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THE SOCIO-POLITICAL VIEWS OF HERACLITUS OF EPHESUS

1. Preliminary notes

It is widely believed that modern society, which is witnessing many revolutionary changes in science and technology and has a positive approach to reality with the aim of further mastering elemental and social forces, least of all tends to encourage the study of the distant past, including ancient Greek theoretical thought. In fact the opposite is the case, for history in general and the phenomena of antiquity in particular have been arousing increasing interest. The early Greek philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus, an Ionian city-state in Asia Minor, is one example of this. As much was written about Heraclitus throughout the world between 1945 and 1970 as in the entire period from the Renaissance (from 1499, to be more precise) to the end of the Second World War¹. There is an equally striking point: nowadays, as in the past, Heraclitus' doctrine attracts the attention of philosophers belonging to the most diverse trends and orientations (more often than not, diametrically opposite ones). He is discussed by Marxists, theologians, existentialists, Freudians, personalists and the ideologists of the so-called new left. It is only natural that the question be raised — what is behind this ever increasing interest in a philosopher who lived in the far distant past, and how far are his ideas valid today?

At present, instead of being «protracted» and «slowed down», time is felt (in a more general sense of the word) as being «compressed» and «on-rushing»; and the «time-compressing» factor, which seems somehow to have cut the time interval dividing past and present, has made our generation more historically sensitive. And this is probably explained by the desire to take one's bearings in the succession of times and generations, in socio-historical development and the more active «dialogue» of epochs. Everything is cognizable in confrontation. Only recently man began to think himself superior to past generations due to the latest achievements in science and technology. Now,

1. Evangelos N. Roussos, *Heraklit — Bibliographie*, Darmstadt 1971.



when we know only too well that no achievement, however astounding (contrary to early predictions), will solve any of the fundamental problems of human existence, and, on the contrary, may even raise some new, previously unknown problems — this superiority complex is being replaced by the conception of man's inclusion (on a more or less «democratic» basis) in the historic process. And —what is even more indicative— by the growing need for self-knowledge and an understanding of the dialectics (of the contradictory character) of life and being.

It is natural that a thinker, who was the first to say that «all is perpetual flux and nothing abides» —and that strife is the source of all that happens—, is very much in tune with our highly dynamic age, full of ideological and political confrontation, class struggle and social changes; he is thus one of the most interesting to study and to conduct a dialogue with Heraclitus' philosophy, and socio-political views are now equally relevant, though his socio-political legacy is less studied and needs special discussion. We shall now proceed from the analysis of his epoch.

2. H e r a c l i t u s' e p o c h

Heraclitus is one of the most original thinkers in the history of Greek and world philosophy. He lived in a very tense and critical period of Greek history, when, as a result of the intense struggle of the *demos*, the lineal aristocracy stepped down in favour of *polis* democracy. This was also the period when the Greek *poleis* in Asia Minor and the whole of Hellas fought a liberation war against the Persian kingdom. In the unequal struggle against the Persian colossus all the biggest of the *poleis* in Asia Minor suffered bitter defeat and fell into a decline from which they were unable to recover economically despite the fact that in the long run the Graeco-Persian Wars ended in their liberation. Intellectually, the *poleis* then suffered a crisis of tradition, i.e., the decline of the ancient conceptions of the universe and life. It was only natural that Heraclitus, whose views were to a considerable degree the product of the dramatic events, military conflicts, political upheavals, and social shifts he had lived through, declared war (strife in general) the «father» of all, the «king» of all.

Let us discuss in more detail the socio-political processes and historic events which were most typical of the Greek *poleis* particularly the Ionian cities in Asia Minor in the 6th-5th centuries B.C. First, it should be mentioned that fundamental changes in the Greek way of life and thought (specifically, the formation and development of its philosophy and science) were the result of the socio-political revolutions which replaced the Homeric king and lineal

aristocracy by the so-called early (senior) tyranny. This took place in the 7th-6th centuries B.C. and was a transitional political form between the rule of the lineal aristocracy and the rule of the *demos*, or *polis* democracy.

Early in the 6th century B.C. the ruling dynasty of Basilides (from which Heraclitus descended) was dethroned by force, and several tyrants, including Pindar and Pythagora (not the Pythagora, the mathematician and philosopher, but another), came to power. According to Clemens of Alexandria, Heraclitus' life in Ephesus coincided with the rule of the tyrant Melankomas (see 22a 3 DK)².

Little is known about the Ephesus of that time.

A few facts can be restored on the basis of the events in the neighbouring city of Miletus. Herodotus (V 28) writes that the Milesians, torn by civil strife and disturbances had to ask the Parians to reconcile the opposing factions. In many cases the mediators who functioned *aesymnetes*, i.e. elected holders of supreme power, or «elected tyrants» who held office for one year, were influential citizens of the same *polis*. Sometimes the law-makers played the role of peace-making *aesymnetes*.

Among the first law-makers, i.e. persons who were the first to codify the law, were Zaleukus of Locrus in Southern Italy (mid-7th c. B.C.) and Draco of Athens (about 624 B.C.). A concession to the *demos*, codified law had far-reaching historical consequences. It limited the high-handedness of the lineal aristocracy, among whose privileges were interpreting the custom and administering justice.

The Ionian cities had advanced along this road of socio-political and legislative development until they were subdued by Persia in 546 B.C.

Persian rule, which heavily taxed the trade of Greek cities in Asia Minor, was aggravated by the autocracy of the tyrants appointed by the Persian king. It was in such conditions that in the winter of 500-499 B.C. the Milesians started an anti-Persian uprising. Backed by the other Ionian cities, the uprising went on, deposing the tyrants appointed by Persia and establishing a democratic system.

The fate of the uprising is well known. In 498 B.C. a unit of insurgents, with *hoplites* from Athens and Eretria also taking part, captured the city of Sardis, the seat of the Persian satrap Artaphernes.

There is only one fact known about the role of Ephesus in the uprising

2. Here and thereafter all reference to Heraclitus' fragments are given according to the book: *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*. Griechisch und Deutsch von H. Diels. Herausgegeben von W. Kranz. Bd. 1, 13 Aufl., Dublin/Zurich 1968), or DK for the sake of brevity.

of Greek cities in Asia Minor — the Ephesians allowed Athenian and Eretrian ships the use of the harbor to bring in warriors to help the insurgents, and the Milesians gave special guides to the Greek army headed for Sardes (Herodotus V, 100). When the city, built mostly of reeds, suddenly caught fire because of a warrior's carelessness, the Greeks retreated. The Persian army, pressing them back, caught them near Ephesus, and in the battle there the Greeks were utterly defeated. In the summer of 494, after a year of heroic defence, populous Miletus, the centre of the uprising, fell. The city was demolished, Apollo's shrine plundered, and the land divided among the Persian warriors. Some of the Milesians were killed, some sold as slaves, and others deported to the shores of the Tigris (Herodotus VI, 20). Other Greek Ionian cities were treated similarly. The triumphant conquerors sent people from the demolished cities to the slave markets: Ephesus became one such slave trade center. Most likely Herodotus' observation that war makes slaves of some and free people of others, thus creating differences between them comparable to those between people and gods, was the result of the dramatic events he had experienced.

When Asia Minor and some islands in the Aegean Sea had been conquered, the threat of Persian enslavement hovered over the whole of Hellas. Many cities in continental Greece and some islands resigned themselves to the likely future. Athens and Sparta were the only ones who resolutely refused to recognize any Persian power over them.

The results of the Graeco-Persian Wars are common knowledge. The Greek victories over the Persian king (at Marathon in 490 B.C., in the sea battle at Salamis in 480, at Plataea in the spring of 479 B.C., etc.) brought freedom to the Greek cities in Asia Minor in 478 B.C. The victory of small Greek city-states over a powerful Persian kingdom has become one of the most outstanding events not only in Greek but also in World history.

3. Heraclitus' life and work

We have more legends and anecdotes *and various speculations* about Heraclitus than hard facts³.

Let us to try to restore some moments in Heraclitus' biography on the

3. Commentaries on the complete set of texts on the life and work of Heraclitus, and also a critical analysis of the legends and speculations about him see: S. N. Muraviev, *Life of Heraclitus of Ephesus*, Vestnik Drevnei Istorii, 1974, No 4, 3-23 (texts pp. 195-215); and also by the same author: *Heraclitus: Contemporaries, legend, iconography*, Vestnik Drevnei Istorii, 1975, No 1, 25-27 (texts pp. 229-244). Both in Russian.

basis of those facts available which seem less doubtful and more reliable. According to Diogenes Laertius (22a 1, 1), Heraclitus reached his peak at the time of the 69th Olympiad (504-501 B.C.). It means that Heraclitus was born in approximately 544-541. These facts, cited by Diogenes Laertius and going back to Apollodorus, are regarded as more or less correct, though some scholars think that the philosopher was born in 541-540, while still others place his birth in the late 6th century. It is no less probable that Heraclitus was born in 535 B.C. The date of his death is unknown. Diogenes Laertius reports (22a 1, 3) that Heraclitus died when he was sixty, i.e. about 484-481 B.C., and it is virtually impossible to say to what extent this is correct. With a certain degree of certainty it can be assumed that Heraclitus died little later, in 475 B.C.

That Heraclitus belonged to the royal family is beyond any doubt. Strabo writes (22a 2) that those of royal blood who could trace their descent from the founder of Ephesus, Androcles, son of Codrus, the king of Athens, were in Strabo's own time still called kings and entitled to certain privileges (they presided over sporting events, had the right to carry the sceptre to wear purple clothes and be priests of Demeter at Eleusis) up until the first century B.C. One source says (22a 1, 6) that Heraclitus renounced his claim to hereditary kingship and ceded it to his brother «out of pride». Most scholars regard this as probable. There are all kinds of guesses as to his motive. Some authors (for example E. Zeller) think he resigned in protest against the triumph of democracy in Ephesus. S. N. Muraviev in his paper: *Life of Heraclitus*, which has attracted attention in many other respects, supports the view that this enabled Heraclitus «to enter on an equal footing with other 'best' citizens into politics»⁴.

It is quite possible that Heraclitus did not want to play a so to say «decorative» role in the socio-political life of his city, but it is hard to agree with Muraviev's statement. It is known that in Ancient Greece, as elsewhere, no one ever dared to miss the slightest advantage in politics, including purely token or «decorative» ones. Heraclitus' decision to abandon his title to kingship may therefore have been due to anything but a wish to influence political events from a less opportune position.

Heraclitus is said (22a 3) to have persuaded the Ephesian tyrant Melankomas to relinquish his powers. Most researchers do not believe this, specifically doubting that Melankomas existed in Ephesus during Heraclitus' times.

4. S. N. Muraviev, *Life of Heraclitus of Ephesus*, Vestnik Drevnei Istorii, 1974 No 4, p. 14. In Russian.

S. N. Muraviev, on the contrary [quoting Herodotus (VI, 43), according to whom the Persian military leader Mardonius dethroned (in 492 B.C.) all the Ionian tyrants and established democratic rule in the cities], believes that under the Persians there was a tyrant ruling in Ephesus, probably Melankomas, who, like the other Ionian tyrants, was dethroned. Asking what Melankomas was personally guilty of in the eyes of the Persians, Muraviev thinks that Melankomas was most probably blamed «for his opportunist vacillations»⁵. Muraviev does not say what «opportunist vacillation» led to the dethroning of tyrants in the other Ionian cities, but continues: «And now Heraclitus, who was about 28 (!) and was eager to show himself, may have persuaded Melankomas to give up his power before being ordered to do so by the Persians, in the hope of forcing through 'his' man, Hermodorus, to power»⁶.

Whether we like it or not, this produces the impression that Heraclitus was some kind of hapless schemer, even perhaps, a political intriguer. In his desire to justify himself politically in Ephesus Heraclitus started by abandoning his claim to the title of *Basileus*, then made up his mind to persuade the «opportunist» Melankomas to give up his powers and finally took quite positive steps to push «his» man to power, but in vain, since the Ephesians probably divined Heraclitus' manoeuvring and selfish scheming in time and banished his creature Hermodorus.

We judge that in his attempt to reconstruct the unavailable material from the life of Hermodorus, S. N. Muraviev has been too enthusiastic, and chosen the way of risky speculation. Further, S. N. Muraviev states that Hermodorus and Heraclitus, «having taken into account the situation ..., regarded the struggle against the 'barbarians' (i.e., the Persians - Th. K.) as useless»⁷. But since Hermodorus and Heraclitus were so sober-minded in assessing the situation, and, even according to Muraviev, «opposed ... the activities of Ephesus on the side of the insurgent Ionians», the question inevitably arises as to why, at so inappropriate a moment, Hermodorus and Heraclitus extolled the ancient «code of honour»⁸? Why did these Persophiles, though not very convinced ones, have to inspire valour among the insurgent Ionians? Of course, there is not, nor will there ever be any answer to these questions, which is only natural.

5. S. N. Muraviev, *ibid.*, p. 18.

6. *Idem.*

7. *Idem.*

8. *Idem.*



If it is a question of a man who «while taking into account the situation» regarded the struggle (the uprising of Ionian cities) against the great powerful Persia as useless and hopeless, this is someone mentioned by Herodotus (V, 36), though it was not Heraclitus but the Milesian historian (logographer) and geographer Hecataeus, the Hecataeus whom Heraclitus listed among those whom «much learning has not taught sense» (VS 22, B40).

The only man, of whom the Ephesian spoke of with praise (VS 22, B39), was Bias, the wise man from Priena, who, according to Herodotus (I, 170), suggested that all the Ionians should, in order to escape Persian slavery, move to the island of Sardo (Sardinia) and set up a single city-state there. The modern Greek scholar K. Georgoulis, referring to the anti-Persian sentiment of Heraclitus, cites his praising of Bias and also the negative meaning of the word «barbarian» in fragment 107⁹.

It is reasonable to assume that apart from the tyrants installed by the Persian king, the whole population of the Greek cities, whether aristocrats or democrats felt the Persian rule to be a burden.

All attempts made so far to establish the role of Hermodorus in the history of Ephesus and the reasons for his banishment have been to no avail, and, in effect, we lack any reliable information besides that coming from Heraclitus himself: «Every grown man of the Ephesians should hang himself, and leave the city to the boys; for they banished Hermodorus, the best man among them (ὀνήϊστον), saying, 'Let no one of us excel, or if he does, be it elsewhere and among others'» (VS 22, B121).

From fragment 121 in addition to the resolute condemnation of Ephesians, it follows also that Heraclitus calls the banished Hermodorus not «ἄριστος», i.e. «the best», but «ὀνήϊστος», «most useful», or in other words, without assessing the moral qualities of Hermodorus, Heraclitus thinks that «the Ephesians are losing a man who would be pre-eminently useful to the community and thus to themselves»¹⁰.

Judging by everything, the banishment of Hermodorus (most probably through ostracism) may have taken place after the tyranny in Ephesus was dethroned and democracy restored. In the first quarter of the 5th century B.C. the democratic system in Ionia was restored three times: in 499 by Aristagoras (Herodotus V, 37), in 492 by Mardonius (Herodotus VI, 43), and in 478, when the Ionian cities were freed from the Persian yoke as the result

9. K. Γεωργούλη, «Ἡ πνευματικὴ παρουσία τοῦ Ἡρακλείτου», *Νέα Ἑστία*, 818, Ἀθήναι 1961, σ. 1007.

10. G. Vlastos, *Equality and Justice in the Early Greek Cosmologies. Studies in Pre-Socratic Philosophy* I, N.Y. 1970, 72.

of the Graeco-Persian Wars. Each of the above dates is equally probable as that of Hermodorus' banishment, though most scholars prefer the last one, i.e. 478 B.C., since they believe that democracy in Ephesus could have been fully re-established only when Ionia was liberated from the Persians. There is only one thing which is beyond doubt: Frag. 121 and the whole of Heraclitus' treatise was written at a time when recollections of Hermodorus' banishment were still fresh.

The sharply negative response to Hermodorus' banishment is not the only instance of disagreements between Heraclitus and his fellow-citizens. For example in fragment 125a we read: «Let the wealth abandon you not, Ephesians, for all to see (for you to be exposed of) how vicious you are».

Diogenes Laertius (22a 1, 3) writes that Heraclitus, when found playing, dice with children, and asked by citizens why, replied: «Why are you surprised you good-for-nothings? Isn't this better than playing politics with you?» Diogenes Laertius (22a 1, 2) further writes that the philosopher rejected the Ephesians' demand that he should make laws for them, on the grounds that «bad rule» had become a longstanding tradition in their city. If there is a grain of historical truth in these legends then it is probably this: Heraclitus, like any other thinker of the classical Greek period, was first of all a political figure deeply involved in the public life of Ephesus. He was also keenly interested in the social changes and political events of his time. In short, Heraclitus was a «civic-minded» Greek, or in other words, a natural politician. It is not improbable that his political failures, his anger and annoyance with his fellow-citizens made Heraclitus (probably at a mature age or at the very end of his life) abandon political activities and participation in state affairs.

It is generally accepted that Heraclitus is an anti-democrat and a political «reactionary». But speaking in the spirit of Heraclitus himself, «Let us make no hasty decisions about important things» (VS 22, B47).

4. Socio-political views of Heraclitus

Heraclitus, more than any of the early Greek nature-philosophers, worked on general philosophical and socio-political problems, rather than on the natural sciences. The importance he ascribed to socio-political problems gave some early authors a basis for considering his writings to be not about «nature but state, speaking of nature only as an example» (VS 22, A1 [15]).

The emphasis on socio-political problems in Heraclitus' writings can be attributed, on the one hand, to the social revolutions and major historic events (the uprising of the Ionian city-states, the Graeco-Persian Wars), dealt with earlier in this paper, and, on the other hand, to the specific features of

the philosopher, including his profound and sensitive (almost morbid) relations to the events that had taken place. We know that he responded to Hermodorus' banishment with a burst of indignation (VS B121), and regarded the lifestyle of his fellow-citizens as «immoral» (VS B125a). The fragments by the Ephesian are full of polemics, irony and acid gibes at what, in his opinion, was the Philistine way of life and mentality of the «majority» of people. It should be recalled that the proud descendant of the Codrides saw the superiority of a few of the «best» over the «majority», or «crowd» («πολλοί») to lie in the fact that the former preferred «eternal fame» to ephemeral things, while the latter «feed like cattle» (VS 22, B29). According to Heraclitus, the «majority» does not understand the universal *logos* which rules everything (VS B1, 17, 72), and live «as if they have their own reason» (VS 2). In some other fragments the Ephesian is even more categorical: «One man is to me ten thousand if he is the best» (VS 22, B49); since «there are many bad people, and few good ones» (VS 22, B104).

Heraclitus had an extremely negative attitude towards the masses of his fellow-citizens and towards the «majority» in general. These have provided the basis for many scholars (often of the most varied political outlooks) to speak of him as of a convinced antidemocrat and a political reactionary. Below are some statements on this point: «...He (Heraclitus — Th. K.) sided with the aristocracy and fiercely defended its interests since he was deeply convinced that he had a profound right to despise an opponent»¹¹; «Heraclitus was an aristocrat by birth and in his political views. He was against the democratic rule which in his city replaced the rule of lineal aristocracy»¹². According to A. F. Losev, on the one hand, Heraclitus had «a proud, aristocratic mentality, treating the crowd in a contemptuous manner»¹³; and, on the other hand, «Heraclitus convincingly ... disseminates the teaching of the universal equality of things, equally changing from one to another, despite any advantages (that of fire over the other elements — Th. K.)»¹⁴. Hence A. F. Losev's conclusion: «Heraclitus' work is an amazing mixture of the *aristocratic and the democratic mentality*»^{14a}, or, to be more precise, in him aristocratic political convictions are combined with virtually democratic views on nature and the world as a whole. True, if, like A. F. Losev, we recognize

11. Th. Gomperz, *Greek Thinkers*, St. Petersburg 1911, 57. See also S. Ya. Lurie, *Ocherki po Istorii Antichnoi Nauci*, Moscow - Leningrad 1947, 43.

12. V. F. Asmus, *Antichnaya Filosofiya*, Moscow 1976, 31.

13. A. F. Losev, *Istoria Antichnoi Estetiki* (early classics), Moscow 1963, 376.

14. Idem., 380.

14a. Idem.

that fire has certain «advantages» (or aristocratic privileges as it were) over the other elements, there can be no question of «equality of things» in Heraclitus' doctrine, or of his «democratic» outlook on the world around him.

Here is one more summing up of his socio-political position: «...He (Heraclitus — Th. K.) supported the aristocracy who were vainly trying to halt the mounting tide of revolutionary forces... His interpretation of the motives for this (Hermodorus' banishment — Th. K.) is extremely interesting since it shows that the range of arguments against democracy has remained almost unchanged since then». «They ... say: 'Let no one of us excel or if he does, be it elsewhere and among others'»¹⁵.

Many other views of Heraclitus have been expressed in recent decades. In the early fifties, for instance, there was a supposition that Heraclitus supported the written legislation codified in Ephesus in the 6th century B.C. as a version of the Solonian Laws; Heraclitus was an ideologist of the moderate aristocracy who, in the conditions of the aggravated strife between the demos and the lineal nobility, championed the «common» interests and the supremacy of the law (Constitution) and the observance of the law¹⁶. The Ephesian says: «A right-minded people would defend the law as they would their city's walls» (VS B44). «Insolence («ὕβρις») must be quelled more promptly than a conflagration» (VS B43). On the basis of a concrete historical context it can be supposed that these statements were directed against the then Persian-imposed tyranny. Contrary to the high-handedness of tyranny and high-handed actions of Persian-imposed tyrants, Heraclitus defends the inviolability of the law and urges the necessity to fight the «ὕβρις. »True, the philosopher speaks about «ὕβρις» (insolence, arrogance, impudence) in general, without any reference to tyranny, or democracy, or aristocracy. It is quite obvious that insolence, or highhandedness, refers to both the tyranny and the democracy which banished Hermodorus. While he opposed the «extremes» of democracy, Heraclitus did not approve of the obsolete precedent law whose interpretation was the privilege of the lineal aristocracy. M. Marcovich is thus quite right to say that «Heraclitus was quite aware of the fact that the time of aristocratic supremacy had gone»¹⁷. Regarding Heraclitus as a supporter of aesymnetia resembling that of Aristarchus of Athens, M. Marcovich writes that «Heracli-

15. K. R. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, v. 1, Princeton 1971, 12-13.

16. See F. K. Kessidi, *Dialectics and Materialism in the Philosophy of Heraclitus of Ephesus*, *Voprosy Filosofii* 5 (1953), 134-135, and: *Filosofskiye and Esteticheskiye Vzglady Geraklita Efesskogo*, Moscow 1963, 30-43.

17. M. Marcovich, «Herakleitos», *Paulys Real - Enzyklopädie der Klassischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Suppl. Bd X (1965), Sonderausgabe, 1968, s. 251.



tus would like tyranny to be eliminated through a fixed constitution, and the rule of a moderate person, his friend Hermodorus, be established (VS B 121 hence «One man is to me ten thousand, if he is the best» — (VS B49) and also «It is law too to obey the counsel of one» (VS B33), instead of — «pure democracy»¹⁸. Thus, analysing fragments 49 and 33, generally regarded as the most undemocratic and aristocratic pronouncements of Heraclitus in the context of his defence of the constitution, Marcovich concludes that Heraclitus was an advocate of «moderate democracy».

G. Vlastos has similar views saying that Heraclitus «favoured the limited democracy of the past»¹⁹. His reasons in favour of such a hypothesis are as follows: Heraclitus' opposites observed in nature are equal versions of the world fire, which is the measure of any process (Frag. 90); the «many» who are criticised in Heraclitus' pronouncements for their philosophic ignorance, are not the *demos* but all those who are unable to follow the simplicity of Heraclitian wisdom, including also all this illustrious company: Homer, Hesiod, Archilochus, Pythagoras, Xenophanes, Hecataeus (Frag. 40, 42); state and society seem impossible for Heraclitus without law; law is a social feature of the city-state and also the source of its force (Frag. 114). This idea can be found in fragments 44 (A right-minded people should defend the law...) and 43 which discusses the «ὄβρις». G. Vlastos further writes: «This concept of the state as a community, united by a common state in a common justice, is perfectly compatible with democratic politics. Early in the 6th century it has inspired the Solonian reform programme»²⁰. According to Vlastos, Heraclitus' doctrine, that the city «strengthens» itself through the law, has an obvious affinity with Bias of Priene, a statesman of early democracy who was highly praised by Heraclitus (Frag. 39). Accordingly, continues Vlastos, we should interpret the fragments of the Ephesian (49, 99, 110, 121), which exalt the «one» against the «many» in the sense that the fragments speak of the supremacy of the «common» law: «It is law to obey the counsel of one» (Frag. 33) can only mean «the will of one» is law «only when it expresses the common (i.e., the law which is behind the society), to which all (including the 'one') are subject»²¹.

Finally, G. Vlastos points out that «we must speak of the cosmic supremacy of fire in Heraclitean physics, not as a predominance of a single power but as the submission of all powers to a single law. For, if we think of fire... as the One which is the Many, then fire is not a separate power lording it over

18. Idem.

19. G. Vlastos, *Equality and Justice...*, 71.

20. Idem.

21. Idem., 72.

the rest». If everything is fire, then the «government of fire» in the *cosmos* is «cosmic self-government...» or «the universe is a law unto itself»²².

The argumentation of the above noted scholar seems in many respects quite convincing, apart from his statement that Heraclitus did not include *demos* in the «many», or the «majority». Indeed, it is sufficient merely to refer to fragments 121 and 125a which are against the Ephesians, to become convinced of the opposite.

Generally speaking, the political position of Heraclitus is rather obscure and contradictory and only more or less probable suppositions can be made. It is worth recalling that the intense strife between the *demos* and the hereditary aristocracy early in the 6th century B.C. resulted in the overthrow of the Basilides, and in mid-century — in the rule of lineal nobility being limited by the framework of the «constitution» compiled by *aesymnet* Aristarchus, who had been invited from Athens (see *Suda* Aristarchos). Aristarchus' legislation was probably a version of the Solonian Law in Athens. Taking into account the fact that Solon became known in Greece as a law-maker (and hence was probably included among the seven wise men), it is highly improbable that Aristarchus could have suggested anything considerably different from the Solonian Law. It cannot be regarded as merely incidental that the *aesymnet* was invited from Athens and not from any other city. The Solonian Laws (594 B.C.) undermined the rule of the hereditary aristocracy; they made the extent of political rights dependent on wealth, and replaced the hereditary privileges with the privileges of public service. Solon strengthened the role of the people's assembly («ἐκκλησία») and established two new democratic bodies: the council of 400 («βουλή») and the jury («ἡλιαία») which became the supreme court in Athens. Speaking of the democratic nature of the Solonian Laws (reform), Aristotle says: «And indeed, if the people hold away in voting, they become masters of the state» (*Athen. Politeia* IV, 9). At the same time Solon preserved the aristocratic council, the *Areopagus*, clearly defining its powers. There is the following reference to this in Aristotle: «...the council of the Areopagites was entrusted with protecting the law; as before, it (the *Areopagus*) supervised state order, and was not only responsible for supervising in general the majority of the most important state affaire, but also for calling the guilty to account» (*Athen. Politeia* IV, 8, 4). Thus, the power of the *Areopagus* was already considerable. The Solonian legislation preserved also the collegium of *Archons*, yet another important state body alongside the *Areopagus*, to which people of the highest propertied rank were to be elected in place of

22. Ibid., 72-73.

the sons of aristocrats, as had hitherto been the case. Yet, the more wealthy section of the Athenian state consisted of the lineal nobility; from this follows that «after the Solonian reform the leading state posts were mainly in the hands of persons of aristocratic descent»²³.

The state rule practised as a result of the Solonian reform is traditionally treated as a moderate democracy. On the other hand, we have tried to expose it as a moderate aristocracy. If the two forms of rule differ, anywhere, then in his political sympathies Heraclitus favoured a moderate aristocracy rather than a moderate democracy, as is suggested by M. Marcovich and G. Vlastos. A moderate aristocracy seems more suited than a moderate democracy to the Heraclitian understanding of the word «ἄριστος» (one who excels). It is almost certain that the Ephesians used «ἄριστος» in the meaning of «the best» in spirit, knowledge, and the administration of the laws, rather than in origine»²⁴. Heraclitus and Socrates appear to have had a similar understanding of the forms of rule. According to Xenophon, Socrates regarded «rule against the will of the people and not on the basis of law, but the will of the ruler to be a tyranny, and when the authorities are elected it is an aristocracy» (*Memor.* IV, 6, 12).

In a not altogether clear fragment of Heraclitus we read: «Those who speak with sense must rely on what is common to all, as a city must rely on its law, and with much greater reliance: for all the laws of men («τρέφονται») are nourished by one law, the divine law; for it has as much power as it wishes and is sufficient for all and is still left over (Frag. 144). From the usual translation of the word «τρέφονται» it follows that judicial norms are the manifestation of the common «divine» (cosmic) law. But Mourelatos has shown that such a translation leads to a considerable confusion: «If human laws are indeed offshoots of the divine law (of divine lineage), why qualify so strongly the comparison of «ξυνὸν» with «νόμος» (law)? The comment «καὶ πολὺ ἰσχυροτέρως» (and even stronger) becomes necessary if human laws are *far inferior* to the divine (law); it is appropriate only if the word «τρέφονται» diminishes rather than exalts the status of human laws²⁵. According to A. Mourelatos the word «τρέφονται» was purposely used by Heraclitus in the archaic sense, as it was used in the epics of Homer and Hesiod. Since «τροφὸς» means «nourished by» and not «under wardship to», the author concludes that in the

23. V. S. Sergeyev, *Istoriya Drevney Gretsii*, Moscow 1963, 177.

24. See also G. Vlastos, *Equality and Justice...*, 70 ff; V. S. Nersesians, *Politicheskie Uchenia Drevnei Gretsii*, Moscow 1979, 55.

25. A. Mourelatos, *Heraclitus*, frag. 114. *American Journal of Philology*, LXXXVI, 3, 1965, 260.

passage from Heraclitus «the divine (law) is the «τροφὸς» of human institutions: it guards their integrity; preserves them inviolate». Accordingly, Mourtelatos suggests that the word «τρέφονται» must be translated as «under the wardship».

In our view, whatever the translation of the word «τρέφονται» is, either «nourished» or «under the wardship», or, more neutrally «supported», one thing is beyond doubt, that human laws depend on the common and universal «divine» law. Apparently, Heraclitus' idea of human laws is that genuine judicial norms are those which express the interest of all and conform (obey, are based on, are supported by, are supplemented by) to their objective basis (the common «divine» law), but not those introduced high-handedly («ἰδία φρόνησις») (Frag. 2) by individuals or even by the majority of citizens. In other words the real assessment of genuine human principles as opposed to false principles, is through their conformity to the «common» logos (the common «divine» law). Hence: «It is law, too, to obey the counsel of one (ῥβουλῇ)» (Frag. 33). It is possible for one, «the best», to be right, and the «majority» wrong. The fragment above (33, also 22, 2) is an echo of Heraclitus' polemics with public opinion (with the common mentality, to be more precise) of his day which regarded the «majority» as the embodiment of truth.

From the above, it follows that Heraclitus was not against the basic principles of democracy — the equality of people before the law and the recognition of everybody's right to defend this or that opinion; rather he was against abusing (in his opinion) the democratic procedure of decision-making by majority vote (which resulted presumably, in the banishment of his friend Hermodorus). If criticism of democratic extremes (ostracism, on-the-spot decisions by the people's assembly which sometimes went contrary to constitutional laws, the use of democratic feeling by some people for their own benefit, etc.), which more often than not discredited democracy and resulted in the power of tyrants, would be classified as an essential sign of antidemocratism and reaction, then, following the logic adopted, we must deprive Democritus of his democratic convictions and a democratic political outlook. Here is what the respected ideologist of early democracy writes: «One should obey the law, the ruler and the more wise» (VS 68, B46), since «it is hard to be under the worse man» (VS 68, B49). «Power, by nature, should be the destiny of the best» (VS 68, B67). Nevertheless, such pronouncements by Heraclitus (VS 22, B33, 49) are lightly included among those that are «aristocratic and «reactionary». Yet, it is quite clear that both Heraclitus and Democritus speak about obedience and about power which should be given to the best people and not the worst. Generally speaking, it is most unlikely that we would find a champion of «pure» or «extreme» democracy among the earlier Greek

thinkers, while there were many of them who criticised unlimited («extreme») democracy; for example, Democritus (VS 68, B266), Thukydides (VI, 89, 6) and Aristotle, who made the question of forms of rule an object of special studies. Aristotle equated extreme democracy with monarchy or tyranny on the grounds that «on-the-spot decisions of such democracy», used as a substitute for the law, «are by their nature the same as the (individual) orders (of a tyrant) in a tyranny». The Stagirite refuses to regard such a form as «democracy in its proper sense». «Since», continues Aristotle, «the law should rule above everything» and «none of the decrees (as opposed to the law) can have a general character» (*Polit.* IV, 4, 2-7), i.e. any decision running counter to the constitution is not valid. It also means that the people (people's assembly), too, has no right to break a law they have adopted. Indeed, using Heraclitus' words, «a right-minded people will defend the law as they would their city's walls» (Frag. 44), and «those who speak with sense must rely on what is common to all, as a city must rely on its laws...» (Frag. 114).

Heraclitus, a son of his time and his people, deeply understood that the public interest must necessarily override individual interests. He also felt the social nature of man and the fact that it was impossible for a man to live outside society and the city; at the same time he often equated Philistine mentality and «crowd» psychology with commonality (society) and social nature of the «majority» (of people). The contradictory nature of the socio-political views of the Ephesian thinker can be attributed not only to the tense struggle between demos and lineal nobility, but also to the specific relations that had taken shape between a somewhat withdrawn philosopher and his compatriots. His political views, therefore, cannot be judged only by his rather unpleasant remarks with respect to the Ephesians. It is interesting that at the height of the socio-political clashes between various classes in Ephesus, the philosopher called for «reliance upon the common» and on the law. This is also an evidence that Heraclitus was an ideologist of moderate aristocracy standing, as has been said above, for the supremacy of the law and the «common» interests.

ΟΙ ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΚΟΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΕΣ ΑΠΟΨΕΙΣ ΤΟΥ ΗΡΑΚΛΕΙΤΟΥ

Π ε ρ ί λ η ψ η

Σκοπὸς τοῦ συγγραφέα αὐτῆς τῆς μελέτης εἶναι νὰ δείξει, ὅτι ἡ κρα-

τοῦσα ἀντίληψη, σύμφωνα μὲ τὴν ὁποία ἡ στάση τοῦ Ἡρακλείτου ἀπέναντι στοὺς πολλοὺς εἶναι ὑπερβολικὰ ἀρνητική, δὲν εἶναι ὀρθή. Ἔτσι, πολλοὶ μελετητὲς τοῦ Ἡρακλείτου, διαφόρων μάλιστα πολιτικῶν ἀποχρώσεων, τὸν θεωροῦν πεπεισμένο ἀντιδημοκράτη καὶ ἀντιδραστικό. Σ' αὐτοὺς ἀνήκουν, ὅπως ἐνδεικτικὰ ἀναφέρει ὁ συγγραφέας, οἱ Th. Gomperz, V. F. Asmus, A. F. Losev καὶ K. R. Popper. Ἀπ' αὐτοὺς ὁ A. F. Losev βλέπει στὸν Ἡράκλειτο μιὰ σύνθεση ἀριστοκρατικῆς καὶ δημοκρατικῆς νοοτροπίας. Τὴν ἀριστοκρατική του διάθεση τὴν βλέπει στὶς κοινωνικὲς καὶ πολιτικὲς του ἀντιλήψεις, ἐνῶ τὴ δημοκρατική του ἀντίληψη τὴ βλέπει στὴν κοσμολογία του.

Ὁ συγγραφέας βρίσκει ἐνδιαφέρουσα τὴν ἄποψη ἐκείνων ποὺ δέχονται (Πβ. M. Marcovich καὶ G. Vlastos) ὅτι ὁ Ἡράκλειτος ἦταν τελικὰ ὑπέρμαχος μιᾶς μετριοπαθοῦς δημοκρατίας, γιατί εἶχε ἀντιληφθεῖ καλὰ ὅτι ὁ καιρὸς τῆς ἀριστοκρατικῆς κυριαρχίας εἶχε πιά παρέλθει. Ὅταν λοιπὸν ὁ Ἡράκλειτος ἐμφανίζεται ὑπέρμαχος μιᾶς ἄκρατης ἀριστοκρατίας «εἰς ἐμοὶ μύριοι, ἐὰν ἄριστος ᾖ» (Ἀπόσπ. 49, πβ. ἀπόσπ. 33), δὲν ἐπιδοκιμάζει μιὰ ἀριστοκρατικὴ ἀπολυταρχία ἢ τυραννία ἀλλὰ ἐννοεῖ βασικά (Πβ. G. Vlastos) τὴν ὑπεροχὴ τοῦ νόμου ποὺ ἐκφράζεται ἀντιπροσωπευτικὰ ὡς «βουλὴ τοῦ ἐνός» (Πβ. ἀπόσπ. 33), τοῦ ἀρίστου καὶ μετριοπαθοῦς, ποὺ ἐνσαρκώνει τὸ νόμο, γιατί ὁ νόμος ἀποτελεῖ γιὰ τὸν Ἡράκλειτο τὴν ὑπέρτατη ἀρχὴ κάθε πολιτείας καὶ κοινωνίας (Πβ. ἀπόσπ. 44 καὶ 114). Ἡ στάση, δηλ. ὁ σεβασμὸς, τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀπέναντι στὸ νόμο, ἔχει γιὰ τὸν Ἡράκλειτο καθοριστικὴ σημασία καὶ ὄχι ἡ καταγωγὴ ἢ ἄλλα κριτήρια.

Μολαταῦτα ὁ συγγραφέας καταλήγει τελικὰ ὅτι ὁ Ἡράκλειτος δὲν ἦταν ὑπέρμαχος μιᾶς μετριοπαθοῦς δημοκρατίας, ἀλλὰ μιᾶς μετριοπαθοῦς ἀριστοκρατίας, γιατί νομίζει ὅτι ἡ μετριοπαθὴς ἀριστοκρατία φαίνεται νὰ ταιριάζει περισσότερο στὴν Ἡρακλειτικὴ ἀντίληψη τῆς λέξης: «ἄριστος» σχετικὰ μὲ τὴ γνώση, τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὴν ἐφαρμογὴ τῶν νόμων. Γιατὶ οἱ νόμοι συνοψίζουν κατὰ τὴ γνώμη τοῦ συγγραφέα τὶς γενικὲς ἀρχὲς τοῦ δικαίου, ποὺ ἐκφράζουν τὰ κοινὰ συμφέροντα τῶν πολιτῶν καὶ ἐνσαρκώνουν ἔτσι ἀντικειμενικὲς ἀξίες καὶ ὄχι αὐθαίρετες ἀτομικὲς ἐπιδιώξεις ἢ καὶ ἐπιδιώξεις ἀκόμη κάποιας πλειοψηφίας, ἐφόσον αὐτὴ δὲν ἐκφράζει τὸν λεγόμενο κοινὸ λόγον (Πβ. ἀπόσπ. 1 καὶ 2), ποὺ ἀποτελεῖ τὸ ἔσχατο κριτήριο τῆς ἀλήθειας καὶ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ. Ἐνα κριτήριο ποὺ πρωταρχικὰ δὲν ἐκφράζει ποσοτικὲς (οἱ πολλοί) ἀλλὰ ποιοτικὲς σχέσεις (ὁ εἷς καὶ ὁ ἄριστος).

Προκειμένου νὰ ἐνισχύσει ὁ Ἡράκλειτος τὸ κῦρος καὶ τὴν ἀξία τοῦ νόμου δὲν διστάζει νὰ τοῦ δώσει κάποια μεταφυσικὴ διάσταση, ἀφοῦ τὸν συνδέει μὲ τὸ «θεῖον» (Πβ. ἀπόσπ. 114).

Ὁ Ἡράκλειτος, καταλήγει ὁ συγγραφέας, δὲν ἦταν ἐναντίον τῶν βασικῶν ἀρχῶν τῆς δημοκρατίας, ὅπως εἶναι ἡ ἰσότητα τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐναντι

τοῦ νόμου καὶ τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ κάθε πολίτη νὰ ἐκφράζει ἐλεύθερα τὴ γνώμη του.

Ὁ Ἡράκλειτος — ποὺ πρέπει ἀσφαλῶς νὰ κατανοηθεῖ μέσα στὰ χρονικὰ καὶ τοπικὰ πλαίσια ποὺ προσδιορίζουν τὴ ζωὴ του, καὶ σ' ἓνα βαθμὸ τὴ σκέψη του—, παρὰ τὴν ὅποια ἀριστοκρατικὴ του διάθεση ἢ καὶ ὑποτίμηση ἀκόμα τῶν πολλῶν, προέταξε ἀξιοκρατικὰ τὴν ὑπεροχὴ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τὸ κοινὸ συμφέρον. Ἡ ἀρνητικὴ στάση του ἀπέναντι στοὺς πολλοὺς δὲν ὀφείλεται σὲ μιὰ προκατειλημμένη ἢ αὐθαίρετη προτίμηση τῶν ὀλίγων καὶ ἀρίστων, καὶ περιφρόνηση τῶν πολλῶν, ἀλλὰ ἐξαρτᾶται βασικά ἀπὸ τὸ κατὰ πόσον οἱ μὲν ἢ οἱ δὲ συμβαίνει νὰ ἐκφράζουν θετικότερα ὀρισμένες ἀνθρώπινες ἀξίες.

Ἑλληνικὴ Περίληψη : Δ. Παπαδῆς