

Martin Heidegger. *Heraclitus, The Inception of Occidental Thinking and Logic: Heraclitus's Doctrine of the Logos.* Trans. Julia Goesser Assaiante & S. Montgomery Ewegen. Bloomsbury 2018. 328 pp. \$88.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9780826462404); \$26.95 USD (Paperback ISBN 9780826462411).

This text contains Heidegger's most sustained engagement with Heraclitus and arguably his most thorough, focused study of early Greek thought. *Heraclitus* is comprised of two lecture courses Heidegger delivered at the University of Freiburg in 1943-44. Long available in the original German text (the corresponding volume in Heidegger's *Gesamtausgabe* having been published in 1979), Assaiante's and Ewegen's translation fills a major gap in the availability of English translations of Heidegger's works. Condensed versions of this text's two lecture courses, taken from two short lectures Heidegger delivered in 1951, were previously available in English in the slim Heidegger anthology *Early Greek Thinking* edited by Frank Capuzzi and David Farrell Krell (Harper, 1984). However, those two short pieces distill into some thirty pages what takes up nearly four hundred pages in the German original. The present text also significantly differs from the 1966-67 seminar protocol *Heraclitus Seminar*, which Heidegger co-authored with the Freiburg philosopher Eugen Fink. That text is primarily led by Fink's reading and does not contain a systematic treatment by Heidegger.

The 1943 lecture course, entitled 'The Inception of Occidental Thinking,' primarily explores Heraclitus' conception of *phusis*, the keyword that in Attic philosophy was to become understood under the concept 'nature.' The opening sections of the course give extensive attention to the intellectual atmosphere in which Heraclitus lived and thought which Heidegger treats through discussion of famous historical testimonies. The 1944 course, to which Heidegger gives the title 'Logic: Heraclitus' Doctrine of the *Logos*,' explores Heraclitus' various claims to the effect that being has a *Logos* (or in Heidegger's reading, a 'gathering') that precedes human discourse. In both courses, Heidegger's emphasis lay less in dissecting the exact meaning of Heraclitus' terse, often cryptic fragments, and more on unraveling the unspoken, meta-dimensions of meaning the hundred-odd fragments express. Heidegger's interest is not to organize the fragments into a coherent whole, or to reconstruct what Heraclitus thought, but instead, to describe the primordial disclosures of being that underlie what Heraclitus articulated. Heidegger reads Heraclitus with the assumption that one actually cannot determine what Heraclitus thought, or what the original text of Heraclitus' book was (29). But what one can do, Heidegger suggests, is engage Heraclitus as a kind of Rosetta stone to interpreting the history of Western thought. A signature way Heidegger describes his approach is to characterize it as seeking the matter 'to-be-thought' (37), where the task is to articulate what was ontologically immanent for Heraclitus and the Western legacy to follow. Heidegger suggests that the more 'inceptual' the thought is, the more closely this thought is united to the words expressing it (28).

The substance of the 1943 course revolves around a reading of Fragment 16 of Heraclitus. The translators render Heidegger's reading of the fragment as follows: 'From the not ever submerging (thing), how may anyone be concealed (from it)?' In orthodox translations, this fragment is typically rendered along the lines of 'How can anyone hide from what never sets?' On the fragment's meaning, Heidegger interprets it to pose a rhetorical question regarding the object of reference for what does not submerge, converting the negative connotation to its positive, viz., the 'perpetually emerging' (66). The phrase Heidegger asserts is the meaning of the early Greek experience of *phusis* (66-67), a keyword that through its root *pha-* connotes things rising into light, appearing, and springing forth. (Think of the term 'phenomena.')

Of emphasis in Heidegger's treatment is the urge to read

this fragment removed from a metaphysics of substance; the key is to regard emergence as a dynamic mode of becoming, not a property of a being. In addition, as Heidegger notes, *phusis* implies a rising specifically from hiddenness or concealment; *phusis* is an un-concealing, an opening. Therefore, for Fragment 16 to ask ‘how can anyone hide from the perpetually emerging?’ is tantamount to asking how anyone can be hidden from *phusis*, or how anyone can be concealed from what always un-conceals. Invoking the fragment’s unspoken rhetoric again, Heidegger concludes that in addition to its implication of the Greek notion of *phusis*, the fragment is ultimately referring to the human being’s capacity for *aletheia*. The latter is another Greek keyword for un-concealment, but as Heidegger provocatively admits, it is not a term appearing anywhere in Heraclitus. Fragment 16 implies that no one can hide from what is always rising because the human being is the being whose very essence is to experience un-concealing (130-31). Heidegger comments in this light: ‘*aletheia* is thought in the saying, though it is not named in it’ (130). Heidegger does not significantly engage Aristotle in this context, but in effect the result of his account here is to describe Heraclitus’ unstated conception of *aletheia* as a precursor to what would become the more robust Greek view of the interaction between the human mind and truth. The result Heidegger arrives at, in fact, closely parallels the climax of *Being and Time*, Division One, Section 44. In that text, Heidegger cites Heraclitus to the effect that *aletheia* or ‘truth’ is a phenomenon of Dasein. My summary of the 1943 course is abbreviated; the course also contains many illuminating discussions of other Heraclitean fragments. Heidegger’s emphasis typically focuses on the pre-philosophical meaning embedded in keywords of Heraclitus, such as *kosmos* (world), *pur* (fire), and *harmonia* (harmony).

The 1944 course on Heraclitus’ conception of *logos* works in a similar mold, but with considerably more complexity. The focus of this course is the Heraclitean fragments that speak of the *Logos* (capital “L” intentional), a term Heraclitus uses repeatedly but whose meaning he never defines. Heidegger drills down on Heraclitus’ references to *Logos* in terms of an all-encompassing, unifying principle binding all things together, juxtaposing these with various other contexts in which Heraclitus speaks of a human *logos* (with a lowercase ‘l’). It has long been uncontroversial that Heraclitus envisions a *Logos* that functions as a principle of reality, and that human nature is to be uncomprehending of the *Logos*. Heidegger’s goal here is, on one hand, to unravel an understanding of the concept *Logos/logos* in its own right and on the other hand, to ascertain the relationship of the *Logos* to human *logos*. The crux of Heidegger’s response to these two questions lay in his translation of *Logos/logos* according to the ancient meaning of the word, ‘harvesting’ or ‘gathering’ (203). Understood in this guise, *Logos* refers to the original ordering or collection in which being reveals itself. To illustrate, Heidegger cites the example of harvesting grain. A harvest of grain already contains a *telos* of ordering and organization; what I gather in a harvest is pre-given. The harvest gives itself to me to be harvested, as it were (204). Whereas the human *logos* can gather the gathering of the *Logos*, but it can equally be out of step with the *Logos*, ungathering. In this case, one is not comprehending being’s disclosure, the original ordering of things. Here, Heidegger is also implicitly talking about *logos* qua its later guise of ‘language’ or ‘discourse.’ To put it in more familiar terms, one’s *logos*-qua-discourse can fall into idle talk, where words have become divorced from original phenomena and experiences.

The 1944 course ends on a much broader, unexpected note that evokes themes from Heidegger’s esoteric writings of the late 1930’s. In the final section of the course, Heidegger suspends his exegesis of Heraclitus, ending instead with twenty-one fragmentary reflections that further deconstruct the underlying import of Heraclitus’ identification of *Logos* with a primordial disclosure or ‘gathering’ of being. Several themes from the 1943 course’s analyses of *phusis* and *aletheia* make

an appearance. Heidegger holds that the original Greek experience of being in the guise of unconcealed gathering entails a responsibility of the human to preserve this gathering. Being is given to the human to safeguard. The human being can perform this safeguarding by continuing to gather what Being grants (281-88).

Heraclitus is an incredibly rich text, with much to offer to anyone interested in this early Greek philosopher or in Heidegger's pre-occupation with the Greeks. Despite the quirks of Heidegger's approach, the book offers an indispensable perspective on Heraclitus and the early Greek mind. It is perhaps the most important work of Heidegger's on early Greek philosophy outside of *Introduction to Metaphysics*. But given that this text's scope does not address what Heraclitus actually thought or said, its appearance in English will make few waves in philological research. Heidegger's rhetoric is too high-flown and his analysis of Heraclitus' Greek is too unsystematic to find much of an audience there. But *Heraclitus* is a text that does considerably advance a deeply reflective and insightful view of keywords and guiding ideas ostensibly at work in the beginning of Western philosophy.

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