REINFORCING DEMYTHOLOGIZED SPIRIT FROM HOMER AND HERACLITUS TO HEGEL AND THE PRESENT WORLD

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ABSTRACT. Explicit reflections on intellectual faculties and their good applications begin by talking about a divine spirit and a human soul. Heraclitus seems to be the first to explain that all higher mental capacities rest on ethical formation. Self-conscious thinking leads therefore, as Hegel also sees, to normative sociality as its transcendental basis.

KEYWORDS: Soul, Mind, Ethos, Formation, Sociality.

1. Main thoughts and gnomic form in Heraclitus' 'book'

Probably one of the most profound sentences of Heraclitus, who was already regarded as dark in antiquity, is:

ēthos anthrōpō daimōn,

which reads:

for humans, their Ethos appears as a Daimon (transl. PSW).[1]

My first ‚translation' reads the dative as an expression for an ‚appearance to us'. The Greek formula neither contains a verb nor an article. This, however, is not the only reason why it is puzzling. Like all of Heraclitus' aphorisms, the sentence does

[1] The translation in Heraklit 1995, p. 36 = B 119 is fairly misleading. Bruno Snell writes: „Die eigene *Art* ist des Menschen Dämon" and C. J. Vamvacas agrees (on p. 179): „One's own *kind* is the human demon". Kirk, Raven and Schofield think that Heraklit wanted to say (under their number 247) that the *character* of a person is its *fate*, Mc Kiharan replaces „fate" by „his divinity (or, guardian spirit)" on p. 127. Aristotle understands the ‚soul' of an individual as his or her life-form oder *eidos* in the sense of an instantiated ‚kind' or ‚character'. However „ēthos" and „eidos", „daimōn" and „psychē" are very different words with quite different semantic ‚connotations'. For Jonathan Barnes, Heraclitus is a „paradoxographer" (p. 80), a judgement that results, in the end, from Barnes' dubitable method of formalising thoughts by the means of mathematical logic.

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not simply assert that an already fixed content or thought is true. It must be understood, rather, as a thought-provoking *riddle*. As such, it ‚says' or ‚entails' everything that emerges in competent reflection on it. This is part of Heraclitus' ingenious articulation technique. It is the clue of its condensed form. It is generally underestimated since antiquity, especially in its tremendous linguistic-philosophical self-awareness. The communicative intention is oriented towards the linguistic form of the oracle, of which Heraclitus says: 'The god (anax: master) of the oracle at Delphi does not say nor conceal anything, he just *suggests*'.[2] The Greek word "sēmainein" means here to *give hints* for self-reflection. Heraclitus even answers to the famous admonition of the oracle of Delphi "gnothi seauton" in B 101: "edizēsámēn emeōytón", "I investigated myself".

Euripides is said to have given the so called book of Heraclitus to his friend Socrates[3] and asked him afterwards what he thinks of it. Socrates reaction was, according to the story: "What I have understood is excellent; I am convinced, all what I have not understood is excellent, too. But it takes an experienced diver"[4] – namely to bring the pearls of content to the surface of explicit articulation.

Heraclitus seems to be the first thinker who, like Ludwig Wittgenstein or Martin Heidegger much later, demands of the reader or listener an exceptionally high level of competence in the art of hermeneutic understanding. He already recognized that this art cannot simply be taught as a schematic technique. It requires experience, practice and education in dealing with language, especially with one's own literary tradition. In fact, Heraclitus is the first *critical reader* of the emerging Greek literature, especially of awakening science. He, not Thales, is the first philosopher, if we do not take it in the wide sense of caring for theoretical knowldge but in the narrow sense of commenting on the very status of *epistēmē* in the sense of canonized general knowledge that can be taught and learned in schools. The socratic dialogues of Plato stand in direct tradition of this ‚dialectical' art of critical comments on traditional teachings and conventional uses of learned ‚knowledge'. It is, therefore, not arrogance, as Diogenes Laertios says at the very beginning of book 9 and almost the whole world before and after him have thought, too. It is, for example, a mere warning to the reader when Heraclitus says: "To understand my words about what is really the case, people will always be too limited, both before and after they have heard them".[5] There might be limited knowledge of the presupposed texts resp. authors that are critically commented. More important is the fact that Heraclitus

[2] Heraklit 1995, B 94.

[3] Heraklit 1995, A 4 = p. 47.

[4] Heraklit 1995, A 4 = p. 47.

[5] Heraklit 1995, B 1 = p. 6f, translation by me, PSW.

criticizes only really important authors, just as Plato‘s Socrates when he discusses Protagoras, Gorgias or his ‚teacher‘ Prodikos. Heraclitus is the first in a row to criticize Pythagoras and his followers,[6] most probably for exaggerating the explaining power of mathematical knowledge. We find the same criticism still in Aristotle‘s complaint that science (‚philosophy‘) is reduced by ‚philosophers‘ to mere mathematics.

Just as in the case of Parmenides, Plato and especially Neo-Platonism are responsible not only for the fact that some of these ancient texts survived in citations, others not, but also for the suggested interpretation. This fact should make as alert for example with respect to usual interpretations of the words „daimōn“ „alētheia“, „nous“, and "logos". In its general meaning, *ho logos* stands for words and concepts *generically*, not yet for a mythical and mystical world-spirit. In fact, one of the greatest achievements of Heraclitus, Parmenides, and Plato was the development of Greek language in an extensional use of *generic expressions for reflecting on content and reference of any word*, from „god“ (*ho theos*) to „nothing“ (*to mē on*). Since then, we can talk about *being* in the sense of the German word „Seiendes“, standing like the Greek „to on“ for *any entity whatsoever*, but also about *being* in the sense of *Sein*, standing like the Greek “to einai“ either for an abstract way of being a formal object or for *actual performances of processes in time*.

Even though Heraclitus says that Homer " was wiser than all the Hellenes" (B 56), he criticizes "the astrologer Homer" (B 105) and wants to have him, together with Archilochos, "beaten out of the competitions", i. e. to be kept out of serious debates (B 42), namely because he, too, was essentially mistaken about the relationship between what can be actually experienced and a supposedly true reality behind these experiences (B 56). Homer deceives himself (and us) about what really exists, says Heraclitus: He believed in gods as boys who told him that they would take away the lice they had not seen and had not caught, but would leave behind those they had seen and caught (B 56). The criticism is directed against the assumption of a reality behind real deeds and events, as if, for example, not Alexandros-Paris but the god Apollo had killed Achilles. The main target of this criticism, however, is not Homer himself, but the incompetence of his *readers* to understand the true *content* of the Iliad and the Odyssey.

2. Divine spirit and ethical formation

But let us first come back to our main formula *ēthos anthrōpō daimōn*. Aristotle‘s word „eudaimonia“ for „happiness“ might go back to Euripides who had said with

[6] Heraklit 1995, B 40,41; B 81; B 129.

some reference to Heraclitus: *Those humans are happy who are lead by a good daimon.* We obviously have to ask now what a good *daimon* is and how it relates to *ēthos*. The following two ‚translations' of our oracle give a short answer:

a) Our own form of life appears to us as spirit.

b) When we talk about spirit, we mean, in fact, our human form of life.

The word "ēthos" does neither mean „character", "moral attitude" nor just "custom", even though it recalls its origin from pastoral language: The words *ēthos* and *nomos* stand, both, for a ‚drift', the place to which the cattle moves by itself. It might be a meadow with water or their ‚home'. Ethos thus turns into something like the *normal milieu*. It shapes the *good life* of humans just as of cattle.

However, the word ‚daimōn' could also mean ‚ghost' or something else ‚unhomely', in German: *un-heimlich*, as Heidegger puts it at the end of his famous Letter on Humanism,[7] reflecting on precisely this sentence of Heraclitus, but with fairly different results. I think the most appropriate translation for *daimōn* is, indeed, simply the word ‚spirit', especially since it leaves it open whether Heraclitus refers to *mind* as *subjective spirit* of an individual human being, the *psychē* or soul, or to *spirit in general*, including everything divine. It is, therefore, not wrong, but one-sided, to translate daimōn by ‚the divine' and ‚ēthos' by ‚character'. I am sure, as Heidegger is, that Heraclitus wants us to give many readings to his oracles. Like Hölderlin, Hegel also frequently uses the same style as Heraclitus, such that we have to care for double and triple main readings of their always gnomic formulations.

In our aphorism it is deliberately unclear what is the subject (or topic) and what is the statement (rhema, comment). One possibility is that the *ēthos* is the topical subject. The sentence would then be a comment on how man represents or imagines his own form of life, namely as ‚spirited': Our *ēthos* is brought about by a divine *daimōn* or spirit. A second possibility is that *daimōn* is the subject or topic and the statement would say: "what appears to man as spirit is always only his *ēthos* ". This leads into the direction of Aristotle's understanding of Ethos and Psyche as Eidos.

In fact, the follwing is, much later, a deep insight of Kant's transcendental philosophy, developed further in Hegel's (and Husserl's or Heidegger's) phenomenology of spirit and of all other things of thought: The things that really are unknown to us and in the end, *un-heimlich*, un-homely, are the *most general things*. We usually take them for granted. This holds, for example, for our own ‚home', from the whole earth via our own culture to our family and friends. It holds even more so for our own forms of being and thinking as spirited animals. Implicit presuppositions usually remain in the dark since we normally focus on finite goals and things. I agree with Heidegger that this is a possible reading ‚on the side' of Heraclitus' gnomic use

[7] Cf. Heidegger 1947.

of the word daimōn. If we take this seriously into account, we may learn to see that, how, and why Heraclitus is the first real philosopher who reflects on things that are, or should be, be self-understood.

But is it now possible that both and more readings have to be considered equally? I think this is precisely the case. In order to meet the need for schematic classifications, the following readings, among others, can now be emphasized:

(a) To man, his implicit *form of life* gets an object of reflection at first in the form of talking about a *divine spirit*.

(b) What we evaluate as a *human* form of life is the result of *spirit*, such that all *inhumanity* shows a deep lack of individual or collective *intelligence*. In any case, the sentence criticizes all belief in spirits and gods. It ‚replaces' the *daimōn* by *ēthos*, spirit by the usual, conventional, and the valid.

The valid is valid first of all because it follows the norms of the normal and thus the right. The sentence, read in this way, replaces gods and spirits with a set of norms for an ethically good and therefore jointly happy life. And it replaces the talk of an individual soul or *psychē*, at least among other things, with ‚drive' and ‚mood'. The sentence thus says that every daimonology, and thus every theology, but also every psychology, insofar as it reaches beyond the purely natural, the physical, refers in reality always only to *social and cultural conditions*.

In the metonymies of our talk about gods, spirits or souls, the true relationships still remain in the dark, at least to a certain extent. In fact, theology, rightly understood, is macrosociology; and psychology, properly understood, is always at least in part micro-sociology. This is especially so where the intersection of ‚natural' behaviour, conventional habits and ‚cultural' competence is concerned, namely in social and cultural learning with its two only seemingly opposing aspects of self-discipline and autonomy. In the end, Hegel's whole philosophy of spirit can be summarized by these sentences.

Hegel famously says that he has incorporated all the propositions of Heraclitus into his ‚system': Any talk about something spiritual and mental is indeed concerned with our social, cultural, personal form of life. This holds also for Homer's distinctions between good and bad *daimōnes*.

How this division depends on the perspective of the speaker becomes very clear in the 24th canto of the Odyssey, where Amphimedon, one of Penelope's suitors and Agamemnon's formal guest, says about the killing of the suitors, that an evil *daimōn* brought Odysseus from somewhere (to Ithaka). As we know, this "evil" *daimōn* is Athena, *the* goddess of the cunning Odysseus: At the very beginning, she persuades Zeus to let the nymph Calypso return him to the hearth and smoke of his home, to his wife and son. Calypso herself sends him home in compliance with the order delivered by Hermes.

What should really strike us is the deep awareness of Homer for the *perspective* of the actors and speakers. Indeed, the greatness and world-wide importance of Homer rests also on his techniques of making *perspectival changes* explicit: *daimōnes* are good when they fights ‚for us', as Athena did for Diomedes or Odysseus. They are ‚evil' or adverse when they are ‚against us', as Apollo is against Achilles and, in the Iliad, with his bow ‚against' the Greeks with their heavy armour. Homer even shows that the allgedly barbarian Asians are not only enemies but also have *aretē* and *human culture*. It is, indeed, most remarkable that Homer identifies the Asian gods on Mount Ida with the Greek gods on Mount Olympus. He denies by this the allegedly ‚essential' distinctions between the religious and moral *Ethos* of the Greeks and the Asians. Homer, who obviously lived in or near the Asian colonies, knew, like Heraclitus, about their high culture. He pleads for the insight that no-one, no nation, is at the centre of the world.

If the *ēthos* is the *topic* and the *daimōn* the *comment*, then our sentence ‚says' that we usually represent the implicit forms of general common life in such a way that we speak of something ‚spiritual', of a *daimōnion*. It is precisely this reading that leads us from Heraclitus back to Homer. It allows us to recognize the following: Where Homer has gods appear in dreams, he represents real powers in life in the form of a kind of dreamscape in such a way that they express real and true things about the form of life in the manner of mantic premonitions. Egon Friedell, one of the most popular German writers about cultural history, therefore also recognizes that Homer "knows that the 'Achaians' believed in the return of the dead; but since he himself no longer believes in it, he lets Achilles *dream* the appearance of Patroclus."[8] Even the last sentence of the Odyssey shows this feature with all desirable clarity. It says of Athena, who had just brought peace to Ithaca, ravaged by civil war, as it were, that she was "like the Mentor both in stature and voice". In fact, Homer usually allows his gods to work in his stories only through the mediation by actions of human beings, or, if they are natural gods, via natural causes, as we shall see more clearly now.

Gods and *daimōnes* appear in Homer's texts especially where improbable events need to be explained. Priam, for example, decides, on the basis of a dream given to him by Zeus, to go through the Greek camp to Achilles in order to ask for the body of Hector. He consciously neglects the anxiety of his wife Hecuba or Hekabe. In the process, he encounters one of Achilles' henchmen who, according to Homer's own account, ‚surprisingly' neither robs him nor murders him nor accepts gifts. This ‚surprise' is ‚explained' on the one hand by the fact that this unusually loyal Myrmidon was actually *Hermes*, the travelling companion sent by Zeus, and

[8] Egon Friedell, 1981, p. 77; cf also p. 69, 75.

on the other by the fact that the ransoms Priam was carrying along already belonged to Achilles – such that he would therefore stealing them from his master, even when he just accepted a gift. Achilles then not only receives Priam according to the rules of a worldwide, international, politeness, despite the war, but even celebrates a kind of private funeral banquet for Hector together with him. On the one hand, this seemingly sudden change of mood is ‚explained' by a dream intervention of his divine mother Thetis; on the other hand Homers suggests that after the death feast for Patroclus, Achilles' anger against Hector, the ‚murderer' of his beloved friend, had already cooled down.

Homer obviously brings a sea of handed-down mythical tales into form in the Iliad just like a director of a *Regietheater*. He evidently shapes a tale of his own in the Odyssey. In both cases, Homer proves himself to be not only a poet, but also a deep thinker. Heraclitus' criticism somehow abstracts unduely from the difference of his and Homer's time, or rather, he criticizes the idea that we could canonize Homer's text as a bible of eternal knowledge. However, when we read Homer in the way recommended by Heraclitus, we see how he ‚uses' the gods quite consciously in allegorically designed explanations, especially in the interest of a dramatized form of representation of psychological and socio-cultural phenomena and powers. This is the case, for example, when the almost defeated Greeks regain courage and strength through ‚divine' encouragement and succour. We find all these considerations more or less explicit also in Hegel's texts.

Heraclitus was such a good reader of the relatively new Greek literal culture and listener to contemporary ideas that he clearly saw that there always is a double narrative level in Homer. For example, the furious Achilles almost drowns in the river Skamandros. A ‚natural' explanation is that the floating corpses of the Trojans killed by ‚him' resp. his men dammed up the water. The ‚supernatural' explanation in the allegorical dream world is that the Asian or Trojan god of the river has been insulted.

What it means that the daimonic or divine *Ethos* can be both culturally formed custom and similar to a natural drive becomes particularly clear in the comparison between Hera and Aphrodite: Hera, the sister and wife of Zeus, defends the Greek institution of marriage by all means against the goddess Aphrodite and the half-goddess Helen. In this role, Hera in the Iliad plays a similar role to Penelope in the Odyssey. For it is precisely in the interest of the dynasty and of his son Telemachos that Odysseus must return to Ithaca from his adventures (for example with the nature goddess Calypso) to the house and hearth of his wife Penelope and to the field and garden of his father Laertes. Apparently, according to older custom, as Homer himself tells us, Penelope would have been entitled to marry one of the suitors after some (ten) years. But this is precisely what Penelope does not do, in contrast to

Clytemnestra, Agamemnon's wife and Helen's sister. Penelope is praised by Agamemnon in the underworld as a role model for all times to come precisely because of her ‚fidelity'. When Agamemnon's son Orestes murders his mother and her new husband Aigisthus, the old *daimōnes*, the goddesses of revenge or Erynia as guardian spirits, especially of mothers, would never forgive. The fact that Clytemnestra and Aigisthus had murdered his returning father would not be a sufficient excuse. Orest is supported in his deed by one of his sisters, Electra, but not by the other, Chrysothemis. Apollo's oracular court resp. Athen's Highest Court (the Areopag) under direction of Athena obviously defends, as Homer did in the Odyssey, the new *patrilinear* family principle that takes all rigths away from the women and supports only the interest of the fathers and husbands (as in the case of Iphigenie) and sons (as in the case of Telemach). Euripides is the first to look at things from a ‚psychological' perspective of women (for example in *Medea*, who murders her sons, and *Hekabe*, who blinds Polymestor, the treacherous murderer of her son Polydoros).

3. Psychological powers and making them explicit

The basic structure of the depiction of the daimonic, divine or psychic forces is generally such that they are encountered by the protagonists as if they were spiritual adversities, so that their effects do not simply appear as consequences of their own consciously intended deeds. A deep ambivalence in the structure of these forces and powers is recognized: On the one hand, they are inherent to the actor. On the other hand, much about these powers is alien to him. The role of the gods is thus always also an articulation of contingency and alienation phenomena.

This is precisely why Odysseus' astonishing ability to tolerate is called divine. Odysseus embodies the idea of a person who patiently waits for his chances, which are promoted by cunning promptings (Athena's). Thus Homer, when read under the guidance of Heraclitus, also articulates a basic structure of our *psyche*, which is always already somehow alienated from itself: Much of what we ascribe to ourselves does not simply come from ourselves. This is true not only for *moods* that are similar to *passive* experiences like an undirected abxiety, despair or depression. It also applies to *changes* of moods or to a still diffuse (undirected) *energy*, in the end even to our intellectual and psychological competence (and incompetence), from the ‚wisdom' of Nestor to the ‚follies' of Helen and Paris.

That it allegedly is almost a trauma for us moderns to have to experience that we are not the master of our own soul is propagated particularly effectively by a philosopher of the metaphorical, Hans Blumenberg. According to his judgment, Freud's enlightenment about the functioning of the *psyche* in particular means a narcissistic mortification of our self-consciousness. Yet, it was precisely the myth-

critical Enlightenment in Descartes' combined philosophy of subjectivity and science that is to be blamed for the overestimation of the intellectual ego. The paradoxical consequence of this fact is that to some intellectualist Enlightenment thinkers, Freud in particular, appear, in part, as anti-enlightenment thinkers. Freud himself works in his theories with allegories and objectifications not unlike myths, thus creating just new *daimōnes*. These modern *daimōnes* include not only the generalized sexual drive, the death drive or the Oedipus complex, but the entire doctrine of the ego, id and superego, of the subconscious and consciousness.

Freud does not see himself as a Heraclitean Homer of our time, which he certainly is, since he uses classic literature in order to make experiences articulable that were previously not expressible in the necessary clarity. Freud sees himself as a *natural scientist* in a very narrow sense of the word – which he is not at all. Hence the problems of Freud's self-commentaries can be used against the hermeneutic interpretation of his achievements, for example, by Habermas. Adolf Grünbaum famously has pointed this out.[9] The problem is that Freud wants to make human behaviour causally explainable through his *daimōnes*. He seems to ‚believe' in the psychophysical reality of the powers of the psyche that he names metonymically and allegorically in the speech mode of myth. He believes in the existence of these powers in exactly the same problematic way as Hesiod still might have believed in gods.

I dare to join Egon Friedell who also doubts that Homer believed in the gods in a literal sense. Heraclitus himself seems to have learned from a close reading of Homer no longer to believe in gods as spiritual beings in a higher world whose deeds could make changes in our world. We thus see in the relation of Homer and Heraclitus an early example of the following general scheme: The first criticism of an ingenious reader or follower goes beyond the ingenious teacher by radicalizing the insights. As a result, the dependencies are regularly underestimated when, for example, Aristotle criticizes Plato, Hegel Kant, Heidegger Husserl or Analytical Philosophers like Karl Popper or Rudolf Carnap virtually all of the above.

The usual representation that only the enlightenment of Greek sophistry replaced myth with logos, superstition with rational explanations, thus becomes as questionable as the opinion that modern psychology or modern science in general is more enlightened than mythological forms of speech, for example in religious traditions. This prejudice must be replaced by a linguistic and critical analysis of the benefits and disadvantages of metonymic, metaphorical or even analogical forms of speech and representation, together with an analysis of what it might mean to speak conceptually 'directly' about things in a way that is not merely figurative.

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[9] Adolf Grünbaum 1984.

My little ‚thesis' is, therefore, that the replacement of *mythos* by *logos* is not a historical event that lies behind us. We rather should see to what extent this replacement is a permanent task of philosophy. It is a matter of the transformation of foreboding, insofar mantic, proto-science. This is initially always articulated in figurative forms of speech. For this, we need metaphors and analogies, metonymies and catachreses and a careful handling of these logical forms of expression that have not yet been further schematized in their inferential normal sequences. The goal is the kind of standardisation needed by a science that is articulated in a language with more or less clear conditions of application and clear inferential semantic determinations.

Philosophy can only be adequately understood as that part of a *science of logic* (Hegel) that deals with basic understandings of the conceptual, both as a critique of unclear and ambiguous modes of expression within and outside the sciences and in the form of the task of making the still pre-conceptual knowledge and skills of a time explicit, 'bringing them to the concept', and doing so in the clearest possible way in terms of inferential semantics.

4. The psyche as subject and as object in self-conscious thinking

Heraclitus' critique of the hypostasis of mind and soul is directed, if understood correctly, against every hypostasis of the subject and the person, of consciousness and the self. In the light of his formula, the supposed unity of the ego dissolves and is to be replaced by a totality of acquired competences and behaviours, of actual activities, mental states and events. Only then will one be able to correctly assess the significance of the cultural milieu for the simplest action and even more so for the competencies of a ‚mentally healthy' person. Indeed, mental health in the full sense always consists in the ability to live a good life in the community according to world-wide norms of ethical behaviour. This in turn stabilizes the mental and physical health of the person. Philosophers and other writers try to articulate and explicate the ideal of such a good common life in different ways, structurally or exemplarily. In this context, personal competence is to be distinguished from mere behavioural dispositions. When competence and dispositions are taken together into a kind of system, they are often addressed as attitudes (hexis, habitus). We therefore have to distinguish a ‚mental' attitude in the sense of a system of dispositions from a ‚mental' attitude in the sense of social skills or the summarized competence of successful participation in a common way of life.

Heraclitus' sentence about the identity of Ethos and Spirit can now also be formulated in this way: What we consider to be our very own personality, our consciousness, is essentially our standing in the social world and our position or attitude towards a form of life. This insight seems to need to be taken into account more

strongly than before, especially in the context of education and self-education, psychology and medicine. Self-awareness is then nothing other than conscious, in critical points explicitly controlled, attitude to our own form of life.

Nevertheless, the relationship of me to myself, for example, also of me to my body, appears, at first, as a mystery. The soul or psychē is initially only a system of abilities and faculties, but turns into the whole character of a person. Aristotle interprets it as just in this way. In order to give the sentences a grammatical subject, we say that the person or the soul, mind, person, or character 'has' or 'takes' a certain competence or attitude. But we also say that the rain falls or the wind blows without assuming that there is rain or wind as real actors next to or behind the raining or blowing. Even in the expressions 'it's raining' and 'it's blowing' we need a formal sentence subject for syntactical reasons. Therefore, although it may sound ungrammatical, it is illuminating when we say that the soul or spirit of a person is actually nothing other than the person's overall attitude, the totality of faculties. Instantiations or manifestations are conditioned by the social environment, partially controlled by the person herself. The individual's own attitude to the form of life is, in the end, the spiritual or psychological person herself. The spiritual or psychological person is the overall attitude, habit, behaviour and action of the individual, just as the wind itself is its blowing and the rain itself is its raining.

Heraclitus presents a very catchy and beautiful allegory for familiar experiences we have with the shifts in our attention in response to some sensory irritation, such as a sensation of pain: "As a spider feels in the middle of its web as soon as a fly tears one of the threads, and therefore rushes quickly to it, as if anxious about the torn thread, so the soul of man, if a part of the body is injured, wanders hurriedly to it, as if it were indignant at the injury to the body to which it is firmly attached according to definite sense“ (i. e. proportion; B 67a, transl. PSW, see also Snell, p. 24f.).

Plato made another, even more confusing, connection in his Doctrine of the Soul. He begins with a Socratic insight: Presently, I am not only concerned with my future life until death, but sometimes also ‚with myself as a whole‘ extending as kind of immortal person that I will have been forever as truth-maker for all judgements about me beyond the limits of my actual life, that is, beyond my death. I can say that one injures me when he injures my reputation. The memory of me, my obituary and fame or disgrace belong to me in a certain sense. The same hold for my family, not only the surviving children, pupils, friends and enemies, but also, in a sense, my nation and country. I can therefore, as Socrates explains in his farewell discourses in the dialogues *Crito* and *Phaedo*, already want today that, in view of a near or then also more distant future, a certain judgement about me should become 'true' on the whole. It remains true, regardless of whether I am then still

alive or not, and even regardless of whether this judgement is conscious to the people then still alive or not, whether they have forgotten me or not, whether its truth is acknowledged or not. This concern for my ‚psyche as a whole', first probably demanded by Socrates and then apparently taken over by the popular teacher Jesus, goes beyond a mere concern for my future mental faculties and abilities. At present, it rather consists in the acquisition of an attitude to my whole life, including the way I behave to my own death. This is the reason why philosophical wisdom always also teaches ‚how to die', as Plato's Socrates famously says. The merely finite life of the individual, which resembles the ephemeral life of a mayfly, is thus contrasted by the poets in particular with a tradition of the immortal glory of heroes. In a conscious adoption of Homer's patterns, Pindar already emphasizes the importance of the poet in securing the immortality of the Olympians he sings about as heroes. He does this quite self-confidently.

Plato now obviously wants to transform the striving for subjective and accidental fame into a striving for objective achievements, without the falsification by poets and advertising media. The spiritual soul of man therefore becomes for him the ideal bearer of objective *aretē*. Plato's praise of the pursuit of honour in competition is therefore about the objective recognizability of the whole person without regard to factual fame. Moreover, Plato's notorious criticism of the poets concerns, at first, the anthropomorphism in their stories about gods, but also the need of distinguishing between striving for real fame and for objective *aretē*.

Socrates, condemned to death, is concerned with his merits as objective achievements, not with his subjective fame. Only against this background is it possible to explain why, according to Plato, an urban community is destroyed in a first but decisive step by ‚timocracy', i. e. by the replacement of Plato's *aristocratic* or better *meritocratic* constitution (*politeia*) by (spiritually arleady corrupt) persons of ambition and their popular support. The dream of a good common life, shared by all, decays already now. The decay begins with initially accidental replacements of the recognition of the ideal of *Ethos* and *Arete*, according to which one is interested in objective achievement and in a common good, by a populist principle of appraisal. The next step leads from manipulating the followers to a decline of trust, truth and honesty in the leadership elite.

The virtue of subjective honesty, truthfulness and sincerity, and the additional aspiration to act in an objectively correct way demands that all performance is still judged by the person himself, especially where others cannot control or know it sufficiently. Plato demonstrates this in his fable of Gyges, who can make himself invisible with a ring: Gyges is a *homo rationalis* or *homo oeconomicus* who cannot be trusted without control.

Plato's Socrates emphasizes that I can and should take care of my 'objective' psychē in the sense of the person as a whole. This person in the whole, the psychē, is first to be distinguished from the body and life of the person in the particular present. As a system of faculties, habits, attitudes and achievements it reaches far beyond the present into an open future. And it reaches in its real consequences far beyond the life of the individual into the community of life of the city, the state, society, and the (human) world. It is thus also supra-temporal in another aspect. For we can conceptually detach the objective notion of the person's worthiness of recognition both from his entire lifetime and from his merely factual reputation, from the actual memory of him.

We should therefore always understand the ancient 'doctrine of virtue', at least initially, in narrow connection between the competence and dignity of the person. The aretē and ēthos of the soul is nothing other than the objective efficiency of the person. It is judged from a virtually threefold perspective. The first perspective refers to the performative execution of the competent person herself as the subject of action and reflective judgement. The second is that of an external observer, which contains, more precisely, the variety of judgements of virtually ‚all' other persons. The third, finally, is an ideal perspective, which one visualizes in its form with the appeal to a fictitious, 'all-knowing' God. Yet it is we ourselves who make the judgements in all these three perspectives. And all these judgements are fallible and correctable in different ways. The objective *aretē* and *ēthos* thus eludes immediate self-praise as well as immediate fame, at least partially. The basic insight we now arrive is this: A whole system of special abilities, among them in particular the competence of judgement and consistent action, determines what is specifically human in a human being and characterizes a full person criterially.

An almost epochal misunderstanding of our ‚immortal soul' stems from misunderstanding Plato's idea of an ‚eternal' *psychē* as the formal subject of all the properties that I will have had after my death. The soul becomes an ‚immortal substance' just as any true statement about the past or in the mode of Futurum Exactum about the future will remain true in all eternity. Plato might have been himself the first victim of the ambiguities in this idea. What is certain, however, is that in (Neo-)Platonism and Hellenistic Judaism (of the so-called Phariseans), hence also in Christianity, the ‚immortal soul' is hypostatized ‚ontically'.

Like Parmenides after him, Heraclitus presupposes the utter evidence of his teaching. He points out that *phronein* and *gignoskein heoutous*, thinking and self-knowledge, are inherently given to all human beings. But – and this is decisive for the form of his literary communication – the *polloi*, the 'crowds', do not make use of these favourable preconditions; they behave like sleepwalkers who do not see

what lies before their feet. With the gesture of the lonely caller in the desert, Heraclitus thus sets himself apart from 'the' people and sticks to 'the few', who know how to receive his logos ('one is worth tens of thousands to me if he is competent').[10] It is a consequence of this attitude that Heraclitus dispenses with all rhetoric and poetic dressing and proclaims his teachings in an enigmatic, concentrated, 'hermetic' prose that is deliberately kept 'inaccessible', or so it seems: All emphasis and responsibility for understanding content and truth is placed on the recipient's, the reader's, self-activity.

5. Hegel on the normative sociality of ethical spirit

In the Philosophy of Religion, Hegel says about the mythological immediacy of thought and knowledge "in the empirical subject" that it is firstly "the result of many mediations", secondly the result of 'pure activity', which means: actual *performance*. The mysticism of an alleged immediacy of feeling, thinking, understanding, intelligence and spirit is just a consequence that we forget the forms of conduct and action that we have learned. This is necessary when we focus on particular matters. We then think that we were directly aware of something. We overlook, so to speak, systematically *our own conventionalized stream of consciousness* in the sequence of silent talking to oneself. Semi-automatic reasoning is in fact a prerequisite for quick comprehension, which in turn is a prerequisite for more complex thinking: "A difficult piano piece can be played easily after it has often been repeated, gone through one by one; it is played with immediate activity, as the result of so many mediating actions."[11] The real ego, the 'mind' as subject of thought, is almost the same as the stream of silent thinking. We think by focusing on content, just as piano virtuosos play long and difficult pieces by heart, seemingly immediately and audibly focusing on the music as a whole in its expressive power, no longer at all on the acquired technique. As with the perfection of a virtuoso, the mastery of speaking and thinking includes forgetting the long practice in shifting the focus from the wording to the content.

Every speaker and every actor is immediately 'aware' of the 'content' guiding him or her. In this sense, thinking is 'transparent': In thinking, *we seem* to look directly at the 'content' and 'matter', through the external expressions of language(s), so to speak. We thus focus on the forms of differentially conditioned inferences that we estimate as relevant. Nevertheless, an implicitly evaluated indifference of meaning-equivalent expressions resp. appearences *constitutes* all contents. In

[10] Heraklit 1995, B 40.

[11] Hegel, GW 29,1 (2017), p. 174.

translational paraphrases, therefore, the particular forms of expression, even in different languages, are 'cancelled out' in Hegel's sense. The expression "negation of the negative" stands precisely for this equality of content of distinguishable forms of expression.

What is decisive is *language*, or more precisely: *speaking*, i. e. the possibly quiet 'stream of speaking thought'. It is the essential expression of my spiritual being, of my *I* as the personal subject that I am. This Hegelian insight goes as far as any later linguistic turn has ever gone.

The prerequisite for all intelligence is the mind (Latin: *mens*) i. e. the capacity to reproduce schemata and general knowledge formally correctly or in conformity with rules, even habitually. Only on a second level of reflection, we need a kind of dialectical self-control: we apply what we have learned. To do this appropriately presupposes practical knowledge of the concrete situation.

Intelligence consists in wise and good applications of schematically learned generic knowledge and semantic forms, norms and rules. They are jointly developed, namely by *whole humankind*. Therefore, Hegel fiercely opposes together with his friends Niethammer and Goethe *all national romanticisms* as they emerge in the vein of Herder's overestimation of national cultures and languages. They opposed, for example, Fichte's and Kleist's anti-French 'Prussian' nationalism. The even more unintelligent overestimation of biological races comes later.

On the other hand, the dependence on a *local* Ethos in the sense of mere costume, on what we learn conventionally, hear or read in the media, explains how it may happen that a majority of people in some state-driven societies like Nazi Germany can loose their human dignity by silently recognizing a corrupt regime. Hegel thus contrasts full human *spirit* as conscientious intelligence and reason to mere *rationality.* Merely rational are those that pursue in some clever ways their own, limited, interest or well-being. Neglecting the always already transsubjective, transnational, in fact *universal human Ethos* of 'self-understood' forms and norms always means to forsake *spirit*, the *daimōn* of *eudaimonia*, which is, as the good life of good persons, much more then mere wish-fulfilling, fortune or happiness.

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