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Gods and people in literature and philosophy

God by the picture of human or human by the picture of god? Homeric vision of reality versus Heraclitus' vision of reality

Before philosophy was born, there was literature. Religious poets told of distant times when the gods were approachable to humans. Their fantasies were often mixed with old beliefs so that the divine-human world had as much wonder and eccentricity as horror. Homer created a kind of encyclopaedia for the Greeks, and Hesiod revealed the divine root of reality. When philosophy enters the arena of the Greek world, the glory of the poets fades. Was philosophy a better proposition for the ancient world? Was it an alternative to the religiously pluralistic society? And, finally, could it deliver something that the Olympian religion could not? These questions are bothering the researchers of antiquity because their resonance — in the form of the conflict between science and religion — does not disappear. If one assumes that philosophy is a field that supplants religion, then one needs to agree that in future this act will have consequences for the religion itself. Philosophy becomes the foundation for science. It explores reality but also intellectually enriches religion. When we ask about the world as it is, we cannot avoid the question of the nature of god, or his creator and guide. Intellect becomes an infallible arbitrator of human life in all its dimensions. Philosophy conquers not only minds but also hearts, to convey them towards the ideal, bearing in mind the unattainable model of the virtuous

man. Religion describes a god similar to humans; philosophy forges a new figure of man similar to a god.

The works of Homer transfer us to the world in which all the things and phenomena receive their rightful place. In this diverse world, there are many unexpected events and mysterious creatures that inspire awe or terror. His poetry is woven with the thread of worldly experience, but its colours come from the unlimited imagination of the author. Heroes dazzle the mortals, and sometimes even immortals. The latter ones, although endowed with supernatural powers, still fall victim to their own temptations. The greatness of a man is in rising above the level of humanity. Homer's dialectic shows a naturally limited human equipped with abilities which enable him to overcome all obstacles. In contrast to him, god is not exposed to suffering, labour-related hardships, or death. Immortals are enjoying their endless lives, although, as a result, they are mired in their own weaknesses. A mortal, even virtuous one, has to acknowledge gods superiority with due worship.

From the very beginning, philosophy has been contesting these views. It is enough to track the thought of Heraclitus, Empedocles, and the Pythagoreans to see their distinct vision of man and the world. The man-hero is capable of development. He is limited only by his ignorance. Ultimately, there emerges an opposition of knowledge and ignorance. Man can gain divinity. In these dialectics, man plays an important role, and god can only assist him in this journey to the lost paradise. This kind of thinking owes its emergence to the Orphics. Heraclitus discovers Logos. The Ephesian announces its omnipresence as a sage, but also as a priest and prophet. He convinces us that our life is tied to the truth about Logos — the Omnipresent Logos that directs, and rules all has a counterpart in every human psyche. Thanks to that, we are not only part of the cosmos, but we can also understand it, what elevates us to the level of divinity. The divinity of a man is found in his nature. Man, although not equal to Logos, bears a divine heritage.

Like god, like human. Homeric vision of the world

In the Homeric world, there is no place for what is absolutely mysterious and unknown. The latter could bring up the feeling of divinity that is synonymous with otherness. Homer established a certain model of reality philosophy could refer to: on the one hand, by affirming some of its elements and, on the other, criticising given gods' image on the other. That is how Kazimierz Banek writes about the meaning of the religion:

This type of image of gods did not appeal to all the Hellenes. The possibility of conducting individual research of divine subjects created propitious space for creating diverse theories, especially those directed towards declining anthropomorphism and polytheism. Religious tradition could not help in solving existential problems nor did it fulfil the need to “make a personal connection between human and god”¹.

Poetry delivers stories about the lives of mortals and immortals, placing them in a certain time and space².

The border between mortals and gods is clear. Although it is not totally blurred, it is somewhat permeable in its roots. The gods contact people, but they use this closeness to convey onto humans the miseries they want to get rid of. Divinity does not demand moral perfection but eternal happiness³. Therefore, gods get rid of the evil and misery by sending it down to earth⁴. As it is known, in the mythical understanding of the world, Zeus rules from his throne forever, while the mortal is subjected to the passage of time, which “overwhelms him” and, in the end, someone else takes his place. Although in poetry the difference between man and god

1 K. Banek, *Historia religii: religie niechrześcijańskie*, transl. P. Austin, Zakład Wydawniczy Nomos, Kraków 2007, p. 288.

2 W. Burkert, J. Raffan, *Greek Religion*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1985, p. 216–246.

3 J. Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death*, Clarendon Press Paperbacks, 1980, p. 145–203.

4 M. P. Nilsson, F. J. Fielden, *A History of Greek Religion*, 2nd ed., repr. Greenwood Press, Westport (Conn.) 1980, p. 134–179.

is exposed — they are divided by an impassable abyss — in fact, they have a lot in common.

God is mighty because, having supernatural powers, he can act in the world, even suspending the laws of nature. However, he cannot overpower the actions of gods more powerful than himself, nor the power of Moira⁵. The homeric project of a god is quite weak, but not because of a lack of sufficient powers, but rather because he is copying human nature. Divine beings are equipped with human senses. They are often held hostage to their own desires and lust. Although Homer does not know what the ideals of freedom and free will are, his immortal constructs resemble power-hungry people following their desires to widen their field of influence. They are enslaved by the will of revenge, sexuality, and power. The object of their desire can be both earthly and heavenly. Gods are not perfect, but they are superior to man, meaning that human fate depends on their favour or aversion. This is evidenced in the *Iliad*, for example, as Pryam's words testify:

“neither be left here to be a bane to us and to our children after us”. So they said, but Priam spake, and called Helen to him: “Come hither, dear child, and sit before me, that thou mayest see thy former lord and thy kinsfolk and thy people—thou art nowise to blame in my eyes; it is the gods, methinks, that are to blame, who roused against me the tearful war of the Achaeans”⁶.

And prayers of both Achaia and Trojans:

“Father Zeus, that rulest from Ida, most glorious, most great, whichever of the twain it be that brought these troubles upon both peoples, grant that he may die and enter the house of Hades, whereas to us there may come

5 F.M. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy. A Study in the Origins of Western Speculation*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1992, p. 12–16.

6 Homer, *The Iliad*, transl. A. T. Murray, William Heinemann, London, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1924, p. 160–165, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3AAtext%3A1999.01.0134%3Abook%3D3>.

friendship and oaths of faith". So spake they, and great Hector of the flashing helm shook the helmet⁷.

This prayer emphasises the real rule of Zeus, his power to turn fate. The mortal heroes of Homer are beautiful and great thanks to their bravery. Their world is admirable so that sometimes some of them themselves seem to be equal to gods. Paris, the noble spouse of Helen with beautiful locks", wearing beautiful armour, called divine by his enemy Menelaus, is, in fact, dependent on Olympic beings. Only death that comes upon the brave warriors makes us think about the limit of human power⁸. Gods can suspend commonly accepted laws and change the course of action with their powerful decisions. Aphrodite opposes the natural course of action and saves Paris:

This he then tossed with a swing into the company of the well-greaved Achaeans, and his trusty comrades gathered it up; but himself he sprang back again, eager to slay his foe with spear of bronze. But him Aphrodite snatched up, full easily as a goddess may, and shrouded him in thick mist, and set him down in his fragrant, vaulted chamber, and herself went to summon Helen⁹.

He has to become invisible for a moment so that the change of his place of stay can occur. On the battlefield, where the fate of the mortals is at stake, Homer crates images which testify to the wonderfulness and supernatural power of gods able to suspend commonly applicable rules of the world. With the help of those images, he creates faith that a god can imperceptibly carry away and lift to the skies his chosen ones. For the gods have their favourites. They favour them even at the cost of exposure to the wrath of other gods. The world of the Olympic gods is full of violence, sensual love and conflicts. Do they think particular gods really are present in a place in the sense that human beings are? The concept of prayer implies that the

7 Homer, *The Iliad*, transl. A. T. Murray, p. 320–325.

8 J. Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death*, p. 143.

9 Homer, *The Iliad*, transl. A. T. Murray, p. 320–322.

gods can be present anywhere at will, or at least that they can hear and attend to their worshippers over vast stretches of space¹⁰. However, Homer upholds our belief that their life is full of happiness. All of these things that happen to gods can be treated as adventures that add a certain flavour to an endlessly ongoing life.

Homer cannot differentiate *bios* from *zoe*. Eternal life in the form of *zoe* must have its significant quality like that of a *bios*. Otherwise, immovable gods stuck in the skies would not have been authentic. “The immortals” are made to human measure, but they are filled with wonder. The wonder is to enchant listeners’ imagination¹¹. The magic gods can do is not only impossible in the human world, but also unnecessary. Hera gives the ability to speak to Achilles’s horse and hastens the sun to set¹². Despite all these wonders, gods do not inspire respect because of their impulsive actions and frauds caused by passionate affairs or anger at the violation of laws and their will¹³. Homer’s poetry affects with powerful, colourful images, stimulates feelings, but suggests a ready image of the world, including the idea of divinity within it¹⁴. Homer also uses Middle Eastern motifs when he wants to show figures of the deities and their place of living. Olympus is patterned on the Canaanite myth and the presence of god is often accompanied by an aura of bright light¹⁵. Another trace of Middle Eastern sources in Homer’s work can be found in the very attitude of the gods. This testifies to the widespread imaginaries about gods having their prototype in man. The seated position of gods during councils resembles the position of Mesopotamian and Ugaritic gods. Cornford takes an interesting take on this issue: he states that the (Olympian and mystical) type of religion and its idea of divinity may have

10 E. Kearns, *The Gods in the Homeric epics*, in: *The Cambridge Companion to Homer*, ed. R. Fowler, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 62–63 (Cambridge Companions to Literature).

11 R. Flacelière, *A Literary History of Greece*, Taylor and Francis, Somerset 2008, p. 46.

12 Homer, *Iliad*, XVIII, eds. D. B. Monro, Th. W. Allen, Oxford University Press, 1920, p. 181–246 (Oxford Classical Texts).

13 K. Banek, *Mistycy i bezbożnicy: przełom religijny VI–V w. p.n.e. w Grecji*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2007, p. 19.

14 R. Flacelière, *A Literary History of Greece*, p. 47–48.

15 M. L. West, *The East Face of Helicon. West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1997, p. 221–226.

emerged from two different experiences. We owe the creation of personal gods to collective experiences. In the sphere of Greek polytheism, referred to as a conglomerate, we are yet to consider two types of gods: the Mystery god and the Olympian god. Mystery gods are from tip to toe daimons of human collectives, while Olympian gods have their daimon rooted in the local area, which is distinguishable from their worshippers¹⁶.

Differences between gods and humans

Undeniably, the life of Homeric gods is similar to that of human beings except for two traits: gods enjoy uninterrupted eternal life and are given supernatural power. Gods act in the heavenly and earthly spheres. They argue with each other about their own or human fate. However, gods do not form a democratic government, but rather a monarchy. The model for this monarchy is the Middle Eastern custom of a feast: a practice of a common banquet, which arrived in Greece a century later. In this imaginary, the human sphere is considerably separated from the divine. Time works to the disadvantage of humans because the abyss that separates humans and gods enlarges with time. Thus, the vision of humans in the distant past was similar to how the life of gods was imagined. The mortals were in a much better situation than they are now; people lived alongside gods. Over time, man has lost the eternal youth that the gods still have. Gods know much more than people because of their supernatural power and the authority they exercise. People are much lower in the hierarchy of beings than gods when it comes to the cognition, because of their limited competence. They do not have power, authority, or knowledge. According to the Greek and Middle Eastern myths, as people, we have been condemned to the necessity of hard work and enduring the hardships of everyday life¹⁷. According to Homer, what elevates a man in human society is his birth, thanks to which he can afford heroic deeds.

16 F. M. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy*, p. 110–113.

17 M. L. West, *The East Face of Helicon*, p. 107–120.

Heroes are beings that sit between humans and gods

One can look at the works of Homer from the perspective of an emerging cultural pattern. The poet composes a song in order to proclaim the acts of great heroes and praise their merits. The battling sides create a specific background to show the greatness of a man endowed with many virtues. Although violated matrimonial laws were the pretext for the war, and the war itself became a revenge on the Trojans, it is in this war that the glory of human beings shines brightly. Heroes are, after all, a distinct kind of mortal beings. First of all, they are gods' chosen ones, and thus they occupy a higher position than average mortals. Secondly, their acts are exceptionally great because they are driven by nobility and bravery. The heroes do not have to be crystalline in their morals. Homer shows them in their human, defective nature. After all, they are selfish, proud and oftentimes they disregard gods' laws.

The always provisional nature of authority is a fundamental feature of both Homeric poems. It lies behind both the dispute between Achilles and Agamemnon in the *Iliad*, and also the implicit approval bestowed upon Odysseus' ability to extricate himself from potentially threatening situations by tricks and deceit¹⁸.

One might infer that it is bravery that elevates them to the pedestal of fame, but the question of heroes is more complicated in Homer's works. Gods love heroes and protect them because they are beautiful, able-bodied, and cunning in fraud, which makes them successful in their actions.

One can say that, before the god's interference in the life of a hero, there is some kind of a heavenly element in his character and life goal. Heroes are somewhat related to gods by birth. Hesiod's story of the four stages of humankind explains it best:

18 R. Osborne, *Homer's Society*, in: *The Cambridge Companion to Homer*, p. 213.

Although Homer never contextualizes the heroic generation in such a schematic way, his portrayal reflects the same sense of their place in the decline of mankind. For Homer as for Hesiod these warriors are *hēmītheōn genos andrōn*, “the race of men who are half-gods”, often by the literal fact of divine parentage but more generally because they stand at an intermediate stage between the gods’ infinite vitality and the sickly feebleness of modern man¹⁹.

Wisdom as the key to divine and human nature

Logos, as understood by Heraclitus, is the core of his teaching. Everything that is, is being directed by Logos, and all reality has a specific nature thanks to the existence of the Logos. In the world of Homer, everything had its designated place. Moiras towering over everything, guided all hierarchical reality to the right ending. Everything that happened, happened accordingly to the fate. That is why pre-unity can be found in old beliefs, and its far echoes can be found in Homer’s works, and in the philosophy of Heraclitus it takes on a new expression. Firstly, it should be noted that the Logos is the Highest Intelligence, Law and Divine Reason, and as a rule of opposites — it is also a god. This god is everything; by combining all opposites, he is then wholeness and perfection²⁰. One can agree with Kazimierz Mrówka that he was pulled out of Olympus in order to take over the entire cosmos²¹. The Logos is the guarantor and the rule of unity. According to Heraclitus, man has a special place because, experiencing Logos — harmony, he finds it also in himself. *ἐδίζησάμην ἑμειωτόν I have sought for myself* (B 101)²². Logos influences the quality of human life, because by living in the human psyche as an individual Logos, it gives rise to a life

19 M. Clarke, *Manhood and Heroism*, in: *The Cambridge Companion to Homer*, p. 79.

20 W. W. Jaeger, E. S. Robinson, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers. The Gifford Lectures, 1936*, Reprint Clarendon Press, Oxford 1947, p. 116–120, 125–127.

21 K. Mrówka, *Heraklit: fragmenty. Nowy przekład i komentarz*, Scholar, Warszawa 2004, p. 210.

22 Plutarchus, *Adversus Colotem*, 20, 118 c (196 Pohlenz), https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Fragments_of_Heraclitus#Fragment_101. Greek originals from: *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, griechisch und deutsch von H. Diels, hrsg. von W. Kranz, vol. 1–3, Dublin–Zürich 1968.

consistent with the operations of the Logos in the external dimension. In another sense, one can say that the Logos is the law of the reality it creates and directs, because the world maintains proper ratios, and relations between things are accorded with Logos. Then, one can speculate that Logos of the human soul works in a similar way. Rationality manifests itself through thoughts and statements about reality as it is. However, this does not exhaust all traits of rationality because rationality is a life compatible with cognition. Having discovered Common Logos as a cosmic rule and immanent god of the world directing everything, Logos of the soul can only submit to that godly law if it acts reasonably. In accordance with the philosopher's thought, the world gains full integration of its elements through Logos — Reason and Intelligence.

Man, as a microcosm, can also submit to this reasonable action of integration by firstly identifying Logos within himself. This divine principle is radically different from earthly things and even beings. God ceases to be a copy of man and appears as a model of perfection, different from what is known and experienced. Divinity does not mean endless but limited existence (as it was in Homer's writing). Homeric gods are enjoying only immutable conditions despite the passing of time, unlike all other beings. Heraclitean Logos is not perfect by separation from the rest of the reality it directs, nor by gaining immortality during its existence. It is as eternal as eternal is the world in which it immanently exists, although the world does not cover it fully. Wojciech Wrotkowski cites the famous excerpt B 30, where we get to know that fire grasps everything, and that is why reality is, in its essence, harmony and order.

Κόσμον τόνδε, τόν αὐτόν ἀπάντων, οὔτε τις Θεῶν, οὔτε ἀνθρώπων
ἐποίησεν, ἀλλ' ἦν αἰεὶ καὶ ἔστιν καὶ ἔσται πῦρ ἀείζων, ἀπτόμενον μέτρα καὶ
ἀποσβεννύμενον μέτρα.

The world, the same for all, that neither any god nor any man has made; but it has always been and is and will be, fire ever-living, kindling in measures and being extinguished by measure²³.

The unity of the universe encompasses the total space-time and has a divine character²⁴. Without wishing to impute Pythagorean views, one could say that divinity is contained in harmony: both spatial and temporal. Eternity is not static but dynamic, in a constant passage from the present to the future.

the maxim B30 (1) understands in a ceaselessly “material” aspect (πῦρ αἰζῶον) the unity of the god-universe, taken “hylozoistically”; and (2) pronounces “space-time totality”, as you would put it today (ἀεί), that grasps in itself the very same order in universe (κόσμος), spreading to (2a) all the past (ἦν), (2β) all the present or mundane (ἔστι) and (2γ) all the future (ἔσται, B30; as above)²⁵.

Fire has to impose a rhythm because it is the originator of the order, then it is a law, according to which everything goes with a proper ratio²⁶.

The first step: knowing thyself. The turn towards individual Logos

Heraclitus’ sentence transmitted by Plutarch alludes to the Delphi invocation: Know thyself. Heraclitus forestalls philosophy’s interest in human.

23 Clemens Alexandrinus, *Stromata*, V, 14, 104, 2–3, vide lut., Plutarch, *De animae procreatione in Timaeo*, 1014 A6–9; see W. Wrotkowski, *Αἰών. Wieczność w teologii Heraklita*, “Przegląd Filozoficzny. Nowa Seria” 16 (2007) no. 1, p. 22; source of English translation: <http://www.heraclitusfragments.com/B30/notes.html>, excerpt on the website from J. Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, Routledge, 1982.

24 Ch. H. Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 135–137.

25 W. Wrotkowski, *Wieczność w teologii Heraklita*, p. 22.

26 J. Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 1920, p. 179–181.

The Ephesian thinker anticipates Socrates because he answers to Delphi's call²⁷. This is not only an answer of a religious man who wants to be obedient to a god, but also the answer of a philosopher who does not have any authority except for reason²⁸. Heraclitus shows symptoms of being an introvert and solitary, but above all he points to the *psyche* and her cognitive abilities. In the search for oneself, there is a way up and a way down, the path, at the end of which Logos is revealed to man. Accordingly: like the Logos, it is universal, accessible to man, but undiscovered and invisible, the way human is accessible to himself, but undiscovered and invisible. Looking for oneself will remain a specific philosophical attitude for centuries. The consciousness, in fact — self-consciousness, is a condition for a happy life after death.

You will not find the boundaries of soul by travelling in any direction, so deep is the measure of it. (B 45)²⁹

ψυχῆς ἐστι λόγος ἑαυτὸν αὔξων

To the soul, belongs the self-multiplying Logos. (B 115)³⁰

A fundamental question arises: What is Logos in the human *psyche*? Can it be associated with intellectual abilities? Does deep human Logos testify to the unlimitedness of what is limiting, giving things and phenomena the right measure? Let us start with the fact that, for Heraclitus, *psyche* was a physical substance (atmospheric exhalation or steam) which,

27 K. Mrówka, *Heraklit: fragmenty*, p. 281.

28 K. Mrówka, *Heraklit: fragmenty*, p. 280.

29 Diogenes Laertius, IX, 7 (440), source: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Fragments_of_Heraclitus#Fragment_101, source of the excerpt on the website: J. Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 1920, p. 152. Online: Page:Early Greek philosophy by John Burnet, 3rd edition, 1920. djvu/152 — Wikisource, the free online library.

30 Stobaeus, *Florilegium*, III, 1, 180 (III, 130 Hense), source: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Fragments_of_Heraclitus#Fragment_101, source of the excerpt on the website: J. Hastings et al., *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 6, 1908, p. 593. Online: Encyclopædia of religion and ethics: Hastings, James, 1852–1922. n 82058769: Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming: Internet Archive.

like the entire cosmos, is submitted to the laws of Logos. Therefore, it takes part in the natural cycle of Fire transformations. It can be then treated like other things that abide by the rules of Logos (having its limited amount and proper ratio) if not the fact that it has far (and even undefined) borders, because it has Logos. *Psyche* then cannot be one of the many things. Heraclitus uses here a term *peirata psyche*, which refers to a mythical image from Homer's and Hesiod's poems.

We owe the later development of philosophy to the thought of Heraclitus. Parmenides of Elea creates metaphysics that is not only a continuation of Xenophanes's idea, but rather a reaction to Heraclitus' work³¹. The teaching of the Ephesian is a material fully open to interpretations of different kinds and even to a critique from those who see the divine Logos from another perspective. It is, finally, the ability to express oneself — the ability to speak. However, thinking and speaking do not exhaust the human Logos. Human Logos can also enable human to the acts that go in accordance with thought and words. Just like common Logos directs the world, so Logos of the psyche directs human actions.

Of course such a grave role of the term *Logos* makes it the prime term in Heraclitean philosophy. For it is on it that human cognition is based, the theory of oneness and opposites finds its solution in it, also Heraclitean imagination of god and divine fire is identified with it. Finally, the mystery of the structure of eternal, ever-changing cosmos, together with its human dimension — microcosm, lies within it. In other words, Logos "directs" life of a human (because a Logos of his soul is in a way a part of divine Logos), the life of state and society (because human laws have their beginning in one, divine Law — vide B114) and the fate of whole universe. Material substance for universe is fire, endowed with immanent steering its power³².

31 Vide E. Zeller, *Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy*, Longmans, Green, London 1886, p. 130.

32 K. Narecki, *Logos we wczesnej myśli greckiej*, transl. P. Austin, Redakcja Wydawnictwa Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, Lublin 1999, p. 93 (rozprawa habilitacyjna, Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski).

The task of an enlightened man is to give up to the activity of Logos and become a part of cosmos through this process. The consciousness widened to incomprehensible length of cosmos “creates” a new man.

ἐν τὸ σοφὸν ἐπίστασθαι γνώμην κυβερνήσαι πάντα διὰ πάντων.

Wisdom is one thing. It is to know the thought by which all things are steered through all things. (B 41)³³

Πάντα τὸ πῦρ ἐπελθὼν κρινεῖ καὶ καταλήψεται.

Fire in its advance will judge and convict all things. (B 66)³⁴

Those fragments of Heraclitus’s teaching are an attempt to define god and the principles of the world in a totally different style than did Homer, or Ionian philosophers. **God is not a being similar to man, but man can become similar to him, when he understands the One thing ruling all. Therefore, the only trait that could indicate human similarity to god is the ability to think. God is the opposite of multitude, so he is unity, and as such he is other than the universe shaped by his thought.** The thought in which God-Logos is comprised, leads eventually to transformation of a limited human existence. As commonly known³⁵, at this time in Greece, attempts are made to escape religion locked in certain myths and public religious cult in favour of more individual experiences and a direct contact with god. Nevertheless, those attempts are not a departure from practices, but in some regions — their intensification; practiced in order to achieve the desired state of bliss, euphoria associated with the presence of god in a man, or even his deification.

33 Diogenes Laertius, IX, I (437), https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Fragments_of_Heraclitus#Fragment_101, source of the excerpt on the website: J. Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 1920, p. 148. Online: Page:Early Greek philosophy by John Burnet, 3rd edition, 1920.djvu/148 — Wikisource, the free online library.

34 Hippolytus, *Refutatio omnium haeresium*, IX, 10, 7 (244 Wendland), https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Fragments_of_Heraclitus#Fragment_101, source of the excerpt on the website: J. Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 1920, p. 149.

35 W. Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults*, Harvard University Press 1987, p. 44–60.

It will not be a misuse if we say that the consciousness of the Logos is not only a contact with an eternal principle of the world, but also a way to change one's own existence. **The goal of Heraclitus teaching is to know the Logos that properly guides human actions. It does not stop us from stating that Heraclitus teaching could lead to a better kind of mundane life and a better life after death. For knowledge gives wisdom that uncovers the true reality, and its cognition has a soteriological sense and leads from death to immortality.** It is worth underscoring, that Heraclitean identification of Dionysus and Hades (B15)³⁶ could have eschatological meaning, i.e., it was a symbolic expression of the domination of life over death. According to the philosopher this religious worldview, together with the purification rites, the mystery cults does not eventually lead to the proper way of living. The critique of religion is an attempt to save man. That is why Heraclitus, as other philosophers in the fifth century B. C. did, superseded Orphism from enlightenment circles³⁷. Heraclitus seems to be arguing with different forms of religiosity, but not in order to negate the existence of god, but to show the thread of its false images and the perplexity of practiced rites.

Heraclitus appears to be the first representative of philosophy to create anthropology. As Krzysztof Narecki has rightly stated, the image of man emerges on the basis of theology and cosmology. "His philosophy of man could be described as the smallest of the three concentric circles. These circles cannot be really separated, and in no way, one cannot imagine an anthropological circle in separation from the cosmological and theological. In Heraclitus's understanding, man is a part of cosmos and, as such, he submits to the law of wholeness, equally as other parts and everything"³⁸.

Death is to man what it is to a cosmos: a necessary factor in constant change. Man in his individual shape is submitted to it, while as a species, he is immortal. Heraclitus probably introduced and modified ancient Greek

36 Clemens Alexandrinus, *Protrepticus*, 34,5 (I, 26 Stählin), <http://www.heraclitusfragments.com/B15/notes.html>.

37 A. Krokiewicz, *Studia orfickie. Moralność Homera i etyka Hezjoda, Aletheia*, Warszawa 2000, p. 27 (Dzieła, 2).

38 K. Narecki, *Obraz a myśl filozoficzna Heraklita z Efezu*, TN KUL, Lublin 1981, p. 28.

thought, in which reality arises from one stream of Life or Soul, which, in turn, manifests in everything³⁹. Individual man floats on the surface only for a brief moment, like bubble on the water. Then it bursts to give space for the next one. Did Heraclitus assign a specific type of existence to a soul after death? We do not have enough evidence to support this thesis. In constant transitions, Logos decides about the “identity” of life and death. This way ending can be a beginning, and this new beginning will reach its end. The goal of life is contentment and pleasure coming from knowing Logos and from acting accordingly to his warrants. This is good and just.

Conclusion. Homer’s idea — god as a human

In Homer’s terminology we can find the following phrases to describe a human being: a one-day being, a mortal, which underscores the limited time a man has. According to the poet, man is a conglomerate of diverse experiences and sensual desires but, first of all, he is a being that is contained in a limited time span of birth and death. His desire of uninterrupted life cannot be realised because of him having such nature. What elevates him over his status is also his natural heritage, just a little bit bigger on earth. Nature of a given human enables him to carry out great acts. He becomes a hero by struggling with adversities. Suffering adds him nobility and the ability to bear the pain, tenacity in fight become the causes of his greatness. Poetry is a monument of mortals, who conquer weak human condition, although they cannot defeat death. Only the gods found themselves in this sphere of reality, where there is no suffering, old age, or death. Gods watch over order of the world; their presence should arouse fear, which leads to piety and worship towards gods in a human. However, those immortal beings in Homer’s song sometimes cause laughter. Entangled in conflicts and intrigues, they act like whimsical magnates. Immortality and supernatural power do not add to their seriousness nor does it give them advantage over people. Their limits go in a different direction and place than man’s, which

39 F. M. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy*, p. 192–193.

means that despite of their strength and endless life they are inscribed in a hierarchical world. Gods have their model on earth and, although death is taken from them, and supernatural power is added, they are still beings limited in their possibilities.

The idea of a god in Heraclitus is drastically different from the one we get to know in Homer's writing. Human happiness cannot be linked to satisfying bodily desires, but with the knowledge that gives birth to the right actions. By following literary and philosophical transmission we can see how the image of man is changing and how important wisdom is. According to the philosopher, to gain knowledge means to be guided by Logos, which gets human being out of errors and limitations by integrating its thoughts, actions, and words. By discovering the Logos, man becomes an integrated whole, but also a part of a cosmos. Knowledge makes him someone, who despite having a mortal nature is elevated over his finitude and limitations. A man observing Logos (Reason, God, Law) changes his consciousness. The discovery of the divine Logos makes him acquire wisdom in the universal, theoretical, and existential, practical dimension. This idea of God-Logos changed entirely the perspective of human existence and the idea of a man's place in the world. If the Logos is god, then man can participate in this divine reality to become good and just.

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Abstract

Gods and people in literature and philosophy.

God by the picture of human or human by the picture of god?

Homeric vision of reality versus Heraclitus' vision of reality

The article deals with the theological issues of Homer and Heraclitus. The analysis of the works of Homer and the philosophical thought of Heraclitus serves to compare and contrast them extracting significant differences regarding the image of god and man. The author develops both literary and philosophical understanding of gods. She compares the man-god relationship in early Greek literature and philosophy. There is an interesting intrinsic tension in the literary tropes that can only be understood if the religious function of this literature is taken into account. The author tries to describe the vision of the world and the place of human beings in it in both sources: literature and philosophy. In philosophical writings, there can be seen a movement in the vision of the world structure: the gods become more inaccessible to humans, but humans gain the opportunity to become godlier if they follow a proper set of thoughts and actions proposed by philosophy. Religious poets were speaking of the past when the gods were approachable to people. Their fantasies were often mixed with old beliefs so that the divine-human world has as much wonder and eccentricity as dread. Philosophy conquers not only minds but also hearts, to convey them towards the ideal, bearing in mind the unattainable model of a virtuous man. While religion describes gods similar to humans, philosophy forges a new god-resemblant human figure.

Keywords: philosophy of religion, gods, religion, literature

Abstrakt

Bogowie i ludzie w literaturze i filozofii.

Bóg przez obraz człowieka czy człowiek przez obraz Boga?

Homerowska wizja rzeczywistości a wizja rzeczywistości Heraklita

Artykuł dotyczy zagadnień teologicznych u Homera i Heraklita. Analiza dzieł Homera i myśli filozoficznej Heraklita służy ich porównaniu i zestawieniu, wydobywając istotne różnice dotyczące obrazu boga i człowieka. Autorka rozwija zarówno literackie, jak i filozoficzne rozumienie bogów. Porównuje relację człowiek–bóg we wczesnej greckiej literaturze i filozofii. Istnieje interesujące wewnętrzne napięcie w poszukiwaniach literackich, które można zrozumieć tylko wtedy, gdy weźmie się pod uwagę religijną funkcję tej literatury. Autorka stara się opisać wizję świata i miejsce w nim człowieka w obu źródłach: literaturze i filozofii. W pismach filozoficznych można dostrzec ruch w wizji struktury świata: bogowie stają się bardziej niedostępni dla ludzi, ale ludzie zyskują możliwość stania się bardziej boskimi, jeśli podążają za odpowiednim zestawem myśli i działań proponowanych przez filozofię. Religijni poeci mówili o przeszłości, kiedy bogowie byli dostępni dla ludzi. Ich fantazje często mieszały się ze starymi wierzeniami, dzięki czemu świat bosko-ludzki jest równie cudowny i ekscentryczny, co przerażający. Filozofia podbija nie tylko umysły, ale i serca, by skierować je ku ideałowi, pamiętając o nieosiągalnym wzorcu cnotliwego człowieka. Podczas gdy religia opisuje bogów podobnych do ludzi, filozofia tworzy nową postać człowieka przypominającą boga.

Słowa kluczowe: filozofia religii, bogowie, religia, literatura