

THE HERACLITUS FRAGMENTS

The following translation of the Heraclitus fragments is by John Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 2nd Ed. London: Adam and Charles Black, 1908, pp. 146-156.

[Material appearing in brackets is my addition for this course; it represents an informal attempt to clarify the spirit, not the letter, of the translation - Garrison LeMasters].

1. It is wise to hearken, not to me, but to my Word [Logos], and to confess that all things are one.
2. Though this Word is true evermore, yet men are as unable to understand it when they hear it for the first time as before they have heard it at all. For, though all things come to pass in accordance with this Word, men seem as if they had no experience of them, when they make trial of words and deeds such as I set forth, dividing each thing according to its nature and showing how it truly is. But other men know not what they are doing when awake, even as they forget what they do in sleep.
16. The learning of many things teacheth not understanding, else would it have taught Hesiod and Pythagoras, and again Xenophanes and Hekataius.
17. Pythagoras, son of Mnesarchus, practiced inquiry beyond all other men, and choosing out these writings, claimed for his own wisdom what was but a knowledge of many things and an art of mischief.
18. Of all whose discussions I have heard, there is not one who attains to understanding that wisdom is apart from all.
19. Wisdom is one thing. It is to know the thought by which all things are steered through all things.
20. This world [kosmos], which is the same for all, no one of gods or men has made; but it was ever, is now, and ever shall be an ever-living Fire, with measures kindling, and measures going out.
21. The transformations of Fire are, first of all, sea; and half of the sea is earth, half whirlwind...
22. All things are an exchange for Fire, and Fire for all things, even as wares for gold and gold for wares.
23. It becomes liquid sea, and is measured by the same tale as before it became earth.
24. Fire is want and surfeit.

25. Fire lives the death of air, and air lives the death of fire; water lives the death of earth, earth that of water.

26. Fire in its advance will judge and convict [overtake?] all things.

27. How can one hide from that which never sets?

29. The sun will not overstep his measures; if he does, the Erinyes, the handmaids of Justice, will find him out.

32. The sun is new every day.

36. God is day and night, winter and summer, war and peace, surfeit and hunger; but he takes various shapes, just as fire, when it is mingled with spices, is named according to the savour of each.

39. Cold things become warm, and what is warm cools; what is wet dries, and the parched is moisted.

40. It scatters and it gathers; it advances and retires.

41, 42. You cannot step twice into the same river; for fresh waters are ever flowing in upon you.

43. Homer was wrong in saying: "Would that strife might perish from among gods and men!" He did not see that he was praying for the destruction of the universe; for, if his prayer were heard, all things would pass away...

44. War is the father of all and the king of all; and some he has made gods and some men, some bond and some free.

45. Men do not know how what is at variance agrees with itself. It is an attunement [harmony] of opposite tensions, like that of the bow and the lyre.

46. It is the opposite which is good for us.

47. The hidden attunement [harmony] is better than the open.

50. The straight and the crooked path of the fuller's comb is one and the same.

51. Asses would rather have straw than gold.

51a. Oxen are happy when they find bitter vetches [flora] to eat.

52. The sea is the purest and the impurest water. Fish can drink it, and it is good for them; to men it is undrinkable and destructive.

53. Swine wash in the mire, and barnyard fowls in dust.

54. ...to delight in the mire.

57. Good and ill are one.

59. Couples are things whole and things not whole, what is drawn together and what is drawn asunder, the harmonious and the discordant. The one is made up of all things, and all things issue from the one.

60. Men would not have known the name of justice if [there had been no injustice].

61. To God all things are fair and good and right, but men hold some things wrong and some right.

62. We must know that war is common to all and strife is justice, and that all things come into being and pass away through strife.

63. All the things we see when awake are death, even as all we see in slumber are sleep.

64. The wise is one only. It is unwilling and willing to be called by the name of Zeus.

65. The bow is called life, but its work is death.

66. Mortals are immortals and immortals are mortals, the one living the others' death and dying the others' life.

67. For it is death to souls to become water, and death to water to become earth. But water comes from earth; and from water, soul.

68. The way up and the way down is one and the same.

69. In the circumference of a circle the beginning and end are common.

70. You will not find the boundaries of soul by traveling in any direction, so deep is the measure of it.

77. And it is the same thing in us that is quick and dead, awake and asleep, young and old; the former are shifted and become the latter, and the latter in turn are shifted and become the former.

78. Time is a child playing draughts; the kingly power is a child's.

78b [This fragment is important, but the translation has not aged well. "Draughts" means checkers, although here it is a metaphor within a metaphor, so it gets confusing. To wit, I include here a less literal, more contemporary sense of 78a.]

78c [History unfolds at the whim of a child, carelessly playing.]

80. We step and do not step into the same rivers; we are and are not.

82. It rests by changing.

83a. Even the posset separates if it is not stirred.

83b. [Posset: Spiced, warmed milk curdled with alcohol.]

89. Those who are asleep are fellow-workers...

90a. Thought is common to all.

99. The people must fight for its law as for its walls.

100. Greater deaths win greater portions.

101. Gods and men honour those who are slain in battle.

119. One day is like any other.

120. Man's character is his fate.

121. There awaits men when they die such things as they look not for nor dream of.

124. The mysteries practiced among men are unholy mysteries.

125. And they pray to these images, as if one were to talk with a man's house, knowing not what gods or heroes are.

126. For if it were not to Dionysus that they made a procession and sang the shameful phallic hymn, they would be acting most shamelessly. But Hades is the same as Dionysus in whose honor they go mad and keep the feast of the wine-vat.

127, 128. They vainly purify themselves by defiling themselves with blood, just as if one who had stepped into the mud were to wash his feet in mud. Any man who marked him doing thus, would deem him mad.

