

The One and The Many

-In the works of Heraclitus, Parmenides and Lao Zi

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PREFACE

*Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the two shall meet,
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat;*
-R.Kipling

Albeit the above poem, and its popular interpretation that East and West are incompatible by principle, this work reflects my belief that it is possible to make relevant comparisons between philosophies, in spite of their different temporal or cultural domain. My aim is to show that there are captivating similarities between Heraclitus, Parmenides and Lao Zi, when it comes to their understanding of One and The Many. I believe this kind of comparison to be possible *only* through thorough understanding of their cultural differences and what role these play in their respective philosophies. I would consider straightforward comparison between these philosophies, without consideration given to their respective domain, to be misguided.

This should not be taken as a criticism towards any preceding scholars, working in the field of comparative philosophy, but as sincere respect for the difficulties I have met when trying to make apprehensible and meaningful comparison between philosophies of different cultural backgrounds. On the true understanding of the hardships of comparative philosophy, I have found great help in the work of professor G.E.R Lloyd, who in my opinion has done a great effort in trying to bring forth understanding of the differences between Greek and Chinese Philosophies.

What in the first place caught my imagination, was the use of element-theories in both cultures. But the more I was looking into the subject, the less convinced I was that the common ground for philosophical thought should be found there. This was for many reasons, but I came to think that these philosophers were after so much more than just to find the pattern in which change occurs. So I went on to see what they had to say about change itself. This proved to be

somewhat more fruitful approach, but it suffered from the fact that the Chinese had no problem with change, but their question was *how* should one accommodate to it. This at least in Lao Zi's case, for his background was thoroughly influenced by *Yi Jing* (The Book of Changes), which takes ongoing change to be the only constant thing in the world.

Change is elemental when we are trying to make sense of the Greek thinkers of this paper. On the surface of it, Heraclitus is regarded as holding the opinion that change is constant (and hence there can not be knowledge as Plato had it in *Theaitetos*), and Parmenides is of the opinion that change is an illusion of 'mortals' (i.e. the common man). While these descriptions hit partially the mark, they can not be said to outline the work of these two men. We will see that the focus of their work was considerably more challenging and in significant amounts less technical than that.

So when I was considering what could serve as a common-ground for all these thinkers, I ended with one conclusion; they were all after the Wisdom which would reveal The Most Fundamental Reality for us. All these philosophers claim to have some sort of understanding which differs qualitatively from that of a 'common man'. All of them regard this journey to take place inside man himself or that this journey has revealed them the true arranging of things. This symbolism should not go unnoticed.

This concentration on change seems too vast to capture anything interesting or shared between these philosophers, and therefore I chose to concentrate on the question of The One and The Many, although none of them were using this exact wording. So the key-questions which all of these philosophers will have to answer are; What is change and is it real? The world seems to consist of plural entities, what kind of unity bonds it? What is wisdom? What is the world *really* like, what is reality like in its most fundamental level?

So in my methodology I shall concentrate on more classical notions of Wisdom and The most Fundamental Reality, and on lesser extent to the gross details of

Heraclitus', Parmenides' and Lao Zi's thought. Only the outcome of this paper will reveal if my chosen methodology stands correct.

GENERAL CULTURAL DIFFERENCIES IN PHILOSOPHY

This chapter is dedicated to give some general outlines of the two different cultures and some of the features which have influenced the ways of making philosophy. Since Heraclitus and Parmenides were under the influence of Greek culture and Lao Zi of Chinese, broadly speaking, I will represent some of the outlines of these two cultures. It is of course a quite a generalisation to call these philosophers Chinese or Greek, since both cultures have been brought under the topic 'Greek' or 'Chinese' by scholars in later times. These questions should not be too troublesome, since the aim of this paper is to make comparisons between philosophers, not between different cultures.

So while the cultural influences are not the focus of this paper, they should be addressed nevertheless. The impact they have had on these philosophers and especially on their *modus*, is significant. In this chapter I mainly refer to the work of G.E.R. Lloyd. His work has been the most comprehensive I have run into, in fact he is the key-figure in my opinion alongside with professor Sivin, in all the work concerning the comparing of Chinese and Greek cultures. His books cover a wide range of topics in these two cultures, from comparing astrology to comparing military technology. His work also helps one to understand the implicit reasons why these two traditions differ from one another in the way of persuasion and the goal of philosophizing.

From things to lookout..

There are two points that we should take into consideration before we start to make comparisons between philosophies of two different domains, they are called *An Anti-generalisation point* and *An Anti-piecemeal point*.¹ These two reflects two grievous mistakes that a scholar might do. In Anti-generalisation point, Lloyd wishes to remind us that we shouldn't drive towards generalisations

¹ Lloyd, 1996, p.3

about the *whole* culture. These two cultures, namely The Greek and The Chinese, are way too vast to be grouped under few descriptions that would explain the whole of them and the intellectuals they produced. Lloyd wishes to make no point of overall *mentality* of Greek or Chinese thought, he sees this as an over-generalisation, it is a mistake to make an assumption that there is such a uniformity in thinking. Thinking differs from time to time, even inside one culture². As he states: “..all the diversity tends to get set aside all too readily when the grand generalisation about *Greek* thought is attempted.”³

Even though Lloyd presents no overall schema of Greek or Chinese thought, he nevertheless sheds some light into their general differences by distinguishing their historical background. And even if in this work I am trying to avoid the grand generalisations, I nevertheless wish to have general outlines of the two cultures in question. It is not that philosophers in question were acting in a vacuum of values while working in their philosophy, nor do I wish to make it an assessment that they were merely the products of their respective cultures.

The second point that Lloyd wishes to make is Anti-piecemeal Point. This is a real challenge to the study in question, for I try to follow most of the guidelines that Lloyd puts forward, but at the end of this chapter (and work) I shall also take a glimpse at the gaps found in Lloyd’s method. The Anti-Piecemeal Point goes in the lines that we shouldn’t compare theories and concepts between different cultures straightforwardly, with the assumptions that they are talking about the same thing.

First this sort of mistake to come into mind, would be that of comparing *Dao* and *Logos* straightforwardly. *Dao* and *Logos* are very vast concepts, even among their respective cultures. A common tradition of philosophers is to re-define the concepts and it could be seen as essential to understanding a particular philosophy, to get a grip of the sense that the philosopher is using the word in. So in this work I shall refer to these terms, *Dao* and *Logos*, only regarding their place in the thinking of Heraclitus, Parmenides and Lao Zi.

² Lloyd, 1996, p.3-4

³ Lloyd, 1996, p.4

What is the left of the project that we are about to set forth? If we cannot make definitive generalisations about the culture and neither can we compare concepts of different cultural domain, what is there to do in comparative philosophy? I'll start with Lloyd's view how we should conduct this investigation and after that set my own agenda forth for assessment. In short, I use the concepts on 'The One', 'The Many' and 'Change' as focal points.

...To things to look into

The first of the methodological principle that Lloyd puts forward is, that we shouldn't compare the *answers* that the individuals gave, but those *questions* that the individuals were asking (and whether their answers were suitable for those questions)⁴. "What were the questions or problems that the Chinese were concerned with that led to the answers they gave being the answers they were? And what, similarly, were the key questions or problems on the Greek side?"⁵

Secondly, we are reminded by Lloyd that we shouldn't separate the content of philosophical debate from its *mode of conduct*⁶. These differences in the ways of making philosophy and the cultural differences, have a major impact on philosophy of Heraclitus, Parmenides and Lao Zi. So while Lloyd's *Anti-generalisation point*, is of little concern to us, since we are not trying to make point about a whole of Chinese or Greek philosophy, his second *Anti-piecemeal point*, deserves our full attention. In the following I'm bringing out the features of these two cultures that have had their influence on *the mode of conduct*, or the way of doing philosophy.

⁴ Lloyd, 1996, p.9

⁵ Lloyd, 1996, p.9

⁶ Lloyd,1996, p.18

The way philosophy was done..

Despite the *Anti-generalisation point*, Lloyd characterizes the Chinese culture as *Irenic* and the Greek culture to be *Antagonistic*⁷. These are not definitive, they are even close to being trivial, but in favour of Lloyd, these concepts work rather well when comparing Chinese and Greek surroundings for philosophy.

In China, the school of a certain philosophy, or philosopher to be more exact, was called *jia*, which as a written character stands also for a family or sect. The function of the *jia* was to uphold and spread the Master's teachings⁸. The one of the characteristics that differs from the Greeks, is that obedience was held in a very high esteem, which can also be understood by the word *jia*, family, sect. Master of the school, often already passed away, was *the* authority of the school in question, and to criticize him *directly* and *openly*, was not a custom. On the other hand, a student might have several schools of thought which he attended.⁹ However, it was commonplace to criticize other philosophical schools¹⁰.

In Greek we can find some contrast to this. The schools were relatively more open, to the limit that you could talk of inquiring communities¹¹. It was a custom for a person to change a school of thought quite often¹² and criticising teacher, or master if you will, was a genuine possibility¹³.

Also influence was gained from variety of schools and these influences were later brought up by saying that the philosopher in question was a 'student of Heraclitus', when he actually had Heraclitean tendencies.

⁷ Lloyd, *Adversaries and authorities: investigations into ancient Greek and Chinese science*, 1996

⁸ Lloyd, 1996, p.32

⁹ Lloyd, 1996, p.34

¹⁰ Lloyd, 1996, p.41

¹¹ Lloyd, 1996, p.38

¹² *Ibid.*, p.37

¹³ *Ibid.*, 1996, p. 35

..To whom it was directed

It goes without saying that the audience in question has a big effect on the way philosophy is done. The modes of conduct and different forums influence heavily the *modus* of philosophising.

In the case of the Greeks, philosophy was directed towards the intellectuals, which in the Greeks case equals to aristocrat-elite of city-states. It was also common to give public lectures and hold open debates between different schools¹⁴. It also stands that the ways of conduct in these sessions resembled very much the customs held in public meetings and public trials¹⁵. The study of the impact that these forums gave to the mode of conduct and the way of reasoning are a subject of a study on their own, but for the study in hands, it's sufficient to say that argumentative reasoning was later to become a field on its own right.

In China philosophy was directed to the emperor himself, at least formally¹⁶. Also to the *shi*, the literati that was emperors governmental-aid. Probably wide support among the literati could ease the way to the emperor's favour, but the fact remains that the public addressee of the philosophy was ruler¹⁷.

These differences in whom the philosophy was addressed to, should not be exaggerated. For the philosophers in question, Heraclitus and Parmenides did not write to the emperor, whereas Lao Zi partially did. In both cultures the *literati* was in essential role in evaluating these thoughts.

Especially Lao Zi's *Dao De Jing* has been traditionally divided into two parts, the *De* and the *Dao*. Whereas the *De* is more concerned about the governmental issues, the *Dao* is at greater extent directed to the individuals in *literati*. At the Lao Zi-chapter I give some facts which could hinder that the concept of *De*

¹⁴ Ibid., 1996, p.39

¹⁵ Ibid., A&A, p.86 and p.79 [eri kirja?]

¹⁶ Ibid., A&A, p.39

¹⁷ Lloyd, 1996, p.41

gained popularity in later additions to *Dao De Jing*, and for this reason *De* gained its place alongside *Dao*.

Ways of Persuasion and Argumentation

What influences did the differences in sects and in the audience of philosophy have on the way of persuasion and argumentation? And how it can be seen in the argumentation and general structure of the reasoning in the case of Heraclitus, Parmenides and Lao Zi? I will briefly go over the features that characterizes the Greek philosophy and the Chinese, but none of the philosophers in concern gave any systematic proof of their ideas. They were implicitly giving away what we might be regarded as ‘proof’, or as persuasion. Parmenides stands as the one who tries to give some arguments for his views, but all these are pretty inconclusive.

The Chinese mathematics was fairly acquainted with the need for generalisations¹⁸, but the culture as a whole is rich with the use of analogies¹⁹. In the times of Lao Zi, there were nothing resembling axiomatic proof²⁰, but there was recognition of *bian*, to be argumentative²¹. In addition to Lloyd’s stand, I would say that there are some examples of analogies, reasoning and argumentation in Lao Zi’s book, but the text itself trusts that the reader will find the proofs himself, in this sense the reasoning might be called implicit. But one feature that sets Lao Zi apart from his colleagues in Greece is the use of the ideal of a Wise Man, the Sage. While Heraclitus, and to some extent Parmenides, do talk about importance of wisdom as a goal and at the same time tell what is the content of being wise (i.e. what does the Wise Man believe in), it is Lao Zi who gives the ideal its central place as mediator between *Dao* and man. Since *Dao* is sort of omni-principle, it stands too far to be recognized as an ideal for conduct, so the Sage acts as a more approachable figure in *Dao De Jing*. Also it is a fact that it was a custom in China to portrait oneself as a Wise

¹⁸ Lloyd, 1996 p.61

¹⁹ Ibid., p.75-76

²⁰ Ibid., p.75

²¹ Ibid., p.34

Man²², and thus way to further ones agenda. I have more to say about the subject in the Lao Zi-chapter of the work.

Heraclitus and Parmenides are trying to convince their audience that they have wisdom which surpasses the understanding of a common man. To Heraclitus wisdom lies in the fact that man is capable of recognizing *Logos*²³ in the world, while Parmenides claims his vision to be based on divine inspiration which has moved him beyond everyday understanding. Also, Parmenides does not hold back his criticism when it comes to the errors of common man, set against the Wise.

Elements with Politics

Both the Chinese and the Greek culture have used elements to describe and to organize the pattern of change. Chinese have the yin-yang where yin stands for dark and feminine, and yang for bright and masculine, and the change is explicable using these terms. When it comes to Heraclitus, we see that Heraclitus is also using his elementary theory to describe change and its occurrence and pattern; all changes start from fire, become earth and then sea (water), after which the change is reversed. For Parmenides, to see the world governed by two principles or elements is the way of common people, or his predecessors, to make sense to the pattern in change. For Parmenides this way of sorting experience is not reliable.

When looking at Greece, we find traces of two ideas that are related to elements. First of these ideas is, that there is substance or substances that have existed always. For example Thales sees that the element of water is substantial and Anaximander held the opinion that the key-element in understanding the world is *apeiron*, boundless or limitless. The second idea is that complicated things are

²² Ibid., p.92

²³ *Logos* in this case could stand for sense. Other meanings for *Logos*, see the Heraclitus-chapter.

made of simpler elements, which in turn are not made up of another kind of elements²⁴.

We should now remind ourselves how Lloyd sketched the difference between mentality of philosophical or scientific communities in Greece and China. He characterized the Chinese mentality as irenic and authority-bound²⁵ and the Greek mentality as one encouraging adversiality. This is one of his key-points and he goes on in quite some length to give credibility to his point. In my view his point in general is correct.

Lloyd sees that the sphere of cosmological thought can not be separated from the political sphere: "Several of the Presocratic philosophers already pictured the cosmos as a political state, even though they diverged on the type of state in question. Some, such as Anaximander (-6th century), saw it in terms of balance of opposed equal powers – and Empedocles represented the relations between his equal cosmic principles as being governed by 'broad oath', that is, a kind of contract between them. But others (Xenophanes, Anaxagoras, Plato, Aristotle) saw the cosmos as a monarchy, under a single divine ruler: while Heraclitus saw the world in terms of strife or anarchy."²⁶ The last remark on Heraclitus should be reconsidered, as I will try to show. But the cosmological and the political sphere do have common features, but is it that the cosmological sphere reflects the political one or vice versa? I will come back to these thoughts at the end of the chapter and at the conclusions-part of my work, but generally I agree with Lloyd that the two spheres are strongly intertwined.

How about the China? Can we see similarities in preferences in the political thought and the cosmological one? We should take a glimpse in the culture in which the Chinese philosophers operated. It was briefly noted that the Chinese philosophers addressed their work to the Emperor, but the relationship was a bit deeper than that. The literati and the emperor had a relationship that was mutually beneficial; the literati legitimated the Emperors position and in return,

²⁴ Lloyd, 1970, p.40

²⁵ Lloyd, 1996, p.44

²⁶ Lloyd, 1996, p.101

the Emperor provided support for the literati²⁷. It should also be mentioned that the literati held the official posts in imperial court. So we could say that there was a case of mutual benefit; *literati* gained a way to power and the Emperor gained influence among the ruling class. Besides this crucial point of mutual support, we should also take a notice of a concept of *tianrenheyi*, which is elemental to our understanding of the cultural and metaphysical currents in Lao Zi's time. The translation for *tianrenheyi* is a problematic one but *tian* stands for Heaven, *ren* for Man, *he* for both, and *yi* for one or oneness. Of the influences that can be seen in Lao Zi's *De Dao Jing*, perhaps the most important is the *Yi Jing* (Book of Changes), and this book: "...reflects the philosophical understanding of the unity of multiplicity, namely, *tian ren he yi*. In this unitary oneness, wherein the universe and man are identically merged, there lies a harmonious interrelation and interaction between the cosmological world and the human world."²⁸ Linyu Gu, the writer of previous quote, expresses the idea of *tianrenheyi* as The Harmonious Oneness of The Universe and Man. *Tianrenheyi* illustrates quite nicely what Lloyd proposes; that the Chinese culture values irenic vices. One of the Lloyd's points is that the Chinese elementary-theories, namely yin-yang in our case, cannot be straightforwardly compared to Greek elementary-theories, for they reflect different kinds of political environments.

We could then conclude that due to the fact that the yin-yang-theory reflects the reciprocity between the ruler and those who are ruled, it can not be compared too hastily to Greek theories of elements. The Greek counterparts reflect a wider variety of political systems, which often had an implicit supposition of one element being of a higher status²⁹. I slightly disagree with Lloyd on this broad generalisation, which is excusable in terms of it really being a broad generalisation. I see the influence in Heraclitus, Parmenides and Lao Zi, of their respective cultures but I wouldn't go so far as to say that there couldn't be a sensible comparison between them on the subject of change and that of One and

²⁷ Ibid., p.126

²⁸ Linyu Gu: "*Tian Ren He Yi* (The Harmonious Oneness of The Universe and Man): A review of Steven Heine's *Opening a Mountain – Kôan of the Zen Masters*, Journal of Chinese Philosophy, 2006, p.177

²⁹ Lloyd, 1996, p.136-138

The Many. Actually, this is one of my main assertions and I believe that my study gives credibility to my view.

It would be rather harsh to say that the philosophers in concern, namely Heraclitus, Parmenides and Lao Zi, did not have any personal impact on the philosophy that they were making, but that their philosophy was a product of their particular society, especially when Heraclitus gives *Logos* a new sense, whereas Lao Zi gives new sense to *Dao*. Even though it is clear that the political sphere had a considerable influence on philosophical thought, it is also that the thought relating to philosophy and wisdom had an impact on that very same political sphere. The idea that political sphere stands somehow intact, from where we can understand the whole content of philosophy, strikes to me as unsound.

Conclusions on the Cultural Differences

To bring together the ideas of this chapter, I would conclude that Lloyd is right in the point that the two traditions differ quite considerably in their ways of persuasion and in the settings in which the philosophers worked. But maybe not so much in their basic questions that we would have to condemn it an impossibility to make comparisons between philosophical inquiries in two different cultures. It was Lloyd himself that pointed out that we shouldn't look into the *answers* that the philosophers gave, but the *questions* they were asking. And in my opinion, each one of the subject of this paper were trying to answer the following-like questions, and these are the questions I'm asking from each one. What is change? Why and how it occurs? Is change real? What is the place of change in human experience? What is the goal of human wisdom in a world that seems to change constantly? What kind of Unity is there under the world of seemingly plural entities? What is common and shared by all that is?

So while I in the next chapters concentrate on the question of Change, the reader should stay aware that my final goal is finding out what kind of monism and pluralism did the philosophers in concern promote

HERACLITUS

In this chapter I shall concentrate on Logos and the place of change in Heraclitus' thought and only touch briefly on the concept of elementary theory, due to the fact that none of the interpretations about this subject is entirely coherent. This is not to be taken as a criticism towards modern scholars working on Heraclitus, but as a sincere remark of the difficulties any hard-working scholar is ready to admit on this area of Heraclitus' thought. In my opinion Heraclitus' theory and view on change do provide some interesting, philosophical considerations. In the core of Heraclitus' thought lies one interesting concept, that of *Logos*, and a highly defined view of the place of change in the world.

I should note that I disagree with the assumption that the content of Heraclitus' *Logos* could be reduced to the mere elementary theory. This approach is way too technical and misses many of the Heraclitus' finer philosophical remarks.

This chapter should give evidence to my view on Heraclitus' thought. I'm going to defend the following claims: 1) *Logos* is Heraclitus' way of offering a path to finding Unity in the changing world of Many. His monism is a kind of epistemic monism in ontological plurality. Of course 'monism' and 'pluralism' are concepts that did not exist at Heraclitus' time, but they are nevertheless quite suitable to describe his philosophy. 2) *Logos* can not be reduced to the mere pattern in change, i.e. the element theory. The content of *Logos* is far wider than that.

These goals do not contradict the broad variety of modern interpretation on Heraclitus, but neither are they self-evident. The questions which I think are the key to understanding Heraclitus' thought are the following: There is plurality, but what kind of unity is there in the world? There seems to be regularities in the changes that take place in the world, what are these and why are there such? I will try to find out what are Heraclitus' answers to these questions.

Logos

Heraclitus was not the first to dwell in the problem of change and constancy in our world. He inherited some of the concepts from earlier thinkers, but his rigorous focus on change and its nature, had a deep influence on the thinkers to follow³⁰.

As an example of the influence of earlier thinkers on Heraclitus, is the concept that the *kosmos* is in a state of constant war between elementary opposites, which can be traced back to Anaximander. Unlike Anaximander, Heraclitus however, did not consider this to be wrong, but sees it as a normal state of events, something that is to be accepted as *Status quo*³¹. We will see that this tension is actually pivotal to the world-order.

Much can be said about the style of Heraclitus' work. It is intriguing and there one can feel the sense of something of a mystical quality. But for this work it is sufficient to say that it resembles the style of oracles and Wise Men³². Much more fascinating interpretation of stylistic choice of Heraclitus and the reasons behind it can be found in Graham's work³³. Graham says that Heraclitus' syntactic ambiguity is intentional and I agree with that, but I see Heraclitus' choice of style as more of suggestive, it calls the reader to ponder the things himself. In this sense the style itself carries important philosophical feature which can not be cut separate from his philosophical considerations.

The sense one gets in reading modern commentaries on Heraclitus, is the quintessential role that the majority of them give to *logos* in interpreting the remaining fragments. Although we do not know how much the fragments have altered during the centuries to follow or what was said in the material that did not survive to our days, it can be said that Heraclitus gave a special sense to

³⁰ Parmenides probably refers critically to his ideas on change in his work. See more, Coxon, p.18 and p.186-189

³¹ Guthrie, p.197-198, "Flux and *Logos* in Heraclitus", *The pre-Socratics*, 1996

³² Kahn, 1979, p.7

³³ Daniel W.Graham: "Heraclitus: Flux, Order, and Knowledge", *The Oxford Handbook of Presocratic Philosophy*

logos and used it in a very specific manner. For our purposes the following connotations are central; *Logos* can be said to refer to “what is said”, word, story, mathematical ratio, right reckoning, reasonable proportion³⁴.

But for us there is a special interest in Heraclitus’ original way of using this word; that as *logos*

1) describing the underlying unity of the world and 2) as a principle governing the change.

*”Of this logos which is always people prove to have no understanding, both before they hear [of?] it and when once they have heard it. For though all things come about according to this logos, (people) are as though they had no experience, though they experience such words and deeds as I set forth, marking off each thing according to its nature and pointing out how it is. But other people do not notice what they do when awake – just as they do not notice all the things they forget about when sleep.”*³⁵ (DK.1)

Catherine Osborne remarks that this fragment gives two meanings to *Logos*, first it is used in a sense 1) That all things take place in accordance with it, and 2) it is also something people hear, and yet fail to appreciate even when they have heard it³⁶. It can be added that Heraclitus does not consider people’s fallacy to be due to world’s constant change, but that of people’s inability to grasp the underlying message, the *Logos*³⁷.

So why is it that the common people are unable to catch this message, this *logos*. For Heraclitus himself it had to do with the very nature of this *logos*, for he says the following:

³⁴ Hussey, p.91, “Heraclitus”, The Cambridge Companion to early Greek Philosophy

³⁵ The translation is Hussey’s, 1999, p.92

³⁶ Osborne, 1997, p.97, “Heraclitus”, Routledge History of Philosophy, Volume 1, From the Beginning to Plato

³⁷ Graham, 2008, p.176

*”Latent structure (harmoniê) is master of visible structure”*³⁸. (DK.54)

Here we can see that for Heraclitus the fundamental structure is not evident from the visible events. So in a world of constant change there is a latent and profound structure and a right use of reason will reveal this structure to us³⁹.

Heraclitus strongly believes that people should pursue a right kind of reasoning, and that the results of doing so, would bring forth the universal rule that governs the world. If people are not using their rationality right, the results of their queries will not be truly universal and applicable to all.

*“Though the logos is shared, the many live as though they had a private source of understanding”*⁴⁰

For Heraclitus this is a grievous mistake. Nothing at all shall be achieved by relying to private opinions, they lead people astray. There should be a genuine way of reasoning (*Logos*) that would reveal the true structure of the world (also *Logos*)⁴¹. The way of reasoning should be *common to all*.

*”Those who speak with sense must rely on what is common to all, as a city must rely on its law, and with much greater reliance: for all the laws of men are nourished by one law, the divine law; for it has as much power as it wishes and is sufficient for all and is still left over.”*⁴² (DK.114)

Way of reasoning and its results can not be accepted to be varying from individual to another, but must reflect the universal rule that all things come according to. Heraclitus is really advocating the idea, that as well as the way of reasoning is common to all, so are the results that are gained through such an

³⁸ Hussey, 1999, p.91

³⁹ Ibid, p.93

⁴⁰ Hussey, 1999, p.92

⁴¹ This double-meaning of “*logos*” might seem difficult, but Heraclitus makes it obvious in which sense he is using the word on this occasion

⁴² Kirk, p.48

understanding; the way that the world functions⁴³. He does not ask us to believe just his word:

“When one listens, not to me but to the logos, it is wise to agree (homologeîn) that all things are one [hen panta].”⁴⁴ (DK.50)

So we should summarize what is Heraclitus’ *Logos* like. Some have suggested that it is at the same time the discourse of Heraclitus, the nature of language itself, the structure of the psyche and the universal principle in accordance with which all things come to pass⁴⁵. In my view, the most important aspect of *Logos* is the one that describes *Logos* as a rule or a law, by which all things come to pass. Therefore, *Logos* can be seen as the rule governing the constant change⁴⁶. In here, lies a striking resemblance to modern concept of *laws of nature*. While there is certainly a huge gap between the two concepts, and I do not wish to make the mistake of interpreting Heraclitus’ thought only through the concept of ‘pre-scientist’, I see this as a very essential feature of Heraclitus’ thought.

Another feature of *Logos* that is important, is the concept of *hen panta* that Heraclitus presents in his fragments: *“It is wise, listening not to me but to the report [Logos], to agree that all things are one.”⁴⁷ (DK.50)* and *“...: out of all things can be made a unity, and out of a unity, all things.”⁴⁸ (DK.10)*. This *hen panta* reflects the Unity Heraclitus is after.

It is no new conception that Heraclitus was trying to bridge monism and pluralism in his work, for even Plato hold this opinion. But how is Heraclitus to overcome the difficulties that one faces when trying to bridge monism and pluralism? His answer is, according to Kirk⁴⁹, that we should stress more the synthetic view to things, instead of the conventional analytic thinking, since synthetic view reveals the underlying unity. Kirk takes the following to say what

⁴³ Kahn, p.21-22

⁴⁴ Hussey, 1999, p.91

⁴⁵ Kahn, p.21-22

⁴⁶ Osborne, p.100

⁴⁷ Kahn, p.45

⁴⁸ Kirk, p.168

⁴⁹ Kirk, p.176-177

is Heraclitus' point: " 'from all things (i.e. the plural phenomenal world) one can understand a unifying connection; from this connexion, the single formula or Logos of all things, one is led to turn one's attention back to the many things which are so connected.' "⁵⁰ Here we can already see what I described as Heraclitus' ontological pluralism and epistemological monism, the Unity stands above the Many.

Heraclitus' philosophy is incomprehensible if we do not keep in mind that he held the idea that all change in the *kosmos* come to be because of the elementary battle of opposite forces. This concept of *kosmos* as a battleground for these forces was briefly touched in the beginning, but in order to understand Heraclitus' philosophy of change we must examine elements more thoroughly.

Opposites and the Element Theory

I already mentioned in the beginning that there is a huge variation in the interpretations of Heraclitus' thinking when it comes to regarding the place and nature of opposite forces, and even greater variation when the topic is his elementary theory of change. So I will keep this part rather short, since it is not even in the focus of my current work to settle out these controversial issues. Instead, I focus on the place that change occupies in Heraclitus' thought, rather than refining the technicalities of this issue, since there is no commonly accepted interpretation of it.

In the last chapter we came to the conclusion that for Heraclitus it was more fundamental to see the underlying connection in the plurality of things, rather than just the pluralities. He stressed the Unity over The Many. This same stressing on unity of seemingly plural entities can also be seen in Heraclitus' words on opposite elements.

⁵⁰ Kirk, p.178

*“War is common because the Logos that is the law of all becoming is a law of strife, of simultaneous opposite tensions.”*⁵¹(DK.80)

Here the two concepts are intertwined; strife (change in world) is due to the fact that there is a fundamental tension between the opposites. Without this built-in oppositionary nature of *kosmos*, there would be no change, as can be seen in Heraclitus’ fragment:

*“Even the barley-drink disintegrates if it is not moved.”*⁵²(DK.125)

The barley-drink was made out of barley, wine and melted cheese, and obviously such a drink would disintegrate, stagnate if not constantly stirred. What Heraclitus has in mind is that it is constitutive for our *kosmos* to be in constant change, without such a change, the world would be in a state of constant harmony (stagnation).⁵³

But Heraclitus turns it around; it is not only that there are opposite forces in our *kosmos*, but that there is hidden unity where the opposite nature of these forces is seen as relative and much is emphasized that we should concentrate our efforts in seeing the underlying harmony.

*“They do not understand how being at variance with itself it agrees: back-turning structure as of a bow or a lyre”*⁵⁴(DK.51)

So while these forces oppose each other, they nevertheless form a greater harmony. As Daniel W. Graham puts it: “They [opposites] are stages in a process of transition such that one goes from having one to having the other – and back again.”⁵⁵

⁵¹ Guthrie, p.198

⁵² Kirk, p.255

⁵³ Guthrie, p.200

⁵⁴ Graham, p.178

⁵⁵ Graham. p.175

When Heraclitus is describing his opposites in a *kosmos* level, it should be noted that this strife takes place also *within* particular objects⁵⁶. This kind of change is elemental to the being of that object, thing or a person. Change concerns the very *physis*, nature of that being. I will return to this point. While it is true that it might be right to assert that for Heraclitus there was a greater cycle in a *kosmos* level⁵⁷, it is also in Heraclitus interest to explain how and why individual beings and objects change.

There has been two interpretations on the relationship between opposites; other one saying that opposites form a reciprocal tension between each other, the other interpretation saying that they are the ends of oscillation; that all things vary on this scale⁵⁸. Wiggins on the other hand does not see big difference between these concepts, and even comes to the conclusion that these are co-existing views: "Heraclitus' theory of the world requires reciprocal tension if it is to accommodate substance; and it requires oscillation if it is to accommodate periodicity."⁵⁹

We are now ready to investigate the elemental theory of change in Heraclitus. As I noted previously, this is quite a controversial issue, but it does not need to blur the conclusion of this paper, since we are looking what is the place and nature of change in Heraclitus. In the following I shall refer mainly to Graham's interpretation of elemental change. It might be said that in earlier interpretations of Heraclitus there was reserved a pivotal place for the element of fire and this view has some support.

*"This world-order (kosmos), the same of all, no god or man did create, but it ever was and will be: everliving fire, kindling in measures and being quenched in measures"*⁶⁰ (DK.30)

⁵⁶ Graham, p.175

⁵⁷ Kahn has been a proponent of this view that believes that Heraclitus thought that the whole world burns, dies and reborns in cycles. The name of the concept is *ecpyrosis*, the great conflagration.

⁵⁸ The first view is held by Aristotle and Kirk, the second by Kahn

⁵⁹ Wiggins, p.20-21, "Heraclitus' conception of flux, fire and material persistence", *Language and Logos: Studies in ancient Greece philosophy presented to G.E.L. Owen*

⁶⁰ Graham, p.170,

On this fragment 'Fire' might not refer to one of the elements, but as a notion might be quite close to *Logos*⁶¹. In this fragment we can see the first hint of the possibility that changelessness (*kosmos* as sustaining world-order) and change (the image of constantly changing fire) are somehow intertwined. Fire could be chosen for this instance for its qualities; even though it seems to move without regularities, one can feel that it does have sense and rhythm of its own.

Nevertheless there are clearer passages in Heraclitus that show the interchangeability of seemingly oppositionary elements.

*"To souls it is death to become water, to water death to become earth, but from earth water is born, and from water soul"*⁶²(DK.36)

In interpreting this fragment it helps to know that soul is equated to the element of fire. So the elemental process goes from fire to water, from water to earth, and back to water from earth, and from water to fire. All these processes are reciprocal, it does not matter where one starts, it is always in this order that the change appears. Graham gives the following conclusion about the nature of elements: "... the constant transformations of matter seem to maintain the overall stability of the totality."⁶³ I agree here with Graham's interpretation, for it helps us to understand the notion that Heraclitus is probably best known for the later generations. This notion uses rivers to interlock the idea of change of matter and sustaining structures.

The Role and Place of Change in Heraclitus

Whatever we might make of Heraclitus' concept of change, there is one concept that has been attributed to Heraclitus and that he is known for. It is scheme of *panta rhei*, everything changes. This is a thought that Plato says Heraclitus

⁶¹ Kirk, p.403

⁶² Graham, p.172

⁶³ Graham, p.172

proposed⁶⁴ and it is the view that Heraclitus is best known for the later generations. It is quite questionable how right Plato's view on Heraclitus was on this issue, for these philosophers had a different orientation in their work. Heraclitus was not an epistemologist but more keen to explain change and its nature, although he had some demands on what could be said to hold true. As we saw in the logos-chapter, he held that the way of rationalizing should be universal, and that the order of the change is not itself under change, but "*..it ever was and will be.*".(DK.30)

Some of the studies in last century held the opinion that this view of constant flux is not what Heraclitus himself promoted. On the other hand, more recent research has come to the conclusion that this view does exist in Heraclitus' thought. Wiggins sees that there is really no problem in *panta rhei*, because there is sustainability in the changing world, this constancy is manifested in the law-likeness of the order of change⁶⁵, i.e. as constant *logos*. So it goes well to say that for Plato Heraclitus was a figure that modelled an instable world that nothing can be known of⁶⁶.

So what was Heraclitus' own idea of change and sustainability? For *panta rhei* itself appears in the fragments in slightly different way that it is discussed in the work of Plato.

*"As they step into the same rivers, other and still other waters flow upon them."*⁶⁷ (DK.12)

If Heraclitus was insisting that nothing is constant and everything is in a constant flux, why is he referring to *same rivers*? For surely they are not the same rivers if the waters in them have changed? He is not actually neglecting the sameness of the rivers, but takes it as given⁶⁸. It is the constant renewal that makes the form of an entity to be lasting, as long as there is the renewal of the

⁶⁴ Plato: Cratylus: 402

⁶⁵ Wiggins, p.24

⁶⁶ Guthrie, p.201

⁶⁷ Kahn, p.53

⁶⁸ Kahn, p.167

‘filling’. Without the constant flow of water, there would be no river. Graham goes on to exemplify:

”Heraclitus’s point is rather that different things (here: material components) can make up the same things (structures). Rivers, in fact, are long-lasting organizational states of transitory waters. The structure supervenes on the matter and outlasts it, attaining at least a relative permanence through its channelling of the ephemeral matter.”⁶⁹I see that Graham’s account on this subject is coherent with the content of Heraclitus’ fragments.

Heraclitus himself never said *panta rhei*, that everything changes, but that this is Plato’s interpretation of Heraclitus’ fr.12. Plato misses the point, for Heraclitus, permanency of structures (i.e. beings) is based on the constant change of their ‘filling’.

Conclusions on Heraclitus

In the end, I would like to ask, what were the questions Heraclitus was asking and whether the answers he gave, can be said to answer those questions.

Heraclitus naturally inherited some of the key interests and questions from earlier philosophers. A.A. Long gives a short account on what he sees as the modus of early Greek philosophy: “[to give] an account of all things that is (1) explanatory and systematic, (2) coherent and argumentative, (3) transformative, (4) educationally provocative, and (5) critical and unconventional”⁷⁰. In Long’s description, it was essentially in Pre-socratics interest to explain *all* things, that is the phenomena that take place in the world.

What then distinguished Heraclitus as a philosopher from his contemporaries?

Long says that Heraclitus gives as rational and systematic explanation as possible, he sees that his presentation is coherent, he wishes to wake people from their “private world” (i.e. individual beliefs, since rationality and truth are

⁶⁹ Graham, p.174

⁷⁰ Long, p.13, “The scope of early Greek philosophy”, The Cambridge Companion to early Greek Philosophy

universal), Heraclitus provokes thinking and that he is very critical on his predecessors views. I think that Long is mostly right in his description of the modus of Heraclitus, but this still does not give us the questions that Heraclitus was asking. I will shortly go through my view on Heraclitus, then provide some questions Heraclitus was asking and then go through the answers he gave for these questions.

In my opinion, Heraclitus was not satisfied with his predecessors wide scope of interests.

*“Learning many things does not teach noos. Else it would have taught Hesiod and Pythagoras, as well as Xenophanes and Hecataeus.”*⁷¹ (DK.40).

Heraclitus still sees that it is important to study these many things (DK.35)⁷², but that it is far more important to see the Unity than just The Many Things. *“Latent structure (harmoniê) is master of visible structure”*⁷³(DK54). The visible structure would be that of strife (DK.80)⁷⁴, war between opposite elements, but the latent, hidden structure is revealed to us: *“They do not understand how being at variance with itself it agrees: back-turning structure as of a bow or a lyre”*⁷⁵(DK.51).

Wisdom is the key element for Heraclitus in getting to understand this ‘hidden structure’: *“Wisdom is one thing: to know the will that steers all things through all”*⁷⁶(DK.41). In this fragment, Graham has chosen to use ‘will’ for *gnome*, whereas Kahn translates this as ‘plan’⁷⁷. In either case there lies a strain of cosmic god or higher intelligence⁷⁸, working in the world.

⁷¹ Graham, p.181 [tarkista tarkka sivu!]

⁷² DK.35: *“Men who love wisdom must be good inquirers into many things indeed”*, Kahn, p.33

⁷³ Hussey 1999, p.91

⁷⁴ DK.80: *“War is common because the Logos that is the law of all becoming is a law of strife, of simultaneous opposite tensions.”*, Guthrie, p.198

⁷⁵ Graham, p.178

⁷⁶ Graham, p.179

⁷⁷ Kahn, p.170

⁷⁸ Ibid. .p.171

In my view, we should not view these fragments literally, but understand that in Heraclitus' time, philosophers had not yet distanced thoroughly from the idea of Active Deity. So this reference to divine should be taken as ennobling, stylistic choice. In my opinion it is essential to understand that Heraclitus' language plays an important role in getting his message, *Logos*, through to the reader. So in the case of what is usually regarded as the first fragment, we should understand that Heraclitus is about to tell what is Wisdom:" *"Of this logos which is always people prove to have no understanding, both before they hear [of?] it and when once they have heard it."*⁷⁹ (DK.1). This *Logos* is not limited to that of just element-theory, but the reflects the whole content of Heraclitus' thought.

Heraclitus compares *Logos* to law in interesting ways, but we could say that both of the ideas on *Logos*, as the poetic word deriving inspiration from the divine and as the law, are still both important. It is interesting that another thinker in another culture was in the same shift from the Active Deity to the Universal Law. Lao Zi, whose ideas on *Dao* I will examine in his own chapter, has both connotations in his *Dao*.

What now were the questions of Heraclitus and how did he answer them? In the beginning I sketched few questions; There is plurality, but what kind of unity is there in the world? There seems to be regularities in the changes that take place in the world, what are these and why are there such?

For the first one Heraclitus' answer might go as the following: the underlying Unity is *Logos*. When man understands this One (*Logos*), man can understand The Many (plural entities). It seems to me that *Logos* can not be reduced to the mere pattern in change (the element theory), but should be understood in a more broader way; as a Heraclitus' genuine attempt to give an Account on All Things, that is in the lines of natural philosophy originating from Miletus⁸⁰. And while it is essential to give an account on All Things, "..., *distinguishing each according*

⁷⁹ Graham, p.92

⁸⁰ Ibid. .p.99

to its nature (physis) and telling how it is.”⁸¹ (DK.1), the real wisdom lies in understanding the Unity, *hen panta* (All things are One). So we should recognize the Many (plurality), but strive for The One (unity). When one understands *Logos* he can also understand the nature (*physis*) of each thing. To me it seems that Heraclitus is not making an ontological claim in his *hen panta*, but seeking a unifying understanding. For this reason I have described him in the beginning as ontological pluralist, but as an epistemic monist.

Now for the second question that I omitted to Heraclitus; There seems to be regularities in the changes that take place in the world, what are these and why are there such? The what-question is the simpler one; the regularities in the world are part of the cosmic play, where change starts from fire, then to earth, and then to water (sea). Then this elemental change is reversed; from water to earth, and from earth to fire. So in my opinion elemental theory is Heraclitus’ answer to his predecessors, it describes the regularity that lies in change.

The why-question is a bit trickier one. Why are there regularities in the change? Heraclitus is swinging between the idea of Active Deity as the one who ensures this regularity, and that of *Logos* as Law, according to which all things come to be; “.., for it has as much power as it wishes and is sufficient for all and is still left over.”⁸² (DK.114). This idea of the supreme law, that is above any mortal law, is very interesting. It reflects the shift from idea of Active Deity to that of Universal Law. As I mentioned, my goal is to compare these ideas of Deity and Law to the notions that Lao Zi

⁸¹ *ibid.*, p.98

⁸² Kirk, p.48

PARMENIDES

The dichotomy between One and The Many is considerably clearer in Parmenides than in the case of Heraclitus. But by no means is it simple by nature. In Parmenides fragments the One and The Many have their own Ways; The Way of Truth (*Aletheia*) opens an aspect to The One, and the Way of Seeming (*Doxa*) opens an aspect the world of The Many. This aspect-related thinking is close to what Lao Zi was promoting, as we shall see in the next chapter. For Lao Zi too the world can be attended as The One (monistic) or as the Many (pluralistic). But let us first see what is Parmenides' take on The One and The Many.

On the literature on Parmenides I find A.H. Coxon's studies as the most useful, since he is a modern scholar that comes with a general theory on Parmenides' thought. Other scholars have their strengths, but none of them is representing a coherent view on Parmenides' philosophy as a whole.

G.E.L. Owen concentrates very much on *esti* (what-is) and is in my opinion giving a very good proofs for his theory on this word. But to concentrate on one single word, which although is essential, disregards many of the features of Parmenides' philosophy. David Sedley hasn't come up with a book on the Parmenides' philosophy, but I hold his articles on the subject to be credible. Patricia Curd's *The Legacy of Parmenides* does have its merits, but this work stands against the standard modern interpretation and the ancient account on Parmenides. Alexander P.D. Mourelatos has written a book on Parmenides, but the weakness of his work lies in my opinion on the fact that it doesn't come up with a general theory on Parmenides' thought. As a scholar work it is of the first rate, but it is of little use for a philosopher looking for a general theory on Parmenides' philosophy.

For me the questions that Parmenides is asking and the ones I'm trying to find his answers are: What is reality like in its ultimate level, what is The Most Fundamental Reality like? Why do people think there is change?

When examining Parmenides, we see a change in the emphasis of philosophy. If for Heraclitus change was in the core of philosophizing, then for Parmenides it lies in the immobile heart of Being. These philosophers were even in ancient times understood to hold opposite conceptions of the nature of true reality; for Heraclitus change was real and this change had a pattern in it, namely *logos*. But for Parmenides, as we shall see, the whole concept of change is a grievous mistake of the mortals (i.e. common people or his predecessors⁸³), which shades the true nature of unchanging reality.

I noted in the previous chapter of the difficulties we face when investigating pre-Socratic thinkers. In the case of Parmenides the problems arise when we try to make a general view of his thinking. It is difficult to tell from the remaining material, what was the original relationship between the way of truth (*Aletheia*) and the way of seeming (*Doxa*). It has been estimated that the *Doxa*-part made up probably 2/3 of the whole work⁸⁴. Nevertheless, a very important part of Parmenides' thought, that of concerning *aletheia*, has been preserved in fragment 8. The ordering of the remaining fragments stands as an ongoing question, but in general, time has been more merciful on Parmenides' work than the other pre-Socratics⁸⁵.

It was seen in the chapter addressing the cultural differences, that in Greece it became a custom to give and demand rational arguments, probably due to the competitive nature of the philosophical schools. Parmenides doesn't name his adversaries and even himself talks of *aletheia*, as a Way of Persuasion⁸⁶, but it is clear that he does see his account to surpass those of his predecessors.

Parmenides does give arguments to support his views, but these are all pretty inconclusive. In my opinion, the main difference between Parmenides and Lao Zi, the subject of the next chapter, does not lie necessarily in the ways of persuasion, where one can find resemblances, but in their attitude towards those seeing the world as pluralistic. Both of them held that what-is can be approached

⁸³ Usually he refers to his predecessors, *physikoi*, the natural philosophers. See Coxon, p.18

⁸⁴ Gallop, p.21

⁸⁵ Gallop, p.30, see footnote

⁸⁶ *Modus* of adversiality can be seen if we hold the opinion that P. was criticizing his predecessors

in two different ways, although Parmenides seems to be more keen to make reservations on the Way of Seeming (*doxa*), which leads to pluralism.

The Journey

Parmenides' philosophy is written in allegorical prose, where a young man (*kouros*) is taken to a journey that leads him to the gates of Night and Day and through them. Here he meets goddess, who has a special reason for bringing *kouros* (young man) to her:

*"You must be informed of everything, both of the unmoved heart of persuasive reality and of the beliefs of mortals, which comprise no genuine conviction;.."*⁸⁷.(DK.1)

The fact that this gate of Night and Day is probably the gates of *tartarus*, lets one understand that the way to truth is somehow similar to anticipating death⁸⁸, for this gate is where man steps in to the divine world⁸⁹. Recently there has been a growing interest to Parmenides' mystical undertone and connections with mystical practices⁹⁰, but due to the limited space, I will not dwell in these issues, although they do deserve a careful examination of their own.

Goddess goes on to describing three routes to examine Being. One, that

*"..a thing is, and that it is not for not being, is the journey of persuasion,.."*⁹¹(DK.1).

This makes a demand for us when we speak of what-is; being for Parmenides is radical in the sense, that on this road, what is *is* and what is not, is *not*. This seemingly stupefying sentence comes as one of the cornerstones when

⁸⁷ Coxon, p.49-50

⁸⁸ Coxon, p.16

⁸⁹ Coxon, p.14

⁹⁰ Namely in Peter Kingsley: *In the Dark Places of Wisdom*, Golden Sufi Center Publishing, Inverness, CA, 1999

⁹¹ Coxon, p.52

Parmenides lays his philosophical argumentation about the illusionary nature of change.

The second route is one that states:

*“..,that a thing is not and that it must needs not be, this I tell you is a path wholly without report, for you can neither know what is not (for it is impossible) nor tell of it..”*⁹².(DK.1)

As can be seen, this second route is rejected by the goddess. The reason being that from this route there is no report, since one can not know what is not, and therefore there is nothing to tell⁹³.

We’ll see later on that Parmenides is quite rigorous when it comes down to the question what can be thought and what is approved as the subject for this thought. For Parmenides is in search of thinking that is *about* something, and thought concerning Nothing (a thing that is not) can be no genuine thought.

Third route that the goddess describes, goes in the lines that:

*”...on which mortals with no understanding stray two-headed, [...], people without judgement, by whom this has been accepted as both being and not being the same and not the same, and for all of whom their journey turns backward again.”*⁹⁴.(DK.1)

In here we can get the first glimpse why the opinions of mortals (i.e. common people or natural philosophers) stand wrong. Mortals think that we say or think something when we talk about something that at one point is and at another isn’t. For Parmenides this is not thinking with real objects since at some point these things are and at another they are not, their existence is not real. But why is it that Parmenides is calling mortals two-headed? It has to do with the number of substances they suppose to exist:

⁹² Coxon, p.52

⁹³ Coxon, p.173

⁹⁴ Coxon, p.54

”For they resolved to name two Forms (of which it is wrong to name only one, wherein men have gone astray),..”⁹⁵(DK.8)

Parmenides brings his arguments and stand-points in a bizarre pattern, but an ideal form to deductive argumentation was not given before Aristotle. But the passage arguments that it is wrong to see the world through two different elements, and this is the first sign of Parmenides’ metaphysical monism⁹⁶.

Aletheia

It was noted that the goddess points three possible routes to inquiry. She turns down two of these and

“Only one story is still left: that a thing is”⁹⁷(DK.7)

This route is called by the name *aletheia*, the Way of Truth. Parmenides sees that this route will lead to a genuine thought about and understanding of what-is⁹⁸.

The point of Parmenides is that since the objects of everyday life change and disappear (can be said to be and not-to-be at some point), they are not what *really* is. Parmenides is obsessed with finding this entity that can be said to exist, to really *be*, and major part of his survived fragments deals with what this entity is like. Parmenides doesn’t so much point out what that thing is, but does give some outlines what is it like. The fact that Parmenides gives only outlines for his *esti* (what-is, without a subject, open *is*), has lead to the huge variations

⁹⁵ Ibid. p.76

⁹⁶ This is nowadays somewhat controversial claim. Only a few deny that Parmenides is a monist, but there is a huge variety of concepts what kind of a monist he is. I follow Coxon (p.17), and to some extent Owen, other interpretations have fallacies, such as making dichotomies and relying on concepts in their interpretation that didn’t exist at Parmenides’ time. Also these interpretations do not go in line with the interpretations made in antique.

⁹⁷ Coxon, p.58

⁹⁸ Curd, p.24

in the opinions of modern scholars of what is the subject of this *esti*. Patricia Curd proposes in her work that Parmenides represents the view of predicational monism. She makes the point: "...that Parmenides was interested both in the criteria for a proper account of what-is – that is, the fundamental entity or entities in an account of *kosmos* – as well as in the metaphysical requirements any such entity must meet. Such an entity, after all, is the goal of the route of inquiry."⁹⁹

There is a lot that I can agree in that statement, namely Parmenides' interest on what-is and that he was interested in the metaphysical requirements that such an entity must meet. But I must say I disagree with the view that Parmenides was a firstly cosmologist and that his program could give rise to plurality, if we are to follow the guidelines represented in *aletheia*. Parmenides' program is much more philosophically refined than his predecessors', he literally pulls of the rug underneath them. For him their, the *physilogoi*, natural philosophers, mistake is of orientation, they took the illusions of the phenomenal world as their stepping stone. As we shall see, for Parmenides, the Most Fundamental Reality is itself unchanging. Since my interpretation of Parmenides is closer to standard interpretation, I shall mainly refer to Coxon, Sedley and Owen, and to lesser extent to Curd and Mourelatos.

Sedley points out that Parmenides is quite rigorous in his logic, to him there are no half-truths, no question can be answered yes *and* no¹⁰⁰. This leads him to abandon the concepts of mortals, where things change and disappear, and can therefore be attributed *is* and *is-not* in some time¹⁰¹. In fact, Parmenides favours pure reason over sense-data:

⁹⁹ Curd, p.67

¹⁰⁰ Sedley, p.115, "Parmenides and Melissus", The Cambridge Companion to early Greek Philosophy

¹⁰¹ We shall see later that Parmenides doesn't approve the reality of time and therefore his *esti* can not be changing

*”..let no habit do violence to you on the empirical way of exercising an unseeing eye and a noisy ear and tongue, but decide by discourse [i.e. by thinking] the controversial test enjoined by me.”*¹⁰²

(DK.7)

So the method of testing can be gathered as thus: what can be said to be, and thus the only object for thinking, is in Parmenides’ words:

*“...Being [what-is] is ungenerated and imperishable, entire, unique, unmoved and perfect;..”*¹⁰³.(DK.8)

For Parmenides Being cannot be born from not-Being, Being is not coming to be or perishing, Being is indivisible and there is no distinctions in Being (what-is).¹⁰⁴

Parmenides goes on in fragment 8 to prove his standpoint to a degree that had no equivalent in his days and he does give some arguments to support his views. It is clear that he is willing to defend his point:

*“Nor is it divisible, since it is all alike and not any more in degree in some respect, which might keep it from uniting, or any inferior, but is all full of Being.”*¹⁰⁵ (DK.8)

From this premise that all Being is uniform Parmenides deduces that Being is a single individual¹⁰⁶:

*“Therefore it is all united, for Being is adjacent to Being.”*¹⁰⁷ (DK.8)

¹⁰² Coxon, p. 58, and as a prove of abandoning the senses in favor of pure reason, Sedley, p.117

¹⁰³ Coxon, p.60

¹⁰⁴ Coxon, p.64

¹⁰⁵ coxon, p.66

¹⁰⁶ Coxon, p.203

¹⁰⁷ Coxon, p.66

It should be clarified that in the last passage above, Parmenides is refusing the idea that Being could be divided by something that is not-Being. And the reasoning for it goes in the lines:

*".., because it is not lawful that Being should be incomplete, for it is not defective, whereas Not-being would lack everything."*¹⁰⁸ (DK.8)

Here one can see the similarities between Parmenides and later rationalists, such as Descartes. From a concept of Being, is deduced the nature of Being. Being is *ungenerated and imperishable, entire, unique, unmoved and perfect*. Very often in the argumentation of Parmenides, first appears the premises, then the conclusion, after this appears a chain of assertions and with the help of these, the premises are attached to the conclusions¹⁰⁹. But this odd order of proving a point should not prevent us from seeing the depths of his metaphysics, for Parmenides has one more piece of shocking news, at least to his contemporaries:

*"And time is not nor will be another thing alongside Being,.."*¹¹⁰ (DK.8)

Time cannot be used to analyze reality for Being is changeless. It would be hard to come up with anything more shocking to his contemporary colleagues than this. Many of them, Heraclitus in particular, had taken change as a natural starting place for their philosophical inquiries. And now there appears a man that denies not only the plurality of entities, but also time which rests on their starting point, the concept of change. But Parmenides sticks it just a little bit deeper, in to the heart of the whole issue:

".., since this [Being] was bound by fate to be entire and changeless. Therefore all those things will be [nothing more than] a name, which mortals, confident that they are real, suppose to be coming to be and perishing, to be and not to be,

¹⁰⁸ Coxon, p.70

¹⁰⁹ Coxon, p.212

¹¹⁰ Coxon, p.70-72

*and to change their place and alter their bright aspect to dark and from dark to bright.”*¹¹¹(DK.8)

Parmenides now has what he perceives as The Most Ultimate Reality. It is ungenerated and unperishing , a single whole, unmoving, and perfect¹¹². In this most fundamental reality there is no time or change, Being is of one continuous substance, where no distinctions (into pluralities) can be made.

*“..; it never was nor will be, since it is now all together, one indivisible. For what parentage of it would you look for?”*¹¹³ (DK.8)

In this passage Parmenides is convincing us that he is really talking about the ultimate reality, the very thing that is the focus of his deep metaphysical considerations. It is somewhat surprising that Lao Zi uses almost the very same words, when insisting the reader to step to the abyss of The Most Fundamental Reality.¹¹⁴

But Parmenides does not possess the qualities of a die-hard sceptic, like his pupil Zeno did, but goes on to giving a positive account of things, from the pluralist view-point, starting from the premises closer to his contemporaries.

*“Therewith I put a stop for you to my reliable discourse and thought about reality; from this point learn human beliefs, hearing the deceptive composition of my verse.”*¹¹⁵ (DK.8)

While this account to follow is not entirely reliable, if at all, the goddess nevertheless presents it as the best *possible* one, concerning the common premise, that there are two elements working in the world. One should remember that in Parmenides’ opinion we shouldn’t really divide Being into

¹¹¹ Coxon, p.72-74

¹¹² Sedley, p.118

¹¹³ Coxon, p.62

¹¹⁴ I return to this at the Conclusions-chapter of this work

¹¹⁵ Coxon, p.76

parts¹¹⁶. Parmenides is then giving a response to his Ionian colleagues, the natural philosophers, even though he thinks their starting point is erroneous.

Doxa

Doxa, the way of seeming, occupies a disputed place in Parmenides' thought. Curd holds the opinion that the lesson of *doxa* "...is neither that cosmology is unacceptable, nor that, as an account of sense-experience, it has lesser value. Rather I argue that Parmenides supposes that his model in the *Doxa* would yield a rationally grounded cosmology if the basic entities of such a theory met the criteria of B8 (fr.8) for what-is."¹¹⁷

What is the weight that we should put on Parmenides' *doxa*? What was he after when he wanted to give an account on the lines of his predecessors (i.e. mortals)? What is the place of *doxa* in Parmenides' thought?

I see that Curd is partially neglecting the negative *modus* that Parmenides gives to this way of seeming. It is clear that much less credibility is led to The Way of Seeming, than to The Way of Truth. Mourelatos sees the goddess as saying: "You shall learn about truth, *and* about opinions; but nevertheless, you shall learn this also."¹¹⁸. So it must be that these two routes, *aletheia* and *doxa*, are *not* describing two parts of a single project, but are separated by the goddess herself to be of different credibility, when she moves from The Way of Truth to The Way of Seeming:

*"Therewith I put a stop for you to my reliable discourse and thought about reality; from this point learn human beliefs, hearing the deceptive composition of my verse."*¹¹⁹(DK.8)

¹¹⁶ Sedley, p.122-123

¹¹⁷ Curd, p.6

¹¹⁸ Mourelatos, p.209, in the footnote M. is saying that it doesn't matter that the single "this", poses no real problem for this interpretation

¹¹⁹ Coxon, p.76

Parmenides has already outlawed any kind of plurality in the ultimate level, what-is has already been described as a single kind. The lesson is obvious the goddess gives this (plural) account of things:

”..in order that no opinion of mortals may outstrip you.”¹²⁰(DK.8)

It is not on The Way of Truth, but on The Way of Seeming that this program is presented. One must come to the conclusion that this is the best *possible* cosmology that can be given in the lines of mortals¹²¹, in other words when we are forced to talk about change and therefore use plurality of entities¹²².

A.A.Long argues that we should understand that the focus of pre-Socratic philosophers was to give an account of “all things”¹²³. This means that these philosophers had not yet formed a common conception of what philosophy is; their interests varied from meteorological observations to religious speculation, from wisdom to the nature of the *kosmos*. So we could do well in taking Parmenides by his own words, what was the focus of *doxa*:

”You will know the aether’s origin, and likewise all the signs in the aether and the invisible deeds of the pure torch of the brilliant sun and whence they sprang;..”¹²⁴(DK.10)

And this is just a part of it; Parmenides goes on in the next fragment to explain:

“..how earth and sun and moon and universal aether and celestial galaxy and extreme Olympus and the stars’ hot power started to come into being.”¹²⁵(DK.10)

¹²⁰ Sedley, p.123

¹²¹ Sedley, p.123

¹²² I see it that Curd interprets P. in a light of atomists. I agree that they took the ‘verification of the entity’-part, i.e. were testing their ideas of the object of a genuine thought, that is unchanging and lasting, but in my opinion, stayed quite intact of other Parmenidean influences, such as his monism.

¹²³ Long, p.10-13

¹²⁴ Coxon, p. 80

¹²⁵ Coxon, p.82

Here is a clear sign that on *doxa* Parmenides was on a quest to give his own account of “all things” to his rivals. In *aletheia* Parmenides reveals his view that these accounts do not concern the ultimate reality, which is changeless, but he never the less starts his account in the way ‘if you want to discuss about this world offered by senses, here’s how to do it’.

As we have now a conception of the role and relationship between *aletheia* and *doxa*, I will shortly describe what parmenidean ‘physics’ is like as presented in *doxa*. As was noted, there are two kinds of substances in play, in the ‘beliefs of mortals’.

*“For they resolved to name two Forms (of which it is wrong to name only one, wherein men have gone astray), and they chose opposites in body and assigned them marks separate from one another, on the one hand aetherial fire of flame, being mild, immensely light, the same with itself in every direction but not the same as the other; that, on the other hand, being likewise in itself the opposites, unintelligent night, a dense and heavy body.”*¹²⁶(DK.8)

So Parmenides sees that in ‘physics’, one must see things through a dualistic order or elements; Fire being gentle, bright and self-identical, Night being unintelligent, dense and heavy. It is plausible that Parmenides’ starting-point for this dualistic order is Pythagorean, the difference being that he sees that Fire (brightness) is associated with femininity and Night (darkness) with masculinity¹²⁷. In my opinion it is interesting that Parmenides chose to envisage reason (or wisdom) in the form of a woman and with feminine attributes. Goddess is pointing to *aletheia* as a way of persuasion, “*for persuasion attends the truth*”. Even on this most crucial point of his philosophy (what is it that *is*), he withdraws from stating and urges us to use our own reason. This identifying of our highest capabilities with feminine virtues is just one of those little strings that attach Parmenides to Lao Zi, as we shall see in the next chapter.

But Parmenides has a little bit more to tell about these two Forms:

¹²⁶ Coxon, p.76-78

¹²⁷ Coxon, p.219

“Now since light and night have been given all names, and the names corresponding to their potencies have been given to these things and those, all is full of light and invisible night together, both of them equal, since in neither is there nothing.”¹²⁸ (DK.9)

Even if there are considerable gaps in the fragments concerning the *doxa*-part, we can nevertheless sum up the general features of Parmenides’ conception of ‘the best possible theory of Two-headed mortals’. Sensible objects and their properties can be analyzed through Two forms (elements), namely Night and Day. Even though they carry oppositional characteristics, they are equal. In none of the remaining fragments is Parmenides implying that one Form is higher in status or otherwise to be considered superior role in their exchange¹²⁹.

And what is the place for monism and pluralism in Parmenides’ thought?

“Thus, I say, according to belief these things originated and now are and in later times hereafter, having received their sustenance, will end. On them men bestowed a name to give its mark to each.”¹³⁰

Mourelatos holds the opinion that Parmenides is not holistic monist, but that his monism is essentially non-dualistic. He notices that in none of the extant fragments, is Parmenides using the word “many” to refer to plural entities¹³¹. But the fragment above makes it clear that pluralism is the focus of Parmenides’ attack; it is the fallacy of men to bestow names to entities that are coming-to-be and perishing away. And it is clear that this pluralism takes place in *doxa*, for this fragment talks in the lines that Parmenides has already outlawed in his *aletheia*, about the objects that are coming-to-be and passing-away. Those kind of entities are not real in Parmenides view, as seen in *aletheia*, but are merely illusionary appearances, whose value lies in their currency in everyday-life¹³².

¹²⁸ Coxon, p.84

¹²⁹ Coxon, p.233

¹³⁰ Coxon, p.92

¹³¹ Mourelatos, p.130-133

¹³² Coxon, p.256

For all of this, I would say that ‘holistic monism’ is a suitable term for Parmenides’ point, presented in *aletheia*.

I take the following to be a credible interpretation of Parmenides’ philosophy; *Aletheia* presents us the ultimate reality; changeless, timeless and monistic in nature. *Doxa* gives an account in the lines of his predecessors; world as changing, temporal and pluralistic. For Parmenides *Aletheia* reflects the more fundamental conception on the Being than *Doxa*, but *Doxa* can not be condemned as a hoax, it has some credibility, even though settling the degree of that credibility is difficult even for the goddess:

*“This order of things I declare to you to likely in its entirety, in such a way that never shall any mortal outstrip you in practical judgement.”*¹³³ (DK.8)

So while *doxa* is not wholly credible, it is still the best way of analyzing the Being from pluralistic point of view. Parmenides however insists that we consider the Being as a single whole without segregating or dividing of Being.

Conclusions On Parmenides

As we now have made observations on Parmenides concept of change and totality, it is time to ask in the lines of Lloyd, what were the questions that Parmenides was asking? Coxon sums up the questions as 1) What, if anything, can be said or thought to be, without any kind of possibility to deny its existence? i.e. What is that *is*? 2) What else can be said about this what-is? Can anything else be said about it?¹³⁴.

In the beginning of this chapter I gave the questions that Parmenides might have been asking. What is reality like in its ultimate level, what is The Most Fundamental Reality like? Why do people think there is change?

¹³³ Coxon, p.78

¹³⁴ Coxon, p.20

It is essential to remember that Parmenides project was influenced by his predecessors, whose goal was to give an account of “all things”.

In *aletheia* Parmenides goes on to describe his concept of what really exists, what is reality like in its ultimate level. As noted, this Being (what-is) is ungenerated, imperishable, timeless and a single whole. It is hard for me to see that this would be something else than holistic monism, that was disregarded by Mourelatos and Curd.

Secondly, on the Way of Seeming, Parmenides seems to give an account of “all things”, as response to his predecessors and contemporaries. He sees that in the majority of these systems, if not in all of them, there are two kinds of Forms (elements) in play, and this is the error they make and end up with a concept of a changing world. This critique fits well to Heraclitus who establishes his philosophy on the concept strife between opposite forces.

If *aletheia* presents Parmenides own view of truth, we must conclude that *doxa* does not receive as high credibility for Parmenides. Why was it then that he felt compelled to come up with this part? He had already drawn his bow, but he still needed to direct the arrow to its goal. Parmenides is literally pulling the rug beneath his opponent when he says that the change which was the starting point or the thing that needed explicating does not in reality exist. This in Parmenides view puts his philosophy in to higher regard than that of his predecessors. His system is not based on dualisms of any kind, and his objects of thought can not be said to come-into-being or perishing-away; he is thinking with *real* object, not with some everyday objects that in fact do not really exist.

It is as intriguing as it is speculative, to eschew Parmenides motif for his monism. Majority of modern researchers agree that Parmenides was entangled in mystic practices. To me these practices could seem to be firstly that of meditation, for he would not be the first one to end up with monistic views via these practices. But this line of thought is in serious need of extra-considerations. It is clear already in the philosophy of Parmenides that he is after

The Most Fundamental Reality. He is taken to a journey by goddess herself, he is envisaged the truth of divine kind, instead of mortal opinions. I would do very well in closing this chapter by a remark made by a scholar whose impact on the field of pre-Socratic thought have been tremendous: "Parmenides' logic must have seemed to him...a path beyond the limits of mortality. 'A mortal must think mortal, not immortal, thoughts', had been the common belief. And mortal thoughts never strike certainty; by common consent this was the privilege of the gods. Yet in his doctrine of Being, Parmenides found certitude and security such as no god could surpass."¹³⁵. This short passage from Gregory Vlastos goes well to highlight the focus of my interpretation of Parmenides; he really sees that he has attached a higher truth of what-is, exists than his contemporaries. His predecessors mistake was to analyze of what-is, via two forms, where Being itself is timeless, undivided single whole.

¹³⁵ .", Vlastos, Gregory, p.75: "Parmenides' Theory of Knowledge", (orig. *TAPA* 77 (1946)). Reprinted in *Studies in Greek Philosophy*

LAO ZI

Now that we have come to the last philosopher of this paper, we face different kinds of challenges than with Heraclitus and Parmenides. The main controversy is the existence of Lao Zi (literally Old Master) and his authorship of the *Dao De Jing*. It has been noted, by Victor H. Mair¹³⁶ and others, that Lao Zi's work carries many resemblances to Indian philosophy, and this has led some scholars to a view that the work itself, *Dao De Jing*, is a compilation of 'Sayings of the Old', influenced by Indian philosophy. Before briefly considering the evidence of Lao Zi's existence, I go through the standard story.

According to the legend Lao Zi's original name was Li Er and he was the head of the national library of the Zhou dynasty during 580-500 B.C.¹³⁷. Vast majority of Chinese scholars see that the basics of this account stand correct, among these scholars are Wang Keping, Guo Moruo, Ma Shulun, Ren Jiyu, Zhan Jianfeng and many others¹³⁸. For this view speaks the fact that Lao Zi is mentioned in *Shiji* (109-91 BC) which was written by Sima Qian. Wang also sees that the work has its own structure and logic, and that the language used dates to the late Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BC) and that some expressions carry resemblance to the language used in Warring State Period (mid 4th to early 3rd century B.C.), when it was modified¹³⁹.

The opinion that *De Dao Jing* is a compilation of originally oral proverbs is held by Naito Konan, Kimura Eiichi, Victor H. Mair and Michael LaFargue, among others¹⁴⁰. Csikszentmihalyi notes that Sima Qian uses very often expressions, such as 'some say', 'in general' and 'it is said', which gives an impression that he didn't have any first hand source on Lao Zi, but that he was going through

¹³⁶ See Mair, Victor, H.: Tao Te Ching

¹³⁷ Wang, p.4

¹³⁸ Wang, p.4

¹³⁹ Wang, p.5

¹⁴⁰ Csikszentmihalyi, p.4, "Introduction", Religious and Philosophical Aspects of the *Laozi*, (ed. Mark Csikszentmihalyi & Philip J. Ivanhoe)

the common folk-say. This interpretation does not, however, deny that there are interesting philosophical views in *Dao De Jing*.

The issue have been further clouded by the fact that there have been discoveries of the earlier versions of *Dao De Jing*. In 1973 a tomb was excavated in Mawangdui and inside was found the earliest complete version of *Dao De Jing*, which scientists dated to around 200 B.C.¹⁴¹ This version is quite similar to the traditional version of the book. But in 1993 there was a new finding in Guodian which scientists date to approximately 300 B.C.¹⁴² This version includes only 31 fragmentary chapters when current version has in total 81¹⁴³ chapters. It might be that there was a wider source, “various masters”-corpus for example, out of which the different versions of *Dao De Jing* were compiled¹⁴⁴. But it can also be the case that the material was copied from *Dao De Jing*, which could have existed already then¹⁴⁵. In either case, the traditional story stands correct and there really lived a person who was identified as Lao Zi or that the book is a compilation of oral sayings, even those regarding the text as a collection, hold the view that the oldest parts date to 550 B.C.¹⁴⁶

My take on this controversial issue is that *Dao De Jing* has several layers in it which were written at different times. I find it hard to believe that it would be written by one man alone, but this of course doesn't exclude the possibility that there really was a person identified as Lao Zi, who could have had followers who identified Lao Zi as the Master of their school. This school then came up with new material for what we now know as *Dao De Jing*. This school might have later then opposed the Confucian ideas prevailing at their time¹⁴⁷

I shall not dwell any longer on the new material found, since its meaning, significance and influence on interpretation is still under research by scholars. I

¹⁴¹ Wang, p.26

¹⁴² Allan, p.239, “*The Great One, Water, and The Laozi: New Light from Guodian*”, T'oung Pao, LXXXIX, 2003

¹⁴³ Csikszentmihalyi, p.5

¹⁴⁴ Csikszentmihalyi, p.10

¹⁴⁵ Allan, p.241-242

¹⁴⁶ Mair, the Cosmic Track, p. 16-18, also published 1990 as Mair's Tao Te Ching

¹⁴⁷ The *Dao De Jing* criticizes quite openly some of the Confucian ideas. See Slingerland p.81-82

nevertheless doubt that there is going to be any groundbreaking material that would alter the *whole* view on Lao Zi's thinking. Therefore I'm inclined to follow the traditional interpretation of the philosophy expressed in *De Dao Jing*, or to put it more accurately, the broad outlines of the traditional interpretation. I see that the text has a reasonable amount of coherence that it can be treated as a philosophical text, or that its coherence is *at least* the same regard as Heraclitus'. I do although see that there is a strong probability that the philosophy written down in *Dao De Jing* altered during the time, and personally I hold the opinion that the relationship between some of the key-concepts (*wu*, *you*, *Dao*, *De*) changed during the time. I will discuss on this view briefly later on in this work.

It is not only that the origin of the book remains a mystery, but the language itself gives possibilities to several interpretations. The differences between modern Chinese and ancient one are remarkable¹⁴⁸, also the meaning of the characters have changed during time and the book has been edited. The way of Lao Zi's writing is open to several interpretations and there one can find suggestive phrases as well as philosophical points which are suggestive in nature.

Now that we have considered the history of the work and its authorship, we can proceed to concern its content. Whether the work has one or several authors it has had an enormous impact on Chinese thought. This influence is due to the very deep philosophical considerations it includes, *De Dao Jing* discusses such topics as war, governing, ideal of a Sage and so on. In this work I shall concentrate more on the metaphysical and ontological aspects, and leave aside the more mundane aspects of *Dao De Jing*.

Some scholars have been eager to see the work either as a religious *or* philosophical in its orientation . I personally do not see such a split in interpretations as sensible¹⁴⁹, but I'm inclined to say that the language used

¹⁴⁸ Mair, the cosmic track, p.22

¹⁴⁹ This dividing into religious and philosophical readings of *DDJ* is in my opinion needless. *DDJ* has spiritual and philosophical ideas which are intertwined in interesting fashion.

contains some metaphors which I would call suggestive, a style that calls the reader to ponder things himself. It might also be that there is some references to meditative practices in the book, but straight references to these kind of a practices are quite few and shouldn't make it an impossibility to compare Lao Zi's work to that of Heraclitus and Parmenides, who them selves have similar kind of suggestive tone and could also have advocated the use of meditative practices of some sort.¹⁵⁰

Dao

The notion of *Dao* is central in order to understand Lao Zi's thinking, in a very same way that *Logos* is a key-concept to understand Heraclitus. In a similar way, both of these thinkers gave a new sense to the word, on which they were building their philosophical foundations on. Before Lao Zi, according to Tong Shuye¹⁵¹, the notion of *Dao* sprang from the notion of *ming* (fate¹⁵²), in the August and Spring period (770-476 B.C.). Since the idea of personal deities was somewhat discarded, thinkers started to come up with different kind of ideas and concepts regulating the world. The historical background in this sense was not that different from that of Heraclitus' and Parmenides' historical context.

What I'm trying to show in this chapter is that Lao Zi's *Dao* isn't a person or a thing with personal qualities, but it is the Law and the Source of the Most Profound Reality. We should also note that Lao Zi is cutting loose from the solely religious tradition of his time¹⁵³.

¹⁵⁰ Kingsley has examined these practices in Parmenides, but it might be that he is exaggerating these features(Kingsley: In the dark places of wisdom). Kahn on the other hand sees that it is probable that for Heraclitus the microcosm reflects the macrocosm, the world (Kahn, p.21). This could explain the Heraclitus' statement "I went in search of myself"(DK.101).

¹⁵¹ I'm forced to refer on this instance to Wang's book, since I didn't have an access to Tong's book. Wang, p.24-25

¹⁵² This *ming* could also be translated as "The *Dao* of Heaven". Lao Zi didn't himself come up with the concept of *Dao*, but gave it a new content.

¹⁵³ Robinet, p.149, : "The Diverse Interpretations of the *Laozi*", Religious and Philosophical Aspects of the *Laozi*

The character of *Dao* can be said to constitute of two different components, those being of head and leg. These characters together have been commonly interpreted to refer to walking¹⁵⁴. Also *Dao* can refer to a manner or course of doing¹⁵⁵. The most common translation for *Dao* is although The Way. "Way" is not a bad translation for the *Dao*, when we speak in the context of the Dao of Heaven, Dao of man, Dao of War etc. In all these instances Dao translates quite effortlessly as a 'way', for it emphasizes the connotations of Dao as a guide, or as a path we have to follow if we are willing to understand or master the nature of a phenomenon (i.e.war). But when 'Dao' is used alone, as it is in the most metaphysical chapters of DDJ, the notion of the way soon loses its practicality, for Dao has connotations that are hard to come by in western metaphysics. So what is this Dao?

Wang Keping has distinguished four meanings that can be found in *Dao De Jing*:

- 1) The proto-material or substance which constitutes the universe;
- 2) The potential driving force that creates all things
- 3) The underlying law related to the motion and development of all things; and
- 4) The standard or code with which to measure human conduct.¹⁵⁶

In this chapter concerning Lao Zi, I will nevertheless concentrate to Dao as a metaphysical concept. So while I will concentrate on 1, 2 and 3, the last meaning for Dao will get only a brief discussion. I must say that on Wang's 1) I would edit the word 'proto-material' out and concentrate to Dao as a substance. 'Proto-material' is not suitable, for Lao Zi does not talk about matter or about the birth of matter. In my view even talk of a substance can be somewhat misleading, due to the fact that this western concept has very much the connotations it became to carry in the hands of western philosophers (Spinoza for example), but 'substance' is a quite good notion as one meaning for *Dao*, but it has its short-comes as well.

¹⁵⁴ Tao Zhijian, p.114, "Dao, Logos and Différance", Tao: reception in East and West

¹⁵⁵ Hansen, p.191, Encyclopedia of Chinese Philosophy

¹⁵⁶ Wang, p.32

Substance is understood generally in philosophy as that which ‘stands under’ and is permanent by nature, in this sense ‘substance’ is a suitable term for *Dao*. But as said, there is no mention of matter in *Dao De Jing* and neither is *Dao* substance in a sense of carrying attributes. One could of course say something in the lines that *Dao* is the only real substance for Lao Zi since its permanent, whereas all the phenomenal beings are temporal. The issue whether ‘substance’ suits *Dao* as a description deserves a study of its own and can not be clarified in the limits of this paper.

I also have a little bit different opinion on 2), where I would replace ‘..that creates all things’. I would put it that ‘..that all things are born from’, since the *Dao* is referred to as Mother on chapter which deals *Dao* as the origin of all creatures. ‘Mother’ should here be understood as describing the nature of *Dao*, not as stating for some supreme being which is self-conscious.

“There was something undifferentiated and all-embracing, / Which existed before Heaven and Earth./ Soundless and formless, it depends on nothing external/ And stays inexhaustible.”¹⁵⁷
—

The nature of *Dao* was hard to explicate even for Lao Zi, but it is clear that *Dao* is not an entity with a personality, like that of Jahve. None of the scholars thinks that *Dao* would be an active, creative God.

In my opinion, Lao Zi opens his book with a discussion on The Most Fundamental Reality:

*“The Dao that can be told is not the constant Dao.
The name that can be named is not the constant Name.
The Being-without-form [Wu] is the origin of Heaven and Earth;
The Being-within-form [You] is the mother of myriad things.*

¹⁵⁷ Wang, p.231

Therefore it is always from the Being-without-form[Wu]

That the subtlety of the Dao can be contemplated;

Similarly it is always from the Being-within-form[You]

That the manifestation of Dao can be perceived.

These two have the same source but different names,

They both may be called deep and profound.

The Deepest and most profound

*Is the doorway to all subtleties.*¹⁵⁸

I have added the *wu*- and *you*-concepts on the chapter, for there we can find the most intriguing parts for this study. My first task is to show how these concepts (*wu* and *you*) can be understood to constitute the world as Inseparable One and as The Many. In the terms of western metaphysics, I'm trying to show that these two concepts come strikingly close to the notions of monism and pluralism. I'm going to defend a view that what Lao Zi is in fact saying, is that we can see the world as monistic or pluralistic, depending on the stand we take.

The meaning of the opening lines is a topic of its own, there are many studies on them and they diverge quite considerably. The two characteristics that should be brought from the opening lines are; 1) the *Dao* that Lao Zi wishes to discuss is not a casual object which can be spoken of. The *Dao* he wishes to discuss is not to be captured by language¹⁵⁹, and 2) the true *Dao* cannot be described in language, for language is not constant, unlike *Dao*. So it should be clear that the language cannot describe fully *Dao*, if at all. And that the "Name that can be named is not the constant name", where as what Lao Zi would like to talk about, is something that is constant in the changing world. But all this does not quite answer the question why is it that Lao Zi's *Dao* is inexpressible in language.

I see that the following quotation would be helpful in understanding Lao Zi's *Dao*:

¹⁵⁸ Wang, p.22

¹⁵⁹ Bo Mou, p.430-431, "Ultimate Concern and Language Engagement: a re-examination of the opening message of the *Dao-De-Jing*", *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 27:4 (December 2000)

”When the people of the world know the beautiful as beauty,/ There arises the recognition of the ugly./ When they know the good as good,/ There rises the recognition of the evil.”¹⁶⁰

From this we could gather that for Lao Zi the concepts are born together, they are equiprimordial. There can not be an attribute without its opposite, the sense of the word requires that we know what is its opposite¹⁶¹. But since *Dao* is the totality of things no description of it is possible on the language level. As I will show on this chapter The *Dao* is not dividable and since there can be no negative or positive attributes which would describe this totality of *Dao*.

Lately there has been a discussion whether we should investigate *Dao De Jing*, as a book primarily concerning the language engagement and language’s capabilities of making notions of the world¹⁶².

I would rather see that Lao Zi is making the point that he is after The Most Fundamental Reality, the *Dao*, which can not be thoroughly described in language, as seen in the beginning of the chapter above.

There really shouldn’t be any doubt that Lao Zi is speaking of the Most Fundamental Reality, something that we have to conceive if we are to understand the way things really are. *Dao* is transcendent in a way that if we are to pursue true understanding of the world, we have to realize *Dao*. This is crossing-point with Heraclitus, for him it was not *Dao*, but *Logos* that a man should understand. And for Parmenides it was the Truth, *Aletheia*, that world is One; indivisible unity/entity.

Next I will describe two aspects to *Dao*; as monistic, inseparable One, and as the origin of the beings.

¹⁶⁰ Wang, p.221

¹⁶¹ Wang is pretty much on the same lines with me here (p.104), as well as A.C.Graham: ”The trouble with words is not that they do not fit at all but they always fit imperfectly; they can help us towards the Way, but only if each formulation in its inadequacy is balanced by the opposite which diverges in the other direction.” p.219

¹⁶² See Hansen: A Daoist theory of Chinese thought : a philosophical interpretation

Wu:

In the opening chapter we can see that Lao Zi is saying that there are two ways to look the world. When we look the world in its *wu*-aspect (Being-without-form), “*the subtlety of the Dao can be contemplated*”. And when we look the world in its *you*-aspect (Being-within-form), “*the manifestation of Dao can be perceived*.” So, in my interpretation, *wu*-aspect is the one regarding the world as One, and *you*-aspect regarding the world as Many. So *wu* and *you* denote two aspects into *Dao*.

Which one is the more deeper, the view that comes first of the two?

“The Deepest and most profound/ Is the doorway to all subtleties”

The view held in chapter 1, states that *wu*-aspect is the deepest and the most profound, for in the first instance Lao Zi talks about *wu*, as where the subtlety of the Dao can be perceived and in the end of the chapter marks that this is the deepest and most profound.

Also Ch.1 includes a viewpoint, that:

“These two have the same source but different names”.

I would understand this in a way that their ‘source’ refers to the Most Ultimate Reality, *Dao*, that both *wu*- and *you*-aspects apprehend, but *wu*-aspect being the higher aspect to view the world.

In many of the chapters, Lao Zi is referring to Dao as empty. This shouldn’t be taken literally, but as to describe that on the ultimate level (Dao in its *wu*-aspect), there is no distinctions to be made in *Dao*. Like chapter 14 says:

“You look at it but cannot see it;

It is called the imageless.

You listen to it but cannot hear it;

It is called the soundless.

You touch it but cannot find it;

It is called the formless.

*These tree cannot be further inquired into,
For they are the inseparable One.”*

Why is it that we cannot say anything about the Dao in its monistic *wu*-aspect?

*“The One is not bright when it is up,
And not dark when it is down.
Infinite and indistinct, it cannot be named,
Thus reverting to a state of non-thingness.”*¹⁶³

So when Lao Zi wants to say that he is really talking about The Most Fundamental Reality, the reader must understand that this entity, *Dao* in its *wu*-aspect, is 1) inseparable One, 2) infinite and 3) indistinct. These are the features when we talk about the *Dao* in its *wu*-aspect. Furthermore, “*..,it [Dao] cannot be named,/ Thus reverting to a state of non-thingness.*”. Non-thingness should be understood in a way, that there are no individual things or beings, but that everything is in a state of not being distinct.

Also I should now point out that the concept “*These two have the same source but different names*”, is a conception that alters later in the book in a way that the *wu* is the origin of *you*-aspect and that *wu*-aspect can be attended by continuing *you*-aspect to the beginning of the Pluralistic world. I will come to this concept of reversing (*fan*) later on, but to conclude this part, I would like refer to Wang Keping to remind us what is the nature of *wu*-aspect: "The term 'non-thingness' (*wu*) does not mean that there is nothing at all. Instead it denotes a state of being without shape."¹⁶⁴ So Wu-aspect in its entirety attends the world which has no shape (individual beings or things), that something can be said of. It is the monistic aspect lacking any distinctions.

¹⁶³ Wang, p.225

¹⁶⁴ Wang, p.45

You

As I said, the relationship between *wu*- and *you*-aspects seems to alter in the latter chapters of the book. In the first chapter it is stated that they have the same source, but in the majority of latter chapters it is stated that *you* comes from *wu*, and that *wu* can be attended by reversing, which happens on the way of *you*.

Chapter 40 states:

*“All things under Heaven come from Being-within-form [you]. And Being-within-form comes from Being-without-form [wu].”*¹⁶⁵
—

So this chapter, as well as many of the latter ones, states that 1) All individual creatures can be seen to have a common beginning (*you*-aspect) and 2) the Common Beginning comes from where there is no distinctions to individual beings (*wu*-aspect). So now *Dao* has two meanings; in its *wu*-aspect it is the One, which is empty in a sense that there is no distinctions. In its *you*-aspect, it is the beginning of the phenomenal world, sometimes referred to as a Mother.

“There was a beginning of a universe,/ Which may be called the mother of the universe.

He who has found the mother,/ Thereby understands her sons;

*He who has understood the sons/ And still keeps to the mother/ Will be free from danger throughout his life.”*¹⁶⁶
—

When we see the world in its *you*-aspect (regarding it as plural entities, the Sons), the best that we can do, is to understand their common origin (the Mother). This idea includes the idea of *fan* (reversion), as the path to understanding the plural phenomenal world. Wang explains the content of *fan* (reversion):

“It is worth pointing out that Lao Zi, even though emphasizing the opposing interrelationship between things and the significant role of their transaction or

¹⁶⁵ Wang, p.238

¹⁶⁶ Wang, p.243

transformation, ultimately focuses on the idea of returning to the root as the final destination for all things.”¹⁶⁷

I disagree with Wang on this concept of *fan* (reversion). As I see it, in Lao Zi’s case this ‘reversion’ happens in man himself. There is no clear evidence that Lao Zi is advocating some form of ontological model where things return to where they originated, but this *fan* is primarily referring to man’s own process; it is that he should contemplate on mutual beginning (mother), and from there realize the pluralist creatures (sons). It might be that there is ‘a return to the Mother’ when beings die, but there just isn’t a chapter in *Dao De Jing* that would state this clearly, so I’m concentrating on this inward process.

The following chapter gives a better understanding what *fan* (reversion) is about as an inward process. Above Lao Zi advocated ‘finding the mother’, so how should we find this Mother, the common beginning?

*“Try the utmost to get the heart into complete vacuity./ Be sure to keep the mind in steadfast tranquility./ All things are growing and developing/ And I see thereby their cycles./ Though all things flourish with a myriad variations,/ Each one eventually returns to its roots.”*¹⁶⁸

Without getting tangled in the debate of how much *De Dao Jing* contains meditative aspect, it is clear that this journey is something that a man makes in himself (“*I see*”)¹⁶⁹. In that sense it comes close to Parmenides allegory of Journey. But what is the outcome of this inward process? Lao Zi continues:

*“He who knows eternal can embrace all./ He who embraces all can be impartial./ He who is impartial can be all-encompassing./ He who is all-encompassing can be at one with Heaven./ He who is at one with Heaven can be at one with the Dao.”*¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ Wang, p.57

¹⁶⁸ Wang, p.226

¹⁶⁹ Giving credibility to claim that this (*fan*) is a process that takes place inside man: chapters 10 (Wang, p.224), 47 (p.241) and 52 (p.243)

¹⁷⁰ Wang, p.227

So to understand impartiality of the Most Fundamental Reality is to become one with the *Dao*, and this means returning to ‘the root’ (*ben*). This returning is by no means a simple concept in *Dao De Jing*. In Returning (*fan*) one can find the following meaning¹⁷¹:

Man returns to the root in a sense that he understands the underlying unity of things, the *Dao* and how this *Dao* works. On the other hand, *fan* (reversion) also means that man will find his own essence (*ziran*, so-of-itself)¹⁷² at the root (*ben*). When he has found the ‘common origin’ he is capable of controlling the phenomena of a pluralistic world.

*“Hold on to the Dao of old,/ In order to harness present things./ From this you may know the primeval beginning./ This is called the law of Dao.”*¹⁷³

So when a man has realized *Dao*, he becomes to “be one with *Dao*”, but also he has capabilities to “harness present things”. In addition, when man models *Dao* (tries to work alongside with *Dao*), he is capable of controlling phenomena according to the way of *Dao*.

*“Does not the Dao of Heaven resemble the drawing of a bow?/ When the string is taut, press it down./ When it is low, raise it up./ When it is excessive, reduce it./ When it is insufficient, supplement it./ The Dao of Heaven reduces what ever is excessive/ And supplements whatever is insufficient.”*¹⁷⁴

Dao’s work is then one of balancing the excessive. In his action man should model the way *Dao* works, but he can control phenomena in another way too:

¹⁷¹ It could be argued that *fan* is used also when the emphasis is made to hold on to weakness or feminine as way to revitalize one. This goes in the lines of an idea that there is some cyclic motion that events move, from weak to strong and back to weak. But since I haven’t found any solid proof of this in *DDJ*, I’m treating *fan* as to refer to man’s inward journey to understand the *Dao*.

¹⁷² Su Che, p.145, Religious and Philosophical Aspects of the *Laozi*

¹⁷³ Wang, p.45, ‘law’ can also be translated as ‘foundation’, see Wang, p.46

¹⁷⁴ Wang, p.254

*“In order to contract it,/ It is necessary to expand it first./ In order to weaken it,/ It necessary to strengthen it first.”*¹⁷⁵

When man understands the way *Dao* works, he can take advantage of this also, by contradicting the normal way of doing things. When one can not *reduce the excessive*, he should do the contrary and enforce things until they naturally fall weaker because of the law of *Dao*. This is to take advantage of the ‘cycles’ things work; from weak to strong, from strong to weak. This idea is expressed also in a Chinese conception of *wu ji bi fan* (Inevitable reversal of the extreme)¹⁷⁶, where everything too excessive will naturally turn towards it’s opposite.

While capable of controlling affairs around him, it is not that a Sage has his own agenda his trying to accomplish thru *Dao*, but that he is imitating the way *Dao* works. Idea of this lack of personal agenda is highlighted in the notion of *wu-wei*.

*“The Dao invariably takes no action [wu-wei],/ And yet there is nothing left undone,/ If kings and lords are able to maintain it,/ All things will submit to them due to self-transformation.”*¹⁷⁷

‘Takes no action’ is widely used translation for *wu-wei*. The idea of *wu-wei*, does not mean that man shouldn’t do anything at all, but that his actions should not be against nature¹⁷⁸, or the *Dao*. And especially, his actions shouldn’t be against the nature of things, but let things fulfil their own nature (*De*), or to put it another way, to help everything achieve state of *ziran*, so-of-itself.

This nature (*De*) of each thing as it is, is referred to be calling it *ziran*.

Slingerland explains *ziran* as:”.., *Ziran* refers to the way a thing is when its action spring from its own internal Essence.”¹⁷⁹. So it is not that a man following *Dao* would be after his personal benefit, but he discards the irrelevant

¹⁷⁵ Wang, p.236

¹⁷⁶ Wang, p.57

¹⁷⁷ Wang, p.86

¹⁷⁸ Chan Wing-tsit: A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy, p.135

¹⁷⁹ Slingerland, p.97

and helps beings to attain their own nature (*De*), and thus is part of the workings of the *Dao*.

When something has achieved *ziran*, naturally so, it can be said to have attained its true nature, *De*. When man lets everything be, not forcing action upon them, he will be able to understand every beings nature, *De*.

De

In my opinion, *De*-part of *Dao De Jing*, seems to be a little bit separate from the rest of the material. In Guodian-slips which include the oldest fragmentary chapters (around 300 B.C.), concept of *De* doesn't occur nearly as often as in the current version. Only in four chapters out of twenty-eight is *de* mentioned, and in these, only two has *de* in focal point. Now it could be that when the Guodian-material reflects Confucian influences, the *de*-parts criticizing Confucian ideals are left of. Or that the *de*-parts of *Dao De Jing* came as an addition by the school regarding Lao Zi as their master. I'm inclined to think that the *De*-parts were written by latter Taoists, in reflection to Confucius' thinking. The reason why I hold this opinion is that it is evident that *Dao De Jing* has been supplemented through its history and reflects the thinking of those that identified themselves as Daoists.

The following interpretations for *De*, according to Wang Keping, stand as: 1) attributes of things in the physical world 2) functions of affairs in the human society, and 3) the virtue of a person in the course of the cultivation of his or her personality¹⁸⁰.

I'm not entirely happy with the clarity of that definition, but the notion of *De* that I'm inclined to use is very much on the same lines. What I'm trying to defend in this work, is that we incorporate notions 1) and 3), while the notion of *De* in societal affairs is not in the scope of this work.

¹⁸⁰ Wang, p.50

How then to incorporate these two interpretations for *De*? I think Mair comes close with his definition: “*Te [De]* represents self-nature or self-realization, only in relation to cosmos. It is in fact the actualization of the cosmic principle in the self. [...] Each creature, each object has a *te [de]* which is its own manifestation of the Tao [*Dao*].”¹⁸¹ The following quote gives credibility to Mair’s notion of *De*:

“*The Dao begets all beings,/ And De fosters them./ Substance [Dao] gives them physical forms,/ And the environment completes them.(...)Hence the Dao begets all beings,/ And De fosters them, rears them and develops them,/ Matures them and makes them bear fruit,/ Protects them and helps them breed.*”¹⁸²

In this chapter Lao Zi proposes his view that 1) All things have a common beginning, and 2) *De* is in charge for the way they develop. *De* is the instantiation of *Dao* in individual beings. *De* of each thing:” *De* is instantiation of *Dao* in plural entities. It is what makes everything as it is.”¹⁸³

So *De* makes everything as it is and is the nature that beings are to fulfil, when they fulfil their *De* they can be regarded as *ziran* (naturally-so or so-of-itself)

In this way the concept of *Dao-De*, repeats the hierarchy of *wu-you*. *Dao* as a unity stands higher than that of *De*, as manifestation in plural entities. “*Only when is Dao lost does De arise.*”¹⁸⁴ Although this chapter deals with the ethical connotation of *De*, it can be seen that we should concentrate on *Dao* rather than on *De* (here personal virtue).

As I see it, *Dao De Jing* is still stressing monistic aspect over the pluralistic aspect of things.

¹⁸¹ Mair, p.135

¹⁸² Wang, p.72-73

¹⁸³ Religious and Philosophical Aspects of the *Laozi*, p.21

¹⁸⁴ Wang, p.75-76, I have used the traditional translation for this part of the chapter, unlike Wang, for in my opinion it’s much more consistent with the rhythm and message of the chapter.

Conclusions on Lao Zi

I have suggested a view on Lao Zi's metaphysical thought that in my opinion is in the broad boundaries of traditional interpretation. *Dao* can be approached by two different aspects into Being; to see world as an undifferentiated One (*wu*, being-without-form/without distinctions) and as Many (*you*, being-within-form/with distinctions to different objects)¹⁸⁵.

Two things should be noted. *Dao* can be approached as an undifferentiated One or as the Many. In its pluralistic aspect '*Dao*' refers to the common beginning of our world (the Mother) as well to the fashion this *Dao* works.

*“Does not the Dao of Heaven resembles the drawing of a bow?/ When the string is taut, press it down./ When it is low, raise it up./ When it is excessive, reduce it./ When it is insufficient, supplement it./ The Dao of Heaven reduces what ever is excessive/ And supplements whatever is insufficient.”*¹⁸⁶

So when *Dao* is used in its sense of Law that works in the world, it seems that its fashion is one of balancing. This of course differs from Heraclitus' concept of *Logos* as strife. When both of these thinkers see a higher principle working in the world, they oppose each other on the question how this order works. If for Heraclitus balance in the world is maintained by two opposite forces, then for Lao Zi *Dao* itself levels the extremes. I shall continue on this topic at the end of my paper.

The last concept that we should pay attention on Lao Zi is *wu-wei*. This is the hard core of Lao Zi's philosophy and reflects the idea of man's place and mission in the world. I let David Loy to clear the concept of *wu-wei*, it is non-dual action where :”there is no bifurcation between subject and object: no

¹⁸⁵ Robinet sees that *Dao* can be approached by these two aspects, Religious and Philosophical Aspects of the *Laozi* p.133-134

¹⁸⁶ Wang, p.254

awareness of an agent that is believed to *do* the actions as being distinct from an objective action that is *done*.”¹⁸⁷

In *wu-wei* man is a part of the world and is working alongside the *Dao* to bring everything to work according to its nature (*De*). As Slingerland expresses it:”even for Laozi, however, this *wu-wei* is still not to be understood as a state of genuine passivity, but rather represents an ideal state of harmony with the cosmos that brings the personal efficacy and ultimately universal salvation.”¹⁸⁸. So when man has attained *Dao* he does not further his own agenda but is working alongside the *Dao*.

I have more to say of how Heraclitus, Parmenides and Lao Zi see wisdom and how to attain it in the later parts of this study. Previously I noted that the *De*-parts grow in number between Guodian-slips (c.300 B.C.) and Mawangdui material (c.200 B.C). In my opinion *De*-part systemizes and organizes ideas that are in *De Dao Jing* and tries to bring it to uniform description. Also the *De* that is advocated by the *Dao De Jing* is in juxtaposition to Confucian *De*¹⁸⁹. All this have lead me to believe that *Dao De Jing* should be regarded as a work of a school, identifying Lao Zi as their master. Another sign of a rich variety of writers, rather than a single man, is the fact that there are two concepts of *wu-you*-relation; other states that *wu* (being-without-form) and *you* (being-within-form) have the same source, other one stating that *wu* is the origin of *you*.

All this editing of the Masters sayings can be applied to Heraclitus and Parmenides as well. Heraclitus was re-interpreted by Stoics and Parmenides by the Elean school of thought. We have no way of sorting out the schools interpretation from the original message, but must settle for what have survived to us of these thinkers’ work.

¹⁸⁷ Slingerland, p.73

¹⁸⁸ Slingerland, p.77

¹⁸⁹ Slingerland, p.81-82

CONCLUSIONS

I should now bring together the vast material gone through so far. My aims are as follows:

1) To show that there are similarities between Heraclitus and Lao Zi when it comes to the pattern of change in the pluralistic world. Namely, there are parallels between the concepts held by them. For Heraclitus, the change is governed or has a pattern that can be called *Logos*. Similarly, for Lao Zi, the events in world exemplify the *Dao*, or are governed by the *Dao*.

2) To show that there are similarities between the monism held by Parmenides and Lao Zi. Both of them acknowledge that Being or world can be attended via monistic and pluralistic aspect, but that the aspect that attends it via monistic route, is the more substantial one.

3) To show that the differences between these three philosophers come in to play, when discussed about the question what kind of a **Unity** they see in the world

1) To show that there are interesting similarities between Heraclitus and Lao Zi when it comes to the pattern of change in the pluralistic world. Namely, there are resemblances between the concepts held by each one. For Heraclitus, the change is governed or has a pattern that can be called *Logos*. Similarly, for Lao Zi, the events in world exemplify the *Dao*, or are governed by the *Dao*.

There indeed are some resemblances between the notion of *Logos* and *Dao*, in its pluralistic form, as a law of change.

Heraclitus is in most studies considered to begin his work with a fragment describing the *Logos*

- I) as a pattern in change. "... *all things come to pass in accordance with this [Logos],...*"¹⁹⁰ Also we are reminded of the nature of this *Logos*
- II) as a law of change on different occasions. "*Wisdom is one thing: to know the will that steers all things through all.*"¹⁹¹ This will, is of course, the *Logos*.

III) We also find the law-likeness in this Logos:

"Those who speak with sense must rely on what is common to all, as a city must rely on its law, and with much greater reliance: for all the laws of men are nourished by one law, the divine law; for it has as much power as it wishes and is sufficient for all and is still left over."

¹⁹²

I showed in chapter on Heraclitus that *Logos* refers also to the pattern of change in world, and the 'elementary theory', is a part of the content of that *Logos*.

We can see similar kind of descriptions of Dao, in it's *you*-aspect, as a manifestation as order in change:

- I) As a pattern in change: "*Yet it is the Dao that initiates all things/ And brings them to completion.*"¹⁹³ [lisää ch tähän? Ja ero H:n, L:n välissä, dao synnyttäjänä ja lakina]
- II) As a law in change: "*The net of Heaven is large and vast,/ It lets nothing escape, despite its wide meshes.*"¹⁹⁴
- III) Dao as a law: "*Hold on to the Dao of old,/ In order to harness present things./ From this you may know the primeval beginning./ This is called the law of Dao.*"¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁰ (DK.1)Kahn, p.29, I have replaced Kahn's 'account' with the original word, *Logos*, for in my opinion this concept is so central to Heraclitus' thought and he uses it with so many different senses, which are intertwined, that it only blurs the understanding of his thought to find a fitting translation on every occasion. [Kahn, fr.I]

¹⁹¹ Graham, p.179

¹⁹² Kirk, p.48

¹⁹³ Wang, p.239

¹⁹⁴ Wang, p.253, Check also for p.159-160, that 'Heaven' on this occasion refers to *Dao* as the way things work

¹⁹⁵ Wang, p.45

Dao and *Logos* are compared to Law only few times, so the connotation should not be over-exaggerated. Heraclitus refers to *Logos* as a kind of Law in only few fragments and Lao Zi talks about the way *Dao* works, without a mention of Active Deities. Also on III) Lao Zi is advocating the idea that if one understands *Dao* one can gain understanding ‘of the present things’, but *Dao* is not itself a law of change. What still closes its to law, is that it is impersonal, there is no sign of personality. The turn from active deities to impersonal ‘rule’ is evident. “Heaven [Dao] detests what it detests. Who knows its cause?”¹⁹⁶

In my opinion it’s not far-fetched to think that both of the philosophers in question were forcing the metaphor of law or rule over active deities. As we can see from the above Lao Zi quotation, there is nothing to be gained by praying or scarifying for this impersonal Heaven, its rule is what it is.

For Heraclitus *Logos* described the way *kosmos* works. The *Logos* is the order that things come to be through, and man should understand this *Logos*. For Lao Zi “Dao begets all things, de brings them to completion.”[s.71, ch.51]. Man should return to Dao, here referred to as the Mother; “He who has found the mother,/ Thereby understands her sons;..”¹⁹⁷. So if Heraclitus claimed that one may know the true nature (*physis*) of things when he understands *Logos*, Lao Zi is making claims on the same lines; when you achieve *Dao* (mother) you will also understand the plural things of the world (sons).

It is impossible to tell, but I doubt that Lao Zi would have serious problems with Heraclitus’ *hen panta*, but the Unity they found are different. When for Heraclitus the knowledge of *logos* gives the understanding of Unity, Lao Zi seems to emphasize harmony with *Dao*¹⁹⁸.

What are the differences between Heraclitus and Lao Zi in deeper level? Lloyd describes the Greek culture as antagonistic and the Chinese culture as irenic. He was showcasing Heraclitus as an example of this, for Heraclitus said; “War is

¹⁹⁶ Wang, p.253

¹⁹⁷ Wang, p.243

¹⁹⁸ Roth talks about profound merging with *Dao* in Religious and Philosophical Aspects of the *Laozi*, p.72

common because the Logos that is the law of all becoming is a law of strife,..”¹⁹⁹. And when Lao Zi talks about the *Dao* he is talking about the Mother. All this would fit Lloyd’s characterization nicely, but both of these philosophers use the imagery of bow when talking about the harmony on the Most Fundamental Reality. Even for Heraclitus regardless of the strife between opposite elements, there is a deeper harmony: “*They do not apprehend how being at variance it agrees with itself: there is a connexion working in both directions, as in the bow or lyre.*”²⁰⁰

When Heraclitus sees that there is harmony under all the strife between elements, Lao Zi sees that *Dao* itself harmonizes, in the lines of *wu ji bi fan* (Inevitable reversal of the extreme):

“*Does not the Dao of Heaven resembles the drawing of a bow?/ When the string is taut, press it down./ When it is low, raise it up./ When it is excessive, reduce it./ When it is insufficient, supplement it./ The Dao of Heaven reduces whatever is excessive/ And supplements whatever is insufficient.*”²⁰¹

Here we can see that *Dao* is one who harmonizes and this is the conduct man should follow.

So the difference between Heraclitus and Lao Zi lies in that the other finds deeper harmony under the strife, and the other finds a balancing, harmonizing rule.

Another chapter that still blurs the issue even more, is that not all the time the underlying forces are emphatic towards man: “*Heaven and Earth are not humane./ They regard people as straw dogs./ The Sage is not humane./ He regards all people as straw dogs.*”²⁰²

Straw dogs refer to straw images of dogs used as sacrificial offerings at ceremonies such as those worshipping Heaven or praying for rain. So we can conclude that even there is some sense in Lloyd’s characterization of Greek as antagonist and Chinese as harmony-driven, this is conclusive.

¹⁹⁹ (DK.80) Guthrie, p.198

²⁰⁰ (DK.51), Kirk, 203

²⁰¹ Wang, p.254

²⁰² Wang, p.51

The value of these two thinkers does not lie in that Heraclitus and Lao Zi would have made a conclusive analysis of the pattern in change, but that they were among the first to come up with an impersonal concept that governs change and assures its regularity. Their concepts are nowhere near a modern day concept of Laws of Nature, but few strings attach these ideas, the Law is common, stable and truly universal. But of them hold that man should understand the way *Logos* or *Dao* works and then man be truly effective²⁰³, although for Lao Zi man should not be striving for his personal goals, as we saw in the notion of *wuwei*.

Logos and *Dao* can then be something that helps one to group different phenomena and see the underlying unity. *Logos* and *Dao* serve as concepts through which both of these thinkers emphasized the unity over the plurality, the One over The seemingly Many.

Dao has another features as well which overlap those of the *logos*, as we can see in the following when Lao Zi talks about *dao* in its monistic aspect.

2) To show that there are similarities between the monism held by Parmenides and Lao Zi. Both of them acknowledge that reality can be attended via monistic and pluralistic aspect, but that the aspect that attends it via monistic route, is the more substantial one.

As was shown on the Parmenides-chapter, Parmenides regarded his Way of Truth (*Aletheia*) as higher than The Way of Seeming (*Doxa*). The Most Fundamental Reality that was attended on *Aletheia* was monistic; “..*ungenerated and imperishable, entire, unique, unmoved and perfect.*”²⁰⁴

Although Lao Zi’s description of The Most Fundamental Reality that can be attended via *wu*-aspect

²⁰³ Kirk, p.403

²⁰⁴ (DK:??), Coxon, p.60

differ in words, it is still talking about the totality in which there is no distinctions: “*Infinite and indistinct, it cannot be named,..*”²⁰⁵ . Lao Zi is hesitant to give as much description of the One as Parmenides is willing to give, to Lao Zi language itself makes these distinctions which can not made on the ultimate level. *Dao* is the totality of things, no part of it can be named for then there would be distinctions. “*The Dao that can be told is not the constant Dao./ The name that can be named is not the constant Name.*”²⁰⁶ The standard interpretation is on the same lines with me here²⁰⁷, *Dao* as attended on *wu*-aspect, as totality, can not be reached through language. There is nothing to say in the world where there are no distinctions made on language level, but there is only One which stays undescribed.

The pluralistic route is investigated by Parmenides as well as Lao Zi. It is difficult to say how plausible Parmenides thinks his Way of Seeming (*Doxa*) is, but it is certain that it is not the level of Way of Truth (*Aletheia*): “*Therewith I put a stop for you to my reliable discourse and thought about reality; from this point learn human beliefs, hearing the deceptive composition of my verse.* [*doxa* follows]”²⁰⁸

Also Lao Zi’s perception was the same, his *wu*-aspect (being-without-form) the most deepest and profound way to attend the most fundamental reality:

“*Therefore it is always from the Being-without-form[Wu]/ That the subtlety of the Dao can be contemplated;/ Similarly it is always from the Being-within-form[You]/ That the manifestation of Dao can be perceived./ These two have the same source but different names, /They both may be called deep and profound./ The Deepest and most profound /Is the doorway to all subtleties.*”²⁰⁹

I have emphasized ‘subtlety’ and ‘subtleties’ so that reader can be convinced that the *wu*-aspect is higher than *you*-aspect.

²⁰⁵ Wang, p.225

²⁰⁶ Wang, p.22

²⁰⁷ Bo Mou, p.430-431

²⁰⁸ (DK??), Coxon, p.76

²⁰⁹ Wang, p.22

But to turn our attention to the pluralistic accounts by Parmenides and Lao Zi, can one find similarities in them? In my opinion yes, but this question should get a study of its own. My limited account on this question goes as follows. I mentioned that the *wu-you*-relation seems to change in the *Dao De Jing*; in the what is usually regarded as the first chapter, it is mentioned that the *wu* and *you* ‘have the same source’, but in the latter chapters it is mentioned that *you* (being-within-form) comes from *wu* (being-without-form)²¹⁰. As I explained in the Lao Zi-chapter, the concept of *fan* (reversion, return) would mean in the latter chapters that there is a way from plurality to monism.

I think that this is what compilers and arrangers of DDJ were actually asking when trying to systemize the work, is there a way from pluralism to monism? If one would return from Many Things to the Mother, the origin of all beings, would it mean that one would have achieved a state where there are no distinctions? And in my opinion they came to the opinion that it is possible, albeit what the first chapter says about the subject.

What about in the case of Parmenides, is there a way from pluralism to monism? *Kouros* is taken from the dark to light, and between the gates between journeys of night and day. This would mean that monism is somehow revealed to Parmenides on higher level, and Parmenides is really not holding back when he writes in verse to emphasize that the knowledge he has perceived stands above the normal knowledge . When the goddess tells about the ways of inquiry, she sees that the error lies in: “*For they resolved to name to Forms..*”²¹¹, elements that is and this led men to the error of considering everyday objects to be real. “*Therefore all those things will be [nothing more than] a name, which mortals, confident that they are real, suppose to be coming to be and perishing, to be and not to be, and to change their place and alter their bright aspect to dark and from dark to bright.*”²¹²

²¹⁰ “All things under Heaven come from Being-within-form [you]. And Being-within-form comes from Being-without-form [wu].”, Wang, p.238

²¹¹ (DK.8, 52), Coxon, p.76

²¹² (DK.8, 38-41), Coxon, p.72-74

Here we can see again that for Parmenides what really is, is not subject to change. The Way of Seeming is not assured to carry truth, but the goddess gives it nevertheless for the purpose “..that never shall any mortal outstrip you in practical judgement.”²¹³ Obviously ‘mortal’ should be understood as reference to the *physiologoi*, the natural philosophers for whom the changing world, outruled by Parmenides himself, was the main focus.

I don’t see that Parmenides is of the opinion that there is a way from The Many to The One, route from pluralism to monism. There could be the possibility that when *kouros* is taken to the goddess, he passes ‘the gates of the journeys of night and day’, and so surpasses from the dualist principles to the world of One²¹⁴, from dark to light. But none of the scholars have seen ‘the gates between journeys of night and day’ in this way and it unlikely that they have a relation to Parmenides’ Forms (elements).²¹⁵

So we have to conclude that for Parmenides there isn’t a straight way from the pluralistic aspect to the monistic aspect. Since the goddess begins her account on sorting out different basis for a survey on what-is, we see that these two ways (*Aletheia* and *Doxa*) to survey diverge from the beginning and hence we can safely say that they are separate aspects to what-is. These aspects reveal the world as the changeless world of One and the changing world of Many.

These two aspects in to the world are mentioned in the beginning of *Dao De Jing* and they are on the same lines with Parmenides; we can either see world being-without-form (*wu*) which leads to monism, or being-within-form (*you*) which leads to pluralism. Later on the work this concept changes so that the being-without-form is the origin of being-within-form, this of course would

²¹³ (DK.8, 60-61), Coxon, p.78

²¹⁴ For in favor of this idea it could be thought that thinking leads man from the dark world of Many to the world of One: “The mares that carry me kept conveying me as far as ever my *spirit* reached, once they had taken and set me on the goddesses’ way of much *discourse*, which carries through every stage straight onwards a man of *understanding*.”(DK.1, 1-4), Coxon, p.44

²¹⁵ Coxon thinks that the gates refers to gates of tartarus [viite] and so they have a connection to anticipating death [korjaa]. Of course man would gain sort of immortality, or understand that there is no death or birth when everything is in fact One; there is no coming-to-be or perishing-away, hence no birth or death.

mean that there is a route from the pluralistic account to attending the truly monistic world of One.

It would be interesting to compare the pluralistic accounts between Parmenides and Lao Zi, but Parmenides' *Doxa* has not survived to our times and what is left of it can not be suitable basis for a deeper study. Lao Zi and Parmenides could have agreed that in the world of Many, one can find two forms or opposite forces, but in *Dao De Jing* the yin-yang-parity is seldom mentioned, no extensive analysis is made on them or is there a clear description of other opposite elements, unlike Parmenides' night and day. There is however signs of *wu ji bi fan* (Inevitable reversal of the extreme) as was shown on part comparing Heraclitus' *Logos* and Lao Zi's *Dao*.

If one would insist that *Dao De Jing* has an ontological model which uses elements to describe change, I would point out that this is a possibility, but few things should be taken in to consideration. Firstly, the chapters that would be pointed for finding these elements on a ontological level would be in my opinion chapters 25, 40 and maybe 16²¹⁶. But as I went through different translations for these chapters I came to notice that there really isn't convincing evidence which would make it certain that these chapters should be regarded as showing an ontological model. There are mentions on other chapters on opposite elements, where usually the soft and feminine are advocated. But these chapters (43, 76, 78) deal with strategy in political-military context. Are they about ontology or strategy?

One could say that it's a strategy based on ontological model, i.e. man would imitating the workings of *Dao*. But I haven't found any solid ontological model that would be explicated clearly. This of course doesn't mean that there aren't tendencies in *DDJ* which could count as general features of ontology. That is *Dao* being soft, yielding, supportive, but that there just isn't that kind of

²¹⁶ look for Wang p. 42 for translation disagreements on ch.25. For ch.40 on Wang, p.55 and compare it to Mair, p.8. In my opinion *Dao* isn't an ontological object moving in the world, but that ch.40 should be understood as advocating the right path. Ch.16 is concentrating on what one should look from the meditative aspect, it's a chapter concentrating on the right way to 'see', not exhibiting ontological model.

element-theory on an ontological level which could make it easy to compare element-theories between Lao Zi and Pre-socratics.

3) To show that the differences between these three philosophers come in to play, when discussed about the question what kind of a **Unity** they see to hold on in the world.

For Heraclitus, it's mainly epistemic monism; one rule or law governs the world. But it is not that the content of *Logos* is that of elementary-order, also all things, the *physis* (nature) of them, can be deduced from one principle, *Logos*. This is what is meant by "..., *from all things one and from one all.*"²¹⁷

For Parmenides, it is evident that he sees his work to surpass those of his predecessors, the natural philosophers. In my opinion, Parmenides is a monist, who sees that to see world as pluralistic is a misconceptions held by the 'mortals'. In this account what-is, is *ungenerated and imperishable, entire, unique, unmoved and perfect*. Parmenides doesn't wholly condemn what he lays out in *doxa*, but sees that as *deceptive part of goddesses verse*.

Lao Zi also gives stronger emphasis on what may be called his monistic view. But he doesn't show any sign of contempt to a more pluralistic view, but sees that even in ontological plurality, there can be seen a epistemic monism, namely the Way in which the *Dao* works (the law of dao).

²¹⁷ Kahn, p.85, Kirk also p.?

The relationship between One & The Many and change

Since I have now laid out all my main points I should explicate what is the relationship between my key-concepts One & The Many and that of Change, and why they are chosen as the central point of focus. Heraclitus found the One in *Logos*; which is besides the poetic use of the word, the law which governs Change in the world of the Many. Parmenides is a monist, a firm believer in that everything is One, but goes on to give an analysis of the Change in the world of Many. Parmenides comes to the conclusion that to talk about Change requires two Forms, whose interaction creates the seemingly world of the Many. For Lao Zi the most fundamental reality can be seen by both routes; The One (*wu*) and The Many (*you*), but the one concentrating on the One is more profound. Change takes place in the world of The Many, where *Dao* can be attained as law that governs the Change. *Dao* can be attained also on the world of One, where it is just a name used to refer for this monistic entity.

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Dao & Logos

As said in the beginning, to compare *Dao* and *Logos* without giving an account of their cultural background would end in failure. But do these concepts have something in common? I would point out that both of them have a uniting feature that groups up the whole variety of phenomena under one concept. When one understands this concept, *Dao* or *Logos*, he is capable of understanding the manifold beings and their true nature (*physis* and *de*).

But are the terms that refer to the nature of each thing, *physis* and *de*, really talking about the same thing? Is there a shared understanding what this 'nature' of each thing means? When I first started to examine and to compare Chinese and Greek ideas on change, I thought that I would find similarities in the structures these philosophers used to understand change. In other words I thought that the comparison could be made on the level of element theories. This hope came to be short-lived.

The whole attitude on change was different; when Lao Zi inherited the natural, approving attitude towards change, his counterparts in Greece were battling on the right *arkhe* (element) which could explain the nature of change. More than that, there comes Parmenides to say that there really is no change, or time for that matter.

To understand really Lao Zi, Parmenides and Heraclitus, one should note that neither in China or in Greece was there anything close our modern concept of cause and effect. The real causes (*Aition*) were in Greece the nature (*physis*) of those things²¹⁸. This would mean that they were not looking for chains of causes and effects to understand phenomena, but looking to the nature of each thing for an explanation. This of course bears the question what is common for these natures of different beings? For Heraclitus unity was found on *Logos*; the nature of each thing could be deduced from this *Logos*. Parmenides then held the opinion that even to divide Being into beings is a error of his predecessors and contemporaries.

I consider it a possibility that the notes on *de* grew in *Dao De Jing* after the school regarding Lao Zi as their master, was confronted with those calling them Confucians. Confucians gave *de* a central place in their philosophy and emphasized virtue ethics, where man should cultivate his *de*²¹⁹. To fight this idea Lao Zi's heirs were advocating the idea of original, uncultivated *de*. For them the man to better himself would loose the original nature (*de*), and would be ceased to be called *ziran* (so-of-itself, naturally-so).

There is still a difference between Lao Zi's *De* and *physis* of Greeks. Lao Zi does not advocate any kind of a virtue ethics, but his message has ethical undertones. One should help every thing to fulfil their nature (*de*) and not do anything that is contrary to their nature. This is achieved when one has achieved understanding of *Dao* and how it works. *Dao* works namely in the way of *wu-*

²¹⁸ Lloyd, p.103-104

²¹⁹ Philip J. Ivanhoe: *The Concept of de ("Virtue") in the Laozi*. in Religious and philosophical aspects of the *Laozi* (edited by Mark Csikszentmihalyi and Philip J. Ivanhoe), State University of New York Press, Albany, U.S.A, 1999, p.247

wei. This *wu-wei* can be translated as ‘taking-no-action’ or ‘action that is not against the nature of things’, the content is that man should not be striving for his own benefits and goals, but letting everything fulfil their nature (*de*).

To compare *physis* and *de* would be essential in understanding the differences and similarities between the philosophies of ancient Greek and China.

Wisdom

I have already shown that all the three thinkers of this paper were keen to emphasize seeing unity under plurality, the differences lay what kind of unity were they after. Are there other concerns that they shared? In my opinion all of them were sceptical towards the knowledge perceived through senses.

Heraclitus was sceptical towards senses, but this was only because people could not understand the message underlying them²²⁰, the *Logos*. The knowledge of the *Logos* was to ‘understand the will that steers all things through all’ and understanding *hen panta*, all things are one.

Parmenides advocated also to judge by reason and for him the most fundamental reality was found beyond senses. He criticized the people whom thought things were coming-to-be and perishing-away, but went anyway to give an account in the lines of his predecessors, of the changing world given by the senses.

Lao Zi did not discard world offered by the senses, in it one could see the workings of the *Dao* taking place, but one could not find the higher level of *Dao* by mere looking:”*Without going out of the door/ One may know all-under-the-sky./ Without looking through the window/ One may know the Dao of*

²²⁰ ”*Eyes and ears are poor witnesses for men if their souls do not understand the language*”(DK.107), “*Whatever comes from sight, hearing, learning from experience: this I prefer.*”(DK:55), Kahn, p.106

Heaven.”²²¹. The *Dao* is to be found inside oneself²²². Its also probable that Heraclitus found his *Logos* from within:”*I went in search of myself.*”²²³

As for Parmenides we can not find this ‘going to self’, but his journey could easily be understood as a journey that happens in himself. At least this journey is not taking place in the world of the mortals: “*The mares that carry me kept conveying me as far as ever my spirit reached,..*”²²⁴.

As noted before, all these philosophers in question seemed to use rather suggestive language, in order to make the reader ponder the things himself. Heraclitus’ message was obscure on purpose, Lao Zi offers no proof for his philosophical considerations and Parmenides talks about his *Aletheia* as way of persuasion. To me this means that they did not defend their philosophies by referring to active deities, even though they still used these metaphorically, but were genuinely laying their work for an open assessment.

It is also interesting why Parmenides and Lao Zi chose to link their wisdom to feminine virtues. Lao Zi talks about *Dao* as mother and emphasizes that its nature is that of a nurturer. Parmenides’ goddess reflects the purest wisdom and her ways are that of persuasion. It is useful to know that some of the phrases in *Dao* refers to femininity in a very concrete way²²⁵.

The world of philosophy today

Why should these ancient philosophies be regarded by modern philosophy? First of all, there is popular conception that philosophy started with Plato and Aristotle. It is an old concept that Plato was trying to combine Heraclitus’

²²¹ Wang, p.122

²²² “*Block up the holes;/ Shut up the doors;/ And till the end of life there wil be no toil.*”, see Wang p.122-124 on Lao Zi’s relation to senses.

²²³ (DK.101), Kahn, p.41. See also Kahn p.21, where he states that its probable that Heraclitus found the law in the microcosm and then in the macrocosm.

²²⁴ Coxon, p.44, I have emphasized the ‘spirit’.

²²⁵ *xuan pin* (The subtle and profound female) used to describe the nature of *Dao*, refers to female sex organ in its concrete sense, see Wang, p.39-40

change and Parmenides' stability²²⁶. But in order to understand the importance of *Logos* for modern philosophy, one should understand how influential it has been.

There is a influential book which starts with the *Logos*: "In the beginning there was *Logos* and that *Logos* was God."²²⁷ The church-fathers, founders and editors of Christian faith were also influenced by the idea of *Logos*. For them individual *Logos* should reflect thoroughly the original *Logos*, God. So what lays in the western tradition, is the central concept of what is the goal of human existence; to know the *Logos*. For what started as the natural philosophers project and was later to become as the scientific approach, concentrated to the question what is the pattern of this constant change, the *Logos*] And likewise, for church-fathers it was essential that man's mind reflects the true reality, the *Logos*, the God. What ties these two approaches together is, that man's mind should reflect the *true* reality. This stands as well for Heraclitus, Parmenides, church fathers, and even today's physicists community, when it is trying to find the laws behind the changing world²²⁸. In my opinion studying Heraclitus and Parmenides would clarify the concept of representational so influential in western history. Maybe the natural philosophers would be tempted to ask from the physicists, *why* are these regularities, laws holding?

I began this work by citing a poem that is quotes by people that have the opinion that East and West are incompatible by nature and there can be no genuine understanding between them.

*Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the two shall meet,
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat;*

²²⁶ Long, p.17

²²⁷ The Gospel of John

²²⁸ It could be argued that the early Wittgenstein continues an essentially heraclitean project; Wittgenstein sees that we should give an account (*logos*) of the true structure (*logos*) of the world. Heidegger was interested in pre-Socratics and was also involved in translating Lao Zi to German. See Lin Ma: "Deciphering Heidegger's Connection with the *Daodejing*", *Asian Philosophy*, 16:3, 149-171 (*Asian Philosophy*, Vol. 16, No. 3, November 2006)

What I hope I have shown is that on the philosophical level there is shared, common ground when we take notice of the differences in the cultural background. The author of the aforementioned poem, Rudyard Kipling, did not however feel the way that is usually considered by those that quote his poem. He ends his poem in universal tone that I wish this work in its own part could promote.

*But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,
When two strong men stand face to face, tho' they come from the ends of
the earth.*

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-Rudyard Kipling: The Ballad of East and West

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