I Searched Myself

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I

In 1854 Bernays wrote:

> ἐδιζησάμην ἐμωυτὸν, i.e.in me ipsum descendi meaeque naturae leges perscrutando ad intellegendas universae rerum naturae leges pervenire conatus sum.[1]
>
> By delving into myself and by investigating the laws of my own nature, I strove to attain the rational laws of the universal nature of things.

There are three traditional interpretations of Heraclitus' fr. 101 DK. The first goes back to Diogenes Laertius:

> He (Heraclitus) was exceptional from his boyhood; for when a youth he used to say that he knew nothing, although when he was grown up he claimed that he knew everything. He was nobody's pupil, but he declared that he 'inquired of himself', and learned everything from himself.[2]

1 Jacob Bernays, *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, ed. H. Usener (Berlin: W. Hertz, 1885; repr. Hildesheim/New York: G. Olms, 1971), I 105.

2 IX, tr. R.D. Hicks (Loeb Classical Library).

The second interpretation is that of Plutarch. He compares Heraclitus' saying to the Delphic γνῶθι σαυτόν, and to Socrates' inquiry into what is man.[3] According to this interpretation of the fragment, Heraclitus' interest here is mainly ethical, maybe anthropological. No doubt Heraclitus was deeply interested in things human, as many of his sayings bear witness. This is perhaps the prevalent modern interpretation of the dictum.

Thirdly, there is the interpretation of Plotinus. As usual with him, he quotes Heraclitus *en passant* in order to add weight to his own views and in the process he almost drowns Heraclitus in a swelling tide of Plotinian doctrines:

> The Intellectual-Principle, therefore, is itself the authentic existences, not a knower knowing them in some sphere foreign to it. The Authentic Beings, thus, exist neither before nor after it: it is the primal legislator to Being or, rather, is itself the law of Being. Thus it is true that 'Intellection and Being are identical'; in the immaterial knowledge of the thing is the thing. And this is the meaning of the dictum 'I sought myself', namely, as one of the Beings: it also bears on reminiscence.[4]

Of course, the identification of intellect νοῦς with the authentic existences (τὰ ὄντως ὄντα), and the correlated assertion that the objects of intellect are not outside the intellect itself — these are pure Plotinus. That intellect is the primal legislator (νομοθέτης πρῶτος) and even the Law of Being itself, this too cannot be easily read into Heraclitus' ἐδιζησάμην ἐμωυτόν. Even the assumption that Heraclitus' self is the intellect is restrictive, even somewhat distorting. But then Plotinus was not doing exegesis, but expounding his own philosophy. Nevertheless, his view of Heraclitus could still be basically sound. And this was obviously the view Bernays was following.

If this view is sound, Heraclitus was radically changing the approach to nature that the Ionian philosophers had been following. He was not interested in the description of the world from its beginnings to his own times, as Anaximander was. Nor did he deem the salvation of the soul to be in θεωρία τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, as Pythagoras had preached. Heraclitus would then be saying that he turned towards himself and sought in himself the solution for the problem of unity and plurality in the world. As I hope to make plausible, Heraclitus' introspection is more than anthropological or ethical. It is such

3 adversus Colotem 1118 C.

4 V 9 (5), 26–32 H.S.

too, no doubt. But as one follows his interests and delineates his background, one begins to see that Heraclitus' understanding of his own inner reality is ultimately linked to his interpretation of the external world.

II

As Bruno Snell has shown, the discovery of the specific individuality of the human soul[5] is the work of the early Greek lyricists. It is they who first express, in those poems which Snell calls 'personal lyrics', the separate reality of one's inner world of private experiences and emotions, in contradistinction to the external world of things and events, the same for all.[6]

In the lyricists' description of that reality, two main characteristics are prominent: Firstly, the psychic realm is the realm of the absolute predominance of the subjective, which does not demand justification beyond the mere fact of its being experienced. The subjective experience and the subjective valuation are valid because they are felt by the individual to be so, and by each individual differently. Sappho probably said it best:

> Some say a host of horsemen, some say of infantry,
> Some say of ships, is the fairest thing
> On the black earth — but I say it is
> That whom one loves.[7]

5 By the sixth century the ψυχή begins to designate the seat of emotions and thought in addition to simple life-breath. Heraclitus may have been the first philosopher to articulate this new notion of soul. Cf. Netta Zagagi, *Tradition and Originality in Plautus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), 85 and n. 82. That the θυμός was only incorporated into the ψυχή by Plato, as argued by Mrs. Zagagi, does not affect my main point here: the distinction elaborated on by the lyricists between the 'inner', private experience (conveniently called in modern terms, the soul) and the 'outer', public world.

6 Cf. B. Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind*, tr. T.G. Rosenmeyer (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960), ch. 3, and esp. pp. 46 ff. Since the publication of the first German edition of Snell's *Die Entdeckung des Geistes*, his theses have generated much discussion. For my purposes, however, it will suffice to accept that the lyricists, in some of their poems, shift their main interest to the specific individual soul in its individuality, i.e. to the personal aspects of their reactions to the world.

7 27 a D (38E).

True, Homer had already acknowledged the changeability of the minds of men:

> Such is the mind of men on earth each day
> As brings upon them th' father of gods and men.[8]

But it is Archilochus who first puts each man's heart as the final arbiter of the different ideals:

> But of different men the heart is pleased differently.[9]

It is not Zeus who provides the justification for the diversity and changeability of men's opinions, by putting in their minds different thoughts at different times. Rather, the very fact of the diversity of things men take pleasure in is justification enough for each man's reaction.

Second, for the lyricists the reality of the soul is fundamentally distinct from physical reality. The inner structure of the soul is a structure of coexisting contradictions and unresolved tensions. In the soul, opposites do not necessarily cancel each other, nor do they balance or alternate with each other 'according to the order of time'. Sometimes, no doubt, opposites do alternate in one's soul as they do in one's open life. Archilochus acknowledges that much in an almost Stoic vein:

> ...Victorious, do not rejoice exuberantly,
> Nor vanquished moan prostrated in your house,
> But enjoy your successes and lament your misfortunes
> In measure. Know what is rhythm that controls men.[10]

But more often than not, and more characteristically, opposites in the soul reinforce each other, creating a tension that resists resolution. On the one hand, this unresolved tension heightens the sense of reality of the inner experience as immediately felt. On the other hand, it sets the psychic realm sharply apart from the physical, in that the domain of the soul is experienced as intrinsically ambiguous and contradictory.

8 Od. 18. 135; cf. Od. 14.228.
9 41 D (36E).
10 67 a D.

Nowhere are these tensions and contradictions of the soul better seen than in the lyricist's awareness of unhappy love:

"I know not what to do," says Sappho, "double is my thought."[11]

And again, in the tersest formulation of all:

> Again does Eros looser of limbs stir me,
> Bittersweet and irresistible...[12]

Anacreon, a little later, elaborates on the contradiction:

> Again, like a smith, has Eros smitten me with a great
> Hammer, and doused me in a chill stream.[13]

III

Heraclitus shares with the lyricists this turn towards the inner reality. True, his *psuchē* is fire, as Anaximenes' was air. In its living and rational aspect, the individual soul is a part of the cosmic *archē*.

But, for Heraclitus, the *psuchē* is much more than that which, in Anaximenes' phrase, 'holds us together' in the same way that the cosmic *archē* holds the world together and regulates its life. With Heraclitus, the individual enters Greek philosophy — not only as a part of the cosmic *arche*, as the Ionians would have it — but also as a concrete person, as the lyricists had depicted it. A few years later — if later it was — Parmenides, in the first words of his poem, roots his philosophical doctrine in personal experience:

> The mares that carried me...[14]

This is not a mere literary device. The fundamental decision (κρίσις) between the two ways presented by the goddess has to be made by the individual himself:

11 46 D (52E).
12 137D (81E).
13 45D (48E). But, on the other hand, note his paratactical construction.
14 1.1 DK.

> ...but decide with your reason on the much-disputed contention...[15]

The outcome of the process of decision is, of course, a foregone conclusion, or at least it should be:

> But it has already been decided, according to necessity...[16]

Still, the decision itself, the act of κρίσις, can be performed only by the individual himself, on being personally convinced of the truth of the goddess' words.

As with Parmenides, so with Heraclitus, the way to the understanding of the real nature of things necesarily passes through the individual's effort. However, for Parmenides the individual is a κριτής. He is part of the framework, even a necessary part of it, but he is not part of the content. Once the decision has been made, there is no more room for him. The individual belongs, so to say, to the method, not to the system. For Heraclitus, on the contrary, the individual's inner life is part and parcel of the world as it is. It is, in fact, paradigmatic of the world.

Heraclitus is only too keenly aware of the range and complexity of the soul.

> You will not find the limits of the soul
> Even if you travel every path;
> Such a profound *logos* does it have.[17]

The soul cannot be adequately described, even *prima facie*, by the same type of inquiry as the material things. It is not the sort of thing that one can circumscribe — as one might think one could do to the physical world — by way of ἱστορίη. It does not have a fixed *logos* (measure, account, explanation) because it is open to itself. It is 'the logos which augments itself' in introspection and self-understanding, and can be reached only by introspection and self-understanding.

15 7.5 DK.

16 8.16 DK.

17 45DK. I have adopted Marcovich's printing of the fragments of Heraclitus in short lines. But I do not always follow Marcovich's reading.

IV

At the same time, Heraclitus denounces those who seem to 'have a mind of their own'.

> Therefore one must follow what is common;
> but although the *logos* is common
> the many live as if they had a mind of their own.[18]

On the one hand, then, Heraclitus searches himself and stresses the unfathomable complexity of the *psuchē*, and on the other hand he condemns the many who follow an idiosyncratic wisdom, and live, as it were, in their own, private world.

Those who do not follow the common *logos* are like the sleeping and the deaf. The sleeping too have a mind of their own and a world of their own.[19] But the structure of their world — or should we say, of their worlds — is different from the structure of the one waking world common to us all. Theirs is partial, insular, disconnected. Like the world of the deaf, it is severed off from the common world of the rest of humanity. Like the deaf, 'they are absent even while being present'.[20]

The world of dream does have an inner plausibility of its own. But this plausibility is restricted. It lacks continuity with waking life. As Heidegger has noted, sleep is a sort of self-absorption (*Versunkenheitsform*).[21] In sleep the soul turns upon itself and excludes the external world, except insofar as the extenal world is reflected in the soul itself, and only to the extent that the external world serves as material for the soul's reactions to it. It is thus,

18 2 DK Prof. H. Rosen would rather have ξυνός as a participal form of ξυνίημι ("verständlich"). This would strengthen the point I am about to make. But I cannot reconcile this understanding of ξυνός with Heraclitus' fr. 103 DK.

19 89 DK.

20 34 DK.

21 Cf. M. Heidegger and E. Fink, *Heraklit* (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1970), 221.

incidentally, that the coherence of dreams becomes a crux of idealistic, phenomenalistic and phenomenological approaches to reality.
The unintelligent apperception of the world is dream-like apperception, where the familiar seems strange.

> What they continually are engaged in,
> with that are they in discord,
> and what they meet every day
> seems to them strange.[22]

The intelligibility of the world is in the relations between its parts, but οἱ πολλοί see only the disparate elements, not their interconnections.

> They do not understand how in discording it agrees with itself.[23]

Οἱ πολλοί do not understand because, in the original sense of ξυνίημι, they are not capable of bringing things together. As in dreams, their world seems unfamiliar and strange because it is disconnected, unexplained. It is a disparate array of events, to which men react one by one.

But is not precisely such the stand of the lyricists? Are not Archilochus Sappho, Anacreon, as opposed to the epic poet, interested first and foremost in their own reactions to the events, and in the events themselves only insofar as they are the cause or the occasion for their feelings?

> Look, Glaucon: the deep sea is already troubled
> By waves, and round the top of Gyres clouds are piled up,
> A sign of storm. A sudden terror falls upon us.[24]

> He seems to me the equal of the gods,
> That man who sits opposite
> You and listens to your
> Sweet voice.

22 72DK.
23 51 DK.
24 Archilochus 56 D.

> And to your lovely laughter; but this
> Flutters my heart within my breast.
> For when I look briefly at you, I can
> No longer speak.[25]

In one poem, probably referred to by Hercalitus at least once, Archilochus elaborates on Homer:

> Such is the heart of men, Glaucon son of Leuptines,
> As Zeus brings upon them on each day,
> And they think such thoughts as are the things they meet.[26]

Here Archilochus clearly delineates the border between the external world, or the things and deeds that men come across in their daily lives and their variable reactions to them. But, Heraclitus seems to be saying in fr. 72 DK discussed above, as long as one thinks of the inner and the outer as separate realms, and especially as long as one sees the things and events in the world as isolated and disconnected, one cannot hope to understand them, but one can only imagine.

> The many do not understand such things
> as they encounter,
> nor do they understand them once they have learned,
> but they imagine them to themselves.[27]

And so it is that Heraclitus carries over to the physical world the tensions and contradictions that the lyricists had discovered within the self. Heraclitus finds that the lyricists had falsified reality in that they had severed off the 'inner' from the 'outer', as if the 'inner' reality were indeed fundamentally different from the 'outer'.[28] On this count, world and soul are equal: the

25 Sappho 31D (41E).

26 68 D.

27 17DK.

28 Contrast, e.g., W. Luther, "Wahrheit, Licht und Erkenntnis in der griechischen Philosophie bis Demokrit", *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 10 (1966), 75: "Heraklit (hat die) von den früheren Lyrikern erschlossene Unterscheidung von Innen und Aussen übernommen."

world too consists of the very tensions between the hot and the cold, the living and the dead, between satiety and hunger, which coexist as unabated opposites. Nor is the inner life an incoherent, unexplained bundle of opposites.

> 'A man's character is his *daimon*', says Heraclitus
> (or perhaps: 'the character is a man's *daimon*').[29]

The *ethos*, a man's habitual way of acting and reacting, provides a framework which is not arbitrary. There is in a man's actions an overall unity, which is not imposed from without and is not just a consequence of his several reactions to what he happens to meet day by day. One could perhaps call this unity, with reservations, a man's personality. There are in it tensions and contradictions, but there is also coherence, unity and meaning.

VI

Just as travelling every path will not disclose to us the *logos* of the *psuchē*, in much the same manner, a description of the world in terms of information amassed by observation of what presents itself to the eye and to the ear is bound to be inadequate. *Polymathiē*, much-learning, does not teach understanding, and *historiē*, the inquiry into facts, is a sham, *kakotechniē*.[30] Learning which is eclectic,[31] intent on fact alone, not on meaning, cannot give insight.

> Eyes and ears are bad witnesses to men
> if they have barbaric souls,[32]

i.e., if they have souls which, like barbarians who do not understand Greek, can hear the sounds and see the characters but cannot get through them to their meaning.
On the other hand, ἱστορίη is not dispensable. Somewhere else Heraclitus says:

29 ἦθος ἀνθρώπῳ(-ου) δαίμων 119 DK.
30 Cf. fr. 40, 129 DK.
31 Cf. fr. 129 DK καὶ ἐκλεξάμενος ταύτας τὰς συγγραφάς
32 107 DK.

> Philosophers (if the word is indeed his) must be knowledgeable about a great many things.[33]

What distinguishes the philosophical from the non-philosophical *historiē* is that the latter rests content with the facts themselves whereas the former tries to go beyond the facts to their meaning. And, as it has already been noted, for Heraclitus the meaning is the connection as expressed in the *logos*.

The *logos* as speech-thought-structure of things has a double function: On the one hand the *logos* is the gathering of disparate items under a common heading, as shown by the etymology of λέγειν. It is thus that a word picks up its several referents and 'collects' them together under one single heading — separate in space and time as they may be. It is thus that the *logos* as 'account' strings separate events together into one coherent whole. And it is even thus that Heraclitus' *logos* as *aphanēs harmoniē* unifies things which seem to be irreconcilably opposed to each other. If one listens not to him, says Heraclitus, but to the *logos*, it is wise to agree (ὁμολογεῖν) that all things are one.[34] On the other hand, the *logos* is the presentation of what is as it is. It is the expression of reality in words, whereby Heraclitus 'declares each thing as it is' (φράζων ὅκως ἔχει).[35] In this sense it performs the same function as Aristotle's ἀποφαντικὸς λόγος.[36] Of course, Aristotle's ἀποφαντικὸς λόγος, as the *logos* which either affirms or denies something of something else, does not admit of the contradictions of Heraclitus' *logos*. For Heraclitus, the *logos* is always true precisely because it exhibits the ambiguity inherent in things. Hence it is also speech which is itself ambiguous and contradictory. It is these very tensions between the elements of the world that compose the structure which is to be expressed in the spoken *logos*.

The world is a world of συλλάψιες, unifications, or perhaps of συνάψιες, interconnections,[37] and an account of such a world requires distinguishing between its components and showing them for what they are, i.e. moments in

33 35 DK. It is a hotly disputed question, which words in this fragment, if any at all, are to be traced back to Heraclitus.

34 Cf. fr. 50 DK.

35 Cf. fr. 1 DK.

36 Cf. *de interpretatione* 4. 17a 2, 5. 17a 8.

37 Cf. fr. 10 DK. The tradition of the text is uncertain between these two readings.

an interrelated unity.[38] This view of *logos* will eventually be developed by Plato in his concept of dialectic in the *Phaedrus*.[39]
This *logos* is ξυνός because it pervades all things and because it can be reached by every individual in his individuality, perhaps through his individuality. But the λόγος ξυνός does not obliterate the particularity of particular things just as it does not negate the individuality of the individual soul.

VII

Heraclitus envisages a concept of objectivity (τὸ ξυνόν) in which the boundaries drawn by the lyricists between the 'inner' reality and the 'outer' world no longer hold. He suffuses the physical world with the very same contradictions that exist in the soul. There is for him no hard and fast distinction between what is one's own and what is common — or at least there should not be. To make the psychical dimension a realm of its own is to be condemned never to understand world and soul. What is true of the soul as the lyric poets had described it, is also true of the world, and moreover it is true of the soul *because* it is true of the world.

Sextus Empiricus, our main witness for Heraclitus' fr. 1 DK, and our only one for fr. 2 DK, interprets the Ephesian's ξυνόν as the public and the purely intersubjective, hence the non-subjective:

> And he (Heraclitus) declares reason to be the judge of truth — not, however, any and every kind of reason, but that which is 'common' and divine... It is then by drawing in by inspiration (δι' ἀναπνοῆς) this divine reason that, according to Heraclitus, we become intelligent, and while forgetful during sleep become sensible again on waking... Heraclitus then asserts that this common and divine reason, by participation in which we become rational, is the criterion of truth. Hence, that which appears to all in common is trustworthy (for it is perceived by the common and divine reason), but that which affects one person alone is, for the opposite cause, untrustworthy.[40]

38 Cf. fr. 1 DK: ...κατὰ φύσιν διαιρέων ἕκαστον, and fr. 10 DK: ...ἐκ πάντων ἕν, καὶ ἐξ ἑνὸς πάντα.

39 Cf. *Phaedrus* 266 AB, 277 BC.

40 *adversus mathematicos* VI 127–132; cf. 133–134.

In this passage, as elsewhere too, Sextus makes Heraclitus into a proto-Stoic. As Sextus has it, the objective is common to all precisely because it is non-subjective. But it seems rather that for Heraclitus the ξυνόν is the *trans-subjective* — that reality which is common (at least potentially, as we would say) without ceasing to be subjective because of that.

It is not that we find ourselves in the world in the pure Milesian sense, as having a *psuchē* of air, or for that matter of fire, of which the world too consists. This too is part of Heraclitus' thought, no doubt. But the role he gives to the individual goes well beyond that of a part of the cosmic *archē* — thinking as it may be — trapped within a certain body. Nor is Heraclitus to be explained simply through the archaic lack of distinction between the subjective and the objective aspects of cognition. Rather, his is the recognition of the intrinsically dialectical nature common to the individual soul and to the physical world. Far from separating psychic life and physical reality, Heraclitus found in the physical nature the same structure that he had found in his own self.

In a way Heraclitus learned from no one, as Diogenes Laertius says, because he could not have grasped such structures but by searching into himself. Indeed, not completely unlike Plato's recollection — with all the reservations that Plotinus neglected to make, and which must be left for another occasion.

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