RESPONSE

A Response to Aryeh Finkelberg

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Your reputed Journal recently published a review by Aryeh Finkelberg of two volumes of my *Heraclitea*.[1] My first purpose in writing these lines is to thank the author sincerely for the thoroughness with which he accomplished this task and for the fairness and acuteness of most of his remarks. My second purpose — one he suggested himself when we met at the *Symposium Heracliteum II* (México-Ciudad, June 23-30, 2006) — is to reply briefly to the few remarks of his with which I find it difficult to agree.

First, about the two topics raised by the reviewer concerning the *Memoria* volume: the problems of Heraclitus' chronology are of course insoluble in the present state of our documentation, and any hypothesis concerning them is bound to be problematic and fallible. Its value lies not so much in the concrete figures suggested for his dates as in the argumentation on which it is based and in the texts it helps to explain. More concretely, the suggested dates are the result of a systematic reconsideration of Eusebius' information concerning a number of thinkers:[2] Heraclitus, of course (three different *akmai*: texts M 2c, M 5a and M 3b), but also Hellanicus, Democritus, Anaxagoras, Empedocles, Parmenides and Zeno. The *akmai* of the first three writers coincide with H.'s first (supposedly Apollodorian) *akmê* — 500/496 — but should be reinterpreted as their dates of *birth*; those of the last three coincide with H.'s third *akmê*, a chronologically impossible one — 456/2 — and display a curious 'square dance' metathetical figure: Heraclitus' partner should be Empedocles, not Zeno; Parmenides' partner should be Zeno, not Empedocles. Lastly, the date of Anaxagoras' *death* — 460/59 — coincides with H.'s second *akmê*; but since this date is obviously that of Anaxagoras' own *akmê*, this suggests that H.'s second *akmê* should be understood as referring to the date of his *death*. The above reinterpretation, when taken with Aristotle's information on H.'s age at his death (M 6), entails a number of consequences, among them the placing of H.'s *floruit* at the age of ca. 20.

Though all these topics are addressed in my commentary (III.1, 114-126), the reviewer seems to have missed them entirely and finds only the following objections to the proposed chronology (151): (1) the *akmê* was conventionally set at the age of 40 (but how can you prove that this 'convention' was followed in all cases and there was no room for exceptions? See my 114); (2) Apollodorus would not have attached so much importance to H.'s resignation as compared, say, to the writing of the book (but what if he knew of no other important *dated* [e.g. in the official records of Ephesus] event of H.'s life?); (3) The legend about Darius' invitation and the *Letters* assume H.'s maturity in ca. 500 (but at what age does maturity begin? And how chronologically accurate and precise could the author of the pseudo-Heraclitean *Letters* manage to be half a millenium later?). Honestly, instead of a repetition of these old *opiniones communae* dating from Diels's and Jacoby's time, I would have preferred to hear something about my new overall assessment of the dates found in Eusebius' *Chronica*.

Concerning the (probably) posthumous recognition of Heraclitus (151), I do indeed disagree with George Thomson. Why? (1) None of his suppositions mentioned by the reviewer (unlike the

rest of this most remarkable article)[3] is warranted by any direct evidence — all of them are *ex silentio*. (2) There would have simply been no point in mentioning the success of the book had there been a real school, or a 'religious society', or whatever.

And now about the three critical comments on vol. III.3.A: the difficulty the reviewer has in understanding the opposition *êthos : logos* (III.1, 389) is probably due to his equating it with the *langue-parole* opposition (152). Both *êthos* and *logos* belong to the *parole* term of the latter opposition which already presupposes the presence of a message with its superficial linguistic meaning. The various configurations which can be built on this basis affect both the form (the numerous levels and units) and the content of the linguistic meaning and create a kind of super-paradigm (a rhythmic pattern, a type of consonance, a tactic scheme, a figure, a metaphor *vel sim.*). Configurations of the same type (say, the chiasmi ABCBA) have something in common, if not in the meaning they create, then in the kind of change or distortion to which they subject both the form (that is, the syntax) and the content on the purely linguistic level. This could be termed their *êthos* (the result of a sort of generic interplay between any such linguistic form-with-content and any such chiastic arrangement) — not that I really believe such a generic *êthos* would be practically definable. As to the *logos*, it rather designates the final result of another interplay: that between the *êthos* of a given supralinguistic configuration and the full form and content of the text on the purely linguistic level, including (as its most important product) the generation of additional semantic levels: the poetic or philosophical meaning, a construal modeling some definite state of the object or inducing some psychological and/or emotional state of the reader, etc. The *logos* of a given occurrence of a given configuration can obviously be understood only *in concreto* and *in contextu*.

But my deepest disgreement with the reviewer concerns the distinction he appears to draw between poetical language as such and what I termed syntactic *polyphony* (deliberate ambiguity) in the form of what is commonly known as the *apo koinou* figure. While accepting and applauding my book as the first comprehensive study of the former (152), he rejects as trivial most (if not all) of the cases allowing for 'a multiplicity of [syntactical] readings' (153).

First of all I must stress most vehemently that *any* poetic language — whatever the level(s) on which it is built (phonetic, grammatical, syntactic and/or semantic) — is *per definitione* ambiguous, since it uses linguistic means supralinguistically and either replaces the linguistic meaning by another one (yet without suppressing the former which remains in the background), or modifies it (same remark), or adds new meanings to the superficial one. Thus F 48, though syntactically unambiguous, clearly combines two different meanings under the word BIOS (see my definition of poeticity in III.3.A, 137ff. [143-4, 213].)

Second, in a poetical text, which is just the opposite of a logically seamless, scientific demonstration, the presence of 'a multiplicity of readings' does not necessarily imply that one has to choose between them. It implies, on the contrary, the opposite necessity of accepting them all at once (which is why I speak of polyphony, not ambiguity) and of striving somehow to reconcile them (to force them into living together) without any loss of balance on either side. In most of the 'trivial' cases which the reviewer mentions (F 1, F 5, F 18, etc.: see 153 with notes) it is fairly easy to make the 'right' choice, with no need for hairsplitting: whatever one chooses, it makes little or no difference. But, just as such non-linguistic features as rhythm and rhyme create an atmosphere of regularity and repetition of certain stresses and sounds, adding a whole new grid of links between linguistically unconnected words and ideas, similarly, frequent *apo koinous* create an atmosphere of syntactic indeterminacy which adds a new semantic dimension to the resulting meaning and in some non-trivial cases plays an extremely pregnant and important role in construing the philosophical meaning. The reviewer unfortunately does not specify which three construals

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3   G. Thomson, 'From Religion to Philosophy', *JHS* 73 (1953), 77-83 (81). The omission of this article in *Heraclitea* III.3.A (where it should have been reviewed on 53) is one of the worst lacunae of this volume.

of F 32 (out of the 18 theoretical possibilities I list) he still considers possible, but let us suppose it was the following:

1. One, the only Wise, wants not and (yet) wants to be called by the name of Zeus.

2. The only Wise wants not to be called One and wants the name of Zeus.

3. The One wants not to be called Wise only and (yet) the name of Zeus wants (it);

Obviously, here the difference will be enormous both on the grammatical and syntactical levels and monumental on that of the overall interpretation of the sentence; and the choice of only one of the many construals at the expense of the others would be extremely damaging to the resulting philosophical meaning. (See details in III.3.A, 361-9).

Last but not least, in vol. III.3.A, which is an introduction to the language of Heraclitus based on his *verbal* fragments and prior to any in-depth examination of them, there was no place to discuss either the (highly conjectural) 'testimony' of the Derveni papyrus on H.'s obscurity or the similarity of his style with that of the Orphic bone plates and gold tablets.

This said, let me repeat that I indeed appreciate very highly Aryeh Finkelberg's opinion on the books reviewed and am looking forward to new and fruitful discussions of the points on which our views still diverge.

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