

Ψυχή AND λόγος IN HERACLITUS B45 AND B115 (DIELS-KRANZ)

Ψυχή and λόγος are discussed with special reference to their occurrence in Heraclitus fragments B45 and B115 (Diels-Kranz, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Berlin 1950). The genetical relationship in these fragments, ψυχῆς-λόγος, implies neither possession, origin, nor definition. Evidence from the fragments in general does not suggest that ψυχή and λόγος are identical. They are functionally distinct though it is difficult to suppose ψυχή capable of rational thought without λόγος. They may be regarded as dimensions of the individual human agent, having indefinitely variable mutual relationship: for instance a high value of λόγος would indicate a high level of developed consciousness.

Ψυχῆς πείρατα ἰὼν οὐκ ἂν ἐξεύροιο, πᾶσαν
ἐπιπορευόμενος ὁδόν· οὕτω βαθὺν λόγον ἔχει (45).

Ψυχῆς ἐστὶ λόγος ἑαυτὸν αὖξων (115).

1. The possessive relation between ψυχή and λόγος in these fragments seems to suggest that λόγος is a capacity or attribute of ψυχή. It would appear that ψυχή, which we have no grounds to think of as anything but «each individual» ψυχή, possesses its own specific λόγος or participates in λόγος. The former alternative will be excluded if it implies that λόγος is a quality, property, or phase of being of ψυχή, which in being so is entirely separate from the λόγος which we are told in DK B2 (Diels-Kranz, *Vorsokratiker* = DK in subsequent references) is ξυνός, 'general' or 'universal'. There are no reasons for supposing that λόγος the of the ψυχή is a fragment cut off from the λόγος which is ξυνός, any more than we enjoy the benefit of a private or individualised, «non-public» force of gravitation or law of general relativity. On the level of DK B50 which enjoins us to listen to the λόγος rather than its first person agent Heraclitus: «all things are one», and there would be no need for us to argue about the contents of these fragments at all. On this level, the things to which we attribute different names and char-

acteristics, including *ψυχή* and *λόγος*, would be identical. Yet on our mundane level, given our relatively restricted cognitive apparatus and using a natural language of limited power, we have to think and speak of things as if they were commutative, mutually translatable into each other's being. Heraclitus uses images, such as that of a composite bow whose unity is maintained and identity sustained by tension (DK B51) as an «intuition pump» to help us to apprehend at least in part a situation that lies beyond human language and thought. Our understanding of this situation seems to require the operation of *λόγος*. Some interpretations of the fragments¹ regard *λόγος* as equivalent to primal fire and *ψυχή*, though there is no precise statement deducible from the fragments which specifically states this². It may be possible to interpret *ψυχή* as cosubstantial with fire³ (DK B67) and moisture and earth (DK B36); but not identical with either. Aristotle seems to accept a close form of this connection when he says that *ψυχή* is an *ἀρχή* (*De Anima* 405a 25). Evidently he is thinking of its fiery character. Philoponus tries to explain this point in terms of the phases of fire's varied and fluent metamorphoses⁴. But *λόγος* and *ψυχή* do not appear, from the fragments we possess, to be regarded as identical or mutually translatable. The sense of the two fragments under consideration suggests that they are distinct in function as well as identity.

2. Heraclitus uses various words to denote the intelligent agent and *ψυχή* certainly has a definite place amongst these⁵. The words *γνώμη*, (*γινώσκει*), *φρόνησις*, *νοῦς* and even *θυμός* to some extent, indicate intelligent mental activity. On the other hand *οἷσις* (DK B46), with its obvious allusion to *οἶος* 'alone', indicates a mental state which is separated from that which is 'general' (*ξυνόν*) (B2), and has therefore the characteristics of mental disease: *τὴν τε οἷσιν ἰερὰν νόσον ἔλεγε κτλ.* (DK B46). *Λόγος*, on the other hand, being *ξυνός* (DK B2), is contrasted with the *ἰδία φρόνησις* of the majority of (casually unthinking) people. The *ψυχή* in addition to possessing the attributes of an intelligent agent⁶, also has attributes of materiality⁷. We see in fragment DK

¹ G. S. Kirk, *Heraclitus, The Cosmic Fragments*, Cambridge 1954, pp. 248, 396, 403.

² F. R. Adrados, «El sistema de Heráclito: estudio a partir del léxico», *EMERITA* 41, 1973, p. 9.

³ Kirk, *op. cit.*, pp. 145, 148, 247 s., 251.

⁴ Kirk, *op. cit.*, pp. 275, 326, 383.

⁵ M. C. Nussbaum, «Psyche in Heraclitus», Part 1, *Phronesis* 17, 1972, pp. 1-15.

⁶ Nussbaum, *op. cit.*, p. 3 ss.

⁷ O. Goldin, «Heraclitean Sateity», *Monist* 74, 4, 1991, p. 573.

B36 that it can emerge from water, as well as be destroyed by it. Its close association with fire, which is the ἀνταμοιβή of everything (DK B90) has been noted in connection with Aristotle's view of it in *De anima*. Aristotle also says (*De anima* 405a 27) that Heraclitus regards ψυχή as ἀσωματώτατον. This need not mean that it is entirely immaterial: the adjective occurs various degrees in Aristotle's texts, see: ἀσωματώτερος H. Bonitz, *sub uoce ἀσώματος*⁸. Even the superlative does not entail exhaustive immateriality. The ψυχή is susceptible to the improving effects of heat and dryness as well as the debilitating consequences of becoming moist. Implicit in the fragments is the ψυχή's freedom as agent to embrace torpidity and moisture or dryness and philosophy. As DK B36 states, moisture is both delight and death to ψυχή, and by a process of mutation through earth and fire the ψυχή can be generated from water. We have no evidence that this represents regeneration of particular individual ψυχή. In so far as ψυχή is material, its nature is the object of analytical description by (or in terms of) λόγος just like any other feature of the universe. The distinction between material and immaterial is of limited use discussing Heraclitus' view of the ψυχή, since we have no evidence that distinction between the two was clearly focused in Heraclitus' thought or in his life-time. Entities such as gods were not considered to be of the same substance as animals and human beings and though they could «materialise», for their own purposes, they were not specified as being incorporeal as such. We might cautiously ascribe a broadly analogous status to ψυχή within the context of his thinking.

3. Λόγος in the fragments of Heraclitus has several meanings⁹ or perhaps a «layered meaning». It can mean a story or narrative in the familiar Ionian (we might even say «Herodotean») sense¹⁰. It can mean the description in words of a theory of «how things are» (ὅκως ἔχει, DK B1), that is, a working description of the structure of the universe, a *De rerum natura*¹¹; and also the articulative pattern informing the structure thus described. Even if we were inclined to discount as Stoicising intrusions the two occasions in which λόγος is referred to as διοικῶν (DK B31 & 72), the managing or organising factor in the universe, we

⁸ H. Bonitz, *Index Aristotelicus*, Graz 1955.

⁹ Adrados, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-25; W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, I, Cambridge 1962, pp. 419-435; M. Marcovich, «Problemas heracliteos», *EMERITA* 41 1973, p. 466 ss.

¹⁰ Kirk, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-46.

¹¹ V. Tejera, «Listening to Heraclitus», *Monist* 74, 4, 1991, p. 499.

cannot deny it the ascription of generality (ξυνόν, DK B2) which itself may imply some such power. In none of its phases does λόγος empower us to understand ὅκως ἔχει in any other than the limited predicative and discriminative terms of our language (which of course itself is one of the phases of λόγος). The gods have insights (γνώμας) in such matters which we do not possess (DK B78).

4. Though we have no evidence that ψυχή and λόγος are identical, it is nevertheless difficult to understand how ψυχή could be capable of thought without λόγος. It has been suggested that the relationship between ὁδός and βαθύς λόγος in DK B45 is described in a way that recalls vertical and horizontal coordinates¹². These would indicate exhaustive «distances» which could not, in either direction, be adequately tracked. The wording of the fragment does not suggest that only two «coordinates» are envisaged, one in either direction: the expression ὁδός πᾶσα, «every road», suggests multiplicity in the relation, perhaps many layers of relationship simultaneously operating. However for the purposes of this discussion we shall imagine only two coordinates as in a simple graph. On this view, then, the λόγος of the ψυχή like the ψυχή itself has no cognisable boundaries, that is: it can never be fully comprehended. On this view also, we might suppose that Heraclitus is referring to two dimensions of the same entity: namely the thinking, reasoning human agent, the ψυχή which is informed by, and connected with λόγος. The 'dimensions' (πείρατα), expressed «horizontally» by ὁδός πᾶσα, and «vertically» by the implied βαθύς of βαθύς λόγος, may vary in relation to each other: a movement towards 'moisture' may be represented by one proportionality between the two; a movement towards 'dryness' (i. e. heat and active thought) by another. The relation, itself a function of λόγος, would be real, but not ultimately or completely commensurable, just as the square root of 2 was real for the Pythagoreans, but not ultimately or completely commensurable. Ψυχή is capable of overriding λόγος in that it has volition whereas λόγος has not. Λόγος is not designated as «personal»¹³. Ψυχή can «decide» to lose itself in the moisture of drunkenness and death, at which point we might suppose very low «values» for both «coordinates». Λόγος may not in this context be identified either with 'thinking' or the product of thought. It may be, rather, the constitutive condition of thought. Unlike Pythagoras (for whom he has scant respect: DK B40) Heraclitus had the philo-

¹² M. Marcovich, *Heraclitus*, Mérida (Venezuela) 1967, p. 366 ss.

¹³ J. Moravcsik, «Heraclitean Concepts and Explanation», *Language and Thought in early Greek Philosophy*, ed. K. Robb, La Salle, Illinois, 1983, p. 145.

sophical resources to cope with incommensurability in a basic philosophical relation. He recognised that our restricted cognitive and linguistic abilities condemn us to relative ignorance. After all, the fragment says «You may not find out the boundaries etc.» It does not say that they are unreal.

5. Fragment 115 has an additional share of obscurity, because it is so brief. The remaining words would appear to be translatable as: «of the soul there is a self-increasing λόγος». This can scarcely mean what Hippolytus, the source for the fragment, suggests namely that the human soul increases throughout life (Diels-Kranz, I, p. 176). The participle αὔξων does not necessarily suggest that the λόγος wills its own growth. We may be reminded of fragments which suggest reflexivity in the physical processes of the cosmos (DK B1, 10, 51, 103). The participle may suggest, however, that the λόγος of the ψυχή has a disposition to increase. The fragments which mention the effects of moisture on the ψυχή suggest that it also had a disposition to decrease. It is also possible that the growing process mentioned in this fragment refers to the relation between the coordinates in DK B45.

6. It is tempting to suppose that consciousness may be a function of a variable relation between ψυχή and λόγος. The evidence of the fragments would appear to indicate that conscious thinking was not a continuous state of the human mind: consider for example, «we are and are not» (DK B49a), and «the saying is that people are present and absent at the same time» in DK B34, where those who lack (philosophical) understanding are compared to the deaf, or DK B1 where such ἀξύνετοι (also = those who have no ξυνόν) are likened to sleepwalkers. Fragment B45 implies that some phases of the ψυχή's being, that is, certain values of ψυχή/λόγος, will remain inaccessible to conscious thought. Like the sun which is «new» every day (DK B6) people cannot presume on continuity of consciousness or being (recall «we are and are not», DK B49a). The state of the ψυχή as cognising agent may not be continuous, but iterative, like the successive tracts of water in the river which is constantly changing, but yet remains a river. The river is specifically introduced as an image representing ψυχή, and we note that ἕτερα ὕδατα (DK B12, cf. 49a), is Heraclitus' phrase for the succession of water, not ἄλλα, which would imply a continuum¹⁴. When λόγος consists of words and sentences which we are expected to listen to and at-

¹⁴ G. S. Kirk, «Natural Change in Heraclitus», *Mind* 60, 1951, pp. 35-42.

tempt to understand, its sense and structure are «analytical» (διαίρεων, DK B1). Yet it also has the task of empowering us to conceptualize a domain of being which seems incompatible with that which is conceived within the discriminating, analysing and classifying rules of language, namely a domain in which everything, including opposites, is somehow unified and identified. We can hardly assume that λόγος, in its role of managing agent of the cosmos, would be likely to function in a language-based, language-restricted way. This may well be a significant part of the message of fragment DK B45. We can hear or read the assertion it makes but, by its own prescription, we cannot expect to get beyond the limit it places upon our ability to understand. Although DK B101 refers to the first-person speaker, presumably Heraclitus, engaged in an enquiry into himself, and DK B116 says that insight into self is part of the human make-up, this self-scrutiny can never be complete. A person may attain considerable knowledge of himself or herself, but not of what it is to be himself or herself. The problem is still with us¹⁵. This knowledge, we may infer, would be available if the λόγος of the ψυχή were completely accessible to cognition.

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¹⁵ T. Nagel, «On What it is like to be a bat», *Mortal Questions*, Cambridge 1979, pp. 165-180.