

## Heraclitus on Analogy: A Critical Note

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Analogy entails a comparison between objects or a system of objects that seem to be similar or alike in some respects: since objects are similar in certain observable or identified cases, they are also similar in some other unobservable or unidentified cases (Bartha 2019). Analogy is not only used in literal cases, but also in cases of metaphor and explanation. Similes and analogies are common in Homer: ‘whiteness’ is expressed by comparison to the snow or the sun, ‘sweetness’ by comparison to honey, ‘hardness’ to stone or iron (Lloyd 1966). As Lloyd observes, for the modern reader, the Homeric similes might be considered as “literary devices deliberately used to enliven repetitious descriptions”, but, as he further suggests, they also “serve important purposes besides those which may very broadly be termed stylistic, they “reveal the fundamental role which comparisons play in conveying certain notions” (Lloyd 1966, 183-184).

In early Presocratic thought, analogy is a pattern of thought that underlies the first attempts to explain the cosmos. For the Milesians, analogical reasoning should be considered as one of the first incidents of inductive reasoning and particularly the analogy between the microcosm and the macrocosm (Stamatellos 2011). Thales provides a first form of analogical reasoning: as a piece of wood floats on a pond, so the whole earth floats on water (Aristotle *De Caelo* B13, 294a28). Anaximander also compared the earth to <a section of> a stone column, while Anaximenes asserted the analogy between human soul and the cosmos (fr. 2 and 2a; see also A7 and A12).

Analogical reasoning and particularly the use of an argument articulated through analogy in Presocratic thought is a controversial issue in modern scholarship. Whereas scholars accept analogy as a form of argumentative reasoning that serves explanatory purposes (Lloyd 1966; Kahn 1979; Frankel 1974), Jonathan Barnes (1979) denies a systematic analogical argumentation in early Greek philosophy. However,

despite the recognised limitations of analogy as a form of argumentation (mainly due to the arbitrary presupposition of similarities between things) analogical reasoning seems to be a pattern of thought in the early Greek philosophical tradition.

Analogical reasoning and the application of analogy are remarkably wide in Heraclitus' philosophy (Lloyd 1966; Kahn 1979). Lloyd (1966) maintains that Heraclitus' similes and analogies are not only literary devices but also important vehicles that reveal hidden truths. Fränkel (1974) particularly suggested that there is a specific thought pattern in Heraclitus. His analysis began from fragment 79: A man is said to be a child compared with a god, "just as" (ὅκωσπερ) a child is compared to a man. Fränkel proposed the formulae  $A / B = B / C$  - God / Man = Man / Child. There are three levels: God, Man and Child, the degree of perfection decreases and the degree of imperfection increases in equal measure from A to B and from B to C. He considered that the proportional form of exposition was dear to Heraclitus and that fragment 79 is the clearest example of a proportional statement. Fränkel's mathematical orientation of his mathematically-oriented interpretation has been doubted (Marcovich 1967, Kahn 1979), however, analogical reasoning could be further considered in light of Heraclitus' ontology and epistemology. For instance, Heraclitus' analogy "God / Man / Child" stresses the limitations of human knowledge in terms of a comparison between a Man with God's higher level of cognition and a Child's lower level of awareness. It should be noted that the use of the Ionic style adverb (ὅκωσπερ) "just as" is important and aims to show the emphatic tone of Heraclitus in his analogical comparison not only in terms of reasoning but also in the ontological status of *logos*. Heraclitus' analogy contrasts and compares God to Man / Man to Child in respect of the ontology of *logos* and the divergent expressions of being.

*Logos* is the internal hidden rhythm of nature, the universal principle that regulates change for all things in a harmonious balance of opposite tensions (Stamatellos 2012). *Logos* underlies the changes of fire (frs 31, 90) and it is compared in analogy to the exchanges of gold: "All things are an equal exchange for fire and fire for all things, as goods are for gold and gold for goods" (fr. 90). The use of *ὅκωσπερ* in fr. 90 again emphasizes a strong analogy of *logos*: exchanges of fire / exchanges of gold. Fire preserves the unity of the universe within an everlasting cosmic cycle of alterations "just as" gold preserves the exchange of goods between humans. For Heraclitus, fire and soul are ontologically homogenous and analogous: fire is the material substance of soul and the soul follows the cosmic transformations of fire, the

principal element of cosmic vitality (frs. 31, 36). The cosmos and the soul are analogous to the 'transformations of fire'. As Zatta observes, fire connects the soul with cosmic processes, not only in terms of analogy but also in terms of a "direct relationship" between fire and the human soul (Zatta 2019, 84-85). Heraclitus' direct relationship between fire and the soul is underlined by the rhythm *logos*. *Logos* rules, governs and controls the internal changes and transformations of fire and, by extension, both the soul and the cosmos. The Heraclitean God, as an expression of *logos*, is the one guiding principle that perfectly self-includes and unifies two opposite tensions in one single pattern (fr. 67): "God: day night; winter summer; war peace; satiety hunger; but he changes "just as" (ὅκωσπερ) <fire>, which, when mingled with the smoke of incense, is named according to each individual's perception." Marcovich (1967) claims that in fr. 67 the presence of fire is of great interest and denotes the very essence of god and not just a simple comparison. Moreover, it should be suggested that the use of ὅκωσπερ in fr. 67 stresses an exact and direct analogy between fire and God in terms of *logos* as the unitary element that reveals analogous oppositions in the plurality of things (fr. 88, see also fr. 60).

However, Heraclitus uses analogy as an explanatory device. For instance, the cosmos expresses the beauty of divergence and plurality in randomness: the most beautiful cosmos is "as" (ὥσπερ) a rubbish heap piled up at random. (fr. 124). In contrast to the common interpretative line, Marcovich notes that ὥσπερ in fr. 124 belongs to Theophrastus *Met.* 15 and not Heraclitus. Nevertheless, ὥσπερ in fr. 124, as in fragments 73 and 128, is used for metaphorical purposes and not to denote an ontological analogy between two things. The analogy of the Heraclitean opposites of *logos* is not only inherently present in each single thing of the cosmos but also manifested in the interrelation of all things in their connections and conjunctions. Heraclitus conception of the relationship between opposites is quite different from the Pythagorean opposites and the Milesians' use of analogy. The recognition of an analogy in Heraclitus' thought is not only related to the internal structure of things themselves but also to their external interconnections (Lloyd 1966; Zatta 2019). He stresses not only the interdependence of opposites but also the constant conflict between them.

Heraclitus' political analogies are also relevant in this context. Humans must protect the law "just as" they protect the city walls: "The people must fight for the law just as (ὅκωσπερ) for their city wall" (fr. 44). The intrinsic importance of law, as a form of *logos*, strongly corresponds in analogy to the city walls. Heraclitus emphasizes the

analogy between the law and the city walls; the law *is* a city wall (ὄκωσπερ) and not a mere metaphor (ὥσπερ). To protect the city from external enemies is analogous to the protection of inside dangers. The human law (*nomos*) that unites the *polis* should follow the one divine law (*logos* or God) that binds the cosmos (fr. 114). Thus the wisdom of the *logos* is applied in the structure and functioning of both the *cosmos* and the *polis*. Moreover, the internal recognition and appreciation of the wisdom of *logos* in political terms underlies Heraclitus' philosophy in ethical terms. To be wise, is to recognize the analogies expressed in different things (frs. 9, 13, 37 61). The wise have souls close to the natural proportions of fire, "just as" (ὄκωσπερ): "most gorge themselves just as cattle" (fr. 29). The analogy is evident in the quality of *aristos*: "one man is as ten thousand, if he is the best" (fr. 49). Hence, Heraclitus' ethics is linked to his physics and psychology through *logos*. Fire constitutes the living bodies in physical terms, just as human *ēthos* and wisdom sustain the soul in psychological terms.

Heraclitus' use of analogy reveals an ontology of *logos*. He takes a step further from the Milesians; he considers analogy not only as an explanatory device but also as a manifestation of *logos* that is revealed in the harmony of opposites. His use of ὄκωσπερ denotes an emphasis of an ontological analogy between two things and not a mere metaphor or similarity (ὥσπερ). The analogy of things corresponds to the common but hidden rhythmical structure of *logos* that underlies the exact nature of things. Natural phenomena and their analogies are indications of a complex cosmic network of fire and *logos* where the unity of *logos* establishes the connection not only between apparent pluralities and oppositions but also similarities. Analogy reveals both the inherent opposition of *logos* in each single thing and the interdependent common interrelation of all things.

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