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> Der Still soll beweisen, daβ man an seine Gedanken glaubt und sie nicht nur denkt, sondern empfindet.
>
> —Friedrich Nietzsche

As Michel Foucault says, Nietzsche's philosophy is a struggle with language. What was the result of that struggle (if there could be any) or—better—what did that struggle express? The following is an attempt partially to answer that basic question.

The title might be seen as provocative since the kinship between Nietzsche and Heraclitus is widely acknowledged (Heidegger, in his *Nietzsche,* is the exception here) and frequently confirmed by Nietzsche himself. Among the most famous declaration of that brotherhood comes from *Ecce Homo,* where he writes about Heraclitus "in whose proximity I feel altogether warmer and better than anywhere else. The affirmation of passing away and destroying, which is the decisive feature of a Dionysian philosophy; saying Yes to opposition and war; becoming, along with a radical repudiation of the very concept of being—all this is clearly more closely related to me than anything else thought to date" (EH GT 3). Further, he writes that the Zaratustrian doctrine of eternal recurrence could have also been taught by Heraclitus. The kinship between Heraclitus and Nietzsche consists in the problem they confront. Their kinship could be called thematic, but despite Nietzsche's declaration, this is not the kinship of the way of thinking. If two philosophers deal with the same problem, it is not obvious that they think similarly. In such a case the similarity could be only superficial, covering a deeper level of divergence.

My thesis is that Nietzsche is faithful not to Heraclitus himself but to his interpretation of Heraclitus from *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*. He is faithful to his way of interpreting the Greek philosopher, and it is this way that marks his own way of thinking. The question of relationship between

Nietzsche and Heraclitus is all the more interesting since the former recognizes Heraclitus's point very clearly and is able to show the consequences of Heraclitean thought for the language and discourse of philosophy. That is, he is aware that another style of thinking has to influence the language and the style, changing them completely. But even if Nietzsche invokes Heraclitean metaphors in his later writings on will to power, the style of his writing shows that he is not faithful to Heraclitus despite his open declarations. To verify this thesis, I shall start by discussing his interpretation of Heraclitus in *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*. Then I will answer the question whether the Heraclitean thought pattern, or his project of thinking, is really continued in Nietzsche's later writings.

Nietzsche's interpretation-attempt seems to be radical. At the very beginning he explains the key point of Heraclitean thought: "One, he denied the duality of totally diverse worlds—a position that Anaximander had been compelled to assume. He no longer distinguished a physical world from a metaphysical one, a realm of definite qualities from an undefinable 'indefinite.'" And after this first step, nothing could hold him back from a second far bolder negation: he altogether denied being" (PTAG 5). Indeed Heraclitean thinking refutes the traditional ontological perspective. Strictly speaking, it was too early for such a perspective in European thinking in general. The conclusion is an accusation made by the Nietzschean Heraclitus that traditional philosophers misuse language:

You use names for things as though they rigidly, persistently endured (ibid.). So Nietzsche is a disciple of Heraclitus when in 1885 he accuses philosophers of having faith in grammar. As Nietzsche's Heraclitus, Nietzsche opposes metaphysical thinkers:

> Was mich am gründlichsten von den Metaphysikern abtrennt, das ist: ich gebe ihnen nicht zu, daβ das 'Ich' es ist, was denkt; vielmehr nehme ich das *Ich selber als eine Construktion des Denkens,* von gleichem Range, wie 'Stoff', 'Ding', 'Substanz', 'Individuum', 'Zweck', 'Zahl': also nur als *regulative Fiktion* mit deren Hilfe eine Art Beständigkeit, folglich, 'Erkennbarkeit' in eine Welt des Werdens hineingelegt, *hineingedichtet* wird. Der Glaube an die Grammatik, an das sprachliche Subjekt, Objekt, an die Thätigkeits-Worte hat bisher die Metaphysiker unterjocht: diesen Glauben lehre ich abschwören.[1]

Did Nietzsche himself renounce that belief? The answer lies in the form of the discourse and thought pattern, which must be changed after recognizing the linguistic habit to build fictious constructions petrifying the flux or becoming.

Recognizing the problem language is confronted with when becoming is affirmed as the only reality should lead to the question of possibility of philosophical discourse. In other words, Nietzsche should ask how to speak when we are aware of the lack of firmness, which was the guarantee of linguistic

referentiality. But Nietzsche does not ask this question in *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks;* the accusation cited above is the only thing he does here. He does not change the style of the lecture and, using Schopenhauer's terminology, he considers the conditions of the possibility of becoming, namely, time and space. Putting aside the question whether the consideration of Heraclitean becoming in transcendental terms is adequate, some *lapsus calami* is to be noted. Describing Heraclitean reality, Nietzsche says: "The whole nature of reality lies simply in its acts and that for it there exists no other sort of being; Schopenhauer also addresses this point" (PTAG 5) in *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*. If Heraclitus rejected being altogether, the word "being" should not appear in this description of becoming, because no other word expresses firmness more emphatically. That one short word is the mark of the way of thinking that shapes the whole Nietzschean interpretation of Heraclitus (beside the fact that Nietzsche himself prompts to do so in his condemnation of belief in grammar). This way of thinking is inherited from Schopenhauer, who is cited as the best and final explanation of Heraclitean philosophy.

It is almost obvious that Nietzsche's interpretation of Heraclitus is not original but was strongly influenced by Schopenhauer's statement from *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung:* "Alles, was in ihm [Raum] und der Zeit zugleich ist, Alles also, was aus Ursachen oder motiven hervorgeht, nur ein relatives Dasein hat, nur durch und für ein Anderes, ihm gleichartiges, d.h. wieder nur eben so bestehendes, ist. Das Wesentliche dieser Ansicht ist alt: Herakleitos bejammerte in ihr den ewigen Fluβ der Dinge."[2] Nietzsche could not overlook that remark, since he cited the fragment from the next page as an explanation of Heraclitus's conception in his *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*. Becoming is seen as an inner war of matter and it consists in: "Veränderung, die ein Teil derselben im andern hervorbringt, ist folglich gänzlich relativ, nach einer nur innerhalb ihrer Gränzen geltenden Relation, also eben wie die Zeit, eben wie der Raum."[3]

The very use of the term "matter" in the context of Heraclitus's philosophy is doubtful, especially when we have Schopenhauerian matter in mind. At first glance this term seems to fit well, since matter in Schopenhauer is an activity. Material being given in our perception is concrete activity, since every being exists insofar as it enters the mutual relation of interaction with other similar beings. Reality (*Wirklichkeit*) is the totality of the objectifications of the will, and objectification means interaction and conflict with others' objectifications.

There are two approaches to matter in Schopenhauer: subjective (i.e., matter as a representation) and objective (i.e., matter in itself). According to the former approach, matter is a concrete thing; according to the latter, it is an abstraction from that concreteness. Matter in itself cannot be an object that is given in the same way as empirical data. It is a form of the perception:

"Insofern aber ist die Materie eigentlich auch nicht *Gegenstand,* sondern *Bedingung* der Erfahrung; wie der reine Verstand selbst, dessen Funktion sie so weit ist. Daher giebt es von der bloβen Materie auch nur einen Begriff, keine Anschauung."[4]

Therefore Schopenhauer starts with matter as concrete object, but in the end he shows it as a derivative of the work of the intellect. Matter is a fixed concept used to order the whole manifoldness of the experience. The only problem is that this approach leads to the reduction of war, conflict, and multiplicity to one and the same ground. And that ground, because of its oneness, makes the conflict and change only a superficial phenomenon, behind which a solid, firm, immutable basis can be found. That is what Schopenhauer says about matter in itself: "bleibende *Substrat* aller vorübergehenden Erscheinungen," "im *Intellect* gegründet ist, unter allem jenem Wechsel als das schlechthin Beharrende, also das zeitlich Anfangs- und End-lose gedacht werden muβ."[5]

Here it is not important whether the substance, or the matter, is an empirical being or a form of cognition. What is important is the way of thinking and the approach to the problem of change and conflict. What is important is that Schopenhauer needs something solid, fixed, and unchanging to think about or to explain change, which is therefore reduced to permanent substance. Therefore change is not thought of as a change in itself. What is paradoxical is the grasp of change as something secondary, a derivation from something that does not change at all. This is an Aristotelian way of thinking,[6] not a Heraclitean one.

Change in itself is not a single object that can be thought of like every other thing. Thinking needs a solid object (be it the concept or empirical thing) to grasp it as its referent. The object of thought must be self-identical; otherwise thinking does not work, since something that is thought is not the thing that is thought. But the very change is not self-identical, so it cannot be grasped in an ordinary way of thinking. Schopenhauer is unaware of that problem and that is why his thinking is a kind of repression. Change is grasped as something else in order to appropriate the escaping change within reflection, to subject it to thought, to make the change the object of thinking. Nevertheless, change is not an object.

The following operation is characteristic of Schopenhauer's way of thinking: what is difficult to grasp is reduced to an easily thinkable object. But this is a kind of falsification. Reflection grasps its own product only, and not *die Sache* to be thought of. Pure change is grasped as unchanging being, so when Schopenhauer says, "becoming, conflict, war," he uses these names as if objects had a constant being—and this is exactly opposite to the Nietzschean Heraclitus. But what is all the more striking is the fact that Nietzsche appropriates this way of thinking in his interpretation of Heraclitus, which is confirmed by a clear quotation from *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung,* offered

as a proper illustration of Heraclitean philosophy: "That struggle, which is peculiar to all coming-to-be, that everlasting alternation of victory, is again something also described by Schopenhauer [WWV, Bd. I, §27]: 'Forever persistent matter must change its form'" (PTAG 5). Does Nietzsche really follow his proclamation that Heraclitus rejected being as something solid and unchanging, since he sums up his interpretation with the Schopenhauerian concept of matter and the quotation concerning persistent matter, which is hardly to be found in Heraclitean philosophy? In the Nietzschean Heraclitus, being is not rejected but is simply covered with a thin layer of changing phenomena. Nietzsche's interpretation follows the strictly Schopenhauerian suggestion cited above, that his conception of matter has much to do with Heraclitus. But Schopenhauer has no right to refer to Heraclitus. He can refer to Plato—which he does right after referring to Ephesian—because his scheme is Platonic. It is Plato who let the oneness, changelessness, reign over change and multiplicity that are then reduced to appearance. In fact, Schopenhauer follows a common pattern according to which there is a Heraclitean component in Plato's thought, namely, the world of change, which is opposed to the world of Ideas. But such an analogy is superficial. The world of Heraclitus is flat, one-dimensional. Nietzsche himself acknowledges this, saying: "One, he denied the duality of totally diverse worlds"—so the only reality is becoming. If you add something solid to such a view—Platonic Ideas, for example —you cannot speak of a Heraclitean component, because this is exactly the opposite view, claiming that something is not in flux. Unfortunately, Nietzsche adopts such a Platonic vision from Schopenhauer and that spoils his interpretation of Heraclitus. And that is why opposing Heraclitus to all metaphysical philosophy, Nietzsche explains his thought, using, as Schopenhauer says, "a metaphysical view of matter"[7] from *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*. Nietzsche does not reverse Platonism here.

The understanding of becoming that leads to condemnation of the belief in grammar must result in the construction of a discourse that uses the names of things as if they do not have constant being. The ambiguity of that formulation is lucky since the instability of things is parallel to the instability of names, which can be frozen into stonelike concepts when we use them more than once, as Nietzsche indicates in *Über Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne*. Does Nietzsche later reject the belief in grammar that compelled him to misunderstand Heraclitus in *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks?*

In 1885, when Nietzsche condemned the belief in grammar, he wrote also one of the most famous fragments on will to power—a fragment full of Heraclitean metaphors:

> And do you know what "the world" is to me? Shall I show it to you in my mirror? This world: a monster of energy, without beginning, without end; a

firm, iron magnitude of force that does not grow bigger or smaller, that does not expend itself but only transforms itself; as a whole, of unalterable size, a household without expenses of losses, but likewise without increase or income; enclosed by "nothingness" as by a boundary; not something blurry or wasted, not something endlessly extended, but set in a definite space as a definite force, and not a space that might be "empty" here or there, but rather as force throughout, as a play of forces and waves of forces, at the same time one and many, increasing here and at the same time decreasing there; a sea of forces flowing and rushing together, eternally changing, eternally flooding back, with tremendous years of recurrence, with an ebb and a flood of its forms; out of the simplest forms striving toward the most complex, out of the stillest, most rigid, coldest forms toward the hottest, most turbulent, most self-contradictory, and then again returning home to the simple out of the this abundance, out of the play of contradictions back to the joy of concord, still affirming itself in this uniformity of its courses and its years, blessing itself as that which must return eternally, as a becoming that knows no satiety, no disgust, no weariness: this, my *Dionysian* world of the eternally self-creating, the eternally self-destroying, this mystery world of the twofold voluptuous delight, my "beyond good and evil," without goal, unless the jou of the circle is itself a goal; without will, unless a ring feels good will toward itself—do you want a *name* for this world? A *solution* for all its riddles? A *light* for you, too, you best-concealed, strongest, most intrepid, most midnightly men?— *This world is the will to power—and nothing besides!* And you yourselves are also this will to power—and nothing besides! (WM 1067)

Quite a long quotation, but a characteristic one. It reveals a habit of which Nietzsche is probably unaware. The whole imagery is Heraclitean. The world is a cyclic, mutating totality, juxtaposition of one and many, arising and destruction, flux full of inner contradictions, and finally a ring and becoming. It is probably the most Heraclitean description of will to power. Nietzsche tries to write in a Heraclitean style, creates the background that enables the reader to understand will to power as becoming. But the whole argument is not sound just because he uses his definite term "will to power."

But first we have to make a small and important remark. The useful term "becoming" cannot be found in Heraclitus's text. It has been created by the commentators, but Heraclitus himself could not use it. The reason is obvious: Heraclitus did not believe in grammar.

What does it mean? If Heraclitus struggles to think in the perspective of the complete lack of being, in a non-ontological perspective, then he can never use the same term because such a concept will create a fiction of an unchanging basis of reality grasped by that concept. The only thing Heraclitus does is multiply contradictions as examples of flux to avoid using the same term that indicates something constant in the background of every contradiction (now even the term "contradiction" should be rejected). If we try to describe every single contradiction with a common name, this name then erases the

two opposites, which cannot be reduced to and grasped in one concept. They must remain different, so we cannot use one term to describe them both. This is the leveling of something that cannot be leveled—this is falsehood indicated by Nietzsche: "Denken wir besonders noch an die Bildung der Begriffe. Jedes Wort wird sofort dadurch Begriff, daβ es eben nicht für das einmalige ganz und gar individualisierte Urerlebnis, dem es sein Entstehen verdankt, etwa als Erinnerung dienen soll, sondern zugleich für zahllose mehr oder weniger ähnliche, das heiβt streng genommen niemals gleiche, also auf lauter ungleiche Fälle passen muβ. Jeder Begriff entsteht durch Gleichsetzen des Nichtgleichen."[8] In our case, the term "becoming" levels two opposites of the contradiction and levels every contradiction that is unique and irreducible to another contradiction. The concept of becoming petrifies nature.

Now we see that the phrase "will to power" used as an equivalent of becoming is equally improper. Unfortunately, Nietzsche uses it too often. In his famous description, Nietzsche wants to find the name for the unnamable, and that is what Heraclitus did not try to do. It expresses the opposite way of thinking. The whole listing of Heraclitean metaphors is ultimately useless, since it is annulled with the name that should be abandoned and not repeated. Nietzsche should deny the previously used name or reject names as concepts; otherwise he will think stability into the flux. And he seems to be aware of that second option. He tries to avoid concepts. Therefore, he should reject the term "will," and so he does: "The means of expression of language are useless for expressing 'becoming'; it accords with our inevitable need to preserve ourselves to posit a crude world of stability, of 'things,' etc. [. . .] There is no will: there are treaty drafts of will [*Willens-Punktationen*] that are constantly increasing or losing their power" (WM 715). But here again, Nietzsche does it a little bit too fast or takes one step too many. When he wants to say that there is no will, he explains the lack of it with will once again—with the punctuations of will, with the same power everywhere. His language says something he does not want to say. He is unable to construct the postulated discourse, because he still believes in grammar. He uses the term "punctuations of will" that reinstaurates common, constant ground, that he tries to reject in the same moment. Once again, "change, war, conflict" is thought with something that is made unchanging by the language itself. Once again, he makes the same Schopenhauerian error we have discovered in *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*.

In the case of flux, Nietzsche's style is the proof that he thinks his thoughts but does not experience them. Or maybe his experience of becoming was not strong enough to find its expression in the realization of Nietzschean, sharp declarations concerning the language of philosophy. Heraclitean experience (which finally appears to be very far from Nietzschean experience) makes people silent or compels them to speak with contradictions and Nietzsche is not so contradictory. He tries, but in the end his contradictions are too mild

to be Heraclitean; they are only quasi-contradictions stemming from the belief in grammar. The Heraclitean fire burns up all names and Nietzsche is not a philosophical pyrotechnist.

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1. F. Nietzsche, *KSA,* vol. 11, 526.

2. Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (Leipzig, 1919), Book I, 29.

3. Ibid., 31.

4. Ibid., Book II, 379–80.

5. Ibid., 380.

6. Cf. Aristotle, *De gen*. 314b–315a, *Phys,* 192a, *Met* 1068b, *De int*. 4a.

7. Schopenhauer, *Die Welt,* Book II, 385.

8. Nietzsche, "Über Wahrheit und Luge im aussermoralischen Sinne," in *Werke* (Leipzig: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1930), Book I, 610.