

HERACLITUS STUDIES: The Fragments as Koans



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with fragments translated by

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Background

*There is no such thing as a master or pupil among them
[the Heracliteans], but they spring up of their own accord.*
Plato (*Theat.* 1790-180 A&C)

Introduction

I know very little about Zen koans but enough to hold the opinion that the *method* of study is as important as the words themselves, maybe more so. People study Zen koans to become enlightened. To get there one apparently has 18 major mystical experiences and numerous minor ones, *insights* some call them, these experiences. I've had some of these so-called insights, and the effort is worthwhile only if you are the sort of person who appreciates greater depth and meaning in life. If not, then you will likely find them a waste of time.

It is this *method* that makes it possible to study Heraclitus fragments as one would study Zen koans, and with the same or similar result. The method of study comes from Chinese Zen and has been in use for about 1000 years. The Heraclitus fragments have been around for about 2500 years, but so far as I know the two have never been introduced to each other – until this work you are now reading. You will be one of the first to apply a Zen method to Heraclitus study.

In addition, this is the only work I know that attempts to understand Heraclitus from the perspective of the right cerebral hemisphere. Heraclitus was known as the Obscure One, even in his lifetime, because he often said things that defied rational analysis. You will find that much of the literature investigating these fragments attempts to make sense of them by using the left brain – often until the scholar appears tired and not just a little silly. We won't be doing that. Instead, we will be using Zen mystical methods to study a Western mystic, offering entirely new and different possibilities.

Translations

John Burnett's translation was used, first, because it is in the public domain. After awhile, I also realized that Burnett has a poet's affection for the words of Heraclitus. However, as is generally the case with works that are more than 100 years old, some of the words are outdated and rarely in use today. There were a few very minor revisions that were made, all of them with the assistance of the more contemporary scholar and translator, T. M. Robinson. His work, *Heraclitus Fragments* (University of Toronto Press, 1987) is recommended, and unlike many commentaries available, it is readily accessible to the lay reader. The various interpretations and commentaries available on Heraclitus should be read with caution, and it should be remembered that their opinions may or may not be more valid than your own – especially after you finish these studies.

History

[**Heraclitus** (c.535-c.475 BCE). Extracted from *The Path of the Sage*, 1996.] There are a number of centuries in history when human beings rose to the challenge of greatness. One of these was in the sixth century BCE, a time when we crossed the bridge from animism to natural philosophy and Western Civilization was born. It began in Ionia, a rich culture made up of twelve principle cities located along the southwestern coast of Turkey and on the nearby Aegean Islands in the Mediterranean.

Ionian history began when colonists from mainland Greece fled their homeland around 1000 BCE to escape the conquering Dorians of southwest Macedonia. The Grecian refugees married the native Carians to produce a new culture and a new people, the Ionians. The Ionians became merchant seamen and builders of great cities and temples that were renowned throughout the ancient world. Today, these cities and temples are largely forgotten, buried in the silt and dust of time. But it's only an empire that was lost, a small matter compared to the civilization that was won, a civilization that first formed in the philosopher's mind. For the Stoa, that mind belonged to Heraclitus.

He was a nobleman of Ephesus. Some say he was a hereditary king who set aside his crown to study philosophy. He was undoubtedly a sage, a mystic genius, and the first cosmologist of the Stoa. Heraclitus has fascinated thinkers from Socrates to Goethe and from Aristotle to contemporary quantum physicists. He is the greatest of the Ionian sages, a Founding Father of Western Civilization, a creator of philosophy, and a diviner of the fundamental essence of the cosmos. He is also known as the Obscure One, a reputation acquired in his own time for a vague and riddling style that some believe he deliberately adopted to elude even the most erudite scholars.

God, he called the Logos, Reason, Intelligence, a Whole made up of the sum total of all opposites, constantly in motion, birthing, living, dying, and being born again. The Heraclitean universe is a place where all parts are related to the whole, and its symbol is fire, a rarefied fire that permeates, consumes, destroys, creates, and lights the cosmos as one single organism of life.

Unfortunately, what he wrote, in its original form, has been lost in antiquity by the systematic attempts of early Christians, such as Theodosius I (4th century CE), the last emperor of a unified Rome who set out to destroy all remnants of pagan civilizations during the years of his reign, 375-395 CE. What the Christians didn't destroy, many others attempted. In the 7th century CE, the last of the early Stoic works were likely destroyed in the willful destruction of the great library of Alexandria. Caliph Omar, the Muslim general who conquered Egypt, gave the edict that all books except the Koran were to be burned. The contents of the library, all the greatest works of antiquity, were carted off to be burned as fuel for the public baths of Alexandria, keeping their fires lit, it was said, for more than six months.

All that remains are fragmentary references from many sources, some reliable, some unreliable, from Plato to Medieval monastic scholars. And from these fragments we discover remarkable parallels between the observations of Heraclitus and modern physicists 2500 years later. His cosmology and ours describe a universe that is a unified whole; an eternal becoming, perpetual and cyclical; unity and paradox in pairs of opposites; and a dynamic living organism of movement, flow, and change. In all of these attributes of Nature, Heraclitus would include a rational consciousness and providence.

[**All Roads lead to Heraclitus.** Extracted from *The Book of Doubt*, 2005.] The darkest night of Pyrrhonian doubt settled on Aenesidemus (Unknown: after Philo but before Sextus Empiricus of 2nd c.), but the first prophet of uncertainty began nearly five centuries earlier with Xenophanes (570-478 BCE), a wandering poet-philosopher from Ionia born in the town of Colophon who lived in a number of Greek city states during his exceedingly long life. He was often claimed by the ancients to be the first true skeptic based especially upon one preserved fragment of his work, a comment he purportedly made about knowledge:

...and of course the clear and certain truth no man has seen nor will there be anyone who knows about the gods and what I say about all things. For even if, in the best case, one happened to speak just of what has been brought, still he himself would not know. But opinion is allotted to all.

Contemporary academic philosophers argue over the exact interpretation of this text, but the gist of it is that there never has been and never will be anyone who has or will achieve certain knowledge.

Heraclitus (c. 535-475 BCE) and **Parmenides** (early 5th century BCE). Heraclitus disagreed with Xenophanes and believed it *was* possible to provide an explanation of the world by the relationship of the Logos, the divine intelligence, to the human psyche, the seat of human knowledge whereby we come to know such intelligence. This is thought to be the origins of epistemology, the study of the nature of knowledge, in Western philosophy. Then, Heraclitus went on to describe the processes of Nature as emanation from God, the One, into the many parts of our familiar world and back again in a continuous state of flux. Existence as we know it is in such a state of flux that at any given moment one could not describe the nature of any object, because, by the time it was described, it would have changed again and become slightly different. Heraclitus maintained that all objects in our world were in a state of becoming, from birth and growth to deterioration and death, from the life of planets to the aging of our own physical constitution.

Parmenides disagreed with Heraclitus and thought it was impossible for God, the One, to become all the many parts of our familiar world. In fact, if the One were perfect, why would it extend itself into a state of imperfection? No, the One was an immovable being, the world was in a state of being, not in a state of becoming, as Heraclitus maintained, and the changes we see in life as we know it was an illusion. In his work, *The Way of Truth*, Parmenides states that the One is “whole, immobile, eternal, all together, one and continuous.” There were two kinds of knowledge: true knowledge and common knowledge, and what most of us see with our senses and believe with our minds is of the common sort, mere opinion.

Aenesidemus and Heraclitus. Sextus Empiricus criticized Aenesidemus for saying, “All roads lead to Heraclitus.” Academicians today take three positions on Aenesidemus' statement: first, it is meaningless and irrelevant;¹ second, it was made while he was in the process of converting from the Academy to Pyrrhonism;² and third, Aenesidemus actually left Pyrrhonism in the end and became a

1. Stough, C., “Stoic Determinism and Moral Responsibility,” in *The Stoics*, Ed., J. Rist, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1978.

2 Rist, John M., “The Heracliteanism of Aenesidemus,” *Phoenix* XXIV (1970), pp. 309-319.

Heraclitean.³ It does seem odd that he would become a Heraclitean after the pure form of skepticism he endorsed and taught, and Rist may be right.

Rist thinks the criticism of Sextus may have been referring to a period between Aenesidemus' skepticism at the Academy and breaking away to found the school of Pyrrhonism. His thesis begins by noting that skeptics assert the *appearance* of opposite attributes while Heracliteans assert the *reality* of opposite attributes, which leads him to suggest the following possible conclusions:

1. Aenesidemus broke with the Academy because of Philo and Antiochus' move towards Stoic dogma.
2. Aenesidemus first aligned himself with his teacher Philo in searching for the true reality of objects behind the information we get from our senses.
3. His skeptical education led him to embrace the Heraclitean notion of a continuum of opposites in every object. This was the Heraclitean period to which Sextus was referring.
4. Finally, he comes to reject the possibility of ever knowing the real object lying behind our sensory impressions, and just by knowing that it has opposite characteristics doesn't give us any certainty about its underlying nature. So, *epoche*, we must suspend judgment.

In an attempt to attain some certainty on the matter, I wrote an e-mail to Professor Groarke, Dean of the Brantford Campus of Wilfred Laurier University in Canada. He had referenced his assertion that Aenesidemus ended his philosophical career as a Heraclitean with the usual Sextus material, plus a couple of passages from the early Christian apologist, Tertullian (*De Anima* 9.5, 14.5).

Professor Groarke answered, "From my point of view, I don't find the Heraclitean/Pyrrhonian parts of Aenesidemus' career all that strange. If you believe, as I do, that the essence of scepticism is its emphasis on equal but opposing points of view, then it is not so surprising that someone would jump from this to the conclusion that opposites are the essence of the world (i.e. Heraclitus!)."

And so it goes. If Aenesidemus created Pyrrhonism, then abandoned his creation and became a Heraclitean, as the only ancient references to this fact suggest, a good explanation of his reasons have not been found.

*

3 Groarke, Leo, *Ancient Skepticism*, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2003.

The Method

Introduction

The Zen koan, a kind of teaching story, was first begun in China more than 1000 years ago as a test of mystical insight. A practitioner of Zen, then and now, uses koans as a tool of meditation and to evaluate the level of understanding of both master and pupil. There are two parts to the koan, the koan itself and the commentary added by other masters.

Here is an example of a Zen koan as found in Thomas Cleary's work, *Unlocking the Zen Koan* (North Atlantic Books, 1997).

37: The Cypress Tree in the Yard

[The Koan]

A monk asked Zhaozhou, "What is the living meaning of Zen?"

Zhaozhou said, "The Cypress tree in the yard."

[The Commentary]

Wumen says,

If you can see the point of Zhaozhou's answer intimately, there is no past Buddha before and no future Buddha after.

Wumen's verse

Words do not set forth facts,
Speech does not accord with situations;
Those who take up words perish,
Those who linger over sayings get lost.

Zen Master Huanglong Nan's verse

All trees wither and die in time,
But the cypress in Zhaozhou's yard flourishes forever.
Not only does it defy the frost, keeping its integrity;
It virtually sings with a clear voice to the light of the moon.

And so on

The *method* we will be using here follows that which can be found in *Unlocking the Zen Koan* quoted above. Cleary claims to have studied Zen koans for thirty years and is reputed to be one of the foremost translators of Buddhist and Taoists texts in the world. I have personally studied this work and its method and can recommend it highly. That's why I have adopted and adapted it to the study of the Heraclitus fragments. I know that it works.

I have chosen twelve well-known fragments of Heraclitus to be used as koans in our study. However, Stoics do not have a tradition of Zen koan masters to provide the commentary necessary to fully implement the correct method. Thus, I have used the words of Heraclitus himself to amplify the chosen koans. He alone will be our commentator until such time as others can be added.

There may be those who wonder why we don't just study Zen koans; why go to all the trouble of using a Zen method to study the fragments of Heraclitus? After all, they have 1000 years of practice to offer the student of meditation. Yes, I would agree, except that, frankly, I'm more interested in the words of Heraclitus than I am in those of the Zen mystics. Today, Heraclitus is in danger of being forgotten by all but a handful of scholars, and I believe it is profoundly important for Stoics to know the concepts and origins of our cosmology.

Essence and Function

In using the classical Zen method, according to Cleary, we seek the experience of two symbolic domains of enlightenment: essence and function. First, we seek the “Land of Eternal Silent Light,” the essence of what we are. Then, we seek the “Land of True Reward,” the function of what we can be. It's important to remember that these are not real places. They represent symbolic names for the two domains of experience that we find in our fulfillment as a human being.

These two domains are also reflected in the order in how Zen koans are presented. The first koan establishes one form of response and the second establishes another. As it happens, they are also similar to the two kinds of meditation we have already studied: Pnuma and Stick Action Meditation, respectively. Pnuma focuses on the essence of being, clearing the mind and entering into silence, while SAM focuses on the mindfulness of our active being. Cleary refers to this as “...focusing the attention on the total perception of the immediate present (p. XXIII).” This will become more apparent when we actually get into the steps that follow, but first we need to consider some of the reasons and problems we should know.

Although we are immersing ourselves in words, the special talent of the left cerebral hemisphere, we are not using its analytical power. Cleary makes that plain in his introduction (p. XV) with the following statement: “It is axiomatic that the awakening experiences and direct perceptions of Zen realization cannot be explained or understood as they really are by means of intellectual interpretation or conceptual thought, because they are not in the domain of ideation.” Instead, what we are doing is awakening “...the mind from the limitations and burdens of narrow views, dogmatic assumptions, and circular thinking habits (p. XI).”

Faith & Doubt

Faith is a word that's off-putting for some Stoics, but part of the process of studying koans includes faith that the effort will achieve results. After all, faith can be just another word for perseverance through doubt – continuing to go forward even when there is no result and nothing comes together as planned. (See Cleary's discussion of faith, doubt, and resolution on p. XXIV.) What you will be encountering here is different from your usual studies. It will probably not make sense right away, and at some point you may doubt there is any point in continuing. When that happens you will need faith (perseverance) through the doubt to the resolution.

It may take several weeks before you realize that what you are doing has any value at all. In fact, it's likely that you will be confused about how to do it or if you are doing it correctly. That too is part of the process. Don't quit. You are throwing your cocky left brain for a loop, and that's the whole point. This is not easy work, but it does have its rewards, and I can promise that with perseverance through the doubt you will finally understand Heraclitus as you've never understood him before.

Personal practice

I've been fascinated by Heraclitus for years. That may be because I've always been attracted to nonsense verse, but more likely it is because he is the Stoic cosmologist. He tells us where and who we are as we make our way in this life. The one thing he doesn't tell us is how to study his work, either with the left brain or the right. We could look to the Zen masters with their centuries of experience, but they don't have the same material to work with, so we're pretty much on our own here.

I begin the Heraclitus Study (HS) first thing in the morning six days a week. I already have a place in one bedroom of our house where I can go to meditate. I know that's a luxury everyone doesn't have, but I trust you will be able to adapt to your situation with a little thought and motivation. I've found that generally the Heraclitus Study can be practiced just about anywhere you can be off by yourself without a lot of disturbance. It doesn't really matter whether you're sitting in a favorite chair at home, in the parked car, or at the office as long as you can be alone for about a half hour.

If you're going to actually meditate in conjunction with the Heraclitus Studies you may want to get some votive candles, matches, and a large bowl to serve as a Fire Bowl. That's what I call it anyway. The Fire Bowl is symbolic of what we are doing here. Heraclitus is the author of the Logos or divine and living fire. That's why I use a candle during the morning meditation, but of course it's optional.

Fragments & Commentary

Because very few of the Heraclitus fragments are constructed as questions in the same manner as the koan conundrum, the mind is not as likely to immediately go searching for the answer. Therefore, in order to challenge the analytical attitude in the reader all but one (#9) of the Leading Fragments are rewritten as questions similar to the style of the Zen koan. The left cerebral hemisphere must be awakened before it can be dismissed.

From here on we will be speaking less of koans and more of fragments and commentary. To make it easier to remember, the two parts that form our koans will be referred to as Leading Fragments and Commentary (LF&C). It is recommended that you study two each day for six days according to the instructions of Week One outlined below. At the end of 6 days, take a day off then follow the instructions of Week Two. Again, after six days, rest for a day and begin Week Three – and so on until you have completed Week Five. This program is designed to last five weeks, or longer if you choose.

When or where you study your LF&Cs are up to you, but what I have done, what I do, is explained without a lot of tiresome detail in the “Notes & Observations” of Appendix A. After your initial study it's important to return to your LF&C when you are in different places, physically and mentally. However, no attempt is made to explain what insights or awakenings may be achieved by following this method of study, because everyone is not approaching this program from the same level of preparedness. The most specific claim I can make was actually made by Heraclitus many centuries ago:

If you do not expect the unexpected, you will not find it; for it is hard to be sought out and difficult (7).

* *

Week One

As you read and contemplate each Leading Fragment whenever a thought, any kind of thought, occurs to you, no matter how certain you may feel it defines and explains that fragment, say “No!” and do not continue thinking that thought. As Cleary says, “Koans are geared to incite feelings of frustration in the arrogant, impatient, possessive part of the psyche, in order to expose the doings of this inner tyrant (XXII).” Saying No! to yourself in this fashion is similar to the action of the will in stopping *all* thought in Pneuma Will Power Meditation.

Read two Leading Fragments (LFs) each day, in the AM and in the PM, and as many times as you can during the day. Do not put yourself on a timetable, as in “I will think about this koan on the hour every hour.” Just tell your subconscious to recall the koan at random times throughout the day. CAUTION: Do not engage in this mental exercise while operating dangerous equipment. I'm sure you have sense enough to avoid this activity at inappropriate times, but our legal system appreciates including such warnings nonetheless.

And that's it. Two Leading Fragments per day for six days—all twelve LFs. Do *not* read the commentary, just the LF. The commentary is reserved for weeks three, four, five and onward if you wish to continue this form of meditation. Repeat the LF in your mind several times throughout the day. Whenever analytical thoughts about that LF enter your mind, just say No! It is recommended that you read the Method through all five weeks, then return to each week's instruction when you are ready for that week.

Week Two

After you have gone through all twelve Leading Fragments you are ready to begin again. This week, as you contemplate each LF, instead of saying No! to any stray thought bring yourself into a state of complete and simultaneous mindfulness about everything in your environment. Be a mirror of awareness to everything in your field of vision. Instead of saying No!, this time say “Not blind” and bring all into simultaneous awareness.

What do we mean by complete and simultaneous mindfulness? It may help to understand it by using the contrast of focus. Right now, you're focusing on these words, one-at-a-time, on this page. Expand your awareness by focusing on the page itself. To do that, you must lose your focus on single words and see all of the words visible simultaneously. Expand that once again to include the words, the page, and everything out to that invisible edge of your peripheral vision. Do *not* make any judgments or comparisons.

This step requires a kind of mindfulness similar to but somewhat different from that of of Stick Action Meditation (SAM). There you are being mindful of your kinesthetic function, plus breathing, plus focused vision. Now you become simultaneously aware of your entire sensory experience as it occurs in this very moment of time.

CAUTION: Do not engage in this mental exercise while operating dangerous equipment. I'm sure you have sense enough to avoid this activity at inappropriate times, but our legal system appreciates including such warnings nonetheless.

And that's it. Two LFs per day for six days—all twelve LFs. Do *not* read the commentary, just the LF. The commentary is reserved for the next steps. Repeat the LF in your mind several times throughout the day, and whenever you think about it, expand your awareness out to that invisible edge of your visual consciousness. By the end of this second week you will probably have memorized all of the LFs without even trying. Good.

Week Three

Now we go back to the beginning and begin again. This time read both the Leading Fragment and Commentary (LF&C) together. As before, while you read and contemplate each LF&C whenever a thought, any kind of thought, occurs to you, no matter how certain you may feel it defines and explains what you have just read, say “No!” and do not continue thinking that thought. Go through all twelve LF&Cs, two each day for six days, and take the seventh day off. Try to memorize them as you go. This will take some doing, but it will be worth the effort in time.

Week Four

Go back to the beginning, and as before when you contemplate each LF&C, instead of saying No! to any stray thoughts bring yourself into a state of complete and simultaneous mindfulness about everything you see and hear in your environment. Be a mirror of awareness to everything going on about you. In place of saying No!, this time say Not blind to bring all into a simultaneous field of awareness. Do *not* make any judgments or comparisons. Go through all twelve LF&Cs, 2 each day for six days, and take the seventh day off.

Week Five & Onward

Week Five incorporates the methods of both essence (No!) and function (Not blind). In the first four weeks you have completed the foundation for this kind of study and are ready now to decide if you wish to continue. From now on, whether you continue one week, one hundred weeks, or for the rest of your life, as you remember the L&FC shift back and forth between No! and Not blind. Cleary says, “The purpose of this final step is to cultivate the ability to experience the consciousness of No and Not blind simultaneously, yet to also be able to shift back and forth at will to focus on either one, according to need: the purifying and awakening function of No, or the clarifying and enlightening function of Not blind (p. XXIV).”

* * *

The Leading Fragments & Commentary (LF&C)

written by Heraclitus, translated by John Burnett, and arranged by Erik Wiegardt

LEADING FRAGMENT #1: What scatters and gathers; what advances and retires (40)?

COMMENTARY:

It is wise to listen not to me but to my Logos and acknowledge that all things are one (1). Couples are things whole and things not whole, what is drawn together and what is drawn asunder, the harmonious and the discordant. The one is made up of all things, and all things issue from the one (58).

* *

LF #2: How does the thunderbolt steer the course of all things (28)?

COMMENTARY:

Wisdom is one thing. It is to know the thought by which all things are steered through all things (19). The wise is one only. It is unwilling and willing to be called by the name of Zeus (63). The sun will not overstep his measures; if he does... the handmaids of Justice will find him out (29).

* *

LF #3: Why must the people fight for its law as for its walls (94)?

COMMENTARY:

So, we should follow what is common, yet though my Word is common, the many live as if they had a wisdom of their own (87). Thought is common to all (85). Those who speak with understanding must hold fast to what is common to all as a city holds fast to its law, and even more strongly...(86).

* *

LF #4: Is every beast driven to pasture with blows (55)?

COMMENTARY:

It is not good for men to get all they wish to get. It is sickness that makes health pleasant; evil, good; hunger, plenty; weariness, rest (98). It is the opposite which is good for us (45). Men would not have known the name of justice if these unjust things were not (59).

* *

LF #5: How will fire in its advance judge and overtake all things (26)?

COMMENTARY:

This cosmos, which is the same for all, no one of gods or men has made; but it was ever, is now, and ever shall be an ever-living Fire, with measures kindling, and measures going out (20). Fire is want and excess (24). All things are an exchange for Fire, and Fire for all things, even as wares for gold and gold for wares (22).

* *

LF #6: Are those who sleep fellow-workers in the universe (84)?

COMMENTARY:

The waking have one world in common, but the sleeping turn aside each into a world of his own (90). All the things we see when awake are death, even as all we see in slumber are sleep (62). It is weariness to labor for the same masters and be ruled by them (78).

* *

LF #7: Why do gods and men honor those who are slain in battle (96)?

COMMENTARY:

We must know that war is common to all, and strife is justice, and that all things come into being and pass away through strife (61). Homer was wrong in saying: “Would that strife might perish from among gods and men!” He did not see that he was praying for the destruction of the universe... (42).

* *

LF #8: Are eyes and ears bad witnesses to men if they have barbarian souls (4)?

COMMENTARY:

The fool is fluttered at every word (108). For what thought or wisdom have they? They follow the poets and take the crowd as their teacher.... For even the best of them choose one thing above all others, immortal glory among mortals, while most of them are glutted like beasts (102).

* *

LF #9: How can one hide from that which never sets (27)?

COMMENTARY:

Cold things become warm, and what is warm cools; what is wet dries, and the parched is wetted (39). It rests by changing (79). You cannot step twice into the same river; for fresh waters are ever flowing in upon you (41). Time is a child playing, moving pieces in a game; the kingly power is a child's (75).

* *

LF #10: Do we step and not step into the same rivers when we are and are not (77)?

COMMENTARY:

Mortals are immortals and immortals are mortals, the one living the others' death and dying the others' life (65). And it is the same thing in us that is quick and dead, awake and asleep, young and old; the former are shifted and become the latter, and the latter in turn are shifted and become the former (74).

* *

LF #11: How is the way up and the way down one and the same (67)?

COMMENTARY:

In the circumference of a circle the beginning and end are common (68). God is day and night, winter and summer, war and peace, surfeit and hunger; but he takes various shapes, just as fire, when it is mingled with spices, is named according to the aroma of each (36). To God all things are fair and good and right, but men hold some things wrong and some right (60).

* *

LF #12: Have I searched for myself (76)?

COMMENTARY:

The many do not take heed of such things as they meet with, nor do they understand them when they are taught, though they think they do (5). They are estranged from that with which they have most constant intercourse (88). You will not find the boundaries of soul by traveling in any direction, so deep is the measure of it (69).

* * * *

Appendix A: Notes & Observations

These observations are based upon my own original practice and apply specifically to the week to which they are added. You may wish read them any time during the appropriate week as another perspective on your own practice; or, you may not wish to read them at all. They are offered not as direction but as information that may or may not be useful.

WEEK ONE

Transition Week. You can begin your Heraclitus Studies Meditation as an extension of the Pneuma Will Power Meditation you've already begun. (You have been doing Pneuma, right?) As you sit on your cushion with eyes nearly closed repeat the Leading Fragment by memory as often as desired. Whenever the mind (left brain) attaches itself to the meaning, say No! and return to the empty mind. Whenever the mind wander to *any* topic, say No! and return to the empty mind.

I can't meditate in the afternoon or evening. I just promptly fall asleep almost as soon as I close my eyes. It's not an old age thing, I've been that way since I first learned to meditate in my 20s. It could be that some have just the opposite problem and can't stay awake in the early AM. These folk often find afternoon and evening meditation to be no problem. Live according to nature, your nature. Just do the opposite of what I do. If you can't do sitting meditation in the AM without falling asleep, walk.

Because I can't meditate in the afternoon or evening that's when I walk, as in *Walking Meditation*. Basically, we've got sitting and walking meditation at our disposal for the Heraclitus Studies. For *our* form of walking meditation we can walk at whatever speed is comfortable. There is a form of Buddhist walking meditation where the toe of one foot touches the heel of the other foot, and each step is incredibly slow. That's certainly a great discipline and practice, but it's not necessary for us here and now. You will be getting enough discipline in another way. Just walk.

Walk wherever you want to be, preferably *not* on city streets where you have to be concerned about cars and other obstacles. Walk in a park or around your house. Except in the most extreme weather you can do it any time. Remember, the University of Oregon was at one time the preeminent track and field school in America, and that's in Eugene where it rains most of the year. (I know, because that's where I went to graduate school—and one of the reasons I live in San Diego, California.) Put on a hat and coat.

Try to walk with an empty mind as much as possible. You can do this and still be aware of bushes, steps, and other obstacles. Repeat your Leading Fragment as often as you wish and say No! whenever you catch yourself thinking about the koan or what you're going to have for dinner. Change your inner monologue to empty mind mode and keep walking. Don't worry about distractions such as the weather, a singing bird, or a friendly neighbor. You're not in a cocoon; it's all part of the process. Enjoy them and keep on walking. About a half hour should do it.

On where to do the Heraclitus Studies Meditation: one could tell one's secretary to hold all calls and do your LF right in the corner office of the 82nd floor of your building just before the Board of Directors meeting. Or, you could practice in the woods by the lake. I don't believe there is any one absolute here except to have a few minutes of quiet and focus, preferably without disturbance, but I'm not absolutely sure that is necessary. A Zen master might say that a disturbance at just the right time may actually trigger an Insight. My first Zen Insight [years ago] took place after I stood up from sitting meditation to

get something out of the closet. When I sat back down again it happened. So, I think the first difference between koan or LF&C meditation and the usual kind is that one does not need to be absolutely motionless and deeply inward to make it happen.

*

WEEK TWO

Not blind week. There is no way you can practice the Simultaneous Vision to the Periphery (SVP) with your eyes mostly closed. SVP may be new to you and can be a little taxing at first. It was to me, probably because I'm old, and you can't teach old dogs new tricks. Well, you can, but it's more difficult. To be honest, I wanted to quit halfway through the second week, and much of the discouragement came from SVP. It's actually not so hard; it just feels weird for awhile.

When doing SVP no one object should have greater value or prominence than another. Hold it for a few seconds, then return to normal vision. When you repeat the Leading Fragment and find yourself thinking about it, anything about it, say Not blind and go into the SVP mode. Hold it there for as long as you are comfortable. Do not quit your Heraclitus studies because of it. Do what you have to and persevere. You'll get it.

How many times each day should you remember the LF? There is no fixed number, no minimums or maximums. The right time to say it to yourself it is when you think of it – unless it pops into your mind while negotiating a difficult stretch of rush hour traffic. Then, it probably doesn't hurt to think it, but don't do the Not blind SVP. If you miss a session, no worries. You can make it up sitting in your parked car or on a toilet seat.. Anywhere. Just do it.

Always remember the proverb, “Those who are in a hurry do not arrive.”

Halfway through the second week I found that doing the Simultaneous Vision to the Periphery (SVP) was taxing on both eyes and mind. Persevering at this point was difficult, more difficult than I thought it would be, and the Not blind process was almost entirely without reward. So, I shortened the length of time I would normally be meditating, both for the AM sitting and PM walking meditation.

[Later] I was able to meditate with eyes open, looking at the candle and doing SVP, for 30 minutes. One important thought kept coming to mind, “Remember to blink!” The SVP is getting easier Seeing with equal values makes the vision somewhat 2-D, rather than 3-D.

I have to remind myself to not assume that the commentary following the Leading Fragment defines, explains, or illuminates. It may, or it may be a parallel or even divergent path from the one you have begun. It continues to examine and test our faith and patience.

Walking meditation is especially appropriate for mental workers who need the exercise. If you've already done enough physical labor for today take a shower, make a cup of coffee or tea, and sit in a chair in a quiet room. If you nod off, stand up. There's no reason to waste your time creating obstacles of unnecessary harshness.

*

WEEK THREE

Greater clarity with specificity came to me while meditating this morning:

No! (Pneuma)

Instead of thinking about the fragment, commentary, or any other thought, do as you did in Pneuma Meditation, be still and listen to your breath. Keep a clear and empty mind.

Not blind (SAM)

The present moment. No past, no future, just total sensory awareness of this instant in time. The SVP is a way of locking in that awareness.

Mneme. When you learn and know it by heart you not only make it more convenient to recite at all times and places, but you are more nearly making it a part of you. *Mneme*, the ancient Stoic exercise of memorization, is a valuable part of this process. It is not an expectation of the student of Zen koans, their koans and commentary are often quite lengthy, but we should have no difficulty in taking up this practice in the study of Heraclitus. BTW, the old saying about learning and knowing something by heart comes from ancient Greece where it was believed that the seat of the intelligence was in the heart.

Although there is no exact number of times one must repeat the fragments during the day, once learned by heart the only thing preventing one from doing it frequently if not continually is the interruption of employment or other mind-engaging chores.

*

WEEK FOUR

I'm beginning to believe that the main purpose of Not blind and going into the SVP mode appears to be capturing the present moment, the instant of Now! SVP is not the goal; it is a technique for arresting and grasping the mind and holding it steady in the instant moment.

Now that I've spent some time memorizing John Burnett's translation I am beginning to appreciate his rhythm, cadence, word choice, even "poetry" in the fragments. I've even changed a couple of the "archaic" words back to his choice. They work better.

Insomnia extends my day. In case there is any concern about not having enough time to enjoy the PM meditation, the second LF&C, before going to bed, I am finding myself going over them as I go to sleep and at the times of awakening in the middle of the night. It's an excellent remedy for having trouble with getting to or back to sleep.

I took a shower and sat in a straight-backed chair on the deck in the shade with a cup of green tea for this afternoon's LF&C meditation. I've been running all day, physically active, now tired, and couldn't see the point of walking around the house 22 times on top of it all.

How does one become a mirror, and what does that mean, exactly? It means that everything in one's field of vision, even out to the soft edges of the periphery, has the same value without emphasis. A mirror reflects all things equally and without partiality. That is what SVP does. And, don't forget to breathe occasionally. And blink!

I'm convinced there is no better way to appreciate Heraclitus

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WEEK FIVE

Be a mirror, a breathing mirror In HS Meditation both analytical and stray thoughts are like specs of dust and smears of dirt on the Breathing Mirror: **No!** cleans the mirror. **Not blind** holds the mirror steadily in view. **Breathing** sustains and rekindles the vision. This was the insight and plan for week five and thereafter.

This afternoon I did the PM Meditation sitting on a chair on the deck looking out over the world and Nature between me and Cowle's Mountain. I had the certain feeling that this was as good or better than any inside sacred space or altar or icons, et cetera.

What should we do when we are quite certain we have a new understanding of an obscure fragment? It seems there are two things to do: 1) meditate on it; then 2) create a commentary. The commentary should *also* be obscure. Why obscure? Because this is a path to wisdom, not some idle play for parrots or prattlers.

The Heraclitus Studies Mediation is an exercise in bonding with ancient wisdom, not just as a thought but also as a feeling.

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Appendix B: Complete Fragments of Heraclitus

The following translation of the Heraclitus fragments is by John Burnett, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 2nd Ed. London: Adam and Charles Black, 1908, pp. 146-156. *Editor's note: The original numbering system has been altered slightly to avoid the confusing redundancies that were required by scholarship. Also, a few of the words have been modified to contemporary usage with the assistance T.M. Robinson and are noted and referenced accordingly.*

1. It is wise to *listen* not to me but to my Word [*Logos*] and to *acknowledge* that all things are one.
2. Though this Word is true evermore, yet men are as unable to understand it when they hear it for the first time as before they have heard it at all. For, though all things come to pass in accordance with this Word, men seem as if they had no experience of them, when they make trial of words and deeds such as I set forth, dividing each thing according to its nature and showing how it truly is. But other men know not what they are doing when awake, even as they forget what they do in sleep.
3. Fools when they do hear are like the deaf: of them does the saying bear witness that they are absent when present.
4. Eyes and ears are bad witnesses to men if they have *barbarian* souls.
5. The many do not take heed of such things as they meet with, nor do they *understand* them when they are taught, though they think they do.
6. ...knowing not how to listen nor how to speak.
7. If you do not expect the unexpected, you will not find it; for it is hard to be sought out and difficult.
8. Those who seek for gold dig up much earth and find little.
10. Nature loves to hide.
11. The lord whose is the oracle at Delphi neither utters nor hides his meaning, but shows it by a sign.
12. And the Sibyl, with raving lips uttering *gloomy words without adornment or perfume*, reaches over a thousand years with her voice, thanks to the god in her.
13. The things that can be seen, heard, and learned are what I prize the most.
14. ...bringing untrustworthy witnesses in support of disputed points.
15. The eyes are more exact witnesses than the ears.
16. The learning of many things *does not teach* understanding, else would it have taught Hesiod and Pythagoras, and again Xenophanes and Hekataius.
17. Pythagoras, son of Mnesarchus, practiced inquiry beyond all other men, and choosing out these writings, claimed for his own wisdom what was but a knowledge of many things and an art of mischief.
18. Of all whose discussions I have heard, there is not one who attains to understanding that wisdom is apart from all.
19. Wisdom is one thing. It is to know the thought by which all things are steered through all things.
20. This world [*kosmos*], which is the same for all, no one of gods or men has made; but it was ever, is now, and ever shall be an ever-living Fire, with measures kindling, and measures going out.

21. The transformations of Fire are, first of all, sea; and half of the sea is earth, half whirlwind...
22. All things are an exchange for Fire, and Fire for all things, even as wares for gold and gold for wares.
23. It becomes liquid sea, and is measured by the same tale as before it became earth.
24. Fire is want and *excess*.
25. Fire lives the death of air, and air lives the death of fire; water lives the death of earth, earth that of water.
26. Fire in its advance will judge and convict [overtake?] all things.
27. How can one hide from that which never sets?
28. It is the thunderbolt that steers the course of all things.
29. The sun will not overstep his measures; if he does, the Erinyes, the handmaids of Justice, will find him out.
30. The limit of East and West is the Bear; and opposite the Bear is the boundary of bright Zeus.
31. If there were no sun it would be night, for all the other stars could do.
32. The sun is new every day.
34. ...the seasons, that bring all things.
35. Hesiod is most men's teacher. Men think he knew very many things, a man who did not know day or night! They are one.
36. God is day and night, winter and summer, war and peace, *excess* and hunger; but he takes various shapes, just as fire, when it is mingled with spices, is named according to the *aroma* of each.
37. If all things were turned to smoke, the nostrils would distinguish them.
38. Souls smell in Hades.
39. Cold things become warm, and what is warm cools; what is wet dries, and the parched is *wetted*.
40. It scatters and it gathers; it advances and retires.
41. You cannot step twice into the same river; for fresh waters are ever flowing in upon you.
42. Homer was wrong in saying: "Would that strife might perish from among gods and men!" He did not see that he was praying for the destruction of the universe; for, if his prayer were heard, all things would pass away...
43. War is the father of all and the king of all; and some he has made gods and some men, some *slave* and some free.
44. Men do not know how what is at variance agrees with itself. It is a *harmony* of opposite tensions, like that of the bow and the lyre.
45. It is the opposite which is good for us.
46. The hidden *harmony* is better than the open.
47. Let us not conjecture at random about the greatest things.
48. Men that love wisdom must be acquainted with very many things indeed.
49. The straight and the crooked path of the fuller's comb is one and the same.

50. Asses would rather have straw than gold.
51. Oxen are happy when they find bitter vetches to eat.
52. The sea is the purest and the impurest water. Fish can drink it, and it is good for them; to men it is undrinkable and destructive.
53. Swine wash in the mire, and barnyard fowls in dust.
54. ...to delight in the mire.
55. Every beast is driven to pasture with blows.
56. Good and *bad* are one.
57. Physicians who cut, burn, stab, and rack the sick, demand a fee for it which they do not deserve to get.
58. Couples are things whole and things not whole, what is drawn together and what is drawn asunder, the harmonious and the discordant. The one is made up of all things, and all things issue from the one.
59. Men would not have known the name of justice if these things [unjust things?] were not.
60. To God all things are fair and good and right, but men hold some things wrong and some right.
61. We must know that war is common to all and strife is justice, and that all things come into being and pass away [?] through strife.
62. All the things we see when awake are death, even as all we see in slumber are sleep.
63. The wise is one only. It is unwilling and willing to be called by the name of Zeus.
64. The bow is called life, but its work is death.
65. Mortals are immortals and immortals are mortals, the one living the others' death and dying the others' life.
66. For it is death to souls to become water, and death to water to become earth. But water comes from earth; and from water, soul.
67. The way up and the way down is one and the same.
68. In the circumference of a circle the beginning and end are common.
69. You will not find the boundaries of soul by traveling in any direction, so deep is the measure of it.
70. It is pleasure to souls to become moist.
71. A man, when he gets drunk, is led by a beardless lad, tripping, knowing not where he steps, having his soul moist.
72. The dry soul is the wisest and best.
73. Man is kindled and put out like a light in the night-time.
74. And it is the same thing in us that is quick and dead, awake and asleep, young and old; the former are shifted and become the latter, and the latter in turn are shifted and become the former.
75. Time is a child playing, *moving pieces in a game* (T.M. Robinson trans., frag. #52); the kingly power is a child's.
76. I have *searched* for myself.
77. We step and do not step into the same rivers; we are and are not.

78. It is a weariness to labor for the same masters and be ruled by them.
79. It rests by changing.
80. Even the posset separates if it is not stirred.
81. Corpses are more fit to be cast out than dung.
82. When they are born, they wish to live and to meet with their dooms — or rather to rest — and they leave children behind them to meet with their dooms in turn.
83. A man may be a grandfather in thirty years.
84. Those who are asleep are fellow-workers (*in the universe*, T.M. Robinson trans., frag. #75).
85. Thought is common to all.
86. Those who speak with understanding must hold fast to what is common to all as a city holds fast to its law, and even more strongly. For all human laws are fed by the one divine law. It prevails as much as it will, and suffices for all things with something to spare.
87. So we must follow the common, yet though my Word is common, the many live as if they had a wisdom of their own.
88. They are estranged from that with which they have most constant intercourse.
89. It is not *proper* to act and speak like men asleep.
90. The waking have one common world, but the sleeping turn aside each into a world of his own.
91. The way of man has no wisdom, but that of God has.
92. Man is called a baby by God, even as a child by a man.
93. The wisest person is an ape compared to God, just as the most beautiful ape is ugly compared to man.
94. The people must fight for its law as for its walls.
95. Greater deaths win greater portions.
96. Gods and men honor those who are slain in battle.
97. Wantonness needs putting out, even more than a house on fire.
98. It is not good for men to get all they wish to get. It is sickness that makes health pleasant; evil, good; hunger, plenty; weariness, rest.
99. It is hard to fight with one's heart's desire. Whatever it wishes to get, it purchases at the cost of soul.
100. It is best to hide folly; but it is hard in times of relaxation, over our cups.
101. And it is law, too, to obey the counsel of one.
102. For what thought or wisdom have they? They follow the poets and take the crowd as their teacher, knowing not that there are many bad and few good. For even the best of them choose one thing above all others, immortal glory among mortals, while most of them are gluttoned like beasts.
103. In Priene lived Bias, son of Teutamas, who is of more account than the rest. [He said, "Most men are bad."]
104. One is ten thousand to me, if he be the best.

105. The Ephesians would do well to hang themselves, every grown man of them, and leave the city to beardless lads; for they have cast out Hermodorus, the best person among them, saying, "We will have none who is best among us; if there be any such, let him be so elsewhere and among others."
106. Dogs bark at every one they do not know.
107. [The wise man] is not known because of men's want of belief.
108. The fool is fluttered at every word.
109. The most esteemed of them knows but fancies; yet of a truth justice shall overtake the artificers of lies and the false witnesses.
110. Homer should be turned out of the lists and whipped, and Archilochus likewise.
111. One day is like any other.
112. Man's character [*daimon*] is his fate.
113. There awaits men when they die such things as they look not for nor dream of.
114. ...that they rise up and become the wakeful guardians of the quick and dead.
115. Night-walkers, Magians, priests of Bacchus and priestesses of the wine-vat, mystery-mongers...
116. The mysteries practiced among men are unholy mysteries.
117. And they pray to these images, as if one were to talk with a man's house, knowing not what gods or heroes are.
118. For if it were not to Dionysus that they made a procession and sang the shameful phallic hymn, they would be acting most shamelessly. But Hades is the same as Dionysus in whose honor they go mad and keep the feast of the wine-vat.
119. They vainly purify themselves by defiling themselves with blood, just as if one who had stepped into the mud were to wash his feet in mud. Any man who marked him doing thus, would deem him mad.

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