

BOOK REVIEW

Die Vorsokratiker: Ausgewählt, übersetzt und erläutert. By JAAP MANSFELD AND OLIVER PRIMAVESI. Erweiterte Neuausgabe. Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam Jun., 2011. ISBN 978-3-15-010730-0.

We today can only marvel that Hermann Diels's *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*—in view both of the wide scope of the work and of the philological sophistication it assumes on the part of its readers—should have been conceived of and intended as an academic source-book. For that is how its creator announces and characterizes the work in the opening sentence of the original edition (1903). No doubt it did serve in this way in Diels's own classes in Berlin. But what proved more viable ultimately for classroom use are smaller, more selective collections. Among those that include both ancient text and modern translations, two stood out—by the criteria of quality of scholarship and interpretative authority—in the second half of the twentieth century: for English readers, G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge University Press, 1957), later edited and with additions by Malcolm Schofield (1983); for German readers, Jaap Mansfeld's *Die Vorsokratiker*, originally published paperbound as a two-volume set in 1983 and 1986 (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam Jun.), then reissued in 1999 by the same publisher as a hardbound single volume with additions to the bibliography, and now in a new edition that includes new material by Oliver Primavesi.¹

¹In the last five years there have been two likewise excellent new source-books: in German, M. Laura Gemelli Marciano, *Die Vorsokratiker: Auswahl der Fragmente und Zeugnisse, Übersetzung und Erläuterungen*, 3 vols. (Düsseldorf: Artemis & Winkler Verlag, 2007, 2009, and 2010); in English, Daniel W. Graham, *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy: The Complete Fragments and Selected Testimonies of the Major Presocratics*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). A long standing gap (no "Loeb" pre-Socratics) is soon to be filled with the projected publication as early as 2015 of *Early Greek Philosophy*, ed. André Laks and Glenn W. Most, with the collaboration of Leopoldo Irabarren and Gérard Journée, 4 vols., The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press).

Let me first describe what the new Mansfeld-Primavesi Reclam volume (henceforth "MRP") shares with its Mansfeld-only Reclam predecessor (henceforth "MR"). In each chapter we find all or most of the DK "fragments" *sensu stricto*, i.e., what are or appear to be quotations from the pre-Socratic author in the chapter at issue, and a selection from the correspondingly relevant ancient testimonia. Whereas in Diels and in DK these two types of source material were put in distinct parts in each chapter, in both MR and MRP the testimonia are thematically intercalated with the fragments, and the distinction is marked on recto pages in the translations by the use of italic font for fragments and roman font for testimonia.

MR had adhered to the narrower understanding of "Vorsokratiker" that had been adopted in Kirk and Raven and in many of the collections of essays on the pre-Socratics in the second half of the twentieth-century, in accordance with which the Sophists are not included. This is still so in MRP. Moreover, neither Melissus nor Diogenes of Apollonia was included in MR, and they have not been added in MRP. In the case of Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans, MR and MRP adhere to the treatment in DK: there is a single chapter on "Pythagoras und die älteren Pythagoreer"; Philolaus is not presented separately. As in MR, there is a helpful thirty-page general introduction in MRP, and there are also substantial and helpful special introductions to each chapter, in some cases more than twenty pages.

In the section on selected texts in each chapter there are no explanatory comments keyed to particular lines or words; and, except in the Empedocles chapter in MRP, notes on variant readings are provided only sparsely. Especially useful in MR, and indeed well received at the time, was the inclusion of a number of texts or readings drawn from the Arabic tradition: not only the medieval Latin translation of an Arabic alchemical treatise that came to be known as *Turba philosophorum* but also the Arabic translation of the pseudo-Plutarch *Placita philosophorum*, which in a number of contexts appears to have been based on early manuscripts of the *Placita* that may well have been superior to those that survived in the medieval manuscript tradition. These texts from Arabic sources have been retained in MRP and augmented with additions, especially from the Arabic version of the *Placita*.

The main and prominent difference between MR and MRP is the totally new chapter on Empedocles, for which the selection of texts, the translations, and the new special introduction are all by Primavesi. In book size alone, MRP is larger than MR, and in its larger font-size much more accommodating to the eyes of older scholars. By my count, the fragments and testimonia that are in MR but not in DK come to 48 in number; and in MRP we now have an additional 11 such

texts. Moreover, MRP offers no fewer than 59 lines, or parts of a line, that can be added to, or inserted into, DK fragments, especially in the case of Empedocles. In MR select bibliographies had appeared at the end of each chapter; in MRP a significantly expanded 28-page bibliography comprising 27 thematic sub-sections appears at the end of the volume. In the new preface in MRP, the editors, in addition to calling attention to the new chapter on Empedocles, point to changes, all made by Mansfield, in the section on doxography in the introduction, in the chapters on Anaximander and on Heraclitus, and in the much expanded bibliography.

What is totally new in MRP is the material contributed by Primavesi on Empedocles, which reflects Primavesi's own studies since the 1990s of the Strasbourg papyrus.² A concise account of this chapter's content may therefore be appropriate in the present review. For the sake of brevity, I summarize in direct statement, omitting such phrases as "Primavesi says" or "According to Primavesi."

The evidence in the sources supports the assumption that Empedocles wrote two distinct poems, *Katharmoi*, "Purifications," and *Peri physeôs*, "On nature." In both poems Empedocles takes on a narrator's "mask": in the first, that of a god exiled from the divine realm and wandering among mortals as a *daimôn*; in the second, as a teacher addressing his favorite pupil, Pausanias. The narrative in *Katharmoi* is not, as many modern readers have assumed, a boastful and extravagant autobiography; rather it is comparable to the myth of the earth-bound exile of Apollo, a myth thematically exploited also by Aeschylus in the *Suppliants* and by Euripides in *Alcestitis*. The first poem, accordingly, belongs to the genre of *theologia fabulosa*. The second poem is a *theologia naturalis* that expounds the doctrine of an eternally repeated cosmic cycle of 20,000 years, in the course of which Love acts to mix the Empedoclean four elements, moving centrifugally, and Strife acts to separate them, moving centripetally.

² See especially Alain Martin and Oliver Primavesi, *L'empédocle de Strasbourg (P. Strasb. gr. Inv. 1665-1666): Introduction, édition et commentaire with an English summary* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999); also Oliver Primavesi, *Empedokles Physika I: eine Rekonstruktion des zentralen Gedankengangs*, *Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete*, suppl. vol. 22 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008). Another ten studies by Primavesi on Empedocles are listed in the bibliography of the volume under review (pp. 793-794).

Accordingly, there are four distinct phases in the Empedoclean cycle: (i) 4,000 years of total separation of the elements in an agitated vortex, with three outer shells for fire, air, and water, and a spherical earth-mass in the middle; (ii) 6,000 years of progressive removal of the three boundaries between elemental masses toward achieving maximal blending, which is brought about by Love; (iii) 4,000 years of rest in a state of total fusion, with Strife forced to the periphery, outside of the spherical cosmic whole (the *Sphairos*); and again (iv) 6,000 years of progressive separation and agitation of the elements brought about by Strife—which ultimately leads to the recurrence of phase (i).

The temporal periods of the cycle are generated by a module of 2,000 years. In phase (ii) Love needs $3 \times 2,000$ years to remove the three boundaries between the four elements; in phase (iv), Strife needs $3 \times 2,000$ to reintroduce the boundaries. The module of 2,000 years divides the 4,000 years of phase (i) in the following way. At the end of phase (iv) Strife has already penetrated and conquered all three outer shells. Over the first 2,000 years of phase (i), Strife seeks to penetrate and thus to conquer the earth-sphere as well. But when, at the end of this first 2,000 years, Love is confined to the geometric center of the earth-sphere, there is a reversal. Love counterattacks and begins to repel Strife; and after another 2,000 years succeeds in reclaiming all of the earth-sphere. There is, of course, no division in halves within the absolutely quiescent state of the *Sphairos* in phase (iii); its allotted duration of 4,000 simply balances the duration allotted to phase (i).

Compounds of the four elements, and in particular living things, are constituted always by the action of Love. There are two distinct zoogonies, one in the middle of phase (ii) and one in the middle of phase (iv). In each of these zoogonies there are two stages, which reflect the difference of initial conditions. In phase (ii) the initial state is one of high degree of separation (distinct limbs and organs); and thus the stage that follows is one of monstrous formations through accretions of parts. In phase (iv) the initial state is one of high degree of unification ("whole forms," reminiscences, as it were, of the unity in the *Sphairos*); and the stage that follows is one of sexually differentiated biological species.

Primavesi's reconstruction of the Empedoclean cycle adapts, significantly modifies, and enhances the older four-phase reconstruction represented in the works by W. K. C. Guthrie, and Dennis O'Brien, among others. Since the 1960s there has been a different reconstruction, one that involves only two phases, as proposed by Jean Bollack and adopted by A. A. Long and others. On the Bollack-view, there is no polar counterpart to the era of the *Sphairos*. Rather there is a highly disruptive attack by Strife on the *Sphairos* at the start of the second phase, with the

result that there is an initial period of maximum disorganization—but never total separation of the elements. On the two-phase reconstruction, from the first moment of Strife's attack, there is immediate counter-action by Love, so as to preserve and then progressively restore unity, thus ultimately leading to reconstituting the Sphairos. Mansfeld, in his own older introduction to the Empedocles chapter, the one in MR, had described the cycle in language that is compatible either with the four-phase or the two-phase reconstruction. Scholars who have concentrated their study on one or another of the pre-Socratics may find cause to disagree with the translation here or there, and the implied interpretation, in some chapter or other of MRP. But it is beyond dispute that the translations in MRP reflect broad and profound knowledge of both the philosophical and philological issues and of the complexities of transmission in the ancient doxographic tradition. Studies of even isolated pre-Socratic texts should always take into serious consideration the translations and interpretative options offered in MRP—as the more careful studies over the last three decades have done with respect to MR.³

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