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Being and Becoming in the 'Tragic Age' of
Greece:
A Critical Reading of Nietzsche's 1870s
Lectures on Heraclitus and Parmenides

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MPhil Classics
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Die Vergangenheit ist mir lieber als die Gegenwart; aber ich glaube an eine bessere Zukunft.

I prefer the past to the present; but I believe in a better future.

KGW I, 1 13 [10]

Allmählich hat sich mir herausgestellt, was jede grosse Philosophie bisher war: nämlich das Selbstbekenntnis ihres Urhebers und eine Art ungewollter und unvermerkter mémoires.

It has gradually become clear to me what every great philosophy has hitherto been: a confession on the part of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir.

BGE §6 / KGW VI, 2, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* §6

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This thesis is dedicated in memory of my grandfather, Mr Maurice Bates.

Abbreviations

Nietzsche	
KGW	Nietzsche. 1967ff. <i>Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe</i> . ca. 40 volumes in 9 divisions. Edited by G. Colli and M. Montinari. Berlin/New York: de Gruyter.
KGB	Nietzsche. 1974ff. <i>Briefwechsel. Kritische Gesamtausgabe</i> . c.a. 24 volumes in 3 divisions. Edited by G. Colli, M. Montinari, N. Miller and A. Pieper. Berlin: De Gruyter.
A	<i>Anti-Christ / Der Antichrist</i> Translation: in Kaufmann (1976) / Original: KGW VI, 3
BT	<i>The Birth of Tragedy / Die Geburt der Tragodie</i> Translation: Nietzsche (1999) / Original: KGW III, 1
BGE	<i>Beyond Good and Evil / Jenseits von Gut und Böse</i> Translation: Nietzsche (2003) / Original: KGW VI, 2
CW	<i>The Case of Wagner / Der Fall Wagner</i> Translation: in Kaufmann (1976) / Original: KGW VI, 3
D	<i>Dawn / Morgenröthe</i> Translation: Nietzsche (2011) / Original: KGW V, 1
EH	<i>Ecce Homo / Ecce Homo</i> Translation: Nietzsche (1989) / Original: KGW VI, 3
GS	<i>The Gay Science / Die fröhliche Wissenschaft</i> Translation: Nietzsche (1974) / Original: KGW V, 2
HH	<i>Human, all too Human / Menschliches, Allzumenschliches</i> Translation: Nietzsche (1996) / Original: KGW IV, 2
PPP	<i>The Pre-Platonic Philosophers / die vorplatonischen Philosophen</i> Translation: Nietzsche (2001) / Original: KGW, II, 4
PTAG	<i>Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks / Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen</i> Translation: Nietzsche (1962) / Original: KGW, III, 2, 293-266
TI	<i>Twilight of the Idols / Götzen-Dämmerung</i> Translation: Nietzsche (1998) / Original: KGW VI, 3
WP	<i>The Will to Power</i> Translation: Kaufmann (1968) / Original: assorted nachgelassene fragmente KGW VII, 2 - VIII, 3
The Greeks	
DK	Diels, Hermann, and Walther Kranz. 1956. <i>Die Fragmente der</i>

	<i>Vorsokratiker</i> . in 3 vols. Berlin: Weidmann.
DL	Diogenes Laertius, <i>Lives of the Eminent Philosophers</i> . Translations: Hicks (1925) or Mensch (2018) / Original: Hicks (1925) or Dorandi (2013)
Graham	Graham, Daniel. 2010. <i>The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy</i> . in 2 volumes vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Kirk, Raven, and Schofield	Kirk, Raven, and Schofield. 1983. <i>The Presocratic Philosophers</i> . 2nd edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
	Schopenhauer
SW	Schopenhauer, Arthur (1986ff.) <i>Sämtliche Werke in Fünf Banden</i> . Ed. Löhneysen, Wolfgang von. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp.
WWR	The World as Will and Representation Translation: Schopenhauer (1966) / Original: SW I-II
PP	Parerga and Paralipomena Translation: Schopenhauer (1974) / Original: SW XII

Nietzsche texts are cited, as per convention, by aphorism or section number for the main published works, denoted by a §, with KGW volume and section for the original German; translation page number and KGW volume and section for the notes and unpublished writings; and by translation page number and KGW page number for the lectures.

The Presocratics are cited, as per convention, according to the Diels-Kranz convention, which typically goes DK [thinker #] [A for testimonia, B for fragments, and C for imitations and uncertainties] [#], e.g. DK22B7. The translator is given where appropriate, either according to the abbreviations above or by citation.

Plato and Aristotle are cited, as per convention, following the standard Stephanus pagination and Bekker pagination respectively, and the translator is given where appropriate, either according to the abbreviations above or by citation.

Abstract

This thesis compares and contrasts Friedrich Nietzsche's account of two significant Presocratic thinkers, Heraclitus and Parmenides, in his early period lectures on the period of philosophical history he calls pre-*Platonic*. For Nietzsche, the fragments of Heraclitus display a 'tragic' tendency aiming towards individual reconciliation with life through confrontation with the nature of reality in 'becoming'. This confrontation takes place in full acknowledgement of the suffering inherent in becoming. Parmenides, known to modern audiences as one of the most celebrated Presocratic thinkers, is lambasted by Nietzsche as *un-tragic*, unable to form a real reconciliation with life and acknowledge the value of appearances due to the alienating consequences of the abstract concept of 'being'.

The first chapter provides essential context for the study by providing an in-depth account of who the Presocratics are and what sources for their thought Nietzsche used in preparing his lectures. The second chapter opens with a precis on Nietzsche's early period writings, including the *Birth of Tragedy* and the unpublished book draft, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*. It then goes on to offer a critical reading of Nietzsche's theory of tragedy structured around a tripartite understanding of tragedy: pessimism, tragedy, and aesthetics. The third chapter dives into a critical reading of the lecture course. For Nietzsche, Anaximander sets the key question tackled by the rest of Presocratic philosophy: how can something that deserves to live, pass away? This question institutes a form of ontological dualism, and a tension between indefinite being and becoming. Nietzsche finds opposing solutions in the fragments of Heraclitus and Parmenides. Heraclitus, he argues, solves the issue with a rejection of being in favour of becoming, and a valorisation of life and the aesthetic. Parmenides, on the other hand, rejects becoming in favour of being, and is criticised by Nietzsche as offering only an abstract understanding of the world that cannot reconcile with appearances. In the concluding chapter, these readings are explored in-depth with reference both to their philosophical merit and their philological im/possibility.



Lay Summary of Thesis

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In the 1870s, the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche was a Classics professor at the University of Basel in Switzerland. During his tenure, he delivered lectures on early Greek philosophy – the philosophers that came before Plato and Aristotle. I argue that Nietzsche's interpretation of these philosophers is coloured by his own theory of tragedy and show this through a close reading of the lecture course that focusses on two of the main figures of early Greek philosophy, Heraclitus and Parmenides. This study is conducted in three parts. Firstly, I provide an in-depth overview of early Greek philosophy, and explore what evidence we have for what these ancient Greeks thought and how this evidence has survived the ages to reach us today. Secondly, I provide an explanation of Nietzsche's theory of tragedy. I argue that tragedy consists of a relationship between three concepts: pessimism, tragedy, and aesthetics. It begins with a bleak view of the world but looks towards a positive affirmation of the world and our own everyday experience. Thirdly, I offer a close reading of the text of Nietzsche's lectures. A final concluding chapter sums up my argument.

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Introduction

Despite being better known for his later philosophical ideas such as the death of God, the eternal recurrence, and the *Übermensch*, Nietzsche was a promising classicist. A doctorate was hastily conferred upon him on the basis of several articles on Diogenes Laertius that he had published in his supervisor Ritschl's journal, *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*, so that he could take up the chair of Greek Language and Literature at the University of Basel in 1869, at the ripe old age of 24.¹ Nietzsche's deep curiosity and fondness for Greco-Roman antiquity is evident throughout his life and works, but especially so here in the books, drafts, and lecture courses produced during his decade of tenure at Basel. Mainstream Nietzsche scholarship focusses on *The Birth of Tragedy* as the output par excellence for this period, and the significance of lectures has largely gone unspoken in the field, though this trend is beginning to turn.² I consider this turn both inevitable and utterly vital to the field: Nietzsche's most sustained engagement with Presocratic thought takes place here in the early period, in the form of the *Vorplatonischen Philosophen* lecture course and the unpublished book draft, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*. Of the two, the book draft has received the most attention in the scholarship over the years; however, I argue that the lectures constitute the most significant and philosophically rich work Nietzsche ever produced on the Presocratics. Unlike PTAG, the lectures contain quotations of and direct references to the Presocratic fragments and engage with the scholarship of the period. Most critically, the lectures extend beyond the scope of the abandoned book draft, tackling philosophers such as Empedocles, Democritus, and Socrates. Questions for the critical reader abound: can Nietzsche's work of this period add to our understanding of ancient philosophy? Do these works add to our understanding of Nietzsche's thought? After all, this early period is when Nietzsche truly begins to become who he is.³

This thesis compares and contrasts Friedrich Nietzsche's account of two

¹ Schaberg (1995) 15.

² See excellent works such as Jensen and Heit (2014).

³ 'You should become who you are.' (Du sollst der werden, der du bist.) GS §270.

significant Presocratic thinkers, Heraclitus and Parmenides, in his early period lectures on the period of philosophical history he calls pre-*Platonic*. For Nietzsche, the fragments of Heraclitus display a ‘tragic’ tendency aiming towards individual reconciliation with life through confrontation with the nature of reality in ‘becoming’. This confrontation takes place in full acknowledgement of the suffering inherent in becoming. Parmenides, known to modern audiences as one of the most celebrated Presocratic thinkers, is lambasted by Nietzsche as *un-tragic*, unable to form a real reconciliation with life and acknowledge the value of appearances due to the alienating consequences of the abstract concept of ‘being’.

There are two main methodological considerations, or lenses, for this study. The first is the lens of philology. We open with an in-depth account of who the Presocratics are and what sources were available in Nietzsche’s time. Essential context is provided by answering the question of how to periodise the Presocratics, examining the last 100 years of Presocratic scholarship, and analysing the strands of transmission that preserved what we know of Presocratic thought today, including the philological caveats essential to any reconstruction of Presocratic thought. Then, this information is put into the context of Nietzsche’s work in the 19th century through an assessment what sources for early Greek philosophy were and weren’t available at that time and what editions and texts Nietzsche used for his course.

The second methodological lens is Nietzsche’s thought itself. Building upon the theory of tragedy presented in the 1871 work, *The Birth of Tragedy*, and other early *Nachlass* fragments, Nietzsche establishes a concept of an entire ‘tragic age’ of Greece in the archaic period.⁴ Ostensibly, the theory of tragedy is an aesthetic-metaphysic interpretation of the genre and genesis of the Greek tragic drama: anticipations of Schopenhauer’s pessimism and metaphysics of the world as Will and Representation are present in the twin artistic drives of the Dionysian and Apollonian.

⁴ ‘The philosophical systems of the early Greeks. The world they reveal is the same one that was created by tragedy. In this we grasp the unity of philosophy and art for the purpose of culture.’ (Die philosophischen Systeme der älteren Griechen. Es offenbart sich dieselbe Welt, die die Tragödie schuf. Hier begreifen wir die Einheit der Philosophie und der Kunst zum Zweck der Kultur.) KGW III, 4, NF-1872 19[51].

From here, Nietzsche extrapolates his theory off the stage and into the entire intellectual culture of archaic Greece. The chapter opens with a precis on Nietzsche's early period writings, including the *Birth of Tragedy* and the unpublished book draft, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*. It then goes on to offer a critical reading of Nietzsche's theory of tragedy structured around a tripartite understanding of tragedy: pessimism, tragedy, and aesthetics. A pessimistic understanding of reality is confronted through the medium of the tragic, and this acknowledgement allows for a reconciliation with life understood as the aesthetic – as a valorisation of appearances, despite the terrible nature of things. Thus, we find an aesthetics 'not confined to art, not even to 'art as a whole'. It runs into [...] life itself.' (Silk and Stern 1981, 40) This is the theoretical basis of the tragic reading of the Presocratics: for Nietzsche, the entire intellectual culture of archaic Greece is influenced by tragic thinking, and it is in this milieu that Presocratic thought emerges.

The third chapter dives into a critical reading of the lecture course, informed by the understanding gained in the first two methodological chapters. For each early Greek philosopher analysed, there is an introduction for the reader to their overall system of thought and the scholarly debates over interpretations. Then, Nietzsche's interpretation is offered through a close following of the lecture material. Finally, any issues with Nietzsche's account, such as outdated or unconventional readings, are made explicit, so that Nietzsche's interpretation can be evaluated from both the philosophical and philological perspective.

The chapter opens on Anaximander. For Nietzsche, Anaximander sets the key question tackled by the rest of Presocratic philosophy: how can something that deserves to live, pass away? Suffering and death are our punishment for separating from an indefinite 'being' and instead 'coming-to-be'. This question splits into investigations of ontology, epistemology, and ethics, as the very act of our becoming is characterised by injustice. For Nietzsche, all philosophers that are truly 'tragic' engage on this level or respond to these questions as posed by Anaximander in some way. This interpretation of Anaximander is not unique to Nietzsche, as evidence shows that a similar reading is given by Ritter decades before the lectures, but an

analysis of some of the alternative readings of Anaximander shows that the ‘tragic’ interpretation is not as likely as Nietzsche may have thought.

Next is Anaximenes, who is included in this thesis as a counterpoint to the dominance of the tragic paradigm. For Nietzsche, Anaximenes is *boring* – he does not engage with the tragic, despite being a direct descendant of Anaximander. What does it mean for Nietzsche’s theory that not all Presocratics channel some ‘tragic’ insight? The limits and remit of Nietzsche’s theory are put into sharp focus with an analysis of this nonconformist, and criticism is levelled against Nietzsche himself for the deficit in his account of Anaximenes’ thought.

Famously obscure and difficult to parse, Heraclitus is an important tragic thinker and spectacularly original character for Nietzsche. Heraclitus’ thought shows, in Nietzsche’s interpretation, an engagement with the idea of the world as becoming without purpose, but a reconciliation with life understood as the aesthetic that does not require the Schopenhauerian pessimism of Anaximander’s conclusions. The play of the child and the conflagration are not punishment for existing, but part of the logic of a world continually coming-to-be in the eternal present. Three issues in Nietzsche’s interpretation present themselves. Firstly, the status of the Logos; secondly, the reading of εἰδέναι / εἶναι in DK22B50; thirdly, the question of whether Heraclitus had a cosmic cycle, or whether it was anachronistically read into Heraclitus’ philosophy by the later Stoics.

The Eleatics, in particular Parmenides, are a subject of much vitriol on Nietzsche’s part: the Eleatic denial of becoming in favour of homogenous being necessitates an alienation from the aesthetic through its appeal to an abstract form of being. Therefore, from their first principles, it becomes impossible for them to engage with and ultimately reconcile with the world of appearances. This makes the Eleatics un-tragic thinkers, set apart from their age. However, once again, Nietzsche can be accused of deficit in his account; he skims through traditional philological concerns about how to interpret the ἔστι of Parmenides with a ‘tragic’ bulldozer. In the narrative he constructs, ἔστι can only be existential, as Parmenides is responding to the question of being and becoming set by Anaximander. Therefore, the only

possible conclusion about Parmenides' thought is a damning one.

The final chapter draws together an overall analysis of Nietzsche's lectures on Heraclitus and Parmenides. Overall, Nietzsche's 'tragic' interpretation of Heraclitus and Parmenides meets with varying levels of success both philologically and philosophically. Alternative readings and interpretations are often dismissed or omitted to preserve the tragic narrative. The account of Heraclitus holds merit: Nietzsche pulls together a thread of tragic thought from the scattered and aphoristic words of Heraclitus, descended neatly, in his view, from the problem of Anaximander, offering answer to the problem of existence with a kind of joy and affirmation in becoming that precipitates Nietzsche's later 'Dionysian' thought after the break with Schopenhauer and Wagner. This breakthrough comes at the philological price of a more comprehensive understanding of the Logos and of alternate readings of Heraclitus, but here, in a fashion typical to Nietzsche, the philosophical ideal trumps philological rigour. The reading of Parmenides, on the other hand, is missing the kind of depth of engagement and understanding to properly substantiate Nietzsche's thought. Faced with what he interprets as the antithesis of the Heraclitean ideal, Nietzsche becomes dismissive, forfeiting his chance to really validate his tragic reading of the intellectual culture of archaic Greece through analysis of its own failure to manifest in Eleatic thought. The lectures remain evidence of both the genius and impetuosity of the young Nietzsche, coming to terms with the gravity and consequences of his own ideas.

1. Methodology 1: On the 'Presocratics' – The Difficult History of Reading Early Greek Philosophy

1.1. Introduction

One aim of this thesis is to engage with the thought of Heraclitus and Parmenides through the medium of Nietzsche's lectures. To do this, we must have a broad understanding of the field of early Greek philosophy. Who exactly do the terms 'Pre-Platonic' and the more commonly used 'Presocratic' refer to? What is the history of the transmission of their texts and ideas? What sources were available to Nietzsche, and what did he recommend to his students? The answers to these questions constitute the first methodological lens of a critical reading of the lectures: the philological lens.

This chapter first asks *who* the Presocratics are, exploring the question of the meaning of the various popular periodisations of early Greek philosophy. Thinking and writing before the creation of the mainstream philosophical 'schools', there are many ways to compartmentalise their philosophy, and I explore what the different terms – 'Presocratic', 'Pre-Platonic', even 'pre-Sophistic' – mean and how they have been applied historically.

The works of the Presocratics survive only in fragments and testimonia from later authors, so the second part of the chapter explores the history of the transmission of Presocratic doctrines. We are indebted to more or less all of the philosophers and philosophical schools from Plato until late antiquity for what little we know about the Presocratics. The question emerges of whether it is possible to know what the early Greek philosophers thought and wrote, as their works lie on the other side of a complicated philosophical historiography. The chapter explores the questions of where our knowledge of early Greek philosophy comes from, engaging with some of the issues and debates surrounding the reception and transmission of the Presocratics in later sources.

Finally, the chapter asks questions about Nietzsche's sources. What editions of the fragments and testimonia did he use? What did he recommend to the students

on his lecture course? Writing before the publication of the first edition of the Diels-Kranz compilation, tracing Nietzsche's sources is not as simple as referring back to the modern standard of the Diels-Kranz numbering of fragments. Between the *Encyclopaedie der klass. Philologie* lectures from 1871 and an examination of both Nietzsche's personal library and his borrowing history from school and university libraries, the editions of the main works that are referenced in the lectures is established.

With this philological exploration of the difficult history of reading early Greek philosophy in hand, the present thesis is prepared for an informed approach to the lectures.

1.2. Who are the Presocratics? Presocratics and Periodisation

'Presocratic' has become the dominant term of reference for the philosophers active in the ancient Mediterranean, Near East, and North Africa between the 7th and the 5th centuries B.C. The grouping commonly begins with Thales of Miletus and ends with Socrates of Athens. The earliest known use of term is in 1788, in Eberhard's *Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie*.⁵ It was popularised by Eduard Zeller (1844-1852) in *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, and became the industry standard term in philosophical and classical scholarship with the critical success of Hermann Diels' *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* [*Fragments of the Presocratics*], the first edition of which was published in 1903.⁶ The *Fragmente* dominates Presocratic scholarship today, over sixty years since the publication of the last edition in 1952, edited by Walther Kranz. Modern sourcebooks such as Graham's *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy* open with justifications for their existence in the shadow of the 'Diels-Kranz' (Graham 2010, xiii), and its impact on the field has been the subject of studies such as the excellent Fondation Hardt collection edited by

⁵ Eberhard (1788). See Laks (2018) 1.

⁶ Diels' usage followed Zeller's. See Laks (2018) 21.

Calder III and Mansfeld (1999). A recently published Loeb edition of the Presocratic fragments, edited by Laks and Most (2016), sets out to finally succeed it; only time will tell if the age of the Diels-Kranz has ended.

What does the term 'Presocratic' refer to? It is not a school or particular tradition bound by geography; the Presocratics lived in disparate corners of the ancient world, from Miletus over in modern-day Turkey to the Eleatics in south-west Italy. It cannot be a merely temporal term, for, as Runia points out, not all of the 'Presocratic' philosophers actually *pre-date* Socrates (Runia 2008, 28). He gives Democritus as a notable example. Guthrie explains that Diels and Kranz never intended for us to understand the term as *merely* temporal;

'Presocratic' is intended to mean, not (as it is often taken) 'before Socrates', but 'before the Socratics'. Its unity lies in the presentation of a philosophy (the singular, surprisingly, is used) which has not been through the school of thought of Socrates and Plato. It gives in fact the non-Socratic, rather than the pre-Socratic part of ancient philosophy, and its character is determined by content rather than chronology. (Guthrie 1962, 345 n1)

The distinction, then, is dialectical. Socrates signified a change in the content and concern of philosophy, with which all philosophy that follows enters into dialogue. There is ancient precedent for this idea. Aristotle provides an explanation of this sort in the *Metaphysics*, arguing that this shift in content is a shift from *physics* to *ethics*:

And when Socrates, disregarding the physical universe and confining his study to moral questions, sought in this sphere for the universal and was the first to concentrate upon definition, Plato followed him. (Arist. *Met.* 987b)

An explanation of the same kind is found 300 years later in Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*:

But Socrates was the first who brought down philosophy from the heavens, placed it in cities, introduced it into families, and obliged it to examine into life and morals, and good and evil. (Cicero, *Tusc. Dis.* 5. 10. Translation: Grant 1971)

The historical Socrates had little concern for the cosmology and physical theory of

the earlier philosophers. Rather, his main concern was ethics – the question of how to live well.⁷ However, merely citing a transition of the primary concern of philosophy from physics to ethics is not a sufficient argument when we consider the full range of philosophical concerns explored by the Presocratics. The ethical and the physical are often found hand in hand, such as in the ethical interpretation of Anaximander’s sole fragment outlining the workings of cosmic justice and Democritus’ ethical sayings. An alternative argument for citing Socrates as the beginning of a period of philosophy is a kind of successions argument. The philosophical schools that follow all owe a personal debt to Socrates. Plato was a follower of Socrates, and the teacher of Aristotle. History has conferred upon these philosophical descendants of Socrates the status of being two of the most important philosophers in the Western canon. Further to this, two of the Hellenistic schools – Stoicism and Cynicism – trace their lineage back to Antisthenes, another pupil of Socrates (see DL VI 2) who took his ethical teachings in a different direction to Plato and Aristotle. Drawing the boundary lines of periodisation around Socrates seems reasonable in this context of the enormous impact on the history of philosophy.

However, while ‘Presocratic’ is the dominant periodisation, it is not the only one. Ueberweg used the term ‘pre-Sophistic’ in his *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie: von Thales bis auf die Gegenwart* [*Sketch of the History of Philosophy*] (1863), finding a meaningful distinction between the early natural philosophers and the 5th century sophists. The term ‘vorplatonisch’ or ‘pre-Platonic’ first appears in 1815 with Krug’s *Geschichte der Philosophie alter Zeit*, and again in 1830-8 in Karsten’s editions of the fragments of Xenophanes, Parmenides, and Empedocles.⁸ While Nietzsche acknowledges the term ‘Presocratic’, it is the term ‘pre-Platonic’ that becomes his periodisation of choice in the Basel lectures, as he argues that Socrates

⁷ ‘Plato’s works themselves provide us with good evidence that Socrates focused his investigative skills on one question only – How should one live one’s life? – and was not similarly preoccupied with the broader range of issues that absorbed their author.’ Kraut (1992) 3.

⁸ Krug (1815) and Karsten (1830, 1835, 1838). See Laks (2018) 19.

belongs with his predecessors for the originality of his thought and character.⁹

Some modern scholars are moving towards the use of 'early Greek philosophy' as a blanket term that avoids the problems of periodisation; Peter Adamson argues in his pop-philosophy book, *Classical Philosophy*, that 'it seems a bit rude to label these thinkers with reference to a future philosopher' (Adamson 2014, 4).¹⁰ As Heidegger argues, '[e]ven where, in the meantime, philological and historical research has occupied itself more thoroughly with the philosophers before Plato and Aristotle, their interpretation is still guided by modern versions of Platonic and Aristotelian representations and concepts' (Heidegger 2002, 243); the conceptual and interpretative baggage of later Greek philosophy confounds our ability to understand the Presocratic philosophers in and for themselves. 'Pre-' gives us a sense of what Laks terms 'chronological anteriority' (Laks 2018, 28). When we use a term prefixed with 'pre-' to designate these earliest philosophers, this can lead us to the idea of them as merely antecedents or provisional stages for 'more complex', 'more important', or 'more correct' philosophical ideas and traditions. Movement away from terms that implicate the later philosophical tradition may be useful for studies of Presocratic philosophy.

The issues of periodisation and which term to use are, as detailed above, fraught with connotations and coloured by various traditions in scholarship. This work makes the conscious decision to use the term 'Presocratic' in light of the full acknowledgement above of the controversy surrounding the periodisation of the Presocratics due to its contemporary significance, recognisability in the field of philosophical and classical scholarship, and for the sake of internal consistency.

1.3. The Presocratics: The Last 100 Years

A short survey of the past one hundred years or so of Presocratic scholarship is a prerequisite for any modern work on the Presocratics. The following works

⁹ PPP 5 / 214.

¹⁰ The scholarly works with this term being, of course, Graham (2010), and the new Loeb edition, Laks and Most (2016).

comprise the modern scholar's toolkit for engaging with Presocratic philosophy. The works fall into three categories: collections of fragments, testimonia, and commentary that focus on individual Presocratic philosophers, collections of fragments, testimonia, and commentary for multiple thinkers or even the entire Presocratic tradition, and essential essays and scholarship. Some focus on the historical and philological aspects of studying the tradition, and some the more philosophical; a balance of both, informed by multiple sources, is required of the well-rounded scholar of the Presocratics.

Having waxed lyrical about its importance above, it is only right to begin here with the Diels-Kranz. It separates the surviving fragments and testimonia into 'A', 'B', and 'C' fragments. The 'A' fragments are testimonia about the philosophers' lives, works, and ideas, as told by ancient authors. The 'B' fragments are the *ipsissima verba* – the surviving words of the ancient philosophers themselves. 'C' fragments are imitations, a category that includes works of spurious attribution and works that take the philosopher in question as a model. An important early English-language survey of the Presocratic tradition is by the Scottish classicist, John Burnet. His *Early Greek Philosophy* first appeared in the late 19th century in 1892, was revised in 1908, 1920, and 1930, and appears in a summarised form in the seminal *Greek Philosophy: Part 1, Thales to Plato*.¹¹ G.S. Kirk and J. E. Raven's edition of the Greek fragments with an English translation and commentary was first published in 1957, and revised in a second edition with M. Schofield in 1983; the revised edition is frequently prescribed for undergraduate courses due to its presentation and accessibility.¹² A detailed study of the Presocratics appears in the first three volumes of Guthrie's *A History of Greek Philosophy*.¹³ The student of the Presocratics may benefit from Richard McKirahan's English presentation of the Greek fragments in *Philosophy Before Socrates*, along with his detailed commentary, which includes details of the philosophers' lives, and situates the reader within the context of Greek culture and

¹¹ See Burnet (1892), and Burnet (1914).

¹² See Kirk, Raven, and Schofield (1983).

¹³ See Guthrie (1962).

society.¹⁴ Jonathan Barnes made important advancements in the evaluation of early Greek philosophy qua philosophy in *The Presocratic Philosophers*, emphasising philosophical insight over philological and historical detail.¹⁵ Daniel Graham's *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy* offers a new English-Greek parallel text in two volumes, with a commentary and up-to-date bibliography for each thinker up to the Sophists.¹⁶ Laks and Most's new edition of the fragments, the nine-volume crowning glory of the Loeb Classical Library entitled *Early Greek Philosophy* (2016), 'represents a wholesale advance on Diels-Kranz', according to the series' General Editor.¹⁷ However, at the time of writing, this edition is so new that the first critical reviews are yet to appear in academic journals. It has yet to become clear what impact it will have on Presocratic scholarship.

In addition to these works that address the whole of the Presocratic tradition, there are many useful editions and surveys that engage with individual philosophers. The most recent edition of the fragments of Xenophanes is by Lesher (1992). Two main editions of the fragments with a commentary dominate Heraclitus scholarship: Kahn (1979) and Kirk (1954). Palmer's modal interpretation of Parmenides has revolutionised modern analytic Parmenides-interpretation (2009).

In terms of collections of essays, both Curd and Graham's *Oxford Handbook of Presocratic Philosophy* and A. A. Long's *Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy* are essential recent collections of essays for the scholar of the Presocratics.¹⁸ The recent re-issue of Mourelatos' collection of essays, *The Pre-Socratics*, brings together over one hundred years of essential critical essays (1993). A final essential collection is Victor Caston and Daniel W. Graham's *Presocratic Philosophy* (2002).

¹⁴ See McKirahan (1994), 2nd ed published 2011.

¹⁵ See Barnes (1979b).

¹⁶ See Graham (2010).

¹⁷ Henderson (2016)

¹⁸ See both Long (1999), Curd and Graham (2008).

1.4. Strands of Transmission

The scholar of the Presocratics must be both a philologist and a philosopher. Many of the Presocratics were not prolific writers; whilst, say, Empedocles wrote tragedies and medical texts as well as philosophy,¹⁹ Heraclitus, Parmenides, Melissus, and Anaxagoras²⁰ all wrote single books. Of these works, no complete editions survive – only fragments quoted by later authors. As Runia states, “[e]ven the students of early Hellenistic philosophy are better off” (Runia 2008, 32) when it comes to availability of source material. Compounding this is the question of the reliability of our ancient sources; we must turn a critical eye to the methods and motivations of these later authors. In light of questions of reliability, some scholars hold a pessimistic position on the possibility of reconstructing early Greek thought.²¹ Recent discoveries such as the Strasbourg Papyrus of Empedocles bring us closer to a full text for one of these early Greek authors, but it is uncertain whether a full text will ever be discovered.²²

This present section surveys the strands of transmission for the works of Presocratic philosophy throughout ‘Ancient’ philosophy, from Plato in the 4th century B.C., through to the philosophers and commentators of late antiquity, and asks: *In what forms have the doctrines of the Presocratics survived? How reliable are our sources, and what interpretative biases do we need to consider?*

1.4.1. Plato and the Presocratics

Born in the 5th century BC, Plato was the pupil of Socrates, and his surviving works on the philosophical adventures of Socrates are widely regarded as the cornerstone of Western philosophy.²³ Plato was a prolific writer, and many of his

¹⁹ DL 8.77, DK31A2.

²⁰ DL 9.5, DL 1.16.

²¹ This is explored in detail in reference to the possibility of the unreliability of the Aristotelian testimony in 1.4.2.

²² See van Der Ben (1999).

²³ Notably, by Alfred Whitehead, who states that ‘The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato.’ Whitehead (1929) II, 1, 1.

exoteric works, or dialogues, survived antiquity, though the esoteric works from inside his academy do not survive. As the first Greek philosopher for whom we have fully extant texts, it would be reasonable to start with him in our reconstruction of the reception and transmission of the earlier Greek philosophers. Plato's familiarity with Presocratic philosophy would have come from both his association with the followers of the Presocratics and from their written texts, which would have been available to him. His association with Cratylus the Heraclitean is reported by both Diogenes Laertius (DL 3.6) and Aristotle (Arist. *Met.* 1. 6, 987a32), though Cratylus is treated 'as a noodle' (Crombie 1963, 476), meaning, as a fool or simpleton, in the Platonic dialogue that shares his name. In the same breath as the above, Diogenes Laertius also informs us that Plato also associated with Hermogenes, a student of Parmenides, and later on with Philolaus and Eurytus, the Pythagoreans.²⁴ According to Mansfeld, it is credible to believe that Plato would have had access to the original texts of many major Presocratics, as well as the collections of views compiled by the Sophists, Gorgias and Hippias (Mansfeld 1999, 26-7). These collections would have been arranged by philosophical topic rather than by author.

The most immediately apparent impact of Presocratic thought upon Plato is seen in the eponymous Platonic dialogues – those that bear the names of prominent Presocratic philosophers and their followers, such as the *Parmenides*, the *Protagoras*, and the aforementioned *Cratylus*, as well as the dialogues named for the sophists who compiled the early handbooks to the Presocratics, *Gorgias* and *Hippias (Minor and Major)*. Going a little deeper, Irwin (1992, 51) helpfully furnishes us with specific references in Plato's dialogues to philosophers such as Anaxagoras,²⁵ Heraclitus,²⁶ Parmenides and Zeno,²⁷ and Empedocles.²⁸ This is not counting the philosophers that Plato alludes to without mentioning them by name, such as the similarity between

²⁴ For further information on Plato's life and associations with his contemporaries, including a critical evaluation of the sources, see Riginos (1976).

²⁵ *Apology* 26d-e; *Cratylus* 400a; *Phaedrus* 72c, 97b-98c.

²⁶ *Cratylus* 402d, 440c; *Phaedrus* 78d-e; *Symposium* 187a-b, 207d; *Republic* 485b; *Theaetetus* 152e; *Sophist* 242e.

²⁷ *Symposium* 178b-c; *Parmenides* 127a-128e; *Theaetetus* 183e; *Sophist* 217c.

²⁸ *Timaeus* 73d, 77c, 78e; *Theaetetus* 152e; *Sophist* 242d-e.

Anaximenes' theory of the density of substances and the theory propounded in the *Timaeus* at 49b7-c7; such similarities also exist between Democritus' use of the word ἰδέαι [*ideai*] for his atomic theory in comparison with Plato's use of the word in the theory of Forms. Some of Plato's references to the Presocratics are apocryphal, such as Socrates' story of Thales falling in a well at *Theaetetus* 174a, mythologising the earlier philosophers.

Presocratic philosophy had a significant influence on Plato's thought. As Kraut states, 'the mathematical work of the Pythagoreans, the theory of flux advocated by Heraclitus and Cratylus, the unchanging and unitary being postulated by Parmenides – all of these played an important role in [Plato's] thinking.' (Kraut 1992, 2) The Pythagorean influence is especially notable for the attention it gets in late antique Neoplatonism, where authors such as Plotinus and Porphyry brought together Neopythagoreanism and Platonic philosophy. However, unlike the collections of opinions written by the Sophists, Plato's tendency is to furnish us with allusions and references to the Presocratics, rather than direct quotes. Runia characterises him as a 'quirky witness' (Runia 2008, 32) – he is not writing a history of philosophy when he writes his dialogues, but dialogues with their own philosophical agenda, part of this agenda being to refute his predecessors. Mansfeld warns us to '[a]bove all note that what we have in Plato is not doxography but a form of dialectic'. (Mansfeld 1999, 27) Careful representation of the views of the Presocratics is not on Plato's agenda. 'His purposes do not require a fair reconstruction of views in their original context', McKirahan notes, with some degree of circumspection (McKirahan 1994, 3). In his book on Heraclitus, Kirk takes a strong view, calling Plato's knowledge of Heraclitus 'limited' and stating, '[Plato] only adduces earlier views where they are relevant to his own contentions'. (Kirk 1954, 15) Therefore, when using the representations of Presocratic philosophy in Plato's works as a source, we can acknowledge that they are useful due to Plato's close chronological proximity to the earlier philosophers and affiliation with their followers, while at the same time maintaining that their use must be carefully considered in each instance.

1.4.2. Aristotle's Doxastic Method

Born in the 4th century BC, Aristotle was originally a pupil of Plato, but he founded his own breakaway school, the Lyceum. He wrote many books, none of which survive.²⁹ We have, in fact, the obverse to the problem we had with Plato: Aristotle's exoteric works are gone, and what has survived are his esoteric or pedagogical materials - the lecture notes or lecture courses.³⁰ These works are famous for their use of the 'doxastic' method, by which Aristotle recounts the *doxa*, or opinions, of his predecessors, and uses them as the starting point of his own discussion of philosophical topics. As he states in the *Metaphysics*,

we must partly investigate for ourselves and partly learn from other investigators, and if those who apply themselves to these matters come to some conclusion which clashes with what we have just stated, we must appreciate both views, but follow the more accurate. (τὸ δὲ λοιπὸν τὰ μὲν ζητοῦντας αὐτοὺς δεῖ τὰ δὲ πυνθανομένους παρὰ τῶν ζητούντων, ἂν τι φαίνεται παρὰ τὰ νῦν εἰρημένα τοῖς ταῦτα πραγματευομένοις, φιλεῖν μὲν ἀμφοτέρους, πείθεσθαι δὲ τοῖς ἀκριβεστέροις. Arist. *Met.* XII 1073b, tr. Tredennick.)

In contrast with the rhetorical context of Plato's treatment of the Presocratics, Aristotle's intention is to learn from them, in order to better compare and contrast their views with his own. His works are valuable to us as sources for the Presocratics, as his surveys of their thought in key areas of philosophical interest such as physics and metaphysics appear to be constructed with a similar purpose to our own – the understanding of historical philosophy. Aristotle passed down this historical interest in the Presocratics to his pupils; as we will see in 1.4.3., it is theorised that one them, Theophrastus, went on to influence the rest of the reception of the Presocratics in antiquity through his proto-doxographical works.

However, the use of Aristotle as a source for the philosophical thought of the

²⁹ For example, see the impressive list of supposed works of Aristotle at DL 5.1-35.

³⁰ As stated by Irwin and Fine (1996) pp. xi-xii. Commonly distinguished into 'exoteric' and 'esoteric'; 'as Lucian puts it for comic effect, you get two Aristotles for the price of one.' Sharples (2007) 505-12. In fact, Aristotle himself uses the term 'exoteric' – see, for an example, *Metaph.* 1076a28.

Presocratics is fraught with debate over the legitimacy and authenticity of his accounts of Presocratic *doxa*. This debate largely took place in the form of examinations of the contradictions in Aristotle's representations of Presocratic thought,³¹ until Cherniss pioneered a theory of Aristotle's ultimate unreliability in his work, *Aristotle's Criticism of Presocratic Philosophy* (1935).³² McDiarmid summarises Cherniss' argument as follows:

Aristotle is not interested in historical facts as such at all. He is constructing his own system of philosophy, and his predecessors are of interest to him only insofar as they furnish material to this end. He believes that his system is final and conclusive and that, therefore, all earlier thinkers have been groping towards it and can be stated in its terms. Holding this belief, he does not hesitate to modify or distort not only the detailed views but also the fundamental attitudes of his predecessors or to make articulate the implications that doctrines may have for him but could not have had for their authors. (McDiarmid 1953, 86)

The argument means that, contrary to first appearances, Aristotle did not share our goal of understanding the thought of the Presocratics in and for themselves, but instead that his testimony of their thought only exists where it helps further his own arguments. This includes interpreting earlier philosophers in the light of his own system, comparing how close they came to his own, *obviously* correct, philosophical positions, and possibly distorting their doctrines to make his appear truer and more logical by contrast. Reflecting on Cherniss' argument, Guthrie takes it to its alarming conclusion.

Now if Aristotle's interpretation of the Presocratics is entirely unhistorical, it is scarcely worthwhile our continuing to study them. Through Theophrastus he influenced the whole doxographical tradition. (Guthrie

³¹ 'Modern criticism of Aristotle's treatment of the Pre-Socratic thinkers has resulted, up to this time, from single contradictions between the preserved fragments of these thinkers and the statements of Aristotle about their doctrines or from the contradictions between Aristotle's differing statements about one and the same doctrine.' Jaeger (1937) 350-6.

³² Eruditely summarised in Cherniss (1951) 319-45.

1957, 36)

Aristotle, as previously stated, is an important source for the Presocratics due to the doxastic opening sections to his extant esoteric works. In addition to this, his pupil, Theophrastus, is the basis of much of the doxographical tradition, as is seen in 1.4.3. A further way in which Aristotle heavily influences the reception and transmission of Presocratic thought is through the commentary tradition – that is, the trend of later authors to write commentaries on Aristotle’s works – and, in particular, the Neoplatonic commentary tradition, which is examined in 1.4.4. If we cannot find some way of mitigating the above claims about the usefulness of Aristotle’s works, we find ourselves unable to make many claims about the content of Presocratic philosophy at all.

Guthrie states the following in defence of Aristotle against these criticisms.

The proper treatment of Aristotle’s evidence is vital for the whole history of Presocratic thought. [...] As a historian Aristotle has serious failings, but he deserves less wholesale condemnation than he is at the moment in danger of receiving. (Guthrie 1957, 51)

Whilst Aristotle is not the perfect historian – indeed, the rigorous citation practices of the modern scholar would appear alien to an ancient author – we should be able to accept this and look for ways to mitigate a wholesale condemnation of his use in Presocratic historiography. An example of such mitigation comes from Frede, who states that ‘Aristotle was in a much better position than we are to form a view about early philosophy’ (Frede 2008, 503). Unlike the modern scholar, Aristotle would have had access to the full texts of early Greek philosophy, and would have encountered its adherents. Whilst his presentation of early Greek philosophy has its problems and is subject to Aristotle’s privileging of his own philosophical views, it is presented in a more rigorous fashion than Plato’s allusions and offhand references, and comes from some level of familiarity with texts that are lost to us. The best the scholar can do is be on our guard against the Aristotelian bias, while appreciating the value of his works as a rich source for Presocratic philosophy both in themselves and in their legacy throughout antiquity and beyond.

1.4.3. Doxography and Biography: Hippolytus and Diogenes Laertius

Outside of philosophical works, our knowledge of the Presocratics comes to us from two genres of ancient literature: doxography and biography. The difference between doxography and biography is constituted in the type and arrangement of material.

The word 'doxography' is a neologism coined by Diels in his 1879 work, *Doxographi Graeci*. It is used to describe a certain genre of philosophical literature that Diels traces back to Theophrastus, the pupil of Aristotle, and his work *Physikai Doxai*, which aimed to convey the δόξαι [*doxai*, beliefs or opinions] of the earlier natural philosophers. 'Diels argued that doxography proper began with a topic-oriented treatise in sixteen books, of which only fragments (already collected and edited by Usener) are extant. This was composed by Aristotle's pupil and successor Theophrastus', states Mansfeld (1999, 23). According to Diels' theory, many of the later doxographical works in antiquity were ultimately descended from Theophrastus' original work on the physical theory of the Presocratics. Diel's theory, including the history of speculation before Diels, is subject to scrutiny in Mansfeld and Runia's excellent *Aëtiana: The Method and Intellectual Context of a Doxographer* (1997).³³ Originally, the term 'doxography' referred only to the specific lineage of works on physical philosophy tracing back to Theophrastus. However, the term has come to refer to works that overview the philosophical positions of earlier authors more generally. (Mansfeld and Runia 1997, xiii) Doxographical works would have been topic-oriented, rather than arranged by original author, similar in style to the 'doxastic' opening sections of an Aristotelian work. Doxographical works that have survived antiquity include Stobaeus' *Anthology* (1884) and Hippolytus' semi-doxographical *Refutation of All Heresies* (See appendices in Osborne (1987)), though we tend to receive these works in a fragmentary fashion in our modern source books. Osborne advocates returning to the doxographical works themselves to read our Presocratics in the 'embedded texts' rather than pulling the fragments out of the

³³ Discussed in Baltussen (2005) 1-26.

surrounding text in her book, *Rethinking Early Greek Philosophy* (Osborne 1987, specifically, pp.8-13).³⁴

The biographical genre is concerned with individuals, providing an account of the the life of the thinker, arranged around διαδοχαί [*diadochai*], or successions, of philosophers. It was a popular genre in Classical Athens;

Most *Lives of Philosophers* seem to have been written between appr. 350 and 200 BC. Xenocrates wrote a life of Plato, Hermodorus and Philippus wrote about Plato, Aristoxenus Lives of Socrates, Plato, Pythagoras and Archytas [... and so forth.] (Mejer 1978, 90)

From the biographical genre we receive a most striking text - Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*. This work is significant for its survey of the lives and thought of philosophers from the major Presocratics through Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, to the philosophers of the Hellenistic period, ending with Epicurus – as well as for being almost fully extant. Its value as a reference material has been recognised by philosophers throughout history.³⁵ The biographies tend to follow a similar format: a philosopher is presented along with their likely dates of birth and death, or perhaps just date of 'flourishing', accompanied by an account of the *diadochai*, or lineage, within the philosophical school. The rest of the biography entry consists in a mixture of apocryphal anecdotes and doxography. For nearly one hundred years, the most up-to-date version of the text and translation was the bowdlerised Hicks (1925) edition, but in 2013 a new critical edition of the original Greek was completed by Tiziano Dorandi (2013), shortly followed by a new English translation by Pamela Mensch (2018).

There are problems with relying on the biographical tradition for an account of the Presocratics. Diels held biography to be 'fundamentally unreliable' (Mansfeld 1999, 23) because of the lack of source criticism at work. In particular, Mejer objects to the use of literary sources to construct a factual account; 'the working conditions for the ancient biographer made it necessary for him to rely on sources which we

³⁴ This idea is explored in more depth in 1.4.4.6.

³⁵ For examples of the impact of Diogenes Laertius on Continental authors, see works such as Barnes (1986), and Irina (2010).

consider unreliable, e.g., literary works, and not shrink from filling in gaps with anecdotes and bon mots.' (Mejer 1992, 3560) Mejer opens his 1978 critical work on Diogenes Laertius with the bold statement that 'nobody would deny that it is more appalling to imagine what the history of Greek philosophy would look like if Diogenes was our primary source than to think of what we would know without Diogenes.' (Mejer 1978, 1) Diogenes Laertius used many source books, themselves at a remove from the original material, in the construction of his accounts. As Long states:

Since most of [Diogenes'] favourite sources [...] were themselves masters of the art of making one new book from many old ones, Diogenes' material often comes to us at several removes from the original [...] Since this is so, the value of any section of Diogenes depends on the value of its sources. (Long 1967)

Who were Diogenes Laertius' primary sources? Mejer tells us that 'with the exception of the Stoic doxography in Book 7 and the Pythagorean in Book 8, Diogenes rarely refers to any sources in his doxographical sections' (Mejer 1992, 3564). Many different theories about the sources have been floated by scholars, summarised by Mejer (1978: 8), though, in the case of the Presocratics, it is possible that the doxographical sections are descended from the same Theophrastian source material discussed above (Mejer 1992, 3590). When it comes to the problems of Diogenes Laertius and source criticism, Mejer hits the nail on the head when he states, 'the main problem in Laertian *Quellenforschung* is, I believe, the following dilemma: All supposedly direct sources and most indirect sources are lost.' (Mejer, 1978: 10) It is difficult for us to verify the legitimacy of many of Diogenes Laertius' sources, as they are lost to us.

A further problem with Diogenes Laertius as a source for the Presocratics is the priority given to the biographical sections over the doxographical sections. Mejer argues that '[t]he biographical sections (including apophthegms and anecdotes) take up much more space than the doxographical and many biographies have no doxography.' (Mejer 1978, 4) Take as an example the biography of Empedocles in DL 8.51-77, which largely concerns itself with epigrams, anecdotes about Empedocles' political career, and speculation about the manner of his death, whether by jumping

into a volcano or by falling from a carriage. These details are not befitting for the construction of a purely philosophical argument. However, some authors think that there is constructive work to be done at the crossroads of philosophy and biography.³⁶

Another further problem is the scarcity of the doxographical account for some of the Presocratics. Much of the original source material must still have been available in ca. 300 C.E., but some of the accounts of Presocratic philosophers is diminutive compared to, say, the Stoics and Epicurus. An example of this is the section on Anaximander in D.L. 2.1-2, which runs to a measly two sections long. There are also accusations that Diogenes Laertius was already out of date in his own time, as stated by Runia (2008, 39):

It is worth emphasizing that Diogenes, though he probably wrote in the early to mid-third century CE, included no philosophers later than the Hellenistic period in his work. [...] It is striking that, in the case of Pythagoras for example, none of the mystagogic emphasis found in Porphyry and Iamblichus is present. Very likely Diogenes was working in a backwater, not up to date with the latest trends.

If Diogenes Laertius' knowledge of philosophy was not cutting-edge, but, in fact, out of date and unaware of the contemporary Neoplatonic trends, does this affect how useful he is for a philosophical historiography of the Presocratics?

To summarise, the problems of Diogenes Laertius's reliability revolve around the following: 1. the priority given to biographical details over doxographical details – while apocryphal biographical details about Greek philosophers are interesting, they are not as useful for scholarly philosophical work as a detailed treatment of the philosophical views themselves; and, 2. it is unclear who Diogenes Laertius' sources are and how accurately he represents their views. In defence of Diogenes Laertius, one may assert similar points to the ones we encountered at the end of our section on Aristotle (1.2.2.) – that perhaps the work can be rescued from accusations of absolute unreliability as a source for the Presocratics by conceding its flaws and promoting a critical reading of the work that takes into account the possible bias of

³⁶ See Horky (2016).

an author who ‘was more interested in the personalities of the philosophers and in their lives than in philosophical problems and arguments’ (Mejer 1992, 3561).

1.4.4. Late Antiquity: Simplicius and The Neoplatonic Commentary Tradition³⁷

The next important stop in the history of the transmission and reception of the Presocratics in antiquity comes within Neoplatonism. The late antique commentary tradition of Athens and Alexandria has undergone a revival in scholarship in recent years with collected editions such as Adamson, Baltussen, and Stone’s 2004 work, *Philosophy, Science, and Exegesis*, exploring commentary as ‘a vehicle of philosophical and scientific thought’ (2004, ix). Much of the focus of this work and projects such as Richard Sorabji’s *Ancient Commentators on Aristotle* series is on the impact of the commentary tradition on Aristotelian studies.³⁸ However, one commentator in particular is of great importance to the scholar of the Presocratics, and that is Simplicius of Cilicia, one of the last Athenian professors from the 5th and 6th century AD.

1.4.4.1. Who is Simplicius?

Simplicius of Cilicia was a late antique commentator writing in the 5th and 6th century AD (c. 490 – c. 560) in Athens and Persia. Little is known about his early life, but he received his philosophical education under Ammonius in Alexandria and Damascius in Athens.³⁹ Simplicius was subject to persecution under Emperor Justinian, who, in 529, forbade pagans to teach philosophy or law. Along with his teacher Damascius, Simplicius left Athens and fled to Persia. The fate of the exiled philosophers remains uncertain. Some sources suggest that they were later able to

³⁷ Most of the material in 1.4.4. has been previously published in Parsons (2018).

³⁸ See ‘Ancient Commentators on Aristotle’ in bibliography; also Sorabji (1990).

³⁹ *in Phys.* 59, 23; 183, 18; 192, 14; 642, 17; 774,28; 1363. For details of editions and translations of Simplicius’ *Physics* commentary used, please see Huby and Taylor (2011) and Baltussen et al. (2012). Additional excerpts are from Graham (2010) and Dillon and Finamore (2002).

return to Athens, and others, that they never returned.⁴⁰ It is possible that Simplicius went to ancient Carrhae, or what is now Harran in modern Syria, and wrote many of his commentaries there.⁴¹ ‘Wherever he was,’ muses Sheppard, ‘he must have had access to a good library.’⁴²

Simplicius was a prolific writer. Four authentic commentaries have survived: works on Aristotle’s *de Caelo*, *Physics*, and *Categories*, and a commentary on the *Enchiridion* of Epictetus. There is a further commentary on Aristotle’s *de Anima*, the authenticity of which is a matter of ongoing dispute.⁴³ There is possibly also a commentary on Euclid’s *Elements* which has been preserved in part in Arabic translation.⁴⁴ It is the undisputed *Physics* commentary that is most valuable to the scholar of the Presocratics, and its value becomes clear in the following section.

1.4.4.2. *Why is Simplicius Valuable?*

As Baltussen states in his 2008 work, *Philosophy and Exegesis in Simplicius*, ‘without Simplicius the study of Presocratic thought would be speculation for the most part, especially when it comes to the preservation of *ipsissima verba*’.⁴⁵ It is particularly the physical doctrines of the early Greek philosophers that have been preserved by Simplicius, in his commentary on Aristotle’s *Physics*. His commentaries on Aristotle preserve over half of our extant fragments of Anaxagoras, as well as two thirds of our fragments of Parmenides – whole swathes of the ‘Way of Truth’.⁴⁶ Furthermore, he is one of our prime sources for the famous fragment of Anaximander’s work on the originaive substance, τὸ ἄπειρον [*to apeiron*].⁴⁷

Due to the amount of material we owe to Simplicius, the task of evaluating

⁴⁰ Sheppard (2000) 841.

⁴¹ Tardieu (1987) 40-57.

⁴² Sheppard (2000) 842.

⁴³ See Hadot (2002) for details of Steel’s objections to, and Hadot’s arguments for, positively identifying Simplicius as the author of the *in de Anima* commentary.

⁴⁴ Tuominen (2009) 35-6.

⁴⁵ Baltussen (2008) 63.

⁴⁶ *in Phys.* 145, 1 – 146, 25.

⁴⁷ *in Phys.* 24, 13 – 25; DK 12A9.

his commentaries is an important one. Experts on Simplicius agree that the amount of material that he provides is more than would be strictly necessary to produce an exegesis of Aristotle's doctrines; Baltussen even describes the effort that he goes to in providing actual quotations 'exceptional'.⁴⁸ Why does Simplicius make so many extended and verbatim references to the early Greek philosophers in his commentaries on Aristotle? Asking this question will help us establish the value of Simplicius for Presocratic studies in the light of any problems which could have implications on our reading of Presocratic fragments. I am going to explore three explanations for why Simplicius quotes so much.

1.4.4.3. *Ancient Awareness of Problems in Transmission?*

The first possibility is that he is aware of the problems surrounding the transmission of Presocratic texts, since many of them had been written around a thousand years before his time. He justifies his quotation of extended passages from Parmenides' poem by alluding to its scarcity; he introduces a large quotation by stating that '[Parmenides'] *treatise is becoming quite rare*'.⁴⁹ This is a conscious decision to reproduce the text of the poem for the benefit of his readers. It raises the possibility that he is explicitly aware that he is preserving the poem.

He also shows an awareness of the problems of interpretative bias in the reportage of earlier authors:

in Phys. 36, 25 – 31

When we read Aristotle criticizing the views of earlier philosophers – and before him Plato clearly does this, and before both of them Xenophanes and Parmenides – we should keep in mind that because they were concerned for the sake of their more superficial students, they refuted in their works the theories that seemed absurd, whereas the ancient thinkers were accustomed to express their real views enigmatically. (ἐπειδὴ δὲ καὶ Ἀριστοτέλους ἐλέγχοντος ἀκουσόμεθα τὰς τῶν προτέρων φιλοσόφων δόξας καὶ πρὸ τοῦ Ἀριστοτέλους ὁ Πλάτων τοῦτο φαίνεται

⁴⁸ Baltussen (2008) 56.

⁴⁹ *in Phys.* 144, 25-8 tr. Baltussen.

ποιῶν καὶ πρὸ ἀμφοῖν ὁ τε Παρμενίδης καὶ Ξενοφάνης, ἰστέον ὅτι τῶν ἐπιπολαιότερον ἀκρωμένων οὗτοι κηδόμενοι τὸ φαινόμενον ἄτοπον ἐν τοῖς λόγοις αὐτῶν διελέγχουσιν, αἰνιγματωδῶς εἰωθότων τῶν παλαιῶν τὰς ἑαυτῶν ἀποφαίνεσθαι γνώμας. tr. Graham)

This passage is critical of the idea, presented by Jonathan Barnes, that ‘it is often plausible to believe that these fragments preserve the most important and most interesting of their philosophical doctrines.’⁵⁰ As mentioned previously, Cherniss pioneered a theory of Aristotle’s ultimate unreliability based around the idea that Aristotle was not interested in providing an impartial assessment of Presocratic thought in the endoxic sections of his works, but instead references the Presocratics as a foil to his own philosophical ideas and achievements. This, Cherniss argues, could lead to us having received a distorted reportage of Presocratic thought.⁵¹ In this passage, Simplicius shows an awareness of this kind of issue. Returning to the source texts themselves allows us to explore the writings of ancient thinkers, ‘accustomed to express[ing] their views enigmatically’, rather than relying on reportage and testimonia that could suffer from the author’s intentions. See, for example, the following defense of Melissus:

in Phys. 107, 29 – 108, 1

Aristotle has refuted these well, replying with reference to appearances. But since Melissus was a clever man, we ought to aim at the thought of a man like that, resolving the objections that have been brought against him. (Καὶ ταῦτα μὲν καλῶς ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης ἀντείρηκε, πρὸς τὸ φαινόμενον ὑπαντῶν. ἐπεὶ δὲ σοφὸς ἀνὴρ Μέλισσος, ὡς τοιούτου χρή καὶ τῆς ἐννοίας στοχαζόμενον τὰ ἐπαχθέντα αὐτῷ ἐγκλήματα ἀπολῦσασθαι. tr. Huby)

Whilst this is not an outright attack on Aristotle’s account of Melissus, as deference is shown to Aristotle, Simplicius continues to justify exploring the objections raised against Melissus, going on to quote him verbatim slightly further on in the commentary at *in Phys.* 111, 16. This is a possible reason why he quotes so many verbatim fragments of the Presocratics in his commentaries – to counterbalance the

⁵⁰ Barnes (1979b) 14.

⁵¹ Once again, see Cherniss (1935, 1951).

possible problems with Aristotle's testimonia.

1.4.4.4. *Disagreement with Alexander of Aphrodisias*

The second of the three possibilities involves Simplicius' predecessors in the commentary tradition. Going back to the 3rd century AD, we find Alexander of Aphrodisias, who was a prolific Peripatetic commentator. By Simplicius' time, his commentaries were so well circulated that he was referred to as ὁ ἐξηγητής [*ho exēgētēs*], the 'Exegete', or the 'Commentator'.⁵² Simplicius frequently mentions Alexander of Aphrodisias. Baltussen puts the frequency of these mentions and quotations into context as follows:

Among the many references to his commentator-predecessors, Simplicius mentions Alexander almost 1,200 times, of which c. 700 occur in the 1,300-page commentary on the Physics. (Baltussen 2008, 109)

This compounds the original question – why does Simplicius make such frequent references to Presocratic material, and why so many references to Alexander? The answer to this lies in the methodology of the commentary tradition itself. The ancient commentary was a vehicle for teaching. Commentary is expository – it helps the students understand the texts of the great masters. There are layers of interpretative history in the commentary tradition – each commentator was building upon the interpretative work of their predecessors, discussing their agreements and disagreements with previous commentators. As Fazzo states,

A new commentary on a given work of Aristotle thus appropriated, not without criticism and selection, the interpretative legacy of the preceding commentary. (Fazzo 2004, 5)

Simplicius built upon the interpretative legacy of his predecessors in the philosophical and commentary tradition. He does not take influence merely from Alexander; for instance, he references Iamblichus' own *de Anima* in the commentary on Aristotle's

⁵² Cf. Simplicius, *in Phys.* 707, 33; 1170, 13; 1176, 32; Philoponus, *in An. Pr.* 126, 21 (See Wallies (1905) for the CAG edition of Philoponus).

de Anima.⁵³ However, Simplicius and Alexander frequently came into disagreement over interpretation due to their different philosophical backgrounds. Despite early Stoicism showing little signs of Aristotelian influence,⁵⁴ the Middle Stoics of the second century BC engaged in what Sedley calls ‘syncretism’, a blending of Aristotelian, Platonic, and Hellenistic thought.⁵⁵ As Fazzo states, ‘by the time of Alexander of Aphrodisias, much work was done in order to reduce terminological blending [of Aristotelianism] with Stoicism to a minimum’.⁵⁶ Further to this, Sharples characterizes Alexander’s treatment of Stoic thought as a ‘polemic against the Stoics’.⁵⁷ As a Peripatetic, Alexander was concerned with distilling Aristotle’s thought from these Hellenistic-Aristotelian tendencies. Simplicius, on the other hand, was a Neoplatonist. In the Neoplatonic school, the study of Aristotle was essential preparation for the study of Plato⁵⁸ – the impact of which is explored in the discussion of Neoplatonic ‘harmonization’ below in section 1.4.4.5. These institutional differences between Simplicius and Alexander lead to interpretative differences and disagreements. Simplicius, then, quotes so much original Presocratic material – and so much of Alexander of Aphrodisias – to back up his arguments where he is in disagreement with the great master, Alexander. An example of this is in Simplicius’ *Physics* commentary at 110, 13 – 113, 20. In a discussion about Melissus, Simplicius quotes from Alexander’s commentary, following the quotation with his own remarks as follows:

in Phys. 110, 20 – 111, 1

Alexander wrote these things in his own words like this,

⁵³ Simplicius, *in de Anima*. 1, 10-15. See Dillon and Finamore (2002), in particular Appendix A & C. This point is leveraged on positively attributing the *in de Anima* to Simplicius; once again, see the in-depth treatment of this debate in Hadot (2002).

⁵⁴ ‘One apparent feature of early Stoicism that has caused controversy is the surprising rarity of engagement with the philosophy of Aristotle.’ Sedley (2003) 12.

⁵⁵ Sedley (2003) 22. See Gottschalk (1987) for in-depth analysis of this period.

⁵⁶ Fazzo (2004) 4.

⁵⁷ Sharples (1987) 1178.

⁵⁸ ‘Both at Athens and Alexandria there was by [Proclus’ time] a traditional curriculum. Students would start by studying Aristotle [...] Aristotle, however, was only a beginning. Students would then move on to study selected dialogues of Plato’ Sheppard (2000) 838.

and [said] that Melissus did away only with spatial motion, and not other kinds of alteration. [...] But it seems to me that Melissus is completing what he had said about Being, that it has not come to be and is eternal and infinite and one and like itself, [and] through these taking away from Being all the other changes connected with coming to be, and showing first that neither as being destroyed nor as growing nor as getting smaller nor as being altered is Being changed, or made different as a whole, which would be common to growth and alteration. For it would be neither eternal nor infinite nor one nor like itself if it underwent these things. (ταῦτα μὲν οὖν οὕτως αὐτῆ λέξει φησὶν ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος, καὶ ὡς τὴν κατὰ τόπον κίνησιν ἀναιροῦντος τοῦ Μελίσσου μόνην, οὐ μὴν καὶ τὴν ἀλλοίωσιν, οὕτως ποιεῖται τὴν ἐξήγησιν διὰ τὸ ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἀριστοτέλους εἰρημένον τὸ ἔπειτα ἀλλοίωσις διὰ τί οὐκ ἂν εἴη. ἐμοὶ δὲ δοκεῖ συμπεραίνόμενος ὁ Μέλισσος τὰ περὶ τοῦ ὄντος εἰρημένα, ὅτι ἀγένητον καὶ αἰδίον καὶ ἄπειρον καὶ ἓν καὶ ὅμοιον, ἐκ τοῦτων καὶ τὰς ἄλλας πάσας κινήσεις τὰς περὶ τὴν γένεσιν ἀφαιρεῖν ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄντος, καὶ πρῶτον μὲν δεικνύει ὅτι οὔτε ὡς ἀπολλύμενον οὔτε ὡς αὐξόμενον ἢ μειούμενον οὔτε ὡς ἀλλοιούμενον κινεῖται τί ὄν ἢ ὅλως ἕτεροποιούμενον, ὅπερ κοινὸν αὐξήσεως ἂν εἴη καὶ ἀλλοιώσεως. οὔτε γὰρ αἰδίον οὔτε ἄπειρον οὔτε ἓν οὔτε ὅμοιον ἂν εἴη ταῦτα πάσχον. tr. Huby)

Simplicius here is disagreeing with Alexander's interpretation of the One of Melissus. Alexander writes that it is only incapable of spatial motion, but Simplicius argues that he rejected all kinds of change. Rather than leave the reader to decide between one commentator and the other, he quotes extensively from Melissus, prefacing the quotation as follows:

in Phys. 111, 16

let us set out his archaic words in order that readers can be more accurate judges of quite relevant explanations. (παρακείσθω καὶ αὐτὰτὰ ἀρχαῖα γράμματα πρὸς τὸ δύνασθαι τοὺς ἐντθγάνοντασ ἀκριβεστέρουσ γίνεσθαι κριτὰσ τῶν προσφυεστέρων ἐξηγήσεων. tr. Huby)

Simplicius sets out the original words themselves so that the reader can form their own opinion about whose interpretation is the more accurate.

A second point of divergence between Simplicius and his predecessor has to do with the promotion of the harmonization of Greek thought, and this is in fact our

third line of enquiry.

1.4.4.5. *Simplicius and the Harmonization Hypothesis*

The third and most substantial avenue of explanation is the practice of Neoplatonic ‘Harmonization’, or ‘agreement’, which comes from the Greek συμφωνία [*symphonia*] and Latin *concordia*. In her 2015 work, *Athenian and Alexandrian Neoplatonism and the Harmonization of Aristotle and Plato*, Ilsetraut Hadot says that

With regard to the tendency to harmonize the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, it is important to take into account the fact that it fits within a movement that is much more vast. It begins with the conciliation of Plato’s philosophy with that of Pythagoras [...] Among the Neoplatonists, the tendency to harmonize the doctrines of Plato and Aristotle was thus merely one harmonizing tendency among others. (Hadot 2015, 43-50)

Under the harmonization, all philosophy is the exposition of a unified truth – that is, minimally, the works of Plato and Aristotle. This was especially prevalent in Simplicius’ time, where the pagan philosophers were coming under criticism from early Christianity for the lack of unity in their thought; Simplicius left Athens for Persia when he came under persecution from the emperor Justinian, who forbade pagans from teaching philosophy.⁵⁹

Simplicius thought that harmony or agreement was present not just between the works of Plato and Aristotle, but that it extended back to the Presocratics. He says about Aristotle that,

in Phys, 179, 25 – 30

He shows that the principles are contraries, that is, the elementary foundations of physical things, firstly from the agreement among almost all the natural philosophers, even if they disagree in other respects. (Δείκνυσι δὲ ὅτι ἐναντία αἱ ἀρχαί, δηλονότι τῶν φυσικῶν πραγμάτων αἱ στοιχειώδεις, πρῶτον ἐκ τῆν πάντων σχεδὸν τῶν φυσικῶν κατὰ τοῦτο συμφωνίας, κἂν ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις διαφωνῶσι. tr.

⁵⁹ Sheppard (2000) 841.

Baltussen)

Here he claims that Aristotle shows that the Presocratics agree on the first principles, that is, that things are contrary – hot and cold, moist and dry – even if they disagree on other things. Philosophy, then, is the process of revealing the ultimate truth about things, even if the philosophers disagree about more superficial things. We see this again further on in the same passage:

in Phys, 188, 13-17

Having shown that regarding the principles there is harmony among the ancient natural philosophers in making them contraries, because to many they seem to disagree with each other as each one posits something else as the principle, he also passes on their difference. And how this too leads to agreement, he shows nicely and clearly. (Δείξας τὴν τῶν παλαιῶν φυσιολόγων περὶ τὰς ἀρχὰς συμφωνίαν κατὰ τὸ ἐναντίας αὐτὰς τίθεσθαι γινομένην, ἐπειδὴ τοῖς πολλοῖς διαφωνεῖν δοκοῦσι πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἄλλος ἄλλο τι λέγων τὴν ἀρχήν, καὶ τὴν διαφορὰν αὐτῶν παραδίδωσι. Καὶ ὅπως εἰς συμφωνίαν καὶ αὕτη περιάγεται, καλῶς καὶ σαφῶς ἐπιδείκνυσι. tr. Baltussen)

As Baltussen states,

[B]y his more elaborate inclusion of pre-Aristotelian thinkers he tries to show that philosophical thought is the medium for a single venerable and ancient message, to be found as much in the Presocratics as in later Greek philosophers. (Baltussen 2008, 56)

His works express that there is agreement not only between Plato and Aristotle, which is the standard harmonization impulse in Neoplatonism, but he extends it back to the Presocratic philosophers. Looking back, this gives us another explanation for why he was in disagreement with Alexander of Aphrodisias; Alexander was an Aristotelian, who wished to isolate pure Aristotelian ideas out of the harmonizing impulses of his own time, which was Aristotelianism and Hellenistic philosophy. These two different philosophical perspectives – Simplicius' harmonizing and Alexander's attempts to isolate the 'true' Aristotle – would undoubtedly result in different interpretations of Aristotle and Aristotle's endoxic sections on the

Presocratics.

Simplicius' aim of showing the harmony of Greek thought appears to us as an answer to the question of why he quotes substantial amounts of Presocratic material in his commentaries on Aristotle. But does this have any impact on the value of Simplicius as a source for Presocratic studies? Richard Sorabji presents the problems as follows:

Evidently, the theological motive of the Neoplatonist curriculum and the pressure to harmonize Plato with Aristotle creates dangers, if the commentaries are read as straightforward guides to Aristotle, without due allowance being made. Nor is it safe to extract from them the fragments of the Presocratics, or of other authors, without taking account of the Neoplatonist background against which the fragments were originally selected for discussion. For different reasons, analogous caveats apply to fragments preserved by the pre-Neoplatonist commentator Alexander. (Sorabji 1990, 16)

Neoplatonist harmonization does not pose an interpretative problem in and of itself; however, it becomes problematic when it comes to the naïve reading of Presocratic source books, where the fragments are taken out of the context of Simplicius' work. As Han Baltussen states, 'his work as a whole has suffered fragmentation and thus become invisible.'⁶⁰ And if Simplicius is invisible, then how are we to guard against letting the harmonization principle impact our understanding of the content of early Greek philosophy?

1.4.4.6. *Resolution*

A point made by Catherine Rowett (formerly publishing as Osborne) in her 1987 work on Hippolytus, entitled *Rethinking Early Greek Philosophy*, appears as a good recourse to resolve this conundrum. When it comes to Presocratic fragments, she emphasizes the advantages of studying the embedded text, rather than a fragment taken out of context.⁶¹ While she is discussing Hippolytus, this seems just

⁶⁰ Baltussen (2008) 55.

⁶¹ Osborne (1987) 9.

as applicable to Simplicius. She states the following:

Reading an embedded instead of a fragmented text we read it as a functioning and meaningful system, governed by the reoccupation of an interpreter whose interests we can assess, rather than a set of disjointed parts, detached from the context in which they might mean something. (Osborne 1987, 10)

Rowett's point is that it is easier and more fulfilling to extract a range of meaning from an embedded fragment – a fragment of Presocratic philosophy found in a context where it has been quoted for some reason or purpose – than taking these fragments out of their contexts and trying to understand them, bereft of the meaning that was given to them by the context of quotation. A holistic reading of the source material for the philosophy of the Presocratics, a reading that acknowledges the problems of the source texts by acknowledging the context of the fragments, is better than dismissing the value of the source materials we have for Presocratic philosophy on the basis of those problems and falling into skepticism about the possibility of knowing Presocratic thought.

While this kind of holistic reading of Simplicius is becoming possible with the new translations coming out of the 'Ancient Commentators on Aristotle' project, it is a goal that still seems some ways off to the beginner scholar. The reasons given by Tarán in 1987 in regards to the need for new critical editions of the Greek text still stand, in particular, the point he raises about Diels being unaware of or misunderstanding Simplicius' Neoplatonism and its harmonizing elements. He suggests that Diels therefore made unnecessary or even erroneous emendations to the text in editing the *Commentaria in Aristotelum Graeca* edition.⁶²

⁶² '[Diels] often unnecessarily emended the text, mostly because he failed to see the importance of the history of the text and of accurate collations as a basis for emendation. This tendency of his is to be seen not only in his edition of Simplicius but also, for example, in his editions of Theophrastus' *De Sensibus* and of the fragments of the Presocratics. Moreover, Diels did not always understand Simplicius' Neoplatonism and this, too, not infrequently led him to unnecessary and sometimes wrong emendations.' Tarán (1987) 248.

1.4.4.7. Conclusion

In summary, Simplicius is a valuable source for the Presocratics due to the unusual amount of direct quotation of lost works that appear in his commentaries. There are a few avenues of explanation for this phenomenon: first, that he was aware of the problems facing the transmission of Presocratic texts, even in late antiquity; that he was justifying his disagreements with his predecessors, and, in particular, Alexander of Aphrodisias; and that he was incorporating Presocratic thought into a harmonized Neoplatonic curriculum. The fragmentary presentation of his commentaries is harmful to Presocratic studies as it means that students are unaware of the harmonizing bias. A holistic reading could help when looking for the truth of the Presocratics. The *Ancient Commentators on Aristotle* project is helping by producing new editions of Simplicius' commentaries, but there is new work that needs to be done on the evaluation of Simplicius for Presocratic studies as well as for Aristotelian studies.

1.5. Is It Possible to Know the Presocratics?

Evaluating the evidence above about the transmission of Presocratic thought through antiquity, is it possible to maintain an optimistic position in regard to the possibility of knowing what the Presocratics thought? In 1.4.1., we saw that, while Plato was influenced by Presocratic philosophy and the Presocratics appear in rhetorical contexts, his surviving dialogues do not provide a scholarly historical account. In 1.4.2., the reliability of the Aristotelian account was questioned, which has ramifications on the value of Theophrastus and the entire doxographical tradition, as explored in 1.4.3. In this same section, Diogenes Laertius's biographical accounts of the Presocratics also came under scrutiny, with accusations of his being philosophically out of date in his own time, and fundamentally uninterested in providing an accurate philosophical account. An in-depth examination of Simplicius in 1.4.4. showed him to be valuable in terms of pure output, but raised questions about the implicit interpretative legacies of previous commentators, as well as the influence of the harmonisation of Greek philosophy that took place in late antique

Neoplatonism.

On top of these analyses of the major sources for the Presocratics are more general questions about the reliability and scope of fragments. How much has the selection of these later authors altered our interpretation of Presocratic philosophy without our knowing it? Take as an example Simplicius' preservation of the 'Way of Truth' from Parmenides' poem – the 'Way of Opinion' does not receive the same treatment. This implies that Simplicius saw some worth, philosophically, in the 'Way of Truth' that he did not see in the 'Way of Opinion', leading him to preserve one part of the poem and not the other. Is it the case, as Jonathan Barnes says, that 'it is often plausible to believe that these fragments preserve the most important and most interesting of their philosophical doctrines' (Barnes, 1979: 14), or would a modern scholar see something philosophically important or interesting in the 'Way of Opinion' that Simplicius did not, were they only able to read it?

In light of these problems, all that the scholar of the Presocratics can do is hope for further papyrological and palaeographical discoveries, but, in the meantime, make do with the sources available to us in full knowledge of the sometimes problematic nature of reception and transmission. The fear is that taking a pessimistic position about the value of our sources for the Presocratics could leave us unable to say anything about them as philosophers at all. This would be a detriment to the study of philosophy, in both the context of the ancient world and in the context of the history of Western philosophy as a whole. The Presocratics made the first explorations of many of the basic concerns of philosophy and remain important even in the face of the difficulty in reconstructing their thought.

1.6. Early Greek Philosophy in the 19th Century: Nietzsche's Sources

One must sift through lectures, notes, and the archival work of others with the keen eye of an archaeologist in the trenches to answer the question, was Nietzsche referring to any specific textbooks or editions of fragments when he lectured? In the 18th lecture of the 1871 summer semester lecture course,

'Encyclopedia of Classical Philologie [*Encycloaedia der klass. Philologie*]', entitled 'On the Study of the Antique Philosophers [*über das Studium der antiken Philosophen*]' Nietzsche advises his student thus:

The fragments must be studied in the original: in Mullach fragm. philos. (poor esp. Democritus), the personal-notes in Laert. Diogenes. Numerous historical writings are lost. Valuable compendium with excerpts of sources Ritter a. Preller. Comprehensive account from Zeller, now 3 ed.

Die Fragmente muß man original studieren: bei Mullach fragm. philos. (schlecht bes. Democrit), die Personalnotizen bei Laert. Diogenes. Zahllose historische Schriften sind verloren gegangen. Werthvolles Compendium mit Quellenexcerpten Ritter u. Preller. Umfassende Darstellung von Zeller, jetzt 3 Aufl. –

(KGW II, 3, 407. Tr. Heit (2014) 222.)

Whilst this advice does not appear in print in the text of the pre-Platonic lecture course, we may assume that Nietzsche would recommend these sources as the set texts, as the 'Encyclopedia' course was 'intended as a general guide to the study of philology' (Porter 2000, 167), a concrete account of his recommendations.⁶³ The collections recommended to his students are, then, as follows:

1. Mullach, (1860), *Fragmenta philosophorum graecorum*
2. Diogenes Laertius, ed. Hübner (1831), *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*
3. Ritter and Preller, (1869), *Historia philosophiae Graecae*⁶⁴
4. Zeller, (1844-52), *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*

These books, then, are the first port of call in the search for Nietzsche's sources. He first read Zeller's works in 1867, borrowed both the Mullach and the Diogenes Laertius from the library at Pforta between 1865 and 1869.⁶⁵ His reliance on Diogenes

⁶³ Porter devotes an entire chapter to the 'Encyclopedia' lectures; apparently this is an entire genre of philological lectures and publications, and Nietzsche's 'Encyclopedia' lectures may have been structured in imitation of Ritschl's, which Nietzsche would have attended as a student. See Porter (2000).

⁶⁴ Specifically this 1869 edition and not the 1838 first edition; see Brobjer (2008) 240.

⁶⁵ Brobjer (2008) 194, 191-2.

Laertius throughout the lectures is the result of his critical work, published in the *Rheinisches Museum* in 1869 and 1870.⁶⁶ Any critique he makes of Diogenes Laertius is shallow, and his view of the value and significance of the *Lives* is, perhaps, in the light of Mejer's assessment above, overstated.⁶⁷ Entering the Basel years, he borrowed the Mullach from the Basel University Library in 1872, though, by this time, he had a low opinion of Zeller, badmouthing it in a letter to Erwin Rohde in the same year.⁶⁸ By 1874, Nietzsche's scorn for Zeller reaches its peak; 'I at least would rather read Diogenes Laertius than Zeller; for in Diogenes at least the spirit of the old philosophers lives on, whereas in Zeller you will find neither that spirit nor any other,' he writes.⁶⁹ A copy of the 1869 edition of Ritter and Preller is in Nietzsche's personal library, but it is unknown when he read it.⁷⁰

From the records of Nietzsche's library borrowings and personal library, we can also identify the other editions of fragments and testimonia he used. He buys an edition of Aristotle's work in German (1833-60 9 volume Stuttgart edition) in 1868, and records show him borrowing various Greek editions of Aristotle from the Basel University Library.⁷¹ He first reads Plato in 1863, and various editions of the dialogues are borrowed from the libraries at Pforta and Basel.⁷² The first specific Presocratic Nietzsche shows interest in is Democritus, as he first reads the Mullach edition of Democritus' fragments in 1867, with the intention to write an article.⁷³ He borrowed the Karsten editions of Parmenides and Empedocles from the Basel University Library in 1872.⁷⁴ Notably, the only edition of a Simplicius commentary in Nietzsche's library

⁶⁶ Barnes (1986) 21. See KGW II, 1, 75-143 for *De Laertii Diogenis fontibus* and 191-233 for *Breitträge zur Quellenkunde und Kritik des Laertius Diogenes*.

⁶⁷ Nietzsche calls Diogenes Laertius 'a sleepy head' and 'stupid' in his notebooks (KGW II, 1, 80, 89), but ultimately concludes that he is the 'night-porter to the history of Greek philosophy' (BAW 5, 126). tr. Barnes (1986) 20.

⁶⁸ Brobjer (2008) 205; KGB 1872, 229.

⁶⁹ KGW III, 2, 297. tr. Barnes (1986) 20.

⁷⁰ Brobjer (2008) 240.

⁷¹ Brobjer (2008) 196, 243.

⁷² Brobjer (2008) 252-3.

⁷³ Brobjer (2008) 245, 57. Also Mullach (1843).

⁷⁴ Brobjer (2008) 205. See Karsten (1830, 1835, 1838).

and reading history is a copy of Simplicius' commentary on Epictetus' *Enchiridion*: we must therefore conclude that his many references to Simplicius' commentary on Aristotle's *Physics* throughout the lectures have come from the editions of fragments above. There is also no reference to Schleiermacher's *Herakleitos der dunkle von Ephesos* in the personal library or library borrowings, despite the definitive evidence that Nietzsche referenced it during the lecture; the provenance of this text remains mysterious.⁷⁵

The first edition of Diel's *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* did not come out until 1903, so Nietzsche's references to the Presocratics are cross-referenced with the Diels-Kranz numbering system where possible. There were prospective plans for Nietzsche and Diels to collaborate on a volume of pre-Socratic sources in 1871, with Nietzsche focussing on Diogenes Laertius; it is possible that this plan was scuppered in the aftermath of the negative reaction of the scholarly community to Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* in 1872.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Schleiermacher (1838), which is referenced in the Heraclitus lecture, for instance, at PPP 68 / 278.

⁷⁶ The possibility of Nietzsche and Diels inheriting this task from Wachsmuth and Usener is mentioned in a letter from Diels to Gomperz in February 1871, as described by Mansfield and Runia (1997) 15.

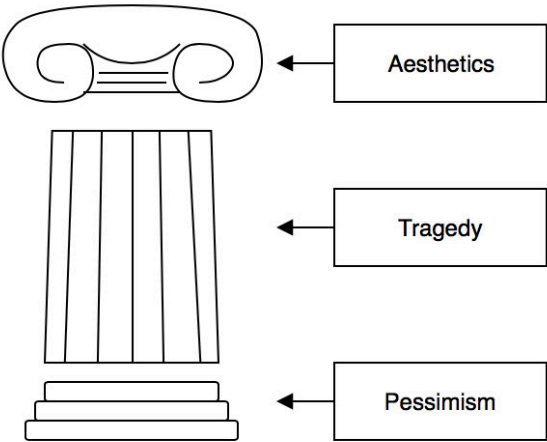
2. Methodology 2: Tragedy and the ‘Tragic Paradigm’

2.1. Introduction

Understanding the way that Nietzsche interprets Presocratic philosophy and, in particular, the philosophy of Heraclitus and Parmenides, requires a reading of Nietzsche’s early thought and an investigation into the tragic paradigm that colours his reading of the Presocratics. Halliwell refers to reading the *Birth of Tragedy* as ‘alternately exhilarating and frustrating’ (Halliwell 2018, 92), and this comment could be made about much of the early period; the tragic paradigm I present here is just one attempt to read the relationship between tragedy, pessimism, and the world as an aesthetic phenomenon. It is by no means authoritative but is presented as an attempt to tease out a cohesive system from a reading of the notebooks, the published and unpublished works, and the lectures.

This methodology chapter begins with a precis of the early period works. Whilst the pre-Platonic Philosophers lecture course forms the core source of Nietzsche’s ideas about Heraclitus and Parmenides, the lectures do not exist in a vacuum. They emerge in the same period and from the same philosophical impulses that lead to the writing and publication of *BT*, and the ideas that engender the tragic ideal are present in the very early public lectures, book drafts, and notebooks that Nietzsche writes. An understanding of this context is essential for a critical reading of the lectures.

The main task of this chapter is the outlining of a diagrammatic understanding



of pessimism, tragedy, and aesthetics. I argue that the theory of tragedy can be understood through the tripartite diagram opposite that displays the hierarchy of concepts – a grounding in pessimism, a theory of tragedy incorporating the Greek tragic drama and the

twinned necessity of the Apollonian and the Dionysian, and an aspiration towards an aesthetic theory and valuation of existence. The key explanatory function of the graph is to build in an understanding of the relationship between these concepts and the development of them across the early to late period writings: the pessimistic grounding changes with Nietzsche's break with Schopenhauer and rejection of metaphysics in general, and this change in the groundwork affects the upper echelons of the theory.⁷⁷ In the early period writings, we have at the base a philosophical pessimism based on the influence of Arthur Schopenhauer: a 'life is suffering' worldview, predicated on 'the terror and horror of existence' (BT §3), as well as some debt to Schopenhauer's metaphysics of the world as Will and Representation. This influences the theory of tragedy. There are the twin artistic drives of the Dionysian and Apollonian. The Apollonian represents individuation, order, and rationality; the Dionysian represents the drive to universality and the irrational. The Apollonian mirrors Representation, and the Dionysian, Will. The changes in Nietzsche's philosophy after the break with Schopenhauer move to a theory of tragedy that privileges the Dionysian over the Apollonian, making the elenchus between the Dionysian and the Christian, but in the early period, we see an emphasis on the necessity of both the Apollonian and the Dionysian elements: 'Dionysus speaks the language of Apollo, but in the end Apollo also speaks the language of Dionysus' (BT §21). Influenced by the theory of tragedy, which is influenced by the theory of pessimism, is Nietzsche's aesthetics, and here in

⁷⁷ 'Those who discuss Nietzsche's views on art often treat his books as if they were separate chapters of one continuous work. The coherence of this *oeuvre* is sometimes strongly affirmed, sometimes denied, but the whole sequence is taken to be a single work in the sense that excerpts from different parts of it may be played together, like cards from a single pack, without further ado. [...] This procedure is unacceptable.' Silk and Stern (1981) 273. I would argue that this comment has wider application than just those who discuss Nietzsche on art. A periodisation of Nietzsche's works into early, middle, and late period works has become the standard (early from BT until UM; middle as HH to GS; late as Zarathustra onwards) which has tempered this tendency and introduced more nuanced ideas of development and transition into the scholarship. I believe that the visual representation of the theory of tragedy with aspects that depend on one another for their character makes explicit the idea of change in Nietzsche's thought.

Nietzsche's theory the urge to move beyond Schopenhauer manifests even in the early period. The transformative effect of the tragic is the aesthetic turn, which is an affirmation of the aesthetic – and this is aesthetics 'not confined to art' (Silk and Stern 1981, 40), but an existential aesthetics, relating to life itself. As Nietzsche says in the *Birth of Tragedy*, 'only as an aesthetic phenomenon is existence and the world eternally justified.' (BT §5)

2.2. Precis: Nietzsche's Early Period Writings

2.2.1. Introduction

This sketch of Nietzsche's intellectual output in the early 1870s, combining philosophical arguments and biographical details, provides an understanding of the works that contribute to the development of Nietzsche's theory of tragedy and its application to the whole of Presocratic thought. From the early public lectures and *The Dionysian Vision of the World* through to *The Birth of Tragedy* and beyond, Nietzsche's early period work constructs an understanding of tragedy informed by Schopenhauerian pessimism with a view to the possibility of affirming existence as an aesthetic phenomenon. Furthermore, the unpublished notes and book draft of *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* provide context to Nietzsche's Presocratics project as a whole, though with limitations; it is essential to outline my justification for preferring the lectures to the *PTAG* draft.

2.2.2. The Early Public Lectures and Associated Writings

In 1869, the 24-year-old Friedrich Nietzsche took up the chair of Greek Language and Literature at the University of Basel on the recommendation of his doctoral supervisor, Friedrich Ritschl.⁷⁸ On the 23rd of March 1869, he was hastily conferred a doctorate on the basis of several articles on the subject of Theognis and Diogenes Laertius that he had published in Ritschl's journal, *Rheinisches Museum für*

⁷⁸ Corroborated from several sources including Hayman (1980), Kaufmann (1975) and Grossman (2000).

Philologie.⁷⁹ As Grossman notes, 'Nietzsche had a heavy teaching load' (Grossman 2000, 415); the university lecture courses met three days a week, seminars one day a week, and Paedagogium classes met twice a week.⁸⁰ He often taught two classes of Paedagogium students a semester. At the same time, he also gave public lectures, for which claims to have drawn large audiences: 'about three hundred people', according to Hayman (1980, 148). It is in these public lectures that Nietzsche first began to develop his ideas for *BT*. In early 1870, he gave two public lectures on Greek tragedy: '*Das griechische Musikdrama*' on the 18th of January and '*Sokrates und die Tragödie*' on the 1st of February.⁸¹ These lectures provide the first sketches of the ideas that go on to be the focus of *BT*. The first lecture covers Nietzsche's ideas on the origin of tragedy, roughly corresponding to *BT* §5-10, and the second focusses on tragedy's death at the hands of Socrates and Euripides, corresponding near verbatim to *BT* §11-15.⁸²

In the summer of 1870, Nietzsche wrote two unpublished drafts of what would become *BT: The Dionysian Vision of the World* (*Die dionysische Weltanschauung*) and the shorter *The Birth of Tragic Thinking* (*Die Geburt des tragischen Gedankens*). In his introduction to the new translation, Ulfers claims that *The Dionysian Vision* has value as a standalone text: some of the important ideas of *BT* that form the concept of the 'tragic age of Greece' find their first presentation in writing in this short book draft.⁸³ Bringing together the ideas from the two lectures, *The Dionysian Vision* presents for the first time the now-famous dichotomy of the Apollonian and Dionysian.⁸⁴ Already in this work, the key concepts of pessimism, tragedy, and aesthetics emerge. The pessimism here is wholly Schopenhauerian in character, appealing to the wisdom of the Silenus;

It is the philosophy of the p e o p l e that the forest god in

⁷⁹ Schaberg (1995) 13.

⁸⁰ The Paedagogium classes were university preparation for senior gymnasium students, aged 15 to 18 years old, which Basel faculty were required to teach.

⁸¹ See KGW III, 2 1ff.

⁸² Brobjer (2012) 39.

⁸³ Ulfers (2013) 2 n4.

⁸⁴ Brobjer (2012) 39-40.

his chains reveals to mortals: “Best not to be, second-best to die quickly.”

(Die Philosophie des V o l k e s ist es, die der gefesselte Waldgott den Sterblichen enthüllt: “das Beste ist nicht zu sein, das Zweitbeste bald zu sterben”. DV §2 36-7 / KGW III, 2, §2, 52)

On this basis, tragedy is seen through the lens of its engagement with this pessimism, and the transformative moment of tragedy:

Now, in the tragic period of Hellenism, two characters best display how it again became possible to live: Aeschylus and Sophocles. The sublime appears to Aeschylus, as a thinker, most often in the most extraordinary justice. [...] With [Sophocles], Suffering attains its transfiguration; it is conceived of as something sanctifying. [...] At this stage of cognition there are only two paths: that of the saint and that of the t r a g i c a r t i s t . Both have in common that they can live on with the clearest cognition of the nullity of existence, without feeling a rift in their vision of the world.

(An zwei Typen zeigt sich am besten, wie man jetzt in der tragischen Periode des Griechenthums wieder leben konnte, an Äschylus und Sophokles. Das Erhabene erscheint dem Ersten als Denker am meisten in der großartigen Gerechtigkeit. [...] Das Leiden gewinnt bei ihm seine Verklärung; es wird aufgefaßt als etwas Heiligendes. [...] Auf dieser Stufe der Erkenntniß giebt es nur zwei Wege, den das H e i l i g e n und den des t r a g i s c h e n K ü n s t l e r s : beide haben gemein, daß sie bei der hellsten Erkenntniß von der Nichtigkeit des Daseins doch fortleben können, ohne in ihrer Weltanschauung einen Riß zu spüren. DV §3 46-8 / KGW III, 2, §3, 60-2)

The tragic art-impulses of the Dionysian and the Apollonian mediate the transformative moment of the Greek tragic drama that allow for what Ulfers terms ‘an aesthetics *of the world*’ (Ulfers 2013, 1) – the movement to the affirmation of the world as an aesthetic phenomenon.

In these early lectures and writings, Nietzsche first formulates the links between pessimism, tragedy, and aesthetics, thereby witnessing what he calls ‘the birth of t r a g i c t h o u g h t .’ (der Geburt des t r a g i s c h e n G e d a n k e n s . DV §2 43 / KGW III, 2, §2, 58) These concepts go on to be substantiated in *BT*.

2.2.3. The Birth of Tragedy

Nietzsche was a promising classicist. His articles on Diogenes Laertius continue to be cited as a notable moment in the history of Diogenes Laertius source theories.⁸⁵ However, *BT* fell flat in the philological community; most famously, it was scathingly critiqued by Wilamowitz in his rebuttal, '*Zukunftsphilologie!*' (Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1872). Despite the evidence for his competence in academic writing and style shown by his earlier publications, Nietzsche eschewed scholarly conventions and produced a book where scholarly references both to ancient texts and contemporary debates were conspicuously absent. Allusions to Aristotle, Schiller, and Goethe abound, and, in §16, a whole section of Schopenhauer's *World as Will and Representation* is reproduced; however, these prove insufficient for the book to claim any standard of academic rigour. Kaufmann describes the style of writing as 'where not beautiful, flamboyant'. (Kaufmann 1975, 27) Nietzsche himself, reflecting on the work in the new preface added in 1886, considered it 'badly written, ponderous, embarrassing [...] in places saccharine to the point of effeminacy' (*BT Attempt*. §3). Much of the book is concerned with cultural criticism of contemporary Germany; much of the interpretations of the content of Greek tragic dramas are contestable. However, at the time of writing, Nietzsche was aware of the very conventions he was breaking; he commented about 'how offended the philologists are bound to be at anything [...] without the paraphernalia of critical notes (Du weißt, wie sehr die Philologen auf alles gestoßen werden müssen, was nicht bei Teubner und ohne den Zubehör kritischer Noten erscheint)' in a letter to Rohde, 23 Nov 1871 (KGB II, 1, 248). He was not merely aware of his unconventionality, however; as Halliwell states, Nietzsche's goal was 'a pointed symbol of resistance to what he took to be the dead weight of institutionalised philological practices' (Halliwell 2018, 92).⁸⁶

⁸⁵ For example, by Mejer (1978) 8.

⁸⁶ I join Halliwell in making no apology for adding to the historical-critical scholarship on Nietzsche despite Nietzsche's own distaste for scholars that would only grow more virulent as his alienation from academia grew – see GS 373, for instance, where he states, 'scholars [...] can never catch sight of the really great problems and question marks; moreover, their courage and their eyes simply do not

Based on his public lectures and early period writings, Nietzsche finished writing *BT* in late 1871, and it was published in early 1872. The reception of the work was a dramatic turning point in Nietzsche's career. Wilamowitz's public denouncement damaged Nietzsche's career, both in the short term – the following semester, Nietzsche had only two students enrol for his course, though numbers returned to a normal size in the following years before his retirement; and in the long term – Nietzsche's academic reputation never did quite recover.⁸⁷ Ritschl's lack of response to the work, either public or private, worried Nietzsche greatly – as anyone who has looked to their doctoral supervisor for approval will understand. When the response did come, it turned out to be a charge of impiety towards philology.⁸⁸ To be fair, the reception of the work was not entirely negative; Wagner loved it, and Rohde wrote both a glowing review and a response to Wilamowitz's rebuttal.⁸⁹ It would however be many years before the subtlety or complexity of the work would come to be appreciated.⁹⁰ As Silk and Stern note, despite its denouncement of all that is scholarly, 'it represents a significant contribution to the appreciation of the cultural and spiritual realities of the ancient world [...and] it has come to exert a considerable influence on subsequent Greek scholarship.' (Silk and Stern 1981, 157)

The book has two central aims: first, to levy cultural criticism of Nietzsche's Germany on the basis of a comparison with Greek culture and society, and, through this cultural criticism, ask broader questions about the nature of human culture and society; secondly, to propound a theory of tragedy that revolves around the conception of the tragic play as an aesthetic engagement with philosophical pessimism. Nietzsche identifies Attic tragedy as an art form that acknowledges,

reach that far'.

⁸⁷ Schaberg (1995) 27.

⁸⁸ Bishop (2012) 52.

⁸⁹ 'I have never read anything more beautiful than your book!' (Schöneres als Ihr Buch habe ich noch nichts gelesen! KGW II, 2, 493), said Wagner. See also Bishop (2012) 51-2.

⁹⁰ The sense that his work would not be understood in his own time would follow him from this point throughout the rest of his career as a writer – see, for instance, a letter to Malwida von Meysenbug in September 1886, where he suggests that *BGE* should not be read until the year 2000. (KGB III, 3, 756, 24 September 1886.)

rather than denies, philosophical pessimism, and defends a view of Wagner as ‘the new Aeschylus’.⁹¹

The work itself can be broken up into four sections.

2.2.3.1. *BT § 1-4: The Apollonian and the Dionysian*

In the very opening of BT, Nietzsche introduces his twin artistic drives:

the continuous development of art is bound up with the *Apollinian* and *Dionysian* duality [...] through this coupling ultimately [they] generate an equally Dionysian and Apollonian form of art – Attic Tragedy. (die Fortentwicklung der Kunst an die Duplicität des Apollinischen und des Dionysischen gebunden ist [...] in dieser Paarung zuletzt das ebenso dionysische als apollinische Kunstwerk der attischen Tragödie erzeugen.) (BT §1)

The Apollonian is analogous to the dream: the ‘beautiful illusion of the dream worlds’ (BT §1) is manifested in the representational arts, especially sculpture and the concept of the image. With this *principium individuationis*, rationality, individuality, and order become valorised qualities or ideals. The Dionysian, on the other hand, is analogous to intoxication. Intoxication manifests in the non-representational arts, such as music. As Nietzsche states:

The very element which forms the essence of Dionysian music (and hence of music in general) is carefully excluded as un-Apollonian – namely, the emotional power of the tone, the uniform flow of the melody, and the utterly incomparable world of harmony. In the Dionysian dithyramb man is incited to the greatest exaltation of all his symbolic faculties; something never before experienced struggled for utterance – the annihilation of the veil of *māyā*, oneness as the soul of the race and of nature itself. (Behutsam ist gerade das Element, als unapollinisch, ferngehalten, das den Charakter der dionysischen Musik und damit der Musik überhaupt ausmacht, die erschütternde Gewalt des Tones, der einheitliche Strom des Melos und die durchaus unvergleichliche Welt der Harmonie. Im dionysischen

⁹¹ Bishop (2012) 51.

Dithyrambus wird der Mensch zur höchsten Steigerung aller seiner symbolischen Fähigkeiten gereizt; etwas Nieempfundenes drängt sich zur Aeusserung, die Vernichtung des Schleiers der Maja, das Einssein als Genius der Gattung, ja der Natur.) (BT §2)

In experiencing the universal (that which lies behind the veil) through intoxication, we experience a revelation the oneness of things, and, alongside it, of the terror of individuated existence.

The agonistic synthesis of these two impulses is Attic tragedy: through strife and union, they find 'glorious consummation in this child' (BT §4). The Dionysian chorus comes together with the Apollonian individualistic speech and action of the actors to convey the tragic myth, engaging with both dialectical components of the human condition. The characters on the stage are all the masked Dionysus; in this way, the Apollonian mediates the Dionysian revelation, allowing for an aesthetic engagement with philosophical pessimism. This, then, is for Nietzsche the synthetic origin of the Greek tragic drama.

2.2.3.2. *BT § 5-9: The Origin of Tragedy*

Homer the epic poet and Archilochus the lyric poet are identified as pre-tragic artists (BT §5), and, as such, are purely Apollonian. As Nietzsche states, 'the epic poet [...] is absorbed in the pure contemplation of images', whilst '[t]he Dionysian musician is, without any images, himself pure primordial pain and its primordial re-echoing' (BT §5). As concluded at the end of BT §4, it is this synthesis that leads to the Greek tragic drama. The actors on the stage are all Dionysus behind their Apollonian mask.

Nietzsche devotes some time in these sections to discussing his objections to other theories of the origins of tragedy, such as in §7, where he disagrees first with Schlegel and then Schiller in turn. In BT §9, the two 5th century BC poets, Aeschylus and Sophocles, are identified as tragedians *par excellence*, with an examination of Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* and Aeschylus' *Prometheus*. The latter most reaches the synthetic pinnacle of tragedy: in the titular character of Aeschylus' *Prometheus* Nietzsche finds a 'dual nature [*Doppelwesen*]', one 'which is at the same time Dionysian and Apollinian [*seine zugleich dionysische und apollinische Natur*]' (BT §9),

confronting a misfortune in the very nature of things with the strong desire for justice.

2.2.3.3. *BT § 10-15: The Death of Tragedy*

Nietzsche's definition of the genre of tragic drama is based around the extant works of Sophocles and Aeschylus. In §10-15, Nietzsche describes the death of tragedy at the hands of two spectators: Euripides – the youngest of the three extant tragedians of the 5th century BC – and Socrates – the teacher of Plato and turning-point in philosophical history.⁹²

Euripides 'fought this death struggle of tragedy,' states Nietzsche in BT §11. Writing 'not as poet' but '*as thinker*' (BT §12), that is, applying cool conscious rationality to tragedy, Euripides fails to channel the aesthetic sensibilities of his predecessors, rejecting the Dionysian elements of the genre and 'reconstruct[ing] tragedy purely on the basis of an un-Dionysian art, morality, and world-view' (BT §12). His work is merely 'dramatised epos', and 'in this Apollonian domain of art the *tragic* effect is certainly unattainable' (BT §12). '[F]iery affects' replace 'Dionysian ecstasies' (BT §12). Nietzsche's critique of Euripides implies that, in his works, there is no engagement with philosophical pessimism leading to a transformative moment of affirmation and the aesthetic justification for existence. His work inspires not a continued tradition of authentic tragic works, but instead Athenian New Comedy, which he calls 'a degenerate form of tragedy' (BT §11).⁹³

This death struggle is the result of Euripides' association with Socrates. The Socratic impulse introduced a rationalistic method to the irrational art, what Nietzsche terms 'aesthetic Socratism' (BT §12). With Socrates came a 'new and unprecedented value set on knowledge' (BT §13). Socratic optimism about science,

⁹² See 1.2. for discussion of the role of Socrates in the periodisation of ancient philosophy.

⁹³ As opposed to the Athenian Old Comedy of Aristophanes, the New Comedy of Menander was less obscene and lacking political commentary. The plots mostly revolved around love and marriage, with a nod to the social tensions between classes, family members, and rural versus urban. See the entry on 'Comedy' in Howatson (2011) for more information.

logic, knowledge lies in direct conflict with the necessity of the Dionysian – irrationality, impulse, intoxication – for the aesthetic world-view.⁹⁴ A whole new world-view is needed to accommodate the Socratic tendency: the moral world-view, one that asserts that there is some essential good. The stage is thus set for the Platonic devaluation of the aesthetic as mere representation. As Nietzsche states: ‘This is the new opposition: the Dionysian and the Socratic – and the art of Greek tragedy was wrecked on this.’ (BT § 12)

In §15, Nietzsche expounds the Socratic effect on intellectual culture through the ages to modernity. Justification is only possible through art. All science – all knowledge – must reach the point of tragic insight and transformation: he calls for ‘a *Socrates who practices music*’.

2.2.3.4. *BT § 16-24: The Rebirth of Tragedy*

The final sections of *BT* are dedicated to the question of the *rebirth* of tragic culture in contemporary Germany. This is made possible by Wagner: he is one of the ‘forces which seem to me to guarantee a *rebirth of tragedy*’ (BT §16). This is a revitalisation of German culture, which he diagnoses as ‘Socratic-Apollonian’, invigorated with a return to the Dionysian as expressed in classical music. It is in music that the Dionysian and, indeed, the tragic, finds its manifestation in art:

From the nature of art as it is usually conceived according to the single category of appearance and beauty, the tragic cannot honestly be deduced at all; it is only through the spirit of music that we can understand the joy involved in the annihilation of the individual. (Aus dem Wesen der Kunst, wie sie gemeinhin nach der einzigen Kategorie des Scheines und der Schönheit begriffen wird, ist das Tragische in ehrlicher Weise gar nicht abzuleiten; erst aus dem Geiste der Musik heraus verstehen wir eine Freude an der Vernichtung des Individuums.) (BT §16)

It follows that the art of Wagner is a step towards a reinvigoration of the Dionysian to balance out the Apollonian elements of contemporary German culture, leading to

⁹⁴ An analogy can be drawn from a certain reading of Plato’s *Symposium*; while his interlocutors drink and become intoxicated, Socrates drinks but remains sober.

the tragic and its transformative capabilities.

2.2.4. Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks

After *BT*, Nietzsche's next writing project was a book based on the *Pre-Platonic Philosophers* lecture course. A draft was written between the summer of 1872 and early 1873, which, like *BT* before it, 'challenges traditional classical scholarship by being subjective, freely interpretative, and by almost completely ignoring philological methods and conventions'.⁹⁵ Having been translated by Marianne Cowan back in 1962, it has received a wider reception in Anglophone Nietzsche scholarship than the lectures. Nietzsche's original intention was to cover a similar assortment of Presocratic thinkers as in the lectures, but, as a result of Wagner's influence, Nietzsche put the brakes on the project in the late spring of 1873, and did not pick it up again after the break with Wagner in 1876. Throughout this thesis, it is referred to when it can help us clarify Nietzsche's position in the lectures, but, due to its posteriority, narrow focus, lack of scholarly paraphernalia as found in the lectures, and overall incompleteness, its use is limited when trying to construct an image of Nietzsche's overall view of the Presocratics in the early period.

The aim of the book project is shared with the lecture series, encapsulated here in the notebooks of the period:

The philosophical systems of the early Greeks. The world they reveal is the same one that was created by tragedy. In this we grasp the unity of philosophy and art for the purpose of culture.' (Die philosophischen Systeme der älteren Griechen. Es offenbart sich dieselbe Welt, die die Tragödie schuf. Hier begreifen wir die Einheit der Philosophie und der Kunst zum Zweck der Kultur.) KGW III, 4, NF-1872 19[51].

Tragedy is presented as a feature of the entire intellectual culture of ancient Greece, encapsulating certain ideas about pessimism, the tragic, and aesthetics.⁹⁶ The work of the lectures on how this manifests (or not) in the thought of the Presocratics is

⁹⁵ Brobjer (2012) 42-3.

⁹⁶ See 2.2.

condensed into a short book draft, though with a narrowed focus: the *character* of these early philosophers.

I have selected those doctrines which sound most clearly the personality of the individual philosopher. (Es sind aber die Lehren ausgewählt worden, in denen das Persönliche eines Philosophen am stärksten nachklingt) (PTAG, later preface 25 / KGW III 2 Einleitung 2)

Nietzsche's various attempts at plans, titles, and *précises* for this work appear throughout the notebooks of 1872 and 1873. From these, we can see the scope of his original plans for PTAG. Take for an example this chapter outline below, which follows quite precisely the order followed in the lecture series, with some notable omissions: it groups Pythagoras later on with the Pythagoreans, and elides completely Anaximenes, Xenophanes, and Leucippus.

History of Greek Philosophy.

Introduction.

1. *Thales.*
2. *Anaximander.*
3. *Heraclitus.*
4. *Parmenides.*
5. *Anax<agoras>.*
6. *Empedocles.*
7. *Democritus.*
8. *Pythag<oreans>.*
9. *Socrates.*

Postscript.

(Geschichte der griechischen Philosophie.)

Einleitung.

1. Thales.
2. Anaximander.
3. Heraklit.
4. Parmenides.
5. Anax<agoras>.

6. Empedokles.
7. Demokrit.
8. Pythag<oreer>.
9. Sokrates.

Nachtrag. KGW III 4, Summer 1872 – Early 1873, 19 [189])

Just a little further on in this notebook from the summer of 1872 onwards, we find the first attempt at a title for this work:

Philosophy
in the
Tragic Age of the Greeks.
Concise Report on the Ancient Greek Philosophical
Masters.
(Die Philosophie
im
tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen.
Kurzgefasster Bericht
über die alten philosophischen
Meister der Griechen.

KGW III 4, Summer 1872 – Early 1873, 19 [214])

In the winter of 1872-3, we find again a chapter outline for the book. Here, more information about the introduction and epilogue are provided. Again, Anaximenes and Xenophanes do not appear, and Pythagoras is grouped with the Pythagoreans.

- | | |
|---------|--|
| Chapter | I. The Greeks as Philosophers.

The <i>sixth century</i> .
The miracle workers.
Competition. The
Dionysian. |
| Chapter | II. Thales and Anaximander.
III. Heraclitus.
IV. Parmenides.
V. Anaxagoras.
VI. Empedocles.
VII. Democritus. What does knowledge of |

impact mean?

VIII. Pythagoreans. Numbers as the limits of knowledge.

IX. Socrates. Abstract truths.

X. Epilogue. Anthropomorphism:

The mutable human being
and water. Death as
punishment. The artistic
game. Intellect.

(Kapitel I. Die Griechen als Philosophen.

Das sechste
Jahrhundert. Die
Wundermänner. Der
Wettkampf. Das
Dionysische.

Kapitel II. Thales und Anaximander.

III. Heraklit.

IV. Parmenides.

V. Anaxagoras.

VI. Empedokles.

VII. Demokrit. Was heißt Erkenntniß des Stoßes?

VIII. Pythagoreer. Zahlen als Grenzen der Erkenntniß.

IX. Sokrates. Abstrakte Wahrheiten.

X. Epilog. Anthropomorphism:

der veränderliche
Mensch und das
Wasser.

Der Tod als Strafe.

Das künstlerische
Spiel.

Der Intellekt.

KGW III 4, Winter 1872-73, 23 [3])

Further along in this notebook, Nietzsche writes a clear 'mission statement', followed by a title, now familiar to us:

The birth of tragedy viewed from another perspective.
Confirmed by the philosophy of its contemporaries.

The Philosophers of the Tragic Age.

In memory of Schopenhauer.

(Die Geburt der Tragödie betrachtet von einer andern Seite
aus. Die Bestätigung aus der Philosophie ihrer
Zeitgenossen.

Die Philosophen des tragischen Zeital
ters.

Dem Andenken Schopenhauers.

KGW III 4, Winter 1872-73, 23 [24-5)

We can learn many things about Nietzsche's purpose for the book as opposed to his lectures and other writings from these notes: firstly, that Anaximenes is as inconsequential to him as I conclude in 3.3. – the third Milesian does not appear in either these chapter outlines or in the draft of PTAG itself. Xenophanes, on the other hand, is not included in these chapter outlines, but does appear in the surviving book draft.⁹⁷ His importance as a predecessor for Parmenides is perhaps enough to Nietzsche to warrant his inclusion at the time of writing, though not the time of planning. Thirdly, there are inferences we can make from these chapter outlines that bestow importance upon the lecture notes themselves: Nietzsche intended to write on Empedocles, Democritus, the Pythagoreans, and Socrates. Whilst the lecture notes on these philosophers survive, a draft for their book chapters was never written. Between the incompleteness and the narrowed scope of the book, we can conclude that the lecture notes remain our most important source for Nietzsche's views on these philosophers in the early period.

Wagner appears to be the impetus behind the abandonment of the book. A few weeks before a visit to Bayreuth in 1873, Nietzsche writes excitedly about the project in his letter to Gersdorff:

I am bringing a manuscript. "Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks," with me to Bayreuth for reading [...] I have discovered the greatest majesty, which the Greeks are and were. The path from Thales to Socrates is something

⁹⁷ Xenophanes is discussed at PTAG 74 ff / 334 ff.

incredible.

Nach Bayreuth bringe ich ein Manuscript „die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen“ mit, zum Vorlesen. [...]Ich habe mich wieder auf das herrlichste überzeugt, was die Griechen sind und waren. Der Weg von Thales bis Sokrates ist etwas Ungeheures. (KGB II, 3, 301. Letter of 5th April 1873 to Carl von Gersdorff in Rome. Translated by Whitlock, PPP XXVI.)

However, a month later, he writes to Rohde, mentioning both his ‘persistent melancholy (anhaltenden Melancholie)’ on his return from Bayreuth, and his draft of a paper against David Strauss (‘eine Schrift gegen David Strauss’), which was to become the first of the *Untimely Meditations* – ‘David Strauss: the Confessor and the Writer’, published later that year. (KGB II, 3, 307. Letter of 5th May 1873 to Erwin Rohde in Kiel.) The essay is an attack on David Strauss’ essay, ‘The Old and the New Faith: A Confession’, from 1871. Nietzsche’s sister, terrible witness though she is,⁹⁸ writes that this abandonment of PTAG in favour of the critique of David Strauss was due to the ‘scorn and aversion’ shown by Wagner towards Strauss’ book; it was ‘the subject of much discussion during his Easter visit to Bayreuth’ (Förster-Nietzsche 1921, 169). Nietzsche attempted to curry back favour with Wagner through ‘fulfill[ing] Wagner’s expectations by devoting himself to more present-day problems’. (Förster-Nietzsche 1921, 169) Taken in the light that the break between Nietzsche and Wagner – apocryphally held to be a sudden and severe reaction to the Christian themes of Wagner’s *Parsifal* – was indeed precipitated by an ‘increasing aware[ness] of the impossibility of serving both Wagner and his own call’, (Kaufmann 1975, 37) it makes sense that Nietzsche in this time would abandon a writing project at the behest of his ‘most famous friend’ (Kaufmann 1975, 30) in favour of a project more (un)timely.⁹⁹ The final break occurred in 1876, around the time of the publication of *Human, All too Human*. Around this same time, Nietzsche did write the

⁹⁸ Kaufmann tackles the Elisabeth issue head-on in the prologue of his intellectual biography of Nietzsche; Kaufmann (1975) 3 ff.

⁹⁹ ‘One cannot serve two masters, when one is called Wagner’, states Nietzsche in *The Case of Wagner* (CW, first postscript, 185 / KGW VI, 3, *Der Fall Wagner*, Nachschrift).

later preface for PTAG, but made no further progress on the work itself.¹⁰⁰

The extant draft of PTAG can be understood as grouped into the following sections: § 1-2, Introduction; § 3, Thales; § 4, Anaximander; § 5-8, Heraclitus; § 9-13, Parmenides and Xenophanes; §14-19, Anaxagoras.

¹⁰⁰ Brobjer (2012) 42.

2.3. Pessimism, Tragedy, Aesthetics: Constructing Nietzsche's 'Tragic' Lens

2.3.1. Introduction

Nietzsche contextualised the intellectual culture of the archaic period as an entire *tragic age* of Greece. The majority of the evidence for this assertion comes from the unpublished works; as discussed in 2.2.4., he wrote an unfinished book based on the Presocratics lectures under the title *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, and a particularly noteworthy comment in his notebooks of the period reads,

The philosophical systems of the early Greeks.

The world they reveal is the same one that was created by tragedy.

In this we grasp the unity of philosophy and art for the purpose of culture.

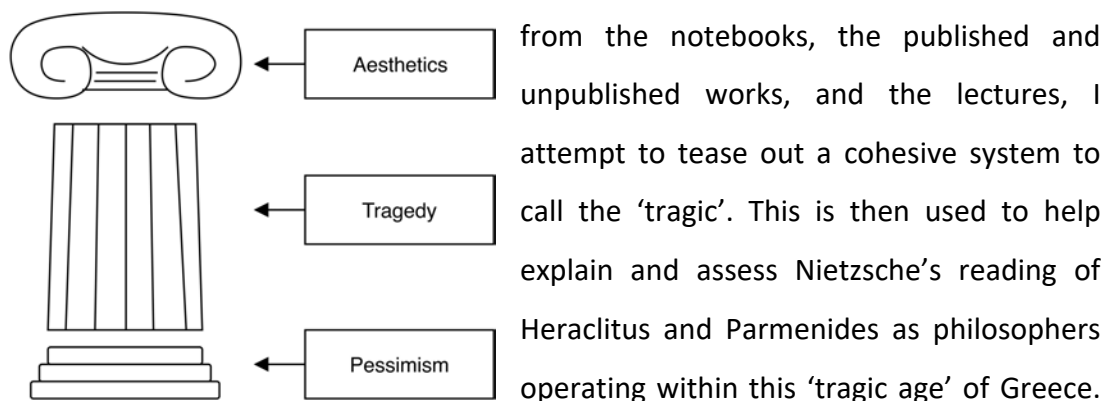
(Die philosophischen Systeme der älteren Griechen.

Es offenbart sich dieselbe Welt, die die Tragödie schuf.

Hier begreifen wir die Einheit der Philosophie und der Kunst zum Zweck der Kultur.)

(Nietzsche 1999b, pp. 20-21. KGW III, 4, NF-1872 19[51]).

The question is, what does the 'tragic age' consist of? What unifies both the philosophy of the Presocratics and the art of the Greek tragic drama? Using evidence



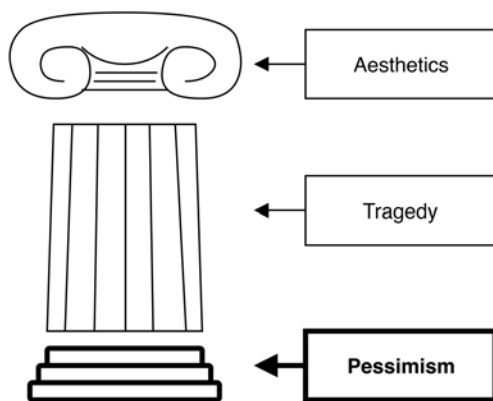
This system aims to understand what the concept of tragedy means to Nietzsche by offering a hierarchical tripartite structure through which to understand the relationship between pessimism, tragedy, and aesthetics in Nietzsche's thought.

Nietzsche's theory of tragedy, I argue, is dependent on an understanding and application of philosophical pessimism. This philosophical pessimism changes in character across Nietzsche's works, and these changes impact the character of the theory of tragedy. Both serve to inform his overall aesthetics. The resulting attitude, I believe, is summarised by a fragment from sometime between November 1887—March 1888, where he quotes Dostoyevsky's *Demons*;—"Ich bin Nihilist, aber ich liebe die Schönheit"—"I am a nihilist, but I love beauty." (My translation. KGW VIII, 3, NF-1887 11[341]).

This results in an interpretation of tragedy, beauty, and the Greek ideal that is both anti-Classicism and anti-Idealism. On the one hand, Nietzsche criticises the theories of tragedy of the German Idealists because of their over-moralising of tragedy. On the other, he criticises the entire tradition of Classicism which, since Winckelmann, idealised the idea of ancient Greek culture and society itself. Nietzsche pushes for a new acknowledgement of that which he believes has gone unacknowledged about Greek culture—the Dionysian. This work both serves to investigate Nietzsche's engagement with Classicism and Idealism, and stands as a prolegomenon for any future investigation of Nietzsche on the archaic, or "tragic," period, including the philosophy of this period—the philosophy of the Presocratics.

2.3.2. Pessimism

We begin at the base of the structure with philosophical pessimism. When we discuss pessimism in this context, we are not talking about a merely gloomy



disposition, a bad attitude, or a subjectivist description of experience, but a normative judgement about the character of existence itself. I describe this with the term "pessimistic realism": that the tenets of a philosophical pessimism hold true for existence. A commitment to a kind of pessimistic realism is pervasive throughout

Nietzsche's works, though the character of this pessimism changes.

Nietzsche's early period pessimism was heavily influenced by Schopenhauer, whose works he first discovered in a used book store in Leipzig in 1865. Thacker summarises Schopenhauer's cosmic pessimism as follows: "life is suffering, [...] human life is absurd, [...] the nothingness before my birth is equal to the nothingness after my death" (Thacker 2015, 31). This may sound like a bleak characterisation—but it is backed up by Schopenhauer's words themselves. There are three essential premises of Schopenhauer's cosmic pessimism.¹⁰¹

1. *The metaphysics of Will and Representation*

The world, for Schopenhauer, is split into Will and Representation: "For this world is, on the one side, entirely representation, just as, on the other, it is entirely will. ([...] denn diese ist, wie einerseits durch und durch Vorstellung, so andererseits durch und durch Wille.)" (WWR, I 4. SW I § 1). The Will is the in-itself: the word signifies the fundamentally meaningless drive behind all things and the unity of things. Representation is appearances: it is responsible for the diversity of appearances. Technically speaking, it is Will objectified, which means that it can be reduced to illusion.¹⁰²

2. *The problematisation of time*

Time is problematized in two essential ways in Schopenhauer's pessimism. It is a burden we bear without consent:

Not a little is contributed to the torment of our existence
by the fact that *time* is always pressing on us, never lets us
draw breath, and is behind every one of us like a

¹⁰¹ Following Dienstag (2006) and Thacker (2015): Schopenhauer's is a pessimism on a *cosmic* scale: that is, it impacts to the whole of existence, not merely social or cultural constructs. Dienstag refers to it as "metaphysical pessimism." However, this usage of "metaphysical" could be confused with Nietzsche's later rejection of the metaphysics of Will and Representation; I use Thacker's term "Cosmic Pessimism" instead.

¹⁰² This is the result of the application of the principle of sufficient reason for Schopenhauer: as he concludes, "all perception is intellectual (daher ist alle Anschauung intellektual)" (WWR, I 11. SW I § 4)—"the objectified will [is] will that has become representation (als der objektivirte, d.h. zur Vorstellung gewordene Wille ist)" (WWR, I 100. SW I § 18).

taskmaster with a whip. Only those who have been handed over to boredom are not pressed and plagued by time.

(Zur Plage unsers Daseins trägt nicht wenig auch Dieses bei, daß stets *die Zeit* uns drängt, uns nicht zu Athem kommen läßt und hinter Jedem her ist, wie ein Zuchtmeister mit der Peitsche. —Bloß Dem setzt sie nicht zu, den sie der Langenweile überliefert hat.) (PP, p. 292. SW V, XII § 151 p. 317).

Secondly, it is the symbol of mortality, as it is a function of time that we die:

For in the end time proclaims the judgment of nature on the worth of all beings that appear in it, since it destroys them.

(Denn zuletzt verkündigt die Zeit den Urtheilsspruch der Natur über den Werth aller in ihr erscheinenden Wesen, indem sie sie vernichtet) (WWR, II 574. SW II § 46, *Von der Nichtigkeit und dem Leiden des Lebens*).

3. *Pain as the positive affect*

‘Positive affect’ here means that it is the sensation or emotion which makes itself felt. Schopenhauer argues that it is not pleasure which is the positive affect, but *pain*:

the happiness of any given life is to be measured not by its joys and pleasures, but by the absence of sorrow and suffering, of that which is positive.

([...] das Glück eines gegebenen Lebenslaufes nicht nach dessen Freuden und Genüssen abzuschätzen, sondern nach der Abwesenheit der Leiden, als des Positiven.) (PP, p. 293. SW V, XII § 153, p. 318).

Pleasure is merely a respite from pain:

Accordingly, I know of no greater absurdity than that of most metaphysical systems which declare evil to be something negative whereas it is precisely that which is positive and makes itself felt. On the other hand, that which is good, in other words, all happiness and satisfaction, is negative, that is, the mere elimination of a desire and the ending of a pain.

(Ich kenne demnach keine größere Absurdität, als die der meisten metaphysischen Systeme, welche das Übel für etwas Negatives erklären; während es gerade das Positive,

das sich delbst fühlbar machende ist. [...] Hingegen das Gute, d. h. alles Glück und alle Befriedigung, ist das Negative, nämlich das bloße Aufheben des Wunsches und Endigen einer Pein.) (PP, pp. 291-292. SW V, XII § 149, p. 316).

Further to this, Schopenhauer argues that if things were not as he describes, then we would all suffer from boredom and ennui anyway:

Suppose the human race were removed to Utopia where everything grew automatically and pigeons flew about ready-roasted; where everyone at once found his sweetheart and had no difficulty in keeping her; then people would die of boredom or hang themselves; or else they would fight, throttle, and murder one another and so cause themselves more suffering than is now laid upon them by nature.

(Man versetze dies Geschlecht in ein *Schlaraffenland*, wo Alles von selbst wüchse und die Tauben gebraten herumflögen, auch jeder seine Heiß-Geliebte alsbald fände, und ohne Schwierigkeit erhielte. —Da werden die Menschen zum Theil vor langer Weile sterben, oder sich aufhängen, zum Theil aber einander bekriegen, würgen und morden, und so sich mehr Leiden verursachen, als jetzt die Natur ihnen auflegt.) (PP, p. 293. SW V, XII § 152, pp. 317-318).

The result of these three premises is twofold. Firstly, they result in an acknowledgement of the incompatibility between man and world as a fundamental feature of human existence. Schopenhauer concludes that “this world itself is the worst of all possible worlds (sie selbst also unter den möglichen die schlechteste)” (WWR, II 583. SW II § 46, *Von der Nichtigkeit und dem Leiden des Lebens*). The second result is resignation—there is no hope that things could be another way: “the world and life can afford us no true satisfaction, and are therefore not worth our attachment to them. In this the tragic spirit consists; accordingly, it leads to resignation (die Welt, das Leben, kein wahres Genügen gewähren könne, mithin unserer Anhänglichkeit nicht werth sei: darin besteht der tragische Geist: er leitet demnach zur Resignation hin)” (WWR II 434. SW II § 37, *Zur Aesthetik der Dichtkunst*). This leads to possible accusations of nihilism—there is no inherent meaning in the striving of the will and we are resigned that things could not be

different. Schopenhauer's cosmic pessimism encapsulates the wisdom of Silenus: life is suffering, and it would have been better never to have been born—second best, to die as quickly as possible. Existence, then, is an absurd catch-22—our lives are necessarily characterised by suffering as pain is the positive affect, and time hounds us to remind us of our own mortality. Suicide is not even an option; all it does is snuff out the representation, the individual occurrence of the objectification of the Will, but the Will—where suffering ultimately comes from—continues to exist:

suicide, or the arbitrary destruction of an individual phenomenon, is a quite futile and foolish act, for the thing-in-itself remains unaffected by it, just as the rainbow remains unmoved, however rapidly the drops may change which sustain it for the moment.

([...] der Selbstmord, die willkürliche Zerstörung einer einzelnen Erscheinung, bei der das Ding an sich ungestört stehn bleibt, wie der Regenbogen feststeht, so schnell auch die Tropfen, welche auf Augenblicke seine Träger sind, wechseln, eine ganz vergebliche und thörichte Handlung sei.) (WWR, I 399. SW I § 69).

This concludes a brief summary of the philosophical thought at the foundation of Nietzsche's early pessimistic philosophy. Midway through his time at Basel, however, Nietzsche's thought changes direction:

Around 1876 [...] I grasped that my instinct went into the opposite direction from Schopenhauer's: towards a *justification of life*, even at its most terrible, ambiguous, and mendacious; for this I had the formula "*Dionysian*."

(G e g e n 1 8 7 6 [...] begriff ich, daß mein Instinkt auf das Gegentheil hinauswollte als der Schopenhauers: auf eine Rechtfertigung des Lebens, selbst in seinem Furchtbarsten, Zweideutigsten und Lügenhaftesten: —dafür hatte ich die Formel „dionysisch“ in den Händen.) (Kaufmann (1968), § 1005. KGW VIII, 2, NF-1887 9[42]).

He turns from Schopenhauer's conclusions of resignation to ask of the possibility of affirmation in the face of pessimistic realism. After this turn, he begins the development of his tools of affirmation. These can be summarised in three premises, as follows.

Firstly, there is the turn against metaphysics, beginning in 1876. Nietzsche's

critique of metaphysics focuses not on formal proofs for the nonexistence of God or other metaphysical phenomena, but on diagnosing the damage that metaphysics is responsible for and the psychology of what he calls the “metaphysical need”:

Schopenhauer’s metaphysics demonstrates that even now the scientific spirit is not yet sufficiently strong: so that, although all the dogmas of Christianity have long since been demolished, the whole medieval Christian conception of the world and of the nature of man could in Schopenhauer’s teaching celebrate a resurrection. Much science sounds in his teaching, but what dominates it is not science but the old familiar “metaphysical need.”

(Aber auch in unserem Jahrhundert bewies Schopenhauer’s Metaphysik, dass auch jetzt der wissenschaftliche Geist noch nicht kräftig genug ist: so konnte die ganze mittelalterliche christliche Weltbetrachtung und Mensch-Empfindung noch einmal in Schopenhauer’s Lehre, trotz der längst errungenen Vernichtung aller christlichen Dogmen, eine Auferstehung feiern. Viel Wissenschaft klingt in seine Lehre hinein, aber sie beherrscht dieselbe nicht, sondern das alte, wohlbekannte „metaphysische Bedürfniss“.) (HH, 1, 26. KGW IV, 2, 1, 26).

This attack on metaphysics is characteristic of Nietzsche’s Middle Period works: he focuses on the rejection of metaphysical and religious values that lead to the devaluation of life. He attacks religion on the grounds of its prescriptive morality¹⁰³ and its claims to provide us with meaning for existence, which he calls above the ‘metaphysical need’. Metaphysics leave us feeling alienated from the self and world: they sacrifice the value of the phenomenal to something higher. After this critical period, there is no more metaphysics of Will and Representation.

Secondly is *Amor Fati*, the “love of fate,” which is a valorisation of affirmation against resignation. This idea emerges in 1882 in *The Gay Science*. The idea is to actively love fate, rather than being resigned to it: as Nietzsche states, “I want to

¹⁰³ “there is today perhaps no more firmly held prejudice than this: that one *knows* what actually constitutes morality. (Es giebt vielleicht jetzt kein besser geglaubtes Vorurtheil, als diess: dass man *w i s s e*, was eigentlich das Moralische ausmache.)” (D, § 132. KGW V, 1, *Morgenröthe* § 132).

learn more and more to see as beautiful what is necessary in things; then I shall be one of those who makes things beautiful. *Amor fati*: let that be my love henceforth. (Ich will immer mehr lernen, das Nothwendige an den Dingen als das Schöne sehen: —so werde ich Einer von Denen sein, welche die Dinge schön machen. Amor fati: das sei von nun an meine Liebe!)” (GS, § 276. KGW V, 2, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* § 21).

The third premise is the theory of the Eternal Recurrence, which signifies the permanence or unchangeability of things anew. While first developed in 1882’s *The Gay Science*, it emerges fully in the *Zarathustra* (1883-91). In GS, § 341, “The Heaviest Weight,” Nietzsche asks us to imagine that a demon visits us with the following strange proclamation:

This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more: and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence—even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself.

(Dieses Leben, wie du es jetzt lebst und gelebt hast, wirst du noch einmal und noch unzählige Male leben müssen; und es wird nichts Neues daran sein, sondern jeder Schmerz und jede Lust und jeder Gedanke und Seufzer und alles unsäglich Kleine und Grosse deines Lebens muss dir wiederkommen, und Alles in der selben Reihe und Folge— und ebenso diese Spinne und dieses Mondlicht zwischen den Bäumen, und ebenso dieser Augenblick und ich selber.) (GS, § 341. KGW V, 2, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* § 341).

It may seem odd for Nietzsche, the philosopher who aimed to destroy metaphysical consolations with his critique of Judeo-Christian religion and instead proposed a revaluation of all values, should create such a formulation: that everything that happens will happen again—giving cosmic significance to events. He asks us whether we would respond to this demon with curses or exaltation. The meaning of this is clear, whether we understand Nietzsche as posing a thought experiment, a cyclical view of time or sincerely advocating this as a cosmological truth: we should act in a

way that we affirm our existence—both in suffering and in joy.¹⁰⁴ This is the “highest formula of affirmation” spoken of in EH:¹⁰⁵ returning to the pessimistic realism of the Early Period writings without Schopenhauer’s resignation to existence but with the attitude of “a Yes-Sayer (ein Ja-sagender)” (GS, § 276. KGW V, 2, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* §276). Being a “Yes-Sayer” means sidestepping the nihilism that can result from pessimism and the destruction of hitherto held values by placing a new value and meaning on existence. Nietzsche asks us, in the formulation of the eternal recurrence, to exist in a way that we would affirm our life eternally.

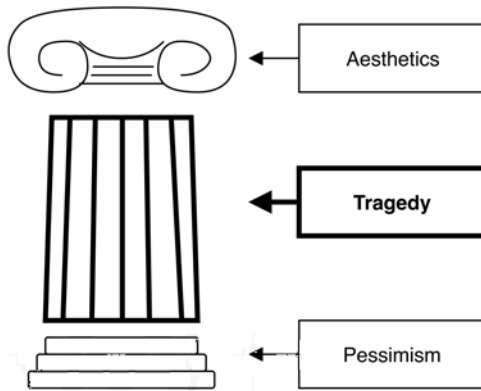
The combination of these three premises leads to a form of philosophical pessimism which acknowledges the terrible reality of existence, but affirms life nonetheless. This impacts the later formulations of tragedy and the aesthetic.

¹⁰⁴ There is ongoing debate in Nietzsche scholarship on how literally to interpret the doctrine of the eternal recurrence; some point to Nietzsche’s interest in physics in this period as evidence that he quite literally means that everything that has happened will happen again: in Kaufmann 1968, § 1063. KGW VIII, 1, NF-1886, 5[54], Nietzsche states that “The law of the conservation of energy demands *eternal recurrence*. (Der Satz vom Bestehen der Energie fordert die ewige Wiederkehr.)” Others argue rather than this idea is merely a thought experiment to act by, similar to the Kantian categorical imperative. For an in-depth examination of the arguments, see Loeb (2013). A conclusion for this debate is not necessary for the point at hand: both the literal and literary interpretations of the eternal recurrence lead to Dionysian Pessimism.

¹⁰⁵ “[T]he *idea of eternal recurrence*, the highest formula of affirmation that can possibly be attained [...] (der Ewig – Wiederkunts – Gedanke, diese höchste Formel der Bejahung, die überhaupt erreicht werden kann —)” (EH, “Thus Spoke Zarathustra”, 1. KGW VI, 3, *Ecce Homo*, “Also sprach Zarathustra” 1).

2.3.3. Tragedy

Nietzsche's theory of tragedy was first presented in the 1872 book, *The Birth of Tragedy*. Whilst it fell flat in the philological community for its lack of scholarly apparatus, it is a philosophically rich exegesis of Nietzsche's early theorising of the



connection between pessimism, tragedy, and the aesthetic.¹⁰⁶ Tragedy, he argues, is the result of two complementary but conflicting artistic drives, named for two of the Greek gods: Apollo and Dionysus. For Nietzsche, the philosophical pessimism represented by the Dionysian underpins the intellectual culture of

archaic Greece as a whole, from tragedy on the stage to the Pre-Socratic thinkers: this is his *tragische Weltanschauung*. (KGW III, 3, NF-1869 3[71]). Philosophical pessimism is the problem that gives impetus to the development of Greek art and culture. In the early period theory of tragedy, the echoes of Schopenhauer's cosmic pessimism are clear in a number of instances.

Firstly, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche identify a similar origin to the impulse to tragedy in the form of philosophical pessimism. Where Schopenhauer asserts that the Greeks were "deeply affected by the wretchedness of existence. The invention of tragedy, which belongs to them, is already evidence of this. ([...] von dem Elend des Daseyns tief ergriffen [...]). Dies bezeugt schon die Erfindung des Trauerspiels, welche ihnen angehört.)" (WWR, II 585. SW II § 17, *Ueber das metaphysische Bedürfnis des Menschen*). Nietzsche echoes this in the opening sections of BT, when he states that "[t]he Greeks knew and felt the terror and horror of existence (Der Grieche kannte und empfand die Schrecken und Entsetzlichkeiten

¹⁰⁶ Nietzsche was well aware of the conventions he broke in the writing of BT, commenting on "how offended the philologists are bound to be at anything [...] without the paraphernalia of critical notes (Du weißt, wie sehr die Philologen auf alles gestoßen werden müssen, was nicht bei Teubner und ohne den Zubehör kritischer Noten erscheint)" in a letter to Rohde, 23 Nov 1871 (KGB, II, 1, p. 248). '[P]art of its aim is to demonstrate the limitations of scholarly or scientific (*wissenschaftlich*) discourse,' explains Nehamas (1985) 18.

des Daseins)" (BT, § 3. KGW III, 1, § 3).

Secondly, the Apollonian / Dionysian drive dynamic that Nietzsche predicates his theory of tragedy on mirrors the metaphysics of Will and Representation. The Apollonian represents individuation, order, and rationality; the Dionysian represents the drive to universality and the irrational. The Apollonian mirrors Representation, and the Dionysian, Will. We see the parallels clearly first in this description of the Dionysian drive:

[the] Dionysiac drive [...] consumes this entire world of appearances, thereby allowing us to sense, behind that world and through its destruction, a supreme, artistic, primal joy in the womb of the Primordial Unity.

([...] dionysischer Trieb diese ganze Welt der Erscheinungen verschlingt, um hinter ihr und durch ihre Vernichtung eine höchste künstlerische Urfreude im Schoosse des Ur-Einen ahnen zu lassen.) (BT, § 22. KGW III, 1, § 22).

Thirdly, the parallel between the illusion of Representation and the illusion of the Apollonian becomes clear in a note from Summer 1872—Early 1873; they are the "illusion necessary for sentient beings to be able to live (Die Illusion nöthig für das empfindende Wesen, um zu leben)" (KGW III, 4, NF-1872 19[64]).

Finally, Schopenhauer says that what we have to learn from tragedy is resignation to fate;

What gives to everything tragic, whatever the form in which it appears, the characteristic tendency to the sublime, is the dawning of the knowledge that the world and life can afford us no true satisfaction, and are therefore not worth our attachment to them. In this the tragic spirit consists; accordingly, it leads to resignation.

(Was allem Tragischen, in welcher Gestalt es auch aufträte, den eigenthümlichen Schwung zur Erhebung giebt, ist das Aufgehn der Erkenntniß, daß die Welt, das Leben, kein wahres Genügen gewähren könne, mithin unserer Anhänglichkeit nicht werth sei: darin besteht der tragische Geist: er leitet demnach zur Resignation hin.) (WWR, II 434. SW II § 37, *Zur Aesthetik der Dichtkunst*).

This is the pessimistic influence on tragedy—the wisdom of the Silenus given

aesthetic form on stage:

The horrors on the stage hold up to him the bitterness and worthlessness of life, and so the vanity of all its efforts and endeavours.

(Die Schrecknisse auf der Bühne halten ihm die Bitterkeit und Werthlosigkeit des Lebens, also die Nichtigkeit alles seines Strebens entgegen.) (WWR, II 435. SW II § 37, *Zur Aesthetik der Dichtkunst*).

For Nietzsche, the Apollonian mediates the Dionysian revelation, allowing for an aesthetic engagement with philosophical pessimism. This allows for a toleration of, or resignation to, tragic knowledge. The sublime is Nietzsche's first attempt to defuse the problem of Schopenhauer's resignation:

Once truth has been seen, the consciousness of it prompts man to see only what is terrible or absurd in existence wherever he looks [...] now he grasps the wisdom of the wood-god Silenus: he feels revulsion. Here, at this moment of supreme danger for the will, *art* approaches as a saving sorceress with the power to heal. Art alone can re-direct those repulsive thoughts about the terrible or absurd nature of existence into representations with which man can live; these representations are the *sublime*, whereby the terrible is tamed by artistic means, and the *comical*, whereby disgust at absurdity is discharged by artistic means.

(In der Bewusstheit der einmal geschauten Wahrheit sieht jetzt der Mensch überall nur das Entsetzliche oder Absurde des Seins, [...], jetzt erkennt er die Weisheit des Waldgottes Silen: es ekelt ihn. Hier, in dieser höchsten Gefahr des Willens, naht sich, als rettende, heilkundige Zauberin, die *K u n s t*; sie allein vermag jene Ekelgedanken über das Entsetzliche oder Absurde des Daseins in Vorstellungen umzubiegen, mit denen sich leben lässt: diese sind das Erhabene als die künstlerische Bändigung des Entsetzlichen und das *K o m i s c h e* als die künstlerische Entladung vom Ekel des Absurden.) (BT, § 7. KGW III, 1, § 7).

Horror is tamed and made sublime—beauty, then, becomes the response to nihilism.

Let us turn again to the late period. Just as Nietzsche's pessimism changed before from early to late, we see the resurgence of "tragedy" and "the tragic" in his

later thought, stripped of the early period metaphysical associations. They no longer represent nihilism and resignation, however, but a love of fate and the possibility of affirming life.

Tragedy is so far from providing any proof of the pessimism of the Hellenes in Schopenhauer's sense that it should rather be seen as its decisive refutation and *counter-example*. Saying yes to life, even in its strangest and hardest problems; the will to life rejoicing in the *sacrifice* of its highest types to its own inexhaustibility—*this* is what I called Dionysian.

(Die Tragödie ist so fern davon, Etwas für den Pessimismus der Hellenen im Sinne Schopenhauer's zu beweisen, dass sie vielmehr als dessen entscheidende Ablehnung und G e g e n – I n s t a n z zu gelten hat. Das Ja sagen zum Leben selbst noch in seinen fremdesten und härtesten Problemen; der Wille zum Leben, im O p f e r seiner höchsten Typen der eignen Uerschöpflichkeit frohwerdend—das nannte ich dionysisch.) (TI X § 5. KGW VI, 3, *Götzen-Dämmerung* X § 5).

He reevaluates the pessimism present in Greek tragedy and decides that it is not correlative with Schopenhauer's, but his own: tragedy points to the ability to affirm existence despite its horrors, in the way Nietzsche's tools of affirmation help us say yes to life. Thus we arrive at the following formulation:

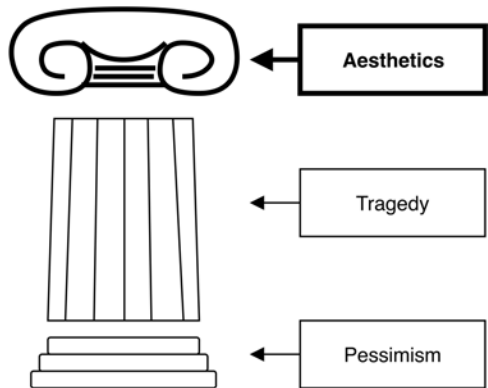
Even resignation is *not* a lesson of tragedy, but a misunderstanding of it! Yearning for nothingness is a *denial* of tragic wisdom, its opposite!

(Auch Resignation ist n i c h t eine Lehre der Tragödie! — sondern ein Mißverständniß derselben! Sehnsucht ins Nichts ist V e r n e i n u n g der tragischen Weisheit, ihr Gegensatz!) (Kaufmann (1968), § 1029. KGW VII, 2, NF-1884 25[95]).

Here, resignation is openly rejected: another way is possible.

2.3.4. Aesthetics

As began to emerge in the discussion of tragedy, Nietzsche's aesthetics are built atop his understanding of pessimism and tragedy. The aesthetic, for Nietzsche,



comes from a twisting together of two understandings of the word: in its first sense, as derived from its etymology in perception - αἰσθάνομαι (*aisthanomai*), to perceive or apprehend through the senses – the world is, necessarily, *experienced*. Here the high stakes of the tensions between

Schopenhauer's metaphysics and the consequences of Nietzsche's rejection of metaphysics become explicit: the question of metaphysics is the question of the reality and value of that which is experienced, and the origin of Nietzsche's perspectivism. The second sense of aesthetics is a more traditional understanding of aesthetics as both representational art and the appreciation of representational arts. This twisting together of these two senses leads to life itself being understood as art, and, as an artwork, to be valued; or, as Silk and Stern put it, '[a]esthetics [...] is not confined to art, not even to 'art as a whole'. It runs into history, psychology, and moral philosophy, into life itself' (Silk and Stern 1981, 40). Nietzsche's aesthetic conviction – 'that art exist[s] in order to make life worth living' – is, as Halliwell states, 'a permanent attachment' of his (Halliwell 2018, 95); but its content is, I argue, dependent on the shifting conceptions beneath of pessimism and tragedy, changing in character across Nietzsche's life and works.

In the early period, Nietzsche's ideas are still informed by the metaphysics of will and representation, as we saw from the correlations between the Apollonian and the Dionysian and Will and Representation. Music itself penetrates the depths of the metaphysics of Will, allowing for an experience of the metaphysical whole of the universal Will through aesthetic experience (BT, § 24 / KGW III, 1, § 24). But as he begins to explore the idea of art and the aesthetic as the answer to nihilism in *The Birth of Tragedy*, with a valorising of the phenomenal, he concludes that,

only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* is existence and the world eternally *justified* (denn nur als ä s t h e t i s c h e s P h ä n o m e n i s t d a s D a s e i n u n d d i e W e l t e w i g g e r e c h t f e r t i g t). (BT, § 5. KGW III, 1, § 5).

This position is fully formed in the late period after the rejection of metaphysics. Schopenhauerian metaphysics (and all metaphysics) sacrifice the phenomenal (the aesthetic) to a higher kind of “reality”, such as the subjugation of representation to Will. The tragic is the return to the aesthetic: “[a]n anti-metaphysical view of the world—yes, but an artistic one (eine antimetaphysische—ja, aber eine artistische —)” (Kaufmann 1968, § 1048. KGW VIII, 1, NF-1885 2[186]). With the rejection of metaphysics, we have only one legitimate way of judging life—in the aesthetic sense.

Art and nothing but art! It is the great means of making life possible, the great seduction to life, the great stimulant of life. Art as the only superior counterforce to all will to denial of life, as that which is anti-Christian, anti-Buddhist, antinihilist *par excellence*.

(Die Kunst und nichts als die Kunst! Sie ist die große Ermöglicherin des Lebens, die große Verführerin zum Leben, das große Stimulans des Lebens.

Die Kunst als einzig überlegene Gegenkraft gegen allen Willen zur Verneinung des Lebens, als das Antichristliche, Antibuddhistische, Antinihilistische *par excellence*.) (Kaufmann (1968), § 1029. KGW VIII, 3, NF-1888 17[3] II).

Nietzsche’s project seems to be grounding its aims of mediating his truths about the nature of reality—the phenomena of becoming itself—in the aesthetics. Life, qua art, is imbued with value; ‘the great style no longer just as art, but turned into reality, truth, life (der grosse Stil nicht mehr bloss Kunst, sondern Realität, Wahrheit, Leben geworden...),’ the great achievement of the Greeks realised (A § 59 / KGW VI, 3, *Der Antichrist*, §59). Beauty itself becomes the defence against nihilism.

This kind of understanding of Nietzsche’s aesthetics is not unique to this present thesis: it follows a particular tradition of interpretation in Nietzsche scholarship. See, for example, the understanding of the aesthetic that Ulfers shows in his introduction of *The Dionysian Vision of the World*, when he states that:

This is an aesthetics *of the world*. So, when Nietzsche talks

about the world being an aesthetic phenomenon, he is not talking about the world being there for human perceiving. Rather, the world is aesthetic in its very becoming, in a fashion that cannot be restricted to or fully contained by human experiencing. (Ulfers 2013, 1-2)

Similarly, Nehamas understands Nietzsche as

look[ing] at the world in general as if it were a sort of artwork; in particular, he looks at it as if it were a literary text. (Nehamas 1985, 4)

Nehamas' literary interpretation of Nietzsche's aesthetics leads to what he calls the 'philology of the world' (Nehamas 1985, 4). Both readings and my own reading build upon the traditional or common-sense idea of the aesthetic to create a concept beyond art and the mere perception of things: of life and the world itself being understood as art, and, as an artwork, to be valued. It places Nietzsche within a wider German tradition in aesthetics that looks towards a kind of existential aesthetics, 'a quest for the 'whole man'' (Silk and Stern 1981, 41).

2.3.5. Anti-Classicism and Anti-Idealism

Nietzsche's theory of tragedy is an attack on classicism and idealism. He identifies inadequacies in German Philhellenism and its influence upon the philosophy of the German idealists. German Philhellenism is defined by Suzanne Marchand as the 'conviction that to be Greek was to worship beauty, and to live a beautiful life, free from the disfiguring conventions and restrictions of the modern world' (Marchand 1996, 3); many aspects of this definition line up with Nietzsche's theory of the Apollonian. In the 18th century, writers such as Schiller, Winckelmann, and Humboldt constructed an idealised view of Greece which acknowledged *only* the Apollonian aspect—the serene illusion of Greek culture and society—ignoring its artistic twin, the Dionysian, the dark, orgiastic, primordial side of Greece. The influence of Philhellenism is what we see in the following passage from Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*:

The riches of the Greek world consist only of an infinite quantity of beautiful, lovely and pleasing individualities in the serenity which pervades all existence.

(Der Reichtum der griechischen Welt besteht nur in einer unendlichen Menge schöner, lieblicher, anmutiger Einzelheiten, in dieser Heiterkeit in allem Dasein.) (Hegel 1892, intro.), p. 154. Hegel 1986, p. 253)

The Nietzsche who claims to see ‘the terror and horror of existence (die Schrecken und Entsetzlichkeiten des Daseins)’ (BT § 3. KGW III, 1, § 3) in Greek tragedy surely could not assent to a characterisation of Greece that appears to extend only to the nature of the plastic arts, shining marble statues with their gaudy paint washed away by the ravages of time. The *Birth of Tragedy* acts to dispel the myth of early Greek optimism as such.

Goethe, too, is not safe from Nietzsche’s criticism, despite being hailed in 1888 as “the last German I hold in reverence (Goethe ist der letzte Deutsche, vor dem ich Ehrfurcht habe)” (TI IX § 51. KGW, VI, 3, *Götzen-Dämmerung* IX § 51). Evidence for this is spread across Nietzsche’s work: in GS, Nietzsche speaks of Goethe “spreading a Homeric light and splendour over all things (einen homerischen Licht- und Glorienschein über alle Dinge breitend).” (GS, § 370. KGW, V, 2, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* § 370) If we take into account BT § 3. KGW III, 1 § 3, where he indicates the correlation between the Homeric and the Apollonian, the inference is clear—Nietzsche believes that Goethe’s Greeks are subject to the same accusations of Philhellenism as Hegel’s. Nietzsche makes his belief that Goethe would deny the Dionysian abundantly clear in the following passage from TI:

We are affected quite differently when we test the concept of ‘Greek’ which Winckelmann and Goethe shaped for themselves, and find it incompatible with the element from which Dionysian art grows—the orgiastic. In fact I have no doubt that Goethe would have excluded anything like this in principle from the possibilities of the Greek soul. *Hence Goethe did not understand the Greeks.* For only in the Dionysian mysteries, the psychology of the Dionysian state, is the *basic fact* of the Hellenic instinct expressed.

(Ganz anders berührt es uns, wenn wir den Begriff „griechisch“ prüfen, den Winckelmann und Goethe sich gebildet haben, und ihn unverträglich mit jenem Elemente finden, aus dem die dionysische Kunst wächst,—mit dem Orgiasmus. Ich zweifle in der That nicht daran, dass Goethe etwas Derartiges grundsätzlich aus den Möglichkeiten der

griechischen Seele ausgeschlossen hätte. Folglich verstand Goethe die Griechen nicht. Denn erst in den dionysischen Mysterien, in der Psychologie des dionysischen Zustands spricht sich die Grundtatsache des hellenischen Instinkts aus.) (TI X § 4. KGW VI, 3, *Götzen-Dämmerung* X § 4).

This damning statement indicates that Philhellenism without an acknowledgement of the Dionysian amounts to a *misunderstanding* of the Greeks. Scholars have tried to defend Goethe from this attack; Adrian Del Caro calls Nietzsche's critique "absurd," as "in fact Goethe's understanding of the Greeks appears to be deeper and bolder than Nietzsche's" for the acknowledgment of the eternal feminine in *Faust*—an aspect that, Del Caro believes, is sorely lacking from Nietzsche's Dionysian vision. (Del Caro (2013), p. 122).

Nietzsche's second opponent is the moralising of the German Idealists. Aesthetics and morality are bound together by Kant in the *Critique of Judgment*: "Now I say: the beautiful is the symbol of the morally-good (Nun sage ich: das Schöne ist das Symbol des Sittlichguten)" (Kant 1987, §59). Hegel's interpretation of tragedy hinges on the moral.¹⁰⁷ The tragic collision in *Antigone* takes place in Creon's justified assertion of the law of the state against that of the family, and Antigone's assertion of her right, based in divine law, against that of the state. By asserting their own right, they both violate the right and law of the other. As Silk and Stern summarise eloquently:

What Hegel envisages is an absolute conflict, a total collision, of two rights. [...T]he tragic conflict becomes the conflict of law against law, right versus right. Morality—the objective condition of the spirit's working at a given time—is on both sides. (Silk and Stern 1981, 378-9).

Nietzsche believes that the moral response is an inadequate response to the tragic phenomenon, dismissing it wholesale in BT:

they never tire of characterizing the true essence of tragedy as the struggle of the hero with fate, the triumph

¹⁰⁷ See the *Antigone* section in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and Paolucci and Paolucci's collection of Hegel's comments on tragedy from across his corpus in *Hegel on Tragedy* (1962).

of a universal moral order, or the discharge of affects induced by tragedy; such persistence makes me think that they may not be susceptible to aesthetic stimulation at all, and that, when they are listening to tragedy, they can perhaps only be considered as moral beings.

([...] während sie nicht müde werden, den Kampf des Helden mit dem Schicksal, den Sieg der sittlichen Weltordnung oder eine durch die Tragödie bewirkte Entladung von Affecten als das eigentlich Tragische zu charakterisieren: welche Unverdrossenheit mich auf den Gedanken bringt, sie möchten überhaupt keine aesthetisch erregbaren Menschen sein und beim Anhören der Tragödie vielleicht nur als moralische Wesen in Betracht kommen.) (BT, § 22. KGW III, 1, § 22).

In fact, as we see in this late comment on Hegel and Kant, the entire moral system of the German Idealists comes under fire in Nietzsche's philosophy—not only where it applies to tragedy and the aesthetic:

Let us not be deceived either in the Kantian or in the Hegelian manner:—we no longer believe in morality, as they did, and consequently we have no need to found a philosophy with the aim of justifying morality.

(Wir wollen uns weder auf die Kantische noch Hegelsche Manier betrügen lassen: —wir g l a u b e n nicht mehr, wie sie, an die Moral und haben folglich auch keine Philosophien zu gründen, damit die Moral Recht behalte.) (Kaufmann 1968, § 415. KGW VIII, 1, NF-1885 2[195]).

Nietzsche's twofold attack on German Classicism and Idealism—against the Apollonian nature of Philhellenism, which denies the Dionysian, and the moralising of the German Idealists, which denies Nietzsche's vision of the aesthetic—is the result of his *tragische Weltanschauung*. (KGW III, 3, NF-1869 3[71]).

2.3.6. Summary

Nietzsche's characterisation of the intellectual culture of the archaic period of Greece as "tragic" is based on an understanding of tragedy predicated on philosophical pessimism. Pessimism and tragedy are the foundations of a life justified through aesthetic experience. This use of tragedy contrasts with German Classicism, which relies on an idealistic view of the Greeks that denies the Dionysian aspect, and with

German Idealism, which is criticised on the basis of moralising tragedy. This, I believe, is the intellectual background at work for Nietzsche's lectures on the Pre-Socratics, the philosophers of the tragic age of Greece; the question remains as to what extent this background manifests in his lecture courses on Heraclitus and Parmenides, and how successful a reading of the Presocratics this provides.

3. The Lectures: A Critical Reading

3.1. Lecture 7: Anaximander (DK12) [pp.31-38 / 239-246]

3.1.1. Introduction

Presocratic philosophy is generally taken to have begun in Miletus, on the coast of what is now modern Turkey, with the succession of three thinkers: Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes. The second Presocratic philosopher to feature in the lecture course is Anaximander (c.a. 6th century BC), the second of these Milesians. Anaximander's cosmogonical theory posits τὸ ἄπειρον [*to apeiron*] (DK12A9), the 'boundless', 'infinite', or 'indefinite', as a starting-point from which he builds a cosmology of a disc- or ring-shaped world:

He says the earth is cylindrical in shape, and has a depth one third its width. (ὕπαρχειν δὲ φησι τῷ μὲν σχήματι τὴν γῆν κυλινδροειδῆ, ἔχειν δὲ τοσοῦτον βάθος ὅσον ἂν εἴη τρίτον πρὸς τὸ πλάτος. tr. Graham. DK12A10)

[The earth's] shape is concave, round, like a column drum. (τὸ δὲ σχῆμα αὐτῆς γυρόν, στρογγύλον, κίονι λίθωι παραπλήσιον. DK12A11, tr. Graham.)

From this starting-point, Anaximander offers explanations for meteorological and astronomical phenomena such as the stars, eclipses, and storms:

Anaximander [says the sun] is a circle twenty-eight times the size of the earth, similar to a wagon wheel, having its rim hollow, full of fire, in one part emitting its fire through an opening as through a jet of fire. (Ἀναξίμανδρος κύκλον εἶναι ὀκτωκαίκοσαπλασίονα τῆς γῆς, ἀρματείωι τροχῷ παραπλήσιον, τὴν ἀψίδα ἔχοντα κοίλην, πλήρη πυρός, κατὰ τι μέρος ἐκφαίνουσιν διὰ στομίου τὸ πῦρ ὡσπερ διὰ πρηστῆρος ἀύλοῦ. DK12A21, tr. Graham.)

Anaximander [says] wind is a current of air when the most fine and moist parts of it are moved or dissolved by the sun. (Ἀναξίμανδρος ἄνεμον εἶναι ῥύσιν ἀέρος τῶν λεπτοτάτων ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ ὑγροτάτων ὑπὸ τοῦ ἡλίου κινουμένων ἢ τηκομένων. DK12A24, tr. Graham.)

Physical change is accounted for with the contraries of hot and cold, moist and dry:

His contraries are hot, cold, dry, moist, and the rest. (ἐναντιότητες δὲ εἰσι θερμόν, ψυχρόν, ξηρόν, ὑγρόν, καὶ

τὰ ἄλλα. DK12A9, tr. Graham.)

In this way, he can be thought of as a pioneer, exploring of the structure and happenings of the cosmos from a scientific perspective.

Anaximander is the Milesian who Nietzsche identifies as particularly important for the ‘tragic’ paradigm.¹⁰⁸ Privileging Anaximander’s cosmogony, Nietzsche places significance on the choice of τὸ ἄπειρον as the starting-point, and develops a ‘tragic’ reading of Anaximander’s most famous surviving fragment, DK12A9. Nietzsche argues that, essentially, a whole cosmology can be extrapolated from the short fragment: to exist materially is to be separated from being, and this separation has an ethical dimension – it is some kind of wrongdoing, for which our punishment is the fact of our mortality and the inevitability of our death. Nietzsche problematizes injustice, setting the stage for the Presocratics to follow.

Two issues arise from the lecture that require addressing. The first is concerned with the interpretative lens of the ‘tragic’ paradigm; the second, with the interpretative lens of philology. Firstly, Nietzsche’s philosophical interpretation of Anaximander through the ‘tragic’ paradigm, whilst not entirely unprecedented, turns out to be an unorthodox reading in the light of contemporary and modern interpretations of Anaximander. Secondly, an examination of Nietzsche’s use of ancient and contemporary sources in the lecture reveals that the basis of the ‘tragic reading’ is an out of date version of Simplicius’ commentary on Aristotle’s *Physics*. Textual emendations lead the modern reader away from the ‘tragic’ reading, to a reading that roots the text in the origins of physical science.

3.1.2. Nietzsche’s interpretation of Anaximander

The lecture opens with a collection of uncontroversial biographical details gathered from, among others, Diogenes Laertius and Themistius, which Nietzsche uses to place Anaximander firmly in the 6th century BCE.¹⁰⁹ Towards the end of the

¹⁰⁸ See this note from the notebooks of summer 1872 – early 1873: ‘[t]he tragic nature of existence. Anaximander. (Das Tragische des Daseins. Anaximander.)’ own. tr. KGW III, 4, NF-1872, 19 [18].

¹⁰⁹ DK12A1; DK12A7.

lecture, we find a summary which serves as an ideal starting-point for our exegesis.

Nietzsche writes:

His writing is important beyond its relation to Thales: acceptance of a metaphysically true Being, a world in opposition to Becoming and the transient physical world; the qualitatively undifferentiated as primal matter and, in contrast to it, all things qualitatively definite, individual, and particular as afflicted with injustice (ἀδικία); [and the] posing of the question concerning the value of human existence (the first pessimist philosopher). (Wichtiger Schritt über Thales hinaus: Annahme einer metaphysisch wahrhaft seienden einen Welt im Gegensatz zur wedenden u. vergehenden physischen. Das qualitativ Unbestimmte als Urstoff: ihm gegenüber alles qualitativ Bestimmte, Individuelle, Einzelne mit ἀδικία behaftet, Aufstellung der Frage nach der Wertschätzung des Daseins (der erste Philosoph Pessimist). *PPP* 37 / 246)

This summary can be broken down into three essential arguments. Firstly, is that the succession from Thales to Anaximander involves a moment of significant progress in the history of ideas: rather than beginning with a single material substance such as Thales' water, Anaximander begins with a metaphysical principle, separating existence into being and appearance. Secondly, is the argument concerning what Anaximander's metaphysical principle, τὸ ἄπειρον, is: Nietzsche considers a selection of possible interpretations, and settles on 'the indefinite', with interpretative consequences that follow. Thirdly, his metaphysical reading of DK12A9 engages with the 'tragic' paradigm – this is the gnostic character of identifying existent things as 'afflicted with injustice'.

3.1.2.1. Successions and Innovations

Nietzsche begins by asserting the existence of a master-pupil relationship between Thales and Anaximander. This is based on an uncited testimony calling Anaximander a 'ἑταῖρος γνώριμος [well-known associate]' (*PPP* 32 / 240), Diogenes Laertius' successions procedure, and inference based on their shared time and place. This enables him to understand Anaximander's thought as 'the intellectual continuation of Thales' ideas (das Weiterdenken des thaletischen Gedankens)' (*PPP*

32 / 240). The origin of the exact phrasing ‘ἑταῖρος γνώριμος’ is, by my account, untraceable. The *Stromata* is a likely source due to the linguistic similarities, and similar claims are made in sources such as DK12A2, DK12A4, and DK12A6.¹¹⁰ Nietzsche acknowledges two caveats: that Thales wrote nothing, so therefore the pedagogical relationship must have been based on an oral tradition; and that any account of lines of succession or schools in this time period are a later invention retroactively applied to explain the development of ideas (*PPP* 32 / 240). Due to the wealth of testimony on this matter, there is nothing controversial about attesting to a pedagogical relationship of some description between the Milesians – especially when consideration is made to mention that this is prior to the development of formal philosophical schools.

Nietzsche follows Aristotle in describing water as Thales’ ἀρχή [*arche*], or first principle (*PPP* 26-7 / 234-6). Anaximander’s great innovations over his teacher are, in Nietzsche’s opinion, coining the term ἀρχή, and designating not a single material substance such as water but a metaphysical principle – τὸ ἄπειρον [*to apeiron*] – as the ἀρχή.¹¹¹

3.1.2.2. τὸ ἄπειρον as ‘Indefinite’

Nietzsche makes a case against a common translation of τὸ ἄπειρον, and in turn makes the case for a translation of his own, with tangible interpretative consequences. ‘It is not the “Infinite”’, he argues, ‘but instead the “Indefinite” (Es heite nicht “das Unendliche” sondern “das Unbestimmte”)’ (*PPP* 36/245). This dismissal of the ‘infinity’ translation stands in contrast with near contemporaries such as Eduard Zeller, who translates τὸ ἄπειρον as ‘Das Unendliche’.¹¹² (There is evidence that Nietzsche has indeed read Zeller in this lecture – he cites him on *PPP* 37 / 245.) The interpretation of τὸ ἄπειρον as ‘infinite’ can be traced back at least as far as Aristotle. It is clear from DK12A15 (Arist. *Phy.* 203b6-28) that Aristotle interprets τὸ

¹¹⁰ DK12A10, ‘Ἀναξίμανδρον Θάλητος ἑταῖρον’.

¹¹¹ See also *PPP* 151 n24. / 360-2

¹¹² Zeller (1844-1852) I. 179-204.

ἄπειρον as ‘infinity’, as at least three of the five justifications he gives for a belief in τὸ ἄπειρον as first principle only work with the concept of ‘infinity’ in mind. These are the argument using the concept of time (1) and the arguments using mathematical infinity (2 and 5). Nietzsche believes that this interpretation of τὸ ἄπειρον is anachronistic: ‘the ancients [...] transferred to [Anaximander] problems recognised later (den Alten gelang, die viel später erkannte Probleme an ihn heranbrachten)’, he states (*PPP* 32 / 241). Kirk, Raven, and Schofield appear to agree – in their discussion of Anaximander’s τὸ ἄπειρον, they assert that it is not likely that the concept of infinity was widely used or comprehended until the time of Melissus and Zeno approximately a century later.¹¹³ Zeno’s paradox concerning the infinite division of distances to ‘prove’ the impossibility of motion is perhaps what Aristotle is referring to when he writes the second argument: ‘from the division in magnitudes (for mathematicians employ the concept of infinity)’. Nietzsche offers an explanation for this common misinterpretation. He reads the following passage from Pseudo-Plutarch’s *Placita Philosophorum* as preserving a direct quotation from Anaximander’s lost book: ‘λέγει γοῦν διότι ἄπειρόν ἐστιν, ἵνα μηδὲν ἐλλείπη ἢ γένεσις ἢ ὑφισταμένη.’¹¹⁴ Greg Whitlock’s translation does not present a strong case for reading this as a direct quotation.¹¹⁵ However, examination of the Greek leads to the conclusion that Nietzsche must have read the λέγει at the beginning of the sentence as evidence for his reading: it could indicate that direct speech follows. Read as a direct quote from Anaximander’s lost book, rather than a paraphrase burdened with the concepts of later thinkers, it appears to posit a primitive understanding of the concept of infinity – defined as that which ‘in no way fails’. Nietzsche argues that the sentence of Anaximander’s is the origin of Aristotle’s

¹¹³ Kirk, Raven, and Schofield (1983) 114.

¹¹⁴ Ps. Plut. *Plac.* 1.3. ‘He tells for example why it is [ἄπειρον], that the existing creation [of things] in no way fails’ (modified tr.). This passage does not appear to feature in Diels’ *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* as part of the fragments and testimony of Anaximander.

¹¹⁵ *PPP* 35 / 244 reads: ‘He tells for example why it is infinite, that the existing creation [of things] in no way fails (λέγει οὖν • διὰ τὸ ἄπειρόν ἐστιν; ἵνα μηδὲν ἐλλείπη ἢ γένεσις ἢ ὑφισταμένη)’. tr. Whitlock.

misconception: ‘this belief in [τὸ ἄπειρον] as ‘infinite’ refers precisely only to this sentence (Nun beruht aber jener Glaube an τὸ ἄπειρον als “unendlich” eben nur auf jenem Satz)’ (PPP 36 / 244). He argues that the sentence is the basis of Aristotle’s polemic against an infinite first principle in *Physics* 208a. Just as earlier in the *Physics* at 203b6-28 (DK12A15), Aristotle’s argument is coherent only if τὸ ἄπειρον is conceived as ‘infinity’.

Nietzsche justifies his argument against the interpretation of τὸ ἄπειρον as ‘infinite’ in relation to Anaximander’s physics. ‘That Anaximander considered the world [‘die Welt’] as infinite is impossible’, he states, ‘that is a misunderstanding of [τὸ ἄπειρον]. Otherwise, what could the ring of fire signify as the rind of the cosmic ball? (Eine volle Unmöglichkeit ist, daß A. die Welt für unendlich gehalten habe: das ist ein Mißverständniß des ἄπειρον: was hat sonst der Feuerkreis als Rinde der Weltkugel zu bedeuten?)’ (PPP 36-7 / 245) No references to primary source texts are given for this question. It appears to be a reference to DK12A10:

He says that that which is productive from the eternal of hot and cold was separated off at the coming-to-be of this world, and that a kind of sphere of flame from this was formed round the air surrounding the earth, like bark round a tree. (φησὶ δὲ τὸ ἐκ τοῦ αἰδίου γόνιμον θερμοῦ τε καὶ ψυχροῦ κατὰ τὴν γένεσιν τοῦδε τοῦ κόσμου ἀποκριθῆναι καὶ τινα ἐκ τούτου φλογὸς σφαῖραν περιφυῆναι τῷ περὶ τὴν γῆν ἀέρι ὡς τῷ δένδρῳ φλοιόν. DK12A10, tr. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield.)

DK12A21 and DK12A22 are also contenders, though these are more unambiguously describing the sun. Through the context of these fragments and testimonia, we can attempt to reconstruct what Nietzsche’s obscure point may have been. If there is an edge of some kind to the cosmos, this ring of fire, then the world [Welt] cannot be infinite – as an infinite world would not fit inside in a finite sphere or ring.¹¹⁶ By the same token, the nature of the primary substance cannot be infinite. This argument feeds into his opinion on the question of ‘countless worlds (zahllose Welten)’ (PPP 37

¹¹⁶ Note that this is not the only possible conclusion; the ‘infinite’ or ‘indefinite’ could be that which extends beyond the outer limits of the sun’s wheel. See White (2008) 103.

/ 246) in Anaximander. According to McKirahan, there are three principal interpretations of what is meant by ‘infinite’ or ‘countless’ worlds: the ‘coexistent worlds theory’, whereby an infinite number of worlds exist concurrently; the ‘successive worlds theory’, where one world is destroyed only to be followed by another; and the ‘one world theory’, where only one world exists.¹¹⁷ Nietzsche dismisses the possibility of coexistent worlds on PPP 37 / 246, expressing a preference for the successive worlds theory: ‘[h]ence this world perishes, yet Becoming does not cease; the next world coming to be must also perish (Also diese Welt geht zu Grunde: aber das Werden hört nicht auf: die nächstgewordene Welt muß auch zu Grunde gehen. Und so fort).’ The coexistent worlds theory requires the infinite universe dismissed on PP 36-7 / 245. The one world theory is only proposed in 1955, and one can only speculate on what Nietzsche’s opinion on it would be.¹¹⁸

Nietzsche also argues against the possibility of τὸ ἄπειρον being a material with any definite, or positive, qualities. It is neither elemental, as in DK12A16: ‘it is said to be something between air and water (Da soll es ein Mittelding zwischen Luft und Wasser sein)’ (PPP 34 / 242), nor is it a mixture, as in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* 12.2 (1069b): ‘the ‘mixture’ of Empedocles and Anaximander... (...καὶ Ἐμπεδοκλέους τὸ μῖγμα καὶ Ἀναξिमάνδρου...)’. Nietzsche is immediately very dismissive of the question of an elemental τὸ ἄπειρον, calling it ‘false and contradictory to the essence of [Anaximander’s τὸ ἄπειρον] (es ist rein willkürlich, an Anaximander zu denken, ja geradezu falsch und dem Wesen des ἄπειρον widersprechend)’ (PPP 34 / 243). He is similarly dismissive of the idea of τὸ ἄπειρον as a mixture. ‘Just as mistaken,’ he states, ‘is the argument, continued to this day, whether Anaximander had conceived [τὸ ἄπειρον] as a [μῖγμα] of all actual material or as indefinite material (Ebenso irrtümlich ist der noch bis jetzt fortgeführte Streit, ob Anax. das ἄπειρον als Mischung μῖγμα aller vorhandenen Stoffe oder als unbestimmten Stoff gefaßt habe)’ (PPP 34 / 243). Nietzsche identifies the line from Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* as the culprit here. He supposes that either τὸ ἄπειρον featured in the lacuna that follows in the

¹¹⁷ McKirahan (2001) 50.

¹¹⁸ See Kirk (1955).

text, or that Aristotle was drawing an ‘imprecise (ungenauer)’ comparison with Empedocles that has gone on to be misunderstood (PPP 35 / 243). It appears that Nietzsche believes that his argument for an ἄπειρον conceived of only in the negative is cogent enough to act as counter-argument to these alternative ancient discussions of what sort of thing τὸ ἄπειρον could be. We can only imagine that he would apply this reasoning in just the same way to modern discussions of τὸ ἄπειρον, such as Finkelberg’s argument that τὸ ἄπειρον is airy, anticipating Anaximenes.¹¹⁹

Having dismissed interpretations of τὸ ἄπειρον as *infinite*, as *elemental*, and as *mixture*, Nietzsche instead constructs an account of it in the negative – as *indefinite*, that which is without definite qualities. It is ‘ἀθάνατον [...] καὶ ἀνώλεθρον [immortal and indestructible]’ (PPP 32 / 241, DK12A15/B3) according to evidence from Aristotle, though the Greek Nietzsche gives here is different from the received text. The first principle is *indefinite* – without definite qualities. It is that which has definite qualities that comes to be and passes away. ‘So that γένεσις does not cease, the primal Being must be superior to it (D a m i t d i e γ έ ν ε σ ι ς n i e a u f h ö r t, m u ß d a s U r w e s e n ü b e r s i e e r h a b e n s e i n)’ (PPP 36 / 244). The meaning of this is connected to the third essential premise, where the definite and indefinite come to signify a kind of metaphysical dualism of reality and appearance.

3.1.2.3. ‘Tragic’ Reading of DK12A9

Thirdly, Nietzsche argues for a reading of Anaximander’s DK12A9 that fits within the ‘tragic’ paradigm. He cites Simplicius *in Phys.* 21.17 as his source for the fragment, but his Greek is an out-of-date version of the text (see the next section for discussion of this). The interpretative consequences become clear when the Greek as given by Nietzsche is rendered side-by-side with what we now think of as the received version:

¹¹⁹ Finkelberg (1993) 241.

Nietzsche's (PPP 33/241)

ἐξ ὧν δὲ ἡ γένεσις ἐστὶ τοῖς οὕσι καὶ
τὴν φορὰν [sic] εἰς ταῦτα γίνεσθαι,
κατὰ τὸ χρεῶν. διδόναι γὰρ αὐτὰ
τίσιν καὶ δίκην τῆς ἀδικίας κατὰ τὴν
τοῦ χρόνου τάξιν.

Graham's (2010, 50-1)

ἐξ ὧν δὲ ἡ γένεσις ἐστὶ τοῖς οὕσι, καὶ
τὴν φθορὰν εἰς ταῦτα γίνεσθαι κατὰ
τὸ χρεῶν · διδόναι γὰρ αὐτὰ δίκην
καὶ τίσιν ἀλλήλοις τῆς ἀδικίας κατὰ
τὴν τοῦ χρόνου τάξιν,

Firstly, he reverses the order of τίσιν and δίκην. Secondly, he gives φορὰν instead of φθορὰν. Thirdly, his text is missing ἀλλήλοις from the final phrase. These variations in the Greek lend the sentence a meaning slightly dissimilar to that we would find in Graham or in Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, one which translator Greg Whitlock renders as follows:

PPP 33 / 241

Kirk, Raven, and Schofield
(1983) 108

Graham (2010) 51

Where existent things have their coming-to-be, thereto must they also perish, 'according to necessity: for they must pay retribution and penalty for their injustices, in accordance with the assessment of time.'¹²⁰

And the source of coming-to-be for existing things is that into which destruction, too, happens 'according to necessity; for they pay penalty and retribution to each other for their injustice according to the assessment of Time'

From what things existing objects come to be, into them too does their destruction take place, **according to what must be: for they give recompense and pay restitution to each other for their injustice according to the ordering**

¹²⁰ Throughout the text of the lectures, Nietzsche occasionally does not provide a German translation for his Greek: this is one of those occasions. A comparison of the English translations of the different editions of the Greek, Nietzsche's text and our received text, show the subtle shift in meaning, but without a translation into Nietzsche's own words to elucidate how he understood the meaning of the sentence configured as such, this is as strong a case for his reading as can be attested.

Whitlock's translation does not appear to tackle the φορὰν / φθορὰν issue: φορὰν

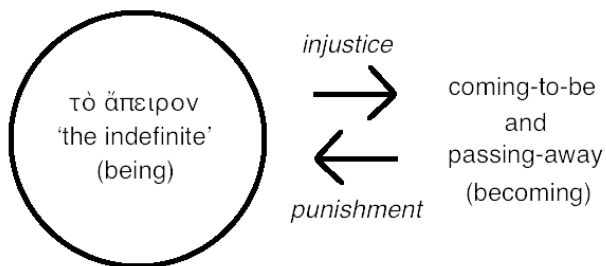
of time,

Nietzsche argues that τὸ ἄπειρον, as the Indefinite, is the background 'being' behind the world of 'becoming'. As such, τὸ ἄπειρον is atemporal, unbounded, and ungenerated. 'Becoming', in all its generation and destruction, emerges from τὸ ἄπειρον. Nietzsche calls this 'the incredible leap of Anaximander (Es war dies ein ungeheurer Sprung des Anaximander)': metaphysical dualism – the separation of things into *being* and *appearances* (PPP 33 / 241).

This metaphysical stance leads to an engagement with the 'tragic' paradigm. Nietzsche summarises that Anaximander must be the first philosophical pessimist, stating that 'the origin of the world as a sum of unexpiated injustices offers a look into the most profound ethical problems. (die Entstehung der Welt, als eine Summe

Anaximander

Nietzsche's interpretation of DK12A9



von abzubüßenden ἀδικίαι eröffnete einen Blick in die tiefsten ethischen Probleme.) '

(PPP 34 / 242) This is the result of his reading of 'διδόναι γὰρ αὐτὰ τίσις καὶ δίκην τῆς ἀδικίας κατὰ τὴν τοῦ χρόνου τάξιν'.

First, all that comes to be, passes away as a kind of paying penalty (τίσις) and a retribution for injustice (δίκην τῆς ἀδικίας): this means that becoming, the removal from the indefinite to the world of definite qualities, is itself an injustice. This leads him to the question: 'How can something that deserves to live pass away? (Wie kann etwas vergehen, was ein Recht hat zu sein!)' (PPP 33 / 242). We see clearly here the gnostic motifs of the 'tragic'

is surely an error on Nietzsche's part, as φορὰν does not serve as a conclusion of the coming-to-be of γένεσις in the same way that φθορὰν does – perhaps even the opposite. The root noun φορὰ, from the verb φέρω, is about carrying, with derivatives relating to freight, burdens, and even birth or gestation – where we end up in linguistically comparable territory to γένεσις. With Nietzsche providing no German translation of the text, it is impossible to assert one way or another whether this reading of φορὰν for φθορὰν is intentional or whether Nietzsche just dropped the theta.

paradigm: existence is some kind of mistake or punishment, and we will soon be returning to the undifferentiated 'being' from which we have emerged.

Important, too, is the emphasis on time and the order of time (κατὰ τὴν τοῦ χρόνου τάξιν). Time as a symbol of mortality, the taskmaster with the whip, and as that which *brings about* death itself, are important motifs in philosophical pessimism. For Nietzsche, the association between the injustice of becoming and time as the agent who brings end to this injustice is significant.

3.1.3. Issues

3.1.3.1. Issue 1: Nietzsche's interpretation

There are three interpretative issues apparent with the lecture on Anaximander. The first is his uncritical acceptance of testimony that Anaximander coined the term ἀρχή, or first principle. An examination of the Greek allows us to take a more critical view on this testimony. The second interpretative issue is more substantial: I examine both the basis for, and probability of, Nietzsche's pessimistic interpretation of DK12A9 itself. This requires an awareness of the history of interpretation of the fragment and of the manuscript tradition, in the light of which it becomes clear that Nietzsche's interpretation is problematic. Finally, some attention is paid to the incomplete exegesis of Anaximander's physics.

Firstly, Nietzsche asserts that Anaximander was the first to use the term ἀρχή, or first principle (*PPP* 32 / 241). This is based on Theophrastus' report, preserved in Simplicius' *in Phys*, that Anaximander 'πρῶτος τοῦτο τοῦνομα κομίσας τῆς ἀρχῆς'.¹²¹ Mansfeld points out that we can interpret this in two ways: one, that Anaximander was the first to use the term ἀρχή; second, that Anaximander was the first to specifically call the ἀρχή by the name 'τὸ ἄπειρον'.¹²² In this second reading, Theophrastus is merely calling τὸ ἄπειρον a first principle (ἀρχή), and stating that Anaximander was first to call the ἀρχή by the name τὸ ἄπειρον, not attributing the

¹²¹ DK12A9. 'the first to name this the first principle' (my rough translation).

¹²² Mansfeld (2011) 2.

origin of the term ἀρχή to Anaximander.¹²³ Nietzsche's interpretation is problematic due to this textual ambiguity, compounded by the lack of recognition of this 'almost classic' problem.¹²⁴

Secondly, Nietzsche's pessimistic interpretation of DK12A9 is considered out of date. According to Mansfeld, there are two historically significant interpretations of the fragment: the 'Orphic' or 'mystical' interpretation, and the 'naturalistic' or 'equilibrium' interpretation.¹²⁵ Nietzsche's 'tragic' reading is a variety of the former. However, I argue that it is likely the result of his use of an out of date version of Simplicius' *in Phys*. Textual emendations, available in his time, lead the reader away from the pessimistic or metaphysical reading to a modern reading that roots the text in the origins of physical science.¹²⁶

As explored above, Nietzsche's 'tragic' reading argues for a gnostic interpretation of DK12A9: the coming-to-be of things out of the Indefinite is some kind of injustice or crime, whose punishment is our very mortality. This strain of interpretation can be traced back as least as far as Heinrich Ritter, in his work '*Geschichte der Ionischen philosophie*' (1821). Ritter argues that DK12A9 is evidence that Anaximander thought of the coming-to-be of the worlds as some kind of unjust act:

Therefore Anaximander regarded the emergence of the world and heaven from the infinite primordial being as an unjust deed, as it was as a fall from the highest, legitimate authority and demanded of concepts an all-powerful prevailing justice, so that this wrongdoing also had to become its punishment.

Also betrachtete Anaximandros das hervorgehn [sic] der Welten und Himmel aus dem unendlichen Urwesen als eine ungerechte That, gleichsam als einen Abfall vom der höchsten, rechtmäßigen Gewalt und verlangte nach dem Begriffe einer allmächtig waltenden Gerechtigkeit, daß

¹²³ Mansfeld (2011) 2.

¹²⁴ Kirk (1955) 21-4.

¹²⁵ Kahn (1960) 194; Mansfeld (2011) 10; Vlastos (1997) 143, 'Anaximander's equilibrium of elements'.

¹²⁶ Published in Brandis (1835) 129 nF – at least 30 years before Nietzsche delivers his lectures.

dieser Missethat auch ihre Strafe werden müsse.¹²⁷

Nietzsche was familiar with Ritter's work; both the book above and Ritter and Preller's *'Historia philosophiae Graecae'* (1869) were in his library.¹²⁸ The latter was one of the assigned textbooks for the lecture course itself.¹²⁹

The missing ἀλλήλοισ from the text of DK12A9 in Nietzsche's rendering above tells us something about which texts he used and how these influenced his interpretation. The ἀλλήλοισ is, in fact, missing from printed texts of Simplicius until 1835, with the publication of Brandis' *Handbuch der Geschichte der griechisch-römischen philosophie*.¹³⁰ This means that it would have been missing from the received text used by Ritter when he wrote the 1821 *'Geschichte'*, and explains its inclusion in Ritter and Preller's *'Historia'*, as its first edition was published in 1838, after the newer printed text of Simplicius became available. The missing ἀλλήλοισ in Nietzsche's rendering of the fragment suggests then that he has not used the *'Historia'* as his source for the Greek in the lecture. The *'Geschichte'* does not give the Greek fragments and testimonia in its discussion of Anaximander. Where, then, has Nietzsche's Greek come from? Another textbook for the course is Mullach's *'Fragmenta philosophorum graecorum'*; this text, despite its publication in 1860, does not feature ἀλλήλοισ in the fragment.¹³¹ It is possible that this, then, is Nietzsche's source for the Greek text of Simplicius, and that Ritter's *'Geschichte'* influenced his 'tragic' interpretation.

Whilst Nietzsche's tenure was decades before the publication of Heidel's 1912 article discussed below, he would have had access to a copy of the newer text of Simplicius featuring ἀλλήλοισ, since, as stated above, this text is in *'Historia'*, one of the texts assigned to his students. The argument Kahn makes appears to be that if Nietzsche had seen the significance of the inclusion of ἀλλήλοισ in the complete

¹²⁷ Ritter (1821) 188-9. Unpublished translation via Dr. Dino Jakušić.

¹²⁸ Specifically this 1869 edition and not the 1838 first edition; see Brobjer (2008) 240.

¹²⁹ Nietzsche (1992) 407.

¹³⁰ Brandis (1835) 129 nF.

¹³¹ Mullach (1860) 240.

version of the text of Simplicius, that he would of course have realised the issues with his ‘tragic’ reading of the fragment.¹³² Kahn substantiates his criticism of this interpretation in the use of ἀλλήλοισ: ‘this view cannot explain why compensation is paid by things *to one another* (ἀλλήλοισ)’.¹³³ By this, Kahn means that injustice takes the form of one agent doing injury to another. A reciprocal relationship of injustice and compensation that ends in both agents ceasing to exist is, in his view, ‘strange’;¹³⁴ if both agents cease to exist, then neither can benefit from the meting out of justice in this way. Furthermore, Kahn seems perturbed by the continued use of the older version of the text: ‘strangely enough, the incomplete version was still cited throughout the nineteenth century (e.g., by Nietzsche)’.¹³⁵ Mansfeld, too, bases his criticism of a Nietzschean interpretation on ἀλλήλοισ, stating that this position is ‘only arguable as long as ἀλλήλοισ is absent, or is ignored’.¹³⁶ On this basis, it appears that we can criticise Nietzsche for including only the interpretation of Anaximander that fits with his ‘tragic’ reading of the Presocratics, as it is predicated on some kind of wilful or careless exclusion of the updated text of Simplicius and the ἀλλήλοισ which proves problematic for this reading.

Upon inclusion of the ἀλλήλοισ, we reach the second historically significant interpretation of DK12A9, which can be called the ‘equilibrium’ interpretation. It becomes historically significant following the publication of an article by Diels’ student, Heidel,¹³⁷ who indicates the importance of ἀλλήλοισ – the sense given by the dative of something done ‘*to one another*’ – and asks what it could mean for justice and compensation to be given *among peers*, rather than as a force of the cosmos against the agent. ‘What then are the peers that are engaged in this truly Greek ἀγών? We can think of nothing but the “opposites” mentioned in our sources’, he states.¹³⁸ Simplicius attributes the essential contrary elements to Anaximander –

¹³² Kahn (1960) 193-6.

¹³³ Kahn (1960) 194.

¹³⁴ Kahn (1960) 194.

¹³⁵ Kahn (1960) 194.

¹³⁶ Mansfeld (2011) 11.

¹³⁷ Heidel (1912) 233-4.

¹³⁸ Heidel (1912) 234.

the hot and the cold, and the dry and the moist.¹³⁹ Combining the opposite elements with the reading of the fragment as injustice and compensation done to one another as peers, we end up with an idea of cosmic equilibrium: these contraries changing into one another in constant contest. One element takes the place of another by injustice; the compensation is that element taking back its ground. This is how no one element gains dominance – the hot and the cold and the dry and the moist are in eternal interchange into one another.¹⁴⁰

There is a third significant interpretation of Anaximander. It is similar to the 'naturalistic' or 'equilibrium' view above in that it does not indulge in the pessimistic and existential concerns of Nietzsche's 'tragic' reading, but it differs in that the interchange of the contrarities does not result in a state of equilibrium. This accounts for the natural eschatology of DK12A27, that the sea will one day dry up completely, without assigning it a gnostic character.¹⁴¹ This position is held by scholars such as Mansfeld, but it is, on his own admission, a 'minority view'.¹⁴²

The final issue with Nietzsche's interpretation of Anaximander concerns his neglect to present a complete account of Anaximander's physics, despite the resources available to him. 'Relative to the fundamental idea, the other physical doctrines are less important', (PPP 36) he states. This is followed by a brief account of the physics with no reference to primary source materials. Whilst the earth for Anaximander is cylindrical, no mention of this is made by Nietzsche.¹⁴³ Whilst reference is made on PPP 36-7 / 245 to wheels or rings of fire, he does not name the number of them, though we know from testimonia that there are three: one each for the stars, the moon, and the sun.¹⁴⁴ Despite Nietzsche's assertion above that the

¹³⁹ *Simp. in Phys.* 150.24-25.

¹⁴⁰ Mansfeld (2011) 11.

¹⁴¹ 'Anaximander's explanation of the generation of the world as a natural process comparable to the generation of, say, a tree, or a marine animal, unavoidably suggests that, just as such a tree or animal, the world too will at one time come to its end.' Mansfeld (2011) 15.

¹⁴² Mansfeld (2011) 11.

¹⁴³ DK12A10, DK12A11, DK12A25.

¹⁴⁴ DK12A10, DK12A11, DK12A18; KRS 134 f.

physics are ‘less important’, scholars such as White argue that Anaximander’s physics – in particular, the rings – are significant in the development of astronomy; one could consider this a first step towards our modern understanding of the workings of planetary orbit.¹⁴⁵ Further to this, Couprie argues that Anaximander can be credited with the discovery of space itself.¹⁴⁶ Dismissing the physical theory of Anaximander, when its significance can be argued thusly, leads to an image of a Nietzsche blinkered against aspects of Presocratic thought that do not contribute to his ‘tragic’ schema.

3.1.3.2. Issue 2: Sources

The lecture suffers from two issues related to source material: firstly, the existence of some inconsistencies in Nietzsche’s citations, and secondly, the range and kind of ancient material consulted. The first issue is mitigated in part by the fact that he never intended the lectures as they are to be published; *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* was his unfinished attempt to convert the material into a prose manuscript for publication. If the comparison is to be made with *PTAG*, then we should be grateful that Nietzsche leaves any citations for his ancient authors in the lecture at all - *PTAG*, like *The Birth of Tragedy*, suffers from a deficit of scholarly paraphernalia. Thankfully, most of the citations in the lecture are mostly legible. However, there are three kinds of problem citation in the lecture: incorrect citation, indiscernible citation, and absent citation. On *PPP* 32 / 240, a passing reference is made to Pliny, which Nietzsche references as Pliny’s *Histories* 2.76. In DK13A14a, the reference for the passage from Pliny in question is given as *Histories* 2.186. On *PPP* 37 / 245, Nietzsche states that ‘Simplicius counts Anaximander among those who held the world to be bounded (Simplic. Schol. in Arist. 505, a, 15 rechnet A. zu denen, welche die Welt für begrenzt hielten)’. The reference given here can be expanded to ‘Simplicius, Scholia in Aristotelem 505a, 15’. This does not follow the convention for citing Simplicius, which gives the title of the specific work of Aristotle Simplicius is commenting on, rather than merely ‘scholia in Aristotle’; as a result, neither I nor the

¹⁴⁵ White (2008) 103-4.

¹⁴⁶ See Couprie (2003).

translator of the English language edition could discern exactly what Nietzsche is referring to here. On *PPP* 36 / 245, Nietzsche states that ‘Anaximander described the stars as gods (the inhabitants of heaven) (Die Sterne hat A. als die Götter bezeichnet (die Bewohner des Himmels))’, without reference to source material. It is likely to be a reference to DK12A17.

In terms of ancient sources, Nietzsche constructs the majority of his account from Aristotle’s *Physics* and *Metaphysics*. Even where he refers to Alexander, the citations he gives are for Aristotle. Another source is Diogenes Laertius. The reasons why these sources are problematic are clear from 1.4.2. and 1.4.3.: Aristotle’s account is coloured with his own philosophical ideas, and the biography tradition is fundamentally unreliable. Another ancient source is Simplicius’ commentary on the *Physics*, which Nietzsche cites as his source for the most famous fragment of Anaximander. It is unclear exactly which edition he used. The only text of Simplicius in his library is the commentary on Epictetus’ *Enchiridion*.¹⁴⁷ The missing ἀλλήλοισ from his rendering of the Greek indicates that it is unlikely that he used Ritter and Preller’s ‘*Historia*’ as his main textual source. It is possible that it is Mullach, as this text is another textbook recommended for the course, appears in Nietzsche’s library, and, despite its 1860 publication, is missing the ἀλλήλοισ.¹⁴⁸ The question remains of whether he is unaware of the textual variation between Mullach on the one hand and Ritter and Preller on the other, or whether he has simply not seen any significance in it, his own lecture reflecting the incomplete rendering of Simplicius from Mullach.

In terms of contemporary sources, there is evidence in this lecture that Nietzsche has read Zeller’s *Das Philosophie der Griechen*, as he cites it at *PPP* 37. As described above, he has read Ritter’s ‘*Geschichte der Ionischen philosophie*’, Ritter and Preller’s ‘*Historia philosophiae Graecae*’, and Mullach’s ‘*Fragmenta Philosophorum Graecorum*’.

¹⁴⁷ See Brobjer (2008) 255.

¹⁴⁸ Nietzsche (1992) 407; Brobjer (2008) 247; Mullach (1860) 240.

3.1.4. Summary

Nietzsche argues for a reading of Anaximander which fits with his 'tragic' paradigm: it posits that existence is an injustice, for which we pay the penalty with our eventual demise. However, this reading is reliant on an outdated edition of the fragment, that scholars, from Heidel and Kahn to the present day, have argued is just not tenable. Justice does not end in mutual destruction, but in the vindication of one and punishment of another. This lends to an 'equilibrium' reading of Anaximander – that the contrarities are in constant competition, and this accounts for physical change. Whilst Nietzsche cannot be criticised for not showing an awareness of the 'equilibrium' reading in his lecture, he can be criticised on the grounds of using an out-of-date edition of Simplicius' *in Phys.*, which lends itself to his reading.

3.2. Lecture 8: Anaximenes (DK13) [pp.39-43 / 247-251]

3.2.1. Introduction

The eighth lecture in the course features the third Milesian – Anaximenes (c.a. 6th century BC). He identifies ‘air’ (ἀέρα) as the basic matter of the cosmos (DK13A1, DK13A4, DK13A5, etc.), and accounts for change with a theory of its condensation and rarefaction. Air can present as fire, air, wind, cloud, water, earth, and stone, depending on its density:

It differs in essence in accordance with its rarity or density. When it is thinned it becomes fire, while when it is condensed it becomes wind, then cloud, when still more condensed, water, then earth, then stones. Everything else comes from these. (διαφέρειν δὲ μανότητι καὶ πυκνότητι κατὰ τὰς οὐσίας. καὶ ἀραιούμενον μὲν πῦρ γίνεσθαι, πυκνούμενον δὲ ἄνεμον, εἶτα νέφος, ἔτι δὲ μᾶλλον ὕδωρ, εἶτα γῆν, εἶτα λίθους, τὰ δὲ ἄλλα ἐκ τούτων. tr. Graham. DK13A5)

This is compared to the process of felting, or *πίλησις* (DK13A7), offering an explanation for how the compression and related density of the one substance can result in a change of properties in that substance.

In this lecture, Nietzsche shows much more interest in Anaximenes in relation to other Presocratic philosophers than as a philosopher worthy of individual study. He introduces the idea of ‘original philosophers (origineller Philosophen)’ (PPP 42 / 251), which becomes important further on in the lecture course. Anaximenes, Nietzsche concludes, is merely ‘a *forerunner* (ein *Vorläufer*)’ (PPP 43 / 251) to these ‘original philosophers’, and this opinion results in neglect in the report of Anaximenes’ thought. The exegesis of Anaximenes’ theory of change and the place of this theory in the origin of the natural sciences, is brief. In addition to this, Nietzsche makes no mention of ‘felting’.

Anaximenes may not be the most ‘popular’ of the Presocratics; to date, there is not a single English-language monograph on his thought.¹⁴⁹ In contrast, consider

¹⁴⁹ Graham (2010) 94 lists no English-language monographs on Anaximenes in his bibliography, though he does include a German-language monograph by Wöhrle (1993).

the wealth of scholarship on some of the philosophers who follow him immediately in the standard chronology: Heraclitus, Parmenides, and Xenophanes.¹⁵⁰ However, one may wonder whether his neglect in this instance is due to Nietzsche's own interpretative interests when it comes to the Presocratics: Anaximenes does not contend with the problem of injustice as posed by Anaximander, and does not appear to fit into the 'tragic' paradigm. His physical theory does not contend with either the metaphysical or the ethical dimensions of the 'tragic' paradigm.

3.2.2. Nietzsche's Interpretation of Anaximenes

3.2.2.1. *Dating and succession*

Having concluded lecture 7 by naming Anaximenes as Anaximander's successor (PPP 38), Nietzsche opens lecture 8 with an exploration of the issues of dating and succession that concludes otherwise. Nietzsche dismisses the theory of a direct succession from Anaximander to Anaximenes, and introduces Parmenides as an intermediary, as follows:

Thus in the second year of Olympiad 58, Anaximander flourishes at sixty-four years of age. A twenty-year-old Parmenides hears him. In Olympiad 69 Parmenides flourishes at sixty-four years of age. Anaximenes is taught by him at twenty years of age.

(Also Ol. 58, 2 blüht Anaximander (64 Jahre alt). Bei ihm hört 20jährig Parmenides.

69 blüht Parmenides (64 Jahre alt). Bei ihm hört Anaximenes 20jährig.) (PPP 40 / 248)

This is an unusual order, as Anaximenes is usually taken to be a pupil of Anaximander.¹⁵¹ However, according to Nietzsche's theory, Anaximenes was born

¹⁵⁰ See Kahn (1979), Palmer (2009), and Lesher (1992) respectively.

¹⁵¹ Anaximenes comes after Anaximander in Diels-Kranz. The possibility of succession is discussed by both Kirk, Raven, and Schofield (1983) 143 and Graham (2010) 72; they all minimally agree that Anaximenes is younger. Scholarship often takes a pedagogical relationship between Anaximander and Anaximenes for granted, such as when Classen (1977) 99 calls Anaximenes 'a pupil of Anaximander's'.

too late to be a pupil of Anaximander. Therefore, the line of succession must have run from Anaximander to Parmenides to Anaximenes. Nietzsche uses evidence from Theophrastus via Diogenes Laertius to support this hypothesis, stating that '[a]ccording to Laertius, Theophrastus testifies in his φυσική ιστορία that Parmenides had been a pupil of Anaximander (Nach Laert. IX 21 bezeugt Theophrast in seiner φυσική ιστορία daß Parmenides den Anaximander gehört habe)' (PPP 40 / 247: DL 9.21, DK28A1) He goes on to take this as evidence that Theophrastus rejected a master-pupil relationship between Anaximander and Anaximenes: 'this most ancient witness [Theophrastus] rejected the Anaximander-Anaximenes διαδοχαί (dieser älteste Zeuge somit die διαδοχαί Anaximander – Anaximenes leugnet)' (PPP 40 / 248), in favour of an Anaximander-Parmenides succession. Furthermore, on PPP 41 / 249, he gives an uncited table of datings from Apollodorus to support the claim that Anaximenes is too young to be a pupil of Anaximander. From this collection of evidence, he comes to the following conclusion: '[w]e separate Anaximenes from Anaximander, therefore, and believe that he belongs with Parmenides (Wir scheiden also Anaximenes von Anaximander und glauben, daß er bei Parmenides gehört hat)' (PPP 41 / 250).

However, the evidence is not as straightforward or definitive as Nietzsche's argument in the lecture would make it appear. Whilst Diogenes Laertius states 'τοῦτον Θεόφραστος ἐν τῇ Ἐπιτομῇ Ἀναξίμανδρου φησὶν ἀκοῦσαι'¹⁵² in 9.21 (DK28A1), it is thought that this sentence refers to Xenophanes, not Parmenides.¹⁵³ Furthermore, in 2.3, Diogenes Laertius writes 'Ἀναξίμενης [...] ἤκουσεν Ἀναξίμανδρου, ἔνιοι δὲ καὶ Παρμενίδου φασὶν ἀκοῦσαι αὐτόν'.¹⁵⁴ This shows that Diogenes Laertius cannot be used for a definitive answer to this question of successions. In DK13A5, Simplicius gives evidence from Theophrastus that 'Ἀναξίμενης [...] ἑταῖρος γεγωνὼς Ἀναξίμανδρου': 'Anaximenes [... was] a companion

¹⁵² 'Theophrastus in his *Epitome* makes him a pupil of Anaximander' (tr. Hicks).

¹⁵³ 'Notiz, die sich auf Xenophanes bezieht', writes Diels (DK28A1 22-23n). Kirk, Raven, and Schofield (1983) make a similar comment at 240.

¹⁵⁴ 'Anaximenes [...] was a pupil of Anaximander. According to some, he was also a pupil of Parmenides.' (tr. Hicks).

of Anaximander'. On consideration of this evidence, it is difficult to support the conclusion that Nietzsche's 'most ancient witness' rejected a relationship between Anaximander and Anaximenes.

The Anaximander-Parmenides-Anaximenes order of succession has been disputed by contemporary scholars as well. Graham argues that it is possible that Anaximenes is the subject of criticism in both Heraclitus and Parmenides.¹⁵⁵ This would necessitate Anaximenes' acme being prior to Parmenides.

3.2.2.2. *Anaximenes' Physics*

Whilst Anaximenes may be, in Nietzsche's opinion, 'impoverished and unoriginal as a philosopher', Nietzsche does pay some attention to his significance as 'a student of nature (Anaximenes ist jedenfalls eine weit geringere u. unoriginellere Natur, als Philosoph u. Metaphysiker, aber weit bedeutender als Naturforscher)' (PPP 38 / 246), with a brief discussion of Anaximenes' physics on PPP 42 / 250. '[A]ll things have arisen due to *the thinning and thickening of an original material* (es sei alles durch Verdünnung und Verdickung eines Urstoffs entstanden)', Nietzsche states, and cites DK13A5. This original material is named only twice, and, furthermore, only in the final quarter of the lecture, as 'air' (*Luft*) (PPP 42 / 250). Air thins into fire, and thickens, or condenses, into wind, clouds, water, earth, and, finally, stone (PPP 42 / 250).

Nietzsche is more interested in the theory of change that underpins Anaximenes' theory of the condensation and rarefaction of air than the identification of air itself as the primary substance. He identifies this theory of change as Anaximenes' real contribution to Presocratic science: 'his feat is not to suggest something as the primal material but rather his ideas about the *development* of the primal matter. (Denn nicht sowohl das, was er als Urstoff hinstellte, ist seine That, sondern der Gedanke über die Entwicklung des Urstoffs.)' (PPP 42 / 251) Scholarship acknowledges the significance of this contribution, though Classen warns us not to overestimate how exactly scientific Anaximenes' theory is, as it does not explain the

¹⁵⁵ Graham (2003) 7-8.

causes behind rarefaction and condensation.¹⁵⁶

Here, we see the consequences of Nietzsche's having insisted on placing Anaximenes after Parmenides chronologically. In Nietzsche's opinion, Anaximenes rejects the question of metaphysics wrestled over by Parmenides, exploring instead mechanical principles and explanations for natural phenomena (PPP 42 / 250). He writes that this advancement in the development of early science – the theory of the change of a single substance into different observed phenomena – anticipates the atomism of the later Presocratics, and 'already assumes Heraclitus and Parmenides: [atomism] immediately after Anaximander would be a miraculous leap! (Dies ist aber eine viel jüngere Stufe, die Heraclit u. Parmenides schon voraussetzt. Gleich nach Anaximander wäre das ein wunderlicher Sprung)' (PPP 42 / 250). The possibility of interpreting Anaximenes as a forerunner to the atomists is disputed by modern scholarship, however. As Kirk, Raven, and Schofield state, '[a] more certainly false interpretation is that which makes Anaximenes the forerunner of atomism [...] it seems unlikely that anyone before Heraclitus bothered about the formal constitution of matter'.¹⁵⁷

Finally, there is a glaring omission in Nietzsche's account of the physics of Anaximenes. He makes no mention of *πίλησις* [*pilēsis*], or *felting*. Anaximenes uses felting as an analogy to explain his theory of change. As wool is compressed to make felt, so air is compressed into cloud, and so forth; 'from air cloud is produced by *felting* [κατὰ τὴν πίλησιν]' (DK13A7). The source of this testimonia is Hippolytus' *Refutation of All Heresies* 1.7, which Nietzsche makes reference to on PPP 40 n6 – but only to aid his discussion of dating. This is evidence that Nietzsche was aware of 'felting' and for unknown reasons omitted it from his exegesis of Anaximenes. However, one could argue that, if 'felting' can be interpreted as some kind of 'condensing', then Nietzsche's account is not necessarily making a large omission. However, as Graham argues, felting serves to explain *how* compression can change the properties of a thing, and therefore felting serves as *complementary* to

¹⁵⁶ See Graham (2003) 1 and Classen (1977) 101.

¹⁵⁷ Kirk, Raven, and Schofield (1983) 148.

rarefaction and condensation: it exemplifies *how* this process works.¹⁵⁸ Therefore, it should be considered as a separate and necessary aspect of an exegesis of Anaximenes' thought.

3.2.3. 'Original Philosophers (origineller Philosophen)'

In this lecture, Nietzsche identifies seven 'original philosophers (origineller Philosophen)', whose thought epitomises for him 'seven independent paradigms (7 u a n a b h ä n g i g e Rubriken)' (PPP 42 / 251). The idea appears to be that these are the Presocratics who he sees as more historically significant than their contemporaries. They are as follows:

(1) Anaximander, (2) Heraclitus, (3) the Eleatics, (4) Pythagoras, (5) Anaxagoras, (6) Empedocles, and (7) the atomists (Democritus).

(1) Anaximander 2) Heraclit 3) Eleaten 4) Pythagoras 5) Anaxagoras 6) Empedocles 7) Atomistik (Democrit.) (PPP 42-3 / 251)

The significance of these seven 'original philosophers' becomes clear when they are placed in contrast to the three 'purest' named on PPP 58 / 265.¹⁵⁹ Anaximenes, he argues, is a precursor to the final three of these philosophers – Anaxagoras, Empedocles, and the atomists. This is accompanied by what appears to be a value judgement about Anaximenes: '[h]is relationship to them is similar to that of Leucippus to Democritus, Xenophanes to Parmenides, or Thales to Anaximander (Er steht ähnlich wie Leucippus zu Democrit, wie Xenophanes zu Parmenides, wie Thales zu Anaximander)' (PPP 43 / 251). Just as Nietzsche sees Leucippus, Xenophanes, and Thales as important for their influence on the Presocratics he names as his 'original philosophers', he sees Anaximenes as less historically significant in his own right, but important as an influence upon more historically significant Presocratic philosophers. This, then, may be the source of the neglect evident in Nietzsche's exegesis of Anaximenes. For Nietzsche, these 'original philosophers' are the ones that map more

¹⁵⁸ Graham (2010) 92.

¹⁵⁹ See 3.3.2.2.

closely onto his tragic paradigm. Anaximander poses the problem of the injustice of existence, and, to be considered significant, the worldview of the philosophers to follow must contend with this problem. Therefore, Nietzsche skips here straight from Anaximander to Heraclitus. The lack of substantive material on Anaximenes in the lecture on Anaximenes is, then, due to Nietzsche's own interpretative interests when it comes to the Presocratics: Anaximenes, as merely a forerunner, does not fit into Nietzsche's 'tragic' paradigm.

3.2.4. Sources

This lecture is heavily reliant on testimonia from Diogenes Laertius, entries from the Suda, and Simplicius' commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*. Oddly, Nietzsche does not seem to have noticed the issue with using Diogenes Laertius to corroborate the testimonia of Apollodorus and vice versa on PPP 39 / 247. Reference is made to Hippolytus in the discussion of dating, though, as discussed above, Hippolytus is conspicuously absent from the account of Anaximenes' physics. In terms of contemporary sources, once again, Nietzsche cites Zeller (PPP 40 n4 / 247).

3.2.5. Summary

Anaximenes appears to be relegated to the status of 'forerunner' by Nietzsche, leading to neglect in the exegesis of Anaximenean physics. He finds no 'tragic' or 'gnostic' traces in Anaximenes' thought: Anaximenes does not engage with the ethical dimension of existence and the problem of injustice posed by Anaximander, but 'merely' produces a mechanism to explain change. Whilst it is scientifically significant, Nietzsche does not find it significant for his project of establishing a 'tragic age' of Greece.

3.3. Lecture 10: Heraclitus (DK22) [pp. 53-74 / 261-282]

3.3.1. Introduction

Heraclitus of Ephesus (c.a. late 6th century BC – early 5th century BC) is notorious for the obscurity in his writings. To muddy the waters further, Heraclitus' interpreters, from the 5th century disciple Cratylus onwards through the philosophers of late antiquity, to the Church fathers and beyond, have all brought their own ideas and motivations to the study of his remaining obscure fragments.¹⁶⁰ In his monograph on Heraclitus, Kahn warns us about the difficulty – and asks the question of the *possibility* – of ever being able to reconstruct authentic Heraclitean thought.¹⁶¹ Despite this, we can identify some of the key motifs in the philosophy of Heraclitus, though their interpretation is fraught with options of varying scholarly and philosophical value. First, is the Logos [λόγος]:

Of this [λόγος]'s being forever do men prove to be uncomprehending, both before they hear and once they have heard it. For although all things happen according to this [λόγος], they are like the unexperienced experiencing words and deeds (τοῦ δὲ λόγου τοῦδε ἐόντος αἰεὶ ἀξύνετοι γίνονται ἄνθρωποι, καὶ πρόσθεν ἢ ἀκοῦσαι, καὶ ἀκούσαντες τὸ πρῶτον • γινουμένων γὰρ πάντων κατὰ τὸν λόγον τόνδε ἀπίροισιν εἰκόασι, περιώμενοι ἐπέων καὶ ἔργων τοιούτων, tr. Graham. DK22B1)

Is this Logos some kind of cosmic principle or law? This gives a grand significance to man's inability to comprehend it: the proposition becomes that people do not understand the laws that govern the cosmos or perhaps being itself. Or, is the Logos meant in a more mundane sense of the noun, that is, referring to Heraclitus' actual account, speech, or word? In this reading, Heraclitus asserts here only that people struggle to understand his philosophy.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Kahn (1979) 87.

¹⁶¹ Kahn (1979) 87.

¹⁶² Though this interpretation goes back as far as the Stoics, Burnet (1892) 133 n has 'no hesitation' in dismissing the cosmic principle interpretation in favour of a more conventional reading of the noun. It is defended as recently as de Beer (2015) 5. Johnstone (2014) catalogues significant contributions to the scholarship on this issue, and offers his own interpretation.

Second, is the doctrine of flux:

On those stepping into rivers staying the same other and other waters flow. (ποταμοῖσι τοῖσιν αὐτοῖσιν ἐμβαίνουσιν ἕτερα καὶ ἕτερα ὕδατα ἐπιρρεῖ. DK22B12, tr. Graham.)

Is flux a doctrine of radical change and denial of permanence? This fragment exists in the pop-philosophy discourse as “you cannot step into the same river twice”, evoking the changing waters as proof that there never really is the ‘same’ river to step into. Reading the Greek original, the possibility arises that the flux doctrine is a discourse on the stability of substrates through the process of change. The waters that flow through the Firth of Forth are in a constant process of change as water comes down from the Trossachs and flows out to the North Sea, but there continues to exist something that persists which we can identify as the Firth of Forth from one moment to the next.¹⁶³

Third, is fire:

From fire all things are composed and into it all things dissolved. (ἐκ πυρὸς τὰ πάντα συνεστάναι καὶ εἰς τοῦτο ἀναλύεσθαι. DK22A1, tr. Graham.)

Is fire a metaphor for the radical form of the flux doctrine, with the constant shift of its flickering flame representing change? Or is it a primary substance from which all other things are constituted, like Thales’ water, and Anaximenes’ air, and Democritus’ atoms? Is it the agent of a cosmic cycle of conflagration, the destruction of all that exists by fire? Or is it a symbol of life, offering warmth like the human body?¹⁶⁴

Finally, the unity of opposites:

Sea is the purest and most polluted water: for fish drinkable and healthy, for men undrinkable and harmful. (θάλασσα ὕδωρ καθαρώτατον καὶ μιαρώτατον, ἰχθύσι μὲν πότιμον καὶ σωτήριον, ἀνθρώποισι δὲ ἄποτον καὶ ὀλέθριον. DK22B61, tr. Graham.)

Sickness makes health pleasant and good, hunger satiety, weariness rest. (νοῦσος ὑγίειν ἐποίησεν ἡδὺ καὶ ἀγαθόν,

¹⁶³ See 3.5.2.5.1.

¹⁶⁴ Kahn (1979) 132-138 offers a good analysis of the question of fire.

λιμὸς κόρον, κάματος ἀνάπαυσιν. DK22B111, tr. Graham.)

Is Heraclitus describing the selfsame identification of one thing with its opposite, flouting the Aristotelian law of non-contradiction over 100 years before its formalisation? Or is it a treatise on the logical necessity of opposite concepts? Or is it another corollary to (a certain interpretation of) the flux doctrine, about the preservation of some thing through change, as one thing becomes its opposite but retains its essential identity?¹⁶⁵

Despite these difficulties in establishing a positive account of Heraclitus' thought, Heraclitus is the most popular Presocratic among Nietzsche scholars.¹⁶⁶ It can be argued that anticipations of Nietzsche's later thought are to be found here in the interpretation of Heraclitus in the lectures; for one, he calls the Ephesian 'übermenschlich' (PPP 55 / 263), a foreshadowing of the future philosophy of the 'übermensch', or 'overman'.¹⁶⁷ In fact, Nietzsche identifies his affiliation with Heraclitus himself when, writing in 1888, he says that his doctrine of the eternal recurrence could well have come from the mouth of the Ephesian over two thousand years before.¹⁶⁸ Heraclitus' significance to the early period 'tragic' paradigm emerges even prior to Lecture 10; he is named as one of the 'original philosophers' on PPP 42 / 251, and the entire opening paragraph of Lecture 9, a lecture ostensibly on Pythagoras, is wholly concerned with Heraclitus (PPP 44 / 251-2). In addition to this, he is a philosopher that Nietzsche finds irresistible to return to later in the lecture course, such as in the lecture on Parmenides and Xenophanes (PPP 84 / 292), and the lecture on the neo-Pythagoreans (PPP 136-7 / 346-8).

Connections to Nietzsche's 'tragic' paradigm are explicit in this lecture. According to Nietzsche, Heraclitus takes as his starting-point the moralistic cosmology of Anaximander and the problem of injustice. In short: how can something

¹⁶⁵ See 3.5.2.5.2.

¹⁶⁶ See, for instance, Hershbell and Nimis (1979), Wohlfart (1991), Cox (1999) chapter 4.4 'Nietzsche, Becoming, Heraclitus', Przybylski (2002), and Meyer (2014).

¹⁶⁷ See *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Zarathustra's Prologue, part 3 – 4.

¹⁶⁸ *EH*, 'The Birth of Tragedy', §3. See also 2.1.

that deserves to come to be out of the indefinite, pass away? Existence is an injustice, for which we atone with our morality and eventual death.¹⁶⁹ This pessimistic view of the world offers no consolation or affirmation of aesthetic experience. Heraclitus' answer to the dualism of being and becoming is to deny being, his answer to issue of injustice is justice. There is a lawfulness in becoming that is free from the moral character of Anaximander's account, such as when the child plays. The occasion of play is not bound by imperative, but there are rules of the game. Becoming, as well as the cycle of the destruction of the world by fire, is accounted for in a non-moralised way, creating space for an aesthetic justification of existence.¹⁷⁰ Nietzsche notes Heraclitus' dark fame as the 'weeping philosopher (*weinenden Philosophen*)' (PPP 69 / 277), but considers it a misunderstanding. In comparison with Anaximander's negative valuation of experience as injustice and guilt, Heraclitus' becoming is free of moral character: men who know the Logos will see the playful innocence of becoming. Both Dionysian and Apollonian aspects interact with one another in the one body of thought, in the 'Law in Becoming and Play in Necessity (*die Lehre vom Gesetz im Werden und vom Spiel in der Nothwendigkeit*)' (PTAG 68 / 329). The aesthetic justification of existence emerges from this cosmic innocence and lawfulness. Even the gnostic eschatology Nietzsche identifies in the conception of fire (PPP 67-8 / 272) is free from moral character.

The task I share with the established scholarship – *how does Nietzsche interpret Heraclitus?* – is only the beginning; the deviance from tradition raises the question, *why does Nietzsche interpret Heraclitus in this way?* As with the previous Presocratics discussed in this work, this question is answered through the interpretative lens of philology on the one hand and the lens of the 'tragic' paradigm on the other. This investigation leads to the conclusion that Heraclitus is a synecdoche for Nietzsche's project with the lecture course: the big picture painted by this lecture mirrors the picture of the lecture course overall. Throughout, the

¹⁶⁹ See 3.2.2.3.

¹⁷⁰ Through the 'oneness and eternal lawfulness of nature's processes' (PPP 58 / 266).

question of how Nietzsche's reading stands against historically significant and more scholarly readings of Heraclitus is addressed for balance.

3.3.2. Nietzsche's Interpretation of Heraclitus

As the lecture on Heraclitus is more extensive than any that preceded it, the following account of Nietzsche's interpretation is more extensive than the exegeses that have gone before. It is roughly grouped into sections that tackle the aspects of Heraclitean thought to which Nietzsche dedicates space, and, therefore, importance, to in his account.

3.3.2.1. *Heraclitus before Lecture 10*

Beginning in the lecture on Pythagoras (Lecture 9, PPP 44-52 / 251-60), both Parmenides and Heraclitus are portrayed as resolving Anaximandean dualism in opposite ways. 'Heraclitus rejected the world of Being altogether and maintained only the world of Becoming: Parmenides does the reverse [... b]oth seek to destroy this dualism (Heraclit leugnet die Welt des Seins ganz und behauptet nur die Welt des Werdens: das Umgekehrte that Parmenides [...] Beide versuchen, jenen Dualismus zu vernichten)' (PPP 44 / 252), Nietzsche states. According to his interpretation, Anaximander splits the world into being (τὸ ἄπειρον) and becoming (the things that come to be and pass away). Heraclitean flux (see below) rejects the 'being' premise, retaining only becoming. Parmenides rejects the 'becoming' premise, retaining only being.¹⁷¹ This emphasis on the importance of Anaximander for the thought of both Heraclitus and Parmenides is one of the interpretative consequences of placing Anaximenes later in the chronology. For Nietzsche, Heraclitus responds to Anaximander *directly*, without the interloper Anaximenes; in turn, Anaximenes responds to Heraclitus. This makes Heraclitus the more significant of the two, as he 'solves' the Anaximandean problem with a rejection of 'being',

¹⁷¹ The idea that Heraclitus and Parmenides are in 'deliberate antithesis' (Zeller 1931, 49) is a particularly 19th-century narrative, so it's not surprising that Nietzsche takes up this thread of interpretation in his lectures.

relegating the status of Anaximenes' theory of change to that of a mere explanation of a natural mechanism.

3.3.2.2. *Biography, Dating, and the 'Purest' Philosophers*

Like many of the other lectures, the lecture on Heraclitus opens with a discussion of dating and biographical testimonia (PPP 53-4 / 261-2). Using evidence from the *Suidas* and Clement of Alexandria's *Stromateis* (DK22A3), Nietzsche connects the dates of Heraclitus' acme to the reign of Darius the Great: the 69th Olympiad (c.a. 504 BC). He corroborates this with evidence from Diogenes Laertius (DK22A1).

The discussion of biographical testimonia is longer than that of previous philosophers. In particular, Nietzsche devotes time to the construction of an account of Heraclitus' character, rather than merely asserting biographical claims. This account is more political in content than that of the previous philosophers. Nietzsche notes Heraclitus' opposition to democracy, rejection of political office, and preference for leaving the city voluntarily instead of being ostracised (PPP 53 / 261). This famous disposition towards solitude and rejection of political life (PPP 54-5 / 262-3; DK22A1) is, Nietzsche writes, the result of the intuitive grasp of truth in the *Logos*, without which, humans commit errors: '[Heraclitus] sees outside himself only error, illusion, an absence of knowledge (er sieht außer sich nur die Verkehrtheit, den Wahn, den Mangel an Erkenntniß)' (PPP 55 / 263). As a result, 'he simply cannot live among his fellow men (unter Menschen war er unmöglich)' (PPP 55 / 263). Nietzsche consolidates this image with a retelling of the famous anecdote from DK22A1 (PPP 54 / 262), where Heraclitus prefers to play games with the children in the sanctuary of the temple than to participate in civil life. As a result of his rationalistic enquiry, the philosopher exiles himself from civic life.

Nietzsche evaluates his construction of the character of Heraclitus with a tone of awe: 'his regal air of certainty and magnificence is something nearly unbelievable, (jene königliche Überzeugtheit u. Herrlichkeit etwas fast Unglaubliches)' he writes, identifying a fundamental sense of pathos in Heraclitus' '[übermenschlich]

self-glorification (übermenschlichen Selbstverehrung)' (PPP 55 / 263). The question of whether this awe is meant in a positive or negative sense is debatable. It could betray an admiration for the self-certainty of Heraclitus' intuitive understanding of the Logos, in the way that the 'free spirit' of his middle period works is separated from society through inquiry. However, it could also be read as an indictment of Heraclitus: self-glorification, with 'no bridge lead[ing] him to his fellow man (keine Brücke führt zu den anderen Menschen hin)' (PPP 55 / 263) could indicate hubris.

The conclusion of this preoccupation with the character of Heraclitus is seen further on in the lecture, with the identification of the Ephesian as some kind of 'purest (reinsten)' philosopher:

[Heraclitus] involuntarily created the new image of the σοφός [*wise man*], which was entirely different from that of Pythagoras: later, blended with the Socratic ideal, it is used as the ideal image of the Stoic godlike wise man. We must designate these *three* as the purest paradigms [reinsten *Typen*]: Pythagoras, Heraclitus, and Socrates – the wise man as religious reformer; the wise man as proud, solitary searcher after truth; and the wise man as the eternal investigator of all things.

(Unwillkürlich schuf er das neue Bild eines σοφός, das ganz verschieden von dem des Pythagoras war; es ist später zum Idealbild des stoischen gottähnlichen Weisen benutzt worden, mit einer Verschmelzung des Sokratesideals. Diese d r e i muß man als die reinsten Typen bezeichnen: Pythagoras, Heraklit, Sokrates, der Weise als religiöser Reformator, der Weiser als stolzeinsamer Wahrheitsfinder, der Weise als der ewig u. überall Suchende. (PPP 58 / 265)

Compare this identification of three 'purest paradigms (reinsten *Typen*)' to the concept of the seven independent paradigms [*Rubriken*] from PPP 42 / 251. It is possible that here Nietzsche is narrowing down his seven 'original (origineller)' philosophers to three 'purest (reinsten)'. This leads to the question of what theoretical distinction is being made between 'original (origineller)' and 'pure (reinsten)'. Note, however, the inclusion here of Socrates, who does not feature on the list on PPP 42 / 251. This implies that the 'pure (reinsten)' philosophers are not a mere narrowing down of the 'original (origineller)' philosophers by some process of

elimination, as the candidates are different. The linguistic difference adds weight to this argument: on PPP 42 / 251, we hear about the original paradigms or *Rubriken*, and on PPP 58 / 265, we hear about the pure paradigms or *Typen*. The difference in meaning between these words may be slight, but it implies the possibility of a distinction: a possibility that would not be present in this way if the same word were used in both instances. This distinction allows us to further understand what Nietzsche means with the categories of original *Rubriken* and pure *Typen* by contrast. The philosophers identified as the seven original *Rubriken* are the proponents of seven original paradigms for considering the world: the key is the difference in physical theory between each philosopher or school. The three purest *Typen* are, on the other hand, the purest types of the σοφός, the wise man – the focus being on the character of the philosopher. The descriptions of the three *Typen* above concern not the physical theory or cosmology of the philosophers, but their character and stature. Heraclitus, then, is significant both for his originality in his philosophy of nature, and his creation of an archetype of ‘the wise man (σοφός)’.

3.3.2.3. *On Religion, Dionysus, and Apollo [PPP 55-57 / 263-5]*

Early on in the lecture, Nietzsche focuses on Heraclitus’ rejection of popular religion. ‘The self-glorification of Heraclitus contains nothing religious (die Selbstverehrung des Heraclit hat gar nichts Religiöses)’ (PPP 55 / 263), he writes. Nietzsche builds an account of Heraclitus’ polemic against the Dionysian cults and mystery religions by citing DK22B14 and DK22B15, stating that ‘in Dionysian excitement he saw only an invitation to ill-bred drives by way of hot-blooded festivals of desire. (In der dionys. Erregung sieht er nur eine Entladung unzüchtiger Triebe durch rasende Festlust)’ (PPP 56 / 264). Similarly, Heraclitus holds in contempt writers of myth and poetry (PPP 57 / 265).¹⁷² Thinking about Nietzsche’s identification of Heraclitus as a particularly important philosopher for the tragic paradigm, this helps us further our understanding of the ‘Dionysian’. Nietzsche’s concept of ‘tragedy’ and the ‘Dionysian’ here in the early period is *not* identical with the

¹⁷² See Kahn (1979) 262-6.

'Dionysian' of the cults of Dionysus. Considering the necessity of both the Dionysian and the Apollonian to the 'tragic' in the early period, perhaps the Dionysian cults as criticised here are the result of a lack of Apollonian moderation: the Dionysian ideal of celebrating the dark, orgiastic side of nature, taken to the extreme with no counterweight in serenity, illusion, and measure.

Despite being ill disposed towards popular Greek religion, Heraclitus makes multiple allusions to Apollo. Nietzsche discusses the connection between the obscure language of Heraclitus and the language of the Sibyls, Apollo's priestesses at his shrine in Delphi (PPP 55 / 263), substantiating his claim with a rendering of DK22B93 and DK22B92:

The lord whose oracle is at Delphi neither speaks nor conceals, but gives signs. (ὤμαξ οὐ τὸ παντεῖόν ἐστι τὸ ἐν Δελφοῖς οὔτε λέγει οὔτε κρύπτει, ἀλλὰ σημαίνει. DK22B93, tr. via Whitlock.)

The Sibyl with raving mouth utters solemn, unadorned, unlovely words, but she reaches out over a thousand years with her voice because of the god within her. (Σίβυλλα δὲ μαινομένῳ στόματι καθ' Ἡράκλειτον ἀγέλαστα καὶ ἀκαλλώπιστα καὶ ἀμύριστα φθεγγομένη χιλίων ἐτῶν ἐξικνεῖται τῇ φωνῇ διὰ τὸν θεόν DK22B92, tr. via Whitlock.)

We may take this to mean that Heraclitus intends to speak in signs and require interpretation to be understood. Nietzsche also connects this to his idea of the 'loneliness (Einsamkeit)' of Heraclitus (PPP 55 / 263). 'There is no doubt that Heraclitus is referring to the Delphic practice of giving advice in indirect form, by imagery, riddle, and ambiguity,' states Kahn (1979, 123). Furthermore, Kahn argues that the obscurity of Heraclitus is intentional, as '[t]he only hope of 'getting through' to the audience is to puzzle and provoke them into reflection' (Kahn 1979, 124). For Nietzsche, it appears that Heraclitus' decision to present Dionysian truths (about Becoming) in Apollonian language is a particularly 'tragic' moment: the necessity of both the Apollonian and Dionysian elements is satisfied, and, in fact, in the *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche at one point states that 'Dionysus speaks the language of Apollo, but in the end Apollo also speaks the language of Dionysus (Dionysus redet die Sprache des Apollo, Apollo aber schliesslich die Sprache des Dionysus)' (BT §21).

3.3.2.4. *The Logos as Intelligence*

Despite the importance of the Logos in modern studies on Heraclitus, Nietzsche does not write at length on it; his interpretation of it must be constructed from the available evidence in the lecture.¹⁷³ The translator Greg Whitlock's reading of Logos as intelligence appears to be a result of the rendition of DK22B50 on PPP 70-1 / 278:

οὐκ ἔμοῦ ἀλλὰ τοῦ λόγου ἀκούσαντας ὁμολογέειν σοφὸν
ἔστιν ἔν πάντα εἰδέναί. / Weise ist nicht auf mich sondern
auf den λόγος hörend zu bekennen, *e i n e s* wisse alles. /
Listening not to me but to the Logos it is wise to agree that
one thing knows all. (DK22B50, tr. via Whitlock.)

As explored in 3.5.3.1. below, modern editions of this text render the final infinite verb as εἶναι rather than Nietzsche's εἰδέναί. In this rendering, the fragment relates to *epistemology* rather than *ontology*: 'one thing (eines)', the Logos, knows all. Knowledge requires an intelligence that knows. On this basis, the other instances of the word λόγος, which in Nietzsche's manuscript is left in the Greek, is translated as *intelligence* in multiple places in Whitlock's translation, such as on PPP 56 / 264 and PPP 60 / 265.

Does the Logos not seem Apollonian (rationality)? This keys into the lawfulness of the world, and has a tragic nature to itself – Heraclitus boasts 'an intuitive grasping of the truth (der intuitiven Erfassung des Wahren)' (PPP 55 / 263). Intuition is a Dionysian aspect; we witness here the necessity and interplay of both Dionysian and Apollonian. *Intuition is Dionysian, the rationality of the Logos is Apollonian: the necessity of both is satisfied.*

3.3.2.5. *The Four Main Concepts and the Tragic Paradigm [PPP 60-74 / 267-282]*

According to Nietzsche, the four main concepts in Heraclitus' thought are: becoming, justice, war, and fire (PPP 62-7 / 271-5). Becoming is the first main concept (PPP 62-

¹⁷³ See 3.5.3.1.

3 / 270-1). Nietzsche characterises Heraclitean becoming in radical terms, as the flux of all things: the permanence of things is an illusion. Becoming itself is the terrifying thing about existence: considering the impermanence and eternal motion of things should transfix the thinker in awe (PPP 64-5 / 272). The other three main concepts – justice, war, and fire – are used to explain how becoming comes about, and to evidence its innocence. From these, Nietzsche constructs an overall worldview, initially inherited from Anaximander, but offering up solutions to the problem of injustice, which allows for a reconciliation with life and the aesthetic through the innocence of becoming.

3.3.2.5.1. On Flux: Being, Becoming, and the Illusion of Persistence [PPP 60-63 / 267-271]

According to Nietzsche, Heraclitus solves Anaximander's problematic dualism of being and becoming by doing away with 'being' altogether. For Heraclitus, there is only Becoming, the coming-to-be and passing-away of things. In this way, he solves the problem of the pessimistic, anti-aesthetic worldview of Anaximander: with no indefinite Being to be emancipated from, there is only the innocence of continuous flux and becoming. As Nietzsche states:

Only in the play of the child (or that of the artist) does there exist a Becoming and Passing away without any moralistic calculations. He conceives of *the play of children* as that of spontaneous human beings: here is innocence and yet coming into being and destruction: not one droplet of [ἀδικία] should remain in the world. [...] we find here a purely aesthetic view of the world.

(ein Werden u. Vergehen ohne jede moralische Zurechnung gibt es nur im Spiel des Kindes (oder in der Kunst) Als unkünstlerischer Mensch griff er nach dem Kinderspiele l. Hier ist Unschuld u. doch Esntstehenlassen u. Zerstören. Es soll kein Tropfen von ἀδικία in der Welt zurückbleiben. [...] Es ist eine rein ästhetische Weltbetrachtung.) (PPP 70 / 278)

Nietzsche makes a lengthy digression in his lecture to illustrate a key point regarding becoming: the result is that the idea that anything persists is an illusion, a

product of human ignorance. He uses as an example the biological relativism of Karl Ernst von Bär: that temporal perception is proportional to pulse rate.¹⁷⁴ An animal with a fast heart rate, such as the rabbit, perceives or experiences more in a set period of time than an animal with a slower pulse rate, such as the elephant. Nietzsche uses this idea to make a grand extrapolation. If we could accelerate or decelerate our perception, then we would see what an error the illusion of persistence is. If we accelerated our perceptions, then ‘we would consider the grass and flowers to be something just as absolute and persistent as we now consider the mountains (dann würde man Gras und Blumen für ebenso starr und unveränderlich halten, wie uns jetzt die Gebirge erscheinen’ (PPP 61 / 268). Decelerated, we would be able to perceive with our own vision processes that take place over long periods of time, such as the weather erosion of mountains, in the way we can now watch footage of a flower opening in mere seconds thanks to the invention of time-lapse filming techniques.

This, for Nietzsche, demonstrates the illusion of persistence. Things appear to be stable and persistent to us, such as mountains that tower unchanged above us for years. This leads to the human belief in the permanence and persistence of ‘being’ itself. Nietzsche takes a hard-line interpretation of πάντα ῥεῖ (PPP 60 / 267): no underlying substrate persists throughout the process of change, and the illusion that something does persist is the result of human perception and ignorance (PPP 62 / 269).

Nietzsche makes only one reference to any of the fragments of Heraclitus’ work in support of this account of flux. On PPP 60 / 267, he mentions the saying ‘πάντα ῥεῖ’, *everything flows*, without giving a citation. From a scholarly perspective, this fleeting reference is insufficient to substantiate Nietzsche’s account: it is impossible to positively attribute the saying directly to Heraclitus, which opens it up to criticism on the basis of distortion. The first occurrence of the saying that has

¹⁷⁴ See von Bär (1862). A version of idea still exists in the present-day scientific community; for a contemporary example, see Healy et al. (2013), which argues that body mass and metabolic rate determine how different species of animals perceive time.

survived antiquity is in Plato's *Cratylus* 402a, where it appears as 'πάντα χωρεῖ'. Whilst it is attributed to Heraclitus in the text, there are two reasons to cast doubt on its authenticity. Firstly, the attribution is made by Cratylus, a disciple of Heraclitus, who was renowned in antiquity as a proponent of a radical Heracliteanism.¹⁷⁵ Secondly, we must not forget the tendency of Plato to artifice in his use of earlier philosophers in the dialogues.¹⁷⁶ This means that the phrase cannot be taken at face value. However, it continues to be attributed to Heraclitus or Heracliteans through antiquity; by late antiquity, we see it produced as the familiar 'πάντα ῥεῖ' in Simplicius, *in Phys.* 1313.11.¹⁷⁷ Nietzsche's source for the saying is more likely to be Simplicius than Plato, as it is rendered as 'πάντα ῥεῖ', without the 'χω-' from Plato's rendering.

If the saying 'πάντα ῥεῖ', regardless of origin, is Nietzsche's only source for his discourse on flux, then an avenue of criticism of this extreme interpretation of Heraclitean thought opens up. The saying 'πάντα ῥεῖ' is part of a group called the River Fragments: variations on the phrase, "you cannot step into the same river twice".¹⁷⁸ Graham reports that, beginning with Reinhardt, there is controversy over how many of the river fragments provide the correct reading of the one thought to be the original: DK22B12.¹⁷⁹ The fragment reads as follows:

Ποταμοῖσι τοῖσιν αὐτοῖσιν ἐμβαλίνουσιν ἕτερα καὶ ἕτερα
ὔδατα ἐπιρρεῖ. / On those stepping into rivers staying the
same, other and other waters flow. (DK22B12, tr. Graham.)

All Heraclitus states here, according to Graham, is that while the waters are changing, the river remains: we cannot step into the same water twice, but we can step into the same river.¹⁸⁰ The river remains constant in some sense, whether physically as a substrate for the waters that flow through it, or metaphorically in the enduring

¹⁷⁵ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1010a.

¹⁷⁶ See 1.4.1.

¹⁷⁷ Though it is attributed to 'the natural philosophers who follow Heraclitus' (tr. McKirahan) rather than just Heraclitus himself.

¹⁷⁸ Graham (2008) 172.

¹⁷⁹ Graham (2008) 173. He traces the origin of this line of argumentation back to Reinhardt (1916, 1942).

¹⁸⁰ Graham (2008) 173-4.

concept 'river'. Stability goes hand-in-hand with change. The idea that *all* things are in a constant state of flux comes into play with Plato's interpretation of DK22B12, possibly under the influence of Cratylus, Plato's teacher, who held a view of flux so radical that it denied that it is possible to step into the same river once – denying the possibility of enduring identity through difference.¹⁸¹ The radical presentation of the theory of flux in *Cratylus* 402a is likely to have influenced later commentators such as Plutarch (DK22B91).

If we follow the line of argument originating from Reinhardt and pursued by Graham, then we are forced to conclude that Nietzsche's interpretation of Heraclitean flux is made on the basis of Plato's erroneous reading of Heraclitus: one which is, in fact, more Cratylean in character. However, this line of argument is not free from criticism from scholars such as Tarán, who argues that Heraclitus is still asserting the universality of change, though with emphasis on patterns of change and identity in difference.¹⁸² The question remains of whether a radical reading like Nietzsche's can be rehabilitated without relegating it to the status of a 'Cratylean' idea, therefore undermining the status Nietzsche gives to Heraclitus as an 'original' philosopher and 'pure' type.

3.3.2.5.2. Justice, War, and Fire

The remaining three main concepts – Justice,¹⁸³ War,¹⁸⁴ and Fire¹⁸⁵ – work together, subservient to the concept of Becoming. Justice is the answer to Anaximander's problem of injustice: it provides the justification, or reconciliation, with becoming and the aesthetic. It is the foundation of the lawfulness of the world. 'War' or 'strife' – Nietzsche is inconsistent in his usage, but 'strife' appears to be

¹⁸¹ Graham (2008) 174; Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 987a and 1010a.

¹⁸² See Tarán (1989, 1999).

¹⁸³ 'δίκη is the second main concept (ist der z w e i t e Hauptbegriff die Δίκη)' (PPP 63 / 271).

¹⁸⁴ 'The trial of this justice is Πόλεμος, the third main concept (Der Prozeß dieser Δίκη ist der Πόλεμος, der d r i t t e r Hauptbegriff)' (PPP 64 / 272).

¹⁸⁵ 'The fourth main conception is *Fire* [das Feuer]. (Der v i e r t e Hauptbegriff ist das F e u e r)' (PPP 66 / 274).

conceptually subservient to 'war' – is the function of becoming. All coming-to-be is the result of the war, or interplay, of the opposites. Finally, fire is either the agent of Justice and the cosmic cycle that brings about occasional purifications, or, somehow self-identical with justice – on this point, Nietzsche is unclear. This interpretation of Heraclitus' thought is rather unique to Nietzsche, but it is the result of the narrative of the lecture course: for Nietzsche, all those that follow Anaximander must contend with the problem of his tragic reading.

The concept of justice is Heraclitus' answer to the problem of injustice. For Anaximander, the coming-to-be from the Indefinite (a kind of Being) is an injustice that must be punished with passing-away. The result of Heraclitus' rejection of any kind of Being and retention of only Becoming removes this initial injustice in coming-to-be, and, therefore, passing-away exists without a moral aspect. In fact, 'the one overall Becoming is itself law (Also das e i n e überhaupt Werdende ist sich selbst Gesetz)' (PPP 63 / 270), bringing about justice. Becoming is no longer a punishment but, as we will see below, more like a game with beginning and end, lacking moral teleology.

War, which appears to be enacted by strife, constitutes the character of this becoming ruled by justice. Nietzsche connects the idea that 'war is the father of all things' to Heraclitus' doctrine of the unity of opposites. Rather than thinking of the unity of opposites as some kind of flouting of the laws of non-contradiction, the unity of opposites is the necessary basis of the function of strife in the continuous coming-to-be.¹⁸⁶ Nietzsche is most clear on this in PTAG:

The strife of the opposites gives birth to all that comes-to-be; the definite qualities which look permanent to us express but the momentary ascendancy of one partner.

(Aus dem Krieg des Entgegengesetzten entsteht alles Werden: die bestimmten, als andauernd uns erscheinenden Qualitäten drücken nur das momentane Übergewicht des einen Kämpfers aus) (PTAG 55 / 319)

We can see this as a reading of Heraclitus' DK22B10: 'out of all things there comes a

¹⁸⁶ A variety of fragments are cited in support of this claim in Nietzsche's lecture, such as DK22B8, DK22B10, and DK22B51.

unity, and out of a unity all things'. All things are one for Heraclitus, but the variance of coming-to-be is the result of the opposites contained within one another. We can think about the unity and variance of day and night to understand what is meant here. In reality, these 'opposites' are one thing – the continuous rotation of the planet in its orbit around the sun. At one moment, one of the opposites, 'day', is in ascendance, and all is flooded with light and warmth. At another moment, its pair, 'night', is in ascendance, with the opposite qualities of dark and cold. Out of the unity of day and night comes all things, the transition between day and night – out of these things there is unity, which is the rotation of the planet. This is a particularly 'tragic' moment in Heraclitus' thought – it displays the interdependency and necessity of opposites, the way that the Apollonian and Dionysian are opposite and necessary.

The particularly 'tragic' and gnostic elements of Nietzsche's interpretation of Heraclitus become explicit in the connection he draws between justice and fire.¹⁸⁷ Fire is the agent of justice, bringing about a cosmic cycle of creation and destruction, and delivering the purification by fire, called ἐκπύρωσις [ekpyrōsis].¹⁸⁸ Nietzsche describes 'the periodic destruction of the world. The current world shall dissolve itself into fire, bringing forth a new world from the flames (periodischen Weltuntergängen. Die gegenwärtige Welt werde sich in Feuer auflösen, aus dem Weltbrand eine neue Welt hervorgehn)' (PPP 67-8 / 275); furthermore, 'a destruction by fire awaits (ein Untergang durch Feuer steht bevor)' (PPP 72 / 280). This eschatology does not appear to have a moral character: it is a purification, directed by justice.¹⁸⁹ Fire is method of purification, ensuring the continued justice of the world.¹⁹⁰ This, for Nietzsche, is the meaning of the child at play in DK22B52: 'only in the play of the child (or that of the artist) does there exist a Becoming and Passing Away without any moralistic calculations (ein Werden u. Vergehen ohne jede moralische Zurechnung gibt es nur

¹⁸⁷ 'We should keep clearly in mind the oneness of fire and justice (Die Einheit aber des Feuers u. der δίκη ist festzuhalten)' (PPP 68-9 / 276).

¹⁸⁸ PPP 68 / 276.

¹⁸⁹ 'the φθορά is in no way a punishment. (Die φθορά ist also keinesfalls eine Strafe)' PPP 63 / 271. See also PPP 70 / 278.

¹⁹⁰ PPP 69 / 277.

im Spiel des Kindes (oder in der Kunst)' (PPP 70 / 278). The games of the child have a beginning, a process, and an end, but these ends are not the consequence of cosmic injustice or guilt.¹⁹¹ We should not give in to the temptation to read the games morally.¹⁹² This play of the child [*Kinderspiel*] can 'be grasped only as an aesthetic phenomenon (nur als künstlerisches Phänomen zu erfassen)' (PPP 70 / 278).

With the interaction of these four concepts, becoming, justice, war, and fire, Heraclitus is not pessimistic in a Schopenhauerian sense:

only those unsatisfied by his description of human nature will find him dark, grave, gloomy, or pessimistic. At his core he is the opposite of a pessimist because he does not deny away sorrows and irrationality: for him, war reveals itself as the eternal process of the world.

(düster, schwermüthig, finster, pessimistisch finden ihn nur die, welche mit seiner Naturbeschreibung des Menschen nicht zufrieden sind. Im Grunde ist er der Gegensatz des Pessimisten. Andererseits ist er kein Optimist: denn er leugnet nicht das Leiden u. die Unvernunft hinweg: der Krieg zeigt sich ihm als der ewige Prozeß der Welt.)¹⁹³ (PPP 74 / 281-2)

Nietzsche emphasises his split with Bernays' interpretation of Heraclitus, which predicates the cosmic cycle and the eschatological end of days in a purification by fire in ὑβρις [*hubris*].¹⁹⁴ For Bernays, the cycle is a punishment, meted out by 'most miraculous lawfulness (die wunderbarste Gesetzmäßigkeit)' (PPP 69 / 277).¹⁹⁵ For

¹⁹¹ See BT §24.

¹⁹² 'We must exclude even more any moralistic tendencies [...] (Ebenso sehr die moralische Tebdebz des Ganzen [...] ist ausgeschlossen)' PPP 70 / 278.

¹⁹³ Note here the important difference between Whitlock's translation and the original German: Whitlock elides the phrase 'Andererseits ist er kein Optimist', '*on the other hand, he is no optimist*'; this emphatic denial of Heraclitus being an optimist is essential to the construction of a nuanced view of his interaction with philosophical pessimism. He is not merely 'the opposite of a pessimist (der Gegensatz des Pessimisten)', he is 'no optimist (kein Optimist)' either.

¹⁹⁴ PPP 68-9 / 276-7 is where Nietzsche engages with Bernays' view, and urges the reader to 'discard this entire assumption (Diese ganze Annahme ist zu verwerfen)'. See Bernays (1848).

¹⁹⁵ 'the world process is a cathartic act of punishment (Der ganze Weltprozeß ein kathartischer Strafakt)' PPP 69 / 277.

Nietzsche, it is the result of the lawfulness of the world, like the rules of the child's game which must, at some time, come to an end and be started again anew, like the waves washing away a sandcastle to be rebuilt again. Becoming, a process characterised by justice and the warring opposites, may bring us terror, but the value of existence lies in the ability to view it as an aesthetic process. This, then, is a truly 'tragic' image of existence: grounded in a philosophical pessimism, Heraclitus' thought relies on the necessity and tension of opposites to bring about that which comes to be and passes away. The transformative moment of the tragic confrontation with this fact offers a reconciliation with existence through the amoral character of the aesthetic.

3.3.3. Issues

3.3.3.1. *Issue 1: Nietzsche's interpretation*

Three issues in Nietzsche's interpretation present themselves. Firstly, the status of the Logos; secondly, the reading of εἰδέναι / εἶναι in DK22B50; thirdly, the question of whether Heraclitus had a cosmic cycle, or whether it was anachronistically read into Heraclitus' philosophy by the later Stoics.

Firstly: where is the Logos? There is no emphasis on the Logos in Nietzsche's account, which is contrary much scholarship on Heraclitus.¹⁹⁶ It does not feature in his list of the four main concepts of Heraclitus, and there is no sustained discussion of the nature of the Logos. The reading of Logos as intelligence is, as seen above, constructed by picking up fragments of Nietzsche's intention from throughout the lecture. Fire, as well, has a diminutive status compared to mainstream accounts: Nietzsche places it fourth, after becoming, justice, and war.

Secondly, as with our previous discussion of Anaximander and the missing ἀλληλοῖς, there is an interpretative question that arises from Nietzsche's rendering of the Greek fragments. On PPP 71 / 279, he reproduces DK22B50, with εἰδέναι in place of the modern εἶναι. It is unclear exactly which text is Nietzsche's source for

¹⁹⁶ For instance, see Edwin L. Minar (1939), Kirk, Raven, and Schofield (1983) 187-8, and Brann (2011); Peters (1967) 110-1.

the fragment. Mullach renders the word as γίνεσθαι, but cites that it is rendered in Miller's 1851 edition of Hippolytus' *Refutatio* as εἰδέναί. The question remains whether Nietzsche read the εἰδέναί in the notes on Mullach's edition or whether he read Miller's edition of the *Refutatio* himself; it is indisputably one of these texts, however, as the fragment is not included in Schleiermacher, and is rendered as εἶναι in the Ritter and Preller. We can here identify an issue with the English edition of the text: the translator calls Nietzsche's citation of *Refutatio* 9.9 for this fragment wrong, giving instead 9.4, but it is the translator who is indeed wrong here.

The interpretative consequences of preferring εἰδέναί to εἶναι are clear when we connect this matter with PPP 60 / 265: 'eins ist gerade τὸ σοφόν, jenen λόγος zu erkennen': the fragment becomes about *knowing* rather than *being* – translating as 'wisdom is to know all things', rather than 'wisdom is that all things are one'. The concern is epistemology rather than ontology. This leads to Nietzsche's interpretation of the Logos as intelligence, as its relationship is with knowing.¹⁹⁷

Which reading is correct? Kirk discusses the manuscript history in his apparatus.¹⁹⁸ Kahn, 'with some misgiving', renders εἶναι rather than εἰδέναί.¹⁹⁹ Why the misgivings? We could apply the principle of *praestat difficilior lectio*, 'prefer the more difficult reading' – as a difficult word is more likely to have been corrupted down to a simpler word than vice versa – to make a case for preferring εἰδέναί.²⁰⁰ So, whilst Nietzsche's use of εἰδέναί flies in the face of modern renderings of this fragment, this reading can be justified through the means of textual criticism.

Nietzsche does not pay much heed to the different historically significant interpretations of Heraclitus' fire, preferring to describe only his own idea of fire as the agent of cosmic justice. However, one such alternative is that it could be a metaphorical argument, displaying the inherent contradiction in identifying the eternal world order with a transitory visual phenomenon.²⁰¹ Minimally, Kirk, Raven,

¹⁹⁷ Refer back to 3.5.1.4.

¹⁹⁸ Kirk (1954) 65-7.

¹⁹⁹ Kahn (1979) 44.

²⁰⁰ West (1973) 51.

²⁰¹ Kahn (1979) 22-3.

and Schofield state that it cannot be an 'originative stuff' in the same way that water and air were presented by Thales and Anaximenes, so at least Nietzsche does not describe fire as substance.²⁰²

Finally, the accuracy of attributing a cosmic cycle to Heraclitus is disputed. Many think that the cosmic cycle is actually a result of Stoic syncretism of the doctrine of ἐκπύρωσις [ekpyrōsis], or a universal conflagration, rather than original Heraclitean doctrine.

Some ancient commentators (e.g., Simplicius [...]) suggested Heraclitus as the source of the Stoic theory of universal conflagration; but recent scholarship has shown that it is extremely doubtful that Heraclitus taught anything resembling Stoic *ekpyrōsis*. (Lapidge 1978, 179-80)

In fact, A. A. Long argues that while this periodic destruction of all things into fire has been regarded as a Heraclitean view by many scholars, it is dependent on Theophrastus' interpretation of Heraclitus rather than any fragment attributable to Heraclitus.²⁰³ This sheds doubt on the possibility of the cosmic cycle of the destruction of the world by fire being an original Heraclitean idea, rather than a retroactive and anachronistic reading of Heraclitus' writing on fire. If this line of scholarship is followed, then it undermines the authenticity of Nietzsche's interpretation of Heraclitus' philosophy, which is predicated on the cycle of destruction by fire.

3.3.3.2. *Issue 2: Translation Issues*

An issue with the translation arises when the English is compared with the German, in particular, with the translation of the words Nietzsche chooses to keep in Greek into English as part of the translation. Whitlock assumes some interchangeability between the concepts of *strife* and *war*, ἔρις [*Streit*] and πόλεμος [*Krieg*]. Nietzsche, however, often kept πόλεμος in the original Greek in his lecture

²⁰² Kirk, Raven, and Schofield (1983) 198.

²⁰³ Long (2001) 40-1.

notes, surely to indicate a lexical distinction between *Streit* and *Krieg*. For instance, on PPP 64 / 272, Nietzsche writes that ‘Heraclitus became familiar with the paradigm of such strife (Agonen, aus dem Staatsleben hatte H. das Typische dieses πόλεμος kennen gelernt)’; the next sentence begins, ‘The idea of war-justice [Πόλεμος-δίκη] is the first specifically Hellenic idea in philosophy (Der Gedanke von Πόλεμος-δίκη ist der erste spezifisch h e l l e n i s c h e Gedanke in der Philosophie)’. On PPP 70 / 278 and 72 / 279, πόλεμος is translated as ‘strife’; however, further down on PPP 72 / 279, it is ‘war’ again. This interchangeability in terms in the translation is problematic because of the different connotations of ἔρις and πόλεμος in Heraclitus’ thought, which Nietzsche preserved in his own lecture notes. As explored in 3.5.1.5.2., strife appears to be the action or function of war: preserving the linguistic difference between these terms preserves this difference in meaning which is ground in subservience.

3.3.4. Sources

In addition to the textbooks by Mullach (1860) and Ritter and Preller (1869), Nietzsche also makes use of Schleiermacher’s *Herakleitos, der Dunkle*, originally published in 1807.²⁰⁴

On PPP 58, Nietzsche turns to the opening of Heraclitus’ alleged work, DK22B1. There are minor differences in the Greek from this edition of the fragment and the received version in the Diels-Kranz, but the interpretative consequence of this difference is slight. Comparison of this rendering of the fragment with Nietzsche’s sources proves that the source for his Greek is Mullach (1860).

Interestingly, he uncritically uses Lucian’s *Philosophies for Sale* on PPP 65 / 273 as evidence in an exposition of the doctrine of the unity of opposites, despite it being a satire and therefore surely subject to scrutiny as a candidate for serious evidence of ancient thought.²⁰⁵

There are a lot of important contemporary German sources referenced in the

²⁰⁴ PPP 59 / 267, 68 / 276, 84 / 292. See Schleiermacher (1838) for the edition in the *Sammtliche Werke*.

²⁰⁵ See Harmon (1915).

manuscript, importantly, Bernays (1848), who Nietzsche disagrees with. This disagreement helps us develop a nuanced understanding of Nietzsche's 'tragic' paradigm; Bernays puts forth a straightforwardly 'pessimistic' reading of Heraclitus, which is rejected by Nietzsche in favour of some kind of system of becoming, justice, war, and fire that leads to an amoral interpretation of the eschatological features of the cosmic cycle.²⁰⁶

Despite the lecture course being offered at Basel as early as 1869, the references to Heinze (1872) on PPP 44 and 72 date the manuscript to at least 1872, after the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy*.

3.3.5. Summary

According to his auditors, Nietzsche's lecture on Heraclitus was one of the most entertaining and engaging of the course.²⁰⁷ However, its significance extends beyond its entertainment value, into the rushing leaps from concept to concept that, carefully read, can be made intelligible, and into a truly tragic interpretation of Heraclitus.

The necessity of the interchange of the warring opposites, mirroring the necessity of the Apollonian and Dionysian, is the function of a radical interpretation of becoming. The acknowledgement of this interchange as war or strife and the radical instability of the world process evokes the 'terror and horror of existence' (BT §3) that is constituent of the pessimistic root of the tragic paradigm. Yet it is accompanied by a valorisation of the aesthetic in the priority of becoming and its characteristic innocence and justice. Nietzsche rejects the straightforwardly pessimistic reading propounded by Bernays for one that reaches beyond the merely Schopenhauerian or Anaximandrian (in Nietzsche's reading) in character: existence itself is confronted and reconciled with. In this way, Heraclitus is the first 'tragic'

²⁰⁶ PPP 68-9 / 276-7 is where Nietzsche engages with Bernays' view, and urges the reader to 'discard this entire assumption (Diese ganze Annahme ist zu verwerfen)'.

²⁰⁷ 'Heraclitus!! I will never forget how Nietzsche characterised him. [...] I always feel a shudder of reverence when I think of the moving end of that lecture.' Ludwig von Scheffler, commenting on the lecture course of summer 1876. Gilman (1987) 73.

philosopher of Nietzsche's lecture course: the ideas expounded in this lecture are a miniature of the 'big picture' of the tragic paradigm as a whole. Empedocles and Democritus are to follow as the next most significant figures to the 'tragic' paradigm.

However, the lecture is not without its issues, which I have explored in detail above. The modern reader, armed with the evidence and literature of the post-Dielsian age, has difficulty reconciling Nietzsche's account with the modern understanding of the possibility of meaning in the words of Heraclitus. As with the lecture on Anaximander, Nietzsche's ideas are at once meaningfully grounded in the 19th century as well as his own interpretative intentions.

3.4. The Eleatics. Lecture 11: Parmenides (DK28) and his forerunner, Xenophanes (DK21) [PPP 75-88 / 282-296]; Lecture 12: Zeno (DK29) [PPP 89-93 / 296-301].

3.4.1. Introduction

The two lectures that follow on from the lecture on Heraclitus have a particular character in common: their focus is a series of philosophers who, like the Anaximenes back in 3.2., do not fit Nietzsche's tragic paradigm and world-view of archaic Greece. The result of this is a deficit in attention to their life and thought. Though these lectures suffer from scant detail, they are useful on the basis that we can learn from them that Nietzsche does not find un-tragic philosophers threatening to his tragic paradigm, due to their inclusion in the lecture course with the conspicuous absence of any actual *attack* on their thought. The tragic paradigm is a philosophical tendency these philosophers merely do not participate in. They do not serve the end of substantiating the claim to a 'tragic age' of Greece. Therefore, to Nietzsche, they are not worth the energy of proper presentation or engagement.

The closest thing to vitriol here is reserved for Parmenides, who, in Nietzsche's interpretation, rejects becoming and a doctrine to account for the coming-to-be and passing-away of the objects of perception (the way of doxa) wholesale in favour of eternal, homogenous, unchanging being, reducing perception to error and thereby rejecting the reality of the Dionysian and the value of the aesthetic. Xenophanes is a forerunner of Parmenides, offering a worldview short of the rejection of the aesthetic; Zeno is a sycophant that offers negative proofs in support of the Parmenidean thesis in the form of paradox.

This chapter surveys these three philosophers, offering an insight into the traditional interpretations of their life, works, and thought, and assesses Nietzsche's interpretation of them, in light of both the philological lens and the tragic lens. While these three lectures are on the shorter side, their importance lies in what they add to the understanding of the tragic paradigm in the negative.

3.4.2. Xenophanes (DK21)

Xenophanes was born in Colophon in the 6th century BC. A travelling rhapsode, his philosophical ideas were derived from his long years of experience across the ancient world:

Already seven and sixty years
have tossed my thoughts o'er Hellas land,
and from my birth were five and twenty more
if I know how to speak of these things true.
(ἤδη δ' ἑπτὰ τ' ἔασι καὶ ἐξήκοντ' ἑνιαυτοὶ
βληστρίζοντες ἐμὴν φροντίδ' ἀν' Ἑλλάδα γῆν •
ἐκ γενετῆς δὲ τότε ἦσαν ἐείκοσι πέντε τε πρὸς τοῖς,
εἶπερ ἐγὼ περὶ τῶνδ' οἶδα λέγειν ἔτυμωσ. DK21B8, tr.
Graham.)

He composed poetry in epic meter, that is, hexameter in the style of Homer, elegiac meter, and iambic trimeter. As well as poetry that touches on scientific philosophical topics – the basis of his inclusion in the canon of Presocratic philosophy – he also wrote satires and sympotic verse, or songs describing the nature of good conduct at a 'symposium' drinking party.²⁰⁸ He is generally taken to be some kind of forerunner or teacher of Parmenides. Xenophanes is most well-known for two aspects of his thought: firstly, his critique of traditional Greek religion, and, secondly, his epistemological scepticism.

3.4.2.1. *Xenophanes' critique of traditional Greek religion*

The epic poetry of Homer and Hesiod is centre stage in the cultural life of ancient Greece. However, they often represent the gods as human in form and foible.

Homer and Hesiod have attributed to the gods all things / that are blameworthy and disgraceful for men: / stealing, committing adultery, deceiving each other. (πάντα θεοῖσ' ἀνέθηκαν Ὅμηρός θ' Ἡσίοδος τε, / ὅσσα παρ' ἀνθρώποισιν ὀνειδέα καὶ ψόγος ἐστίν, / κλέπτειν μοιχεύειν τε καὶ ἀλλήλους ἀπατεύειν. DK21B11, tr.

²⁰⁸ DK21B1, DK21B5.

Graham.)²⁰⁹

An example of what Xenophanes is referring to here is in the *Odyssey* book 8, where Aphrodite is caught committing adultery with Ares. Played for comic effect in the *Odyssey*, Xenophanes' critique problematizes such an immoral representation of the divine.

Ethiopians say their gods are flat-nosed and black, /
Thracians blue-eyed and red-haired. (Αἰθίοπες τε <θεοὺς
σφετέρους> σιμούς μελανάς τε / Θρηϊκῆς τε γλαυκοὺς καὶ
πυρροὺς <φασὶ πέλεσθαι>. DK21B16, tr. Graham,
modified.)

Here, the critique is that, for every culture, the gods resemble themselves. Xenophanes moves beyond pure anthropomorphism, however: elsewhere he writes that if horses and cattle could communicate, they would tell us about their horse-gods and cattle-gods.²¹⁰

The point of these critiques is that we should not map human form, constraints, and limitations upon the divine. However, Xenophanes does not merely present a negative critique of religion: the remains of his poetry tell us about some of his positive ideas about the divine.

One God [εἷς θεός], greatest among gods and men, / not
at all like to mortals in body nor in thought. (DK21B23, tr.
Graham.)

We see here evidence for some kind of transcendent, supreme deity. Some commentators interpret this as a kind of pantheism, or an argument for one greatest god who deserves our piety over all the others.²¹¹

3.4.2.2. *Xenophanes' Scepticism*

Xenophanes doesn't claim privileged insight of some kind in his poetry about the true nature of the divine; in fact, Xenophanes' scepticism – one that the ancient sceptics

²⁰⁹ Nietzsche does not cite DK21B11, but it is useful here for our brief overview of Xenophanes' ideas.

²¹⁰ DK21B15.

²¹¹ Zeller (1931) 43 is a proponent of a pantheism interpretation; Lesher (1992) 97-100 provides us with a 'greatest of the gods' interpretation.

took to be the basis of their own school of thought, though modern scholarship is split on this issue – argues for the limits of human knowledge.²¹²

DK21B34 (tr. Graham)

καὶ τὸ μὲν οὖν σαφὲς οὕτις ἀνὴρ γένητ’	Now the plain truth no man has seen nor
οὐδέ τις ἔσται	will any
εἰδὼς ἀμφὶ θεῶν τε καὶ ἄδδα λέγω περὶ	know concerning the gods and what I
πάντων ·	have said concerning all things.
εἰ γὰρ καὶ τὰ μάλιστα τύχοι τετελεσμένον	For even if he should completely succeed
εἰπών,	in describing things as they come to pass,
αὐτοσ ὅμως οὐκ οἶδε · δόκος δ’ ἐπ’ ἰ πᾶσι	nonetheless he himself does not know:
τέτυκται.	opinion is wrought over all.

How severe is Xenophanes’ scepticism? Is this a universal scepticism about all knowledge and objective truth, or a critique of the human capacity to knowledge? For the best overview of this question, see Lesher (1978); in general, modern commentators in general tend towards a less severe interpretation of Xenophanes’ scepticism. It’s about the limits of human knowledge and a first questioning of the epistemological apparatus.²¹³

3.4.2.3. *Nietzsche’s interpretation of Xenophanes*

In his interpretation of Xenophanes, Nietzsche reads him as responding to the metaphysical dualism of Anaximander. The critique of religion and positing of εἷς θεός – one god – is not an impersonal God, existing beyond the physical world, like in the Judeo-Christian tradition, but a statement about pure Being.²¹⁴

These religious insights originated from a need to eliminate anthropomorphism [...] take these figures away and the nature worship of the One – now attributed with

²¹² See DK21A35 for evidence of the Sceptics taking Xenophanes as forerunner.

²¹³ See, for instance, Tor (2013) 1, and Lee (2010) 16.

²¹⁴ The evidence that Nietzsche cites for his views is DK21B16, DK21B15, DK21B23, DK21B24, DK21B25, DK21B26.

the purest predicates – would remain. Xenophanes struggles for a mythical, *general* notion of nature.

(diese religiösen Ansichten sind aus dem Bedürfnis entsprungen, das Anthropomorphe abzustreifen [...] nahm man diese Gestalten weg, so blieb die Verehrung bei der einen Natur stehen, die nun mit den reinsten Prädikaten belegt wurde. X. strebt nach einer mythischen Gesamtaufassung der Natur PPP 78 / 285)

There's a specifically ethical dimension to this separation: Nietzsche describes Xenophanes as 'seek[ing] to distance all things human and unworthy from the gods (das von den Göttern alles Menschl. u. Unwürdige fern zu halten sucht)' (PPP 79 / 285). Later on in the lecture, he explicitly refers to the 'one god' as matter or substance. This leads Nietzsche to the claim that Xenophanes' cosmology is:

a dualism similar to Anaximander's: here, the world of Becoming and Passing Away; there, eternally fixed divine primal matter. (es war ein ähnl. Dualismus, wie bei Anaximander's ἀπειρον. Hier die Welt des Werdens u. Vergehens: dort der ewig gleiche ruhende göttliche Urstoff. PPP 80 / 287)

When discussing Xenophanes' scepticism, Nietzsche appears to take a relatively severe interpretation, and makes it subservient to the cosmology.

Xenophanes already accomplished intellectual progress; he believed we exist abandoned to delusion, to what is opinion – no absolute truth could exist for us. He stimulates a critique of our epistemological apparatus.

(Einen ahnungsvollen Schritt that schon Xenoph., er meinte, wir seien dem Wahne, dem Meinen preisgegeben, es gäbe für uns keine absolute Wahrheit. Also er regte eine Kritik unseres Erkenntnisapparats an. PPP 80 / 287)

The interesting thing here is that this idea that the senses lead only to delusion is something he will criticise about Parmenides later on in the same lecture, but here it appears to be acceptable – perhaps, the questioning of the possibility of *absolute truth* is the important point.

The result of this reading is that Xenophanes provides some engagement with the 'tragic' – there is a separation of that which comes to be and passes away, and a

'being' represented here by the identification of God with nature. We remain alienated, at a remove, from this divine nature, and this impacts our knowledge and experience: we can only have opinions about experience. We end up with a continuation or development of the Anaximandrian worldview, but there is no positive transformative aesthetic project to act as a solution.

3.4.3. Parmenides (DK28)

3.4.3.1. *Parmenides' Poem: On Truth and Seeming*

Born in the 6th century BCE in Elea, Parmenides is known for his poem on nature. Contrary to the negative view of Parmenides propounded by Nietzsche, Graham states that it is 'almost a truism' that Parmenides 'is the most important Presocratic' (Graham 2010, 203), echoing similar sentiments voiced by scholars such as Curd (2004, 3) and Palmer (2009, vi).

Parmenides' poem is written in epic hexameter, the verse of Homer, like many of Xenophanes' works. It has a mythic proem, where the narrator is borne by chariot to visit a goddess. The goddess's message for Parmenides takes two aspects: first, the Way of Truth [Ἀλήθεια], the metaphysical aspect of the poem, concerned with Being: secondly, the Way of Seeming [Δόξα], the physical or scientific phase of the poem. While scholars have argued since antiquity over how these two aspects of the poem interact, in the dominant 'existential' interpretation of Parmenides, the goddess's message appears to be essentially this: the metaphysics of the oneness of Being is the true reality. Therefore, there is some level of unreality to things which appear to come to be and pass away.

Consider the following fragment from the Way of Truth, DK28B6:

DK28B6 (tr. Graham)

χρή τὸ λέγειν τε νοεῖν τ' ἐὸν ἔμμεναι ·	It is right to say and to think that what-
ἔστι γὰρ εἶναι,	is is, for being is,
μηδὲν δ' οὐκ ἔστιν · τὰ σ' ἐγὼ φράζεσθαι	and nothing is not. These things I bid
ἄνωγα.	you consider.

What is, is: what is not, is not. Things cannot come to be, as there is no-where for them to have come from; things cannot pass away, as there is no-where for them to go. There is only the One [ἡ μὲν, DK28B2]. This is where the link between Xenophanes and Parmenides comes in: the One God of Xenophanes is refined here into a 'One', whole, unchanging, continuous, indivisible, unlimited, motionless, and so on. Being is, Not-Being cannot be, and as Becoming is not Being, it is not.

This rejection of Becoming is reinforced in the latter half of the poem, when the goddess introduces the Way of Seeming:

Here I cease from faithful account and thought / about
truth; from this point on learn mortal opinions, / hearing
the deceptive order of my words. (ἐν τῷ σοι παύω πιστὸν
λόγον ἠδὲ νόημα / ἀμφὶς ἀληθείης · δόξας δ' ἀπὸ τοῦδε
βροτείας / μάθανε κόσμον ἐμῶν ἐπέων ἀπατηλῶ
ἀκούων. DK28B8, tr. Graham.)

The physical or scientific phase of the poem is described as deceptive. The obvious question here is, why bother with this Way of Seeming at all, if it is not real? Commentators have tackled this in a variety of ways throughout history, with some offering a 'palliative thesis' that results in a Way of Seeming which 'is a way of plausibility of verisimilitude or probability' instead of pure falsehood (Barnes 1979b, 123). Others start with a different understanding of what the goddess really means in the Way of Truth, which I explore in more detail below.²¹⁵ Part of the problem is that little of this second part of the poem has survived antiquity – either because it was insignificant compared to the Way of Truth, or because those who we owe our fragments of Parmenides believed it to be insignificant compared to the Way of Truth. Nietzsche's explanation is that the Way of Seeming explains Parmenides' more conventional views on scientific matters from before his great discovery of 'being'. (PPP 81 / 288)

The interpretation of Parmenides' Way of Truth above is based on an 'existential' interpretation of ἔστι in Parmenides' statements about being in DK28B6. The 'existential' interpretation of the 'is' of 'ἔστι' is that it is meant to refer to that

²¹⁵ Barnes as a pluralist, Curd as a predicative monist; see Curd (2004) 66 and below.

which *is*, and many interpret it as a significant influence on Plato's Theory of Forms.²¹⁶ However, as Bredlow explains, the 'existential' sense of ἔστι is only one possible interpretation. The 'veridical' concerns the truth of the matter: "it is the case that *p*", and the 'predicative', which is about the properties of the thing in question, "*x* is *F*" (Bredlow 2011, 284). Further to these traditional scholarly interpretations, Palmer (2009) sets forth a 'modal' interpretation of the ἔστι in the statements about being – that is, that the subject of discussion is about what is possible to be spoken of or thought about, the possible objects of thought and reference. One must first decide upon their interpretation of the ἔστι – existential, predicative, veridical, or modal – upon which to build an account of the nature of the 'being' which is being described: one or many? For instance, Curd's predicative monism 'allow[s] for a plurality of fundamental, predicationally unified entities that can be used to explain the world reported by the senses' (Curd 2004, 241): the ἔστι is predicative, that is, describing the properties of the basic entity of existence, but this does not necessarily lead to the consequence that the Way of *Doxa* is pure falsehood and error.

3.4.3.2. *Nietzsche's Interpretation*

A number of important interpretative decisions must be made in the process of trying to describe Parmenides' ideas. What sense of ἔστι is at play in the Way of Truth? Is the being at stake here one or many? What relationship is there between the subjects of the Way of Truth and the Way of Seeming, that is, being and appearances? Nietzsche skims through these concerns with a 'tragic' bulldozer: in his narrative, ἔστι can only be existential, as Parmenides is responding to the question of being and becoming set by Anaximander.

The dualism of being and becoming, inherited from Anaximander in Nietzsche's narrative, is solved with a wholesale rejection of becoming. Trapped in this oneness of being, and with the rejection of physical experience as deception, Parmenides cannot account for knowledge and experience, and this is where

²¹⁶ Curd (2004) 9-15 traces the origin of this interpretation in modern scholarship to Owen (1960) before offering her alternative.

Nietzsche takes an incredibly critical view of Parmenides:

We must assume, in the person of Parmenides, an entirely extraordinary power of abstraction. The cardinal idea was that only Being is; Not-Being cannot *be*. It is the greatest error to speak of a Being of Not-Being.

(Wir müssen bei Parm. eine ganz außerordentl. Kraft der Abstraktion voraussetzen. Der Kardinal-Einfall war: "nur das Seiende i s t, das Nichtseiende kann nicht s e i n." Es ist die größte Verkehrtheit, von einem Sein des Nichtseienden zu reden. PPP 84 / 291)

With the denunciation of 'becoming' in favour of 'being', Parmenides cannot begin to move through the three levels of the 'tragic' paradigm: the very first premise of the pessimistic view of the cosmos is rejected. The result is an inability to participate in the 'tragic' moment of transformation that leads to the acceptance and, eventually, affirmation of the aesthetic. The result is a purely abstract form of being, and with it, an epistemological nightmare: the inability to account for normal sense-perceptions in an ordinary sense. For Nietzsche, this abstraction makes Parmenides the non-aesthetic poet, the Pure Apollonian Personage.

Parmenides further concluded that Becoming belongs to the realm of *deceptions*, since it can belong to neither the world of Being nor that of Not-Being, for the latter does not exist.

(Nun schloß Parmen. weiter: also gehört das Werden in das Reich der T ä u s c h u n g e n: denn es kann weder der Welt des Seins angehören, noch dem Nichtsein, da letzteres nicht existirt. PPP 85-6 / 293)

The rejection of any basis for perception eliminates the value of life and the aesthetic. The Way of Seeming, the part of Parmenides' poem that deals with physical phenomena, is reduced to the status of error and deception. This is a greater problem than Xenophanes' scepticism: it's a movement from mere doubt to pure error. In fact, such an abstract philosophy of being doesn't have a merely value-neutral impact on the world of experience: Nietzsche states that under its influence, 'one develops a hatred for phenomena (die Phänomene [...] es bildet sich selbst ein Haß)'. (PTAG 80 / 338)

Parmenides, then, is a failure of the tragic type. As Nietzsche states, ‘Here with Parmenides, everything aesthetic ends (Heir, bei Parm., hört alles Aesthetische auf)’ (PPP 83 / 290); he also calls Parmenides ‘un-Greek as no other in the two centuries of the Tragic Age (ungreichisch wie kein anderer in den zwei Jahrhunderten des tragischen Zeitalters)’ (PTAG 69 / 330).

While Nietzsche thinks that Parmenides is a failure of the tragic age for denying Becoming in its totality, on the contrary, Hegel believes that this is the very beginning of philosophy – and of idealism;

Since in this an advance into the region of the ideal is observable, Parmenides began Philosophy proper. A man now constitutes himself free from all ideas and opinions, denies their truth, and says necessity alone, Being, is the truth. This beginning is certainly still dim and indefinite, and we cannot say much of what it involves; but to take up this position certainly is to develop Philosophy proper, which has not hitherto existed. (Hegel 1892, 254)

Hegel, the system-builder – who Nietzsche would come criticise along with all other metaphysicians – we can read into the one man’s rejection and the other’s valorisation of the abstract notion of Being derived from Parmenides.

3.4.4. Zeno (DK29)

Zeno was a fifth century BC Eleatic and a student of Parmenides.²¹⁷ If Parmenides can be said to offer a positive argument for the oneness of being, then Zeno offers the counterpart negative argument: his book is a series of forty logical paradoxes that aim to prove the impossibility of plurality and motion. The most famous fictional representation of Zeno is in Plato’s *Parmenides* (for example, see *Parm.* 127d6-128e4 / DK29A12), but most of our knowledge of specific paradoxes comes from evidence from either Aristotle’s paraphrases in the *Physics* or direct quotations featured in Simplicius’ commentary *in Phys.*²¹⁸

²¹⁷ DK29A1, DK29A2, DK29A3.

²¹⁸ e.g., DK29B1, DK29B2, DK29B3, DK29A21, DK29A25, DK29A26, DK29A27; once again, Simplicius proves a valuable source for verbatim quotations of the Presocratics. See Parsons (2018).

Nietzsche devotes little time or resources to the exegesis of Zeno, either of the accounts of his character and political activity or of his philosophy. This is not surprising considering the dismissive attitude towards Parmenides' thought displayed above in 3.6.3., as Zeno continues this Eleatic tradition in the negative. Nietzsche gives a cursory glance through the paradoxes without reference to primary sources, or much in the way of commentary. I match his paraphrase to the evidence from antiquity below.

Nietzsche gives four of Zeno's proofs against plurality on PPP 90-91 / 298-299, whilst Graham gives six – a full three more than Nietzsche, if you count the fact that he categorises one of the proofs cited by Nietzsche under 'other' rather than 'against plurality'.²¹⁹

Nietzsche	Diels-Kranz	Graham	Summary
'Proofs against Plurality' 1 PPP 90 / 298	DK29A12 (Plato, <i>Parmenides</i> , 127d-128e)	'Arguments against the existence of a plurality' 1 (i): 'Likeness argument'	P1. If a plurality of things existed, then they would have to be both alike and unlike – alike in the sense of beings, but unlike in the sense of their individuation. P2. However, it is impossible to call unlike things alike or alike things unlike. ∴ a plurality of things is impossible.
'Proofs against Plurality' 2 PPP 91 / 298	DK29B2 (Simplicius, <i>in Phys</i> , 139.5-19)	'Arguments against the existence of a plurality' 2 (ii): 'Addition argument'	P1. The plurality of things do not have size. P2. Adding or removing a thing without size makes no change to the thing added to or removed from.

²¹⁹ Graham (2010) 254-259. The proof Graham recategorises as other is DK29A24, the 'Place Argument', on Graham (2010) 262-3.

			∴ the thing added or removed is nothing, and therefore there is not a plurality of things.
'Proofs against Plurality' 3 PPP 91 / 299	DK29B1 (Simplicius, <i>in Phys</i> , 139.24-140.6)	'Arguments against the existence of a plurality' 6 (vi): 'Division argument'	P1. Being is divisible. Suppose being is divided as much as possible, there are two possible outcomes: (a). division will result in an infinite number of finite parts (b). division will go on until there is nothing left, at which point something is nothing ∴ being is indivisible.
'Proofs against Plurality' 4 PPP 91 / 299	DK29A24 (Aristotle, <i>Physics</i> , 210b22-25)	'Other Arguments' 1 (xi): 'Place argument'	P1. Every existing thing is in a place. P2. That place is in a place. Ad infinitum.

Here, Nietzsche misses out what Graham calls the 'sameness argument', an argument for which we have the conclusion but not the premises: '*if there are many things, no one has size because it is one and the same as itself.*' (Graham 2010, 266-7). Without this first argument, the arguments that follow, such as the 'addition argument', are missing their context and therefore do not make much sense. It is possible that Nietzsche substitutes in the 'likeness argument' to introduce order to his reasoning.

Nietzsche gives two of Zeno's proofs against motion on PPP 91-92 / 299-300, though the first is a conflation of two separate arguments; Graham gives four.²²⁰ If you count the first proof Nietzsche gives as the two he conflates, then he presents only one proof against motion less than Graham.

²²⁰ Graham (2010) 258-263.

Nietzsche	Diels-Kranz	Graham	Summary
<p>'Proofs against motion' 1 PPP 91-2 / 299</p>	<p>DK29A25 (Aristotle, <i>Physics</i>, 239b9-14)</p> <p>DK29A26 (Aristotle, <i>Physics</i>, 239b14-20)</p>	<p>'Arguments against motion' 1 (vii): 'Halfway argument'</p> <p>'Arguments against motion' 2 (viii): 'Achilles argument'</p>	<p>To get from point A to point B, you must first travel half of the distance between A and B. Then you must travel half of the remaining half of the distance (one quarter) between A and B. Then you must travel half of the remaining half of the distance (one eighth) between A and B. ad infinitum.</p> <p>In a race between Achilles and a turtle, if the turtle has a head start, then Achilles will never win. Achilles can never overtake the turtle as first he must reach where the turtle set out from – but in this time, the turtle has moved further ahead.</p> <p>∴ motion is impossible.</p>
<p>'Proofs against motion' 2 PPP 92 / 299-300</p>	<p>DK29A27 (Aristotle, <i>Physics</i>, 239b30-33)</p>	<p>'Arguments against motion' 3 (ix): 'Arrow argument'</p>	<p>P1. Everything is at rest when it occupies a certain space.</p> <p>P2. At every individual moment of the arrow's flight, it occupies a certain space, and is therefore at rest.</p> <p>∴ motion is impossible.</p>

In evaluating Zeno, Nietzsche relates the work of the paradoxes to Kant's critique of pure reason: '[a]ll these proofs are produced under the hypothesis that space and time possess absolute reality. This is contradicted, and the leap is additionally made that they possess no reality at all. (Alle diese Beweise sind unter der Hypothese gemacht, daß Raum u. Zeit absolute Realität haben)' (PPP 92 / 300) Occupying the middle space between these two positions is the Kantian hypothesis that space and time are forms of intuition – that is, that space and time exist as 'empirical realities *for us*. (es sind empirische Wirklichkeiten für u n s)' (PPP 93 / 301) The absolute reality of time and space is indemonstrable, Nietzsche tells us; 'the one, like the other, is our representation; we know, in itself, neither whether a thing exists, whether there is motion, nor whether space exists (Das Eine wie das Andere ist unsere Vorstellung: wir wissen an sich weder, ob es Ding oder ob e seine Bewegung oder ob es einen Raum giebt)' (PPP 93 / 301). This is what he later describes later on the same page as the 'Kantian problem (Kantische Problem)'. The failing of Eleaticism, then, was its inability to expand the sceptical method of the paradoxical hypothesis to its conclusions. '[A]ll sorts of reflection on our notions as eternal truths [*aeternae veritates*] lead to contradictions, (daß alle Betrachtungsarten unserer Vorstellungen als *aeternae veritates* auf Widersprüche führen)' (PPP 93 / 301) Nietzsche states, anticipating his later work reevaluating all values, and, specifically, any concept of eternal truth.²²¹

3.4.5. Summary

Xenophanes continues, in some sense, the Anaximandrian line of Presocratic thought, tackling the question of the separation of being and becoming and its connection to the ethical dimension of existence and alienation from divine being.

²²¹ See the criticism of the concept of *aeterna veritas* in HH 2, as well as the following note from 1886: 'Against that positivism which stops before phenomena, saying "there are only *facts*," I should say: no, it is precisely facts that do not exist, only *interpretations*...' (Gegen den Positivismus, welcher bei dem Phänomen stehen bleibt „es giebt nur Thatsachen“, würde ich sagen: nein, gerade Thatsachen giebt es nicht, nur Interpretationen. tr. Kaufmann. KGW VII, 1, NF-1886 7[60]).

Parmenides, however, represents a failure of the 'tragic age', because the abstract nature of Being in his account and subsequent rejection of all phenomena eliminates the value of life and the aesthetic.

Several questions remain, however. Nietzsche treats them in the same lecture and sees Xenophanes as some kind of forerunner to Parmenides, but does not have the same negative opinion about Xenophanes as he does Parmenides. Why is this? Above, I suggested that the distinction between 'mere doubt' and 'pure error' is somehow substantial, but this was not exhaustive.

Why does Nietzsche pay no attention to the form of writing the Eleatics used? Two of these philosophers chose to compose their thought in poetry, and not just any poetry – the meter of popular entertainment and epic, mirroring Homer and Hesiod. The language is language that the whole Greek world would have been familiar with, and the implication of writing in this form is that the poetry was intended for a public audience, compared with the prose Presocratics such as Heraclitus.²²² Does this make a difference? Quite on the contrary to these statements, Barnes critiques Parmenides' choice of hexameter on the basis that '[t]he exigencies of metre and poetical style regularly produce an almost impenetrable obscurity' (Barnes 1979b, 122). Can the claim of an intention for the poetry to be heard by a public audience withstand such harsh criticism of the poetry's lucidity? Nietzsche does not weigh in on these debates, and, while he does cite some lines of Xenophanes in his discussions of Xenophanes, he actually does not cite any of Parmenides' poem in his lecture or other writings on Parmenides, such as PTAG. Putting the obvious criticism of a lack of substantiation of Nietzsche's arguments with textual evidence aside, is something important missed out when we discuss the ideas of a poet with no reference to their poetry?

My final question that remains as yet unanswered concerns Nietzsche's idea of a 'tragic age' of Greece as a whole. As opposed to Anaximenes, who makes neither a positive nor negative contribution to the 'tragic' paradigm, we have here in

²²² See Wright (1998) 22, though be aware of the objections to this view expounded in Osborne (1998).

Parmenides a resolute *failure* of the 'tragic' type, one which resonates through the work of Zeno as well. What does it mean that some of the early Greek philosophers fail to embody the tragic type? Does this undermine his project of interpreting an entire tragic age of Greece? Parmenides' failure can be traced through the stages of the tragic paradigm: he rejects the pessimistic base of non-moral cosmos characterised by coming-to-be and passing-away, instead presenting logical arguments for the existence of an immutable being. This failure to accept the pessimistic basis of the world means that there is no 'tragic' moment of transformation necessary to move from the acceptance of this fact to the affirmation of life, and, in fact, we end up with a rejection of life and the aesthetic through their denigration as 'seeming' and falsehood. In Nietzsche's view, Parmenides' failure is his own.

4. Conclusion: Evaluating Nietzsche's Account

Having concluded the close reading of the text in chapter 3, we are now in the position to stack the successes and failures in Nietzsche's account of Heraclitus and Parmenides against one another. In the case of Heraclitus, I argue that Nietzsche says something philosophically rich, that is, he has something interesting to say about Heraclitus, even if the strictly scholarly assessment his work found the account lacking. From the starting-point of the tragic paradigm, we find in Nietzsche an experiential interpretation of Heraclitus, rooted in a non-teleological reading that valorises the aesthetic experience of becoming. In the case of Parmenides, however, I argue that Nietzsche's contribution is interesting on neither a philosophical nor philological basis. Through the lens of the tragic paradigm, Parmenides is a failure: his denial of the aesthetic leaves him unable to confront life itself, and he is unable to join the ranks of the 'tragic' philosophers proper. This failure could still be the basis of some kind of philosophically interesting insight, but the issue is that Nietzsche uses this failure to justify neglect of both the Eleatic project overall and specifically the Way of Doxa. Nietzsche sees no philosophical reason for the inclusion of the doxa in Parmenides' poem, considering it at odds with his pure monistic interpretation of the Way of Truth: every thing is this one specific thing, being. Against the backdrop of Parmenides reception from antiquity to today, however, we scholars ascribing importance to the physical theory of Parmenides, and multifarious attempts to reconcile this physical theory with the metaphysics of the first half of the poem. By not engaging with over two thousand years' worth of these efforts on even a surface level, Nietzsche undermines his own account. The overall result is that we can justify the reading of Heraclitus we find in the lectures and other early period works on philosophical grounds, but not the reading of Parmenides from this same period.

When it comes to the critique of scholarly method on Nietzsche's approach to Heraclitus, the bullet must be bitten. Nietzsche's Heraclitus lecture is dependent on versions of Heraclitus' texts that were outdated in his own day, offers little engagement with the arguably very central concept of Logos, and derives its view of

a cosmic cycle from Stoic syncretism. The real question is, does the entire validity of his account get undermined by his scholarly shortcomings? To his credit, Nietzsche does both give many citations for the Heraclitean fragments, and carefully cite the contemporary philology of Schleiermacher, Heinze, Lasalle, and Ueberweg; as Jensen notes, we as readers cannot rely on their ideas of the ‘more philologically orthodox Heraclitus’ (Jensen 2010, 336) gleaned from Guthrie, Kirk, and Kahn across the 20th century when contemplating how Nietzsche would have received Heraclitus back in the 19th. Furthermore, I argue that, through his use of the tragic lens, Nietzsche does get at something fundamental about Heraclitus, that could even be illuminating as a reading of Heraclitus’ understanding of the world. It is an ethical reading that at the same time provides an account of how one can live in the world.

Nietzsche reads into Heraclitus’ obscure words an affirmation of coming-to-be and passing-away, a rejection of Being, a view of war and opposition as just rather than necessarily unjust, teleological, or moralistic, in the Anaximandrian fashion. What he also finds – though the young Nietzsche does not know it yet – is ‘the primordial origin’ of his own thought, as Fink puts it, (Fink 2003, 7) and this does not merely refer to their shared rejection of metaphysics and revaluation of values, but also to Heraclitus’ prefiguring of the Eternal Recurrence.

Nietzsche’s most illuminating reading of Heraclitus is found in the aesthetic conception of existence within the fragment of the child at play, DK22B52.²²³ The child plays, builds, and destroys, but with no teleology, no purpose, no moral goal: only for the lived experience of play.²²⁴ This forms a metaphor for existence freed from the moral concerns of Anaximander. Our passing-away is no penalty for a grave

²²³ αἰὼν παῖς ἐστὶ παίζων, πεσσεύων · παιδὸς ἢ βασιληΐη. [Aeon] is a child at play, moving pieces in a game: the kingdom is a child’s (tr. Graham, amended). Nietzsche refers to this fragment directly and indirectly throughout the lecture: see PPP 65-6 / 273-4, PPP 70 / 278, PPP 73 / 281, PPP 74 / 281.

²²⁴ ‘We must exclude even more any moralistic tendencies to think teleologically here, for the cosmic child [*Weltkind*] behaves with no regard to purposes but rather only according to an immanent δίκη: it can act only wilfully and lawfully, but it does not *will* these ways.’ PPP 70 / 278.

injustice.²²⁵ It is only the child razing a sandcastle to build one anew, placing the game pieces back in the box to begin another round. This play is without moral consequence or moral necessity, motivated only by a love of the aesthetic, understood as life itself. This aesthetic understanding extends to the flux doctrine understood as a philosophy of becoming. The eternal process of coming-to-be and passing-away is without any moral necessity or any goal in particular, but merely flows like the river, proceeds like the child playing the game. Jensen makes this very point when he argues that,

[f]or Nietzsche [...] Heraclitus needs no external organizer who would require some sort of blueprint to guide his universe-forming; the change itself is the character of the universe, ever becoming what is its natural lot to become. In its uniform but continual natural flux the universe is without purpose; like a flowing river that rushes ever on toward an end that it neither intends nor avoids. (Jensen 2010, 340-1)

This is the way that Heraclitus solves the moral problem of Anaximander. Creation and destruction – coming-to-be and passing-away – exist playfully, rather than as a crime and its punishment, coexisting in grave injustice. As Jensen argues again, '[t]he cosmic process creates and destroys [...] yet far from bearing the guilt of injustice [...] the universe is like a child in its innocent caprice.' (Jensen 2010, 343) This is what Nietzsche means when he calls it the 'play of Aeon [Spiel des αἰών]' (PPP 73 / 281), the play of time. The essential nature of war for Heraclitus makes sense in the context of the cosmos as play; to quote Huizinga, '[t]he two ideas often seem to blend absolutely in the archaic mind. Indeed, all fighting that is bound by rules bears the formal characteristics of play by that very limitation.' (Huizinga 1949, 89) War is the father of all things for Heraclitus in its similarity to play: creation and destruction, tensions between forces, all according to the natural law of what is possible. My reading of Nietzsche here follows not merely Jensen but also Fink:

Heraclitus' concept of play becomes Nietzsche's deepest intuition for the grandly symbolic and metaphorical nature of the cosmos. He feels a kinship with him in the

²²⁵ 'here is innocence and yet coming into being and destruction' PPP 70 / 278.

‘fundamental aesthetic conception of the world at play’.
(Fink 2003, 32)

This reading is opposed to more traditional interpretations of the fragment such as Kahn’s; Kahn supposes that the child at play is another metaphor for the underlying logic of the cosmos. The board game infers rules and regularity: ‘after one side plays it is the other’s turn, and after the victory is reached the play must start over from the beginning.’ (Kahn 1979, 227) Similarly, as seen in 3.4.[x.x.], Kirk attacks a flux doctrine as strong as Nietzsche’s reading, beginning from the linguistic variations in the surviving river fragments to agnosticism about Heraclitus intending the river to be a symbol of substrateless flux at all. ‘Now of this doctrine that things are constantly changing like flowing rivers there is no sign whatever in the fragments,’ he states, ‘[...o]n the other hand, there is plenty of evidence from the fragments that Heraclitus did *not* deny stability to the natural world’. (Kirk 1954, 370) However, I argue that denying the radical nature of Nietzsche’s reading of Heraclitean flux is to circumvent the consequences of this reading of Heraclitus: of confronting a view of the world that exists in continual change, without an ultimate purpose or end, and yet is there for us to affirm in the aesthetic fashion – affirming life qua life itself. Nietzsche’s Heraclitus leads us to a view of how one can live, even if this exists in opposition to mainstream 19th and 20th century classical philology.

The reception of Parmenides and the Eleatics stands in sharp contrast to the reception of Heraclitus. Xenophanes gets off somewhat lightly: despite being posited as a forerunner of Parmenides, he is credited as having attempted to engage with the Anaximandrian question of the ethics of coming-to-be and passing-away.²²⁶ Parmenides, on the other hand, is the target of much vitriol. The Way of Truth offers an explanation of the universe through metaphysical monism, and, by virtue of this monism, there can be no truth or significance in the Way of Doxa. Nietzsche gives a

²²⁶ See PPP 80 / 278: ‘a dualism similar to Anaximander’s [to apeiron]: here, the world of Becoming and Passing Away; there, eternally fixed divine primal matter.’ Furthermore, ‘his wanderings are devoted to the betterment and purification of humanity’ (PPP 77 / 284), which presupposes transgression even if this is not made as explicit as it is in the case of Anaximander.

brief overview of the physical doctrines,²²⁷ though he ultimately judges that they must be some kind of leftover account of Parmenides' more conventional physical views from before his 'discovery' of being, left completely incompatible with the truth of being.²²⁸ 'Becoming cannot be conceived,' states Nietzsche, 'Consequently, his elements are a delusion'. (PPP 87 / 295) Through this argument, Nietzsche fails to give the doxa even some kind of status as secondary to the way of truth. It leads to the conclusion that Parmenides rejects both becoming and the aesthetic, and fails to embody the tragic spirit of his age.²²⁹ In Nietzsche's opinion, Zeno merely reformulates the views of Parmenides in the form of paradox, offering little but proof in the negative.²³⁰

I argue that Nietzsche gives only a superficial account of Parmenides, and this constitutes a failure on Nietzsche's part. Leading with the conclusion that Parmenides does not participate in the tragic philosophy of his age, Nietzsche does not devote any time or space to the examination of what is innovative in Parmenides' physical thought, declaring it merely incompatible with the first half of the poem. Indisputably, the second half of the poem is deficient in some way, and either Parmenides or history itself is at fault for this deficiency; however, the key point is that Parmenides went to the trouble of developing his physical theory, rather than calling it a day with the Way of Truth. Its mere existence is evidence that it was meant to tell us something about the phenomenal world, and perhaps to show the compatibility of this view of the phenomenal world with the metaphysics of the Way

²²⁷ PPP 83-4 / 290-1.

²²⁸ See PPP 81 / 288: '[t]he [theory of being] required him to discard every other notion, *thus also his own previous one*, as a deception of the senses. But he permitted himself to say, "*if one were to partake in another direction, my previous viewpoint alone is justified.*"

²²⁹ 'That they deny [becoming] is the shortest way out, yet the least illuminating. With this ceases all observation of nature, all desire to learn from things.' PPP 88 / 296.

²³⁰ Though Nietzsche sees little value in Zeno – the lecture is one of the shortest of the course - he does compliment how Zeno's paradoxes have effects similar to his own revaluation of all values: 'this knowledge, which ancient philosophy did not know to expand, is important: all sort of reflection on our notions as eternal truths lead to contradictions.' PPP 93 / 301.

of Truth. In antiquity, the commentators give precedent for interpreting the doxa at face value and look for compatibilities. In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle attributes to Parmenides the view that everything that is, is, by definition, one, but, at the same time, can appear to be more than one through perception (DK28A24). Plutarch and Simplicius share the view that the Way of Truth and the Way of Seeming are metaphysically compatible as one concerns the intellect and the other appearances, though Plutarch does give deficient status to the doxa (DK28A24, Simp. *in Phys.* 39.10-12). In the 19th century, Zeller comments on the physical and astronomical knowledge of Parmenides, laments the limits of the surviving texts on this topic, and states that Parmenides ‘paves the way for the metaphysical dualism which found its most complete expression in the Platonic theory of ideas’, meaning that Parmenides is a step towards a form of metaphysical compatibilism. (Zeller 1931, 49-52) Turning to modern scholars, Barnes revolutionised the field in his 1979 essay, ‘Parmenides and the Eleatic One’, where he argued that Parmenides was no monist: claims of Parmenidean monism are a conflation of Parmenides with the later Presocratic, Melissus.²³¹ Developing a rejection of Parmenidean monism further, Curd argues for an ontological distinction: that Parmenides’ poem identifies a problem with belief *only* in the reality of that which is perceived by the senses. Mortals believe that coming-to-be and passing-away are all that is, because, to the senses, that is all that seems to exist – they do not apprehend the eternal ‘being’ behind the appearance of things. (Curd 2004, 114) However, she argues, ‘Parmenides’ diagnosis of this problem does not entail that the world reported by the senses is therefore to be rejected entirely.’ (Curd 2004, 100) Cordero takes this idea further, making the radical argument that it is later authors whose arrangements separated all the metaphysical fragments into the Way of Truth and all the physical fragments into the Way of Seeming. The consequence is the possibility of a lost Parmenidean physics in the Way of Truth: if ‘the ὄντα (all things) exist because there is Being’, then Truth could examine the being of beings and beings according to perception without there being a necessary incompatibility between them. (Cordero 2010, 242) Palmer’s modal

²³¹ Barnes (1979a) 20-21.

interpretation of Parmenides takes yet another perspective, validating the significance of the doxa as the contingent path. The modal interpretation is that the first half of the poem concerns what must necessarily be and what must necessarily not be: that is, that being itself must exist, and non-being must not exist. The second half of the poem concerns the contingent things – things that do not exist out of necessity. For instance, the existence of the tree in the garden is not a necessary feature of the cosmos: its existence is based on contingent factors such as the soil, humidity, and availability of light; it is alive now, though it was not before, and one day will die or be cut down. In this way we can understand the doxa as ‘a path where the entities considered are subject to variableness of being and identity’, and the way of truth as ‘ways of being that do not involve such variability’.(Palmer 2009, 118) In this way, the second half of the poem continues the project of the first half, moving from that which is necessarily to that which is contingently. I argue for no one of these modern interpretations over the other: by displaying that they are all finding room for the way of doxa, but in different ways, with different arguments, shows the range of possibility in interpretation and the philosophical value of those interpretations.

The question of how to interpret Parmenides to make the different sections of the poem compatible and ‘save’ the physics aside, there are reasons to ascribe value to the physics within the physical doctrines themselves. Parmenides makes some original and innovative physical observations, which also have the striking property of being true. One of these is his doctrine that the moon is illuminated by the sun.²³² This astronomical fact – now taken as a basic truth in our times – finds its roots here in Parmenides; Graham tells us that, according to known evidence, no

²³² In Parmenides’ own words, we are struck by the poetry of the fact: ‘νυκτιφαῆς περὶ γαῖαν ἀλώμενον ἀλλότρον φῶς’ – ‘a light by night, wandering around earth with borrowed light’ (DK28B14, tr Graham (2013) 85). This straightforward assertion we find in testimonia: ‘Παρμενίδης ἴσην τῷ ἡλίῳ · καὶ γὰρ ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ φωτίζεται.’ [Parmenides [says the moon] is equal to the sun, and in fact is illuminated by it.] (DK28A42, tr. Graham). Graham (2010) 240-1 disputes testimonia that this observation came earlier than Parmenides.

earlier culture made this proposition.²³³ This paves the way for astronomical developments such as predicting the moon phases. Furthermore, though he was not the first human ever to establish this – the Babylonians scooped him on this one a millennium before – Parmenides is the first Greek to have correctly identified that the morning and evening star are one and the same.²³⁴ A third example is Parmenides’ argument that the world is round – another innovation that holds true according to the evidence of modern scientists, despite what the modern Flat Earth movement will try to tell you.²³⁵ Evidently, contrary Nietzsche’s argument that Parmenides rejects the aesthetic, it turns out that Parmenides had innovative and scientifically accurate ideas about the world. Regardless of which path one takes in attempting to justify the compatibility of the physics and the metaphysics, it’s problematic to elide the physics on the basis of these innovations.

Of course, these arguments return us sooner or later to concerns about the transmission of Parmenides’ work, what survived, and why. Obfuscating our ability to assess the Way of Seeming is the lack of it: Diels estimated that we have about 90% of the original Way of Truth, but only 10% of the original Way of Seeming. (Curd 2004, 98) Despite the fact established above that ancient commentators often engaged in face-value engagement with the Way of Seeming, it is indisputable to assert that priority was given in antiquity to discuss the former over the latter, leading to the discrepancy in what has survived. This gives precedent for the history of reception that culminates in Nietzsche taking the Way of Truth seriously and show disregard for Seeming. The problem is that, by not engaging with metaphysical compatibilism and instead binning the entire doxa, Nietzsche is forced through his

²³³ Graham (2010) 241.

²³⁴ The morning and evening star are of course Venus. See DK28A40a: ‘Παρμενίδης πρῶτον μὲν τάττει τὸν Ἑῶλιον, τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ νομιζόμενον ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ Ἑσπερον, ἐν τῷ αἰθέρι.’ [Parmenides puts the morning star first, which he considers to be the same as the evening star, in the aether] (tr. Graham). See discussion in Graham (2013) 92-5.

²³⁵ ‘Πρῶτος δ’ οὗτος τὴν γῆν ἀπέφαινε σφαιροειδῆ καὶ ἐν μέσῳ κεῖσθαι.’ [He was the first to say the earth was spherical and situated in the middle] (DK28A1, DL 9.21, tr. Graham).

own Schopenhauerian metaphysical commitments to commit to a wholesale rejection of the philosophical achievements of the Eleatic school. The tragic view of Parmenides and the Eleatics does not give us anything interesting, plausible, or illuminating to add to the history of the interpretation of Parmenides. It views Parmenides as a failure – no physics means no aesthetics which means no value – without considering the possibility of a compatibility between the metaphysics and the physics, and without considering the value of the physics independently of the metaphysics. As Fink notes, ‘Nietzsche does not understand Parmenides’ originality because he fails to see the speculative depth of the ontological problem altogether,’ resulting in a ‘caricature’. (Fink 2003, 32-3)

If this present work were merely philosophy, it could present this reading of Nietzsche’s tragic philosophy and the manifestations and failures of tragic thought he identifies in Heraclitus and Parmenides and be done with it. There is much philosophical richness in the reading of Heraclitus, and in examining Nietzsche’s early thought as part of the movement towards a philosophy that justifies life in the face of meaninglessness. Responding to the madman driven to despair by the death of God (GS §125): we can move beyond meaning in religion and metaphysics to our own new configurations of meaning, a prefiguring of Sartre’s existence precedes essence. But this work must too serve the rigour and requirements of classical philology to maintain its claim to interdisciplinarity. As Nietzsche struggled in this early period to serve two masters, so do I. The criticisms that can be levelled against Nietzsche’s scholarly rigour has consequences for the philosophical conclusions. To wholesale ignore these issues would result in the same criticism being levelled against ourselves – we Nietzsche scholars.

philosophia facta est quae philologia fuit.

Nietzsche, quoting Seneca in his inaugural lecture

(Nietzsche 1869, 24)

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