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THE WORLDHOOD OF THE ΚΟΣΜΟΣ IN HEIDEGGER'S READING OF HERACLITUS*

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This article investigates Heidegger's reading of Heraclitus' conception of ΚΟΣΜΟΣ, so as to show how the former's hermeneutical-phenomenological correlation between the worldhood of the world and the mode of being of Dasein qua Being-in-the-World is in full agreement with the latter's articulation of φυσικος and λογος in the so-called "cosmic fragments."

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Diogenes Laertius ((1970) IX, 5), Heraclitus of Ephesus was the author of a "book" (βιβλιον) whose title was, like many works misleadingly assigned to the φυσικοι

*For technical reasons it was not possible to include the accents in the passage of text in Greek (Ed.).

or “natural philosophers”, “Περὶ φύσεως”, “On Nature”. Following Hermann Diels’s critical compilation of Presocratic fragments and testimonies, scholars have maintained that Heraclitus’ original collection of sayings very likely underwent several editorial arrangements, including Laertius’s division of the work into three sections (περὶ τοῦ παντός καὶ πολιτικῶν θεολογικῶν)¹. Nevertheless, to speak of the whole (το πᾶν, τὸ ὅλον) in mere terms of a “cosmology” (i.e. as “study of the universe”) risks doing a great deal of injustice to the original, ontological sense of κόσμος in Heraclitus’ fragments. In point of fact, the Heraclitean conception of the κόσμος turns out to be very complex and nuanced, to say the least². Moreover, it is precisely to accentuate the distinction between what later became latinized as “universe” (*universum*) and the pre-Pythagorean understanding of the Greek κόσμος articulated by Heraclitus that I shall set out to examine the latter, with a view to elucidating the Heideggerian conception of *Weltlichkeit*. The phenomenological problematic of articulating φύσις and κόσμος in Heidegger’s reading of Heraclitus, along with his appropriation of Parmenides’ ἀληθεία³, constitutes in effect one of the greatest features of the Heideggerian λόγος. In order to better understand the Heideggerian conception of *Weltlichkeit* in its full phenomenological determination, i.e., as the horizontal φαίνεσθαι which lets beings come to appear as they are in the world, I intend to examine how Heraclitus’ notion of the κόσμος may contribute to a phenomenological “return to the things themselves”. Before proceeding to explore Heidegger’s conception of worldhood in *Sein und Zeit*

¹ Cf. Diogenes Laertius (1970), IX 6.

² Cf. A. Jeannerie (1959); G.S. Kirk (1962); C. Kahn (1979).

³ Cf. M. Heidegger (1953), §§ 4 and 44.

(in particular § 14) I shall recall Heraclitus' articulation of *κόσμος* and *φύσις* in the very fragments invoked by Heidegger in his 1928 treatise *Vom Wesen des Grundes*, in the 1935 course *Einführung in der Metaphysik*, and in the Heraclitus seminar (Winter 1966/67).

2. HERACLITUS' CONCEPTION OF THE ΚΟΣΜΟΣ

Although the Greek word *κόσμος* occurs only once or four times – depending on textual authenticity – in Heraclitus' fragments⁴, its meaning seems to underlie many other guiding motifs of his thought such as “Λογος” and “Fire”. To be sure, it would be misleading to attempt to retrieve the original meaning of *κόσμος* in Heraclitus' fragments by simply examining the textual occurrences of the term. Besides the hermeneutical limitations imposed by any textual exegesis, there remains an intertextual, critical task of establishing the authentic texts and their semantic and conceptual contexts. This correlation between textual meaning and philosophical significance translates thus – and always already betrays – a certain hermeneutical circularity in our reading of Heraclitus' fragments. As Eugen Fink wisely conceded, to “leave open what *κόσμος* means with Heraclitus”⁵ is perhaps an effective strategy to start any exploration of the cosmic fragments.

⁴ Since I am relying on the 6th edition by W. Kranz of H. Diels's *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, (Dublin/Zürich: Weidmann, 1967) – in fact, a reprint of the 1952 edition – the fragments are referred to by their Diels-Kranz notation (here abbreviated as D) and quoted in Greek as they have been critically edited by Charles Kahn (Kahn (1979)).

⁵ M. Heidegger and E. Fink (1979), p. 23.

something like a flame of becoming, common to all the manifold manifestations of its being. “Waking”, in this context, rather than expressing the notion of “awakening” as an act of awareness taking place in a κόσμος against which the ψυχή sets out to know, translates instead the pre-givenness of this ordering fire. Humans only wake to the becoming of beings and their growing (φύειν) insofar as the φύσις brings to light their being common to the κόσμος. To be awake means thus to be brought to light at the κρυπτεσθαί of φύσις (D. 123). And this paradox is certainly not to be dialectically formulated¹¹. According to Heraclitus, thinking well (σώφρονεῖν) is to recognize and be acquainted with the very un-concealment of the φύσις. The many, on the other hand, are the ones who “are oblivious of what they do awake, just as they are forgetful of what they do asleep” (D. 1).

σαρμα εικη κεχυμενων ο καλλιστος, φησιν Ἡρακλειτος, [ο]
κοσμος.

Heraclitus says, “The most beautiful *kosmos* is a heap of random sweepings”. (D. 124)

Kahn concedes that even though Theophrastus’ text is “badly preserved” (*Metaphysics* 15), at least the *jeu de mots* on κόσμος must belong to Heraclitus (Kahn (1979), p. 287). The Diels-Kranz edition used by Heidegger slightly differs from Kahn’s:

αλλ’ ωσπερ σαρμα εικη κεχυμενων ο καλλιστος κοσμος.

¹¹ Cf. Hegel’s dialectical appropriation of Heraclitus in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*.

Hence the possibility of interpreting κόσμος as Theophrastus' interpolation – “the most beautiful” becoming an epithet to ἀνθρώπων¹². Heidegger prefers the less critical reading of the fragment, which he translates: “The most beautiful world is like a heap of rubble, tossed down in confusion.” He even goes so far as to comment on the contrast between ἀρμονιη and συρμας:

Sarma is the antithesis of *logos*, that which is merely tossed down over against that which stands in itself, muddle over against togetherness, unbeing over against being.¹³

For Heidegger, the φύσις of the κόσμος is always already bound up with the “gathering together” (λεγειν, *versammeln*) of the λογος. It is beyond the scope of this article to critically examine Heidegger's reading of the Heraclitean λογος, and yet I should like to invoke the so-called “Λογος fragment” (D. 50) in order to reintroduce the problematic of the κόσμος in terms of the whole. It is well known that Heidegger reads the Heraclitean claim that “all things are one” (εν παντα ειναι) as the disclosure of Being, ἀληθεια, as the very event of gathering together, λεγειν. As he explains it in his polemical “Λογος” essay:

When we can see in Λογος how the Ἐν essentially occurs as unifying, it becomes equally clear that this unifying which occurs in the Λογος remains infinitely different from what we tend to represent as a connecting or binding together. The unifying that rests in λεγειν is neither a mere comprehensive collecting nor a mere coupling of opposites which equalizes

¹² Cf. Kirk (1962), p. 220.

¹³ Heidegger (1987), p. 133.

all contraries. The 'Εν Πάντα lets lie together before us in one presencing things which are usually separated from, and opposed to, one another, such as day and night, winter and summer, peace and war, waking and sleep, Dionysus and Hades.¹⁴

Heidegger's explicit omission of the verb εἶναι is at once revealing and strategic: the infinitive verb is "set aside" so as to be unveiled in its own concealment, as it were, between Ἐν and Πάντα. It is precisely to avoid "an overhasty account of the world" that Heidegger lets the formula 'Εν Πάντα appear as the betweenness which accounts for the ontico-ontological difference.

Heidegger refrains from simply asserting that "one is all" because traditional logic fails to grasp the *ontological* meaning of the Heraclitean εἶναι. For "One" to be "All" εἶναι must not be read into the Λογος (it is already there), nor does it call for Heraclitus' authority or authorship (οὐκ ἐμου). The very problem of translating εἶναι reveals the syntactic, logical aporia in saying the truth of Being without getting caught up in endless, metaphysical tautologies. "To agree *that* one is all" the σοφος must only listen to the pre-given λογος, always already unveiling in the concealment of Being. εἶναι may be trivially translated as "being," "that is" or "to be," simply referring to the self-evident, predicative function of the copula. However, to assert that "S is p," to recognize with Leibniz that the *predicatum* is always present in a *subjectum*¹⁵, does not sufficiently translate the meaning of Being. In particular, to assign predicative and subjective values to 'Εν

¹⁴ Heidegger, "Logos" (Heraclitus, Fragment B 50), in Heidegger (1984), p. 71.

¹⁵ Cf. Heidegger (1969), p. 15.

and Πάντα already presupposes an ontological understanding of these terms. How is “one” opposed to “all”? Are these two words to be identified, differentiated, and contrasted after all? What determines the relation of one to the other? According to Heidegger, the betweenness of Ἐν Πάντα elucidates the entire problematic of the Being of beings and must be ontologically articulated as κόσμος. What is common to all is one, what “ever was and is and will be,” cannot be reduced to an entity but transcends and makes possible every manifestation of its immanent becoming. The way between Ἐν and Πάντα cannot, therefore, be understood in a dialectical process, as if the absolute immanence of the world secured its transcendental constitution against onto-theo-logical foundations. On the contrary, Heidegger has convincingly shown how metaphysics, and transcendental thought in particular, has sought after grounds that never accounted for the structural transcendence of the world. To a certain extent, the world is groundless, in that its being is not caused by anything else, but its constituting a world allows for the manifoldness of being to be manifest. For Heidegger, the Being of beings, i.e. “that which determines entities as entities” ((1953) p. 6), has fallen into oblivion precisely because metaphysical thinking withdrew, as it were, from the world. To the κόσμος we must return.

3. HEIDEGGER'S CONCEPTION OF WORLDHOOD

We have seen some of the difficulties inherent in the Heraclitean conception of κόσμος. The predicative relation of πῦρ αειζῶον to κόσμος τονδε (D. 30) remains problematic and needs further elucidation. In this essay, I have proposed a phenomenological articulation between the principal nature

of the κόσμος and its transcendental structure, so as to avoid any hasty, logical identification of the κόσμος with an entity or with the sum of entities. Although Heraclitus did not explicitly define the κόσμος as “horizon,” we have seen that both “ordering” and “betweenness” fairly translate his cosmology as the gathering together of unity (εν) and whole (παντα). Perhaps one of the greatest contributions of Heidegger’s reading of the Presocratics to phenomenology consists in the very retrieval (*Wiederholung*) of the ontological transcendence of the κόσμος in Heraclitus’ cosmology.

In effect, Heraclitus’ cosmological overcoming of forgetfulness underlies Heidegger’s reading of the Presocratics, beyond post-Aristotelian reductions of the latter to naturalistic metaphysics. At the very beginning of *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger refers to Aristotle’s third book of *Metaphysics* so as to formulate the *Seinsfrage* in terms of the Presocratic correlation of το εν and το ον. According to the Peripatetics, the Presocratics could not successfully articulate the ontological question precisely because they identified “Unity and Being” with one single principial cause (αιτια, αρχη) – in Heraclitus’ case, with “fire”. In a nutshell, Aristotle argues that the Presocratics recognized only the “material cause”, having failed to understand the fourfold causation of the κόσμος. Hence he goes on to say:

...[U]nless one assumes Unity and Being to be substance [ουσιαν] in some sense, no other universal term can be substance; for Unity and Being are the most universal of all terms [καθολου μαλιστα παντων], and if there is no absolute Unity or absolute Being, no other concept can well exist apart from the so-called particulars.¹⁶

¹⁶ Aristotle (1989) III, iv. 27 (B 1001 a 21-24), 135. Cf. I, iii. 3-17.

Heidegger has carefully shown that Aristotle's work remains one of the best clues to the understanding of Western metaphysics and to the "destruction" of its onto-theo-logic. For Aristotle's *Metaphysics* bears witness to the oblivion of Being at the same time that it compels us to a phenomenological return to the ordering of the φυσικς. Although Heidegger remarks that even Aristotle failed to articulate Being *qua* universal *transcendens* in terms of its onto-logical determinateness ((1953), p. 3), it is in light of the Aristotelian conception of λεγειν *qua* αποφανεσθαι that Heidegger seeks to retrieve the question of the κοσμος as the phenomenological problem *par excellence*. To describe the "world" as a phenomenon, i.e. "to let us see what shows itself in 'entities' within the world," such is the main task of phenomenology which Heidegger undertakes to explore in the third chapter of Part One of his *magnum opus* ((1953), pp. 63 ff).

"The worldhood of the world" (*Die Weltlichkeit der Welt*) designates more than one theme among others in *Sein und Zeit*, it remains Heidegger's lasting contribution to phenomenology and the guiding motif of his *opera omnia*.¹⁷ Since I am limiting my discussion to the conception of *Weltlichkeit* in light of Heidegger's reading of Heraclitus, I do not intend to explore all the cosmological implications of Dasein's analytic in *Sein und Zeit*. However, it was with a view to understanding Being-in-the-World as the basic state of Dasein ((1953), pp. 53-62), that Heidegger set out to problematize and elucidate anew the concept of κοσμος. As early as 1927, in his magisterial lecture course on "The Basic Problems of Phenomenology",

¹⁷ Here I am indebted to the lecture-courses by Professors Klaus Held, John Sallis, and John Caputo on Heidegger's phenomenology and Greek thought.

Heidegger boldly asserted that “[t]he concept of the world, or the phenomenon thus designated, is what has hitherto not yet been recognized in philosophy”¹⁸. And he proceeds to distinguish “the whole cosmos”, “the universe”, from the world which philosophically transcends the totality of all entities, in the very “alethic” sense of Heraclitus’ ordering. He adds:

World is not something subsequent that we calculate as a result from the sum of all beings. The world comes not afterward but beforehand, in the strict sense of the word. Beforehand: that which is unveiled and understood already in advance in every existent Dasein before any apprehending of this or that being, beforehand as that which stands forth as always already unveiled to us.

Dasein is always already in the world. Accordingly, “world” must now on be understood in a phenomenological sense, as opposed to the “pre-philosophical” concept of world as “totality of intra-worldly beings”. For Heidegger, the world is “a determination of being-in-the-world, a moment in the structure of the Dasein’s mode of being” (Heidegger (1982), p. 166). This radical understanding of the world has led to subjectivist and existentialist misreadings of Heidegger’s project, but neither philosophical anthropology nor humanism is what determines the ultimate orientation of this cosmological problematic. In fact, the question of the world, as we have seen, remains above all an ontological question. Thus, in order to overcome the epistemological present-at-hand (*vorhanden*) dichotomy opposing a subject *vis-à-vis* an object, Heidegger shows that Dasein’s everyday attitude towards the ready-to-hand (*zuhanden*) does not require the emergence of a themati-

¹⁸ Heidegger (1982), p. 165.

cally conscious subject ((1953), pp. 67 ff.) Heidegger's critique of traditional "ontology" is particularly aiming at the idea of a primordial intentionality, which always already presupposes a background (*Umwelt*) that accounts for the most trivial relations of everydayness. The context or background of the world always precedes Dasein's "consciousness of something".

There remains, however, a fundamental question: How is Dasein's primacy articulated with the primacy of the world? It is precisely to elucidate the relationship of Dasein to the world that Heidegger calls for a phenomenological understanding of the *κοσμος* and its transcendental implications. In *Vom Wesen des Grundes*, Heidegger defines the Presocratic concept of the *κοσμος* as *Zustand* ("condition", "state of affairs"), "the *How* in which being is *in its totality*". He proceeds then to support this interpretation by pointing to the use of the expression *κοσμος οντος*, "*this κοσμος*", not as an exclusion of "another *κοσμος*", but "rather one world of being in contrast to a different world of the same being, *εον* (being) itself *κατα κοσμον* (in relation to the *κοσμος*)" (Heidegger (1969), p. 49). Although Heidegger refers the reader to Melissus (fr. 7) and Parmenides (fr. 2) – perhaps to reaffirm the one transcending every becoming of all beings and to problematize the popularized opposition of Heraclitus to Parmenides¹⁹ –, Heraclitus' *κοσμον τονδε* (D. 30) can be now more fully articulated in its essential meaning of transcendence. First, it is interesting to remark that Heidegger translates Heraclitus' fragment 89 as follows:

¹⁹ Cf. (1953), pp. 219-223, where Heidegger's only reference to Heraclitus (Fragment 1, on n. xxxv) occurs in the context of his appropriation of Parmenides' *αληθεια* to explain Being-in-the-world as the foundation for the primordial phenomenon of truth.

since the life-world is Dasein's "natural" milieu. Heidegger introduces a fourth conception of world to designate what has been called "worldhood" or "worldliness" ((1953), p. 93). As an ontological, horizontal world, worldhood is another way of saying that the world worlds, just as time times. In effect, *Weltlichkeit* and *Zeitlichkeit* essentially translate the same truth of Being, the ἀληθεια of the Ἐν Παντα. By asserting the worldliness of the κόσμος as betweenness *out of which* (*aus*) Dasein's being emerges, Heidegger has successfully elucidated the Heraclitean articulation of κόσμος and φύσις, beyond all predicative aporias, in the very χωρειν of the one and the many.²¹ Heidegger's "fragmentary reading" of Heraclitus has, at once, resolved some syntactical ambiguities and problematized anew some of the most important philosophical notions that were either taken for granted or had fallen into oblivion. Among these, the question of Being and the question of the world, which constitute together the crux of philosophical thought. After all, to affirm the worldhood of this κόσμος and to meditate on the How of appearing remains the beautiful, ongoing task of phenomenological thinking.

Abstract: *Este artigo investiga a leitura que Heidegger nos oferece da concepção heraclitiana de kosmos, mostrando como a correlação hermenêutico-fenomenológica entre a mundanidade do mundo e o modo de ser do Dasein enquanto ser-no-mundo concorda com a articulação entre physis e logos nos chamados "fragmentos cósmicos".*

²¹ Cf. Plato's popular quote "παντα χωρει" in *Cratylus* 402a.

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