

*All Things Flow and All
Is One: Plato's
Depiction of Heraclitus
and Parmenides*

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INTRODUCTION

- HERACLITUS AND PARMENIDES OPPOSED
- ACCORDING TO PLATO:
- HERACLITUS:
 - PHILOSOPHER OF BECOMING
 - UNIVERSAL FLUX
- PARMENIDES:
 - STATIC, HOMOGENEOUS, AND UNITARY REALITY

HERACLITUS

- *CRATYLUS AND THEAETETUS:*
- UNIVERSAL FLUX → RELATIVISM (*HOMO MENSURA*)
- OBJECTIVE KNOWLEDGE IS NOT POSSIBLE
- FRAGMENTS:
 - COMMON REALITY (1, 2, 30, 89, 114)
 - ACCESSIBLE TO THOSE AWAKE (1, 19, 73, 97)
 - DK 22 B 41: “The wise is one (εἶναι γὰρ ἓν τὸ σοφόν), to know the intelligent plan by which all things are steered through all”.

PROTAGORAS IN *THEAETETUS* (152a)

- “Well, isn’t he saying something like this, that as each and every thing appears to me, so it is for me, and again, as they appear to you, so they are for you – you and I both being human beings?” (Οὐκοῦν οὕτω πως λέγει, ὡς οἷα μὲν ἕκαστα ἐμοὶ φαίνεται τοιαῦτα μὲν ἔστιν ἐμοί, οἷα δὲ σοί, τοιαῦτα δὲ αὖ σοί· ἄνθρωπος δὲ σύ τε κάγω;).

IDENTITY AND UNITY

- DK 22 B 89: “For the waking there is one common world (ἓνα καὶ κοινὸν κόσμον), but when asleep each person (ἕκαστον) turns away to a private one (ἴδιον)”.
- GEORGE MOYAL:
 - “Heraclitus also uses the word «common» to qualify the wisdom of the thought which apprehends the Logos; and we should have, here also, no difficulty understanding what that means: the common wisdom is the wisdom of those whose thoughts share the same contents, provided those contents are the truth”.
- DK 22 B 50: “listening not to me, but to the Logos, it is wise to agree that all things are one (ἐν πάντα εἶναι)”.

PLATO'S INTERPRETATION

- 1) INDIRECTLY: THROUGH DISCIPLES AND FOLLOWERS
- ARISTOTLE'S *METAPHYSICS*:
 - CRATYLUS AND HERACLITEAN OPINIONS (ταῖς Ἡρακλειτείοις δόξαις)
- FOLLOWERS OF HERACLITUS, BUT NOT WITH HERACLITUS HIMSELF

ARISTOTLE, *METAPHYSICS*, 1010a

- “Seeing that all this sort of nature is in movement, and that about what is changing nothing can be said, they concluded that about what is in every respect and in every way changing, at any rate, it is not possible to grasp the truth. For it was this supposition that blossomed into the most extreme of the beliefs we have mentioned, that of the declared Heracliteanizers (ἡ τῶν φασκόντων ἡρακλειτίζειν). This was also the sort held by Cratylus, who in the end thought that he should say nothing, but instead only moved his finger, and criticized Heraclitus for saying that it is not possible to step into the same river twice, since he thought that we could not do so even once”.

PLATO'S HERACLITUS

- *CRATYLUS*, 402a: "Heraclitus says, you know, that all things move and nothing remains still, and he likens the universe to the current of a river, saying that you cannot step twice into the same stream".
- HERACLITUS MAY HAVE SAID "ALL THINGS FLOW"
 - AND "EVERYTHING REMAINS THE SAME"
- *CRATYLUS*, 402b: "I seem to have a vision of Heraclitus saying some ancient words of wisdom as old as the reign of Cronus and Rhea, which Homer said too".
- 2) IMPORTANCE AND DIGNITY:
- HOMER, HERACLITUS, PROTAGORAS
 - PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAS OF HIS TIME:
 - DIGNIFIED BY PRESTIGIOUS FIGURES

THEAETETUS, 152e

- *“Nothing ever is, it’s always coming to be (ἔστι μὲν γὰρ οὐδέποτ’ οὐδέν, ἀεὶ δὲ γίγνεται). On this account of things we may take it that all the wise in succession, apart from Parmenides, are agreed: not just Protagoras, but Heraclitus and Empedocles, and among the poets, the top representatives of both genres, Epicharmus for comedy and, for tragedy, Homer, who in composing the line ‘Ocean, begetter of the gods, and Tethys their mother’ made everything the offspring of flux and change”.*

PARMENIDES

- DK 28 B 8.21: “Thus coming-to-be has been extinguished and perishing cannot be investigated”.
- UNGENERATED AND IMPERISHABLE (ὡς ἀγέννητον ἔον καὶ ἀνώλεθρόν ἐστιν), UNSHAKEN (ἀτρεμές), UNCHANGING (ἀκίνητον)
- *PARMENIDES AND SOPHIST* : “all is one” (*Parmenides*, 128b: ἓν φη̃ς εἶναι τὸ πᾶν) (*Sophist*, 244b: ἓν τὸ πᾶν λεγόντων).
- SCHOOL OF ELEA:
 - MONISM
 - XENOPHANES

MELISSUS

- UNDERAPPRECIATED PHILOSOPHER
- THE ONE: MELISSUS RATHER THAN PARMENIDES
- JOHNATHAN BARNES:
 - “Melissus soon became the chief representative of the Eleatic School; and Parmenides’ obscure verses were read — and misread — in the light of his successor’s clear prose. The careless conflation of the two men by Plato began a tradition which still trammels us”.

ALL IS ONE

- HERACLITUS (DK 22 B 10)
 - “out of all things there comes a unity and out of a unity all things”
(ἐκ πάντων ἓν καὶ ἐξ ἑνὸς πάντα)
- PLATO: DENIAL OF PLURALITY
 - THERE IS NO πάντα
- ONLY ONE THING IS

ZENO OF ELEA

- *PARMENIDES*, 128a-b: “In your poems, you say the All is one (έν τοῖς ποιήμασιν έν φής εἶναι τὸ πᾶν), and you provide fine and excellent proofs of this”.
- PARMENIDES UPHOLDS UNITY, ZENO DENIES PLURALITY
- THE TERM “ONE” ONLY APPEARS ONCE IN PARMENIDES' POEM (DK 28 B 8, v.6)

PLATO'S DEPICTION OF PARMENIDES

- 1) PLATO UNINTENTIONALLY CONFUSES THE POSITIONS OF PARMENIDES AND MELISSUS
- 2) MELISSUS' PHILOSOPHY:
 - LINKED TO A NOBLE AND VENERABLE ADVERSARY
 - OR MEGARIAN PHILOSOPHY

CONCLUSION

- PLATO DOES NOT TRANSMIT THE THOUGHT OF HERACLITUS OR THAT OF PARMENIDES IN A RELIABLE WAY
- HEIDEGGER: “Heraclitus, to whom one ascribes the doctrine of becoming, in stark contrast to Parmenides, in truth says the same as Parmenides”.

PLATO'S SOURCES

- 1) PLATO MISINTERPRETED HERACLITUS AND PARMENIDES
- 2) MANSFELD: PLATO BUILDS HIS KNOWLEDGE ON A COMPILATION MADE BY HIPPIAS
 - COXON: "it may be taken for granted that Aristotle's pupils Theophrastus and Eudemus, as well as Plato and Aristotle, had access to a manuscript of the complete poem".

CONCLUSION

- PLATO DOES NOT CLAIM TO REPRESENT ANY AUTHOR FAITHFULLY
- WORKS OF FICTION: ALL KINDS OF LICENCES
- PLATO DEPICTS HIS OWN HERACLITUS AND PARMENIDES
- HIS CHARACTERS STAND AS IF THEY WERE ALIVE
 - COPIES THAT ARE ORPHANED IF WE DO NOT CARE FOR THE ORIGINAL

Thank you for your attention!
