[33][[1]](#footnote-1) Heraclitus and the Silent Voice of *Logos*

**Abstract:**

In this article, I examine Heraclitus’s 50th fragment with regard to the pronominal negation, *ouk emou.* In the first part of the paper, I argue that the dictum «*one is all*»is not something uttered by the *logos*, but rather is a response given by the human being according to the silent voice of the *logos.* Secondly, I proceed to analyze the deictic character of the negation *ouk emou*, aligning my interpretation with Agamben’s exposition of pronouns in *Language and Death.* Thus, I argue that in Heraclitus’s case, the pronoun testifies to the event, or the happening, of language. This happening is demonstrated in a *showing* manner, rather than a communicative one. This reading enforces the argument that *logos* itself does not say anything, let alone that *one is all*, supporting Heidegger’s interpretation of language as *consonance of silence* (*Geläut der Stille*).

**Key words:** language, deixis, Heraclitus, voice, silence.

In the lecture-course from the summer semester of 1944, Heidegger took Heraclitus’s 50th fragment as a point of departure for an overall interpretation of the early Greek thinker.[[2]](#footnote-2) The reason for this, one could assume, is that the fragment expressly touched on main issues that have been haunting the European philosophy ever since, namely, to name a few, the relation between the self and the being, as well as the relation between the one and the many.

[34] The fragment reads as follows: οὐκ ἐμοῦ, ἀλλὰ τοῦ λόγου ἀκούσαντας ὁμολογεῖν σοφόν ἐστιν ἓν πάντα εἶναι, which is rendered in the English translation of Heidegger’s provisory, German translation as follows: «If you have listened not merely to me, but rather have obediently regarded the originary forgathering, then (the) knowledge (which subsists therein) is to gather oneself toward the forgathering and to be gathered in the “one is all”.»[[3]](#footnote-3)

Before proceeding to interpret this line, I think that it is noteworthy to ponder on the very beginning of the fragment, which starts with a negation: *ouk emou,* «not to me». According to Heidegger’s hermeneutical indication: «the fidelity we owe to the inceptual word demands that we leave it in its negating form, especially since, presumably, the negation in the inceptual word is something other than a mere form of linguistic expression.»[[4]](#footnote-4) This indication will play a pivotal role in my interpretation of Heraclitus’s fragment. In this regard, *ouk emou* should not be treated merely as a manner of speech that could be cursorily left behind in striving to get to the essential issue of the Heraclitean saying. My attempt will be to elucidate the Heraclitean fragment through the lens of these two words, *ouk emou*, showing how the kernel of the fragment—which is the articulation of the relationship between *hen* and *panta*—is essentially built on this negation. More specifically, I will argue that *hen panta einai* is not something that the *logos* [35] itself says. Rather, on the reading I would like to advance, one should interpret this emblematic saying as something that only human beings say in response to the *logos* that, from the very beginning, keeps silence. The silent voice of *logos* is disclosed through the negation from the beginning of the fragment, insofar as the negation (*ouk emou*) addresses the self as the concrete speaker, who lets language appear through his speech, and at the same time effaces the sounding voice of the speaker in pointing to the *other* (*alla*) voice—the one belonging to the *logos* itself. In this vein, in the second part of the paper, I will propose an interpretation of Heraclitus’s saying based on Giorgio Agamben’s work, *Language and Death*, pointing to the deictic nature of the negative pronoun, *ouk emou*, and its relation with the event of language (*logos*). Such an approach supports the idea that negation is inherent, rather than incidental, in Heraclitus’s fragment. Then, I will conclude with some remarks, arguing for the compatibility of this interpretation with Heidegger’s own understanding of Presocratic thought.

1.

There are many possible ways in which the beginning of Heraclitus’s 50th fragment, composed of the words «ouk emou», could be interpreted. It might be reasonable to suppose that these interpretations would vary according to the meaning assigned to the *logos* itself. The manner in which one refrains from listening to the *logos* can differ significantly, insofar as neglecting the speech is distinct from disregarding the reason, and further distinct from ignoring the judgment, and so on, in accordance with the customary polysemic translations of *logos*. Yet, in saying that he is not to be listened to, the thinker still avails himself of a kind of *logos* that escapes his prohibition of not paying heed to his own speech. If this were not the case, then the prescriptive continuation of the fragment, starting with «but» (*alla*), would lack coherence. For a better clarity, the fragment could be divided into a prohibitive part, which consists of the first two words, *ouk emou*, and the rest, constituting the prescriptive segment that begins with *alla*. This latter part indicates what is deemed wise: τοῦ λόγου ἀκούσαντας ὁμολογεῖν σοφόν ἐστιν ἓν πάντα εἶναι, «to listen to the *logos* and say in correspondence with it what is wise, that one is many.»[[5]](#footnote-5) The pair of words *ouk-alla* (*not-but*)articulates the structure of the fragment, forming an internal coherence that cannot be dissolved without losing the force of expression of the fragment as a whole.

Yet, the reader could be easily struck by the paradoxical character of this kind of speech, insofar as it prohibits the listener [36] to pay heed to the very speech that subsequently tells the listener what should be done or what is considered wise. In this sense, the fragment is reminiscent of the liar paradox, attributed amongst others to Eubulides,[[6]](#footnote-6) who reportedly said «I am a liar» leaving his listeners with the doubt of whether what was said is true or false. In the same way, saying «do *not* listen to me, *but* listen to the *logos*» leaves us with the aporia of not being able to follow both claims to the fullest extent, namely to *not* listen to the one who is speaking, *and* at the same time to listen to what he or she is saying (i.e., to abide by *logos*). We are presented here with a contradictory claim. How are we to proceed in this case? Should we attempt to refute this contradiction? I believe that reading this fragment in a Heraclitean way would imply, on the contrary, an endorsement of his contradictory claim, instead of rejecting it. More specifically, this would mean to accept that listening to Heraclitus’s *logos* is the same as *not listening* to it. How can this be the case? In what way must the *logos* be construed so that we would end up with a kind of listening that, paradoxically, amounts to a not listening? I believe that this kind of listening takes place as a listening to the silence, and respectively the *logos* must be interpreted as a silent voice. I will explain the reasons for this in what follows.

First of all, Heraclitus does not merely say that one should listen to the *logos*. Instead, his utterance starts with «not me», pointing thus to himself as the subject not to be listened to in striving to what is wise. According to Marcel Conche, the reason for this caution lies in the need to prevent the listener to pay heed to Heraclitus, regarded as a human being, as someone who expresses his own mind.[[7]](#footnote-7) Conche rightfully points out that the *logos* evinced by Heraclitus is something one can listen to, thus being present as a form of discourse.[[8]](#footnote-8) Consequently, the *logos* which Heraclitus indicates is something present to our ears in one way or another, aligning it with the concrete, human speech. One could say that Heraclitus does not point to a *logos* which is different from the one effectively uttered, but rather to something different *in* the uttered *logos*. Since the *logos* can be listened to, it is somehow present in the utterance of the human being, [37] who proclaims this *logos*, and thus can be confounded with the actual, *empirical* wording that one hears. For this reason, it becomes clear that it is necessary to begin with a provisional forethought, saying that «*not me* is to be listened, but *logos* itself».

If this is true, then we should ask: what kind of *logos* takes place in one’s speech, yet without being identical with the speech itself? How is this difference marked, namely the gap between, on the one hand, what the self (the ego) says and, on the other hand, the *logos* according to which one ought to speak (in *homologein*). In other words: what does *logos* as suchsay? In the interpretation proposed by M. Conche, the *logos* says «that *all is one*».[[9]](#footnote-9) However, I think that it is important to note that, in Heraclitus’s fragment, the *logos* does not explicitly assert that *one is all*; in fact, the *logos* does not say anything. According to the fragment, one only listens (*akousantas*) to the *logos,* and then, as a consequence, one says—according to that *logos*, i.e. in answering it (*homologein*)—that one is all (*hen panta einai*). Thus, it is *we* who are saying *one is all* after lending an ear to and in correspondence with the *logos*, while the *logos* itself—as far as we can gather from the Heraclitean fragment—remains silent.

However, before developing further this line of thought, an objection must be faced: why cannot we assume that by virtue of *homologein,* i.e.of saying the *same* as the *logos,* we truly say what the *logos* itself says?[[10]](#footnote-10) Why could not we interpret *homologein* as *repeating* the words that one hears in listening to the *logos* itself, namely *hen panta einai*? This interpretation assumes that the *logos* is that which says *one is all* before we are advised to repeat and say the same in its trail. Therefore, the claim that *logos* does not say anything holds ground only if *homologein* is something different from a sheer repetition of certain words. If *homologein* means «saying the same» without further ado, then it would be reasonable to infer that *logos* itself is that which, from the very outset, expressly proclaimed *hen panta einai*. The question thus concerns the nature of *homologein*: does it take up the true *logos* completely, or does it do so only according to the limits of the human way of being? Let us consider both scenarios. If the first is the case, then *homologein* [38] would be a sheer echoing of the true *logos.* In merely *echoing* the *logos*, the aspect of *homo* (being the same)would be preserved, while that of *legein* would be lost. The reason for this is that echoing entails simply returning what one has heard without truly assuming in one’s own speech (*legein*) what one has listened to. The echo, aptly described as «a voice without a body»,[[11]](#footnote-11) lacks the very subject of speech, making the act of speaking (viz. *legein*) impossible. In this account, I follow the basic meaning of echoing as inability to speak on one’s own, as recounted by Ovid, and summarized by Sallis: «Echo’s speech was limited to merely repeating what someone else had just said. It was as though her voice were no longer her own, as though it were taken over by the words of others, expropriated.»[[12]](#footnote-12)

On the other hand, if *homolegein* presupposes the presence of the human speech (*legein*), then we are faced with another potential difficulty in interpreting *homologein* as repeating or saying the same: the homoeotic aspect, the harmonious attunement to the *logos* itself, stands at the risk of being lost. The reason for this lies in the beginning of the fragment, in the negation of the self (*ouk emou*), which should not be treated lightly. The thinker advices us from the very outset, *not me*—a human being with a human *ethos*—is to be listened to, but *logos* itself, marking thus a fundamental gap between the self and the discourse as such. This negation acknowledges that the *logos* is not a product of human thought or language, and therefore it is not repeatable at one’s will.

Thus, if we interpret *logos* as saying something at all, putting forth a certain thesis (in the present case, that «one is all»), then we find ourselves in the situation of a double bind that deters any possibility of *homologein*: if one attempts to utter *the same* as the *logos* does, then one finds it impossible *to say on its own* what the *logos* itself says; on the other hand, if one attempts to humanly *say* what the *logos* says, then it becomes impossible to say it in *the same* way*.* [39] The human being cannot perfectly map onto the *logos* without either losing its humanity or altering the nature of the *logos* towards which it aspires. Moreover, in accordance with Heraclitus’s teaching, I think that *logos* is far from being reducible to a human product, but rather, as we will see, it is akin to the divine.

There is another fragment of Heraclitus’s that revolves around the same fundamental words (*hen*, *logos, sophon*) as the one from above, namely the 32nd fragment, which could shed some light on the nature of the *logos*: «ἓν τὸ ςοφὸν μοῦνον λέγεςθαι οὐκ ἐθέλει καὶ ἐθέλει Ζηνὸσ ὄνομα», «The wise is one alone, unwilling and willing to be spoken of by the name of Zeus».[[13]](#footnote-13) We encounter again the idea of *the one*, the wise, and that of speech (*legein*). In addition, we find here the name of the god, Zeus. Accordingly, «the wise» wants and at the same time does not want to be called by the name of Zeus. Naturally, we are presented here—in *ouk ethelei kai ethelei*—with the play of the opposites that belongs to God in the most intimate way.[[14]](#footnote-14) Indeed, even in 50th fragment we find the opposition between *hen* and *panta.* Alongside the play of the opposites, whose importance in Heraclitean thought cannot be overstated, we also find here the important link between the wise (*to sophon*) and the God. Thus, if the wisdom belongs in the most genuine way to God, then speaking wisely, in correspondence with *logos*—which proclaims the contraries in their identity (*hen panta einai*)—is a godly speech. As divine, it is non-human, which reinforces the claim that *ouk emou*—involving atranscending of the human dimension*—*is a necessary prerequisite for accessing the true *logos.*

Now, coming back to the line from the beginning, we should note that there is a difference between two voices: the voice of the ego, who gives rise to a speech, and the voice of the discourse (*logos*), that takes place insofar as the ego is effaced. The same two voices—one patent, another latent—are present in 32nd fragment, in that the wise is willing to be called (aloud, one may add) by the name of Zeus, and at the same time it is unwilling to be called so. The play between the two voices—one that utters Zeus, and the other that does not utter (yet without relinquishing the name of [40] Zeus), one that *says* on its own that one is all, and the other that is only listened and responded to in *homologein*—this play is attested by Heraclitus himself in saying that «the hidden attunement is better than the obvious one (ἁρμονίη ἀφανὴς φανερῆς κρείττων)». Shouldn’t we try to find then a hidden harmony in 50th fragment, i.e. a silent voice that attunes the human being and gives the guiding words, *hen panta einai*? Combining these two fragments, namely fr. 50 and fr. 32, one could say regarding the wise that it is willing and at the same time unwilling to be described as «one is all» (*hen panta einai*). In this regard, we could say that from the human perspective it is wise to say that one is all. Yet, from the perspective of the *logos* itself, the claim that one is all—like any other claim—no longer remains tenable. It would be too presumptuous to ascribe to *logos* as such a certain thesis, a claim put forth for humans to repeat. The most self-effacing interpretation of the *logos* would be along the lines of the essential withdrawal belonging to *physis* itself (as in the fr. 123). In this regard, it is better to assume that *logos* keeps silence—not as an absolute and disregarding absence, but as a telling or revelatory silence. In this regard, Heidegger says that

When looked at from the perspective of human λόγος, this λόγος, while existing in relation to the Λόγος, nevertheless cannot reach it. When looked at from the perspective of the Λόγος, the Λόγος is somehow present to the essence of the human, while not being properly present to the human. For the human λόγος, the Λόγος is something akin to an absent presence.[[15]](#footnote-15)

A crucial element in constructing this argument is the assertion that *logos* and *physis* run parallel to each other, thereby exhibiting a symmetrical structure. If there is an essential tendency towards absence and concealment at the core of appearance and manifestation itself (for *physis krypthestai philei*)[[16]](#footnote-16), then it is reasonable to look for a similar tendency in *logos.* Heidegger argued in his lecture-course on Heraclitus for this isomorphic structure, finding the essential movement of withdrawal at its core, and characterizing both *physis* and *logos* along the lines of an essential concealment belonging [41] to manifestation.[[17]](#footnote-17) Moreover, in a private note, gathered in (GA 73.2), he drew a parallel between *logos* and *physis*, highlighting their congruent characteristics. The note reads as follows:

*Der Blick der Stille[[18]](#footnote-18)*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Physis* | *Logos* |
| *Phaos*  Licht  Gesicht | *eidos*  *«Sehen»*  «Anwesen»  [Vorstellen]  *Fid*  *oida*  ich habe  gesehen und  «sehen» ist  | Gesehenhaben | «Versammlung» (ekthetisch-aletheisch *eregnishaft!* Brauch!)  «Wort»—Stimme der Stille (Brauch des Ratsals)  Gehör  *«Hören»*  (Ereignis)  [Andenken]  Gehören in die Sprache  Geeignet in Gewähr  der Eintrag des Brauchs des Ratsals  *Wort*  Geeignet | Ereignis |  und so Lassend – (Wohnen)  die Spur des Lassens (Nachbar des Todes)  die Sage des Denkens als Andenken |

What is particularly interesting in this note is, on the one hand, the visual character ascribed to the *physis* (Gesicht / Sehen), making it the realm of *phenomenality* at its purest; and, on the other hand, the aural character of the *logos* (Gehör / Hören)*,* establishing an essential connection with the voice. Furthermore, what essentially makes possible the visibility as such, the light as the medium of visibility, has a correspondent element in the realm of the logos, and that element is the «word» itself. The «word» has to be understood in an essential way—whence the quotation marks that bracket so to speak the word as something empirically sounded forth. Such a word, which displays a gathering character («Versammlung») in accordance with the proper meaning of the Greek *logos*, as it is evident from above, amounts to the voice of silence («Wort»—Stimme der Stille)—or as Heidegger put in in the lecture course on Heraclitus [42], to an «inaudible voice»[[19]](#footnote-19)—neighboring death (Nachbar des Todes). The hearing that belongs to this voice, Heidegger notes, amounts to the enowning (Ereignis).[[20]](#footnote-20) It is interesting to remark that some of Heidegger’s later reflections on the essence of language could find a clarification in this note. For instance, his claim that when one passes through a forest, one passes through the word «forest» as well, is aptly explained when the «word» is treated as the medium of intelligibility.[[21]](#footnote-21) In the aforementioned note, this claim could be interpreted as granting the word the status of a diaphanic medium in which everything appears. If *light* is that through which we see, without being able to see the light itself, then the word is a similar medium through which we make sense of the world itself.[[22]](#footnote-22) This reveals a unique significance of the word, as seen in Stefan George’s poem, meticulously analyzed by Heidegger, particularly in the verse «where word breaks off no thing may be.» Accordingly, the word is that which makes possible the thing as such: «The word itself is the relation which in each instance retains the thing within itself in such a manner that it “is” a thing.»[[23]](#footnote-23)

To continue the parallel between the light and the word, just as the light is not to be seen when things are present to our eyes (in *Vorstellen*), so too the word is not to be heard (in its silent voice) when things make sense in our thinking and recollecting thoughts (Andenken). As Heidegger put it, the possibility of speech is granted by the retractile nature of the word:

[43] […] the essential nature of language flatly refuses to express itself in words—in the language, that is, in which we make statements about language. If language everywhere withholds its nature in this sense, then such withholding is in the very nature of language.

Alongside *diaphane*, we can speak of a certain *diaphone* (traversing through the voice), which is the voice of *logos* itself: the proper medium or element of thought. This voice is not the same as the human voice which one could hear on a regular basis, but rather amounts to the silent voice of being that calls us into «the wonder of all wonders: *that* beings *are*»,[[24]](#footnote-24) resembling in this regard the Heraclitean *hen panta einai.*

How are we to interpret this polyphony, this contrapuntal movement between one voice that is sounded forth, but effaced, and the other voice that is hidden, and yet even more present? What is at play in this opposition between the voices?

2.

I believe that one can find a key for elucidating the matter at hand, regarding the silent voice of *logos,* in Giorgio Agamben’s work, *Language and Death.* I will briefly reconstruct his main argument in order to show how it could elucidate the play between the two voices, one manifest and the other hidden, with respect to the idea of discourse (*logos*) that is so pervasive in Heraclitean thought. Agamben’s book was born out of a seminar held in 1979-1980. During that period, he attempted to interpret the essential relation between language and death, which, according to Heidegger, «flashes up (blitzt auf) before us, but remains still unthought».[[25]](#footnote-25) The book summarizes a seminar in which he took part, and thus should not be regarded as a treatise that puts forth a definitive theory. This is important to note especially for the provisory and alluding character of [44] some of the ideas developed in his book. In the following, I will not attempt to expound Agamben’s claims, because such a task will go beyond the purpose of interpreting Heraclitus’s fragment. Rather, I will embrace some of Agamben’s insights in order to show their use in the attempt at interpreting the 50th fragment.

In his recapitulation of the seminar, Agamben presents, on the one hand, an analysis of Heidegger’s notion of *Da-sein,* and, on the other hand, an interpretation of the Hegelian notion of *Diese-Nehmen* from the beginning of *Phenomenologie des Geistes.* According to the Italian philosopher, both have an etymological and a morphological connection and find their roots in the Greek article, *to*.[[26]](#footnote-26) What is particularly interesting about these pronouns is that the meaning of words like *there (da), this (diese),* and even *I (ich)* are deictic, making them dependent on the subject that utters them, and on the proper context in which they are expressed. With recourse to Jakobson and Benveniste, Agamben argues that «the relation to the instance of the discourse» is an essential trait of the pronouns.[[27]](#footnote-27) This particular feature distinguishes pronouns in the discursive realm, insofar as they transcend the arbitrary *naming* or *referring* to the world (or the arbitrariness of the signifier-signified relation), and assume instead a necessary self-reference that makes possible the discourse in the first place.

To make the difference between usual statements and deictic utterances clearer, let us consider the case in which I say, for instance, «the books are on the table». The statement has a certain autonomy, being interpretable on its own.[[28]](#footnote-28) The statement refers to the world without implying the presence of a specific speaker. Anyone could utter the same words and mean the same thing. On the other hand, if I say «I am here», the *I* is essentially tied to and defined by a person who utters the sentence. And the same goes for *here*, which is also defined extralinguistically in terms of a situated and embodied speaker that finds itself in a specific place. As Agamben writes, the

[45] *deixis*, or indication […] does not simply demonstrate an unnamed object, but above all the very instance of discourse, its taking place. The place indicated by the *demonstratio,* and from which only every other indication is possible, is a place of language. Indication is the category within which language refers to its own taking place.[[29]](#footnote-29)

In other words, «I am here» does not simply say or mean something. Rather, the utterance also *shows* (in *demonstratio*)the fact that it takes place as enounced by a certain speaker. These special, deictic words were called by Roman Jakobson *shifters*, and, in Agamben’s view, they enact «the transcendence of the event of language with respect to that which, in this event, is said and signified».[[30]](#footnote-30) Precisely in this transcending power of the shifters, Agamben says, one has to look for the transcendental status which Kant attributes to the *I,* and it is here, we could say, that one has to look for the meaning of the Heraclitean *not-I,* *ouk emou.*[[31]](#footnote-31)

The question to be considered now concerns the difference between, on the one hand, a simple utterance that describes a matter of fact and, on the other hand, an indicative utterance that refers to the very taking place of the utterance. More precisely, what is the link between the discursive I and the actual I that gives meaning to the pronoun? Agamben’s answer is that there cannot be any other ground for the essential tie between the pronoun and the self that enacts the pronoun except the *voice* expressing the very self in the pronoun: «*The utterance and the instance of discourse are only identifiable as such through the voice that speaks them,* and only by attributing a voice to them can something like a taking place of discourse be demonstrated.»[[32]](#footnote-32) What is important to remark in this case is that the voice is not the sheer sound of it. If it were reduced to mere *phone,* residing on the same level as the animal sound (as one finds it in the Aristotelian account of the voice)[[33]](#footnote-33), it could not have made the link between the vocal self and the meaningful discourse in which that self finds its expression. As pure phonematic [46] appearance, i.e. sheer signifier, the voice would have been indifferent with regard to the signified dimension that it expresses. As pure sound, the voice could never trespass the tongue of the utter*ing* I and assume the linguistic role of the utter*ed* I, being thus unable to ever say «I» and really mean it.

In order to be able to articulate the relation between the utter*ed* *I* and the utter*ing I,* the voice has to be neither a sheer accident that is dispensable and subjected to pure meaning of the words, nor reduced to the empirically sounding forth of the vocal apparatus. This other voice, as Agamben puts it, «enjoys the status of a *no-longer* (voice) and of a *not-yet* (meaning)».[[34]](#footnote-34) Thus, in the very taking place of the language, in its event, we find a special kind of voice that gives ground both to the speaking subject (with his or her own, unique perspective, assuming the *Da* as *je meinig* and *Diese* as singular), and to the realm of meaningfulness, i.e. to everything that can be spoken of, making thus an essential tie between *hen* and *panta*. The voice of *logos* is therefore the ground for *hen-panta*. This other voice comes to pass by the removal of the empirical voice of a concrete human being, as Heraclitus admits in his—if we can call it—self-negation, and before the crystallization of the meaning as such: «*[t]he taking place of language between the removal of the voice and the event of meaning is the other Voice*».[[35]](#footnote-35) On Magali Année’s reading, this other voice would amount to the sonic-semantic halo created by the specific condition of the Greek language itself. According to her:

In this Greek conception, words, beyond their own semantic meanings, play important functional roles in discourses by the way their sound elements interfere with each other to arouse a set of semantic «halos»: the whole meaning thus is based both on the linear syntactical organization and on this non-linear phono-syllabic organization, which, in the discourse flow, is said and heard as well as the former.[[36]](#footnote-36)

[47] The interstice between the empirical sound of one’s voice and the meaning of words—considered purely from a semantic point of view—is constituted by the original voice of language, in which sound and meaning echo each other in a mutually constitutive manner. Heidegger notices the same thing in saying that «it is just as much a property of language to sound and ring and vibrate, to hover and to tremble, as it is for the spoken words of language to carry a meaning.»[[37]](#footnote-37) Described through such a chiasmus between sound and sense, this other voice can be aptly described using Heidegger’s locution as a «consonance of stillness» (*Geläut der Stille*).

Agamben’s analysis resonates with Heraclitus’s fragment. Obviously, Heraclitus’s fragment also starts with a pronoun— *ouk emou, not me*—that has a deictic character and thus indicates the very taking place of the utterance*.* The *me*, just as the *I*, makes sense only in relation to a self that enacts—in the first person—the meaning of the pronoun by uttering it. The negation, however, removes the voice of the speaker from the focus, insofar as the thinker says that *not to me should you listen*. Moreover, saying that one should listen to the *logos* itself, the implication of another voice is clear: the voice of *logos*, that is the taking place of language itself. In correspondence with this event of language, the speaker says in its turn that one is all (*hen panta einai*). The trope of *hen-panta* could be interpreted in many ways. Yet, the most evident thing to notice is that *hen-panta* attests both to a difference and a unity (or sameness).[[38]](#footnote-38) [48] This differential unity is at the core of Heidegger’s ontological difference.[[39]](#footnote-39) This is the case insofar as being *is not* an entity, and at the same time the being is always the being *of* an entity, while in the meantime the entities are possible only as *being* in some way or another.[[40]](#footnote-40) The idea that the ontological difference can be expressed in two equal and complementary manners, both in terms of a negative judgment (being *is not* an entity) as well as in genitive terms (being *of* entities), attests to this differential unity, which is present even in Heidegger’s latter thought. While some interpret Heidegger’s latter notion of being as independent and autonomous from the entities—which would amount to «being in itself», resembling the Kantian *Ding an sich,* and thus breaking away from an interpretation along the lines of the ontological difference—there are good reasons to still accept the ontological difference when interpreting Heidegger’s latter thought.[[41]](#footnote-41) I am referring to his private remarks, which were gathered in such volumes as *Zum Ereignis-Denken* (GA 73.1 and GA 73.2), that shed light on the unity of Heidegger’s thought. For instance, he expressly acknowledges the interdependence between being and entities in saying that: «Being is not to be thought without the manifestation of entities [Sein ist nie ohne Offenbarkeit von Seiendem zu denken.]» [[42]](#footnote-42)

In Heidegger’s interpretation of the 50th fragment, one can encounter these themes in a cogent way. He pays close attention to the negation from the beginning of the fragment, saying that it is not merely negative, «not an utterance of mere resistance: it is perhaps [49] rather a pointing toward a detaching and a jumping off.»[[43]](#footnote-43) In the current interpretation, this negation testifies to a detachment from the sounding forth (of the voice as *phone*), and a jumping into the other voice, which is indicative of the language itself. Moreover, the vocal character of the *logos* is not left behind in Heidegger’s reading: «The *Logos*—what kind of voice is that? If not a human one and therefore not an audible one, is it then an inaudible voice? Does such a thing exist?»[[44]](#footnote-44) It is well known that, for Heidegger, this voice amounts to the soundless voice of being that summons the human to the «wonder of all wonders: that beings [*panta*] are [*hen*].»[[45]](#footnote-45)

By way of concluding, I would like to suggest that *hen panta einai* cannot come from the voice of *logos,* or the voice of being in a direct way, for it is a human response to the latter. In Heraclitean thought, true wisdom (*to sophon*) entails precisely the acknowledgement of ultimate contraries in their hidden harmony, embracing the idea that *one is all.* Consequently, as Marcel Conche suggests, accepting this truth involves acknowledging our finitude and mortality. If this is the case, then this imperative cannot come from a human voice, a voice that orders, that commands and tells others what is to be done. Instead, it should come from a non-human voice, the voice of being, that does not say something in particular, thus allowing ample space for everything to appear. With no recourse to *logos apohantikos*, in the common Aristotelian sense*,* this other voice cannot hide either. Rather, as expressing the wiseness (*sophia*)—understood as being divine—, this voice does not say, nor hides, for it cannot do either of them; rather, it gives signs, i.e. shows or indicates itself in its silent happening.[[46]](#footnote-46) Thus, it is more suitable to regard the voice of *logos* as a silent—and yet revelatory—voice. This interpretation has several advantages that could be pursued further on.

Firstly, it provides a coherent interpretation of both the prohibitive and the prescriptive aspects of Heraclitus’s 50th fragment. When interpreted as a silent voice, the act of not-listening to the one who speaks is on a par with listening to a non-human speech, identified with the [50] *logos* itself. In this interpretation, the silent voice is listened to in the same manner as one refrains from listening to the speaking (concrete) self. From this perspective, *homologein* is not a simple echoing or repetition of certain words. Instead, it amounts to an attunement to the way of *logos*. Being silent, the *logos* finds its correspondence in the silencing of the self (in *ouk emou*) attempting to grasp the *logos.*

Secondly, interpreting the voice of *logos* as a silent voice allows us to understand the essential link between the self and the language through the lens of Agamben’s analysis of deictic pronouns. Because the self is expressed in a deictical manner through the personal pronoun, it bears a self-referential structure that is indicative of the very context in which it is uttered. The deixis points to the fact that there is speech, that speech happens, before anything is said. Negating the pronoun does not negate its deictical character. Instead, the negation shows that the voice behind language is irreducible to the voice of the individual self.

Finally, this interpretation finds a correspondence in Heidegger’s considerations not only of Presocratic thought, but also of the language in its poetic—which for him amounts to the essential—manifestation. According to Heidegger, the word shows and makes everything appear by virtue of its withdrawing character. It functions thus as the diaphanous (or *dia-phonetic*) medium for the entities. In this way, it can be described as a silent voice as well, indeed, as the silent voice of being.

To sum it up, the voice to be listened to—the voice of *logos* itself—must essentially remain silent. «*One is all*» comes to pass as a human response to the voice of being, a response in which listening to the *showing* silence takes precedence. What kind of soul is capable of such a listening to the silence? What kind of self can lend an ear to the absence and is able to gaze into the hiddenness itself? In this respect, one could only attest to the abysmal ground of the soul whose limits one could never reach, no matter how much one would have searched for them.[[47]](#footnote-47)

1. In square brackets are inserted the pages from the journal. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Martin Heidegger, *Heraclitus. The Inception of Occidental Thinking. Logic: Heraclitus’s Doctrine of the Logos.* Translated by Julia Goesser Assaiante and S. Montgomery Ewegen.London / New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018, p. 232. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Ibidem*: «Habt ihr nicht bloß mich angehört, sondern habt ihr fügsam auf die ursprüngliche Versammlung geachtet, dann ist (das) Wissen, das darin besteht, auf die Versammlung sich zu sammeln und gesammelt zu sein in dem “Eins ist Alles”.» The fragment was translated by Charles H. Kahn in a way that seems unsatisfactory to me: «It is wise, listening not to me but to the report, to agree that all things are one.», in *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 45. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. M. Heidegger,cit*.* p. 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The translation is mine. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. J. Moline, «Eubulides and the Sorites», in *Mind,* 1969 (78)*,* p. 394. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Marcel Conche, *Héraclite. Fragments.*p. 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *Ivi*, p. 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. *Ivi*, 24: «Que dit le *logos* — le discours philosophique? Que *tout est un.*» [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. This line of interpretation is followed by M. Conche, cit., p. 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Mladen Dolar*, A Voice and Nothing More*, MIT Press, 2006, p. 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. John Sallis, *Echoes: After Heidegger,* Indiana University Press, 1990, p. 2. There is another meaning of the echo, which Sallis draws based on Thoureau’s account of hearing the ringing bells in the middle of the silence of the woods. This latter interpretation of the echo would correspond to our notion of the silent voice of the logos. According to it: «Hearing the echo, one then experiences silence, not as the mere opposite of speech or sound but as the open space of the voice.», ivi, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. M. Conche, cit*.*, p. 243. Ch. Kahn, cit*.*, p. 83 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. M. Conche, cit*.*, p. 379. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Heidegger, Heraclitus, p. 238. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Ch. Kahn, cit., p. 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Heidegger, p. 277: «Ἀλήθεια, Φύσις, Λόγος are *the same*: not, however, in the empty conformity of a collapsing together into the undifferentiated, but rather as the originary self- forgathering into the differentiated One». [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. GA 73.2, p. 1146. Heidegger’s arrows were not drawn here. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Heidegger, *Heraclitus*, p. 187. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. For the translation of Heidegger’s *Ereignis* as *enowning,* see P. Emad and K. Maly, «Translators’ Foreword», in *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, Indiana University Press, 1999,pp. xv-xliv; also, see Bogdan Mincă, «The Enowning of Translation», in *Pensar la traducción: La filosofía de camino entre las lenguas*, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track,* trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 232-233: «If we go to the fountain, if we go through the woods, we are already going through the word “fountain,” through the word “wood,” even if we are not saying these words aloud or have any thoughts about language.» [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. M. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz, Harper & Row, 1971, p. 73: «If the word did not have this bearing, the whole of things, the “world,” would sink into obscurity, including the “I” of the poem [...]». [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. *Ivi*.*,* p. 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. M. Heidegger, *Pathmarks,* ed. by William McNeill, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 234. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. M. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 107. It is noteworthy to remark that the word *blitzen* used by Heidegger certainly has Heraclitan overtones, as in the case of the flash, «The reversals of fire: first sea; but of sea half is earth, half lightning storm», Ch. Kahn, cit., p. 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Agamben, *Language and Death*, trans. Karen E. Pinkus and Michael Hardt, University of Minnesota Press, 2006, p. 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. *Ivi*. p. 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. In the same vein, Husserl argues in *Logical Investigations*, p. B 265, that the judgement is grounded in a state of affairs in an unilateral manner, turning thus the judgement «the books are on the table», and the actual books from the table, into two independent fragments of a whole. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. G. Agamben, cit., p. 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. *Ivi*, 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Negating a shifter does not deprive it of its deictic character, just as negating a pronoun does not transform it in something different. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. *Ivi*, p. 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Aristotle, De anima, 420 b. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. G. Agamben, cit*.,* p. 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. *Ibid*. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Magali Année, «Kingship at Play», in *Rhizomata* 2020, 8(1), p. 5. As Magali Année brilliantly pointed out, the article «assumes each time a kind of function that reveals the original deictic function it has as an ancient presentative word» and, moreover, she says that in Heraclitus’s case, the article has «a specific, pragmatic power.» (ivi., p. 12) Naturally, the article has a typical revealing character implied by the deictic function of the words. To give just an example, it is altogether different to say, for instance, that something is *a* thing, and that something is *the* thing. But what about its «specific, pragmatic power»? Année gives an example that is especially relevant for our argument: «Thus, in the particular case of the few fragments where the article is explicitly repeated, where it specifically singles out the name λόγος, and where it marks a contrast with names used without the article (such as fr. 22B 52DK), the article seems to be used as a pointer, as a revelator, like divine epiphany of the morpho-semantic essence of the word it accompanies.» (ivi, p. 4). [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, p. 98. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. These are inextricably linked. As Heidegger puts it: «Every sameness, and above all the sameness of ὁμολογία, is grounded in difference: only what is different can be the same. It is by virtue of its differing from the same that the different itself remains self-same. Upon the self-same and its sameness, both the difference of the different, and the sameness of the same, depend.» M. Heidegger, *Heraclitus*, p. 191. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. For instance, in interpreting Heraclitus’s *logos,* Heidegger writes that «It is here that *the* originary difference between beings and being presides.» *ivi.,* p. 252. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. See Martin Heidegger, GA 24, p. 109. In a private note from *Zum Ereignis-Denken* (GA 73.2, p. 1119), Heidegger traces a parallel between, on the one hand, *hen-panta,* and on the other hand *einai-eonta,* both with regard to the difference (*Unterschied*). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. This debate amounts at its core to Richard Capobianco’s realist reading and Thomas Sheehan’s phenomenological reading of Heidegger’s “being”. See, for instance, R. Capobianco, «Heidegger on Heraclitus: *Kosmos*/World as Being Itself», in *Epoche,* Volume 20, Issue 2 (Spring 2016); and T. Sheehan, «Heidegger and Professor Capobianco: Phenomenology vs. Crypto-Metaphysics», in *Maynooth Philosophical Papers* 11 (2022). [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. GA73.2, p. 975. In the same vein, Heidegger says that being is what entities have as their own: GA 73.2, p. 1253: «28. Zum Leitsatz. Das Sein als das Eigene des Seienden.» [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Heidegger, *Heraclitus*, p. 187. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. *Ibidem.* [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, p. 234. The Greek insertions are mine. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. As it appears in Heraclitus’s fragment: «The lord whose oracle is in Delphi neither declares nor conceals, but gives a sign.» trans. Kahn, cit., p. 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. As one can read it in Heraclitus’s fragment: «You will not find out the limits of the soul by going, even if you travel over every way, so deep is its report.» Kahn, cit., p. 45. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)