that this occurs. Moreover, Heraclitus may have constructed the sentence, but he did not construct the Greek language and its system

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<sup>43</sup> E.g., *Symposium* 187a5: τὸ ἐν γὰρ φησι “διαφερόμενον αὐτὸ αὐτῷ συμφέρεσθαι, ὥσπερ ἄρμονίην τόξου τε καὶ λύρας.” Also *Sophist* 242e3: διαφερόμενον γὰρ αἰὲν συμφέρεται, φασὶν αἱ συντονώτεροι τῶν Μουσῶν.

of meaning. He draws on that system in order to construct an exemplary instance of “fitting-together” in syntax.

I want to be clear that this exemplarity, while it does involve modelling the idea in language, is not just about producing a likeness. Rather, the availability of the idea in the language of the statement means that the reader may discover that this idea is enacted in *their own* activity of reading. To notice this instance of “backwards-turning fitting-together” is to notice that one is, by virtue of one’s faculty of language comprehension, performing just that in making sense of the statement. This makes the recognition of *παλίντροπος ἄρμονίη* first-personal, and not a function of attending to Heraclitus’ voice but to what the language itself is doing. It is through one’s own experience of the text that the idea becomes available, and specifically through noticing the way in which any statement, or any *λόγος*, is a function of a listener’s comprehension as much as of a speaker’s voice, and both depend upon the system of language that mediates both expression and comprehension.

The text itself only concerns a very specific kind of *ἄρμονίη*, one that is backward-turning, but through the more general idea of agreement in difference it suggests a broader significance, one that might even lead us to miss the very specific way in which this ‘backwards-turning fitting-together’ actually occurs in the experience of the text. The allusions in B51/D49 to other texts of Heraclitus, and to other texts in the Greek tradition, similarly expand the reach of the statement beyond the instantiation of “fitting-together” in the text. The failure of understanding (*ou xuniasin*) echoes the *xunos* that defines the *λόγος* in B2/D2, and the verb literally means failing to bring things together, a principle the statement goes on to dramatize, on my reading, in its syntax.

The verb expressing agreement, of course, both incorporates λόγος and resonates with B50/D46: ὁμολογέει. In alluding to both of these statements, B51/D49 suggests that what is available here is both another dramatization of humans' failure to comprehend the λόγος, but also something actually 'speaking in agreement.' On my reading, we find an exemplary instance of this in the syntax that Heraclitus' constructs.

Moreover, the statement brings in several kinds of epic resonance, first of all in the three dactylic feet that open it but peter out just where the statement begins to instantiate the very form of fitting-together it announces (οὐ ξυνιάσιν ὅκως δια...). Commentators have focused in particular on the bow and the lyre, which are often noted as symbols of war and peace and as the attributes of Apollo. Though it has not been remarked, I find it notable that the bow and the lyre are also the instruments that reveal Odysseus' true identity: the lyre among the Phaeacians, by prompting his tears against his will, and the bow on Ithaca, with which he reasserts his heroic title and drives the suitors out of his house. A statement that, by implication, urges its reader to "get it together," combines a great many allusions and ideas. All of these may, then, lead one to miss the way in which it offers an exemplary instantiation of its difficult idea, "backwards-turning fitting together," in the language of its author and its comprehension by an audience.

B54/D50, in contrast to B51/D49's expansive allusions, is remarkable for its focus: ἀρμονίη ἀφανῆς φανεροῆς κρείττων, "Unapparent fitting-together is stronger than apparent." Here again the attribute linked to ἀρμονίη indicates a grammatical feature in the text, and in the same sense: it both suggests the attention that might discover it – ironic given that it is unapparent – and describes the feature so discovered. Here ἀφανῆς suggests attention to a "fitting-together" of differing elements that is

imperceptible. I take this to describe the way in which ἀφανῆς must be discerned from φανεροῆς as the proper nominative attribute of ἁρμονίη. Grammatical relationships are never perceptible *per se*, as Jim Leshner points out in arguing that Heraclitus is the first to identify linguistic meaning in this network of relations. Yet the key relation in B54/D50 is discerned despite the fact that both adjectives have identical word-endings. At least, they would appear that way in a text written without word breaks or diacritics, as Heraclitus' text would have been. So, a reader sounding out the syllables might be tempted, at first, to link the two words with identical endings. There is a difference in accentuation, but Heraclitus elsewhere relies on the temporary suspension of accentuation in text to produce a significant homophony: B48/D53 is built around the play on the archaic term for “bow”, βίος, and the word “life,” βίος: “The name for the bow is ‘life,’ but it’s work death” (βίος τῷ τόξῳ ὄνομα βίος ἔργον δὲ θάνατος.)

In distinguishing ἀφανῆς as nominative and φανεροῆς as genitive – a distinction that is essential to the grammar and meaning of the statement – a reader performs an act of “non-apparent fitting together:” ἀφανῆς must be predicated of ἁρμονίη while φανεροῆς depends on κρείττων. In this way, the text models its “non-apparent fitting-together” in its own syntax. More importantly, it offers itself as an occasion on which that idea is actively performed in reading the statement. We apprehend the idea of “non-apparent fitting-together” as a feature that is active in the text, and also internal to our own intelligent activity in reading.

As I worried at the outset, this argument makes much of the experience of reading when there is little we can know about how Heraclitus' text presented itself to its ancient audience. There are, however, two general points that support this kind of self-reflexive

attitude in reading. The first concerns what we know about the act of reading: one read aloud in order to distinguish the individual words from one another in a text with no word breaks or diacritics, and so to read one had to both see the text and hear in one's voice so that the block of text might become intelligible speech. Second, there is evidence that even later in antiquity the texts of Heraclitus were considered unusually laborious reading: Aristotle, for example, complains that it is work to punctuate Heraclitus' text, citing the much-discussed ambiguity of ἀεὶ in B1/D1.<sup>44</sup> Such evidence gives us reason to think that the very act of reading Heraclitus would prompt one to take up a more self-reflexive posture in language comprehension. The relatively recent emphasis on the important of language itself for thinking about Heraclitus and his λόγος makes it all the more salient for his texts in particular.

In the case of B54/D50, I do not mean to suggest that the similar text and sound of ἀφανῆς and φανεροῆς would give a Greek any difficulty in comprehension. My point is that one may recognize the distinction of ἀφανῆς from φανεροῆς as an instance of ἀρμονίη ἀφανῆς, "unapparent fitting-together." Once we do so, this feature becomes significant not just as a model of the idea but also as an occasion for recognizing that idea at work in our own reading. Just as in B51/D49, the attribute of ἀρμονίη 'indicates' the grammatical feature: it motivates the kind of attention that might discover it and describes it in a way that seems to confirm its significance. That significance lies, as I have been urging, in the activity and encounter with the text.

Of course, Heraclitus' audience might not recognize the way in which B51/D49 and B54/D50 demonstrate in their grammar their particular modes of "fitting-together."

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<sup>44</sup> Aristotle, *Rhet.* 3.5 1407b11-18.

Those who do recognize this, however, must be struck by it, as I have been. The statement does not simply tell us about a “backwards-turning fitting-together,” but provides an opportunity to encounter it in action. In this way “fitting-together” is presented both as a principle of some general significance and as one that is active in the text itself, such that we may encounter it for ourselves there. In making sense of it, we bear witness to a key pattern in the intelligibility of the world.

The demonstrative exposition of two kinds of ἁρμονίη in B51/D49 and B54/D50, despite the fact that it hides in plain sight, may exemplify what Heraclitus means when he says in B1/D1 that he produces his “words and works” (ἑπέων καὶ ἔργων) by “distinguishing each thing according to its nature and showing how it is” (...κατὰ φύσιν διαιρέων ἕκαστον καὶ φράζων ὅπως ἔχει.). In my discussion of B1/D1 in the first chapter, I noted that the verb φράζω often means to *show* rather than tell, and in Homer it never connotes speech.<sup>45</sup> Heraclitus has found a way for his writing to demonstrate the idea that he treats, but in such a way that it emerges in his audience’s encounter with the text rather than in his own textual utterance. It is the work of their eyes, ears, and voice (sounding out the syllables), together with an active understanding of how the Greek language works, that enables the reader to comprehend the concept at work in the text.

Taken together, both B51/D49 and B54/D50 suggest the importance of “fitting-together” as a general principle in the radical unity of the world that Heraclitus’ texts announce. Yet these readings also show us the way in which ἁρμονίη is local and specific: the attributes in each statement specify a particular form for this general principle, and, on my reading, we come to understand this particular form through its

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<sup>45</sup> LSJ, φράζω, A.1

manifestation in grammar. This means that we apprehend these ideas not as symbols or images in the text, but as features of our own intelligent activity in processing the systematic relationships that create meaning in language. In that way the text gives us an account, a λόγος, that indicates the world at large but also realizes itself in the very words of Heraclitus' discourse. The personal voice that originally articulated those words is not itself the source of understanding here, even if it is the trace of an agent that has accomplished something extraordinary in crafting a text that lets understanding take place in the act of reading.

CHAPTER FOUR  
ΦΑΤΙΣ ΑΥΤΟΙΣΙΝ ΜΑΡΤΥΡΕΙ: Bearing Witness in Heraclitus

Not one death but many,  
not accumulation but change, the feed-back proves, the feed-back is  
the law

Into the same river no man steps twice  
When fire dies air dies  
No one remains, nor is, one

- Charles Olson, *The Kingfishers*

Of course I don't live for poetry; I live far more than anybody else does. And forever and why not. Because it is the only thing. But what do you do meanwhile? So what do you do with the rest of the time? That's all. I said I promised to *witness*. But I mean I can't always.

- Charles Olson, "The Art of Poetry No. 12," *Paris Review*

The last chapter argued that *logos* in Heraclitus indicates the way in which the world presents itself, or gives an "account" of itself, to human beings in their own experience. The significance of things is given in this self-presentation, though it frequently demands interpretation. I showed that Heraclitus makes language itself paradigmatic for the interpretation and intelligibility of *logos* in this global sense, and his texts use language in ways that allow their audience to perform the activity of interpretation necessary for comprehending meaning as it presents itself, both in the text and in the world at large. As we saw, Heraclitus' statements on *harmonia* instantiate the activity of recognizing the very idea that they describe, achieving this by modeling that idea in the syntax itself. This collapses the distinction between *logos* as Heraclitus' utterance and *logos* in this broader sense of the intelligibility of the world: the experience of the text becomes the moment in which one 'hears' the *logos* in both its local and global significance. Since, as we saw in Chapter 1, Heraclitus rejects his own voice as the source of understanding, this moment of comprehension is not a transmission of knowledge from author

to audience but a function of actively comprehending one's own experience, as Heraclitus emphasizes from the outset in B1/D1. This activity of interpretation and understanding is fundamental to living well, and Heraclitus' prose poetics aim to communicate it. His texts, through this poetics, provide an occasion for recognizing both the availability of understanding and the capacity to achieve it in one's own activity of perception and interpretation.

The present chapter provides a fuller account of the way in which such understanding can become an activity that, for Heraclitus, constitutes the best way for human beings to live. I offer a view of Heraclitus' ethics that combines understanding in the first person with his insistence that the organization and significance of all things is held in common. To do so, I draw on a recurring idea in the extant texts that has received little attention: bearing witness. Research on Greek law has shown how central witnesses are to legal procedure in the life of Greek polities, but this has hardly figured in discussions of Heraclitus. Once we appreciate the role of the witness there, I argue, we may find in witnessing a model for participation in the common life of the *kosmos*. As with the modeling of *harmonia* in syntax, witnessing in the political sense is not merely an analog for this participation but an exemplary instantiation of it. Each involves the correct interpretation of events according to a normative pattern, and, as we shall see, there turns out to be a direct and dependent connection between human *nomoi* and the divine power that organizes the *kosmos*. Moreover, witnessing is central to conceptions of knowledge and access to it across archaic and early classical Greek culture, with no small import for reflecting on the transmission of knowledge in poetry and in prose.

Witnessing, then, suggests itself as an analog for both the activity of comprehending one's own experience and the significance of that experience within the larger life and order of a communal whole. In keeping with Heraclitus' emphasis on what is common to all (B2/D2,

B114/D105), witnessing points to the comprehension of the individual according to the pattern of laws that governs the shared life of a political community. Moreover, the presentation of a popular saying in B34/D4, one conspicuously parallel to Heraclitus' own gnomic utterance, turns the poetological significance of witnessing towards Heraclitus' own text. There, Heraclitus makes the saying itself bear witness, confirming the way in which he suppresses his own persona as the source of knowledge in order to privilege his audience's encounter with the text. The availability of such sayings in the common culture of Greece, together with the communal significance of witnessing more generally, provide a counterpoint to longstanding views of Heraclitus as an oracular voice, an enigmatic prophet of the *logos*.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, I consider the kind of "community" within which the ethical activity of properly comprehending one's own experience takes place. Here we see that Heraclitus marks the limits of human political community as a model for understanding the *kosmos*, but envisions a direct and intimate relationship between the organization of human communities and the organization of reality that is common to all things. Witnessing thus becomes a way of understanding how human life relates to this common and all-encompassing reality. Just as we understood *logos* in Heraclitus to indicate the intelligible self-presentation of reality, the self-presentation of human beings in speech and action may participate in and further express the single reality common to all things. Through witnessing, then, we get a fuller account of what it is to 'speak in agreement' (B50/D46) with the *logos* and participate in the life of the *kosmos*.

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<sup>1</sup> e.g., Hölscher 1974, Gallop 1989, Maurizio 2012

## A theme in Heraclitus

Witnessing appears several times in the texts of Heraclitus, in both verbal and nominal forms:

ἀξύνετοι ἀκούσαντες κωφοῖσιν εἰκόασι: φάτις αὐτοῖσιν **μαρτυρεῖ** παρεόντας ἀπείναι.  
Uncomprehending, when they listen they resemble the deaf; the saying **bears witness** for them:  
“while present, absent.” DK 22 B34/LM D4

ὀφθαλμοὶ τῶν ὠτῶν ἀκριβέστεροι **μάρτυρες**.  
Eyes are more exacting **witnesses** than ears. DK 22 B101a/LM D32

κακοὶ **μάρτυρες** ἀνθρώποισιν ὀφθαλμοὶ καὶ ὠτα βαρβάρους ψυχὰς ἐχόντων.  
They make bad witnesses for human beings, the eyes and ears of those whose souls do not speak  
the language.  
DK 22 B107/LM D33

Δίκη καταλήψεται ψευδῶν τέκτονας καὶ **μάρτυρας**.  
Justice will catch up to the builders of lies and their witnesses. DK 22 B28b/LM D28

The authenticity of B101a/D32 has been doubted, but the other three all speak to key themes in Heraclitus’ work as a whole: B34/D4 for his criticisms of most humans’ understanding, B107a/D33 for his epistemology and psychology, especially as it relates to language, and B28b/D28 for his emphasis on divine justice and, perhaps, eschatology. Yet the *resonance* of witnessing in these several statements – here I borrow Charles Kahn’s hermeneutic principle of tracking terms and ideas that occur across Heraclitus’ texts – has hardly been noticed or discussed.

Research on Greek legal practice has shown that ‘witnessing’ carries a significance quite different from what we typically take the term to denote, and this has already been pointed out as relevant to these texts of Heraclitus.<sup>2</sup> As I will show here, understanding the meaning of

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<sup>2</sup> Robb 1991, citing work by Michael Gagarin (1984) in particular.

witnessing for Heraclitus and his audience shows us that the relationship between human observation and its objects is not the disinterested pursuit of knowledge typically imagined in modern empiricism, but one that is already imbued with ethical and communal significance. On this understanding, the knowledge gained through sensory experience just is ethical in character. Moreover, witnessing and human community model participation in the common life of the *kosmos*, but not as a mere analog. As my reading of B114/D105 will show, the norms that structure human community and ethics are themselves substantially dependent upon the divine power at work in ordering the *kosmos*, so that bearing witness in the political sense already participates in what is common to all as well as in human community. Just as grasping the significance of *logos* collapses the distinction between Heraclitus' text and the self-presentation of the world to which he means to draw our attention, witnessing provides a way in to understanding the way in which humans may participate rightly in the *kosmos* as a communal form of life.

### **The procedural witness in early Classical politics and in Heraclitus**

Kevin Robb has argued that modern commentators on Heraclitus have missed the true significance of witnessing in his texts by assuming that it correlates with *accidental* witnessing.<sup>3</sup> Robb draws on work by Michael Gagarin and others to show that in late archaic Greek culture the term refers primarily to the *procedural* witness: someone, usually one in a set of two or three citizens, who is summoned and sworn to faithfully observe some transaction or speech act, the

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.. Robb cites longstanding studies of the law code of Gortyn by J.W. Headlam (1892-93) that point out the distinction between the accidental and the procedural witness, showing that the code – and, by extension, Greek law generally – is primarily concerned with the latter. Michael Gagarin (1984) has argued, *contra* Headlam, that there are still some cases in which the witness is an accidental rather than a procedural one, though Gagarin still agrees on the primacy of the procedural witness.

performance of which is governed by law and may require, especially in the event of a dispute, future testimony.<sup>4</sup> Procedural witnesses are typically citizens, or, at a minimum, adult free persons who are familiar with communal laws and norms. These criteria will be significant when we turn to reading Heraclitus' texts: witnessing requires a certain status and basis for comprehension. Here I want to emphasize that these witnesses perform an official legal function: they are sworn to observe that the matter in question is conducted as the law prescribes, and to offer testimony of the same should it become necessary in the future. As Hesiod advises in the *Works and Days*, it is best to get a witness when you make a deal, even with your brother.<sup>5</sup> Hesiod's relationship with his brother may be a special case, but his advice nonetheless makes clear that witnesses are crucial for ensuring that affairs are conducted according to the relevant norms, and that agreements are upheld.

The procedural witness does persist in modern legal practice, in the witnesses to marriages or wills, for example. In the largely oral culture of Heraclitus, however, witnesses were crucial to a wide range of acts and events, as can be seen from the following in the law code of Gortyn, dated to the first half of the 5th century BCE:

Αἱ τέκοι γυνὰ κῆ[ρ]ε[ύ]ονσα, ἐπελεῦσαι τῷ ἀνδρὶ ἐπὶ στέγαν ἀντὶ μαιτύρων τριῶν. αἱ δὲ μὲ δέκσαιτο, ἐπὶ τῇ ματρὶ ἔμεν τὸ τέκνον ἔ τράπεν ἔ ἀποθέμεν· ὀρκιότεροδ δ' ἔμεν τὸς καδεστάνυς καὶ τὸς μαίτυρανυς, αἱ ἐπέλεύσαν. φοικέα τέκοι κῆρεύονσα, ἐπελεῦσαι τῷ πάσται τὸ ἀνδρός, ὅς ὄπιυε, ἀντὶ μαιτύρων [δυ]ῶν.

If a wife who is separated (by divorce) should bear a child, (they) are to bring it to the husband at his house in the presence of three witnesses; and if he should not receive it, the child shall be in the mother's power either to rear or expose; and the relatives and witnesses shall have preference in the oath as to whether they brought it. And if a female

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<sup>4</sup> I am grateful to Deborah Kamen for pointing out to me that we might also consider a third class of witnesses: guests at a wedding, for example, or at the entrance of a young man into his father's *phratry*. These may not be procedural witnesses in the official sense, but are not merely accidental witnesses either.

<sup>5</sup> μισθὸς δ' ἀνδρὶ φίλω εἰρημένος ἄρκιος ἔστω. / καὶ τε κασιγνήτῳ γελάσας ἐπὶ μάρτυρα θέσθαι. / πίστει γάρ τοι ὁμῶς καὶ ἀπιστίαι ὄλεσαν ἀνδραυς. (*WD*, 370-372). Some editors have rejected lines 371-372 as an interpolation, but recent editors have preserved them: e.g., West 1978, Most 2007.

serf should bear a child while separated, (they) are to bring it to the master of the man who married her in the presence of two witnesses.<sup>6</sup>

The witnesses in this instance are present to observe and, if necessary, recall the conduct of an important action: the assignment of parental rights when a child is born after the mother and father have separated. The text may seem matter of fact, but the stakes are high: the life of a child, together with the rights and property of the parents (and those of their masters). Perhaps anticipating that charged emotions might complicate the process prescribed by law, the text states explicitly that the testimony of the three witnesses and relatives – i.e., not that of the parents themselves – should carry the most weight. In this case we see how early Greek law deploys the procedural witness to ensure both fidelity to the law in the event itself and an accurate record of it for the future.<sup>7</sup>

I will discuss the significance of witnessing for Heraclitus momentarily, but there are two points about the procedural witness that I want to emphasize beforehand. First, these witnesses typically observe an action for which the procedure itself is governed by law. They are not simply observing what happens in their presence but ensuring that the action takes place in accordance with a prescribed pattern. In this way, they serve as guarantors of the action's legality and communal significance, both in the event and after the fact. Second, such witnesses are not just incidental to the action but are actual participants, ones who are essential for it to accomplish what it is meant to accomplish. We could say that witnesses embody the authoritative presence of laws at work in the community: they do not enforce laws or adjudicate

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<sup>6</sup> Greek Text is from Beck 2010 (IV.57-60 = Willetts 1967 Col. III.44-55). Translation is Willetts 1967, 41. The code is roughly contemporary with Heraclitus but the dialect is Doric. However, Michael Gagarin (1986) has argued that in early Greek law procedural matters and prescriptions are remarkably consistent across polities, though the specific solutions to legal issues often varied a great deal. The Gortyn code, then, can speak to the legal landscape of Heraclitus' Ephesus with respect to the procedural role of the witness.

<sup>7</sup> The example comes from archaic law on Crete, but Michael Gagarin (2005) has argued that the unity of Greek law rests not on common codes shared across the Greek world, but shared procedures, including the witness.

disputes, but their presence – along with, importantly, public confidence in their perception, understanding, and reliability – enables both to take place. Most of all, witnesses make the action part of communal life, both by their actual participation and their presence in the community after the fact. By ensuring the legal status of an action in the present, and providing a record of it for the future, procedural witnesses uphold the laws as they actually govern the life of the polity.

Contrasts between witnessing in the ‘procedural’ versus the ‘accidental’ sense are stark and informative for approaching those texts of Heraclitus that deploy the idea. The procedural witness already understands himself to play just this role in the action he observes, and understands too that it is incumbent upon him to ensure that this action conforms to a prescribed pattern and is recollected accordingly. The accidental witness, by contrast, may or may not have any sense of the significance in what they observe: consider someone who observes a fact or action without grasping that it is or pertains to a legal matter, criminal or otherwise. That witness is called to give an account just of what they happened to have seen, and is hardly expected to grasp the larger action let alone its significance before the law. The procedural witness, by contrast, has an interest in what he observes that carries ethical significance in both the individual and communal sense: he understands his duties and the relevant norms beforehand, and that these matter for both the integrity of communal life and his personal standing within it; he must observe faithfully and ensure propriety in the event itself and in its future significance for the community. Witnessing in this procedural sense, unlike the happenstance observation of the accidental witness, necessarily involves a profoundly ethical relationship to what is observed: a full understanding of what transpires, faithful observation, and trustworthy recollection are all required of the procedural witness. His own ethical standing

within the community both qualify him for and depend upon the good exercise of these duties.

A couple of points in Heraclitus' texts suggest that his own conception of bearing witness aligns with the procedural rather than the accidental witness. Typically, as in the example above, multiple witnesses were prescribed in order to discourage bias and corruption.<sup>8</sup> It is noteworthy, then, that whenever Heraclitus uses the noun 'witness' he does so in the plural. In a similar vein, D28/B28b exhibits confidence that false testimony will not go unpunished, and the presumption here seems to be that the witnesses knowingly participate in the perpetuation of lies: they are not innocently reporting what they saw and heard. Corrupting the testimony of procedural witnesses, whether by bias or bribe, threatened not just the adjudication of a particular case but undermined the rule of law more broadly, since procedural witnesses are meant to guarantee that laws are followed in the first place. Multiple witnesses did much to forestall false testimony, but stiff penalties also served as a deterrent: in fifth century Athens, repeated instances of false testimony meant being stripped of citizenship and reduced to *atimia*.<sup>9</sup> And if false testimony was a sign of bad character, one's efficacy as a witness similarly depended upon a reputation for honesty and fairness. Aristotle will later explain in the *Rhetoric* that the testimony of a witness is inextricably tied to that person's character (*êthos*) and will be partly evaluated on that basis; later in that same work, he points out that the credibility of witnesses is more important than their number.<sup>10</sup> The credibility of a witness matters whether we mean the term in the accidental, procedural, or any other relevant sense. As I pointed out above, however, credibility and character are much more pointed in the case of the procedural witness, especially since here these are criteria for the role even before one enters into it, with the added requirement

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<sup>8</sup> Willetts 1967 Col. III.22

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., Willetts 1967, 39; Thür 2005, 162.

<sup>10</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, I.15; II.21.

of familiarity with the laws and norms of the community.

Now I would disagree with Robb's claim that the legalistic sense of 'bearing witness' is primary to the point of exclusivity in Heraclitus, even if Heraclitus does make this framework more explicit in B28b/D28.<sup>11</sup> Herodotus, whom scholars recognize as our best source for Ionic usage roughly contemporary to Heraclitus, frequently uses such terminology in the broad sense of 'proof' rather than explicit legal testimony.<sup>12</sup> That said, I think Robb's point is an important one for how we read the set of statements connected by this significant term. For the legalistic sense of 'witnessing' offers significant parallels with Heraclitus' claims about the common λόγος: it requires perceiving that actions take place according to a given rule or pattern, with a special emphasis on 'hearing' – and fully comprehending – a meaningful utterance with real world consequences. For the work of a witness goes beyond just observing what occurs, as they must comprehend the *meaning* of everything said and done, ensuring that all is in accordance with the laws.

### **Law in Heraclitus and early Greek philosophy**

Aside from the overlap between the procedural witness and Heraclitus' focus on what is common to all, his texts that treat laws and the city invite a broader application of witnessing. They also reveal remarkable conceptions of the basis and significance of human laws, one that should be connected with the way in which early Greek philosophy works with the conceptual framework of human laws. The obvious predecessor in this is Anaximander, whom we

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., esp. 666ff. With the exception of B28b, none of the other texts of Heraclitus suggest juridical context is central to the meaning, and the common sense of testimony or proof is often applicable, here as in Herodotus (LSJ, *loc. cit.*). As is usually the case, we should be slow to restrict the field of reference for what looks to have been a significant term in Heraclitus, except on grounds of anachronism or inauthenticity.

<sup>12</sup> Herodotus 2.18, 8.94; LSJ, 'μαρτυρέω,' A.1

discussed at length in Chapter 2. The only remnant of his prose treatise describes regular cosmological exchange between states or elements in terms of *dike*: “paying the penalty to one another for injustice” as each one displaces and supplants another in turn.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, we lack context that might tell us whether Anaximander means this description in a purely metaphorical or some more literal sense, though Simplicius seems to interpret it as the former in mentioning the poetical expressions at work here.<sup>14</sup> Of course we also cannot know to what extent Anaximander might have imagined his *kosmos* along these lines of justice, injustice, and politics.

Anaximander is hardly unique, however, in taking ideas of justice and injustice to apply not just to human life but to the world as a whole: Hesiod’s cosmogony may be taken to find its *telos* in the enduring political order established by Zeus in his distribution of rights and privileges, but Xenophanes still contests his and Homer’s portrayals of the gods committing shameful deeds.<sup>15</sup> During the archaic period sage figures like Solon become famous in part as law-givers, *nomothetes*, and many early Greek philosophers – though not Heraclitus – are said to have served cities with laws or leadership.<sup>16</sup> In the fifth century and beyond, of course, debate rages around whether there is any basis, natural or divine, for human laws and customs beyond mere convention.

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<sup>13</sup> Anaximander DK 12 B 1 (Simplicius, *Physics* 24.13ff): [ἐξ ὧν (στοιχείων?) δὲ ἡ γένεσις ἐστὶ τοῖς οὐσί, καὶ τὴν φθορὰν εἰς ταῦτα γίνεσθαι κατὰ τὸ χρεών·] **διδόναι γὰρ αὐτὰ δίκην καὶ τίσιν ἀλλήλοις τῆς ἀδικίας κατὰ τὴν τοῦ χρόνου τάξιν.** As I discuss in Chapter 2, the authenticity of nearly every word in this text attributed to Anaximander has been contested.

<sup>14</sup> Simplicius’ text continues: ...ποιητικώτεροις οὕτως ὀνόμασιν αὐτὰ λέγων, “...thus he speaks in more poetic terms.” *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Xenophanes DK 21 B11/ LM D8: πάντα θεοῖς ἀνέθηκαν Ὅμηρός θ’ Ἡσίοδος τε / ὅσσα παρ’ ἀνθρώποισιν ὀνειδέα καὶ ψόγος ἐστίν / κλέπτειν μοιχεύειν τε καὶ ἀλλήλους ἀπατεύειν. “Homer and Hesiod have attributed to the gods all things / That among men are sources of blame and censure / Thieving, committing adultery, and deceiving one another.” (translation is from Laks & Most). See also B12/D9, as well as broader discussion in Vlastos 1947.

<sup>16</sup> In fact, political leadership or at least significant participation is typically attributed to the early figures of Greek philosophy throughout Diogenes Laertius’ *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, which also include the sage figures I mentioned.

As we will see when we turn to consider the place of witnessing in epic, divine justice and its relationship to human norms often appears inscrutable before Heraclitus, and it is subjected to radical interrogation after him. It is all the more remarkable, then, that Heraclitus envisions a direct and dependent relationship here. I raise the issue now because his framework for thinking about human laws is central to significance of witnessing in Heraclitus. Given the relationship between human *nomoi* and the divine that emerges in B114/D105, the act of bearing witness in political life does more than simply illustrate what participation in the common life of the *kosmos* might look like: it proves to be a paradigm that itself already participates in and even depends upon that common life. Heraclitus' view of human and divine *nomoi* is all the more interesting since it emerges out of a (rare) positive description of speaking (λέγοντας) with intelligence:

ξὺν νόῳ λέγοντας ἰσχυρίζεσθαι χρὴ τῷ ξυνῶ πάντων, ὅκωσπερ νόμῳ πόλις καὶ πολὺ ἰσχυροτέρως. τρέφονται γὰρ πάντες οἱ ἀνθρώπειοι νόμοι ὑπὸ ἑνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ· κρατεῖ γὰρ τοσοῦτον ὁκόσον ἐθέλει καὶ ἐξαρκεῖ πᾶσι καὶ περιγίνεται. B114/D105 (Stob. 3.1.179)

Those speaking with mind must draw strength from what is common to all, just as a city does its law, and even much more strongly. For they are nourished, all human laws, by one, the divine: for it is as powerful as it wishes and suffices for all and is more than enough.

Though this is a longer, discursive statement, it begins with the wordplay, repetition, and analogy characteristic of his more gnomic statements: “with mind” (ξὺν νόῳ) will sound practically identical to “common” (ξυνῶ), forging an acoustic link between intelligence and what is “common to all,” and the crucial verb *ischurizesthai* reappears in the adverb (ἰσχυροτέρως) attached to it. The genitive *panton* that follows *xunoi* also suggests, by virtue of this acoustic link, something like the mind or intelligence of all. The emphasis on the root *ischuros* is often noted but rarely interrogated; once we do so, I think Heraclitus' analogy with a city and its law becomes more striking. The root connotes strength in a broad sense, but it is often applied to

physical and military strength.<sup>17</sup> That the *law* turns out to be the source of strength for the city may thus come as a surprise; in any case, Heraclitus makes this substitution of law for military power explicit in B44/D106: μάχεσθαι ἄρα τὸν δῆμον ὑπὲρ τοῦ νόμου ὅκωσπερ τείχεος, “The people must fight for their law as for the city wall.” Here we see Heraclitus forging strong links between the law and the city’s identity and security: where one might expect emphasis on the exercise of power vis-à-vis *other* cities, Heraclitus is asserting that the city’s own self-constitution in its laws is at least as crucial to its success and survival, in addition to exemplifying what it is to rely on what is common to all.<sup>18</sup> This is striking enough, but few have remarked on the significance of Heraclitus’ gesture towards “the people” (τὸν δῆμον): as Kurt Raufflaub notes, Heraclitus – elsewhere so disdainful towards the bulk of humanity – emphasizes the necessity of their participation in public life. Just as a martial emergency might send most citizens to the wall, Heraclitus points out not just that the efficacy of the laws must be maintained, but that this is the responsibility of the entire city in its collectivity.

Turning back to B114/D105, it is noteworthy that beyond its gnomic wordplay Heraclitus also creates a meaningful dynamic over the successive sentences of this text. He first claims the necessity of speaking in accordance with ‘the common’ and then establishes the analogy between keeping to it and upholding the law in a human community. At first that analogy seems merely illustrative. With the explanatory particle (γὰρ, “for”) near the beginning of the next sentence, we might expect that Heraclitus will go on to explain what the prior sentence has emphasized as

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<sup>17</sup> LSJ, *loc. cit.*

<sup>18</sup> A recent study by Kurt Raufflaub shows that Heraclitus’ political thought is at the center of contemporary Greeks’ evolving ideas about the rule of law and its role in unifying a community.<sup>18</sup> Raufflaub singles out his emphasis on the common good and shared responsibility for it, a point already on display in the role of the common in B114/D105 but made more concrete in B44/D106: μάχεσθαι ἄρα τὸν δῆμον ὑπὲρ τοῦ νόμου ὅκωσπερ τείχεος, “The people must fight for the law just as they would for their city wall.” The analogy here makes law as essential for the existence and survival of the city as the defenses that define its physical space and presence.

absolutely necessary, i.e., holding to what is common in intelligent speech. Instead, he expands upon the other side of his analogy, the city holding to its law. This, like substituting the rule of law for military might as the source of strength, comes as another surprise: the initial analogy shifts from an exemplary parallel as we learn that both participate in a broader network of real and substantive relation. It turns out that both sides of the analogy – intelligent speech and political life – operate under the larger umbrella of a ‘divine one’ that sustains both. As a recent reading points out, the initial sentence comes in indirect speech, while the following are all in direct speech.<sup>19</sup> I would add that it is only in the final sentence, repeating the same explanatory particle, that we see verbs that are both finite and active. This ‘divine one’ thus emerges as this text’s first and only active agency as a paratactic series of verbs attributes unlimited power and self-sufficiency to this “one divine.”

More than one commentator has noticed that the final profusion of verbs, together with the metaphor of nourishing, represent “an unusual intensity of description” in Heraclitus.<sup>20</sup> This is an indication of the importance of the idea, but Heraclitus’ art in organizing his connected prose here goes further than that. The shifting dynamic across sentences here impresses upon us the superfluous power and primacy of the divine one, as we come to see that all of the other actions in the statement ultimately depend on it: speaking with mind, drawing strength from what is common, and these both in political life and in general. B114/D105 begins with an emphasis, perhaps embodied in the verbal repetitions, on the serious effort required to speak intelligently and to sustain the rule of law. It ends, though, with the divine power that, even as it nourishes

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<sup>19</sup> Schofield 2015, 49. I agree entirely with Schofield’s emphasis on the primacy of the ‘divine one’ as the real source of power, and find his resistance to earlier focus on the law analogy to be helpful. I am less convinced of his ultimate claim that this text is meant to express the “that humans need to muster more strength to get the support available to understanding than citizens have to exercise in accessing that available in the law.” Rather, as I have emphasized above, I take this statement to be concerned above all with the primacy and efficacy of the divine one.

<sup>20</sup> Kirk 1954, 54. Similar emphasis occurs in Schofield 2015, *passim*.

and suffices for all things, still has more than enough power.

We might feel that the initial relation between speaking with mind and holding to what is common to all, introduced with such emphasis, has fallen by the wayside: the two supposedly explanatory sentences embark on a much more expansive thought, one that might seem to move us farther and farther away from it. The opening clause, however, is echoed throughout the sentences that follow: the νόμοι that comes at the beginning of the analogy picks up on the initial punning, since νόμοι and νόω offer similar vowel sounds. Heraclitus might be relating the law to a form of intelligence, since we might consider the law an expression of the collective mind and will of the citizens in a *polis*. More to the point, the ‘all’ at the heart of ‘what is common to all’ turns up again as *all* human laws are nourished by a divine one, and that divine one turns out to ‘suffice for *all*’ *simpliciter*. What is ‘common to all,’ then, is expanded upon in the divine one that nourishes all human laws and turns out to be sufficient for all things, full stop.

The analogy that at first seemed illustrative is turned inside out to reveal the central and superior importance of this ‘divine one,’ which turns out to be the ground of the analogy itself. Heraclitus is pointing out that the terms in his initial analogy do not just express a similar pattern, but both draw their pattern from the same source, the supreme one.<sup>21</sup> This is a crucial point for my argument here, since it shows that good order in political life *already* participates in the broader *kosmos*, and is in fact sustained by it. The city-law example cited above does not just illustrate what it is to draw strength from what is common to all but is itself an instance of

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<sup>21</sup> Kirk’s treatment of this point is excellent, and is not given sufficient credit by Schofield: “The ‘divine law’ is perceptible in things, and human laws are effective insofar as they coincide with the one law or formula which controls not merely a particular society of men but the whole complex of existing things, animate and inanimate. Yet the relationship was not simply one of imitation on the part of human laws: divine law played its part in a concrete manner, as is implied by the term τρέφονται. To revert entirely to later, Platonic, concepts: for Heraclitus the relationship between particular men or things and the one universal formula or law was *both* μίμησις *and* μέθεξις; for the naïve corporealist there is no illogicality in this. But here the discussion goes beyond Heraclitus.” (1954, 55).

actually doing so, even if most people are unaware of this. In this way activities in political life, like bearing witness, turn out to already involve drawing on the common even as they model a more complete way of doing so with what is common to everything.

Heraclitus chooses a striking verb to express the relationship between human laws and this divine one: *trephontai*, “nourishing, rearing, sustaining.” It is frequently used of rearing children or maintaining households, primarily in the sense of sustaining life through nourishment but may also refer to education. Like the *ischuros* discussed earlier, it is a term with broad application but firm roots in the physical and bodily.<sup>22</sup> Heraclitus is encouraging us to imagine the relationship in biological or familial terms, and the verb he selects goes beyond just genetic relation: the divine one has not only begotten or conferred human laws at some point in the past, but is actively sustaining them at present. This invitation to imagine parental relation is of a piece with several texts that figure the relationship between human and divine in terms of child and adult.<sup>23</sup> All this could hardly be further from the contrast between nature and human convention that will only grow in importance after Heraclitus.<sup>24</sup>

I will turn shortly to considering the place of witnessing in epic, both for its poetological significance and for the relationship between human laws and the divine there. Epic often offers vivid depiction and characterization of divinities; these become a theme in Greek philosophy from Xenophanes to Plato and beyond. So what can be said about Heraclitus’ ‘divine one’ here? Fully addressing this question would require much more discussion than I can give it here, unfortunately. It must be said first that Heraclitus’ final sentence in B114/D105 makes it natural

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<sup>22</sup> Kirk notes that the notion of “nourishing” lends a sense of corporeality to the laws. 1954, 53.

<sup>23</sup> B70/D6 and B74/D7 respectively characterize human opinions as “children’s toys” (παίδων ἀθύρματα) and warn against modeling our own behavior on that of our human parents. Heraclitus often uses children to highlight human ignorance, in B56/D

<sup>24</sup> Kirk 1954, 53; Conche 1987, 218.

to supply ‘law,’ so that the phrase denotes a ‘divine law:’ “...one law, the divine one...” as in the translation of Most and Laks.<sup>25</sup> However, given Heraclitus treatment in other texts of a ‘wise one’ (B41/D44, B32/D45), there is significance in the omission: as with the ‘name of Zeus’ in B32/D45 and the paradoxical personification of War in B53/D64, Heraclitus both invites the imagination of divine law or personage but marks it as inadequate or incomplete. In fact, B32/D45 suggests that we might be better off if we do not expect an adequate description in language: ἐν τὸ σοφόν, μόνον λέγεσθαι οὐκ ἐθέλει καὶ ἐθέλει Ζηνὸς ὄνομα. “What is wise is one: willing and unwilling to be called only by the name of Zeus.” The flat contradiction at the center of this statement is as stark as any in Heraclitus, and most commentators have noted that the archaic genitive “Ζηνὸς” is used here to invoke the verb “to live,” ζῆν. I have not seen it noted, however, that this wordplay complicates the idea that the wise one is *only* spoken of by the name of Zeus.<sup>26</sup> Heraclitus has smuggled two names in one, but this is lost if the ‘name of Zeus’ is actually spoken in the vocative (Ζεῦ) or nominative (Ζεύς). Heraclitus, in a statement that should obviate his conflation with Cratylus in Plato’s dialogue of that name, insists on multiple levels that it is mistaken to seek a single name for this supreme divinity. His emphasis on *logos*, as I have frequently pointed out, shifts the focus from individual words to their complex meaning in grammatical coordination, i.e., in *logos*. This may be the thrust of the contrast here between speaking (λέγεσθαι) and the name (ὄνομα).

We might gather a similar point from B114/D105: here it turns out that speaking with intelligence – again using a form of λέγεσθαι – ultimately draws its strength, like everything

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<sup>25</sup> Laks and Most 2016 Vol. III, 193.

<sup>26</sup> Some commentators (e.g., Kahn 1979, 268ff) take the μόνον with the subject (“What is wise is one alone..”) rather than as an adverb with the verb λέγεσθαι, which is how Laks and Most construe this statement (2016 Vol. III, 159). At a minimum the construction is ambiguous, and I agree with the preference of Laks and Most for the latter: not only does it preserve the echo between the opening formula here (ἐν τὸ σοφόν) and an identical one in B41/D44, but it also gives the statement added significance along the lines I suggest.

else, from this one divine. I take this ‘one divine’ here to point in the same direction as the ‘one wise’ in B41/D44 and B32/D45, especially since the latter explicitly points out that we should not expect singular terms to fully indicate it.<sup>27</sup> As B114/D105 suggests, this ‘one’ is itself the ground or the condition of possibility for intelligent speech. As such, we might expect that human language would struggle to speak of it adequately. Moreover, this text marks such speech as speaking *with* mind, just as wisdom in B50/D46 consists in saying *with* the *logos* (ὁμολογεῖν) that all things are one. Speaking wisely and well, apparently, involves drawing from and speaking with the divine one or one wise on which all things depend. As B41/D44 has it: ἐν τῷ σοφόν, ἐπίστασθαι γνώμην, ὅτι ἐκυβέρνησε ἅπαντα διὰ πάντων, “What is wise is one: to know the thought that steers all through all. The term *gnome* (γνώμην) is conspicuous here since it may mean thought or judgment, but is also used to refer to the kind of “gnomic” statements on which Heraclitus draws so heavily, as we shall see in examining B34/D4. Moreover, B78/D74 states that the human character (ἦθος) does not possess such “thought” (γνώμας), but the divine one does. For Heraclitus, then, speech and political life both involve drawing strength from the ‘one’ that sustains the common life of the *kosmos*, even as the human *qua* human cannot itself possess the kind of divine thought that creates and sustains that life. As B33/D108 says, perhaps alluding to the “will of Zeus” (Διὸς ... βουλή) in the proem to the *Iliad*, νόμος καὶ βουλή πείθεσθαι ἐνός: “It is law also to obey the will of one.”

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<sup>27</sup> The same point is made somewhat differently in B67/D48: ὁ θεὸς ἡμέρη εὐφρόνη, χειμῶν θέρος, πόλεμος εἰρήνη, κόρος λιμός· ἀλλοιοῦται δὲ ὄκωσπερ <πῦρ>, ὁκόταν-συμμιγῆ θυώμασιν, ὀνομάζεται καθ’ ἡδονὴν ἐκάστου. “The god: day night winter summer war peace satiety hunger: he changes just like <fire> when it is mixed with incense, is named according to is named according to the scent of each one.” My translation here follows that of Laks and Most.

## Witnessing in Epic

The common ground in B114/D105 between intelligent speech and well-ordered political life already suggests that the activity of witnessing, so fundamental to the latter, may bear significance in both the ethics and poetics of Heraclitus. Moreover, this is already marked in epic treatments of witnessing, which also show a very different relationship between human *nomoi* and the divine. The political culture of Homer and Hesiod, in which there is no evidence of written law, certainly differed from that of Heraclitus' Ephesus at the turn from the sixth to fifth century, but witnesses still performed a similar role as shown in Hesiod's advice of getting witnesses to a deal. It is also commonplace in Homeric epic and beyond to call on the gods as witnesses. Hector does so when, in Iliad XXII, he turns to face Achilles and proposes that the victor in their fight release the body of the vanquished for burial:<sup>28</sup>

ἀλλ' ἄγε δεῦρο θεοὺς ἐπιδώμεθα· τοὶ γὰρ ἄριστοι  
μάρτυροι ἔσσονται καὶ ἐπίσκοποι ἁρμονιάων·  
οὐ γὰρ ἐγὼ σ' ἔκπαγλον ἀεικίω, αἶ κεν ἔμοι Ζεὺς  
δώῃ καμμονίην, σὴν δὲ ψυχὴν ἀφέλωμαι·  
ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ ἄρ κέ σε συλήσω κλυτὰ τεύχε' Ἀχιλλεῦ  
νεκρὸν Ἀχαιοῖσιν δώσω πάλιν· ὣς δὲ σὺ ῥέζειν. (Il. 22.254-259)

But come, then, let us pledge by the gods: for they the best  
witnesses will be, and overseers of compacts.  
For I will not abuse you terribly, if Zeus should  
grant me endurance and I take away your life,  
but when I strip from you the famous arms of Achilles,  
your corpse I will give back to the Achaeans. And you do likewise.

The position and enjambment of “witnesses” (μάρτυροι, though μάρτυρες is also transmitted) gives the term particular emphasis. In relation to Heraclitus, it is especially noteworthy that the gods are to be “witnesses and overseers” of *harmoniai* (ἁρμονιάων), as we have seen in the last chapter that this idea is central to his conception of cosmic unity. This is the only case in

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<sup>28</sup> Il. 3.280, 14.274, 22.255; Od. 1.273, 14.394, 16.423.

Homeric epic in which the term, already rare, appears in a figurative application of its basic sense: a physical “joining together.”<sup>29</sup> Hector’s insistence that the gods will – note the future tense – be the *best* (ἄριστοι) witnesses at this climactic moment in the epic narrative make it especially salient for thinking about law and about witnessing in a broader sense. Irene De Jong notes the “legalistic ring” of Hector’s proposal and the response by Achilles, one that turns Hector’s terms back on him by pointing out, famously, that there are no “faithful oaths” (ὄρκια πιστά) between lions and men nor “like-mindedness” (ὁμόφρονα) among wolves and sheep. Here too we might see a special resonance for Heraclitus, who frequently contrasts human perspectives with those of other animals.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, his notion of *harmonia* speaks directly to the unity of opposites like those Achilles invokes, a unity that Heraclitus expresses in terms of an agreement similar to the like-mindedness that Achilles rejects (ὁμολογεῖν). On the whole, then, this dramatic clash of Hector’s pious justice with Achilles’ war of all against all may be especially resonant for Heraclitus, as Achilles’ rejection of any *harmonia* between the enemies marks the limited sphere of human *nomoi*.

Events themselves, moreover, show the capriciousness of the gods in sustaining the normative fabric of human life. Hector soon realizes that the gods whom he has just said *will* be “the best witnesses and overseers” turn out to have actively deceived and left him to die at the hands of Achilles.<sup>31</sup> Athena, present in the guise of Hector’s closest brother Deiphobus, halted his flight and precipitated the combat between Hector and Achilles. Hector’s invocation of divine presence, then, is ironic: a god is standing nearby, but under the most robust form of false pretense. When Hector turns to Athena-as-Deiphobus for another spear, she has disappeared;

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<sup>29</sup> The other notable instance is, as De Jong notes, concrete: Odysseus joining together the beams of his raft at *Od.* 5.248, (2012, 123-4).

<sup>30</sup> D78/B61; D79/B9; D80a+b/B37; D81/B82.

<sup>31</sup> De Jong (2012, 125) notes the uncertainty of divine justice in the Homeric world.

Hector recognizes at once both the deceit and his fate. In the failure of witnessing here, this episode marks its reliance on shared principles of order, principles which are here left unsupported by both men and gods. Athena demonstrates the fickle nature of divine presence: it is there to be invoked, but impossible to ascertain in its actuality or intentions. The ‘plan of Zeus’ invoked at the beginning of the epic is hardly reassuring, as divine will remains inscrutable both there and in the events of book XXII. We are a long way from Heraclitus’ vision of human laws being sustained by the divine one.

Witnessing among human beings, on the other hand, raises epistemological issues that are central to epic poetics. It is the Muses who guarantee the knowledge that enables epic poetry, and their significance has been understood along the lines of the witness, as we saw earlier in Ford’s work.<sup>32</sup> As Ford points out, the value of what epic claims to know lies in access to the account of one who may claim to have been present at the scene of the event in question. Ford’s account, as we saw in Chapter 1, focuses in particular on the invocation to the Muse at *Iliad* 2.484-6:

Ἔσπετε νῦν μοι Μοῦσαι Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχουσαι·  
 ὑμεῖς γὰρ θεαὶ ἐστε πάρεστε τε ἴστε τε πάντα,  
 ἡμεῖς δὲ κλέος οἶον ἀκούομεν οὐδέ τι ἴδμεν·

Tell me now you Muses who have homes on Olympus  
 For you are goddesses, you are present, and you know everything,  
 But we hear only fame and we do not know anything...

Ford notes the “nearly incantatory assonance” in 2.485 (ἐστε πάρεστε τε ἴστε), and the triplex guarantee of epic’s discursive preeminence: divinity, presence, and knowledge.<sup>33</sup> I would add that “presence” (πάρεστε) in particular is front and center in that pattern of assonance as well as

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<sup>32</sup> Ford 1992, 62. Goldhill 1991 similarly notes the importance of presence for knowledge, and thus of the role of the Muses as providing witness.

<sup>33</sup> Ford 1992, 60-61.

in the poetic line itself. It is the assurance of such presence, a function of divine power and immortality, that guarantees the privileged stature of what Greeks imagined the gods can and do know. This privilege, transmitted through the poet, enables the compelling vividness of epic poetry, the feature Ford and others, following ancient critics, treat as its hallmark.<sup>34</sup> The success of epic is thus made to depend, in the Greek imagination, on contact with an “actual witness:” Odysseus’ superlative praise of Demodocus’ singing in the *Odyssey* is capped with his claim that the blind bard must have actually been there at Troy or heard straight from someone who was.<sup>35</sup> Simon Goldhill uses this very term to describe “the authority of presence” that he sees in later prose, parsing such authority as “the eyewitness who sees.”<sup>36</sup> Witnessing thus endures as a paradigm for thinking about what constitutes authoritative knowledge among human beings.

Another example of witnessing in Homer highlights the imperfections of humans’ epistemic condition, as well as the work of the epic poet. In the second assembly of Book II, Agamemnon, himself under the influence of a false dream from Zeus, is testing the army’s resolve with a false command to depart for home. Odysseus, who plays poet himself among the Phaeacians, summons all to an assembly to make the case for standing fast. After humiliating Thersites, he expresses sympathy for the men’s restlessness but rebukes them for forgetting their pledge to Agamemnon. Even more importantly, they have forgotten the omen at Aulis that the seer Calchas took to predict Greek victory in the tenth year of war:

εὖ γὰρ δὴ τόδε ἴδμεν ἐνὶ φρεσίν, ἐστὲ δὲ πάντες  
 μάρτυροι, οὐς μὴ κήρες ἔβαν θανάτοιο φέρουσαι·

For we all know this well in our hearts, and you are all  
 Witnesses, whom the dooms of death have not led off. (*Iliad* II.301-302)

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<sup>34</sup> Ford 1992, De Jong (ed.) 1999. A number of critics and the ancient scholia consistently praise Homeric *enargeia*, as discussed in Zanker 1981, esp. 310, n.57.

<sup>35</sup> *Od.* 8.491, ... ὡς τέ που ἢ αὐτὸς παρεὼν ἢ ἄλλου ἀκούσας. “... as though you yourself were present or heard from another (*scil.* who was present).”

<sup>36</sup> Goldhill 2002, 80.

As in Hector’s speech to Achilles, enjambment emphasizes the predicate μάρτυροι. Odysseus’ ensuing reference to comrades who have died – another appeal to memory – makes the designation all the more visceral, especially since he has just compared the Achaeans to young children and widows in their cowardice (*Il.*289). All in the assembly were there at Aulis, but not all those who bore witness to the omen there are still present in the assembly. For the next thirty lines, Odysseus vividly recounts the omen – a snake devouring 9 out of 10 in a family of sparrows before being turned to stone – along with Calchas’ confident interpretation of this sign “for which the fame will never perish” (...ῥου κλέος οὐ ποτ’ ὀλεῖται, 2.325).<sup>37</sup> In this, Odysseus is performing the role of a witness himself. This may not be procedural witnessing in the strict sense I set out above – we might associate that with the greater codification of law in Heraclitus’ time – but it is certainly an instance of comprehending and recalling events according to a pattern that is of special and lasting significance for a community. Unlike accidental witnessing, which may not fully grasp the import of what it observes, Calchas’ interpretation lets all present become aware of the full import, even as it highlights the gap between the privileged insight of the seer and what is available to most humans. Odysseus also articulates a central concern for the poem and for epic poetics more generally: overcoming the transience of human life through the memory and re-presentation of the past.<sup>38</sup> This goal is common to epic and to bearing witness, as Odysseus’ simultaneous performance of both demonstrates.

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<sup>37</sup> ‘...of which the renown will not ever perish’ ...ῥου κλέος οὐ ποτ’ ὀλεῖται, 2.325

<sup>38</sup> Heraclitus finds much to criticize in epic, but he does assign a positive value to the pursuit of *kleos*: αἰρεῦνται ἐν ἀντι ἀπάντων οἱ ἄριστοι, κλέος ἀέναον θνητῶν· οἱ δὲ πολλοὶ κεκόρηται ὄκωσπερ κτήνεα. (LM D13=DK B29) They choose one in exchange for all, the best, renown ever flowing through mortals: but the many have sated themselves just like cattle. His praise of Bias stands in contrast to his wide-ranging and acerbic criticisms, and there he deploys the term *logos* where we might expect *kleos*: ἐν Πιρῆνι Βίας ἐγένετο ὁ Τευτάμεω, οὐ πλείων λόγος ἢ τῶν ἄλλων. I point this out because, though Heraclitus himself appears to have been largely uninterested in the past as a source of knowledge, it is noteworthy that he nonetheless recognizes the drive for *kleos* as tracking the truth; all the more so since he reconfigures *kleos* as *logos* in the case of Bias.

These two moments of witnessing in Homer emphasize human reliance on witnessing to sustain both community and memory, even as the episodes themselves reveal the fragility of both. Communal norms, already limited in their extent, are not sustained by divine powers, which are often inscrutable in their presence, operations, and objectives. Odysseus' performance shows that reliable memory is an exceptional trait among human beings rather than the norm, making both epic poetics and witnessing in law troublingly tenuous work. Through these moments, Homer drives home the limited cognitive power and ultimate transience of human life, together with the inability of humans to order their world or rely on the divine to do so.

Hesiod, since he never mentions the gods serving as witnesses, seems more attuned to bearing witness in its significance for and among human beings. The terminology only occurs in the *Works and Days*, and, in both instances, it conveys pessimism about human faithfulness.<sup>39</sup> One instance, as we saw above, implies that witnesses are necessary as a hedge against dishonesty, even where they are made with one's own family (*WD*, 371). The other references false testimony and highlights, not unlike Heraclitus, the certainty of divine justice:

...εἰ γὰρ τίς κ' ἐθέλη τὰ δίκαι' ἀγορεύσαι  
 γινώσκων, τῷ μὲν τ' ὄλβον διδοῖ εὐρύοπα Ζεὺς·  
 ὃς δὲ κε μαρτυρήσῃ ἐκὼν ἐπίορκον ὁμόσσας  
 ψεύσεται, ἐν δὲ δίκην βλάψας νήκεστον ἀασθῆ,  
 τοῦ δὲ τ' ἀμαυροτέρη γενεὴ μετόπισθε λέλειπται·  
 ἀνδρὸς δ' εὐόρκου γενεὴ μετόπισθεν ἀμείνων.

For anyone willing to pronounce just things in public,  
 recognizing them, to him far-seeing Zeus gives wealth;  
 but whoever in his witnessing willingly, after falsely swearing,  
 lies and, in harming justice, does irreparable damage,  
 his family line is afterwards relegated to greater obscurity:  
 but the line of a man who keeps his oath is improved. (*WD*, 280-285)

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<sup>39</sup> A reference to the gods as witnesses, in line with the typical examples in Homer cited above, occurs in the *Shield of Herakles* at line 20: ...θεοὶ δ' ἐπὶ μάρτυροὶ ἦσαν. The attribution of the *Shield* to Hesiod is rejected as spurious by modern commentators, and so I omit it in my discussion of Hesiod's works here.

Within these lines themselves, the harms and penalties of false witness are emphasized: though two positive counterexamples bracket the liar, the description of his crime and punishment takes up half of these six lines. The middle pair states doubly both the falsehood (ἐπίορκον: ‘perjury;’ ψεύσεται: ‘he lies’) and its harms (δίκην βλάβας: “harming justice,” νήκεστον ἀσθῆ: “he does irreparable damage). The punishment, a diminished family line, is expressed in the comparative “more obscure” (ἀμαυροτέρη). With a root meaning “dim” or “obscure,” it is used in the *Odyssey* to describe the specter of Iphthime, sister to Penelope, that Athena sends to sooth the anxiety of the latter with assurances that Telemachus will safely return. Sappho (fr. 68) uses it to describe shades of the dead in Hades (ἀμαύρων νεκύων). The term makes for an uneven contrast with the “better” (ἀμείνων) fortunes for descendants of the honest, but it also echoes the consonants in ‘witnesses’ (μαρτυρήσι), even falling at nearly the same place in the line. This poetic link cements the connection between public testimony and social esteem: he who falsely testifies before the community, obscuring the truth, brings a similar obscurity on his descendants. The adjective Hesiod chooses, moreover, connects false witnessing with obscurity in death, echoing the concerns implicit in Odysseus’ speech in *Iliad* II: mortals rely on human memory to counterbalance death’s oblivion.

Hesiod may express confidence in theodicy, at least in the long run, but in his poem the relationship between divine and human is at least as antagonistic as it is benevolent. He notes that justice is a gift from Zeus (*Op.* 279-80), but devotes far more verses to the gift of Pandora as punishment for Prometheus’ theft of fire (*Op.* 60-104). In fact, Hesiod’s insistence on practicing work, justice, and piety is driven largely by the gods having hidden sustenance from humans:

νήπιοι, οὐδὲ ἴσασιν ὅσῳ πλέον ἤμισυ παντὸς  
οὐδ’ ὅσον ἐν μαλάχῃ τε καὶ ἀσφοδέλῳ μέγ’ ὄνειρα.  
κρύψαντες γὰρ ἔχουσι θεοὶ βίον ἀνθρώποισιν·  
ῥηιδίως γάρ κεν καὶ ἐπ’ ἤματι ἐργάσσαιο,

ὥστε σε κείς ἐνιαυτὸν ἔχειν καὶ ἀεργὸν ἐόντα·

...

ἀλλὰ Ζεὺς ἔκρυψε χολωσάμενος φρεσὶν ἦσιν,

ὅτι μιν ἐξαπάτησε Προμηθεὺς ἀγκυλομήτης·

τούνεκ' ἄρ' ἀνθρώποισιν ἐμήσατο κήδεα λυγρὰ. (*Op.* 40-44; 47-49)

Fools, they don't know how much more the half is than the whole

nor what great profit lies in mallow and asphodel.

For, having hidden it, the gods keep livelihood from humans.

For easily even one day you might work,

yet have enough for a year though you are idle

...

But Zeus hid it since he was raging in his heart,

because crooked Prometheus deceived him.

For this reason he contrived grievous cares for men.

Hesiod's initial claim that "the gods" have hidden human livelihood turns out to be the work of a vindictive Zeus, punishing humans for the advantage gained through not their own but the Titan Prometheus' malfeasance. On the whole, work, justice, and piety serve mainly to remedy this human condition, since Hesiod tends to focus on the material prosperity they bring through both productiveness and divine favor.<sup>40</sup> His vision of a divine regime that actively withholds the means of life is a long way from Heraclitus' superabundant divinity actively nourishing human laws as it steers the *kosmos* for the best, even if that good may not coincide with human interests.

### **Witnessing in Heraclitus**

As we have seen, treatments of witnessing in epic are thick with questions around epistemology as well as the nature and operations of justice among human beings. Heraclitus offers a view of the latter in which the norms of human community and divine order are intimately connected, in contrast to Homer and Hesiod's treatment of the divine as often inscrutable and antagonistic. The advancing codification of law in Heraclitus time, as we see in

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<sup>40</sup> Gregory Nagy argues that early Greek poetry associates justice with fertility, and that piety is similarly motivated: "... we see the prospects of fertility and prosperity as the ultimate signal for those who turn to justice." (1995, 63)

the code from Gortyn, also makes witnessing central to the rule of law, and in this a matter of communal interest beyond the kind of personal safeguard advised by Hesiod. As I stressed earlier in discussing the procedural witness, that citizen is called to observe an act which is already governed by law, not merely an agreement or event that has binding implications for the future. I do not mean to insist that the distinction between procedural and accidental witness was operative for Heraclitus and his audience, or that when Heraclitus uses the term he is referring directly to the procedural witness as I have described. On the contrary, I am aiming to correct the anachronism that fails to see the procedural witness in Heraclitus' use of the terminology, and showing why, once we do see it, its usage takes on far greater significance.

Witnessing in Heraclitus has been seen mainly in terms of epistemology and empiricism in particular, but we must appreciate its legal significance together with the fact that he also puts it to poetological purposes. I will turn to the texts in a moment, but would point out first that our ability to read Heraclitus at all indicates the importance of a form of witnessing here. As many have noted, much of what we can read of Heraclitus' writing draws on techniques of oral culture that emphasize memorability. Whatever the format of his original text, it certainly included eminently quotable statements in brief and impactful formulations.<sup>41</sup> The survival of these, as André Laks has argued in resisting the traditional division between authentic text and "testimonia," represent a form of bearing witness to texts that are, in their entirety, lost to us.

It is with all of this in mind that I turn to the texts of Heraclitus. The first I will examine, D4/B34, extends the criticism, begun in D1/B1 and D2/B2, that people fail to properly recognize the truth about the objects of their own experience. In this thematic concern we see a parallel

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<sup>41</sup> See, e.g., Havelock 1983; Robb 1983. As André Laks has argued, the traditional division between authentic quotations and mere "testimonia" should be reimagined, since both attest to a text that has been lost, however differently. Laks 1997.

with legal procedure that differs from epic's frequent preoccupation with accurate representation of the past. Heraclitus focuses, like the procedural witness as described above, on the comprehension of present experience according to the norms and processes that shape the shared life of a collective.<sup>42</sup> This is not to privilege the present at the expense of the past, or the future for that matter: procedural witnesses must bring knowledge of communal norms to bear on their present experience, and also recall accurately what transpires there. The temporality of bearing witness thus extends beyond the moment of experience to encompass the consequences of that experience together with the imperative to preserve a record in memory. Most humans may grasp what this means in the political context, but B114/D105 points out that comprehending and drawing on the common life of the whole requires far more strength. Most people are not even aware of that connection and possibility, and so cannot comprehend their experience let alone draw strength for intelligent speech from its basis.

ἀξύνετοι ἀκούσαντες κωφοῖσιν εἰκόασι: φάτις αὐτοῖσιν **μαρτυρεῖ** παρόντας ἀπείναι.

Uncomprehending, when they listen they resemble the deaf; the saying **bears witness** for them: “while present, absent.” (B34/D4)

In contrast to the complex and connected sentences we see in B1/D1 and in B114/D105, B34/D4 is characteristic of Heraclitus' briefer statements, the sort that I have just described as eminently memorable. Asyndeton obscures the semantic link to any preceding statement, a complaint of Heraclitus' ancient readers that we explored in Chapter 2.<sup>43</sup> The paradoxical juxtapositions (hearing-deaf, present-absent) are jarring and make a memorable impression of the absurdity that

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<sup>42</sup> As Mark Johnstone writes, “What is needed to address this lack of comprehension, he seems to say, is not more information, but rather a more adequate understanding of what is already and everywhere right before our eyes. On this view, Heraclitus aimed in his work to startle his audience out of their complacency and steer them towards grasping the true nature of things rightly for themselves.” (2014, 26).

<sup>43</sup> Demetrius, *On Style*, 191-192: DK A4/LM R4.

Heraclitus conveys here. Similarly, the marked consonance and assonance, especially in the first four words, bring the acoustic quality of language to the fore. This has special irony given the phrase, “hearing like the deaf.” Moreover, the *phatis* that Heraclitus adduces to bear witness about the uncomprehending skips over similitude to paint in starker terms the position of those who, though they may be physically present, are alienated from their own experience by their failure to comprehend.

The use of the popular saying (φάτις) is especially noteworthy. At first glance, it does not seem to add much. It is another characteristically striking formulation that expresses humans’ inability to actually hear and comprehend the common account or *logos*, but haven’t the first four words already given us just this? The near redundancy of the *phatis* does, however, help us see how it parallels Heraclitus’ own form of expression.<sup>44</sup> In fact, D4/B34 could be said to reference its own gnomic character in its marked use of a popular saying (φάτις), one that the audience may have recognized amidst the difficulties of Heraclitus’ prose, even if, like their language itself, Heraclitus’ usage makes what is familiar strange.<sup>45</sup> The cryptic nature of Heraclitus’ expression, together with his own references to the oracle at Delphi in B93/D41 and B92/D42, has led most commentators to associate his own style with the enigmatic utterances of the Pythia.<sup>46</sup> The link here with a popular saying, though, together with the communal

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<sup>44</sup> So much so, in fact, that Martha Nussbaum argued the phrasing belonged to Heraclitus rather than a common saying. Her argument rests on two points: that φάτις does not have another contemporary attestation for the meaning ‘proverb,’ and that there are no other examples of this saying extant before Aristophanes. Nussbaum 1972, 12. Those points are valid but not dispositive. Conche, moreover, points out that the term appears with this meaning in the Derveni papyrus (perhaps unavailable to Nussbaum at the time), and cites an additional instance of the formulation in a fragment of Euripides: ἄπεισι κἄν παρῶσ’ ὄμως (fr. 519 Nauck = Stob., III.8.3). Conche 1986, 49. To this I would add that Heraclitus in B104 cites a saying that we know was attributed to Bias of Priene, whom he also praises in B39. This all lends credibility to his citation of popular saying here.

<sup>45</sup> This term φάτις, in its most basic connotation, means speech: it may refer to oracular utterance or divine voice, but also to popular sayings. (LSJ *ad loc.*)

<sup>46</sup> B93/D41: ὁ ἀναξ οὐ τὸ μαντεῖόν ἐστι τὸ ἐν Δελφοῖς οὔτε λέγει οὔτε κρύπτει ἀλλὰ σημαίνει. “The lord whose oracle is at Delphi neither speaks nor conceals but gives a sign.” B92/D42: Σίβυλλα δὲ μαινομένην στόματι, καθ’ Ἡράκλειτον. These texts have led most commentators to assume that Heraclitus is associating his

significance of bearing witness, offer a counterpoint to this view: in contrast to the prophetic or seer, who enjoys rare and privileged access to knowledge but resides on the margins of human community, Heraclitus is here associating his form of expression with a form of utterance that is common and available to everyone. Given his insistence on the importance of what is common to all, this connection should seriously qualify the view that Heraclitus identifies himself with the oracle in an exclusive sense.

The use of the saying, besides paralleling Heraclitus' prose form, calls to mind the availability of such sayings in a shared culture. In this regard it suggests a connection with the characterization of the *logos* as common (ξυνοῦ) in B2/D2, one that also occurs through the use of the term uncomprehending (ἀξύνετοι). That term characterizes most mortals here and in B1/D1: τοῦ δὲ λόγου τοῦδ' ἐόντος αἰεὶ ἀξύνετοι γίνονται ἄνθρωποι, "Though the account (*logos*) is always mortals are uncomprehending." Such close connections with the statements that introduced the λόγος together the ignorance of most people bring both B1/D1 and B2/D2 to mind. We could even say that λόγος, in a reversal of most people's epistemic situation, is present by implication here in D4/B34. The term itself is absent, but the verbal connections with the two statements that introduce the λόγος lead us to expect it here. This is all the more striking since the verb 'listening' (ἀκούσαντες) has no direct object. This is comically appropriate to 'listeners' who are not in fact hearing anything, but an audience would likely anticipate a direct object. More to the point, if they are attuned to the resonance here with D1/B1 and D2/B2, they might well expect to hear *logos* (or λόγου) again, making it present to mind even as it remains absent in the text itself.

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own style and authorial position with that of the Pythia. See, e.g., Hölscher 1974, Gallop 1989, Maurizio 2012, and Kahn 1979, 123ff, esp. 130: "Heraclitus is, after all, a *prophetes* ("spokesman") for the *logos*..."

In B50/D46, Heraclitus insists that, instead of his own voice, the *logos* is the proper object of attention. A similar abdication of personal authority is felt here, as Heraclitus makes the saying itself the agent of witnessing rather than marking it as speech of his own. Despite the other mentions of witnessing in Heraclitus, this is the only instance in which testimony actually takes place, but the author himself is not explicitly present in a first-person verb or pronoun. I have mentioned how popular sayings draw on a set of shared and familiar ideas, but that it is made to *witness* here connects it even more closely with the shared norms, knowledge, and experience of a community. This text invites us to imagine that Heraclitus' statements work the same way as the *phatis* here, and it is crucial to note that agency is located in the *phatis* itself rather than in the one who utters it. Earlier we saw that authoritative knowledge depends, in early Greek prose as well as poetry, on access to the "actual witness." Heraclitus, however, deliberately avoids presenting himself as the source of knowledge. Instead, he assigns that role to the enigmatic statement itself. Understanding Heraclitus' own statements this way means that there his audience makes direct contact with a 'witness,' and not with Heraclitus' privileged knowledge but with the shared reality available to everyone.

As I said earlier, most readers have taken witnessing in Heraclitus to focus on issues of empiricism and epistemology. This is because two of the four statements that mention witnessing deal explicitly with sense experience when they identify eyes and ears as "witnesses." B101a/D32 is a problematic text, but this is because it may also draw on a popular saying:

ὀφθαλμοὶ τῶν ὠτῶν ἀκριβέστεροι μάρτυρες

'Eyes are more exacting witnesses than ears.' DK B101a/LM D32

On its face, it is surprising that Heraclitus should privilege sight when elsewhere he invests the acoustic paradigm with so much significance. However, as Marcel Conche points out, we should

also hear in this statement an emphasis on direct experience over hearsay, or the testimony of others about what we have not witnessed ourselves. Homer’s invocation of the Muses in *Iliad* II maps this epistemic dichotomy on to human and divine knowledge, but the same contrast is often made among the different perspectives of human beings. In fact, this statement echoes a theme so common in Greek literature, particularly in Ionian *historiê* and its tradition, that its authenticity as an actual text of Heraclitus has been doubted.<sup>47</sup> Polybius is the only source, but he does explicitly attribute the statement to Heraclitus. This would be strange if this text were merely a common saying, as Conche argues.<sup>48</sup> The sentiment is certainly congruent with Heraclitus’ thinking, given his emphasis on the importance of direct experience in learning. I would point out as well that the term μάρτυρες, though it can hardly guarantee authenticity, is one that is significant for Heraclitus, as we are seeing here.

B101a/D32 makes the eyes and ears metaphors for different forms of experience, but B107/D33 conjoins them to make a pointed statement, though a more puzzling one, about the relationship between the senses and understanding:

κακοὶ μάρτυρες ἀνθρώποισιν ὀφθαλμοὶ καὶ ὦτα βαρβάρους ψυχὰς ἐχόντων.

Bad witnesses for humans are the eyes and ears of those whose souls do not speak the language.  
LM D33=DK B107

Most discussion of this statement has focused on the intriguing notion of ‘barbarian souls,’ especially because this appears to be the earliest instance in extant Greek literature connecting “soul” (*psyche*) with cognitive capacity. Since the publication of work by Martha Nussbaum,

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<sup>47</sup> Conche 1986, 271-272 offers examples of this theme as it appears in the encounter of Odysseus and Demodocus (*Od.*, VIII, 491) and at Herodotus II.99; “Thucydide est très conscient de la distinction (I, 22, 2; 72, 2).” Conche also points out, *contra* Bernays characterization of the text as merely a proverbial utterance, that it would be strange for a writer to attribute a proverbial utterance to a specific author. Marcovich doubts the text and Kahn brackets it as inauthentic but offers no argument on the subject. The recent Loeb edition of Laks and Most, however, prints the text as an authentic statement of Heraclitus.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

commentators have appreciated that Heraclitus identifies cognition with the soul and both with the capacity to understand language in general (or, for Heraclitus' audience, their native Greek in particular).<sup>49</sup> Emphasizing the senses as witnesses, however, helps us appreciate that the statement builds towards that strange phrase by stressing the escalating alienation from self that ignorance entails. We discover first that the bad witnesses for human beings are *their own* eyes and ears, before encountering the shocking notion that their very soul, their own life, could be somehow alien to them. The syntax here, though, is tricky: since the final participle expressing the possession of "barbarian souls" (ἐχόντων) differs in case from the dative "human beings" (ἀνθρώποισιν), it cannot be referring directly to humans in general. Commentators generally take one of two roads in translation: taking the participle circumstantially, as Kahn does ("... if their souls do not understand the language"), or as an attributive participle that is genitive to convey possession, as in the case of Laks and Most ("... of those who possess barbarian souls"). The former reads the participle as absolute, but then we would expect the subject to be expressed; the latter would be more persuasive if we had an article or a noun to go with it.<sup>50</sup> Neither reading is impossible, but both may be felt to be strange.

No matter how we parse the grammar here, we see that the human beings in question, or at least those who have barbarian souls, turn out to be an uneasy composite of senses and soul that are at odds with one another and with the world around them. I take the difficulty in construing the Greek here to simply drive that point home: especially in the absence of an

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<sup>49</sup> Commentators since Diels often understood the strange phrase βαρβάρους ψυχὰς to suggest an *analogy* between cognizing language and cognizing sensory experience. Nussbaum, on the other hand, pointed out that "barbarian" typically referred to someone who does not speak *Greek*: "Thus it seems that Heraclitus is not making the rather bland and vague statement that sense-data are deceptive if you have a crude and uncomprehending ψυχή, but the far more interesting statement that your senses will deceive you if you do not have an accurate understanding of your own language... Men are misled by their atomistic conception of language." 1972a,10-11.

<sup>50</sup> Participles may still be attributive in the absence of an article or a substantive, but this is much more rare (see Smyth 1920, 454-456).

expressed subject for the “possessing” (ἐχόντων), we are left to wonder who it is that possess the senses and the soul in question. Moreover, once we have stripped away both senses and soul as separate, what is left of human beings to actually possess these? In this we see the discombobulation of ignorant humans: they are not simply absent when they are present, as B34/D4 has it, but are in fact as fragmented in themselves as they are alienated from their own experience.

The sense of ‘barbarian souls,’ moreover, may more fully express foreignness of both language *and* customs. This renders the procedural witness all the more relevant to the situation at hand. Now we can appreciate in a more complete way the significance of understanding language here, since speech acts were often central to the events that witnesses would have been summoned to observe. In fact, insofar as this involved performative speech such as vows and contracts, speech acts may be the very events in question. It is thus incumbent upon witnesses not just to understand what is said, but also to observe and ensure that what is said is in accord with the prescriptions of the law and the norms of the community. The senses were separated from one another in B101a/D32 in order to convey the metaphorical sense of hearsay versus first-person experience. Now, in keeping with actual first-person experience, they work together. Even then, though, Heraclitus points out – through the significance of the witness as much as the ‘barbarian’ – that what the senses report must also be integrated with a soul that can accurately cognize how that report tracks the larger pattern of norms that organize and sustain a community. Since we have already seen how, in B114/D105, Heraclitus imagines a kind of cosmic community that sustains the human one, ‘barbarian souls’ here captures how the ignorant are as unable to participate in the shared life of the whole as they are unaware of it in the first place. B55/D31, on the other hand, offers an exemplary but obscure conjunction of sight and hearing

with learning, and here Heraclitus speaks with an emphatically first-person perspective:

ὄσων ὄψις ἀκοή μάθησις, ταῦτα ἐγὼ προτιμέω.

‘Whatever of which seeing and hearing are understanding, these things I myself think best.’

This statement, like D4/B34, operates in a gnomic mode. There are no articles, particles, conjunctions, or prepositions, lending a terseness to the syntax that is extraordinary even for Heraclitus (and impossible to reproduce in English with good sense). Consonance and assonance, together with a (non-metrical) rhythm that at once divides and pairs the two cola make for something like a nursery rhyme; my translation here sacrifices semantic precision to replicate it. Especially notable, to my mind, is the appearance of the first-person pronoun in the nominative here together with a first-person verb. This is the only surviving text besides B1/D1 in which we see this, and the only one in which this formulation appears as the subject of a main clause. Aside from lending emphasis to the point that sense experience is crucial for understanding, B55/D31 makes clear that such experience can only be *one’s own*. The first half of the sentence offers a profusion of abstract nominalizations (ὄψις ἀκοή μάθησις) – some commentators have made the use of this kind of vocabulary central to the development of Greek philosophy itself<sup>51</sup> – but the second half reminds us that these must map on to what an individual mind actually experiences. Experience, then, is not considered abstractly but in a strongly personal sense: it is experience *in the first person* that Heraclitus values, and the individual’s ability to properly cognize their own experience. This is in keeping with the object of knowledge that Heraclitus concerns himself with: in indicating a broad and ever-present pattern of intelligibility in the world, Heraclitus is not emphasizing any specific object of knowledge.

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<sup>51</sup> Eric Havelock (1983) makes the search for an abstract vocabulary “the linguistic task of the Presocratics,” and his discussion focuses on just this kind of abstract noun.

Instead, the aim is to recognize this pattern at work throughout our own experience.

In B55/D31, Heraclitus also makes clear that he prefers – i.e., assigns special value – to the things that are understood in one’s own experience. Earlier I emphasized that the procedural witness is not simply a neutral observer but rather an interested participant in what they observe: they have political and ethical duties to discharge, along with a vested interest in upholding communal norms. Moreover, their very presence is meant to act as a normative force, both in the present and for the future, ensuring that affairs are conducted appropriately and continue to be respected as such. Heraclitus is not expressing that kind of interest here, but his assignment of special value to the objects of one’s own experience shows in a different way that he does not think of such experience in terms of the disinterested observer that we moderns tend to privilege in aiming at objectivity in empirical knowledge. Rather, Heraclitus’ empiricism, if we may call it that, must be understood in terms of an observer who is profoundly implicated, ethically as well as ontologically, in what it is they are experiencing. When it comes to human beings, their proper understanding may not be as necessary for the good order of the whole as it is for the citizen-witnesses in a *polis*, but it is nonetheless urgent for their own being and conduct, as we saw in the fragmentation of those possessing “barbarian souls” in B107/D33. When Heraclitus tells us that he ‘sought for himself’ in B101/D36 (ἐδίξησάμην ἐμεωυτόν), it carries the full sense of having inquired *by* himself but also having sought himself as an object of understanding. Tony Long has seen in Heraclitus the advent of something like the “objective self” that Thomas Nagel argues is central to modern practices of knowledge.<sup>52</sup> There may be some truth to that insofar as Heraclitus envisions a shared reality that is independent of variation in human perspective or evaluation. However, I take the centrality of witnessing to Heraclitus’ comments

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<sup>52</sup> Long 1992

on sense experience to highlight the way in which he sees understanding the objects of our own experience as an inherently ethical project, one that witnessing as I have discussed it here may help us grasp.

Both the legal significance of witnessing and its ethical stakes are made vivid in B28b/D28. Earlier I emphasized how the procedural witness, especially before records were widespread, was essential for the efficacy of a city's laws. Heraclitus' use of witnessing, especially insofar as it must follow what is common to *all* rather than a particular set of norms, impress upon us that this is essential for the proper understanding and conduct of human life. It does not, however, have quite the same stakes for the order of the whole: the 'divine one' of B114/D105 certainly does not need any help. Nevertheless, Heraclitus expresses a Hesiodic confidence that those who bear witness to lies will get their comeuppance:

Δίκη καταλήψεται ψευδῶν τέκτονας καὶ μάρτυρας.

“Justice will catch up to the builders and witnesses of lies.” B28b/D28

Heraclitus' statement that justice will “overtake” these purveyors of lies has most often been understood as an eschatological claim.<sup>53</sup> I think it safer to concentrate on the more overtly legalistic framework of the statement rather than speculate on its precise reference.<sup>54</sup> On the model of the procedural witness who participates in the actual event, the ‘witnesses’ here are

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<sup>53</sup> This is certainly the case in our best source for the text: Clement of Alexandria cites it together with B28a in the course of arguing that Christian faith, though it must be accompanied by intellectual investigation, lies in the power of god rather than human knowledge. Commentators have generally understood the conjunction of B28a and b as a function of Clement's writing rather than that of Heraclitus, but they nevertheless often follow Clement's assumption that B28b evokes punishment in the afterlife. The future tense of “overtake,” which may also mean “convict,” makes this a plausible assumption, but one that may be unnecessarily prejudicial to interpretation. The only other statement that imagines such just enforcement in the future, D89=B94, concerns the trajectory of the sun, and so eschatology is hardly in view there: ἥλιος οὐχ ὑπερβήσεται μέτρα. εἰ δὲ μή, Ἐρινύες μιν Δίκης ἐπίκουροι ἐξευρήσουσιν. “The sun will not overstep measures. Otherwise, the Erinyes, attendants of Justice, will find out.” The Laks and Most entry begins with the attestation to this statement in the Derveni Papyrus, which also alludes to DK B3. The latter is also included under D89.

<sup>54</sup> Working against the tendency towards an eschatological reading, Robb (1991) wants this statement to invoke a contemporary courtroom scene: a litigant peddling a false claim, with false witnesses brought in to support it.

likely to be complicit participants in constructing and disseminating the falsehood rather than unwittingly deceived. Heraclitus' apparent confidence that justice will catch up with these builders of lies and false witnesses suggests a divine justice that does not depend upon the vice and caprice of human beings. Kahn aligns this with what he calls a 'traditional Greek feeling' that grave offenses are, in the long run, punished by the gods, as we saw in Hesiod's statement of the consequences for false witness.<sup>55</sup> Heraclitus certainly suggests the personification of Justice here in making it the agency of 'overtaking' and editors tend to capitalize the term accordingly. This blanket condemnation, though, specifies neither the domain of falsehood, the mechanism of eventual justice, or its consequences. The emphasis instead seems to rest on the positive value of unerring truthfulness in Heraclitus' *kosmos*, just as he aligns wisdom with "saying and doing true things" in B112/D114b.<sup>56</sup>

### **Ethical implications of witnessing in Heraclitus**

On the whole, Heraclitus uses witnessing to emphasize both first-personal experience and conformity to a common pattern prescribed and sustained by intelligence. Witnessing is meaningful in part because it involves an awareness of how these two things work together. The significance of witnessing for epistemology and epic poetics also turns up here, as Heraclitus makes a common statement – one very much like his own – address the failure of first-personal experience where one is ignorant of what is common to all (B34/D4). I argued that the emphasis on the work of the statement itself is another way in which Heraclitus makes the text rather than his person the object of attention and engine of transmitting understanding. The witness is, in the ideal case, a transparent window onto what they have observed, even as they

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<sup>55</sup> Kahn 1979, 212.

<sup>56</sup> σοφίη ἀληθέα λέγειν καὶ ποιεῖν κατὰ φύσιν ἐπαίοντα.

participate in those events and exert a normative force on their course. Though their bearing and character are important for establishing credibility, once credibility is established it is to the testimony rather than the person that we attend. Heraclitus labors to put his text rather than himself before the eyes of his audience, and, as I have been arguing throughout, that text itself strives to make the intelligible pattern of reality present for its audience.

Of course, the efficacy of the witness depends upon their understanding of communal norms, as well as their character and reliability. The latter are best displayed in the witness's own conduct, especially the degree to which their public life conforms to and so supports those communal norms. It is no great leap to extend this to participating in the community of Heraclitus' *kosmos*, especially since B114/D105 invites us to do so. As Kirk notes, the purview of that statement gestures mainly at speech but the domain of the verb (λέγοντας) extends beyond it, like Heraclitus' use of *logos* generally, to encompass the signification of non-linguistic events and entities as well.<sup>57</sup> The speech *and* actions of human beings can thus attest to the reality that encompasses all things, as Heraclitus emphasizes in B112/D114a+b:

σωφρονεῖν ἀρετὴ μέγιστη [καὶ] σοφίη ἀληθέα λέγειν καὶ ποιεῖν κατὰ φύσιν ἐπαίοντας.

Moderation is the greatest virtue [and] wisdom is to speak and do true things, perceiving (things?) according to (their?) nature.

The first conjunction belongs to Stobaeus and so this may be drawn from two separate statements in Heraclitus. It is difficult to analyze this statement as a unit, then, but the latter part in particular makes the doing and saying of true things go hand in hand with perceiving the nature of things. Action and observation go together, and if the idea of “doing” true things seems obscure, we get purchase on it in the notion that action, like speech, can also signify or

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<sup>57</sup> Kirk 1954, 55ff.

attest to the way things really are. Moreover, the statements that treat sense experience in terms of witnessing impress upon us that humans are ethically involved with what they experience; the binding norms here are, as Heraclitus’ “according to nature” (κατὰ φύσιν) makes clear, the nature of reality itself.

Much of the biographical tradition is hostile to Heraclitus, portraying him as antipolitical and misanthropic, though I pointed out earlier that his making the *demos* responsible for the law acknowledges the people as essential participants in the life of the *polis*. A rare positive anecdote in Plutarch shows him silently communicating the great value of moderation in

B112/D114a:

[. . .] ἀξιούντων αὐτὸν τῶν πολιτῶν γνώμην τιν’ εἰπεῖν περὶ ὁμοιοῦς, ἀναβὰς ἐπὶ τὸ βῆμα καὶ λαβὼν ψυχροῦ κύλικα καὶ τῶν ἀλφίτων ἐπιπάσας καὶ τῷ γλήχωνι κινήσας ἐκπιὼν ἀπήλθεν, ἐνδειξάμενος αὐτοῖς ὅτι τὸ τοῖς τυχοῦσιν ἀρκεῖσθαι καὶ μὴ δεῖσθαι τῶν πολυτελῶν ἐν εἰρήνῃ καὶ ὁμοιοῦς διατηρεῖ τὰς πόλεις.  
*On Garrulity*, 17 511B.

...when his fellow citizens asked him to give his opinion about concord, he went up to the rostrum, took a goblet of cold water, sprinkled some barley groats into it and stirred it with mint; then he drank it out and went away—he had shown them that to be satisfied with one’s circumstances and to feel no need for luxuries preserves cities in peace and concord.<sup>58</sup>

Heraclitus’ fellow citizens ask him to speak (εἰπεῖν), but he departs before he can even be asked for the interpretation that Plutarch provides. Moreover, the term for the “opinion” that is requested of Heraclitus here (γνώμη) is one that can refer to judgment or opinion as well as to their communication in “gnomic” sayings. We saw Heraclitus use it in describing the singular object of knowledge that constitutes wisdom in B41/D44 (ἐπίστασθαι γνώμην, ὅτι ἐκυβέρονησε...). Other evidence of this anecdote as driven by Heraclitus’ text rather than

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<sup>58</sup> Text and translation are from Laks and Most 2016, 126-127.

independent biographical information comes in the means of his demonstration: it likely recalls the stirred drink of B125/D59 that, depending on the text, separates depending on whether or not it is stirred.<sup>59</sup> There is nothing particularly striking about making Heraclitus demonstrate the importance of moderation, here: his own emphasis on it above in B112/D114a+b is conventional, as is the anecdote of a philosopher or other sage figure giving clever expression to it. It is remarkable, though, that Heraclitus here refuses to speak his own thought, instead creating an experience for his audience that makes it incumbent upon them to comprehend both his own meaning and the ethical claim that it makes on themselves and on their community. Heraclitus' emphasis in B112/D114a+b on moderation may be somewhat conventional, but his invocation of the watchword for the novel forms of inquiry into nature – *κατὰ φύσιν* – points out that a new grasp of reality is making a claim on traditional Greek ethics. His privileging of *truth* in both action and speech shows that knowledge of reality just is ethical in nature, just as the procedural witness is far from indifferent to the actions that they observe. B112/D114a+b makes clear, however, that humans are not obliged simply to bear witness to reality but to attest to truth in all that they say and do. As I argued in the last chapter, *logos* in Heraclitus is the meaningful self-expression of reality, and the genuine apprehension of the *logos* entails the further expression of its meaning in one's own behavior. B50/D46 presents this as “speaking in agreement” with the *logos* that all is one, but we also get purchase on this through comparison with the activity of bearing witness.

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<sup>59</sup> Laks and Most (2016 Vol. III, 165) print *καὶ ὁ κινεῖν δίσταται κινούμενος*, but note that Bernays inserted a negation before *κινούμενος*. Kahn (1979, 194-195) prints Bernays' text but does not consider it authentic.

## Conclusions

Heraclitus' invocations of witnessing draw on a wealth of significance, one familiar to his audience from both literary culture and political life. They touch on the way in which Greeks of the period conceived of access to knowledge in a broad sense, but also on how this shapes human life and literature, especially in its communal aspects. All of this informs the way in which Heraclitus imagines the interaction between human beings and the truth about things as it expresses itself in the *logos*. The role of the witness in political life adds another dimension to Heraclitus' emphasis on what is "common to all," especially insofar as it offers a form of participation that is available to any who are trustworthy, observant, and knowledgeable about the norms and processes that regulate their community. The biographical tradition, on the basis of the evident disdain for the Ephesians and most other Greek authorities in his texts, imagines Heraclitus as anti-political and misanthropic, yet here we see aspects of human community thoroughly informing his conceptions of proper cognition and ethical behavior.<sup>60</sup>

Though Heraclitus is often understood as an oracular voice or a 'prophet of the *logos*,' witnessing may be more in keeping with the spirit of his project as a whole.<sup>61</sup> He emphasizes the role of direct experience in understanding, as well as the availability of such understanding to all

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<sup>60</sup> David Sider (2013) has recently argued that Heraclitus' ethics, despite his irascible misanthropy, are much more political in orientation than has been recognized. The connection I argue for here points, I think, in the same direction.

<sup>61</sup> Heraclitus is often characterized as an oracular voice or 'prophet' for the *logos*, (e.g., Hölscher 1974, Gallop 1989, Maurizio 2012) almost exclusively on the basis of D41/B93: ὁ ἀναξ οὐ τὸ μαντεῖόν ἐστι τὸ ἐν Δελφοῖς οὔτε λέγει οὔτε κρύπτει ἀλλὰ σημαίνει. "The lord who has his oracle at Delphi neither speaks nor conceals but makes signs." Oracular utterance certainly fits with Heraclitus' famous obscurity, and this statement itself makes use of a common trope in oracles: substitution. A prime example is Delphi's oracle to Croesus at Herodotus 1.55, on how long his rule will last: "When a mule comes to be king of the Medes, then, tender-footed Lydian, flee the pebbled shore of the Hermus and do not remain and do not be ashamed to be cowardly." Croesus is elated, thinking such a thing impossible but it turns out that "mule" refers to the half-Mede half-Persian Cyrus, who conquers Croesus' empire. A similar substitution is at work in B93, but it is even more transparent: "lord" certainly refers to the god Apollo. The transparency of this 'sign,' as well its rather verbose nature, actually makes this utterance rather un-Heraclitean in my view, and so unworthy of the uniquely programmatic significance it has been given to the exclusion of other texts.

human beings.<sup>62</sup> These points are hardly in keeping with the divine favoritism (or punishment) that makes prophets unique members of a Greek community, ones whose access to knowledge usually reserved for divinities is highly exceptional if not downright uncanny. That the gift of prophecy is, in the Greek imagination, often paired with physical blindness already puts that form of knowledge at a remove from Heraclitus' own sense of what matters for understanding. The witness, on the other hand, keeps faith with Heraclitus' emphasis on the common and public nature of the *logos* he announces. This "account" may be heard by anyone, and *should* be heard by everyone. Even if only a few achieve it, the position of the witness is in principle available to any informed, upright, and conscientious citizen. The texts of Heraclitus, insofar as their formulation is in keeping with the emphasis in B114/D105 on holding to 'what is common to all,' are an opportune site for the audience to learn to comprehend the objects of their experience, and so bear witness well.

Finally, though it can have little impact on reading Heraclitus, it is interesting to note that the connection between witnessing and philosophical truth becomes a literary device for Plato as well. At *Gorgias* 472a, an incredulous Polus asks for witnesses to Socrates' view that doing injustice is worse than suffering it. Socrates admits that many could be found to disagree with him, but he goes on to tell Polus, in a passage that makes conspicuous and varied use of the term *logos*, that he only cares whether he may make Polus himself a witness to the truth of what he says.<sup>63</sup> In this, Plato's Socrates takes an implicitly Heraclitean stance: he admits that most would

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<sup>62</sup>D29/B113, "Thinking is common (*xunos*) to all," and D30/B116, "It belongs to all humans to recognize themselves and to think soundly." The latter, in drawing on the Delphic maxims, also repurposes familiar phrases.

<sup>63</sup>ἐγὼ δὲ ἂν μὴ σὲ αὐτὸν ἕνα ὄντα μάρτυρα παράσχωμαι ὁμολογοῦντα περὶ ὧν λέγω, οὐδὲν οἶμαι ἄξιον λόγου μοι πεπεράνθαι περὶ ὧν ἂν ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος ἦ. "But unless I make you yourself the one witness who agrees with what I am saying, I do not think I will have done anything worthy of account concerning the matters of our discussion." (472b5-10). He returns to the point soon after in saying (*Gorgias* 474a7-9):

ἐγὼ γὰρ ὧν ἂν λέγω ἕνα μὲν παρασχέσθαι μάρτυρα ἐπίσταμαι, αὐτὸν πρὸς ὃν ἂν μοι ὁ λόγος ἦ, τοὺς δὲ πολλοὺς ἐὼ χαίρειν... "For the things I say I know how to produce one witness, him with whom I am having a discussion, but let the many go on their way..."

agree with Polus, but does not concede the argument on these grounds. Rather, Socrates sees it as incumbent on him to help Polus see the truth for *himself*; absent this, Socrates knows that he will have achieved nothing. Aristotle may express similar sentiments when, as we saw earlier, he makes one credible witness superior to any number of more dubious ones.<sup>64</sup>

For Heraclitus, though, the ultimate significance of witnessing may be the way in which, on my account, the gnomic phrase or popular saying informed his own project. Perhaps he envisioned the circulation of his own statements in the mode of the quotable *phatis*, as would seem likely given the conditions of contemporary literary culture and the fact that he embraces such quotation in his own writings, as we have seen. This would suggest that those sources who quote from and testify about Heraclitus' text for us remain faithful to at least this aspect of the original: Heraclitus' sayings, and not just his whole text, may bear witness for us to the truth about the world as it is expressed by *logos* in our own experience. And, however much we may wish to see for ourselves the text as he actually composed it, what we can see makes clear that the crucial object of attention and understanding is what we already meet in our own experience.

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<sup>64</sup> The connection between witnessing and character, especially respect for the truth, is also central to the drama of the *Seventh Letter*. That Platonic author, whoever it may be, makes the climactic moment in Dionysius' character drama his abrogation of an agreement that he had made with Theodotes in Plato's presence, even after Plato points out that both he and the gods were witnesses to the agreement. This is the final falling out, and the end of Plato's attempts to convert Dionysius to philosophy. *Seventh Letter*, 348c-350b. I am by no means suggesting or relying on the authenticity of the letter, but following the general agreement of scholars that the author must have been well-read in and thoughtful about Platonic texts. See Burnyeat and Frede, 2015.

## CONCLUSION

As with the other texts and figures of early Greek philosophy, the remnants of Heraclitus' writings challenge the entire conceptual framework we employ in trying to understand them: their ideas and expression do not fit neatly into our conception of philosophy, even as we continue to make them foundational for a philosophical tradition that they never imagined. This has partly to do with the challenge of putting new modes of thought into discourse, an issue common across early Greek philosophy and one of its most interesting facets. Heraclitus stands out, however, in inventing a startlingly unique textual form, one that puzzled and inspired his ancient audience as well as his modern one.

In ascribing a poetics to Heraclitus here, I have aimed to focus attention on the nature and operation of his textual form, and without subordinating these to the very different project of describing what he thought. That latter project has, as I discussed in the Introduction, dominated the modern study of Heraclitus; we see a similar project at work in ancient doxography, but unfortunately the extensive commentaries and thus the full range of ancient interpretations and hermeneutic approaches are lost to us.<sup>1</sup> I have emphasized repeatedly that, as B1/D1 makes clear at the outset, Heraclitus' texts address the failure of most human beings to comprehend the "account" (*logos*) of how things really are that is given in, and actually determines, all that they experience. As Mark Johnstone has recently acknowledged, once we notice this we can no longer read Heraclitus' texts as an articulation of his own thought.<sup>2</sup> Instead, we must take his

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<sup>1</sup> See Introduction pp. 12-17; esp. 14 discussing the interpretive essay "On Reading Heraclitus" in Kahn's commentary (1979, 89ff).

<sup>2</sup> Johnstone 2014, 26: "It is tempting to read Heraclitus as a relatively orthodox natural philosopher, presenting his view of the way things are and arrogantly berating people for being too foolish to understand the truth of what he says. However, if the present account is correct, Heraclitus was berating people not for their failure to understand *him* (or his *logos*), but rather for their failure to understand the world as it constantly reveals itself to them (the one common cosmic *logos*). ... What is needed to address this lack of comprehension, he seems to say, is not more information but a more adequate understanding of what is already everywhere right before our eyes. On this view, Heraclitus aimed in his work to startle his audience out of their complacency and to steer them towards grasping the

texts to “steer” his audience towards recognizing the truth for themselves. Heraclitus’ expressive form is directed at prompting insight and investigation on the part of his audience, rather than at the artistic communication of what he himself thought. As I argued in Chapter Three, this helps us make sense of the ambiguity in the relationship between the common *logos* and the *logos*, or the “words and works,” of Heraclitus the writer: the texts draw attention to the common *logos* by presenting themselves as an exemplary experience of that *logos*. Through their prose poetics, the texts provide opportunities to ‘hear’ the common account in one’s own engagement with them. This makes Heraclitus’ writing a paradigmatic instantiation of the common *logos* present in everything, and not at all an account of what he thinks.

Much of my discussion has aimed at showing how Heraclitus’ texts provide the venue and the occasion for his audience to hear this common *logos*. The rejection of personal authority discussed in Chapter One represents a radical departure from existing practices for communicating knowledge, and it does so precisely in order to emphasize the text as an instrument for one’s own intellectual activity rather than a vehicle for authorial knowledge. In Chapter Two, I considered the absence of narrativity in both the form and content of the texts: Heraclitus’ writing, like the *kosmos* it presents, does not organize itself according to beginning, middle, and end. Much more could be said about the particular temporality this brings with it, especially in its difference from the narrative temporality that structures so much of archaic and Classical Greek thought. The most important point for my account, though, is that this locates the availability of understanding in the present moment: it does not require access to the past or to some “beginning.” This is especially fitting for a text that addresses the inability of most

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true nature of things rightly for themselves.” Similar ideas have been present in the literature for some time (e.g., Dilcher 1995, 45: “... Heraclitus did in fact not so much mean to present a doctrine or “truth,” but rather envisaged a specific form of reasoning in connection with wisdom.”), but the assumption that we should read with a view to what Heraclitus himself thought has persisted nonetheless.

people to comprehend what is right in front of them and, on my account, offers itself as an opportunity for an exemplary experience of such comprehension.

I have tried to show in attending to individual texts how particular expressive features there disrupt existing expectations and habits of mind and also make way for the emergence of new ideas or ways of seeing. The modeling of *harmonia* in the “fitting-together” of syntax in B51/D49 and B54/D50 is an especially salient example, but the wide range and variety in Heraclitus’ verbal technique means that this can take place in different ways in different texts. This is all the truer when we take the texts together, since the relations and interactions between them are not organized by the hierarchy of a pre-existing form, whether narrative, generic, or otherwise. For that reason, my strategy has been mainly to focus on the operations of individual statements rather than attempt an artificially specific and restrictive description of how, precisely, they create the kind of experience I am claiming they do. We should be wary of overly systematizing and defining Heraclitus’ poetics as well as his thought.

It is likewise difficult to give a detailed account of how, for Heraclitus, one lives in light of the understanding that his texts make available. The texts should certainly be seen as having a protreptic and propaedeutic function, but they offer few details on what the life of understanding looks like, even as they emphasize the urgency and centrality of this understanding for all we do. This is surprising in some ways, especially since the genre of ethical maxims is perhaps closest to Heraclitus’ own expressive form. On the other hand, though, this is in keeping with the overarching point that Heraclitus is not writing to communicate his own view of things: his texts claim *that* we need to be attentive and thoughtful in our engagement with the world, but they do not offer a prescription for doing so.

We get some purchase on this ethical aspect of Heraclitus' poetics, though, by considering the role and significance of bearing witness, as I discussed in Chapter Four. The witness gives us help in imagining the life of understanding, but once again it is not specific or prescriptive. Most importantly, it shows us that the kind of comprehension Heraclitus' poetics aims to communicate means participating in the common life of the *kosmos*. The connection between knowledge and first-person experience is well established in Greek thought, but Heraclitus' emphasis on witnessing also shows that the knowledge with which he concerns himself is fundamentally ethical. As the nature of witnessing in his own time makes clear, Heraclitus is not imagining disinterested observers doing a better or worse job of comprehending what we perceive. Instead, he invites his audience to imagine themselves as participants in a shared activity that organizes and determines the life of both the participating individuals and the community, one that requires exercising a full and attentive understanding of its significance.

Witnessing also, in describing the work of a conspicuously Heraclitean saying in B34/D4, makes an important contribution to how we might imagine Heraclitus as author. The cryptic and superior knowledge of the oracle has long stood as the prevailing model for Heraclitus' own expression. The example of witnessing, though, offers some productive complications: it dispenses with the exceptional status of prophecy to align Heraclitus' work with a role that is, at least in principle, available to any upstanding and perceptive participant in the community, just like the comprehension that is so badly lacking among human beings. The long history of reading Heraclitus may not have fundamentally altered this situation, but we are fortunate that we can still see at least some of what he wrote with our own eyes. To be good readers, though, we must consider the poetics of these texts and the way in which they aim, as ever, at enabling us to listen to the *logos*.

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