

Heraclitus of Ephesus

Even in antiquity, Heraclitus (born c. 540 B.C.) was seen as obscure and difficult to understand. He proposed an intricate world-view according to which a divine *logos* governs the universe and flux underlies superficial stability. Below is a selection of the surviving fragments of Heraclitus. The following translations are from *A Presocratics Reader: Selected Fragments and Testimonia*, P. Curd, R. D. McKirahan [Hackett, 2011].

Although this *logos* holds always humans prove unable to understand it both before hearing it and when they have first heard it. For although all things come to be [or, “happen”] in accordance with this *logos*, humans are like the inexperienced when they experience such words and deeds as I set out, distinguishing each thing in accordance with its nature (*physis*) and saying how it is. But other people fail to notice what they do when awake, just as they forget what they do while asleep. (Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Mathematicians* 7.132 = DK 22 B 1)

For this reason it is necessary to follow what is common. But although the *logos* is common, most people live as if they had their own private understanding. (Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Mathematicians* 7.133 = DK 22 B2)

We would call oxen happy when they find bitter vetch to eat. (Albertus Magnus, *On Vegetables* 6.401 = DK 22 B4)

What is opposed brings together; the finest harmony [*harmonia*] is composed of things at variance, and everything comes to be [or, “occurs”] in accordance with strife. (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 8.2 1155b4 = DK 22 B8)

Asses would choose rubbish rather than gold. (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.5 1176a7 = DK 22 B9)

Things taken together are whole and not whole, <something that is> being brought together and brought apart, in tune and out of tune; out of all things there comes a unity and out of a unity all things. ([Aristotle], *On the World* 5 396b20 = DK 22 B10)

Upon those who step into the same rivers, different and again different waters flow. (Arius Didymus, fr. 39.2 = *Dox. Gr.* 471.4–5 = DK 22 B12)

Pigs rejoice in mud more than in pure water. (Clement, *Miscellanies* 1.2.2 = DK 22 B13)

This *kosmos*, the same for all, none of gods nor humans made, but it was always and is and shall be: an ever-living fire, kindled in measures and extinguished in measures. (Clement, *Miscellanies* 5.103.3; tpc = DK 22 B30)

For souls to become water is to die; for water to become earth is to die; but from earth, water comes to be; from water, soul. (Clement, *Miscellanies* 6.17.2; tpc = DK 22 B36)

Pigs wash themselves in mud, birds in dust or ash. (Columella, *On Agriculture* 8.4.4 = DK 22 B37)

Much learning [“polymathy”] does not teach insight. Otherwise it would have taught Hesiod and Pythagoras and moreover Xenophanes and Hecataeus. (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 9.1 = DK 22 B 40)

The wise is one (*to sophon*), to know the intelligent plan (*gnōmē*) by which all things are steered through all. (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 9.1; tpc = DK 22 B41)

Heraclitus said that Homer deserved to be expelled from the contests and flogged, and Archilochus likewise. (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 9.1 = DK 22 B42)

Willful violence [*hubris*] must be quenched more than a fire. (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 9.3 = DK 22 B43)

The people must fight for the law as for the city wall. (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 9.2 = DK 22 B44)

You would not discover the limits of the soul although you travelled every road: so deep a *logos* does it have. (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 9.7 = DK 22 B45)

[He said that] conceit is a holy disease³ [and that] sight tells falsehoods. (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 9.7 = DK 22 B46)

Let us not make random conjectures about the greatest matters. (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 9.73 = DK 22 B47)

The name of the bow is life, but its work is death. (*Etymologium Magnum* sv *bios* = DK 22 B48)

We step into and we do not step into the same rivers. We are and we are not. (Heraclitus Homericus, *Homeric Questions* 24 = DK 22 B49a)

Listening not to me, but to the *logos*, it is wise to agree that all things are one. (Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.9.1 = DK B50)

They do not understand how, though at variance with itself, it agrees with itself. It is a backwards-turning attunement like that of the bow and lyre. (Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.9.2 = DK 22 B51)

Most men's teacher is Hesiod. They are sure he knew most things—a man who could not recognize day and night; for they are one. (Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.10.2 = DK 22 B57)

The road up and the road down are one and the same. (Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.10.4 = DK 22 B60)

The sea is the purest and most polluted water: to fishes drinkable and bringing safety, to humans undrinkable and destructive. (Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.10.5 = DK 22 B61)

Thunderbolt steers all things. (Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.10.7 = DK 22 B64)

Fire is want and satiety. (Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.10.7 = DK 22 B65)

God is day and night, winter and summer, war and peace, satiety and hunger, but changes the way <fire,(?)> when mingled with perfumes, is named according to the scent of each. (Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.10.8 = DK 22 B67)

Fire lives the death of earth and *aēr* lives the death of fire, water lives the death of *aēr*, earth that of water. (Maximus of Tyre, 41.4 = DK 22 B76)

It is necessary to know that war is common and justice is strife and that all things happen in accordance with strife and necessity. (Origen, *Against Celsus* 6.42 = DK 22 B80)

The most beautiful of apes is ugly in comparison with the human race. (Plato, *Hippias Major* 289a3–4 = DK 22 B82)

The wisest of humans will appear as an ape in comparison with a god in respect to wisdom, beauty, and all other things. (Plato, *Hippias Major* 289b4–5 = DK 22 B83)

Changing it rests. (Plotinus, *Enneads* 4.8.1 = DK 22 B84a)

It is difficult to fight against anger, for whatever it wants it buys at the price of the soul. (Plutarch, *Life of Coriolanus* 22.2 = DK 22 B85)

The same thing is both living and dead, and the waking and the sleeping, and young and old; for these things transformed are those, and those transformed back again are these. (Pseudo-Plutarch, *Consolation to Apollonius* 106E = DK 22 B88)

For the waking there is one common world, but when asleep each person turns away to a private one. (Pseudo-Plutarch, *On Superstition* 166c = DK 22 B89)

All things are an exchange for fire and fire for all things, as goods for gold and gold for goods. (Plutarch, *On the E at Delphi* 338d–e = DK 22 B90)

[It is not possible to step twice into the same river]. . . . It scatters and again comes together, and approaches and recedes. (Plutarch, *On the E at Delphi* 392b = DK 22 B91)

I searched [or: inquired into] myself. (Plutarch, *Against Colotes* 1118C = DK 22 B101)

To god all things are beautiful and good and just, but humans have supposed some unjust and others just. (Porphyry, *Notes on Homer, on Iliad* 4.4 = DK 22 B102)

What understanding (*noos*) or intelligence (*phrēn*) have they? They put their trust in popular bards and take the mob for their teacher, unaware that most people are bad, and few are good. (Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Alcibiades I* 117, Westerink = DK 22 B104)

Of all those whose accounts (*logoi*) I have heard, no one reaches the point of recognizing that what is wise is set apart from all. (Stobaeus, *Selections* 3.1.174 = DK 22 B108)

It is not better for humans to get all they want. (Stobaeus, *Selections* 3.1.176 = DK 22 B110)

Disease makes health pleasant and good, hunger satiety, weariness rest. (Stobaeus, *Selections* 3.1.178 = DK 22 B111)

Right thinking (*sōphronein*) is the greatest excellence, and wisdom (*sophia*) is to speak the truth and act in accordance with nature (*physis*) while paying attention to it. (Stobaeus, *Selections* 3.1.178 = DK 22 B112)

Those who speak with understanding (*noos*) must rely firmly on what is common to all as a city must rely on [its?] law, and much more firmly. For all human laws are nourished by one law, the divine law; for it has as much power as it wishes and is sufficient for all and is still left over. (Stobaeus, *Selections* 3.1.179 = DK 22 B114)

It belongs to all people to know themselves and to think rightly (*sōphronein*). (Stobaeus, *Selections* 3.5.6 = DK 22 B116)

A man when drunk is led by a boy, stumbling and not knowing where he goes, since his soul is moist. (Stobaeus, *Selections* 3.5.7 = DK 22 B117)

Gleam of light: the dry soul, wisest (*sophōtate*) and best. (Stobaeus, *Selections* 3.5.8 = DK 22 B118)

A person's character is his divinity [*daimōn*]. (Stobaeus, *Selections* 4.40.23 = DK 22 B119)

Nature (*physis*) loves to hide. (Themistius, *Orations* 5.69 = DK 22 B123)

The most beautiful *kosmos* is a pile of things poured out at random. (Theophrastus, *Metaphysics* 15 = DK 22 B124)

Even the *Kykeōn* falls apart if it is not stirred. (Theophrastus, *On Vertigo* 9; tpc = DK 22 B125)