

HERAKLEITOS

- 1 The Logos is eternal
but men have not heard it
and men have heard it and not understood.

Through the Logos all things are understood
yet men do not understand
as you shall see when you put acts and words to the test
I am going to propose:

One must talk about everything according to its nature,
how it comes to be and how it grows.
Men have talked about the world without paying attention
to the world or to their own minds,
as if they were asleep or absent-minded.

- 2 Let us therefore notice that understanding is common to all men. Understanding is common to all, yet each man acts as if his intelligence were private and all his own.
- 3 Men who wish to know about the world must learn about it in its particular details.
- 4 Men dig up and search through much earth to find gold.
- 5 Our understanding of the greatest matters will never be complete.
- 6 Knowledge is not intelligence.
- 7 I have heard many men talk, but none who realized that understanding is distinct from all other knowledge.
- 8 I have looked diligently at my own mind.
- 9 It is natural for man to know his own mind and to be sane.

- 10 Sanity is the highest excellence. The skillful mind speaks the truth, knowing how everything is separate in its own being.
- 11 I honor what can be seen, what can be heard, what can be learned.
- 12 Eyes are better informers than ears.
- 13 Eyes and ears are poor informers to the barbarian mind.
- 14 One ought not to talk or act as if he were asleep.
- 15 We share a world when we are awake; each sleeper is in a world of his own.
- 16 Awake, we see a dying world; asleep, dreams.
- 17 Nature loves to hide. [Becoming is a secret process].
- 18 The Lord who prophesies at Delphoi neither speaks clearly nor hides his meaning completely; he gives one symbols instead.
- 19 In searching out the truth be ready for the unexpected, for it is difficult to find and puzzling when you find it.
- 20 Everything flows; nothing remains. [Everything moves; nothing is still. Everything passes away; nothing lasts.]
- 21 One cannot step twice into the same river, for the water into which you first stepped has flowed on.
- 22 Cold things become hot; hot things, cold. Wet things, dry; dry things, wet.
- 23 Change alone is unchanging.
- 24 History is a child building a sand-castle by the sea, and that child is the whole majesty of man's power in the world.
- 25 War is the father of us all and our king. War discloses who is godlike and who is but a man, who is a slave and who is freeman.
- 26 It must be seen clearly that war is the natural state of man. Justice is contention. Through contention all things come to be.
- 27 When Homer said that he wished war might disappear from the lives of gods and men, he forgot that without opposition all things would cease to exist.

- 28 Everything becomes fire, and from fire everything is born, as in the eternal exchange of money and merchandise.
- 29 This world, which is always the same for all men, neither god nor man made: it has always been, it is, and always shall be: an everlasting fire rhythmically dying and flaring up again.
- 30 Not enough and too much.
- 31 Divides and rejoins, goes forward and then backward.
- 32 The first metamorphosis of fire is to become the sea, and half of the sea becomes the earth, half the flash of lightning.
- 33 As much earth is washed into the sea as sea-stuff dries and becomes part of the shore.
- 34 The life of fire comes from the death of earth. The life of air comes from the death of fire. The life of water comes from the death of air. The life of earth comes from the death of water.
- 35 Lightning is the lord of everything.
- 36 There is a new sun for every day.
- 37 The sun is one foot wide.
- 38 If there were no sun, all the other stars together could not dispel the night.
- 39 Morning is distinguished from evening by the Bear who rises and sets diametrically across from the path of Zeus of the Burning Air.
- 40 The most beautiful order of the world is still a random gathering of things insignificant in themselves.
- 41 All beasts are driven to pasture.
- 42 No matter how many ways you try, you cannot find a boundary to consciousness, so deep in every direction does it extend.
- 43 The stuff of the psyche is a smoke-like substance of finest particles that gives rise to all other things; its particles are of less mass than any other substance and it is constantly in motion: only movement can know movement.
- 44 The psyche rises as a mist from things that are wet.

- 45 The psyche grows according to its own law.
- 46 A dry psyche is most skilled in intelligence and is brightest in virtue.
- 47 The psyche lusts to be wet [and to die].
- 48 A drunk man, staggering and mindless, must be led home by his son, so wet is his psyche.
- 49 Water brings death to the psyche, as earth brings death to water. Yet water is born of earth, and the psyche from water.
- 50 That delicious drink, spiced hot Pramnian wine mixed with resin, roasted barley, and grated goat's cheese, separates in the bowl if it is not stirred.
- 51 It is hard to withstand the heart's desire, and it gets what it wants at the psyche's expense.
- 52 If every man had exactly what he wanted, he would be no better than he is now.
- 53 Hide our ignorance as we will, an evening of wine reveals it.
- 54 The untrained mind shivers with excitement at everything it hears.
- 55 The stupid are deaf to truth: they hear, but think that the wisdom of a perception always applies to someone else.
- 56 Bigotry is the disease of the religious.
- 57 Many people learn nothing from what they see and experience, nor do they understand what they hear explained, but imagine that they have.
- 58 If everything were smoke, all perception would be by smell.
- 59 In Hades psyches perceive each other by smell alone.
- 60 The dead body is useless even as manure.
- 61 Men are not intelligent, the gods are intelligent.
- 62 The mind of man exists in a logical universe but is not itself logical.
- 63 The gods' presence in the world goes unnoticed by men who do not believe in the gods.
- 64 Man, who is an organic continuation of the Logos, thinks he can sever that

continuity and exist apart from it.

65 At night we extinguish the lamp and go to sleep; at death our lamp is extinguished and we go to sleep.

66 Gods become men; men become gods, the one living the death of the other, the other dying the life of the one.

[*Wheelwright translates: Immortals become mortals, mortals become immortals; they live in each other's death and die in each other's life.*]

67 In death men will come upon things they do not expect, things utterly unknown to the living.

68 We assume a new being in death: we become protectors of the living and the dead.

69 Character is fate.

70 The greater the stakes, the greater the loss. [The more one puts oneself at the mercy of chance, the more chance will involve one in the laws of necessity and inevitability.]

71 Justice stalks the liar and the false witness.

72 Fire catches up with everything, in time.

73 How can you hide from what never goes away?

74 There are gods here, too.

75 They pray to statues of gods and heroes much as they would gossip with the wall of a house, understanding so little of gods and heroes.

76 Paraders by night, magicians, Bacchantes, leapers to the flute and drum, initiates in the Mysteries—what men call the Mysteries are unholy disturbances of the peace.

77 Their pompous hymns and phallic songs would be obscene if we did not understand that they are the rites of Dionysos. And Dionysos, through whom they go into a trance and speak in tongues and for whom they beat the drum, do they realize that he is the same god as Hades, Lord of the Dead?

78 They cleanse themselves with blood: as if a man fallen into the pigsty should wash himself with slop. To one who does not know what's happening, the religious man at his rites seems to be a man who has lost his mind.

- 79** There is madness in the Sibyl's voice, her words are gloomy, ugly, and rough, but they are true for a thousand years, because a god speaks through her.
- 80** All men think.
- 81** All men should speak clearly and logically, and thus share rational discourse and have a body of thought in common, as the people of a city are all under the same laws. The laws of men derive from the divine law, which is whole and single, which penetrates as it will to satisfy human purposes, but is mightier than any law known to men.
- 82** Defend the law as you would the city wall.
- 83** Law gives the people a single will to obey.
- 84** One man, to my way of thinking, is worth ten thousand, if he's the best of his kind.
- 85** The best of men see only one thing worth having: undying fame. They prefer fame to wealth. The majority of men graze like cattle.
- 86** Those killed by Ares are honored by gods and men.
- 87** The man of greatest reputation knows how to defend a reputation.
- 88** Extinguish pride as quickly as you would a fire.
- 89** To do the same thing over and over is not only boredom: it is to be controlled by rather than to control what you do.
- 90** Dogs bark at strangers.
- 91** What do they have for intellect, for common sense, who believe the myths of public singers and flock with the crowd as if public opinion were a teacher, forgetting that the many are bad, the few are good [there are many bad people, few good ones]?
- 92** All men are equally mystified by unaccountable evidence, even Homer, wisest of the Greeks. He was mystified by children catching lice. He heard them say, What we have found and caught we throw away; what we have not found and caught we still have.
- 93** Homer should be thrown out of the games and whipped, and Archilochos with him.

- 94** Good days and bad days, says Hesiod, forgetting that all days are alike.
- 95** The Ephesians might as well all hang themselves and let the city be governed by children. They have banished Hermadoros, best of their citizens, because they cannot abide to have among them a man so much better than they are.
- 96** Ephesians, be rich! I cannot wish you worse.
- 97** Life is bitter and fatal, yet men cherish it and beget children to suffer the same fate.
- 98** Opposites cooperate. The beautifullest harmonies come from opposition. All things repel each other.
- 99** We know health by illness, good by evil, satisfaction by hunger, leisure by fatigue.
- 100** Except for what things would we never have heard the word justice?
- 101** Sea water is both fresh and foul: excellent for fish, poison to men.
- 102** Asses would rather have hay than gold.
- 103** Pigs wash in mud, chickens in dust.
- 104** The handsomest ape is uglier than the ugliest man. The wisest man is less wise, less beautiful than a god: the distance from ape to man is that from man to god.
- 105** A boy is to a man as a man is to a god.
- 106** To God all is beautiful, good, and as it should be. Man must see things as either good or bad.
- 107** Having cut, burned and poisoned the sick, the doctor then submits his bill.
- 108** The same road goes both up and down.
- 109** The beginning of a circle is also its end.
- 110** The river we stepped into is not the river in which we stand.
- 111** Curled wool, straight thread.
- 112** Joints are and are not parts of the body. They cooperate through opposition, and make a harmony of separate forces. Wholeness arises from distinct particulars;

distinct particulars occur in wholeness.

- 113** To live is to die, to be awake is to sleep, to be young is to be old, for the one flows into the other, and the process is capable of being reversed.
- 114** Hesiod, so wise a teacher, did not see that night and day are the same.
- 115** A bow is alive only when it kills.
- 116** The unseen design of things is more harmonious than the seen.
- 117** We do not notice how opposing forces agree. Look at the bow and the lyre.
- 118** Not I but the world says it: All is one.
- 119** Wisdom alone is whole, and is both willing and unwilling to be named Zeus.
- 120** Wisdom is whole: the knowledge of how things are plotted in their courses by all other things.
- 121** God is day night winter summer war peace enough too little, but disguised in each and known in each by a separate flavor.
- 122** The sun will never change the rhythm of its motion. If it did, the Erinyes, agents of justice, would bring it to trial.
- 123** All things come in seasons.
- 124** Even sleeping men are doing the world's business and helping it along.