



Fragments

HERACLITUS

Musean Translation

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Translated by Michael Berardi

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THIS EDITION

Mouseia's complete machine-assisted Musean translation of all 130 genuine fragments in Hermann Diels's *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (4th ed., 1922), made directly from the Ionic Greek and Latin and checked against the printed page. Words of the ancient authors who quote Heraclitus stand in round parentheses.

TRANSLATOR

Michael Berardi

THE WORK

Written c. 500 BCE · Philosophy

SOURCE

Original text from [archive.org](https://www.archive.org).

GAPS AND UNCERTAINTIES

Heraclitus' book is lost; each fragment survives only as a quotation, and where the quotation ends is sometimes uncertain. The text follows Diels's 1922 edition, read from the page scans; his doubtful and spurious fragments (126a–139) are not included.

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Fragments 1–10

- ¹ Though this Logos is forever, people remain without understanding, both before they hear it and when they have first heard it. For all things come to pass according to this Logos, yet they seem without experience, though they experience such words and deeds as I unfold, distinguishing each according to its nature and showing how it is. The rest of humanity is unaware of what it does awake, just as it forgets what it does asleep.
- ² So we must follow the common, that is, what is shared; for what is shared is common. Yet though the Logos is common, the many live as if they had a private understanding.
- ³ (On the sun's size:) the width of a human foot.
- ⁴ (Heraclitus said that) if happiness lay in bodily pleasures, we would call oxen happy when they found bitter vetch to eat.
- ⁵ They cleanse themselves in vain by staining themselves with blood, as if someone who had stepped in mud washed himself with mud. Anyone who saw him doing this would think him mad. And they pray to these statues as if one were chatting with houses, knowing nothing of who the gods and heroes are.
- ⁶ (The sun is not only, as Heraclitus says,) new each day (but always new, continually).
- ⁷ If all that exists became smoke, noses would tell one thing from another.
- ⁸ What opposes unites; from differences comes the most beautiful harmony; all things come to pass through strife.
- ⁹ Donkeys would choose sweepings over gold.

- ¹⁰ Joinings: wholes and not wholes, converging diverging, in tune out of tune; from all things one, and from one all things.

Fragments 11–20

- ¹¹ For every creature is driven to pasture by a blow.
- ¹² Over those who step into the same rivers flow different and ever different waters; souls, too, rise as vapor from what is wet.
- ¹³ (For a refined person must neither be dirty nor unkempt nor) delight in mire.
- ¹⁴ Night-wanderers, magi, Bacchants, Bacchic women, initiates: (these he threatens with what comes after death; for these he foretells fire;) for the mysteries sanctioned among people are celebrated without holiness.
- ¹⁵ If they did not hold the procession for Dionysus and sing the hymn to the genitals, their deed would be most shameless; but Hades and Dionysus are the same, for whom they rave and hold their Bacchic rites.
- ¹⁶ How can anyone hide from what never sets?
- ¹⁷ For the many do not understand the things they meet; even after learning them, they do not know them, though they think they do.
- ¹⁸ Without expectation you will not find the unexpected: it cannot be searched out, and no path leads to it.
- ¹⁹ They know neither how to listen nor how to speak.
- ²⁰ Once born, they wish to live and meet their doom—or rather, to rest—and leave children behind for dooms to be born.

Fragments 21–30

- ²¹ All we see awake is death; all we see asleep is sleep.
- ²² For those who seek gold dig much earth and find little.
- ²³ They would not know Justice's name if these things did not exist.
- ²⁴ Gods and humans honor those slain in war.
- ²⁵ For greater deaths win greater shares.
- ²⁶ A man at night kindles a light for himself, dead, [his sight extinguished], yet living; asleep, his sight extinguished, he touches the dead; awake, he touches the sleeper.
- ²⁷ What waits for people after death is what they neither expect nor imagine.
- ²⁸ For the most esteemed knows and guards what seems true; yet Justice will seize the makers and witnesses of lies.
- ²⁹ For the best choose one thing over all: undying renown among mortals. The many are stuffed like cattle.
- ³⁰ This world-order, the same for all, no god or human made. It always was and is and will be: ever-living fire, kindling in measures and going out in measures.

Fragments 31–40

- ³¹ Fire's turnings: first sea; of sea, half earth, half fiery storm. (For in effect he says that fire, under the Logos and god governing all things, turns through air into moisture, the seed, as it were, of the ordering of the world, which he calls) sea,

(and from this, earth and heaven and all they contain come into being again.
How it is taken up again and kindled into fire he makes clear in these words:)
Sea pours out and is measured by the same measure as before it became earth.

- 32 The wise, one alone, is unwilling and willing to bear the name of Zeus.
- 33 It is law, too, to obey the counsel of one.
- 34 Hearing without understanding, they are like the deaf; the saying bears witness to them: present, they are absent.
- 35 For lovers of wisdom must indeed be inquirers into very many things.
- 36 For souls it is death to become water; for water, death to become earth. From earth comes water, from water soul.
- 37 Pigs bathe in mud, barnyard birds in dust or ash.
- 38 (Thales is thought by some to have been) the first to study the stars (... Heraclitus and Democritus also bear him witness).
- 39 In Priene lived Bias, son of Teutamas, held in higher account than the rest.
- 40 Much learning does not teach understanding. Otherwise it would have taught Hesiod and Pythagoras, and Xenophanes and Hecataeus too.

Fragments 41–50

- 41 For the wise is one thing: to know the thought that has steered all things through all.
- 42 Homer (he said) deserves to be driven from the contests and beaten, and Archilochus likewise.
- 43 Arrogance must be quenched more urgently than a blaze.
- 44 The people must fight for the law as for the city wall.

- ⁴⁵ You would not find the soul's limits in your travels, though you walked every road: so deep is its account.
- ⁴⁶ Presumption is a sacred disease (he said), and sight lies.
- ⁴⁷ Let us not guess at random about the greatest things.
- ⁴⁸ The bow's name is life; its work is death.
- ⁴⁹ One is ten thousand to me, if he is the best.
- ^{49a} Into the same rivers we step and do not step; we are and are not.
- ⁵⁰ For those who listen not to me but to the Logos, it is wise to agree that all things are one.

Fragments 51–60

- ⁵¹ They do not understand how what pulls apart agrees with itself: a harmony turning back, like that of bow and lyre.
- ⁵² Time is a child at play, moving pieces on a board; the kingship is a child's.
- ⁵³ War is father of all and king of all: some he has shown as gods, others as humans; some he has made slaves, others free.
- ⁵⁴ Unseen harmony is stronger than seen.
- ⁵⁵ What sight, hearing, and learning reveal—this I prize.
- ⁵⁶ People are deceived (he says) in their knowledge of what lies in plain sight, much as Homer was, who was wiser than all the Greeks. For boys killing lice deceived him when they said: "What we saw and caught, we leave behind; what we neither saw nor caught, we carry."
- ⁵⁷ Teacher to most is Hesiod. They are certain he knows the most—he who did not know day and night: they are one.

- ⁵⁸ Both good and evil [are one]. Doctors, for instance (Heraclitus says), cut, burn, torture the sick cruelly in every way, and demand a fee from the sick, though they deserve none, producing the same things (benefits and diseases).
- ⁵⁹ In the fuller's shop the straight and crooked path (the turning of the instrument called the screw in the fuller's shop is straight and crooked, for it moves at once upward and around) is one (he says) and the same.
- ⁶⁰ The road up and down is one and the same.

Fragments 61–70

- ⁶¹ Sea: water purest and foulest, drinkable and life-preserving for fish, undrinkable and deadly for humans.
- ⁶² Immortals mortal, mortals immortal: living the others' death, dead in the others' life.
- ⁶³ They rise before the one who is there and become wakeful guardians of the living and the dead.
- ⁶⁴ Thunderbolt steers all things.
- ⁶⁵ (He calls it) want and fullness.
- ⁶⁶ For all things (he says) will be judged and seized by fire when it comes.
- ⁶⁷ God is day night, winter summer, war peace, fullness hunger (all opposites: this is the meaning); he changes as fire does when mixed with incense, taking a name from the savor of each.
- ^{67a} Just as a spider (he says), standing in the middle of its web, feels it as soon as a fly breaks one of its threads and swiftly runs there, as though grieving for the thread's wholeness, so the human soul, when any part of the body is hurt, hur-

ries there, as though unable to bear injury to the body, to which it is firmly joined in due proportion.

- ⁶⁸ (And for this reason they were rightly called) remedies (by Heraclitus, as things that would cure terrors and raise souls above the misfortunes of coming into being).
- ⁶⁹ (I distinguish, then, two kinds of sacrifices: those) of people utterly purified, such as might occur in one person only rarely (as Heraclitus says), or in a few men who can easily be counted.
- ⁷⁰ (How much better, then, that Heraclitus took for) children's playthings (the opinions of human beings).

Fragments 71–80

- ⁷¹ (Remember also) the man who forgets where the road leads.
- ⁷² With the Logos, their closest, constant companion (which governs the whole), they are at odds; what they meet every day seems foreign to them.
- ⁷³ We must not act and speak as though asleep. (For even then we seem to act and speak.)
- ⁷⁴ (We must not act like) children of their parents (that is, put simply: as we have been taught).
- ⁷⁵ (Heraclitus, I think, calls those who sleep) workers (he says they are) and fellow workers in what comes to pass in the world-order.
- ⁷⁶ Fire lives earth's death, and air lives fire's death; water lives air's death, earth water's.
- ⁷⁷ For souls (he said), becoming wet is pleasure or death.
- ⁷⁸ For human character has no insight; divine character does.

- 79 A man is called a child by a divinity, just as a child is by a man.
- 80 We must know that war is common, that Justice is strife, and that all things come to pass through strife and necessity.

Fragments 81–90

- 81 (The rhetoricians' introductory teaching aims all its principles at this and, in Heraclitus' words,) is the ringleader of swindlers.
- 82 The most beautiful ape is ugly beside the human race.
- 83 The wisest human will seem an ape beside a god, in wisdom, beauty, and all else.
- 84 It rests in change (and) it is weariness to toil for the same people and be ruled by them.
- 85 Passion is hard to fight: whatever it wants, it buys with the soul.
- 86 Through disbelief it escapes being known.
- 87 A fool takes fright at every word.
- 88 The same: living and dead, waking and sleeping, young and old. These, changed, are those; those, changed again, are these.
- 89 For the waking there is one common world-order (but each sleeper turns aside into a private one).
- 90 All things are given in exchange for fire, and fire for all things, as goods for gold and gold for goods.

Fragments 91–100

- ⁹¹ For one cannot step twice into the same river (nor touch mortal substance twice in the same state; rather, through the sharpness and speed of change) it scatters and gathers again (or rather, not again or afterward: it forms and falls away at once), and comes and goes.
- ⁹² The Sibyl, with a raving mouth (according to Heraclitus), uttering words without laughter, adornment, or perfume (reaches across a thousand years with her voice) through the god.
- ⁹³ The lord whose oracle is at Delphi neither speaks nor conceals, but gives a sign.
- ⁹⁴ For the sun will not overstep its measures; otherwise the Furies, Justice's helpers, will track it down.
- ⁹⁵ For it is better to hide ignorance (but that is hard in leisure and over wine).
- ⁹⁶ For corpses are fitter to be thrown out than dung.
- ⁹⁷ For dogs bark at whatever they do not know.
- ⁹⁸ Souls have a sense of smell in Hades.
- ⁹⁹ If there were no sun, there would be night, despite the other stars.
- ¹⁰⁰ (The sun, as overseer and watchman, marks out, judges, displays, and brings to light the changes and) seasons that bring all things.

Fragments 101–110

- ¹⁰¹ I went in search of myself.
- ^{101a} For eyes are more exact witnesses than ears.

- 102 To the god, all things are beautiful and good and just; humans have taken some for unjust, others for just.
- 103 For on a circle's circumference, beginning and end share a common point.
- 104 What mind or understanding do they have? They trust the people's singers and take the crowd for their teacher, not knowing that "the many are bad, the few good."
- 105 (From this line Heraclitus calls) an astronomer (Homer).
- 106 One day is equal to every other.
- 107 Eyes and ears are poor witnesses for people with barbarian souls.
- 108 Of all those whose accounts I have heard, not one comes to this: to know that the wise is set apart from all.
- 109 Better to hide ignorance than bring it into the open.
- 110 It is not better for people to have all they wish.

Fragments 111–120

- 111 Sickness makes health sweet, evil good, hunger fullness, weariness rest.
- 112 Sound thought is the greatest excellence, and wisdom is to speak the truth and act according to nature, with understanding.
- 113 Thinking is common to all.
- 114 Those who speak with understanding must draw strength from what is common to all, as a city does from law, and far more strongly. For all human laws are nourished by the one divine law: it rules as far as it wishes, suffices for all, and has more to spare.
- 115 The soul has an account that enlarges itself.

- 116 All people have it in them to know themselves and think well.
- 117 When a man gets drunk, he is led by a boy not yet of age, stumbling, not knowing where he steps, his soul wet.
- 118 A dry radiance—the wisest and best soul.
- 119 A person’s character is their divinity.
- 120 The limits of dawn and evening are the Bear and, opposite the Bear, the boundary of bright-skied Zeus.

Fragments 121–126

- 121 The Ephesians deserve to hang themselves, every man of age, and leave the city to those not yet grown: they expelled Hermodorus, the most valuable man among them, saying, “Let no one among us be most valuable; if anyone is, let him be elsewhere and among others.”
- 122 Drawing near.
- 123 Nature (according to Heraclitus) loves to hide.
- 124 (Like) sweepings strewn at random is the most beautiful (Heraclitus says) world-order.
- 125 Even the mixed drink separates unless it is stirred.
- 125a May wealth never fail you (he said), Ephesians, so that your wrongdoing may be exposed.
- 126 Cold things grow warm; what is warm grows cold; what is wet dries; what is parched grows moist.