In the Shadow of Anaximander: Philosophical Temperaments and Schopenhauerian Pessimism in Nietzsche's Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks

Christopher Robin Mountenay

Follow this and additional works at: https://dsc.duq.edu/etd

Recommended Citation
IN THE SHADOW OF ANXIMANDER: PHILOSOPHICAL TEMPERAMENTS AND SCHOPENHAUERIAN PESSIMISM IN NIETZSCHE’S PHILOSOPHY IN THE TRAGIC AGE OF THE GREEKS

A Dissertation
Submitted to the McAnulty Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By
Christopher R. Mountenay

December 2013
ABSTRACT

IN THE SHADOW OF ANXIMANDER: PHILOSOPHICAL TEMPERAMENTS AND SCHOPENHAUERIAN PESSIMISM IN NIETZSCHE’S PHILOSOPHY IN THE TRAGIC AGE OF THE GREEKS

By

Christopher R Mountenay

December 2013

Dissertation supervised by Dr. Patrick Lee Miller.

Friedrich Nietzsche’s unfinished 1873 manuscript, Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks, has been long overlooked by scholars. The piece is ostensibly a philological work, detailing the lives of Pre-Platonic philosophers. What I show in my work, however, is that Nietzsche is actually using the figures of the early Greeks to deal with philosophical problems that remain germane throughout his entire corpus, notably the relation of temperament to one’s philosophical outlook and the attempt to deal with the pessimism of Schopenhauer. The former problem is examined by viewing the Pre-Platonic philosophers as “philosophical archetypes” whose “unmixed” outlooks are the result of their monolithic characters. These primordial philosophical types have recurred throughout the history of philosophy, albeit in diluted forms. The first of these archetypes to be examined is Anaximander, whom Nietzsche sees as the original pessimist: a proto-Schopenhauer. Nietzsche’s Anaximander poses the question of why
things pass away and then insists that it is because they deserve to be annihilated. Those who do not wish to be gloomy pessimists in the Schopenhauerian vein henceforth must find a way to justify the seeming injustices of the world of becoming. Nietzsche provides two contrary characters to show how philosophers have dealt with the Anaximandrian problem. The first is Heraclitus, for whom Nietzsche is unambiguous in his admiration. Heraclitus celebrates the vicissitudes of becoming, seeing the conflict and impermanence as being justice itself. This leads to the Heraclitean metaphors of justice as competition, fire, and a child at play.

Nietzsche’s writing on Heraclitus is particularly interesting since it shows Nietzsche’s own attempts to escape from the Schopenhauerian worldview that he had long held, but ultimately would reject. The other figure who attempts to deal with the problem of Anaximander is Parmenides. While Heraclitus dealt with becoming by celebrating it, Parmenides denies it, reducing the world of perception to a mere illusion and inventing a second world of being where the horrors of becoming are absent. According to Nietzsche, this misstep has informed most subsequent philosophers, causing them to prefer eternal being over temporal becoming.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Anaximander</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 The First Philosophical Author</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.1 What Does Nietzsche Say and Not Say About Anaximander</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.2 The Bearing of Anaximander</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.3 The Fragment</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Eternal Justice and Apeiron</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.1 The Only Serious Moralist</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.2 A Mephistophelean Doctrine</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.3 Justice as Destruction</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.4 Apeiron as Will</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.5 The Debt of the World</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.6 Zarathustra Contra Anaximander</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.7 Anaximander’s Shadow</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Heraclitus</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 A Divine Stroke of Lightning</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1 Early Interpretations of Heraclitus</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2 Schopenhauer on Heraclitus</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2. Becoming</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1 The First Negation</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2. Heraclitean Intuition</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.3. Schopenhauerian Intuition</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.4. Heraclitus and Schopenhauer on Time and Becoming</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.5. The Second Negation</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.6. Heraclitus on Perception</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.7. The One, Qualities, and Strife</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3. Justice</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1. The Earthquake and Pessimism</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2. Agon: Justice as Competition</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.3. Fire as Justice and First Substance</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.4. Fire as the Cosmic Cycle of Conflagration</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.5. Fire as Want and Satiety</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.6. Fire as Punishment for Hubris</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.7. Hubris and Justice</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.8. Justice as a Child</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.9. Justice as Play</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4. The Philosopher’s Bearing</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.1. Heraclitus’s Obscurity</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.2. Adapting a Preface</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.3. Heraclitus’s Solitude</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.4. Heraclitus’s Pride</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.5. Heraclitus’s Coldness</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.6. Thus Spoke Heraclitus?</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Parmenides........................................................................................................................................111

3.1. The Icy Truth-Teller......................................................................................................................111

3.1.1. The Two Eras of Parmenides.................................................................................................112

3.1.2. The Influence of Anaximander...............................................................................................115

3.2. Parmenides’ Strategy Against Pessimism...................................................................................117

3.2.1. Negation..................................................................................................................................117

3.2.2. Aphrodite................................................................................................................................118

3.2.3. Rejecting What is Not...........................................................................................................121

3.3. The Character of Parmenides......................................................................................................123

3.3.1. Against Heraclitus..................................................................................................................123

3.3.2. Against the Masses and Senses...............................................................................................124

3.4. Parmenides the Spider.................................................................................................................127

3.4.1. Nietzsche’s Other Spiders.......................................................................................................131

3.4.2. God the Spider........................................................................................................................133

3.5. Parmenides and the Ascetic Ideal..............................................................................................135

3.5.1. The Philosopher as Ascetic Ideal...........................................................................................135

3.5.2. The Secular Parmenides.........................................................................................................137

3.5.3. Motion, Deceit, and Failure.....................................................................................................139

4. Conclusion......................................................................................................................................143

4.1. Untimely Meditations................................................................................................................147

4.1.1. Three Dangers.......................................................................................................................147

4.1.2. The First Danger....................................................................................................................149

4.1.3. The Second Danger..............................................................................................................153
4.1.4. The Third Danger.................................................................155

4.1.5. Empedocles.................................................................158

4.2. The Problem of Anaximander.................................................161

Bibliography.............................................................................164
Introduction

Friedrich Nietzsche’s unfinished 1873 manuscript, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* (PTAG), has had the misfortune of being largely overlooked. Despite the abundance of translations of Nietzsche’s major works, PTAG has not received a new English translation in over fifty years.\(^1\) The book was meant to be released shortly after *The Birth of Tragedy*, but was instead abruptly abandoned as Nietzsche refocused his attention on *The Untimely Meditations*.\(^2\)

Nietzsche never wrote a proper conclusion, nor did he write planned chapters on Empedocles, Democritus, the Pythagoreans, and Socrates.\(^3\)

He did manage, however, to include a meditation on lost books in the early chapters of PTAG. Read with hindsight, this meditation seems prophetic:

> It is a veritable misfortune that we have so little extant of the works of the ancient masters and that not a single one of their works was handed down to us complete. We are involuntarily influenced by this loss, measuring therefore with false standards, and letting ourselves be disposed more favorably toward Plato and Aristotle by the sheer accident that they never lacked connoisseurs and copyists. Some go so far as to assume a special destiny reserved for books, a *fatum libellorum*. Such a fate would have to be malicious indeed to deprive us of Heraclitus, of the wonderful poetry of Empedocles, and of the writings of Democritus, thought by the ancients to be Plato’s equal and, so far as ingenuity is concerned, his superior, slipping us instead the Stoics the Epicureans, and Cicero. Very likely the most impressive part of Greek thought and its verbal expression is lost to us, a fate not to be wondered at if one remembers the misfortunes that befell Scotus Erigena and Pascal and the fact that in even this enlightened century the first edition of Schopenhauer’s *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* had to be sold for wastepaper[… ] Mankind so rarely produces a good book, one which with bold freedom sounds the battle-cry of truth, the song of philosophic heroism. And yet the most wretched accidents, sudden eclipses of men’s minds, superstitious paroxysms and antipathies, cramped or lazy writing fingers, down to book worms and rainfall, all

---

\(^1\) Cowan’s translation, which is quoted throughout this work, was originally published in 1962.

\(^2\) Pletsch, 164-65.

\(^3\) Unpublished Writings, 23, 3.
determine whether or not a book will live on another century or turn into ashes and mold.⁴

While Nietzsche is being somewhat hyperbolic in supposing that Plato and Aristotle’s success was by virtue of “sheer accident,” his description of the loss of great swaths of ancient thought remains poignant.⁵ Moreover, not confining the cruelty of happenstance to the ancient world, Nietzsche speaks of the lot of Schopenhauer in “this enlightened century.”⁶ It does not seem far-fetched to imagine that Nietzsche was aware that a similar fate may be possible for his own works.

 Luckily, the bulk of Nietzsche’s work as a whole has yet to fall into the same abyss as that of Heraclitus and Empedocles. Yet PTAG is still relatively obscure. The culprit in this matter however is not “worms and rainfall,” but a much more deliberate agent of fate, namely Richard Wagner. Nietzsche had intended to finish PTAG by the end of the Lenten season of 1873.⁷ Academic works have a tendency to take longer than one might hope and Nietzsche was still writing the Anaxagoras chapter when he visited the Wagners at Bayreuth for Easter. He brought a copy of the unfinished manuscript to read to the Wagners, but the work received a chilly reception from Richard.⁸ The work struck Wagner as being overly academic and he suggested that Nietzsche write something that had more relevance to contemporary matters.⁹ Wagner had probably hoped for a book that would be directly relevant to his primary interests, if not openly about Wagner himself, as The Birth of Tragedy was. He was also experiencing numerous professional annoyances, and so was not in the mood to meditate upon Heraclitus and

---

⁴ PTAG, 35-37.
⁵ A similar theme is explored in his late work, The Antichrist, albeit with an added emphasis on the role of Christianity in the loss of philosophical works. Antichrist, 59.
⁶ PTAG, 36.
⁷ Unpublished, 23, 6.
⁸ Pletsch, 164.
⁹ Ibid.
Parmenides.\(^{10}\) It is safe to assume that Nietzsche took this to heart; he almost immediately wrote an embarrassingly obsequious letter to Wagner, begging for his forgiveness.\(^{11}\) Nietzsche then began work on *The Untimely Meditations* and his notebooks show an abrupt cessation of work regarding early Greek philosophy.\(^{12}\)

Wagner’s condemnation was thus internalized by Nietzsche, but it was an unfair reaction to PTAG. Nietzsche might have said that although Wagner may not find Greek philosophy interesting, many do, and that Nietzsche, as a professional philologist, should be expected to write about such matters. But to imagine this response would be to assume that what Nietzsche did in PTAG was provide a simple work of philology. Wagner’s dismissal of the piece seems to have been based on a superficial reading of it. In fact, Nietzsche’s sister suggested that Wagner did not even bother to listen to Nietzsche’s reading of PTAG when he heard the topic of the book.\(^{13}\) Had he paid closer attention, Wagner would have realized that PTAG is not merely a recounting of the doctrines of ancient philosophers, but rather a work that deals with timeless problems of philosophy and showcases Nietzsche’s evolution as a philosopher.

Thus my intention in this work is to provide an analysis of PTAG that shows both its importance to Nietzsche scholarship and also to philosophy in general. To accomplish this, I shall examine the three figures in PTAG whom Nietzsche most fully develops: Anaximander, Heraclitus, and Parmenides.\(^{14}\) What I hope to show is both how PTAG stands as an interesting transition from Nietzsche’s early to middle works and how it illuminates his later works.

\(^{10}\) Cate, 172.  
\(^{11}\) Selected Letters, 51.  
\(^{13}\) Förster-Nietzsche, 168. As is good practice, the testimony of Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche is taken with a grain of salt.  
\(^{14}\) To keep my analysis focused, I have not included his sections on Thales and Anaxagoras. The first is more concerned with the notion of the philosopher as such than with Thales in particular. The section on Anaxagoras does not appear to be complete and thus could not be fairly compared to the preceding sections. Both sections are fascinating in their own right, but I have chosen to remain focused on those philosophers who are answering the pessimistic problem of Anaximander.
Moreover, I wish to show how PTAG also represents one of Nietzsche’s most interesting investigations of the problem of pessimism. In this work he makes some of his first attempts to renounce the philosophical pessimism of Arthur Schopenhauer. Finally, I wish to show how Nietzsche accomplishes this goal by examining the personalities of the philosophers he examines and through this creates philosophical archetypes with which to understand later thinkers.

Nietzsche lays out his goal for PTAG very plainly in its Preface. He explains that “philosophical systems are wholly true for their founders only,” which is why this is not merely going to be a display of the doctrines of the ancients.\(^\text{15}\) If we were to look at this project as merely a collection of philosophical systems, then Wagner’s criticism would have seemed more apt, as some of these systems have been long since disproven, which would make them seem as if they are only of interest to the antiquarian.\(^\text{16}\) But Nietzsche actually states that a strength of his work is that it contains “a very small number of doctrines,” which from the standpoint of the antiquarian would be a definite weakness.\(^\text{17}\) He does not believe that we should be examining these systems for their truth value, but rather for the character of the great men who created them. He says that “whoever rejoices in great human beings will also rejoice in philosophical systems, even if completely erroneous.”\(^\text{18}\) What makes a system so fascinating is the “personal mood” and “color” of it.\(^\text{19}\) A philosophical system is useful in Nietzsche’s eyes since it can “be used to reconstruct the philosophic image” and lead us to the person behind the philosophy, the soil from which the system grew from.\(^\text{20}\) Thus the system may be refuted, but the philosophers

\(^{15}\) PTAG, 23.
\(^{16}\) Even then, Wagner’s dismissal seems overly far-reaching. For instance we shall see that Nietzsche is able to support many of Heraclitus’s claims with modern science. *Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, 60-63.
\(^{17}\) PTAG, 25.
\(^{18}\) Ibid. 23.
\(^{19}\) Ibid.
\(^{20}\) Ibid.
themselves will always remain as those “we must ever love and honor,” “great individual human beings.”

The Greek philosophers before Plato provide a special insight into this sort of thought, according to Nietzsche, because they are “the archetypes of philosophic thought.” These early philosophers were remarkable in their thought, both because of its purity and its fullness.

All other cultures are put to shame by the marvelously idealized philosophical company represented by the ancient Greek masters Thales, Anaximander, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Anaxagoras, Empedocles, Democritus, and Socrates. These men are monolithic. Their thinking and their character stand in a relationship characterized by strictest necessity. They are devoid of conventionality, for in their day there was no philosophic or academic professionalism. All of them, in magnificent solitude, were the only ones of their time whose lives were devoted to insight alone. They all possessed that virtuous energy of the ancients, herein excelling all men since, which led them to find their own form and to develop it through all its metamorphoses to its subtlest and greatest possibilities. For there was no convention to meet them halfway. Thus all of them together form what Schopenhauer in contrast to the republic of scholars has called the republic of creative minds: each giant calling to his brother through the desolate intervals of time.

Note here that the earliest philosophers are portrayed by Nietzsche as being “monolithic” figures, whose thought was uninhibited by preexisting roles for philosophers. Nietzsche also noted that these early figures did not establish any sort of schools, leading to no sort of sectarianism, which he sees as antithetical to Greek culture. Nietzsche’s diagnosis may not be entirely historically accurate: these philosophers did tend to teach students their doctrines. Yet these foundational figures of philosophy did not establish schools to instruct future students. Instead, they developed models of life their descendants could emulate. Additionally, the early Greek philosophers, according to Nietzsche, were not concerned with salvation for individuals or small

---

21 Ibid. 24.
22 Ibid. 31.
23 Ibid. 31-32.
24 Ibid. 35.
groups, but instead sought “the healing and the purification of the whole.”

He is vague here, perhaps purposefully. Although he seems to be speaking of Greek culture as a whole, we shall see that a philosopher’s work concerns the judgment of existence as a whole.

The philosopher is also a figure who is unmixed. Nietzsche says that while later thinkers have criticized the “older masters” as “one-sided,” he sees this as a mark of their intellectual purity. The problem of philosophical mixing occurs initially with Plato, not only in terms of philosophies, but also in philosophical personality types.

Plato himself is the first mixed type on a grand scale, expressing his nature in his philosophy no less than in his personality. Socratic, Pythagorean, and Heraclitic elements are all combined in his doctrine of Ideas. This doctrine is not a phenomenon exhibiting a pure philosophic type. As a human being too, Plato mingles the features of the regal exclusive and self-contained Heraclitus with the melancholy compassionate and legislative Pythagoras and the psychologically acute dialectician Socrates. All subsequent philosophers are such mixed types.

It is not merely that Plato’s philosophy is an amalgam, with its Heraclitean lower world and Pythagorean upper world, but also his character. Nietzsche would later describe the Platonic Socrates as “Plato at the front, Plato at the back, Chimaera in the middle,” but even Plato seems to be Pythagoras at the front, Socrates at the back, Heraclitus in the middle in PTAG. The philosophers who follow Plato are all mixed types, adopting his eclecticism in favor of the monolithic heroic stances of the earliest Greeks.

Since Nietzsche is appropriating much of what he says about the philosophers before Socrates from Diogenes Laertius’s Lives of Eminent Philosophers, a work not known for its

---

25 Ibid.
26 Ibid. 34.
27 Ibid. 35.
28 Beyond Good and Evil, 190.
29 PTAG, 35.
veracity, a critic could claim that Nietzsche’s diagnosis of these figures is suspect. But Nietzsche is less concerned with the philological questions in PTAG than he is with what we can do with the figures the philosophers left behind.

Diogenes Laertius offers much more about the existential characters of the earliest philosophers, something that Nietzsche also adopted as a strategy for investigating what the person had done or achieved in the course of life. It is easy to dismiss this question of character as a non-rigorous psychobiographical approach for the evaluation of a philosopher, yet such a method of inquiry need not lapse into arbitrary ad hominem arguments, nor be fueled by a spurious dogmatism or voyeurism. Such concerns are relevant for Nietzsche’s unpopular question: Is the philosopher’s worldview a psychological coping mechanism?

The truthfulness of the accounts is less important to Nietzsche than how the accounts transmit the personalities of the philosophers. The accounts of Diogenes Laertius may be exaggerations and at times outright falsehoods, but Nietzsche is concerned with constructing a “simplified” story that can give us a portrait of great philosophers and demonstrate the legacy that survives in later accounts of them.

And so in PTAG, he uses them to demonstrate the “psychological coping mechanisms” of those who faced what he saw as “the profoundest problem in ethics”: “How can anything pass away which has a right to be.” This is the problem of pessimism. Nietzsche quotes Anaximander as saying “Where the source of things is, to that place they must also pass away, according to necessity, for they must pay penance and be judged for their injustices, in accordance with the ordinance of time.” As we shall see, this raises the question of why it is that things go out of existence. If they truly deserved to exist, would they not be eternal? If they

30 Swift, 19.
31 PTAG, 25.
32 Ibid. 48.
33 Ibid. 45.
are not eternal and no eternal things can be said to exist, can life be worth living? As we shall see, this profound problem shall serve as the perpetual challenge to philosophers.

The coping mechanisms described above are the philosophies that arose from the great thinkers who faced the Anaximandrian problem. These philosophies are not interesting because of their systematic thinking, but rather because of how they illuminate the characters of their creators.\(^{34}\) In his recent examination of philosophical practices, *You Must Change Your Life*, Peter Sloterdijk states that Nietzsche is not a philosopher of modernity, but one of antiquity, and one who does not see us as having progressed beyond the ancients.\(^{35}\) Following this approach, Nietzsche introduces the philosophy of the ancients as a remedy for later philosophical attempts at changing one’s life. “Askesis” is not necessarily self-denial, but merely exercise, especially the exercise of the philosopher in living his philosophy.\(^{36}\)

When Nietzsche speaks of the ascetic planet, it is not because he would rather have been born on a more relaxed star. His antiquity-instinct tells him that every heavenly body worth inhabiting must – correctly understood – be an ascetic planet inhabited by the practicing, the aspiring, and the virtuosos. What is antiquity for him but a code word for the age in which humans had to become strong enough for a sacred-imperial image of the whole? Inherent in the great worldviews of antiquity was the intention of showing mortals how they could live in harmony with the ‘universe,’ even and especially when that whole showed them its baffling side, its lack of consideration for individuals. What one called the wisdom of the ancients was essentially a tragic holism, a self-integration within the great whole, that could not be achieved without heroism. Nietzsche’s planet would become the place whose inhabitants, especially the male ones, would carry the weight of the world anew without self-pity.\(^{37}\)

PTAG is a catalog of such heroes. Nietzsche has given us a gallery, albeit an incomplete one, where we can see how great thinkers proved their strength in carrying the heavy weight that the

---

\(^{34}\) Ibid. 24.
\(^{35}\) Sloterdijk, 31-33.
\(^{36}\) Ibid. 33.
\(^{37}\) Ibid. 35.
universe in its incomprehensibility put upon them. While PTAG is not explicitly an account of philosophers’ exercises, it does attempt to deal with the problem of the philosopher living within his own philosophy, rather than having it be something distinct from his daily life.

In sum, this work will be a close reading of PTAG, but one that will explore important themes in Nietzsche’s work and philosophy in general. One of the major themes shall be the problem of pessimism, as it was introduced by Anaximander, but also how it influenced Nietzsche by way of Schopenhauer. The other theme, complementing this one, will be Nietzsche’s analysis of philosophers by way of their characters. As we shall see, the character of the philosopher is often the most important element in determining how he responds to the problem of Anaximander. Through this examination, we shall see how PTAG gives birth to many thoughts that would grow in Nietzsche’s later works, making it an important element in understanding the evolution of Nietzsche’s thought.
1. Anaximander

1.1 The First Philosophical Author

Having established the basic archetype of the philosopher with Thales, Nietzsche proceeds to describe the “image of his great successor, Anaximander.”¹ The transition is a natural one, Anaximander being the next figure in the traditional history of philosophy chronologically.² Thales is typically credited as the first philosopher, but Anaximander was “the first philosophical author.”³ What is more striking about Anaximander, however, is that while Thales introduced the idea of the philosopher, Anaximander began the struggle that Nietzsche saw as being the central one not only in pre-Platonic philosophy, but also in the discipline’s entire history. Anaximander was “the first Greek” to tackle “the profoundest problem in ethics,” that is, “How can anything pass away which has a right to be?”⁴ With this began the conflict of being and becoming.⁵ Of the figures presented in Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks, Anaximander is the one of whom Nietzsche gives the most idiosyncratic reading. More than any of the other pre-Platonic philosophers, Anaximander is used as a stand-in for another position in the history of philosophy, specifically that of Schopenhauer.

¹ PTAG, 45.
² McKirahan, 32.
³ PTAG, 45.
⁴ Ibid. 48.
⁵ Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 37.
Nietzsche, having established the basic archetype of the philosopher in Thales, now has the opportunity to examine specific philosophical archetypes. Nietzsche made his purpose clear in “The Later Preface,” stating the following.

This attempt to tell the story of the older Greek philosophers is distinguished from similar attempts by its brevity. This has been attained by mentioning, for each of the philosophers, but a very small number of doctrines—in other words, by its incompleteness. But I have selected those doctrines which sound most clearly the personality of the individual philosopher, whereas the complete enumeration of all the transmitted doctrines, as it is the custom of ordinary handbooks to give, has but one sure result: the complete silencing of personality. That is why those reports are so dull. The only thing of interest in a refuted system is the personal element. It alone is what is forever irrefutable. It is possible to present the image of a man in three anecdotes; I shall try to emphasize three anecdotes in each system and abandon the rest.

Does Nietzsche accomplish this task that he has laid out for himself? It is only fair to remember that this is an unfinished work and thus the preface might have been revised to match the completed work. Yet as this is the most explicit description of Nietzsche’s project, it is interesting to see where he does and does not follow the guidelines that he lays out for himself. In the chapter on Anaximander, Nietzsche breaks with some of the details of his format, but still emphasizes the importance of the philosopher’s personality and also the abandoning of those doctrines that do not aid in elucidating that personality.

1.1.1 What Nietzsche Does and Does Not Say About Anaximander

Perhaps the place where the format of the preface proves to be the most problematic is in the laying out of the three anecdotes. More so than any other of the philosophers on

---

6 PTAG, 45.
7 Ibid. 25.
whom Nietzsche focuses in *PTAG*, there are very few surviving legends regarding Anaximander. Of these figures, Diogenes Laertius’s chapter on Anaximander is by far the shortest. The usually loquacious Diogenes has next to nothing to say about Anaximander. We learn his basic biographical information such as his parentage, place of birth, and years of birth and death. Diogenes also lays out his doctrines regarding the shape of the universe and his creation of the gnomon and the globe. The only anecdote that reveals anything regarding the personality of Anaximander is as follows: “There is a story that the boys laughed at his singing, and that, when he heard of it, he rejoined, ‘Then to please the boys I must improve my singing.’” While this anecdote would count towards the requisite three that Nietzsche requires, it would not contribute to the image of the regal pessimist that Nietzsche cultivates in *PTAG*; improving one’s singing to conform to the tastes of children hardly seems fitting for a tragic hero. Diogenes Laertius does mention Anaximander in one other section of his *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*. In his chapter on Empedocles, he relates that Diodorus of Ephesus claimed that Empedocles emulated Anaximander by “displaying theatrical arrogance and wearing stately robes.” This image of Anaximander, as we shall see, provides a basis for Nietzsche’s archetypical view of Anaximander.

Although Nietzsche is limited in some places by lack of information regarding the historical, or even legendary, Anaximander, there are other places where Nietzsche himself provides the limits of what should be said. As he says in the preface, he has no interest in “refuted systems,” unless he can show something about the “personal element”

---

8 Diogenes Laertius II, 1.
9 Ibid. The gnomon is the portion of the sundial that casts a shadow.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid. VIII, 70.
of the philosopher.\textsuperscript{12} Thus elements of Anaximander’s cosmology that had long been disproved by the Copernican revolution are completely absent from Nietzsche’s chapter on Anaximander in \textit{PTAG}. The cylindrical Earth which Hippolytus and Pseudo-Plutarch attribute to Anaximander appears in numerous other works on Anaximander,\textsuperscript{13} the sort that Nietzsche is trying to get away from with this book. Hegel mentions the cylindrical Earth in his \textit{Lectures on the History of Philosophy},\textsuperscript{14} as does Zeller in his \textit{Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy}.\textsuperscript{15} In fact, Nietzsche himself pays attention to this “refuted system” in his own lectures on Pre-Platonic philosophy, though they are left out of \textit{PTAG}.\textsuperscript{16} Likewise, Anaximander’s description of the stars as being the venting of the circle of fire outside of the dark mist that surrounds the Earth\textsuperscript{17} is present in Hegel,\textsuperscript{18} Zeller,\textsuperscript{19} and Nietzsche’s lectures,\textsuperscript{20} but totally absent from \textit{PTAG}.

While such theories are interesting, and even have a certain poetic beauty to them, they had long since been refuted by 1873. More importantly, though colorful, they would say very little about the philosophical character of Anaximander. Nietzsche has boiled away any element of doctrine that does not assist him in showing Anaximander as the author of “justice and punishment universal”\textsuperscript{21} or as “the first pessimistic philosopher.”\textsuperscript{22} Nietzsche is acting as a philosopher and not a scientist in the sense that he described in

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{PTAG}, 25.  
\textsuperscript{13} DK 12A10–11 as cited in McKirahan, 38. Also, note that this description of a cylindrical Earth does contradict Diogenes Laertius’s claim that Anaximander constructed the first globe. Charles Kahn attributes this description to “Hellenistic confusion” arising out of the ambiguity of “strongylous” or “round,” which can apply to a sphere as well as to a flat disk.” (Kahn, 56)  
\textsuperscript{14} Hegel, 188.  
\textsuperscript{15} Zeller, 29.  
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Pre-Platonic Philosophers}, 37.  
\textsuperscript{17} DK 12A11, as cited by McKirahan, 38.  
\textsuperscript{18} Hegel, 188.  
\textsuperscript{19} Zeller, 29.  
\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Pre-Platonic Philosophers}, 36.  
\textsuperscript{21} Unpublished, 19, 134.  
\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Pre-Platonic Philosophers}, 37.
the preceding chapter on Thales. Selectivity and taste play a role in philosophy, separating it from mere science, which allows any piece of true information into its discourse.\(^{23}\) This selectivity separates *PTAG* from his lectures, rendering the former more akin to philosophy and the latter more akin to a science, namely philology. That this distinction should be noticeable in the chapter on Anaximander seems particularly apt because in his notes Nietzsche describes Anaximander (along with Heraclitus and Empedocles) as being concerned with the "Control for the drive of knowledge [Nietzsche’s emphasis] — or strengthening the mythic-mystical, the artistic."\(^{24}\) With his philosopher’s book, Nietzsche is doing a very similar thing. The information transmitted is to be selected in the service of strengthening the mythic figure of the philosopher. Nietzsche does not want a list of dead doctrines, but rather wishes to show the archetypical figure that dwells in the philosophy of the early Greeks.

After having ruled out much of what Nietzsche does not want to include in *PTAG*, what can we say that he does wish to include? Unlike Heraclitus, Parmenides, or Anaxagoras, Anaximander only warrants a single chapter, so Nietzsche has the ability to be extremely selective in his discussion of him. The chapter includes a description of the philosophical figure that Anaximander represents through his bearing and style. Nietzsche also chooses to examine two central doctrines of Anaximander which, he believes, give us the essence of Anaximander’s thought: eternal justice (as described in the sole surviving fragment of Anaximander) and the *apeiron* (translated by Nietzsche as “undefined”\(^{25}\)).

\(^{23}\) PTAG, 43.

\(^{24}\) Unpublished, 23, 14.

\(^{25}\) “Unbestimmten”
The preceding chapter regarding Thales introduces the archetype of the philosopher himself, but not with the same lucidity we see in the specific archetype of Anaximander. “While the archetype of the philosopher emerges with the image of Thales only as out of shifting mists,” Nietzsche writes, “the image of his great successor already speaks much more plainly to us.” The language here is particularly interesting, describing Thales literally “being singled out” of the undefined “mists,” while Anaximander is the first to differentiate himself plainly from those mists. Anaximander also, being the first philosophical writer, is possessed of an “innocence and naiveté,” literally “un-self-consciousness,” having not been confronted with “alienating demands.” Not unlike his own *apeiron*, Anaximander’s character is literally undefined. Nietzsche’s Anaximander is therefore a figure of purity and one who is often metaphorically laying down his new doctrine in stone. He writes in “graven stylized letters,” laying down new “milestones,” and giving his fragment “lapidary impressiveness.” Nietzsche finally has Anaximander as pronouncing his pessimistic proclamations over the “boundary stone” of philosophy. The first philosophical writings to survive antiquity have been laid in stone Nietzsche seems to be saying, as if coming down from Sinai.

---

26 PTAG, 45.
27 “heraushebt”
28 Literally “Nebeln.” While Cowan translates this as “swirling mists,” it could also be read as fog or, even “nebulae.”
29 “Unbefangenheit”
30 PTAG, 45.
31 “großstilisierte Steinschrift”
32 “Meilensteine”
33 “lapidarischen Eindringlichkeit”
34 “Grenzsteine”
1.1.2 The Bearing of Anaximander

As for the messenger of this proclamation, Nietzsche also must describe the bearing of the man. As mentioned above, Anaximander was “the great model for Empedocles,” which Nietzsche brings up without crediting Diodorus by way of Diogenes Laertius. The only other biographical fact that Nietzsche makes use of in this section is that Anaximander’s “fellow citizens elected him to lead a colony of emigrants,” a fact that he attributes to the Roman rhetorician, Aelian, in his lecture notes. From the single sentence from Diogenes and the colony account of Aelian, Nietzsche is able to construct an entire persona for Anaximander. He embellishes Diodorus’s description of “theatrical arrogance and stately robes.”

We can easily credit the tradition that he walked the earth clad in an especially dignified garment and displayed a truly tragic pride in his gestures and customs of daily living. He lived as he wrote; he spoke as solemnly as he dressed; he lifted his hands and placed his feet as though this existence were a tragic drama into which he had been born to play a hero. In all these things, he was a great model for Empedocles.

Presenting us with this picture of a simultaneously flamboyant and morose philosopher, Nietzsche suggests that “perhaps [his fellow citizens] were glad to honor him and get rid of him at the same time.” In his unpublished writings, Nietzsche

---

35 PTAG, 49.
36 Diogenes Laertius VIII, 70.
37 PTAG, 49.
38 Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 31.
39 PTAG, 49.
40 Ibid. Nietzsche is ignoring the accounts of Parmenides drafting laws that were followed in Elea for 500 years. McKirahan, 157.
explains that “none of the great Greek philosophers was a leader of the people.” He claims that Anaximander, like his successors, Heraclitus and Empedocles, attempts to legislate through his greatness; through “mythic-mystical” and artistic drives. However, this great tragic figure is unable to lead the people and thus is cast away. The philosopher not appreciated in his own time, by his own people, a theme that appears often in Nietzsche, but also in the life of Schopenhauer, who, as I shall show, Nietzsche sees as Anaximander’s heir. Besides the physical colonization that occurred in Anaximander’s life, Nietzsche describes a more metaphorical intellectual colonization.

His thought, too, emigrated and founded colonies. In Ephesus and in Elea, people could not rid themselves of it, and if they could not make up their minds to remain where it had left them, they also knew that they had been led there by it, and it was from there that they would travel on without it.

The colonies founded in Ephesus and Elea are the philosophies of Heraclitus and Parmenides (and his followers) respectively. Anaximander’s fragment was enough to colonize the thought of those who succeeded him by forcing them to answer “how anything can pass away which has a right to be” and to continue Thales’ project of discovering “the one.”

---

41 Unpublished, 23, 14.  
42 Ibid.  
43 Numerous examples of this can be found in Nietzsche’s work. In the preface to Nietzsche Contra Wagner, he laments that while he is read abroad, he has no readers in Germany (265). In Ecce Homo: Why I am a Destiny, he predicts that his name “will be connected with the memory of something tremendous” (143). In the “Maxims and Arrows” section of Twilight of the Idols, he identifies himself as the “posthumous” man (157). Even his allegorical characters suffer this fate, such as the madman in Gay Science 138 who came too early in announcing the death of God or Zarathustra who realizes that he is not “the mouth for these ears” after speaking to the people of the town (Zarathustra 1: Prologue, 5). Even the title of the work written immediately after PTAG, Untimely Meditations, echoes this sentiment.  
44 PTAG, 49.  
46 Ibid. 49.
1.1.3 The Fragment

Before starting to uncover the meaning that Nietzsche finds in Anaximander’s fragment, we should look at the actual wording that Nietzsche uses. In his eponymous essay on the Anaximander Fragment, Martin Heidegger opens with “the generally accepted text” in German, which happens to be that of “the young Nietzsche” from Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks. Cowan translates Nietzsche’s German translation as “Where the source of things is, to that place they must also pass away, according to necessity, for they must pay penance and be judged for their injustices, in accordance with the ordinance of time.” This translation however is “scarcely distinguishable,” according to Heidegger, from Hermann Diels’ 1903 slightly “more literal” translation. In David Krell’s translation of Heidegger’s work, the Diels fragment reads “But where things have their origin, there too their passing away occurs according to necessity; for they pay recompense and penalty to one another for their recklessness.” Heidegger is correct in saying that these translations are similar, particularly when compared to the final iteration of his own attempts at translating it: “… along the lines of usage; for they let order and thereby also reck belong to one another (in the surmounting) of disorder.” That a well-trained philologist such as Nietzsche comes up with a translation that is nearly identical.

---

47 The original Greek that Nietzsche uses reads “ἐξ ὧν δὲ ἡ γένεσις ἀστι τοῖς οὐσί, καὶ τὴν φθορὰν εἰς ταῦτα γίνεσθαι κατὰ τὸ χρόνον· διδόναι γὰρ αὐτὰ δίκην καὶ τίσιν ἀλλήλους τῆς ἀδικίας κατὰ τὴν τοῦ χρόνου τάξιν.” Heidegger, 13.

48 Ibid.

49 “Woher die Dinge ihre Entstehung haben, dahin müssen sie auch zugrunde gehen nach der Notwendigkeit; denn sie müssen Buße zahlen und für ihre Ungerechtigkeiten gerichtet werden gemäß der Ordnung der Zeit.” PTAG, 45.

50 Heidegger, 14.


52 Ibid. 57.
to that of another great classicist should not come as a surprise. Despite his reputation as a revolutionary philosopher, in 1873 he was still employed as a philology professor at Basel. Yet even though this translation may seem traditional, Heidegger’s description of Nietzsche’s “interpretations of the texts” as “commonplace, if not entirely superficial” is unfair, as the rest of this chapter aims to show. Nietzsche’s originality in his Pre-Platonic scholarship is not through his translations being radically unique, but through the conclusions he draws from them. What even Heidegger admits is that Nietzsche “does establish a vibrant rapport with the personalities of the Preplatonic philosophers.”

1.2 Eternal Justice and Apeiron

1.2.1 The Only Serious Moralist

The “vibrant rapport” that Nietzsche shows with Anaximander is primarily exhibited in his linking of the Milesian philosopher with “the only serious moralist of our century,” Arthur Schopenhauer. After asking how to interpret Anaximander, Nietzsche immediately gives the following quotation.

The proper measure with which to judge any and all human beings is that they are really creatures who should not exist at all and who are doing penance for their lives by their manifold sufferings and their death. What could we expect of such creatures? Are we not all sinners under the sentence of death? We do penance for having been born, first by living and then by dying.

53 Ibid. 14.
54 Ibid.
55 PTAG, 46.
56 Ibid. Peculiarly, the E.F.J. Payne translation of *Parerga and Paralipomena* does not contain this paragraph, nor the preceding one, in section 156a of the chapter, “Additional Remarks on the Doctrine of
Nietzsche then posits a hypothetical man, who, having read this extremely pessimistic passage “can recognize the basic poor quality of any and all human life in the very fact that not one of us will bear close scrutiny.” As a brief aside, Nietzsche accuses the present era’s “biographical plague” of having given the opposite opinion of man, a dignified view of mankind. The hypothetical man, though, has been inoculated against this plague by Schopenhauer and “India’s clear air,” having heard “the holy word of the moral value of existence.” He finds himself unable to resist taking this “anthropomorphic metaphor” of a world with actual moral value to “extract that melancholy doctrine from its application to human life and project it unto the general quality of all existence.” The Schopenhauerian man judges coming-to-be as “illegitimate” as it is “an illegitimate emancipation from eternal being” and only through destruction can it find penance. Our hypothetical man has carried the string of Nietzsche’s thought from Schopenhauer to his Ionian forebear. At no further point in the chapter is Schopenhauer referred to directly (and note that he is not mentioned by name at all in the chapter), but Nietzsche’s reading of Anaximander nonetheless draws its conclusions from Schopenhauerian doctrines. His Anaximander is essentially a pre-modern Schopenhauer, as an examination of both Nietzsche’s reading of Anaximander

57 Ibid.
58 Nietzsche’s own rather biographical, almost hagiographic, readings of the Pre-Platonic philosophers suggest this is intentional irony
59 Ibid. Bear in mind that while Schopenhauer has an extremely pessimistic view of the world, he still sees it as having inherent moral significance. In *Parerga and Paralipomena*, he says “that the world has only a physical and not a moral significance is a fundamental error, one that is the greatest and most pernicious, the real perversity of the mind (Volume 2, 201).
60 PTAG, 46.
61 Ibid.
and Schopenhauer’s own doctrine of eternal justice and of the nature of reality shall reveal.

1.2.2 A Mephistophelean Doctrine

Schopenhauer was not the first author since Anaximander to have expressed a view that eternal justice would consist of the passing away of all existence. Schopenhauer’s “intellectual hero” and sometimes mentor, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, had more than a decade before the first edition of World as Will and Presentation included a passage that echoes the Anaximander fragment in his magnum opus, Faust. Not only is Faust perhaps the most famous piece of German literature, but Nietzsche had quoted or referenced Goethe’s Faust several times in earlier works, so it is likely that he may have had the following passage in mind, where Mephistopheles answers Faust about who he is.

The spirit which eternally denies!
And justly so; for all that which is wrought
Deserves that it should come to naught;
Hence it would be best if nothing were engendered.

This passage can be seen to have had a great deal of influence on Schopenhauer, who references it twice in The World as Will and Presentation. This poetic proclamation from the Devil himself contains the essence of the relationship between Arthur Schopenhauer and Nietzsche’s reconstructed version of Anaximander.

---

62 Cartwright, 169.
63 Birth of Tragedy, 22, 46, 51, 66, 86, and 88. In his following work, Untimely Meditations, Nietzsche actually compares the Schopenhauerian man to Mephistopheles, albeit based on a different line (Untimely Meditations, 153)
64 Faust I, 1338–1341.
65 The World as Will and Presentation Volume II, 573 and 656.
1.2.3 Justice as Destruction

From this groundwork, we can see why Nietzsche presented the two great philosophers as being such kindred spirits. Both Anaximander and Schopenhauer posit a world that has an eternal and internal form of justice in that it annihilates that which participates in becoming. Moreover, the attitude of both men according to Nietzsche is inherently pessimistic. Finally, both present a world of duality consisting of an undifferentiated, eternal substance and the ever-changing veil that covers it. Nietzsche’s Anaximander is the first Greek to ask what Nietzsche considers to be “the profoundest problem in ethics,” that is, “How can anything pass away which has the right to be?”66 This question presupposes that there are things which have the right to be, a position that Schopenhauer would deride as optimism. In his critique of Christianity, for example, Schopenhauer mocks the Judeo-Christian God: “But that a God Jehovah creates this world of misery and affliction animi causa and de gaiété de coeur and then applauds himself with a panta kala lian, this is something intolerable.”67 Schopenhauer is much glibber about the world not deserving to exist than Nietzsche’s very serious Anaximander, but ultimately the solution will be the same. The world must be annihilated to account for the injustice of its coming into being.

The injustice of the world’s existence, according to Schopenhauer, shall be punished by eternal justice. Schopenhauer introduces the concept initially at the end of the sixtieth chapter of the first volume of The World as Will and Presentation, after

66 PTAG, 48.
67 “Because he feels inclined to,” “out of sheer wantonness,” “everything was very good,” Parerga and Paralipomena Vol 2, 156 (p.308).
discussing the role of the Hindu god, Shiva, in the cycle of life and death. Shiva represents the balance between generation and destruction, even being represented by the lingam, linking sexual reproduction with death.\(^{68}\) Thus he introduces eternal justice.

Most people… persistently affirm life without clear thoughtful awareness. As a mirror of this affirmation there stands the world, with countless individuals, in endless time and endless space, and endless suffering, between procreation and death without end. In this matter, however, no further complaint can be raised from any side; for will is performing the great tragicomedy at its own expense, and is also its own spectator. The world is precisely such as it is because will, whose phenomenon it is, is such as it is, because this is how it is willing. The justification for sufferings is the fact that, even in this phenomenon, will is affirming itself; and this affirmation is justified and balanced out by the fact that it is bearing the sufferings. In fact, there opens itself up to us here a glimpse of eternal justice with respect to the whole…\(^{69}\)

Following two chapters on temporal justice,\(^{70}\) Schopenhauer fully covers the concept of eternal justice. This is the justice that “does not hold sway over the state but the world” and is “infallible, firm, and sure.”\(^{71}\) Eternal justice, being eternal, is outside of time and thus “cannot be retributive justice, thus cannot, like the latter, allow of delays and deadlines, and only balancing bad deeds with bad consequences.”\(^{72}\) For how could there be any retributive justice for acts that occur within time, if eternal justice by its very nature exists outside time? The world of representation, being bound to the Principle of Sufficient Ground and thus the laws of causality, exists temporally. The will from which all things arise, however, exists outside of time. The inner nature of the world as will is therefore atemporal and eternal. Thus Schopenhauer sees eternal justice as not being

---

\(^{68}\) The lingam is the phallus of Shiva in Hindu iconography.

\(^{69}\) *World as Will and Presentation* Volume 1,390.

\(^{70}\) Temporal justice encompasses all the forms of justice in the world as representation, notably criminal and civil justice.

\(^{71}\) Ibid. 414.

\(^{72}\) Ibid.
something that exists outside of the world, but is rather immanent; "eternal justice actually lies in the essence of the world."\(^\text{73}\)

Schopenhauer’s explanation for how this sort of eternal justice could be found in the structure of the world follows.

The phenomenon, the objectivization of the one will for life, is the world in all the plurality of its parts and forms. Existence itself and any mode of existence, in the whole as in every part, is only on the basis of will. It is free; it is omnipotent. In every thing, will makes its appearance precisely as it determines itself to do, in itself and beyond time. The world is only the mirror of this willing. And all the finitude, all the suffering, all the torments it contains belong to the expression of that which it wills, are as they are because it wills as it does. It is with the strictest justice, accordingly, that every being bears existence in general, and then the existence of its species and of its own peculiar individuality, just as it is and in the surroundings as they are, in a world such as it is, ruled by chance and by error, temporal, transitory, constantly suffering; and in all that befalls it, indeed can ever befall it, justice is always done to it. "\(^\text{74}\)

Eternal justice can only exist in the will itself. Only the will is free since it is outside of time and is thus not subjected to the laws of cause and effect. Moreover, the world as it is represented to us is “the mirror of this willing,” so any explanation of why eternal justice occurs can only be answered by examining the will, not through our representation of it. Since this justice is being carried out in the will, by the will, and against the will, Schopenhauer says that “the world itself is world court of justice.”\(^\text{75}\) As stated above the will affirms itself through punishing itself and then pays the penalty of that punishing through its own suffering.\(^\text{76}\)

---

\(^{73}\) Ibid. 414.  
\(^{74}\) Ibid. 415.  
\(^{75}\) Ibid. 415.  
\(^{76}\) Ibid. 390.
1.2.4 Apeiron as Will

The will for Schopenhauer is extremely similar to the apeiron as presented in Nietzsche’s interpretation of Anaximander, while the world as representation corresponds to the world of becoming. Nietzsche has Anaximander determine that those things which possess “definite qualities” will pass away and thus cannot be the true “first principle of things.” There must be something more primal than the definite. It is here that Nietzsche reinterprets Anaximander’s apeiron.

That which truly is, concludes Anaximander, cannot possess definite characteristics, or it would come-to-be and pass away like all other things. In order that coming-to-be shall not cease, primal being must be indefinite. The immortality and everlastingness of primal being does not lie in its infinitude or its inexhaustibility, as the commentators of Anaximander generally assume, but in the fact that it is devoid of definite qualities that would lead to its passing. Hence its name, “the indefinite.” Thus named, the primal being is superior to that which comes to be, insuring thereby eternity and the unimpeded course of coming-to-be. This ultimate unity of the “indefinite,” the womb of all things, can, it is true, be designated by human speech only as a negative, as something to which the existent world of coming-to-be can give no predicate.

Thus Nietzsche gives an account of the apeiron that resembles Schopenhauer’s will as described in the above-quoted passage on eternal justice.

For Schopenhauer, the “phenomenon” of the world of representation is the result of the principium individuationis, the individuating principle through which the singularity of the will is presented as plurality. Only through this principle do definite characteristics, absent from the will itself, appear in the world of representation.

---

77 PTAG, 47.
78 Ibid.
79 World as Will and Presentation, Volume 1, 416.
Schopenhauer also referred to this principle by its Indian name, “Maya,” and sees it as being nearly as old a problem as Nietzsche does, attributing it to how “Heraclitus bemoaned the eternal flow of things” and how “Plato denigrated its object as that which is perennially becoming, but never is.”\textsuperscript{80} To the person who is behind the veil of Maya, it is impossible to see the “essence of things which is one,” but instead sees “its phenomena, as separate, distinct, innumerable, most diverse, indeed in opposition to one another.”\textsuperscript{81} Only those who can see through the veil of Maya can know the true nature of things.

But eternal justice will be comprehended and grasped only by one who rises above cognizance that advances under the direction of the Principle of Sufficient Ground and is bound to individual things, one who is cognizant of Ideas, penetrates the principium individuationis, and becomes aware that the forms pertaining to the phenomena do not pertain to the thing in itself.\textsuperscript{82}

One must remember that Schopenhauer says that “the thing-in-itself is solely will,”\textsuperscript{83} so all references to the will in his work are references to the thing-in-itself and vice versa. This further connects Schopenhauer’s will to Anaximander’s apeiron as Nietzsche says “We may look upon it as the equal of the Kantian Ding an sich.”\textsuperscript{84} Nietzsche’s Anaximander is thus the man who has grasped Schopenhauer’s eternal justice. Anaximander comprehends a dual world that is broken up between an undifferentiated something and that which emanates from it. The former is necessarily eternal and

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid. 9. It is interesting to note at this point that Schopenhauer at no point mentions Anaximander in neither The World as Will and Presentation, nor Parerga and Paralipomena. In fact, Anaximander is the only figure covered in PTAG (including Empedocles, Democritus, and Socrates) not mentioned in either of Schopenhauer’s major works.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid. 416.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid. 418.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid. 131.
\textsuperscript{84} PTAG, 47.
constant, while the latter is immanent, temporal, and transitory. And from this, he builds a moral judgment of the world. “From this world of injustice, of insolent apostasy from the primeval one-ness of all things,” writes Nietzsche, “Anaximander flees into the metaphysical fortress from which he leans out, letting his gaze sweep the horizon.”

1.2.5 The Debt of the World

Yet Nietzsche seems less concerned with the actual composition of the *apeiron* than he is with the ethical ramifications. His Anaximander asks us “How can anything pass away which has the right to be?” and “What is your existence worth? And if it is worthless, why are you here?” The answer that Nietzsche has Anaximander state is that nothing does have the right to be. “Your guilt, I see, causes you to tarry in your existence. With your death, you have to expiate it… Who is there that could redeem you from the curse of coming-to-be?” This sentiment is shared by Schopenhauer, who states, “We are fundamentally something that should not be; therefore we cease to be.” Man “owes nature a death” and this proves to Schopenhauer that “our existence is a debt.” In fact Schopenhauer uses the metaphor of a debt to explain human existence.

For human existence, far from bearing the character of a *gift*, has altogether that of a contracted *debt*. Its settlement appears, imposed by that existence, in the form of urgent needs, tormenting desires, and endless hardship. As a rule, our entire lifetime is expended in the paying off of this debt; yet with that, only the

---

85 Ibid. 48.
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
88 *World as Will and Presentation, Volume 2*, 579.
89 Ibid. 650.
interest is paid back. Payment of the principal occurs through death. — And when was this debt contracted? — At the time of procreation.  

Schopenhauer in fact goes as far as to describe the world as “just a hell and in it human beings are the tortured souls on the one hand and the devils on the other.” Thus the world is both suffering and punishing itself for the suffering that it inflicts on itself. “The tormentor and tormented are one. The former errs in believing he does not share in the torment, the latter in believing that he does not share in the guilt.” Since the individual is “mere phenomenon,” then his differentiation from other individuals does not exist in the will itself.  Eternal justice, which as we have seen must exist in the will itself because of its atemporality, thus carries itself out against the world as a gestalt rather than against individuals. This is the natural state of the world according to Schopenhauer, and is in fact perfectly just. He states that if the crimes of existence and the suffering that befalls all were to be place on a scale, the scale would be perfectly evenly balanced. 

To answer Nietzsche’s Anaximander (“Who is there who could redeem you from the curse of coming-to-be?”), Schopenhauer would say that the guilty himself shall, but in the process accrue more debt, thus keeping the process going. Thus the world actually manages to justify itself by constantly destroying itself, though this process must continue as an eternal cycle as the punishment itself calls out for recompense.

---

90 Ibid. 663.
91 Parerga and Paralipomena, Volume 2, 300.
92 World as Will and Presentation, Volume 1, 418.
93 Ibid. 417.
94 Ibid. 418.
1.2.6 Zarathustra Contra Anaximander

The ghosts of Anaximander and Schopenhauer make themselves known once again in the second book of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. When talking to a group of malformed individuals, the eponymous hero of the work describes the sickness of those who attempt to will backwards. In their impotence in being able to affect the past, they try in vain to fix what was by way of revenge. Note the language by which Zarathustra describes this phenomenon.

The spirit of revenge: my friends, that so far has been what mankind contemplate best; and wherever there was suffering, punishment was always supposed to be there as well. For “punishment” is what revenge calls itself; with a lying word it hypocritically asserts its good conscience. And because in willing itself there is suffering, based on its inability to will backward — thus all willing itself and all living is supposed to be — punishment! And now cloud upon cloud rolled in over the spirit, until at last madness preached: “Everything passes away, therefore *everything deserves to pass away!* And this itself is justice, this law of time! That it must devour its own children” — thus preached madness. “All things are ordained ethically according to justice and punishment. *Alas, where is redemption from the flux of things and from the punishment called existence?*” Thus preached madness. “Can there be redemption, if there is eternal justice? Alas, the stone ‘it was’ is unmoveable; all punishments too must be eternal!” Thus preached madness. “No deed can be annihilated; how could it be undone through punishment? This, this is what is eternal about the punishment called existence, that existence must also eternally be deed and guilt again!”

The language of justice here all but quotes the declaration of Eternal Negation given by Mephistopheles. At this point in Nietzsche’s career, he has recognized that the pessimistic character is born of some pathology. Yet to truly diagnose it, he requires some idea of how the healthy individual could cope with the problems of Anaximander.

---

And the Nietzsche of PTAG is still struggling to not become this pessimistic figure who he will diagnose a decade later.

1.2.7 Anaximander’s Shadow

Nietzsche does not believe the pessimistic figure of Anaximander satisfactorily answers his own questions concerning this injustice. Anaximander introduced the problem of reconciling the becoming in the world with eternal being. Yet his answer to this problem does not satisfy Nietzsche, who gives a rather gloomy end to a gloomy figure.

Here Anaximander stopped, which means he remained in the deep shadows which lie like gigantic ghosts upon the mountains of this world view. The closer men wanted to get to the problem of how the definite could ever fall from the indefinite, the ephemeral from the eternal, the unjust from the just, the deeper grew the night.  

The call for illumination in this night is immediately answered in the first paragraph of the next chapter by Heraclitus. Thus Nietzsche sets up the opposition between both Anaximander and Heraclitus, but also between Schopenhauer and himself. Dale Wilkerson in *Nietzsche and the Greeks* gives this summary of the conflict between the two pairs:

While Heraclitus refuted or stood outside conventional beliefs and intellectual trends, his thought ‘advanced’ against Anaximander; against the pessimism activated in Anaximander’s thought; against the separation of the *apeiron* from the world of time, space, and causal distinctions; against the judgment that ‘injustice’ characterizes the transformation of things into their opposites. I will simply note, here, that Nietzsche perceived *himself* also to be advancing against

---

96 PTAG, 50.
the pessimism of Schopenhauer, while refuting or standing outside the common beliefs and intellectual trends of his own time. Hence it is not difficult to detect in the contest Nietzsche draws between Heraclitus and Anaximander an analogy for that intellectual struggle Nietzsche saw himself carrying out against Schopenhauer.  

While in his previous work, *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche had provided “a bulwark against Schopenhauer’s pessimism,” in his reading of Anaximander, Nietzsche provided a thinly veiled version of Schopenhauer’s pessimistic philosophy to be defeated by the combined efforts of Heraclitus and himself.

Yet his reverence for Schopenhauer nevertheless shines through. He is still referred to as the “only serious moralist of our century” and the pessimistic philosopher is always described as a bold, tragic figure. While he is not able to answer the questions that he raises to the same extent as the affirmative philosopher (whether Heraclitus or Nietzsche himself), he still shows more bravery and honesty than any previous man. A year after penning the Anaximander chapter, Nietzsche wrote that “the Schopenhauerian man voluntarily takes upon himself the suffering involved in being truthful.” The pessimist shows honesty and fortitude in his denial of the world. Yet the archetypical pessimist must remain in darkness until someone who is willing to create, rather than deny, is willing to illuminate the way.

---

97 Wilkerson, 138.
98 Kaufmann, 131.
99 PTAG, 46.
100 *Untimely Meditations*, 152.
2. Heraclitus

2.1 A Divine Stroke of Lightning

Having left Anaximander in the deep shadows of the towering problem of cosmodicy, Nietzsche introduces the most dynamic figure of *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks.*\(^1\) His introduction is accordingly dramatic: “Straight at that mystic night in which was shrouded Anaximander’s problem of Becoming, walked *Heraclitus* of Ephesus and illuminated it by a divine stroke of lightning.”\(^2\) After being left in the dark at the end of the last chapter, Nietzsche’s new champion brings us light, and not just light. Heraclitus illuminates the night sky by means of the “divine stroke of lightning,”\(^3\) that is to say, the thunderbolt. Besides having the evocative power of inaugurating Heraclitus as the Zeus of Nietzsche’s philosophical pantheon, he also invokes the famous saying of Heraclitus, “The thunderbolt pilots all things.”\(^4\) The proclamations of Heraclitus will not merely illuminate Anaximander’s problem, but they will bring a form of order to them. And just as Heraclitus will attempt to overcome Anaximander’s pessimistic conclusions, so will Nietzsche try to dispel the pessimism of Schopenhauer.

2.1.1 Early Interpretations of Heraclitus

---

\(^1\) *PTAG*, 50.
\(^2\) Ibid.
\(^3\) Ibid.
\(^4\) Heraclitus, B 64. Note that all translations of Heraclitus are taken from Kahn.
Nietzsche continues a long tradition of holding Heraclitus up as the exemplar of the philosopher, and also as identifying Heraclitus’s views as being in line with one’s own doctrines. In antiquity the Stoics saw Heraclitus as a forerunner to their own philosophy. Nietzsche mentions this legacy in *Ecce Homo*, stating that the Stoics “inherited almost all of their fundamental ideas from Heraclitus.” Extant writings of the Stoics support this claim. In the fifteenth section of his *Enchiridion*, for example, Epictetus instructs his followers to treat life as a banquet and not reach for that delicacy which has not yet arrived. To join in the gods’ company, one must adopt a similar attitude to “children, wife, wealth, and status” and if one goes on to decline such things altogether one joins in the gods’ power. The two figures who have behaved in such a way according to Epictetus are Diogenes of Sinope and Heraclitus; thus they “came to be called, and considered, divine.” Here we see Heraclitus held up as an extreme paragon for the Stoic in the same way that their Cynic forebears were. Marcus Aurelius in his writings also reminds his reader to “remember the words of Heraclitus” and goes on to impart quotations regarding the cycle of the elements and the lofty standards that Heraclitus (and subsequently the Stoics) had for men. The Stoics saw Heraclitus as being a sort of proto-Stoic, though Nietzsche thought they had “reinterpreted him on a shallow level.” The Stoics were not the only Roman-era philosophical faction to claim Heraclitus as one of their own. Justin Martyr, a first-century Christian apologist, claimed Heraclitus as a

---

6 Epictetus, 15.
7 Ibid.
8 Marcus Aurelius, 4:46.
9 PTAG, 65.
proto-Christian, along with Socrates, for his understanding of the Logos.\textsuperscript{10} Even in antiquity, then, many would claim Heraclitus, as one of their own.

Philosophers after antiquity have also found much in the writings and life of Heraclitus that they wish to interpret through their own lenses. Speaking of the scholars of Heraclitus since the early nineteenth century, Guthrie says “some of these writers have been painstaking scholars, others philosophers or religious teachers who found in the pregnant and picturesque sayings of Heraclitus a striking anticipation of their own beliefs.”\textsuperscript{11} Perhaps the most striking claim of this sort comes from one of the most renowned philosophers of the nineteenth century. In his \textit{History of Philosophy}, Hegel says that Heraclitus is the first philosopher to speak of the Absolute and was “thus universally esteemed a deep philosopher and even was decried as such.”\textsuperscript{12} Hegel goes even farther in placing Heraclitus within his system by proclaiming that “there is no proposition of Heraclitus which I have not adopted in my Logic.”\textsuperscript{13} Hegel also devotes some of his history to biographical information, notably Heraclitus’s “relations to his countrymen the Ephesians.”\textsuperscript{14} According to Hegel, Heraclitus “began the separation and withdrawal of philosophers from public affairs and the interests of the country, and devoted himself in his isolation entirely to Philosophy.”\textsuperscript{15} He thereby drew a clear distinction between himself and the “seven sages as statesmen, regents and lawgivers” and “the Pythagorean aristocratic league.”\textsuperscript{16} This antipathy that Heraclitus has for his fellow citizens will prove to be a defining characteristic in Nietzsche’s reading of him.

\textsuperscript{10} Justin Martyr, I: 46.
\textsuperscript{11} Guthrie, I:403.
\textsuperscript{12} Hegel, 279.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
2.1.2 Schopenhauer on Heraclitus

A philosopher who shared Heraclitus’s disdain for the state and the common man, Arthur Schopenhauer, also filtered the thought of Heraclitus through a very particular lens. Schopenhauer did not share Hegel’s view of Heraclitus as a proto-Hegel, since Schopenhauer hardly thought of Hegel as a philosopher at all. In fact, he held such disdain for Hegel that he was alarmed to learn that both enjoyed Mozart’s *Magic Flute*.\(^{17}\) Because of his own appropriation of the Ephesian as a predecessor,\(^{18}\) he could not see Heraclitus as a forerunner to such a rival. While Hegel devotes a sizeable portion of his *History of Philosophy* to Heraclitus, Schopenhauer hardly mentions him in his own “Fragments for the History of Philosophy.” In the section entitled “Pre-Socratic Philosophy,” Heraclitus is merely mentioned in passing as teaching “the ceaseless movement of all things” in reaction to the Eleatic philosophers.\(^{19}\) By contrast, Schopenhauer presents us with a detailed anecdote about Pythagoras.\(^{20}\) The bulk of his own writing regarding the Pre-Socratics, in fact, is dedicated to Anaxagoras and Empedocles.

It is only in his principal work, *The World as Will and Presentation*, that Schopenhauer makes explicit his own peculiar views regarding Heraclitus. In the forty-sixth chapter of the second volume, “On the Vanity and Suffering of Life,”\(^{21}\)

\(^{17}\) Cartwright, 367.
\(^{18}\) *World as Will and Presentation*, Volume I, 9.
\(^{19}\) *Parerga and Paralipomena*, Volume I, 33.
\(^{20}\) Ibid. 40.
\(^{21}\) This quotation appears amidst a host of other quotations, including the verse from *Faust* that played such a major role in my last chapter. *World as Will and Presentation*, Volume II, 656.
Schopenhauer quotes Heraclitus, albeit in a peculiar manner. The quotation appears between lines by Plato and Theognis which are intended to convey that most of the great thinkers in history have agreed with Schopenhauer’s pessimism. Schopenhauer presents both the original Greek line and a Latin translation of it. The quotation is translated in English editions of Heraclitus as “The name of the bow is life; its work is death,” but Schopenhauer’s Latin translation comes out to “Vitae nomen quidem est vita, opus autem mors,” or “In name, life is life, but in effect it is death.” The standard translation picks up on a Greek homonym that means “bow” or “life” (depending on where the accent occurs), yet the Latin translator has ignored the wordplay and translated both words as “life,” which helps Schopenhauer identify Heraclitus as a pessimist. He refers to two original sources of the text, both in Greek. As David Carus and Richard Aquila note, this mistake seems to come from Schopenhauer’s unfortunate habit of generally omitting accents and breathing marks from Greek quotations. As he is the author of the Latin translation, the mistranslation may be intentional, though it could also be the result of his sloppiness in reporting Greek texts. Later in the same volume, Heraclitus is listed along with several other ancient thinkers, including Empedocles, Plato, and the Sibyls, who Schopenhauer says “deeply lamented the sorrowful character of the world, hence taught pessimism.” His Heraclitus lives up to the ancient reputation of the “Weeping

---

22 Heraclitus, B48.
23 World as Will and Presentation, Volume II, 671, n.
24 Kahn, 201.
25 World as Will and Presentation, Volume II, 671. The texts in question are Etymologicum magnum and Eusathius ad Iliad.
26 World as Will and Presentation, Volume II, 671, n.
27 Ibid. 711.
Philosopher” who despises and bewails the nature of the world.\textsuperscript{28} In fact, early in the first volume of the same work, Schopenhauer says that “Heraclitus bemoaned the eternal flow of things.”\textsuperscript{29}

As I stated in the last chapter, Schopenhauer had literally nothing to say regarding Anaximander, despite the fact that Nietzsche saw the latter as a proto-Schopenhauer. Despite this omission, Schopenhauer’s interpretation of Heraclitus as a forerunner to his own philosophical pessimism resembles Nietzsche’s Anaximander a great deal. While Nietzsche sees Heraclitus as the antidote to the pessimism of Anaximander (and thus Schopenhauer), Schopenhauer sees Heraclitus as part of the Greek tradition of philosophical pessimism.\textsuperscript{30}

Both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche continue the philosophical tradition of seeing themselves as the natural progression of Heraclitean philosophy. That said, Nietzsche exerts some effort to distance Heraclitus from a Schopenhauerian reading, and in doing so distances himself and all others who would do philosophy in his way. In his \textit{Nietzsche and Philosophy}, Giles Deleuze clearly outlines the goal of Nietzsche’s reading of Heraclitus: “Thus Nietzsche opposes [Heraclitus] point by point to Anaximander, just as Nietzsche himself is opposed to Schopenhauer.”\textsuperscript{31} I agree with Deleuze’s reading, but I will say that even though Nietzsche is stepping out of Schopenhauer’s philosophical shadow, he still often works within a Schopenhauerian framework. In his 1886 “Attempt

\textsuperscript{28} His melancholia is described in Diogenes Laertius, IX, 6. For references to Heraclitus as the archetypical “Weeping Philosopher,” see Lucian’s “Philosophies for Sale” and Montaigne’s essay, “On Democritus and Heraclitus.”
\textsuperscript{29} \textit{The World as Will and Presentation}, Volume I, 9.
\textsuperscript{30} \textit{The World as Will and Presentation}, Volume II, 711.
\textsuperscript{31} Deleuze, 23.
at Self-Criticism,” written as a preface to later editions of Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche discusses his earlier dedication to the Kantian/Schopenhauerian schema.

I now regret very much that I did not yet have the courage (or immodesty?) at that time to permit myself a language of my very own for such personal views and acts of daring, labouring instead to express strange and new evaluations in Schopenhauerian and Kantian formulations, things which fundamentally ran counter to both the spirit and taste of Kant.  

While there are times when Nietzsche’s allegiance to Schopenhauer still makes itself known, through the figure of Heraclitus Nietzsche is able to develop this immodest courage and forge the new language that he needs. It is worth noting, though, that it is not necessarily the metaphysical content that separates the Heraclitean from the Schopenhauerian; often Nietzsche is still working in a distinctly Schopenhauerian framework. Besides his doctrines regarding time and reason, which I shall examine with more detail in the coming pages, Nietzsche’s metaphysics bears a distinctly Schopenhauerian stamp in not only Birth of Tragedy, but also his later works. Even Nietzsche’s doctrine of the Will to Power bears more than a passing resemblance to Schopenhauer’s Will to Life, but with an emphasis put on affirming the Will rather than denying it. Likewise what Nietzsche believes separates the Heraclitean view from that of Schopenhauer is how one aesthetically interprets these truths. Nietzsche’s Heraclitus thus adds three aspects to the Nietzschean philosopher: metaphysics of Becoming, the notion of aesthetic justification, and the noble bearing of the philosopher.

---

33 Higgins. 155.
34 Ibid. 158–61.
2.2 Becoming

Demonstrating that Heraclitus has answered the challenge thrown down by Anaximander’s proclamation of the guilt of the world, Nietzsche isolates the new aspects of the Heraclitean worldview.

From such intuition Heraclitus derived two connected negations. Only through comparison with the doctrines of his predecessor can they be illuminated. One, he denied the duality of totally diverse worlds – a position which Anaximander had been compelled to assume. He no longer distinguished a physical world from a metaphysical one, a realm of definite qualities from an undefinable “indefinite.” And after this first step, nothing could hold him back from a second, far bolder negation: he altogether denied being.\(^{35}\)

This double negation contrasts itself both with Anaximander’s philosophy before it and the legacy of Parmenides and Plato that follows it.\(^{36}\) Moreover, Nietzsche’s later philosophy would be marked by these two negations, reaching its apex in one of his last works, *Twilight of the Idols*, showing these ideas to be central both to Nietzsche’s early and to his later thought.\(^{37}\) It is worth mentioning that while Nietzsche has presented the negations as distinct entities, conceptually they are interwoven and overlap a great deal.

2.2.1 The First Negation

\(^{35}\) PTAG, 51.
\(^{36}\) Cox, 192–93.
\(^{37}\) *Twilight of the Idols*, “Reason in Philosophy.”
The first of the two negations is the denial of “the duality of totally diverse worlds.”

This idea of a second world, distinct from the regular world of perception, appeared in the chapter concerning Anaximander. Faced with a world of Becoming and passing away, Anaximander envisions a second, more real world. This second world, the *apeiron* or “indefinite,” lacks qualities and thus is immune to the vicissitudes of Becoming.

While Heraclitus rejects such a second world, similar concepts are found throughout the history of Western philosophy. Nietzsche is not merely setting up Heraclitus as a bulwark against Anaximander’s *aperion*, but also against Plato’s theory of Forms, Kant’s noumena, and Schopenhauer’s Will, in addition to Indian and Christian ideas of spiritual worlds.

In a page-long section of *Twilight of the Idols*, titled “How the ‘True World’ Finally Became a Fable,” Nietzsche provides a brief history of the increasingly unobtainable “true world,” beginning with Plato, moving on to Christianity, Kant, and eventually positivism, which renders knowledge of the “true world” completely unfeasible. Therefore Nietzsche proclaims defeat of this ideal. “The ‘true world’ – an idea that is of no future use, not even as an obligation, – now an obsolete, superfluous idea, consequently a refuted idea: let’s get rid of it!”

Heraclitus, however, was the one philosopher to escape such mistakes. He knew that “the ‘apparent’ world is the only world: the ‘true world’ is just a lie added on to it…” Avoiding the pitfalls of later philosophers, according to Nietzsche, Heraclitus keeps “the Greek view of the world [that] in no way distinguished body from spirit as matter and nonmatter” because for him,

---

38 PTAG, 51.
39 Ibid. 47.
40 Cox, 193.
“opposition between matter and the nonmaterial simply does not exist, and that is proper.”

2.2.2 Heraclitean Intuition

Heraclitus’s ability to avoid the error of the “true world” is tied not only to his denial of Being, but also to “his extraordinary power to think intuitively.” Nietzsche claims that Heraclitus arrives at such beliefs as “everything forever has its opposite along with it,” not through reasoning of the sort that involves “concepts and logical combinations,” but through pure intuition. This faculty of intuition Nietzsche describes as the ability to embrace “the present, many-colored and changing world that crowds in upon us in all our experiences” and the conditions that make it possible, “time and space.”

This intuitive thinking is said by Nietzsche to have led Aristotle to label him as the worst type of criminal against reason: he violated the principle of non-contradiction, and was actively hostile toward reason. The principle of non-contradiction, according to Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* is “the same attribute cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject in the same respect.” Immediately following this proclamation, Aristotle makes an explicit reference to Heraclitus, stating that some believe the Ephesian philosopher to believe that this is not the case, but that people do not

---

43 Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 72.
44 PTAG, 52.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
always believe what it is that they say.\textsuperscript{49} In other words, Aristotle believes that Heraclitus does actually believe in the principle, since to do otherwise would be madness, but merely stated such. Aristotle believes that holding a “Heraclitean” perspective leads to two unsavory positions. One could be like Heraclitus himself, and state that absolutely everything is true, since every proposition and its negation must be true, thus literally everything is true.\textsuperscript{50} Worse, however, are those disciples of Heraclitus, such as Cratylus, who claim that since absolutely everything is in flux, that absolutely nothing can be stated.\textsuperscript{51} While Nietzsche invokes Aristotle’s allegations against Heraclitus and his breaking of the most primal of all laws, his line of argument does not seem to want to pursue the more troubling aspects of this philosophical conundrum. In fact, Nietzsche shows himself to be concerned with a different problem than Aristotle’s reported Heraclitean nemeses. Nietzsche is not concerned with the actual truth proposition of the principle of contradiction, but rather the way in which such propositions are made. Nietzsche’s Heraclitus is not concerned with either proving or disproving the principle since that would be dwelling in the realm of the rational. Heraclitus supposedly is a thinker of the intuitive, rather than the rational variety, so Nietzsche attempts to show him to be working in an entirely different framework.

\subsection{2.2.3 Schopenhauerian Intuition}

Interestingly enough, Nietzsche’s description of the intuitive thinker versus the rational thinker closely mirrors Schopenhauer’s view of feeling versus abstract reason. What is

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid. 1005b, 24–26.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid. 1012a, 34–35.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid. 1010a, 10–15.
reason to Schopenhauer? To understand his answer, a brief examination of Schopenhauer’s epistemology is helpful. Schopenhauer’s overall project is an explicitly bifurcating one that makes clear distinctions between opposing elements. Most notably, he divvies up the world into will and presentation. Though this is obvious to anyone who has even read the title of his principle work, what is perhaps less obvious is that these bifurcations rarely cut the world into even halves. Rather, they separate the different elements of the world into categories where one might consist of the majority of experience, while the other is virtually empty. Going back to the separation of will and representation, here we see a division that is, at least phenomenologically, largely one-sided. The opening sentence, ‘the world is a presentation to me,’ initially suggests a monist view. Upon further examination of that brief sentence though, we see that the phrase, “to me,” has great significance. The world as presentation makes up the vast majority of what we experience. Nearly every sentence that has ever been uttered, even in a philosophy text, has been referring to the world as presentation. The only direct experience we can have of the will is our own embodiment as corporeal beings. Schopenhauer calls this “objectivization of the will.” It is this firsthand experience of Being that gives us our only venture outside of the Principle of Sufficient Ground. Schopenhauer therefore says “will is cognizance a priori of the body, and the body is cognizance a posteriori of will.” Thus we can easily at least apprehend what reason cannot possibly be. Reason is not cognizance of the will. Direct cognizance of the will,

52 World as Will and Presentation, Volume I, 1 amongst others.
53 Ibid. 3.
54 Ibid. 120.
55 Ibid.
which is the thing-in-itself, is only available through the experience of the body. As the world is only world and presentation, reason must have presentation as its object.

And what class of presentations does Schopenhauer subjugate to reason? When introducing the sections on reason in *World as Will and Presentation*, Schopenhauer says this.

But first we need to consider the class of presentations that pertains to human beings alone, the material for which is concepts and the subjective correlate of which is reason, just as the subjective correlate of the presentations so far considered was understanding and sensibility, which are also attributable to all animals. 56

Thus we see that reason is that which distinguishes man from all other animals. In fact Schopenhauer says that all differences between the two are the product of abstract reasoning. 57 The class of presentations that make up reason is the abstract, while all other presentations are intuitive. 58 Reason rules over the abstract, feelings over the intuitive. Thus for Schopenhauer, feeling has a rather banal definition. As feeling is the negation of reason, feeling is merely all of those instances of the cognizance of perceptions that are not rational. This definition is so “broad,” “heterogeneous,” and “diverse” that it seems almost philosophically useless. 59

Basically reason has only one function: the creation of the “concept-formation.” 60

Much more limited than the understanding, which is tasked with intuitive cognizance of

---

56 Ibid. 41.
57 Ibid. 47.
58 Ibid. 8.
59 Ibid. 61.
60 Ibid. 46.
the perceptible world and causality, concepts “exist only in the human mind.”

Unlike intuitive cognizance, abstract concepts are always second order. Schopenhauer compares reason’s relationship with perception to the moon which only reflects the light of the sun and presents it as its own via “borrowed reflection.”

Moreover, in his distinctly misogynistic style, Schopenhauer demeans reason as being feminine, saying “reason is of a female nature: it can only give after it has received.”

This is because reason, for Schopenhauer, has content “only by way of, and with reference to, cognizance of the perceptual sort.” Unlike most prior philosophers who celebrated reason as a way of understanding the world superior to perception, Schopenhauer believes that reason is second-hand and that all that it knows, it knows through perception. He believes that perceptions should be called “primary perceptions,” while Schopenhauer goes as far as to say the following regarding the difference between the two types of “cognizance.”

*Perception* is not only the source of all cognizance, but is itself cognizance *par excellence*; it alone is unconditionally true, genuine cognizance fully worthy of its name; for it alone imparts real insight, it alone is assimilated by a person, passes into his essence, and can with complete grounding be called *his*, whereas concepts merely adhere to him.

Schopenhauer then explains that both wisdom and virtue are the domain of perception, not reason, since both focus on how one interacts with the perceptual world, not the

---

61 Ibid.
62 Ibid. 41.
63 Ibid. 59.
64 Ibid. 41.
65 David Hume, a favorite of Schopenhauer, is an obvious exception. Schopenhauer refers to Hume as “illustrious” in *World as Will and Presentation*, Volume I, 631.
abstract world. All rational thinking is second-order. Moreover, “cognizance of the relation of cause and effect on the part of the understanding is to be sure in itself much more complete, deeper, and more exhaustive than that which can be thought of about it in abstracto.” In fact Schopenhauer says, in a rather vivid analogy, that abstract knowledge in the sciences compared to intuitive knowledge will always resemble a mosaic compared to a realistic painting. “However delicate the mosaic may be,” he writes, “the boundaries of the stones are a constant factor, and therefore no continuous passage from one color to another is possible.”

Moreover, “perception is self-sufficient” and as long as one’s reason resembles his perceptions, then he is immune to error, though not to illusion, which is the malfunction of perception. This distortion is due to the presentation being incorrectly copied and filtered through concepts. Schopenhauer claims that “every error is an inference from a consequence to a ground.” This is typically the result of either supposing a ground for a consequence that it could not have, or assuming that a consequence can only have come from a particular ground. In his typically pessimistic and ascetic style, Schopenhauer believes that error is more likely to occur when one is experiencing pleasure or strong emotions such as love and hate. The relevant quality of error here though is that it is always the product of reason and is far more pernicious and lasting than mere illusion.

---

67 Ibid.
68 Ibid. 63.
69 Ibid. 67.
70 World as Will and Presentation, Volume I, 41–42.
71 Ibid. 94.
72 Ibid.
73 Ibid. 105.
74 World as Will and Presentation, Volume II, 106.
75 Ibid. 73.
What use then does reason have? The vast majority of Western philosophers have championed reason over perception making it necessary for Nietzsche to highlight Heraclitus as being the philosopher of the intuitive. Why would anyone grant privilege to a faculty that, if we are to believe Schopenhauer, is derivative and error-prone? He reminds us that “knowledge, abstract cognizance, has its greatest value in its communicability and in the possibility of being preserved in a fixed form; only thereby does it become so inestimably important for practical matters.” Without reason, man would be caught in an eternal present in the same way that the animals are. With the help of reason, we are able to communicate that which is not immediately present. The truth and wisdom of perception “can unfortunately be neither held firm nor communicated, at most purified and elucidated.” Even this is ultimately unsatisfactory to Schopenhauer, however, and he laments the poor quality of communication.

Unconditionally communicable is only the poorest sort of cognizance, that which is abstract, secondary, the concept, the mere shadow of proper cognizance. If perceptions were communicable, there would then be a communication worth the trouble; but under the circumstances, everyone has to remain in the end within his own skin and within his own skull, and no one can help another. To enrich concepts through perception is the unceasing endeavor of poetry and philosophy.

The information that is transmitted through second-hand means, such as books, will always be inferior to experience, since concepts are always general and thus “not able to

---

76 PTAG, 52.
77 World as Will and Presentation, Volume I, 66.
78 Ibid.
79 World as Will and Presentation, Volume II, 79.
80 Ibid. 80.
descend to the individual.” True wisdom and genius are rooted in the perceptual faculties. They are both rooted in “the entire manner in which the world displays itself,” the former being the product of experience and the latter inherent. Neither can be taught, nor communicated. Since neither can be taught, understandably “pseudo-philosophers” prefer abstract reasoning, which is communicable and easily manipulated to make “broad and empty abstractions” to mystify their audiences.

We can now see why rational thinking, as described by Schopenhauer, is antithetical to Nietzsche’s Heraclitus. Besides sacrificing accuracy so as to be understandable to others (hardly an action that “The Obscure” should take), it also fixes things in place. Nietzsche expresses a similar sentiment in Twilight of the Idols, when he bemoans the tendency of philosophers to kill and mummify living, changing things to hold them in place. Schopenhauer warns of the perils of the overuse of rational thinking albeit in a much less dramatic fashion than Nietzsche:

Given the elevated press of life with its call for quick decisions, bold action, prompt and firm engagement, there is indeed need for reason, but when it wins the upper hand and hinders and confuses intuitive, immediate discovery and simultaneous adoption of the right course of action, purely in terms of understanding, and generates indecisiveness, it easily ruins everything.

---

81 Ibid.
82 Ibid. 80–81.
83 Philosophaster.
84 Ibid. 92.
85 The sobriquet, “The Obscure,” is often used for Heraclitus, making its first extant appearance in the spurious Aristotelian treatise, On the Universe (396b, 20). It refers to the supposedly enigmatic nature of Heraclitus’s philosophy, a subject that I shall cover in greater depth below.
86 Twilight of the Idols, Reason in Philosophy, 1 (167).
87 World as Will and Presentation, Volume I, 68.
Moreover, error is possible only because of reason.\textsuperscript{88} In fact, madness is also a result of reason; Schopenhauer notes that with rare exceptions, “animals do not go mad.”\textsuperscript{89} While his championing of intuitive thought over rational thought never reaches the near fever pitch that is found in Nietzsche’s description of Heraclitus, some common ground still remains.

2.2.4 Heraclitus and Schopenhauer on Time and Becoming

Even more direct links between the intuitive thought of Heraclitus and the writings of Schopenhauer are elucidated by Nietzsche when he describes Heraclitus’s conception of time, showing how enmeshed in the Schopenhauerian framework Nietzsche still is. “As Heraclitus sees time,” he writes, “so does Schopenhauer.”\textsuperscript{90} According to Nietzsche, Heraclitus can perceive time and space “intuitively, even without a definite content, independent of all experience, purely in themselves.”\textsuperscript{91} This is confirmed by Schopenhauer who says of time and space that they “can be perceptually presented on their own and apart from matter.”\textsuperscript{92} Regarding the similarity between Heraclitus and Schopenhauer’s conception of time, Nietzsche said,

\begin{quote}
[Schopenhauer] repeatedly said of it that every moment in it exists only insofar as it has just consumed the preceding one, its father, and is then consumed likewise. And that past and future are as perishable as any dream, but that the present is but the dimensionless and durationless borderline between the two.\textsuperscript{93}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{88} World as Will and Presentation, Volume II, 73.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid. 75.
\textsuperscript{90} PTAG, 52.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{92} World as Will and Presentation, Volume I, 10.
\textsuperscript{93} PTAG, 52–53.
Nietzsche is indeed correct in saying this. In fact, this passage appears nearly verbatim in *World as Will and Presentation*, though Nietzsche does not cite it directly. Nietzsche continues the text with a passage regarding space and time having only a “relative existence” is likewise acquired from the same paragraph of Schopenhauer. Continuing this line of thought, Nietzsche claims the following:

This is a truth of the greatest immediate self-evidence for everyone and one for which this very reason is extremely difficult to reach by way of concept or reason. But whoever finds himself directly looking at it must move on at once to the Heraclitean conclusion and say that the whole nature of reality lies simply in its acts and that for it there exists no other sort of being.

Schopenhauer, lays out the exact same thought and acknowledges that “this view is old” and that “in it, Heraclitus bemoaned the eternal flow of things.” Thereafter, Schopenhauer sharply disagrees with Nietzsche’s view that one must necessarily move on to the Heraclitean conclusion, presenting several alternatives:

Plato denigrated its object as that which is perennially becoming, but never is; Spinoza called it mere accidents of the one single substance that is and endures; Kant opposed that which is cognized in this way with the thing in itself. Finally the ancient wisdom of the Indians speaks “It is Mâyâ, the veil of deception, that envelops the eyes of mortals and lets them see a world of which one can say neither that it is nor that it is not…”

---

94 *World as Will and Presentation*, Volume I, 8.
95 Compare PTAG, 53 and *World as Will and Presentation*, Volume I, 8.
96 PTAG, 53.
98 Ibid. 9.
Nietzsche is exaggerating when he claims that when faced with Becoming and the impermanence of things, one’s only option is to recognize the Heraclitean conclusion, though one can see that even Schopenhauer has to acknowledge that this is a “terrible, paralyzing thought” and that all thinkers after Heraclitus have had to cope with it.\footnote{PTAG, 54.}

This exceedingly Schopenhauerian discussion of time is followed by a long quotation from \textit{World as Will and Presentation} (this time cited) where Schopenhauer admits the Heraclitean principle that “only by acts does reality fill space and time.”\footnote{Note that it is Nietzsche’s assertion that “as Heraclitus sees time, so does Schopenhauer,” Ibid. 52–53.} This seems to me to be a bad case of editing on Nietzsche’s part as the sentences that immediately precede his quotation in Schopenhauer’s original text resemble the Nietzschean interpretation of Heraclitus even more than those included in PTAG. Schopenhauer states that matter “is through and through nothing but causality, as everyone immediately sees as soon as he reflects on it... its being, namely, is its effectuality, no other being is so much as thinkable for it.”\footnote{World as Will and Presentation, Volume I, 10.} This reads much like Deleuze’s reading of Heraclitus in \textit{Nietzsche and Philosophy}, “being is the being of becoming as such.”\footnote{Deleuze, 23.}

To fully grasp this, it may be helpful to look at Schopenhauer’s definition of causality. In his doctoral thesis, \textit{On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason}, he explains that it is not objects that are causes, but rather states.\footnote{On the Fourfold Root, 55. Note that since the only recent English translation of this work was done by Payne rather than Aquila and Carus, there may be some terminological differences in translation. Where possible, important differences (such as Vorstellung being translated as “presentation” rather than “representation”) will be altered to reflect Aquila and Carus’s translations.} That is to say, Schopenhauer’s account of causality is not object-based, but rather event-based.

While an object-based causality would look for the object that led to a change in another
object, Schopenhauer insists that we take a wider view. He acknowledges that the object in a state that is the differing factor that causes another state to transpire should be isolated perhaps as a “causal moment,” “element,” or even “condition,” but explicitly states that “the entire state is the cause of the one that follows.” It is the states of the entire world that lead to each other according to the principle of sufficient reason, rather than simply one object causing another object or state. Schopenhauer lays this out in

*On the Fourfold Root.*

There is absolutely no sense in saying that one object is the cause of another, first because objects contain not merely form and quality, but also *matter* which does not arise or pass away; and then because the law of causality refers exclusively to *changes*, in other words, to the appearance and disappearance of states in time. Here it regulates that relation in reference whereof the earlier state is called the *cause*, the later the *effect*, and their necessary connection the *resulting or ensuing* of one from another.

It is important here to remember that matter for Schopenhauer is the perceivability, or presentation of the union of space and time. While matter represents the realm of presentation, the thing-in-itself, the will, is even less stable. Schopenhauer refers to the Will as “constant striving,” a topic that Nietzsche explores later in this section. What this constant striving means though is that “eternal being, endless flux, belongs to revelation of the essence of will.”

---

104 Ibid.
105 Ibid. 53.
106 Ibid. 55.
107 Ibid. 46.
109 Ibid. 196.
In other words, Schopenhauer has not explicitly denied Being *per se,* but rather has reduced it entirely into acting, or Becoming. While I would not go far as those who claim that Nietzsche’s entire reading of Heraclitus is Schopenhauerian, the similarities are fairly glaring.\(^\text{110}\) Yet I think it is important to note that the passages that Nietzsche quotes in regards to time are from the first book of the first volume of *World as Will and Presentation,* the book on Presentation, or how the world presents itself to us. It would not be inconsistent for one to accept certain aspects of this part of Schopenhauer’s philosophy without ever agreeing to the dual world of Will and Presentation that is at the heart of Schopenhauer’s work. In this manner, Nietzsche has committed to the veneer of Presentation without accepting the Will. Of the Schopenhauerian passages I have quoted in the last few paragraphs, the only one that I believe Nietzsche would truly find troubling is Schopenhauer saying that Heraclitus “laments” the eternal flux. Later in this chapter, I will show how this will be the true breaking point between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche.

### 2.2.5 The Second Negation

Heraclitus’s “far bolder” of his two negations is his complete and utter denial of Being.\(^\text{111}\) Nietzsche has him proclaim this “louder than Anaximander,” shouting while his predecessor had spoken in hushed tones. Becoming is all that he can see; there is no Being, merely Becoming.\(^\text{112}\) It is the hallucination of philosophers that allows them to

---

\(^{110}\) Przybyslawski, 6.

\(^{111}\) PTAG, 51.

\(^{112}\) Ibid.
“see land somewhere in the ocean of coming-to-be and passing away.”\textsuperscript{113} This evocative language appears to be meant to invoke a metaphor from Kant’s First Critique.\textsuperscript{114}

We have now not only traveled through the land of pure understanding, and carefully inspected each part of it, but we have also surveyed it, and determined the place for each thing in it. This land however is an island, and enclosed in unalterable boundaries by nature itself. It is the land of truth (a charming name), surrounded by a broad and stormy ocean, the true seat of illusion, where many a fog bank and rapidly melting iceberg pretend to be new lands and, ceaselessly deceiving with empty hopes the voyager looking around for new discoveries, entwine him in adventures from which he can never escape and yet also never bring to an end.\textsuperscript{115}

Kant accurately describes the swirling uncertainties that await the metaphysical sailor on the open seas of Becoming. The world of flux is indeed “stormy” and those brief moments of the certainty that only Being could provide are “rapidly melting.” Yet Nietzsche takes the entire analogy a step further, depriving our sailor of “the land of truth.” Every piece of dry land is illusory in the ocean of Becoming.

In Nietzsche’s reading, as we have seen, Heraclitus comes to these truths intuitively, which would seem to suggest that he knows them empirically. Yet fifteen years later, in \textit{Twilight of the Idols}, Nietzsche takes Heraclitus to task for not admiring the sensory organs highly enough:

When all the other philosophical folk threw out the testimony of the senses because it showed multiplicity and change, Heraclitus threw it out because it made things look permanent and unified. Heraclitus did not do justice to the

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid. 52.
\textsuperscript{114} Credit should go to Christoph Cox for introducing the comparison of Nietzsche’s island metaphors in other works to Kant’s similar analogy (Cox, 173).
\textsuperscript{115} Kant, \textit{Critique of Pure Reason}, A236/B295.
senses either. The senses do not lie the way the Eleatics thought they did, or the way Heraclitus thought they did, -- they do not lie at all. What we do with the testimony of the senses, that is where the lies begin, like the lie of unity, the lie of objectification, of substance, of permanence… ‘Reason’ makes us falsify the testimony of the senses. The senses are not lying when they show becoming, passing away, change…¹¹⁶

I would like to first note that as late as 1888, the influence of Schopenhauer can still be felt. Schopenhauer’s belief is that only through processing the intuition through the concepts do we fall into reason, or even madness.¹¹⁷ But what I shall focus on primarily is Nietzsche’s seeming condemnation of Heraclitus. Why would he condemn the philosopher whom he frequently lauds in much of his earlier work?

Nietzsche seems to have in mind the following Heraclitean aphorism: “Eyes and ears are poor witnesses for men if their souls do not understand the language.”¹¹⁸ The first clause of the sentence does seem to imply that Heraclitus finds the testimony of the senses to be unreliable. Moreover, the source of the passage is Sextus Empiricus, the Pyrrhonian Skeptic, so a skeptical interpretation of the aphorism is understandable. Yet notice the second half of the sentence; the senses’ inability to serve as good witnesses is contingent on the soul not understanding the language, literally having a “barbarous” soul in the original Greek. What this refers to is one’s inability to interpret sensory data if one does not have knowledge of the logos.¹¹⁹ A proper examination of what the word, logos, means for Heraclitus is beyond the scope of this work, but for our purposes, let us identify it with rationality, or literally an “account” of the world.¹²⁰ In other words, the

¹¹⁷ World as Will and Presentation, Volume II, 74–75.
¹¹⁸ Heraclitus, B107.
¹¹⁹ McKirahan, 118n.
¹²⁰ Ibid. 133.
senses do not transmit correctly if one’s ability to interpret them is wanting.\textsuperscript{121} This seems to be roughly what Nietzsche is saying in \textit{Twilight of the Idols}. The senses are not deceitful in themselves, but only in the misappropriation of them. Moreover, Heraclitus gives a strong endorsement of the senses, saying “Whatever comes from sight, hearing, learning from experience, this I prefer.”\textsuperscript{122} Even another seeming condemnation of one sense, “eyes are surer witness than ears,”\textsuperscript{123} represents not a denigration of hearing, but rather a preference of firsthand experience over hearsay.\textsuperscript{124} Thus, Nietzsche’s late scolding of Heraclitus seems not only inconsistent with his earlier works, but misguided in its interpretation of the relevant aphorisms.

\textbf{2.2.6 Heraclitus and Perception}

Perhaps, though, Nietzsche was referring to Heraclitus’s aphorisms about the confusing testimonies that the senses do give. Heraclitus was, despite the passages quoted above, hardly an empiricist. In fact, many of Heraclitus’s fragments address how different observers can give different accounts of the same “object.”\textsuperscript{125} In \textit{The Art and Thought of Heraclitus}, Charles Kahn groups a set of these fragments together:

\begin{quote}
The sea is the purest and foulest water: for fishes drinkable and life-sustaining; for men undrinkable and deadly.\textsuperscript{126}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{121} Cox, 197.
\textsuperscript{122} Heraclitus, B55.
\textsuperscript{123} Heraclitus, B101a.
\textsuperscript{124} Kahn, 106.
\textsuperscript{125} I hesitate to use the word, “object” to describe what is being observed in these instances, as that suggests a distinctly non-Heraclitean ontology. For brevity’s sake though, I shall at least temporarily describe these “objects” in a typical grammatical fashion.
\textsuperscript{126} Heraclitus, B61.
Asses prefer garbage to gold.\textsuperscript{127}

Swine delight in mire rather than clean water; chickens bathe in dust.\textsuperscript{128}

These fragments show the differences between the needs and desires of human beings and those of animals. Kahn, in a fashion of which Nietzsche would approve, warns us against seeing these fragments as being an attempt to moralize and judge the actions of men by calling them bestial.\textsuperscript{129} He also brings up the ancient tradition of “interspecies relativism” using Plato’s depiction of Protagoras utilizing this technique in his eponymous dialogue.\textsuperscript{130} This technique was popular enough in the Roman world that Sextus Empiricus lists it as the first of the “Ten Modes through which we are thought to conclude to the suspension of judgment.”\textsuperscript{131} Sextus refers to the mode as “the argument according to which animals, depending on the difference among them, do not receive the same appearances from the same things.”\textsuperscript{132} By showing that the same thing is experienced differently by different animals, Sextus attempts to demonstrate that we are not sure if true knowledge of any particular thing can be apprehended.\textsuperscript{133}

In his lectures on Heraclitus, Nietzsche attempts to use the mode with mid-nineteenth century scientific theories to prove a slightly different point. Rather than attempting to advance a skeptical position, Nietzsche wishes to show that “whenever a human being believes he recognizes any sort of persistence in living nature, it is due to

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{127} Ibid. B9.
\bibitem{128} Ibid. B13 and B37.
\bibitem{129} Kahn, 186.
\bibitem{130} Protagoras, 334 a–c.
\bibitem{131} Sextus Empiricus, 35.
\bibitem{132} Ibid. 40.
\bibitem{133} Interestingly, Sextus states that Heraclitus does not actually offer true Skeptical arguments, since the Heraclitean doctrines such as conflagration and contraries existing in the same thing lead to “dogmatism.” Ibid. 210–12.
\end{thebibliography}
our small standards.” He cites a thought experiment given by “a researcher in the natural sciences at the Petersburg Academy” in 1860. The researcher posed the possibility that the inner lives of animals are experienced at a ratio proportional to their pulse rate. In other words, rabbits have a pulse four times that of cows, so rabbits would experience the world as moving at one fourth the speed as cows do. Nietzsche asks us to imagine if this sort of thing were magnified to extremes in human beings. If a human being’s pulse were fast enough, a bullet in flight would appear to be moving at a standstill and the growth of grass would be as slow as the growth of mountains is to us now. What if we were to imagine the opposite, which is to say that the world appears to be moving a thousand times faster than how it appears to man? Time would have the opposite effect. A year would seem to be eight hours long; day and night would “alternate like light and shadow in but a moment”; the sun “would race along the arch of the heavens.” If it should be a thousand times faster, day and night would disappear and “the solar ecliptic” would appear as “a circle of fire.”

What Nietzsche is saying with such vivid imagery is that what we see as permanence is merely the effect of our perceptions. Things that appear in motion to us would appear as eternal to beings whose lives we could measure in seconds, while those who would measure our lives in seconds see our eternals as transitory. It is only our all-too-human perception of time that makes the world seem stable. If we had the vision of a god, “every shape appearing to use as persistent would vanish in the superhaste of events.

134 Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 60.
135 Ibid.
136 Ibid. 61.
137 Ibid.
138 Ibid.
and would be devoured by the wild storm of Becoming.”\textsuperscript{139} If we could think even faster than we already do then we would have “an even greater illusion of persistence,” and at some ultimate speed, “all motion would cease, and everything would be eternally fixed.”\textsuperscript{140} Nietzsche even seems to have some rudimentary understanding of modern atomic theory, saying that “Becoming never ceases at the indefinitely small,” anticipating the constantly moving electrons that exist in every atom of every seemingly stationary object.\textsuperscript{141}

In \textit{Gay Science}, Nietzsche says that man “placed himself in a false rank order in relation to animals and nature.”\textsuperscript{142} This is similar to the Heraclitean fragments mentioned above regarding the difference of opinions between man and animal, in addition to the hypothetical creatures of Nietzsche that live lives magnitudes faster and slower than ours. This should not be read as Pyrrhonian Skepticism; neither Nietzsche nor Heraclitus is trying to show that the senses are completely unreliable. Rather, “every description is relative to an interpretation.”\textsuperscript{143} Neither the ass, nor the man has the entire truth, though both of them hold part of it. I do think that Nietzsche moves a bit away from his perspectivist outlook though, giving Heraclitus’s “intuitive perception” a privileged position. He says of this perception, “there is no thing of which we may say, ‘it is.’ He rejects \textit{Being}. He knows only Becoming, the flowing. He considers belief in something persistent as error and foolishness.”\textsuperscript{144} I believe this strongly suggests that this is not merely an aesthetic truth, of the sort that shall be discussed below, but that Nietzsche

\textsuperscript{139} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid. 61–62.
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid. 62.
\textsuperscript{142} \textit{Gay Science}, 115.
\textsuperscript{143} Cox, 197.
\textsuperscript{144} \textit{Pre-Platonic Philosophers}, 62.
believes that Heraclitus has a privileged epistemological position. His use of contemporary science and empirical evidence to bolster his claims regarding Becoming lend credence to this interpretation. In fact, in his notes, Nietzsche attributes the quotation, “humans in all their activities and in any of their arts only emulate the natural law and nevertheless do not recognize this,” to Heraclitus.¹⁴⁵ This is not an exact translation of any of Heraclitus’s aphorisms, but does show that Nietzsche’s Heraclitus believes that the truth of nature predates man’s interpretation.¹⁴⁶

### 2.2.7 The One, Qualities, and Strife

Having established that Heraclitus differs from Anaximander by having no duality of worlds, nor any concept of Being, Nietzsche establishes one final difference in the metaphysics of the two. Heraclitus does not totally eschew the idea of the One, though his acceptance of it is very different from the doctrines of Anaximander or Parmenides.¹⁴⁷ He even goes as far as to say that if one listens to the logos one will “agree that all things are one.”¹⁴⁸ Yet Nietzsche reads the Heraclitean notion of the One as very different from Anaximander’s. For Nietzsche’s Anaximander, the *apeiron* is a One unified by its complete lack of qualities. In other words, the *apeiron* is defined by its lack of definition; a definite quality would risk passing away or coming to be and thus must not be attached to the *apeiron*.¹⁴⁹

---

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. 59.
¹⁴⁶ Ibid. 59n. I am suspicious that this is Nietzsche’s paraphrasing of the aphorisms that describe the logos as “shared” (Heraclitus, B 2) and holding forever, but being commonly misinterpreted (Ibid. B1).
¹⁴⁷ Parmenides’ notion of the One will be explored at great length in a later chapter, dedicated to Nietzsche’s reading of Parmenides.
¹⁴⁸ Heraclitus, B50.
¹⁴⁹ PTAG, 47.
For Nietzsche’s Heraclitus, though, it is the presence of qualities that defines the One. In his lectures on Heraclitus, he affirms that Heraclitus sees the existence of the One, but in a manner that is directly opposed to that of Anaximander or Parmenides. For those latter two thinkers, the presence of multiplicity is a hallmark of illusion. Yet for Heraclitus, it is only through multiplicity that we may see the One.

Heraclitus thus sees only the One, but in the sense opposite to Parmenides’. All qualities of things, all laws, all generation and destruction, are the continual revelation of the existence of the One: multiplicity, which is a deception of the senses according to Parmenides, is for Heraclitus the cloth, the form of appearance of the One, in no way a deception: otherwise the One does not appear at all.  

Nietzsche ties this back to Anaximander, reminding the reader of the “qualityless Being” of the *apeiron*, but asks how “can that which is encumbered by qualities, Becoming, arise from the qualityless.” Thus the One must have “*all* predicates, *all* qualities.”

Nietzsche states that the multiplicity that Parmenides denounces as the root of all deception is for Heraclitus “the cloth, the form of appearance, of the One.” The One imagined by Nietzsche in his reading of Heraclitus is the plurality of all qualities. The world does not emerge from a qualityless *apeiron* and then develop qualities. Rather, the One already contains all of the qualities of existence, since it is the totality of qualities that forms the One.

Gilles Deleuze, a philosopher enamored with multiplicity, describes Heraclitus’s multiplicity in Nietzsche’s work in a way that ties it back to the first two negations.

---

150 *Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, 63.
151 Ibid.
152 Ibid.
153 Ibid.
For there is no being beyond becoming, nothing beyond multiplicity; neither multiplicity nor becoming are appearances or illusions. But neither are there multiple or eternal realities which would be, in turn, like essences beyond appearance. Multiplicity is the inseparable manifestation, essential transformation, and constant symptom of unity.\textsuperscript{154}

Deleuze captures the danger of the incoherence of multiplicity either being a veil of illusion cast over qualities, or a transcendent essence. If Anaximander or Parmenides were right and the world’s primary character were that of perfect unity without multiplicity, then whence comes the apparent multiplicity of the world? Even the existence of two worlds, one “real” and one merely apparent, suggests multiplicity by the very nature of dualism.\textsuperscript{155} A worldview that accounts for multiplicity, such as that of Heraclitus, is the only coherent option. Nietzsche describes this as “not a world of unity as Anaximander sought beyond the fluttering veils of the many, but a world of eternal substantive multiplicities.”\textsuperscript{156} Nietzsche does not want these qualities to be phantasms, as Parmenides would describe them, nor “eternal substances” as they would be for Anaxagoras.\textsuperscript{157} Instead, these qualities are in constant struggle against one another, going in and out of existence. “Everlastingly,” he writes, “a given quality contends against itself and separates into opposites; everlastingly these opposites seek to reunite.”\textsuperscript{158} whatever appears to have any sort of permanence is merely a tension of these qualities.\textsuperscript{159} This brings Nietzsche to another quotation by Schopenhauer and also to the

\textsuperscript{154} Deleuze, 23–24.
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{156} PTAG, 57.
\textsuperscript{157} Ibid. 58.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid. 54.
\textsuperscript{159} Cox, 194.
real place where the chasm between the two begins to emerge.\textsuperscript{160} The passage from Schopenhauer is as follows.\textsuperscript{161}

Thus everywhere in nature we see conflict, battle, and the exchange of victory, and will later more distinctly recognize precisely in this fact the internal division that is essential to will. Every level of the objectification of will makes matter, space, time contestable for others. Persisting matter must constantly vary its form while, according to the directing principle of causality, mechanical, physical, chemical, organic phenomena, greedily pressing to come to the fore, tear that matter away from one another; for each would reveal its Idea. Though the whole of nature one may pursue this conflict, indeed it exists only precisely through it.\textsuperscript{162}

Nietzsche says that the “pages that follow this passage give some notable illustrations of such struggle.”\textsuperscript{163} “Notable” may be a slight understatement as Schopenhauer uses these vivid examples: the ichneumon wasp laying its eggs in the living bodies of other insects; the bulldog ant after having been cut in two proceeding to have a mortal battle between the severed head and tail.\textsuperscript{164} Also, notable is the glaring omission that Nietzsche makes in his editing. After the point where Nietzsche cuts off the sentence, Schopenhauer’s original text continues with a quotation by Empedocles (in the original Greek) which translates to the following: “If strife had not been present in things, then all would have been one.”\textsuperscript{165} While Nietzsche wishes to show the similarities and differences between

\textsuperscript{160} PTAG, 56.
\textsuperscript{161} I am presenting the quotation in the context it appears in Schopenhauer’s original work. The portion that appears in PTAG begins with the words, “Persistent matter” and ends where I end the quotation.
\textsuperscript{162} World as Will and Presentation, Volume I, 174–75.
\textsuperscript{163} PTAG, 56.
\textsuperscript{164} World as Will and Presentation, Volume I, 175.
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid.
Schopenhauer and Heraclitus, Schopenhauer himself wishes to show that his doctrine is similar to that of Empedocles. 166

Nietzsche points out that there is a large difference between how Heraclitus and Schopenhauer describe strife, saying of Schopenhauer’s notable examples: “the basic tone of their description is quite different from that which Heraclitus offers, because strife for Schopenhauer is a proof of the internal self-dissociation of the Will-to-Live.” 167 Not unlike the injustice of Anaximander before him, Schopenhauer’s notion of the Will is “a self-consuming, menacing and gloomy drive, a thoroughly frightful and by no means blessed phenomenon.” 168 Herein lies the real split between Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. He may agree with him on metaphysical issues, at least at this point in his career, but he is no longer willing to take up the life-denying philosophy of pessimism Schopenhauer associates with it. While Heraclitus may have been portrayed as the Weeping Philosopher, Nietzsche finds in him a philosophy of affirmation. Heraclitus answers the real concern of Anaximander, the injustice of Becoming, through the Heraclitean images of justice seen as the contest, as fire, and as the child at play. In doing so, he places himself apart from the gloomy and pessimistic philosophy of his predecessor. Thus the justification of Becoming can be understood only if Heraclitus’s unique views of justice are first grasped.

166 Of the Pre-Platonic philosophers, it is Empedocles whom Schopenhauer spends the most time discussing in his “Fragments for the History of Philosophy.” He particularly admires his “decided pessimism.” (Parerga and Paralipomena, Volume I, 35)
167 PTAG, 56.
168 Ibid.
2.3 Justice

2.3.1 The Earthquake and Pessimism

Nietzsche fully acknowledges that the transition from a metaphysics of Being to a metaphysics of Becoming is a harrowing one. Heraclitus’s thought is “terrible” and “paralyzing.”\(^{169}\) Nietzsche uses a powerful metaphor to describe it:

Its impact on men can most nearly be likened to the sensation during an earthquake when one loses one’s familiar confidence in a firmly grounded earth. It takes astonishing strength to transform this reaction into its opposite, into sublimity and the feeling of blessed astonishment.\(^{170}\)

Nietzsche is fond enough of the metaphor to use it also in his lecture notes, where he places the observer in the middle of the earthquake so he “observes all things in motion.”\(^{171}\) The world of the metaphysician has been destroyed and everything that at one point seemed stable has come crashing down. Yet why does this particular metaphor appear twice? When it appears in the lecture notes it is accompanied with an allusion to the sea, but it appears alone in the manuscript of PTAG. Why would Nietzsche select a metaphor of earth—rather than perhaps a conflagration, which would seem more apropos to Heraclitus—to represent cosmic strife? The earthquake conveys well the sense of having the ground fall from beneath one’s feet, to be sure, but I believe Nietzsche has something else in mind as well.

\(^{169}\) PTAG, 54.

\(^{170}\) Ibid.

\(^{171}\) Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 64.
Because this passage is indeed about finding “sublimity” in the midst of a natural disaster, namely an earthquake, perhaps Nietzsche is alluding to the Lisbon Earthquake. This disaster, which struck on November 1, 1755, was one of the deadliest in modern European history, killing nearly a quarter of the city’s 250,000 inhabitants and destroying not only the capital of a great empire, but also cities farther abroad in Andalusia, France, and Morocco. It could be felt throughout Europe for weeks and triggered tidal surges as far away as Finland and the Dutch East Indies. Yet the shockwaves it sent throughout European culture resonated even longer. While Voltaire had once been a believer in the theodicy of Leibniz, that this was the best of all possible worlds, as Adorno states, “the earthquake of Lisbon sufficed to cure Voltaire of the theodicy of Leibniz.” In fact, one Voltaire scholar has gone so far as to say that the earthquake marked “the death of optimism,” and it was this event that inspired Voltaire’s 1759 satire of Leibniz, *Candide* (not to mention its biting subtitle, *Optimism*).

More nuanced reactions to this devastation were born in Konigsberg, where a young Immanuel Kant stayed abreast of the debates, philosophical or scientific, that followed the earthquake. Eagerly collecting every report he could find, Kant proceeded to compile what Walter Benjamin refers to as “certainly the beginnings of seismology.” Kant’s essays explained earthquakes as “purely geological phenomena which were in no wise incompatible with the goodness and power of God.” In fact,
Kant went as far as to argue that doubts about the compatibility of a perfect creation and natural disasters are rooted in “ignorance, egocentricity, and presumptuousness.”

Kant took another tack on this matter several decades later in his *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Although explicit references to the Lisbon Earthquake are absent (just as mentions of earthquakes in general are conspicuously rare), Kant introduces his concept of the dynamic sublime, which attempts to account for the feeling one has when confronted with frightening natural phenomena. The sublime itself is, for Kant, the combination on the one hand of displeasure someone has when the bounds of his imagination have been overcome and on the other of the pleasure that he feels when he judges the inadequacy of imagination against the power of his reason. Describing nearly every major natural disaster except earthquakes, Kant says that they have the ability to “make our capacity to resist an insignificant trifle in comparison with their power,” yet the more fearful they are, the more attractive they are. Thus they are sublime when we find ourselves in relation to them, but only in relative safety, in that they “elevate the strength of our soul above its usual level, and allow us to discover within ourselves a capacity for resistance of quite another kind, which gives us the courage to measure ourselves against the apparent all-powerfulness of nature.” In other words, the more horrific the event is the more that the dignity of man is allowed to shine through. An event as horrific as the Lisbon Earthquake could not help but be felt as sublime to Kant.

---

180 Ibid. xxxix.
181 Ray, 10.
182 Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5:257.
183 Ibid. 5:261.
The aftershock of the earthquake was continued to be felt in philosophical texts as late as 1844, since Schopenhauer references, albeit in passing, in the second volume of *The World as Will and Presentation*. In his own attack on Leibniz’s optimism, Schopenhauer proposes the complete antithesis of the theodicy: that this is actually the *worst* of all possible worlds.\(^{184}\) For any world that were any worse than this world would not be able to exist; our world always exists on the cusp of destruction. He says “This world, then, is arranged as it had just barely to be in order to persist: if it were a little bit worse, it could no longer persist. Consequently one worse than it, since it could not persist, is not possible at all, it itself therefore the worst of all possible.”\(^ {185}\) Following this, he presents a number of things that could go wrong on an astronomical scale, before presenting his own view of seismology: one in which the Earth is constantly on the verge of destroying its surface.

Under the firm crust of planets, in turn, powerful forces of nature reside, which as soon as some chance occurrence gives them leeway, must necessarily destroy it with everything living on it: as has already occurred at least three times on our planet, and will probably occur still more often. An earthquake in Lisbon, in Haiti, the burying of Pompeii are but minor, mischievous hints as to what is possible.\(^ {186}\)

Following this, Schopenhauer goes on to show the various atmospheric and ecological changes that also could spell total doom for life on Earth. This is followed by a brief discussion of fossils of extinct animals, demonstrating that life on Earth actually has been

---

\(^{184}\) *World as Will and Presentation*, Volume II, 667.

\(^{185}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{186}\) *Ibid.* 668.
extinguished at different points in history.\textsuperscript{187} The Lisbon earthquake, which was a world-shattering event for prior European philosophers, is a mere hiccup in Schopenhauer’s cosmology. Schopenhauer starts from a point of pessimism, wherein depicting life “as a desirable state and human happiness as its purpose” is a “pernicious doctrine,” thus to him the upset of an earthquake is hardly an evil.\textsuperscript{188}

Thus by using the imagery of the earthquake, Nietzsche is invoking two distinct feelings that the philosophy of Heraclitus should awaken in the reader. First, as Nietzsche explicitly states, there is a feeling of sublimity that arises from this loss of one’s footing. While Nietzsche may not be as concerned with the dignity of man as Kant is, he is trying to evoke the aesthetic experience that the enormity of the Heraclitean earthquake inspires. Second, Nietzsche is once again joining the battle between optimism and pessimism that occurs in philosophy. The strong opposition to optimism, championed by Voltaire in 1755, has already made itself known in PTAG in a perhaps exaggerated sense through the pessimism of Schopenhauer and Anaximander. Schopenhauer, incidentally, praised Voltaire for his “war on optimism in Candide,” showing that he saw his French predecessor as a fellow champion of pessimism.\textsuperscript{189}

But what of theodicies and optimism? Should we expect Heraclitus and Nietzsche to take the Panglossian side of Leibniz and Kant? Five years after writing PTAG, in \textit{Human, All-Too Human}, Nietzsche made explicit his opinion of theodicies and the debate between optimism and pessimism.\textsuperscript{190} First, he wishes to dispense with the

---

\textsuperscript{187} Ibid. 668. Oddly, this seems to contradict Schopenhauer’s earlier claims that species are Platonic forms which are always represented by extant life forms (Ibid. 542–43).
\textsuperscript{188} Ibid. 669.
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid. 670.
\textsuperscript{190} A book incidentally dedicated to Voltaire on the centennial anniversary of his death. This further alienated Wagner, who despised both the French and science. This was a deliberate blow on Nietzsche’s part. \textit{Human, All-Too Human}, xv.
terms “optimism” and “pessimism,” because he equates optimism with the need to defend a God and pessimism as an attempt to attack belief in God.\textsuperscript{191} For his part, Nietzsche feels that we have moved past theological debates, asking “what thinker still has need of the hypothesis of a God?” and “who still bothers about theologians – except other theologians?”\textsuperscript{192} Thus Nietzsche sees the question about the inherent goodness or badness of the world as irrelevant, at least at this point in his career:

Disregarding theology and opposition to theology, it is quite obvious that the world is neither good nor evil, let alone the best of all or the worst of all worlds,\textsuperscript{193} and that these concepts ‘good’ and ‘evil’ possess meaning only when applied to men and perhaps even here are, as they are usually employed, unjustified: in any event, we must cast off both that conception of the world that inveighs against it and that which glorifies it.\textsuperscript{194}

This sentiment of 1878 is perhaps a bit cooler than some of his later works, but I believe that it is one that first makes itself truly known in PTAG. Nietzsche says that unlike Leibniz, Heraclitus has no need to prove that this is the “best of all possible worlds.”\textsuperscript{195} At the same time, Heraclitus does not answer to those who would find him “gloomy, melancholy, tearful, sinister, bilious, pessimistic, generally hateful” for they are like the ones who need to refute the theologians, hoping to grind their axes.\textsuperscript{196}

Heraclitus, by contrast, wishes to make “existence an aesthetic phenomenon rather than a moral or religious one.”\textsuperscript{197} To understand this form of existence, Nietzsche

\textsuperscript{191} Human, All-Too Human, Volume I, 28.  
\textsuperscript{192} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{193} Note that Schopenhauer did in fact say that this is the worst of all possible worlds (World as Will and Presentation, Volume II, 667).  
\textsuperscript{194} Human, All-Too Human, Volume I, 28.  
\textsuperscript{195} PTAG, 63.  
\textsuperscript{196} Ibid. 64.  
\textsuperscript{197} Deleuze, 23.
examines Heraclitus’s world first as the *agon*, a contest between qualities. Then he examines the doctrine of the conflagration or *ecpyrosis*, wherein the primal fire of existence justly consumes the hubristic world. Finally, Nietzsche gives us perhaps the clearest, aesthetic worldview through Heraclitus’s example of the “child at play, moving pieces in a game.”¹⁹⁸ I shall now examine each of these permutations of Heraclitean justice.

### 2.3.2 Agon: Justice as Competition

As has been stated above, for Heraclitus, the world is filled with a constant struggle between qualities. If we ever perceive permanence in a thing, it is merely because the thing is “at variance with itself,” being drawn tight like a bow or a lyre.¹⁹⁹ Nietzsche conceives of this tension between qualities as “the diverging of a force into two qualitatively different opposed activities that seek to reunite”; or perhaps the qualities are like two wrestlers, who in the course of the match exchange positions, the inferior becoming superior, and *vice versa*.²⁰⁰ Our limited view of this struggle might cause us to believe that the superior position is permanent and thus that quality is eternal, but this too is subject to change. Imagine the modern sports fan that has seen his favorite team consistently have losing seasons for as long as he has lived in his town. While he may gnash his teeth and assume that it is simply that his team is an eternally losing franchise, it probably has not always been this way, nor shall it be forever. The opposite qualities inherent in all things can be seen in a similar way. Although one may have dominance

---

¹⁹⁸ Heraclitus, B52.
¹⁹⁹ Ibid. B51.
²⁰⁰ PTAG, 54.
for long enough that mortals perceive it as the truly permanent quality of the thing, it is but the “momentary ascendancy of one partner.” Nietzsche reminds us that “this by no means signifies the end of the war; the contest endures in all eternity.”

There is still the danger of viewing this contest in an Anaximandrian, or Schopenhauerian, sense. It is easy for the observer to judge that the contest is proof of the injustice of existence. As stated above, Nietzsche highlights this with a description of the struggle from World as Will and Presentation, asserting that the passage has a tone that “is quite different from that which Heraclitus offers.” Once again, this is Schopenhauer’s view of the will that Nietzsche finds “self-consuming, menacing, and gloomy…thoroughly frightful and by no means blessed.” Schopenhauer follows this characterization with several pages of grotesque descriptions of the most horrific manifestations of the will in the natural world.

In Hesiod’s Works and Days, there is mention of a “good Eris” along with the more traditional Eris who brings war. The “good Eris,” however, is the strife that continually causes humans to move forward, fostering healthy competition. While Heraclitus was no admirer of Hesiod, this sort of imagery provides Nietzsche with what he sees as the proper Hellenic and Heraclitean way of looking at the world. In “Homer’s Contest,” an essay written one or two years before PTAG, Nietzsche stresses that this “Good Eris” is a distinctly Greek manner of looking at the world. The “Good Eris” causes men to be envious of another, yet this is an admirable state. It is only

\[\text{\footnotesize
201} \text{Ibid. 55.}
202 \text{Ibid. 56.}
203 \text{Ibid.}
204 \text{Hesiod 11–24.}
205 \text{Heraclitus, B57.}
206 \text{PTAG, 55.}
\]
through this envy that competition can arise so that men achieve greatness. In this essay, Nietzsche again praises those whom Heraclitus himself condemns, in this case the Ephesians who, according to Heraclitus, “drove out their best man, Hermodorus, saying ‘Let no one be the best among us; if he is, let him be so elsewhere and among others.’” However, rather than prescribing that all the men of Ephesus should be hanged, as Heraclitus does, Nietzsche hypothesizes how the practice of ostracism originally arose among the Greeks. If anyone ever did become the best, unchallengeable, then the whole idea of the contest would become untenable. According to Nietzsche, the early Greeks loved contests so much that they forbade anyone who truly dominated a competition from continuing to compete. As long as there was no clear preordained winner in a competition, then each competitor would improve himself in an attempt to win. The Hellenic culture “loathes a monopoly of predominance and fears the danger of this,” that is to say, an end to the competition and a state of stasis. Ironically, it seems as if in this one instance, the Ephesians understood Heraclitus’s principle of Eris better than Heraclitus himself did.

The same thing can be said of the contest that occurs between qualities in the things of the world. In PTAG, Nietzsche says that the “Good Eris” is at play here too. She has now been “transformed into a cosmic principle” and the Greek spirit of competition has been “transformed into universal application so that now the wheels of the cosmos turn on it.” The principle that spurred on the Greeks to excel in athletics and drama has been used by Heraclitus to explain why it is that the world is in a constant

---

207 “Homer’s Contest,” 177.
208 Heraclitus, B121.
209 “Homer’s Contest,” 178.
210 PTAG, 55.
state of flux. This constant striving and competition justifies the world. The purpose of
the world is the conflict itself, so strife justifies itself. Only by this strife can eternal
justice be revealed.211

Moreover, the judges of existence are not like the umpires and referees of an
athletic competition who must sit on the sidelines as impartial observers. The “blissful
spectator” and “stern judges” are actually the competitors themselves. Heraclitus “could
no longer see the contesting pairs and their referees as separate: the judges themselves
seemed to be striving in the contest and the contestants seemed to be judging them.”212
This unification of contestant and judge seems both to solve and return to the problem of
the one and the many. On one hand, there are no cosmic outsiders who judge existence.
The gods themselves, in Nietzsche’s reading of Heraclitus, are purely immanent.213 On
the other hand, Nietzsche acknowledges that this reading does seem to suggest that
beneath the world of men, there is a deeper world, perhaps opening a back door for
Parmenides’ assertion that the senses deceive us, or Anaxagoras’s belief that eternal
qualities come from eternal substances.214 Nietzsche, however, believes that Heraclitus
has a third way of solving this problem that “cannot be guessed by dialectic detective
work nor figured out with the help of calculations.”215

2.3.3 Fire as Justice and First Substance

211 Ibid.
212 Ibid. 56.
213 Ibid.
214 Note that these are Nietzsche’s readings of Parmenides and Anaxagoras, Ibid. 57.
215 Ibid.
Nietzsche thus introduces the other two metaphors for cosmic justice: the fire, representing both the one and the many, and the world as the “game Zeus plays.” Fire shall be conceived in Nietzsche’s reading of Heraclitus in two ways. First, it acts as a unifying principle that is itself one, but out of which all other things come. Second, it is the agent of the cosmic cycle of conflagration through which all things are destroyed and then reconstituted. The conflagration will ultimately be seen to be the play of Zeus.

The imagery of fire in Heraclitus has been subject to numerous interpretations. On the one extreme, we have the materialistic monist view of Aristotle, for whom Heraclitus’s fire is analogous to Anaximenes’s “air” or Thales’s “water” as “the most primary of the simple bodies.” This tradition of reading Heraclitus as a physical philosopher would also include the Stoics, who as mentioned before, see Heraclitus’s philosophy as containing a physical doctrine. The fire described by the Stoics is a literal fire. At the other extreme, we have a view held by the Stoics, which is interpreted by the Ante-Nicene Church Father, Clement of Alexandria, so that there would be a cosmic conflagration that would be the “purification by fire of those who have led bad lives.” It should come as no great surprise to anyone familiar with Nietzsche’s philosophy that this latter, Christian, view is seen by him as “a crude misunderstanding.” Yet the conflagration, and fire itself, have more than a grossly materialist meaning. Nietzsche, as we shall soon see, does acknowledge that much of

---

216 Ibid. 58.
217 Metaphysics, 984a6.
218 PTAG, 65.
219 Kahn, 145.
220 Clement, V.1.
221 Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 69.
222 Let it be abundantly clear that a non-literal reading of Heraclitus’s fire and the cosmic cycle is by no means an exclusively Christian interpretation. In fact, Kahn goes to great lengths to show that the view held by him, the Stoics, and the Peripatetics is the minority view in modern scholarship. See Kahn, 147-53.
the Heraclitean view of fire is taken from Anaximander, who in turn borrows much of his own position from Thales. Anaximander’s influence on Heraclitus is also felt in the very notion of conflagration, which Heraclitus uses to develop his own idea of the justice of the world.

Nietzsche introduces the concept of fire in PTAG by reminding the reader of how Anaximander made warm and cold the primary qualities in nature. When the “aboriginal” qualities of warm and cold combined, they formed the moist, “the birth canal for all things.” This provides both an origin for Thales’s primal water and also helps explain the beginning of Becoming for Anaximander. Heraclitus’s reinterpretation debuts when he makes “warm breath, dry vapor, in other words…fire” the primal object rather than adopting the moisture of Thales and Anaximander. Like the two earlier philosophers, Heraclitus has all things born out of this fire as it takes different forms. As Clement had reported Heraclitus saying, “The reversals of fire: first sea; but of sea half is earth, half lightning storm… Sea pours out <from earth>, and it measures up to the same amount it was before becoming earth.” Nietzsche quotes this fragment, identifying it as “the worldview of Anaximander,” whom, according to Nietzsche, Heraclitus considers to be “an authority in the natural sciences.” He also

---

223 PTAG, 59.
224 Ibid. 60.
225 Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 66.
226 PTAG, 61.
227 Ibid.
228 The view that Heraclitus is continuing the tradition of Anaximander with his oppositions is not unique to Nietzsche. See Kahn, 166.
229 Heraclitus, B31.
230 Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 67.
cites Heraclitus’ assertion that “the way up and the way down is one and the same”\textsuperscript{231} as proof that the cycle is complete and works both ways.\textsuperscript{232}

According to Nietzsche there is one major difference between the worldviews of Anaximander and Heraclitus: the absence of an absolute principle of cold in Heraclitus:

While Heraclitus is Anaximander’s disciple as to the main ideas, such as fire being fed by vapors, or water separating into earth and fire, he is independent of Anaximander and in opposition to him in that he excludes cold from the physical process. Anaximander had juxtaposed cold and warm as equal terms in order to produce moisture from both. Heraclitus of necessity could not allow this, for if everything is fire, then in spite of all its transformations there can be no such thing as an absolute opposite. Hence he probably interpreted what is called ‘cold’ as but a degree of warmth.\textsuperscript{233}

This rather idiosyncratic view appears both in the PTAG passage quoted above and also, nearly identically, in his lecture notes.\textsuperscript{234} In those notes, Nietzsche does not quote any actual sources when making this assertion and says only that “we must probably attribute” the lack of absolute cold to Heraclitus.\textsuperscript{235} Heraclitus’s view, at least as it can be reconstructed from the extant aphorisms, seems to contradict Nietzsche’s reading. In one aphorism, for example, Heraclitus states, “cold warms up, warm cools off, moist parches, dry dampens.”\textsuperscript{236} This aphorism seems to imply that Heraclitus is continuing Anaximander’s changing of opposites into one another, without any substantial break in tradition.\textsuperscript{237}

\textsuperscript{231} Heraclitus, B60.
\textsuperscript{232} Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 67.
\textsuperscript{233} PTAG, 60.
\textsuperscript{234} Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 67.
\textsuperscript{235} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{236} Heraclitus, B126.
\textsuperscript{237} Kahn, 166.
So why would Nietzsche attribute the disbelief in cold as a property to Heraclitus, despite a fragment that seems explicitly to negate such a reading? I believe that here Nietzsche is attempting to attribute one of his own metaphysical presuppositions to Heraclitus. As Christoph Cox says in his *Nietzsche: Naturalism and Interpretation*, the “critique of opposites and dissolution of differences-in-kind into differences-of-degree is a central feature of Nietzsche’s philosophy.”

Cox gives several noteworthy examples of this feature, including the following from Nietzsche’s works.

> Between good and evil actions there is no difference in kind, but at the most one of degree.  

> Let us beware of saying that death is opposed to life. The living is only a form of what is dead, and a very rare form.

> Actually, why do we even assume that ‘true’ and ‘false’ are intrinsically opposed? Isn’t it enough to assume that there are levels of appearance and, as it were, lighter and darker shades and tones of appearances…?

> Even when language, here as elsewhere, cannot get over its crassness and keeps talking about opposites where there are only degrees and multiple, subtle shades of gradation…

Cox could easily have included Nietzsche’s view of Heraclitus’s absent cold in his list. If Nietzsche allows cold to exist in the Heraclitean worldview as a rival principle to fire, then he ushers in both an eternal absolute and a total lack of Becoming. An absolute cold would have no ability to move both up and down in the eternal competition, becoming

---

238 Cox, 74n.
239 *Human, All-Too Human*, 107.
241 *Beyond Good and Evil*, 34.
242 Ibid. 24.
warmer as it did so, for cold cannot be warm. The absolute cold, if it were to exist, would be like the dominant contestant mentioned in “Homer’s Contest,” an eternal victor in the game of Becoming, for if it is truly untouched by fire then there is no way that it can be unseated in the fiery conflict. An absolute cold would be as dominant in the competition as a fire of which no greater fire can be imagined. Thus it too must be banished from the competition. What of the other Heraclitean principles? Why not extend this to dryness or wetness? This may simply be an oversight in Nietzsche’s reading of Heraclitus. It may also be an attempt to stay focused on the primacy of fire, which will make itself known in the sections on the conflagration. Therefore, he speaks of the impossibility only of an absolute cold.

2.3.4 Fire as the Cosmic Cycle of Conflagration

But what are we to make of the other extreme? What of the fire of which none could be greater? This Nietzsche examines in the second aspect of fire, conflagration. Briefly put, conflagration (also known as ecpyrosis) is the process by which the world is engulfed by an all-consuming fire. Nietzsche views the conflagration of Heraclitus as being another element that remains consistent from the doctrines of Anaximander. Nietzsche says that Heraclitus “believes, like Anaximander, in a periodically repeated end of the world, and in the ever renewed rise of another world out of the all-destroying cosmic fire.” In PTAG Nietzsche speaks only of a much more general coming-to-be and

---

243 “Homer’s Contest,” 178.
244 Nietzsche correctly points out that this term is not actually used by Heraclitus, but only later by the Stoics. Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 68.
245 PTAG, 60.
passing-away for all things in the philosophy of Anaximander; he thus never mentions all of creation coming-to-be or passing-away at the same time, except to ponder why this had not happened yet.\textsuperscript{246} In his lecture notes, however, Nietzsche denies prior interpretations of Anaximander (such as those of Eduard Zeller) which assume “a coexistence of the countless worlds.”\textsuperscript{247} Nietzsche instead posits this as Anaximander’s theory of the existence of countless worlds.

Correct are those propositions that guarantee that the world is destroyed, that the sea gradually wanes and dries out and that the earth is gradually destroyed by fire. Hence this world perishes, yet Becoming does not cease; the next world coming to be must perish. And so forth. Thus, countless worlds exist.\textsuperscript{248}

With this reading of Anaximander, Nietzsche lays the groundwork for a philosophy that must accept the consequences of such thinking about Becoming, namely “the future annihilation of the world, infinite worlds one after another.”\textsuperscript{249} He also notes that there is an evolution of the doctrine from Anaximander to Heraclitus. According to his interpretation, Anaximander posited “the gradual drying out of the sea, thus a gradual domination of fire.”\textsuperscript{250} Having followed Anaximander this far, however, Heraclitus found that “the influence of the forerunner was even great enough to draw him to a less than logical conclusion.”\textsuperscript{251} Therefore, we shall examine what Nietzsche believes this “less than logical conclusion” is, and how it should be interpreted.

\textsuperscript{246} Ibid. 50. \\
\textsuperscript{247} Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 37. \\
\textsuperscript{248} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{249} Ibid. I believe that it would not be unreasonable to assume that this would also imply that there have been an infinite number of prior worlds that have already been destroyed in the past. \\
\textsuperscript{250} Ibid. 68. \\
\textsuperscript{251} Ibid.
Heraclitus, at least as is evidenced by the accounts of Theophrastus and the Stoics, continued Anaximander’s view of a world that is repeatedly, regularly, consumed by a cosmic flame. And like his Milesian predecessor, Heraclitus presumes that through the same process, the world re-emerges. Diogenes Laertius, the Roman-era doxographer, recounted a summary of Heraclitus’s doctrines that had been compiled by Aristotle’s successor at the Lyceum, Theophrastus. What follows is the portion of that account that gives the most general, and perhaps thorough, view of the conflagration.

Fire is the element, all things are exchange for fire and come into being by rarefaction and condensation; but of this he gives no clear explanation. All things come into being by conflict of opposites, and the sum of things flows like a stream. Further, all this is is limited and forms one world. And it is alternately born from fire and again resolved into fire in fixed cycles to all eternity, and this is determined by destiny. Of the opposites that which tends to birth or creation is called war and strife, and that which tends to destruction by fire is called concord and peace.

From this paragraph, we see the important elements of the conflagration. Fire is the primal element of the universe, creating and consuming all things. Moreover, there is a fixed cycle of ignition and extinguishing of the cosmic fire. Also, the entire cycle is caused by the interplay of opposite forces, in this case “war and strife” versus “concord and peace.”

---

252 Diogenes Laertius, V, 36.
253 Ibid. IX, 8.
254 This view seems to privilege war as the superior force, though we might be able to imagine the dominance of peace as being completely outside of the force of war when it is in ascent. Still, the fact that peace has to struggle with war makes it seem that war should probably be seen as the superior force.
Diogenes then goes on to describe the specific exchanges of heat and moisture that result in the transmutation of the elements.\textsuperscript{255} Charles Kahn in \textit{The Art and Thought of Heraclitus} calls into question the account that Theophrastus gives of the Heraclitean corpus, particularly the sections that attempt to make Heraclitus’s philosophy into a simplified, physical philosophy.\textsuperscript{256} Thus he sees the specific details mentioned after the passage mentioned above as being apocryphal and “a childish view.”\textsuperscript{257} The portion above, however, seems to differ from those later sections and Kahn believes it is quite possibly derived from Heraclitus’s own book.\textsuperscript{258}

Kahn also cites two other doxographical records that give us accounts of the conflagration, one indirectly, the other explicitly. The first is from Simplicius, who claims that for Heraclitus “there is a certain order and fixed time for the change of the cosmos in accordance with some fated necessity.”\textsuperscript{259} This seems consistent with the less suspect paragraph from Diogenes Laertius and is “free of Stoic contamination,” so Kahn believes that it may very well be accurate.\textsuperscript{260} The second, like the rest of Diogenes Laertius’s quotation from Theophrastus, presents us with a very detailed, but also suspicious view of the conflagration.\textsuperscript{261} It is quoted, probably from a Stoic source,\textsuperscript{262} by Censorinus, the Roman grammarian.

There is a <Great> Year… whose winter is a great flood and whose summer is an ecpyrosis, that is, a world conflagration. For it is thought that in these alternating

\textsuperscript{255} Ibid. IX, 9–12. 
\textsuperscript{256} Kahn, 291. 
\textsuperscript{257} Ibid. 
\textsuperscript{258} Ibid. 290. 
\textsuperscript{259} Heraclitus, A5 
\textsuperscript{260} Kahn, 157. 
\textsuperscript{261} Ibid. 156. 
\textsuperscript{262} Ibid. 157.
periods the world is now going up in flames, now turning to water. Heraclitus and Linus <believed this cycle to consist of> 10,800 years.\textsuperscript{263}

Like the Theophrastus accounts from outside of the eighth paragraph of book nine of Diogenes Laertius, it seems to contradict the claim that little is known of the details of the conflagration.\textsuperscript{264} Moreover, giving an exact number is a practice that is virtually unknown in the writings of Heraclitus.\textsuperscript{265} Like the section from Diogenes Laertius and Theophrastus, this fragment seems to be based on a later reading of Heraclitus instead of his original writings.

I quoted the section from the doxographical writings for two reasons. First, it gives a clear account of the conflagration, uniting the elements of it that are found in more scattered, but also more authentic fragments. Although a somewhat literal reading of the conflagration has fallen out of favor with some scholars in recent years, it has been the view of the Stoics, along with Kahn, Zeller, and, most importantly, Nietzsche.\textsuperscript{266} In fact, the doctrine had been questioned in Nietzsche’s time. Zeller states in his 1883 Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy that attempts had been made to deny that Heraclitus held the view of a cyclical, cosmic conflagration. He argues that such denials were “contradicted not only by the unanimous testimony of the ancients since Aristotle, but by Heraclitus’ own words.”\textsuperscript{267} Likewise, Nietzsche himself mentions that Schleiermacher and Lasalle opposed the conflagration, but that “Hippolytus’s book seems to remove any doubt that Heraclitus conceived of world epochs.”\textsuperscript{268} Second, I

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{263} Heraclitus, A13.
\item\textsuperscript{264} Diogenes Laertius, IX, 8.
\item\textsuperscript{265} Kahn, 157.
\item\textsuperscript{266} Ibid, 145.
\item\textsuperscript{267} Zeller, 47.
\item\textsuperscript{268} Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 68. The passage from Hippolytus’s Refutations is quoted below.
\end{itemize}
want to contrast the crude materialist reading that Theophrastus gives in the rest of his epitome with the more nuanced reading of the conflagration that Nietzsche gives. Nietzsche does not jettison the conflagration, but says that “the Stoics reinterpreted him on a shallow level, dragging down his basically esthetic perception of cosmic play to signify a vulgar consideration of the world’s useful ends.”

Before we can get to “cosmic play” though, we must unpack the notion of the conflagration itself. Although a thorough analysis of whether the conflagration is authentically Heraclitean is outside the scope of this study, I do want at least to present textual evidence that the account found in Diogenes Laertius IX, 8 is a legitimate reading based on what survives from Heraclitus’s own writing. The main reason for this is that Nietzsche, as shown above, appears to take the conflagration as a major doctrine of Heraclitus.

The aphorisms of Heraclitus, found outside of doxographical writings, that mention the conflagration are not as cohesive as the previously quoted account, but still prove conflagration to be an authentic Heraclitean principle. Clement has Heraclitus saying that “the ordering, the same for all, no god nor man has made, but it ever was and is and will be: fire everliving, kindled in measures and in measures going out.” This confirms the idea of an eternal, cyclical fire that in a measured fashion ignites and is snuffed. Clement also has Heraclitus saying, “The reversals of fire: first sea; but of sea half is earth, half lightning storm. Sea pours out <from earth>, and it measures up to the same amount it was before becoming earth.” While this is nowhere near as complete an account as Theophrastus gives (and Kahn suggests that it is probably as complete as

---

269 PTAG, 65.
270 Heraclitus, B30.
Heraclitus ever gave), it does suggest a cosmic cycle wherein the elements of the world are in a perpetual cycle of transmutation. Moreover, all of these transmutations are “reversals of fire.” That all things shall come out of fire and return to it is also suggested by a passage in Plutarch. “All things are requital for fire, and fire for all things,” writes Heraclitus, “as goods for gold and gold for goods.” A cycle of fire that produces, transforms, and consumes all things seems to be posited by Heraclitus.

Moreover, there are the passages from the book of Hippolytus that seem, according to Nietzsche.

To remove any doubt that Heraclitus conceived of world epochs in which the plurality of things strives for the unity of the primal fire and a condition of miserable “craving” (chresmosyne), in contrast to those world epochs of satiety (kyros), which have entered into primal fire.

What exactly does Hippolytus say that is so definitive? In the fifth chapter of the ninth book of *Refutation of All Heresies*, while comparing Heraclitus’s philosophy to the heresy of Noetus, he states the following.

<Heraclitus> says “the thunderbolt pilots all things.” By “thunderbolt” he means the eternal fire. And he says this fire is intelligent and cause of the organization of the universe. He calls it “need and satiety.” According to him, “need” is the construction of the world order; “satiety” is the conflagration. For he says “fire coming on will discern and catch up with all things.”

---

272 Kahn, 145.
273 Heraclitus, B90.
274 *Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, 68.
275 Heraclitus, B64–66.
Once again Heraclitus is quoted as presenting an “eternal fire” that is the “cause of the organization of the universe.” Hippolytus also explicitly mentions the conflagration, though he never uses that word in an actual quotation of Heraclitus, and thus is possibly using the vocabulary of contemporary Stoics. But the portions of Hippolytus’s account that are quotations seem to support the conflagration interpretation.

The fact that “fire…will discern” or judge “and catch up with all things,” moreover, introduces the idea of justice to the conflagration.276 This is supported by the aphorism where Heraclitus claims that if the sun steps out of line, the “Furies, ministers of Justice, will find him out.”277 Fire acts as the agent or personification of Justice, catching up to all things to bring them to judgment, in the same way as the mythical Furies did to matricides and oath-breakers (particularly if we think of all things as acting out of injustice as Anaximander did). Moreover, fire has been identified by Diogenes Laertius above as identical to strife and warfare.278 If that is the case, and we take into account the famous aphorism in which Heraclitus proclaims that conflict or strife is identical with justice, then transitively it makes sense to say that fire itself is justice.279 Fire also has been identified in Hippolytus, Plutarch, and Clement’s earlier quotations as the principle of the universe.280 Thus it seems that the universe, having fire as its guiding principle, has an inherent justice.281

This principle of justice through strife, destruction, and repetition is what Nietzsche finds so attractive in the theory of conflagration. Even if we do not accept it as

276 Kahn, 273.
277 Heraclitus, B94.
278 Diogenes Laertius, IX, 8.
279 Heraclitus, B80.
280 Ibid, B64–66, 90, and 30 respectively.
281 Kahn, 273.
a physical truth that the world is literally immolated and reconstituted every few
millennia, there is still a deep meaning in the account for Nietzsche. As I have already
shown, Nietzsche believes that Heraclitus’s philosophy is an antidote to the pessimism of
Anaximander and Schopenhauer, largely through by supplying the world with immanent
justice.

2.3.5 Fire as Want and Satiety

Central to Nietzsche’s reading of Heraclitus is the interplay between want and satiety, as
was quoted above in the passage by Hippolytus.\(^{282}\) In PTAG, he notices how Heraclitus
characterized the conflagration “with notable emphasis, as a desire, want, or lack; the full
consumption in fire he calls satiety.”\(^ {283}\) From this, Nietzsche says that it “remains for us”
to determine how exactly Heraclitus interpreted the interplay between want and satiety,
and the “newly awakening impulse toward cosmic formation, the new outpouring into the
forms of plurality.”\(^ {284}\) He, however, finds a possible solution in a Greek proverb that
states, “Satiety gives birth to hubris.”\(^ {285}\) Thus Heraclitus may “perhaps derive the return
to the many from hubris.”\(^ {286}\) In his lecture notes, Nietzsche puts it more clearly, stating
that “a satiated fire breaks out into a desire for multiplicity.”\(^ {287}\) The reason for this is that
Nietzsche believes that Heraclitus possesses the idea that “plurality is associated with
impulsiveness” as a holdover from the philosophy of Anaximander.\(^ {288}\)

\(^ {282}\) Heraclitus, B65.
\(^ {283}\) PTAG, 60.
\(^ {284}\) Ibid.
\(^ {285}\) Ibid.
\(^ {286}\) Ibid.
\(^ {287}\) Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 68.
\(^ {288}\) Ibid.
Let us step back and examine the aphorism regarding “need and satiety.” A fire is impossible unless it possesses both need and satiety. A fire that is completely needful, but not at all satiated will die because it lacks fuel to keep itself lit. A fire that has completely satiated, and not at all needful, on the other hand, is in the same position. In its utter satiety it will not seek any more fuel and will burn itself out. Thus to continue to exist, the fire must at the same time be satiated and hungry. This fragment could exist within itself as a Heraclitean paradox, denying the Principle of Non-Contradiction by having fire be two contradictory things at the same time, in the same way. Yet if we look at the context that Hippolytus puts it in, the fire looms larger, being the principle of the entire cosmos. It should be mentioned that this could very well be the product of a Stoic contamination of the text. If the conflagration is taken as an authentically Heraclitean doctrine, then the description of fire as need and satiety is extremely important.

Going back to the Nietzschean interpretation, the satiety that occurs upon “full consumption” is ultimately transformed into hubris. One can imagine the self-satisfied flame that has engulfed all that there is to engulf. In its haughtiness and its lack of concern for those that it has immolated, it no longer remains fire in the proper sense. If it lacks material for consumption, it cannot burn any longer. It must cease being complete fire and therefore must allow a new world to spring from its ashes. Nietzsche says that Heraclitus “probably considered fire to be eternal, whereas the world had developed.”

---

289 Miller, 14–15.
290 Kahn, 276.
291 PTAG, 60.
292 With all these mentions of “satiety,” I feel it worth mentioning that in a letter that Diogenes Laertius attributes to Heraclitus, he writes to King Darius that he shuns “general satiety which is closely joined with envy.” Thus Heraclitus equating hubris and satiety seems to be a logical move. Diogenes Laertius, IX, 14.
293 Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 68.
Fire always exists as fire, yet the world has to come in and out of existence. Although it may win the conflict regularly, fire must always show its hubris and lose some of its grip on the world if it wishes the conflict to continue. Fire is seen by Heraclitus as being the force of conflict,\textsuperscript{294} so it would lose its status as eternal competitor if it consumed all that there is to consume without recreating the world. It would thereby cease being fire.

2.3.6 Fire as Punishment for Hubris

As I mentioned above, Nietzsche does not believe this to be the most logical proposition, but this worldview does present new options for answering the problems put forth by Anaximander, Schopenhauer, and other such pessimists.\textsuperscript{295} Nietzsche does use the conflagration in PTAG as his opportunity to introduce Heraclitus’s countenance as the “weeping philosopher,” but in his lecture notes he provides an interesting solution to Anaximander’s guilt.\textsuperscript{296}

We discover in this notion of hubris, in the notion of the development of the world, and in the notion of judgment by fire a facet of Anaximander’s ideas that was \textit{not completely} overcome: plurality is associated with impulsiveness for Heraclitus also; the transition from pure to impure cannot be explained without recourse to guilt. The entire process of the transformation carries out the laws of justice: the particular individual is thus free from injustice. Fire itself, however, is punished for its own inborn hubris by this craving and want. Injustice is mislaid at the core of things; individuals are exonerated of it. The world process is a huge act of punishment, the workings of justice and the consequent purification, or

\textsuperscript{294} Diogenes Laertius, IX, 8.  
\textsuperscript{295} \textit{Pre-Platonic Philosophers}, 68.  
\textsuperscript{296} PTAG, 61.
catharsis, of fire. We should keep clearly in mind the oneness of fire and justice; it is its own judge.297

In other words, fire is ultimately self-regulating. There is no need for an outside force coming in to pronounce or impose justice upon the world. At first, one may draw the comparison between this reading of Heraclitus and Schopenhauer’s world of self-correcting justice. As mentioned in my earlier treatment of Anaximander, Schopenhauer believes that the suffering of the world is just because it is merely the world punishing itself for the suffering it has inflicted upon itself.298 Nietzsche’s reading is somewhat less harsh. Suffering has not been meted out to the individuals of the world. Instead, they are exonerated of any injustice; injustice is found only in the whole, not the part.299 This shows a fundamental difference between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche: both find the world to be unjust, but this brings the former to charges of immorality and the latter to a new amorality. Schopenhauer sees the world as unjust and thus requiring punishment. Nietzsche sees the unjust world punishing itself and sees this as just, making the world an “unjust justice.”300

2.3.7 Hubris and Justice

The language of punishment, however, becomes problematic for Nietzsche. The degree of this varies between PTAG and the lecture notes. When facing hubris in the former, Nietzsche calls it “that dangerous word” that “is indeed the touchstone for every

297 Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 68.
298 The World as Will and Presentation, Volume I, 418.
299 Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 68.
300 Ibid. 69.
Heraclitean.” It is when confronting the idea of hubris that the Heraclitean must inquire into the guilt of the world of which Anaximander was the harbinger. Oddly, in his lecture notes Nietzsche finds hubris a less compelling notion. Dale Wilkerson in *Nietzsche and the Greeks* sums the contrast up in this way.

In 1873’s essay, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, he seems to accept, with some qualification, but absent commentary, the view that “hubris” serves the Heraclitean worldview as a fundamental principle, through which the moral states of individuals, communities, and the whole of existence are determined. In Nietzsche’s lectures on Heraclitus, however, almost certainly revised in the 1870s, Nietzsche’s consideration of this point is at least clearer: to attribute to Heraclitus the proposition that hubris best describes the moral state of all beings is to completely misunderstand Heraclitus’s view of the world. In a Heraclitean system, moral judgments are merely expressions of human perspectives.

I think that Wilkerson provides a viable explanation for the discrepancy, but I would also like to propose an alternative.

I suspect that Nietzsche was more careful with structure in PTAG than he was in his lecture notes. Remember that PTAG was intended to be published eventually and was even presented to Cosima and Richard Wagner. Nietzsche’s notes, on the other hand, were intended to be seen only by him (and perhaps heard by the young students in his under-attended courses). Rather than a naïve idea in need of revision, I believe that Nietzsche is presenting a stage in the progression of Heraclitus’s thought. Wilkerson’s presentation implies that it was a post-1873 innovation for Nietzsche to proclaim that Heraclitus has a non-moral view of the world, despite his saying in PTAG that Heraclitus

---

301 PTAG, 61.
302 Wilkerson, 138.
implies us not to “make morality of” his system.\textsuperscript{303} For Nietzsche, the examination of hubris is a step in Heraclitus’s thought. By isolating the idea of hubris, Heraclitus receives the question of whether “guilt, injustice, contradiction and suffering exist in the world.”\textsuperscript{304} Before he can make the leap to cosmic play, he must confront this grimmest of all questions.

With this progression, we can see a forecast of one of Nietzsche’s most striking images of his later work. In “On the Three Metamorphoses” from \textit{Thus Spoke Zarathustra}, the pinnacle of the transformation is the creative child at play. Before one can take that step, however, one must experience the previous form of the grimmest of beasts, the lion.\textsuperscript{305} While I do not want to get too far ahead of myself, I simply wish to present the idea that Nietzsche intentionally has his reader trek through the wilderness of the moral interpretation of the cosmic cycle. Gilles Deleuze provides a similar reading, saying that “we must understand the secret of Heraclitus interpretation; he opposes the instinct of the game to hubris.”\textsuperscript{306} I also suspect that Nietzsche is intentionally having Heraclitus wrestle with Anaximander to highlight his own struggle against Schopenhauer.

So what is the Heraclitean answer to Anaximander’s question about the existence of this cosmic guilt, in addition to the existence of “injustice, contradiction, and suffering?” “They do exist,” says Nietzsche’s Heraclitus, “but only for the limited human mind which sees things apart but not connected.”\textsuperscript{307} The godlike eye for Heraclitus is one that sees things—all things—as good. Nietzsche states that “before his

\textsuperscript{303} PTAG, 64.
\textsuperscript{304} Ibid. 61.
\textsuperscript{305} \textit{Thus Spoke Zarathustra}, Book I, The Three Metamorphoses.
\textsuperscript{306} Deleuze, 25.
\textsuperscript{307} PTAG, 61.
fire-gaze not a drop of injustice remains in the world poured all around him.”\(^{308}\) This echoes Heraclitus’s own view that “for god all things are fair and good and just, but men have taken some things as unjust, others as just.”\(^{309}\) This is also the view that Nietzsche states in his notes, a view that is nonetheless absent from PTAG.\(^{310}\) But in his lecture notes, Nietzsche paraphrases the fragment mentioned above, saying “to God all things appear as good while to mankind much appears as bad.”\(^{311}\) The god that Nietzsche’s Heraclitus presents is blind to our human labeling of things as good and evil.

Now, obviously the god in question is not the Abrahamic one for whom Nietzsche would later provide an infamous obituary. He (or it) is neither the grim lawgiver of Near Eastern faiths, nor the karmic balance of Schopenhauer. Deleuze gives this god two names and several epithets: “the player-artist-child, Zeus-child; Dionysus, who the myth presents to us surrounded by his divine toys.”\(^{312}\) This figure is described by Heraclitus in another aphorism preserved in Hippolytus’s *Refutations*. Heraclitus proclaims “Lifetime is a child at play, moving pieces in a game. Kingship belongs to the child.”\(^{313}\) Of all of the extant fragments of Heraclitus, this is the one that appears to have most thoroughly captured Nietzsche’s imagination.

### 2.3.8 Justice as a Child

---

\(^{308}\) Ibid. 62.

\(^{309}\) Heraclitus, B102.


\(^{311}\) *Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, 70.

\(^{312}\) Deleuze, 24.

\(^{313}\) Heraclitus, B52.
In 1872’s *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche is already inspired by the image of the cosmic child. He describes the Dionysiac phenomenon as follows.

That striving towards infinity, that wing-beat of longing even as we feel supreme delight in a clearly perceived reality, these things indicate that in both these states of mind we are to recognize a Dionysiac phenomenon, one which reveals to us the playful construction and demolition of the world of individuality as an outpouring of primal pleasure and delight, a process quite similar to Heraclitus the Obscure’s comparison of the force that shapes the world to a playing child who sets down stones here, there, and the next place, and who builds up piles of sand only to knock them down again.\(^{314}\)

Here Nietzsche is describing the mindset that tragedy creates. The breakdown of the principle of individuation is occurring, yet the destruction is playful. While we may feel “supreme delight in a clearly perceived reality,” a reality that makes sense, we always have a desire to unearth this other, chaotic phenomenon, and thus to return to the state of the child playing.\(^{315}\) A second innocence is brought to what may otherwise have been considered frightening and destructive.

One year after publishing *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche returns to the image of the Heraclitean child in PTAG, not as a way of elucidating the tragic destructive power of the Dionysian, but now as the answer to the problem of guilt brought forward by Anaximander. As stated above, Nietzsche has Heraclitus no longer seeing injustice.\(^{316}\) In order to find a language describing the post-injustice world view, he uses “play.”

---

\(^{314}\) *Birth of Tragedy*, 114.

\(^{315}\) Ibid.

\(^{316}\) PTAG, 62.
world is now seen as the play of a child, or perhaps an artist thanks to Heraclitus’s “sublime metaphor.” The account given in PTAG is as follows:

In this world only play, play as artists and children engage in it, exhibits coming-to-be and passing away, structuring and destroying, without any moral additive, in forever equal innocence. And as children and artists play, so plays the ever-living fire. It constructs and destroys, all in innocence. Such is the game that the aeon plays with itself. Transforming itself into water and earth, it builds towers of sand like a child at the seashore, piles them up and tramples them down.

Nietzsche has equated the cosmic cycle of conflagration, both its destruction and its creation, with the play of a child. Fire, the eternal actor, is represented as the child. It is a constant in the world, not necessarily unchanging, but never either created or destroyed.

This is not to say that the world suffers no vicissitudes of generation and corruption thanks to the cosmic child. But Nietzsche is quick to separate this from a vengeful or hubristic deity, continuing his metaphor:

From time to time it starts the game anew. An instant of satiety – and again it is seized by its need, as the artist is seized by his need to create. Not hubris but the ever self-renewing impulse to play calls new worlds into being. The child throws its toys away from time to time – and starts again, in innocent caprice.

317 Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 70.
318 PTAG, 62.
319 Nietzsche is ambiguous as to whether the child changes or not, and I think it is not really a concern for him. My own instincts tell me that if the child did not change then there would be no way that it could have any relationship to the world. An unchanging being would not be able to change how it interacts in any real way with a changing world, and thus would be in a state not unlike the gods of Epicurus. For the eternity of fire in Nietzsche’s thought, see Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 68.
320 Nietzsche’s term here is Weltkind, which he uses interchangeably with the Aeon child. Ibid. 70n.
321 PTAG, 62.
Notice that once again we have the interplay between need and satiety. The child on the beach can build its sandcastle as tall as it wishes, but its satisfaction (or satiety) is short-lived. Eventually there will come a point when the child is bored and knocks its creation down. Notice that there is absolutely no malice in this destruction. Nor is there any sort of judgment. The sandcastle has done nothing wrong and has not been found wanting; even the perfect sandcastle must suffer this fate. Such is the case with the world. The world should not feel guilt for being destroyed, but merely understand that it is at the mercy of the caprice of the child. The child on the other hand, as Nietzsche says, is not acting out of hubris, for that would imply that it wishes to harm the object of its play.\(^3\)\(^{22}\) But once again, the child acts innocently and amorally.

A less poetic, but perhaps more explicit description of the metaphor of the child appears in Nietzsche’s lecture notes. There are similarities between his accounts, but it is nonetheless worth noticing his emphasis on the moralistic and teleological consequences of this view:

Heraclitus possessed a sublime metaphor… 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 injustice should remain in the world. The eternally living fire, Aeon, plays, builds, and knocks down: strife, this opposition of different characteristics, directed by justice…We must exclude even more any moralistic tendencies to think teleologically here, for the cosmic child behaves with no regard to purposes but rather only according to an immanent justice: it can act only willfully and lawfully, but it does not will these ways.\(^3\)\(^{23}\)

---

\(^3\)\(^{22}\) I would, at this time, like to point out again that I believe that Wilkerson’s reading of PTAG is not nearly generous enough, particularly when he claims that in PTAG, “hubris serves the Heraclitean worldview as a fundamental principle.” Note that Nietzsche explicitly denies that the Aeon-child has any sort of hubris whatsoever. Wilkerson, 138.

\(^3\)\(^{23}\) Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 70.
Here we have an explicit account of the actions of the child, completely innocent, without a hint of injustice. Moreover, Nietzsche explicitly links the motions of strife and fire with those of the Aeon child.

2.3.9 Justice as Play

These motions of the Aeon child should not be conceived of teleologically. Note that Nietzsche says that the child acts “willfully and lawfully,” but does not itself will. First, let us note the term, “lawfully.” In PTAG, Nietzsche states that “when [the child] does build, it combines and joins its structures regularly, conforming to inner laws.” Thus, while the child moves capriciously, there is some sort of lawfulness to its motions. Like a child playing a game, the cosmic child sets up rules for itself. In his interpretation of the fragment, Kahn stresses that the child follows a set of specific rules, noting “the fundamental thought is not the childlike and random movements of the game (as some interpreters have supposed) but the fact that these moves follow a definite rule.”

Though I believe that he is one of the interpreters mentioned in Kahn’s parenthetical criticism, Nietzsche still does seem to respect the necessity of some sort of rule. Note here that Nietzsche has changed the metaphor of the aphorism from the playing of a board game, as is found in the original fragment, to the building of castles in the

---

324 Ibid.
325 PTAG, 62.
326 Kahn, 227.
327 Kahn suggests that based on the verb, “pesseuôn,” we can assume “a board game perhaps involving dice, like backgammon and modern Greek tavli.” Ibid. 71n.
While one may be tempted to say that Nietzsche is attempting to choose a manner of play that is more chaotic than the one found in interpretations such as Kahn’s, I imagine that the main reason for this change is that he is introducing a creative element to relate the child’s play to the artistic endeavors of the aesthetic man. Note that while sandcastle building does not have the rigid structures of a board game, it does have a set of inner rules that separate it from truly random play.

The other notable aspect of the Aeon-child is that while it expresses itself “willfully,” it itself “does not will these ways.” In a footnote, Nietzsche explains this to be in contrast to the “superficial” readings that the Stoics gave Heraclitus. While Heraclitus “embraced the highest lawfulness of the world,” he did so “without Stoic optimism.” What Nietzsche is equating with this optimism is their clinging to the doctrine of “freedom of the will.” He reads Heraclitus as being an opponent of any such doctrine of free will. PTAG contains the following attack on the notion of free will:

Man is necessity down to his last fibre, and totally “unfree,” that is if by freedom one means the foolish demand to be able to change one’s *essentia* arbitrarily, like a garment – a demand which every serious philosophy has rejected with the proper scorn.

If Nietzsche is alluding to a specific saying of Heraclitus, it is probably “man’s character is his fate.” In other words, someone cannot change his character “like a garment,”

---

328 PTAG, 62.
329 Emphasis in the original, *Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, 70.
330 Ibid. 70n.
331 Ibid.
332 PTAG, 63.
333 The word given for “fate” is “daimōn,” which Kahn gives as also meaning “fortune for good or evil” (Kahn, 81n). Heraclitus, B119.
which would be a prerequisite for any theory of robust free will.\textsuperscript{334} Nietzsche here is perhaps channeling Schopenhauer again. Of character, Schopenhauer said that “no one can be talked out of egoism or malice any more than a cat can be of its inclination to mousing” and that good character is equally immutable.\textsuperscript{335} Moreover, Nietzsche is adamant in asserting that “every serious philosophy” rejects the notion of free will “with proper scorn.”\textsuperscript{336} Schopenhauer similarly claims that “the touchstone by which one can differentiate the profound, thinking minds from the superfluous ones” is by their denial of free will.\textsuperscript{337} Thus, we see another holdover from Nietzsche’s reading of Schopenhauer, albeit one that will persist into his later writings, notably \textit{On the Genealogy of Morality}, where the idea of the free man is bred in an attempt to force responsibility onto him.\textsuperscript{338}

By presenting the Aeon-child (along with all others) as not possessing “free will” and acting lawfully, but not teleologically, Nietzsche also differentiates Heraclitus from his successor, Anaxagoras. Having proposed a world where intelligence\textsuperscript{339} is found in all things, Anaxagoras “construes the order of the world as a determinant will with intentions.”\textsuperscript{340} This, Nietzsche believes, is what caused successive philosophers to imagine that the world desires consciousness, a notion that Nietzsche believes shows Anaxagoras’s intelligence to be closer to the will, that is to say “the willing after goals” than it is to other sorts of intelligence.\textsuperscript{341} Both the Heraclitean child and Anaxagoras’s mind are defined by their desires, not by their contemplation.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[334] PTAG, 63.
\item[335] The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics, 255.
\item[336] PTAG, 63.
\item[337] The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics, 59.
\item[338] On the Genealogy of Morality, II, 2.
\item[339] Nous.
\item[340] Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 72.
\item[341] Ibid. The “will” here is a translation from Der Wille.
\end{footnotes}
Heraclitus does not propose a world without any sort of intelligence, according to Nietzsche; instead, he understands intelligence in a peculiar way. Heraclitus speaks of wisdom when he says, for example, “it is wise, listening not to me but to the [logos], to agree that all things are one,” or “of all those whose accounts I have heard, none has gone so far as this: to recognize what is wise, set apart from all.” Nietzsche writes that Heraclitus is not speaking of “contemplative knowing,” but rather knowing of a different sort. How would one be able to achieve such different knowing? Nietzsche proposes that we embrace the thinking of the cosmic child.

The fire eternally building the world at play views the entire process similar to how Heraclitus himself views this entire process; consequently, he attributes wisdom to himself. To become one with this intuitive intelligence, not somehow to do this with dynamic things, is wisdom. We must distinguish between the justice in the form of the trial and this all-contemplating intuition: this immanent justice and intelligence prevailing over oppositions and this fiery power overlooking the entirety of strife.

For Heraclitus, then, wisdom is not something found in humans to be imposed on the cosmic order, but rather something that one develops by assimilating the cosmic order within oneself. Once again we have mention of intuitive thinking being the strength of Heraclitus and now we see its value as it mirrors the cosmic child.

The sort of man who can achieve this childlike thinking is the aesthetic man. Familiarity with the interplay of plurality and lawfulness, of necessity and randomness, is

---

342 Heraclitus, B50.
343 Ibid. B108.
344 Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 71.
345 Ibid. 72–73.
346 Ibid. 71–72.
347 For discussion on intuitive thinking in Heraclitus, see both above and PTAG, 52–53.
the strength of the aesthetic man according to Nietzsche.\textsuperscript{348} It is up to such great men to recognize that the cosmic cycle is “the beautiful innocent game of the aeon.”\textsuperscript{349} As Deleuze says in his study of Nietzsche, Heraclitus “understands existence on the basis of an \textit{instinct of play},” making “existence an \textit{aesthetic phenomenon} rather than a moral or religious one.”\textsuperscript{350} Moving from the view of the world order as being motivated by hubris to that of the cosmic child, moreover, Deleuze says in the voice of Heraclitus, “It is not guilty pride but the ceaselessly reawoken instinct of the game which calls forth new worlds.”\textsuperscript{351} Nietzsche puts similar words in the mouth of Heraclitus when he is responding to those who ask “why fire is not always fire”: “It is a game. Don’t take it so pathetically and – above all – don’t make a morality of it!”\textsuperscript{352} The world cannot be appreciated in moral terms if thought of as the game of a child. Nietzsche instead imagines Heraclitus gazing with pleasure upon this game as “an artist does when he looks at his work in progress.”\textsuperscript{353} By finding satisfaction in the chaotic interplay of the world, the Heraclitean man is able to understand a higher form of justice.

\textbf{2.4 The Philosopher’s Bearing}

The satisfaction that Heraclitus felt upon contemplating the divine game brings us to the third aspect of Nietzsche’s interpretation of Heraclitus: the noble bearing of the philosopher. As PTAG is intended to celebrate the “slice of \textit{personality}” and to create “the recovery and the re-creation of certain ancient names,” this is the section that should

\begin{itemize}
    \item \textsuperscript{348} Ibid. 62.
    \item \textsuperscript{349} Ibid. 63.
    \item \textsuperscript{350} Deleuze, 23.
    \item \textsuperscript{351} Ibid. 25.
    \item \textsuperscript{352} PTAG, 64.
    \item \textsuperscript{353} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
truly embody Heraclitus as philosopher. The section is largely successful, containing some of the most beautiful language and profound proclamations to be found in Nietzsche’s early works, though, as I shall soon show, it also represents an odd echo of previous writing.

2.4.1 Heraclitus’s Obscurity

The segue between Nietzsche’s description of Heraclitean justice and the description of Heraclitus’s bearing is the refusal to take seriously those who attempt to make a morality out of cosmic justice. As I have stated above, those “gloomy, melancholy, tearful, sinister, bilious, pessimistic, generally hateful” people are found to be “negligible” to Heraclitus. To them, he “condescends” and offers advice such as “dogs bark at those they do not recognize” and “asses prefer garbage to gold.” Yet the relationship between the pessimists and Heraclitus leads to his reputation as a particularly obscure thinker. Heraclitus’s aphoristic style, combined with the difficulty of his philosophical project, might give the reader the suggestion of an inscrutable thinker. That initial impression is bolstered with the received readings of centuries of frustrated commentators. From that arises this reputation of Heraclitus, the Obscure. Nietzsche actually believes that the reputation of obscurity is unfounded and is primarily an invention of the pessimists.

354 Ibid. 24.
355 Ibid. 64.
356 Heraclitus, B97.
357 Ibid. B9.
358 PTAG, 64.
359 Ibid.
An example of this reading of Heraclitus “the Obscure” can be found in Hegel’s *History of Philosophy*. As Hegel is not typically associated with clarity of writing, it is somewhat amusing to hear him speak of another philosopher’s obscurity. Hegel says of Heraclitus that he “has been considered obscure and is indeed celebrated for this.” To attempt to explain this, Hegel first looks at the explanations of two ancient commentators. On one hand, Cicero “thinks that Heraclitus purposely wrote obscurely.” Hegel dismisses this as a “shallow” idea, showing the “shallowness of Cicero himself.” Despite Hegel’s derision of this view, it is worth noting that according to Diogenes Laertius, it was not an uncommon view in antiquity. On the other hand, according to Hegel, Aristotle believed that “Heraclitus’s obscurity is the result of neglecting proper composition and of imperfect language.” Although it does not provoke personal attacks, Aristotle’s thesis is also rejected by Hegel. Why is Heraclitus perceived as being obscure? “The obscurity of this philosophy,” according to Hegel, “chiefly consists in there being profound speculative thought contained in it.” In other words, the difficulty lies in the fact that the “Notion” or “Idea” is “foreign to the understanding,” no doubt accounting also for the obscurity of Hegel’s own works.

While Nietzsche disagrees with Hegel’s actual account of Heraclitus’s obscurity, he does similarly tie this reputation to complaints that have been made against his own philosophy. Nietzsche declares that “hardly anyone has ever written with as lucid and

\[\text{\textsuperscript{360}}\text{Hegel, 281.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{361}}\text{Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{362}}\text{Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{363}}\text{Diogenes Laertius, IX, 6.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{364}}\text{Hegel, 281. Hegel refers to Aristotle, 1407, b 13–16.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{365}}\text{Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{366}}\text{Ibid.}\]
luminous a quality,” thus totally denying the accusations of obscurity. What makes Heraclitus difficult, and ultimately obscure, for some readers is that he writes “very tersely” and thus causes difficulties for “readers who skim and race.” This appears to forecast Nietzsche’s own aphoristic style that would emerge several years later. In 1879’s *Assorted Opinions and Maxims*, a supplement to *Human All-Too Human*, Nietzsche speaks “against the censurers of brevity” and laments that novice readers are not able to grasp the “fruit of long thought.” In the very next aphorism, he scolds the reader who assumes that “this work must be fragmentary” because it has been given in fragments. Thus there is a similar frustration with those who complain about a work that is terse and does not on first glance give the reader what he desires. Such laments carry into *On the Genealogy of Morality*, where he claims that the aphoristic form “is not taken seriously enough these days.” The problem is that many who read an aphorism declare it to have been understood upon reading it. What Nietzsche instead proposes is that an aphorism must be ruminated in the same way that a cow digests its food.

Thus the speed of reading is also a problem. In the 1886 preface to *Daybreak*, Nietzsche says that he is living in an age that emphasizes speed, so his goal is to teach his reader to “read well, that is to say, to read slowly, deeply, looking cautiously before and aft, with reservations, with doors left open, with delicate eyes and fingers.” In other words, he does not want his readers to “skim and race” as they did with Heraclitus.

Nietzsche’s Zarathustra makes a similar request, stating “whoever writes in blood and

---

367 PTAG, 64.
368 Ibid.
370 Ibid. 128.
372 Ibid.
373 *Daybreak*, Preface, 5.
374 PTAG, 64.
proverbs does not want to be read, but to be learned by heart." Therefore it is not Heraclitus who is obscure, but the reader who is incompetent and rushed in his reading.

Furthermore, Nietzsche cannot fathom why any writer would make a deliberate effort to be read as obscure, unless he had “good cause for hiding certain thoughts, or else were rascal enough to hide his thoughtlessness behind words.” At this point, Nietzsche agrees with Hegel’s assertion regarding the reading of Heraclitus given by Cicero. But Nietzsche instead brings in Hegel’s nemesis, Schopenhauer to elucidate this point. Nietzsche says that Schopenhauer calls on us to write clearly about “those most difficult, abstruse, scarcely attainable goals of thinking that it is philosophy’s task to express.” While Nietzsche does not explicitly reference any specific passage by Schopenhauer, there are numerous examples of such sentiments, usually leveling attacks against Hegel. A quintessential example occurs in the examination of sculpture in the third book of *The World as Will and Presentation*. After having discussed whether it is aesthetically preferable to have statues be clothed or nude, Schopenhauer goes on this tangent.

Just as beautiful corporeal form is most advantageously visible with the lightest of clothing or none at all – and therefore a most beautiful man, if he had taste and was at the same time able to follow it, would preferably walk around nearly naked, clothed only after the manner of the ancients – just in the same way, every beautiful and inspired spirit will always express itself in the most natural, least involved, simplest manner, endeavoring whenever possible to communicate his thoughts to others, so as thereby to alleviate the loneliness that he is bound to feel in a world such as this. But conversely, spiritual poverty, confusion, and contortedness clothe themselves in the most contrived expressions and the most obscure modes of speech, so as to cloak in weighty and pompous phrases, trivial,

---

375 *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Book I, On Reading and Writing.
376 PTAG, 64.
377 Hegel, 281.
378 PTAG, 65.
minute, dull, or everyday thoughts: like someone who, because he is lacking in beauty’s majesty, would compensate for the failure with clothing, and seek to hide the minuteness or ugliness of his person under barbaric trimmings, glitter, feathers, ruffles, puffs, and cloaks. Just as embarrassed as one such as this would be, were he to have to go naked, many an author would be, were he compelled to translate his so pompous, obscure book into its trivial, clear content.  

The philosopher of substance, according to Schopenhauer, is marked by his clarity, not his obscurity. Nietzsche cites Schopenhauer and the Romantic novelist, Jean Paul, whom he quotes in this section, as being the champions of clarity in writing, which itself is to Nietzsche a trademark of Heraclitus.

Despite his clarity, Nietzsche said that “Heraclitus has not escaped ‘barren minds,’” borrowing a phrase from Jean Paul. As I have already mentioned, Nietzsche singles out the Stoics as interpreting Heraclitus “on a shallow level.” The Stoics commit the crime of taking Heraclitus’s notion of the Great Year, which he interprets as an “aesthetic perception of cosmic play” and dumbing it down to “a vulgar consideration for the world’s useful ends.” Here Nietzsche harks back to his chapter on Thales, where he quotes Aristotle’s *Nichomachean Ethics*: “What Thales and Anaxagoras know will be considered unusual, astonishing, difficult, and divine, but never useful, for their concern was not with the good of humanity.” Adopting Aristotle’s judgment, Nietzsche differentiates philosophy from “intellectual cleverness” by the former’s “emphasis on the useless.” The Stoics in their reading of Heraclitus have moved away

---

380 PTAG, 65.
381 Ibid.
382 Ibid.
383 Ibid.
384 Aristotle, 1141b, 4–8. I have quoted Nietzsche’s translation from PTAG, 43.
385 PTAG, 43. Note that Cowan has translated the German term *Klugheit* as “intellectual cleverness,” but it can also be rendered more generously as “prudence.”
from philosophy into the realm of science and into the more mortal, less discriminating realm of science. Rather than “name-giving” and “legislating” greatness as philosophers do when dealing with aesthetic ideas, the Stoics translate it into “crude optimism.”

They have taken the lofty philosophy of Heraclitus down to “Tom, Dick, and Harry,” an unforgivable act of democratization. Not only have they taken the flame of the gods down to man, this Promethean rabble use it to invite hoi polloi with the concluding injunction of Roman comedy: *plaudite amici*.

### 2.4.2 Adapting a Preface

This attack on “Tom, Dick, and Harry” and those who would cater to them, appropriately leads into the eighth chapter of PTAG. Nietzsche here describes the pride of Heraclitus, but also commits a strange act of self-plagiarism. While there are probably several other reasons for his disapproval, Richard Wagner may have had an experience of déjà vu when reading PTAG. Several months before his presentation and eventual abandonment of PTAG, Nietzsche had provided Cosima Wagner with a collection of five essays, titled *Five Prefaces to Five Unwritten Books* as a Christmas gift. The work was then read aloud by the Wagners on New Year’s Day 1873. Included among those five prefaces was “On the Pathos of Truth,” which included a passage regarding Heraclitus that

---

386 Ibid.
387 Ibid. 65.
388 Ibid. Nietzsche’s choice of idiom here is “Hinz und Kinz,” which signifies the same sort of everyman signified by the English “Tom, Dick, and Harry.”
389 Ibid. The Latin translates literally to “applaud my friends.” This is possibly a reference to Beethoven’s last words, *Plaudite, amici, comedia finita est*, which translates to “applaud my friends, the comedy is over.”
390 *Prefaces to Unwritten Works*, 3.
391 Ibid.
Nietzsche would recycle nearly verbatim in the eighth chapter of PTAG. As “On the Pathos of Truth” is a discourse on fame and how it relates to philosophers, Heraclitus would be an obvious subject for Nietzsche. When it came time, several months later to revisit Heraclitus, Nietzsche removed the first three paragraphs of “On the Pathos of Truth,” changed the focus of the fourth paragraph from a hypothetical philosopher to Heraclitus explicitly, and replaced the final paragraphs with a new conclusion.

2.4.3 Heraclitus’s Solitude

Nietzsche’s characterization of Heraclitus in this chapter is marked by a heroic solitude. He is portrayed predominantly as a lonesome hermit, one who despises the company of the public. In this reading, Nietzsche is not straying far from the traditional view of Heraclitus espoused by Diogenes Laertius. The doxographer describes him in the very first paragraph of the account of his life as “lofty-minded beyond all other men, and overweening.” Later in his life, Heraclitus became “a hater of his kind and wandered on the mountains,” living on a “diet of grass and herbs” that led to his eventual death by dropsy. Thus the image of the philosopher who walks “alone along a lonely street” is part of the traditional image of Heraclitus.

Several of the anecdotes Diogenes relates about Heraclitus make their way into Nietzsche’s writings. Heraclitus is used to continue the archetype of the philosopher who

\[\text{\textsuperscript{392}}\text{“On the Pathos of Truth,” 23n.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{393}}\text{One of those removed final paragraphs of “On the Pathos of Truth” would find its way into Nietzsche’s work as the first paragraph of “On Truths and Lies in the Extra-Moral Sense.”}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{394}}\text{Diogenes Laertius, IX, 1.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{395}}\text{Diogenes Laertius, IX, 3.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{396}}\text{PTAG, 66.}\]
chooses not to be a leader of men. \textsuperscript{397} Diogenes Laertius reproduces two epistles exchanged between King Darius of Persia and Heraclitus, wherein Darius invites Heraclitus to teach him philosophy and Greek culture, particularly because Darius believes that the Greeks “are not prone to mark their wise men,” while the Persians wish to hear what the great philosopher has to say. \textsuperscript{398} But as Nietzsche states in his lectures, Heraclitus scorned this invitation. \textsuperscript{399} As with many of Diogenes Laertius’s tales, this one is probably apocryphal, but Nietzsche thought it worthy of noting as it supports his vision of the Ephesian philosopher. Heraclitus desires fame, not among mortals, not even the most powerful king, but the fame of immortality. \textsuperscript{400}

A story regarding Heraclitus that leaves a deeper impression on Nietzsche’s work is the one regarding his retreat to the temple of Artemis. After describing how Heraclitus refused to create laws for Ephesus, seeing it as already having a bad constitution, Diogenes Laertius says the following:

He would retire to the temple of Artemis and play at knuckle-bones with the boys; and when the Ephesians stood round him and looked on, “Why, you rascals,” he said, “are you astonished? Is it not better to do this than to take part in your civil life?” \textsuperscript{401}

The report of this incident definitely made an impression on Nietzsche. It is repeated in the first paragraph of his lecture on Heraclitus, wherein he refers to him as a “merciless opponent of democratic parties” and speaks of his retreat from the political life. \textsuperscript{402} While there is not a complete retelling of the tale in PTAG, Nietzsche does give Heraclitus the

\textsuperscript{397} Unpublished, 23, 14.  
\textsuperscript{398} Diogenes Laertius, IX, 13–14.  
\textsuperscript{399} Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 54.  
\textsuperscript{400} PTAG, 68.  
\textsuperscript{401} Diogenes Laertius, IX, 3.  
\textsuperscript{402} Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 53.
epithet, “the Ephesian hermit of the temple of Artemis,” further demonstrating the vividness of this tale in Nietzsche’s portrait of Heraclitus.\textsuperscript{403}

While it should come as no surprise that Nietzsche would relate such a story in works primarily concerned with Heraclitus, what is more interesting is that this incident would appear in his writings over a decade later. In the third essay of \textit{On the Genealogy of Morality}, “What Do Ascetic Ideals Mean?,” Nietzsche describes the influence of the ascetic ideal on philosophers and recounts the incident as an example, albeit with more commentary than in previous iterations:

When Heraclitus withdrew into the courts and colonnades of the immense Temple of Artemis, I admit that this ‘desert’ was more dignified: why do we lack temples of that sort? (– maybe they are \textit{not} lacking: I am just thinking of my nicest study, Piazza di San Marco, spring, of course and in the morning, the time between ten and twelve). But what Heraclitus was trying to avoid is the same that we try to get away from: the noise and democratic tittle-tattle of the Ephesians, their politics, news of the ‘Empire’\textsuperscript{404} (Persia, you understand), their market affairs of ‘today’, – because we philosophers need rest from one thing above all: anything to do with ‘today.’\textsuperscript{405}

Here Heraclitus’s retreat to the Temple of Artemis represents his removal of himself from the concerns of lesser men for all things temporary and fleeting. This echoes his description in “On the Pathos of Truth” of the philosopher who seeks fame, not out of “self-love,” nor to please the masses, but to achieve something that is “eternally present.”\textsuperscript{406} According to PTAG, “a lack of consideration for what is here and now is at the very core of the great philosophical nature.”\textsuperscript{407}

\textsuperscript{403} PTAG, 67.
\textsuperscript{404} Reich.
\textsuperscript{405} \textit{On the Genealogy of Morality}, III, 8.
\textsuperscript{406} “On the Pathos of Truth,” 249.
\textsuperscript{407} PTAG, 66.
There might seem to be some conflict between a philosophy of Becoming and a focus on that which is eternal. But there is no worry: the philosopher himself is fleeting; he does not need “the immortality of the man Heraclitus.” And even “the ‘truth’ of Heraclitus” is gone like a “vanished dream, wiped from faces of mankind.” Can we attribute any sort of immortality to Heraclitus, whose works have fallen to a sort of malicious “fatum libellorum”? If we can, it is only through the scant fragments that survive and, more importantly to Nietzsche, the nearly mythic figure of Heraclitus that PTAG reveals.

Heraclitus is marked in Nietzsche’s writings by his solitude, his pride, and his coldness, or distance. Nietzsche obviously wants to present Heraclitus as a truly solitary creature. He paints a rather romantic picture of this solitude.

His activities never directed him toward any ‘public,’ toward any applause from the masses or toward the encouraging chorus of his contemporaries. To walk alone along a lonely street is part of the philosopher’s nature. His gift is the rarest gift of all, the most unnatural one in a certain sense, exclusive and hostile even toward others with similar gifts. The wall of his self-sufficiency must be built of diamonds if it is not to be destroyed and broken into, for everything and everyone is in league against him. His journey toward immortality is more difficult and burdensome than that of other men.

What is ironic about such quotations is that they appear during what was probably the most socially well-adjusted period of Nietzsche’s life. His friendships with Burckhardt, Overbeck, and von Meysenbug, his cohabitation with Elizabeth, and his increasing

---

409 Ibid. This is of course an obvious hyperbole since we are still discussing Heraclitus 2,500 years later.
410 PTAG, 36.
411 Ibid. 66.
renown in Wagner’s circle led to high spirits and a rare sense of belonging.\textsuperscript{412}

Nonetheless he glorified the lifestyle of the eremite. Heraclitus’s disdain for his fellow man defines his philosophical type. The self-imposed exile is prudent, moreover, because “everything and everyone is in league against him.”\textsuperscript{413} Even had he wished to live amongst men, the very nature of his type would have made it nearly impossible.

\subsection*{2.4.4 Heraclitus’s Pride}

Diogenes Laertius had described Heraclitus as overweening, and Nietzsche’s depiction of him does little to dispel that description.\textsuperscript{414} Nietzsche begins the section on Heraclitus’s character by announcing his pride and stating that “when a philosopher exhibits pride, it is a great pride indeed.”\textsuperscript{415} Later in the same paragraph, he describes the “regal self-esteem” of Heraclitus that springs from his conviction that “he is the only rewarded wooer of truth.”\textsuperscript{416} This pride is seen by Nietzsche as being so extreme as to be nearly unimaginable to the average reader of the history of philosophy, unless presented with the actual example of Heraclitus.\textsuperscript{417} This pride provides Heraclitus with an inner “fortress” that beats back “the waves of illusion and of wrongness.”\textsuperscript{418} Note the similarity in language between this and Marcus Aurelius, who says “Free from the passions, the mind is a veritable fortress.”\textsuperscript{419} Marcus as a Stoic was greatly influenced by Heraclitus, whom

\textsuperscript{412} Cate, 159–60.
\textsuperscript{413} PTAG, 66.
\textsuperscript{414} Diogenes Laertius, IX, 1.
\textsuperscript{415} PTAG, 65.
\textsuperscript{416} Ibid. 66.
\textsuperscript{417} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{418} Ibid. 67.
\textsuperscript{419} Marcus Aurelius, VIII, 48.
he spoke of with great reverence.\textsuperscript{420} There are no clear indications that Nietzsche is intentionally referencing Marcus, but the similarity in metaphors is interesting.

\subsection*{2.4.5 Heraclitus’s Coldness}

Due to his isolation and his feeling of superiority over his fellow man, Nietzsche’s Heraclitus is an extremely cold and distant figure. Nietzsche goes so far as to describe him as living inside his “own solar system.”\textsuperscript{421} Later, he is said to be a “star devoid of atmosphere.”\textsuperscript{422} Due to his preoccupation with the “game of the great world-child, Zeus,” Heraclitus is not interested in other men, even those who would seek out his teachings.\textsuperscript{423} Like the oracle of Delphi, men seek him, but he does not seek them. Nietzsche, chillingly and succinctly states that “the world forever needs the truth, hence the world forever needs Heraclitus, but Heraclitus does not need the world.”\textsuperscript{424}

In fact, Heraclitus is a man who treats himself “almost with religious reverence” and “super-human esteem,” not unlike Pythagoras or Empedocles.\textsuperscript{425} But even these legendary, self-proclaimed deities are in a lower sphere than the Ephesian hermit, for they are caught up in metempsychosis and “the unity of all life.” Those doctrines teach them that all living things are essentially one and thus drag them “back to other human beings for their salvation and redemption.”\textsuperscript{426} In his lecture notes, Nietzsche also contrasts Heraclitus with Pythagoras, but replaces Empedocles with Socrates, and uses a

\begin{footnotes}
\item[420] Ibid. VIII, 3.
\item[421] PTAG, 66.
\item[422] Ibid. 67.
\item[423] Ibid.
\item[424] Ibid. 68.
\item[425] Ibid. 66.
\item[426] Ibid. 67.
\end{footnotes}
less pejorative tone. Nietzsche compares the three unifying ideas of the three “purest paradigms” of philosophy: Pythagoras’s metempsychosis, Socrates’s unity through thought, and Heraclitus’s belief in “the oneness and eternal lawfulness of nature’s processes.” If Nietzsche is being consistent between the two works, we must assume that Heraclitus’s belief in the unity of nature through the lawfulness of its processes does not lead man back to other men in the same way as a belief in some sort of reincarnation.

2.4.6 Thus Spoke Heraclitus?

Nietzsche obviously means to communicate his admiration for the nearly superhuman figure of Heraclitus. In fact, there is good reason to suppose that Nietzsche uses the Ephesian philosopher as a model for his later literary re-imagination of an ancient figure, Zarathustra. Both seem to invoke the same spirit of reverence in Nietzsche and share similar defining characteristics. In fact, Nietzsche in his attempt to find a “tragic philosopher” as a precursor to both himself and his creation, Zarathustra, fingers Heraclitus as the only figure to come close:

Nobody has ever turned the Dionysian into a philosophical pathos before: tragic wisdom was missing, – I could not find any sign of it, even among the eminent Greek philosophers, those from the two centuries before Socrates. I had some doubts in the case of Heraclitus; I generally feel warmer and in better spirits in his company than anywhere else. The affirmation of passing away and destruction that is crucial for a Dionysian philosophy, saying yes to opposition and war, becoming along with a radical rejection of the very concept of ‘being’ – all these

427 Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 58.
428 Ibid.
are more closely related to me than anything else people have thought so far. The
infinitely repeated cycle of all things—this is Zarathustra’s doctrine, but ultimately
it is nothing Heraclitus couldn’t have said too. At least the Stoics have traces of
it, and they inherited almost all of their fundamental ideas of Heraclitus.”

So Nietzsche does not actually equate Heraclitus with his Zarathustra, but does see him
as a forerunner.

The differences between the Heraclitus of PTAG and the eponymous character of
Thus Spoke Zarathustra are marked, albeit subtle. By a superficial reading, Nietzsche’s
epic may just as well have been titled “Thus Spoke Heraclitus,” seeing how Zarathustra’s
metaphysical views seem to be, by Nietzsche’s admission, quite similar. Perhaps more
importantly, Zarathustra seems to have been cast in the archetypical mold of Heraclitus.
The signature Heraclitean characteristics of solitude, pride, and distance may all seem to
be embodied by Zarathustra. The extreme pride of Heraclitus is also a feature that
Nietzsche gives his Zarathustra. Humility is hardly a virtue one would give to a creation
that supposedly breathes air that Goethe and Shakespeare could not stand for a second
and contains more genius in a single speech that he gives than all the great spirits in
history could conjure. But while the other two virtues are not absent in Zarathustra,
they are not celebrated in the same way that PTAG celebrates them in Heraclitus.
The two characters both made a decision to remove themselves from society and retreat
into the mountains. Heraclitus makes the decision to remove himself from Ephesian
society rather late in life after a lifetime of disagreement with other citizens.
Zarathustra makes his sojourn at the relatively young age of thirty, leaving his home to

\[\text{429 Ecce Homo, “Why I Write Such Good Books: The Birth of Tragedy,” 3.}\]
\[\text{430 Ibid.}\]
\[\text{431 Ecce Homo, “Why I Write Such Good Books: Thus Spoke Zarathustra,” 6.}\]
\[\text{432 Diogenes Laertius, IX, 3.}\]
enjoy “his spirit and solitude,” but no explicit reason is given for his leaving, neither do we discover whether his relation to his hometown influenced this decision. There is therefore a somewhat reactive element to Heraclitus’s self-imposed exile which is lacking in Zarathustra.

It is the prospect of return that is most interesting. If the doxographies that Nietzsche credits are to be believed, Heraclitus never returns from his exile, succumbing to illness and a rather absurd quack cure. Zarathustra, however, after a decade of solitude descends back into the valley, “his heart transformed.” Heraclitus, particularly the idealized version of him in PTAG, is sickened by his fellow man, and thus turns his back on human beings. He has his “immortal wisdom” and therefore does not need other men. Zarathustra’s relation to his wisdom is quite different; he has grown weary of it. Thus “like a bee that has gathered too much honey,” he needs “hands that reach out.” Zarathustra needs his fellow human beings, even if it is merely because he needs someone to whom he may impart his wisdom. But, as mentioned above, the younger Nietzsche of PTAG, champions Heraclitus’s complete lack of need for his fellow man.

A shining example of the contrast between PTAG and Thus Spoke Zarathustra can be found in the celestial imagery used in both. In PTAG, Heraclitus is described as being “a star devoid of atmosphere.” Men like him “live in their own solar system”

---

433 Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Book I, Zarathustra’s Prologue, 1.
434 Specifically being buried in manure and left to heat in the sun in an attempt to dry out his body and cure his dropsy. Unfortunately, this resulted in Heraclitus being immobile and easy prey for a pack of feral dogs. Diogenes Laertius, IX, 3–4.
435 Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Book I, Zarathustra’s Prologue, 1.
436 PTAG, 67.
437 Ibid. 68.
438 Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Book I, Zarathustra’s Prologue, 1.
439 Ibid.
440 PTAG, 68.
441 Ibid. 67.
and can be found only if they are sought out. Yet Zarathustra compares himself not to a star off in a distant galaxy, but instead to the sun that shines upon our own Earth. As he decides to wander down into the valley, he makes the following ode to the sun.

You great star! What would your happiness be if you had not those for whom you shine? For ten years you have come up here to my cave: you would have tired of your light and of this route without me, my eagle, and my snake. But we awaited you every morning, took your overflow from you and blessed you for it… I want to bestow and distribute until the wise among human beings have once again enjoyed their folly, and the poor once again their wealth. For this I must descend into the depths, as you do evenings when you go behind the sea and bring light even to the underworld, you super-rich star.

Rather than reveling in being off in the heavens keeping its light in the void of space, the sun draws its pleasure from sharing its light with the planets and creatures that orbit it. The sun does not stay in the heavens. It brings its light down to Earth: it goes under.

Zarathustra cannot live as Heraclitus, as a misanthrope. He must share his wisdom.

The solar metaphor is revisited in the second book of Thus Spoke Zarathustra, where the sun is contrasted with the moon. Lunar love is “content in viewing, with dead will, without grasp and greed of selfishness”; it is an “immaculate perception.”

Heraclitus’s vision in PTAG is described in similar terms: “his eye, flaming toward its inward center, looks outward dead and icy, with but the semblance of sight.” Solar love, on the other hand, kisses and sucks on the land; it does not attempt to remain at a

442 Ibid. 66.
443 Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Book I, Zarathustra’s Prologue, 1.
444 Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Book II, On Immaculate Perception.
445 PTAG, 67.
distance from the Earth, rather it caresses it." \(^{446}\) Zarathustra wishes to be as the sun, loving “life and all deep seas.” \(^{447}\)

While the Heraclitus of PTAG is no pessimist, he certainly is a misanthrope. To draw out firmament metaphors one last time, Heraclitus is shown to see the highest principle of fire “as exemplified by celestial bodies,” not as “irrational man.” \(^{448}\) Considering his lack of need for other human beings, Heraclitus resembles less Zarathustra than he does the first person whom Zarathustra meets after leaving the mountain. The saint in the woods is yet another hermit, but one who left society out of his love for mankind, a trait that differentiates him from both Heraclitus and Zarathustra. \(^{449}\) But his hermitry has taught him to despise human beings, saying “now I love God: human beings I do not love. Human beings are too imperfect a thing for me.” \(^{450}\) While Heraclitus never aims at loving God, he does focus on those things which are not as imperfect and fleeting as man. Heraclitus has “no bridge to lead him to his fellow man.” \(^{451}\) Yet Zarathustra recognizes something more in man, declaring “what is great about human beings is that they are a bridge and not a purpose.” \(^{452}\) While Zarathustra has not become a lover of man as man, he at least sees a reason to come down from the mountains and once again live among them.

This move away from the misanthropic hermit to Zarathustra represents a major progression in Nietzsche’s works. He acknowledged in *Ecce Homo* that his “danger is

---

\(^{446}\) *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Book II, On Immaculate Perception.  
\(^{447}\) Ibid.  
\(^{448}\) PTAG, 63.  
\(^{449}\) *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Book I, Zarathustra’s Prologue, 2.  
\(^{450}\) Ibid.  
\(^{451}\) *Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, 65.  
\(^{452}\) *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Book I, Zarathustra’s Prologue, 4.
The decade between PTAG and Thus Spoke Zarathustra was a particularly tumultuous one for Nietzsche, containing the loss of his teaching position, his friendships with Wagner, Salomé, and Rée, and his belief in Schopenhauerian doctrines. Through it all, the Nietzsche of Zarathustra seems to overcome the misanthropy and distance of the Nietzsche of PTAG.

Thus we have a response to the problem of Anaximander’s pessimism. The Heraclitean man has the sort of character that is not brought low by the Becoming of the world. He has developed a definition of justice that does not see the flux of the world as a punishment for perceived injustices brought on by existence, but rather as the natural, playful justice of agon. This is not optimism since that would assume that the world needs justification. This is instead a way of being that transcends optimism and pessimism, that acknowledges existence’s playful destruction. Heraclitus provided an answer to Anaximander that finds redemption in the world, but as we shall see, there are others who find it without.

\[454\] Human, All-Too Human, Volume 1, 28.
3. Parmenides

3.1 The Icy Truth-Teller

While Heraclitus provides the young Nietzsche with one possible solution for those who do not wish to succumb to Schopenhauerian pessimism, Nietzsche dedicates a long portion of *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* to an alternate method of coping. Just as Heraclitus was cast as the hero of PTAG, Parmenides is the antagonist whom Nietzsche chooses as the representative of those who embrace an otherworldly solution to the problem of Anaximander. Despite this antagonism, Nietzsche shows quite a bit of respect for his foe. He introduces him in heroic terms as Heraclitus’s foil.

While each word of Heraclitus expresses the pride and the majesty of truth, but of truth grasped in intuitions rather than attained by the rope ladder of logic, while in Sibyline rapture Heraclitus gazes but does not peer, knows but does not calculate, his contemporary Parmenides stands beside him as counter-image, likewise expressing a type of truth-teller but one formed of ice rather than fire, pouring cold piercing light all around.¹

Parmenides is included in the pantheon of the Pre-Platonic philosophers, but in this case we do not have a figure whom Nietzsche aspires to emulate; his is a cautionary tale. The story of Parmenides demonstrates the dangerous pitfalls that await those who follow in the foot-steps of Anaximander, or any great pessimist. Parmenides attempts to bring “forth an organized philosophic-physical system in answer to Anaximander’s questions.”²

---

¹ PTAG, 69.
² Ibid.
Like Heraclitus, he “sought a way out of the contradictoriness and disparity of a double world order” as first problematized by Anaximander. Yet Parmenides’ method of coping with the “deep night” of Anaximander was not the “divine stroke of lightning” of Heraclitus, but a much colder light.

3.1.1 The Two Eras of Parmenides

Unsurprisingly, Nietzsche’s reading of Parmenides contains idiosyncratic and unorthodox elements. The most striking at the outset of the section on Parmenides is his division of the philosopher’s career into an early and a later period. Parmenides’ philosophical work is clearly bifurcated between sections on “Truth” and “Mortal Opinion,” which are two “roads of inquiry.” The first is “the one, that it is not possible for it not to be,” while the second is that which is and is not.” Parmenides’ language in describing the two may cause one to question why only Heraclitus is referred to as “the Obscure,” but at least provides the reader with the impression that the first road is to be followed and the second is to be avoided. Surprisingly, Parmenides wrote sizeable sections on both the reliable way of truth and the fallible way of opinion. In fact, the section concerning opinion was probably much longer than the section concerning truth. What reason could he have for devoting the majority of his poetic expression of his philosophy to untruth as he does to truth?

---

3 Ibid. 70.
4 Ibid. 50.
5 Ibid. 69.
6 Miller, 44.
7 Parmenides, DK28, B2.
8 Ibid. DK28, B1.
9 McKirahan, 158.
10 Miller, 44.
In characteristic style, Nietzsche gives a psychological explanation to explain this aberration in Parmenides’ philosophy. In his lecture notes, Nietzsche imagines that the listener might believe that this was Parmenides’ attempt to please the masses, but he quickly dismisses such a notion.\(^\text{11}\) In PTAG, he explains that late in life, in “a moment of purest absolutely bloodless abstraction, unclouded by any reality,” Parmenides had a revelation.\(^\text{12}\) Nietzsche sees the early Parmenides, and for that matter the history of philosophy up to that moment, as being fundamentally Anaximandrian. This event proves to be a “boundary stone that separates two periods” and “divides pre-Socratic thinking into two halves.”\(^\text{13}\) It bears noting that this interpretation is not found in Diogenes Laertius, nor does any other ancient source describe this chronological reading. Regardless, Nietzsche sees the Way of Mortal Opinion as being the early period of Parmenides’ philosophy and the Way of Truth as the late. The early work “still bears Anaximandrian traces” and offers a “philosophic-physical system in answer to Anaximander’s questions.”\(^\text{14}\) As it is speculated that the mostly lost Way of Mortal Opinion probably “contained a cosmogony and a cosmology,” Nietzsche’s theory that the early Parmenides was a physical philosopher seems apt.\(^\text{15}\) Thus, in Nietzsche’s account, the young Parmenides attempted to answer the philosophical problems of Anaximander via an account of the natural world, not ontology. It was only in the moment of the “icy tremor of abstraction” that Parmenides cast his natural philosophy into “the rubbish heap of the older doctrines.”\(^\text{16}\)

\(^{11}\) Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 84.  
\(^{12}\) PTAG, 69.  
\(^{13}\) Ibid.  
\(^{14}\) Ibid.  
\(^{15}\) McKirahan, 158.  
\(^{16}\) PTAG, 70.
Nietzsche’s chronological reading provides a reason for the existence of two separate Parmenidean philosophies, but not their coexistence in one poem. Had he truly disposed of the early philosophy, would he not have excised it from his work rather than looked for a way to make it compatible with his late philosophy? This is where Nietzsche brings in his psychological approach for understanding Parmenides. In a surprising show of humanity, Parmenides felt “paternal good-will” and “solicitude” towards his early work.\(^\text{17}\) Parmenides believed that his late work was the only way to truth, but provided his early work as a consolation prize to those who could not reach the dizzying, airless heights of the former.\(^\text{18}\) Nietzsche does not present this as Parmenides believing that his old system deserves this privileged position based on its veracity, but rather on the Eleatic’s sentimental feelings towards the work of his youth. In fact, Nietzsche sees this as being the sole remnant of the humanity that was lost to Parmenides’ philosophizing. It was “the only trace of human sentiment in a nature wholly petrified by logical rigidity and almost transformed into a thinking machine.”\(^\text{19}\)

This image of the philosopher made by his thinking into an inorganic thing, such as a machine or even a sculpture, is a recurring theme in Nietzsche’s writing on Parmenides. The coldness of his philosophy leaves him as something that is no longer truly alive or participating in the world of Becoming. Still, there is a tragic element to the tale of Parmenides. His early philosophy had a brilliance to it, manifesting its fertile influence on thinkers such as Empedocles and later Pythagoreans.\(^\text{20}\) Like Heraclitus, he

\(^{17}\) Ibid.
\(^{18}\) Ibid
\(^{19}\) Ibid.
\(^{20}\) Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 84.
is called on to face the potentially life-destroying truths of Anaximander, but due to his very different character, his fate is not apotheosis, but petrification.

3.1.2 The Influence of Anaximander

The catalyst for Parmenides’ transformation is his encounter with Anaximander, though in Nietzsche’s account, this occurred in stages. Diogenes Laertius reports that Theophrastus stated that Parmenides was possibly a student of Anaximander. Nietzsche finds this theory to be believable largely because of the obvious similarities in the two philosophers’ “distrust toward a world which only is and a world which only comes to be.” Regardless of whether they actually met in the flesh, Nietzsche believes that the touch of Anaximander left its mark on both Parmenides and, as we have previously seen, Heraclitus.

The leap into the indefinite, un-definable, by which Anaximander had once and for all escaped the realm of come-to-be and its empirically given qualities, did not come easy to minds as independent as those of Heraclitus and Parmenides. They sought to stay on their feet as long as they could, preserving their leap for the spot where the foot no longer finds support and one must jump to keep from falling. Both of them looked repeatedly at just that world that Anaximander had condemned with such melancholy and had declared as the place of wickedness and simultaneously of atonement for the unjustness of all coming-to-be.

21 Diogenes Laertius, IX, 21.
22 PTAG, 70. It should be noted that Nietzsche’s view is not supported by any sources outside of Theophrastus. In fact, there is a fair amount of doubt that Parmenides was personally acquainted with Xenophanes, let alone Anaximander (see Coxon, 17–18). It is suspected though that Parmenides was aware of the ideas of Anaximander, based not only on the similarity of the apeiron and the One, but also the “spherical astronomy” that both accepted, but had been rejected by Xenophanes, Anaximenes, and Heraclitus (Ibid. 19).
23 Ibid.
Let us first note that Nietzsche once again uses the metaphor of the unsteadiness of the earth below the philosophers’ feet. The transformative power of Anaximander’s pessimism scars the minds of these early philosophers in the same way that the Lisbon earthquake scarred those of the Enlightenment philosophers.\(^{24}\) Also, describing the world as “the place of wickedness and simultaneously of atonement” further strengthens the link between the Nietzschean readings of Anaximander and Schopenhauer. After all, Schopenhauer’s pessimistic outlook on the world is one of his defining characteristics;\(^{25}\) as we have seen in our discussion of Anaximander, Schopenhauer also sees this world as the crucible of cosmic justice.\(^{26}\)

Nietzsche goes on to remark that Heraclitus “discovered what wonderful order, regularity, and certainty manifested themselves in all coming-to-be.”\(^{27}\) This is to remind the reader that when one is faced with the supposed horrors of the Anaximandrian world, there are still ways of interacting with it that do not involve denigrating it. But Nietzsche must now show the alternative that was chosen by Parmenides, an alternative that would prove to be an indicator of the strategy that most subsequent philosophers would adopt when faced with the problem of pessimism.

\(^{24}\) See Chapter 1.

\(^{25}\) Perhaps the most extreme such statement is the above-mentioned “worst of all possible worlds” comment in *World as Will and Presentation*, Volume 2, 667, but Schopenhauer’s work are overabundant with extreme pessimism. Other contenders for the superlative example of pessimism include “Additional Remarks on the Doctrine of the Vanity of Existence” (*Parerga and Paralipomena*, Volume 2, 283–90) and “Additional Remarks on the Doctrine of the Suffering of the World” (Ibid. 291–305), the latter of which begins with the lines, “If suffering is not the first and immediate object of our life, then our existence is the most inexpedient and inappropriate thing in the world” (Ibid. 291).

\(^{26}\) *World as Will and Presentation*, Volume 1, 414f.

\(^{27}\) *PTAG*, 71.
3.2 Parmenides’ Strategy Against Pessimism

3.2.1 Negation

Parmenides’ strategy is one of “negation.” When presented with two alternatives that seem to produce a contradiction, Parmenides does not respect the plurality of existence, but rather interprets one of the members of the dyad as being actually existent and the other as being a mere lack of the former. Nietzsche lists several examples of these pairings of existent and nonexistent qualities, but neglects to mention that Aristotle reports a similar list in his Metaphysics, attributing it to the Pythagorean, Alcmaeon of Croton, who is said to have compiled it to show the sets of opposites that make up the world. Nietzsche’s list, which he takes from the fragments of Parmenides’ poem, bears a striking resemblance to Aristotle’s, but there is no mention of the Pythagoreans. He makes it seem as if Parmenides’ revelation comes merely from his “defiant talent for abstract-logical procedure.” Nietzsche was obviously not ignorant of Alcmaeon’s table, citing it in his lectures on Pythagoreans and stating that it “recalls the exemplary table of Parmenides.” This once again makes it clear that in PTAG, Nietzsche is not concerned with philological matters, but rather the effects of philosophical systems on thinkers that fall into different archetypes. The historical context can be suspended to allow comparisons between philosophers of different eras.

28 Italics in the original. Ibid.
29 Ibid. 72.
30 Metaphysics, 986a22–b2. Note that Diogenes Laertius states that Parmenides was possibly the pupil of a Pythagorean named Ameinias (IX, 21).
31 Parmenides, DK28, B8.
32 PTAG, 72.
33 Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 132–33.
Having divided the world into those things which are existent and those that are not, Parmenides now looks at what we can say about the existent and its relationship to coming-to-be. Nietzsche points out that unlike Anaximander, whose *apeiron* is outside the world, “beyond our horizon,” Parmenides introduces an immanent being. “Right here before us, everywhere, in all coming-to-be, there is contained an active something which is existent.”\(^{34}\) While this seems to promise an almost worldly philosopher, Parmenides is still faced with the question of “What is coming-to-be?”\(^{35}\) Like Heraclitus, he turns his gaze upon the impermanence of the world and attempts to form a cosmodicy.\(^{36}\) In other words, Parmenides has to solve the problem of coming-to-be and passing away as originally posed by Anaximander: “How can anything pass away which has the right to be?”\(^{37}\) As we have seen, there must be some sort of injustice involved; otherwise such a thing could never occur. Not satisfied with the sort of justification that Heraclitus provided, Parmenides seeks out the culprit of Becoming. It seems inconceivable to Nietzsche’s Parmenides that the existent could be “guilty of passing away.”\(^{38}\) After all, if it truly is existent, it could not be passing away.

### 3.2.2 Aphrodite

So who is the guilty party? The only other possibility is that the nonexistent is responsible for change. Yet there could not be any change, coming-to-be, or passing away if the existent did not interact with the nonexistent. Nietzsche paraphrases the view

\(^{34}\) PTAG, 72.
\(^{35}\) Ibid.
\(^{36}\) Ibid. 73.
\(^{37}\) Ibid. 48.
\(^{38}\) Ibid. 73.
of Parmenides: “For coming-to-be, the existent as well as the nonexistent are necessary; whenever they interact, we have coming-to-be.”  

To account for this, though, there needs to be some principle that brings these two disparate elements together. Luckily for Nietzsche, Parmenides’ poem is dedicated to a goddess who has such a power, namely the goddess of love, Aphrodite. The bond is explicitly described as being the province of the goddess in the Way of Mortal Opinion: “For [the goddess] rules over hateful birth and union of all things, sending the female to unite with male and in opposite fashion, male to female.” Nietzsche sums up this process by stating

It is the power of Aphrodite that weds the opposites, the existent with the nonexistent. Desire unites the contradictory and mutually repellent elements: the result is coming-to-be. When desire is satiated, hatred and inner opposition drives the existent and the nonexistent apart once more — and man says, “All things pass.”

At this point, other philosophers might have accepted this as an acceptable metaphysical system. The appeal to, as Nietzsche puts it, a “qualitas occulta,” such as Aphrodite, may seem to be overly obscure, but this is not unheard of in the philosophy of the era. A generation later, Empedocles would express a similarly all-encompassing force in the cosmic Love that is always in struggle with its antithesis, Strife. In Nietzsche’s description of Parmenides’ Aphrodite, we even hear the echo of Heraclitus, who also describes his divine fire as being the interplay between desire and satiety.

---

39 Ibid.
40 Parmenides, DK 28, B1.
41 Ibid. DK28, B12.
42 Ibid. 73–74.
43 Ibid. 73.
44 Empedocles, DK 31, B35.
45 Heraclitus, DK22, B65a.
his lectures notes, in fact, Nietzsche compares and contrasts the early Parmenidean view with the Heraclitean view.

Were we to compare this view of the world with [that of] Heraclitus, [we would see that] they share the beliefs that opposed qualities are active in each thing that becomes and that the thing perishes on them as well. But whereas Heraclitus sees only the endless transformation of one fire in all qualities, Parmenides in general perceives the transformation of two opposing elements. War, for Heraclitus, is a game, the characteristic mark of hatred here, yet the hateful elements have an instinct toward each other. This is a very significant conception, for the world of Heraclitus was without instincts: knowing and not knowing, fire and water, war — yet there is nothing in them that explains drive, instinct. It is an aesthetic view of the world. Here with Parmenides, everything aesthetic ends; hate and love are not a game but rather effects of the same daimon. We see in this genius the struggle to overcome dualism, yet it transpires in only a mythical manner — the notion of reducing Becoming and passing away to a love struggle between Being and Not-being. What a colossal abstraction!  

While Parmenides chose an artistic manner to express his philosophy, he is not satisfied with aesthetic explanations for the drama of coming-to-be. Unlike the great logical criminal, Heraclitus, who has no trouble brazenly sinning against the principle of non-contradiction, Parmenides remains loyal to it.  

Once again, the principle, as defined by Aristotle, states that “the same attribute cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject in the same respect.” Parmenides, had formulated similar thoughts long before Aristotle, saying “that it is not and that it is necessary for it not to be, this I point out to you to be a path completely unlearnable, for neither may you know that which is not (for it is not to be accomplished) nor may you declare it.”

---

46 Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 82–83.
47 PTAG, 52.
49 Parmenides, DK28, B2.
on the principle of non-contradiction, Parmenides must construct a myth, albeit one that he cannot fully believe. The myth is not to be read literally, but as a “colossal abstraction.”

3.2.3 Rejecting What is Not

Unsurprisingly, a mind as logical as that of Parmenides cannot stay happy with a mythological explanation that seems to fly in the face of reason.

But no one lays hands with impunity on such fearsome abstractions as “the existent” and “the nonexistent.” Slowly, upon touching them, the blood congeals. There came the day when a strange insight befell Parmenides, an insight which seemed to withdraw the value from all his old combinations so that he felt like throwing them away like a bag of old worn-out coins.

Nietzsche states that this has often been seen as having been the result of external events, namely Parmenides meeting Xenophanes of Colophon. But he disagrees with this reading, stating that “it seems no more than accidental that in the same place, in Elea, two men should be living for a while who both carried in their minds a concept of unity.”

Going by the accounts of Diogenes Laertius, Xenophanes was not a native of Elea, but did live in the Eleatic colony of Zancle in Sicily, so an Eleatic connection is not far-fetched. The approaches of the two men are utterly different according to him. “Whereas Parmenides came to the unity of the existent purely by adherence to his

---

50 Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 82–83.
51 PTAG, 74.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid. 75.
54 Diogenes Laertius, IX, 18.
supposed logic, spinning it out of the concepts of Being and Nonbeing, Xenophanes was a religious mystic who, with his mystic unity, belongs very typically to the sixth century.”55 Later, Nietzsche says of Parmenides’ philosophy that it was “not evoked by a profound religious conviction.”56 While Nietzsche had credited Xenophanes with influencing Parmenides in his lecture notes, he distances the two in PTAG.57 The Parmenides of PTAG is more the product of the problem of Anaximander and his own peculiar character.

In Nietzsche’s account of the genesis of the Eleatic notion of Being, Parmenides tests his solution to the Anaximandrian problem and finds it to be deficient. He had proposed Nonbeing as one of the components of his ontology, but it raises a troublesome question: “can something which is not, be?”58 After all, the principle of identity claims that “A=A,” that is to say “what is, is,” so should it not follow that “what is not, is not”?59 Nietzsche characterizes Parmenides as having up to this point “light-heartedly” assumed the existence of negative qualities.60 The early philosophy of Parmenides had not succumbed to the gloom brought by pessimism, be it Anaximandrian or Schopenhauerian, but it had also not taken its own conclusions as seriously as such heavy matters warrant. It was only now that he realized the weight of the matter. In his early philosophy, Parmenides had been content with speaking both of existent and non-existent things, but this sort of compromise between the two did not directly address the seriousness of the Anaximandrian dilemma. Not only did this dualistic worldview not

55 PTAG, 75.
56 Ibid. 81.
57 Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 80.
58 PTAG, 76.
59 Ibid. 77.
60 Ibid.
satisfy the problem of a just world, but it also was riddled with contradictions. How could things both be and not be? Every time that Parmenides attempted to make this defense, he realized that he was speaking nonsense to the judge of reason. “Suddenly Parmenides felt a monstrous logical sin burdening his whole previous life.”\textsuperscript{61} Nietzsche even refers to Parmenides’ former philosophy as “total perversity of thought.”\textsuperscript{62} This represents a second catastrophic philosophical discovery in Parmenides’ career, and it leaves its mark.

\section*{3.3 The Character of Parmenides}

\subsection*{3.3.1 Against Heraclitus}

While Nietzsche describes Parmenides in terms that make him seem far too frigid to fall prey to “human sentiment”, the Nietzschean Parmenides reacts to the revelations of his philosophy passionately.\textsuperscript{63} It is worth mentioning that the writings of Diogenes Laertius neither confirm nor deny an emotionless Parmenides. The sole clue to his character in \textit{Lives of Eminent Philosophers} is that he lived “the peaceful life of a student.”\textsuperscript{64} But Nietzsche paints a picture of a philosopher who is an Achilles of rage. The most focused instance of his rage is his “unhappy encounter” with Heraclitus.\textsuperscript{65} Nietzsche’s prose is particularly colorful in describing the seething hatred that Parmenides feels.

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{63} Ibid. 70.
  \item \textsuperscript{64} Diogenes Laertius, IX, 21.
  \item \textsuperscript{65} PTAG, 77.
\end{itemize}
Caring now for nothing except the strictest separation of being from nonbeing, he must hate in his deepest soul the antinomy-play of Heraclitus. Propositions such as “We are and at the same time are not” or “Being and nonbeing is at the same time the same and not the same,” tangle and cloud everything which he had just illuminated and distinguished. They drove him to fury. “Away with those people,” he screamed, “who seem to have two heads and yet know nothing. Everything is in flux with them, including their thinking. They stand in dull astonishment before things and yet must be deaf as well as blind to mix up the opposites as they do!”

Parmenides can be seen as the first to have taken Heraclitus to task for his sins against logic. While earlier Nietzsche had described Aristotle as the one to summon Heraclitus before “the tribunal of reason,” Parmenides is the original prosecutor. The shock of the Anaximandrian revelation has seriously shaken Parmenides, literally to the core of his being, and he is not impressed by Heraclitus’s attempts to solve the cosmic problem with illogic. Nietzsche interprets this as not merely a disagreement, but the product of hatred. Ontology in the tragic age was personal.

### 3.3.2 Against the Masses and the Senses

In Nietzsche’s account Parmenides and Heraclitus share many characteristics, which is not uncommon for enemies. Parmenides’ anger that is not focused on his Ephesian contemporary is often directed at targets who both philosophers condemn. While Parmenides may have Heraclitus in mind when speaking of those who “knowing nothing, two-headed, wander,” he does not see Heraclitus as being the originator of such

---

66 Ibid. 77–78.
67 Ibid. 52.
Rather, it is the masses who have always thought this way, though Heraclitus has justified their opinions. For as much as Heraclitus chided the common people, Parmenides thinks that he justified their foolishness. For Parmenides, “the irrationality of the masses, glorified in playful antinomies, and lauded as the culmination of all wisdom was now a painful and incomprehensible experience.”

Parmenides and Heraclitus both agree that one needs to separate oneself if one wishes to understand the truth, but they disagree about the content of the truth and the content of the crowd’s opinion. As far as Parmenides is concerned, Heraclitus is the epitome of the two-headedness of the masses.

Heraclitus also shares with Parmenides a disdain of the senses. Once again, though, we see subtle differences. Heraclitus’s problem with the senses is that they make bad witnesses, at least to those with barbarous souls. Later in his career, Nietzsche notes that this is disdain for their making things seem “permanent and unified.” Parmenides clearly differs in his reasons for finding them to be bad witnesses, but Nietzsche presents his affect as being quite different as well.

And now, whenever Parmenides glances backward at the world of come-to-be, the world whose existence he used to try to comprehend by means of ingenious conjectures, he becomes angry with his eyes for so much as seeing come-to-be, with his ears for hearing it. “Whatever you do, do not be guided by your dull eyes,” is now his imperative, “nor by your resounding ears, nor by your tongue, but test all things with the power of your thinking alone.” Thus he accomplished the immensely significant first critique of man’s apparatus of knowledge.

---

68 Parmenides, DK 28, B6. Note that the theory of Heraclitus influencing Parmenides has been examined at great length, notably in Daniel Graham’s essay, “Heraclitus and Parmenides.”
69 PTAG, 78.
70 Ibid.
71 Heraclitus, DK 22B, 107.
73 PTAG, 79.
This is the inverse of the sort of prejudice against the senses that Nietzsche found in Heraclitus. The senses betray us by presenting us with Becoming. Unlike the merely ill-suited senses of Heraclitus, these are complicit in the “crime against logic” that earns Parmenides’ ire.\textsuperscript{74}

Nietzsche, in turn, condemns Parmenides’ campaign against the senses, accusing it of having “dire consequences” that the Eleatic philosopher could not have predicted.\textsuperscript{75} The later Nietzsche would list Plato as the first step in the formation of the fable of the real world,\textsuperscript{76} but the younger Nietzsche of PTAG gives this role to Parmenides. To be precise, he sees Plato as being a defining figure in the deformation of the philosophical concept of the world, but in this Parmenides was a forerunner.\textsuperscript{77} To his credit, Parmenides was innocent of the “curse” that has plagued philosophers since Plato, namely “the wholly erroneous distinction between ‘spirit’ and ‘body’.”\textsuperscript{78} In Parmenides’ cleaving of the world into two, Nietzsche stresses that the “dichotomy between ‘spirit’ and ‘matter’ is absent.”\textsuperscript{79} Despite this, Nietzsche believes that “wrenching apart the senses and the capacity for abstraction” opened the door for the cleaving of the body and the mind, by making it seem as if men were composed of two opposing minds.\textsuperscript{80} The senses have already been indicted as liars in the service of Becoming, so one would want to distance oneself from them. Moreover, the part of the mind that performs abstraction participates in Being, not Becoming. Indeed, Parmenides goes so far as to say that

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid. 77.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid. 79.
\textsuperscript{76} Twilight of the Idols, “How the ‘True World’ Finally Became a Fable,” 171.
\textsuperscript{77} PTAG, 79.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{79} Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 84.
\textsuperscript{80} PTAG, 79.
“thinking and being are the same.” German scholars of Nietzsche’s day typically interpreted this as meaning that thinking and Being are identical. The attempt to follow Plato’s imperative for the philosopher to “liberate himself as much as possible from the bodily, meaning from the senses” seems to follow if one believes that pure thinking unites one with the nature of Being while the senses can only supply us with deceptions. Nietzsche sees this as being “the most dangerous of false paths, for no true philosophy can construct itself from this empty hull; it must proceed from intuition of reality.” Note that Nietzsche still champions the Schopenhauerian notion of intuition, as distinct from and superior to the “faculty of abstraction.”

2.4 Parmenides the Spider

This divorce from the senses and the world of Becoming leads Nietzsche to pen some of the most beautiful and caustic statements of his early career. For example, he provides this vivid description of Parmenides leaving the world as an empty husk.

All the manifold colorful world known to experience, all the transformations of its qualities, all the orderliness of its ups and downs, are cast aside mercilessly as mere semblance and illusion. Nothing may be learned from them. All effort spent upon this false deceitful world which futile and negligible, faked into a lying existence by the senses is therefore wasted. When one makes as total a judgment as does Parmenides about the whole of the world, one ceases to be a scientist, an investigator into the world’s parts. One’s sympathy toward phenomena atrophies; one even develops a hatred for phenomena including oneself, a hatred for being unable to get rid of the everlasting deceitfulness of

81 Parmenides, DK 28B, 3.
82 Miller, 48.
83 Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 86.
84 Ibid.
85 Ibid. For more on Schopenhauer’s view of abstraction, see Chapter 2.
sensation. Henceforward truth shall live only in the palest, most abstracted generalities, in the empty husks of the most indefinite terms, as though in a house of cobwebs. And beside such truth now sits our philosopher, likewise as bloodless as his abstractions, in the spun out fabric of his formulas. A spider at least wants blood from its victims. The Parmenidean philosopher hates most of all the blood his victims, the blood of the empirical reality which was sacrificed and shed by him.86

This analogy provides a vivid image of the danger of Parmenidean philosophy. While Alan Schrift, in his otherwise excellent “Arachnophobe or Arachnophile: Nietzsche and His Spiders,” claims that the spider here is “a positive image of self-generating creation and predation,” I see this as one of the most severe criticisms in all of Nietzsche’s corpus and the forerunner to many of his later attacks.87 While Heraclitus had watched the same display of orderly chaos as a “blissful spectator,” Parmenides can no longer watch such a shameful display and so turns his back on it.88 Without the senses, empiricism can no longer be accepted as a methodology; nor, then, can science as a whole. In the earlier chapter of PTAG, regarding Thales, Nietzsche said that philosophy differentiates itself from science through its discrimination on the basis of “taste”; Parmenides has found the entire world of the senses distasteful.89

Note that while Parmenides is trying to make himself into this cold, unfeeling arachnid, he finds himself more tangled in his own feelings of hatred. The hatred begins as an outward feeling, but ultimately it must turn itself inward. The Parmenidean philosopher must loathe himself as he is the one who ultimately has let in the hordes of deceitful sensations. In fact, Nietzsche sees this as the reason why Parmenides cannot be considered a Kantian. The things that Parmenides tries to scrape out of his soul, “time

---

86 PTAG, 79–80.
87 Schrift, 68.
88 PTAG, 57.
89 PTAG, 43.
and space, substance” are for Kant, “necessary presuppositions of the world of representations.” In fact, since these are preconditions for Kant, the thing-in-itself would appear to be a return to the problematic apeiron. If thought and Being are indeed the same thing, Kantian metaphysics would appear to be a philosophy of Nonbeing. The thing-in-itself lacks any definite qualities that we can cognize and lies totally outside of our ability to make logical statements about it. “Parmenides would have immediately rejected the thing-in-itself, for it would present itself to him as a Not-Being.” The thing-in-itself not being comprehensible makes it impossible to be the Parmenidean Being since what cannot be thought cannot be identical with thinking itself. Regardless of whatever else Nietzsche thinks of Kant, he does not see him as a strict Parmenidean.

Having found himself to be as loathsome as any vermin, the Parmenidean decides that he will act like his eight-legged cousins and protect himself with a web, not of silk, but of abstractions. The spider is centered in his web, letting it spread outward from him, but always traceable back to him. In the same way, one can always find traces of the philosopher’s personality in his system; a philosopher sits in the middle of every system. The sensory world is like a swarm of flies, flitting and mobile, but ungrounded. These phenomenological gnats, with their thoughtless flight patterns, are in danger of coming into contact with the web that has been consciously constructed to catch them. In a way that would make any geometer envious, the web has precision and regularity in form, much like an intricate philosophical system. And once the web is touched, there is no way to remove its adhesive residue, not unlike the metaphysical doubts about the world that are difficult to dispel once Parmenides has introduced them. A lucky insect

---

90 Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 87.
91 Ibid.
will fly away, albeit never able to fully wash it off, but most will find themselves stuck. The spider can then come close and with the very same sticky substance that built the web encase the insect, leaving it immobile. While the next step would be the climax for an actual spider, for the Parmenidean spider, it is a necessary, but distasteful evil. The actual spider hungers for the life essence that flows in things, but to the Parmenidean, it is merely a waste product. But after this, we have a lovely husk that will not offend anyone with movement or change.

The similarities between the spider and any metaphysician in the Parmenidean sense are striking. A metaphysician is hungry for content; he is initially empty. He has only his a priori ideas. Like the spider, all he can do initially is craft this web, this system of ideas. He claims not to have learned these ideas; they are after all innate. As such they have a structure that is precise and intricate like a spider’s web, but also as thin and full of holes. The joy of the system though is that in its web it can catch the buzzing, bustling confusion of the sensible, the lived, and the changing. So-called logic provides the adhesive strength of the web’s strands. Spider silk is stronger than steel and abstractions are even more durable, even if just as thin. The prey is caught and the metaphysician moves out from the center of the system to assimilate the victim. The argument has to engulf the fact, make it part of itself. Then the metaphysician injects venom like that of the spider to dissolve the life out of the fact. The life in this case can be seen as that which is changing. Life, after all, is a process and thus not compatible with unchanging eternals. For instance, the human being comes into existence, grows, changes, deteriorates, and inevitably goes out of existence. This fact gives us a creature that from an Anaximandrian or Parmenidean perspective is deeply flawed; a creature that
would make a poor subject of this sort of philosophy. The trick that those of a
Parmenidean disposition pull is to remove those protean motions and temporary aspects
from the human being and leave behind an immortal, unchanging soul. Anything that
changes is merely accidental to the eternal thing that is the proper subject. This leaves a
subject whose life has been removed; a husk of permanence remains. Yet Nietzsche
acknowledges that there is a difference between the metaphysician and the spider that
goes beyond number of legs. The spider savors that which it sucks out of its prey. The
spider is nourished by the life substance that it steals, but the metaphysician hates this
substance. He wishes simply to make it go away.

3.4.1 Nietzsche’s Other Spiders

This analogy of the spider foreshadows many other accounts of web-weavers, both literal
and figurative in Nietzsche’s writings.\(^2\) Schrift’s exhaustive listing of spider references
makes listing every single example of them redundant, but let us focus on a few that are
particularly relevant. In Daybreak, Nietzsche actually presents us all as spiders that are
stuck in the centers of our respective webs, never able to move into any sort of “real
world.”\(^3\) The aphorism is titled “In prison,” by which Nietzsche refers to our limited
perspectives as human beings. Not unlike the passages in his lecture notes on Heraclitus
regarding our perception of time, he imagines scenarios where our senses are set to scales
that allow us views of the macroscopically large or the microscopically small.\(^4\) Here
Nietzsche wishes for us to understand that we are always in the midst of “the habits of

\(^2\) Schrift, 62.
\(^3\) Daybreak, 117.
\(^4\) Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 60–62. See also my commentary on this passage in chapter 2 of this work.
our senses.” He writes: “We sit in our webs, we spiders, and whatever we may catch in it, we catch nothing at all except that which allows itself to be caught in precisely our net.”

All of our webs resemble the Parmenidean schema, allowing only imperfect conceptions of the world. Like the Parmenidean, the weaver of these perspectival webs forms a limited worldview through a particular mental fiction, though he need not exsanguinate everything he catches.

In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, spiders are a frequent image. At perhaps their most Parmenidean, Nietzsche has them represent the virtue of the “teachers of resignation,” the nihilists. The target here appears to be a sicklier spider than Parmenides. Rather than a web of pure metaphysics, these spiders have woven webs of supposed morality. They claim to be virtuous, but their virtue is simply their desire not to be harmed. Zarathustra has contempt for these tiny creatures and describes them as spiders. “And even what you abstain from weaves at the web of all future humanity; even your nothing is a spider web and a spider that lives off of the blood of the future.” The webs in this instance are the tiny, life-defying morals that trap any future possibilities of life. The blood, representing life, is once again what the world-hating spider must drain from the world.

The section of *Twilight of the Idols* titled “Reason in Philosophy” shows that the Parmenidean spider that disgusted Nietzsche in the beginning of his career was still lurking in his last days. In the first section, Nietzsche uses another figure that delights in wrapping up its charges and removing their organs: the Egyptian embalmer. Possessed of

95 *Daybreak*, 117.
96 *Schrift*, 65.
98 Ibid. 3.
a “hatred of the very idea of becoming,” these mummy-makers attempt to remove the innards of whatever ends up on their tables.

Nothing real makes it through their hands alive. They kill and stuff the things they worship, these lords of concept idolatry — they become mortal dangers to everything they worship. They see death, change, and age, as well as procreation and growth as objections, — refutations even. What is, does not become; what becomes, is not... So they all believe, desperately even, in being. But since they cannot get hold of it, they look for reasons why it is kept from them. “There must be some deception here, some illusory level of appearances preventing us from perceiving things that have being; where is the deceiver?” — “We’ve got it!” they shout in ecstasy, “it is in sensibility! These senses that are so immoral anyway, now they are deceiving us about the true world. Moral: get rid of sense-deception.”

Like the Parmenidean spider, the embalmer must remove viscera because they represent the voluptuousness of the senses and the never-ending mutability of Becoming.

Nietzsche harks back to PTAG even more explicitly when he later refers to these philosophical taxidermists as “sick cobweb-weavers,” who have constructed the emptiest concept, God. 4

3.4.2 God the Spider

God is promoted from cobweb to spider in Nietzsche’s penultimate work, The Antichrist. Nietzsche here posits that the “cobweb-weavers” have made for themselves an idol that acts as they wish they could act. By shifting the emphasis from themselves to their hypothetical construct, metaphysicians can express their bloodless ideals without having to live up to them. Thus, the Judeo-Christian god, having wrested control from the

100 Ibid.
101 Ibid 4 (169).
pagans of the Roman world stays in a subterranean kingdom of decadence and finds himself going through a reverse apotheosis at the hands of metaphysicians.

Nonetheless, the God of the “great numbers,” the democrat among gods, did not become a proud, heathen god: he stayed Jewish, he was still the cranny God, the God of all dark nooks and corners, of unhealthy districts the world over!... His empire is as it ever was, an empire of the underworld, a hospital, a basement-kingdom, a ghetto-kingdom... And he himself, so pale, so weak, so decadent... Even the palest of the pale would still get the upper hand over him, our dear Messrs Metaphysician, the conceptual albinos. They spun around him for so long that in the end he was hypnotized by their movement and became a spider, a metaphysicus himself. Then he spun the world from out of himself again, — sub specie Spinozae —, then he transfigured himself into something increasingly thin and pale, became “Ideal,” became “pure spirit,” became “absolutum,” became “thing-in-itself”... 102

The next section continues the metaphor.

The Christian idea of God – God as a god of the sick, God as spider, God as spirit—is one of the most corrupt conceptions of God the world has ever seen; this may even represent a new low in the declining development of the types of god. God having degenerated into a contradiction of life instead of its transfiguration and eternal yes! God as declared aversion to life, to nature, to the will to life! God as the formula for every slander against “the here and now,” for every lie about the “beyond!” God as the deification of nothingness, the canonization of the will to nothingness... 103

The god in these descriptions is the ideal Parmenidean. He has retreated from a world that has been found to be wanting and unjust. Therefore, he retreats from the world of Becoming and enters into the heaven of Being. By becoming “pure spirit” he has achieved the epitome of stasis. The spider here is nearly identical to the spider described in PTAG, but with one crucial difference: he does not actually dwell within the world of

102 The Antichrist, 17. Note that at this point in his career, Nietzsche has ceased differentiating between the Parmenidean ideal and the Kantian thing-in-itself.
103 Ibid. 18.
Becoming. He does not have to worry about ingesting blood, as the actual Parmenidean does, because he does not exist; he has escaped life and become its contradiction. Moreover, since he exists outside of this world, the metaphysician cannot seek to become like him in this life, as Parmenides did in vain, but must wait until the next. Thus metaphysicians have an excuse for why they are never able to comprehend true Being while they are still alive.

3.5 Parmenides and the Ascetic Ideal

3.5.1 The Philosopher as Ascetic Ideal

The metaphysical desire for an objective world and the religious desire for a god both arise from the ascetic ideal, a topic covered in the third essay of Nietzsche’s On the Genealogy of Morality, titled “What do Ascetic Ideals Mean?” While Parmenides is never explicitly mentioned in this work, the archetype that he represents is definitely being described. The echo of the Parmenidean contempt for the senses resounds in statements such as the following: “as long as there are philosophers on earth and whenever there have been philosophers (from India to England, to take the opposite poles of a talent for philosophy), there exists a genuine philosophers’ irritation and rancor against sensuality.” Dating back nearly to the dawn of Western philosophy, perhaps the moment that Parmenides encountered Anaximander’s dark wisdom, the philosopher has rejected the senses and the ambiguity that accompanies them. In fact Nietzsche sees

105 On the Genealogy of Morality, III, 7.
this disposition as having become nearly synonymous with being a philosopher. He refers to it as “the peculiarly withdrawn attitude of the philosophers, denying the world, hating life, doubting the senses, desensualized, which has been maintained until quite recently to the point where it almost counted for the philosophical attitude as such.”

Parmenides, in his attempt to escape the problem of Becoming, created a “dangerous conceptual fairy-tale,” that there could be such a thing as a “pure, will-less, painless, timeless subject of knowledge.”

As with all other forms of the ascetic ideal, the philosophical urge comes from bad conscience, which is itself the “instinct for freedom” or “will to power” being turned in on itself because of its inability to be directed outside of itself. For the philosopher, Nietzsche claims that the ascetic ideal is like a sense of smell directed towards “the most favorable conditions of higher intellectuality.” In other words, the philosopher’s ascetic ideals are those motivations that drive him towards “being elsewhere” from the world. The philosopher has a great desire for freedom and wishes to clear away every obstacle, even if that leaves a vast desert before him. Nietzsche believes that the philosopher is not truly attempting to negate when doing so, but is affirming in a strange way.

What does the ascetic ideal mean for a philosopher? My answer is – you will have guessed ages ago: on seeing an ascetic ideal, the philosopher smiles because he sees an optimum condition of the highest and boldest intellectuality, – he does not deny “existence” by doing so, but rather affirms his existence and only his

106 Ibid. III, 10.
107 Ibid. III, 12.
108 Ibid. II, 18.
109 Ibid. III, 1. Nietzsche’s term for intellectuality is “Geistigkeit.”
110 Ibid. III, 13.
111 Ibid. III, 7.
existence, and possibly does this to the point where he is not far from making the outrageous wish: *pereat mundus, fiat philosophia, fiat philosophus, fiam!*...\(^{112}\)

In other words, the philosopher, having felt disenfranchised by the disorder and suffering of the world uses his philosophy to affirm himself and his place in the world. This may very well entail excising portions in the world, such as Parmenides draining the world of everything but Being. The philosopher following the ascetic ideal is doing so to preserve himself; as Nietzsche puts it, “the ascetic ideal springs from the protective and healing instincts of a degenerating life.”\(^ {113}\) Having faced the horrors of the Anaximandrian worldview, it makes perfect sense for the Parmenidean to attempt to remove from the world all of those things which he cannot control so that he can reaffirm his own power. While the ascetic ideal is too vast a concept to be traced back to a single figure, the model for its incarnation as philosopher seems to be the Parmenides of PTAG.

### 3.5.2 The Secular Parmenides

It should be noted that while later thinkers used the Parmenidean conclusion to create religious dogmas that posited Being as some sort of deity, Nietzsche does not think this is the aim of Parmenides. Eleatic philosophy was “not evoked by a profound religious conviction,” nor some sort of attempt to join with the “*one* all-sufficing ecstatic state of mind which is the enigma and vexation of ordinary minds.”\(^ {114}\) Parmenides’ icy way of

---

\(^{112}\) Ibid. The Latin translates to “Let the world perish, but let philosophy exist, let the philosopher exist, let me exist.”

\(^{113}\) Ibid. III, 13.

\(^{114}\) PTAG, 81.
thinking should not be confused with the rapturous escape of the mystic. Nietzsche points out that “Parmenides’ thinking conveys nothing whatever of the dark intoxicating fragrance of Hindu wisdom which is not entirely absent from Pythagoras and Empedocles.” Note Nietzsche’s invocation of Hinduism, recalling his earlier mention of Schopenhauer’s breathing “India’s clear air” in the sections regarding Anaximander.

Nietzsche here is once again contrasting the pessimistic approach with the Parmenidean approach to the Anaximandrian problem. As for the mention of Empedocles, note that while PTAG was aborted before the Empedocles section could come to term, we have Schopenhauer’s own explicit approval of Empedocles. Schopenhauer praised the “decided pessimism” of Empedocles and says that he recognized the “same fundamental wisdom constituting the basic wisdom of Brahmanism and Buddhism.”

Thus I think it safe to assume that Nietzsche is here contrasting Schopenhauer, who always has his eyes on the suffering of the world with the Parmenidean who has taken great efforts to deny such imperfections. In his lecture notes, he even explicitly contrasts Parmenides with the Buddha, saying we must not mistake the two. “For Buddha it is an ethical, religious conviction to nothingness, to sorrow, to the perishability of all things: the world is Buddha’s dream.” It seems as if the expected response to the problem of Becoming is a retreat into the mystical. But the Parmenidean, having already rejected the untrustworthy senses, is not about to throw in his lot with those who inhale the dreamy smoke of mysticism. The offer of understanding the world in terms of

115 Nietzsche’s description of Parmenides as an entirely secular figure is not universally accepted. Miller for instance poses the possibility of Parmenides being a “priest of Apollo.” This reading does not make Parmenides into the sort of mystic who is enamored with irrationality, as he follows the divine rationality of the logos. Miller, 52–54.
116 PTAG, 81.
117 Ibid. 46.
118 Parerga and Paralipomena Vol 1, 35.
119 Pre-Platonic Philosophers, 86–87.
a dream is about as far from the Parmenidean project as is possible. He craves “certainty” above all else. One almost gets the impression from Nietzsche that he admires Parmenides for his refusal to accept the religious solution. While he may attempt to banish the world, he at least does not let himself be intoxicated by the thick clouds of incense that would lull many of his descendants to sleep.

3.5.3 Motion, Deceit, and Failure

Nietzsche is nevertheless critical of Parmenides’ attempts to undo the Anaximandrian dilemma by means of reason. Parmenides might be able to suck the life out of the world by means of his cosmic spider web, but the motility of his own arachnid mind remains. He might envision a world that has become utterly unchanging, but his very envisioning has made him the thing he hates. For the mind “moves from concept to concept,” says Nietzsche; later “it is quite impossible to designate thinking as a rigid persistence, as an eternally unmoved thinking-in-and-on-itself on the part of unity.” If change and movement were truly impossible, the mind should not be able to focus on, let alone think of, different things at different times. The mind should be as static as being itself. Parmenides’ own mind has betrayed him. A later critic of Parmenides asked if the Eleatic and his goddess had succeeded and found his solution wanting.

For our part, we cannot think or say they have [succeeded]. They cannot have thought or spoken in time, for example, because the passage of time, from non-being into non-being, is unthinkable and unspeakable; neither past nor future can be. Nor can we think or say that either Parmenides or his goddess has changed in

---

\(^{120}\) PTAG, 81.

\(^{121}\) Ibid. 88.
any way; we can think and speak only of the changeless. Finally, we cannot think or say anything that requires either to be an individual, divided from whatever else is. We must think and speak only of it: undivided, homogenous, perfect and static being.\textsuperscript{122}

If Parmenides cannot escape from the mobility of thought, he cannot escape from Becoming itself.

Even his denial of the senses is futile: experiencing a semblance is experiencing an illusion produced by something. “Nonbeing cannot even practice deceit.”\textsuperscript{123} In other words, if Nonbeing cannot even exist, how could it provide us with actual experiences of being deceived? If Being is all that there is, then it is Being itself that is deceitful. But was the move towards Being not at least partially inspired by the attempt to escape the false testimony of the senses? It seems as if there is any deceit occurring and if Becoming is truly nonexistent, we must acknowledge the deceitfulness of Being. And if Being is producing deceit, can we call it either timeless or unified? Moreover, the flight into pure Being is no longer protection against being deceived.

The Parmenidean project is doomed because the mind that conceives of it is always situated within the world of Becoming. The argument from motion proves the necessity of a subject situated in Becoming while the problem of deception shows the inescapability of Becoming. The subject is always coming from a particular perspective. Nietzsche makes a very similar plea against this sort of philosophizing in a passage in \textit{On the Genealogy of Morality} that was briefly touched upon above.

From now on, my philosophical colleagues, let us be more wary of the dangerous old conceptual fairy-tale which has set up a “pure will-less, painless, timeless

\textsuperscript{122} Miller, 48.
\textsuperscript{123} PTAG, 89.
subject of knowledge,” let us be wary of the tentacles of such contradictory concepts as “pure reason,” “absolute spirituality,” “knowledge as such”: – here we are asked to think an eye turned in no direction at all, an eye where the active and interpretative powers are to be suppressed, absent, but through which seeing still becomes a seeing-something, so it is an absurdity and non-concept of eye that is demanded. There is only a perspectival seeing, only a perspectival “knowing;” the more affects we are able to put into words about a thing, the more eyes, various eyes we are able to use for the same thing, the more complete will be our “concept” of the thing, our “objectivity.” But to eliminate the will completely and turn off all the emotions without exception, assuming we could: well? Would that not mean to castrate the intellect?...

Besides making a eunuch of the intellect, the philosopher who has eliminated any perspectives besides that of “pure reason,” has greatly limited our view of the object.

Moreover, and perhaps even more damningly to Parmenides, Nietzsche believes that this sort of thinking actually produces a contradiction. The eye must be seeing from somewhere and a context-free subject, such as one that is identical to Being, is essentially seeing from nowhere; as such, it does not not exist. Do note that Nietzsche attempts to play Parmenides’ advocate in the section of PTAG concerned with Anaxagoras by presenting a pseudo-Kantian answer that we are conscious of pure thinking through our inner sense, but that this consciousness is not the pure thinking itself. Nietzsche says that “it is probable that this would have been Parmenides’ way out,” but that it would be countered in a similar fashion as how the Neo-Kantian philosopher, African Spir, countered Kant. Spir is quoted as saying that “succession indubitably has objective reality” and that “semblance itself is something objectively given.”

Ultimately, Nietzsche sees the Parmenidean project as an abject failure.

---

124 On the Genealogy of Morality, III, 12.
125 PTAG, 97
126 Ibid.
Yet of all standpoints, Parmenides’ later one is the most void of content, the least fruitful, because it clarifies nothing at all: Aristotle rightfully calls him no natural philosopher. It is also the sole piece of evidence for a sharpness of the dialectical sense, but not for deep thought and contemplation; because of this, his school of eristic dialectics also declined. His first system had a more powerful, lasting effect, yet it was only an exposition of Anaximander’s dualism. Through him, specifically, the problem of Becoming came into philosophy, not through the Eleatics. That they deny it is the shortest way out, yet the least illuminating. With this ceases all observations of nature, all desire to learn from things. Then the fundamental failure remains, that the apparatus of the senses is inexplicable: it moves itself; it is in plurality. If it itself is a delusion, how can it be the final cause of a second delusion? The senses deceive, but what if the senses did not exist? How could they deceive? So plurality of the senses certainly exist, and so everything else may be moved and manifold.\textsuperscript{127}

To Nietzsche, Parmenides’ early exposition of Anaximander was a more fruitful philosophical project. The Anaximander fragment is where the problem of Becoming first finds its way into Western philosophy. At best, Parmenides’ denial of the problem is a clever bit of sophistry. At worst, it has introduced an obsession with a world beyond this one that is somehow free from deception that can never be satisfied and shall always lead people away from life. The pessimist’s dilemma cannot be solved by simply denying the tragedy of coming-to-be and passing-away.

\textsuperscript{127} \textit{Pre-Platonic Philosophers}, 87–88.
4. Conclusion

In the Preface to Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks, Nietzsche made the promise that his work would do more than had been done in previous examinations of early Greek philosophers.

I am going to tell the story – simplified– of certain philosophers. I am going to emphasize only that point of each of their systems which constitutes a slice of personality and hence belongs to that incontrovertible non-debatable evidence which it is the task of history to preserve. It is meant to be a beginning, by means of a comparative approach, toward the recovery and re-creation of certain ancient names, so that the polyphony of Greek nature at long last may resound once more. The task is to bring to light what we must ever love and honor and what no subsequent enlightenment can take away: great individual human beings.¹

The system of a philosopher is to Nietzsche an outgrowth of the soil of the philosopher’s temperament.² There was no point in examining the system as an attempt to form new philosophical propositions since the system of a philosopher can only be “wholly true” for the philosopher himself.³ Yet the system can still be of interest to the reader as long as he seeks the correct form of content from it. Nietzsche said that “whoever rejoices in great human beings will also rejoice in philosophical systems, if completely erroneous.”⁴ The joy of a philosophical system comes from the one thing that cannot be taken away from it: “personal mood, color.”⁵ From this we learn the most from a philosopher.

¹ PTAG, 24.
² Ibid
³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid. 23.
⁵ Ibid.
Nietzsche would later say, in “Schopenhauer as Educator” that “I profit from a philosopher only insofar as he can be an example.”\(^6\) This is followed by his assertion that philosophy teaches in the way “which the philosophers of Greece taught, through their bearing, what they wore and ate, and their morals, rather than by what they said, let alone by what they wrote.”\(^7\) While the talk of diet may seem to be irrelevant, Nietzsche did say the following in a note from late 1873:

> I am thinking of the first night of Diogenes\(^8\): all ancient philosophy was aimed at simplicity of life and taught a certain absence of needs, the most important remedy for all thoughts of social rebellion. In this respect the few philosophical vegetarians have accomplished more for humanity than all the more recent philosophies taken together; and as long as philosophers do not muster the courage to advocate a lifestyle structured in an entirely different way and demonstrate it by their own example, they will come to nothing.\(^9\)

The published writings and manuscript for PTAG never take diet quite so seriously, but despite this hyperbole, the character of the philosopher still seems to be a prominent theme from this period of Nietzsche’s writings (1873-74).

Yet the actual structure of PTAG is not one that merely examines anecdotes about the great philosophers in the manner that Diogenes Laertius would and then examines them, despite Nietzsche’s promise that this is what he is going to do.\(^10\) The apparent reason for Nietzsche’s departure from this format is that he is actually focusing on a philosophical problem, albeit one that is faced in different ways by philosophers of differing temperaments.

---

\(^6\) *Un timely Meditations*, 136.  
\(^7\) Ibid. 137.  
\(^8\) This refers to Diogenes of Sinope, the Cynic philosopher, not Diogenes Laertius.  
\(^9\) Unpublished, 31, 10.  
\(^10\) PTAG, 25.
According to Nietzsche, the question is the one that was posed recently by “the only serious moralist of our century,” Schopenhauer, and much earlier by the first man to ask “the profoundest problem in ethics,” Anaximander. As Nietzsche elegantly summarized it, “how can anything pass away that has the right to be?” This question entails both metaphysical and ethical concerns, examining the ontological problems of being and becoming, in addition to the problem of assigning value to existence. Nietzsche shows these two sorts of problems to be intertwined and the answer given by both is the product of the temperament of the philosopher who asks the question.

The question is undoubtedly born of the pessimistic character possessed by Anaximander and Schopenhauer, but its danger is believed by Nietzsche to be felt by any subsequent philosopher who comprehends its depths. In PTAG, Nietzsche highlights the challenge as it is posed first to Heraclitus and then Parmenides. Heraclitus walked “straight at that mystic night in which was shrouded Anaximander’s problem of becoming” and “illuminated it by a divine stroke of lightning,” an entry that highlights both Heraclitus’s heroism and the pervasive darkness that Anaximander had summoned. Parmenides’s response is not the confident stride of Heraclitus, but rather a “climb down, into the abyss of all things.” Both men though are described by Nietzsche as attempting to “escape” from Anaximander and to keep their footing in the upheaval that such a doctrine inflicts on a great thinker’s worldview. The diametrically opposed philosophies that grew from exposure to the same doctrine are the results of Heraclitus’s view of the world being “oriented from a point of view totally different

---

11 PTAG, 46 and 48.
12 Ibid. 50.
13 Ibid. 77.
14 Ibid. 71.
from that of Parmenides” and vice versa.\(^{15}\) Both were called upon to answer
Anaximander’s problem, yet they came to it from such different positions that Nietzsche asks us to imagine Parmenides meeting Heraclitus, the former repelling down into the depths of being and the latter scaling up to the heights of becoming.\(^{16}\)

As I have already shown that Nietzsche believes Anaximander’s question is essentially the same as that posed by Schopenhauer, he also believes himself to be attempting to provide an answer, a project that spans his entire oeuvre.\(^{17}\) Nietzsche’s responses to Schopenhauerian dilemmas were cleverly masked by the historical figures whom he used to represent them, but ultimately this work was an early attempt to develop his own philosophy, an attempt to examine Schopenhauer without being Schopenhauerian. Unfortunately, the first ears to hear this attempt were those of Nietzsche’s then-mentor, Richard Wagner.\(^{18}\) Although Wagner was a dedicated Schopenhauerian, he seemed to miss the importance of the work to Nietzsche’s continuing evolution as a philosopher. Rather, he saw it as a an irrelevant work of academic philology that committed the grave sin of not being about Wagner himself, in the way that Birth of Tragedy had been.\(^{19}\) Sadly, Nietzsche’s relationship to Wagner was still in such a stage that he was so taken aback by Wagner’s displeasure that he immediately abandoned PTAG and sent his “dearest Master” an obsequious letter wherein he begged Wagner to adopt him “simply as a pupil.”\(^{20}\) Attempting to select a

\(^{15}\) Ibid.
\(^{16}\) Ibid. 77.
\(^{17}\) See Chapter II.
\(^{18}\) Pletsch,164.
\(^{19}\) Ibid.
\(^{20}\) Selected Letters, 51.
topic that was more appealing to the Wagners, he began the first of the *Untimely Meditations*, “David Strauss, the Confessor and Writer.”

### 4.1 Untimely Meditations

#### 4.1.1 Three Dangers

Yet this was far from the end of Nietzsche’s interest in how philosophers face the Anaximandrian question. His third Untimely Meditation, “Schopenhauer as Educator,” resurrects the notion of a philosopher’s character being an essential component of his reaction to the pessimist’s problem. While this essay is ostensibly about Schopenhauer, Nietzsche revealed what he claims were his true intentions in *Ecce Homo*. He says “what is basically at issue is not ‘Schopenhauer as Educator’ but instead its *opposite*, ‘Nietzsche as Educator,’” thus we can interpret this as more than simply a meditation on Schopenhauer, but rather an autobiographical piece. He states, tellingly, that this essay is his “becoming” and that it marks his “pledge” as to what he will write in the future. The entire content of “Schopenhauer as Educator” is beyond the scope of this piece, but I think we see the remnants of PTAG in key places.

As we have seen, what defines a philosopher’s reaction to the problems of Anaximander is his character. Moreover, the early Greek philosophers were pure types:

---

21 Cate, 173.
22 *Ecce Homo*, The Untimely Ones, 3.
23 Ibid.
their reactions were singular because their philosophies represented single, unmixed ideas.\textsuperscript{24} Bearing in mind that each of the philosophers had a unique response to the problem of pessimism, but that future philosophers could not be monomaniacal paradigms like the Pre-Platonic philosophers, we should expect to find Nietzsche’s own response to the problem to be somewhat mixed. Furthermore, as “Schopenhauer as Educator” is giving us the account of Nietzsche himself, we can see this essay as giving us insight into Nietzsche’s continuing attempts to deal with the problem of pessimism following the abandonment of PTAG.

The most striking example of the continuation of the project of PTAG in “Schopenhauer as Educator” comes when Nietzsche gives an examination of the dangers that a philosopher such as Schopenhauer would face. He states that a philosopher of this caliber is “nothing less than a miracle” because “he was pressed upon, from within and without by the most tremendous dangers which would have crushed or shattered any weaker being.”\textsuperscript{25} Nietzsche then proceeds to describe “three constitutional dangers” that not only threatened Schopenhauer, but “threaten us all.”\textsuperscript{26} The dangers are those that befall any man who asks the most dangerous question, “What is life worth as such?”\textsuperscript{27} What I think marks these dangers as so interesting to the reader of PTAG is that each one of the dangers is one that was described as being an aspect of a different pre-Platonic philosopher in the earlier work. Thus, I shall present the three dangers and show how they correspond to the thinkers of antiquity.

\textsuperscript{24} PTAG, 34-35.
\textsuperscript{25} Untimely Meditations, 137.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid. 143.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid. 146.
4.1.2 The First Danger

Nietzsche does not begin his analysis with the danger faced by the chronologically first philosopher discussed in PTAG. Rather, he begins with the trait that he sees as the most dangerous to both himself and Schopenhauer (it is important to bear in mind that he sees this essay as “Nietzsche as Educator”), not to mention the philosopher with whom Nietzsche most closely identifies. This dangerous element is isolation, which Nietzsche had attributed to Heraclitus. Many philosophers, particularly in Germany, according to Nietzsche, for the sake of comfort nestle themselves into the institutions of the university and church. The example Nietzsche uses here is that of Kant. To maintain his “pure and truly antique attitude towards philosophy,” Schopenhauer required a certain amount of worldly resources. In other words, for Schopenhauer to remain a philosopher in the same sense that someone like Heraclitus was, he had to remain outside of the bondage of a career in academia or the church. Similar incidents occurred with Heraclitus, both with his unwillingness to draft laws for his homeland of Ephesus and his refusal to serve King Darius as a tutor. The great philosophers are unwilling to make themselves beholden to the teaching requirements of the state. It is worth mentioning here that Nietzsche at this time was still a professor at the University of Basel, so this may represent self-criticism, though when one considers his later life, the talk of isolation seems prophetic.

Nietzsche’s dissatisfaction with German academia is made particularly blatant

---

28 See chapter 2 of this work.
29 Untimely Meditations, 137.
30 Ibid. 139.
31 Diogenes Laertius, IX, 2, 12-14.
when he says that “the philosopher in Germany has more and more to unlearn,” and that we should look upon Schopenhauer as the model for living.\textsuperscript{32}

While this independence is laudable, it is also the most at risk. The man who stands apart could be destroyed by his loneliness. Nietzsche cites Hölderlin and Kleist, who succumbed to madness and suicide respectively, as forerunners who show the danger of having an independent spirit in Germany.\textsuperscript{33} Only those who had “natures of iron, such as Beethoven, Goethe, Schopenhauer, and Wagner” are able to survive the solitude that they feel, though their miens reveal “the wearying struggle that they have to engage in.”\textsuperscript{34} The Germans do not punish their outcasts with inquisitions or arrests, but rather with “unbreakable silence,” for they believe that this state of not thinking as your countrymen do is a conscious choice: “anyone who feels unhappy and solitary among them has only himself to blame.”\textsuperscript{35}

Schopenhauer is perhaps the worst victim of this sort of cultural abuse. Nietzsche claims that he had a “secret guilt on his conscience,” namely “valuing his philosophy more than his contemporaries.”\textsuperscript{36} His works were left unread, reduced to waste paper, and his followers were not gathered until the last decade of his life.\textsuperscript{37} We find a similar inability to be read in Heraclitus’s attempts to leave his own book in the temple to Artemis.\textsuperscript{38} In fact, Nietzsche attributes Schopenhauer’s personality to not only being a great philosopher, but also to one who had suffered much. Schopenhauer was “a total

\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Untimely Meditations}, 137.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid. 138.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid. 138-39.
\textsuperscript{38} Diogenes Laertius, IX, 5.
solitary," lacking a single close companion.\(^{39}\) Heraclitus too was a man lacking in friends, his close friend, Hermodorus, being driven out of Ephesus which convinced him that any good man would not be welcome in his hometown.\(^{40}\) Not unlike Schopenhauer, his lot was “to walk alone along a lonely street.”\(^{41}\) In fact, eventually he was seen as a misanthrope and left civilization for the mountains.\(^{42}\) This is not unlike how Nietzsche describes Schopenhauer, disappointed with his inability to connect with his fellow man, returning to his only true companion, “his faithful dog.”\(^{43}\)

The similarities between Nietzsche’s versions of Heraclitus and Schopenhauer continue with the imagery of philosophy being a retreat from the world.

Where there have been powerful societies, government, religions, public opinions, in short wherever there has been tyranny, there the solitary philosopher has been hated; for philosophy offers an asylum to man into which no tyranny can force its way, the inward cave, the labyrinth of the heart: and that annoys the tyrants.\(^{44}\)

Obviously when Schopenhauer retreated, it was not to a literal, external cave, but rather to the cave of his mind. The cave as a hiding place for the philosopher would later be used by Nietzsche in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, where the eponymous hero spent ten years in a mountain cave to enjoy solitude.\(^{45}\) As we have seen, the philosophical hermitage of Zarathustra bears a striking resemblance to that of Heraclitus.\(^{46}\) The external exile of Heraclitus is translated, in an era when even the mountains are not distant enough, into a

---

\(^{39}\) *Untimely Meditations*, 139.

\(^{40}\) Diogenes Laertius, IX, 3.

\(^{41}\) PTAG, 66.

\(^{42}\) Diogenes Laertius, IX, 3.

\(^{43}\) *Untimely Meditations*, 139.

\(^{44}\) *Untimely Meditations*, 139.

\(^{45}\) *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Prologue, 1.

\(^{46}\) See chapter 2 of this work.
purely internal exile. Of course, this sort of inner retreat is not at all unknown to the Ephesian philosopher who went in search of himself.\footnote{Heraclitus, B101.}

This sort of exile will rarely be unchallenged, so the philosopher still has some ties to his countrymen. In the later works of Nietzsche, this would become a recurring motif. Notable examples include the madman who declares the death of God but has come “too early,” and Zarathustra in his discussions with the townspeople who mistake his description of the overman as an advertisement for a tightrope walker.\footnote{Gay Science, 125 and Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Prologue, 3, respectively.} In “Schopenhauer as Educator,” though, the encounter between the philosopher and the non-philosopher is set up as a much more antagonistic affair. The solitary philosopher bears a “cloud of melancholy,” which Nietzsche sees as the product of being forced to present a false face to the world.\footnote{Untimely Meditations, 139.} Note that Heraclitus was described as a “mob-reviler” by Timon and as a sufferer of melancholia by Theophrastus.\footnote{Diogenes Laertius, IX, 6.} Yet Nietzsche continues the Heraclitean imagery by speaking of how the “perpetual bitter resentment of this constraint fills them with volcanic menace.”\footnote{Untimely Meditations, 140.} Nietzsche says that these men were driven “so deep into themselves that when they re-emerge it is always as a volcanic eruption.”\footnote{Ibid.} Heraclitus, of course, is one who was definitely acerbic to his fellow Ephesians. He suggested that the lot of them should be put to death and that the city be left to the young boys.\footnote{Diogenes Laertius, IX, 2.} Short of giving Heraclitus volcanic eruptions, Nietzsche does describe him as
being “nauseated” by his fellow man as he “looks outward dead and icy” upon his lesser countrymen.\textsuperscript{54}

### 4.1.3 The Second Danger

The second “danger in whose shadow Schopenhauer grew up” was “despair of the truth.”\textsuperscript{55} To any reader of Schopenhauer, this danger should seem readily apparent. We have already examined his pessimistic views in depth, but it should perhaps be repeated that even Bryan Magee, one of Schopenhauer’s greatest living commentators, said that his worldview was “totally bleak, without comfort.”\textsuperscript{56} Nietzsche attributes this bleakness to the study of Kant: it “attends every thinker who sets out from the Kantian philosophy, provided he is a vigorous and whole man in suffering and desire and not a mere clattering thought-and-calculating machine.”\textsuperscript{57} In fact, Nietzsche does not seem to think that the full weight of Kantian philosophy has been felt in Europe. Otherwise, its effects would be immediately visible. He states that if “Kant ever should begin to exercise any wide influence we shall be aware of it in the form of a gnawing and disintegrating skepticism.”\textsuperscript{58} The exception would be the “most active and noble spirits” who would despair from the truth, such as Kleist, who lamented Kant’s philosophy before his suicide.\textsuperscript{59} The advantage of Kleist, though, was that he understood that philosophy touches upon the “most sacred part” of one’s being.\textsuperscript{60}

---

\textsuperscript{54} PTAG, 67.
\textsuperscript{55} Untimely Meditations, 140.
\textsuperscript{56} Magee, 166.
\textsuperscript{57} Untimely Meditations, 140.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid. 140-41.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid. 141.
Schopenhauer is able to accomplish a similar depth with his work, without succumbing so deeply to the gloom of existence that it leads to his annihilation. Rather, Schopenhauer gives us insight into how we deal with the problem of philosophical despair.

And yet this must be done if we are to understand what, after Kant, Schopenhauer can be to us – namely the leader who leads us from the depths of skeptical gloom or criticizing renunciation up to the heights of tragic contemplation, to the nocturnal sky and its stars extended endlessly above us, and who was himself the first to take his path. His greatness lies in having set up before him a picture of life as a whole, in order to interpret it as a whole; while even the most astute heads cannot be dissuaded from the error that one can achieve a more perfect interpretation if one minutely investigates the paint with which this picture is produced and the material upon which it is painted; perhaps with the result that one concludes that it is a quite intricately woven canvas with paint upon it which is chemically inexplicable. To understand the picture one must divine the painter – that Schopenhauer knew.  

In this passage, we see that the project of understanding philosophers through their personalities that Nietzsche had initiated in PTAG was not abandoned, even if the book had been. It appears as if the way that we can deal with the question of the value of existence is to divine ourselves as the painters of value.

The problem of Anaximander, like all great philosophical problems, must be understood not only as a problem on a cosmic level, but also one on a personal level. Nietzsche states that what every great philosophy says to us is that “this is the picture of all life and learn from it the meaning of your own life.” Yet, the reverse is also true:

---

61 Ibid.
62 PTAG, 25.
63 Untimely Meditations, 141.
64 Ibid.
“only read your own life and comprehend from it the hieroglyphics of universal life.”  

To master Schopenhauer’s philosophy, one must first approach it from an individual level, understanding his own “want and misery.” This understanding will reveal to the nascent philosopher that his previous attempts at attaining happiness through wealth, esteem, or even learning had ultimately been in vain. The only escape in the Schopenhauerian worldview is the renunciation of the ego. By understanding this, one can also understand the suffering of the world and the role of eternal justice. I believe that Nietzsche here has made a bit of a step backward from PTAG. While Nietzsche leaves Anaximander in the gloomy shadows that result from such a worldview, he does not merely stop there. Through other philosophical temperaments, Nietzsche shows that the renunciation of the will is not the only way to deal with the problem of pessimism. Some ways, like that of Parmenides, are misguided; others, like the Heraclitean solution, allow one to transcend the Anaximandrian and Schopenhauerian positions. Yet, by choosing Schopenhauer as a figure of reverence, rather than as an interlocutor who must be debated, Nietzsche loses some of the nuance of PTAG.

4.1.4 The Third Danger

The third and final danger that Nietzsche describes in “Schopenhauer as Educator” is petrification. Of the three, this one receives the shortest treatment from Nietzsche, taking

---

65 Ibid. 141-42.
66 Ibid. 142.
67 Ibid.
68 PTAG, 50.
only a single paragraph. Nietzsche nevertheless states that it “lay concealed in the whole structure and skeleton” of Schopenhauer’s being.\textsuperscript{69} The precursor to the danger of petrification is a limitation that all human beings perceive in their own inner being. Nietzsche sees this self-critical stance as being the “root of all culture” as one longs to be a saint or a genius.\textsuperscript{70} Where this longing is absent, we find sterile, repulsive creations.\textsuperscript{71} The man who no longer longs for the correction of the limitation becomes petrified, a danger to which Schopenhauer’s nature was vulnerable because of “a strange and deadly dualism.”\textsuperscript{72} Schopenhauer was both a man who sought to quiet his longings, but also a man who was filled with “burning longing.”\textsuperscript{73} While he may have sought an escape from the vicissitudes of Becoming, Schopenhauer never succumbed—as so many others did—to denying its existence.

The corresponding figure to the third danger in PTAG would be Parmenides. Recall that Nietzsche referred to Parmenides’s nature as “wholly petrified by logical rigidity and almost transformed into a thinking machine.”\textsuperscript{74} The reoccurrence of the imagery of petrification does not appear to be accidental. In both instances, Nietzsche is describing someone who is tormented by the problems of Becoming and pessimism, and therefore tempted to do away with Becoming altogether. Schopenhauer’s dualism is so dangerous because it offers a chance to escape from this world of impermanence and to be an unchanging, otherworldly thing. Petrification is the lot of those who have accepted the Parmenidean escape from the Anaximandrian problem. Although Nietzsche posits

\textsuperscript{69} Untimely Meditations, 142.
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid. 143.
\textsuperscript{74} PTAG, 70.
Heraclitus’s solution as superior to Schopenhauer’s acceptance of pessimism, he can at least credit Schopenhauer with not totally fleeing the real world by succumbing to Eleatic temptation.

Having made allusions to his earlier work on early Greek philosophy, Nietzsche ends this section of “Schopenhauer as Educator” with an explicit reference to a figure whose section was never completed in PTAG: Empedocles. Having explained the “constitutional dangers” that Schopenhauer faced, he goes on to describe the dangers that are inherent in the age. The health of a philosopher’s age, according to Nietzsche, lends weight to his verdict on the question of the value of existence. Nietzsche says that the drive for truth will always seek the answer to the question “what is existence worth as such.” The ancient Greeks had a real advantage over nineteenth century Germans in that the Greeks lived much fuller lives, even lives of “luxuriant perfection” and thus were able to judge existence as such. The fact that they lived such lives makes their pessimistic diagnosis all the stronger: they are not judging life by the accidents that cause it to fall short, but rather in all of its voluptuousness.

This argument is lifted directly from PTAG, where Nietzsche made it at greater length.

The judgment of those philosophers as to life and existence in general means so much more than any modern judgment, for they had life in lavish perfection before their eyes, whereas the feeling of our thinkers is confused by our split desire for freedom, beauty and greatness on the one hand and our drive toward truth on the other, a drive which asks merely “And what is life worth after all?”

---

75 Untimely Meditations, 144.
76 Ibid. 145.
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid.
79 PTAG, 33.
The Greeks were more open to this terrifying possibility than modern culture, not seeing the philosopher as being like a comet, coming out of nowhere and inspiring terror, but rather a sun around which their culture can revolve. Nietzsche at this point in his career believed that “absolute knowledge leads to pessimism,” meaning that only a healthy civilization would be able to handle the knowledge brought forth by philosophy. In fact, in the same note where he made that remark, he gives philosophy the job of drawing knowledge into “an artistic conception of the world,” with art being the only true “remedy” for pessimism.

4.1.5 Empedocles

At this point, Nietzsche invokes the answer of Empedocles as the quintessential response to the question of “what is existence worth as such.” Nietzsche’s choice of Empedocles is interesting for several reasons. His given reason for choosing him is that Empedocles lived at what Nietzsche saw as the height of Greek civilization and thus, as noted above, was in the perfect position to serve as the arbiter of the value of existence. Nietzsche’s choice of Empedocles is made more problematic because Empedocles was one of the figures whom Nietzsche had planned to include in PTAG, but whom he did not finish because of Wagner’s rejection. Luckily, his basic outline for the chapter still exists,

---

80 Ibid. 34.
81 Unpublished, 19, 52.
82 Ibid.
83 Untimely Meditations, 145.
84 Ibid. Nietzsche gives Empedocles’s dates as variable, his birth ranging from 500 to 475 BCE and his death in either 415 or 416 BCE in Pre-Platonic, 107. Here Nietzsche also claims that Aristotle places Anaxagoras before Empedocles because of his “overriding resentment against Empedocles.”
though it is a bit sparse.\textsuperscript{85} What stands out for the subject at hand is the conception of the world as “one enormous living organism,” which is split asunder by the forces of strife, but reconnected, albeit “in a furious haste,” by love, which is most strongly represented as “sexual love.”\textsuperscript{86} This is compared to the fable of Aristophanes in Plato’s \textit{Symposium}, as a “longing for oneness” that has been lost.\textsuperscript{87} If we expand our focus to include Nietzsche’s lecture notes, we find that this is a “world of discord, of sorrow, of oppositions,” but that a different world order is possible through Aphrodite, whom Nietzsche sees as representing “the life of sexuality.”\textsuperscript{88} When describing Empedocles’s notion of strife, Nietzsche makes a point to describe the entire process as “purposeless,” a blind striving system, that while ordered, has no ultimate goal.\textsuperscript{89} This, according to Nietzsche, has been the basis for subsequent materialist worldviews, particularly Darwinism.\textsuperscript{90}

The language in Nietzsche’s description of Empedocles is distinctly Schopenhauerian, which should come as little surprise. Schopenhauer had quoted Empedocles’s description of strife as he introduced his bleak view of the constant conflict that the will creates.\textsuperscript{91} Nietzsche’s equation of Aphrodite with the sexual impulse continues the identification of the Will with Empedocles’s forces, as Schopenhauer saw the sex drive as being the strongest affirmation of the will to life.\textsuperscript{92} In fact, Empedocles was the figure to whom Schopenhauer gave the most thorough description in the chapter

\textsuperscript{85} Unpublished, 23, 30-34.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid. 23, 34.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{88} \textit{Pre-Platonic}, 114.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid. 116.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{91} \textit{World as Will and Presentation}, Volume I, 175.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid. 389.
of his “Fragments for the History of Philosophy” regarding “Pre-Socratic Philosophy.”

Schopenhauer seems quite impressed with Empedocles’s ability to divine that the cosmic force at play here is not Anaxagoras’s mind, but rather Will. What Schopenhauer finds most impressive about Empedocles, however, is his “decided pessimism.”

Schopenhauer sees Empedocles’s philosophy as a forerunner to Plato’s analogy of the cave and the Christian “vale of tears.” In fact, Empedocles’s asceticism, vegetarianism, and belief in metempsychosis suggests to Schopenhauer that the earlier philosopher was closer to “Brahmanism and Buddhism” than the current trend of “optimistic, Jewish-Protestant rationalism.”

What Schopenhauer is showing with this idiosyncratic characterization of Empedocles is that the very same question that Nietzsche is concerned with in PTAG—namely “What is existence worth as such?”—has been a central one in the history of philosophy since the beginning. Schopenhauer recognized Empedocles as responding to this question, giving the same basic answer as Schopenhauer himself. Nietzsche managed to take this problem a few steps back, showing that it was a problem for Anaximander, Heraclitus, and Parmenides, all of whom Schopenhauer largely ignored.

Thus while Schopenhauer recognized that he was continuing a long tradition in the history of philosophy, he was unaware of some of the roots of the problem, roots that Nietzsche later examined. Of course, Nietzsche’s interests do not lie in merely giving an academic history of the problem. The preface to PTAG lays out the plan of not giving us dead systems of these philosophers, but what in them one “must ever love and honor,”

---

93 Parerga and Paralipomena, Volume I, 32-40.
94 Ibid. 34.
95 Ibid. 35.
96 Ibid.
97 Ibid.
their greatness as human beings and their personalities.\textsuperscript{98} Accordingly, Nietzsche deliberately limits the number of doctrines that are described in the text.\textsuperscript{99}

### 4.2 The Problem of Anaximander

Therefore, I see the continuation of PTAG’s project in “Schopenhauer as Educator.” Nietzsche spends very little time in this meditation describing Schopenhauer’s metaphysics, epistemology, or opinions about any of the minutiae that are scattered through his works. Rather, this is another instance of Nietzsche writing about the personality and temperament of a great philosopher (or two if you consider the autobiographical nature of the work). The similarities that I have highlighted between PTAG and “Schopenhauer as Educator” show that Nietzsche had not only retained the themes of the former work, but that he saw them as perpetual issues with which philosophers deal. This view continued throughout his career, culminating in his declaration in “The Problem of Socrates” that “the wisest men in every age have reached the same conclusion about life: it’s no good.”\textsuperscript{100} Note that here Nietzsche is speaking rhetorically, as we have seen that neither he, nor Heraclitus could be said to have reached that conclusion, though both the pessimists such as Anaximander and the otherworldly thinkers in the Eleatic tradition had. Moreover, “The Problem of Socrates” continues the theme of personality influencing thought, saying that this condemnation of existence comes from the mouths of the wisest men full of “doubt,” “melancholy,” “exhaustion

\textsuperscript{98} PTAG, 24. Nietzsche’s emphasis.

\textsuperscript{99} Ibid. 25.

\textsuperscript{100} Twilight of the Idols, “The Problem of Socrates,” 1 (162).
with life,” and “resistance to life.” The second danger of “Schopenhauer as Educator,” the Anaximandrian danger, has overtaken them.

In the following paragraph, Nietzsche makes one of his final judgments on the question of the value of existence:

Judgments, value judgments on life, for or against, can ultimately never be true: they have value only as symptoms, they can be taken seriously only as symptoms, – in themselves, judgments like these are stupidities. You really have to stretch out your fingers and make a concentrated attempt to grasp this amazing piece of subtlety, that the value of life cannot be estimated. Not by the living, who are an interested party, a bone of contention even, and not judges, not by the dead for other reasons. – It is an objection to a philosopher if he sees a problem with the value of life, it is a question mark on his wisdom, an un-wisdom.

We see here that Nietzsche has continued the project of PTAG, identifying the philosophical position of those who speak on the value of life as being not a verifiable truth statement, but rather a symptom of the diseases of temperament which inflict them. This formulation of the argument is more severe than any found in his early work, but it is still compatible with the lessons of PTAG. Thus, we could see the Heraclitean position as being the sort of minor inflammation that accompanies an infection, but which ultimately allows its sufferer to live a mostly fulfilled life. While the answer may not necessarily be true, it at least allows for flourishing. The Anaximandrian and Parmenidean philosophers, on the other hand, are sufferers of chronic and malignant diseases. The former is weighed down by the worst sort of melancholia; the latter’s spite for the world has reached such epic proportions that he has removed himself from it.

101 Ibid.
102 Ibid. 2 (162-63).
Although *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* was never completed, it still managed to give Nietzsche the opportunity to explore some of his richest philosophical ideas. The examination of philosophical archetypes and exploration of the problem of pessimism featured in this book would re-emerge in his later works, making PTAG an important experiment with his mature ideas. Nietzsche’s readings of the early Greek philosophers were undoubtedly idiosyncratic, but they allowed him to use these enigmatic figures to shed new light on the philosophical problems that were his own life-long themes: especially the value of existence and the psychological roots of philosophical positions. While Wagner may not have been able to see the value of the nascent manuscript, PTAG is an important work for any serious scholar of Nietzsche and the problem of pessimism.
Bibliography


