This brings us back to the ambiguous "always" of fragment B1/D1. That fragment opens a vista onto eternity. But as soon as we contemplate that *aei* we begin to lose sight of our mortal *aiōn*.[49] "Of this *logos* that is always (*aei*) mortals are always uncomprehending, both before they have heard it and when they have first heard it." The *logos* is the marker of time for mortals, but the chronology it produces is confused: not quite before and after. Human temporality is blurred and with it the change (*ginontai, ginomenōn*) that defines our existence. Experience is no different from inexperience: "They are like people without experience even when they experience such words and deeds as I expound." Memory slides into *lēthē*, the oblivion of a sleepwalker: "Other men are not aware (*lanthanei*) of what they do when they are awake, just as they forget (*epilanthanontai*) what they do when asleep." Fragment B1/D1 offers us a vantage on cosmic eternity, the *logos* that exists always. But from that eternal perspective time, change, experience, memory, the rhythms of the day—all the things that make up an individual *aiōn*—dim and fade from view.

The *aei* of B1/D1 thus marks an irreducible asynchrony between cosmic temporality and human. Human life cannot be brought into rhythm with the cosmic cycle without the loss of its defining *metra*, its unique tempos and temporality. We may come to understand that day and night are one (B57/D25a, B106/D25b), but that understanding renders our existence as *ephēmerioi*, creatures of a day, meaningless. This would seem to indicate the limits of Heraclitus's synthetic project—his hope of transforming *axunetoi anthrōpoi* into *xunetoi*—and of his synthetic vision of a *xunos logos*, for a *logos* that excludes human life is not truly *xunos*. The eternal circle of Heraclitus's cosmology would seem to be a bad infinity, returning always to the "common (*xunon*) beginning and end" (B103/D54) of noncoincidence between the cosmic and the human. Out of tempo with the cosmic cycle, human life is an eternal hole in the cosmic whole.

APHORISM LULLABY

And yet Heraclitus does manage to bring together *aei* and *aiōn*. He effects this synthesis or *xunesis* (literally, "putting together") through the form of his aphorisms.[50] Aphorism has its own particular formal temporality. On the one hand, its brevity makes aphorism the most ephemeral of forms.[51] Delimited by definition

49. Long (1992, 272) speaks of "Heraclitus's view from nowhere." *Aei* and *aiōn* form a parallax, two closely related perspectives that can nonetheless never be synthesized: see Žižek 2006 and chapter 5 below.

50. This section title is a nod to Derrida's essay "Aphorism Countertime" (1992a). Derrida proposes that the aphoristic form precludes synchronicity or simultaneity (both of which are implied by his term *contretemps*). While the same can be said of Heraclitus's aphorisms (as we shall see in the next section), this section shows that his aphorisms can also eliminate asynchrony by eliminating time altogether.

51. For Grant (2016, 45), aphorism's apparent instantaneity "produces an immediate and striking effect, like a flash of lightning." The lightning strike recurs in discussions of aphorism including

(*ap-horizein*), the aphorism exists apart from the temporal flow of continuous narrative or extended exegesis; like the individual *aiōn*, it occupies but a brief and terminal moment. On the other hand, inasmuch as it claims to encapsulate an essential truth, the aphorism is timeless: Nietzsche (himself one of the great aphorists) called aphorism one of "the forms of 'eternity.'"[52] "In this smallness," writes Ben Grant in his study of aphorism, "our short human life and eternity come together, for the timelessness of the truth that the aphorism encapsulates can only be measured against our own ephemerality, of which the brevity of the aphorism serves as an apt expression."[53]

Simultaneously fleeting and eternal, the aphorism brings together *aiōn* and *aei*. Heraclitus exploits and develops this paradoxical temporality with the skillful rhythms of his prose.

> ταὐτό τ' ἔνι ζῶν καὶ τεθνηκὸς καὶ [τὸ] ἐγρηγορὸς καὶ καθεῦδον καὶ νέον καὶ γηραιόν· τάδε γὰρ μεταπεσόντα ἐκεῖνά ἐστι κἀκεῖνα πάλιν μεταπεσόντα ταῦτα. (B88/D68)
>
> The same within: living and being dead and being awake and sleeping and young and old. For these things, changing, are those and those, changing again, are these.[54]

Through its formal structure, this fragment replicates the rift between human and cosmic time. The first sentence measures out the finite arc of a human life span. The leisurely polysyndeton (and . . . and . . . and) counts off its discrete *metra*, the sequential moments that make up an *aiōn*. But "the same within" erases these *metra* and compresses the human narrative into an atemporal simultaneity of "the same." That paradoxical instant is extended in the second sentence; changing and changing back in an unchanging circuit, its chiasmus reproduces the timeless time of the cosmic cycle and sustains us, as we read it, within that impossible temporality. Through its form, this aphorism allows us to feel the different tempos of human and cosmic time; even as it reproduces the split between *aiōn* and *aei* it enables us to experience both simultaneously and thus bridges at the level of sensation a gap that is ineradicable at the level of sense.

Morson 2012, 46; and Marsden 2006, 29. It also figures in both Nietzsche's and Heidegger's reading of Heraclitus (Nietzsche 1962, 50; Heidegger 1975, 78; and Heidegger and Fink 1993, 10).

52. Nietzsche 1998, 75. On Nietzsche's aphorisms, see Blanchot 1993, 151–70; Marsden 2006; and Grant 2016, 97–98. Heraclitus emphasizes this gnomic timelessness with his evocations of the Delphic oracle (B92/D42, B93/D41) and the abiding truth of divine speech; see Grant 2016, 7–8.

53. Grant 2016, 4.

54. The opening as Diels-Kranz print it is probably corrupt, and scholars are divided on how to understand *t'eni:* see Laks 2015, 43. Some editors attribute the second sentence to Ps.-Plutarch, who quotes the fragment. But the same pattern of paradoxical unity of opposites followed by chiasmus is also found in B10/D47, B62/D70, and B67/D48, and I am inclined to think it is original. Bollack and Wismann (1972, 261) offer a subtle analysis of the temporality of the fragment; Deichgräber (1963, 31–33) parses its meter, remarking on the structural similarity to B10/D47 (35). Cf. Mouraviev 2006, 124–25, and for detailed analysis of Heraclitus's prose rhythms, both metrical and syllabotonic, Mouraviev 2002, 219–64.

Nietzsche posited that Heraclitus knows no present moment of being between coming-into-being and passing-away.[55] This non-time is what Aristotle calls "the now" (*to nun*), an instantaneous division between past and future with no temporal duration of its own.[56] Heraclitus's aphorisms hold us in this impossible now, a paradoxical present that is the human experience of cosmic time. As in "the same within," Heraclitus's union of opposites both produces and is produced by an extreme temporal compression that renders the sequential simultaneous.[57] Consider fragment B60/D51: "The road up/down is one and the same" (*hodos anō katō mia kai hōutē*). If understood in static spatial terms, the fragment is a truism: it is one and the same road whether one is heading up to the Acropolis or down to the Piraeus. The truism becomes a paradox only when motion, direction, and change are introduced: laws of physics make it impossible to walk the road from north to south and south to north at the same time. The paradox is produced, in other words, by removing the element of time, by imagining sequential movement (going up *then* going down) as simultaneous: up/down, *anō katō*.[58] There is not even the interval of an "and" in which to switch directions. Instead, that "and" is introduced in the pleonastic "one and the same" (*mia kai hōutē*). That pleonasm allows us to linger, paradoxically, in the instantaneity of the paradox, extending its atemporal "now" into a brief but perceptible duration of human experience.[59]

Or consider another famous fragment, B51/D49.

> οὐ ξυνιᾶσιν ὅκως διαφερόμενον ἑωυτῶι ὁμολογέει· παλίντροπος ἁρμονίη ὅκωσπερ τόξου καὶ λύρης.
>
> They do not comprehend how what differs with itself agrees with itself: back-turned *harmoniē* as of a bow and a lyre.

The compressed phrase "what differs with itself agrees with itself" (*diapheromenon heōutōi homologeei*) encapsulates Heraclitus's unity of opposites and raises it to the meta-level as the unity-in-opposition of unity and opposition themselves. The paradox is elaborated through a simile that introduces further paradox. The linking of instruments of death and music illustrates the abstract claim that "what

55. Nietzsche 1962, 51. Plutarch (*de E* 392A10–E6) says much the same thing, quoting B91/≠LM and B76/R54.

56. Arist. *Ph.* 4.10 218a3–8. On Aristotle's *to nun*, see Coope 2005, 17–30, 125–39.

57. Long 1992, 269: "Remove all temporal distinctions, and you get the identity of living and dead." The first series of Deleuze's *Logic of Sense* (1990) stresses the temporality of paradox: "the simultaneity of a becoming whose characteristic is to elude the present" (1).

58. As Deleuze (1990, 74–81) argues, paradox does not simply reverse the direction of *doxa* but challenges the very notion of directionality by pointing in two directions at once. It is possible that Heraclitus's contrary roads refer to the cosmic cycle, which the doxographers sometimes speak of as a *hodos epi to katō* (from fire to water to earth) and a *hodos epi to anō* (from earth to water to fire): see Diog. Laert. 9.9 (< A1/R46b).

59. The pattern of paradox followed by pleonasm may recur in B59/D52 and B118/R101, but the text of both fragments is uncertain.

differs with itself agrees with itself," as does each instrument in itself if we imagine its string tensed between two parts straining in opposite directions, or the hand of the user pulling back to project the arrow or sound forward.[60] That tense simultaneity of opposite lines of force is perhaps what Heraclitus means by *palintropos harmoniē*. But the temporality of these words is complicated. *Harmoniē*, from *arariskō*, is originally a metaphor from construction: the fitting together of different parts to form an integrated whole (for instance, a building or wall) designed to remain fixed through time. By Heraclitus's day the word had also taken on a musical sense, though one rather different from our own. For the Greeks, *harmoniē* meant not the simultaneous sounding of different notes but a pattern of attunement, that is, the sequential ordering of different pitches into a tonal system.[61] So *harmoniē* is both simultaneous (the enduring structure of a well-fitted wall) and sequential (musical patterns that unfold in time). The same temporal ambiguity is perhaps reflected in the textual uncertainty around *palintropos*. *Palintropos* comes from *trepō*, turning back. Kahn relates it to the cyclical revolutions of the *puros tropai*.[62] But there was an ancient variant: *palintonos*, from *teinō* (to stretch, strain). While *palintropos* entails movement and therefore temporality, *palintonos* suggests the static state of strings held in tension.

Superimposing simultaneity and sequentiality, the fragment jams time in a tense and intense instant. This reading of the fragment's temporality finds confirmation in Plato's *Symposium*, when Eryximachus loosely quotes B51/D49 in the course of his argument that eros reconciles opposites (Pl. *Symp*. 187a5–6). He finds the image nonsensical: when opposite things are brought into harmony, they are no longer opposite; conversely, as long as they are opposite, they are not in harmony. "Perhaps," he suggests, "Heraclitus meant that out of an initial (*proteron*) opposition of sharp and flat notes, harmony is produced subsequently (*epeita husteron*) after they have been made to agree through the musical art" (187a8–b1).[63] He resolves the paradox by reintroducing a clear chronological sequence. In this way he shows that it is precisely time—or rather its elimination—that makes the paradox so paradoxical.

60. The latter interpretation is proposed by Vlastos (1955, 351 and n32).

61. Gurd 2016, 116 (with further references in n125).

62. Kahn 1979, 199–200. The reading *palintropos* is defended forcefully by Vlastos (1955, 348–51), against Kirk (1954, 211–14) and Marcovich (1967, 125–26). Mackenzie (2021b) discusses the textual alternatives in light of a possible allusion to Odysseus's stringing of the bow in *Odyssey* 21. *Palin* itself can be both spatial ("backward") and temporal ("again"). Cf. B88/D68, where *palin* expresses the simultaneous temporality ("once and again") and timelessness ("again and again") of the elemental cycle.

63. Compare Plutarch's comment on B91/≠LM ("they scatter and come together again *[palin]* . . . and are present and absent"); he interjects, "Rather, it is not again (*palin*) and later (*husteron*) but at the same time (*hama*) that they combine and cease and 'are present and absent'," *de E* 392B10–C1). *Palin* introduces temporal sequence (*husteron*); the paradox, as Plutarch recognizes, lies in the simultaneity (*hama*).

But Heraclitus not only eliminates time but, as we saw with the road up/down, allows us to linger in that paradoxical instant. Fragment B10/D47 also uses *harmoniē* to figure the concordance of opposites:

> συνάψιες ὅλα καὶ οὐχ ὅλα, συμφερόμενον διαφερόμενον, συνᾶιδον διᾶιδον, καὶ ἐκ πάντων ἓν καὶ ἐξ ἑνὸς πάντα.
>
> Conjunctions (*sunapsies*): wholes and not wholes, converging diverging, consonant dissonant, and from all one and from one all.[64]

The aphorism is structured similarly to fragment B88/D68. The first part compresses opposites to their asyndetic extreme: without the temporality of a finite verb or even the tiniest conjunction of space or time between *sun–* and *dia–* (not even the *kai* that distinguishes whole and not whole), Heraclitus's *sunapsies* come together in a timeless instant.[65] But the second part unfolds these tightly packed oppositions into a more commodious chiasmus, "and from all one and from one all." The double *kai* ("and") slows down the tempo and the double *ek* ("from") reintroduces the temporal duration of cyclical transformation, the before and after that Plato's Eryximachus wanted in order to make sense of Heraclitus's dissonant harmony. Circling between one and all, this chiastic clause holds us suspended within the eternal now of atemporal conjunction.

The chiasmus is, in fact, one of Heraclitus's favorite forms and it structures many of his aphorisms.[66] The trope enacts at the aesthetic level the *tropai* of the elements that constitute Heraclitus's cosmos, as in B36/D100 where the description of the cosmic cycle is replicated in the chiasmus of *psukhai*-water-earth-water-*psukhē*. Through this mimetic effect, Heraclitus's own *logos* joins with the *xunos logos*, performing the unity it describes.[67] That unity is effected less through the logical sense of the propositional content than through the sensory response elicited by the aphorism's form. In her insightful discussion of Nietzsche's aphorisms, Jill Marsden describes aphorism as a kind of sensory paradox. Because of their

64. *Sunapsies* is disputed, and some editors read *sullapsies* ("graspings"). I like the former for its resonance with *haptomai* in B26/D71 and B30/D85, but *lambanō* is also a good Heraclitean word (B28/D28, B56/D22, B66/D84). Dilcher (1995, 112–14) offers a careful reading of the fragment's structure.

65. The paradoxical temporality of this fragment is intensified by the participles, which have aspect but not tense: the present aspect turns action within time into the timeless present of an ongoing condition. Asyndeton reproduces the disjointedness of aphorism within the aphorism. As Dilcher (1995, 134) points out, it characterizes many of Heraclitus's aphorisms (e.g. B10/D47, B60/D51, B67/D48, B111/D56, B126/D67). Demetrius notes the feature and blames it for the author's obscurity (A4/R7).

66. Most conspicuously in the final sentence of B1/D1, and B10/D47, B21/D72, B25/D122b, B26/D71, B36/D100, B88/D68, B90/D87, B126/D67. For a detailed taxonomy and discussion see Mouraviev 2002, 334–49.

67. This mimetic effect has often been noted. For a recent discussion see Vieira 2013. Graham (2009, 79) advances an argument similar to my own, that "Heraclitus does not just tell us about reality, but he *shows* us. . . . He expects us not simply to read his words but to *experience* them," although he describes that experience in terms of cognition, not corporeal sensation.

rapidity, their "rhythmic necessity—prior to comprehension," aphorisms shake us out of our doxic assumptions and open us to a new way of knowing, one that is less cognitive than corporeal and affective. "What is momentarily glimpsed or made tangible in the aphorism," she writes, "is a mute affective vitality."[68] Marsden's formulation neatly encapsulates the effect of Heraclitus's chiastic aphorisms. Suspending the reader in a timeless present, they make tangible the eternal rhythm of the cosmic *aei*, allowing us to sense its *metra* in our bodies.

We grasp this rhythm in a state of receptivity akin to a waking sleep. Sleep is a recurring theme in Heraclitus's fragments.[69] We encountered it in B1/D1 as a metaphor for the condition of mortals before hearing the *logos*. These people "are not aware (*lanthanei*) of what they do when they are awake, just as they forget (*epilanthanontai*) what they do when asleep." Sleepwalking through life, they are wrapped in oblivious isolation: "Heraclitus says that the cosmos is one and in common for those who are awake, but each sleeper turns to his own private cosmos" (B89/R56).[70] To "act and speak like sleepers" (B73/R54) is to "forget (*epilanthanomenou*) where the road is leading" (B71/R54). For such people "those things they encounter every day seem to them alien" (B72/R54). Sleep is thus a paradigm for human incomprehension, our alienation from knowledge of the cosmic whole, a metaphysical *lēthē*.

But Heraclitus transforms this *lēthē* into a mode of embodied *alētheia* through the chiastic lullaby of his aphorisms.

> ἄνθρωπος ἐν εὐφρόνηι φάος ἅπτεται ἑαυτῶι ἀποσβεσθεὶς ὄψεις, ζῶν δὲ ἅπτεται τεθνεῶτος εὕδων, ἐγρηγορὼς ἅπτεται εὕδοντος. (B26/D71)
>
> A man kindles (*haptetai*) a light for himself in the night when his eyes are extinguished. While he is alive, he touches (*haptetai*) the dead in his sleep; waking, he touches (*haptetai*) the sleeper.[71]

This intricately patterned fragment, with its interlocking double chiasmus, both juxtaposes and interweaves life and death, waking and sleeping. The first clause

68. Marsden 2006, 27, 29. Among its physiological effects, Marsden notes, aphorism denaturalizes the act of reading. We will see this effect of Heraclitus's aphorisms at the end of the chapter. Clarifying the affective force of Heraclitus's formal structure allows us to develop the often-quoted insight of Verdenius (1966, 90) that "die Einheit der Gegensätze, nicht zu beweisen, sondern nur intuitiv zu erfassen ist." Nietzsche (1962, 52) likewise stresses Heraclitus's intuition.

69. I examine the philosophical perplexities of sleep in Wohl 2020. Carson (1999, 55–60) writes eloquently on sleeping and waking in Heraclitus. See also Mansfeld 1967; Kahn 1979, 213–16; Rankin 1995; and Laks 2015, 40–45.

70. Only the first clause seems to be Heraclitus's own words; the second is a paraphrase of B2/D2. Laks-Most (R56) take the whole quotation as paraphrase.

71. I omit Clement's explanatory annotations, printed in Diels-Kranz. The fragment is well analyzed by Schofield (1991, 27–28). Mansfeld (1967) provides the history of its emendation and interpretation; see also Rousseau 1970. Laks (2015, 44) stresses sleep as a simultaneous experience of life and death but reads the fragment as referring to dreams; likewise Kahn 1979, 214–15.

shades imperceptibly from the literal to the metaphoric and from the everyday to the existential, as the darkness of night deepens into the blindness of death. The second clause returns to life (*zōn de*), which it figures as an alternation of sleeping and waking. But instead of viewing these as opposed states, this fragment figures them as a haptic continuum. The kindling (*haptetai*) of a light in the night of death is repeated in the touch (*haptetai*) of that dead self. Sleep is the condition of that "touch," which is then carried over into waking life. The waking man touches his sleeping self, who touches his dead self, who touches the light of an eternal life-in-death. The language of the fragment, with its balanced clauses, repetitions, and interlacing word order, replicates that continuum, weaving life and death, sleeping and waking, into a synthetic state that serves as a virtual definition of *anthrōpos*.

In this somnolent state the individual grasps (*haptetai*) her connection to the cosmos: her body becomes a physical register of its wholeness and cohesion. The language of kindling and quenching links this fragment to B30/D85 and the cyclical transformation of the cosmic fire, "kindled (*haptomenon*) in measure and extinguished (*aposbennumenon*) in measure." Waking and sleeping are figured as a quotidian experience not only of life and death but of the underlying dynamics of the physical universe, marking out in our bodies the regular *metra* of its elemental beat. But the fragment lets us feel not only the sequential alternation of the cosmic kindling and quenching but also the simultaneity of these opposite states, kindling the light of life in the night of death and touching death while alive. The fragment's chiasms lull us into a lucid lethargy in which we can apprehend corporeally, if not comprehend intellectually, the concordance of opposites that Heraclitus calls "conjunctions" (*sunapsies*, from *sun-haptomai*, B10/D47).[72]

I have been translating the verb *haptetai* in the first clause of B26/D71 as a middle voice: "kindles for himself." But that usage is unparalleled, and it is equally possible that the verb is passive.[73] That would make the *anthrōpos* himself the light kindled in the dark. Elsewhere Heraclitus describes the *psukhē* as a gleam or flash of light (*augē*, B118/R101).[74] Lit up in death, the *psukhē* becomes a literal spark of the ever-living fire. Leaving our extinguished bodies, that *psukhē* will join in the cosmic chiasmus of elemental birth and death: "For *psukhai* it is death to become water, for water it is death to become earth; from earth water is born, from water

72. See n. 64 above on the textual question surrounding *sunapsies*. B26/D71 also plays on an opposition of touch and vision. When our eyes are quenched, touch gives us access to the "invisible harmony" that is better than the visible (B54/D50). Ellis (2020b, 129–39) emphasizes the haptic nature of cognition for Heraclitus.

73. In the active *haptō* means to fasten or join, as well as to kindle; in the middle it usually means to touch or to grasp, both physically and (by extension) conceptually, and takes a genitive. The construction here, a middle with the accusative, is thus doubly atypical: see Rousseau 1970. Heidegger and Fink (1993, 127–49) worry at some length over the meaning of *haptetai* in Heraclitus B26/D71.

74. The text is uncertain. On the fire of the *psukhē,* see Kahn 1979, 245–54; and Betegh 2013. Cf. Macrob. *In Somn.* 1.14.19 (= R48c/≠DK): "Heraclitus the natural philosopher [calls the *psukhē*] a spark of the stars' substance (*scintillam stellaris essentiae*)."

psukhē" (B36/D100). It is this ever-living/ever-dying *psukhē* that we touch in sleep, feeling its presence within us as a "mute affective vitality."

In this way, fragment B26/D71 enables us to sense both the eternal fire and the spark that is our own part in it. But that immortal spark appears only in the night of our own lives and can be seen only with extinguished eyes. Where does this leave the *aiōn?* The aphorism figures living as an alternation of sleeping and waking, evoking the alternating *metra* that measure out our quotidian existence. But touch reaches across this defining antithesis in a morbid contiguity. The balance of life and death is lost, and living becomes no more than a pause (*zōn*) between the night of death and a sleep from which we never fully wake.

The fragment thus allows us to touch the cosmic *aei* but at the risk of losing our grip on the *aiōn*. That risk is realized in the fever dream of fragment B21/D72.

θάνατός ἐστιν ὁκόσα ἐγερθέντες ὁρέομεν, ὁκόσα δὲ εὕδοντες ὕπνος.

Death is whatever we see when awake, whatever [we see when] sleeping is sleep.

The aphorism promises a perfect chiasmus between death and life, waking and sleeping. At the level of form, its structural symmetry and the soft alliteration of initial aspirations lull us into the same somnolent state as B26/D71. At the level of content, the aphorism poses a literal paradox in the untraditional association of waking with death. But paradox becomes aprosdoketon when we reach the final term of the chiasmus: the symmetry is broken and in place of the expected *bios* we get *hupnos. Thanatos* is whatever we see when we are awake, whatever we see when we are asleep is . . . sleep. The fragment stands, as Kahn says, "at the climax of Heraclitus's riddling."[75] The association of waking with death may be understood in terms of the unity of opposites that in B88/D68 declared "the same within: living and being dead and being awake and sleeping." But the second clause seems tautological on the face of it, not a unity of opposites but a repetition of the same. In place of a balanced alternation of life and death, waking and sleep, or even a sustained tension between these opposite states, this chiasmus collapses in on itself. Waking and sleeping circle back on one another, leaving no room for life, only for death.

The effect can be measured by reading this fragment against another contemporary meditation on sleep and death: Euphronios's krater depicting the death of

75. Kahn 1979, 213: "Does Heraclitus mean after all to identify life with the private, half-conscious, phantom experience of the dream world? Apparently not, and that is why the sentence does not end as symmetry would require." Similarly, Schofield 1991, 30. Ramnoux (1968, 36–38) asks the same question as Kahn but answers in the affirmative. Diels emphasizes the asymmetry with his proposed supplement: *hokosa de tethnēkotes zōē*. It is worth noting that Heraclitus never uses the noun *zōē* in the extant fragments, only verbal forms of the word (B2/D2, B20/D118, B26/D71, B62/D70, B30/D85, B63/D123, B88/D68). He does use the noun *bios* (B48/D53, B62/D70) and of course *thanatos,* but life (*zōē*) is for him an activity not a state.

FIGURE 1. Calyx-krater by Euphronios showing the body of Sarpedon lifted by Hupnos and Thanatos. From Ceveteri, ca. 515 BCE. Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia, Rome. Photo: Scala/Ministero per i Beni e le Attività culturali / Art Resource, NY.

Sarpedon (fig. 1).[76] Like Heraclitus's fragment, this vase forms a perfect chiasmus between death (Thanatos, labeled on the right) and Hupnos (on the left). That chiastic structure is underlined repeatedly: by the X formed at the top by Hermes's rhabdos and raised hand, and at the edges by the gods' wings and legs, echoed by Sarpedon's own arms and legs. Form follows content as the image, like the gods, holds Sarpedon in suspension between life and death. That perfect equilibrium lasts but a moment, though. The image's lines of action draw the eye up from the bottom left corner, with its overlapping feet of god and men (both dead and living), across Sarpedon's body, to the wingtip of death.[77] The image is an instant of suspension in a larger narrative trajectory that leads from life to death. Although Hupnos and Thanatos work together to bear Sarpedon from the battlefield, you can see that Hupnos's grip is already slipping: soon the hero will belong entirely to

76. The vase is dated to 515, so almost exactly contemporary with Heraclitus. Neer (2002, 44–66) analyzes Euphronios's style as an instantiation of Heraclitus's "backsprung tension." He posits a chiastic relation in the vases between the object depicted and the technique of its depiction, between flatness and depth, that creates a "visual paradox" (61).

77. Many of these lines flow downward (the blood from Sarpedon's wounds, his dropping arm and leg, the fold of Hermes's cloak), but visually the way down and the way up are one.

Thanatos. This trajectory offers a narrative exemplum of the other major structural component of the image, the T formed by Sarpedon's supine body and Hermes's upright figure. Superimposed over the X of Sleep and Death, this T figures the binary opposition between gods and mortals. Even as the hero approaches divine status through what J.-P. Vernant (1991) terms "the beautiful death," the cross of his abdominal muscles reinforces the distinction that is the fundamental point of this mythic episode: mortals and immortals are as different as vertical and horizontal. Their point of contact is also their point of greatest difference: the moment of death depicted on this vase.

The Sarpedon krater and the Homeric episode behind it immortalize the ephemeral human *aiōn* at the moment of its loss ("when the *psukhē* and *aiōn* left him," *Il*. 16.453). The image holds you for a moment in its chiasmus and then lets you go, as all mortals must go, to Death. It is, in this sense, a perfect image of human temporality. The Heraclitean aphorism, by contrast, never lets you go. It holds you suspended, as I suggested above, in a timeless interminable present that is mortals' experience of the cosmic *aei*. That static present does not eternalize human life. Instead, it ellipses it, just as fragment B21/D72 replaces the expected final term *bios* with *hupnos*. Life is present only as an absence. If for Pindar *psukhē* is an *aiōnos eidōlon*, in Heraclitus's sleep fragments *aiōn* is itself a mere phantom, a vanishing dream vision.

At the extreme, even that ghost of an *aiōn* is lost.

> ἀθάνατοι θνητοί, θνητοὶ ἀθάνατοι, ζῶντες τὸν ἐκείνων θάνατον, τὸν δὲ ἐκείνων βίον τεθνεῶτες. (B62/D70)
>
> Immortals mortals, mortals immortals, living the others' death, dying the others' life.

In this fragment the chiasmus implodes, voiding the difference between life and death, mortals and immortals. With a symmetry of form that mirrors its content, it negates the very idea of negation (*a-thanatoi*) in an intensely pointed paradox. The paradox is perhaps comprehensible if we situate it within the temporality of cosmic transformation: its union of opposites would then allude to the sequential devolution and evolution of the elements, described in fragment B36/D100 as a cycle of death and birth.[78] But this aphorism nullifies that sequentiality. Instead of a cycle of life and death, each discrete and following one upon the other in even measure, we find life and death condensed into a single static condition, a condition that (in the absence of a finite verb) is interminable. This paradox thwarts the propositional logic of signification: negation, predication, and demonstration buckle under its weight, unable to produce sense.[79] In its asyndetic juxtaposition

78. Betegh 2013, 253–54. Cf. B76/R54, which is likely a gloss on B36/D100.

79. The alpha privative does not negate; the demonstrative pronouns fail to differentiate and identify; the internal accusatives strain against their verbs; predication produces nonsense. Bossi (2009)

of opposites, the signifiers that define human existence lose their meaning. That existence itself loses its meaning. Mortals and immortals alike are robbed of their proper being as each lives/dies the death/life of the other. Death is gone but so too is the *aiōn*, the concept of human existence as a duration of life punctuated by death. Both duration and punctuation are lost. Instead, we go around and around forever in a nightmarish spiral of life-death.

In his chiastic mimesis of the cosmic cycle, Heraclitus's *logos* speaks in unison with the *logos* that exists always; aesthetic form harmonizes with the structure of the universe, *kosmos* with *kosmos*. Through this mimetic synthesis, Heraclitus synchronizes human and cosmic tempos in a timeless eternal now. He brings human *xunesis* together with the common *logos*, making us feel this unity in our own bodies as a common rhythm, the shared *metra* of the cosmic revolution, and in this way secures the wholeness and unity of a cosmos in which "all things are one." But in fragments B26/D71 and B62/D70 that unity is experienced as annihilation. The chiasms' embrace becomes a death grip, holding us in the cosmic *aei* but at the cost of our mortal *aiōn*.

Fragment B21/D72 holds us in this same eternal chiasmus between *thanatos* and *hupnos*: "Death is whatever we see when awake, whatever we see when sleeping is sleep." Life appears here only as a distressing imbalance in the aphorism's perfect symmetry. And yet perhaps that is enough to wake us from our morbid lethargy. Asymmetry breaks the chiastic stranglehold of *athanatoi thnētoi thnētoi athanatoi* and opens a space for that which we do not see either in sleep or awake: *bios*.

STUTTER, SYNCOPATION

In the symmetry of his aphorisms Heraclitus both produces and reproduces a cosmos of such unity and coherence that it leaves no space for human life. But every once in a while, as in B21/D72, we find a subtle but pointed asymmetry, a syncopation generated by the convergence of different tempos. These moments are expressed as a kind of stutter in the text, a "grammar of disequilibrium" within both Heraclitus's *logos* and the cosmic *logos*.[80] This stutter introduces an incoherence into the perfect order of Heraclitus's *kosmos*, but a productive and necessary one, for it is here, I will suggest, in this briefest interval, that we find a space (or time) for human life, as well as the paradoxical origins of Heraclitus's own philosophical discourse.

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offers the fullest treatment of B62/D70; see also Porter's (2024) explication of the fragment's paradoxes. For a very different interpretation see Hussey (1991), who takes immortals and mortals to mean minds with and without understanding.

80. Deleuze 1997, 112: the stutter is "a syntax in the process of becoming, a creation of syntax that gives birth to a foreign language within language, a grammar of disequilibrium." Cf. Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 98, and on the generativity of asymmetry, Deleuze 1994, 22–24.