

*For many of us, the publication of David Balme's translation of, and notes to, De Partibus Animalium I and De Generatione Animalium I (with important passages from the beginning of GA 11) provided a valuable, if sometimes puzzling, map of an alien landscape.*

De Partibus Animalium i 5. Such a characterisation of the treatise may be misleading, because Aristotle does not seem to have composed it in order to motivate his audience to go out in the field and study animals, but rather to kindle their interest in the scientific account of animals which he is about to provide. Bonitz, a; Lloyd Aristotle explains why such ignoble animals deserve a place in a scientific account of animals and he illustrates that with an anecdote about Heraclitus. So one must not be childishly repelled by the examination of the humbler animals. For in all things of nature there is something wonderful. However, there is a great deal of opacity in the detail of the anecdote. For instance, 2 where was Heraclitus located when the visitors came to see him? Why did the visitors need encouragement to come in and join Heraclitus there? When Heraclitus said that there were gods there too, what did he have in mind? A satisfactory interpretation must give plausible answers to the following two questions. First, why did the visitors stop when they saw Heraclitus warming himself by the oven? Many extant interpretations of this passage either fail to address these two questions altogether, or they answer one but not the other. I aim to provide an interpretation which convincingly answers both questions and shows precisely how the Heraclitus anecdote is meant to illustrate the point Aristotle wants to make about the humbler animals as a subject worthy of systematic study. Of course, a satisfactory interpretation does not need to assume that the anecdote is authentic. However, it is advantageous if an interpretation is neutral on the question of authenticity, in other words if it works equally well whether the anecdote is authentic or not. I shall proceed by reviewing major extant interpretations, some of which are not unlikely to escape the attention of English-speaking students of ancient philosophy working within the analytic tradition. I shall briefly present and criticise each one of these four interpretations. According to Heidegger, Heraclitus was visited by a common crowd hoping to derive some amusement and material for gossip from the sight of a thinker sitting in a lofty pose and thinking profound thoughts. Instead, they found Heraclitus in such an unremarkably everyday and trivial place as a baking oven, humbled by the cold and seeking refuge by the fire. The visitors were baffled and disappointed by what they saw, so they wanted to turn around and leave. Having read their disappointment, however, Heraclitus invited the visitors to come in, saying that there were gods there too. With these words Heraclitus partly intended to indulge his entertainment-seeking visitors and recapture their interest, since, 1 I have considered the following commentaries on this passage: Michael of Ephesus, As for the deeper sense of the dictum, it seems to have been left to be fathomed by Heidegger himself. It seems more plausible to suppose that the visitors were a small group of individuals, possibly potential followers, interested not only in glimpsing Heraclitus or meeting him in person, but actually in having an exchange with him. Heidegger suggests that the visitors hesitated to come in because they were disappointed with what they saw. There are two things which speak against this suggestion. Furthermore, Heidegger claims that Heraclitus was warming himself up in a baking oven for baking bread. To my knowledge, there is no archaeological or other evidence for the existence of such constructions in the fifth and the fourth centuries BC. It was customary for each household to bake its own bread in ovens which were mostly portable, and this rendered rooms or sheds specially designed for the purpose of baking bread superfluous. Besides, there is no reason to suppose that a place with an oven would strike an ancient Greek as any more everyday and trivial than any other part of the house. However, I wonder whether that would be the obvious reaction of an average ancient Greek, given what we know about his religion. The world of ancient Greeks was populated by gods and divinities whose presence was believed to be manifest in the affairs of individuals and whole communities. In such a culture, saying that there are gods at some place in a house is unlikely to impress one as indicating an opportunity to experience something

exciting or entertaining. Let us now turn to the interpretation proposed by Robertson. However, it is rather improbable that a Greek gentleman would pay a call of nature in a place within his house which is in view of other members of the household, let alone casual visitors. And even if we assume that the anecdote describes such an improbable incident, it is very difficult to believe that Heraclitus would still insist that the visitors should come in, and that anything he might have said could actually persuade them to do so. Although Heraclitus certainly disdained Hesiod and Pythagoras, it is questionable whether we should assume that he was so obsessed with them as to make scathing remarks about them to any random person he met. Mouraviev follows the same line of interpretation, but makes no reference to Robertson or anyone else. There are also objections to the arguments on which Robertson builds his interpretation. This meaning is found in the earliest extant occurrence of the word, in a fragment of Semonides who castigates the kind of woman who refuses to sit by the oven with the excuse that she cannot stand smoke, which implies that attending the oven is part of the domestic work of a virtuous woman Semonides fr. The oven was one of the main domestic utensils of ancient Greeks. It was used for baking bread and preparing other kinds of food, as well as for heating the house and boiling the water for the bath. There is considerable archaeological evidence for the existence of relatively small rooms, usually forming a larger complex with a living room and a bathroom, which can be identified as kitchens by traces of fire and pottery. However, such a reading is not unanimously accepted, see Schneider , ii , and Hollis , Sparkes , and Deighton , Hoepfner and Schwandner , , , Birds ; Wasps and ; cf. The other three times, in Peace twice and Plut. In general, it seems far-fetched to insist on an exceptional and meagrely attested use of a word in interpreting a sentence which can perfectly well be interpreted by adhering to the primary and most widely attested use. The other interpretation which explains why the visitors stopped when they saw Heraclitus warming himself by the oven was proposed by Wheelwright. Having noticed their surprise, Wheelwright maintains, Heraclitus thought he owed them an explanation, and the explanation was that there were gods there too. It was the domain of the housewife and her servants, and hence it might conventionally have been thought as disgraceful for a householder to be found there. However, Wheelwright fails to take into account what is really at issue in the anecdote. Robert agrees that the visitors found Heraclitus in the kitchen, but fails to take notice of the fact that the kitchen was a part of the house which was generally inaccessible to visitors. The reason why they stopped when they saw Heraclitus in the kitchen, according to Robert, is that they expected Heraclitus to meet them and take them to the main room where guests are usually received. From the fact that the visitors were surprised not to find Heraclitus in the main room where receptions usually took place, Conche concludes that the visitors must have been guests invited by Heraclitus. However, we shall presently see that it was a custom to take all visitors, invited as well as uninvited. In response to the first question, then, I propose the following interpretation. Heraclitus was warming himself by the oven, which was located in the kitchen. Due to its relatively small size, the kitchen was the warmest room in the Greek house and hence an obvious refuge from the cold. However, appreciating the warmth of the kitchen and not being bound by petty conventions, Heraclitus encouraged his visitors to come inside, saying that there were gods there too. And this brings us to the second question: This is no doubt very plausible. The idea of the omnipresence of gods would not be new with Heraclitus and it seems consistent with the surviving fragments of Heraclitus. Presumably, the event described in the anecdote took place when Heraclitus was quite old, as I explain in n16 below. Since the elderly are generally quite susceptible to the cold, the anecdote might have taken place at almost any time of the year. This prompts Marcovich , Guthrie , is sceptical, but offers no alternative interpretation. However, interpreting the dictum in the light of a doctrine of the omnipresence of divine beings fails to do justice to the rich imagery of the anecdote. Rather, it is a determinate reference to the object which marks that place, namely the oven, or more precisely, the fire burning in the oven. We should remember that ancient Greeks customarily associated gods and divinities with fire. As Burkert , 61 writes: Sacrifices without fire are rare, conscious exceptions, and conversely there is rarely a fire without sacrifice. Rather, we should take him to be referring to the fire in the oven. It was the pivotal place in life of the household. It may have been used for cooking food and heating

water for baths, and it served as a means of heating and as a source of light. In addition to being a place with multiple practical functions, the hearth was also the place of major religious significance. In Homer it is Zeus who attends to the prayers made by the hearth Hom. I am grateful to Mr. Homeric Hymns v , xxix ; Pind. The head of the family made offerings at the hearth with each meal, marriage ceremonies and rituals concerning children newly born to the household took place around it. Merkelbach , 78; Vernant , Vernant , writes: The stranger must be led to the hearth, received, and feasted there, for there can be neither contact nor exchange with those who have not first been integrated within the domestic space. Pindar wrote that at the ever-spread tables of sanctuaries where Hestia was the patron goddess, the justice of Zeus Xenios was respected. Thus Heraclitus effectively said to his visitors that they should freely step inside because they will be just as welcome and protected near the fire burning in the oven in the kitchen as they would be near the fire of the hearth in the main room. This interpretation is attractive, but there is one serious objection to it. For more information on the cult of Hestia and its significance, see Farnell , ; Fustel de Coulanges , ; Merkelbach ; Vernant ; Burkert , ; Jameson , In an ancient Greek city there was also a common civic hearth to which embassies and honoured guests from other places would be taken. However, this is still an exception. When traces of fire are detected at all in Greek houses, they are usually found in small rooms that can be identified as kitchens Jameson , 98; cf. And not only are hearths in Greek houses of the classical period found rarely, there seems to be no archaeological record of a house with traces of fire in a larger room and in a smaller room. In other words, there seems to be no material evidence of a house with a hearth in the main room and an oven in the kitchen. Suffice it to suppose that the archaic tradition, within which the hearth had the role described above, was alive in the age of Heraclitus, so that he could make an allusion to it and expect his visitors to spot it. Or otherwise, if we do not want to commit ourselves to the authenticity of the anecdote, that this tradition was alive at the age of Aristotle, so that he and his audience could spot the allusion to the hearth. And there can be no doubt that this tradition was very much alive among the Greeks for centuries before and after Aristotle, We may say that the image and symbolism of the hearth were shaped in the formative years of Greek civilization and persisted in poetry and myth, to the exclusion of other architectural traditions, long after a different physical and social reality prevailed Jameson , Material facts concerning Greek housing of the fifth and fourth centuries BC, therefore, do not present a threat to the suggested interpretation.

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De Motu Cordis et Sanguinis [ edit ] Exercitatio Anatomica de Motu Cordis et Sanguinis in Animalibus [An Anatomical Exercise on the Motion of the Heart and Blood in Living Beings] The heart of animals is the foundation of their life, the sovereign of everything within them, the sun of their microcosm, that upon which all growth depends, from which all power proceeds. Neither do they swear such fealty to their mistress Antiquity that they openly, and in sight of all, deny and desert their friend Truth. But even as they see that the credulous and vain are disposed at the first blush to accept and believe everything that is proposed to them, so do they observe that the dull and unintellectual are indisposed to see what lies before their eyes, and even deny the light of the noon-day sun. Argent and Other Learned Physicians"; a portion of this statement is often quoted alone as simply "All we know is still infinitely less than all that still remains unknown. The studious and good and true, never suffer their minds to be warped by the passions of hatred and envy, which unfit men duly to weigh the arguments that are advanced in behalf of truth, or to appreciate the proposition that is even fairly demonstrated. Neither do they think it unworthy of them to change their opinion if truth and undoubted demonstration require them to do so. They do not esteem it discreditable to desert error, though sanctioned by the highest antiquity, for they know full well that to err, to be deceived, is human; that many things are discovered by accident and that many may be learned indifferently from any quarter, by an old man from a youth, by a person of understanding from one of inferior capacity. Argent and Other Learned Physicians". I profess both to learn and to teach anatomy, not from books but from dissections; not from positions of philosophers but from the fabric of nature. I avow myself the partisan of truth alone. Argent and Other Learned Physicians" De Generatione Animalium [ edit ] De Generatione Animalium [On the Generation of Animals] Man comes into the world naked and unarmed, as if nature had destined him for a social creature, and ordained him to live under equitable laws and in peace As art is a habit with reference to things to be done, so is science a habit in respect to things to be known. I appeal to your own eyes as my witness and judge. Man comes into the world naked and unarmed, as if nature had destined him for a social creature, and ordained him to live under equitable laws and in peace; as if she had desired that he should be guided by reason rather than be driven by force; therefore did she endow him with understanding, and furnish him with hands, that he might himself contrive what was necessary to his clothing and protection. To those animals to which nature has given vast strength, she has also presented weapons in harmony with their powers; to those that are not thus vigorous, she has given ingenuity, cunning, and singular dexterity in avoiding injury. Quotes about Harvey[ edit ] Few would have predicted that the discovery of the circulation of the blood would have changed the way philosophers view the world, theologians conceive of God, or astronomers look at the stars, yet all of that happened. Every one leads as he is led, The same bare path they tread, A dance like that of Fairies, a fantastic round, With neither change of motion nor of ground. Had Harvey to this road confined his wit, His noble circle of the blood had been untrodden yet. Abraham Cowley , in "Ode Upon Dr. Harvey was not content merely to gather knowledge; he digested and arranged it under the guidance of the faculties which compare and reason. In the whole course of his long life we hear nothing either of personal enemies or personal enmities â€ one of the great men whom God, in virtue of his eternal laws, bids to appear on earth from time to time to enlighten, and to ennoble mankind.

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