

From Poetic Naming to Dialectic: Heidegger on Heraclitus

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In the 1969 seminar at Le Thor, in the south of France, Heidegger made the surprising claim that the Greek interpretation of language was “thoroughly unpoetic.” His reason was that the Greeks interpreted ‘saying’ [*Sagen*] as asserting something of something (*Aussagen, legein ti kata tinos*):¹ “In Greek, naming always already and in advance signifies *making a proposition* [*Aussagen*], and to make a proposition means to make something known as something” (trans. 41). What would constitute a “poetic” interpretation, on the other hand, would be to interpret *Sagen* as a *naming* that, rather than being an implied assertion (i.e., as the characterization of something as something) is instead a “calling-forth” (*Rufen*): an interpretation Heidegger finds in the poet Hölderlin (336; trans. 41–42). But what is the difference between asserting and this ‘naming’ that ‘calls forth’? In assertion, I subsume that about which I am making the assertion both under what is asserted of it and under my own act of making an assertion. The subject simply lies there at my disposal, a mere given waiting for me to relate it to this or that. It is not, in other words, allowed to show itself in and from itself. In contrast, in simply naming something I am evoking it or calling it forth without subsuming it under anything else. As Heidegger states the point: “In simple nomination, I let what is present be what it is ... The being then is pure phenomenon” (328, trans. 36).² Consider the difference between the proposition, “The sky is full of stars” and the poetic reference to “the starry firmament.” In the former case the sky is reduced to a mere object of which we can predicate this or that. In the latter case, the sky is allowed simply to be present and to show itself. To the extent that the Greeks interpreted language thoroughly

1. *Seminare (1951–1973), Gesamtausgabe* 15 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1986), 336. Translated in *Four Seminars*, trans. Andrew Mitchell and François Raffoul (Indiana U Press, 2003), 42.

2. In the 1944 course, Heidegger, citing fr. 32, points out that *legein* is understood in relation to *onoma*, but then, pointing to the expression “making a name for oneself” (the German equivalent), interprets the latter as follows: “Einen Namen haben, benannt sein, besagt dann: im Licht stehen—erhellt sein. Das Nennen ist das Erhellen, ins Licht-bringen, ins Unverborgene” (248).

unpoetically, they covered up and suppressed “the pure phenomenon,” i.e. the being and truth of beings.

Yet despite this tendency towards an unpoetic interpretation of language among the Greeks, there is to be found a more poetic interpretation among the earliest thinkers of Greece, that is, those thinkers who are not yet philosophers in the later sense. One of these early thinkers discussed in another Le Thor seminar held in 1966 is Heraclitus. At one point in this seminar the poet René Char suggests that Heraclitus “belongs in the company of poets”: a claim with which Heidegger agrees (trans. 8).³ This special status which Heidegger accords Heraclitus among philosophers is further illustrated in a lecture Heidegger gave in 1955 entitled, “Was ist das—die Philosophie?” There, after characterizing philosophy as a *striving* (eros) for the wise (σοφόν), and thus as “underway to the being of beings” (*unterwegs* zum Sein des Seienden), Heidegger insists that Parmenides and Heraclitus were not philosophers but thinkers *greater* than that. The reason is that they were still in “Einklang” with the σοφόν and therefore presumably did not need to strive for it (23–25).⁴ Here it should be noted that to make something into a subject of assertions is not only to make it subject to oneself, but despite, or rather because of this, to alienate it from oneself. In the evocative naming that characterizes poetry, in contrast, there is no alienation between the saying and what is addressed in this saying, but rather a perfect ‘monotony,’ a perfect *Einklang*. If Heraclitus is not a philosopher, this is because, rather than striving to get at the σοφόν, i.e., the truth or essence of beings, by making assertions about them, he instead practices a kind of saying that says the same as what the σοφόν says, or, in other words, is in perfect *Einklang* with it.⁵

3. The distinction between thinking and poetry significantly remains completely opaque in the 1944 Heraclitus course. On p. 301 Heidegger relates the distinction between *das Bildhafte* and *das Bildlose* to the distinction between poetry and thinking, but only then to claim that the two distinctions are not the same. The distinctions are related “insofern das Dichten, um von den anderen Gestalten der Kunst zu schweigen, ein bildhaftes Sagen ist. Allein, es ist eben nicht nur ein sinnliches Sagen, sondern es sagt einen Sinn; insgleichen ist das denkende Sagen nicht bildlos, sondern in seiner Weise bildhaft; daraus wird klar, daß wir den Wesensunterschied zwischen Dichten und Denken nicht unmittelbar unterbringen in der Unterscheidung des Bildhaften und des Bildlosen und des Sagens von diesem” (302). So what is the distinction between thought and poetry? Claiming later that λέγειν is in itself ποιήσις (as a bringing forth from concealment into unconcealment, 370), Heidegger observes that in this case, “Denken und Dichten sind, obzwar in grundverschiedener Weise ursprünglich (und be-ginnlich) das Selbe: das sich im Wort sammelnde Hervorbringen des Seins ins Wort” (370). But then what is the *difference*?

4. “Was ist das—die Philosophie?”, 3rd ed. (Pfullingen: Neske, 1963), 23–25.

5. In a 1933/34 course Heidegger characterizes a Heraclitean fragment as not a “wissenschaftlicher Satz” but “ein *philosophisches* Wort” (*Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*, in *Gesamtausgabe* 36/37 [Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2001]: 95).

But what is the nature of this *Einklang*, at least in Heraclitus, if it is not some kind of correspondence between assertions and their objects and is beyond the mere desire to get at the truth? What exactly is the 'poetic interpretation' of language that makes such an *Einklang* possible? For the answer to these questions we must turn to Heidegger's 1951 essay entitled, "Logos (Heraklit, Fragment 50)."⁶ The fragment which Heidegger interprets in this essay speaks of hearing the λόγος and identifies what is wise (σοφόν) with saying the same (ὁμολογεῖν) as the λόγος, namely, that all is one: οὐκ ἐμοῦ, ἀλλὰ τοῦ λόγου ἀκούσαντας ὁμολογεῖν σοφόν ἐστὶν ἐν πάντα εἶναι. By considering the argument of this essay and, in particular, Heidegger's interpretation of the key terms λόγος, ἀκουεῖν, ὁμολογεῖν, and σοφόν, we can come to some understanding of the kind of saying which Heidegger considers prior to both assertion and philosophy and which he claims to find in Heraclitus. Yet on Heidegger's own reading, this "Aufblitz des Seins" in Heraclitus' thought "remains forgotten" (bleibt vergessen, 232). Despite the more original saying to be found in Heraclitus and the other early thinkers, "language from the very outset assumed the fundamental character which we signify with the word 'expression'" (die Sprache gelangt *zum voraus* in den Grundcharakter, den wir mit dem Namen 'Ausdruck' kennzeichnen, 233, my emphasis). The second part of this paper will turn to the courses on Heraclitus from the 1940s, from which the 1951 essay is derived: *Der Anfang des Abendländischen Denkens*, from the summer of 1943, and *Logik: Heraklits Lehre vom Logos*, from the summer of 1944.⁷ The goal will be to show more specifically what is suppressed by this reading of Heraclitus, where this can be encapsulated in one word: dialectic. The ultimate goal is to show that in suppressing the dialectical character of Heraclitus' thought in favor of a dichotomy between an original poetic saying/showing and a calculative thinking dominated by the logic of the assertion, Heidegger does not do justice to the kind of thinking and saying that characterizes Heraclitus and, arguably, Greek philosophy both in its earliest beginnings and in its fruition.

THE ESSAY ON FR. 50⁸

The key first step of Heidegger's interpretation is the claim that the genuine or original sense of the Greek word λέγειν is not 'saying' and 'talking.' This original sense is instead that of gathering together and laying before (*lesen* and *legen*, in German). Yet such a claim seems arbitrary given the fact that, as Heidegger himself acknowledges, the Greeks from the very beginning used the

6. In *Vorträge und Aufsätze, Gesamtausgabe 7* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000).

7. In *Heraklit, Gesamtausgabe 55* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1979).

8. Following Heidegger, this article will refer to the Heraclitus fragments according to the Diels-Kranz numeration.

word λέγειν in the sense of saying and speaking. It is therefore incumbent on Heidegger to show how what he claims to be the original and genuine sense developed naturally, and even immediately, into the derivative sense. He does so by describing the laying-before-as-gathering that characterizes the Greek λέγειν as a letting-something-lie-together-before in a way that concerns us (liegt uns an, 216). What concerns us is the entrusting of what lies-before to unconcealment (Geborgenheit des Vorliegenden im Unverborgenden, 217), i.e., gathering it forth in such a way that it can show itself as what it is.⁹ But then what we have in the movement from the genuine sense to the derivative sense is really not a change in meaning at all, since saying (sagen) and speaking (reden) have their essence in such a gathering-forth-into-unconcealment.¹⁰ This is to say that the original determination of the essence of language has nothing to do with expression (Ausdruck) and meaning (Bedeutung) but rather with the bringing into unconcealment of what is preserved in concealment and thus with the presencing of what is present. To say is in essence not to express some thing that already lies before one or to give voice to some meaning that lies within one, but rather to bring something to show itself by gathering it into its own self-presence and unconcealment. In short, to say is to unconceal rather than to express or mean what already lies unconcealed.

The following passage summarizes the crucial point: “For as gathering letting-lie-before, saying receives its way of being from the unconcealment of what lies-before-together. The disclosing of what is concealed in the unconcealed is however the presencing itself of what is present. We call it the being of beings” (Denn als sammelndes vor-liegen-Lassen empfängt das Sagen seine Wesensart aus der Unverborgenheit des beisammen-vor-Liegenden. Die Entbergung aber des Verborgenen in das Unverborgene ist das Anwesen selbst des Anwesenden. Wir nennen es das Sein des Seienden, 218). If λέγειν can have the original sense of ‘gathering-forth’ and also be used in the sense of saying and speaking, this is because saying has as its essence not the articulation of sounds but rather making something manifest in collecting it from its concealment. Thus even we today can say, “Silence speaks louder than words.” “Speaks” in this sentence, as explicitly contrasted with words, can only mean “shows,” “makes manifest,” “brings into presence.” Yet we should not conclude that saying gives things their presence and determines

9. Cf. GA55, 267–69.

10. In the course Heidegger likewise insists that λόγος does not mean “Wort” or “Rede” or “Sprache” (239), and yet he must grant, and this is crucial, that λόγος and λέγειν “früh schon bei den Griechen soviel wie ‘reden’ und ‘sagen’ bedeuten” (239). The above are for Heidegger two facts that conceal “etwas Rätselhaftes” (239). The question: if the original meaning of λόγος and λέγειν has nothing to do with anything linguistic, how did they come to mean word and speech? How was the original meaning lost or suppressed (240)?

their being. If Heidegger here calls saying (Sagen) the “gathered-gathering [gesammelt-sammelndes] letting-lie-together-before [beisammen-vor-liegen-Lassen]” (219, my emphasis), it is to emphasize that it does not gather what is simply disparate but rather gathers by being itself gathered by what it lets lie before it. This account of λέγειν provides Heidegger with a way of explaining Heraclitus’ distinction between listening to his words and listening to the λόγος. The λόγος is neither Heraclitus’ words nor anyone’s words, but what gathers all beings into their being and lets them lie before in their being. To listen to the λόγος is, as Heidegger will further explain later in the essay, to listen to the being of beings as it shows itself in and of itself.

But what is the nature of this “hearing”? How can we “hear” something that does not consist of words, those of Heraclitus or of anyone else? Hearing, Heidegger insists, is not to be interpreted here, or indeed anywhere, acoustically or biologically, i.e., as a mere matter of picking up sound waves or of the proper functioning of an organ. When we accuse someone of not listening, we are not saying that his ears are not functioning nor are we speaking ‘metaphorically.’ To ‘hear,’ Heidegger explains, is to attend to, be claimed by, even belong to (gehören) what is said, where what is ‘said,’ recall, is what is allowed to lie-gathered-before-us. To hear is therefore, in Heidegger’s words, “in each case to let lie together in its gatheredness [beisammen liegen lassen in seinem Gesamt] that which a letting-lie-before lays forth together [was ein Vor-liegen-Lassen beisammen vorlegt]” (220).¹¹ If this sounds tautologous, it should. To hear, on Heidegger’s interpretation, is to say what is said as it is said, i.e., to let that which lies-before-together lie-before-together as it lies-before-together. To ‘hear’ the λόγος is therefore, in the word Heraclitus himself uses in the fragment, to ὁμολογεῖν, to say the same as the λόγος. On Heidegger’s interpretation, ὁμολογεῖν is: “To let-lie-before in its gatheredness one as the same (Eines als Selbes), that which lies before in the sameness of its lying-before [ein Vorliegendes im Selben seines Vorliegens gesammelt vorliegen-lassen]” (220). Is not this ὁμολογεῖν precisely that “Einklang” with the *sophon* that Heidegger was seen to contrast with philosophy?

The answer to this question comes when Heidegger turns to the interpretation of fragment 50. In the opposition between “listening to me” and “listening to the Logos” he sees an opposition between merely listening to what is spoken, articulated, expressed, and genuine hearing understood in the sense of *belonging (gehören) to the Logos*. Heidegger now makes explicit that this hearing is itself λέγειν understood as ὁμολογεῖν. This ὁμολογεῖν

11. Likewise in the course Heidegger makes the point that “Hören und Hören ist somit nicht das Selbe” (247). Before we can ‘hear’ something in the sense of perceiving it acoustically, we must already respond, obey (Gehorchen zu, gehorsam sein), belong to (gehören), be claimed by it (244–47).

for him has nothing to do with agreement among ourselves in what we say; it is not simply *our* speaking as distinct from the λόγος of which we speak. Instead, Heidegger maintains that this genuine hearing/saying of mortals is in a way *the same as* the λόγος. If Heidegger also insists that it is not the same, this is only in the sense that our hearing of the λόγος does not *produce* it (222).¹² As already noted earlier, our saying as a gathering into unconcealment is itself gathered by what lies-together-before in unconcealment. Our hearing, precisely as a response, as a belonging-to, cannot be identical with what it hears. And yet a very strong sense of sameness remains on Heidegger's reading between our hearing, our ὁμολογεῖν, and the λόγος itself. There is no gap whatsoever between the two that would need to be bridged and therefore no possible talk of correspondence between one and the other. Our hearing does not *approximate* the λόγος, does not strive towards it, *but says the same as* it (ὁμολογεῖν). Our hearing does not *interpret* the λόγος, does not *signify* or *express* it, but *says the same as* it (ὁμολογεῖν). To hear the λόγος is to be *at one with* it. But being at one with the λόγος in this way is not striving for wisdom, but rather wisdom itself. Thus, in turning to the next word of Heraclitus' fragment, Heidegger writes: "When ὁμολογεῖν occurs, then is realized [ereignet sich], then is σοφόν" (222). This word σοφόν Heidegger translates as 'geschicklich' in the sense of "what can hold itself to what is entrusted to it [das Zugewiesene], can send itself into it [in es sich schicken], can send itself for it [für es sich schicken] (put itself on the way)" (224). If one considers the language here of holding-to, sending-into, sending-for, one can see that, though described as putting itself on the way, the σοφόν leaves no gap to be bridged by striving. "Geschicklich" in Heidegger's word-play means both "skilled" (geschickt) and fated or destined (Geschick), given over to what claims one: therefore *not* skilled in the sense of finding the means of capturing what is separated from one. But to understand what specifically is σοφόν or 'geschicklich' here, we must turn to the final words of the fragment.

According to these words, what we say when we say the same as the λόγος, and therefore what is σοφόν to say, is ἔν πάντα εἶναι: All is One. Significantly, however, Heidegger leaves out the verb εἶναι in favor of simply ἔν πάντα: One All (223–24). He justifies this editing with the claim that the result is more in keeping with "the style of Heraclitean saying" (dem Stil des heraklitischen Sagens)" (224). This is presumably because removing the verb prevents the hearing/saying at issue from being misunderstood as an asserting and brings

12. Cf. GA55, 249–51. Later the ὁμολογεῖν is characterized as follows: "Das sagt jetzt: sich auf das Selbe sammeln, was der λόγος als die Versammlung in sich und auf sich zu gesammelt halt" (280).

it closer to a naming. What we have here is not the proposition that “One are all things” but the evocative naming of “One All.” But the more important, though closely related reason for Heidegger’s editorial intervention is that for him the ἓν πάντα is not something *that* the λόγος says, nor therefore something *that* we ὁμολογεῖν, but rather *is the λόγος itself*. If, as argued earlier, the λόγος is, in its genuine and original sense, the *lesende Lege*, the *gathering Laying-before*, if as such it gathers all together and lets it lie before together (225), it is itself what unifies all, it is itself the one/all. And for Heidegger the λόγος unifies all beings as the being of beings.¹³ Furthermore, as what unconceals what is present [das Anwesende] in its presence [Anwesen] while at the same time entrusting it to its concealment, the λόγος is the “same” (das Selbe) as *aletheia*, or unconcealment (225). Λόγος, being, unconcealment, the ἓν πάντα all are “das Selbe” (226). Furthermore, the ὁμολογεῖν that is wise is not to assert that all is one, but to say the same as the one/all: i.e., to gather into a unity and unconceal what is gathered into a unity and unconcealed. To ὁμολογεῖν is not to assert something about being as the one/all, but to be claimed by and belong to being in its unconcealment.

At this point one might wonder what has become of what many consider a central, if not the central feature of Heraclitus’ thought: the talk of strife and war between opposites as the principle of all things. It is fair to say that when it comes to the unity of the opposites, Heidegger gives all the emphasis to the *unity*. In the one place in the essay in which Heidegger explicitly addresses the opposites, he writes: “The ἓν Πάντα lets lie together before us in one presencing [beisammen in einem Anwesen vorliegen] things which are usually separated from, and opposed to, one another [was voneinander weg- und so gegeneinander abwest], such as day and night, winter and summer, peace and war, waking and sleeping” (226). I quote this passage in the Krell/Capuzzi translation¹⁴ which is especially illuminating here. The word “usually” with which Krell/Capuzzi qualify the opposition and separation is not in Heidegger’s German and yet, I believe, makes explicit what is implied in Heidegger’s sentence: that the opposition between night and day, winter and summer, etc. is a surface phenomenon and the true, pure phenomenon

13. See from the course: “Im Sein und als Sein eint das Eins das Alles, das ist. Das Alles ist das Seiende, das im ἓν der Grundzug seines Seins hat. Wie also sollen wir zu einer gemäßen Erfassung des ἓν und πάντα hinfinden, solange wir nicht das, worin sie weben und wesen, eigens und klar denken?” (GA55, 264). And: “Dieser λόγος ist das Sein selbst, worin alles Seiende west. Diesen λόγος nachdenken, ist freilich nicht mehr Logik im üblichen Sinne. Gleichwohl halten wir den Titel ‘Logik’ fest, verstehen darunter jetzt aber etwas Vorläufigeres, nämlich die Besinnung auf ‘den λόγος’, als welcher sich das Sein selbst anfänglich kundgibt, das so sich als das ursprünglich zu Denkende enthüllt” (278).

14. Martin Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking: The Dawn of Western Philosophy* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1975), 71.

that one sees in listening to the λόγος (and the collapse of the distinction between seeing and hearing is Heidegger's own: 222) is their unity, their single presencing.

This emphasis on the unity at the expense of the opposition is even more striking in Heidegger's next sentence (and here I depart from the Krell/Capuzzi translation as being unclear and misleading at this point): "What is thus carried out [Ausgetragene], διαφερόμενον, along the farthest distance between presence and absence allows the gathering Laying-out to lie before in its bearing [Austrag]. Its laying is itself that which carries [das Tragende] in carrying out [Austrag]. The "Εν is itself a carrying out [austragend]" (226). The full decipherment of these extremely difficult sentences need not detain us here. What deserves our attention in the present context is what Heidegger does with the Greek word διαφερόμενον. Though this word occurs in Heidegger's text in isolation and without citation, it is used in both fragments 10 and 51 to refer to the separation and difference between the opposites. In fragment 10 Heraclitus writes: συμφερόμενον διαφερόμενον, coming together they are drawn apart. In fragment 51 he writes that what people fail to understand is that something agrees with itself (ὁμολογέει) in differing from itself (διαφερόμενον). That Heidegger should cite the word διαφερόμενον in speaking of the relation between day and night, war and peace, etc. is perfectly understandable. But what is striking is that Heidegger rids the word of any connotation of difference, opposition or separation by translating it as 'being carried (φέρειν) out or through (δία)': *aus-tragen*. In other words, he takes the δια to express not difference or opposition but, on the contrary, unity: a carrying *through* that as such gathers together. The last sentence of the passage cited above is therefore remarkable in two respects. First, Heidegger does not say, as the context of the word διαφερόμενον in Heraclitus would lead us to expect, that the "Εν is itself an opposing, a differing, but rather that the "Εν is itself a carrying out or through: *austragend*. Secondly, even if Heidegger had translated διαφερόμενον as borne apart and opposed, he still would have placed the "Εν first whereas it would arguably be more Heraclitean to invert the sentence and write: it is being-borne-apart and being-opposed that unites. What we see here, in short, is a crucial feature of Heidegger's interpretation: a minimizing of the centrality of opposition, strife, and war in Heraclitus' thought.

Towards the end of the essay Heidegger returns to our relation to the λόγος, a relation in which too there is no separation or opposition, though also no simple, empty identity. Heidegger maintains that strictly speaking it is not our ὁμολογέειν that is the σοφόν in the sense of the "fateful" (das Geschickliche), but rather the λόγος itself as the One/All. Nevertheless, Heidegger adds, mortal λέγειν as ὁμολογέειν, insofar as it is "dispatched

toward what is fateful” (sich in das Geschickliche schickt), is “in its own way fateful” (auf seine Weise Geschickliches, 226; see also 229). Thus our own saying is neither what is wise in the primary sense nor merely a skilled attempt to approximate or get at what is wise. Our saying is claimed by and fated by the λόγος and thus at one with it, i.e., a saying of the same. Again, there is here no striving for the σοφόν, but an *Einklang* with the σοφόν that is itself σοφόν.

An important implication of what has been said so far needs now to be made explicit. It is not only our relation to the λόγος that is to be characterized as ὁμολογεῖν, as if this were one relation among others. Instead, because all λέγειν, all saying, is a relation to the λόγος as the One/All, as the being of beings, and as truth/unconcealment, all λέγειν is for Heidegger, and for Heraclitus on his interpretation, ὁμολογεῖν, saying the same of the same. In other words, the essence of language is not to assert something of something but to let something show itself in and from itself, to gather it into presence and let it lie before us in its unconcealment, to call it forth in a way that lets it *be*. The essence of language is naming, not asserting. But is this not the ‘poetic’ interpretation of language which Heidegger at Le Thor claimed to be unGreek? In the essay Heidegger explains, in conclusion, that while the Greeks *lived* [gewohnt] in this essence of language as “gathering letting-lie-before what is present in its presencing [versammelndes vorliegen-Lassen des Anwesenden in seinem Anwesen]”, they did not *think* it [gedacht]: *not even Heraclitus* (233). This essence of language appears in Heraclitus as a lightning flash that is quickly swallowed up in the dark night of propositional logic. Thus, the explicit interpretation of language by the Greeks, and by the entire Western tradition that followed in their footsteps, remains ‘unpoetic.’ To have thought the essence of language as the “gathering letting-lie-before what is present in its presencing,” they would have had to think the essence of language from the essence of being and therefore would have had to think the essence of being itself (233). But that is precisely what we Greeks are still today far from doing or, rather, are farther than ever from doing.

PURGING HERACLITUS OF DIALECTIC IN THE COURSES OF 1943–44

This reading of Heraclitus purges his thought of what others, including Hegel, have seen as its “dialectical” character, and this in three related respects:

1) If Heraclitus sees what is opposed as one, Heidegger places all the emphasis on being-one rather than being-opposed. In other words, on Heidegger’s reading it is not the opposition that is fundamental and brings out the unity, but rather the unity that is fundamental and makes possible the opposition. Up and down are opposed because they are one, rather than

being one because they are opposed. If dialectic seeks unity only in and through opposition, i.e., if it can come to know what something is only in and through opposing one logos to another, then the speech of Heidegger's Heraclitus is fundamentally undialectical in seeking to name/show directly and immediately the Logos as that which gathers and unifies. And Heidegger's characterization of the Logos clearly emphasizes its role of gathering and unifying at the expense of its frequent identification in Heraclitus with War and Strife.¹⁵

2) If Heraclitus characterizes the Logos as common and available to all, he also identifies its remoteness to us and thus our inability to grasp it. Heidegger in rightly insisting on the first point does not entirely neglect the second. However, his interpretation goes out of its way to eliminate any fundamental gap, break, or unbridgeable (or even bridgeable) distance between us and the Logos. If dialectic assumes that what it seeks to say must always evade any attempt to say and show it directly, Heidegger's interpretation rids Heraclitus's thought of any such assumption.

3) But this means that Heidegger's reading of the fragments largely rids them of the riddling, paradoxical and indirect character of their saying. Heraclitus names directly what he intends to say.¹⁶ And in Heidegger's reading most of the emphasis is placed on the individual names or words, not on the statements as such.¹⁷

In the remainder of this paper I wish to look at some of the specific ways in which Heidegger, in his 1943 and 1944 courses, goes about eliminating the dialectical character of Heraclitus' thought, in the different respects mentioned above, in order to see why he feels the need to do so, why, in other words, he finds dialectic in Heraclitus an 'embarrassment.'

15. At one point in the 1966/67 Heraclitus seminar with Eugen Fink, Heidegger revealingly objects to Fink's talk of a movement "in which everything moves throughout everything through opposites": "But may we here speak of opposites or of dialectic at all? Heraclitus knows neither something of opposites nor of dialectic" (11). To this strange suggestion that Heraclitus knows nothing of opposites, Fink sensibly responds: "True, opposites are not thematic with Heraclitus. But on the other hand, it cannot be contested that from the phenomenon he points to opposites" (*Heraclitus Seminar 1966/67*, trans. Charles H. Seibert [University of Alabama Press, 1979], 11).

16. Stressing the need for a reading of Heraclitus that is sensitive to his fragmentary style, does not aim to make present and available the true meaning of his words, and does not privilege unconcealment over concealment (265), Walter Brogan in a note charges Heidegger's reading with being "guilty of this tendency to emphasize the gathering together of all of Heraclitus' thought into a clearing ..." ("Heraclitus: Philosopher of the Sign," in *The Presocratics after Heidegger* [Albany: SUNY Press, 1999], 274, n. 6).

17. And he describes as follows what we hear in the *Grundworte* of early thinking: "Was wir da zunächst hören, ist immer dasselbe und fast Eintönige. Aber es ist der Grundton jenes anfänglichen Denkens der Griechen" (298).

Heidegger on Dialectic

First it is worth noting some of the passages in these courses where Heidegger explicitly insists that Heraclitus' thought is not dialectical. The traditional reference to Heraclitus as "the Obscure" leads Heidegger to reflect on the relation between light and dark in a way that ultimately deems inappropriate any talk of a mere 'relation' here. Heidegger, asking us to imagine light so bright that it blinds us, asserts: "Much more 'is' the dark in its essence the light and the light 'is' in its essence the dark [das Dunkle in seinem Wesen das Lichte und das Lichte 'ist' in seinem Wesen das Dunkle]" (33). What Heidegger is explicitly opposing here is any attempt to interpret such oppositions in terms of 'dialectical thinking' which he takes to mean, since Plato and especially since the metaphysics of German Idealism, "the thinking together of contradictions in a higher unity [das Zusammendenken der Gegensätze in einer höheren Einheit]" (34). This dialectic Heidegger contemptuously dismisses as mere "idle talk" (*Gerede*), as a "fast vehicle" (*eilige Fahrzeug*) found tempting by those who do not really want to think. The reason for this contempt is that dialectic in merely opposing proposition to proposition in the search of a higher synthesis remains completely stuck in the logic of the proposition and therefore unable to think the phenomenon as it shows itself in and from itself. Heidegger later asserts, perhaps in response to some consternation caused by his comments, that his intention is not to criticize and that he is not taking dialectic lightly (42). But if he does not take dialectic lightly, that is because he takes it as serious danger. Heidegger's description of dialectic both in the passage just cited and on pp. 40–41 shows that he has Hegel's dialectic primarily in mind and does not seem to have much or any application to Plato.¹⁸ Yet Heidegger in the context is clearly unconcerned with the difference between one type of dialectic and another. The point on which he insists, and which is the most important in the present context, is that "The word of original thinking is an essentially different one from the language of dialectic" (*Das Wort des anfänglichen Denkens ist ein wesenhaft anderes als die Sprache der Dialektik*, 42).

When Heidegger turns to fragment 123: "φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ," he observes that it appears to contain a contradiction: the emerging (*das Aufgehen*), which is how Heidegger interprets φύσις, is a going-under, a withdrawing into concealment (*ein Untergehen*, 111). Then Heidegger refers to attempts "to follow the model of Hegelian thought in interpreting even Heraclitus' thought 'dialectically' [das Denken Heraklits 'dialektisch' auszulegen]," since dialectic "thinks the unity of the mutually contradictory and sublates the

18. On Heidegger's critique of Plato's dialectic and the failure of this critique to keep Plato distinct from Hegel, see my *Plato and Heidegger: A Question of Dialogue* (Penn State U Press, 2009), especially 264–67.

contradiction as contradiction [die Einheit des Sichwidersprechenden denkt und den Widerspruch als Widerspruch aufhebt] ...” (112). Heidegger’s response is again to dismiss contemptuously these “evasions into dialectic [Auswege in die Dialektik]” as being “indeed an evasion [Ausweg], a flight [eine Flucht] and a cowardice of thinking [eine Feigheit des Denkens], i.e., a retreat before being, which here lights itself [ein Ausweichen vor dem Sein, das hier sich lichtet]” (112). Again it is Hegel’s dialectic that is the main point of reference; again what is opposed to dialectic, with its playing of contradictory propositions against each other, is the thinking/naming/unconcealing of being in its self-showing.¹⁹

Finally, in characterizing Heraclitus’ λόγος as both absent and present (an “abwesende Anwesenheit”), a characterization to which we will return later, Heidegger asserts that this supposed contradiction cannot be overcome dialectically. Heraclitus, he tells us, “knew nothing of the sublating dialectic [wußte nichts von der aufhebenden Dialektik]” (318). Here again the reference point is Hegel and his dialectic of absolute self-consciousness. Heidegger then states categorically and without ambiguity his position on the relation between Heraclitus and dialectic: “To interpret Heraclitus dialectically is even more impossible than to interpret Aristotelian metaphysics with the help of the scholastic theology of Thomas Aquinas” (318).

Unity of the opposites

We thus see that in denying that Heraclitus’ thought is dialectical in any way, Heidegger refuses to see light/dark, emergence/withdrawal, presence/absence, as opposites of the kind that would allow for any kind of dialectical mediation, instead insisting that these opposites are “the same.” That the opposites are one is doubtless what Heraclitus himself says, but that they are one by being “the same” rather than by being brought asunder and set against each other is a view much harder to square with Heraclitus’ fragments. Heidegger, in short, appears to suppress opposition, difference and strife in Heraclitus in favor of a self-same unity.

One example of this tendency is Heidegger’s characterization of the goddess Artemis. According to Heidegger, Artemis is the divinity most closely associated with Heraclitus’ thought. This is shown by her opposed attributes: she is both the goddess of birth and light and the goddess of death and darkness. Yet while Heidegger therefore interprets her as the appearance of contradiction (Wider-spruch), he qualifies this by taking contra-diction

19. For a sensitive and sympathetic account of Heidegger’s interpretation of fr. 123, see Bernard Freyberg, “Heidegger’s Heraclitean Comedy,” *Research in Phenomenology* 37 (2007): 254–68.

here to mean things being turned-towards each other (das Gegenwendige) (26). Heidegger thereby eliminates the “diction” that would make the contra-diction the opposition of propositions and eliminates the “contra” in favor of a much more ambiguous “against” as in “leaning against.” To some extent Heidegger’s interpretation is unobjectionable: Heraclitus does speak of what is borne apart coming together. However, Heidegger’s reading seems to eliminate the coming-apart in favor of the coming-together.

Fragment 8 is one place where Heraclitus expresses most clearly his central idea that coming-apart is the best and even only genuine form of coming together: “τὸ ἀντίξουν συμφέρον καὶ ἐκ τῶν διαπερόντων καλλίστην ἀρμονίαν καὶ πάντα κατ’ ἕριν γίνεσθαι.” In Tom Robinson’s translation,²⁰ which provides the context and brackets the parts not necessarily Heraclitus’ own words (a question that need not concern us here),²¹ we read: “[Heraclitus said that] what opposes unites, [and that the finest attunement stems from things bearing in opposite directions, and that all things come about by strife].” Heidegger’s translation, while by no means incorrect, has a different emphasis: “Going-in-the-opposite-direction [Das Gegen-fahren] a bringing-together [ein Zusammenbringen] and from the bringing-apart [aus dem Auseinanderbringen] a radiant joining [die eine strahlende Fügung]” (145). In his interpretation Heidegger insists that this bringing-together is not the cobbling together of things that are foreign to each other but is instead *phusis* and its “emergent, lightening essence [aufgehenden lichtenden Wesen]” (146). Within this *phusis* essences encounter, meet and co-determine each other. Here, as elsewhere, Heidegger appears to hear “Gegen-fahren”²² as a traveling towards each other so as to meet and “Gegeneinander” as a leaning upon and against each other. What is missing is any sense of opposition, of strife (a part of the fragment Heidegger leaves out) as being what unites.

Another important fragment in this context, and one mentioned earlier in the context of Heidegger’s interpretation of the word διαφερόμενον in the 1951 essay, is fragment 51 which states how people do not ξυνιᾶσιν ὅκως διαφερόμενον ἑαυτῶ συμφέρεσθαι; in Robinson’s translation: “They do not understand how, while differing from (or: being at variance) (it) is in agreement with itself.” In the 1943 course Heidegger does not translate διαφερόμενον as *austragen*, “carrying out,” as in the later essay, but rather as *Sichauseinanderbringen*, “bringing itself apart.” And Heidegger’s translation of the entire phrase seems more faithful to the spirit of what Heraclitus says

20. *Heraclitus: Fragments* (University of Toronto Press, 1987).

21. See the helpful discussion in Jean-François Pradeau, *Héraclite: Fragments* (Paris: Flammarion, 2004), 227–28.

22. Cf. Charles Kahn’s translation of “counter-thrust” (*The Art and Thought of Heraclitus* [Cambridge U Press, 1979], 62).

than anything in the later essay: “People do not bring together [Nicht zusammenbringen] how the bringing-itself-apart should come to presence [wie das Sichauseinanderbringen *wesen* soll], in that it (in the bringing-apart of itself [im Auseinanderbringen seiner selbst] brings itself together with itself [sich mit sich zusammenbringt]” (147). What is odd here is the introduction of “coming to presence” (if that is the proper way of understanding Heidegger’s verb *wesen*) which is nowhere in the Greek, and the implication that we have one self-same thing (or rather: way of being or essence) agreeing with itself.²³ Thus again, despite the recognition of bringing-apart, the emphasis is ultimately on something coming to presence in its self-sameness.²⁴

When Heidegger turns to the reference to the bow and the lyre (the attributes of Artemis) in the last part of fragment 51, he provides the following interpretation: “It belongs to the essence of the bow that while its ends indeed pull apart, they yet also and at the same time in this pulling-apart pull back towards each other [zueinander zurückgespannt sind]” (152). This interpretation again seems unobjectionable in itself, but when Heidegger applies what is said here to the opposition already discussed between *phusis* as “das Aufgehen” and its going-under (*Vergehen*) and self-concealing (*Sichverbergen*), the emphasis is again on their self-sameness, and their reaching towards each other and coming to presence together, rather than on their pulling apart: “Insofar as emergence [das Aufgehen] and self-concealing [das Sichverbergen] grant each other the grace of presencing (sich die Gunst des Wesens gewähren), *is* the joining [die Fügung] of self-concealing in emergence, which at the same time joins emergence to self-concealing [zugleich das Aufgehen in das Sichverbergen fügt]” (153). Yet lest this be thought of as a joining of what is separate, Heidegger proceeds: “What emergence is is the same [Das Selbe] as self-concealing, i.e., going-under” (153). The unity of opposites in Heraclitus can of course not be thought of as the merely external joining of two separate, independent things. But the question is whether their unity, their oneness, is to be understood as sameness or, on the contrary, as difference and opposition. The problem with Heidegger’s reading is that it appears to make the unity prior to the opposition rather than seeing it as constituted by it.

23. According to Kahn, “The force of the neuter is one of generalization: this pattern applies to the universe as a whole and to every organized portion thereof” (197).

24. This fragment proves, according to Heidegger, that “Heraklit den Unterschied und das unmittelbar nie Vereinbare des gewöhnlichen Meinens und des wesentlichen Denkens kennt” (148–49). And Heidegger suggests that this difference is grounded in the difference between beings and Being (150) rather than in any question of psychology.

Our relation to the Logos

The question of the exact nature of the ‘joining’ or harmony of what is opposed is not unrelated to the next question to which we must turn: if and how this harmony can be *known*. If the harmony is constituted by the opposition, if it has no self-same presence but *is* strife and difference, it could hardly show itself to our gaze as such, distinctly and independently of the oppositions that do themselves appear. If on the other hand, the harmony is a unity with its own self-same presence beyond and despite the strife and difference, then it would indeed be possible for us, at least in theory, to see it. What must at this point be our suspicion that Heidegger will take the second alternative is confirmed by his otherwise surprising interpretation of fr. 54: ἄρμονίη ἀφανῆς φανερῆς κρείττων. Here Heraclitus is clearly characterizing the harmony of what is opposed, as distinct, presumably, from the harmony of unanimity and agreement, as ἀφανῆς. The harmony of two things that are alike, or even in essence the same: that is a clearly visible and evident harmony. But the harmony of things that oppose and contradict each other: how could that possibly be seen? Yet Heidegger, in translating ἀφανῆς as *unscheinbare* (“inapparent”), insists that it does not mean *unsichtbare* (“invisible”). This is because he insists that *phusis*, with which he justifiably identifies the harmony, is on the contrary “precisely what is originally seen [das anfänglich Gesichtete], even though it is not at first and for the most part genuinely looked at [eigens Erblickte], indeed often not at all” (143). Thus the invisibility of the harmony is a qualified one: not visible *often* and not visible in the way in which most people try to see it. Thus Heidegger at one point paraphrases ἀφανῆς as “not coming into objective appearing [nicht in den gegenständlichen Vor-schein kommend]” (143). If the harmony is ἀφανῆς, this is only in the sense that it is not visible as an object and therefore cannot be seen by ordinary perception and understanding. As for the fragment according to which φύσις loves to hide, Heidegger insists that this is not the cause of its being ἀφανῆς: the cause is instead the fact that it is “more open and available [offener] ... than anything that is directly available [als jedes geradehin Offenkundige]” (143). Heidegger can thus proceed to conclude that “φύσις is the unapparent appearing [das unscheinbare Scheinen]” (144). This interpretation must strike one as highly strange: ἄρμονίη as φύσις is ἀφανῆς because, if we are to believe Heidegger, it is more genuinely visible and open to us than anything else.²⁵ What is crucial to note here is why

25. Of course, φύσις for Heidegger is not visible in the way an object is visible, is not visible as an *idea*, but instead is visible in a way that is simultaneously a self-occultation: see Ignasi Boada i Sanmartín, “Heidegger lector d’Heràclit: Repensar la Veritat,” *Comprendre* 1 (1999): 198–20. What concerns me here is Heidegger’s insistence that it is nevertheless visible or apparent and immediately so (i.e., not indirectly by way of any dialectic).

Heidegger *needs* this interpretation. Recall that on the ‘poetic’ interpretation of language, the essence of language is to let something show itself in its own self-presence. It is thus absolutely essential to this interpretation that being, and therefore in Heraclitus’ terms ἁρμονίη and φύσις, be a *phenomenon*: what shows itself. If being is not a phenomenon, if the ἁρμονίη really is invisible and φύσις really does love to hide itself, then the only language capable of addressing being would be an indirect, negative and even—horror of horrors!—dialectical language.

One can therefore see Heidegger throughout the courses of the 1940s interpreting away any suggestions in the fragments that the λόγος for Heraclitus is in any way unavailable or inaccessible. Especially significant in this regard is a fragment which Heidegger himself recognizes to be in apparent contradiction with this fragment 50 or, more specifically, with fragment 50 on his reading. This is fragment 45 which reads, in Robinson’s translation: “One would never discover the limits of the soul, should one traverse every road—so deep a λόγος [Robinson has “measure”] does it possess.” The contradiction Heidegger sees is made especially clear in the following passage: “The same human λόγος which, according to fragment 50, is destined to ὁμολογῆν and thus to the outgoing self-collecting [zum hinausgehenden Sichsammeln] upon the Λόγος, this same λόγος prevents man, according to 45, from even arriving at the starting points of his essence [die Ausgänge seines Wesens: Heidegger’s interpretation of ‘limits’] and thus achieving the appropriate relation [den gemäßen Bezug] to the Λόγος” (316). If Heidegger spends a great deal of time on this apparent contradiction, this is because it poses a serious problem for his reading. Recall that according to this reading, while the human λόγος does not produce the Λόγος, they are still essentially the ‘same’: the way in which the human λόγος gathers beings into their being is the ‘same’ as the way in which the Λόγος gathers them. Yet according to fr. 45, the human λόγος reveals an immeasurable and unfathomable depth that puts a direct relation to the Λόγος or Being, much less a self-sameness, beyond its reach.²⁶ What, then, is Heidegger’s solution? Probably the clearest statement of it is the following: “Seen from the perspective of the human λόγος, it is indeed related to the Λόγος, but cannot arrive at it [kann aber nicht zu ihm gelangen]. Seen from the perspective of the Λόγος, it is indeed

26. Of course, one could see the unfathomable depth of the human logos as being precisely what identifies it with the logos of the universe. As Kahn remarks, “A *logos* so profound and limitless can scarcely be distinct from the universal *logos*, according to which all things come to pass” (130). But then the problem for Heidegger would be that in this case the limits of neither *logos* could ever be reached and thus made present to a human saying. In contrast, Pradeau insists that the *logos* at issue here is not at all the *logos* of the universe and translates it as ‘connaissance’ (282).

in some way present [irgendwie gegenwärtig] to the essence of man, without however being genuinely present [eigentlich anwesend] to man" (317). This solution appears merely to grant the problem: despite what Heidegger appears to suggest elsewhere, there is after all a profound gap, a profound absence separating the human λόγος from the Λόγος, so that one can indeed speak only of a relation here. Heidegger later interprets the limit suggested by fragment 45 as being that "man does not arrive at the starting-points of his essence [die Ausgänge seines Wesens], but remains imprisoned in the relation to beings [eingesperrt bleibe in den Bezug zum Seienden], without giving thought to Being [ohne das Sein zu gedenken]" (323). If this were always and necessarily the case, it is hard to see how the ὁμολοεῖν as Heidegger has interpreted it could be at all possible. This is why in what follows Heidegger must imply that what he finds described in fragment 45 is not always or necessarily the case. For example, listen carefully to the language of the following sentence: "Despite the fact that man, *ordinarily and through his own powers in his every day activity and comportment* [gewöhnlich und von sich aus in seinem alltäglichen Tun und Verhalten], does not arrive at the starting-points of his essence, the possibility is still granted him of perceiving the Λόγος, which in all absence remains presence [der bei aller Abwesenung Gegenwart bleibt, zu vernehmen]" (324, my emphasis). All of the qualifications that Heidegger makes here are of course nowhere to be found in fragment 45. He can justify them only by appealing to fr. 50, which tells us to listen to the Logos, and by claiming that fragments 50 and 45 are not only compatible, but require each other. But we could just as well use fragment 45 to question Heidegger's interpretation of listening to the Λόγος as saying the same as the Λόγος. Perhaps there is more straining, more dissonance, more mishearing in this hearing than Heidegger's interpretation allows.

What Heidegger wants to consider achievable here is further clarified in his comments on fr. 115: "ψυχῆς ἐστὶ λόγος ἑαυτὸν αὖξων": "The soul's λόγος is one that increases itself" (354). Heidegger comments: "The way in which the human λόγος becomes richer is not through the growing influx of beings, but rather by the ordinarily absent presence [die gewöhnlich abwesende Gegenwart] 'of Λόγος', i.e., of Being itself, becoming a present one" (336). But the suggestion of fragment 45, along with the other fragments being presently considered, is that for Heraclitus such a transformation of absence into presence, like the making of what is invisible visible, is not possible. Heidegger must turn Heraclitus into a phenomenologist in order to avoid making him into a dialectician. It is significant that while Heidegger at first speaks in this context of a "Zwiespalt," a split or discord in man's relation to being and beings, he later retracts this word and substitutes for it the word *Zwiefalt*: there is only an 'ambiguity' or 'two-sidedness' in man's relation to

being and beings. Heidegger's acknowledged motive for this change is the fear that the word *Zwiespalt* could give the impression that "there is a lack of concord [ein Mangel an Einklang]" (324). And the reason Heidegger wants to avoid giving the impression of discord in our relation to being and beings is that such a characterization of the relation would open the way for dialectic. Thus at one point he characterizes the danger to be avoided as that of "thinking only of division [Entzweiung], of grasping this as 'contradiction' ['Gegensatz'], and setting it right dialectically [zurechtzubiegen]" (344). But perhaps, and even more than perhaps, the harmony that for Heraclitus characterized the Λόγος and the harmony that characterizes our relation to the Λόγος, or ὁμολογεῖν, are essentially, inescapably and constitutively discordant. In this case only dialectic could do justice to this discord, though not the Hegelian dialectic with which Heidegger seems obsessed and which seeks to sublimate the contradictions or set them right.²⁷

Yet Heidegger's reading reaches the limits of plausibility, and even transgresses them, when he turns to a fragment in which Heraclitus appears to reflect explicitly on the yawning gap that sunders the λόγος from us and all things, despite our attempt to listen to it and despite its being the λόγος of all things. This is fragment 108, according to which what is necessary to know is ὅτι σοφόν ἐστι πάντων κεχωρισμένον: what is wise as set apart from all (there are questions about what exactly the correct Greek text is, but for our purposes here we can simply follow Heidegger's reading). Since Heidegger himself identifies what is σοφόν here with the Λόγος, and I believe rightly,²⁸ this fragment would appear to say that the Λόγος is set apart from all things.²⁹ Heidegger strongly objects to such a reading. He argues, first, that to characterize the Λόγος as separated is to characterize it as an Absolute existing independently and thus to inaugurate metaphysics (331–34). Such an argument is hardly convincing because there is no reason why one

27. For good accounts of the difference between Heidegger's and Hegel's readings, see Dennis J. Schmidt, "On the Obscurity of the Origins," in *Philosophy Today* 26/4 (1982): 322–31; and Sanmartín, 201–05.

28. Robinson rightly draws attention to fragment 32 where the σοφόν is that which is unwilling and willing to be called Zeus (152). I am therefore more than a little puzzled by Pradeau's assumption that the only two possible meanings of σοφόν in fr. 108 are 'la personne savante' or 'le savoir'; choosing the latter translation, he interprets the fragment as making a sceptical point about the gap between knowledge and all things (255). Kahn appears at first to take σοφόν to mean 'the wise man', but then also allows it to mean 'wisdom' or 'a unique divine principle of the universe' (115).

29. As Kahn observes, the πάντων could refer to 'all men,' in which case the meaning would be that wisdom is beyond the reach of human beings (115). Kahn rightly insists on letting be the ambiguity between "the wise is beyond all things" and "the wise is beyond all men." Note how in preserving the ambiguity we would have an explanation of how both the human *logos* and the cosmic *logos* are unfathomable.

could not speak of a separation here without interpreting this separation metaphysically. Heidegger's second argument is that this interpretation is incompatible with the understanding of Λόγος that has emerged above: "How should the Λόγος come to presence [wesen] as the One, as that which originally unites every singular thing [als das ursprünglich alles einigende Einzige], if it, the Λόγος, is what is cut-off or separated [das Abgesonderte]?" (334) This is a problem only if one understands 'separation' here crudely as the separation of two things rather than as a discord or dissension that holds apart and sets against.

Yet the major obstacle for Heidegger appears to be the word χωρίζειν: what could this word mean except dividing, separating, re-moving? Heidegger's reply is that these translations are in fact 'untrue' [unwahr] because they suppress what is *named* in the verb: the χώρα. (Note this reduction of a verb to a name). Χώρα in turn Heidegger interprets as the 'region' [Gegend] that first makes possible any places [Orte] (335). He therefore insists that there is no violence in interpreting χωρίζειν as meaning: "to bring into a surrounding surrounding [in eine umgebende Umgegend], into a region [Gegend] und from out of this region to allow coming to presence [anwesen lassen]" (336). Nor is there any violence in suggesting that "a κεχωρισμένον is always according to its essence not and not only something removed [das Weggestellte], but rather what appears from out of a region, from out of its own region [aus einer und seiner Gegend her Erscheinende]" (336). With these 'non-violent' interpretations in place, and with the additional claim that κεχωρισμένον is not to be understood passively but medially, Heidegger finally arrives at the following interpretation of fragment 108: "The πάντων κεχωρισμένον as said of Λόγος does not mean: what is re-moved [Weggestellte] and sundered [Abgesonderte] from all, but rather what brings itself towards [sich entgegen Bringende] all things as their overall present region [als dessen Gegend überhaupt gegenwartend] in the manner of a preserving gathering [in der Weise des wahrenen Versammelns]. The Λόγος is, as the originally preserving gathering, the presence that encounters in the manner of a region [die gegendhaft entgegende Gegenwart], in which what arises [das Aufgehende] and decays [Vergehende] is present and absent [anwest und abwest]" (338). Thus what the fragment appears to describe as the separation of the Λόγος turns out to be the full presence of the Λόγος. The only kind of 'negation' Heidegger will acknowledge here is that the Λόγος "regions from out of itself and can never be reckoned or achieved from the standpoint of an isolated being or even of all beings together" (338). But that of course is hardly a limit when the Λόγος can be addressed and made visible directly without the detour through beings. If the word κεχωρισμένον has been made to say the opposite of what it appears to say, one must wonder if Heraclitus

is not here being turned into his opposite. Heidegger acknowledges that his interpretation must strike others as “strange” [brefremden] and “arbitrary” [willkürlich], but as usual he attributes this perception to the domination of the metaphysical perspective: as if, again, the only alternative to Heidegger’s reading were to interpret the Λόγος as separated in the sense of God the Absolute. Especially revealing, however, is the defense that his reading rests not only on an interpretation of all the fragments, but also on what Anaximander and Parmenides say about the being of beings! (339)³⁰ Anything *distinctive* of Heraclitus’ thought has indeed been lost.³¹

One final interpretation to be considered in this context is Heidegger’s interpretation of fragment 1: an interpretation found only in a draft for the 1944 course and not in the final version actually delivered. This is the fragment that begins: τοῦ δὲ λόγου τοῦδ’ ἔόντος ἀεὶ ἀχύνετοί γίγνονται ἄνθρωποι ...: “Of the λόγος which is always, always are men uncomprehending.” I translate the ἀεὶ twice since it is ambiguous: it can be taken either with the λόγος, which in this case is said to be always, or with men, who in this case are said to be always uncomprehending. Since which option is correct is absolutely undecidable from the text, it seems plausible that, as Robinson (74) and Kahn (93–94) suggest,³² the ambiguity is intentional and we are meant to take the ἀεὶ with both what precedes it and what follows it. Heidegger, however, as we should expect by now, not only does not, but cannot allow that the ἀεὶ be taken with ἀχύνετοι, since this would mean that men were always in some sense uncomprehending of the Λόγος.³³ Furthermore,

30. In a first version of his text included by the editor, Heidegger translates πάντων κεχωρισμένον as “von allem Geschiedenes”, though he still insists that “Es ist nicht getrennt, im Gegenteil, es ist das Nahe in allem Nächsten—aber als dieses ist es unwechselbar einzig, unvergleichbar, durch keine Vermittlung zu erreichen, durch keinen Ausgleich auf Umwegen und mit Vorbehalten zu erschleichen” (393).

31. When Eugen Fink, in the 1966/67 seminar on Heraclitus, interprets κεχωρισμένον as meaning that the σοφόν “holds itself separated from πάντα, while still encompassing them,” Heidegger objects: “κεχωρισμένον [set apart] is the most difficult question with Heraclitus. Karl Jaspers says about this word of Heraclitus: ‘Here the thought of transcendence as absolutely other is reached, and indeed in full awareness of the uniqueness of this thought’ (*Die grossen Philosophen*, Bd. I, S. 634). This interpretation of κεχωρισμένον as transcendence entirely misses the point” (*Heraclitus Seminar 1966/67*, 25).

32. Pradeau in contrast insists on taking the ἀεὶ with ἔόντος (264–65) and his decisive reason is an interpretative one: that human beings *can* come to know the λόγος, as must indeed be the case on Pradeau’s admittedly deflationary interpretation of this λόγος as ‘explication.’

33. Yet in the 1996 seminar at Le Thor Heidegger reverses himself, arguing that the ἀεὶ should be taken with what follows it rather than with what precedes it (1). But this is not because Heidegger now wants to insist on humans being *always* uncomprehending; in fact, nothing is made of this point. Instead, his motive is the negative one of *not* wanting to read the ἀεὶ with “being.” This is because he does not see “being” as qualifying the λόγος (as in: “The λόγος is eternally”) but rather as corresponding to it (as in: “Of the λόγος, of being, humans are always

in his translation Heidegger must insert a clause to qualify and relativize the incomprehension: “men arrive (through their own powers and in their inconstant fleeting way, only) at the point, that they do not bring it [the Λόγος] together [Heidegger’s interpretation of ‘understand’]” (400). Thus any incomprehension here not only does not occur always, but occurs only when human beings are focused on themselves in their ordinary business. Again Heidegger must deny the existence of any fundamental gap here between us and the Λόγος, with again the pretext that any such gap would be a subject/object gap and thus metaphysics, since such a gap would allow dialectic to take over from the silent-saying-the-same (ὁμολογεῖν).]

If we were all always in some way uncomprehending of the Λόγος, both before hearing it and after, as fragment 1 continues to say, and if the Λόγος as the σόφον were separated from all things, then all we would be capable of is *philo-sophia*, not *sophia*. Striving would then replace ὁμολογεῖν. Interestingly, in contrast to the text cited earlier, Heidegger in the 1943 course does not hesitate to characterize early thinking in Heraclitus as a *philia tou sophou*, or ‘philosophy’ (24). Yet it becomes apparent later in the course that the *philia* is here not understood by Heidegger as a longing for something that may never be fully attainable. He instead at one point interprets *philo-sophia* as “friendship [Freundschaft] for what is to be thought [für das Zu-denkende] ...” (129). Heidegger then a few pages later surprisingly identifies the “grace” (Gunst) that defines friendship with ἔρις, but only because he defines ἔρις as grace and thereby disassociates it from any kind of strife: “Grace is the fundamental trait [der Grundzug] of ἔρις, of conflict [Streits], so long as we think this in an original manner [anfänglich] and not immediately and only represent it as discord [den Hader] and conflict [den Zwist] from the perspective of an adverse disgrace and bad grace [aus dem Widrigen der Ungunst und der Mißgunst]” (133). Thus Heidegger also refers a little later to “the originally unifying unity of grace [der ursprünglich einigenden Einheit der Gunst] ...” (136). In short, philosophy is being at one with the wise, graced by it and free of discord and conflict. It is *philia* in the sense of the concord or *Einklang* of which we have seen Heidegger speak. In the 1944 course, Heidegger claims that φρονεῖν, thinking, is “care [die Sorgfalt] for σοφία, is concern [die Sorgsamkeit]—φιλία τῆς σοφίας—is philosophy in the original pre-metaphysical sense” (373). While the reference to care might suggest some distance, some threat of loss, what Heidegger clearly has in mind is care in the sense of caring for what has been entrusted to one, that

uncomprehending”). And the motivation for this latter reading is itself very revealing: “What is said here would thus be the sameness of λόγος and εἶν, in the sense in which Parmenides likewise says in his poem: ‘For it is indeed the same, both thinking and being’” (2). The motive is again to make Heraclitus say what Parmenides says.

with which one has been graced. We are not here that far from the claim in 1955 that Parmenides and Heraclitus were not philosophers because they were still in *Einklang* with the σόφον.³⁴

The question of the nature of philosophy leads naturally to the question of style. If Heidegger's interpretation of Heraclitus is anywhere near the mark, then why did Heraclitus write in the way he did? Why the indirectness, the riddles, the paradoxes, the contradictions?³⁵ Why not a more direct, univocal and even tautological naming in accord with the "poetic" interpretation of language? Why not, indeed, a style more like that of Parmenides? Here we should turn to fr. 93, which is arguably a commentary on Heraclitus' way of speaking: "The Lord whose oracle is at Delphi neither speaks (λέγει) nor conceals, but gives a sign (σημαίνει)" (fr. 93) Heidegger's interpretation of this fragment in the SS 1943 course is very revealing. He there interprets the σημαίνειν, the "giving-a-sign," not as a degree between unconcealment and concealment but as the *unity* of the two in a more originary "*letting-appear*." The meaning of the fragment is therefore, on Heidegger's translation/interpretation, that the god neither *only* reveals nor *only* conceals, but does *both* inseparably and equiprimordially (GA55, 177–79). But by thus inserting the qualification 'only' into his translation, Heidegger is ruling out the possibility that σημαίνειν should be *neither* showing *nor* concealing, but an alternative to both. Such an alternative would be to speak in such a way that what one says neither shows what one intends nor hides it, but instead indicates or signifies it. When, for example, Heraclitus says that the road up and the road down are one and the same, he is neither showing what their unity is nor hiding it, but rather indicating this unity by way of what appears to be a contradiction. Yet Heidegger insists that the word σημαίνειν in fragment 93 has nothing to do with speech or signification and that one should not see in it any reference to "signs," except in the more originary sense according to which a "sign" is "the self-showing of *phusis*," since "signs" in any other sense have a place only in the "reckoning" of modern metaphysics

34. In agreement with the above is Heidegger's interpretation of the one-word fragment ἀγγίβασις, in a dialogue written in 1945 for which this word serves as the title, not as "Herangehen," in which case it would express the essence of modern science (153), nor as "Annäherung" (in which case it would express the essence of modern philosophy as *love* of wisdom? Heidegger does not say this but it would be consonant with what he does say elsewhere), but rather as "In-die-Nähe-gehen," where *die Nähe* is *die Unverborgenheit des Anwesenden* and "gehen" means "hinein-sich-einlassen" (*Feldweg-Gespräche, Gesamtausgabe 77* [Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1995], 151–56).

35. Joanne B. Waugh has stressed this character of Heraclitus' style: "Heraclitus: The Post-modern Presocratic?" *Monist* 74/4 (1991): 605–23. Ironically, she takes Heidegger, as a representative of a 'postmodern' reading of Heraclitus, to be doing the same thing; as the present paper shows, Heidegger's Heraclitus, if pre-modern, is not at all 'postmodern' in Waugh's sense.

(179–80).³⁶ But is this either/or justified? Must a ‘sign’ be either the direct self-showing of the phenomenon (and thus not a sign at all in any modern sense) or a completely external and arbitrary token that is meant only to *stand for* the phenomenon? Is Heraclitus’ saying, not to mention that of the oracle at Delphi, rightly characterized in *either* way?

The abandonment of poetic saying and the beginning of calculative, technological thinking?

One possible way to bring together the specific questions and objections raised above with regard to Heidegger’s interpretation is to object that in thus ridding Heraclitus’ thought of its “dialectical” character, he turns him into Parmenides. Are not on Heidegger’s reading Heraclitus and Parmenides saying the same (Being as One) and even in the same way (in a saying that names and shows directly without asserting)? This is indeed the case and this is precisely what Heidegger wants. When asked by Jean Beaufret, in the 1973 Zähringen seminar, how he presently understood the relation between Parmenides and Heraclitus, Heidegger gave the following remarkable reply:

From a merely historical perspective Heraclitus represents the first step in the direction of dialectic. From this perspective Parmenides is more profound and more essential (if it is correct that dialectic, as ‘S. u. Z.’ says, is ‘a genuine philosophical embarrassment’). In this regard one must recognize that tautology is the only possible way of thinking what dialectic can only cover up. (GA15, 400)

Heidegger then mentions the possibility of reading Heraclitus from the perspective of the Parmenidean tautology, which would of course mean to save Heraclitus from the dialectic that succeeded him (GA15, 400).³⁷ Heidegger here gives priority to the *tautological* seeing-saying he associates with Parmenides in this seminar, i.e., saying the same of the same (as in “being is”) over the *dialogical* speech that begins with Heraclitus.³⁸ Furthermore, the characterization of dialectic as “covering up” what only tautological thinking discloses makes clear that Heidegger sees in dialectic itself the commencement of the oblivion that will culminate in modern technology.

36. What Heidegger is opposing here is precisely the way in which the passage is usually interpreted. According to Kahn, for example, ‘giving a sign’ “means uttering one thing that in turn signifies another” (123).

37. See the talk of the correspondence between the Parmenidean *to auto* and the Heraclitean *logos* in the Le Thor seminar: trans. 39

38. In contrast to this later reading of Heraclitus, Heidegger’s reading in 1926 emphasizes the role of opposition and negation in Heraclitus’ thought and asserts that “Gegensatzproblem ist seine Leistung” (GA22, 61). He also observes that “Das Gegensätzliche *ist*, der Widerstreit; im *Hegelschen* Sinne das Dialektische selbst” (60). In referring to Hegel’s placing of Heraclitus after Parmenides as a higher level of development, Heidegger at least does not object (60).

This is made even clearer in the 1957 Freiburg lecture series *Grundsätze des Denkens*. There Heidegger claims that the modern characterization of thinking as reckoning is “vorgezeichnet” in *Plato’s* dialectic and then asserts: “Both calculative [rechnende] and dialectical thinking are in their ground the same [im Grunde das Selbe], in that ground, namely, that *der Satz von Grund* names without being able to think its essence” (GA79, 133). What Heidegger in these lectures opposes to this calculative and dialectical thinking is thinking understood as a type of $\nu\omicron\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu$ and saying understood as a silent gathering that does not assert. In the 1944 Heraclitus course itself, Heidegger explicitly identifies the original saying with *silence*:

The preserving gathering of beings as such [Das bergende Sammeln des Seienden als eines solchen] is originally already that relation in which man, silent at first and silent still, perceives [ver-nimmt] the being of beings, beings in their being, beings as such. This silencing of being [Dieses Be-Schweigen des Seins] is the original saying and naming of beings, is the original word which the region of being releases [das entgegnet der Gegend des Seins], is the first answer in which hangs suspended every word that unfolds itself in saying and is sounded in the word of language. (382)

Here we see that to interpret language ‘poetically’ as a gathering, laying-before that lets appear is to interpret its essence as silence. Before I can assert anything of beings, I must have already silently gathered their being and let it appear. Speaking is derivative of a silent saying.³⁹ Heidegger therefore proceeds to make a claim that must surprise and even shock out of context: “λέγειν is originally being-silent [das Schweigen]” (382–83). Correspondingly, “The Λόγος is not the word. It is more primordial [ursprünglicher] than this, it is the foreword to every language. Its address to the essence of man is the silent one of the fore-word [des Vor-worts] which entrusts being in silence to man [das dem Menschen das Sein zu-schweigt]” (383). As we have seen, this account of the essence of λέγειν and Λόγος assumes that being is not ‘invisible’ and is not separated from us, but is a phenomenon and thus directly available. It assumes that being is self-same presence, and thus made manifest only in “tautology,” saying the same of the same, rather than being at its core difference, strife, opposition and as such resistant to any direct saying.

Yet we have seen evidence in Heraclitus’ fragments, and specifically in their resistance to Heidegger’s interpretation, that this early thinker would accept none of these assumptions. This would explain why, if we can apply what

39. On this conception of language as silence, and particularly in its opposition to the conception of language that defines modern logic and modern dialectic, see my “And the Rest is Sigeitk: Silencing Logic and Dialectic in Heidegger’s *Beiträge zur Philosophie*,” *Research in Phenomenology* 38 (2008): 358–91.

Heraclitus says of the oracle at Delphi to his own way of speaking,⁴⁰ he does not simply “say” being, silently or otherwise, but rather speaks in paradoxes, in contradictions, and reveals the truth not “beyond” these paradoxes or contradictions but *in them*. It is, in other words, a *dialectical* speaking that finds the truth not in some lost unity nor in some future synthesis, but in the dialectical play of speech itself. Such a type of speech, I suggest, is neither a silent laying-open or saying of the same, on the one hand, nor a technological reckoning, proving, synthesizing, etc., on the other. But then it is perhaps here that we may find an alternative to the opposition between silent *voêiv* and demonstrative speech at work in Heidegger. And it is perhaps here that we may find that which in Heraclitus’ thought is neither poetic nor unpoetic, but rather philosophical.

For what a different contemporary appropriation of Heraclitus could look like, one can turn to Gadamer’s reading. In revealing contrast to Heidegger, Gadamer emphasizes the opposition within unity that characterizes Heraclitus’ thought. For example, Gadamer at one point remarks: “This is the paradox: he [Heraclitus] wants ‘to open up the confrontation (*auseinandersetzen*)’ of this being-one; and this is the *λόγος* to which it is proper to listen.”⁴¹ This interpretation of Heraclitus as seeking to open up confrontation within being-one is diametrically opposed to what has been seen to be the main thrust of Heidegger’s interpretation: to reduce confrontation and opposition to unity and self-sameness. It is therefore no surprise that Gadamer, again in direct contrast to Heidegger, stresses the dialectical character of Heraclitus’ thought and its anticipation of Plato. Thus, after observing that Heraclitus “seeks in all oppositions the one, and in the one he finds opposition, in fire the flame, in the *λόγος* of the soul, in the one, the true (*ἐν τὸ σοφόν*)” (228), he refers to the dialectic gone mad of the second half of the *Parmenides* and comments that “In this way, Plato is able to take up Heraclitus” (228). Finally, both the affinity and the fundamental difference between Gadamer’s reading and Heidegger’s are clearly expressed in the following sentence with which Gadamer concludes one of his essays on Heraclitus: “However, is

40. Surprisingly, Marcel Conche, in opposition to most interpreters, denies this, claiming that what Heraclitus intends is a contrast between his own speaking of the truth (*legei*) and the oracle, which does not speak the truth but instead only gives signs that must be interpreted (*Héraclite: Fragments* [Paris: PUF, 1986], 150–53). Heraclitus’ *logos*, he insists, does not admit of degrees of interpretation and approximation, but is either heard and understood or not (152). Eugen Fink takes the same view: *Heraclitus Seminar 1966/67*, 50. See in contrast Kahn, 123–24, and Pradeau, 319.

41. “Heraclitus Studies,” trans. Peter Warnek, in *The Presocratics after Heidegger*, ed. David C. Jacobs (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999), 221. See also, “Hegel und Heraklit,” *GW* 7, 36–37; and 39, where he appears to distance himself from Heidegger’s attempt to find in Heraclitus an “ursprachliche Artikulation des Seins.”

Heidegger not right when, questioning back, he discovers a Heraclitus that is behind metaphysics, yet in whom everything still plays itself out? *At the same time, could he not also have found in Plato's dialectic the continuation of this play of thought?*" (242; my emphasis). The present paper shows that if Heidegger did not find this continuation in Plato, this is because he refused to acknowledge this "play of thought," this "dialectic," even in Heraclitus. If in the 1973 seminar cited earlier Heidegger is forced to acknowledge the presence of dialectic in Heraclitus, he can see it only as a betrayal of Heraclitus' true self, i.e., Parmenides.

Our journey can end where it began: at Le Thor, in the south of France. In the 1966 seminar held there it is concluded that "In everything for which λόγος provides the measure, it is indeed a matter of διά, but λόγος is nonetheless never *dialectically* determined, that is, as the polarity of standing opposites. The διαφερόμενον of Heraclitus is much more the unfolding of contraries [recall Heidegger's translation of διαφέρειν as *austragen*] and grounded in the inapparent character [*Unscheinbaren*] of the λόγος" (5). It is then explained that "the contraries correspond to one another" while "The conception of standing opposites presupposes the statement as *proposition*, within which they both appear through the play of negation" (5). Thus it is concluded that "With Heraclitus there is no dialectic—even if his word provides the impetus for this, since, in this sense, what began after him is literally that 'which the morning *first* found'" (6). Here we have in a nutshell the main features of the Heraclitus interpretation Heidegger first developed in the courses held more than two decades earlier. And here is where the questions should begin for us: we who have left the first morning far behind and are deep into the evening. If Heraclitus' dialectical play with paradoxes and contradictions was in fact quite different from the tautological saying of Parmenides, was it therefore the anticipation of modern, technological reckoning? In general, is it right to assimilate all philosophical and scientific thinking to technological reckoning by opposing them to a never-had and probably never-to-be-had unconcealment?⁴² And does not such an opposition miss what is most distinctive of Heraclitus' thought and therefore of philosophy at its inception? All of these questions are of course asking the same thing in different ways: What is philosophy? That is the question made inescapable by the Heraclitus/Heidegger confrontation.

42. On p. 287 of the 1944 course, Heidegger asks a question he rarely asks: "Is the presupposition that the beginning of Western thought holds (berge) within itself the destiny (Geschick) of Western history and therefore determined the truth of this history from the start (vorherbestimmte), is the presupposition that this beginning is of such dignity, an inappropriate one (eine ungemäße)?" His answer: "Ich denke nicht." My answer: "I think so."