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THE LOGOS OF HERACLITUS: UPDATING THE REPORT

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In 1952 there appeared a short article in *Theological Studies* entitled “Heraclitus’ Alleged Logos Doctrine.”¹ As one may guess from the title, the author, T. F. Glasson, reported to his largely theological audience that the conception of Heraclitus’ Logos as a cosmic-metaphysical principle, far from being a possible source for the Logos of the Fourth Gospel, rests upon a gigantic mistake. The truth is, rather, that Glasson’s report rests upon a gigantic mistake, as well as several lesser ones. At the very least it does not do justice to a quite different interpretation, an interpretation which, indeed, has become in the meantime the “accepted” one. Our task, also intended primarily for theologians and nonspecialists in pre-Socratic philosophy, is to provide a corrected and updated report, and to make a few observations of our own.

I

According to Glasson, “there are . . . grounds for doubt as to the existence in Heraclitus’ teaching of a Logos doctrine at all, if by Logos we mean a cosmic principle.”² His arguments may be summarized as follows:³

1) The cosmic-principle interpretation was completely turned around⁴ by Burnet, who wrote in the first edition of his *Early Greek Philosophy*:

I have no hesitation in understanding the word λόγος . . . simply as “argument,” “discourse,” “theory,” “description,” or the like. The Stoic interpretation, as we find it in Marcus Aurelius, iv. 46, must be rejected altogether; the word λόγος did not mean Reason at all in early days.⁵

¹ T. F. Glasson, “Heraclitus’ Alleged Logos Doctrine,” *JTS* n.s. 3 (1952) 231–38.

² *Ibid.*, 232.

³ *Ibid.*, 232–38.

⁴ The cosmic-principle interpretation is at least as old as the Stoics on the pagan side (cf. the discussion below), and Clement of Alexandria on the Christian side.

⁵ John Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy* (London: Black, 1892) 133 (note).

And again in the second edition:

The λόγος is simply the discourse of Herakleitos himself; though, as he is a prophet, we may call it “the Word.” It can neither mean a discourse addressed to H. nor yet “reason.” . . . A difficulty has been raised about the words *έόντος αἰεί*. How could H. say that his discourse had always existed? The answer is that in Ionic *έών* means “true” when coupled with words like λόγος. Cf. Herod. i. 30, *τῷ έόντι χρησάμενος λέγει*; and even Aristophanes, *Frogs*, 1052, *οὐκ όντα λόγον*. It is only by taking the words in this way that we can understand Aristotle’s hesitation as to the proper punctuation of the fragment (*Rhet.* Γ 5. 1407b15; Ritter & Preller 30a).⁶

Though his interpretation was attacked from the start (for example, by James Adam in *Religious Teachers of Greece*, 1908⁷), Burnet persisted in this opinion throughout subsequent editions of his important work (third ed., 1920; fourth ed., 1930). Glasson buttresses the Burnet interpretation with a further appeal to A. E. Taylor⁸ and O. Gigon.⁹

2) A fact not sufficiently recognized is that the Fragments containing the term λόγος are very few; omitting irrelevant occurrences, we are left with only half a dozen “Logos-Fragments”. We reproduce these here according to the Diels-Kranz edition¹⁰ along with our translations. (In transliterating λόγος in our translations below we have tried to avoid prejudicing the interpretation; further, both here and later we have avoided as much as possible textual and other technical issues.)

Frg. 1 τού δὲ λόγου τοῦδ' έόντος αἰεὶ ἀξύνετοι γίνονται ἄνθρωποι καὶ πρόσθεν ἢ ἀκοῦσαι καὶ ἀκούσαντες τὸ πρῶτον· γινομένων γὰρ πάντων κατὰ τὸν λόγον τόνδε ἀπειροῖσιν εὐκασι, πειρώμενοι καὶ ἐπέων καὶ ἔργων τοιούτων, ὁκοίων ἐγὼ διηγέμμαι κατὰ φύσιν διαίρέων ἕκαστον καὶ φράζων ὅκως ἔχει. τοὺς δὲ ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους λαυθάνει ὁκόσα ἐγερθέντες ποιούσιν, ὅκωσπερ ὁκόσα εὐδοτες ἐπιδανθάνονται.

Although this *logos* ever exists, men are ignorant¹¹ both before they hear and after they have once heard. For even though all things happen in accordance with this *logos*, they are like men of no experience when they experience words and deeds such as these, when I distinguish each thing according to its nature and explain how it is. Other men are as unaware of what they do when awake as they forget what they do when asleep.

⁶ Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy* (2d ed.; 1908) 146 (note).

⁷ James Adams, *Religious Teachers of Greece* (Edinburgh, Scotland: Clark, 1908) 216–18.

⁸ Letter to Glasson dated August, 1944. The relevant portion of the letter is reproduced by Glasson, “Heraclitus’ Alleged Logos Doctrine,” 237.

⁹ O. Gigon, *Untersuchungen zu Heraklit* (Leipzig: Dietrich, 1935) 4, 19.

¹⁰ Hermann Diels and Walther Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (5th ed.; Berlin: Weidemann, 1952) 1. sec. 22, B.

¹¹ I take the almost identical genitive clause in Frg. 1a and Frg. 2b as involving an intended parallelism. Thus the genitive clause in Frg. 1a is absolute as it is in Frg. 2b, and *αἰεί* in Frg. 1a no doubt modifies *έόντος*.

Fig. 2 διὸ δεῖ ἔπεσθαι τῷ ξυνῶ. τοῦ λογοῦ δ' ἐόντος ξυνοῦ ζῶουσιν οἱ πολλοὶ ὡς ἰδίαν ἔχοντες φρόνησιν.

Therefore it is necessary to follow the common. But although the *logos* is common, the many live as if they had a private understanding.

Fig. 45 ψυχῆς πείρατα ἴων οὐκ ἂν ἐξεύροιο, πᾶσαν ἐπιπορευόμενος ὁδὸν οὕτω βαθὺν λόγον ἔχει.

You would not discover the soul's boundaries though traveling all the way, so deep is its *logos*.

Fig. 50 οὐκ ἐμοῦ, ἀλλὰ τοῦ λόγου ἀκούσαντας ὁμολογεῖν σοφὸν ἔστιν ἐν πάντα εἶναι.

Having listened not to me but to the *logos*, it is wise to concur that all things are one.

Fig. 72 ᾧ μάλιστα διηνεκῶς ὁμλοῦσι λόγῳ, τοῦτ' διαφέρονται, καὶ οἷς καθ' ἡμέραν ἐγκυροῦσι, ταῦτα αὐτοῖς ξένα φαίνεται.

The *logos* which they associate with most closely, this they are estranged from; and the things they encounter daily, these seem alien to them.

Fig. 115 ψυχῆς ἔστι λόγος ἑαυτὸν αὔξων.

The soul has a *logos* which increases itself.

3) It is possible to explain the cosmic or metaphysical interpretation of Heraclitus' *Logos* as an *overinterpretation*—*eisegesis*—by the Stoics, as indeed happened also in the case of the Stoics' attribution to Heraclitus of their own doctrine of an *ἐκπύρωσις* or final universal conflagration.

4) Had Heraclitus in fact employed *λόγος* with the sense of cosmic principle it is unbelievable that neither Plato nor Aristotle (both of whom give suitable attention to Heraclitus) would fail to get mileage from it. The fact is that not until the Stoics do we encounter such a use of *λόγος*.

5) Bertrand Russell in his *History of Western Philosophy* makes no mention whatever of the *Logos* doctrine in his chapter on Heraclitus.

These, then, are Glasson's arguments against the alleged cosmic or metaphysical *Logos* concept in Heraclitus. Now some of Glasson's observations are relevant, but not one of them or all of them together are sufficient to overturn what has now become an almost universally accepted view of Heraclitus' *Logos*. To take the last and certainly weakest of Glasson's arguments first, a New Testament scholar writing on these matters might not, but should, know that Bertrand Russell's *History of Philosophy* is hardly a high-water mark of historical scholarship. Certainly it is no authority in the area of the pre-Socratics where technical philological and historical-critical issues must be addressed more than in all the rest of the history of philosophy put together.

As for evidence—or lack of it—for Heraclitus' cosmic *Logos* in Plato and Aristotle, it must be conceded that these are undeniably

important sources for our knowledge of Heraclitus in particular and the pre-Socratics in general. Heraclitus figures in the Platonic Dialogues at *Crat.* 402A, and *Soph.* 242D; Aristotle treats Heraclitus at *Rhet.* 1407b 11, *Meta.* 984a 7 and 1005b 23, *de Caelo* 279b 12, *Physics* 205a 3, *de Part. Anim.* 405a 24; Aristotle is, moreover, the source of Frgs. 6 (from *Meteor.* 355a 13), 7 (from *de Sensu* 443a 23), 8 (*Eth. Nic.* 1155b 4), and 9 (*Eth. Nic.* 1176a 7). To be sure, largely because of his history of philosophy in *Meta.* I, Aristotle is, *via* Theophrastus, the source of the whole doxographical tradition. In spite of all this, however, it is well-known to pre-Socratic scholars that Plato and Aristotle at many points misunderstood and misrepresented their predecessors, a thesis that underlies Cherniss' indispensable work, *Aristotle's Criticism of Presocratic Philosophy*.¹² Not only so, it is clear that Plato and Aristotle were simply ignorant of many important pre-Socratic ideas; if in fact Plato and Aristotle were our sole sources for our knowledge about Heraclitus, our picture would be quite different and quite deficient. That the metaphysical Logos concept so central to the thought of Heraclitus should appear totally unknown to Plato and Aristotle (the latter quotes the opening of Frg. 1 [*Rhet.* 1407b 11] only for the purpose of making a grammatical point) is something of an enigma to students of classical philosophy, but a fact to be reckoned with no more nor less than the fact that we today quite simply know more about the pre-Socratics than did the ancients themselves.

Glasson says, further, that λόγος with the sense of cosmic or metaphysical principle is nowhere to be found prior to the Stoics. This is a bold assertion indeed. It is easy enough to compile from this period a long list of instances of λόγος with at least relevant and sometimes more or less metaphysical meanings. For a full—almost unwieldy—list, one must consult Liddell-Scott;¹³ for a briefer and more readable list, one should consult W. K. C. Guthrie's *History of Greek Philosophy*,¹⁴ where the meanings of λόγος are confined to the fifth century B.C. or earlier.¹⁵ We include here a sample of the most relevant usages.

Aeschylus uses λόγος with the meaning of *reckoning* or *sum total* (*Pers.* 343); λόγος denoted the *faculty of reason* both in Plato (*Laws* 689D; *Tim.* 89D) and Aristotle (*Eth. Nic.* 102b 26); Aristotle employs λόγος to mean the *definition* or *essence* of a thing (*Meta.* 993a 17), and also the *principle which exists in law* (*Pol.* 1286a 17); Plato speaks of λόγος as *that which added to true opinion makes it knowledge* (*Theat.* 201C). He

¹² Harold Cherniss, *Aristotle's Criticism of Presocratic Philosophy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1935).

¹³ *LSJ*, s.v.

¹⁴ W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1967) 1. 420–24.

¹⁵ Cf. also the articles in *TDNT*, 4. 71–91, and *PW* 13. 1035–81.

also speaks of the *creative λόγος* which is a *divine knowledge coming from God* (*Soph.* 201C), and employs *λόγος* with the virtual meaning of *cosmic reason*, the cause of the harmonious arrangement of the eternal and unchanging order (*Rep.* 500C). Especially relevant are other-than-Heraclitean pre-Socratic usages: Leucippus employs *λόγος* to denote the *universal rational* (though mechanical) *ground* of all happenings as opposed to randomness (Frg. 2); Parmenides uses *λόγος* with the sense of *reasoning faculty* which he contrasts with the sense faculties (Frg. 7); and if Epicharmus, Frg. 2, is authentic, we might well have a dramatic and comic reflection of Heraclitus' doctrine of constant change governed by *λόγος*, a *law of change*, by one who was a near contemporary of Heraclitus.¹⁶ It appears that it would have required no great leap of imagination for Heraclitus to have employed *λόγος* with some such meaning as universal Reason, Plan, Order, etc. And in any event, Glasson's point would be much firmer if not only the term *λόγος* (with this metaphysical sense) but also the *idea* was absent in this period, and certainly this latter cannot be shown.

On the question of Stoic misrepresentation of Heraclitus, no doubt this happened. The best example is, as mentioned above, the Stoics' assignment of their own doctrine of *ἐκπύρωσις* to Heraclitus. But even here it must be admitted that the Stoics were not utterly foolish in seeing this idea in Heraclitus; certain of the Fragments do invite this interpretation, and only recently has pre-Socratic scholarship settled the question. In any event, it does not follow that if the Stoics misunderstood Heraclitus in some respects that they misunderstood him in all. On the contrary, Stoic texts which echo Heraclitus have proven indispensable in the interpretation of his thought. And even if we grant, as we well might, that the Stoic Logos was a more metaphysically extended concept than Heraclitus would have entertained, it does not follow that the Stoics *totally* misrepresented Heraclitus in this regard. It is not possible to pass off so simply, as Burnet and others have done, the cosmic-metaphysical interpretation of Heraclitus' Logos as a complete Stoic invention.

The point about *λόγος* occurring in a possibly relevant sense in only six Fragments is somewhat artificial. The significance or even centrality of a concept in a given thinker can hardly be determined by totting up the number of times it occurs! Even if we possessed only Frgs. 1 and 2

¹⁶ The genuineness of the Epicharmean Fragments has been generally doubted, but for a case recently made for the probable authenticity of at least Fragments 1–6, see my "Critical Analysis of the Philosophical Fragments of Epicharmus" (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1965) chap. 5. I notice that both Heinrich Quiring (*Heraklit* [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1959] 39, 48, 77, 125) and Ewald Kurtz (*Interpretationen zu den Logos-Fragmenten Heraklitis* [Hildersheim: Olms, 1971] 75 n. 26) cite Epicharmus for the meaning of *λόγος* without batting an eye.

of the above six Logos-Fragments it would be necessary to allot to this concept a fundamental role in Heraclitus' philosophy. The unity of the Heraclitean Fragments—the comprehension, continuity and progression of ideas¹⁷—is such that the Logos idea, if not the word itself, pervades the whole. It is therefore artificial to delimit the Logos-Fragments to only those in which the word itself occurs, and at least the following Fragments (and no doubt others) which otherwise express, clarify, and relate the Logos idea¹⁸ should be added to Glasson's list above:

Frg. 16 τὸ μὴ δύνόν ποτε πῶς ἄν τις λάθου;

How could one hide from that which never sets?

Frg. 30 κόσμον τόνδε, τὸν αὐτὸν ἀπάντων, οὔτε τις θεῶν οὔτε ἀνθρώπων ἐποίησεν, ἀλλ' ἦν αἰεὶ καὶ ἔστιν καὶ ἔσται.¹⁹ πῦρ αἰείζωνον, ἀπτόμενον μέτρα καὶ ἀποσβεννύμενον μέτρα.

This world-order, the same for all, was made neither by one of the gods or men, but always was, is, and shall be: an everliving fire, kindled in measures and extinguished in measures.

Frg. 31 πυρὸς τροπαὶ πρῶτον θάλασσα, θαλάσσης δὲ τὸ μὲν ἥμισυ γῆ, τὸ δὲ ἥμισυ πρηστήρ. [γῆ] θάλασσα διαχέεται, καὶ μετρέεται εἰς τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον, ὁκοῖος πρόσθεν ἦν ἢ γενέσθαι γῆ.

Fire's transformations: First sea, and of sea half is earth and half lightning. [Earth] is dispersed as sea, and is measured out in the same proportion as existed before it became earth.

Frg. 32 ἐν τὸ σοφὸν μόνον λέγεσθαι οὐκ ἐθέλει καὶ ἐθέλει Ζηηνὸς ὄνομα.

One thing, the only wise, does and does not wish to be called by the name of Zeus.

Frg. 41 ἐν τὸ σοφόν, ἐπίστασθαι γνώμην, ὅκη²⁰ ἐκυβέρνησε πάντα διὰ πάντων.

The wise is one thing: to know the purpose which steers all things through all things.

Frg. 54 ἀρμονίη ἀφανῆς φανερῆς κρείττων.

An invisible harmony is stronger than a visible one.

¹⁷ We would venture that the hundred-and-thirty-odd Fragments of Heraclitus provide evidence of the earliest extant "philosophical system." It is not only possible but natural to divide the Heraclitean Fragments into general blocks dealing with different but always related aspects of Heraclitus' thought; e.g., the Logos-Fragments, the Fire-Fragments, the Flux-Fragments, the Strife-Fragments, and the Unity-Fragments. Of course many Fragments fall into more than one of these categories.

¹⁸ I am aware that this begs the question inasmuch as it presupposes a certain meaning of λόγος in Frg. 1, etc.

¹⁹ Punctuating with G. S. Kirk, *Heraclitus: The Cosmic Fragments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1954) 307, 311.

²⁰ Reading with Kirk ὅκη for ὅτῃ (*Heraclitus: The Cosmic Fragments*, 386, 389).

- Fig. 64 τὰ δὲ πάντα οἰακίζει Κεραυνός.
Thunderbolt steers all things.
- Fig. 78 ἦθος γὰρ ἀνθρώπειον μὲν οὐκ ἔχει γνώμας, θεῖον δὲ ἔχει.
Human nature has no knowledge, but divine nature does.
- Fig. 86 [τῶν θεῶν τὰ πολλὰ] ἀπιστίη διαφυγγάνει μὴ γινώσκεσθαι.
[Much about the divine] escapes recognition through unbelief.
- Fig. 89 τοῖς ἐγρηγορόσιν ἓνα καὶ κοινὸν κόσμον εἶναι, [τῶν δὲ κοιμημένων ἕκαστον εἰς] ἴδιον [ἀποστρέφεσθαι].
To those awake the world-order is one and common, [but everyone asleep turns to] his own.
- Fig. 94 Ἥλιος γὰρ οὐχ ὑπερβήσεται μέτρα· εἰ δὲ μή, Ἐρινύες μιν Δίκης ἐπικούροι ἐξευρήσουσιν.
The Sun will not overstep his measures otherwise the Erinyes, servants of Justice, will find him out.
- Fig. 108 ὁκόσων λόγους ἤκουσα, οὐδεὶς ἀφικνεῖται ἐς τοῦτο, ὥστε γινώσκειν ὅτι σοφὸν ἐστι πάντων κεχωρισμένον.
Of all those whose words I have heard, none reaches the point as to recognize that the wise is separated from all things.
- Fig. 113 ξυνόν ἐστι πᾶσι τὸ φρονεῖν.
Thought is common to all.
- Fig. 114 ξὺν νόῳ λέγοντας ἰσχυρίζεσθαι χρὴ τῷ ξυνῷ πάντων, ὅκωσπερ νόμῳ πόλις, καὶ πολὺ ἰσχυροτέρως. τρέφονται γὰρ πάντες οἱ ἀνθρώπειοι νόμοι ὑπὸ ἐνὸς τοῦ θεῖου κρατεῖ γὰρ τοσοῦτον ὁκόσων ἐθέλει καὶ ἔξαρκεῖ πᾶσι καὶ περιγένηται.
It is necessary for those who would speak with common sense to be empowered by that which is common to all, just as a city is empowered by law, and even more strongly. For all human laws are fed by one divine law. For it rules as much as it wishes, and is sufficient for all and more than enough.
- Fig. 123 φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ.
Nature likes to hide.

We come then to what appears to be Glasson's major argument against the cosmic-metaphysical interpretation of Heraclitus' Logos, namely, the argument from the authority of Burnet as supported by Gigon and Taylor. But in this respect, as in many others, Burnet is simply very much out of date. It was the case when Glasson published his article in 1952 and is much more so now.

Already in 1947 Werner Jaeger's Gifford Lectures (delivered in 1936) appeared as *The Theology of the Early Greek Thinkers*.²¹ A central

²¹ Werner Jaeger, *The Theology of the Early Greek Thinkers* (trans. Edward S. Robinson; Oxford: Clarendon, 1947).

concern (maybe *the* central concern) of this book was to recover the metaphysical and theological character of pre-Socratic thought over against that of Burnet (and Gomperz) who, viewing the pre-Socratics through the eyes of the prevailing *positivist* mood, saw them rather as empiricists and scientists:

In their zeal for proving the modernity of the pre-Socratics they have often minimized or even neglected that aspect of the first philosophers with which this book is concerned in approaching them in the perspective of the origin of natural theology. When Cicero in his *De natura deorum* and St. Augustine in the *De civitate Dei* see the physicists from Thales to Anaxagoras as the first theologians, they only repeat what they found in their Greek sources.²²

Jaeger's book was something of a landmark in pre-Socratic studies, providing an important alternative to Burnet's, not only in respect of Heraclitus but of the pre-Socratics in general.

But let us return to the interpretation of Heraclitus' Logos. The meanings of *λόγος* may be collapsed broadly into two groups: (1) those with the sense of *oratio* where the accent lies on expression or verbalization, and thus the translations "word," "story," "tale," "account," "discourse," etc.; and (2) those with the sense of *ratio*, that which is expressed or verbalized, and thus the translations "idea," "reason," "principle," "measure," etc. Burnet opted for the *oratio*-meaning, translated it as "word," and took it to refer to Heraclitus' *own* discourse, writing, book, statement or whatever—though granting it a capital "W" in view of the prophetic character of this discourse. It is easy to show, on the other hand, that this interpretation, challenged from the beginning, has been rejected by virtually the whole of recent pre-Socratic scholarship in favor of variations on the *ratio*-sense of *λόγος*. I mention now only some of the more accessible and representative of these recent scholars. And though they may disagree about the meaning of *λόγος* in different Fragments, it is possible to represent their interpretations of Heraclitus' Logos doctrine at least in general, and in the all-important Frgs. 1 and 2 in specific.

Jaeger himself says, "The *logos* according to which everything occurs . . . is the divine law itself. . . . It is the highest norm of the cosmic process, and the thing which gives that process its significance and worth."²³ Freeman translates *λόγος* in Frgs. 1 and 2 as "Law"²⁴ and explains it as the "orderly process of change," the "Measure, by which the process and its material are ruled, that makes our world

²² *Ibid.*, 7–8.

²³ *Ibid.*, 116.

²⁴ Kathleen Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1956) 24.

intelligible.”²⁵ Kirk takes it to mean “formula,” and interprets it more specifically as the “nature, plan of each thing and all things,”²⁶ which, in the later Kirk and Raven volume, is further explained as “the unifying formula or proportionate method of arrangement of things, what might almost be termed the structural plan of things both individual and in sum.”²⁷ For Wheelwright, it is “the Truth in its objective and trans-human character.”²⁸ For Guthrie it is “the governing principle of the Universe, . . . the nearest that Heraclitus came to an *arche* [‘origin’] like that of his predecessors. . . .”²⁹ Marcovich concedes that in Frg. 1 λόγος probably has primary reference to Heraclitus’ own statement, but observes that in light of other Fragments it must mean at the same time “objective truth (law, rule)” and that it implies “(a) unity or coincidence of each couple of opposites; (b) underlying unity of this world-order. . . .”³⁰ Robinson regards Heraclitus’ λόγος as a sort of cosmic reason or thought “existing in its own right apart from the words of the speaker.”³¹ For Hussey, the “minimal sense” that can be assigned to Heraclitus’ λόγος is something like “the true account of the law of the universe.”³² (We will make reference later to Barnes’ understanding of the matter as expressed in his recent and important work, *The Pre-Socratic Philosophers*.)

How these thinkers arrive at an interpretation so different from that of Burnet, Gigon, and Taylor is of course a long story involving indeed their various expositions of the Heraclitean Fragments as a whole. We can hardly take up and consider such material here in our “report” and in any case our only purpose has been to show how Glasson’s argument from authority can now be met by another and better argument from authority.

II

We conclude with some observations of our own concerning the interpretation and rendering of Heraclitus’ Logos, and its possible relation to that of the Fourth Evangelist.

First, and somewhat ironically, the Heraclitean Logos probably is, after all, best rendered as “Word.” On the other hand such a “Word”

²⁵ Kathleen Freeman, *The Pre-Socratic Philosophers* (2d ed.; Oxford: Blackwell & Motts, 1959) 116.

²⁶ Kirk, *Heraclitus: The Cosmic Fragments*, 70.

²⁷ G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1957) 188.

²⁸ Philip Wheelwright, *Heraclitus* (New York: Atheneum, 1964) 23.

²⁹ Guthrie, *History of Greek Philosophy*, 1. 428.

³⁰ M. Marcovich, *Heraclitus* (Merida, Venezuela: Los Andes University, 1967) 8.

³¹ John Mansley Robinson, *An Introduction to Early Greek Philosophy* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1968) 95.

³² Edward Hussey, *The Presocratics* (London: Duckworth, 1972) 40.

must square with the (now generally recognized) belief of Heraclitus in something like a cosmic-metaphysical law.

One of the most familiar and recurring objections to the Burnet-type interpretation of Heraclitus' Logos is that if in Frg. 1 it refers to Heraclitus' own writing or book, then the distinction on Frg. 50 between the Logos and Heraclitus' own words becomes senseless: "Having listened not to me but to the Logos, it is wise to concur that all things are one." For example, Kirk and Raven: "The technical sense of λόγος in Heraclitus is probably related to the general meaning 'measure,' 'reckoning' or 'proportion'; it cannot be simply Heraclitus' own 'account' that is in question (otherwise the distinction in [Frg. 50] between ἐμοῦ and τοῦ λόγου is meaningless), although the Logos was revealed in that account."³³ I think, however, that this objection fails. There is nothing to prevent Heraclitus from distinguishing his own discourse from the inspired and revelatory Truth vouchsafed to him. Likewise, the priestess at Delphi presumably could have distinguished her ordinary discourse from the prophetic words uttered through her by the inspiration of the oracle; Ezekiel surely did not confuse his own words with the "word of the Lord" which "came to him" on many occasions and which he proclaimed; as God's mouthpiece, St. Paul expressly distinguished his own opinions from those commandments which he received from the Lord; etc. There is much in and about Heraclitus that suggests that he too saw himself as the medium of some sort of religious proclamation and redemptive truth.

The oracular character of Heraclitus' utterances is well attested: Heraclitus himself appears somewhat preoccupied with the oracles (Frgs. 92 and 93) and in Frg. 93 seems in fact to liken his own expression to that of the Delphic oracle ("The Lord whose oracle is that at Delphi neither speaks nor conceals but gives a sign"), and it is not for nothing that from the third century B.C. he was known as ὁ σκοτεινός, the Obscure, and later as ὁ αἰνκτής, the Riddler.³⁴ Further, one must ask whether Parmenides' poem with its explicit claim to be a religious revelation³⁵ may not reflect on Heraclitus. Guthrie in fact asserts without the slightest hesitation that "Parmenides was at one with Heraclitus in claiming a prophetic or apocalyptic authority for his teaching."³⁶ I submit that it is this prophetic self-understanding that lies behind the distinction in Frg. 50

³³ Kirk and Raven, *Presocratic Philosophers*, 188.

³⁴ Timon of Phlius (in Diogenes Laertius 9.6); Cicero *De finibus* 2.5, 15, etc.

³⁵ I realize that the interpretation of Parmenides' poem is much disputed, but cf. my brief discussion, "Parmenides the Prophet?" *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 6 (1968) 67–69.

³⁶ Guthrie, *History of Greek Philosophy*, 2. 6. Note also Guthrie's brief note on Heraclitus' "prophetic character" (*History of Greek Philosophy*, 1. 413–15) and Jaeger's comment on Frgs. 1 and 2: "This is not the language of a teacher and scholar, but that of a prophet intent on rousing men from their slumber" (*Theology of the Early Greek Thinkers*, 112).

between Heraclitus' own words and the divine Logos, Word, that he also speaks. Of course the question may be raised: Since there appears to be no place in Heraclitus' philosophy for a personal God, who is it that does the "inspiring," who is it that endows him with his authority? Here I wish to skirt a number of problems by arguing that, at the least, thinkers like Heraclitus and Parmenides in representing their work as religious proclamations are resorting to a *device* or *image* which, though perhaps not intended literally, effectively distinguishes the Truth—absolute, universal, salvific, etc.—which they think they have penetrated.

Further, we must reckon seriously with the fact that *λόγος* does occur in the Fragments with the simple, straightforward meaning of "word". This is not to deny that *λόγος* is employed by Heraclitus in many ways, including some quasi-metaphysical ways: In Frg. 39 it means something like "reputation" or "significance"; in Frgs. 45 and 115 it appears to mean "measure"; in Frg. 31 it means "proportion". But on numerous occasions it means simply "word," "discourse," "teaching," or the like, as in Frgs. 87 and 108. To this latter list I think we must add also Frg. 50 and the all-important Frg. 1. It has already been argued that the *λόγος* of Frg. 50 refers to a (prophetic) "Word," and now I wish to suggest the same for Frg. 1. Everyone agrees that Heraclitus employs *λόγος* with its special Heraclitean sense in Frg. 1, if anywhere. But here too it must be noted that the *λόγος* is said explicitly to be something *heard*, and a few lines later is linked (?) to references to Heraclitus' words, exposition, explanation, etc. Then too we must take into account that in all probability Frgs. 1 and 2 originally stood together as the introduction to Heraclitus' work.³⁷ The continuity of the two Fragments is suggested by the connecting *διό* that begins Frg. 2 and certain parallelisms both of ideas and sentence structure;³⁸ and both Fragments together bear every mark of a prefatory statement. If indeed Frg. 1 stood originally at the opening of Heraclitus' work, then, even though the cosmic-metaphysical interpretation of *λόγος* would not thereby necessarily be excluded, the prophetic-Word interpretation certainly would be natural: Heraclitus confronts his reader at the very start with a

³⁷ Whether Heraclitus actually wrote a book may be irrelevant here. For even if not, one could still argue the connection (in oral tradition) between fragments. There is evidence from the ancients for Heraclitus' "work," generally called "On Nature". But this is discounted, for example, by Kirk who prefers to speak rather of Heraclitus' "sayings" and who attributes many of the connective particles in the Fragments to later sources (*Heraclitus: The Cosmic Fragments*, 7).

³⁸ Cf. (1) the almost identical genitive absolutes, *τοῦ δὲ λόγου τοῦδ' ἑόντος αἰεί* (Frg. 1), and *τοῦ λόγου δ' ἑόντος ξυνοῦ* (Frg. 2); (2) the parallelism between the Logos which is eternal (*ἑόντος αἰεί*) (Frg.1), and the Logos which is universal (*ξυνοῦ*) (Frg. 2); and (3) the parallelism between the men who are ignorant (*ἀξύνετοι*) of the eternal Logos (Frg. 1), and those who have a private understanding (*ιδίαν φρόνησιν*), of the universal Logos (Frg. 2).

statement about the power and authority of his discourse. The cumulative evidence thus suggests that here also in Frg. 1 λόγος means “word,” although we should no doubt render it a “Word.”

If, then, λόγος in Frgs. 50 and 1 means the prophetic Word which Heraclitus proclaims about the universe, then Guthrie is correct when he says that according to these two Fragments the λόγος is “something which one hears”; he is correct when he says further that it is “something with an existence independent of him who gives it verbal expression”; but he is misleading when he says that it is “that which regulates all events, a kind of universal law of becoming.”³⁹ Rather, it is the Word or Teaching or Proclamation about the ultimate principle which regulates all things, not “according to” which but rather “in accordance with” which all things come to pass (as Guthrie himself translates the κατά of Frg. 1⁴⁰). This ultimate principle itself is more likely represented by the differing words or images “the wise” (Frg. 32), “purpose” (Frg. 41), “war” (Frg. 53), “invisible harmony” (Frg. 54), “God” (Frg. 67), “the Erinyes, servants of Justice” (Frg. 94), “divine law” (Frg. 114), and “nature” (Frg. 123). Actually, it may be a bit too narrow to say that Heraclitus’ Word was about this ultimate principle or law. More likely he understood it as the Word about the nature and meaning of the whole cosmos, and as including the doctrines of the underlying fire, universal change, unity born of tension and diversity, as well as the divine Law which governs all.

It was not in his rendering of λόγος as “word” that Burnet erred, and certainly not in his emphasis on the prophetic character of this Word, but in his restriction of this Word to Heraclitus’ treatise itself (it is “simply the discourse of Heraclitus himself,”⁴¹—a book, a writing, a thing), and his failure to relate it adequately to the metaphysical content of Heraclitus’ philosophy as a whole.⁴² The Word of Heraclitus is that Truth about the cosmos which the more recent interpreters have done so much to clarify. In this way I would attempt to relate λόγος as “Word” to Heraclitus’ belief in a cosmic-metaphysical law and to his understanding of the whole cosmos as ruled by that law—the Logos is the inspired proclamation about that reality.

The most recent full study of the pre-Socratics is that of Jonathan Barnes, *The Pre-Socratic Philosophers*.⁴³ It will be useful at this point to

³⁹ Guthrie, *History of Greek Philosophy*, 1. 425.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 2d ed., 146 (note).

⁴² It is a common judgment of pre-Socratic scholars that, as was mentioned earlier, Burnet’s interpretation of Heraclitus as well as his treatment of the pre-Socratics as a whole suffered too much from an anti-metaphysical bias.

⁴³ Jonathan Barnes, *The Pre-Socratic Philosophers* (2 vols.; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979).

mention Barnes' view of the general issue before us. Commenting on Frg. 1 he says:

Most scholars have found in 'logos' a technical term, and they have striven to discover a metaphysical sense for it. Those strivings are vain: a *logos* or 'account' is what a man *legei* or says. We may suppose that our fragment was preceded, in antique fashion, by a title-sentence of the form: 'Heraclitus of Ephesus says (*legei*) thus. . . .' The noun *logos* picks up, in an ordinary and metaphysically unexciting way, the verb *legei*; it is wasted labor to seek Heraclitus' secret in the sense of *logos*.

It does not, of course, follow from this that Heraclitus had no 'metaphysical' theory to propound, no 'Logos-doctrine', as the commentators have it. On the contrary, [Frg. 1] makes it clear that his 'account' must include or embody something like a general 'law of nature': 'everything happens in accordance with the account.'⁴⁴

Aside from Barnes' conjecture about what might have preceded Frg. 1, he no doubt underplays the term λόγος in Frg. 1, failing even to grant Heraclitus' "account" the status of an inspired and prophetic Word. On the other hand, we agree that λόγος in Frg. 1 should not be made to bear the metaphysical meaning attributed to it by most commentators, and Barnes is certainly correct that (as we have already emphasized) a "non-metaphysical" λόγος in Frg. 1 does not undermine the metaphysical theory otherwise expressed in Heraclitus' Fragments.

Finally, a comment on the possible relation of Heraclitus' Logos, Word, to that of the Fourth Gospel. The question of the origin and/or background of the Johannine Logos is one of the oldest and richest issues in NT scholarship,⁴⁵ and a belief in a connection between Heraclitus and John⁴⁶ goes all the way back to the early Fathers. Most notably, Clement of Alexandria found antecedents for his Logos Christology in Heraclitus (as well as in Epicharmus and the Stoics),⁴⁷ and Justin Martyr proclaimed Heraclitus worthy of being called a Christian.⁴⁸ Many modern commentators cite Heraclitus and/or Stoicism, which thought of itself as passing on the Logos doctrine of Heraclitus, as at least relevant background for the

⁴⁴ Ibid., 59.

⁴⁵ For a short but useful summary, see T. W. Manson, *On Paul and John* (ed. Matthew Black; London: SCM, 1963) chap. 4. For a summary bibliography on the Prologue generally, see Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John: I–XII* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966) 36–37.

⁴⁶ We do not raise here the question of the authorship of the Fourth Gospel and my references to "John" are to be taken as shorthand for the Evangelist, whoever he was. For a recent discussion of this question see Oscar Cullmann, *The Johannine Circle* (trans. John Bowden; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976) Appendix 1.

⁴⁷ Cf. Clement of Alexandria *Stromata*, *passim*.

⁴⁸ Justin Martyr *Apology* 1.46.

Johannine Logos,⁴⁹ and some are persuaded of a positive and direct relationship.

Perhaps the noblest attempt in recent years to connect the Johannine Logos directly with Heraclitus is that of Walther Kranz, who in 1950 published an article, "Der Logos Heraklits und der Logos des Johannes."⁵⁰ Kranz states his thesis:

Wenn wir nun das Prooimion des Johannes mit dem Heraklitischen vergleichen, so wird offenbar, dass es zu verstehen ist als eine christliche Logoslehre, welche die des grossen Heiden bewusst nachbildend zugleich ehrt und bekämpft; denn ihr Gedankengang ist parallel.⁵¹

There are, in fact, certain parallelisms in the Logos doctrines of Heraclitus and John, especially if we set aside for the moment the interpretation of Heraclitus' Logos as Prophetic Word and adopt the mainstream interpretation according to which it means something like Divine Law or Cosmic Reason. These parallelisms may be summarized as follows.⁵²

1) *The eternity of the Logos.* Heraclitus says the Logos "always exists" (Frg. 1)⁵³ and John says, echoing Gen 1:1, that the Logos "was in the beginning" (1:1). If, as is probable, Heraclitus' work opened with Frg. 1, then in both Heraclitus and John this is the first thing said about the Logos.

2) *The divinity of the Logos.* For Heraclitus the Logos is identified in some way with the underlying (divine) fire (Frg. 30), it might be identified with the divine law (Frg. 114), it is in some way appropriately called "Zeus" (Frg. 32), and it is regarded as the coincidence of opposites as is also God (Frg. 67). John's identification of the Logos with God is a straightforward and unambiguous "the Logos was God" (1:1).

3) *The identification of the Logos with Light.* Heraclitus relates Logos to the "everliving fire" (Frg. 30), the "never-setting" sun (Frg. 16), and the "lightning bolt" (Frg. 64). In John the Logos is identified outright with light (1:4–5, 8), and the dualism of light/darkness is present throughout.

⁴⁹ Examples: J. N. Sanders, *The Gospel According to St. John* (ed. B. A. Mastin; New York: Harper & Row, 1968) 68–69; C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John* (London: SPCK, 1955) 127; it is interesting, however, that in the 2d ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978) Barrett adds that "early philosophical use of λόγος is questionable; it is probably wrong to claim that Heraclitus had a 'logos-doctrine' . . .," and cites Glasson's article (152).

⁵⁰ Walther Kranz, "Der Logos Heraklits und der Logos des Johannes," *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* n.s. 93 (1950) 81–95.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁵² This is somewhat of a variation of Kranz's list ("Der Logos Heraklits und der Logos des Johannes," 89–90).

⁵³ This of course requires taking ἀεί with ἐόντος rather than with ἀξύνετοι.

4) *The creative work of the Logos.* Heraclitus says, "All things come into being according to the Logos" (Frg. 1); John says, "All things came into being through him," i.e., the Logos (1:3).

5) *The universal presence of the Logos.* Heraclitus says that the Logos is "common to all" (Frg. 2) and related to it the "never-setting" sun (Frg. 16); John says of his Logos that it "illuminates every man" (1:9) and is "the life that was the light of men" (1:4).

6) *The necessity of following the Logos.* For Heraclitus "it is necessary to follow the Logos" (Frg. 2); John says that only those "believing in his name" are children of God (1:12).

7) *The rejection of the Logos.* Heraclitus says that "men fail to understand" the Logos (Frg. 1); according to John "the darkness never grasped" the light of the Logos (1:5).⁵⁴ Kranz regards it as "besonders erstaunlich" that this idea is repeated by both: Heraclitus says, further, that men "lack experience" of the Logos (Frg. 1); according to John, "The world did not know him" (1:10).

While these similarities may seem striking to some, they will fail to impress many NT scholars who find even more striking parallels in OT *hochma/sophia* themes, or in the speculative Wisdom literature of intertestamental Judaism, or in the Logos doctrines of Philo Judeaus, or in gnostic thought, etc. Then, too, the "syncretistic" interpretation, as in Kranz's statement that

wenn wir . . . hier mit solcher Entschiedenheit den Zusammenhang der Prologgedanken mit griechischer Philosophie betonen, so sind wir uns dennoch darüber klar, dass wir damit nur *eine* Komponente in diesem komplizierten Gebilde aus der Zeit des religiösen Synkretismus bezeichnet haben,⁵⁵

along with his references to oriental speculation, Orphic-Pythagorean and gnostic teachings, labors too much under the spell of the old *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*. More important, perhaps, one must reckon not only with similarities between Heraclitus and John but also with *dissimilarities*, and these appear sometimes quite irreconcilable. Whether, or to what degree, those other alleged sources of the Johannine Logos can be reconciled with these last two lines of criticism may also be a good question, but one which cannot be considered here.

Our observations and conclusions may be summarized as follows: (1) A much stronger case can be presented for the cosmic/metaphysical interpretation of Heraclitus' Logos ("Reason") than has sometimes been thought, and this interpretation is now maintained virtually by all pre-Socratic scholars, Barnes being a notable exception. (2) There are,

⁵⁴ *καταλαμβάνω* (here a gnomic aorist *κατέλαβεν*) can mean both to seize, overpower, etc. and to grasp with the mind and thus to understand.

⁵⁵ Kranz, "Der Logos Heraklits und der Logos des Johannes," 92. It is revealing that Kranz refers to Bultmann as "der heute beste Kenner des Johannesevangeliums" (93).

however, also good grounds for the interpretation of the Heraclitean Logos as "Word," but now understood as an inspired and prophetic Word, and viewed in immediate relation to Heraclitus' doctrine of a cosmic and metaphysical Law—it is the proclamation of that Law. Despite superficial similarities, this Logos of Heraclitus stands in no direct connection with that of the Fourth Gospel.

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