

HPPH7010-Knowledge, Reason and Reality

Assignment Two- Essay

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How (if at all) is knowledge possible in the light of the Heraclitean doctrine of flux?

70%. This is an excellent piece of work. I was skeptical about the mention & analysis of the poem at the beginning of the work, but you have presented an interesting analysis that links very well with the topic. You have incorporated a range of interesting & relevant material with an individuality apparent in your development of arguments.

In terms of improvement, the link to pan-psychism is known & needs to be more developed, & the conclusion is well written but strays a bit from the overall content of the essay. Try to explicitly draw on the essay questions in a clearer manner in the conclusion, & ensure you thoroughly know all the issues in the body of the essay.

But, overall, this is an excellent, original piece of work.

According to the Mighty Working

By Thomas Hardy

I
When moiling seems at cease
In the vague void of night time
And heaven's wide roomage stormless
Between the dusk and time
And fear at last is formless
We call allurement peace

II
Peace, this hid riot, change
The revel of quick-cued mumming
This never truly being
This ever more becoming
This spinner's wheel on fleeing
Outside perception's range.¹

(It is enjoyable to read, too.)

This essay will give a brief analysis of the above poem by Thomas Hardy, with reference to the concepts of Parmenides and Heraclitus in relation to flux. These two presocratic philosophers' views were juxtaposed as extremes in the theory of change: on the one hand

¹ Thomas Hardy, *According to the might working* <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/57342/according-to-the-mighty-working> accessed-19.04.2022

everything is in flux, nothing is stable, in accordance with the teachings of Heraclitus; and on the other hand, Parmenides' view that motion does not exist. Heraclitus' presentation of the logos as the objective rationale which gives explanation of the world will be presented and discussed. An analysis of Plato's forms as fixed elements to be experienced as abstract concepts of desired perfection will be presented. Questions in relation to the acquirement of knowledge will be raised, and how this knowledge manifests in relationship to the concept of flux. The Metaphysics and ontological argument of later philosophers will be presented; an argument for Pantheism and Panpsychism in relation to knowledge will be proposed in the conclusion.

Good intro - but you are going to cover a lot here.

Poetry In Motion

Thomas Hardy's poem reflects the philosophical tradition of opposing arguments in relation to motion and knowledge. The title of the poem *According to the Mighty Working* infers the concept of a higher power and how the knowledge of such may be accessed. The poetry of Hardy and others, such as WB Yeats, is referred to as that which is written in the 'mutability tradition' according to Tom McAlindon in Indy Clark's review of Hardy's Poetry.² Clark illustrates the concept that the poem takes an Heraclitan stance in the argument for flux.³ The search for inner peace is illusive as the poem demonstrates; we are drawn to the vast peaceful void, where fears are 'formless'; that point at which the breath ceases before becoming another, where time stops. The first line in the second stanza demonstrates the core of the message expressed in the poem: "Peace, this hid riot, Change."⁴ Peace is not stillness; peace is not found in the quiescent void, that is the illusion; even in peace the riotous noise and movement is present, submerged where change occurs. All is change, all is flux: "This evermore becoming"⁵ ceaseless and enduring movement "Outside perceptions range"; Our senses are unaware of the constant motion within the universe, even when we think we are at rest in the stillness of night, the 'Mighty' is at work, motion persists out of sight, out of mind, in the unknown areas of our mind and senses. The poem also speaks of the transformative: "This never truly being. This evermore becoming"⁶ with an emphasis on

² Tom McAlindon, quoted by Indy Clark, 2017, 'Thomas Hardy', *Victorian Poetry*, **55**(3), pp. 373-382, p.379.

³ Ibid, p.379.

⁴ Hardy

⁵ ibid

⁶ ibid

More analysis

the idea that one thrives for the unreachable ending. As change is constantly accruing, there cannot be a beginning or an end, only a continuum: the never-ending story. The riot is hidden by the peace; the riot is the energy of thriving, of fire; and the element of the logos is fire for Heraclitus. We see wars and riots as destructive, as fire can be also, change can be interpreted as disruptive and challenging; however, I feel it is through the conflict within transformation, through strife and 'moiling' that we can learn to know the knowable and begin to imagine that which is beyond our grasp. In battling with our beliefs and questioning what it is that we know our knowledge develops; some of this knowledge may be 'outside perception's range'. Knowledge must be fluid, a fast-paced performance, for it to come into being, and by being I refer to a form of acknowledgement within our mental references. If knowledge was something sense perceptible and fixed it would not have the allure that it does, if complete knowledge were attainable by all, and as easy as picking an apple from a low branch on a still day, the mystery and appeal would be lost. To give knowledge up to the flux and flow of the universes, to be held in 'heaven's wide roomage' in constant change and 'never truly being' we find purpose, and are always reaching outward, and inward; minds are not still, never stagnant: decaying and fruitless minds serve no purpose in the quest for knowledge.

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One cannot step twice into the same river, nor can one grasp any mortal substances in a stable condition, but it scatters and again gathers; it forms and dissolves, and approaches and departs.⁷

In the flux and flow of language we find Heraclitus' River fragment "As they step into the same rivers, other and still other waters flow upon them"⁸ At times Heraclitus' words may have been lost in translation, and not just in translation, also in how his meaning is to be interpreted. Euripides presented the works of Heraclitus to Socrates, on reading the compositions, Socrates is reported to have judged them genuine in the parts he understood, however, those parts he did not understand: "want a Delian diver".⁹ Delian divers dove for pearls in the darkest depths of the ocean, such is the implication that to understand these

⁷ Charles H. Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus* (Cambridge University Press, 1979) p53.

⁸ Ibid, p.53.

⁹ Diogenes Laertius, 1688. *The lives, opinions, and remarkable sayings of the most famous ancient philosophers. Written in Greek, by Diogenes Laertius; made English by several hands* (London, Printed for Edward Brewster) p.112, accessed 02.05.2022

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Heraclitan pearls of wisdom one must be prepared for, and comfortable with, the dark and obscure. Interestingly, Evan Brann gives references to the Pythagoreans, who were termed Delian divers,¹⁰ where she discusses the meaning of *Logos*: "the Saying whose sentences collects the world into a universal unity and expresses it to those who give heed: *hen:panta* – One:Everything."¹¹ The many interpretations and presentations of *Logos* will be discussed later in the essay in relation to 'One:Everything'; However, Brann's interpretation in reference to the Pythagoreans is the *Logos* as 'relater of all relations'.¹² She postulates that this translation and interpretation of *Logos* gives a rational meaning to the heterogeneous world as a oneness in harmony; she asks us to go deeper as: "The unapparent harmony is stronger than the apparent one (54)".¹³ I will leave you with that pearl for now, and get back to the motion of poetry: With time and an empathetic understanding of the varied translations of the 'river fragment', I find Heraclitus' words flow onto the page as droplets of water flow into the river: moving, transforming in its wake. As in poetry, prose or fragments, change is present, evoked through our engagement with the words, syntax, and rhyme; although the meanings may be fixed between the objective and subjective, in the literal and expression, the essence created and constructed in the sentences by the motion of reading and understanding is forever flowing, in a constant state of flux, changing in its comprehension by reference and influence: There is indeed motion in poetry and poetry in motion. J. Howere

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To understand Heraclitus' doctrine of flux we need not side entirely with the concept that everything is in motion and that there is no stillness to be found in the universe; Heraclitus did not dismiss the idea that within the natural world there is some form of stability: "his [Heraclitus'] main purpose seems to be to assert such stability¹⁴", such stability is to be seen in the transformation of one thing into its opposite, which is fundamental to all change.¹⁵ Within the river fragment we see stability and a fixed point in the geography of the river bed, it is the water moving through the river bed that is in motion, and change occurs in it constantly. As I step into the river I am touched by the water and the riverbed, I feel the

¹⁰ Eva Brann, *The Logos of Heraclitus* (Philadelphia: Paul Dry Book, 2011), p.6

¹¹ Ibid, pp. 42-43

¹² Ibid, pp. 42-43

¹³ Ibid, pp. 42-43

¹⁴ G.S. Kirk, *Heraclitus, The Cosmic Fragments* (Cambridge University Press, 1962), p.370

¹⁵ Ibid, p.370

movement of the river and the stability of the bed beneath my feet. Through research there are many interpretations and developments of the river fragment to be found in relation to substance and identity. It was used in the Disney film 'Pocahontas' for instance, in relation to Native American spiritual traditions. The internal change of the river is revealed through the sensation of touch, and I am never the same person each time I take a step into a river, the water and I have changed; also, the earth is transforming as the water flows through and over it, the structure of myself, the earth and the water is in a constant flux. Kirk gives clarification as he presents the relationship of man and his understanding of his environment and the Logos:

Heraclitus made it far clearer than his immediate predecessors that man himself is a part of his surroundings; in him, too, the Logos is operative, and his effective functioning depends upon action in accordance with it – and so upon his understanding of it.¹⁶

However, as I turn to a geographic reference I can stick a pin into the map, thereby fixing a point of location. I can give the river a name and thereby give it a fixed identity, I call myself by name and am identified as such. So, by name and location we are fixed, we have that Archimedean fixed point reference.¹⁷

"We step and do not step into the same rivers, we are and we are not." (B49a)¹⁸ This fragment defines the river metaphor with an emphasis on identity, at any given point, spacial or temporal, we are both being and non-being, in flux and fixed. In the translations of the fragments of Heraclitus and the poetic works of another presocratic Parmenides, correlations are essential with the name and the thing itself. It is believed that these two presocratic philosophers concurred on the concept that a name is not just a name, it also has meaning and connections with the thing itself, connotations are brought together with the name 'Zeus' and 'the only wise thing'.¹⁹ Parmenides was seen as an opposer of

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 403.

¹⁷ This is in reference to Descartes' argument of doubt, see Descartes, *Meditation on First Philosophy*, Edited by John Cottingham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p.20

¹⁸ Catherine Osbourne 'Heraclitus' in *From the Beginning to Plato*, Edited by C.C.W. Taylor (Oxon: Routledge, 1997), p.99.

¹⁹ Kirk, p.198.

Heraclitus' doctrine of flux, he came after Heraclitus and was seen to prove that there was no such thing as change, reality to Parmenides was one unchanging and eternal thing.²⁰

Parmenides and Plato, Fixed Point and Forms

Plato, Parmenides, and Aristotle believed that to be unchanging, and eternal, is to be seen as essentially superior.²¹ This concept flows through to the seventeenth century philosopher Anne Finch (Countess Conway) and her principles on substance, and in particular the substance of God, which is termed as immutable; the following quote is concerning God and his attributes:

SEEING then that in him there is no Time, nor any Mutability, hence it is that in him there can exist no new Knowledge or Will, but his knowledge and Will are eternal, and without or above time. (I.4.)²²

The immoveable knowledge we seek is the eternal truth known by God, and for the presocratics: Zeus. This knowledge exists out of time, and therefore does not decay or change, remaining fixed and not interchangeable with any other substance. This conforms with Plato's concept of Forms, and it is within these forms that true knowledge would exist. For now, let us get back to the presocratics, and in particular Parmenides' argument against Heraclitus' concept of flux, and the idea that knowledge is not attainable from a substance which is in a perpetual state of motion.

Parmenides words are expressed in the form of a poem, in which the Goddess speaks to him, these words are then referenced as from the voice of the divine. As Edward Hussey posits the main point of this lengthy, complex, and contentious piece of work is the promise the goddess makes.²³ The promise in relation to the truth: "It is necessary to find out everything: both the unmoving heart of well-rounded reality, and the opinions of mortals...(DK 28 B 1.28-32)"²⁴ The unmoving heart is interpreted as the truth, not in the

²⁰ Anthony Gottlieb, *The dream of Reason, A History of Philosophy from the Greeks to the Renaissance*, (London: Penguin 2001), p.52.

²¹ Ibid, p.232.

²² Anne Finch, *The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy* (Dodo Press 1692), p.1.

²³ Edward Hussey 'Pythagoras and Eleatics' in *From the Beginning to Plato*, Edited by C.C.W. Taylor (Oxon: Routledge, 1997) p.131.

²⁴ Ibid, p.131.

I think you need a reference here as an explanation for this interpretation.

saying or thinking of such, but in the reality of the thing, this reality is interpreted as a rounded unmoving thing, not a subject of change; the goddess not only promises the insight into parts of reality but offers guarantees into the truth of the insights.²⁵ With an 'unmoving heart' these truths are interpreted as essentially unchanging and immutable. From these findings it can be concluded that the only voice of truth is that of the goddess, that knowledge of the truth is to be found by listening to her words, and that through the filter of the 'unmoving heart and the 'opinions of mortals' everything is to be found, including knowledge of the truth. The source of information is also seen as essential, Parmenides is also insistent on the method by which the truth is found, these methods must be trustworthy, also a certain 'correctness' and 'certainty' must be evident.²⁶

If to be addressed by a voice both from within and from beyond the world is to receive a revelation, then Heraclitus was such a recipient. That would account for an observation that Aristotle makes of Heraclitus somewhat out of the blue—that he was as convinced of what he *believed* as others are of what they *know*.

(Nicomachean Ethics 1146b)"²⁷

The assumption here is that both Heraclitus and Parmenides balanced head and heart when determining the truth of any attainable knowledge of reality. From this can we conclude any definite idea of whether, or not, knowledge is attainable in the light of the doctrine of flux? The truth appears fixed within an unmovable object, put in place by the Goddess, Gods or other divinity, an understanding of the voice of such a divinity, along with an engagement to the varied opinions of well-informed mortals will lead to truthful knowledge.

Plato's theory of forms would confirm this hypothesis. In *The Republic* Plato presents a dialogue between Glaucon and Socrates in which the purpose is to seek a theory of an ideal society and to show how such a society could come close to such an ideal. This leads to the conclusion that it would appear then that the 'field of opinion' which rests between being and non-being is not knowledge.²⁸ Only that which is real is accessible to knowledge, that which is not real is not accessible to knowledge, and what lies between the two is termed

²⁵ Ibid, p.132.

²⁶ Ibid, p.132.

²⁷ Brann, pp. 18-19.

²⁸ Plato, *The Republic*, Translated by Desmond Lee, Second edn. (London: Penguin Book 1987). BK IV 479d p.203.

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opinion.²⁹ Opinion is held betwixt and between that which is knowable, a grey area, and would not conform to the ideal. However, these opinions informed by that which is fixed, and eternal conforms to the ideal of that which is knowable, as in knowledge. The form of Beauty as in ideal form is discussed and the conclusion presented is that it is to be discovered through reason. This view differs from aesthetic beauty, which is subjective and viewed empirically through our senses. The form is a metaphysical idea, rational, non-physical immutable: The form of Beauty does not hold substance of its opposite, "If a beautiful object is not ugly at the same time it will nevertheless eventually become ugly since it is undergoing change."³⁰ Robert Heinamen's observations inform that the ideal form cannot be an object of change. The concept of ideal forms, for me, is of something ethereal or divine, that which is inaccessible to common sense requiring some form of transcendental communing thought process. I agree with the words of Dorothy Emmet:

The excitement inspired by the contemplation of the beauty of pure form is not describable in cold abstractions, but takes on the imaginative clothing of myth, and becomes Eros moving between earth and heaven.³¹

It is through mathematical process that Plato comes to the ideal form, Plato's 'metaphysical Key' with which he opens the door to the intelligible form of beauty is an intuitive perception.³² The unreliability of sense perception is to be separated out from the austere substance of experience when comprehending the ideal form. Attaining knowledge by an understanding and insight into Plato's theory of forms does seem possible, however for his theory to work one would have to hold a strong belief in the divine and a type of heavenly realm in which the ideal of forms reside. This may be a rather literal interpretation. Intuitively in the pursuit of knowledge I perceive something less fixed, a straddling of both heaven and earth, a fixed point would be an ideal I hold instinctively in my mind from which the oscillating movement of things out there in the world, flowing, changing, sometimes close, sometimes evasive.

²⁹ Ibid, (477a) p.199.

³⁰ Robert Heinaman 'Plato: metaphysics and epistemology' in *From the Beginning to Plato*, Edited by C.C.W. Taylor (Oxon: Routledge, 1997), p.360.

³¹ Dorothy Emmet, *The Nature of Metaphysical Thinking* (London: Macmillan 1966), p.198.

³² Ibid, p.198.

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Giving room to the expansion and dispersing of knowledge allows for a continuing search for truth and seems more realistic; however, if we cannot hold a fixed point of destination, a pure truth, a true belief, or the form of knowledge, that which is knowable, purpose is lost, and purpose is fundamental to any pursuit.

Logos

"Listening not to me but to the Logos it is wise to agree that all things are one (D 50)." ³³

Anne Finch's metaphysics present a theory of three substances: One as immutable, which is God; Two as that which is both mutable and immutable – Jesus Christ and the Logos; Three as that which is mutable – Everything else. ³⁴ To consider Finch's theory of substance is to consider a fixed point within the Logos, and this assists with insights into Heraclitus' doctrine of flux in relation to knowledge. The understanding that the Logos is both fixed and in flux requires a deeper analysis, this is assisted by the concept 'that all things are one' as presented in the above fragment from Heraclitus. In the article 'What Heraclitus and Parmenides have in common on Reality and Deception', ^{Beatriz} Bossi posits that both Heraclitus and Parmenides admit to both change and permanence, but in differing ways; more importantly for the purpose of this essay, both philosophers equate deception with a form of ignorance; "Ignorance which consists in the incapacity to grasp true wisdom is one and of one thing."³⁵ This then fixes ignorance, and deception, in a single unmovable thing, without the ability to move onto wisdom or true knowledge: to be stuck in true ignorance is to lack the ability to grasp. Grasping and oneness are essential concepts in the configuring of the substance of Logos; ^{OK} Therefore, I agree with Robinson, as quoted by Bossi, in the idea which indicates the substance of Logos: "The structure of the universe is supreme cognition or universal logos."³⁶ Here attention is given to Heraclitus' fragment D.10: "Graspings (*sympleses*): wholes and not wholes, convergent divergent, consonant, dissonant, from all things one and from one thing all."³⁷ This emergence of one thing to all things as a form of transition is a simple analysis and I think there is more to be understood; and to fix all things

³³ Kirk, p.50.

³⁴ Mary Warnock, *Woman Philosophers* (London: Dent, 1996), p.23.

³⁵ Beatriz Bossi, 'What Heraclitus and Parmenides have in common on Reality and Deception', *LOGOS. Anales del Seminario de Metafísica* Vol. 48 (2015): 21-34, p.22.

³⁶ T.M. Robinson quoted by Bossi, *ibid* p. 26

³⁷ Kahn p. 281

as one and the same, again this is rather simplistic. To get some form of structure a move towards cognition seems intuitive, and I am drawn to Kahn's analysis of grasping: "Syllapsies will denote the pairwise structuring of reality, and also the act of intelligence by which the structure is gathered together."³⁸ 'The act of intelligence' speaks of an engagement with the deliberate action of cognitive processes; action is movement; therefore one must stand fixed in the 'structure of reality' the physical form of world/universe in which we live and breath and engage with our bodily movements, both physical and mental; bringing together the attributes by which we manifest the said structures and progress onto that which is formed and manufactured by this grasping. To clarify, we make sense of the world from a fixed standpoint - a concept of the structure of reality, as we grasp another fixed attribute - knowledge, through a motion, this motion being cognition. The conclusion that knowledge is possible considering Heraclitus' doctrine of flux is feasible when we consider that to be ignorant of such knowledge is to be fixed. There is transformation to be found in the doctrine of flux, movement, a change from ignorance to a rational being. It is through Finch's concept of a substance that is both mutable and immutable, as she suggests as the logos, we find a substance in which to hold such knowledge. Heraclitus' river analogy gives us a strong image from which to grasp this concept of flux, in relation to personal identity and metaphysics we conceive that for life to breath it must move, breath is existence in the individual, as movement is existence in the universe. From this point I move to the aforementioned idea of oneness; a concept I have strong personal beliefs and connections to. The concept of oneness in philosophy was first brought to my attention on reading Spinoza, and his belief in, and presentation of Pantheism:³⁹ The substance of God/ Nature in all things. This has developed in philosophy of mind to Pan-psychism:⁴⁰ That all things innate and otherwise hold a form of consciousness. Bossi quotes Robinson as giving the indication that Heraclitus posits the possibility that all things have some sense of awareness; Bossi also quotes Stobaeus as stating the translation of Heraclitus' fragment 'thinking is common to all

³⁸ Kirk, p. 282

³⁹ Spinoza's theories are presented in his work: *Ethics*. It is not my purpose to use his beliefs in my argument; the concept of oneness is found also in Eastern belief systems and philosophies. My purpose is to link Heraclitus' doctrine of flux with the development of philosophy through the centuries; this being highlighted does give foundation to my thinking based on my own beliefs. However, a pantheist approach does give understanding to the attainment of knowledge, through the substance of God/Nature within our consciousness, or mind - true knowledge, such as Plato's forms and mathematical propositions, also innate ideas and attributes can be understood without having a belief in a mortal soul.

⁴⁰ Thomas Nagel, 'Panpsychism' Ch. 13 in *Mortal Questions*, (Cambridge University Press: 1979) pp. 181 - 195

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(*pasi*) B113, as the translation of *pasi* indicates, all things as well as all people.⁴¹ Bossi then quotes Kahn in reference to the subject:

“[S]uch pan-psychism gives a new dimension to the ambivalence of Heraclitus’ concept of ‘the wise’, oriented both towards the human and towards the cosmic”, and “fits with the doctrine of a limitless psyche”.⁴²

Is this limitless psyche knowable? If so, is it knowable in the light of Heraclitus’ doctrine of flux? Spinoza proposed that God or Nature is unknown to us and beyond our grasp in its infinite attributes and, according to Stuart Hampshire, Spinoza describes “God or Nature as vastly and immeasurably outstripping human powers of cognition and of understanding.”⁴³ Regarding the structure of things, insights may be found in mathematics, and from here grasping will lead to an ‘intellectual love of God’; “The power of mind will be its own reward.”⁴⁴ Again we are made aware of something fixed - God or Nature, as in that which we can only remain ignorant of; through action and movement in cognition understanding can be attained of the ‘structure of things’. It is my interpretation that reason and passion combined create an ‘intellectual love’. This is as close as possible to true knowledge as we can be, the truths of God/Nature are beyond our grasping, something fixed which is unattainable, therefore only that which is in motion and flux is truly knowable.

⁴¹ Stobeaus quoted by Bossi p.26.

⁴² Kahn quoted by Bossi, p.27.

⁴³ Stuart Hampshire’s Introduction in Benedict De Spinoza, *Ethics*, translated by Edwin Curley (London: Penguin Books, 1996) p. xvi

⁴⁴ Ibid p. xvi

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Very well laid out.

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