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### Cover Page Footnote

[1] Daniel Graham, "Heraclitus," The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, Summer 2011 ed., ed. Edward N. Zalta (Stanford, CA: The Metaphysics Research Lab, 2011), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/heraclitus/>.

## HERACLITUS ON THE LOGOS: UNITY IN OPPOSITION

**Nathan Hall**

### 1. Introduction

This paper will be split into two sections. The first will focus on unpacking the fragments' meaning(s). Note that for this section, the fragments will not be elaborated in numeric order. The second will focus on the fragments' combined meaning in respect to understanding the Logos, as, I claim, the fragments function as different means of expressing the same truth.

### 2. The Heraclitean Fragments

This section will unpack the following fragments –

12. Anhalation (*vaporisation*). Those who step in the same river have different waters flowing ever upon them. (Souls are vaporised from what is wet).<sup>1</sup>

41. That which is wise is one: to understand the purpose which steers all things through all things.<sup>2</sup>

51. They do not understand how that which differs with itself is in agreement: harmony consists of opposing tension, like that of the bow and the lyre.<sup>3</sup>

54. The hidden harmony is stronger (*or*, 'better') than the visible.<sup>4</sup>

Beginning with fr. 41. The fragment opens with 'that which is wise is one'. This is of important note as, I claim, it can be understood as an allusion to unity. This claim is supported by the manner in which two opposing forces often appear as one.<sup>5</sup> This is due to an equilibrium attained when opposing forces act in accordance with the same function, namely, unity.<sup>6</sup> Windelband's example of a river appearing 'as a permanent thing because just as much water

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<sup>1</sup> Kathleen Freeman, *Ancilla to The Pre-Socratic Philosophers* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), 25.

<sup>2</sup> Freeman, *Ancilla*, 27.

<sup>3</sup> Freeman, *Ancilla*, 28.

<sup>4</sup> Freeman, *Ancilla*, 28.

<sup>5</sup> Graham, "Heraclitus."

<sup>6</sup> Wilhelm Windelband, *History of Ancient Philosophy*, trans. Herbert Ernest Cushman (Dover: Dover Publications, 1956), 55.

flows to a point as flows from it'<sup>7</sup>, portrays this equilibrium. Appropriately, I argue that reason functions similarly. Notice the fragment states the necessity of oneness to understand the 'purpose which steers all things through all things.' In the place of 'one', I propose harmony (harmonious), and in the place of 'purpose', I propose Logos. My intention in doing this is to remove any ambiguity from the fragment, making it easier to unpack. It may seem somewhat contradictory, exploring opposites as unified, but this contradiction is removed quite simply by adopting reason as a unity-oriented tool. By doing so, the capacity to understand the 'purpose' (in lieu – the Logos) expressed within the fragment is attained. What this purpose is however, will be expounded in the second section of this paper. I argue that it is *only* through employing reason as a unity-oriented tool, that this 'purpose' can be identified and understood. Having established the efficacy by which reason, when employed in the abovementioned manner, allows for the identification of the Logos hidden within the fragments, this paper shall now proceed to further explain the equilibrium between opposing forces via fr. 51.

Fr. 51 does not mention equilibrium explicitly; rather, it does so implicitly in pointing to the importance of opposition in the attainment of harmony. Harmony is best understood as the end goal of opposing forces, here explored as equilibrium.<sup>8</sup> Like the river example, this equilibrium appears as one, in an 'agreement' of opposition.<sup>9</sup> To explore this further, observe where the fragment mentions 'opposing tension'. Tension in opposition is indicative of Heraclitus positing unity as cohesive; fundamentally restricting any opposition extending to the point of disconnection.<sup>10</sup> This restriction, however, is crucial as it demonstrates that at an essential level, tensions between opposites are entirely dependent on unity's cohesiveness.<sup>11</sup> To analyse further the point of tension, this paper will briefly explain Heraclitus's view of Fire. (Tension shall be returned to later in this paper, after an explanation of perpetual motion as invariable succession).

Heraclitus claimed that Fire is the essence of all things. I use essence deliberately as Heraclitus understood this Fire to be an 'ever-living' Fire.<sup>12</sup> Note that Fire should be considered here in the sense that it is hidden within all things as *the* most basic essence.<sup>13</sup> I claim that

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<sup>7</sup> Windelband, *History of Ancient Philosophy*, 55.

<sup>8</sup> Graham, "Heraclitus".

<sup>9</sup> Graham, "Heraclitus"; Patricia Kenig Curd, "Knowledge and Unity in Heraclitus," *The Monist* 74, no. 4 (1991): 539.

<sup>10</sup> W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy: Volume 1: The Earlier Presocratics and The Pythagoreans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 435.

<sup>11</sup> Guthrie, *History*, 435.

<sup>12</sup> Freeman, *Ancilla*, 26.

<sup>13</sup> Graham, "Heraclitus".

(hidden) Fire, when understood as the most basic essence, may be postulated as the ‘unseen harmony’. From this, it is clear to see that opposites are, at base, essentially the same. Here, it is pertinent to demonstrate the relationship between the sameness of opposites, and the notion of perpetual motion, in order to expand further on Fire’s importance to the Logos.

Having established that Fire is essential in all things, one must now look to possible applications of Fire in its function as demonstrable of unity in opposition. Observe fr. 12. Its focus is the mutable nature of Fire. Notice how Fire is elementally expressed as water. From this, an interesting question is raised: What is of Fire that allows it to change yet remain the same? To answer this, firstly let us examine closely the fragment’s use of *same* and *different*. *Different* waters can flow down the *same* river. Let us take the fragment’s meaning beyond the literal. I claim that Heraclitus is not positing Fire in the elemental sense; rather, he is positing it in the analogical sense. In other words, I claim that the unanimity of opposites is based upon something immutable yet entirely capable of being expressed in opposition, this being, Fire; as analogically, it can function as such. Further, the nature of unity is not found in the ‘identity of the opposites’, but in the transmutability of the same essence into differing forms.<sup>14</sup> In other words, all opposites are constantly changing into, and reverting back to, one another. This may be understood as invariable succession.<sup>15</sup> This is perhaps a reason as to why Heraclitus adopted Fire as the symbol of the Logos, as it can be reconciled with his doctrine of flux.<sup>16</sup>

How, though, has Heraclitus used reason as a unity-oriented tool in fr. 12 in light of the abovementioned claim? I answer that he has done so by positing Fire as analogical. By identifying Fire as such, Heraclitus can use reason like a centrifuge – taking something indiscernible as itself and then proceeding to isolate the individual parts and ultimately discern their similarity. In respect to fr. 12, this use of reason would separate the heavier water from the lighter vapour, thus simultaneously allowing for the identification of individual parts, as well as the unifying condition of motion as invariable succession.<sup>17</sup> Extending this, if one looks at water and vapour more closely, it can be argued that the words are really alluding to the notion that things are ultimately of the same essence, even when appearing in differing forms.

It is here that this paper shall return to the notion of tension in respect to the analogy of the bow and the lyre in fr. 51. This analogy is intended to convey the omnipresent (yet hidden)

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<sup>14</sup> Graham, “Heraclitus”.

<sup>15</sup> Graham, “Heraclitus”.

<sup>16</sup> Constance I Smith, “Heraclitus and Fire,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 27, no. 1 (1966): 126.

<sup>17</sup> This portrayal of the fragment is not intended to engage the topic of the nature of the soul in Heraclitean thought. It goes beyond the scope of this paper to do so.

forces in opposition.<sup>18</sup> My use of the term omnipresent is deliberate, as the bow and the lyre analogy is indicative of the tension throughout all things.<sup>19</sup> This tension is at such equilibrium that no motion is visible.<sup>20</sup> However, this tug-of-war is perpetual, becoming visible only if one force is to overpower the other.<sup>21</sup> It is here that the intention of the fragment is best revealed. Notice the use of harmony in both fr. 51 and fr. 54; particularly fr. 54 and the mentioning of ‘hidden harmony’. Tension is generated by the pulling of opposing forces, yet this tension results in agreement, which may be understood as harmony.<sup>22</sup> Yet, what is the significance of fr. 54’s mentioning of hidden harmony? I answer that, much like Heraclitus’s analogical use of Fire, the hidden harmony is where the Logos is to be found. The support for this answer comes from Heraclitus’s implicitness. Rarely do the fragments explicitly tell their true meaning. Furthermore, Heraclitus states that which is hidden is better or stronger.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, it is fitting to explore the fragment’s meaning as non-literal in order to understand Heraclitus’s interpretation of the Logos.

### 3. Discerning the Logos

This section aims to present an interpretation of the Logos (‘purpose’) in Heraclitean metaphysics, in light of the previous analysis.

So far, this paper has uncovered concepts within the fragments which, I argue, are all relevant to understanding Heraclitus’s interpretation of the Logos. Fr. 41 demonstrated an allusion to unity through oneness. The concept was explored as equilibrium. Fr. 51 was then deciphered as primarily concerned with harmony (equilibrium) through opposing tension, and that this tension was found to be indicative of the cohesive function of unity.<sup>24</sup> Once establishing Fire as essence, fr. 12 then revealed that all opposites are constantly changing into, and reverting back to, one another.<sup>25</sup> Analysing fr. 54 revealed the intention behind the notion of hiddenness, and the importance of viewing this analogically to understand the Logos.

To unify the above themes and, furthermore, identify the Logos that Heraclitus attempts to convey through the fragments, this paper will focus on the common theme of analogy. Again,

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<sup>18</sup> Guthrie, *History*, 438.

<sup>19</sup> Guthrie, *History*, 440.

<sup>20</sup> Guthrie, *History*, 440.

<sup>21</sup> Guthrie, *History*, 440.

<sup>22</sup> Curd, “Knowledge and Unity in Heraclitus,” 539.

<sup>23</sup> Freeman, *Ancilla*, 28.

<sup>24</sup> Guthrie, *History*, 435.

<sup>25</sup> Graham, “Heraclitus”.

I argue that Heraclitus's interpretation of the Logos is to be found in the fragments' implicit meaning. This means being able to observe the *likeness* of the fragments in relation to one another. The previous analysis found that the most fundamental likeness lies in all things being comprised, essentially, of Fire. Fire was revealed as being entirely immutable (essentially), while simultaneously able to be expressed in differing forms, hence, transmutable. From this, I claim that Heraclitean Logos is revealed in two key stages. The first stage is that the Logos is not set; it is in a constant motion, often appearing differently - hence the many fragments.<sup>26</sup> However, saying the Logos is not set does not suggest that the *essence* of the Logos changes (hence its immutability).<sup>27</sup> In the second stage, due to the unchanging nature of the essence (ever living Fire<sup>28</sup>) of the Logos, it may be said that Fire is foundational or stable.<sup>29</sup> Due to this stability, harmony is the end result of the tension of opposites.<sup>30</sup> Harmony, when understood in this manner, is cohesive of opposition, allowing for perpetual motion, yet restricting this motion enough to establish a harmony, which ultimately reveals the Logos as Fire. I conclude this section by arguing that it is *only* through having used reason as a unity-oriented faculty that Heraclitus could have written the Logos into the fragments as to reveal the interpretation elucidated above.

#### 4. Conclusion

This paper aimed to demonstrate that discerning the Logos in the Heraclitean fragments requires the use of reason as a unity-oriented tool. To achieve this, the fragments were analysed and both the individual meanings and related concepts were unpacked and explained. Subsequently, this paper proceeded to express the importance of the related concepts, namely, harmony and analogy. These concepts were then married to reveal the two stages by which the Logos is expressed through the fragments. The first is that the Logos is not set, hence allowing for motion. The second demonstrates that the essence of the Logos does *not* change, which allows for stability (harmony) between opposites. This ultimately is in keeping with Heraclitus's understanding of the primacy of Fire as unifying of all things. From this, I argue that it is *only* through having used reason as a unity-oriented faculty, that Heraclitus could have

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<sup>26</sup> Karl R Popper, "Kirk on Heraclitus, and on Fire as the cause of Balance," *Mind* 72, no. 287 (1963): 386-387.

<sup>27</sup> Popper, "Kirk on Heraclitus," 387.

<sup>28</sup> Freeman, *Ancilla*, 26.

<sup>29</sup> Smith, "Heraclitus and Fire," 127.

<sup>30</sup> Curd, "Knowledge and Unity in Heraclitus," 539.

expressed the Logos through the fragments as to reveal the universal Law which determines and regulates all things.

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