

Research question

If I were to apply Heraclitus' theory of flux as an art student, where does my authenticity lie, in moments of change or stability?

Literature Review

This literature review explores Heraclitus' philosophy on flux as the fundamental essence of the universe through the book *"The Fragments of the Work of Heraclitus of Ephesus on Nature with an Introduction Historical and Critical,"* written by Heraclitus, edited and written by George Thomas White Patrick, and translated from Greek by Ingram Baywater. This work presents the surviving fragments of Heraclitus, along with other philosophical interpretations and Patrick's commentary. With this in mind, I aim to explore Heraclitus' theory on how reality is never fixed, and how that shapes and informs our understanding of authenticity and identity through the lens of an art student.

Out of many aspects and angles I can take from Heraclitus' fragments and other interpretations, my curiosity follows his line of thought of unity in opposites, in this case, change and stability. Specifically, according to the text, we live in the harmony of opposites; because of one factor, another is allowed to exist, and that state is in constant flux, or in Patrick's words, "harmony by tension" (Heraclitus). This law of unity of opposites, fundamental in modern physics, is not the entire philosophy of Heraclitus; however is definitely the highlight (Heraclitus). In this text, Patrick looks into several philosophical interpretations of Heraclitus' fragments, such as those of Hegel, Lassalle, Schuster, Teichmüller, and Pfeiderer, and others, and according to him, quite successful interpretations; however, as with any pre-Socratic text that has been translated over the centuries, there are many in his mind misinterpretations (Heraclitus).

According to Patrick, from Heraclitus's remaining fragments, there are two separate classifications of oppositions, which, in his opinion, all critics have failed to notice, including Heraclitus, and apparently have developed into different paths historically (Heraclitus). One is purely physical opposition that Schuster and Zeller have mentioned, which is that one passes into another, such as day and night, or dead and awake, and for which Lassalle actually disagrees (Heraclitus). As Heraclitus says, they are inherently the same (Heraclitus). The other class, which I failed to understand before, is relativity, such as good or evil, or impure and pure (Heraclitus). As Patrick claims, one thing may be good or evil depending on the angle you look at it (Heraclitus). Connecting this to flux, Patrick looks into Mr. Browne's interpretation. Browne argues that if our world were absolutely fixed, no change would occur, and the illusion of change would be impossible (Heraclitus). The same it would be if stability did not exist (Heraclitus). Patrick, by extension to Browne, is claiming that there must be a recognizable factor that makes change (Heraclitus). Heraclitus claims that everything is in constant flux; however, Patrick is

trying to point out that even in Heraclitus' claim, an underlying stability is implied (Heraclitus). Change is only relative to something stable.

Patrick argues that even change needs certain permanence, that opposites coexist, for which Heraclitus, from the fragments, believes are one (Heraclitus). Through this secondary interpretation or lens from Patrick, I can't help but agree with his commentary. Heraclitus' theory is already difficult to grasp and is in some ways unsettling, and Patrick makes it sound more comfortable. Perhaps as humans we still yearn for some sense of stability, and Patrick claims that one or the other can still exist, and does not change for what they are. Additionally, in comparison to the philosophers or scholars mentioned in the text, he does not try to add on top of Heraclitus' philosophy, but rather reconstructs it and compares his fragments with already existing interpretations, taking into consideration the historical context. As an art student, I've come to realize and agree that my identity and authenticity cannot exist without change or stability, because without the other, what would change or stability even mean?

Bibliography

Heraclitus. *The Fragments of the Work of Heraclitus of Ephesus on Nature: With an Introduction Historical and Critical*. Translated by George Thomas White Patrick, N. Murray, 1889.