

and over time it is dissolved by the moisture, saying that he has the following kinds of proofs: sea shells are found in the middle of earth and in mountains, and imprints of fish and seals have been found at Syracuse in the quarries, and the imprint of coral [or, “of a laurel leaf”] in the depth of the stone in Paros, and on Malta flat impressions of all forms of marine life. He says that these came about when all things were covered with mud long ago and the impressions were dried in the mud. All humans perish when the earth is carried down into the sea and becomes mud, and then there is another beginning of generation,

and this change occurs in all the *kosmoi* [that is, in every such cycle].

(Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 1.14.3–6)

34. (A39) <Concerning the stars that are called the *Dioscuri*>¹⁴ Xenophanes says that the things like stars that appear on boats are small clouds that glimmer as a result of a certain kind of motion.

(Aëtius 2.18.1)

14. Translator's note: Literally, “sons of Zeus”; the term was used to refer to Castor and Polydeuces (Pollux). The phenomenon referred to is St. Elmo's Fire.

5. HERACLITUS OF EPHESUS

ACCORDING TO DIOGENES LAERTIUS, Heraclitus of Ephesus was born around 540 BCE. He was a member of one of the aristocratic families of that city, but turned his back on the sort of political life normally associated with persons of rank, ceding his hereditary ruling position to his brother. In the ancient world, he had a reputation for both misanthropy and obscurity—among his traditional nicknames were “the Obscure,” and “the Riddler.” The reputation is no doubt based on his rude comments about other philosophers, historians, and people in general, the nicknames on the enigmatic paradoxes he uses to present his views. He is said to have written a single book, of which fragment 1 was likely the beginning (or very near the beginning).

Although Heraclitus has cosmological views, many of which seem to have been influenced by Xenophanes, he is as interested in exploring questions about knowledge, the soul, and the human condition as in making claims about the physical world. He asserted that a single divine law controls and steers the cosmos. He calls this the *logos*. The word *logos* means, among other things, “account,” or “thing said,” or even “word.” As with the English word “account,” to give a *logos* is to say something, but also to give an explanation. Heraclitus is well aware of the ambiguities and complications possible in the words he uses, and he takes full advantage of the flexibility of the Greek language to make multiple points. Although the *logos* is an objective and independent truth available to all, Heraclitus is convinced that most people do not exercise the capacities required to come to understand it, and instead act like dreamers asleep in their own private worlds. Treating the *logos* as the divine law of the cosmos, the content of which is a truth to be grasped by humans who can (with difficulty) come to understand the cosmos, Heraclitus attempts to bridge the gap between divine and human knowledge pointed out by Homer, Hesiod, and Alcmaeon. The soul that understands the *logos* can, apparently, have the sure and certain knowledge that Xenophanes claimed “no man has seen.” The path to this understanding is not, Heraclitus thinks, just the inquiry recommended by Xenophanes: Heraclitus ridicules those who have much learning but little

understanding. The accumulation of facts without insight into the divine law-like workings of the cosmos is useless. Understanding how all things form a unity is a fundamental part of the necessary insight. Heraclitus offers signs of this unity in his paradoxical claims about the identity of opposites, insisting that despite unceasing change in the cosmos, there is an unchanging principle—the *logos*—that both governs and explains these changes. The physical sign of the *logos* is fire: always changing yet always the same.

Note on the order of the fragments: Sextus Empiricus, our source for the first two fragments, says that they occurred at or near the beginning of Heraclitus' book, but we do not have similar information for the rest of the fragments. Their ordering is a controversial issue, as a particular order can impose an interpretation. In DK the fragments are ordered alphabetically by the name of the source. Here, the fragments are grouped more or less thematically, beginning with B1 and B2, and then going on to some general comments about the inadequacies of other thinkers and ordinary people. There are then observations on the difficulty of learning about the *logos*, but also encouraging remarks suggesting that proper thinking can lead people to the truth contained in the *logos*. There follow claims about the content of the *logos*, opposition and the unity of opposites, and the cosmos. Finally, there are fragments on soul, the human condition, and some remarks on religion. The reader should keep in mind that most Heraclitean sentences address several philosophical problems, and can be relevant for making a number of philosophical points. Fragments whose authenticity is disputed are marked with an asterisk (*).

1. (22B1) 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)
2. (B2) 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)
3. (B40) 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)
4. (B129) Pythagoras the son of Mnesarchus practiced inquiry [*historiē*] more than all other men, and making a selection of these writings constructed his own wisdom, polymathy, evil trickery.
(Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 8.6)
5. (B42) Heraclitus said that Homer deserved to be expelled from the contests and flogged, and Archilochus likewise.
(Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 9.1)
6. (B39) In Priene was born Bias, son of Teutames, whose worth (*logos*) is greater than the others'.
(Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 1.88)

7. (B57) 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)
8. (B104) 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)
9. (B86) Divine things for the most part escape recognition because of unbelief.
(Plutarch, *Life of Coriolanus* 38 = Clement, *Miscellanies* 5.88.4)
10. (B108) 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)
11. (B50) 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)
12. (B123) Nature (*physis*) loves to hide.
(Themistius, *Orations* 5.69)
13. (B107) Eyes and ears are bad witnesses to people if they have barbarian¹⁵ souls.
(Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Mathematicians* 7.126)
14. (B34) Uncomprehending when having heard, they are like the deaf. The saying describes them: being present they are absent.
(Clement, *Miscellanies* 5.115.3; tpc)
15. (B93) The Lord whose oracle is at Delphi neither speaks nor conceals but gives a sign.
(Plutarch, *On the Pythian Oracle* 404D)
16. (B113) Thinking (*phronein*) is common to all.
(Stobaeus, *Selections* 3.1.179)
17. (B112) 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)
- 18.* (B73) One ought not to act and speak like people asleep.
(Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 4.43)
19. (B89) For the waking there is one common world, but when asleep each person turns away to a private one.
(Pseudo-Plutarch, *On Superstition* 166c)
20. (B26) A man in the night kindles a light for himself when his sight is extinguished; living he touches¹⁶ the dead when asleep, when awake he touches the sleeper.
(Clement, *Miscellanies* 4.141.2)
21. (B21) What we see when awake is death, what we see asleep is sleep.
(Clement, *Miscellanies* 3.21.1)
22. (B114) 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)
23. (B18) Unless he hopes for the un hoped for, he will not find it, since it is not to be hunted out and is impassable.
(Clement, *Miscellanies* 2.17.4)
24. (B22) Those who seek gold dig up much earth but find little.
(Clement, *Miscellanies* 4.4.2)
25. (B17) For many, in fact all that come upon them, do not understand such things, nor when they have noticed them do they know them, but they seem to themselves <to do so>.
(Clement, *Miscellanies* 2.8.1)
- 26.* (B72) They are at odds with the *logos*, with which above all they are in continuous

15. Translator's note: A *barbaros* was originally anyone who did not speak Greek. Heraclitus uses the word here of people who do not understand the *logos*.

16. Translator's note: The Greek word for "kindles" and "touches" is the same.

- contact, and the things they meet every day appear strange to them.
(Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 4.46)
- 27.*(B70) [Heraclitus judged human opinions to be] children's playthings.
(Stobaeus, *Selections* 2.1.16)
28. (B19) [Rebuking some for their unbelief, Heraclitus says,] Knowing neither how to hear nor how to speak.
(Clement, *Miscellanies* 2.24.5)
29. (B28) The knowledge of the most famous persons, which they guard, is but opinion. . . . Justice will convict those who fabricate falsehoods and bear witness to them.
(Clement, *Miscellanies* 5.9.3)
30. (B87) A fool is excited by every word (*logos*).
(Plutarch, *On Listening to Lectures* 40f–41a)
31. (B97) Dogs bark at everyone they do not know.
(Plutarch, *Should Old Men Take Part in Politics?* 787c)
32. (B56) People are deceived about the knowledge of obvious things, like Homer, who was wiser than all the Greeks. For children who were killing lice deceived him by saying, "All we saw and caught we have left behind, but all we neither saw nor caught we bring with us."
(Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.9.5)
33. (B47) Let us not make random conjectures about the greatest matters.
(Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 9.73)
34. (B116) It belongs to all people to know themselves and to think rightly (*sōphronein*).
(Stobaeus, *Selections* 3.5.6)
35. (B35) Men who are lovers of wisdom must be inquirers into many things indeed.
(Clement, *Miscellanies* 5.140.5)
36. (B101) I searched [or: inquired into] myself.
(Plutarch, *Against Colotes* 1118C)
37. (B54) An unapparent connection (*harmonia*) is stronger than an apparent one.
(Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.9.5)
38. (B12) Upon those who step into the same rivers, different and again different waters flow.
(Arius Didymus, *fr.* 39.2 = *Dox. Gr.* 471.4–5)
39. (B91) [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)
- 40.* (B49a) We step into and we do not step into the same rivers. We are and we are not.
(Heraclitus Homericus, *Homeric Questions* 24)
41. (B78) Human nature has no insight, but divine nature has it.
(Origen, *Against Celsus* 6.12)
42. (B45) You would not discover the limits of the soul although you traveled every road: so deep a *logos* does it have.
(Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 9.7)
- 43.*(B115) The soul has a self-increasing *logos*.
(Stobaeus, *Selections* 3.1.180)
44. (B30) 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)
45. (B41) 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)
46. (B32) The wise (*to sophon*) is one alone, both unwilling and willing to be called by the name of Zeus.
(Clement, *Miscellanies* 5.115.1; tpc)
47. (B64) Thunderbolt steers all things.
(Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.10.7)
48. (B90) 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)
49. (B65) Fire is want and satiety.
(Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.10.7)

50. (B36) 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)
51. (B118) Gleam of light: the dry soul, wisest (*sophōtate*) and best.
(Stobaeus, *Selections* 3.5.8)
52. (B117) 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)
53. (B84a) Changing it rests.
(Plotinus, *Enneads* 4.8.1)
54. (B125) Even the *Kykeōn* [posset]¹⁷ falls apart if it is not stirred.
(Theophrastus, *On Vertigo* 9; tpc)
55. (B80) 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)
56. (B53) War is the father of all and king of all, and some he shows as gods, others as humans; some he makes slaves, others free.
(Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.9.4)
57. (B8) 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* VIII.2 1155b4)
58. (B10) 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], *De Mundo* 5 396b20)
59. (B51) They do not understand how, though at variance with itself, it agrees with itself.¹⁸ It
- is a backwards-turning¹⁹ attunement like that of the bow and lyre.
(Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.9.2)
60. (B55) All that can be seen, heard, experienced—these are what I prefer.
(Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.9.5)
61. (B101a) Eyes are more accurate witnesses than the ears.
(Polybius, *Histories* 12.27.1)
62. (B7) If all things were smoke, nostrils would distinguish them.
(Aristotle, *Sense and Sensibilia* 5 443a23)
63. (B98) Souls [have use of the sense of] smell in Hades.
(Plutarch, *On the Face in the Moon* 943E)
64. (B48) The name of the bow is life, but its work is death.²⁰
(*Etymologium Magnum* sv. *bios*)
65. (B59) The track of writing [or, “the path of the carding wheels”]²¹ is straight and crooked.
(Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.10.4)
66. (B60) The road up and the road down are one and the same.
(Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.10.4)

17. The *Kykeōn* is a potion made of ground barley, grated cheese, and wine (sometimes with honey).

18. Translator’s note: Or, “how by being at variance with itself it agrees with itself”; more literally, “how (by) being brought apart it is brought together.”

19. Reading *palintropos* here. Translator’s note: The sources disagree; some give *palintonos*, “backwards-stretching.” There is no scholarly consensus on which word Heraclitus used.

20. Translator’s note: The fragment exploits the identical spelling of the Greek words for bow (*biós*) and life (*bíos*); they differed in the accented syllables, but in Heraclitus’ time accents were not yet written. Also, the fragment does not contain the word *biós* (bow), but uses the more common word *toxon*, thus requiring Heraclitus’ readers (or hearers) to make the essential association themselves.

21. Translator’s note: The manuscript reading *gnapheion* (“carding wheels”) is emended by some editors to *grapheion* (“writing”).

67. (B61) 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)

68. (B13) Pigs rejoice in mud more than in pure water.

(Clement, *Miscellanies* 1.2.2)

69. (B9) Asses would choose rubbish rather than gold.

(Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* X.5 1176a7)

70. (B4) We would call oxen happy when they find bitter vetch to eat.

(Albertus Magnus, *On Vegetables* 6.401)

71. (B37) Pigs wash themselves in mud, birds in dust or ash.

(Columella, *On Agriculture* 8.4.4)

72. (B11) Every beast is driven to pasture by blows.

([Aristotle], *De Mundo* 6 401a10)

73. (B102) 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)

74. (B124) The most beautiful *kosmos* is a pile of things poured out at random.

(Theophrastus, *Metaphysics* 15)

75. (B103) The beginning and the end are common on the circumference of a circle.

(Porphyry, *Notes on Homer, on Iliad* 24.200)

76. (B126) Cold things grow hot, a hot thing cold, a moist thing withers, a parched thing is moistened.

(John Tzetzes, *Notes on the Iliad*, p. 126 Hermann)

77. (B67) 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)

78. (B88) 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)

79. (B23) They would not have known the name of justice if these things [unjust things] did not exist.

(Clement, *Miscellanies* 4.9.7)

80. (B111) Disease makes health pleasant and good, hunger satiety, weariness rest.

(Stobaeus, *Selections* 3.1.178)

81. (B58) Physicians who cut and burn complain that they receive no worthy pay, although they do these things.

(Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.10.3)

82. (B62) Immortal mortals, mortal immortals, living the death of the others and dying their life.

(Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.10.6)

83. (B31) The turnings of fire: first, sea; and of sea, half is earth and half fiery waterspout. . . . Earth is poured out as sea, and is measured according to the same ratio (*logos*) it was before it became earth.

(Clement, *Miscellanies* 5.104 3,5)

84. (B3 + B94) The sun by its nature is the width of a human foot, not exceeding in size the limits of its width . . . Otherwise, the Erinyes, ministers of Justice, will find him out.

(Derveni Papyrus, col. IV)

85. (B6) The sun is new each day.

(Aristotle, *Meteorology* II.2 355a13)

86. (B99) If there were no sun, as far as concerns all the other stars it would be night.

(Plutarch, *Is Water or Fire the More Useful?* 957A)

87. (B136) Souls slain in war are purer than those that perish of diseases.

(Bodleian Scholium on Epictetus, lxxi Schenkel)

88. (B24) Gods and humans honor those slain in war.
(Clement, *Miscellanies* 4.16.1)
89. (B25) Greater deaths win greater destinies.
(Clement, *Miscellanies* 4.49.2)
90. (B27) Things unexpected and unthought of await humans when they die.
(Clement, *Miscellanies* 4.22.144)
91. (B63) They arise and become vigilant guardians of the living and the dead.
(Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.10.6)
92. (B20) When they are born, they are willing to live and to have their destinies, and they leave children behind to become their destinies.
(Clement, *Miscellanies* 3.14.1)
93. (B16) How could one fail to be seen by that which does not set?
(Clement, *Pedagogue* 2.99.5)
94. (B96) Corpses are more fit to be thrown out than dung.
(Plutarch, *Table Talk* 669A)
95. (B121) Every grown man of the Ephesians should hang himself and leave the city to the boys; for they banished Hermodorus, the best man among them, saying “let no one of us excel, or if he does, be it elsewhere and among others.”
(Strabo, *Geography* 14.25)
96. (B125a) May wealth never leave you, Ephesians, lest your wickedness be revealed.
(John Tzetztes, Scholium on Aristophanes’ *Wealth* 88)
97. (B49) One person is ten thousand to me if he is best.
(Theodorus Prodromus, *Letters* 1)
98. (B52) A lifetime is a child playing, playing checkers; the kingdom belongs to a child.
(Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.94)
99. (B44) The people must fight for the law as for the city wall.
(Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 9.2)
100. (B43) Willful violence [*hubris*] must be quenched more than a fire.
(Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 9.3)
101. (B119) A person’s character is his divinity [or, “guardian spirit,” *daimōn*].
(Stobaeus, *Selections* 4.40.23)
102. (B110) It is not better for humans to get all they want.
(Stobaeus, *Selections* 3.1.176)
103. (B95) It is better to conceal ignorance.
(Plutarch, *Table Talk* 644F)
104. (B85) 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)
105. (B5) They vainly purify themselves with blood when defiled with it, as if a man who had stepped into mud were to wash it off with mud. He would be thought mad if anyone noticed him acting thus.
(Aristocritus, *Theosophia* 68; Origen, *Against Celsus* 7.62)
106. (B15) If it were not for Dionysus that they hold processions and sing hymns to the shameful parts [*phalli*], it would be a most shameless act; but Hades and Dionysus are the same, in whose honor they go mad and celebrate the Bacchic rites.
(Clement, *Protreptic* 34.5)
107. (B14) Nightwalkers, Magi, Bacchoi, Lenai, and the initiated. [These people Heraclitus threatens with what happens after death. . . .] For the secret rites practiced among humans are celebrated in an unholy manner.
(Clement, *Protreptic* 22)
108. (B92) The Sibyl with raving mouth uttering mirthless [and unadorned and unperfumed phrases, reaches a thousand years in her voice on account of the god].
(Plutarch, *On the Oracles at Delphi* 397A)