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# Verbs for Knowing in Heraclitus' Rebuke
# of Hesiod (DK 22B57)

## J.H. Lesher

   At some point in the 3rd century, Hippolytus of Rome, in the midst of a doctrinal dispute with Noetus of Smyrna,[1] quoted these words of Heraclitus of Ephesus:

> Διδάσκαλος δὲ πλείστων Ἡσίοδος· Τοῦτον ἐπίστανται
>  πλεῖστα εἰδέναι,
> ὅστις ἡμέρην καὶ εὐφρόνην οὐκ ἐγίνωσκεν· ἔστι γὰρ ἕν.[2]

On one plausible English translation:

> The teacher of most people[3] is Hesiod. They know he knows
> the most things, a man who did not know day and night, i.e.,
> that they are one thing.[4]

The main point of the remark seems clear enough: many people considered Hesiod a paragon of wisdom, but he failed to know one important truth—that day and night constituted a unity. But three related points remain matters of debate: (1) In what manner did Hesiod reveal his ignorance of the unity of day and night? (2) Why did Heraclitus use three different verbs for knowing when one might have sufficed? And (3) How could Heraclitus have consistently asserted that most people *know* (ἐπίστανται) Hesiod knows the most things while identifying one important truth Hesiod failed to know? Formulating answers to these questions will shed light on the rationale behind Heraclitus' rebuke of Hesiod as well as on the early Greek understanding of the relationships between knowledge, truth, and psychological certainty.

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   [1] Hippolytus quoted this remark, along with others, to show that Heraclitus affirmed the unity of all things and that, as a consequence, Noetus' belief in the unity of God the father with God the son had a pagan origin (see the discussion in Osborne 1987, 134-167).

   [2] From Hippolytus, *The Refutation of All Heresies* (ix 10), fragment 22B57 in Diels and Kranz (1966, i 163). Most editors accept Miller's emendation of εὐφρόνην for the εὐφροσύνην of the Paris manuscript, although Mouraviev 1991, 66 retains εὐφροσύνην based on parallels in Heraclitus B26 and B67. On either reading the opposition with ἡμέρη confirms the meaning of 'night'. For Hippolytus' authorship of *The Refutation*, see the discussions in Wordsworth 1853 and Loi 1977.

   [3] Πλείστων may be read either as 'of most things' or 'of most people', but the latter reading provides a natural antecedent for the subject for the verb ἐπίστανται.

   [4] Some have wondered how day and night could be the implied subject of the singular ἔστι, but Heraclitus clearly thought of them as 'a single thing' (cf. the neuter ἕν). I take γάρ as explanatory with the force or 'namely' or 'that is' (see Smyth 1920, sec. 2808).

## I. Day and Night in Hesiod and Heraclitus

Some have held, plausibly, that the target of Heraclitus' criticism was Hesiod's speaking of day and night as 'independent' (Kirk 1954, 156; similarly KRS 1983, 189 and Guthrie 1962, 484) or 'separate' (Kahn 1979, 110) entities. At *Theogony* 123-124 Hesiod states that: 'From Chaos came forth Erebus and black Night; in turn from Night came forth both Day and Aether', thereby implying that Night belonged to an earlier generation and existed for some period of time before either Day or Aether (the upper region of the sky) came into being. Later in the *Theogony* Hesiod describes how Night and Day 'draw near and greet one another as they pass the great threshold of bronze' (748-750), again representing them as different individuals.[5] The impression of independence is reinforced by a series of μέν...δέ contrasts of their usual activities:

> ...and while (ἡ μὲν) the one is about to go down into the house,
> the other (ἡ δὲ) comes out at the door. (750-751)

> ...always one (ἑτέρη) is outside the house passing over the
> earth, while the other (ἡ δ᾽) stays at home and waits until the
> time for her journeying comes. (752-754)

> ...the one (ἡ μέν) holds all-seeing light for them on earth, but
> the other (ἡ δ᾽) holds in her arms Sleep the brother of death,
> even evil Night wrapped in a vaporous cloud. (755-757)

Heraclitus evidently thought otherwise: despite their sharply contrasting appearances, day and night are really just 'one thing'. According to B67, day and night, like three other pairs of opposites, are united through their connection with a single divine being:

> God—day night (ἡμέρη εὐφρόνη), winter summer, war
> peace, satiety famine—undergoes change in the way that
> <fire> whenever it is mixed with spices, gets called by the
> name that accords with the bouquet of each.[6] (B67)

B88 speaks in a similar way of other phenomena as 'one and the same thing' in so far as they are alternating stages within a single on-going process:

> And as one and the same thing, there is present, living and dead
> and the waking and the sleeping and young and old. For the lat-
> ter changed round are the former, and the former, having
> changed round, are back again to being the latter.

So day and night appear to have been 'one thing' in so far as they were alternative states of a single divine substratum[7] or alternating stages in the single pro-

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[5] Marcovich, Kirk, and Koning have doubted the relevance of *Thg.* 748-750 in so far as Heraclitus 'would surely have applauded Hesiod's graphic account of their mutual succession' (Kirk 1954, 156). But Heraclitus would have been troubled by Hesiod's description of their temporal as well as their genealogical successions, since in both cases there was no mention of any unifying connection between the two phenomena.

[6] With minor variations I follow the translations in Robinson 1987.

[7] Kirk 1954, 156; Hussey 1999, 95. Aristotle acknowledges this use of 'one' at *Meta.* 1016a17-

cess through which that divine being manifested itself.[8] But Heraclitus might also have thought that day and night, like health and disease, hunger and satiety, and weariness and rest, were 'one thing' in so far as they sustained or enhanced one another's existence or operation, e.g., that without the contrasting darkness of night we would not fully appreciate the brightness of day.[9] He might also have thought that night and day, like justice and injustice, low notes and high notes, and the attributes of male and female, were so intimately linked with each other that one could not conceive of one member of the pair without also conceiving of the other.[10] So there could have been several respects in which Heraclitus thought that day and night were intimately related, all of them unknown to Hesiod.[11]

Heraclitus' rebuke may have carried one additional sting. In early Greek poetry, failing to know 'the day sent by Zeus to mortals' had served as a cardinal measure of human foolishness.[12] Now, in *Works and Days,* Hesiod claimed to know the nature of days with some precision: how many days to wait before beginning to plow the fields (383ff.) or cut timber (420ff.), how to avoid the wretched cold days of Lenaeon (504ff.), how many days to wait before pruning the vine (572ff.), how many days to let the grapes dry out (610ff.), how many days after the solstice to wait before sailing (662ff.), how many days to wait before reviewing the efforts of workers and re-stocking (764ff.), which are holy days and which are suitable for work (770ff.), which days are suitable for planting (783ff.), and more generally which are good (or lucky) days and which are not (792ff.). He concludes (824-828) by asserting the value of the knowledge he

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18: 'Things are called one in another sense because their substratum (τὸ ὑποκείμενον) does not differ in kind.' Curd 1991, 542 rejects the idea of the god as substratum (as well as the supplement of πῦρ, which lends credence to the idea), but concedes that the question is disputed. See also Marcovich 2001, 413-417.

[8] Graham 2014, 27. Burnet 1930, 155 linked the process with the conflict between the dark and light vapors mentioned by Diogenes Laertius: 'The sun, by burning up the bright vapour, deprives himself of nourishment, and the dark vapour once more gets the upper hand. It is in this sense that "day and night are one." Each implies the other; they are merely two sides of the same process, in which alone their true ground of explanation is to be found.'

[9] Cf. B111: 'Disease makes health pleasant and good, hunger satiety, weariness rest.'

[10] Robinson 1987, 57: 'the unity in question is the unity of complementarity and reciprocity'. Cf. B23: 'If these [injustices] were not, people would not know the name of justice' and A22: 'For attunement would not exist unless there were a low note and a high note, nor living things without female and male—which are opposites.'

[11] Kahn 1979, 109-110 claims that Heraclitus regarded day and night as 'one' in so far as they were co-variants within the constant 24-hour period astronomers of later centuries called the nykthemeron. But this puts a heavy burden on Heraclitus' references to the 'measures' of the sun (B94) and the 'limits of dawn and evening' (B120).

[12] Cf. *Il*. ii 37-38: 'For he thought that on that day he would take Priam's city, Fool, who knew nothing of all the things Zeus planned to accomplish.' For indictments of the day-like νόος of mortals: *Od*. xviii 136-137: 'For such is the mind (νόος) of men upon the earth/ Like the day the father of gods and men brings to them'; Archilochus, Fr. 70; Semonides, Fr. 1; Pindar, *Nemean* 6.6-7; 11, 43-47. For discussions of this theme, see De Jáuregui 2013 and Edmunds 1990.

has imparted to his audience:

> That man is happy and lucky in them who knows all these things (ὃς τάδε πάντα εἰδώς) and does his work without offending the deathless gods, who discerns the omens of birds and avoids transgression. (Evelyn-White trans.)

But fragment B106 leaves little doubt as to Heraclitus' view of Hesiod's expertise:

> …whether Heraclitus was right in upbraiding Hesiod…for not knowing that the real constitution of each day is one <and the same>…

Thus in showing how Hesiod failed to understand the nature of day and its relationship to night, Heraclitus was also showing how the self-proclaimed expert on days actually scored high on the traditional measure of human foolishness.

## II. Heraclitus' Three Verbs for Knowing

Some have held that by using three different verbs for knowing Heraclitus was seeking to convey a specific, ironic message. According to one version of this view:

> The point of the riddle [of how day and night can be one] is sharpened by the ironical use of three different verbs for 'to know'; *epistantai* for the popular intelligence which selects this teacher, *eidenai* for the knowledge they ascribe to him, and Heraclitus' favored term *ginôskein* for the cognition which is denied to him.[13] (Kahn 1979, 109)

But this proposal is flawed in several respects. Ἐπίσταμαι enjoyed no special connection with 'the popular intelligence' (for example, in B41 Heraclitus uses ἐπίστασθαι in speaking of his exclusive insight into the cosmos). Γινώσκειν was not Heraclitus' favored term for the profound understanding of the cosmos he achieved and denied to others (B28a speaks of 'the most esteemed individual'—perhaps a reference to Hesiod—as one who 'γινώσκει and stands on guard for appearances' and B56 speaks of those who are deceived with respect to 'γνῶσιν of the obvious'). Nor is it clear why the use of three different verbs would constitute ironic speech. A number of other Heraclitus fragments possess the same three-verb structure, with no suggestion of irony or sarcasm, as in B1: '…such words and deeds as I set forth (διηγεῦμαι), distinguishing (διαιρέων) each thing according to its nature, and making known (φράζων) how it is' (similarly B2, 18, 19, 22, 45, 66, 85, and 94). Nor does Heraclitus employ any of the grammatical structures or particles that typically marked ancient Greek ironic speech.[14] However, a brief review of the early use of γιγνώσκω, οἶδα, and

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[13] Although he does not claim to detect irony, Burnyeat 2011, 24 similarly holds that 'It is obvious that Heraclitus is playing his three knowledge verbs off against each other.'

[14] E.g., use of the present subjunctive with μή, use of the potential opative with ἄν, use of the future with οὐ interrogative, or use of the particles εἰ μὴ ἄρα, ἄρα, γέ, δή, δῆθεν, or δήπου (see Smyth 1920, secs. 1801, 1826, 1918, 2354, 2794, 2821, 2842, 2849, and 2850).

ἐπίσταμαι suggests a likely rationale for Heraclitus' choice of wording.

The most common meanings of γιγνώσκω (in its later form, γινώσκω) were 'come to know', 'know', and 'know again, recognize'.[15] As an imperfect form, ἐγίνωσκε would have signified that Hesiod's failure to know or recognize took place in and continued during past time,[16] with the negative οὐκ suggesting some degree of resistance or refusal (i.e., Hesiod *would not* or *could not* know).[17] In Homer, the cognitive achievements designated by γιγνώσκω ranged from simple perceptual awareness[18] to ascertaining a person's or thing's identity,[19] recognizing a person or thing one already knows,[20] ascertaining the nature of a thing,[21] and learning of the occurrence of some event or the existence of some state of affairs.[22] Elsewhere in early Greek poetry, forms of γιγνώσκω appear in connection with recognizing a person already known,[23] learning of the occurrence of an event or emerging state of affairs,[24] and discovering the nature of the reality that lies behind deceptive appearances.[25]

Forms of γινώσκω appear in the Heraclitus fragments in connection with three sorts of 'knowing' or 'coming to know'. The οὐ τι γινώσκων of B5

[15] The standard Greek lexicon (LSJ) gives 'come to know, perceive, know, discern, distinguish, recognize, learn, perceive that, feel that, be aware of, perceive to be, know to be, take to mean that, form a judgment, think that, and understand', as well as the extended and rarer meanings of 'determine or decide, know carnally, and make known'. In the standard edition, the meaning of 'know' was restricted to past tenses, but this error was corrected in the 1968 Supplement (ed. Barber).

[16] Some have sought to capture this feature of the verb by translating Heraclitus' οὐκ ἐγίνωσκε as 'never realized' (Burnyeat) or 'continually failed to recognize' (Robinson, Kirk, and Koning). Others offer the more straightforward 'ne reconnut' (Mouraviev), 'nicht erkannte' (Diels), 'did not comprehend' (Graham), or 'did not know' (Burnet). None of these is unwarranted, except perhaps Burnyeat's 'never realized', for which one would have expected οὐκ ἐνόησε (cf. *Od*. xxii 32: τὸ δὲ νήπιοι οὐκ ἐνόησαν/ 'But this the fools failed to realize.'

[17] Smyth 1920, sec. 1896, reflected in Guthrie's and McKirahan's translations: 'a man who could not recognize day and night'.

[18] 'And the mist I have taken from your eyes so that you might well discern (γιγνώσκῃς) both god and man' (*Il*. v 127-128).

[19] 'Achilles turned and immediately knew (ἔγνω) Pallas Athena' (*Il*. i 205-206).

[20] 'We will know each other (γνωσόμεθ᾽ ἀλλήλων) more certainly for we have signs which we two know' (*Od*. xxiii 109).

[21] 'I knew (ἔγνων) as I looked upon him that he was a bird of omen' (*Od*. xv 532).

[22] 'Since you have observed it for yourself, I think you already know that (γιγνώσκειν ὅτι) a god has rolled destruction on the Danaans and given victory to the Trojans' (*Il*. xvii 687-688).

[23] 'Stop! Don't beat it! For it is the soul of a friend I recognized (ἔγνων) upon hearing it cry out' (Xenophanes, B7). Cf. Pindar, *Pythian* IV 86; *Olympian* VII 83. Passages from early Greek poetry are taken from Edmunds 1931, I and II, and Sandys 1937.

[24] 'I know (Γιγνώσκω), and pain lies in my heart, seeing the oldest land of Ionia being slain' (Solon, fr. 28a).

[25] 'This, the hardest part of knowledge (γνωμοσύνης): to grasp in thought the invisible measure (μέτρον) that alone holds the limits of all things' (Solon, fr. 16). Cf. 'This is the hardest of all things to know (γνῶναι), for neither the mind of man nor of woman shall you know (εἰδείης) until you have made trial of it…because outward shapes do so often cheat the understanding' (Theognis, 124-128).

appears to consist in not knowing what kind of thing an individual is:

> …not knowing at all (οὔ τι γινώσκων) who are gods and
> heroes. (B5)

Whereas the μὴ γινώσκουσι of B 97 involves not recognizing a person already known:

> Dogs bark at whomsoever they do not know (μὴ γινώσκωσι).
> (B97)

Whereas in B17, 28a, 56, 86, 108, and 116, forms of γινώσκω are used in connection with individuals who either succeed or fail in knowing the nature of some matter:

> For most men do not think of things in the way they encounter
> them, nor do they know them when they have learned (οὐδὲ
> μαθόντες γινώσκουσι), although they think they do. (B17)

> The most esteemed of individuals knows (γινώσκει) and
> stands guard over appearances. (B28a)

> People are deceived in connection with knowledge (γνῶσιν) of
> the obvious… (B56)

> But most things escape being known (μὴ γινώσκεσθαι)
> because of a lack of belief/trust. (B86)

> Of all those whose accounts I have heard, none gets to this:
> knowing (γινώσκειν) that which is wise, set apart from all.
> (B108)

> It belongs to all men to know (γινώσκειν) themselves and to
> think wisely. (B116)

At the outset of his treatise (B1) Heraclitus had identified his objective in the same terms: 'distinguishing each thing according to its φύσιν/nature and making known (φράζων) how it is'. It was also the φύσις (of things) that 'loves to hide' (B123), the φύσις that Hesiod did not know was one and the same in every day (B106), and the φύσις to which the wise person pays attention (B112). Hesiod's failure, it seems clear, lay in failing to know that day and night had a single common φύσις.

As a perfect form of εἴδω ('see'), οἶδα originally designated a knowledge grounded in visual experience, but as early as the Homeric poems οἶδα was used in connection with knowledge gained by some means other than sight.[26] Not only could οἶδα cover the range of cognitive achievements marked out by ἐπίσταμαι and γιγνώσκω,[27] it was also the natural verb to use in speaking of one who

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[26] Cf. Aeneas' remark to Achilles in *Il.* xx 203 ff.: 'We know (ἴδμεν) each other's lineage, and each other's parents, for we have heard the tales told in olden days by mortal men, but not with sight of eyes have you seen my parents nor I yours.'

[27] For οἶδα LSJ (s.v. εἴδω B) gives 'see with mind's eye, know, have knowledge of, be acquainted with, know of, be assured of, have in one's heart, be disposed, have cunning with, acknowledge, know how to do, be in a condition, be able, have the power, know that such and such is

(either rightly or wrongly) claimed to possess a large body of knowledge. Thus when in *Iliad* ii the singer praises the Muses who are his source of information, he proclaims ἴστε τε πάντα/ 'you know all things' (*Il*. ii 485). He also speaks of Calchas, 'by far the best of seers', as one who 'knew (ᾔδη) all the things that were, that were to be, and that had been before' (*Il*. i 70-71). Athena describes both herself and her ward Odysseus as 'knowing (εἰδότες) all manner of tricks' (*Od*. xiii 296-297). Hesiod's own authorities, the Muses, state that:

> …we know (ἴδμεν) how to speak many false things as though
> they were true, but we know (ἴδμεν), when we will, to utter
> true things. (*Theogony*, 27-28)

As we have seen, Hesiod spoke of the knowledge he had to offer in similar terms: 'Happy and blessed is he who knows (εἰδώς) all these things.' As Burnyeat 2011, 25 explains:

> εἰδέναι is just the right verb for πλεῖστα, because…εἰδέναι is
> open and indeterminate: it can ascribe to Hesiod as much
> knowledge, of as many kinds (that, how, or whatever), as any-
> one could have.

The meaning of ἐπίσταμαι overlaps with those of γιγνώσκω and οἶδα, but has two distinguishing features: (1) It commonly designates practical expertise or 'know how'; and (2) It occasionally designates the possession of a high degree of assurance or certainty.[28] Its derivation from *ἐπι-hίσταμαι ('stand before or on') suggests that a person ἐπίσταται in so far as he or she becomes familar with, well versed in, and sure of some matter.[29] In the Homeric poems 'practical' or 'skill' uses of the verb predominate[30] with only one clear instance of factual knowledge.[31] In early Greek poetry ἐπίσταμαι typically marks the possession of some skill or kind of expertise and, on occasion, the clear and sure awareness of some fact, truth, or state of affairs.[32]

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a fact, know whether, and know how'.

[28] For ἐπίσταμαι, LSJ gives 'know how to do, be able to do, capable of doing' with the related uses of 'to be assured, feel sure that' [LSJ cites Heraclitus B57 and Herodotus i 122; iii 134 and 139; and vi 139], 'understand a matter, know, be versed in or acquainted with, know by heart, know as a fact, know for certain (after Homer), and (rarely) know a person, know that'; and for the participle: 'knowing, understanding, skillful, skilled, versed in' and adverbially 'skillfully, expertly'.

[29] Both Chantraine 1968 and Beekes 2009 derive ἐπίσταμαι from *ἐπι-hίσταμαι, with a loss of breathing and vowel contraction, and posit an original meaning of 'to place oneself above' (Chantraine) or 'stand before something, be confronted with something, take knowledge of some-thing' (Beekes).

[30] The following are typical: 'Arcadian warriors skilled in making war (ἐπιστάμενοι πολεμί-ζειν)' (*Il*. ii 611); 'who knew how to fashion (ἐπίστατο τεύχειν) all kinds of ornaments' (*Il*. v 60); 'skilled (ἐπιστάμενος) in the javelin' (*Il*. xv 282).

[31] 'No one of you took thought to rouse me from my couch, although you knew (ἐπιστάμεναι) clearly in your hearts when he went on board the ship' (*Od*. iv 729-731).

[32] Cf. Archilochus 1, 2: 'Yet I am skilled (ἐπιστάμενος) in the lovely gift of the Muses'; Pindar, *Pythian* III 80; and by contrast: Theognis, 652: 'Although I know (ἐπιστάμενον) what is good and honorable among men.'

The expertise or 'know how' meaning is featured in Heraclitus B19:

> …people who do not know how (οὐκ ἐπιστάμενοι) to listen or
> to speak.

Whereas the infinitive form ἐπίστασθαι occurs in a definition of personal wisdom:

> Wisdom (τὸ σοφόν) is one thing only: knowing (ἐπίστασθαι)
> the intelligence (γνώμην) by which all things are steered
> through all.[33] (B41)

Events as they occur throughout the cosmos are directed by a Zeus-like intelligence, and the key to understanding their significance lies is grasping how things opposed to each other are in agreement with each other:

> One must realize that war is common, and justice strife, and
> that all things come to be through strife and are so ordained.
> (B80)

> That which opposes is helpful, and the most beautiful fitting
> together comes out of things that disagree, and all things come
> about in accordance with strife. (B8)

> They do not understand how, differing from itself, it is in
> agreement with itself, There is a backward-turning[34] connec-
> tion, like that of the bow and lyre. (B51)

Thus when Heraclitus defined τὸ σοφόν as ἐπίστασθαι the γνώμη by which all things are steered through all, the kind of awareness he had in mind consisted in being familiar with, well versed in, and sure of the nature of the power that governs the cosmos. When he asserted that people ἐπίστανται that Hesiod knows the most, what he meant was that people were familiar with, well versed in, and sure of Hesiod's status as a paragon of wisdom. And when he asserted that Hesiod οὐκ ἐγίνωσκεν day and night, what he meant was that Hesiod failed to know that day and night possessed a single common nature. Thus each of the verbs for knowing used in B57 had a distinctive if partially overlapping set of meanings. By using all three verbs, Heraclitus was able to characterize the prevailing epistemological situation with a high degree of precision.

### III. Ἐπίσταμαι as Knowing or Feeling Sure?

If, as Plato appears to have believed,[35] ἐπίσταμαι implies truth, then when

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[33] B41 is full of uncertainties: the phrase 'by which' assumes an emendation to ὅκη from the untranslatable ὁτέη. I understand γνώμη to refer to a cosmic 'mind' or 'intelligence' rather than to the faculty of intelligence in a human being.

[34] Accepting the reading *palintropos* ('backward-turning') in Hippolytus rather than the *palintonos* ('backward stretching') in Plutarch and Porphyry. I follow the account given in Vlastos 1955, and understand the connection as the contrary forces present in the well-functioning bow (and arrow) and lyre.

[35] Cf. Plato, *Theaetetus* 186c: 'But if a man cannot reach the truth (ἀληθείας) of a thing, can he possibly know (ἐπιστήμων ἔσται) that thing?'; similarly *Statesman* 278d: 'It is impossible, is it not, to achieve knowledge (φρόνησιν) in an approach to any part of the total area of true reality if one

Heraclitus asserted that many ἐπίστανται that Hesiod knew the most things, he committed himself to the truth of the proposition that Hesiod knew the most things. But how could he have done that, if he also believed that Hesiod failed to know one truth of fundamental importance—that day and night had a single common nature? Some translators have sought to avoid this difficulty by taking ἐπί-σταμαι to designate merely a subjective certainty—translating ἐπίστανται as 'they believe', 'suppose', or 'feel sure', rather than as 'they know'.[36] Clearly, there would have been nothing problematic in Heraclitus' asserting that many believed, supposed, or felt sure that Hesiod was a paragon of wisdom, *and* that they were mistaken in thinking this. B104, in fact, seems to make just this point:

> What understanding or intelligence (νόος ἢ φρήν) do they
> possess? They place their trust in the popular bards (δήμων
> ἀοιδοῖσι πείθονται), and take the throng for their teacher, not
> realizing that the many are bad, and the good are few.

But others (Burnyeat, Curd, Kahn, Mackenzie) insist that a translation with 'know' is required. As Burnyeat 2011, 24 explains:

> It should be obvious that Heraclitus frag. 57 is playing his three
> knowledge verbs off against each other…[continuing in a note]
> My objection is that the word-play is lost unless we translate
> all three verbs by our one verb 'know.'

The strongest support for the 'subjective certainty' reading of ἐπίστανται comes from Herodotus.[37] As Cary 1843 observed, "Ἐπίστασθαι is often used by Herodotus in the sense of to think, to suppose, to be of opinion, and once the noun *doxêi* is added.' Powell 1938 similarly identified three senses of ἐπίσταμαι in Herodotus of which the third was 'of mistaken knowledge, *suppose*'. On twenty-nine occasions Godley translated forms of ἐπίσταμαι using verbs designating a subjective certainty: 'suppose', 'believe', 'be mindful', 'rest assured', 'be assured', 'was confident', 'being certain', and 'fully believed'. Godley's translations were warranted by circumstances that rendered an attribution of knowledge either implausible or impossible:

> The Greeks took them as far as Delos, and that not readily, for
> they, having no knowledge of those parts and thinking that
> armed men were everywhere, feared all that lay beyond. They
> supposed (ἐπιστέατο δόξῃ) too that Samos was no nearer to
> them than the Pillars of Heracles. (viii 132, Godley trans.)
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> [The parents of Cyrus] received him there, and learning who he

begins from a false opinion (δόξης ψευδοῦς)?'

[36] The most popular choices have been 'are sure' or 'feel sure' (Barnes, Burnet, Curd, Kirk, Guthrie, Marcovich, McKirahan, and LSJ), while others have opted for 'believe' (Marcovich, Graham, Conche), 'think' (Burnet, Most), 'are certain' (Robinson, Snell, Koning), 'are convinced' (Barnes, DK, Finley), 'suppose' (Patrick, Nahm), 'is acknowledged' (Fränkel), and 'accept' (Wheelwright, Harris). LSJ cites B57 as an example of 'to be assured, to feel sure that' (s.v. ἐπίσταμαι I.2) and places εἰδέναι within scare quotes. Beekes proposes: 'be assured, know how…also believe'.

[37] As noted by LSJ, Marcovich, and Burnyeat (who rejects the reading).

was they welcomed him heartily, for they had supposed (ἐπι-
στάμενοι) that long ago he had straightway been killed. (i
122,3, Godley trans.)

…Dorieus was first among all of his peers and fully believed
(εὖ ἠπίστατο) that he would be made king for his manly
worth. Since he was of this opinion (οὕτω φρονέων), Dorieus
was very angry when at Anaxandrides' death the Lacedaemo-
nians followed their custom and made Cleomenes king by right
of age.[38] (v 42, Godley trans.)

Herodotus shared both scientific interests and language with the Ionian philoso-
pher-scientists of the previous generation, especially with Xenophanes and Hera-
clitus,[39] so evidence of his use of ἐπίσταμαι to express subjective certainty is
directly relevant to our question. But since some have dismissed Herodotus'
practice as exceptional,[40] we should note that he was not the only writer to use
ἐπίσταμαι in this way. On at least three occasions Sophocles employs forms of
ἐπίσταμαι in speaking of what one merely feels sure about:

But where Heracles is, no one knows. I only know that he is
gone, and has caused me sharp pain for him. I am almost sure
(σχεδὸν δ᾽ ἐπίσταμαί) that he has come to some suffering.
The interval has not been brief; rather, he is unheard from ten
months already, plus another five. Yes, there has been some
terrible misfortune. (*Trachiniae* 43, Jebb trans.)

Whoever knows fear and shame both, you can be certain (ἐπί-
στασο) that he has found his salvation; but where there is
license to attack others and act at will, do not doubt that such a
State, though she has run before a favoring wind, will eventu-
ally sink with time into the depths. (*Ajax* 1080, Jebb trans.)

Be sure (ἐπίστο) that it is being done, and without delay.
(*Philoctetes* 567, Jebb trans.).

And on two occasions in the *Promethus Bound* Aeschylus uses ἐπίσταμαι to
convey the idea of assurance:

…be well assured (σαφῶς ἐπίστασ᾽), [that this water] shall
bear the name Ionian, as a memorial of your crossing for all
mankind. (840, Smyth trans.)

For your servitude, rest assured (σαφῶς ἐπίστασ᾽), I'd not

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[38] As Gould 1955, 10 explains: 'it is only after reading the following sentence, in which it
becomes clear that the he did not in fact become king, that we can be sure whether ἐπίστατο denotes
an awareness of the (objective) facts or merely a subjective feeling, which we should have to translate
by certainty or conviction'.

[39] See the accounts given by Graham 2003 and Thomas 2000.

[40] Burnyeat 2011, 24n concedes that ἐπίσταμαι with the meaning of a 'subjective faith is
attested for Herodotus', but notes that 'even for Herodotus it is the exception rather than the rule that
ἐπίστασθαι carries no implication of truth'.

barter my hard lot, not I. (967, Smyth trans.)

One final consideration in favor of the 'subjective certainty' rendering of ἐπί-σταντaι is the major inconsistency we introduce into Heraclitus' thought by translating ἐπίστανται as 'they know'. Heraclitus asserted that the many are 'forever uncomprehending of the λόγος' (B1, αἰεὶ ἀξύνετοι), 'live as though[41] they had a private understanding' (B2, ἰδίαν φρόνησιν), 'do not understand the things they encounter' (B17, οὐ φρονέουσι), 'do not know how to listen or speak' (B19, οὐκ ἐστιστάμενοι), 'are uncomprehending when they have heard the truth' (B34, ἀξύνετοι), 'do not understand how while differing it is in agreement' (B51, οὐ ξυνιᾶσιν), 'are deceived in their recognition of the obvious' (B56, ἐξηπάτηνται), that 'the greater part of things divine escape their ascertainment' (B86, μὴ γιγνώσκεσθαι), and that they lack 'understanding or intelligence' (B104, νόος ἢ φρήν). B40 lists Hesiod among those who prove that 'much learning' (πολυμαθίη) does not teach understanding (νόον)[42] and B106 rejects his claim to knowledge of day and night. So if in B57 Heraclitus had meant that Hesiod did indeed know the most things, he would have been speaking in a manner at odds with his uniformly negative characterizations of both the many and their highly regarded teachers. We should, therefore, understand Heraclitus to have asserted, with complete consistency, that most people *felt sure* that Hesiod knew all manner of things, but they were mistaken in thinking this in so far as Hesiod, the self-styled expert on days, failed to know that day and night possessed a single common nature.[43]

We may conclude that Heraclitus' criticism of Hesiod was sparked by the latter's failure to appreciate the way or ways in which day and night had a single common nature, characterizing them instead as separate and independent entities. Although Hesiod was 'the teacher of most', this particular failure showed him to be a paradigm of human foolishness rather than human wisdom. The broader epistemological lesson implicit in Heraclitus' rebuke was that if we aim to discover the nature of things, we must cease placing our trust in the teachings of the poets and begin asking ourselves how things opposed to one another might, upon reflection, be seen to possess a deep symbiotic unity.

Department of Philosophy
University of North Carolina
Chapell Hill NC 27599
jlesher@email.unc.edu

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[41] For translating ὡς with the participle as 'as though', see Smyth 1920, sec. 2086b.

[42] B17 makes it clear that 'acquiring information' (μάθησις) does not imply having knowledge ('nor having learned, do they know'/οὐδὲ μαθόντες γινώσκουσιν). For the limitations of πολυμαθίη, see the account in Granger 2004.

[43] I am grateful to Daniel Ferguson, Amanda Kubic, Emese Mogyoródi, David Ortiz, Jake Rohde, Eleanor Rutledge, and an anonymous reader for their comments on an earlier version of this article.

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