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**SLIM PICKINGS AND RUSSIAN DOLLS?  
PRESOCRATIC FRAGMENTS  
IN PERIPATETIC SOURCES AFTER ARISTOTLE**

IN ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY the fragmentary text is a crucial element of transmission and scholarly discussion, and requires special attention for its complex relation to a lost *concrete* whole (i.e. the actual text on a physical carrier) and a presumed *doctrinal* whole (the set of ideas arranged into a theoretical construct).<sup>1</sup> They are, so to speak, defined as much by the absence of text as they are by the presence of it. The three main points I will make are interconnected and especially relevant for the Presocratic material preserved in Peripatetic sources after Aristotle: firstly, I will ask what we mean by ‘fragment’ as a way of focusing briefly on the underlying metaphor of pieces broken off from a material object – a notion which I believe can sometimes be misleading; secondly, I will recall how the long-standing categories of Diels (‘testimonium’, ‘fragment’ and ‘imitation’, labelled A/B/C in Diels-Kranz) have become criticised as no longer adequate, where I will focus especially on the interpretation of testimonia as the more problematic category. These two points constitute part I of the paper.

<sup>1</sup> After decades of engaging with philosophical fragments it was a great pleasure to present this short paper on philosophical fragments to fellow-fragmentologists (a term I first heard from Dr Paul KEYSER).

The third and last point is more methodological and concerns the question how important the doctrinal entanglement of a short passage is within its context (or source author) and how ideological agendas may play a crucial role in the reporting of Presocratic ideas. Here I draw attention to the multi-layered character of cases where fragments within fragments complicate further our attempt to interpret the materials: for example, when Parmenides is reported in Simplicius (sixth century AD) via Alexander of Aphrodisias (second century AD). Overall, we seem to be much concerned with *reliability*. I also ask the reader to keep in mind the question mark in my title.

## I

### TRADITIONAL LABELS AND ALTERNATIVE TERMS

The risks of inferring meaning from limited or no evidence are well known to all dealing with fragmentary texts. A number of common problems and insights were shared at the conference across genres and sub-disciplines – and they will be mostly the result of the fact that it is often extremely difficult to deal with fragments. But the differences may be of even greater interest. Starting with the question ‘what is a philosophical fragment?’ we can qualify, and possibly sharpen up, the generic notion we all have – a piece of text originating in a larger whole which is no longer extant. I will come back to issues of terminology in the second part of the paper, when I try to frame my comments and illustrate my interpretation with examples.

A bit of background on Diels first will help to set the wider context. While the study of philosophical fragments did not begin with Hermann Diels (Henri Estienne, or Stephanus, already published a collection of what he titled *Poesis philosophica* in 1573<sup>2</sup>), the publication of his *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (first edition 1903 in one volume) was a landmark moment

<sup>2</sup> See O. PRIMAVESI, ‘Henri II Estienne über philosophische Dichtung: eine Fragmentsammlung als Beitrag zu einer poetologischen Kontroverse’, [in:] IDEM (ed.), *The Presocratics from the Latin Middle Ages to Hermann Diels*, Stuttgart 2011, pp. 157–196.

in classical scholarship and a very influential one. As the first comprehensive collection of Presocratic fragments (which appeared in future editions with translations), the mature two-volume work made available, in convenient form and for the first time, the most important remains of the early Greek philosophers from Thales to Democritus.<sup>3</sup> It was in fact made possible only after producing several other grand works, the so-called *Doxographi Graeci* and the edition of the Platonist commentaries on Aristotle under the aegis of the Berlin Academy.<sup>4</sup> Those works had given Diels greater insight into the wide range of sources for the Greek philosophical tradition and their transmission. Moreover, the edition of the late Platonist commentaries on Aristotle (a part of the *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* series) made Diels realise that many Presocratic texts were *quoted* in one form or another, which was remarkable, since we are dealing with long commentaries separated by at least ten centuries from the quoted authors. While overseeing the Berlin edition of the commentaries from 1882 onwards, Diels mined the works successfully for fragmentary texts of Greek philosophers, especially those of the Presocratics in Simplicius.<sup>5</sup>

The modern notion of a fragment in ancient philosophy became thus strongly determined by Diels and his method of selecting and editing the

<sup>3</sup> Note that the first edition was, in fact, in one volume, but DIELS immediately realised its inadequacy. Although it is of interest to note how the idea of an edition of Simplicius, whose work preserves many earlier philosophical fragments, *and* of a collection of Presocratic philosophers was not original, but already conceived by a group of Dutch scholars, in particular SIMON KARSTEN, aided by the important work of Carel Gabriel COBET who collated the manuscripts of Simplicius. F. W. A. MULLACH, *Fragmenta philosophorum Graecorum*, [I] *Poeseos philosophicae caeterorumque ante Socratem philosophorum quae supersunt*, Paris 1860, S. KARSTEN, *Simplicii commentarius in IV libros Aristotelis de caelo*, Utrecht 1865 and H. RITTER & L. PRELLER, *Historia philosophiae Graecae*, 7th ed., Gotha 1888 went before but were not as comprehensive and not based on the new edition of the Simplician commentaries (KARSTEN only did the *in De caelo* but his valuable contribution is reflected in DIELS' app. crit. of the *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* edition). See also n. 4.

<sup>4</sup> The work was a breakthrough, and possibly the point at which classics and ancient philosophy started to go their own ways. On the achievement of DIELS see J. MANSFELD & D. T. RUNIA, *Aëtiana: Intellectual Context and Method of a Doxographer*, I–II, Leiden 1997–2009.

<sup>5</sup> He decided early on to produce a collection of Presocratic fragments. See J. MANSFELD, 'Hermann Diels (1848–1922)', [in:] PRIMAVESI, *The Presocratics* (cit. n. 2), pp. 389–420.

Presocratics, in particular his cut-and-paste method which often robbed the passages of their immediate context. Diels had refined his ideas about what constitutes a good fragment collection early on in reviews on the work of others.<sup>6</sup> In his own edition he chose to distinguish ‘fragments’ from ‘testimonia’ in a way that originated partly in Ingram Bywater’s edition of Heraclitus and partly in the series in which he published his *Poetarum philosophorum fragmenta (PPF)*.<sup>7</sup> But the term ‘Fragmente’ is not consistently used by Diels: it not only refers to the overall collection but also to the *verbatim* quotations (B fragments). The sequence A (testimonia), B (‘quotations’) is not obvious: why he placed testimonia first while we intuitively tend to be more interested in *verbatim* quotations is not clear, except as a traditional move (it was Bywater’s arrangement in his Heraclitus edition). The modern belief that *verbatim* brings us closer to the author in fact undervalues paraphrases of doctrine. The distinction has been criticised by scholars<sup>8</sup> and it is clear that the labels do not represent a hierarchy of importance but one of ancient custom already found in Diogenes Laertius, that is, first testimonia on life and work, then what is known from the works (including titles and quotations), then, if present, later influence or echoes.

For some years now I have been pondering how a closer scrutiny of the testimonia may partly reinstate them as worthwhile evidence (and more reliable than Diels suggested or implied) and to examine to what extent their presumed lack of reliability has any basis in the evidence. The idea is to pay attention to features of the texts that may defuse the notion of ‘testimonia’ as used by Diels as potentially misleading, or just wrong. To put it differently (and even more provocatively): *ipsissima verba* may well be a modern scholar’s preferred treasure, but they do not neces-

<sup>6</sup> MANSFELD, ‘Hermann Diels’ (cit. n. 5), pp. 389–399.

<sup>7</sup> I. BYWATER, *Heracliti Ephesii fragmenta*, Oxford 1877; H. Diels, *Poetarum philosophorum fragmenta* [= *Poetarum Graecorum fragmenta* 3.1], Berlin 1901.

<sup>8</sup> E.g. A. LAKS, ‘Du témoignage comme fragment’, [in:] G. W. MOST (ed.), *Collecting Fragments. Fragmente sammeln* [= *Aporemata* 1], Göttingen 1997, pp. 237–272; IDEM, ‘Éditer l’influence? Remarques sur la section C des “Fragmente der Vorsokratiker” de Diels-Kranz’, [in:] W. BURKERT, L. GEMELLI, E. MATELLI & L. ORELLI (eds), *Fragmentsammlungen philosophischer Texte. Le raccolte dei frammenti di filosofi antichi* [= *Aporemata* 3], Göttingen 1998, pp. 89–105.

sarily inform us better about a philosopher's ideas and doctrine than indirectly presented sources in all cases. Short quotations may be accompanied by clarifying paraphrase in such a way that the latter is more easily understood than the former, especially if we lack context (often still available to the quoting author).

Here we can, I think, appeal to at least two general principles: (1) it is quite plausible to maintain that *prose* writers *can* be paraphrased without loss of the core meaning; sometimes even linguistic and stylistic features are preserved; (2) moreover, the *verbatim* utterances can be over-valued simply for the Presocratics, because they can be determined by their immediate rhetorical context and do not always give a straightforward account of the theory in question. To add a further perspective, Harold Tarrant suggested long ago that many of the written versions of Presocratic philosophy have a certain 'sound-bite quality', because they were used to attract an audience; once drawn in, the potential followers would be given a far more detailed account which remained 'esoteric', so to speak.<sup>9</sup>

Let us consider a text on a point of terminology. My first text (T.1) is a good example of how Diels' categories relegate a good descriptive paraphrase to the so-called A-fragments (testimonia), while the information and paratextual signals suggest a strong link to Parmenides' ideas.

[T.1] That he [= Parmenides] also makes sensation come about by the contrary in itself, is clear in the words in which he says [*ἐν οἷς φησὶ*] that *the corpse does not perceive light and heat and voice because fire is absent*, but that *it does perceive cold and silence and the opposites*; and that *overall all that exists possesses some [power of] knowing*.

(Theophr. *Sens.* 4 = Parmenid. A46 Diels-Kranz; transl. mine)

The paraphrase is introduced with a significant verb form (*φησὶ*) which Theophrastus almost always uses to introduce statements taken from the author under discussion (here *ἐν οἷς φησὶ* 'the words in which he says ...'). It is common knowledge that the conventions for quotation

<sup>9</sup> H. TARRANT, 'Orality and Plato's narrative dialogues', [in:] I. WORTHINGTON (ed.), *Voice into Text: Orality and Literacy in Ancient Greece*, Leiden 1996, p. 135.

were extremely variable in antiquity, since they are clearly not based on a print and reading culture as has evolved since the introduction of the printing press in the fifteenth century. As Ian Kidd already remarked, ancient authors ‘had no moral obligation, it appears, for precise, unbiased, untwisted reference’.<sup>10</sup>

It would seem, then, that the very modern concept of reliability cannot and should not be imposed on these materials in such a rigorous way. The distinction between paraphrase and quotation may initially have been intended as one between indirect and direct representation of the words; their reliability is compromised in both (but in different ways). We should also not ignore the immediate *context* and *agenda* of the source authors.<sup>11</sup>

So much for the background of the Presocratic fragments. Clearly the constraints on what makes a passage a fragment are set by the context, our own notion of incompleteness and the fact that scholars before us have already labeled them as fragment. Of course another problem of the modern edition of Diels has been criticised, namely that his ‘cut-and-paste’ method for selecting ‘Fragmente’ was too narrow.<sup>12</sup> Should we continue to use *fragmenta* and *apospasmata* when both terms suggest the sense of ‘breaking off’ from a larger whole, as if textual fragments are analogues to a potshard or piece of glass?

The metaphor seems inadequate and even misleading. The relationship between part and whole is not like that of pot and shard. In the latter case a shard shares very basic features such as material and colour with the pot, and what goes missing is mostly the overall shape of the object. Such parts are more like fractals, much like the whole in crucial properties. In the case of philosophical texts (especially prose), semantic and ideological entanglements between parts and the whole create a far more complex relationship, and much more can be lost than the simple outline of the whole, if we only have a small part (this point of size is of course

<sup>10</sup> I. KIDD, ‘What is a Posidonian fragment?’, [in:] MOST, *Collecting Fragments* (cit. n. 8), pp. 225–236.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 230.

<sup>12</sup> MANSFELD & RUNIA, *Aëtiana*, I (cit. n. 4); see also D. T. RUNIA, ‘Aristotle and Theophrastus conjoined in the writings of Cicero’, [in:] W. W. FORTENBAUGH & P. STEINMETZ (eds), *Cicero’s Knowledge of the Peripatos*, New Brunswick, NJ 1989, pp. 23–25.

also a difficulty in itself). Even if these considerations seem rather peripheral to the main issues, I would maintain that some of these associated meanings play a subtle role in the usage of these terms.

It is my contention that in quite a number of cases, indirect speech can be *a minimally modified form of direct speech*, which echoes much of the original *content* or at least clarifies it in a helpful way. A contributing factor in the process is that often original words of the reported author remain present in the rewording or paraphrase: this can be illustrated by the manner in which some editors of ancient texts print certain words in different type-face (in German the so-called *Sperrdruck*), in which the letters of the words are spaced out more. This practice is already visible in Hans von Arnim's *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta* (SVF; 1903–1905), the fragment edition of the Old Stoa.

Unfortunately, Diels' approach in guessing what 'original' words are is rather erratic (apart from clear dialect forms). For comparison we may look at Stratton's edition with translation of Theophrastus' *De sensu* in which the occasional *Sperrdruck* is used in the Greek; in this practice he partly follows Diels' *FVS* (not *Doxographi Graeci*), which contains the first modern edition of *De sensu*, but partly makes his own choices.<sup>13</sup>

To reflect the variety of the modes of transmission we will have to consider a greater variety of terms (I suggest a few below). It is worth mentioning here that Whittaker in a little noticed conference paper has shown for the Platonic tradition that certain types of so-called 'errors' or imprecise 'quotations' – such as changed word order or minute variations – can be resolved by appealing to deliberate variation.<sup>14</sup>

Let me finally move to some examples of fragments. I can of course not deal with all the surviving material in the post-Aristotelian Peripatetics, ranging from Theophrastus in the fourth century BC to Alexander of Aphrodisias (second/third century AD). In the Appendix there is a first

<sup>13</sup> See G. M. STRATTON, 'Theophrastus on the senses', [in:] IDEM, *Theophrastus and the Greek Physiological Psychology before Aristotle*, London 1917, §§25, 30, 44, 45, 50, 51, 54, 54–56, 58.

<sup>14</sup> J. WHITTAKER, 'The value of indirect tradition in the establishment of Greek philosophical texts or the art of misquotation', [in:] J. N. GRANT (ed.), *Editing Greek and Latin Texts*, New York 1989, pp. 63–95.



selection of cases, but in what follows I will confine myself to a few obvious features such as context, conventions, and quotation habits.

## II

### FRAGMENTS IN PERIPATETIC SOURCES

The reportage of Presocratic ideas and words in Peripatetic works is in the first instance based on Theophrastus. If we survey the Peripatetic sources after Aristotle more broadly (see Appendix), the distribution is rather one-sided, but of interest nonetheless. I have selected several examples from Theophrastus, but there are further slim pickings with some substance in other school members and later commentators. What I will aim for is to extract some similarities in the way in which these fragments within fragments are presented. I will argue that these similarities allow us to clarify further the major Peripatetic influence on the transmission of the Presocratic material, because in the surviving material ranging from Theophrastus to Alexander of Aphrodisias we can detect patterns of selection and usage. These two mechanisms, selection and usage, point to a specific fingerprint of Peripatetic methodology.

The most elaborate source, Theophrastus' *De sensu*, reports Presocratic views on sense perception occasionally in *ipsissima verba* but mostly in indirect speech. The verb forms to introduce such quotations, near-quotations and paraphrases are, as I indicated with T.1, λέγει and φησίν. Both forms express a conviction of closeness to the author's words (§18 etc.): φησίν seems to introduce quotations or paraphrase close to quotation, whereas λέγει (+ acc. c. inf.) seems to be used for indirect reporting in broad paraphrase. I have tried to reflect this nuance in a new translation of *De sensu* by rendering φησίν as 'says' and λέγει (περὶ) as 'speaks about', λέγει as 'maintains' (for a clear exception, see §51). The statistics for *De sensu* are highly suggestive on this point: φησίν occurs 28 times and is clearly linked to quotation in many cases (in §4 text is quoted: ἐν οἷς φησιν; more emphatic are cases such as καθάπερ φησίν (*Sens.* 13, 14, 16, 18, 54), while λέγει occurs 21 times and is far more linked to indirect reporting and paraphrase in Peripatetic terminology.

As to the characteristics of the reportage in Peripatetic sources, we may distinguish several aspects, which I have organised below marked out by several criteria in nine brief passages. For instance, I present a case in which a Peripatetic agenda is implicitly applied to the theories of predecessors (a. doctrinal ‘entanglement’):

**[T.2]** How can we discriminate with regard to the other senses by way of the similar? For [the phrase] ‘the similar’ is not well defined [ἀόριστον]. For *not by sound [do we perceive] sound nor odour by odour nor the others by what is kindred to them, but rather, so to speak, by their opposites.*

(Theophr. *Sens.* 19)

In this case the negative approach to the main thesis of Empedocles and others who support a claim that we perceive by way of similarity between organ and object is undercut by the opposite view which Theophrastus himself adheres to. Note the qualifying phrase ‘rather, *so to speak*, by their opposites’, a sign of caution typical for his own view shining through.

Closely connected to this point are the next two aspects, doctrinal entanglement linked to the presence of Peripatetic agendas (b. types of questions with doctrinal subtext):

**[T.3]** Is the theory of perception comprehensive? What is the sequence of senses?

Theophr. *Sens.* 5: Πλάτων δὲ ἐπὶ πλεόν ἤπται τῶν κατὰ μέρος ‘Plato touched to a greater extent on the individual senses’; contrast *Sens.* 9 (Emped.): περὶ δὲ γεύσεως ... οὔτε πῶς οὔτε δι’ ἃ γίνονται ‘on taste ... nor how nor through what they come about’.

Here the overall Peripatetic scope is driving the questions that Theophrastus asks of the theories at issue. A secondary criterion attached to this is the idea that it matters in what sequence the senses are discussed.

Next we may review a couple of examples in which the late commentators have developed genre-related conventions which assist in creating a good impression on the reader (c. genre conventions of quotation, e.g. in commentary):

**[T.4]** Alexander of Aphrodisias: source provenance and quotation style  
*Περὶ Παρμενίδου καὶ τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ καὶ Θεόφραστος ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ Περὶ τῶν φυσικῶν οὕτως λέγει 'τούτῳ δὲ ἐπιγενόμενος Παρμενίδης Πύρητος ὁ Ἐλεάτης' ...* [N.B. quotation marks as in *CAG*]

(Alex. Aphr. in *Metaph.*, *CAG* 1.31.7–9)

Theophrastus, too, in the first book of his work *On the Natural Philosophers*, has this to say about Parmenides and his doctrine: 'This man ... was succeeded by Parmenides of Elea, son of Pyres ...'<sup>15</sup>

**[T.5]** Simplicius; justifying quotation

To make sure that I do not seem to be making empty claims [*κενὰς μακαρίας*], I shall give a short quotation [*παραθήσομαι*] from Empedocles' poem.

(Simpl. in *Cael.*, *CAG* 7.140.30–32)

In these examples the authors present quotations with some precision and justify their approach. This advanced methodology is not there to mislead, because a systematic review of the use of particular verbs allows us to identify meanings with a clear intention of staying close to the original.

Finally, a few more examples of quotation habits peculiar to the author are worth considering, since such habits are an important aspect of contextual or paratextual signs (d. authorial conventions of quotation):

**[T.6]** Theophr. *Sens.* 18: indirect speech (paraphrase after *φησί*, *λέγει*) and/or original glosses: *καθάπερ φησί*, a signal that the paraphrase is very close to the original, cf. §§2, 13, 14, 16, 18, 25, 54 (near-quotation?); see also **T.1**.

**[T.7]** Simplicius: reflection on, and verbs of, quotation (*παρατίθεσθαι*; *παραγράφειν*; *παράγειν*)

But since Melissus wrote in an archaic style but not unclearly, let us set down [*παρακείσθω*] those archaic sentences themselves so that those who read them may more accurately judge among the more appropriate interpretations [*καὶ αὐτὰ τὰ ἀρχαῖα γράμματα πρὸς τὸ δύνασθαι τοὺς ἐντυγχάνοντας ἀκριβεστέρους γίνεσθαι κριτὰς τῶν προσφρευστέρων ἐξηγήσεων*].

(Simpl. in *Phys.*, *CAG* 9.III.15–17)<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Trans. D. GALLOP, *Parmenides of Elea: Fragments*, Toronto 1984, slightly adapted.

<sup>16</sup> Trans. J. BARNES, *Early Greek Philosophy*, London 1987.

**[T.8]** ‘Testimonies’ as supporting evidence for argument

It is Aristotle’s habit after demonstrations to introduce the testimonies of his predecessors as agreeing with his demonstrations, in order on the one hand to teach and compel his readers through his demonstrations, and on the other to make the belief more certain in his hearers through the testimonies; he does not employ the testimony of predecessors as demonstrations, as is the habit of more recent writers.

(Simpl. *in Phys.*, CAG 10.1318.10–15)<sup>17</sup>

**[T.9]** Polemic in Simplicius

[after a long quote from Philoponus:] I have quoted [*παρεθέμην*] so much of his words in order to show what kind of man he is.

(Simp. *In Phys.*, CAG 10.1333.33–34)

Each of these examples shows how the advanced stage of the commentary incorporated greater levels of reflection on aspects of source usage and reporting style. Alexander was the real pioneer in forging a style of detailed and insightful exegesis, while the example of Simplicius, writing nearly 400 years later, helps us to understand how ‘later’ does not necessarily mean ‘worse’ when it comes to source quality (a variation on the famous dictum holds: *ueteriores not deteriores*). His quotation style has illustrated how he still had access to Parmenides, Empedocles, Anaxagoras and Diogenes in the early sixth century AD, thus giving us some of the most crucial verbatim fragments we have.<sup>18</sup>

## III

## FRAGMENTS IN FRAGMENTS

A further complicating factor arises in the case of some Peripatetics. This section will necessarily be more tentative, but it raises a specific question regarding the transmission of Presocratic materials within the

<sup>17</sup> Trans. R. D. MCKIRAHAN, *Simplicius: On Aristotle Physics 8.6–10*, London 2001, slightly altered.

<sup>18</sup> See H. BALTUSSEN, *Philosophy and Exegesis in Simplicius: The Methodology of a Commentator*, London 2008, Chapter 3.

Peripatetic tradition. Unsurprisingly, Aristotle's example bore fruit, and his school plays a significant role in the preservation of materials, mainly because Aristotle was of the view that studying previous doctrines was useful. His motivation for doing so was, however, not quite the same as that of the modern historian. And he was not the first either: some Sophists and Plato himself undertook retrospective discussions of their predecessors. But with Aristotle this kind of approach evolved into a more systematic approach. His reasons for this methodology can be summed up in two notions: common sense and accumulative truth. While he rejected the notion of Platonic forms, which gave rise to a rather complex (and suspect) metaphysics of otherworldly exemplars and sub-lunary derivative copies, Aristotle rather maintained the view that knowledge is a matter of sense perception and interpretation; as a result, secure knowledge of the world was in principle open to anyone with properly functioning sense organs, a decent brain and perhaps some training in logic. His pursuit of the truth builds on this approach by trying to make use of such historically located insights and extracting any useful elements from them, mostly based on agreement. In modern terms, we might say he did a kind of 'crowd sourcing': making use of the extended human knowledge beyond his own, and even beyond his own generation.

Theophrastus, Eudemus, and Aristoxenus are famous cases of Peripatetics who collected earlier views in a particular area as preparation for study and evaluation. This state of affairs leads to another important consequence which should concern us with regard to Presocratic fragments: a considerable number of the fragments come to us via the Peripatetic tradition. To illustrate the extent of this source dominance, I will briefly discuss three cases, in the hope that this may be a first step towards evaluating with greater accuracy how much this matters to our understanding of these fragmentary texts, in particular with regard to the Dielsian division of A, B and C fragments. The Appendix contains a more extensive listing.

We can deal quickly with Theophrastus first, since we have already given him considerable attention. Substantial texts from the *De sensu* reside in the Dielsian 'A section' (Parmenides to Plato: *passim* in A sections): Parmenides (A46), Empedocles (A86), Anaxagoras (A92), Alcmaeon

(A5), Diogenes of Apollonia (A19), Democritus (A135). In itself this is not always an indication of (un)reliability (see above), but it certainly engenders a neglect for these passages, which often provide ‘near-quotations’ or ‘close paraphrase’, as is revealed in the vocabulary and the particular concepts mentioned. For instance, in several cases the reference is made to a term related to evidence, as in *Sens.* 20 κοινοτάτω σημείω: σημεῖον is an evidence-related indication or sign of a state of affairs. Theophrastus’ emphasis on this kind of aspect of the theories under review suggests that some Presocratics used the term themselves: see, e.g., Anaxagoras §32; Diogenes of Apollonia §§40, 42, 43, 44, 45; Democritus §§63, 75, 79; Plato §85. Regarding the ‘B section’, embedded fragments are quite frequent, when for instance Anaximander is quoted in Simplicius via Theophrastus (Simpl. *in Phys.*, CAG 9.24.13–25 = Theophr. *Phys. op.* fr. 2 Diels (*Dox. Gr.* pp. 476–477) = Theophr. fr. 226A Fortenbaugh-Huby-Sharples-Gutas = Anaximand. A9 and B1 Diels-Kranz). In both categories (that is, A and B) the interpretation of the fragments is made difficult, because one is required to have good knowledge of the context (quoting author) in terms of style, philosophical views and objectives.

Things get even more complex when the quoting author is also fragmentary. When Dicaearchus is said to have reported on Pythagoras (Dicaearch. fr. 40, 41A Mirhady), we gain our knowledge from Porphyry (ca. AD 300), the follower and biographer of Plotinus:

[T.10] Dicaearchus and the more accurate reporters say that Pythagoras was present during the conspiracy ...  
(Porph. *V. Pyth.* 18 = Pythag. A8a Diels-Kranz)

This short snippet is intriguing not just because of the multiple layers in it, but also because the phrase ‘and the more accurate reporters’ raises the question whether ‘more accurate’ also applies to Dicaearchus or not (i.e. should we read ‘and’ as inclusive? And if so, why separate off Dicaearchus? Is he the first source of this anecdote?). A second text featuring Dicaearchus is also of interest. Once again, layers play a role in the source context and we get presented with an interesting historical fact about Empedocles’ work:

[T.11] The rhapsodist Cleomenes performed the *Purifications* of Empedocles at Olympia, as Dicaearchus says in the *Olympic Dialogue*.

(Ath. 14.620d = Dicaearch. fr. 85 Mirhady = Emp. A12 Diels-Kranz)<sup>19</sup>

The more interesting implication to be taken from *both* passages is that the two texts strongly suggest that Dicaearchus had an interest in the Pythagoreans (Empedocles is said to have been a ‘follower’ of Pythagoras). Yet neither passage allows us to find out much about the Presocratic doctrines and in fact they raise further questions, since the title *Purifications* has recently been rejected as a label for a separate work from *On Nature*.<sup>20</sup> That said, the overarching point here is that meticulous scrutiny of the passages (whether they are from Diels’ A or B section) at least allows us to weigh up the value of the Peripatetic sources in terms of their access to earlier texts, and as to the question who had access to their works. Together such tiny clues can add up to a richer and more balanced understanding of the sources involved.

A final example of this highly selective analysis concerns the famous ‘history’ of Greek philosophy, Diogenes Laertius’ *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* from around the early third century AD. In his Book 8 he reports about the Peripatetic Hieronymus:

Hieronymus says that Pythagoras descended into Hades and saw both Hesiod’s soul bound to a bronze column and screeching, and Homer’s hanging from a tree surrounded by snakes, all in return for what they had said about the gods ...

(Diog. Laert. 8.21 = Hieronym. fr. 50 White)<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Trans. D. C. MIRHADY, ‘Dicaearchus of Messana: The sources, text and translation’, [in:] W. W. FORTHENBAUGH & E. SCHÜTRUMPF (eds), *Dicaearchus of Messana: Text, Translation, and Discussion*, New Brunswick, NJ 2001, pp. 87–88.

<sup>20</sup> J. MANSFELD & K. ALGRA, ‘Interpretative *thētas* in the Strasbourg Empedocles’, [in:] A. HOUTMAN, A. de JONG & M. MISSET-VAN DE WEG (eds), *Empychoi Logoi: Religious Innovation in Antiquity*, Leiden 2008, pp. 317–318 with n. 3.

<sup>21</sup> Trans. S. A. WHITE, ‘Hieronymus of Rhodes: The sources, text and translation’, [in:] S. A. WHITE & W. W. FORTHENBAUGH (eds), *Lycos of Troas and Hieronymus of Rhodes: Text, Translation, and Discussion*, New Brunswick, NJ 2004, pp. 79–276.

Here too we have the fragmentary text reporting on Hieronymus, who in turn reports on Pythagoras in a very interesting account of a descent to the underworld. This makes Hieronymus yet another Peripatetic we know to have had an interest in Pythagoras (cf. above and Appendix). Such stories are of course by themselves of limited value, except perhaps to confirm the ancient understanding of Pythagoras as associated with ideas about the afterlife (the possibility to descend, the notion of punishment, a [tongue-in-cheek?] literary judgement in relation to types of punishment).

What all these examples show is that many aspects of the testimonia (A section) often get lost in the search for *ipsissima verba*, or whatever is taken for such 'original words'. Of course we may never retrieve any of the actual words, given the distance in time and the many intermediary steps of transmission. But to make an effort it is important to utilise every detail in the material in order for us to understand text, subtext and context as well as paratextual aspects of paraphrase and quotation.

#### IV CONCLUSION

This brief and preliminary review of some features of Peripatetic sources on the Presocratics shows two things, one positive and one negative. The positive outcome is that in many cases the situation regarding reliability and access to sources is not as bad as it could have been.

But we have also learned that the common metaphors of 'fragment' may not be as useful as they could be, while my provisional, alternative label 'Russian Dolls' also has its drawbacks given that the layers stay too separated, while the phenomenon of doctrinal entanglement suggests that things are not that clear-cut. Perhaps we could extend it and apply it not just to the Presocratic passages and words in Peripatetic passages, but also to the *hermeneutical context* in which we and our predecessor colleagues operate with regard to their interpretation (in other words, in this way the multiple layers are represented by many different modern interpretations, over and beyond the ancient evidence [as it were an hermeneutical space



which contains embedded views and narratives of a theoretical, doctrinal, and historical nature]).

Such are some of the problems and constraints involved in research into the Presocratic fragments. And it is my contention that our use of especially the 'A' fragments can be improved by relocating them among the other materials, as has been happening in more recent fragment-cum-translation editions.<sup>22</sup> There are other risks as well: the tendency to give more evidence also more weight, which may inadvertently lead to over-emphasising the material (a problem of *preponderance*). Yet the opposite may also happen: contrast how Aristotle's polemic against Democritus' atomism makes us associate Democritus mostly with atoms while much more material survives for his ethics. Then there is the problem of *demarcation*, which is closely related to the extent to which a fragment is integrated in a quoting author, as well as the problem of *contamination* or *distortion*. Ultimately, the challenge is to avoid all these pitfalls, and still deal adequately with the fabric into which later authors have woven the words and ideas of the Presocratics.

## APPENDIX

### LIST OF PRESOCRATIC FRAGMENTS IN THE POST-ARISTOTELIAN PERIPATETIC SOURCES

#### Theophrastus

(a) *De sensu*

Parmenides to Plato (*passim* in Diels' A sections): Parmenides (A46), Empedocles (A86), Anaxagoras (A92), Alcmaeon (A5), Diogenes Apoll. (A19), Democritus (A135).

(b) other works

Anaximander: Simpl. *in Phys.*, CAG 9.24.13–25 = Theophr. *Phys. op.* fr. 2 Diels (*Dox. Gr.* pp. 476–477) = Theophr. fr. 226A Fortenbaugh-Huby-Sharples-Gutas [FHSG] = Anaximand. A9 and B1 Diels-Kranz

Anaximenes: Simpl. *in Phys.*, CAG 9.24.26–25.1 = Theophr. *Phys. op.* fr. 2 Diels (*Dox. Gr.* pp. 476–477) = Theophr. fr. 226A FHSG = Anaximen. A5 Diels-Kranz

<sup>22</sup> E.g. B. INWOOD's *The Poem of Empedocles*, Toronto 2001.

Xenophanes: Simpl. *in Phys.*, CAG 9.22.22–23.20 = Theophr. *Phys. op.* fr. 5 Diels  
 (*Dox. Gr.* pp. 480–481) = Theophr. fr. 224 FHSG = Xenoph. A31 Diels-Kranz  
 Heraclitus' *kukeôn*: Theophr. *Metaph.* fr. 12.15 Wimmer and *De vertig.* fr. 8.9  
 Wimmer = Heraclit. B124–125 Diels-Kranz  
 Anaxagoras: Theopr. *Hist. pl.* 3.1.4 = Anaxag. A117 Diels-Kranz

#### Aristoxenus

Pythagoras: Porph. *V. Pyth.* 9 = Aristox. fr. 16 Wehrli = Pythag. A8 Diels-Kranz;  
 Porph. *V. Pyth.* 21–22 = Aristox. fr. 17 Wehrli = Pythag. A12 Diels-Kranz

#### Dicaearchus

Pythagoras: Porph. *V. Pyth.* 18 = fr. 40 Mirhady (cf. 41A) = Pythag. 8a Diels-Kranz  
 'D. and the more accurate reporters say that Pythagoras was present during the  
 conspiracy'  
 Empedocles: Ath. 14.62od = Dicaearch. fr. 85 Mirhady = Emp. A12 Diels-Kranz:  
 'The rhapsodist Cleomenes performed the *Purifications* of Empedocles at  
 Olympia, as Dicaearchus says in the *Olympic Dialogue*'.  
 Also mentions Pherecydes of Samos (fr. 41A Mirhady), Hippasus (fr. 73), Metro-  
 dorus of Lampsacus (fr. 96).

#### Hieronymus

Anaxagoras: Diog. Laert. 2.14 = Hieronym. fr. 49 White = Anaxag. A1 Diels-  
 Kranz (Report on Pericles vouching for imprisoned Anaxagoras; source: H. ἐν  
 τῷ δευτέρῳ τῶν Σποράδην ὑπομνημάτων – the second book of the *Miscellaneous  
 Notes*.)  
 Pythagoras: Diog. Laert. 8.21 = Hieronym. fr. 50 White 'Hieronymus says that  
 Pythagoras descended into Hades and saw both Hesiod's soul bound to a bronze  
 column and screeching, and Homer's hanging from a tree surrounded by snakes,  
 all in return for what they had said about the gods'.  
 Heraclitus: Diog. Laert. 9.15–16 = Hieronym. fr. 51 White (Brief report that  
 Scythinus 'tried to put [Heraclitus'] writing in verse'.)  
 Empedocles: Diog. Laert. 8.57–58 = Hieronym. fr. 52 White = Emp. A1 Diels-  
 Kranz (Discussion of Empedocles' tragedies; Heraclitus says he has 'read 43'.  
 Probably an homonymous grandson, not Empedocles himself.)

## Hermippus

Pythagoras: Diog. Laert. 8.41 = Hermipp. fr. 20 Wehrli

## Aristo

Heraclitus: Philodem. *De vit.* 10 col. 10.21 = Aristo fr. 21a Storck-Fortenbaugh-van Ophuijsen-Dorandi [SFOD] (Heraclitus in a list of ‘arrogant’ philosophers.); Diog. Laert. 9.5 = Aristo fr. 23 SFOD = Heraclit. A1 Diels-Kranz (From Aristo’s *On Heraclitus*, reports that Heraclitus was cured of dropsy, dying of another illness.); Diog. Laert. 9.11–12 and 2.22 = Aristo fr. 24AB = Heraclit. A1 and A4 Diels-Kranz (*[Life of] Heraclitus.*)

## Alexander of Aphrodisias, late second century CE (selection)

Thales (8x), Xenophanes (6x)  
 Anaximenes (11x), *in Metaph.* and *in Meteor.*  
 Anaximander (2x): *in Metaph.* and *in Meteor.*  
 Empedocles (101x), esp. *in Metaph.*  
 Anaxagoras (92x), esp. *in Metaph.*  
 Heraclitus (49x), esp. *in Metaph.* and *in Top.*  
 Parmenides (48x), esp. *in Metaph.*

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