

Araştırma Makalesi  
Research Article

Prof. Dr. A. Kadir ÇÜÇEN

Uludağ University, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Department of Philosophy, Bursa-Turkey  
kadir@uludag.edu.tr

## Heideggerian Interpretation of Primordial Thinking in Heraclitus' Philosophy

### Abstract

The main aim of this presentation is to explain and analyse the primordial thinking structure of Heraclitus' philosophy according with the basis of German philosopher Martin Heidegger' philosophy, especially in the ontology of his interpretation of pre-Socratic philosophy. Heidegger holds that Anaximander, Parmenides, and Heraclitus were the only primordial thinkers because they thought the beginning, *Being*. These Pre-Socratics represent the most significant historical philosophical period because they asked the most primordial philosophical question, the question of Being, *Seinsfrage*. Rainer Martin calls Heidegger's understanding of the primordial thinking as *beginning* and non-primordial thinking as *inception*. At the Beginning of philosophy, there were many philosophers, but only a few of them thought "Beginn". Heidegger distinguishes these from the rest of the Greek philosophers. Heraclitus' thinking is presented in contrast to Parmenides' thought of Being. For Heraclitus, everything is in flux; so everything is becoming. For Heidegger, this distinction runs through the whole history of philosophy. However, Heidegger points out that the doctrine of becoming must not be interpreted at the same level with Darwinism because the contrast of becoming and Being is represented in Greek thought uniquely and self-sufficiently and not as in later thoughts. Heidegger maintains that although the distinction between Being and appearance is equally primordial with the distinction between Being and becoming, the connection has been inaccessible to us. Heidegger explains the distinction between Being and appearance in the following quotation: "At first sight the distinction seems clear. Being and appearance means: The real in contradistinction to the unreal, the authentic over against the inauthentic."

### Keywords

Heidegger, Being, Seinfrage, Primordial Thinking, Heraclitus.

I am very glad to be here and thank you very much who organized and supported this activity on Heraclitus of Ephesus. I am not specialized on the philosophy of Heraclitus, but, what I will do here I want to point out some ideas of German philosopher, Martin Heidegger. At my speech, I will talk about, firstly, how Heidegger wants to read pre-Socratic philosophy, especially Heraclitus. Secondly, I will try to make some comments on the concepts of Being, becoming and appearance. Thirdly I will talk about Heidegger's interpretation of *Physis* and *logos*. Fourthly, I will state how Heidegger explain his understanding of Being because for him, after Socrates, the philosophers till Nietzsche have forgotten the meaning of Being, but all of them talked about beings. Lastly, I will try to make a conclusion.

The purpose of this paper is to explore and analyse the primordial thinking structure of Heraclitus' philosophy according with the basis of German philosopher Martin Heidegger' philosophy, especially in the ontology of his interpretation of pre-Socratic philosophy. Heidegger asserts that Anaximander, Parmenides, and Heraclitus were the only primordial thinkers because they thought the beginning, *Being*. They represent the most significant historical philosophical period because they asked the most primordial philosophical question, the question of Being, *Seinsfrage*. At the Beginning of philosophy, there were many philosophers, but only a few of them thought "Beginn". Heidegger distinguishes these from the rest of the Greek philosophers.<sup>1</sup>

The distinction between Being and becoming lies in the opposition of Parmenides' philosophy to Heraclitus' philosophy. Being in the authentic sense resists every upsurge of becoming. Heidegger takes Parmenides' thinking of Being as an example of the concept of Being. "For being present it is entirely unique, unifying, united, gathering itself in itself from itself." (Heidegger 1962: 96).

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Heidegger maintains that although the distinction between Being and appearance is equally primordial with the distinction between Being and becoming, the connection has been inaccessible to us. Heidegger explains the distinction between Being and appearance in the following quotation: "At first sight the distinction seems clear. Being and appearance means: The real in contradistinction to the unreal, the authentic over against the inauthentic." (Heidegger 1962: 98).

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<sup>1</sup> See. Reiner 1992: 170-171. For Martin Reiner, Heidegger sees Pindar and Sophocles as the primordial Greek poets because they experienced Being. Among the German philosophers, Heidegger credits Leibniz, Schelling, Hegel and Nietzsche as being German philosophers; however among them, Heidegger sees Leibniz as 'one of the most German philosophers of the Germans.' Among the German poets, Heidegger chooses only Hölderlin who only thinks in Heraclitus and Parmenides sense.

In Greek ontology, *physis* and *logos* were considered in the unity of Being; Being is the peculiar togetherness of *physis* and *logos*. Heidegger sees this unity in Parmenides and Heraclitus' thought. At the beginning of the history of Being, Being opens itself out as emerging (*physis*) and unconcealment (*aletheia or logos*). (Heidegger 1982: 4). From this sense, Being reaches the formulation of presence in the sense of *ousia*. Furthermore, for the Greeks, Being was understood as the *zoon logon echon* as that living thing or traditionally translated as "rational animal". However, Heidegger maintains that this Greek understanding of Being which is the unity of *logos* and *physis* is essentially determined by the potentiality for discourse (*rede*). (Heidegger 1962: 47). As discourse, *logos* embraces both the concept of knowing and dialectic in the Platonic sense. Heidegger himself states that "Parmenides had already taken to guide him in his own interpretation of Being -has the Temporal structure of a pure 'making-present' of something." (Heidegger 1962: 48). For Heidegger the Greeks have conceived and interpreted Being as presence without any explicit knowledge and acquaintance with the fundamental ontological function of time, because "they take time itself as one entity among other entities." (Heidegger 1962: 48).

This naive understanding of time in its Being was interpreted differently by Plato, who separated the unity of *physis* and *logos* from Being, and he explained it in his theory of Ideas as being and as thing, or as permanent and as appearing, or as Ideas and as phenomena. Therefore, what Heidegger calls a discourse of Ancient ontology becomes dialectic in Plato's philosophy. Heidegger calls this turning from the discourse of Parmenides and Heraclitus to the dialectic of Plato as "a genuine philosophical embarrassment." (Heidegger 1962: 47).

In the Parmenides, Heidegger holds that "Being is the beginning" (Heidegger 1992: 7). and argues that philosophy begins with Being. In other words, the aim of philosophy is to grasp what Being truly is. In this sense, man philosophizes because philosophy is concerned with Being which is the source and ground of beings (*seiendes*). Philosophy, for Heidegger, is the dialogue between *Sein* and *Seiendes* because he says that "in distinction from the mastering of beings, the thinking of thinkers is the *thinking of Being*. Their thinking is a *retreating in face of Being*." (Heidegger 1992: 7). For this reason, the aim of philosophy is to distinguish Being from beings.

Since the beginning of Western thought the Being of beings emerges as what is alone worthy of thought. If we think this historic development in a truly historical way, then that in which the beginning of Western thought rests first becomes manifest: that in Greek antiquity the Being of beings becomes worthy of thought is the beginning of the West and it the hidden source of its destiny. (Heidegger 1984: 76).

We seek the determination of the matter of thinking in conversation with Heraclitus. (Heidegger & Fink 1979: 74). In the thinking of Heraclitus the Being (*presencing*) of beings appears as the laying that gathers. But this lightning-flash of Being remains forgotten. (Heidegger 1984: 76).

Truth as unhiddenness was forgotten later although ancient Greek philosophers, Parmenides and Heraclitus, experienced it as *logos*. Heidegger articulates the truth in his interpretation of the meaning of "*aletheia*" as it appears in some of the fragments of the

pre-Socratics. Heidegger tries to point out the connection between the concept of *aletheia* and of *logos* in order to develop an unthought dimension of the nature of truth (*aletheia*) as an unconcealedness. Western History interpreted the *logos* as ratio, verbum, cosmos law, reason and so forth. In contrast to these interpretations, Heidegger interprets *logos* in relation to the concept of "legein" as saying aloud: Even legein, for Heidegger, has more original meanings which are to "lay down and lay before." Further, these concepts are connected with "gathering" and "sheltering." *Logos*, as laying before are letting be, expresses a process of disclosure. In Being and Time, Heidegger provides an explication of the word "*aletheia*" in relation to *logos*. *Logos* is in itself and at the same time a revealing and a concealing. It is *aletheia*. Unconcealment needs concealment, *lethe* for Heidegger, *lethe* as concealment lies in *aletheia* but this is forgotten because of the common tendency to focus upon what is present.

What would have come to pass had Heraclitus—and all the Greeks after him—thought the essence of language expressly as *logos*, as the laying that gathers! Nothing less than this: the Greeks would have thought the essence of language from the essence of Being. (Heidegger & Fink 1979: 77).

I would like to conclude my presentation. For the Greeks, Being and truth mean the same (as in Parmenides), and they are discoveredness, disclosedness, or *aletheia*. In this sense of the truth of Being, Heidegger works out anew the question of Being and truth in a primordial way, and he does not take the concept of Being as present-at-hand (traditional interpretation) and truth as correspondence of the statement with its being<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> This paper has been presented at the conference on "Heraclitus of Ephesus and his Age". 7-12 October 2013, Selçuk-Turkey.



Prof. Dr. A. Kadir ÇÜÇEN

Uludağ Üniversitesi, Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi, Felsefe Bölümü, Bursa-Türkiye  
kadir@uludag.edu.tr

## Herakleitos Felsefesinde İlsel/Öncel Düşüncenin Heideggerci Bakış Açısıyla Yorumlanması

### Özet

Bu sununun amacı, Alman filozof Martin Heidegger'in felsefesinden özellikle Sokrates öncesi felsefede varlık anlayışına dayanarak Herakleitos'un düşüncesindeki önsel düşünme yapısını açıklamaktır. Heidegger, Anaximander, Parmenides ve Herakleitos'un Varlığı yani başlangıcı düşünen ilk ve en köklü/ilksel/öncel düşünürler olduğunu ileri sürer. Heidegger, tabii ki bunları diğer tüm Yunan düşünürlerden ayrı tutar. Sokrates öncesi düşünürler daha önemli tarihsel felsefi dönemi temsil ederler çünkü onlar hep ta en başlangıçta/kökende olan felsefi bir soruyu sorarlar, o da; Varlık sorusudur. *Seinfrage*. Reiner Martin, Heidegger'in kökensel/ilksel/öncel düşünme anlayışını *başlangıç ve başlayıcı* 'yda ilksel-olmayan düşünme diye adlandırır. Felsefenin ilk başlangıç aşamasında, tabii pek çok düşünür vardı ama onların sadece bir kaçı "Beginn" kavramı üzerinde durdular. Heidegger tabii ki bunları diğer tüm Yunan düşünürlerden ayrı tutar. Herakleitos'un düşüncesi Parmenides'in Varlık (Being) düşüncesine bir karşıt düşünce olarak sunulur. Herakleitos için, her şey bir oluş/akış içindedir ve böylece de her şey akmaktadır/olmaktadır. Heidegger için bu ayrım, felsefe tarihi süresince sürekli işlemiştir. Mamafih, Heidegger, oluş kuramı Darwinizmle aynı seviyede kesinlikle açıklanmamalıdır çünkü oluş ve Varlık arasındaki farklılık Yunan düşüncesinde daha sonraki düşüncelerde gözlenmediği şekliyle tek ve benzersiz olup, kendi kendini ifade edecek mahiyettedir. Heidegger, her ne kadar Varlık'la görünüş arasındaki ayrımı eşit bir biçimde Varlık ile oluş arasındaki fark ile bir ilksellik/öncellik olmasına rağmen aralarındaki ilişki bağı da bize anlaşılabilir gibi gelir. Heidegger Varlık ve görünüş arasındaki farkı aşağıdaki şekilde aktarır: "İlk bakışta aradaki fark açıkça gözükür. Varlık ve görünüş şu demektir: Gerçek olmayana karşı ayırmda gerçek; sahici/otantik olmayana karşın sahici/otantik olan."

### Anahtar Terimler

Heidegger, Varlık, Varlık Sorusu, İlsel/Öncel Düşünce, Herakleitos.

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