Transmigrating Soul Between the Presocratics and Plato*

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ABSTRACT

The article discusses the nature of transmigrating soul in the early Greek thought, most notably in the thought of Empedocles and Philolaus. It argues that, in general, soul was conceived as a kind of subtle 'matter'. The turning point Plato who strive to guarantee soul's immortality by connecting it with transcendent, but also immaterial Forms. This accentuates the intellectual character of soul, and this holds also in eschatological context, but at the same time transforms the categories in which we tend to think about it until today.

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For the Greek text of Empedocles and Philolaus, we use chiefly the classical edition by Diels and Kranz 1951–1952, from which, however, we often diverge and use Wright 1995 and Huffman 1993. On the subject of early Greek notion of the soul in general, one can recommend the following sources with further references: Rohde 1925, Furley 1956, Claus 1981, Bremmer 1983, 2002, 2010, Albinus 2000, and Lorenz 2009. The subject of transmigration and afterlife in particular is treated in Long 1948, Burkert 1995, and Drozdek 2011.

The following text traces changes in the notion of transmigration (reincarnation) of the soul in early Greek philosophy. Its aim is to highlight several perhaps less known and less obvious facts related to a shift in the understanding of transmigrating soul that occurs between the Presocratics and Plato, who connects its existence with the immaterial Forms. Although it could be argued that the main motivation for a theory of transmigration is to answer the age-old existential question 'what comes after death?', we leave this issue intentionally aside.[1] Similarly, one could compare arguments for and against transmigration, and it would be an interesting philosophical debate[2] but that, too, we leave to others. In the following, what we try to trace in the various ancient transmigration theories is their position within the overall philosophical scheme of some Presocratics and especially the often

1 Author of this article would like to emphasise that he personally has no clear view regarding the validity of the theory of reincarnation but regards it – especially in the context of ancient philosophy – as an uncommonly interesting theoretical problem with a far-reaching general impact.

2 Christian orthodoxy, for example, had to define its position with respect to Plato's philosophy whose position is at least at first glance more logical: If souls exist eternally, they necessarily exist already before entering a body, and must therefore be reborn again and again, cf. Wallis 1995, pp. 100–105. It should also be noted that the Christian Church had strictly prohibited reincarnation at the fifth ecumenical council, that is, at the Second Council of Constantinople in 553.

rather surprising ontological status of the soul within these theories.

A soul which temporarily leaves its original body only to subsequently enter another is a likely subject of remarkable debates. Such considerations, together with other aspects of Presocratic psychology, have contributed to the great philosophical synthesis of Plato, who treats the issue of transmigrating souls especially in his Phaedo (but also in the Timaeus). Though the present text focuses mainly on the notion of the transmigrating soul in Presocratic writings, this subject also highlights the substantial divide brought about by Plato's teachings, especially by his theory of ideas, transcendent Forms located 'outside' the sensible world. This break divides Presocratic and Classical philosophy, which in many ways represent two rather different ways of understanding the world.[3] At the same time, this subject also brings to light some of the roots of Platonic understanding of the soul, an approach which exerted a far-reaching influence for centuries to come.

I. THE MYSTERIOUS ORIGINS OF TRANSMIGRATION OF SOULS IN GREECE

It is well known that in the works of Homer (app. 8th century BCE), that is, in the oldest written stratum of Greek thought, soul (ψυχή) is best described in terms of a difference between a living person and a dead body. Usually, it is seen as something akin to the 'life force' that leaves a person who lost consciousness or, more usually, who is at the point of death and enters the Hades.[4] Since the very beginning of Greek thought, it has thus been closely connected with afterlife. The souls which Odysseus summons from the Underworld are mere shadows of people who had died. They retain resemblance with their previous appearance and some sort of individuality, but to communicate with the living, they first need to drink some blood. Human thought thus seems to be, at least during life, closely linked to corporeality, which – as in the famous scene of Odysseus' sacrifice to the dead on his way home – the souls of the deceased regain for at least a fleeting moment in the form of blood.[5] Over time, there

3 That is also why we in the following, we use texts of only whose authors who are not religious thinkers but philosophers, and in whose work, a theory of transmigration based on rational arguments is at least to some extent part of a general theoretical scheme of the world.

4 Cf. e.g. Snell 1960, pp. 8–15, Bremmer 2010, pp. 12–15, Cairns 2014.

5 Homer, *Od.* XI.23ff. The only exception among the dead is the soul of Teiresias, who even after death receives from Persephoneia φρένες and a νόος, *Od.* X.490–495. This is also why, unlike other souls, Teiresias recognises Odysseus and addresses him even before partaking of any blood, *Od.* XI.90–99, 139–154, 390. Even so, the souls in Hades remember some past events on the earth and perform certain activities in Hades, e.g., 488–491, 568–575. Some souls, meanwhile, receive their punishment, 576–600, or reward, 601–604, in the Otherworld. Moreover, with the exception of Teiresias, 100–137, who retains the power of prophesy symbolised by the abovementioned parts of the body (φρένες and νόος) even in Hades, they no longer know what is happening in the world, 155–162, 492–503. They merely recall their previous existence, 181–203, 405–434, 553–562, and are called 'phantoms', εἴδωλα, which in later

appear in the Greek religious thinking of the archaic period various notions that take the original idea of a soul as a life force one step further, so that souls do not stay permanently in Hades, wherever it may be located, but rather transmigrate in ways determined by their previous deeds. We do not know whether the notion of metempsychosis was first developed by the mysterious Orphics,[6] by shamans,[7] or brought into the Greek world through contact with India mediated by the Persian Empire.[8] There is too little evidence to definitively decide between the various hypotheses which had been proposed.[9] What is certain

Greek means quite characteristically 'images', or σκίαι, that is, 'shadows'. We can thus speculate that as soon as a human soul is finally freed from its body in a funeral pyre, 218–222 – a procedure that needs to be undertaken if the soul is to enter Hades, *Il.* XXIII.62–108 – it loses contact with this world. The contact can be restored once the soul is again infused with corporeality in the form of blood, cf. Renehan 1980, p. 108, Cairns 2014, par. 22.

6 A balanced account of the Orphic phenomenon can be found in the works of Guthrie 1952, Brisson 1995, and Parker 1995, cf. also Burkert 1985, pp. 296–301, Bremmer 2002, pp. 15–24, and Edmonds 2014. Apart from bone tablets from Olbia dated to around 500 BCE, Orphic eschatology is described in so-called gold leaves, some of which date to as early as the 4th century BCE and the text they contain is probably even earlier, cf. Graf and Johnston 2007, Janko 2016.

7 A 'shamanic' origin of the notion of transmigration was defended especially by Dodds 1951, ch. 5, following Meuli 1935, by Cornford 1952, ch. 6, by Burkert 1972, and by Vernant 2006, pp. 129, 384–385. For a critical assessment, see Kahn 1969b, Bremmer 1983, pp. 24–53, 2002, ch. 3, and recently also Zhmud 2012, ch. 6, Gregory 2013, pp. 133–135, 177, and Lloyd 2014, pp. 39–43.

8 Kahn 1969b, 2001, p. 19, with n. 36, criticises the notion of shamanistic origins of the theory of transmigration and claims that at the time in question, the only such theory can be found in India, in the *Upanishads*, e.g. in the *Brhadaranyakopanishad*, whereby he adds that he managed to win Burkert over for his view as well, cf. Burkert 1997, p. 35. The main problem with this interpretation, however, is that the origins of the notion of transmigration in India are at least as mysterious as its origins in Greece and cannot be explained by a 'diffusion model', cf. Long 1948, p. 10, Bremmer 2002, p. 24, Obeyesekere 2002, pp. 1–18. Moreover, it is quite unclear how the new idea could have passed through the entire Persian Empire without leaving any significant traces, only to spread quite widely not only in northern Greece but also, including in a popular version, in southern Italy, northern Greece, Sicily, and Crete. Richard Seaford informed me that although there are numerous references in Greek texts to Indian customs and beliefs before 326 BCE when Alexander crosses the Indus, there is not a single mention of a philosophical or cosmological *idea* specified as Indian. I would like to thank him for sharing with me this conclusion from his forthcoming book on the subject.

9 If one had to choose between the options proposed above, the 'shamanic' explanation of the origins of the transmigration theory is in the end more convincing, especially in its moderate form, i.e., when it is not interpreted as a putative religious influence from Siberia ('diffusion hypothesis') but rather as a relatively universal manifestation of archaic human thought, cf. Ustinova 2009, pp. 47–51. Moreover, despite the claims of various previous anthropological research, there seems to be some evidence for reincarnation in shamanism. See, e.g., DuBois 2009, pp. 7, 44, 49, 53, 231, cf. also Mihai 2010, pp. 271ff, 2015, p. 123, and Kingsley 2010, pp. 144–147, with further literature, esp. p. 145: 'This shamanic dimension of beliefs and practices related to rebirth is inseparably bound up with the enormous importance attributed by

is that some hints at the notion of soul travelling to various places after death (which resembles transmigration) are found in early fifth century poet Pindar (522/518 – after 446),[10] and it is mentioned by some other contemporary authors.[11] Naturally, various forms of transmigration are found in writings of the time and the idea has its more popular and more intellectual forms.

According to tradition, the earliest author who advocated a theory of immortal soul and who could be seen as a philosopher in a broad sense of the word is Pherecydes of Syros (*flor.* 544/1). He was an interpreter of mythological theology, author of the first Greek book in prose, and the legendary teacher of Pythagoras, a thinker who is usually credited with introducing this theory to Greece. This may well be the main reason why the doctrine of transmigration was later ascribed also to Pherecydes.[12] Yet it is only in later Presocratic thinkers, whose work survives in at least some fragments, that we can follow more closely how the new notions fit into the overall scheme of the world, in other words, in whose philosophy we can reconstruct the nature and form of a transmigrating soul.

II. EMPEDOCLES

The extant fragments of Empedocles of Acragas (app. 495–435 BCE) pose a challenge when we try to reconstruct an overall scheme that would include both the religious passages pertaining to transmigration and his physical teaching, which presupposes four elements alternately united and torn apart by Love and Strife. Yet separating these two aspects of Empedocles' philosophy and claiming, as scholars often used to, that they belong to two distinct poems from different parts of his life, a rational youth and mystical old age (or the other way around) is as an interpretative approach quite untenable today.[13] In contrast to an inconclusive remark made by a late

shamans to inheriting the spirits of ancestors … as well as animals…' For a similar claim, see also Obeyesekere 2002, esp. pp. 15–18; in the following pages, Obeyesekere lists many examples of traditional societies where ancestors are linked to reincarnation. He does, however, criticise the theory of a shamanic origin of the concept of reincarnation, esp. pp. 200–204, 233, 239–241. Obeyesekere offers in his book a broader comparative perspective, but his account of the origins of reincarnation in both India and Greece relies perhaps too heavily on externalist and social explanations.

10 Pindar, *Ol.* 2.56–80; fr. 133 Snell–Maehler, quoted in Plato, *Meno* 81b–c, cf. Long 1948, pp. 29–44, and Lloyd-Jones 1985.

11 See most notably Xenophanes, DK 21 B 7, and Herodotus, *Hist.* II,123.

12 Cf. especially fragment DK 36 B 4 by Ion of Chios and other texts in Schibli 1990, pp. 1–13, 104–127. See also comments in Bremmer 2002, pp. 12–13.

13 The views of various scholars on this issue are aptly summarised by Bollack 2003, pp. 29–36, and Vítek 2006, vol. I, pp. 87–88; cf. also Trépanier 2017, pp. 130–134. Regardless of whether Empedocles actually wrote two distinct poems, Φυσικά and Καθαρμοί, the recent discovery of his previously unknown verses in papyrus *Strasb. Gr. Inv. 1665–6*, which deal with both physics and religion, seems to confirm the overall unity of his thought. For the text, translation, and commentary on the papyrus, see Martin and Primavesi 1999, Janko 2004.

commentator upon his philosophical predecessor Parmenides,[14] in Empedocles' work, the presence of an elaborate conception of transmigration of the soul can be proven with the most reasonable certainty. According to his words, transmigration happens to '*daimons* to whom life long-lasting is apportioned' (δαίμονες οἵτε μακραίωνος λελάχασι βίοιο), meaning across their various reincarnations.[15] They can be reborn not only as land animals, fish, and birds, but also as plants, which is within Greek transmigration theories a rather exceptional notion.[16]

On the other hand, one also ought to consider what happens to the *daimons* when Strife prevails and the whole world again disintegrates in the four basic elements, from which it had been created by Love. If everything without exception consists of the four elements, then *daimons*, too, must inevitably perish. This conclusion seems to be confirmed by the fact that during the uniting of the elements, a kind of 'long-lived gods' (θεοὶ δολιχαίωνες) was created alongside other beings. They share with *daimons* their longevity and are probably identical with them.[17] It is also likely that this is just another way of referring to what both the earlier and later Greek tradition calls the soul (ψυχή) with its eschatological implications.[18] The term *daimon*,

14 Simplicius, *In Arist. Phys.* 39.17-20, quoting Parmenides' fragment DK 28 B 13, cf. Burkert 1972, p. 284, and Bremmer 2002, p. 13.

15 Empedocles, DK 31 B 115.5, trans. Wright.

16 Empedocles, DK 31 B 117, 129.

17 Empedocles, DK 31 B 21.12, 23.8, trans. Wright. It seems that Empedocles uses the words δαίμων and θεός more or less synonymously. In B 59.1, the former term probably denotes the elements, cf. Wright 1995, *ad loc.*, p. 212, which are in B 6 identified with individual Olympic gods. In B 115, Empedocles declares himself to be one of the *daimons*, in B 23 and 112 he even claims to be a god, and in B 146 he describes the apotheosis of prophets, poets, physicians, and rulers (whereby according to some indirect testimonies he believed himself to belong to all of these categories). On the ancient Greek notion of *daimon*, see Burkert 1972, pp. 179–181, Timotin 2012, and Sfameni Gasparro 2015.

18 In fragments attributed to Empedocles, the term soul (ψυχή) appears only once in DK 31 B 138, trans. Wright, in the phrase on the 'drawing of life with bronze' (χαλκῷ ἀπὸ ψυχὴν ἀρύσας), which probably describes the killing of a sacrificial animal. The term ψυχή probably refers here to the life force violently expelled from the animal during the sacrifice. On the other hand, the provenance of this fragment, usually ascribed to Empedocles, seems to be in doubt, cf. Picot 2006. The term θυμός which appears in B 128.10 and B 137.6 in a similar context of violent sacrifice or killing in general (which Empedocles resolutely rejects) is usually seen as denoting the seat of emotions. It leaves the dead body together with the soul, cf. Bremmer 1983, pp. 54–56, 74–75, 84.
It would, however, be premature to assume that Empedocles did not believe in the transmigration of a human *soul*, which would then have to be something other than a transmigrating *daimon*. Firstly, even the *daimon* appears in connection with transmigration in extant fragments only once (elsewhere, we find references to either Empedocles himself or to a 'knowing man'), and secondly, it was the theory of transmigration that motivated Empedocles' rejection of the killing of living beings, during which a body is 'bereft' of its ψυχή or θυμός. The most likely conclusion thus seems to be that *daimon* is just another name for a transmigrating soul, which is understood primarily as a life force, consciousness, and the seat of personal identity. Such a conclusion is in accordance with ancient authors who

meanwhile, is used – as was common at the time – in the sense of a fated determination of a reincarnating being which, as Empedocles claims, defiled itself by killing living creatures.[19] If, however, the transmigrating *daimons* are indeed creatures composed of the four elements, this interpretation results in a somewhat odd conclusion, namely that the *daimons* are, just like everything else, roughly speaking corporeal or 'material' in the sense of being part of the world we live in and perceive with our senses.[20] One could perhaps imagine them as a sort of invisible wisps of air mixed with a fiery substance, such as aither or another fine matter.[21] After all, Empedocles posits a close connection between physicality and thought,[22] though thinking does not seem to be closely linked to the transmigrating *daimon* or, as we are inclined to believe, the soul.

Knowledge of the foundations of the world is, in Empedocles' view, absolutely crucial because it is the only way of avoiding the stain left on humans by spilling the blood of living beings.[23] Yet it seems that the abilities enabling such knowledge are not located primarily in the soul. One could thus claim that a *daimon* determines primarily the human fate and is not directly connected to the depth of understanding. One might also claim that the transmigrating part of

treated Empedocles' *daimons* as souls, cf. Trépanier 2017, pp. 135–136.

19 Cf. especially Heraclitus' fragment DK 22 B 119, trans. Kahn, modified: 'man's character is his fate (δαίμων)'; and Democritus' fragment DK 68 B 171, trans. Graham: 'happiness (εὐδαιμονίη) does not reside in herds or in gold; soul (ψυχή) is the dwelling-place of the guardian spirit (δαίμονος)'; cf. Laks 1999, p. 252, Timotin 2012, pp. 21–24, 32–33, and Sfameni Gasparro 2015, p. 414.

20 See also Plutarch, *De def. orac.* 418e ff., who claimed that Empedocles' *daimons* are mortal, cf. Trépanier 2014, esp. p. 175, with n. 7, 2017, pp. 135–139, and Curd 2013, pp. 135–136. (The conclusion that *daimons* are composed out of the four elements was reached, independently of Trépanier, in the Czech version of this article, cf. Hladký 2010, pp. 22–23.) I do, however, disagree with Trépanier's interpretation of *daimons* as part of the body, see Trépanier 2017, pp. 139–143. On the materiality of the *daimons*, see also Barnes 1982, pp. 495–501, Wright 1995, pp. 57–76, 271–272, Inwood 2001, pp. 55–68, Curd 2005, pp. 142–143, and McKirahan 2010, pp. 284–290, cf. also Gregory 2013, pp. 179–180, 183. For an overview of an alternative interpretation, according to which *daimons* are portions of Love (or sometimes conceived of as parts of the φρὴν ἱερή from Empedocles' fragment DK 31 B 134), see Karfík 2014, par. 25–30, and Therme 2014, par. 13–17. This suggestion was first advanced by Cornford 1912, pp. 224–242, then followed most notably by O'Brien 1969, pp. 325–336, and Kahn 1969a, pp. 19–27; cf. also Curd 2013, pp. 135–136. This hypothesis, however, is not based on any ancient sources at our disposal.

21 Trépanier 2017, pp. 143–144, based on a testimony of Theodoret, *Graec. aff. cur.* V,18.9–10 = Empedocles, DK 31 A 85/4 Vítek: ὁ δὲ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς μῖγμα ἐξ αἰθερώδους καὶ ἀερώδους οὐσίας, jointly with unfortunately poorly preserved verse DK 31 B 9.1, suggests that Empedocles thought of the transmigrating soul as a mixture of aither (celestial fire) and air.

22 See especially Empedocles' fragments DK 31 B 17.14, 103, 105, 106. The term πράπιδες seems to refer to the ability to acquire divine knowledge of the world, B 110 and 132, and, rather interestingly, the ability to recall past reincarnations, B 129, cf. Long 1948, pp. 20–21 (but see recently Macris, Skarsouli 2012).

23 Empedocles, DK 31 B 2–4, 8, 9.3–5, 11–12, 15, 17.14, 23.9–11, 39, 112–114, 129, 136–147, cf. Curd (2005), pp. 150–154.

a person must be closely linked to the principle of Love, which is responsible for unity and harmony in the combination of the four elements.[24] These are, however, the ultimate constituents of everything in the world, including the human soul or the *daimon*. We shall also see that a version of the idea of the soul as a harmony of elements found its way into the thinking of the Pythagoreans. Moreover, the fate of the soul seems to be determined by whether its behaviour is motivated by Lover or Strife.[25] These are the principles responsible for the creation and destruction of the world but they are also present in living beings as the basic emotions which determine their actions. In any case, however, one can conclude that if the *daimon* indeed consists of the elements and its fate is connected to the cosmic principle of Love, then the two aspects of Empedocles' legacy, i.e., religion and natural science, are not in conflict.

III. PHILOLAUS AND THE PYTHAGOREANS

Unfortunately, of the actual philosophical views of Pythagoras (app. 570–490 BCE), a thinker who fascinated his contemporaries no less than his followers, very little is known.[26] It is, however, relatively certain that – in connection with the 'Pythagorean life' based on a strict observance of various religious and moral rules – he and his followers believed in transmigration.[27] Somewhat better attested is the philosophy of his one hundred years younger follower Philolaus (app. 470–385 BCE), who was inspired by Pythagoras' thought either directly or through his disciples. According to Philolaus, the soul (ψυχά) is a life force that does not have an especially close

24 Empedocles, DK 31 B 23.4, 27.3, 96.4, cf. Kahn 1969a, pp. 21–25.

25 Empedocles, DK 31 109.3, 115.14, cf. Wright 1995, pp. 107, 271–272. Empedocles also speaks about the θυμός, usually conceived as the seat of emotions, in the context of ritual killing, cf. n. 18 above.

26 The main work defining current research into early Pythagoreans (e.g., those before Plato) is still Burkert 1972, where the author convincingly challenges later ancient reports on original Pythagoreanism, i.e., reports written under a strong influence of Academic, Neopythagorean, and Neoplatonic reinterpretation of the legendary sage Pythagoras and his followers. Burkert distinguishes between the traditional depiction of Pythagoras' 'shamanic lore' and his mathematical 'science', accepting only the former as historically possible.
This, however, seems to leave some room for Pythagoras in some way engaging in investigations of a mathematical kind. Pythagoras (or, which is less likely, his immediate followers) could thus ascribe to some numbers a particular meaning (*tetractys*, cf. Iamblichus, *Vita Pyth.* 82 = DK 58 C 4,82), emphasise the importance of mathematical harmony in the world or create a theory of a breathing universe. The Pythagorean notion of harmony that unites contrary principles in the world may have inspired Heraclitus' fragment DK 22 B 8, 10, 51, 54, cf. also B 40, 129, see Kahn 2001, pp. 1–4, 14–17, 34–38. Huffman 2014b is rather critical of Kahn's conclusions but even he admits that Pythagoras probably believed the world to be structured according to numbers. On Pythagoras and Pythagorean tradition, see further Huffman 2014a and Zhmud 2012.

27 Cf. Huffman 1999, pp. 68–70, and Huffman 2009, 2014b. Pythagoras' teaching about the transmigration of the soul (ψυχή) is parodied already by Xenophanes in DK 21 B 7, see also Herodotus, *Hist.* IV,95–96, Aristotle, *De an.* I,3 407b20–23 = 58 B 39.

connection to the mind (νόος). The soul is associated with sensation (αἴσθησις) because the principle of both is situated in the heart (καρδία).[28] This means that the soul is primarily a centre of feelings and emotions and as such, humans share it with other animals.[29]

According to Philolaus, the cosmos and everything in it is harmoniously fashioned (ἁρμόχθη) from limiters (περαίνοντα) and unlimiteds (ἄπειρα).[30] The soul, therefore, like everything else, must be a kind of harmony of these opposites, one placed probably in some sort of fine matter.[31] As in other thinkers belonging to Pythagorean tradition, we find some testimonies to the effect that for Philolaus, the soul is subject to transmigration.[32] According to some scholars, it is difficult to reconcile this idea with localisation of the soul in a particular part of human body or with the concept of soul as a harmony.[33]

28 See Philolaus, DK 44 B 13, which describes the location of various physical and mental abilities in humans. Both the principle (ἀρχή) of the soul (ψυχά) and sensation (αἴσθησις) are linked to the heart (καρδία). Unlike, for example, the mind (νόος), whose principle is located in the head and ascribed only to humans, the soul is said to be present in all animals (ζῶον).

29 Cf. Huffman 2009, pp. 22–26.

30 Philolaus, DK 44 B 1, cf. B 2, A 9. On the harmony as an organising principle of the world, see B 6. Philolaus' world seems to be mathematical in nature, and therefore also knowable as such, B 3, 4.

31 Cf. Aristotle, *De an.* I,4 407b27–32 = Philolaus, DK 44 A 23, see Huffman 1993, *ad loc.*, pp. 328–330, 2009, pp. 29–34, and further Aristotle, *Pol.* VIII,5 1340b18–19 = 58 B 41.

32 Of key importance here is Philolaus' fragment DK 44 B 14, cf. Plato, *Gorg.* 493a and *Crat.* 400c, according to which '… on account of certain penalties the soul (ψυχά) is yoked to the body and is buried in it as in a tomb (ἐν σάματι)'. Huffman 1999, *ad loc.*, pp. 403–406, on the basis of philological arguments revises some older views of earlier scholars who argued against this fragment's authenticity: 'The greatest barrier to accepting the fragment as authentic is the way in which the word ψυχά (soul) is used, for here it clearly is, as in Plato, a comprehensive term embracing all the psychological faculties. We might suppose that Philolaus had anticipated this usage except that in F 13 it is used in a much narrower sense as one among many psychological faculties, and meaning something like "life".'

33 See Philolaus, DK 44 A 23 for the soul conceived as harmony. As Huffman 1993, pp. 329–330, significantly claims: 'Thus if we focus on the most reliable evidence we have for Philolaus' view on soul, F 13 and Aristotle's report about Pythagorean views on soul, it appears very likely that Philolaus thought of the soul in largely material terms as a group of constantly moving elements in attunement located in the heart. … But if Philolaus did put forth such a materialistic account of soul (ψυχή), how are we to reconcile this with a Pythagorean belief in immortality of soul as is presupposed in the doctrine of transmigration. … Some have thought that Philolaus in fact might not have believed in immortality… This seems to me a real possibility.' The notion of soul as either physically present in the body or as harmony does not, however, seem to necessarily preclude the possibility that soul refers to that part of the self that undergoes successive reincarnations, which implies also an eschatological function. Huffman further develops and refines his interpretation in Huffman 2009, taking into account some conclusions by Sedley 1995, pp. 22–26. (I did not have Huffman's important contribution at my disposal when preparing the original Czech version of this article, which shares some conclusions with Huffman, cf. Hladký 2010, pp. 25–26.) For a rather sceptical approach to the issue of transmigration in early Pythagoreans, see Zhmud 2012, pp. 387–394, who, however,

If, however, we accept that Philolaus indeed advocated a theory of transmigration, it would follow that in his view, too, the soul which undergoes reincarnations is corporeal or 'material' in the same sense as in Empedocles, i.e., that it is part of the sensible cosmos.[34] For Philolaus, as for some of his contemporaries, it seems connected with air, in particular with the first gulp of air a newborn child breathes in.[35] On the other hand, according to indications which appear in connection with the Pythagoreans, its proper nature should be aethereal or fiery.[36]

That would fit rather well with Aristotle's testimonies in his *On the Soul*. He claims that according to the Pythagoreans, souls are tiny particles of matter moving in the air such as can be seen in a sunbeam.[37] They are thus linked to light, namely as once again a kind of subtle fire carried by air. A little further, Aristotle argues against the conception of transmigrating soul as a harmony of (bodily) elements, a view he ascribes to both the Pythagoreans and Empedocles.[38] Moreover, according to Aristotle's generally accepted assertion, Pythagoreans did not believe that numbers[39] exist 'outside sensible objects': they identified them with material things. But the same should then analogically hold of souls since they, too, like everything else, seem to be corporeal. Aristotle also claims elsewhere that the first thinker to posit the

distinguishes too strictly between the natural and religious ideas of the early Pythagoreans, cf. also Gregory 2013, pp. 131–133, 139–141.

34 Huffman 1993, pp. 328–332, 2009, Sedley 1995, pp. 22–26.

35 Philolaus, DK 44 A 27 = *Anon. Lond.* 18.8–29 Ricciardetto, cf. Sedley 1995, pp. 24–25; on similar views among Presocratics, cf. Emmel 1918, pp. 5–10, Waszink 1954, pp. 176–178.

36 See the so-called *Pythagorean Notes (Hypomnemata)*, which due to their eclectic nature may well contain some genuinely Presocratic ideas, Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae* VIII,26–30 = DK 58 B 1a,26–30, cf. Kahn 2001, pp. 74–75, 79–83, Long 2013, pp. 150–154, but see also Laks 2013 for a contemporary discussion. Hippasus of Metapontum, DK 18 A 9, also claims that soul is fiery (πυρώδη), but one ought to note that he considered fire to be the main cosmic principle, which is why he has been compared to Heraclitus, DK 18 A 7, 8, cf. Zhmud 2012, p. 387, 2014, pp. 94–95, and Palmer 2014, p. 212.

37 Aristotle, *De an.* I,2 403b28–404a20 = DK 58 B 40, trans. Smith: '…the motes (ξύσματα) in the air which we see in shafts of light coming through window… The doctrine of the Pythagoreans seems to rest upon the same ideas; some of them declared the motes (ξύσματα) in air, others what moved them, to be soul. These motes were referred to because they are seen always in movement, even in a complete calm.' See also Aristotle, *Probl.* 15 913a5ff. In the first passage, this opinion of the Pythagoreans is subsumed under the notion of the soul proposed by Democritus (and Leucippus, DK 67 A 28/1), according to which it is a kind of fire and warm and, moreover, is composed of material particles. Cf. Huffman 2004, pp. 328–329, 2009, pp. 22–23, Edmonds 2014, par. 38. Aristotle refers to this theory when criticising the view that soul is (self-) motion, an idea which was among the Pythagoreans upheld by Alcmaeon, who compared it to the motion of heavens. Aristotle, *De an.* I,2 405a29–405b1 = Alcmaeon, DK 24 A 12/1, cf. Hufmann 2017.

38 Aristotle, *De an.* I,3–4 407b13–408a34.

39 On the issue of numbers in Pythagoras, see n. 26 above.

existence of incorporeal principles outside the sensible world was Plato.[40] Such an introduction of another metaphysical level of reality must have, however, to at least some extent involved the concept of the soul. He is therefore the next thinker we ought to consider.

IV. PLATO

Naturally, we cannot discuss in detail all dialogues where Plato develops his notion of the soul and its fate after death, including transmigration. We offer therefore only a brief overview of those passages where he deals with the philosophical conceptions of transmigrating soul proposed by his predecessors. These texts can form a basis for a comparison, thus enabling us to point out where and in what respects Plato transforms previous tradition and how these changes affect the general metaphysical and cosmological background of his own philosophy into which he situates his concept of the soul.

In his *Phaedo,* Plato (427–347 BCE) deals with the abovementioned Presocratics or at least some of the conceptions they proposed.[41] His main interlocutors in this dialogue are Simmias and Cebes who used to 'keep company with Philolaus',[42] and even the notion which is being refuted here is very Philolaus-like: the soul is an invisible and immaterial harmony (ἁρμονία ἀόρατος καὶ ἀσώματος) between the elements which make up the body.[43] Socrates, however, objects to the notion that at the moment of death, the soul must perish together with the body.[44] This idea is linked to another objection raised against the teaching about transmigration. It is noted that one cannot exclude a possibility that after a certain number of reincarnations a soul could in the end perish. The body is seen as a sort of a cloak (ἱμάτιον), which a soul in the course of an incarnation creates always anew and which changes in its other lives.[45] A similar notion of a body being a sort of a cloak or clothing

40 Aristotle, *Met*. I,6 987b27ff, XII,6 1080b16ff, the entire chapter I,6 of the *Metaphysics* deals with the origins of Plato's theory of the Forms as principles independent of sensible objects, see also I,8 989b29ff, cf. Huffman 1993, p. 413, Palmer 2014, p. 216, *pace* Zhmud 2012, pp. 412, 439, 2014, p. 108. For more on the relevance and originality of Aristotle's presentation of Pythagorean theories as opposed to later interpretations coming from the Academy, see Burkert 1972 and Huffman 1993, cf. also Casertano 2013.

41 For a detailed interpretation of the *Phaedo*, see most notably Dorter 1982, Bostock 1986, and Dixsaut 1991.

42 Plato, *Phd*. 61d–e. According to a tradition, Echecrates, the man who listened to Phaedo's description of the end of Socrates' life, was also a student of Philolaus, cf. Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae* VIII,46.4 = DK 14 A 10/2, and Iamblichus, *Vita Pyth*. 251.4, 267.24 = DK 14 A 16,251.4, DK 58 A 1. It seems, however, that Plato endorses Philolaus' theories especially in *Philebus* 23c–27c, cf. Huffman 1993, pp. 106–107.

43 Cf. Huffman 1993, pp. 324–325, 330–331.

44 Plato, *Phd*. 85e–86d. The hypothesis that this theory may have originated with Philolaus is supported by the enthusiastic endorsement it receives from his student Echecrates, 88d, trans. Grube: '...the statement that the soul is some kind of harmony has a remarkable hold on me, now and always, and when it was mentioned it reminded me that I had myself previously thought so.' Cf. Sedley 1995, pp. 10–13, 22–26.

45 Plato, *Phd*. 86e–88b. On both objections, see Dorter 1982, pp. 98–114, and Dixsaut 1991, pp. 118–121.

into which a person is born is also found in Empedocles.[46] All of this would very well correspond to the situation we found in the theories of both of the previous thinkers, according to whom the soul is ultimately corporeal or perhaps rather composed of physical elements. In Plato's *Phaedo*, Socrates thus claims quite significantly that we should not be afraid like children that when soul leaves the body, wind will blow it apart and disperse it. Here he probably hints at an earlier idea which Aristotle attributes to the 'so-called Orphic poems'. According to his testimony, the soul enters the body after being carried to it from the external world by the winds (ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνέμων).[47]

Plato's Socrates relatively easily refutes the first objection, namely that soul is a harmony with an immediate link to the body.[48] During his refutation, Socrates presents his own theory of the Forms, which helps him prove that the soul brings life into the body and therefore cannot perish.[49] For our purposes, what is important is not the fact that the validity of Socrates' argument has often been challenged, but that in this context, soul is once again understood mainly as a principle of life.[50] On the other hand, Socrates also stresses that soul should be seen as distinct from the body. Rather than being like a body, it is the Forms to which it is 'more akin and alike', whereby the Forms are to be understood as immaterial principles of things existing in the sensible world. They are simple, knowable by reason, and indestructible, which is also why the soul survives even after the body's death. Under the influence of passions, the soul can sometimes indeed become 'like a body' (σωματοείδης), which then influences its fate after death.[51] It thus seems that even according to Plato, the soul is not incorporeal *sensu stricto*. Metaphorically speaking, one can claim that the soul stretches between the corporeal world of the senses and incorporeal Forms, whereby its relation to the Forms is the basis of its true essence.[52] By

46 Cf. Empedocles, DK 31 B 126, trans. Wright: '[Necessity] clothing [the *daimon* (?)] in an unfamiliar garment (χιτῶνι) of flesh.' On Empedocles as the source of this image of a cloak in *Phaedo*, see Dixsaut 1991, p. 359, n. 203. It seems, moreover, that Empedocles was the first author in Greece to use this metaphor of body as a clothing of the soul, cf. Treu 1954, p. 39, Vítek 2006, vol. III, p. 550, and Edmonds 2014, par. 34–35. In a similar vein, Aristotle claims that according to the 'so-called poems by Orpheus', formation of the body of a living being is similar to 'the weaving of a net' (τῇ τοῦ δικτύου πλοκῇ), *De gener. animal.* II,1 734a16–20 = *OF* 404 F Bernabé = fr. 26 Kern.

47 Plato, *Phd.* 77d–e, Aristotle, *De an.* I,5 410b27–30 = *OF* 421/I F Bernabé = fr. 27 Kern, cf. Edmonds 2014, par. 43. See also *Pythagorean Notes (Hypomnemata)* preserved by Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae* VIII,30 = DK 58 B 1a,30: 'the reasons of soul are winds' (τοὺς δὲ λόγους ψυχῆς ἀνέμους).

48 Plato, *Phd.* 90c–95a.

49 Plato, *Phd.* 95a–107b, cf. Dorter 1982, pp. 115–161, Bostock 1986, pp. 135–201, Thein 2008, pp. 103–236.

50 Cf. also Plato, *Phaedr.* 245c–246a, where the soul is said to be in constant movement (ἀεικίνητος) and thus immortal because it moves on its own (αὐτοκίνητος) and is not moved by anything external, cf. Karfík 2004, pp. 221–226.

51 Plato, *Phd.* 63e–69e, 77e–84b, trans. Grube, cf. Karfík 2004, esp. 79–84, Betegh 2018.

52 This seems to be true even about the wicked soul that is fully absorbed by the

postulating the existence of immaterial and incorporeal Forms, Plato thus substantially transforms the way the soul should be conceived of and, at least in certain respect, brings it closer to being an immaterial entity. Moreover, in the *Phaedo* as well as in his other dialogues, Plato's conception of transmigration is quite significantly linked to his famous doctrine of *anamnesis* or recollection. It enables us to 'remember' mathematical and other rational truths which the soul had learned when it was freed from a body. Transmigration thus plays a role in acquisition of rational knowledge of immaterial principles.[53]

Leaving aside now some further developments of Plato's concept of soul here,[54] we should turn our attention to the *Timaeus*, where Plato also deals with some earlier Presocratic concepts. In some passages in this dialogue, he seems to react to Empedocles and his ideas.[55] The situation is somewhat similar to the *Phaedo*, where it is likewise implied that the soul, which is connected with the body, is the source of its movement and is neither fully corporeal nor fully incorporeal.[56] Of particular importance, however, is a distinction Plato makes at the beginning of the dialogue (a parallel of which is also found in the *Phaedo*) between the sensible world, known by perception and subject to constant becoming and ceasing to be, and the Forms, which the soul grasps with the mind (νοῦς) and which are the only entities that truly exist.[57] The rational part of us is said to be immortal and transmigrating core of the human soul. It is located in the head and like in Empedocles, it is called *daimon*.[58] As in

material body. On the other hand, due to its position in-between two levels of reality, even the most virtuous soul cannot be detached from the matter completely.

53 *Phd.* 72e, *Phaedr.* 249b–c, *Meno* 80d ff, cf. Burkert 1995, p. 118, see also Sedley 1995, p. 13.

54 The key passage where Plato presents his account of soul is naturally the *Republic*, IV 435e–442d, but its treatment falls beyond the scope of this article. Suffice it to say that in the *Republic*, the picture outlined above is elaborated further. The embodied soul is divided in three parts, whereby the rational one is immortal and undergoes reincarnation, while the other two, namely spirited and appetitive, are mortal. This picture need not, however, substantially contradict our main exposition; see *Republic* X 608c–612a, where soul is said to be simple. This claim is followed by the famous myth about Er, where Plato gives an elaborate account of transmigration. This seems to indicate that for Plato, the difference between the soul and body is a complex issue. Soul's mortality or immortality depends on which parts we refer to and on their particular relation to the body, but at the same time, soul is still seen as a unitary entity, see e.g. Karfík 2005. Cf. also Lorenz 2009, par. 3,2.

55 Cf. Hladký 2015, pp. 75–82. It is also worth noting that tradition links this dialogue with the Pythagorean Timaeus of Locri, while Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae* VIII,85 = Philolaus, DK 44 A 1,85, even relates an anecdote according to which Plato, in writing the dialogue, used Philolaus' book which he bought for a large sum of money.

56 Plato, *Tim.* 34a–36e, 41b–43a, 69c–72d.

57 Plato, *Tim.* 27d–28a, 30b–c.

58 Reason was given to us literally 'as a *daimon*', while the soul is assigned or chooses its fated *daimon* also in Plato's other dialogues (*Phd.* 107d6, 108b3, 113d2, *Resp.* 617e1, 620d8) but nowhere is it identified with the *daimon* in this way. It may thus be an instance of Empedoclean influence, much like the notion of necessity (ἐξ ἀνάγκης) in the description

the abovementioned Presocratic thinkers, it is also related to the fiery element located in heaven.[59] Analogically to the *Phaedo*, however, its fate during transmigration depends on whether during our lives we pay more attention to the sensible world or to the exercise in philosophy, in particular to observations of the regular revolutions of the heavenly bodies. The ultimate principles of these movements, however, are known through reason and, being an expression of the motion of the world-soul, they seem to be also dependent on the immaterial Forms.[60] In this particular point, the difference from Empedocles, who links the fate of the *daimon* mainly to its previous defilement by killing, is evident.

V. PROBLEMS OF MONISM AND DUALISM, IMMANENCE AND TRANSCENDENCE

We are now in a position to draw some broader conclusions from the previous exposition on the transformation of the notion of the soul between the Presocratics and Plato.

1. According to available evidence, Plato indeed seems to be the first thinker who alongside the sensible world postulated something independent of it, to wit the incorporeal Forms, knowable by reason.[61] Another author who could be considered in a search for the origins of distinction between the corporeal and incorporeal is Parmenides. Indeed, in Parmenides' work, too, the immutable reality knowable by reason is opposed to the changeable and deceptive world of the senses. It seems, however, that in his work, the immutable world is rather just the foundation of all of the apparent, merely illusory change. Although these two realms are perceived and known in different ways, they are in fact identical.[62] This seems to have been noted by Parmenides' immediate followers, who, too, interpreted this

of transmigration in *Tim.* 42a3–4, which likewise seems to echo Empedocles, DK 31 B 115.1; cf. Wright 1995, p. 272, Trépanier 2017, p. 177, n. 87. After all, even the description of the cycle of transmigrations which follows in *Tim.* 90e–92c should be seen as a playful presentation of his theory rather than as a thoroughly serious presentation. What Empedocles and *Timaeus* have in common is, for example, the fact that the stages or places souls pass through during their transmigration are linked to the four elements, cf. Hladký 2015, pp. 79–82. For an overview of Plato's conception of the *daimon*, see Timotin 2012, ch. 3; on the interpretation of the function of the soul in the *Timaeus* in general, see Karfík 2004, pp. 149–220, 2005, Betegh 2018.

59 Cf. Karfík 2004, p. 102.

60 Plato, *Tim.* 90a–d.

61 Cf. Renehan 1980, pp. 127–132.

62 It is, for example, quite characteristic that Parmenides' fragment DK 28 B 7/8, starting with verse 42, smoothly passes from ontology to cosmology, whereby the cosmos, taken as a whole, seems to become a sort of link between Parmenides' two worlds. And similarly, Simplicius preserves Eudemus' remarks to the effect that Parmenides' Being was interpreted cosmologically as the world, cf. Simplicius, *In Phys.* 133.21–29, 142.28–143.8 = Eudemus, fr. 44–45 Wehrli = Parmenides, test. 37, 38 Coxon. On Eudemus' interpretation of Parmenides, further see also Simplicius, *In Phys.* 115.11–116.5 = Eudemus, fr. 43 Wehrli = Parmenides, test. 36 Coxon. (I would like to thank the late Tomáš Drvota for bringing this testimony to my attention.) For an overview of the discussion, see Kraus 2013, pp. 467–469.

author in a materialist way.[63] Similarly, a transcendent world distinct from our cosmos is quite clearly absent from the conceptual framework of the atomists.[64]

Moreover, Anaxagoras' Mind (νοῦς) should not be understood as something incorporeal and utterly distinct in its nature from all other things – just different from them.[65] Similarly, within a broader context of the issue of incorporeality in Presocratic thought, Empedocles' Love and Strife are likewise clearly 'part of the natural world'.[66] Anaxagoras' Mind or Empedocles' Love and Strife and their activities are thus inseparable from the things in which they take place and upon which they act as forces. They shape the world from within and create more complex structures out of and within the elementary components. As such, they are indeed different from other physical things, but they are still of the same nature. Finally, another candidate for an incorporeal entity in early Greek thought is Heraclitus' Logos, according to which everything happens, the ultimate background of all cosmic changes.[67] However, although all things are formed by it, the Logos itself exists within the world and is inseparably entangled with it. It is therefore difficult to maintain that it is a non-physical principle.

We would like to claim that Plato's postulation of the incorporeal entities, most notably the transcendental Forms, ultimately led to a profound change in the theory of transmigration received from previous thinkers. While in Plato's philosophy the soul does not lose its connection with the human body and the world, so that even its immortal part is located in the head, if its immortality is to be guaranteed, it must, as we have seen, also maintain its relation to the eternal Forms. According to Empedocles and the Pythagoreans, on the other hand, the soul is ultimately grounded in corporeality, in physical existence. And though Philolaus may have understood harmony, which was in his view the very foundation of the soul, as something incorporeal, the problem is – as seen from the Platonic perspective – that his was a harmony of elements placed in the changeable sensible world, i.e., its existence was grounded in the elements and subject to destruction. This is also the gist of Plato's main objection in the *Phaedo*.

63 Sedley 1999, pp. 113–125, cf. also Long 1996.

64 See n. 77.

65 In Anaxagoras' fragment DK 59 B 12, trans. Curd, the Mind is said to be 'the finest of all objects and the purest'. There thus seems to be no sharp distinction between it and other things (see also Plato's criticism of Anaxagoras in the *Phaedo* 97b–98b, where Socrates in the end realises that the νοῦς, unlike the Forms, cannot function as a sufficient cause explaining the nature of the world). Curd 2005, pp. 142–143, 2007, pp. 192–205, on the other hand, argues for Anaxagoras' Mind being non-material, but see a discussion in Rechenauer 2013, pp. 774–775, and Inwood 2001, p. 51–52.

66 Curd 2013, p. 136. It seems, however, difficult to admit that Life and Strife are at the same time 'physical but not material, not stuffs', as Curd claims, commenting critically upon Renehan 1980. Cf. also Wright 1995, pp. 32–34.

67 Heraclitus, DK 22 B 1, cf. Curd 2013, pp. 114, 124.

2. One could object to the reconstruction of Empedocles' and Pythagorean teaching presented here – according to which a soul is a transmigrating but at the same time necessarily corporeal entity – by pointing out that nothing like that is stated anywhere *expressis verbis*. The core of problem is that we see the whole issue from a different perspective than the Presocratics. Though perhaps unconsciously, we tend to identify the soul with something incorporeal. Yet where there is no difference between the natural, sensible world and another world, the Forms, it makes no sense to distinguish between the corporeal and the incorporeal. Moreover, it seems that the worldview of some Presocratics, such as Thales, Heraclitus, or even Empedocles, and perhaps also the early Pythagoreans, was close to panpsychism, that is, the belief there is soul in everything.[68] Similarly, the elements of which it is composed seem to have been conceived by at least some Presocratics of not as inert stuff or dead matter, but as alive, and sometimes even as active and rational principles.[69]

If we were to ask Empedocles or Philolaus about the nature of the transmigrating soul and its composition, they would quite possibly reply that it had originated from the same principles as the rest of the world. These are probably joined in the soul so as to form a kind of harmony which is not itself material but still ultimately grounded in and dependent on the physical elements it holds together. Perhaps the stuff the soul is composed of it is just 'finer', 'purer', or 'more durable' than anything else, being most probably composed mostly of subtle air and/or fire-aither.[70] This also fits well with some eschatological concepts documented from fifth century Athens, according to which souls after death travel up to reach the aither, an

68 See Thales, DK 11 A 22, cf. Gregory 2013, pp. 65–67; Heraclitus, DK 22 B 113, cf. B 45, cf. Kahn 1979, pp. 119, 128–129, 221; Empedocles, DK B 31 17.14, 103, 110.10, cf. Trépanier 2004, pp. 31–33; the *Pythagorean Notes (Hypomnemata)* preserved by Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae* VIII,27–28, 31–32 = DK 58 B 1a,27–28, 31–32, cf. Kahn 2001, pp. 81–82, Long 2013, pp. 157–158. For a history and contemporary discussions of panpsychism, see Goff, Seager, and Allen-Hermanson 2017.

69 For Parmenides, see Long 1996, for Empedocles, see Curd 2016 and Rowett 2016; a more general overview is given by Lloyd 1966, pp. 232–272, Trépanier 2010, and Gregory 2013; cf. Hladký (forthcoming).

70 Betegh 2006 distinguishes between a 'journey model' and a 'portion model' of the soul in early Presocratics. He also shows, however, that in some cases this distinction cannot be applied strictly, and this holds especially of some early Greek philosophers who had distinctively eschatological ideas about the nature of the soul that survives the death of the body. One may also note that Heraclitus is another author who claimed that in the case of the 'best', most exceptional individuals, the fiery soul survives the death of the body, at least for some period of time, as argued most notably by Kahn 1979, pp. 245–261, 327, n. 286; cf. also Burkert 1972, pp. 362–363, with nn. 64, 66, Mihai 2010, pp. 558, 565, 577, 2015, pp. 48, 63, 154. This conception, however, resembles not a theory of transmigration but rather the later Stoic idea of survival of the 'leading' part of the soul, the *hēgemonikon*, *SVF* I,522, II,811, cf. Hladký (forthcoming).

element which is akin to it.[71] Instead of Platonic transcendence or de facto dualism of two spheres of reality, what we find here is immanence or monism of one world.[72] Nonetheless, these notions are somewhat misleading since both pairs of concepts are mutually intertwined and can be defined only in relation to each other. And in the world where Plato's predecessors speak of the soul, such distinctions make little sense. Everything was contained in one cosmos and there was nothing beyond or 'outside' its borders (if, indeed, it had any).

When trying to define the ontological status of a transmigrating soul in Presocratic thought, we (and other interpreters) have to come to terms with the, at a first glance, somewhat surprising fact that the Presocratics viewed soul as something corporeal and situated in the natural world just like everything else, although it undergoes regular transmigrations. This is a point where, consciously or not, we are profoundly influenced by the Platonic legacy. This is why it is so difficult to find adequate terms for a fitting description of the situation portrayed by the Presocratics. As noted above, distinctions such as ideal/material,[73] transcendent/immanent, or dualism/monism necessarily fail (though the last pair seems to be the most adequate) because the world to which the Presocratic soul belonged was fully united and conceptual divisions of this kind cannot be properly applied to it. It was a world where there was no transcendent principle to which a soul, like in Plato, could relate, a principle that would guarantee its existence. We therefore believe that if we are to arrive at a satisfactory understanding of the Presocratic position as distinct from the Platonic one, we should admit that these distinctions are inadequate. It is,

71 Euripides, *Hel.* 1013–1016, *Orest.* 1086–1087, *Sup.* 531–536, 1139–1141, fr. 839.8–14, 908b.3–4, 971, 1013 Nauck, Aristophanes, *Pax* 832ff., and some tomb inscriptions, *CEG* 10 = *IG* I³ 1179, *CEG* 535, *SEG* XXXVIII,440, cf. Burkert 1972, pp. 357–363, Renehan 1980, p. 112, Egli 2003, pp. 94–114, and Mihai 2010, 2015, pp. 106–113, with further references.

72 'Immanence', as employed in this context, is very close to the somewhat fashionable term frequently used in the tradition of French Spinozism, while the term 'monism' has here a sense similar to that used by Ernst Haeckel, an eminent German biologist, religious reformer, and founder of the Deutscher Monistenbund.

73 Cf. Long 1966, pp. 256–267, and Karfík 2004, par. 39, who distinguish two different interpretative approaches of scholars to Empedocles, a 'mystic' and a 'materialist' one. To list just a few authoritative statements by other scholars, Trépanier 2017, p. 135, claims that 'most Presocratics are best described as default materialists'. O'Brien 2006, pp. 56–57, with n. 19, speaks about 'unconscious materialism' in connection with Empedocles, and elsewhere, O'Brien 2005, p. 338, maintains that the 'Presocratic philosophers have not awaken from Plato's dream [i.e. *Tim.* 51e6–52d1], if we are to judge from Parmenides, Anaxagoras and Empedocles, none of whom appears to have any conception of reality that is not extended in space.' Kahn 2001, p. 82, observes about the doctrines contained in the *Pythagorean Notes (Hypomnemata)*: 'In this respect, the psychology of the *Notebooks* belongs to a tradition of what we may call mystical materialism – a tradition that begins with the Presocratics and continues throughout antiquity.'

after all, well known that a similar situation where analogous distinctions are ill-fitting can be encountered in the case of other than Presocratic thinkers.

3. While the main function of the soul as a principle of life and by extension also a vehicle of a personal as well as moral identity remains unchanged, Plato's postulation of an independent realm of the incorporeal Forms requires a transformation of a soul so that it can relate to it. In Empedocles' writings, soul's fate in the course of incarnations evolves mainly from contaminations due to previous wrongdoings caused by its attachment to Strife, and any requirement of understanding the nature of the world is linked to eschatology only loosely. For Philolaus, it seems that it is the soul that is associated with sensation and emotions and its principle is situated in the heart that is being reincarnated.[74] The emotional part of our self, which is identified with the soul and its fate after death, also naturally leads to a requirement of compassion with animals and other living beings. Souls enter them during the cycle of transmigration and they are composed of the same elements as humans.[75]

Plato, on the other hand, claims that a soul has to strive to be as close to the Forms as possible, in other words, to become rational. From now on, the core of human soul is identified with its rational part, which is the part that enters the cycle of transmigration in the first place.[76] And while knowledge of intelligible principles is thus still linked to the soul's highest, rational part, knowledge of the sensible world is mediated by the body.[77] While in archaic Greek thought, the mind (νόος) is the thinking capacity that enables us to see deeper into the nature of our world,[78] in Plato, attention turns to a completely different order of reality. We have just noted that the soul as a principle of life becomes rational through its relation to the Forms, eternal and transcendent intelligible principles. The soul thus attains a degree of independence from the physical world. It finds itself, metaphorically speaking, outside it, somewhere in-between the physical world of the senses and the intelligible Forms. In virtue of its not quite physical existence, it can thus attain knowledge of the Forms which are found beyond the sensible world.

74 See Huffman 2009.

75 Cf. Sorabji 1993, pp. 131–132, 172–175, Huffman 2009.

76 Cf. Burkert 1995, p. 118, and Obeyesekere 2002, pp. 249, 255, 276–277, 283–287. This important shift brought about by Platos' new conception of the soul naturally has some immediate consequences. As Huffman, p. 41, claims: 'It seems awkward and barbarous to suppose that the full range of human intellectual capabilities are present in the animal but, of course, unable to express themselves.'

77 Kahn 1985, pp. 19–21, argues that while some form of distinction between sensory and rational knowledge can be traced back to Parmenides and his followers including the Pythagorean Philolaus, its more systematic form appears only later, in Democritus, and a definitive form of the distinction was formulated by Plato, cf. Democritus, DK 68 B 11, 125, 191. Huffman 1993, pp. 311, 314–315, 319, notes that a similar distinction can be found also in Philolaus, DK 44 B 13.

78 Cf. Snell 1960, pp. 12–15, and von Fritz 1945, 1946.

Therein lays the main difference between Plato and the Presocratics (especially those discussed above), in whose view the soul is always physical and united with the world in which it fully belongs. Platonic dualism posits an ontological distinction between the physical, sensible world and the transcendent Forms and between our cognitive capacities that relate to these two levels of reality. The Presocratics, on the other hand, do not believe that our mind relates to a reality fundamentally different from the sensible world. In their view, the mind tries to penetrate 'only' some sort of deeper, more fundamental layer of the phenomenal world, which as a whole, however, cannot be anything but unified and one.

4. Throughout these considerations, it appears that Plato was exceptionally successful in promoting a distinction between the sensible world and the intelligible Forms and any return to the 'innocence' of his predecessors is challenging in the extreme. Plato's sharp division of reality exerted enormous influence in centuries to come, where a similar form of dualism is found frequently and sometimes even in unexpected places. When we leave aside Plato's immediate followers, most notably Aristotle, and make a huge leap forward in time, we can see that this is the case of a thinker far removed from ancient Greece, one from the very beginnings of modern philosophy, namely Baruch Spinoza. Quite significantly for such a comparison, it has been claimed that the Presocratics and other early Greek thinkers are close to pantheism, which characterises the philosophy of this thinker.[79] As is well known, Spinoza believed that a person belongs to two attributes among infinitely many that can be ascribed to a substance, to wit the 'attribute of extension' (*attributum extensionis*) and 'thinking' (*cogitationis*).[80] Although he posits one substance underlying all there is, in relation to these two attributes he does not – contrary to expectation – advocate a position close to a unitary monism or immanence of Preplatonic thinkers. From the very outset, he presupposes a distinction between thinking and physicality, two realms which are parallel to one another. This separation can then be mended only thanks to a metaphysical presupposition of unity of all attributes on the deepest ontological level of one all-encompassing substance. Spinoza thus follows not only in the tradition of Cartesian dualism, which defines an insurmountable distinction between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, but even in the long tradition reaching all the way to Plato and revitalised by his Renaissance followers.

In Plato's view, however, these two sharply distinct levels of reality are still connected by a soul which relates partly to the physical world and partly to the intelligible Forms. This makes his dualism somewhat less sharp,[81] but despite

79 Cf. Gregory 2013, esp. pp. 13–15, 51–52, 55–56, 66–67, 75, 203–204. For the history and contemporary discussions of pantheism and panentheism, see Mander 2016 and Culp 2017.

80 Baruch Spinoza, *Ethica*, II, *scholium* to *prop.* 7, cf. *scholium* to *prop.* 21.

81 Cf. Dorter 1982, pp. 179–191.

all the qualifications, his conception of the soul clearly constitutes a fatal step in such a direction. It is the moment when the conceptual field opens within which, it would seem, we still pursue our philosophical quests. A comparison with the Presocratics shows, however, that a similar kind of conceptualisation of the body and soul is not the only possible one and has some important theoretical presuppositions at its background.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Editions:

Coxon, A. H. (2009). *The Fragments of Parmenides* (introd., ed., trans., com. by A. H. Coxon). Las Vegas; Zurich; Athens: Parmenides Publishing (edited with new translations by R. McKirahan; 1st edn. 1986).

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