

THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE SOUL AND THE LOGOS IN HERACLITUS' FRAGMENTS

UDC 1 Heraclitus

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Abstract. *In Heraclitus' teaching, the concepts of the soul and the logos are interrelated. According to Heraclitus, the soul is a part of the omnipresent logos and fire, and the essence of the individual soul is reflected in its ability to get closer to logos. The world of logos and eternity is the law that all shall bow before, whether or not they are aware of it in this life. What logos is for cosmos, mind is for man. The principal moral of Heraclitus' Fragments is subjection to the laws of the mind and harmonization of all life with logos.*

Key words: *soul, logos, fire, Heraclitus, measure, principle, general, law.*

Heraclitus' teachings of the soul and logos are interrelated and represent a kind of paradigm for the Hellenic view of immortality. According to both the time it originated in and the general tendencies noticeable in the preserved fragments, his teaching may be said to belong to the cosmological period of Greek philosophy. The principal feature of this period can be expressed as follows – all that exists is conditioned by general cosmological principles, where man, as microcosm, should attempt to understand and live in accordance with those cosmological principles.

According to Heraclitus, the soul is a part of the omnipresent logos, where the essence of the individual soul is to be found in its ability to get as close to logos as possible. In Heraclitus' words, the soul is a part of all-prevailing fire. With this philosopher we do not find a strong opposition between the soul and the body. Namely, the elements emerge from and disappear in the fire, which is exchanged for all. The soul, i.e. fire, is incessantly exchanged for and transformed into lower elements.

*"To soul it is death to become water, to water death to become earth, but from earth water is born, and from water soul."*¹

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¹ Хераклит, *Певање и мишљење*, Модерна, Београд, 1990, 22 (Heraclitus, *Song and Thought*, Moderna, Belgrade, 1990, 22). All English quotations are from *Heraclitus: Fragments*, Robinson, T.M. (ed.), University of Toronto Press, 1987 (translator's remark).

According to Heraclitus, there is an equality between the soul of the world (which is fire) and the individual soul (which is wise only if it is dry, thus getting closer to fire). Although the soul is the substance existing independently of the body, neither itself, nor anything existing, is exempted from change.

*"Immortals are mortals – mortals immortals; the latter living the death of the former, those dead in the lives of these."*²

One would say that, according to Heraclitus, the soul does not possess a lasting identity, but keeps dying and becoming alive again even during one's lifetime. The individual soul can "fall asleep", and thus lose its connection with the pervasive logos, which would mean its separation from the source of the "ever-living fire", and thus, separation from life and a journey into death. However, for Heraclitus, death is the point at which one state is turned into another. And this is an "all" being, alive and dead, mortal and immortal at the same time.

Death comes to man when the soul is no longer in him. By death, man's "fire" is extinguished. However, the soul itself is turned into something else, and, after a while, again assumes the form of the soul. One gets the impression that in Heraclitus there is no concept of non-being, since the soul is transformed into a new being very quickly.

It might appear that questions of individual immortality were not relevant to Heraclitus, because he only speaks of the immortality of the logos. However, we may find statements in which Heraclitus says that after death, things await man that he cannot even think of and that he does not hope for. For instance, the fragment *"souls (have the sense of) smell in Hades"*³, clearly suggests a special sensibility, which the individual soul retains after the death of the body.

All this testifies to the possibility of a different interpretation of his attitude to the existence of the individual soul, i.e. all this leads one to assume that Heraclitus valued the importance of the individual soul's immortality more than might seem at first glance.

The idea of immortality is clearly pronounced in Heraclitus, but it is given more as a cosmological principle. Logos is manifested as living fire, itself immortal, and this fire is transformed into other elements, water, earth, air, which are immortal as much as they are a part of fire, i.e. logos.

As few people before or after, Heraclitus succeeded in outgrowing the reality of the sense and observe the world with divine eyes, in its totality. For this reason, and most of all, he deals with the questions of the eternal nature of logos. One discerns from his fragments that the human soul is a part of the logos and that it is as eternal as it has been able to get close to the logos.

As opposed to the Milesians, with Heraclitus we notice a clearly expressed concept of the logos. All studies of the history of this concept begin with Heraclitus. In the view of some researchers, entire Heraclitus' philosophy may be defined as the philosophy of the logos.

"Still, numerous problems remain if Heraclitus' understanding of the logos is to be shaped starting from etymology. As it may be, one has difficulties trying to undeniably establish which of the given meanings is the starting point in Heraclitus' philosophy, and this is also seen in the diverging opinions of some interpreters. There are problems in the

² Ibid, 25.

³ Хераклит, фрагменти, 98 (*Plutarchus, De facie in orbe lunae*, 943 e).

very assumption that the original meaning must apply to Heraclitus, too; finally, the very method of prior external definition of the logos (outside the philosophical context) inevitably leads to its supplementary and forceful implantation in individual fragments."⁴

Heraclitus' logos has a large number of terms and definitions, but all those can be reduced to two principal ones:

- logos in its **cosmological** sense, and
- logos in its **anthropological and epistemological** sense.

One gets the impression that the conceptions of logos, fire, and God have the same meaning. Viewed as God, logos is the all-present wisdom that accords the work of all things. According to Lassalle, Heraclitus' logos means, first of all, the cognitive law of indivisible harmony, then absolute and unity, and also the law of the identity of absolute opposition.⁵

A part of the meaning, therefore, pertains exactly to the observation of logos as a universal **cosmological principle and law**. It is a universal law, immanent to all things, a law linking all things into a unified whole, establishing incessant change in the universe, in accordance with the general law. There is one immanent law and mind in the world, where human law should act as its embodiment. Logos is the principle connecting and supporting the universe, the law governing the universe.

In the first preserved fragment already, the concept of logos is emphasized.

*"But of this account [logos], which holds forever, people forever prove uncomprehending, both before they have heard it and once they have heard it. For, although all things happen in accordance with this account [logos], they are like people without experience when they experience words and deeds such as I set forth, distinguishing (as I do) each thing according to its (real) constitution, i.e. pointing out how it is. The rest of mankind, however, fail to be aware of what they do after they wake up, just as they forget what they do while asleep."*⁶

One first notices here that "logos is eternal". This means it is set out of time and should be interpreted as something independent of the subjective act of knowing.

The next statement of the fragment suggests that *all things happen in accordance with this logos*, which means logos acts as a creative principle. It is an eternal, creative, general principle.

In fragment 50 Heraclitus stresses how important it is to understand logos as the supreme, general principle. He points out that listening to logos is more important than listening to words Heraclitus is using in an attempt to explain it. Logos is above any human ability to be fully communicated by words, such as it is. This way, logos is somewhat apophatic in relation to the human capacity to comprehend and adequately communicate it.

*"Not after listening to me, but after listening to the account [logos], one does wisely in agreeing that all things are, in fact, one."*⁷

According to Heraclitus, the common nature of logos comes from its being out of time, in eternity. The commonness of logos is, therefore, not a matter of a product, agreement, or common opinion, but a matter of principles in a world existing independently of any thought, and also independently of man and mankind.

This is why the logos principle can be recognized in the idea of **common** things, frequently found in Heraclitus' fragments.

⁴ В. Митевски, *Хераклит*, Матица македонска, Скопје, 1997, 57. (V. Mitevski, *Heraclitus*, Matica makedonska, Skopje, 1997, 57)

⁵ F. Lassalle, *Die Philosophie Heraklitos des Dunklen von Ephesos*, Bd. 7 und 8, Berlin 1920.

⁶ Хераклит, фр. 1. (Heraclitus, Fr. 1) (Sextus, *Adv. Matemat.*, VII, 132)

⁷ Хераклит, фр. 50 (Heraclitus, Fr. 50) (Hippolytus, *Refutatio omnium haeresimus*, IX, 9, 1).

*"Those who speak with insight must base themselves firmly on that which is common to all, as a city does upon (its) law – and much more firmly! For all human laws are nourished by one (law), the divine (law). For it holds sway to the extent it wishes, and suffices for all, and is still left over."*⁸

*"This is why one must follow that which is common (i.e. universal). Though the account is common, the many live, however, as though they had a private understanding."*⁹

The conception of logos can also be recognized in the term **plan**. For instance, we find it in the fragment:

*"The wise thing is a single thing: knowing the plan which steers all things through all things."*¹⁰

In this fragment, it is the conceptual, i.e. invisible, spiritual nature of logos that is stressed, and then its governing role is given, through the term steering. Logos is that which controls and **governs** all, that which permeates all.

In addition to these expressions, in the fragments we often encounter the expression **one (thing)** as a synonym for logos.

*"One thing, the only wise thing, is unwilling and willing to be called by the name of Zeus."*¹¹

Even though logos is one thing, it should not be invoked using one name only, because its true nature and essence are multidimensional, difficult to reduce to only one expression in the language.

Logos is, therefore, an all-prevailing, universal **principle** and **law**, which is first of all eternal. It is something which lasts even without us or this transient world. Logos is that which is always awake and shining. Heraclitus suggests such nature of logos in the following fragment:

*"How would one escape the notice of that which never sets?"*¹²

Logos is the law, i.e. the **measure** through which everything appears and disappears. It is the measure transforming, but also overseeing the transformation, the measure putting everything in harmony according to its timetable. And, although things are in constant struggle, logos is above that struggle.

The most famous Heraclitus' fragment, that on "eternal fire", also stresses how important measure is.

*"(The ordered) world, the same for all, no god or man made, but it always was, is, and will be an everliving fire, being kindled in measures and being put out in measures."*¹³

The measure refers to both the general principle of fire and to all individual phenomena in which one element is transformed into another. It is logos that shifts day and night, life and death, earth and fire, the seasons, war and peace. Logos is a general principle and a necessity and an individual thing given, system and order, a possibility and act, a total opposition to chaos and meaninglessness.

*"Sea is poured forth (from earth) and is measured in the same proportion as existed before it became earth."*¹⁴

⁸ Хераклит, фр.114 (Heraclitus, Fr. 114) (Stobaeus, *Florilegium*, I 179).

⁹ Хераклит, фрагменти, 2 (Heraclitus, Fr. 2) (Sextus, *Adv.mathemat.*, VII, 133).

¹⁰ Хераклит, фрагменти, 41 (Heraclitus, Fr. 41) (Diogen Laertius, *De vitis dogmatis et apophetegmatis clarorum philosophorum*, I, 23).

¹¹ Хераклит, фрагменти, 32, (Heraclitus, Fr. 32) (Clement, *Stromateis*, V, 115, 2).

¹² Хераклит, фрагменти, 16, (Heraclitus, Fr. 16) (Clement, *Paedagogus*, II, 99, 5).

¹³ Хераклит, фрагменти, 30 (Clement, *Stromateis*, V, 104, 2).

Since logos is the fire that cannot be put out, the fire permeating all, and since it is compared to light and the sun, it also acts as the force guiding all human life. Logos can therefore also be discussed in its **anthropological sense**. Thus no one can hide from it: each human action is observed from the perspective of infinity. In relation to God, man is an imperfect, immature being.

*"A man hears himself called silly by a divinity as a child does by a man."*¹⁵

*"[The wisest of men is for God just] as the most handsome of apes is ugly in comparison with (a member of the) human race."*¹⁶

Yet, in his soul, man carries the profound logos (or measure) which can become bigger¹⁷.

*"One would never discover the limits of soul, should one traverse every road – so deep a measure does it possess."*¹⁸

Man is, therefore, not left to be totally ignorant of logos. *"All people have a claim to self-knowledge and sound thinking."*¹⁹

People should therefore live their life discovering things that are invisible, that keep slipping away.

*"An apparent connection is stronger than one which is obvious."*²⁰

The senses are not reliable witnesses, especially if sensations are used to judge a soul which is not noble or endowed with logos. Heraclitus therefore teaches that people loving wisdom must be informed of numerous matters. Reason has a higher degree of cognitive certainty, but it cannot hold the knowledge of logos by itself, unless man puts in some effort to get to know himself and believe in the possibility that there is a divine world.

*"But the greater part of things divine escape ascertainment because of (people's) lack of belief."*²¹

All those striving to reach wisdom must lead their lives in the direction of this sublime world. Their soul should be dry and light, and they must protect both their bodies and their souls from any disturbance and overindulgence.

*"There is a greater need to extinguish hybris than there is a blazing fire."*²², Heraclitus points out. For this fire can quickly burn all the effort around our soul.

The remaining fragments cannot reveal that eternity is guaranteed for man, however, there can be found a possibility for man to harmonize his life with logos, and thus become immortal. However, sometimes reprimanding, sometimes grieving, Heraclitus concludes that few are able to recognize this one and general principle in all, and that there are few harmonizing their lives with eternity. Most spend their lives enslaved by sensations and dreams. They first refuse to believe that there is another world and a different, invisible harmony beyond the world of the senses, and then, even if they sense that there is such a world, they do not dare to boldly follow it in their life, because in such a life much has to be renounced. In the name of such a journey, Heraclitus renounced his kingdom and dedicated his life to solitude, or, more precisely, to listening to logos.

¹⁴ Хераклит, фрагменти, 31 (Heraclitus, Fr. 31) (Clement, *Stromateis*, V, 104, 3).

¹⁵ Хераклит, фрагменти, 79, (Heraclitus, Fr. 71) (Origens, *Contra Celsum*, VI, 42).

¹⁶ Хераклит, фрагменти, 82, 83 (Heraclitus, Fr. 82) (*Hippias maior*, 289a i 289b).

¹⁷ Хераклит, фрагменти, 115 (Heraclitus, Fr. 115) (*Stobaeus, Florilegium*, III, 1, 180).

¹⁸ Хераклит, фрагменти, 45 (Heraclitus, Fr. 45) (*Diogenes Laertius, De vitis...*, IX, 7).

¹⁹ Хераклит, фрагменти, 116 (Heraclitus, Fr. 116).

²⁰ Хераклит, фрагменти, 54 (Heraclitus, Fr. 54).

²¹ Хераклит, фрагменти, 86 (Heraclitus, Fr. 86) (*Plutarchus, Coriolanus*, 38 and Clement, *Stromateis*, V, 88, 4).

²² Хераклит, фрагменти, 43 (Heraclitus, Fr. 43).

Due to apparent meaninglessness and multitude, people stay dormant, unaware of a different world, and they spend their entire lives in this world, thinking they are awake, while actually sleeping.

*"For those who are awake there is a single, common universe, whereas in sleep each person turns away into his own, private universe."*²³

*"We must not act and think like a man asleep."*²⁴

One may thus say that most people who consider themselves alive are actually dead.

*"Death is what we look at when awake, and dream is what we look at while asleep."*²⁵

For this reason, all human effort must be directed in such a way as to wake ourselves up in **the world of logos**.

The world of logos, the world of God and eternity, this is the law and justice before which all, whether or not aware of it in this life, will bow.

*"In its presence, they arise and become wakeful guardians of living people and corpses."*²⁶

*"The most esteemed [of people] ascertains – and holds fast to – what merely seems. The goddess Justice will catch up with fabricators of falsehood and those who bear witness to them."*²⁷

In these fragments, one notices Heraclitus' position on how crucially important it is what kind of life a man will live. Will he cover himself with lies and illusion, or will he follow the path of the immortal logos!? Heraclitus' concept of logos has numerous senses, and they all, in one way or the other, point to a cognitive, ontological, or anthropological principle. Yet, the common denominator behind all these senses is the essential principle of eternity, which exists in spite of this changeable world.

ODNOS DUŠE I LOGOSA U HERAKLITOVIM FRAGMENTIMA

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Pojmovi duša i logos međusobno su povezani u Heraklitovom učenju. Po Herklitu duša je deo sveopšteg logosa i sveopšte vatre a smisao pojedinačne duše ogleda se u tome da se ona približi logosu. Svet logosa i večnosti je zakon kome će se svi, bez obzira na to bili svesni toga u ovome životu ili ne, pokoriti. Ono što je logos u kosmosu to je um u čoveku. Pokoravanje zakonima uma i usklađivanje svog života sa logosom jeste osnovna poruka Heraklitovih fragmenata.

Ključne reči: *duša, logos, vatra, Heraklit, mera, princip, opšte, zakon*

²³ Хераклит, фрагменти, 89 (Heraclitus, Fr. 89).

²⁴ Хераклит, фрагменти, 73 (Heraclitus, Fr. 73).

²⁵ Хераклит, фрагменти, 71 (Heraclitus, Fr. 71).

²⁶ Хераклит, фрагменти, 63 (Heraclitus, Fr. 63).

²⁷ Хераклит, фрагменти, 28 (Heraclitus, Fr. 28).