

Nature's Bonfire Burns On:
Heraclitean Cosmology as Process Panentheism
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Dedicated to Dr. Joel Kennedy, my uncle,
who first inspired in me a passion for Classics research,
and to Cameron Kelley, my nephew,
whose generation will keep the Classics alive.

Preface

De Musica Universali, Artibus Liberalibus, & Lyra Heracliti¹

“ . . . and to my listening ears all nature sings and round me rings the music of the spheres.”

-Maltbie D. Babcock, in “This is My Father’s World”

Friends, family, and acquaintances alike often ask why I am studying the Classics. And, to be fair, I still find myself asking myself this same question from time to time. My usual sarcastic retort is something to this effect: “Well, I reckon because I couldn’t think of anything else to do.” Or, if I’m feeling a little more matter-of-fact: “Why, for the furtherance of the humanities, of course!” While stereotypical or formulaic responses such as these may warrant chuckles (or groans), neither are particularly helpful. In any event, most folks simply want an answer as to why I chose a field with little practical or extrinsic value. In truth, had I stuck with my original plan, beginning in middle school, I should have earned an associate of applied science in computer science, and be designing software right now, instead of writing an essay prefacing my Classics thesis as a candidate for the bachelor of arts. (I am quite sure a computer science vocation would require far less explaining.) Nevertheless, in the middle of my high school senior year, I decided I liked my childhood passion for Greco-Roman and Medieval literature too much to pursue a purely technical vocation. Naturally, then, a Classical Studies emphasis within a liberal arts program seemed to be the clear track for me.

Yet, after having studied the liberal arts for nearly four-and-a-half years, I occasionally have, even now, difficulty in articulating exactly what it is I do and its value; I think part of the

¹ “On the Music of the Spheres, the Liberal Arts, and the Heraclitean Lyre”

difficulty stems from the liberal arts encompassing a broad spectrum of disciplines, while stressing the interconnectivity of each of these in one's life. Since the liberal arts focus primarily on building individuals to more embody the *imago Dei*, the concept is naturally abstract, and may seem archaic and unnecessary. Unfortunately, we do live in an era which places its value on numbers and tangible outcomes, but Professor I. M. Cross suggests that if one's principle concern after college was to make money then perhaps "we *should* confer an A.B. at birth" (399). Though clearly facetious, Cross does makes the all too relevant rhetorical point of questioning why one should bother with college at all if the only goal afterward is finding employment. Marjorie Lamp Mead further says that "unlike vocational training, which seeks to produce particular skills and train an individual for specialized employment, the liberal arts work to shape an individual to live life fully, both while at work and also while at leisure" (121).

Even after these years, I don't think I came to the clearest understanding of the liberal integration of life, labor, learning, and leisure until attending the Junior Piano Recital of a dear friend, last semester. During Victoria's marvelous performance, I must confess, my mind was wandering in a couple of directions: in one of these places I actually considered how music constitutes one of the seven liberal arts, being one of the four components of the quadrivium.² The Ancients and Medievals since at least Pythagoras, I recalled, conceived of the musical qualities of the universe: *musica universalis*, literally "the universal music," commonly rendered as "the music of the spheres." There is regularity, constancy, and beauty written into the very fabric of the universe, all orchestrated by God. I can only imagine how many scores of hours she (or any musician for that matter) spent in practicing and perfecting those compositions, but that labor stands as a testimony to the gifts and talents God vouchsafed to humanity for our pleasure and edification, and as a testament to the glory of His work.

2 Even though music plays an integral role in the liberal arts, I must admit, while an undergrad I have yet to take an academic course in music.

Norman Melchert, commenting on the Medieval cosmology writes

Such is the world . . . harmonious, ordered, finite, displaying the glories of the creator. Physics, astronomy, and theology are one in a marvelous integration of life and knowledge. Everything in the universe embodies a goal and purpose set within it by the divine love, which governs all. To understand it is to understand this purpose, to gain guidance for life, and to see that absolutely everything depends on and leads to God. (303-304)

As I sat with the audience listening to my friend, a fellow image bearer, so gracefully attesting both to the complexity of God’s universe and to the genius and abilities He imparts to man, I came to better understand the manner in which God orchestrates all of time and space, from beginning to end. For as St. Paul writes to the Colossians, in what I have come to accept as the liberal arts verse, “He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (*NRSVCE*, 1:17).

In our first introduction to the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus (fl. circa 500 B.C.), almost four years ago, my Ancient & Medieval Philosophy class learned that Heraclitus used the lyre as a familiar analogy for his cosmology: “παλίντροπος ἄρμονίη ὅκωσπερ τόξου καὶ λύρης” (Robinson Fr. 51).³ It is unsurprising that Heraclitus, a contemporary of Pythagoras, should also have identified a musical quality in the cosmic order, which has become a common theme running through the course of Western cosmology. Until I began thinking seriously about my thesis last semester, I do not think I had grasped the significance of this fragment, but I finally realized that even in Heraclitus’s work God (the Logos) is directing the Cosmos, working within the disorder and polarity in the world to produce the harmony we perceive as stability (cf. Diels-Kranz Fr. 67). This idea of God’s Word organizing, harmonizing, and, in a diminished sense,

³ “[There is a] backward joining, such as that of the bow and the lyre.” My trans.

redeeming the Cosmos seems to anticipate St. John equating Christ and the Logos (cf. John 1); for in Christ all things hold together, just as they do similarly in Heraclitus's fractured estimation of the Logos.

This is fundamentally why I am a liberal arts major, because God's Truth can be found everywhere, for St. Paul again tells us that there is "one God and Father of all, who is above all and through and in all" (*NRSVCE*, Ephesians 4:9). Poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, in his "Pied Beauty" tells that God's beauty is found in "all trades, their gear and tackle and trim / . . . / Whatever is fickle, frecklèd (who knows how?)" (133). God's Truth and beauty can be seen in the things man produces—from music, to art, to philosophy, to literature—whether the most mundane or the most profound. We must acknowledge, however, that without explicit revelation, man and his faculties may only bring him so far in knowing Truth, on account of sin and ignorance; nevertheless, anyone (Christian and non-Christian alike) listening to the universal harmony may gain some insight into God, man, and the natural order. For this reason, I now see that studying the Classics has become far more to me than simply the enjoyment of reading the pagan poets and philosophers, and I actively look for where they may have said something true about God without realizing they had so done.

My particular interest in Heraclitus first began when I discovered how close his description of the Logos is to John's description of Christ as Logos, some half-millennium later. I firmly believe John was contextualizing, in part because Heraclitus hinted at the Truth, though he necessarily did not possess the fullest dispensation of Truth. But all Truth is God's Truth. What had bothered me throughout the course of my Heraclitean research, however, is that philosophers and scholars had so taken for granted that Heraclitus's worldview exemplified some form of monism, when he seems to clearly distinguish between God and world. My argument and conclusion, thus, are that His cosmology most closely resembles panentheism.

In this sense, I am furthering the humanities, but the task of the liberally educated is much loftier than simply adding to (or correcting) the scholarly record. He must always be searching for the melody of God's Truth interrelating all things and resounding all around. If for no other reason, God's love is an end enough in itself, to seek Him and Truth in life, labor, learning, and leisure, whether spending months researching, an hour or two at a friend's recital, conversing over the dinner table, while on a walk, or in any other position one may find himself. I have no regrets in my pursuit of a liberal education. More than anything else, any liberal arts program should instill in its students a lifelong ethic in order to edify fellow man and glorify God the Creator in absolutely everything they do.

-Christopher M. Nitzband, B.A. (Candidate)

Lux Semper Lucet

Aedificare & Glorificare

On the Feast of the Immaculate Conception

Friday, 8 December 2017

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“I have often said, and oftener think, *that this world is a comedy to those who think, a tragedy to those who feel*—a solution of why Democritus laughed and Heraclitus wept.”

-Horace Walpole, in a Letter to Horace Mann, 31 December 1769

Introduction: The One and the Many

At the outset of his treatise Rousas Rushdoony states, “One of the most basic and continuing problems of man’s history is the question of the one and the many and their relationship” (1). What accounts for the plurality of things in a seemingly unified whole has been a question at the forefront of Western philosophy since before Socrates (Melchert 11). However, early in the Great Conversation, as thought itself developed, the early philosopher tended to sacrifice one leg at the expense of the other: either he denied pluralism, leaving only monism; or he denied monism, offering no underlying principle for the multiplicity of things in the universe. Frederick Copleston reminds the student of philosophy: “The Pythagoreans asserted plurality to the practical exclusion of the One—there are many ones; the Eleatics asserted the One to the exclusion of the many” (59). Yet, in order to provide a holistic explanation of the cosmos and the many instances of particularity within that universe, one must propose a solution not to the exclusion of the one or the many; rather, his solution should simultaneously explain both. To answer this question, then, he must submit a cosmological system in which a single supervening structure exists, allowing for an array of ontologies within its parameters.

Arguably, the pre-Socratic Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, presents the earliest adequate attempt to answer the problem, for in his cosmology one finds the first account of “one world, a

uni-verse, despite the multitude of apparently different and often conflicting things [found] in it” (Melchert 26). In his philosophical system, Heraclitus sets forth a divine entity, the Logos (“ὁ λόγος”),⁴ responsible for the creation, sustenance, and maintenance of the variety of materials in the world (cf. esp. Diels-Kranz Fr. 1)⁵. Throughout the course of Heraclitean scholarship, however, some have maintained that Heraclitus’s worldview only expresses another form of monism (whether materialistic, or pantheistic), since the Logocentric fire exchanges everything in the Cosmos for everything (cf. Diels-Kranz Fr. 90). If this is the case, the question of the one and the many still needs answering, and Heraclitus’s model falters; nevertheless, if one can demonstrate that the Heraclitean view indeed draws a distinction between the Logos and the things under its domain, then he has given a successful reply. A panentheistic examination of the Logos offers a strong case for this latter hypothesis, thus preserving the idea that Heraclitus has constructed a framework in which the One and the many concurrently occur; for the concept of the many existing within the One makes way for a robust and holistic description of the universe.

Through the centuries of Heraclitus scholarship, many have noted that the perpetual cycle of material generation and fluctuation intrinsic to the Heraclitean model predicates an essentially becoming type of metaphysical reality; so to further reinforce a panentheistic worldview within Heraclitean cosmology, this thesis will attempt to show, through Heraclitus’s doctrine of the flux, that a type of process metaphysics is an integral component in his estimation of the God-world relationship. Specifically it will be contended that a characteristic of the Logos is not merely a deistic force, but instead one demonstrating some degree of intentionality; hence, the Logos does not exercise a simply cyclical influence over the nature of reality and its processes, but rather

4 It should be stated that because there is no word in the English language, quite capturing all of the nuances of the Greek word “λόγος” (it could be rendered “word,” “reason,” “account,” among others), throughout the course of this paper I will prefer to transliterate the Greek to “Logos” (cf. Melchert 21; Brann 15).

5 I have also opted to maintain the traditional Diels-Kranz numbering scheme, and my quotations of Heraclitus have come from Robinson’s edition unless otherwise noted.

directs it toward some end.⁶ Although some scholarship has shied away from understanding the Logos as an intentional entity, one ought not ignore the teleological implications inherent therein, because the world within the Logos is not subject to purely mechanical or naturalistic physics, but overseen by this Wise One (“τὸ σοφόν”) (Diels-Kranz Fr. 41). Ontological panentheism, in conjunction with related process metaphysics, demonstrates a more adequate description of Heraclitean cosmology than the previously suggested monistic models, incompatible with any manifestation of monism, because of the clear Logos-Cosmos distinction in Heraclitean thought which properly accounts for the One and the many.

Chapter 1: Heraclitus’s Panentheistic Ontology

The One: Preeminence of the Logos

The corpus of Heraclitus, as with the other pre-Socratics, only exists in a series of fragments, preserved as quotations and paraphrases in the works of later authors. Herein lies the chief difficulty of such studies: reconstructing a philosophical system, based entirely on a few scores of fragments of varying quality and authenticity, in tandem with secondary commentary. Unfortunately, a non-negligible portion of the fragments extant come from authors with explicit biases, especially through Diogenes Laërtius, on the one hand, writing romantic biographies of the philosophers, and, on the other, Hippolytus, whose Christian *Refutation* polemicizes against the pagan philosophers; nevertheless, scholars must necessarily do the best they can with what they have. T.M. Robinson, a pre-Socratic scholar, writes that “[t]he details of [Heraclitus’s] life that are found in Diogenes Laertius are late, anecdotal, and unreliable; many seem to be merely fractured extrapolations from material found in the surviving fragments” (3); F. Legge notes a similar sentiment in his translation of volume two of Hippolytus’s *Refutation* (123). Though certain aspects of Heraclitus’s life and thought may remain ambiguous and uncertain, one can

⁶ While it is true that the Logos almost certainly directs the Cosmos toward some end, this “*telos*” is, in all probability, not a final but progressive state. Confer my discussion on page 14 and following.

ascertain degrees of certainty. For example, since Diogenes (9.6) agrees with Sextus Empiricus (1.132) that Heraclitus titled his book *On Nature* (*Περὶ Φύσεως*), Heraclitus probably titled his treatise thusly.

Fragment 1, perhaps, bears the greatest import for the immediate discussion. Sextus preserves its fullest text, which Aristotle (3.5.6)⁷, Clement of Alexandria (5.111.7), Hippolytus (9.1) each partially corroborate; therefore, one may ascribe a reasonable degree of accuracy, at least, to this first fragment and its place as the introduction to *On Nature*.⁸ And so, Heraclitus, through Aristotle et al., begins: “Τοῦ δὲ λόγου τοῦδ’ ἔόντος αἰεὶ . . .” (3.5.6).⁹ How one interprets “λόγου” (gen. of “λόγος”) here will determine the manner in which the whole of Heraclitus’s cosmology is to be read, on account of the two competing readings of “λόγος.” On one side, taken simply as Heraclitus’s word, or his account of things, the Logos has no real cosmological significance, and would have no place at the center of this project; however, on the other, if one takes the Logos as an eternal, divine being, then from the very beginning of his work the reader realizes that Heraclitus intends for his own theological concerns to be the overarching factor in his program. In this respect, then, this paper will maintain a traditional and conservative reading of Heraclitus, against the contemporary reading held in some circles today.

Some contemporary academicians have interpreted the use of “λόγος” to simply mean Heraclitus’s own estimation of the world in his philosophic structure. Robinson in particular argues that Heraclitus’s successors, specifically the Stoics, turned the word “logos” (referring only to the Heraclitean composition) into the “Logos” (the supreme governing principle of the universe): “But since Heraclitus’ time the *logos* of fragment 1 has been taken as much more than simply his ‘account’ <of things>. For the Stoics it was also (and more importantly) that Rational

7 In the same section, Aristotle further relates that Heraclitus introduces his volume with this fragment.

8 For those interested in textual criticism of Heraclitus, consult the German critical edition of Diels-Kranz, or the English critical edition of Marcovich.

9 “And of this Logos, being eternal . . .” My trans.

Principle (*Logos*) which directs the universe . . .” (75). Instead, Robinson’s impression leads him to believe that the Stoics “in their search for a precursor, misread their hero and misled posterity on several matters of significance (such as, eg, the supposed doctrine of *logos*)”; nevertheless, he is circumspect enough to grant that the “matter is a complex one, and still much controverted . . . [and] should be treated with the scepticism any claims in this area deserve” (4-5). Moreover, Robinson does offer compelling evidence in claiming that referring to one’s own opus as a “logos” was fairly standard practice during the time of Heraclitus, for several authors adhered to this form (74). But as compelling as this argument may be, it departs drastically from centuries of relative consensus on the nature of the Logos as an eternal, fiery, divine-like Being, not to mention continuity among the fragments to the contrary.

In fact, internal evidence from the first fragment itself suggests that, in the Logos, far more transpires than a simple setting forth. Beginning in the second sentence of *On Nature*, one sees the Logos as some kind of creative substance, responsible for everything coming about; Heraclitus writes, “γινομένων γὰρ πάντων κατὰ τὸν λόγον τόνδε . . .” (Robinson Fr. 1).¹⁰ Norman Melchert, in his explication of the fragment, further explains that the Logos makes “the structure or pattern of the world-order . . . not just accidentally what it is. There is a logic to it that can be seen as reasonable and right” (21). To this point, clearly the Logos is, at least, a sort of ontological matrix that allows for the occurrence of events, along with being the necessary metaphysical infrastructure accounting for the existence of things altogether, and the order therein. Charles Kahn submits this as Heraclitus’s ἀρχή (translit. *archē*), or the pre-Socratic “tendency to explain the present state of affairs by deriving it from some initial situation or first beginning” (18). So the Logos, for Heraclitus is the first principle, the “ἓν”¹¹ (Diels-Kranz Frs. 10, 41, & 50), the cosmic agent having initialized the beginning of the cosmos, and which

¹⁰ “For though all things come about on account of this Logos . . .” My trans.

¹¹ “The One.”

continues to properly organize everything in it. Heraclitus additionally qualifies that no external cause created the Cosmos (“κόσμος”), “ἀλλ’ ἦν ἀεὶ καὶ ἔστιν καὶ ἔσται, πῦρ ἀείζωον . . .”

(Robinson Fr. 30).¹²

Now, the Logos appears more than the thought of a particular individual, and one may ascribe a few rudimentary attributes to this *archē* of the universe: being eternal and uncreated, it structures the world, and all the matter within in it; it ostensibly causes the occurrence of any and every event; it is unitary, and supposed to be composed of the material element of fire. However, this still does not predicate some transcendent or divine principle; from everything described so far, it could, like the present concept of gravity, be a purely physical law (and some have incorrectly stopped here). But Kahn notes that “[f]or the early cosmologists, as later for Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics, this conception . . . of the cosmos brought with it the idea of the cosmic god” (19). During this period in history, in a world entrenched in the works of Homer and Hesiod, along with the various cults associated with the Pantheon, the ancient Greek could hardly divorce himself from a notion of divinity. Telling of this, in fragment 64, Heraclitus even employs Zeus-like language in describing the Logos: “Τὰ δὲ πάντα οἰακίζει κεραυνός” (Robinson).¹³ To which Melchert comments, “Reluctant to use the name of Zeus, Heraclitus chooses the most dramatic form of fire familiar to early humans: lightning, the weapon Zeus supposedly uses to enforce his will” (22).

Thus, by equating the Logos, and the influence it bears on reality, with the chief of the Greek Pantheon, Heraclitus almost definitely means to deify his One. He makes this most explicit in naming it “τὸ σοφόν”: the Wise One, having providence over all things subject to it, “ὅτε ἐκυβέρνησε πάντα διὰ πάντων” (Robinson Fr. 41; cf. also Diels-Kranz Fr. 32).¹⁴ Classicist

12 “. . . but always was, is, and will be, an ever-living fire . . .” My trans.

13 “And the thunderbolt steers all things.” My trans.

14 “. . . steering all things, through all things.” My trans.

Eva Brann, in her commentary on fragment 32, says the Wise Thing's "being is a *gnome*, a judgment, which also means 'purpose, intention.' The cosmic Wise Thing has *intention*" (20). By virtue of the Logos being wise, it must have a mind, it must have the capacity for intentionality and agency. The Logos, the preeminent One, the eternal Word, the mental agent under which everything comes about, organizes the Cosmos into a rational pattern: in a word, God for Heraclitus. Quoting from fragment 10, and adding his own commentary, the great twentieth century analytic Bertrand Russell expressly makes this connection: "'All things come out of the one, and the one out of all things'; but the many have less reality than the one, which is God" (41). Although one may now reasonably acknowledge the Logos as God in Heraclitus's work, the relationship between it (the One) and the things over which it supervenes remains to be seen.

The Many: Subordination of Matter

To the ancient Greeks, it generally seemed that the universe was composed of four basic elements—earth, water, air, and fire—as Heraclitus almost certainly believed. In current scholarship, however, debate persists over whether or not Heraclitus actually adhered to a doctrine of air; instead, some scholars (such as Zeller and Burnet) affirm Heraclitus only held to a belief in the other three elements (Kahn 154). Those denying Heraclitus's elemental view of air do so by arguing that his fragments discussing air were additions by the Stoics, again, in order to conform Heraclitus to their paradigm of the Cosmos. Nonetheless, Kahn and Robinson maintain that, even though the use of "ἀήρ" is absent from fragment 31, but present in fragment 76, one would expect Heraclitus to have adopted the idea of four elements from his Milesian predecessors (Kahn 153-155; Robinson 99). Kahn quips about the three-element case: "Such a view cannot give any plausible account of evaporation, wind formation, or the production of rain and lightning from the clouds—precisely the range of natural phenomena in which Ionian speculation took a special interest . . ." (154).

From fragment 1, students of Heraclitus learn that all things transpire on account of the Logos, and, in 30, they learn that this Cosmos is an ever-living fire, which he presumably takes to be the primordial substance or “*Urstoff*” (Robinson 97). He seems to choose this material to be the preceding factor in the world-order, as Norman Melchert conjectures, because fire “is the most ethereal, least solid thing [Heraclitus] is acquainted with . . .” (19). The ancients, awed by the phenomenon of fire—the least tangible element—often associated it with their conceptions of a transcendent reality, as Heraclitus does in his cosmology. Melchert further notes that Heraclitus “might say that *as substance* fire has no priority over other things. It is just one of the four elements taking part with the others in the constant cycles of change. But *as pattern*, as world-order, it does have priority, for the pattern is eternal and divine” (20). Expanding this idea of a dual functionality in the Heraclitean fire, Eva Brann postulates that for Heraclitus two fires exist hypostatically: one as an element among the four, the other the eternal principle. “Visible fire,” she says, “appears on the scene flaring up and dying by the same measures as govern all elemental transformations. But there is a Fire that never goes out, being ever-present throughout the cosmos” (63); for Heraclitus, these fires must be inextricably linked.¹⁵

Heraclitus speculates, “πυρός τε ἀνταμοιβή τὰ πάντα καὶ πῦρ ἀπάντων . . .” (Robinson Fr. 90).¹⁶ Everything in existence comes from the fire, but those things will eventually be recycled back into it. In this perpetual cycle of the condensation and evaporation of the elements, Heraclitus proposes fire condenses down into air, air into water, water into earth, and vice versa via evaporation (cf. the fragment 76 series in Diels-Kranz), especially represented in the Marcus Aurelius quotation from the sequence: “ὄτι γῆς θάνατος ὕδωρ γενέσθαι καὶ ὕδατος θάνατος ἀέρα γενέσθαι καὶ ἀέρος πῦρ καὶ ἔμπαλιβ.”¹⁷ Through the transmutation of the elements, from and into

15 Dr. Samuel Youngs helpfully suggested that since the physical fire is a manifestation of the divine Fire, and the two exist simultaneously, we may call any instance of fire we experience a “pyrophaney.”

16 “All things are an interchange of fire, and fire an interchange of all things. . .” My trans.

17 “That the death of earth is to become water, the death of water to become air, the death of air to become fire, and

one another, comes the plurality of material in the Cosmos; Heraclitus relates, “ἐκ πάντων ἓν καὶ ἕξ ἑνὸς πάντα” (Robinson Fr. 10).¹⁸ The One Thing is, of course, the pyrotechnic Logos, the point-of-origin for everything else, being composed of the many things it holds together.

Therefore, Heraclitus makes a clear distinction between the many and the One; that is, there are a multiplicity of things in the Cosmos, constructed from configurations of four separate ontologies (i.e. the elements), all while existing and subsisting in the one transcendent ever-living fire, but being necessarily subordinate to it. Even so, Heraclitean scholars have usually preferred to classify Heraclitus’s philosophical system as monistic, or, more specifically, pantheistic.

The Many in the One: Heraclitean Cosmology as Panentheism

It seems odd that historians of thought have generally read an implicit monism into the Heraclitean universe, for this view directly contradicts Heraclitus’s project of reconciling the many and the One. In monism, a single substance comprises the world and everything in it, which may reveal itself in one of two broad forms: materialistic, in which the same one substance manifests itself in clever reconfigurations as everything; or pantheistic, where God and the world are identical. Thales, for whom water is the underlying nature of everything, stands as an example of the former expression (cf. Russell 24-26; Melchert 11-12), whereas Baruch Spinoza, whose “philosophy seems to imply that ‘all is God’” exemplifies the latter (Cooper 68). Neither of these seem to adequately capture what Heraclitus set forth in his cosmological work, because, fire, though it precedes the other elements, cannot be said to be the essence of everything in the universe as with Thales’s water, nor can it be said that the many things within the Logos equal the Logos. One should, rather, regard a form of panentheism as the proper model of cosmology in Heraclitus’s worldview, which closely relates, though does not reduce God to the world.

thusly backwards.” My trans.

18 “ . . . out of all things is the One Thing, and from the One Thing is all things.” My trans.

From the German *Allingottlehre*, coined by Karl Krause in the early nineteenth-century, panentheism is the belief that all exists within God (Cooper 121). *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* more robustly explains panentheism as “[t]he belief that the Being of God includes and penetrates the whole universe, so that every part of it exists in Him, but . . . as against Pantheism . . . that His Being is more than, and is not exhausted by, the universe” (1027). *Prima facie*, based on the above exposition of the Logos and the things subject to it, in conjunction with this definition, one should have gathered at least a vague idea of the manner in which he might arrive at a panentheistic model in Heraclitus. But philosophical theologian John W. Cooper notes that though the term was coined in the early 1800s, it did not come into common usage until popularized through the work of mid-twentieth-century philosopher Charles Hartshorne (26). The fact that the terminology is so recent may explain why researchers and scholars have yet to examine Heraclitus’s surviving corpus through the lens of panentheism; for before the advent of the category, one would have naturally reckoned Heraclitus’s close God-World relationship as pantheism. Interestingly, however, though the category has been in the philosophical vocabulary for nearly two centuries, philosophers still have not explicitly applied this term to the Heraclitean Logos-Cosmos organism, merely perpetuating a view not entirely doing justice to Heraclitus’s system.¹⁹

For example and on one hand, for all of his merits and great contributions to the canon of historical philosophy, Jesuit philosopher Frederic Copleston thinks Heraclitus failed at his attempt to reconcile the One and the many; in fact, he goes so far as to deny any sort of theological inclination in Heraclitus. He muses about the pre-Socratics and their attempts to solve the problem: “The one-sided doctrine of Parmenides was unacceptable as also was the one-

19 I feel I should add that, during the course of many months of research, the only source I discovered, expressly linking Heraclitus’s cosmology to panentheism was Cyril O’Regan’s volume on Hegel. But even there, O’Regan merely glosses that Heraclitean cosmology might be identified as such. Confer page 17 and following.

sided doctrine of the Pythagoreans. Yet the philosophy of Heraclitus was also unsatisfactory. Apart from the fact that it hardly accounted sufficiently for the stable element in things, it was bound up with materialistic monism” (59). To Copleston, then, Heraclitus is not even a pantheist, he is a material atheist. Indeed, Copleston further considers that the fact that “Heraclitus speaks of the One as Zeus is true, but it does not appear that he adopted any religious attitude towards the One—Fire” (59). However, Heraclitus, in fragment 41, emphasizes the Wise One as the governing principle of the universe; it has a mind, and therefore must be composed of some kind of transcendental or mental property. Furthermore, far from being equal with the things under its auspices, the Wise One supersedes and encapsulates them. This is evidenced especially in Heraclitus’s description of the finitude of matter: the Logos creates physical things (Diels-Kranz Fr. 1), extinguishing and recreating those things via the natural cycle (Diels-Kranz Fr. 76), whereas the Logos itself is eternal, uncreated, and ever-living (Diels-Kranz Fr. 1; Diels-Kranz Fr. 30).

On the other hand, Charles Kahn takes a monist perspective of Heraclitus, with certainly pantheist leanings, particularly highlighting the “‘pantheistic’ tendency” in fragment 67 (275).²⁰ Here Heraclitus writes, “ὁ θεὸς ἡμέρη εὐφρόνη, χειμῶν θέρος, πόλεμος εἰρήνη, κόρος λιμός . . .” (Robinson Fr. 67).²¹ In fairness, Heraclitus does appear to reduce God to these thesis/antithesis pairs, suggesting that these, or rather the tension between them, comprise the sum of God; however, in light of Heraclitus’s making overt distinctions between the Logos and created matter in other fragments, little warrants reading this fragment pantheistically. Instead, the case may be made that every thesis/antithesis couplet exists within the Logos, and ought to be viewed as partial descriptions of God, rather than His totality. Moreover, Daniel Wallace, in exegeting 1

20 In several places, Kahn more specifically likens his view of Heraclitus’s monism/pantheism to panpsychism, the belief that mental properties emerging from the cosmic Mind or Soul fundamentally construct all reality (cf. 119, 128, & 238).

21 “God is day/night, winter/summer, war/peace, surfeit/famine . . .” My trans.

John 4:8²² notes the similar linguistic phenomenon of propositional convertibility (i.e. constructions where the subject and predicate-nominative may be inverted around a “to be” verb). While Wallace does not read the verse as convertible, he carefully mentions, “If this were a convertible proposition, it would affirm pantheism, or, in the least, panentheism” (45). Likewise, Khan rightly reads fragment 67 convertibly, though, in this case one should err on the side of panentheism.

To this end, although Brann never uses the term “panentheism”, or any variation thereof, she effectively describes the nature of Heraclitean cosmology in this way: “So this Wise Thing is both separated *from* all things and is also at work *within* everything as well *on* itself. It is both disposer and structure. It is as philosophers now say, both transcendent and immanent” (20). To be sure, in its immanence the Logos makes a very active participation in the nature of the Cosmos, as Kahn comments that “Heraclitus must also have thought of his divine principle as in some sense all-pervasive, immanent in the natural order and in all of its constituents . . .” (275). However, against Kahn’s interpretation, one must remember that the Logos, being greater than and not the sum total of the world, transcends the Cosmos. Returning to the above dictionary definition of panentheism, one would discover that the Heraclitean framework meets each of the definition’s qualifications.

Chapter 2: Heraclitus’s Process Philosophy

The Nature of the Flux

Cooper relates that contemporary philosophers primarily base process theology on the work of early twentieth-century philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, especially as it comes from his *magnum opus*, *Process and Reality* (1925-1933). *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* neatly defines the school of thought as “[a] contemporary theological movement which

22 “ . . . ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν” (Nestle-Aland).

emphasizes the processive or evolutionary nature of man and the world, and holds that God Himself is in process of development through His intercourse with the changing world” (1128). As with panentheism, although a recent development in the history of philosophy, one may (and perhaps should) *ex post facto* or retroactively ascribe these ideas to earlier philosophies, in order to more properly examine the beliefs and systems of prior philosophers; for as language and thought continue to progress, so do categories about which to refer to ideas and their thinkers both past and present. In fact, twentieth-century process panentheists Charles Hartshorne and William L. Reese submit that *polarity*, an aspect of process philosophy, “may be traced back through Hegel to Heraclitus and Plato” (2).

Zeno, the father of the Stoics, had supposed motion to be impossible, illusory (cf. Aristotle’s *Physics* 6.9), whereas Heraclitus, on account of his ever-living fire, proposed the doctrine, according to Plato, that “τὰ ὄντα ἰέναι τε πάντα καὶ μένειν οὐδέν” (*Cratylus* 401d).²³ The fiery quality of the Logos, always consuming, always creating, being fueled by an endless cycle of tension and fluctuation is expressive of the doctrine of the flux. In one of the more famous sayings, Heraclitus likens this doctrine of universal flux to a “παλίντροπος ἄρμονίη ὄκωσπερ τόξου καὶ λύρης” (Robinson Fr. 51).²⁴ One cannot loose an arrow except through the tension between the bow and the force of his arm pulling it backward; likewise, the lyre only produces music because the musician plucks its strings, resulting in a sound reverberating from the force exerted on the string. Heraclitus applies this analogy to the entire cosmos, saying “γινόμενα πάντα κατ’ ἔριν . . .” (Robinson Fr. 80).²⁵ The whole of the universe is becoming according to the principles of opposition and strife, for, in the cycle of flux, the destruction of one element results in the creation of another. Melchert, commenting on the doctrine, writes that

23 “Both all beings come, and nothing remains.” My trans.

24 “Backward joining, such as that of the bow and the lyre.” My trans.

25 “. . . all things are coming to be according to strife. . .” My trans.

“[t]ension, opposition, and conflict . . . are *necessary*. Without them the universe could not persist. If we look carefully at each of [Heraclitus’s] examples, we see that each consists of a unity of diverse elements . . . In every ‘one,’ ‘many’ strive” (20). This is how one may admit with Heraclitus that in God exists every thesis and antithesis (cf. Diels-Kranz Fr. 67).

The continuous change in the Logos-Cosmos complex comes from the mechanics of evaporation and condensation: fire, one learned, condenses to air, air to water, water to earth, and conversely by way of evaporation (cf. Fr. 76 sequence in Diels-Kranz). Looking back to the ever-important fragment 30, Heraclitus writes that the ever-living fire is “ἀπτόμενον μέτρα καὶ ἀποσβεννύμενον μέτρα” (Robinson).²⁶ Reading these passages in conjunction with one another, it seems that as the fire burns, it consumes the physical matter under it, evaporating the matter back into itself; when the fire dissipates, on the other hand, the cooled flame condenses to air, another element entirely. The creation and sustaining of everything rests solely on account of this ceaseless motion and the interchange of fire (cf. Diels-Kranz Fr. 90). Nonetheless, paradoxically within this very cycle man perceives the seemingly stable existence of reality: the world, in the midst of the metaphysics of the flux and the striving therein, lies within the mean or average between the opposition of powers in the Logos-Cosmos symbiosis; the underlying metaphysical reality is, in all actuality, more akin to the lyre string, than may have originally been understood, because that opposition inherent in the system, allows for the melody of everything known in existence, via its recycling process of distillation and reuptake. “Μεταβάλλον,” says Heraclitus, “ἀναπαύεται” (Robinson Fr. 84a).²⁷

The Becomingness of the Cosmos

So far the Logos has been described as just *being*, but German Idealist Georg Wilhelm

Friederich Hegel forever solidified the link between the dialectic intrinsic to the Heraclitean

26 “. . . kindling in measures, and extinguishing in measures.” My trans.

27 “In changing it rests.” My trans.

doctrine of flux with the notion of *becoming*; “. . . since everything is and is not,” says Hegel, “Heraclitus hereby expressed that everything is Becoming” (283). The Logos is not simply a static entity, because it remains essentially in the process of motion, constantly changing. Eva Brann, commenting on Hegel’s analysis, notes: “In this Logos-dialectic, this thought-motion, Being (One) is the starting point and Becoming (Transformation) a second moment. Becoming, however, is indeed both generation and destruction, positive and negative at once, and so, in onto-logical terms it ‘is and is not’” (114-115). Kahn further expounds on this subject: “It is this positive interpretation of the principle of negativity that has made the thought of Heraclitus so congenial to Hegel and his followers. For there is indeed something like an anticipation of Hegelian dialectic in Heraclitus’ treatment of the opposites” (188-189). This is the polarity of Becomingness that Hartshorne identified retrospectively in Heraclitus, in which each set of polar opposites exist (cf. Diels-Kranz Fr. 67), awaiting actualization or dissolution, on account of the dialectical fluctuation. In this symbiotic relationship, the Logos affects change in the Cosmos by the condensation of fire downward, while earth finalizes in the evaporation to fire upward, reciprocating change in the Logos. The entire world-system is Becoming, participating in being and not-being.

Still, if God and His world are becoming, they should be systematically moving toward some end or *telos* (i.e. becoming *something*). In arguing for most forms of process reality, one would hope uncover precisely this end; unfortunately, nowhere in the fragments does Heraclitus make an explicit reference to such a final goal, or even an indication of motion toward one. Perhaps Copleston, for this reason, suggests that “Hegel’s assignment of Heraclitus’ philosophy to the category of Becoming is therefore based on a misconception . . .” (40). Nevertheless, in light of the discussion on the intentional qualities of the Logos, one may reasonably deduce a teleological phenomenon. Recall that in both fragments 32 & 41 Heraclitus uses “τὸ σοφόν” to

describe the Logos: being the Wise One, it must have a mind. By having a mind, God expresses intentionality, a will, “ἐπίστασθαι γνώμην, ὅτι ἐκυβέρνησε πάντα διὰ πάντων” (Robinson Fr. 41).²⁸ The Logos knows the purpose or plan by which it providentially presides over every one of its innate dialectic movements. The very language of purposefulness should strongly imply that the Logos-Cosmos organism is becoming toward that plan set forth by the Wise One; therefore, one should not overlook the teleological implications of this cosmology. In any event, one can hardly conceive of a mind whose mental energies are not directed to accomplishing an end; by analogy, he might suppose the same holds true for the divine Mind.

Heraclitus’s Process Panentheism

Unlike Hegel’s more mature model, in which theses and antitheses are said to be synthesized through the activity of sublation (Brann 115), or Whitehead’s full expression of process philosophy, in which an occasion “prehends its immediate successors as they cease to be actual” (Cooper 168), there is no real hint that a processive event is subsumed into a successive one. “Heraclitus,” Brann says, “after all, *stops*, at unresolved difference and preserves pervasive contradiction in thought and perennial antagonism in the cosmos: no conflict-resolution, no reconciliation” (115). Yet, the Heraclitean system must be understood as a nascent form of process reality, for it meets the general criteria: it is in a state of persistent flux, wherein each binary opposition participates; as the Wise One, it has a purpose for this cyclical process; and, in turn, God and the world are expanding together. In fragment 115, one does sense an impression of Logocentric evolution; Heraclitus writes that “ψυχῆς ἐστὶ λόγος ἑαυτὸν αὖξων” (Robinson)²⁹ The Greek reads ambiguously, however, and without greater context the precise syntactic relationship of “ψυχῆς” (sing. fem. gen.) and “λόγος” (sing. masc. nom.) is unclear; the fact that Heraclitus attaches an article to neither of these nouns further exacerbates the trouble in

28 “. . . knowing the purpose, which is steering all things through all things.” My trans.

29 “The Logos is of a soul, increasing itself.” My trans.

translating the passage.³⁰ In any case, the participle “αὔξων” agrees with “λόγος”; therefore, one would naturally assume the participial phrase “ἑαυτὸν αὔξων” qualifies “λόγος.” This reading indicates that the Logos is growing, expanding, evolving, “increasing itself.” Heraclitus’s doctrine of the flux without a doubt, at least, precurses process reality as philosophers and theologians understand it today.

Hegel scholar Cyril O’Regan, in commenting on Hegel’s process panentheism, and mentioning Heraclitus’s philosophy almost in passing, writes:

‘Dialectical panentheism,’ therefore provides a relatively illuminating description of Hegel’s ontotheological view of divine Spirit. Yet, perhaps one further step is required, since under this complex rubric it is possible to confound Hegel’s view with another view from which, nevertheless Hegel’s view ultimately decisively departs. Nothing prevents, for instance, the inclusion of the Heraclitean view of the Logos under this rubric, for, as Heraclitus perceives it, *polemos* (conflict) and *diapheron* (division) are determining characteristics of the Logos as *kinesis* (becoming). (297)

Although O’Regan does not seem to definitely assign the Heraclitean cosmology to his rubric of “dialectical panentheism,” he comes closer than any other source, in the course of this study: the Heraclitean doctrine *can* be included in this definition. And it is precisely this category under which it has been argued that Heraclitus’s worldview should be properly categorized. The Logos (God) supervenes and interpenetrates the separate (though closely related) created Cosmos; at the same, the entire Logos-Cosmos organism moves in a state of sustained flux, and, through the dialectical process of evaporation and condensation, the whole order exists in a mutual condition of becoming, under the auspices of the *telos* in the mind of the Wise One. The cosmology, then,

³⁰ In fact, I have yet to come to upon two translations that completely agree with one another on this matter.

found within Heraclitean philosophy can be none other than process panentheism, and any proposed model not distinguishing between the Logos and the Cosmos, or their reciprocal fluctuant relationship, is in all probability mistaken.

Conclusion

In his poem comparing the Heraclitean fire with the Christian doctrine of the Resurrection, Victorian poet Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote, “Million-fuelèd, nature’s bonfire burns on” (181). Such is the nature of the Heraclitean fire, and such has been the nature of the some 2500 years of continuing Heraclitean studies. Unfortunately, much of the field remains speculative and provisional because the entirety of Heraclitus’s work is no longer extant, lost to time and history. Diogenes relates that Heraclitus left a copy of *On Nature* at the depository in the Temple of Artemis (9.6), which an arsonist destroyed in 356 B.C. From what has survived, archaeologists face the impossible task of determining in what quantity or to what extent scribes copied and disseminated Heraclitus’s volume before the *Urtext* disappeared entirely; yet, the scholars’ incumbency resides in diligently deciphering the meaning within the remaining fragments, and systematically reconstructing a philosophical system based on the fragments and early commentators. For this reason, scholars have proposed numerous interpretations of Heraclitean thought, and, while each may say something true of Heraclitus’s worldview, none appear to fully capture or give an adequate holistic description of the whole program. Nor does it seem probable that any hermeneutical work will achieve this lofty goal, unless, someday, one discovers a more complete text.

Heraclitus has, since Antiquity, been called “the obscure” or “the weeping philosopher,” which Diogenes ascribes to melancholy (9.6). Heraclitus’s obscurity is evident in that even the remaining fragments present difficulties in translating (as is clear in deciding how to take “λόγος,” or the uncertain grammar of Fr. 115). But the work done in the course of this thesis has

been to present a case, in hopes of providing a more accurate categorization of Heraclitean cosmology, because the prevailing materialistic and pantheistic views do not give the best explanation as to how Heraclitus could be said to have presented the earliest passable account of the One and the many. Moreover, the classification of Heraclitean cosmology as a form of process reality fits naturally well into a panentheistic ontology, where each of the particular processes and instances of flux transpiring in the Cosmos exist within the single structure of Becoming, the Logos.

Those with an interest in the fields of biblical studies and theology will note that this Logocentric cosmology is not altogether unlike the manner John writes about Christ as the Logos, in the prologue of his Gospel; he begins, “Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος . . .” (Nestle-Aland, 1:1).³¹ In his account, John further directly identifies God and the Logos, telling his readers that nothing comes about except through the Logos, which is Christ (cf. John 1:1-4). For Heraclitus’s identification of the Logos, around five hundred years before Christ, the early Christian apologist, Justin Martyr, refers to Heraclitus and men like him (such as Socrates) as “Χριστιανοί . . . κὰν ἄθεοι ἐνομίσθησαν” (1 *Apol.* 46).³² It seems, then, that in the long, complicated history of Heraclitean studies, Heraclitus’s cosmology anticipates far more than just the notion of Becomingness in Hegel; it anticipates a divine cosmology held by over two billion Christians today.

31 “In *archē* was the Logos . . .” My trans.

32 “Christians . . . even if they had been thought atheists.” My trans.

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