

"The Logos"

The combined quotations and fragments of Heraclitus in a fresh comprehensive translation by Daniel Christopher June

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The Logos stands ever, but humanity understands never, neither before nor even upon hearing him. For although all things accord with Logos, humanity is unhearing even when I speak of him, even as I define and distinguish the nature of logos in all things. They are as forgetful of their wakeful actions as they are of their sleeping actions. For this reason we must follow commonsense. Although logos is common, most people live by eccentric misunderstandings.

They see the same facts, but what they notice they don't know, but merely think they know. The best of men renounce all things for one thing – an eternal name for themselves – but the others stuff their gut and shrug. People are deceived over the most obvious things – even the wisest man, Homer. When children were killing lice they deceived him saying “All we saw and caught we left behind, but those we neither saw nor caught we bring with us.”

The opinions and beliefs of people are mere baubles and pranks. The Logos, which they touch daily, seems odd to them, their daily things seem strange to them. For lack of wisdom, holy matters are not recognized as such.

A fool is excited by just about any word, lacking discretion, just as the dog barks at everyone he doesn't know. What understanding or wisdom have fools? They trust any body who speaks in a popular inflection, they approve whoever has a talent for mobs rather than for truth, they listen to what most people say, though most people are bad, and few are perfect. Of all who speak their logos, none know that wisdom is sacred, and must be kept sacred and separate. Just as each beast is driven by blows towards pasture, so too must you drive these moblings by insults towards the true pasture of logos.

University learning doesn't teach insight. Otherwise we'd be learning from Hesiod and Pythagoras. Pythagoras studied the most of all, and quite a lot of nonsense he made! Homer should have been flogged.

The most famous and revered saints, sages, and prophets alas only guarded mere opinion. Justice will convict those who fabricate lies and swear by them. They know neither how to hear nor how to see. For even the eyes and ears are liars to the man of barbarous soul. Uncomprehending when they hear, they might as well be deaf. The saying well describes them: though present they are absent.

Do not act and speak as if asleep; those who are awake perceive the one common world, but those asleep turn away into their own private world. A man kindles a night-light when the room is dark; though alive, he sleeps like the dead, though awake, he sees only dreams. When we are awake, we see death, and when we are asleep we see sleep.

Human nature lacks what the divine has in full: insight. For as the man calls his child 'infantile,' so too do divinities call man. And as for the wise, he is one alone: he is both willing and unwilling to be called God.

Thinking is common to all. All people can and should know themselves and think aright. I search myself. Likewise, men who love wisdom must inquire into all matters. Wise men prefer direct experience, the seen and the heard, and between that they trust their eyes much more than their ears. If everything were smoke, the nose would be enough: you must approach matters with all your senses: only in hell will you navigate by nose alone.

You must hope for what nobody knows to hope for or you will never have it, for it cannot be hunted or gained without vision. And don't seek something as dull as gold, for you will dig much and get a lot of dirt. It's like working ever and always and getting nowhere, or like serving a master who has only his own interest.

Nature loves to hide, for she is coy of her secrets. God Apollo neither speaks nor conceals, but gives a sign. Wisdom is but one thing, subtle judgment in how all things are moved through all things. Make no guesses about great matters. Better to be silent where you truly don't know. Reason is the supreme virtue, and wisdom means speaking the truth and acting naturally, while paying attention to the truth of nature.

Listening not to me but to the logos, you would be wise to agree that all things are one. Things taken together are whole and not whole, coming together and pulling apart, in harmony and in cacophony; from all things comes one unity and from one unity comes all things. The one they misunderstand, that though at variance with itself, it also agrees with itself. It finally

turns back on itself like a bow pulling over a lyre. The hidden connections hold stronger than the obvious ones.

To speak and be understood you must rely firmly on common experience, as a city must rely firmly on common law. For beyond that, all humans nourish one law divine – logos – for it has all the power it would wish, and is sufficient for everyone and more.

Opposites pull together; the finest harmony is made of things at variance, and everything is born in accordance to strife.

The sea is the purest and the most polluted of waters: the fishes drink and are safe, the humans choke and drown. Likewise, pigs prefer mud to even the purest water, and an ass prefers rubbish to gold; the oxen moo in pleasure eating what to us is bitter as spinach; and not only do pigs bath in mud, but birds preen in dust and ash. Likewise, the loveliest of apes is to us humans ugly. The wisest human will be that same ugly ape in comparison to a God in respect to wisdom, beauty, and virtue.

The most beautiful arrangement is a pile of things scattered at random.

Physicians cut, stitch, poison, and maim in the name of medicine, and still complain for more pay. Likewise, the track of writing is straight, yet is crooked, like a key. The road up and the road down is the same road. Those who step in the same river, find different waters each time: for it is not possible to step in the same river twice: it scatters and returns, approaches and recedes.

Everything is flux, everything is change.

All is flux, and nothing abides.

Everything flows, everything glides.

All is becoming, and nothing remains.

We are and we are not. The beginning and the end of the circumference are the same. The bow is both beautiful, and yet ugly as death. Cold things warm, warm things chill, moistness withers, withering moistens. One same thing is living and dead, waking and sleeping, old and young; transform this and it becomes that, reform that and it becomes again this. Do not take Hesiod for a teacher: he didn't know day from night, didn't know that it is always day and always night.

Without crimes, justice would be unknown. Disease gives health savor, hunger satiety, weariness rest.

The dead soul melts to water, the dead water sinks to earth, but earth births water, and water fills with soul. The turnings of fire: first it becomes sea, and of the sea, half is earth and half mist; earth pours out as sea, and is measured by the same logic as before it became earth. Fire survives earth, and air survives fire, water survives air, and earth survives water.

The universal Cosmos, same to everybody, was created by no God or Gods, by no man or men, but it was always and ever shall be: an ever-living fire, being kindled in measures and snuffed in measures. Changing, it rests. Working, it relaxes. Even milk separates if it isn't continually stirred. All things stand for fire and fire for all things, as goods for gold and gold for goods. Thunderbolt steers all things. For war is the Father of all and king of all: some he reveals

as gods, others as men; some he makes slaves, others free. Know that war is necessary and justice is strife, know that all which happens does so by strife and necessity. Fire betters some things, judges and convicts others. For fire is need: both want and satisfaction. God is day and night, winter and summer, war and peace, hunger and satisfaction, is in fact all things, but only seems different in the way a waft seems different depending on what perfume it blows over.

It is law to obey the word of the one. To God all things are beautiful and good and just, but humans suppose only some things are, and others the opposite. Immortals are mortal, mortals are immortal: they live the death of others, and die their own life.

Not even the sun dares waver from his track, lest Justice punish him. And yet, the sun is new each day. To man, the sun is no longer than a human foot, yet without him, no amount of stars could hide that we live in night.

Fools wish to be forgiven with sacrificial blood when they have defiled their reputation with blood, as if they would bath in mud after falling in a ditch. This is madness.

If it weren't for Dionysus, how shameful it would be to worship with the penis; but Hades and Dionysus are the same, and thus these men go mad with love for God through orgies. The sibyl mad and babbling, unadorned and unperfumed, moves the destiny of a thousand years because God speaks through her.

It is death for a soul to dampen; but a dry soul is a gleam of light, wisest and best. The man drunk, stumbling and foolish, has moistened his soul – at best a boy must lead him.

Gods and men honor the warrior slain in glory, for the greater death wins a greater destiny: pity them not: wonders unknown and matters unthinkable await humans when they die. They arise as guardians of the living and the dead.

Men think they trick God by doing their deeds at night, but who could fail to be seen by the eye that does not set?

Encircle every road of the world, you would not have discovered the limits of the soul, for deep is his logos. The soul is a self-increasing logos.

Every grown man of the Ephesians should hang himself over a tree branch and let the boys begin anew: for they banished Hermaodrus, and for the worst of reasons, saying, "Let no man excel the others, or if he does, not before us, but elsewhere far from our eyes." May you remain at least wealthy, or you won't even have money to pay for such wickedness. For one man to me is ten-thousand if he is the best.

The people should defend their laws even greater than their city walls. Intentional violence is a greater problem than a spreading fire. Remember that a person's character is his God. It is better for humans not to get everything they want, and not even part of it, immediately. On the other hand it is better for them to conceal their ignorance, and suppress impatience. It is difficult to fight against anger, for what it wants it must sell its soul to get.

Eternity is a child at play, pushing checkers across a board; the kingdom belongs to a child.