

ON THE WAY TO WISDOM IN HERACLITUS

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HERACLITUS OF EPHEBUS thought that the nature of things was hidden but discoverable,¹ and he chastised those who failed to discern the unapparent in the apparent.² We might expect then that Heraclitus would divulge in some way to the hapless many how wisdom is to be got.³ Zeller long ago dismissed such expectation not only as vain, but inappropriate.⁴ More recently Barnes concluded that the "question of how our many observations are to be turned into universal knowledge is never answered in the fragments" (1.149). Most interpreters, however, have found in the fragments some indication of the nature of the way to wisdom, and they fall roughly into three groups. Marcovich and Kirk, among others, maintain that Heraclitus outlines a rational process of analysis by no means mystical or esoteric, which leads to comprehension.⁵ Others, including Guthrie, Jaeger, and Kahn, emphasize intuition rather than observation and analysis as the means to wisdom. Heraclitus' oracular style, his use of

The following works are cited by author's name: Jonathan Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (London 1979), Jean Bollack and Heinz Wismann, *Héraclite ou la séparation* (Paris 1972), W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* 1 (Cambridge 1962), Charles H. Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus* (Cambridge 1979), G. S. Kirk, *Heraclitus: The Cosmic Fragments* (Cambridge 1970), (G. S. Kirk, "Sense and Common Sense in the Development of Greek Philosophy," *JHS* 81 [1961] 105–117 is cited as "Kirk, 'Sense and Common Sense,'") M. Marcovich, *Heraclitus: Greek Text with a Short Commentary* (Merida 1979). Citations of Heraclitus and other pre-Socratic authors are from H. Diels and W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*⁶ (Berlin 1951–52), except where departures from that text are noted.

¹B 123, φύκτις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ; B 54, ἀρμονίῃ ἀφανῆς φανερῆς κρείττων. In the extant literature Heraclitus is the first to think this way. See, for example, Harold Cherniss, "The Characteristics and Effects of Presocratic Philosophy," *JHI* 12 (1951) 319–345, at 333; Bruno Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind*, tr. T. G. Rosenmeyer (Cambridge, Mass. 1953) 220; and Kirk, "Sense and Common Sense," 108. On the getting of wisdom as a quest see Alexander P. D. Mourelatos, "The Real, Appearances and Human Error in Early Greek Philosophy," *Review of Metaphysics* 19 (1965) 346–365, at 352.

²See B 1, 2, 17, 34, 40, 42, 51, 56, 57, and 104. The strident tone of Heraclitus' references to the many lends support to the arguments of Joseph Owens, "The Interpretation of the Heraclitean Fragments," *An Etienne Gilson Tribute*, ed. Charles J. O'Neil (Milwaukee, Wisc. 1959) 148–168, that Heraclitus' scroll was primarily a moral treatise. Concerning Heraclitus' attitude to the many see Bollack and Wismann 12–15.

³Edward Hussey, *The Presocratics* (London 1972) 38.

⁴E. Zeller, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, tr. S. F. Alleyne (London 1881) 2.93–95. Cf. his interpretation of fr. 2, 93, n. 2.

⁵Marcovich 41, n. 6; Kirk 41, 376, "Sense and Common Sense," 108. Unlike Marcovich, Kirk is willing to talk of intuition (43). See also Barnes 63, 67, 72–73, 77–78.

riddle, paradox, word-play, ambiguity, analogy, and so on, work to stimulate insight.⁶ A third group places Heraclitean truth more radically in defiance of rational analysis or justification. Heraclitus is taken to be a prophet expounding a mystery.⁷

A common feature of these various treatments of the Heraclitean way to wisdom is the fairly general level at which the discussion is pitched. Fundamental notions like intuition, insight, rational analysis, and riddle, necessarily employed in such accounts of Heraclitus, are difficult to explicate, and suffer perhaps only a limited degree of precision. This essay contends, nevertheless, that the way in which Heraclitus expected one to search for the unexpected can be set forth more precisely than has hitherto been attempted. Heraclitean wisdom, it is argued here, is attained by a complex analysis of the data of two senses, sight and hearing. This complex analysis involves the proper coordination of aspects of nature designated by names and appropriated by hearing with aspects of nature apprehended by sight. The more specific Heraclitean program for discovery advanced below is important for an understanding of Heraclitus' thought as a whole and sets in bold-face some philosophical convictions of his which provoked and stimulated other thinkers.⁸

I

The Heraclitean path to wisdom, whatever form it takes, begins with the evidence of the senses. Of the B fragments given as authentic by Diels-Kranz seventeen make reference in some way to one or more of the five senses.⁹ The vast majority of references are to hearing and seeing,¹⁰ and, as B 55 states, ὅσων ὅψις ἀκοή μάθησις, ταῦτα ἐγὼ προτιμέω. Heraclitus'

⁶Guthrie 419; cf. 429, 431, 438–439; Werner Jaeger, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers* (Oxford 1947) 120–121; Charles H. Kahn, "A New Look at Heraclitus," *AmPhilQ* 1 (1964) 189–203, at 193, 196, 200; cf. Kahn 99, 105, 106, 270–271; Hermann Fraenkel, "A Thought Pattern in Heraclitus," *The Pre-Socratics*, ed. Alexander P. D. Mourelatos (Garden City, N.Y. 1974) 214–228, at 217–218; and Hussey (above, n. 3) 57–59.

⁷Felix M. Cleve, *The Giants of Pre-Sophistic Greek Philosophy* (The Hague 1965) 1.108; C. J. Emlyn-Jones, "Heraclitus and the Identity of Opposites," *Phronesis* 21 (1976) 89–114, at 99, 114; Uvo Hoelscher, "Paradox, Simile, and Gnomie Utterance in Heraclitus," *The Pre-Socratics*, ed. Alexander P. D. Mourelatos (Garden City, N.Y. 1974) 229–238, at 233; cf. F. M. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy* (New York 1912) 184–193, and *Principium Sapientiae* (Cambridge 1952) 113–116, and Kahn 7.

⁸The following exegesis presumes that the fragments are survivors of a coherent whole and that their interpretation depends on the context which they mutually afford each other. Thus I follow Kirk, "Sense and Common Sense," 190, and Hermann Fraenkel, *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy*, tr. Moses Hadas and James Willis (New York and London 1973) 370, for instance, as opposed to, say, Emlyn-Jones *op. cit.* 112.

⁹B 1, 7, 19, 21, 26, 34, 46, 50, 55, 56, 61, 91, 98, 101a, 107, 108, and 117.

¹⁰Hearing: B 1, 19, 34, 50, 55, 101a, 107, 108, 117; sight: B 21, 26, 46, 55, 56, 101a, 107, 117; smell: B 7, 98; taste: B 61; touch: B 26, 91.

prominent use of λόγος accounts for abundant allusion to hearing, but his coupling of sight and hearing in B 107 and B 101a (if authentic), as well as B 55, is noteworthy. Sight and hearing are picked out and coupled by Greek authors from Homer, whose Sun sees all and hears all.¹¹ Perhaps these authors use sight and hearing in polar opposition to signify the totality of knowledge about the world—the union, possibly, of direct knowledge represented by sight and indirect knowledge by means of hearsay¹²—but the question deserves further study. Sight and hearing specifically may be intended in at least certain instances. Later authors do explicitly separate sight and hearing from the other senses for special treatment. Plato singles out sight and hearing at *Timaeus* 47a–c as boons from God that make philosophy possible for us, and *Phaedo* 65b1–6 and 111b3–4 are the basis for ancient commentators' opinions that the celestial bodies, if sentient as well as intelligent, possess only sight and hearing.¹³ The Aristotelian distinction between living and living well is used by later authors to distinguish sight and hearing from the other senses.¹⁴ St. Augustine, in *De libero arbitrio* 2.7, argues that sight and hearing, unlike the other senses, apprehend common or public objects, that is, objects which several persons can sense simultaneously. In English the coupling of sight and hearing persists in expressions like "Be my eyes and ears at that meeting."¹⁵

The three fragments of Heraclitus which make any kind of reference to touch or taste (B 26, 61, 91) reveal nothing about Heraclitus' views on perception or the uncovering of truth. Of the two fragments mentioning smell, B 98 is apparently concerned with nourishment of souls rather than perception (Marcovich 393–394). As for B 7 (εἰ πάντα τὰ ὄντα καπνὸς γένοιτο, ῥῖνες ἄν διαγνοίεν), Barnes seems to me to strike the right note (147): "In our familiar world, eyes and ears give the basis for knowledge; and even in a radically different world the appropriate senses would be our only ultimate guide." Thus even if Kahn is right (257) and the conditional

¹¹See, for example, Homer *Il.* 3.277, *Od.* 4.322–325, 16.32–33; Hesiod *WD* 9, *Th.* 701; Xenophanes 21 B 24; Epicharmus 23 B 12; Parmenides 28 B 6.7, B 7.4–5; Melissus 30 B 8.10–11, 14; Empedocles 31 B 2.7; Diogenes 64 B 5.23, C 3.2; Democritus 68 B 303.3; Gorgias 82 B 3 (81); Critias 88 B 25.18; Pindar *O.* 6.5, *P.* 1.26; Plato *Phd.* 65b1–6, 111b3–4, *Resp.* 2.367c7–d1.

¹²See Polybius, 12.26e–27, and cf. *Od.* 4.322–325, 8.491, and Gorgias, 82 B 11a (22) (23).

¹³See L. G. Westerink, *The Greek Commentaries on Plato's Phaedo* (Amsterdam 1976–1977) 1.84–87 and 2.60–62, 270, for texts of Olympiodorus and Damascius and references to other authors, especially Proclus.

¹⁴Cf. *de An.* 3.12, 434b22–25, 3.13, 435b19–25, and Ioannis Philoponi in *Aristotelis de anima libros commentaria*, ed. Michael Hayduck (Berlin 1897) 228.21–30.

¹⁵A former colleague says of David Lawrence, founder of *U.S. News and World Report*: "He divided the world into people who get information with their eyes and those who get it through the ear." *Washington Post*, 21 June 1982, *The Washington Post Magazine*, p. 11.

of B 7 is potential rather than counterfactual, smell is not the critical sense in the familiar world; sight and hearing are.¹⁶ But how do sight and hearing function in our familiar world to provide the basis for wisdom?

B 107 speaks of human eyes and ears as witnesses: *κακοὶ μάρτυρες ἀνθρώποισιν ὀφθαλμοὶ καὶ ὠτα βαρβάρους ψυχὰς ἐχόντων*. The probably inauthentic B 101a also calls eyes and ears witnesses (Marcovich 23); the word *μάρτυς* reappears in B 28 and the verb form occurs in B 34.

In Homer *μάρτυς* is associated with sight and hearing. The Homeric witness, often a god, is called upon to combine hearing (of the spoken oath or promise) and seeing (of the actions consequently performed) in order to function as a witness.¹⁷ The value of a witness is that he brings matters into a public and common domain, where deceit and the threat or use of force lose their efficacy.¹⁸ The witness can give testimony regarding what he has heard and seen and thereby ensure truth as a common possession.

Thus Heraclitus' use of *μάρτυρες* in B 107 suits his explicit preference for sight and hearing. It also fits well with his association of wisdom with the common in B 2, 89, and 114.¹⁹ Eyes and ears, as witnesses, provide awareness which is common and shared, rather than private and subject to personal whim or fancy.

These witnesses can be worthless (*κακοί*),²⁰ however, if²¹ their testimony is received by *βαρβάρους ψυχὰς*.²² The soul in some way is responsible for the appropriation of the evidence of sight and hearing. Nussbaum, pointing out that the sense of *βαρβάρους* is the crux of the fragment, argues against a "rather bland and vague" metaphorical interpretation of the barbarous soul as one failing to comprehend the senses accurately. She prefers "the far more interesting statement that your senses will deceive you if you do not have an accurate understanding of your own language" (above, note 21, 10). Nussbaum never considers that Heraclitus makes sight and hearing *μάρτυρες*, however, and that as such they give testimony,

¹⁶Kirk points out (234) that B 7 does not seem to have as its object the sense of smell at all. Both Kirk (235) and Marcovich (420), though in different ways, see this fragment as an indication that the hidden truth must be uncovered by an intelligence over and above the senses. Hades, the locale of B 98, is well separated from our familiar world.

¹⁷*Il.* 3.276–281; cf. 1.338, 2.302, 14.274, 22.255.

¹⁸Hesiod *WD* 370–372; *b. Herm.* 370–374.

¹⁹For a defense of the authenticity of B 89 see Gregory Vlastos, "On Heraclitus," *AJP* 76 (1955) 337–368, at 344–347.

²⁰See Marcovich (47) concerning this rendering of *κακοί* rather than that of "evil" or "pernicious."

²¹See Marcovich 47, Guthrie 415, and Martha C. Nussbaum, "ΨΥΧΗ in Heraclitus, I," *Phronesis* 17 (1972) 1–15, at 9, for *ἐχόντων* as conditional in B 107.

²²D. J. Furley, in "The Early History of the Concept of Soul," *BICS* 3 (1956) 1–18, at 11, notes that this is the earliest extant instance of *ψυχή* in "a purely intellectual context."

testimony which somehow communicates the common to souls that can comprehend. This metaphorical interpretation is straightforward, once the characterization of sight and hearing as witnesses is related to the literal meaning of βαρβάρους (Barnes 148, Ramnoux 38). But can the nature of the relationship between the soul, on the one hand, and sight and hearing, on the other, be made out?

B 55 links sight and hearing to μάθησις: ὅσων ὅψις ἀκοή μάθησις, ταῦτα ἐγὼ προτιμέω. The meaning of perception or experience is usually given to μάθησις here, and the fragment is usually taken to be a general claim about all sense-experience.²³ Such a reading ignores Heraclitus' explicit preference for sight and hearing in the fragments. The structure of B 55 focuses attention on the triad of ὅψις, ἀκοή, and μάθησις. Sight and hearing are the senses which give witness to a soul which must be capable of understanding their testimony. In this context μάθησις in relation to ὅψις and ἀκοή can quite naturally mean the act of learning or the getting of knowledge which constitutes the successful comprehension of the "language" of sight and hearing by the soul. Many parallel instances of a combination of seeing and hearing with an act of learning or a judgement exist in other early Greek authors.²⁴ Given that μάθησις represents an act of mind appropriating the significance of what is taken in of the world by sight and hearing, one might see in ὅψις, ἀκοή, μάθησις, an anticipation of the sophistic triad concerning education, namely, φύσις, μάθησις, ἀσκησις, where φύσις replaces the pair ὅψις and ἀκοή (the discussion of B 1 in section II below argues that sight and hearing make possible an analysis κατὰ φύσιν), and ἀσκησις supplies the sophistic dimension of training and practice.²⁵ In any case, B 107 and 55 indicate that the education of the Heraclitean aspirant to wisdom consists of some kind of intellectual appropriation of the commonly shared data of two senses, sight and hearing.

²³Bollack-Wismann 192; Kirk 61, 281, 376. Raymond A. Prier, in *Archaic Logic: Symbol and Structure in Heraclitus, Parmenides, and Empedocles* (The Hague and Paris 1976), sees here "a special type of sight and hearing . . . obviously related to simple sense perception but at the same time somehow divorced from it," (71). I do not know what Prier means by this, but cf. his 58–59. On page 87 at n. 62 he does urge a stronger sense of μάθησις than perception in general or experience.

²⁴Hesiod WD 9; Xenophanes 21 B 24; Parmenides 28 B 6.6–7, B 7.4–6 (Jaap Mansfeld, in *Die Offenbarung des Parmenides und die menschliche Welt* [Assen 1964] 43, notes that the tongue here signifies the means of speech, not the organ of taste); Melissus 30 B 8 (2); Empedocles 31 B 2.7–8; Critias 88 B 25.18; Sophocles OT 371; Plato *Phd.* 111b3–4, *Resp.* 2.367c7–d1. Cf. Diogenes 64 B 5.23; Gorgias 82 B 11a (34) (35).

²⁵See Protagoras 80 B 3, and Leonard Woodbury, "Aristophanes' *Frogs* and Athenian Literacy: *Ran.* 52–53, 1114," *TAPA* 106 (1976) 349–357, at 351–352; M. J. O'Brien, *The Socratic Paradoxes and the Greek Mind* (Chapel Hill, N.C. 1967) 144, n. 27; Paul Shorey, "Φύσις, Μελέτη, 'Επιστήμη," *TAPA* 40 (1909) 185–201. Cf. Aristotle *Pol.* 7.12, 1332a38–40. I am grateful to the late Professor Woodbury for this suggestion.

II

Heraclitus prefers what comes from μάθησις, but opposes πολυμαθίη.²⁶ Snell points out (above, note 1, 18) that Homer by use of the prefix πολυ- evaluates knowledge in terms of quantity, not intensity: "From this point of view the intensive coincides with the extensive: he who has seen much sufficiently often possesses intensive knowledge." This represents an attitude towards knowledge where, as Mourelatos puts it, "in principle everything will lie open to view, . . . everything can be visualized,"²⁷ and where god and human being know differently only in the former's ability to see more. Penelope tells Eurycleia that she cannot baffle the purposes of the gods even though she is μάλα περ πολύδριν (*Od.* 23.81–82). Prometheus cannot outwit Zeus, even though he is πολύδριν (*Hesiod Th.* 614–616). Hecataeus is wise because of his extensive travels; no human being, however, can see all (see Xenophanes 21 B 34).

Heraclitus proclaims (i) the hiddenness of truth and (ii) the irrelevance of wide-ranging experience. Wisdom is one thing,²⁸ and this single achievement requires the testimony of eyes and ears but not much-seeing and wide experience. B 101, ἐδιζησάμην ἐμειωτόν, suggests a path to knowledge by way of one's personal experience, however limited.²⁹ But which objects of sight and hearing and what kind of intellectual operation lead to the uncovering of truth?

B 1 characterizes men as uncomprehending (ἀξύνετοι), and explains that they are like the unexperienced when they experience words and deeds (ἀπείρουσιν εἰκόασι, πειρώμενοι καὶ ἐπέων καὶ ἔργων). ἀξύνετοι recurs in B 34, where a paradoxical statement similar to that of the γάρ clause of B 1 is formulated. The stem ξυν- of ἀξύνετοι suggests ξυνός, the word used to describe the λόγος in B 2. References to the common abound in the fragments (B 80, 89, 103, 113, and 114), and sight and hearing, as witnesses, provide a basis for the common (above, 306). The stem also suggests the ξυν νόφ of B 114. In addition, it suggests the ξυνίημι in B 51 and

²⁶B 40, 129. See Kahn 113, Marcovich 68, and Kirk 390, on the authenticity of B 129. Cf. R. S. W. Hawtrey, "Παν-Compounds in Plato," *CQ* 33 (1983) 56–65, on "Plato's general dislike of promiscuous plurality, excess and variety" (56).

²⁷Alexander P. D. Mourelatos, "Heraclitus, Parmenides, and the Naive Metaphysics of Things," *Exegesis and Argument*, eds. E. N. Lee, A. P. D. Mourelatos, and R. M. Rorty (Assen 1973) 32–33.

²⁸Marcovich 65: "We might assume that, according to Heraclitus, the achievement of this intelligence or wisdom was not possible without the apprehension of the Logos: the opposite to πολυ- (of πολυμαθίη) could be ἐν contained in fr. 26 (50) and 25 (10), which implies *Logos*."

²⁹διζήμι has two basic meanings: (i) to seek out or look for; (ii) to question or inquire of someone. The second sense has Heraclitus questioning himself, that is, inquiring into his own experience. See *LSJ* s. v. διζήμι and Guthrie 417–418.

συνάψεις (that “beautifully abstract noun”³⁰) in B 10. *ξυν-* conveys the idea of union, connection, a putting together, and the root meaning of *ξυνιήμι* is to bring or set together. When B 51 says that the people οὐ *ξυνιᾶσιν*, it is correct to translate “they do not comprehend” with the root meaning of a uniting or putting together thereby preserved. Thus, the ἀξύνετοι (i) lack the common, which witnesses seek to provide, (ii) lack νόος, and consequently μάθησις, and (iii) fail to make the proper connections.

This absence of the common, of νόος, and of the proper connections is true of men even though they are present to words and deeds of the kind Heraclitus sets forth (τοιούτων, ὁκοίων ἐγὼ διηγέυμαι). Kirk gives the generally accepted view that the phrase καὶ ἐπέων καὶ ἔργων stands in B 1 as a traditional polar expression “not to be taken too literally.”³¹ The phrase is akin to an expression combining saying and doing also used by Heraclitus (B 15, 48, 73, 74, 112—cf. Ramnoux 293–294). This combination of words or things said with deeds or actions performed corresponds to the explicit union of hearing and sight to the exclusion of the other senses in Heraclitus. Scholars tend to see polar opposition in both cases. My proposal is that just as we should take Heraclitus literally in his preference for sight and hearing, so we should take literally the formula καὶ ἐπέων καὶ ἔργων. The allusion to words and deeds in B 1 answers to the preference for sight and hearing: words are heard and deeds or actions are seen.³²

Words and deeds are what Heraclitus sets forth when he distinguishes each given thing³³ according to its nature and tells how it is (καὶ ἐπέων καὶ ἔργων τοιούτων, ὁκοίων ἐγὼ διηγέυμαι κατὰ φύσιν διαιρέων ἕκαστον καὶ φράζων ὅπως ἔχει). The root meaning of διαιρέω is to divide into parts or cut in two (Kirk 41). A literal reading of καὶ ἐπέων καὶ ἔργων gives point to κατὰ φύσιν διαιρέων ἕκαστον: Heraclitus claims to give an analysis κατὰ φύσιν of a thing by dividing that thing into two dimensions proper to it,

³⁰G. S. Kirk, “Heraclitus’s Contribution to the Development of a Language for Philosophy,” *ArchfBegriffsgeschichte* 9 (1964) 73–77, at 73.

³¹Kirk 41; cf. Marcovich 9; Owens (above, n. 2) 160; Kahn 12, 99; Bollack and Wismann 63. See *Il.* 9.443, 15.234; *Od.* 2.272, 15.374–375. Hannah Arendt, in *The Human Condition* (Chicago 1958) 19, 25, emphasizes the heroic character of the couplet; cf. Kahn 99.

³²On the correspondence of sight and action see *Od.* 4.694–695; Hesiod *Th.* 710; Acusilaus 9 B 40a17; Democritus 68 B 194; Thrasymachus 85 B 8; Critias 88 B 25.18. Consider also the Greek virtue of αἰδώς, that sense of shame and self-respect which reminds the virtuous man that his deeds are before the eyes of the community. Ramnoux treats hearing and sight with words and deeds in a rather literal way, but links words to the teachings of sages and poets and seeing to observation of the world. See 38, 53, 55, 57, 76, 173–174, and 218, and the schema on 296. The beginning of Plato’s *Lysis* plays on the hearing of names and speech in general, on the one hand, and visual perception, on the other. *Ly.* 203a6–b1, 204c4–e8.

³³Despite his translation see Marcovich on ἕκαστον (10), and cf. Kirk 33, and Kathleen Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers* (Cambridge, Mass. 1971) 24.

(i) ἔπεα, words (of as yet undetermined kind) which hold of it and which hearing apprehends, and (ii) ἔργα, deeds, actions, or functions, which it manifests to sight primarily (Marcovich 10, 192). This taking apart or division is apparently a condition for the putting together or comprehension which B 1 says human beings commonly fail to achieve.

III

The word ἔπος means generally a word or that which is uttered in words, such as a speech or tale, and its specialized senses include that of a song, oracle, proverb, and (in the plural) epic as opposed to lyric poetry. The prominence of λόγος in the fragments has occasioned much speculation about and weighty claims for the role of language in Heraclitus' thought. In the Heraclitean fragments, however, the only specific references to matters pertinent to language have to do with names and naming, with the exception of the single instance of ἔπος found in B 1 and the recurrent use of λόγος (B 23, 32, 48, and 67).

Marcovich points out that "Heraclitus shared the Greek belief that *name* reveals a great deal of the true φύσις of its object" (192).³⁴ Kirk basically agrees, but limits the revelatory power of a name to some aspect of the nature of the thing named.³⁵ Plato in the *Cratylus* emphasizes that the name reveals a thing's nature³⁶ and suggests the partial and delimiting nature of this achievement by comparing a name to a shuttle which picks out particular threads in a web.³⁷ Heraclitus himself expresses the partial success of the name Zeus in B 32.³⁸ By setting forth καὶ ἐπέων καὶ ἔργων Heraclitus claims to distinguish or to divide each thing in some way into parts according to its nature and tell how the thing is. Thus ἔπεα in the context of B 1 reveal the nature of a thing, but only in part, with ἔργα somehow revealing the complementary side of its nature. The word ἔπος in B 1, then, as revelatory, at least in part, of φύσις seems to be functioning with the more specialized meaning of ὄνομα, in harmony with the confining of Heraclitus' explicit interest in language in the other fragments to

³⁴See 193, n. 1 for references, also Kirk 116–120, Guthrie 446, n. 1, and Leonard Woodbury, "Parmenides on Names," *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, eds. John P. Anton and George L. Kustas (Albany, N.Y. 1971) 155–156.

³⁵Kirk 118. Ramnoux relates name to oracle (291).

³⁶*Crat.* 388b7–c2, 396a5–6, 422d2–3, 428e1–2. Compare Plato's language with φράζων ὅπως ἔχει in B 1.

³⁷ὄνομα ἄρα διδασκαλικόν τί ἐστιν ὄργανον καὶ διακριτικόν τῆς οὐσίας ὥσπερ κερκὶς ὑφάσματος. *Crat.* 388b13–c1.

³⁸Against this Heraclitean background of the partial success of any one name in expressing the nature of what is, consider Parmenides on the single name for the world, 28 B 8.34–41, 53–54, B 9, B 19.3, in conjunction with Woodbury (above, n. 34) 145–162, and Empedocles, 31 B 8, B 9.

names and naming. Words, more specifically, names, which are heard, reveal the nature of a thing in one, partial, way; deeds, which are primarily seen, reveal that nature in another, partial way.

But what type of division of a thing is it which divides in terms of names and deeds? And how does this division lead to a putting-together or comprehension which leads to wisdom? Heraclitus' association of words with hearing and deeds with sight should furnish some clues. This association is not concerned, as, say the *Cratylus* is, with how naming originates and whether names are natural or conventional (Kirk 198). A name for Heraclitus not only expresses the nature of a thing in part but as name it by nature belongs to that thing, just as much as the thing's functioning characteristics do (Marcovich 1, 10, 192). This is clear from B 48, whatever else the fragment means. The division of a thing, then, into a named side or aspect associated with hearing and a functioning side or aspect associated with sight must have to do with the different ways the nature of a thing is authentically manifested by seen activities and heard names.

At least two such differences can be discerned for which evidence from the fragments can be found. One obvious difference is that while seeing requires the presence of the thing, hearing its name does not.³⁹ Thus the dividing of a thing into its constituent aspects of word and deed can be construed as a division of the thing into what is known of it presently in its actual concrete state and context by immediate observation and what is known of it apart from present observation. A second difference is that the heard name, like Plato's shuttle, picks out and fixes a determinate feature of the nature of a thing, whereas sight is incapable of such determination and delimitation. A name functions by excluding meanings other than its own, whereas sight affords a continuous, open-ended experience of something in its complete current circumstances and on-going operation. Thus the division of a thing into words and deeds also suggests statically versus actively presented aspects or faces of the nature of that thing.⁴⁰

By setting forth words and deeds Heraclitus distinguishes a given thing (i) in terms of its current actual life, present to the soul by sight primarily, and its past life, present by names apprehended by hearing and (ii) in terms

³⁹Cf. *Od.* 4.322–325, 8.491, 16.32–33.

⁴⁰Robert Sokolowski, in *Presence and Absence: A Philosophical Investigation of Language and Being* (Bloomington, Ind. 1978) 12–22, discusses how nouns pull elements of a thing out of actual context, as opposed to the expressive function of verbs with regard to action. Whitehead, in *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Natural Knowledge*² (Cambridge 1925), distinguishes events from objects, to the effect that the "continuity of nature is to be found in events, the atomic properties of nature reside in objects" (66). He adds that "we apprehend nature as continuous and we recognize it as atomic" (67). This interpretation of "words and deeds" in Heraclitus is suggesting that names/hearing be related to the atomic and deeds/sight be related to the continuous in the nature of things.

of a characteristic feature of its nature lifted from it in its actual situation and presented in static, delimited terms and its nature as presented in continuous actual functioning. With regard to (ii) it is instructive to note that according to Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 4.5, 1010a 11–15, when Cratylus decided that indeed all is flux, he stopped speaking and only moved his finger. Cratylus was seen but not heard.

Once these parts of a thing are distinguished, Heraclitus suggests in B 1 that a comprehension is possible which constitutes the attainment of wisdom. But is there evidence in the other fragments for this interpretation of B 1?

B 48 reads: τῷ τόξῳ ὄνομα βίος, ἔργον δὲ θάνατος (οὖν is here omitted from the text of Diels-Kranz). With respect to the bow two features are distinguished, name and function. The name presents a fixed determination of the bow's nature, regardless of its actual use. The function is realized and presented in its activity. The consequent combination which the inquirer is expected to make with regard to the bow is unspoken: life and death are one.

B 67 gives a list of names for God and then compares him to a changing mixture of fire and spices named according to its varying scents.

ὁ θεὸς ἡμέρη εὐφρόνη, χειμῶν θέρος, πόλεμος εἰρήνη, κόρος λιμός· ἀλλοιοῦται δὲ ὅκωσπερ (πῦρ), ὁπότεν συμμιγῇ θυώμασιν, ὀνομάζεται καθ' ἡδονὴν ἐκάστου.

The eight words grouped in four pairs of opposites are instances of names for Heraclitus, as the reference to naming in the second part of the fragment makes clear. How these names are related to God (for example, by an "is" of identity or predication) and to one another are matters for discussion (Kahn 278–279, Marcovich 415–417, Kirk 185–187), but certainly a basic point of the fragment is that these names all hold of God equally. It must also be an example of the claim in B 50 that all things are one; that which is day is that which is night which is that which is winter, and so on.

The second half of the fragment is offered to substantiate the first. It presents God as changing (with ἀλλοιοῦται suggesting change more generally than change between opposites exclusively [Kirk 190]) and compares him to a fire mixed with spices. The complex of fire and spices is named according to individual scents, the name picking out and preserving in language the determinate nature of the fire and spice mixture at the time of naming. But the name, expressing a fixed determination, expresses only a feature of the fire's nature for the fire continuously changes in scent and other names are given.

The fragment sets forth two things about the fire, which represent two different but related ways of appropriating its nature: (i) the fire changes and (ii) the fire is named. The naming fastens on determinate phases of the

fire's changing, but the changing fire in its continuing existence, made plain to us in sense-perception, is a single thing whose various phases and aspects are not parts, features, or characteristics actually discrete and discontinuous from one another. These various phases and aspects are picked out and held discrete and fixed by the work of names. Once distinguished, the nature of a thing presented in continuous immediate experience and its nature presented in names can be considered together again to effect the insight that all things are one. This thing called *x* is observed to be *y*, yet *x* is (still) its name; *x* and *y* are one.

B 67 states that God is day and night. Day and night as names have different determinate connotations, and we associate these names with different determinate sense-experiences. But if we look at what we call day, and keep looking at it, putting names and the enterprise of naming temporarily to the side, we continue to look at the same thing, though we end up looking at night. We cannot pick out a point at which day ended and night began, although we might stipulate such a point and include that in our understanding of the names day and night. Day and night are different; names testify to this fact. Yet day and night are the same; continuous immediate experience testifies to this fact. There is a unity of opposites. Burke pointed out that "though no man can draw a stroke between the confines of night and day, yet light and darkness are on the whole tolerably distinguishable."⁴¹ On this reading Heraclitus' way to insight capitalizes on both points and attempts to do justice to both.

The same analysis holds for God as winter and summer, but an additional point is noteworthy. This thing called winter which one experiences is also a day or a night. From a unified experience of what is "out there" various threads are pulled out and maintained by names. Heraclitus suggests a method of analysis whereby one experiences the activity of a thing apart from the names which mark out determinate notes in its activity, and when these names are reconsidered in conjunction with the experienced continuous seamless activity one comprehends that all those things named are really one. Such a procedure is not limited to single pairs of opposites, but as Kahn notes with regard to B 67, "what our sentence adds is the thesis of unity for *all* the pairs" (278). Consequently the procedure is not dependent on temporal continuity for its success in uniting named things, as the day and night or winter and summer examples might suggest. A given thing is sensed while a particular name or description, such as day, is held in abeyance, and it is learned that the very thing which is called day is also called winter.

B 67 calls God war and peace. B 125 and 51 are commonly taken to

⁴¹Quoted by R. E. Allen, *Plato's 'Euthyphro' and the Earlier Theory of Forms* (London 1970) 68.

present unities produced from conflict (Kahn 194–200, Kirk 215–221, 256, Marcovich 127, 157). In these cases tension or strife of parts is the peace of the constant and enduring being of the drink, bow, or harp. There is no question of strife temporally succeeding or being succeeded by peace. When names and the fixity of description are set aside the thing which is experienced in its active life and continuous situation reveals a unity or whole without seams or corners. But this amorphous experience of a thing represented in Heraclitus by sight and deeds and independent of the delimitations of naming is itself, due to this independence, merely a partial reckoning with the nature of the thing. A subsequent combination of names with the functioning whole is required which for Heraclitus suggests that all that is named is actually one and the same. The seeing of the actual life of the given thing when recombined with that thing's names allows a kind of flip-flopping between opposing names—this here before me is peace, but this very thing is strife—in a way similar to the attention shifts in the perception of a figure-ground drawing even though the drawing itself is one and the same. Thus the procedure of distinction and combination of “words and deeds” can be applied to simultaneous opposites as well as successive ones.⁴² The analogy of a gestalt-shift, besides being blunt from constant use in other philosophical quarters in recent years, is of limited application here, however, for the circumstance of one and the same datum itself yielding two different determinations is not accidental or fortuitous in Heraclitus. It constitutes the crux of his λόγος.

B 67 explicitly mentions naming in relation to the “deeds” or actions of God, that is, the manifestations which evoke his various names. With this fragment as a model other fragments can be seen to distinguish and then relate “words and deeds” too, though not explicitly. B 88 has the same two-part structure as B 67. The first part lists opposites (living and dead, waking and sleeping, young and old) and says they are the same. The second part explains this unity of opposites by a reference to the change of one opposite into another. An explicit reference to naming is missing, but those things we call by different names, whether living and dead, awake and sleeping, and so on, betray their identity by what they do. Separation of names and named activity, observation of activity, and a new conjunction of names and activity to the effect that all those named things are one seems to be the common structure of the movement to insight in B 88 and in B 67. The second part of B 88 explains (γάρ) the sense of the oneness of living and dead, waking and sleeping, young and old, precisely by advising the student to attend to the action of a named thing in order to comprehend that another, indeed an opposite, name also belongs to it. This

⁴²See Marcovich's table of opposites (between 160 and 161).

process requires that one distinguish the thing as named (in one way) from that thing in its continuous life and then follow the course of that life to the registration of a determinate character calling for another, perhaps opposite name. The γάρ statement of B 88 also states that the course of the continuous life of a thing is circular: continued observation leads back to the registration of the determinate character which elicits the first name. This circumstance reinforces the conviction that that which is called living is one with that which is called dead, since that which is called dead will be called living again.

B 60 reads: ὁδὸς ἄνω κάτω μία καὶ ὡστή. As commonly noted the fragment requires a context (Kahn 240–241, Kirk 105–112, Marcovich 171–172), but the words ὁδὸς ἄνω κάτω themselves seem to be functioning as names for which some thing or process must be supplied, whether the world, the soul, or an actual road. Diogenes Laertius, for one, thought that the “way up and down” is the name (καλεῖσθαι) given by Heraclitus for the process of change (9.8). Presuming an ordinary road as the context of the saying, we can see how the conclusion of one and the same can be reached by distinguishing and then putting together the actual seeing of the word and its various names. B 59 can be understood in a similar fashion.

It seems then that this view can be fitted to a number of fragments asserting the central truth of the unity of opposites.⁴³ The attainment of the truth that all is one comes about by a reflective dividing and rejoining of what holds of a thing’s nature expressed in names in relation to its immediately perceived active life. With this means of reaching wisdom in mind Heraclitus sets forth καὶ ἐπέων καὶ ἔργων, although human beings persist in missing the implications of what they hear of things, on the one hand, and what they see of them, on the other. When names are separated from and then put together again with deeds, Heraclitus thinks that the truth that all things are one can be reached.

This spelling out of the Heraclitean way to wisdom in large part proceeds by taking Heraclitus’ expressions more literally than is customarily done. It is likely, given Heraclitus’ keen sense and effective use of the power and complexity of his native language, that he would exploit the literal sense of popularly used polar expressions, a sense present but absent to the thoughtless many. Not only does this interpretation make more specific the nature of the path to hidden truth, but it situates Heraclitus’ philosophical interest in language quite plausibly in the context of the pervasive ancient belief in the power of names and the preoccupation of

⁴³Many other fragments present illustrations or consequences of the truth that all is one (B 8, 10, 12, 30, 31, 36, 49a, 51, 53, 62, 76, and 90, for example). Thus a considerable number of fragments can be accounted for.

the thinkers of the age with naming, as evidenced in Parmenides and Empedocles.⁴⁴ Indeed, the Parmenidean doctrine on naming, which has received extensive scholarly attention,⁴⁵ and the Heraclitean way to wisdom explicated here deserve comparative study, but that task is beyond the limits of the present essay.⁴⁶

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⁴⁴Parmenides, 28 B 8.38, 53, B 9.1, B 19.3; Empedocles, 31 B 8.4.

⁴⁵See Woodbury (above, n. 34) and Joseph Owens, "Naming in Parmenides," *Kephalion: Studies in Greek Philosophy and Its Continuation Offered to Professor C. J. de Vogel*, eds. J. Mansfeld and L. M. de Rijk (Assen 1975) 16–25, for provocative discussions of the issue and other references.

⁴⁶My thanks are due to J. Franks, J. Smith, L. E. Woodbury, an anonymous reader for *Phoenix*, and an audience at The Catholic University of America for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper.