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Chapter 5

Heraclitus on Apollo's signs and his own: contemplating oracles and philosophical inquiry

Shaul Tor

This chapter will examine one of Heraclitus' most arresting theological pronouncements (B93):

ὁ ἄναξ οὐ τὸ μαντεῖόν ἐστι τὸ ἐν Δελφοῖς οὔτε λέγει οὔτε κρύπτει ἀλλὰ σημαίνει.

The lord whose oracle is the one in Delphi neither says nor conceals but gives a sign.

What kind of theology and theologising are at play in this abstracted and generalised reflection about Delphic Apollo and how does this reflection relate to and engage with the more implicit theological conceptions of Apollo conveyed in the Delphic traditions (as we find them for example in Herodotus)? What exactly is Heraclitus saying about Apollo's mode of communication and what is he implying thereby about his own? If Heraclitus is appropriating here the theology of Apolline divination as a framework within which to understand his own philosophical inquiry, why does he do so, what is involved in this appropriation and what does Apolline philosophical inquiry look like?

Scholarly discussions of B93 share the mostly implicit assumption that what Heraclitus says about Apollo is *in itself* pretty much clear and unproblematic. Commentators take it that interpretive difficulties and dilemmas arise once we come to ask what, if anything, the comment implies about Heraclitus himself or about anything else. I will argue that Heraclitus' comment about Apollo is pointedly difficult and paradoxical, not only in its implicit ramifications, but already on the most rudimentary and literal level of its interpretation. We are meant to be puzzled by what Heraclitus says about Apollo and it is an interpretive failure on our part if we are not so puzzled. I will suggest that, consequently, Heraclitus' encapsulation of Apollo's *modus operandi* is not an unchallenging assertion of a widely familiar point but, on the most rudimentary level of its interpretation, a case of creative, involved and unobvious theological abstraction. Arguing further that Apollo does indeed serve in B93 as a paradigm of emulation for Heraclitus, I will ask how the paradoxical nature of Heraclitus' theological remark bears on his understanding of his own use of language (and on other, related aspects of his thought) and examine the motivations, scope and limits of the implicit analogy in B93 between god (Apollo) and mortal (Heraclitus).

APOLLO'S PARADOX

What I find especially paradoxical and difficult about B93 is its striking statement that the lord in Delphi 'does not say' or 'speak' (οὔτε λέγει). Does Apollo not *say* all sorts of things (statements, conditionals, questions, imperatives, interjections, etc.) in his oracles and does he not *speak* those oracles? Nor is the statement that Apollo does not conceal immediately obvious (would we not have thought that the lord in Delphi does 'conceal'?) nor does it (together with the affirmation: 'but gives a sign') instantly elucidate the first negation. By describing the fragment as 'paradoxical' in this way I mean that it frustrates immediate understanding and recognition and appears, *prima facie*, to collide with what we think we know about Apollo. The statement thus stops us in our tracks and forces us to think through the remark in a way that will ultimately lead to an illuminating insight (or insights), which will account for both our initial assumptions and Heraclitus' initially puzzling statement, but place both in a new light.¹

Scholars commonly anticipate the paradoxical force of B93 implicitly, and defuse it in advance, by positing (without argument) various over-translations of Heraclitus' starkly unqualified λέγει. So, by way of illustration, we read that Apollo does not 'indicate clearly,'² 'clarify,'³ 'reveal,'⁴ 'assert,'⁵ 'declare,'⁶ 'speak out,'⁷ etc.⁸ I can see no good textual or philological reason to suppress what is uncontroversially (I take it), in Archaic Ionic prose as elsewhere, the standard sense of the verb: 'say' or 'speak'. The unqualified verb is ubiquitously used to introduce in a very general way any kind of meaningful, articulate speech (including not only statements but also questions, imperatives etc), with no implicit restriction to a particular clear, direct, declarative or outright mode of saying or speaking.^{9 10}

There seem to be two underlying motivations for the common over-translations of λέγει (and, more generally, for the attitude to the fragment which these over-translations reflect). First, these

¹ I draw here on Mackenzie's analysis of how Heraclitean paradoxes typically work (1988: 3, 16-17, 37; cf. 1986: 549-550); cf. also Warren 2007: 67-70. While some of Heraclitus' paradoxes pose common or garden observations in such a way as to force one to rethink conventional views (e.g. B60, B61), others, like B93, are disorienting and puzzling already on the most rudimentary and literal level of their interpretation (e.g. B32, B62, B80).

² Robinson 1987: 57.

³ Mansfeld and Primavesi 2011: 259.

⁴ Graham 2010: 177, Kindt 2006: 37. Manetti 1993: 17-18 glosses λέγει as 'reveal completely'.

⁵ Warren 2007: 59.

⁶ Kahn 1979: 43. At 123, Kahn writes that οὔτε λέγει denies 'direct statement', implying that Apollo *does* state *indirectly*.

⁷ KRS 1983: 209. Marcovich 2001: 51.

⁸ Many commentators, of course, translate 'say' or 'speak', but none, to my knowledge, pick out the paradox I address here. Maurizio 2013: 100 is typical of the prevailing attitude in citing the fragment (she translates 'declare') and then proceeding as if the rudimentary and literal sense of Heraclitus' remark about Apollo is in itself self-evident and requires no explication.

⁹ Countless passages could of course be cited here. By way of more-or-less arbitrary illustration, cf. Hdt. 4.126: πέμψας Δαρείος ἰππέα ... ἔλεγε τάδε· κτλ. Note that Darius, like Apollo (as we shall presently see), 'says' things through a go-between and that ἔλεγε introduces in a very broad way questions and imperatives as well as assertions. *With* the appropriate qualifications, the verb can be used to refer to clear, outright and direct speech (e.g. λέγουσα ... σαφῆ λόγον, Aeschyl. *Ag.* 1047; ἐνταῦθα δὴ σαφῶς ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς ὅτι κτλ, Thuc. 8.53) or – just as naturally – to an unclear, secretive, indirect or riddling sort of speech (e.g. τάδε μέντοι ὡς κρυπτόμενα λέγεται καὶ οὐ σαφηνέως, Hdt. 1.140; ὡς πάντ' ἄγαν αἰνικτὰ κάσαφῆ λέγεις, Soph. *OT* 439 (Oedipus addressing the seer Teiresias); οὕτως ἀσαφῶς ἐκάστοτε περὶ αὐτῶν λέγει, Pl. *Cratyl.* 427d7; ἀόριστα καὶ ἀσαφῆ πειρῶνται λέγειν, Aeschin. *In Ctesiph.* 99.2-3). The unqualified verb indicates very generally the act of making any kind of articulate speech, and does not by itself specify a particular way of saying or speaking something.

¹⁰ I will later tentatively suggest that, on a certain level of interpretation, we can relate Heraclitus' use of λέγει in B93 to his term of art *logos*, but this will not amount to suppressing or eliminating from the account the standard sense 'say' or 'speak'.

more qualified translations save Heraclitus from asserting what may appear to be an obvious falsehood. Of course Apollo *says* things in his oracles, but perhaps he does not say things in a direct, outright or clear way. Second, the over-translations make more obvious Heraclitus' reference to the interpretive predicament of Apollo's consultants as we so often find them in the Delphic traditions. Those traditions repeatedly convey the idea that Apollo's oracles communicate in an ambiguous and often figurative manner rather than directly or clearly and, therefore, demand circumspect and reflective interpretation. Consultants who naively assume a superficial and unreflective interpretation often come to sticky ends and embody a cautionary inversion of the proper way to approach Apollo's oracles. Most famously, Croesus is told that if he marches he will destroy a great kingdom (Hdt. 1.53) and mistakenly takes it as read that he will destroy the Persians' kingdom as opposed to his own. Again, Tisamenus is told he 'will win the five greatest contests' and mistakenly infers that he will win five athletic competitions rather than five battles (Hdt. 9.33).¹¹ By having Heraclitus say that Apollo does not assert things in a direct, outright and clear way, then, commentators achieve a more obvious reference to this familiar point.¹²

To take the second point first: on the analysis of the fragment which I will defend, Heraclitus will still be drawing on and preserving the core theological insight about Apollo's mode of communication and the interpretive predicament of his consultants which the Delphic traditions convey. But the way in which Heraclitus' abstracted and pithy remark encapsulates Apollo's *modus operandi* in response to these traditions is much more subtle and less obvious than the over-translations suggest. We must not be lulled by our familiarity with the Delphic traditions into glossing over the precise and difficult way in which Heraclitus puts his point with an unchallenging expression of what we take to be their familiar moral. With regard to the first point, we should embrace rather than try to suppress the fact that Heraclitus is advancing a pointedly surprising and puzzling assertion – although not, *on reflection*, a blatant falsehood – when he says that the lord in Delphi 'does not say' (or: 'speak').

References to Apollo elsewhere – notably and significantly in Herodotus¹³ – regularly identify the god as the speaker of Delphic oracles, nor is any question raised on this score even when the Pythia is expressly specified as the one who voices the oracles.¹⁴ At Hdt. 7.141, for example, the Pythia issues the Wooden Walls response (ἡ πρόμαντις χρᾶ), and yet Apollo identifies himself within the oracle as its speaker (τόδ' αὖτις ἔπος ἐρέω ἀδάμαντι πελάσσας) and it is him that the consultants take themselves to be addressing (ᾧναξ).¹⁵ This general theological backdrop

¹¹ Examples can be multiplied. For similar Delphic traditions in Herodotus, cf. e.g. 1.55 (with 1.91), 4.163-164, 5.43-45, 6.76-80, 1.165-167, with Maurizio 2013: 111-13; Hölscher 1974: 229-30; cf. also Manetti 1993: 24-29; Kindt 2006; Barker 2006. Fontenrose portrays the *historical* Delphic oracle as essentially a Yes/No answering service (1978: esp. 233-35). Parker 2000: 80 with nn.14-15 counters effectively, but we are anyway concerned here to relate B93 to the Delphic traditions (and their implicit theology) themselves; on this point, cf. similarly Maurizio 2013: 107-108.

¹² The contrast with οὔτε κρύπτει may be another motivation for the over-translations of οὔτε λέγει. I will argue that there is a perfectly good contrast in B93 between 'does not say' and 'does not conceal'. At any rate, the contrast with οὔτε κρύπτει certainly does not warrant reading a very specific mode of speaking into Heraclitus' pointedly unqualified οὔτε λέγει in such a way as to deflate in advance the paradoxical force of that striking negation.

¹³ For the principle of looking to Herodotus, who offers the earliest available corpus of (Ionic) prose after Heraclitus, as a prime guide for the (especially linguistic) expectations of Heraclitus' audience, see Kahn 1979: 92; Graham 2003: 175-76.

¹⁴ Cf. similarly Mikalson 2003: 55, 210; Hollmann 2011: 98, with n.112.

¹⁵ For Apollo identifying himself as speaker of the oracles, cf. e.g. Hdt. 4.157 (n.b. ἐλθόντος – again, a masculine participle), 1.47 (οἶδα δ' ἐγὼ κτλ), 1.65-66 (ἐμόν ... νηόν), 5.92^e (ἐμόν δόμον), 6.19, 4.159 (φαμι), 7.220 (φημι); cf. also PW 374 (ἐρέω), PW 487 (ἐξ ἐμέθεν χρησμών θεοῦ, ὅτι κεν εἴπω, cf. Parm. B7.5-6: ἐξ

accentuates the paradoxical and initially puzzling force of Heraclitus' opening assertion that the lord whose oracle is in Delphi does not 'say' or 'speak'.

It might be objected that Apollo clearly gives whatever signs he does (σημαίνει) *by saying* whatever he says in his oracles. Thus, by the time we get to the fragment's last word, any initial puzzles are dispelled. We are reassured that Apollo does indeed speak and say things. Now, the suggestion that the lord at Delphi gives his signs or his signals (σημαίνει) *by saying* what he says in his oracles is itself highly likely.¹⁶ Far from dispelling the paradox, however, this line of thought deepens it. If σημαίνει indicates in this way that Apollo *does* say things in his oracles, then what does Heraclitus mean by *also* asserting that Apollo 'does not say'?

What are we to make of Heraclitus' remark? Could the point be that it is the Pythia rather than Apollo who actually says things in the oracles? It is possible, although not clear, that Plutarch read οὔτε λέγει in this way.¹⁷ At any rate, such an interpretation would be untenable. First, B93 is focused throughout on 'the lord whose oracle is the one in Delphi' as the subject of the verbs and as a communicative agent. There is no suggestion in the verbs of a division-of-labour between Apollo and the Pythia. Second, Apollo gives us signs which demand interpretation because he refrains from doing whatever it is from which he refrains by neither saying nor concealing. But, on the proposed interpretation, the Pythia *does* what Apollo refrains from doing (λέγει), with the implausible consequence that we *do* get what Apollo himself will not give us (οὔτε λέγει) and that, therefore, careful and circumspect interpretation of his difficult signs is not, after all, necessary. We cannot, then, explain οὔτε λέγει by postulating an implicit contrast between Apollo's role and the Pythia's role.

I suggest that Heraclitus' paradox points in another direction. Heraclitus highlights the three verbs, λέγει, κρύπτει and σημαίνει, but pointedly and tantalisingly refrains from specifying what they are directed towards in this connection. He begins by asserting that Apollo 'does not say' just after establishing and emphasising a context ('the lord whose oracle is the one in Delphi') which invites the initial reaction that surely there are *some* things which the god does say (i.e. the Delphic oracles themselves). In this way, Heraclitus impels us towards raising and reflecting on

ἐμέθεν ῥηθέντα). For the Pythia and others on Apollo as the speaker, cf. e.g. Hdt. 1.91 (προηγόρευε ... εἶπε), 6.80 (φάμενος), 8.36 (φάς), 8.122 (ἔφησε); cf. also Hom. *Od.* 8.79-80 (χρείων μυθήσατο), Tyrnt. fr.4.1-2 (Φοίβου ἀκούσαντες Πυθωνόθεν οἴκαδ' ἔνεικαν / μαντείας τε θεοῦ καὶ τελέεντ' ἔπεα), Pl. *Ion* 534c7-d4. We also get references to oracles as themselves 'saying', e.g. Hdt. 6.77 (λέγον), 5.92β (λέγον); cf. the term λόγιον for 'oracle', e.g. Hdt. 1.64, 4.178, 8.62, PW 103.

¹⁶ Cf. e.g. Hdt. 7.142 where Apollo is taken to have given a sign gesturing towards the Athenian ships (ἔλεγον τὰς νέας σημαίνειν τὸν θεόν) obviously *by saying* in his oracle what he said about the wooden wall. Cf. Powell, sv. σημαίνω (6) for further passages in which the signalling or indicating of something (e.g. a historical cause (1.75) or a person (1.5)) is achieved through the use of words. Of course, non-verbal omens can equally 'signal', see e.g. Hdt. 1.78, 9.120. (In none of these passages is there any indication that the verb itself carries the force 'mean' in the sense of a word's or phrase's semantic meaning. Contrast the later semantic use e.g. in Pl. *Cratyl.* 393a6 (ὁ γὰρ ἄναξ' καὶ ὁ ἔκτωρ' σχεδόν τι ταῦτόν σημαίνει); cf. further LSJ sv. σημαίνω III.3.)

¹⁷ So Fontenrose (1978: 238), who advances this as the correct interpretation of Heraclitus. After citing the fragment (with which he expects familiarity: οἶμαι δὲ σε γινώσκειν κτλ, *Mor.* 404d8), Plutarch comments: *add to these words, which are well said, and think of the god of this place as using the Pythia for our hearing just as the sun uses the moon for our seeing* (404e1-3). On Fontenrose's reading, the further point which Plutarch adds is not that Apollo speaks to us through the Pythia (he has, *ex hypothesi*, already read that into Heraclitus' οὔτε λέγει), but only the comparison with the sun's diluting use of the moon. Alternatively, however, it may be that Plutarch's added point *is* that Apollo speaks to us through the diluting medium of the Pythia (like the sun's use of the moon), and that what he extracts from Heraclitus is the distinct (but congruent) point that Apollo withholds something in his oracles, leaving us with signs which somehow fall short of a full communication, in keeping with the general thrust of this passage in Plutarch that what we mortals get from Apollo is something less than the full force of his thought.

the following question: *what* is it that the lord whose oracle is in Delphi does not say (λέγει) or conceal (κρύπτει) but for which he does give a sign or (to convey the structural equivalence of the Greek verbs) which he does ‘signal’ (σημαίνει)? With regard to any Delphic oracle, there will be certain insights – a certain understanding, certain true propositions and useful injunctions – which the inquirer requires and at which the oracle places him in a position to arrive (say, the insight that, if we attack the Persians, we will destroy *our own* great kingdom, or at least the recognition that this is a very possible outcome). Heraclitus maintains that Apollo does not articulate or express those sought-after insights. Nor, however, does he conceal them. Instead, Apollo articulates and expresses *other* things (other statements, conditionals, questions, imperatives, interjections, riddling images, etc; say, the conditional that, if we attack the Persians, we will destroy *a* great kingdom). And these other things, which Apollo does say, will guide the cautious and attuned inquirer and place him in a position to arrive at those insights which he requires and which Apollo leaves categorically unspoken and unarticulated. It is in this sense that Apollo’s oracles act as signs for or ‘signal’ or ‘show’ (σημαίνει) what we require from the oracle. And, equally, it is in this sense that we could say that what Apollo does is a way of communicating those insights. But Apollo’s mode of communication is precisely not (οὔτε λέγει) a way of saying (speaking, expressing, articulating) those insights. It is important to be clear on this point: B93 does not tell us that Apollo says in an indirect and obscure manner that which he signals. Rather, B93 tells us that Apollo does not say (indirectly, ambiguously, obscurely or otherwise: οὔτε λέγει) that which he signals (ἀλλὰ σημαίνει). The force of σημαίνει in B93 is conditioned by its contrast with the verbs λέγει and κρύπτει. Apollo neither says nor conceals but, *instead*, signals. The term σημαίνει, then, indicates in the context of this configuration a different kind of communication: a communication which does not involve or overlap with saying or speaking that which is being communicated. On Heraclitus’ analysis, in sum, what Apollo tells you is not, in fact, the true answer to the inquiry which you put to the oracle. In speaking the oracle, Apollo tells you something else which, however, gestures towards that answer, serving as an orienting but also difficult and ambiguous¹⁸ starting point from which the mortal interpreter will then succeed or fail to arrive at the understanding he requires.

Part of my suggestion, then, is that the force of the negations οὔτε λέγει and οὔτε κρύπτει is context-sensitive; it is determined and restricted by their contrast with the affirmation: ἀλλὰ σημαίνει. Apollo neither says nor conceals precisely that for which he gives a sign. How might we make some sense (and, indeed, this question arises on *any* reading of οὔτε λέγει) of Heraclitus’ far from obvious affirmation that the lord in Delphi ‘does not conceal’? In Herodotus, κρύπτειν typically has the sense of taking deliberate action to keep something from view so as to prevent others from becoming aware of it, and it is this same sense of κρύπτειν in the active voice that we seem to get in Heraclitus B95: ἀμαθίην κρύπτειν ἄμεινον.¹⁹ In Herodotus, The object of concealment can be anything from a material thing (e.g. spoils from a battle, Hdt. 9.80; cf. 3.87, 3.133, 4.179) to an event or state-of-affairs. Cambyses and Prexaspes use the term to refer to their prolonged cover-up of the fact (πρῆγμα, 3.65) of Smerdis’ murder (3.65; 3.75). At one point, Prexaspes contrasts ‘concealing’ this affair with ‘saying what happened’ (κρύπτειν ... λέγειν τὰ γενόμενα, 3.75). With this particular opposition, Prexaspes contrasts the idea of preventing others from becoming aware of the fact of Smerdis’ murder (κρύπτειν) with the idea of speaking and expressing this fact (λέγειν), *not* with the stronger and more qualified idea of

¹⁸ By describing the oracle as ‘ambiguous’ here, I do not mean that it *articulates* or *expresses* the answer ambiguously. On Heraclitus’ account, the oracle (e.g. Croesus’ oracle) will be ambiguous in the sense that, by using it as a starting point for reflection, one could reasonably arrive at multiple and even competing conclusions (competing answers), none of which are themselves *articulated* in the oracle (ambiguously or otherwise: οὔτε λέγει).

¹⁹ I noncommittally follow Robinson’s reconstruction of the original word order (1987: 56).

speaking it in a *direct* or *unambiguous* manner.²⁰ Heraclitus' negations in B93 are, I suggest, best understood along not dissimilar lines. Apollo does not articulate or express in his oracles the insights and answers for which the consultants asked so as to make them instantly and easily available to them. Nor, however, does Apollo take positive and deliberate action in his oracles to ensure that the inquirers fail to become aware of those insights and answers. Rather, Apollo does something which falls in between those two actions. He articulates the oracles, which act as signs for those insights and answers in the sense discussed above. The statement that Apollo does not conceal is, again, tied to and restricted by the statements which flank it: the thrust of B93 is that Apollo neither speaks nor conceals *that which* he signals.

I argued that Heraclitus' remark about Apollo is puzzling and difficult on the most rudimentary level of its interpretation. By the same token, B93 does not simply state a principle that was already obvious if implicit in the traditions surrounding Delphic Apollo. Heraclitus' remark comprises a creative and challenging theological encapsulation of Apollo's *modus operandi*, which, nonetheless, preserves and appropriates the broad theological insight which the Delphic traditions implicitly convey concerning the interpretive predicament in which Apollo places his consultants. On Heraclitus' analysis, Apollo does not in any manner articulate (οὔτε λέγει) that for which he, instead, gives a guiding but difficult and ambiguous sign. That is, the god does not speak those answers and insights for which the consultant asked and which he requires. This theological construal of Delphic Apollo is ingenious and far from obvious. A different observer of the same Delphic traditions could have plausibly arrived at the simpler conclusion (and, indeed, this is what the over-translations of Heraclitus' stark and unqualified οὔτε λέγει are getting at) that the lord in Delphi *does* say that which he signals, only he says it in an indirect and equivocal manner. Did Apollo *say* to Croesus that, if he attacks the Persians, he will destroy his own great kingdom? Or, again, did he *say* to Arcesilaus that he must not burn the Cyrenaeans who fled to Aglomachus' tower (see Hdt. 4.163-164)? On Heraclitus' construal, the answer is 'no'. In saying to Croesus that, if he attacks, he will destroy a great kingdom, Apollo was *saying* nothing more or less than just that: if Croesus marches, he will destroy a great kingdom. Again, in issuing to Arcesilaus the puzzling injunction that, if he finds an oven full of jars, he should not bake the jars, what Apollo can be said to have *told* Arcesilaus on this point includes nothing more or less than this puzzling expression itself. Nonetheless, Apollo did signal those points which he left unsaid. These statements did respectively put Croesus in a position to attain the insight that he will be destroying his own kingdom (or, minimally, that this was a very possible outcome) and Arcesilaus in a position to recognise that he must not burn the Cyrenaeans in the tower. But a competing account of the selfsame oracles could be that Apollo did indeed *tell* Croesus – albeit very equivocally – that he will destroy his own kingdom and that he did indeed *say* to Arcesilaus – albeit very obscurely or figuratively – that he must not burn the Cyrenaeans in the tower. Indeed, this is the conception of Apollo's oracles which the Pythia in Herodotus suggests when she rebukes a disgruntled Croesus for failing to ask which kingdom Apollo was in fact talking about in his oracle (χρῆν ... ἐπειρέσθαι ... κότερα τὴν ἐωτοῦ ἢ τὴν Κύρου λέγοι ἀρχήν, 1.91).²¹ And this is the unsophisticated construal of Apollo which Heraclitus rejects when

²⁰ Herodotus in this passage and Heraclitus in B93 certainly *could have* contrasted 'concealing' with 'saying clearly' (using σαφηνέως, *vel sim.*), but, as it is, these two texts confront us with contrasts between κρύπτειν and a stark and unqualified λέγειν. Cf. n. 000 above.

²¹ Cf. also Hdt. 3.64 (τὸ δὲ χρηστήριον ... ἔλεγε ἄρα). Similarly, Pausanias writes regarding Epaminondas (who was warned to beware 'πέλαγος' and died in a wood called Pelagos): 'but what the god said to him in advance (προέλεγεν) was the wood Pelagos and not the sea', Paus. 8.11.10 = PW 258. The point will not be affected if we translate λέγοι in Hdt. 1.91 with 'meant'. Herodotus will still be using the same verb for 'mean' which covers the sense 'say' or 'tell'. That is, Herodotus' point will be, not that this is what Apollo gestured and oriented Croesus towards by telling him something *else* in the oracle, but precisely that this is in fact what Apollo *actually told* Croesus in the oracle, that this is what the god *actually* said (λέγοι). Heraclitus, by contrast,

he strikingly and strangely affirms that the god does *not* say – or conceal – but, *instead*, gives a sign.

Fittingly, Heraclitus' remark about Apollo is, on its most literal level, not as easy to decipher as it might seem to a reader who glossed over its precise wording and assumed that he was already familiar with the point to which it was alluding. Heraclitus' encapsulation of Apollo's mode of communication impels the reader who is attuned to its very deliberate and difficult formulation to theologise: to ask how we might gain some understanding by reflecting on the initially puzzling assertion that the lord whose oracle is in Delphi neither says nor conceals but, instead, gives a sign.

HERACLITUS' PARADOX

Does the god Apollo present a paradigm of emulation for the mortal Heraclitus? If so, what is Apolline philosophical inquiry like? How might we understand the parallel sense in which Heraclitus neither says nor conceals but gives a sign?

We could only avoid the implication that B93 generates a parallel paradox in the case of Heraclitus (does he not 'say' things?) if we denied that Apollo's use of language is in fact a model for Heraclitus' own.²² But that way-out would be implausible. Heraclitus' style and the challenges it generates for active, reflective and careful interpretation – his authorial rhetoric and pronounced use of dense and pregnant paradoxes, word-plays, analogies, riddles and aphorisms – closely recall Apollo's oracles.²³ Lucian taps into long-standing perceptions of Heraclitus 'the riddler' (Timon *apud* D.L. 9.6) and 'the dark' (Strab. 14.25, Cic. *de fin.* 2.15) when he has his prospective buyer of philosophical lives exclaim to Heraclitus: *Hey, are you telling riddles or putting together puzzles? You're just like Loxias, you make nothing clear* (*vit. auct.* 14.21-22).²⁴ The interpretive predicament of those facing Heraclitus' deliberately crafted remarks fits closely the interpretive predicament which he himself diagnoses in B93 for those who must reflect on Apollo's difficult signs. Heraclitus' sayings offer orienting but difficult starting-points and points-of-reference from which, and between which, the capable reader must think critically and independently. In the opening to his book,²⁵ Heraclitus emphasises that people ever fail to comprehend his account (ἀξύνετοι, B1). The trope of misinterpretation and mistaken inferences is of course central in the Delphic traditions.

How, then, might Heraclitus understand his own use of language on the model of Apollo's? In the light of our analysis of B93, the fragment again impels us to raise and reflect on the question: what is this string of verbs directed towards? *What* is it which Heraclitus neither says (οὔτε λέγει) nor conceals (οὔτε κρύπτει) but for which he, instead, gives a sign (ἀλλὰ σημαίνει)? B93, again, does not tell us that Heraclitus articulates and expresses in an indirect and obscure way that which he signals. Rather, it tells us that Heraclitus does not articulate or express (indirectly, obscurely or otherwise: οὔτε λέγει) that which he signals. And, again, while there is, trivially, an

drives a wedge between what the god says in the oracle and what he gestures and orients his consultant towards by saying whatever he does say in it.

²² Such denials are rare but not non-existent: Barnes 1983: 101; Dilcher 1995: 151.

²³ See Maurizio 2013 for an interesting examination of stylistic and compositional affinities between Heraclitus and Delphic oracles, especially as given in Herodotus; cf. Hölscher 1974: 229-31; Warren 2007: 59, Nightingale 2007: 184.

²⁴ See further Guthrie 1962: 411-12 for ancient references to Heraclitus' obscurity.

²⁵ The book most plausibly comprised a collection of brief, self-standing entries (probably significantly ordered), see Granger 2004; cf. Kahn 1979: 7; Warren 2007: 58-59.

endless amount of things which are not said by Heraclitus in the fragments (or by Apollo in his oracles), what is at issue here is a particular subset of the things which Heraclitus does not say: those things which Heraclitus does not say (or conceal) in the fragments *and* for which he offers signs by saying what he does say.

My suggestion, then, is that what Heraclitus does not *say* in the fragments, according to B93, is what he himself labels the ‘hidden nature’ or the ‘unseen attunement’ of things: *Nature likes to hide* (φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ, B123); *The unseen attunement is better than the evident one* (ἁρμονίη ἀφανῆς φανερῆς κρείττων, B54). In B93, Heraclitus recognises that he does not actually articulate or express in the fragments the hidden nature and unseen attunement of things so as to make them instantly and easily available to us (οὔτε λέγει).²⁶ Nor (οὔτε κρύπτει) does Heraclitus take positive and deliberate action to ensure that we fail to grasp them (even though nature itself does have a proclivity to elude and frustrate recognition and comprehension: κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ, B123). Rather (ἀλλὰ σημαίνει), by confronting us with his words, Heraclitus guides and places the attuned inquirer in a position to arrive at insights into the measures and structures of balance and unity which underlie and frame the phenomena we encounter. But these measures and structures are themselves left unspoken in his words.

Heraclitus’ practice in the fragments indeed seems to conform to the programmatic comment made in B93, understood along these lines. By way of illustration, Heraclitus does not proffer an account which itself articulates the nature of the relations between pairs of opposites. But his observation (B61) that the same thing, seawater, is both the purest water (for fish) and the foulest water (for humans) places us in a position to gain some insight into the hidden relations of unity and the unseen attunement which obtain between what we previously took to be the isolated and disjointed opposites of purity and impurity but which, in fact, jointly inhere at once in one and the same thing. Again, Heraclitus’ statement that fire and all things are exchangeable in the way that money and goods are exchangeable (B90) impels us to reflect, and (along with Heraclitus’ other remarks concerning the physical elements) guides and orients our reflections, about the structure of relations between the elements and fire’s special place in that structure. But this exercising analogy does not itself articulate those relations or that special place. It leaves those things unsaid. On the model of B93, Heraclitus’ remarks can have the status of second-order statements of certain principles *about* the underlying realities, and they can express observations about phenomena in a way that facilitates and guides reflection about the underlying realities, but they do not themselves articulate or express the nature of those realities for which they, instead, give signs.²⁷

²⁶ Heraclitus, that is, does not ‘express’ the hidden nature if that means uttering words which in any way (indirectly or otherwise) capture or represent the hidden nature as part of their semantic force. Heraclitus’ words, rather, capture or represent something *else*, which, however, places the listener or reader in a position to acquire insights into the hidden nature and an understanding of it, in the manner of signs as discussed above.

²⁷ The rubrics of the hidden nature and unseen attunement will extend over what *we* might distinguish as the different (ontological, cosmological, theological, psychological, etc.) aspects of Heraclitus’ philosophical investigations. It is in giving his signs along the lines understood here that I take Heraclitus to be fulfilling his promise to ‘indicate’ or ‘show’ how each thing is (φράζων ὅπως ἔχει, B1). To take this promise to mean that Heraclitus will tell us or articulate or state how each thing is – hardly an obvious implication of φράζων – will conflict not only with B93 (οὔτε λέγει) but, more importantly, with what we actually get in the fragments. See further Svenbro 1988: 20-22 for a general discussion of the verb φράζειν. Svenbro (not discussing Heraclitus) shows that the fundamental sense of the verb is ‘show’ or ‘indicate’, rather than ‘say’, and that it is very close to, and can naturally be used as a functional equivalent for, σημαίνειν and δηλοῦν. See e.g. Hom. *Od.* 19.250, 23.206, 24.346; by *contrast* with saying something: Aesch. *Ag.* 1061; Hdt. 4.113 (ἔφραζε ... σημαίνουσα); of course, things can be ‘indicated’ or ‘shown’ through the medium of speech or writing, e.g. Eur. *IT* 761-63.

An important consequence of this interpretation of Heraclitus' appropriation of Apollo's mode of communication is an interesting attitude on his part to the relation between the language he uses and the underlying realities which are the focus of his philosophical reflections. Heraclitus does not actually articulate or express those underlying measures and structures of balance and unity for which he gives signs. In this sense, there is a certain *gap*, which B93 recognises, between Heraclitus' words and those underlying realities.²⁸

Heraclitus' attitude to names offers an instructive parallel. For Heraclitus, names are significant. If properly interpreted, they yield an insight into the natures of their referents. It also seems, however, that names are always deficient: they never properly manage to express the unified natures of the things they name.²⁹ *The name of the bow is life (βίος), but its work is death (B48).* The bow's name itself discloses an affinity with life but fails to articulate the unified and complex nature of its referent. It is only by considering both the bow's name and its function that we can appreciate holistically the interrelation of life and death in it. Again, the one wise thing *both wants and does not want to be called by the name of 'Zeus' (λέγεσθαι ... Ζηνός ὄνομα, B32).* I cannot explore here the possible reasons for this inclination and disinclination,³⁰ but the same principle recurs: the name 'Zeus' yields an insight into *some* aspects of its referent but does not comprise an adequate articulation of its unified and complex nature. B67 appears to identify 'the god' (ὁ θεός) with a series of opposites (day night, winter summer, war peace, satiety hunger). The fragment continues: *it alters as when mixed with perfumes it gets named according to the pleasure of each one (ὀνομάζεται καθ' ἡδονὴν ἐκάστου).*³¹ These different antithetical designations do circumscribe partial aspects of the divine, which come to light in its continuous permutations. But they do not even jointly exhaust the nature of divinity. Nor, it seems, could *any* name express that nature.³² Heraclitus' attitude to names, then, suggests a similar sort of gap. The names of things, somewhat reminiscently of the language which makes up Heraclitus' fragments, will, if properly interpreted, help us to acquire insights into certain realities, but they do not themselves articulate or capture the complex, unified and whole natures of those realities.³³

²⁸ Maurizio interestingly suggests that Heraclitus was inspired by the representations of equivocal language and its misinterpretation which he encountered in the Delphic traditions to reflect himself on 'how words might or might not correspond to the world, and how language in its polyvalence might occlude the divine and hidden structure of the world' (2013: 117-18, 114-15). Maurizio's suggestion coheres nicely with my own interpretations but proceeds along entirely different lines. Maurizio does not offer an analysis of the language and specifics of B93 itself: she cites the fragment (100) and proceeds on the assumption that the rudimentary sense of Heraclitus' remark about Apollo is itself self-evident and requires no further discussion (cf. n.000 above). Beyond the remarks cited here, moreover, Maurizio does not explicate in further detail precisely how she construes Heraclitus' conception of the relation between language and reality.

²⁹ I follow Kirk 1962: 116-22 on both points.

³⁰ For one thing, the name again captures the referent's affinity with life (ζῆν) but neglects the concomitant opposite death, cf. Kahn 1979: 270-71.

³¹ Kahn 1979: 276-80 argues convincingly against inserting πῦρ (or some other noun) after ὄκωσπερ. Anyway, with the supplement, the point about naming (ὀνομάζεται κτλ) would still bear also on 'the god'.

³² On this point in B67, cf. similarly Dilcher 1995: 124-25.

³³ On Heraclitus' attitude to names – in particular to the naming of gods – see further Rowett 2013: 180-87. Rowett (184) notes that, in B93, Heraclitus fixes the reference to Apollo through a description of his status and the location of his oracle rather than through the use of his name (Socrates does something similar at Pl. *Apol.* 20e7-8 as well as Xen. *Mem.* 4.3.16), and interestingly relates this feature of the fragment to what she identifies as a general religious worry in Heraclitus and elsewhere about calling or failing to call the gods by the right names. Indeed, we may relate it particularly to the questions which, as we saw just now, Heraclitus seems to raise concerning the very capacity of the divine names we use (B32, B67) to do justice to the nature of what they name and not to fragment divinity in very partial ways (a similar concern may be involved in Heraclitus' assertion in B15 that what we call 'Hades' and 'Dionysus' are, in fact, one and the same); on this point, cf. Rowett 2013: 187.

Heraclitus' approach to sensory experiences offers a further instructively comparable gap. Indeed, scholars have not implausibly found in B93 an implicit programmatic remark about our encounters, not only with Heraclitus' text, but also with the perceptible world around us.³⁴ We saw that Heraclitus speaks of a *hidden* nature (B123) and an *unseen* as opposed to perceptible attunement (ἀφανής φανερῆς κρείττων, B54).³⁵ Nonetheless, our sensory experiences, if properly interpreted, do yield insights into those underlying realities: *All those things of which there is sight, hearing, learning from experience: these I prefer* (B55). Again, Heraclitus' statement that *Eyes and ears are poor witnesses for men if they have barbarian souls* (B107) implies that these organs are *not* poor witnesses for those possessed of the right kind of souls.³⁶ Scholars have long observed that the term 'barbarian' conceptualises the failure to make proper use of the evidence given in what one sees and hears as the failure to understand a language.³⁷ Perceptible phenomena comprise a kind of language, which the mortal interpreter can succeed or fail to comprehend and from which he can succeed or fail to gain understanding. But (as with names) there is a gap between our sensory experiences and those *hidden* and *unseen* realities for which they serve as signs. Perceptible phenomena do not, then, themselves *display* (or articulate) those realities, which remain unseen and never immediately available. Nonetheless, by intelligently reflecting on our sensory experience as signs for those underlying realities, we are able to gain some insight into them.

The Apolline Heraclitus who emerged so far is conscious of a gap between the language he uses and the hidden and unseen realities for which this language gives signs but which, importantly, it does not articulate. This conscious attitude conforms to Heraclitus' actual practice in the fragments and is reminiscent of his attitude to the status and heuristic value of names and sensory experiences. Now, *to an extent*, these conclusions run counter to the standard approach which emphasises that, for Heraclitus, there is a correspondence, structural similarity, equivalence, or even identity between language and reality.³⁸ Mourelatos argues powerfully that Heraclitus takes pioneering strides towards a view of reality as not a mere aggregate of things which alternately gain and cede territory but a coherent, harmonious and intelligible system of relations which, as such, shares some of the features of intelligent discourse.³⁹ It is important, and no accident, that Heraclitus uses the one term *logos* with respect both to his words and to the underlying measures and structures of balance, proportion, order and unity inherent in things (that is, to the 'hidden nature' and 'unseen attunement' themselves).⁴⁰

³⁴ Esp. Hölscher 1974: 231-34, cf. e.g. Curd 1991: 541.

³⁵ In this respect, Kahn 1979: 107 seems wrong to speak of our 'direct experience of the nature of things'. Our direct experiences are of perceptible things, which are related to the *unseen* attunement and hidden nature which underlie them in the manner of signs.

³⁶ Sensory experiences thus appear to be necessary but insufficient for understanding, Kahn 1979: 106; Hussey 1982: 34; Graham 2008: 177; cf. B40.

³⁷ E.g. Hussey (*loc. cit.*); Graham (*loc. cit.*).

³⁸ E.g. Hölscher 1974: 234, 238; Mourelatos 2008: 322-23 with n. 63; Emlyn-Jones 1976: 97-98, 101, Mackenzie 1988: 18; Graham 2008: 177, 183; Long 2009: 108-109; Hülsz 2013: 292. Rankin 1994 rejects the view that Heraclitus takes his language to mimic or mirror or somehow match reality, 'which he intuited as effectively indescribable in natural language' (78). He still seems to hold, though, that Heraclitus' words strive to 'represent' reality, but not pictorially or in any kind of straightforward or direct way (71, 74, 77).

³⁹ Mourelatos 2008 (1973): 317-24.

⁴⁰ I take this point (which is not required for my central arguments in this paper) for granted here. See Long 2009 for an excellent treatment of Heraclitus' *logos*; see also Johnstone 2014; Hülsz 2013; cf. Kahn e.g. on B1 (1979: 97-98) and B45 (128-130); Mourelatos 2008: 322; Hussey 1982: 56-57; Warren 2007: 61-62; Nightingale 2007: 185. Some scholars argue that there is no warrant for taking Heraclitus' *logos* to involve any sort of cosmic significance or indeed to refer to anything beyond his own account or discourse, see e.g. Sedley 1992: 32 with n.28; Sedley 2007: 226, n.49. I cannot properly address this question here. It seems difficult to

My arguments here are entirely compatible with Heraclitus' marked dual use of *logos* and with Mourelatos' contention. They require us to qualify rather than discard the view that Heraclitus perceives a kind of affinity between language and reality. Heraclitus' Apolline attitude to the relation between his language and the unseen realities is, I suggest, more nuanced and complex than the traditional unqualified and one-sided emphasis on this affinity will allow. Both Heraclitus' language and the realities which are the focus of his philosophical reflections comprise coherent, harmonious and intelligible systems of relations. This affinity is pointedly highlighted by Heraclitus' dual use of *logos*. Heraclitus' deliberate style and the interpretive challenges it generates, moreover, are an important part of what makes engaging with his sayings an invaluable preparatory exercise for becoming attuned to the cosmic *logos*. By engaging with Heraclitus' dense and many-layered sayings, we prepare ourselves for engaging with our perceptual experiences of things, not superficially or at face value, but as signs for something else; we thus acquire the ability to become aware of, and attuned to, the unseen structures of unity and order which underlie our perceptual experiences but are not displayed in them.⁴¹ At the same time, however, Heraclitus does not naively imagine that the language he uses (his *logos*, his sayings) itself formulates, or somehow coincides or is identical with, those unseen structures of reality (the cosmic *logos*). He recognises – quite correctly – that his sayings do not actually put into words the nature of those unseen realities but, *instead*, give signs for them. Heraclitus, then, is *also* keenly aware of the distinction and, indeed, the gap (somewhat reminiscent of the gap between human names and the natures of their referents) between that *logos* which is his words and the cosmic *logos* which is the unseen measures and structures of unity and attunement inherent in things. Heraclitus' injunction: *Listening not to me but to the logos, it is wise to agree* (ὁμολογεῖν) *that all things are one* (B50) calls attention to, among other things, this very distinction and gap. Listening to what Heraclitus says is not our ultimate goal. It is an exercise designed to render us attuned to *another* kind of *logos*, which Heraclitus' own *logos* does not itself articulate. It is to be attuned to and in harmony with this other *logos* (ὁμολογεῖν) in how we think and act and in what we say (and *refrain* from trying to say: οὔτε λέγει) that is our ultimate goal.⁴²

As a final note, I tentatively suggest – although I would not press this suggestion – that, on a deeper level of interpretation, we may find in Heraclitus' οὔτε λέγει a nod to *logos* (a term of art for Heraclitus). By affirming that he does not λέγει – does not produce a *logos* – Heraclitus may be acknowledging that, while his 'signs' of course amount to *a logos* (his *logos*, his sayings), he does not articulate, and his signs are not equivalent to, that *logos* which inheres in things themselves and which is the ultimate object of our interest. In that sense, Heraclitus indeed does not issue a *logos*. Elsewhere too Heraclitus arguably uses the verb in a way that evokes his term of art *logos*.⁴³ Furthermore, the upshot that, in different senses, Heraclitus both does and does not issue a *logos* (that his *logos* is at the same time not a *logos*) would correspond to similar thought-patterns elsewhere in the fragments.⁴⁴

square the minimalist interpretation with the assertion in B2 that the *logos* is 'common' and with the indication in B1 that the *logos* is or holds good forever (ἐόντος αἰεῖ) and that people ever fail (and so could, in principle, avoid failing) to understand it (αἰεὶ ἀξύνετοι) *both before hearing and once they had heard*; cf. also the soul's 'deep *logos*' in B45.

⁴¹ For the idea that Heraclitus' sayings serve as preparatory exercises for engaging properly with sensory experiences, see esp. Graham 2008: 177-81.

⁴² I return to B50 below.

⁴³ B32 (λέγεσθαι ... ὄνομα), B114 (ξὺν νόφ λέγοντας κτλ), with Kahn 1979: 269-70, 117.

⁴⁴ B10 (συλλάψεις· ὄλα καὶ οὐχ ὄλα, κτλ), B32 (οὐκ ἐθέλει καὶ ἐθέλει), B61 (καθαρώτατον καὶ μιαρώτατον), B125 (ἴσταται κινούμενος, following Mackenzie 1986).

APOLLINE AND HERACLITEAN SIGNS: THE ANALOGY AND ITS LIMITS

What we found in B93 can be described as a distinctive and idiosyncratic kind of *imitatio dei*. Heraclitus' creative and involved theological reflection about Apollo and his use of language served for him as a framework within which to think about his own use of language and the nature of his inquiry. What does Apolline philosophical inquiry look like? Heraclitus, we saw, ascribed to Apollo, and adopted from him, a mode of communication in which the most important things – the insights and answers we are really after – are the ones that get left unsaid. Heraclitus' very appeal to Apollo as a paradigm of emulation, however, raises the question: what are the scope and limits of the implicit analogy in B93 between man and god? To what extent does Heraclitus place himself in relation to his audience in the same position which Apollo occupies in relation to his? In what ways does the business of giving and receiving signs differ in the two cases?

Apollo *could* say what he does not say. He decided to tell Croesus what he did tell him and not to tell him that, if he attacks, he will destroy his own great kingdom. This decision puts mortals in their place. It reflects and, to an extent, determines the mortal condition and the power-relations which frame the interactions between gods and men.⁴⁵ In Hesiod's *Theogony*, Zeus, after his victory over Kronos, takes the stone, which Rhea had passed off to Kronos as the new-born Zeus and which led to Kronos' downfall and to Zeus' ascension (485-491), and fixes it under Parnassus, in 'sacred Pytho': *to be a sign* (σῆμα) *thereafter, a marvel* (θαῦμα) *for mortal human beings* (498-500). The choice of Delphi can hardly be accidental.⁴⁶ Zeus presents to mortal men the stone – the instrument and symbol of divine deception, itself a verisimilitudinous but specious counterfeit which was passed off as the genuine article (cf. *Th.* 27-28) – as the emblem of his new cosmic rule and the epitome of the dynamic which governs the communication between mortal and divine. Heraclitus need not be implying every aspect of this theological tradition, but he does draw on it. Apollo's decision to give signs instead of saying or concealing is part of what determines his place as a god and the place of those who consult him as mortals.

We need not deny altogether that, through the implicit analogy with Apollo, Heraclitus situates himself in a related position of superiority over his audience. Heraclitus issues signs, we struggle with them.⁴⁷ But *could* Heraclitus have said what *he* does not say? We may distinguish two possible responses here. On one view (call it the 'pedagogical' interpretation), Heraclitus decides not to articulate the hidden nature and unseen attunement because he holds that proper understanding and philosophical enlightenment should involve us in an active effort of circumspect and creative reflection, for which his remarks should offer only orienting and framing starting-points and points-of-reference.⁴⁸ On the other view (say, the 'ontological' interpretation), Heraclitus takes it that our language is inherently incapable of articulating or expressing the hidden nature and unseen attunement. On this view too, Heraclitus still holds that philosophical enlightenment demands an active effort of circumspect and creative reflection for which his remarks offer only signs. But now this pedagogical stance stems in the first instance from a certain conception of the nature of reality and from the subsequent view that it would not be possible to put into words the hidden nature and unseen attunement. Nothing in the fragments

⁴⁵ Merlan 1949: 429 took the key point of B93 to be the expression of a hierarchical relationship which involves ambiguity on the part of gods and risk on the part of mortals.

⁴⁶ For 'sacred Pytho' and Apolline divination, cf. Hom. *Od.* 8.79-81, *h.Hom.* 24.1-2; with West 1966: 303.

⁴⁷ Maurizio 2013: 116-17 detects similarities in the rhetorical ways in which Heraclitus in the fragments and Apollo in Delphic oracles construct their authority by disdainfully contrasting their own knowledge with their audience's ignorance and with established authorities.

⁴⁸ Plotinus appears to have understood Heraclitus along these lines (*Enn.* 4.8.1.11-17).

excludes either view. Heraclitus' reflections, though, on the gap between our experiences and words on the one hand, and the hidden and unseen realities on the other (as discussed above), incline me towards the ontological interpretation. It seemed to be an inherent and irremediable limitation of our language, that the names which we use cannot express the unified natures of their referents, and of our perceptual experiences, that they do not themselves display the hidden and unseen realities which underlie them. After the event, it is often easy to say what it was that Apollo refrained from saying in his oracle (or, on a non-Heraclitean account of Apollo, to say clearly what it was that the god said only obscurely). Indeed, such *post eventum* realisations are a recurrent trope in the Delphic traditions (e.g. Hdt. 6.80). There is no parallel to this change 'after the event' with Heraclitus' signs. The unseen attunement which is the focus of our philosophical reflections never comes to light and seems always to stay at the same distance from our cognitive and expressive capacities. Heraclitus is not, after all, in the business of giving oracles in anything like the normal sense, and it would not be surprising if the analogy between man and god was limited precisely when it came to the factors and *constraints* which determine Heraclitus' use of language as opposed to Apollo's. (In suggesting that Heraclitus opts for his mode of communication because any other would falsify the nature of reality, I am in agreement with a standard take on B93.⁴⁹ I diverge from this standard take in my understanding of what this mode of communication amounts to. It is not an indirect and riddling way of capturing or expressing the nature of reality in words.⁵⁰ Rather, Heraclitus neither speaks (indirectly or otherwise: οὔτε λέγει) nor conceals (οὔτε κρύπτει) the nature of the hidden realities. He resorts to his many-layered, paradoxical and riddling sayings as a way of, *instead*, giving signs (ἀλλὰ σημαίνει, as discussed above) which facilitate reflection about, insight into and an understanding of that which could not be said).

What kind of attitude led to Croesus' error and is reflected in it? How does one become *better* at listening to Apollo? Whatever else, Croesus' engagement with the oracle is characterised by thinking about it (i) only superficially and without considering that it may not suggest what it appears to suggest at first glance and (ii) in a self-serving and self-centred manner.⁵¹ The assertion that, if he marches, Croesus 'will destroy' (καταλύσειν, Hdt. 1.53) a great kingdom is compatible with him destroying either his own kingdom or the Persians' but, at first glance, rather suggests the latter. Croesus is further inclined to this interpretation by assuming that the oracle is spoken from his own partial perspective on things rather than from a synoptic, divine perspective for which his own kingdom and the Persians' are entirely on a par.⁵² Above all, Croesus fails to recognise what *kind* of communication he is facing in the oracle. He fails to recognise that there is a serious and perhaps undecidable interpretive dilemma at play and (on Heraclitus' account) that what Apollo told him was not actually the answer itself, but an ambiguous starting point from which to work towards the answer. The Delphic traditions do not afford a set of universal or specific rules for a correct interpretive procedure which will guarantee success. They do, however, convey and inculcate certain broad methodological principles, not least through figures like Croesus, who dramatise transgressions of those principles. The

⁴⁹ E.g. Hölscher 1974: 233-34; Kahn 1979: 124; Rankin 1994: 78 (cf. n. 000 above); Granger 2004: 8, n.17; Nightingale 2007: 183.

⁵⁰ Contrast Hölscher (*loc. cit.*): '[h]is language, too, must be one of paradox, simile, and riddle, precisely insofar as it seeks to proclaim the essence of what is' (my emphases); Kahn (*loc. cit.*): 'to speak plainly about such a subject would be to falsify it in the telling'; Nightingale (*loc. cit.*): Heraclitus had to find 'a new language in which to articulate [the world's] deep and divine structure'.

⁵¹ Herodotus picks up on both points when he says that the oracle was 'specious' or 'deceitful' (κιβδηλοῦ) and that Croesus supposed that it was favourable to him (ἐλπίσας πρὸς ἑωυτοῦ, Hdt. 1.75). The same two factors are emphatic e.g. in Cleomenes' misinterpretation at Hdt. 6.76-80.

⁵² On this point, cf. Manetti 1993: 28.

traditions thus exercise a kind of habituation: they condition us to think about and listen to Apollo's communications in the right ways.⁵³

Heraclitus' sayings – and especially B93 itself as a second-order, programmatic statement – exercise a similar kind of habituation.⁵⁴ They condition us to engage with them – and with the phenomenal world around us – not superficially or at face value but by reading and re-reading, with a careful view to different possible directions and with an ear for nuance and detail. In this way, Heraclitus' sayings teach us how to 'listen' (B1, B19, B34, B50, B108). Again, they impel us to think about, say, seawater (B61) or gold (B9) no less from the perspective of fish and donkeys than of humans. More generally, they disabuse us of our deep-seated myopic and parochial inclinations. They condition us to work towards a viewpoint which is oriented towards not the 'private' but the 'common' (understood as what is universal and universally available – the cosmic *logos* – as opposed to the partial province of a limited perspective) and which strives towards the divine, synoptic view of things (B2, B72, B89, B113, B114, B41, B102). Heraclitus' constant references to the exegetical and philosophical failings of his readers, contemporaries and predecessors (e.g. B1, B2, B17, B19, B34, B40, B56, B57, B72, B104, B108) serve – in place of a Croesus – as negative paradigms illustrating how *not* to approach his sayings or our experiences of the world.⁵⁵ In all this we find further aspects of Heraclitus' affinities with, and appropriations of,⁵⁶ Apollo and the theological traditions surrounding him and his mode of communication.⁵⁶

Putting aside Croesus' attitudinal flaws, what in fact determines whether our inferences from the oracle in any particular case are the right or wrong ones to draw seems to be whether the god would consider them right or wrong. The question is whether we have correctly ascertained divine will. In what sense does Apollo's oracle constitute a sign which points towards the proposition 'if I attack, I will destroy my own kingdom' *any more* than towards the proposition 'if I attack, I will destroy the Persians' kingdom'?⁵⁷ What makes the former proposition but not the latter a correct inference from the sign – i.e. a successful interpretation of what it is a sign for – is that it would be a correct decipherment of divin will. Apollo would consider it a successful inference. The former proposition is the one that, in this sense, Apollo signalled (even while he did not actually speak it) and that Croesus would have, in this particular case, correctly inferred.⁵⁸ There is arguably a disanalogy here with Heraclitus. It is not what Heraclitus thinks or wills which determines whether the conclusions and insights which we derived from *his* signs were the right ones to derive, but only whether these conclusions and insights cohere with the hidden nature and unseen attunement. I suggested above that Heraclitus' injunction *listening not to me but to the logos...* (B50) calls attention to the distinction between his own *logos* and the cosmic *logos*. On a more rudimentary level of interpretation, however, we can also read this fragment as driving a wedge between Heraclitus himself and his own *logos*. What Heraclitus

⁵³ Croesus himself is ultimately habituated to some extent. After hearing the Pythia's defense of Apollo's conduct, he comes to see that the mistake was his and not the god's (Hdt. 1.91). Cf. Kindt 2012: 50-51 on Parmeniscus' enlightenment.

⁵⁴ We saw above how engaging with Heraclitus' sayings can be thought of as a preparatory exercise for engaging with the world.

⁵⁵ Contra Maurizio 2013: 117, who writes that there is no parallel in Heraclitus for an interpreter's incompetent alter ego such as Croesus.

⁵⁶ I cannot address here Heraclitus' reflections on inquiries into oneself (B101, B116) as another sort of appropriative engagement with Delphi; on this point see Maurizio 2013: 115.

⁵⁷ This question can be raised whether we construe the oracle as an ambiguous articulation of the answer or (with Heraclitus) as an ambiguous sign, which does not itself articulate the answer at all (cf. n. 000 above).

⁵⁸ For (Apolline) oracles as affording an insight into divine will, cf. e.g. the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* 130-132, 539a.

himself thinks or wills, or his authority, is not a criterion which determines whether or not we have used his words (his *logos*) properly. Heraclitus' sayings may offer an observation which transmits warrant to a certain conclusion (as with the observation that seawater is life-giving for fish but destructive for humans, B61), or make a bare assertion which invites and orients reflection (as with the assertion that the one wise thing both wishes and does not wish to be called 'Zeus', B32). But, in all cases, our use of these signs will be more or less successful just to the extent that it renders us more or less attuned to and aware of the hidden realities (not to the extent that we have used them as Heraclitus intended). In another arguable contrast with Apollo's signs, moreover, more than one successful answer or interpretive inference can be correlated with a Heraclitean sign. It is true that Heraclitus was aware of and preoccupied with riddles as we know them (B56 relates Homer's failure to solve a riddle posed by children) and it is plausible that the model of the riddle held some programmatic significance for him in relation to the proper way to approach his signs. But we cannot accept the model of the riddle as an entirely appropriate one on which to understand Heraclitus' sayings.⁵⁹ The fragments can raise in a less determinate way different questions on different levels and lead to and accommodate multiple possible elaborations as severally legitimate.⁶⁰ Nor should we imagine that behind every single terse remark by Heraclitus lies a highly specific and fully worked-out position or theory to be reconstructed by the reader, as opposed to, at least in some cases, views and insights of a more general and even vague nature (say, concerning different ways in which opposites may be interrelated and inter-dependent).⁶¹ In these respects, Heraclitus' signs can arguably be more open-ended and underdetermined than Apollo's.

FINAL REMARKS

In the first instance, I argued that B93 poses a theological reflection which is paradoxical and difficult on the most rudimentary level of its interpretation. It impels the attuned reader to theologise, to ask what insight about Apollo and his mode of communication we can reach by reflecting on the initially puzzling assertion that *the lord whose oracle is the one in Delphi neither says nor conceals but gives a sign*. Correspondingly, Heraclitus' relation to, and engagement with, the more implicit theology of the Delphic traditions is more complex than previously assumed. B93 does not simply state a theological principle that was already obvious if implicit in the traditions about Apollo. Heraclitus advances a creative and far from obvious theological analysis of Apollo's *modus operandi*, which, nonetheless, preserves and appropriates the broad theological conception, conveyed in the traditions, of the interpretive predicament generated by Apollo's oracles. In the second instance, we saw how Heraclitus' involved theological meditation on Apollo served for him as a framework within which to think in parallel ways about his own mode of communication and about the relation between his language and the realities which are the focus of his philosophical reflections. Indeed, we saw that Heraclitus' appropriation of Apollo in this regard as a paradigm of emulation (a kind of *imitatio dei* which, as we also saw, had its particular scope and limits) is illuminating and important for understanding these central aspects of his thought. What Heraclitus creatively identified in the god, and what he creatively appropriated from him, was above all a mode of communication and inquiry on which the most important things – the insights and answers we are really after – are

⁵⁹ Contra Gallop 1989; Maurizio 2013: 103, 106, cf. also comments in Hölscher 1974: 233, 238; Hussey 1982: 55-56; Graham 2008: 182.

⁶⁰ Kahn 1979: 91-92 makes a similar point about interpreting Heraclitus, precisely by contradistinction with interpreting oracles.

⁶¹ Schofield 1991: 14-21, 32-34 develops some similar methodological caveats. It is entirely consistent with the remarks made above that we are sometimes warranted in ascribing to Heraclitus certain determinate views or theories, a point on which Betegh 2013: 227 rightly insists.

the ones that get left unsaid. More generally, Heraclitus found in (Apolline) divination an instructive preoccupation with the problem of how limited mortals may gain some insight into matters which lie beyond their perceptual experience, control or even expressive capacities; with the pitfalls which attend the process of acquiring such insights from bits of language or experience which proffer only ambiguous starting points rather than the answers themselves, and with the critical and contemplative skills of reading and listening which enable one to engage in this process in the ideal way.⁶²

Heraclitus has often been portrayed as an enemy of traditional religious thought and practice.⁶³ Conversely, some scholars argue that fragments, which have traditionally been taken to convey such criticisms, in fact criticise misguided and misleading attitudes towards traditional religious practices and their associated patterns of thought rather than those practices and patterns of thought themselves.⁶⁴ I cannot consider here in a general way Heraclitus' engagements with traditional religious thought and practice or address the complex textual problems which the relevant fragments pose. I only dogmatically state my view that we would be wrong to look for a systematic or universal approach here on Heraclitus' part, or to imagine that he ever conceived of traditional religious thought and practice as a unified and circumscribed whole to which one could take an approving or disapproving attitude.⁶⁵ It is indeed difficult to find in Heraclitus' assertion that *corpses are more to be chucked out than faeces* (B96) anything less than 'a studied insult to ordinary Greek sentiment.'⁶⁶ Conversely, B93 – as we examined it – offers a powerful counter-example to Wildberg's general assessment that 'one gets indeed the impression that [Heraclitus] regarded religious thought and talk as the product of a sorely deficient *ratio*, to which he offers his own dialectic as an antidote.'⁶⁷ Heraclitus did not merely devote involved theological and philosophical reflection to Delphic Apollo: he appropriated his divination as a normative theological framework within which to understand the very nature of his own dialectic.⁶⁸

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⁶² On this last point: Iamblichus interestingly cites B93 to buttress his claim that dialectic is a gift from the gods and that, through his ambiguous oracles, Apollo impelled his consultants to develop the critical and analytical skills of dialectical inquiry (*Epist. ad. Dexipp. apud Stob. Anth.* 2.2.5.11-16). Plutarch ascribes to Ammonius the insight that, since philosophy stems from inquiry and inquiry from wonder and puzzlement, it is only fitting that Apollo's oracular responses – and the other riddles surrounding the god – should generate wonder and puzzlement (*On the E at Delphi*, 385c). In the hands of Platonists, this idea perhaps harks back in particular to Plato's *Apology* in which Socrates explains how it was his attempt to understand the puzzling reply which Chaerephon had received at Delphi which led him to undertake his distinctive elenctic inquiries (20e5ff).

⁶³ Notably, Kahn 1979: 263, 266-267; cf. e.g. Burkert 1985: 309; recently, Gregory 2013: 112-113, 125.

⁶⁴ See Osborne 1997, especially on B5 and B15, followed by Adomenas 1999; cf. Boys-Stones 2009: 4.

⁶⁵ On this last point, cf. more generally Harrison 2007: 382; Harrison 2006: 132; Betegh 2006: 626. Most 2013 (esp. 164-66) questions the view that Heraclitus possesses or is concerned to convey to his readers a systematic doctrine about religion. He sees Heraclitus as deeply preoccupied with religious and theological questions and as, in different fragments, accommodating, reinterpreting, rejecting and raising open-ended questions about different Greek religious attitudes and practices.

⁶⁶ Dodds 1951: 181.

⁶⁷ Wildberg 2011: 215.

⁶⁸ I am very grateful to the participants at the *Theologies* conference (Cambridge, July 2012), as well as to the audiences at the B-Club (Cambridge, April 2012) and in KCL (London, February 2012), for their helpful questions and comments. Special thanks are due to Hannah Willey for extended discussions and to Malcolm Schofield, James Warren and David Sedley for their written remarks.

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