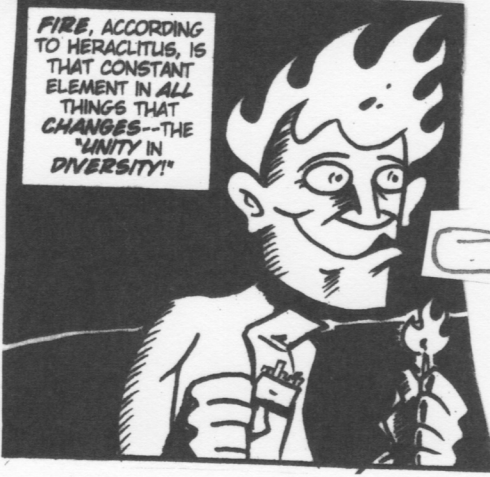


# SUNDAY MORNING AT THE MARXIST LIBRARY

Niebyl Proctor Marxist Library 6501 Telegraph Oakland



APRIL

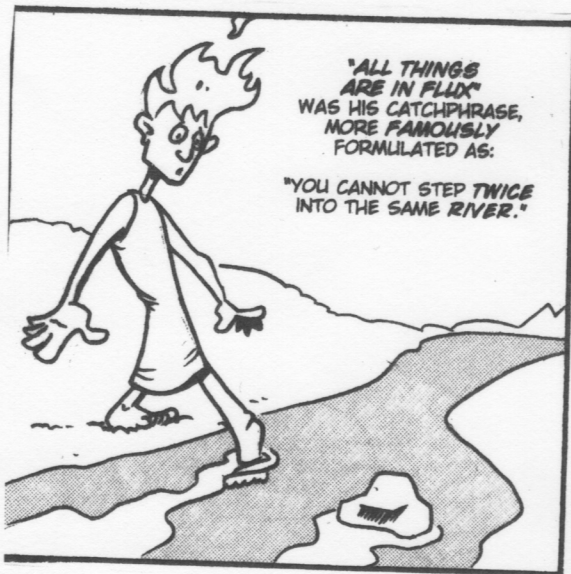
SUNDAY 15



NEXT IN THE SERIES AN HISTORY OF dialecticks:

You can never step in the same river twice

# THE CASE OF HERACLITUS!



PRESOCRATIC PHILOSOPHY

The first ancient Greek to use the term *philosophos*, "wisdom-loving," was Heraclitus, the late sixth-century Greek obsessed with change, a resident of the silting-up city of Ephesus. As we have seen, he said no river stayed the same. He placed fire at the center of the cosmic order and decreed that everything was in flux. Like Thales, later Greeks assumed that Heraclitus had learned from "the barbarian philosophy." Perhaps he had been stimulated by the sanctity of fire in the Persians' religion, Zoroastrianism. But regardless of the source of his ideas, he deserves to be called the first philosopher in the modern sense, because along with proposing that fire was the central principle of the physical world, he considered abstract forces beyond the physical (the metaphysical), aspects of perception, and principles of human behavior. The challenge he faced in finding language to express his novel ideas meant that his books were far from easy reads. This first philosopher immediately gave philosophy its reputation for being abstruse and confusing. His fragments are sometimes maddeningly obscure, to the extent that the Greeks told a story in which the tragedian Euripides gave a copy of Heraclitus's book—written several decades earlier—to Socrates to read; when asked his opinion of the book, Socrates replied, "The part I understand is excellent, and so too is, I dare say, the part I do not understand; but it needs a Delian diver to get to the bottom of it."

